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Who needs a reason to indulge? Happiness following reason-based indulgent consumption☆

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ABSTRACT

While consumers and marketers perpetuate the lay theory that indulging with a reason is more pleasurable and makes everyone happier, this research identifies a condition under which indulging without a reason "feels right" and produces a more positive emotional reaction. The authors show that indulging with or without a reason and consumers' trait self-control interact to influence happiness felt following an indulgent purchase. While high self-control consumers are happier when they have a reason to buy indulgent products (e.g., when they can justify the indulgence), low self-control consumers are happier when they do not have a reason to indulge. That is, indulging with a reason is less pleasurable for consumers with low self-control. This effect on happiness has an impact on downstream judgments about the product and yields important implications for consumer welfare as well as marketing managers. Across four studies we show the effect on consumption happiness, examine consequences of the effect, and report evidence for the underlying process.

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1. Introduction

Previous research and lay theory suggest that having a reason to indulge may improve consumers' emotional experience of indulgences and mitigate the tension between pleasure and costs that is usually associated with indulging (Okada, 2005; Xu & Schwarz, 2009). Indulging with a reason refers to a rational or justified indulgence that feels like it was earned or deserved (Xu & Schwarz, 2009). For example, consumers may reward themselves for having exerted effort (e.g., saving money), for having excelled at a performance, or for having received a windfall gain (e.g., Kivetz & Zheng, 2006). The notion that indulging with a reason is better than indulging without a reason is so pervasive that marketers often provide or remind consumers of reasons to indulge. For example, Acura's "driven by reason" campaign highlights the importance of rationalizing indulgences, and a recent Chrysler 300 ad communicated to consumers that "luxury feels better earned". Marketing campaigns featuring a "you deserve it" message have run for decades, including for Porsche, Buick Reatta, Barclays Premier, and L'oreal. Therein, however, lies the potential for such reason-based indulgence messages to backfire if rationalizing indulgence does not resonate with the target audience (i.e., does not align with their approach to consumer spending). Thus, we examine under what conditions consumers will respond more positively (i.e., feel happier) when they have a reason to indulge. Is it possible that some consumers are happier when they

indulge for no reason? This question addresses a decision problem that marketing managers face: to continue the widespread use of reason-based messaging in indulgent contexts, or follow an up-and-coming trend in targeting messages to consumers based on their personality traits, which might make them a better fit for a message emphasizing a reason or no reason to indulge (Back et al., 2010; LaMontagne, 2015).

Consumers often engage in indulgent consumption to increase their sense of pleasure and happiness (Okada, 2005), which for the purposes of this research we define as an immediate emotional reaction to a stimulus. For example, consumers may buy luxury products, pamper themselves at a spa, or try an expensive wine to increase their pleasure and create a positive emotional experience (Haws & Poynor, 2008; Patrick & Hagtvedt, 2009; Pozharliev, Verbeke, Van Strien, & Bagozzi, 2015). Marketers, such as Coca-Cola, with its "Open Happiness" campaign, often market their indulgent products as fulfilling happiness goals. Nevertheless, little is known about enhancing consumption happiness in the context of indulgence. The evidence is limited probably because most previous research has focused on how reasons or justifications may reduce negative feelings associated with indulgences (typically guilt and regret; Keinan, Kivetz, & Netzer, 2016; Kivetz & Simonson, 2002; Kivetz & Zheng, 2006). The work by Xu and Schwarz (2009) is a notable exception, showing that indulging with or without a reason actually does not change consumers' positive emotional experience in response to indulgences. That is, they find that consumers enjoy their indulgences equally whether they have a reason to indulge or not. Qualifying this previous finding, we propose that while some consumers are happier when they have a reason to indulge, others may actually be happier when they do *not* have a reason to indulge, compared to when they have a reason.

