



Abstract

Making comparative judgments in one domain activates a comparative mind-set that disposes consumers to purchase a product rather than deferring choice in a different domain. We extend the theory in three ways by examining the influence of this mind-set on managerial decision making. First, we examine the process by which the comparative mind-set increases choice. Specifically, we demonstrate that a comparative mind-set increases the accessibility of “which-to-choose” procedures and decreases the accessibility of “whether-to-choose” procedures, which consequently decrease the importance attached to negative attributes in the decision making process. Second, we find that activating a comparative mind-set not only increases managers’ likelihood of making purchases, but also elevates their spending levels. Third, we identify a set of real-world moderators involving decision scrutiny and knowledge accessibility that either amplify or weaken the influence of the comparative mind-set on managers’ decisions. In addition to three lab studies involving actual managers, we conduct three quasi-experiments using presidential elections to evoke the comparative mind-set. We find that activating a comparative mind-set elevates managers’ spending levels in real business decisions.