Our predictions are based upon research on self-regulation and theories explaining how emotions are elicited. Research on self-control suggests that consumers with low or high self-control tend to prefer hedonic consumption when it aligns with their personality traits of being spontaneous or rational, respectively (Bearden & Haws, 2012; Haws, Bearden, & Nenkov, 2012; Nenkov, Inman, & Hulland, 2008; Poynor & Haws, 2009). Taken together with research showing that positive emotions such as happiness result from particular contexts that are consistent with consumers' personal preferences and how they behave (Lazarus, 1991; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988; Ruth, Brunel, & Otnes, 2002), we propose that high and low self-control consumers may react differently to indulging with and without a reason. We predict that high self-control consumers are happier when they have a reason to indulge, and, more interestingly, low self-control consumers are happier when they do not have a reason to indulge. We also develop insights into the underlying mechanism. We propose that the effect of indulging with a reason on consumption happiness is explained by the congruency between one's personality (high or low self-control) and the purchase context (indulging with or without a reason). Self-regulation research (e.g., Aaker & Lee, 2006; Malaviya & Sternthal, 2009) suggests that consumers experience such fit as a "feels right" intuition when indulging. We find that this sense of feeling right mediates the effect.

Besides consumption happiness, we examine a few downstream consequences of the effect we uncover: satisfaction with the purchase, likelihood of returning the product, and word-of-mouth. As such, this research has important implications for consumer welfare and for marketing managers. For example, consumers' experience of immediate happiness can increase their overall well-being (e.g., Kivetz & Keinan, 2006). Happiness elevates consumers' thinking (high mental construal), helping them to see the big picture (Labroo & Patrick, 2009). Happiness that is believed to be fleeting helps consumers decide whether to consume to regulate their emotions (Labroo & Mukhopadhyay, 2009). Consumption happiness is also important for companies because they can benefit from more positive consumer judgments that are a consequence of consumers' experienced positive emotions (Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2008; Kim, Park, & Schwarz, 2010; Kwortnik & Ross, 2007; Mogilner, Aaker, & Kamvar, 2012; Patrick & Hagtvedt, 2009; Pham, Geuens, & De Pelsmacker, 2013) and may benefit from long-term consequences such as loyalty (Homburg, Koschate, & Hoyer, 2006). While communication targeting based on personality variables might have been more challenging for marketers in the past, technology and innovation have made it possible to highly customize products, services and marketing communication, particularly online, based on customer online behavior data (e.g., Chung, Wedel, & Rust, 2016). It is therefore within marketers' reach to be able to target consumer groups based on their trait self-control (e.g., Hirsh, Kang, & Bodenhausen, 2012).

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. First, we develop hypotheses about the conditional effect of indulging with/without a reason on consumption happiness, sense of feeling right, and downstream consumer judgments, as a function of trait self-control. In the empirical section we present converging evidence for our predictions across four studies that examine the effect (studies 1–4), its consequences (studies 1–2), and alternative underlying mechanisms (studies 3–4). Finally, we discuss the implications of these findings to theory, consumers, and marketing practice.

2. Theory and hypotheses

2.1. The effect of indulging with or without a reason on consumption happiness

Interest in the emotion of happiness has increased in the last decade because of an increasing interest in overall well-being (or happiness in life), which is perhaps people's ultimate goal (Etkin & Mogilner, 2016). Well-being is a combination of frequent experience of positive emotions such as happiness, along with a cognitive evaluation of one's satisfaction with life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Thus, experiencing short-term consumption happiness can potentially contribute to consumers' overall well-being (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Fredrickson, 2001).

Consumption contexts, and in particular indulgent consumption, have the ability to contribute to consumers' experience of the positive emotion of happiness (Haws & Poynor, 2008; Patrick & Hagtvedt, 2009; Pozharliev et al., 2015). However, relatively little has been done in this area in marketing despite an expressed need (Mogilner & Norton, 2015). Consumption contexts that have

been found to increase happiness include consumption of experiences (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014; Nicolao, Irwin, & Goodman, 2009), consumption of material goods, under some circumstances (Goodman, Malkoc and Stephenson 2016; Weidman & Dunn, 2016), varying activities over long periods of time (Etkin & Mogilner, 2016), and spending time in ways that enhance personal meaning and social connection (Aaker, Rudd, & Mogilner, 2011). We add to this stream of research by considering how indulgent consumption affects consumer happiness.

Previous research has shown that consumers hold an intuition that they would experience more positive feelings (and less negative feelings) if they have a reason to indulge (Xu & Schwarz, 2009). Indulging with a reason means that an indulgence is "justified" or "earned" (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002; Mick & DeMoss, 1990; Xu & Schwarz, 2009). Specific examples of reasons to indulge from previous research include: rewarding oneself for an accomplishment, promotion, hard work, or effort, celebrating a special event (e.g., graduation, birthday), exerting prior restraint (e.g., resisting a temptation), shopping for a product that attends a functional need, acquiring indulgences because they do not deplete income (e.g., discounted price, windfall gain/extra money, paying in time), engaging in altruistic behavior, or minimizing future regret of missing out in life (Dhar & Simonson, 1999; Haws & Poynor, 2008; Khan & Dhar, 2006; Kivetz & Simonson, 2002; Kivetz & Zheng, 2006; Mick & DeMoss, 1990; Mishra & Mishra, 2011; Mukhopadhyay & Johar, 2009; Okada, 2005; Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998; Xu & Schwarz, 2009).

A critical question that still lacks evidence is under what conditions can reasons to indulge affect happiness. Most research examining emotional responses to indulgence has presumed or shown that having a reason to indulge reduces the negative emotions (e.g., guilt and regret) associated with indulging (e.g., Kivetz & Simonson, 2002; Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). For example, Keinan et al. (2016) show that small utilitarian additions to a hedonic luxury product serve as a justification and reduce guilt. Nevertheless, because positive and negative emotions are largely independent and can co-exist (Ramanathan & Williams, 2007), reducing guilt does not translate into increasing happiness. We therefore focus specifically on the positive emotion of happiness and ways to boost consumers' happiness from indulgent consumption. By shedding light on the role that reason plays in determining happiness from indulgent consumption, we contribute to a growing but still modest body of research calling for conditions that increase happiness in consumption contexts (Mogilner & Norton, 2015).

Research examining how having a reason to indulge affects consumers' positive feelings following indulgence is scant. In a qualitative study, Mick and DeMoss (1990) found that consumers who rewarded themselves with an indulgence when they believed they "deserved it" (e.g., after a promotion) described feelings of happiness, pride, joy, calmness, and satisfaction. Mick and Faure (1998) later corroborated these results in an experimental setting, showing that both deservingness and (anticipated) positive emotions affect likelihood to indulge. Yet, recent work by Xu and Schwarz (2009) shows that although consumers believe that they would enjoy an indulgence more if they have a reason, consumers actually enjoy their indulgence just as much when they have a reason as when they do not (Xu & Schwarz, 2009). Might there be circumstances, then, when having a reason to indulge may backfire and make an indulging experience less pleasurable, and thus, less happy? Adding to and qualifying previous research, we contend that by examining a key source of consumer heterogeneity we can help researchers, consumers, and marketers understand when the direction of emotional responses reverses (Hutchinson, Kamakura, & Lynch, 2000). Put another way, we can predict who may be happier when they indulge with a reason, and who may be happier when they indulge without a reason. Toward this goal, we examine the moderating role of trait self-control.

2.2. Self-control, sense of "feeling right", and indulgent consumption

The current body of work on indulgence has suggested a link between self-control and hedonic vs. utilitarian consumption (Haws et al., 2012; Poynor & Haws, 2009), which indicates that there are differences not only in how high or low self-control consumers make decisions about when and how to indulge, but also in how they experience indulgence. Self-control is a personality trait defined as the ability to monitor one's behavior against specific standards and change or interrupt undesired behavioral tendencies (Baumeister, 2002; Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). Consumer spending self-control is a domain-specific form of self-control defined as the ability to monitor ("I keep track of what I am spending") and regulate one's spending-related thoughts and decisions ("I carefully consider my needs before making purchases") in accordance with self-imposed standards ("I am responsible when it comes to how much I spend"; Haws et al., 2012). Individual differences in self-control are a robust and stable characteristic of one's personality that powerfully and systematically affects behavior (Baumeister, 2002; Bearden & Haws, 2012; Ein-Gar, Goldenberg, & Sagiv, 2012; Poynor & Haws, 2009). Further, self-control is associated with the agreeableness and conscientiousness personality dimensions, which marketers have recently been able to predict through direct consumer feedback as well as data-mining (Finley, 2014; Jensen-Campbell, Knack, Waldrip, & Campbell, 2006; Park et al., 2015; Tangney et al., 2004). We contribute to this literature by examining the immediate, positive emotional experience of consumers with varying levels of self-control after indulgence and in the presence of a reason (or no reason).

Per the definition of self-control, people with a high self-control personality are better able to monitor and regulate their behavior against standards. To do so, high self-control people are more conscientious, have more self-discipline, and display more planned behavior (Bearden & Haws, 2012). As such, they show elements of deliberation, rationality, and thoroughness ("I think carefully before acting"). Because high self-control individuals focus on achieving long-term goals (e.g., being successful at work), elaborating on decisions and monitoring of their spending is an important part of who they are (Haws et al., 2012; Nenkov et al., 2008). A high self-control consumer's personality includes being a controlled or "rational" individual (Haws et al., 2012; Tangney et al., 2004).

Low self-control people, on the other hand, are more easy-going, are less restrained, and display more spontaneous behavior. A low self-control consumer's personality includes being more spontaneous ("I do many things on the spur of the moment"), flexible

("I change my mind fairly often"), or less thorough ("I act without thinking through all the alternatives") (Tangney et al., 2004). In addition, low self-control consumers are motivated to pursue short-term pleasure ("I do certain things that are bad for me, if they are fun"), often being more open to short-term enjoyment in their lives as opposed to a strict focus on long-term virtues (Poynor & Haws, 2009).

Both high and low self-control consumers engage in indulgent behavior. Unlike high hyperopia consumers, who miss out on indulgences (Haws & Poynor, 2008), high self-control consumers tend to incorporate indulgences into their lives by making indulgences part of their long-term goals (Tangney et al., 2004) or by rewarding themselves with indulgences along the way (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991). High self-control consumers tend to elaborate more extensively than low self-control consumers on the consequences of indulging for their long-term goals (Ein-Gar et al., 2012; Nenkov et al., 2008) and they are also more likely to monitor and plan their purchase behavior more closely (Bearden & Haws, 2012; Haws et al., 2012).

To understand if and how trait self-control and having a reason (or not) interact to affect happiness, it is important to understand how positive feelings are elicited. Appraisal theories of emotion (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Lazarus, 1991; Ortony et al., 1988; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985) propose an explanation about the formation and prediction of human emotions by stating that emotions are a response to specific cognitions (appraisals) comparing a given situation (e.g., the purchase context) relative to end-states, goals, beliefs, or personality (e.g., Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Lazarus, 1991). If a situation is appraised as beneficial (i.e., congruent with desired outcomes), a positive emotion should follow; if a situation is appraised as harmful, a negative emotion should follow (Lazarus, 1991). Because happiness is a basic positive emotion, this appraisal of congruency is enough to produce it (Ruth et al., 2002). Authors use different terms to name this appraisal, but descriptions reveal that they refer to the same notion of "congruency" with one's personal preferences (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 1984, 1991). It is relevant to note that appraisals can be deliberative, purposive, and conscious, or unreflected, automatic, and unconscious (Bagozzi et al., 1999). For example, appraisal theories of emotion describe fear as the result of the appraisal that something is threatening. But people do not necessarily consciously appraise an stimulus as threatening (although they may do so later); the appraisal is often quick and unconscious, generating the emotion and the associated physical changes.

Applying this theory to our context leads to the following: When consumers encounter a purchase opportunity, they will automatically appraise it against their own personality or personal preferences - even if consumers do not consciously think about "who they are" at that moment (Lazarus, 1991). A situation (indulging with or without a reason) that is consistent with one's personality (e.g., being a rational consumer or living spontaneously, respectively) will feel "right" and generate greater happiness (Aaker & Lee, 2006; Kwortnik & Ross, 2007). In line with this view, research related to regulatory fit has shown that when messages are congruent with consumers (i.e., when recipients "feel right" about the message), consumers' positive feelings increase as well as the message persuasiveness (Aaker & Lee, 2006; Higgins, 2005; Kwortnik & Ross, 2007; Malaviya & Sternthal, 2009). Intuitively, one might think that having a reason to indulge would make an indulgence context "right" for everyone because, after all, it helps consumers to justify a hedonic purchase (Okada, 2005). However, we expect low self-control consumers to consider indulging without a reason as the "right" context because this is consistent with the personality of low self-control consumers.

In sum, we anticipate that consumers with high levels of self-control will automatically appraise an opportunity to indulge with a reason as a behavior characteristic of a rational and savvy consumer, a view consistent with who they are. As such, we expect that the purchase context of indulging with a reason (e.g., "I am indulging because I deserve to reward myself for hard work") will be more consistent with a high (vs. low) self-control personality and will "feel right" to them. Consequently, we anticipate that high self-control consumers will be happier when they have a reason to indulge as opposed to when they do not have a reason to indulge. Conversely, a situation where consumers indulge without a reason is a behavior consistent with the more spontaneous personality of low self-control consumers. Thus, we expect that the purchase context of indulging without a reason (e.g., "I am indulging on a whim") will be more congruent with the personality of low (vs. high) self-control consumers and will "feel right" to them. As a consequence, low self-control consumers should be happier when they indulge without (vs. with) a reason. Thus, these predictions lead to the intriguing possibility that some consumers (low self-control) will be happier when they indulge more spontaneously (without a reason) as opposed to when they can justify the indulgence (with a reason). Formally stated:

H₁. High self-control consumers will be happier when they have a reason to indulge (vs. when they do not), but low self-control consumers will be happier when they do not have a reason to indulge (vs. when they do).

H₂. Sense of "feeling right" about an indulgent purchase context will mediate the effect of indulging with or without a reason on happiness.

2.3. Happiness and downstream consumer judgments

Beyond the immediate sense of pleasure from indulgence, the experience of happiness can color downstream judgments of the indulgent purchases (Kwortnik & Ross, 2007; Schwarz & Clore, 1983). Research suggests that consumers use the specific emotion they are experiencing as an input into their judgment (Pham, 1998) and that affective responses are in fact near perfect predictors of people's thoughts toward objects (Pham, 2004; Pham, Cohen, Pracejus, & Hughes, 2001). While the emotion tends to be fleeting and only be (re)-experienced when consumers think about or use the product (Weidman & Dunn, 2016), cognitive judgments tend to be more stable and lasting (Cohen, Pham, & Andrade, 2008). Thus, happiness elicited by a specific purchase context can potentially have a lasting effect on consumers' judgments of their indulgent product. As such, we expect that individuals experiencing greater consumption happiness will be more satisfied with their indulgent purchase, will be less likely to return it,

and will be more likely to engage in positive word-of-mouth (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Chitturi et al., 2008; Dube & Morgan, 1998; Homburg et al., 2006; Westbrook & Oliver, 1991), potentially extending the pleasure they derive from their indulgent purchase (Goodman, Malkoc, & Stephenson, 2016; Weidman & Dunn, 2016). Formally stated:

H₃. Happiness from indulging with a reason (vs. no reason) will enhance consumer judgments about the indulgent product.

Fig. 1 illustrates our framework, which we test in four studies reported next.

3. Study 1: the effect

The main goal of this study is to show the predicted effect on happiness (H1). In addition, we examine satisfaction with the purchase as a consequence of happiness (H3).

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Design and procedure

The study design included one between-subjects factor (reason vs. no reason) and one measured factor (trait consumer spending self-control; Haws et al., 2012). Participants were 175 students (average age = 26.42, 62.3% female), who completed an online study in exchange for extra credit or monetary compensation.

We told participants that their task was to imagine the scenario given to them as vividly as possible, imagining what they would think about and feel like if they were in that situation, as part of a "vivid imagination exercise" (Xu & Schwarz, 2009). As the context for the indulgent purchase, participants imagined purchasing a luxury product, given that consumers perceive luxury purchases as indulgences relative to their means (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002) and that a decision to purchase luxuries, rather than necessities or more utilitarian products, gives rise to the typical tensions (pleasure vs. costs) associated with indulgences (Xu & Schwarz, 2009).

Participants read the following scenario: "Imagine that you are in a shopping mall. As you are walking through the stores, you see an expensive pair of designer jeans that you really like. You try the jeans on and seriously consider purchasing it." As part of the scenario, participants were either given a reason to purchase the jeans (reason condition) or not (no reason condition). In the reason condition, participants read they had a reason to spend on those jeans (they saved money on other purchases) and were asked to close their eyes for a moment and vividly imagine buying an expensive pair of jeans with a reason to do so. In the no reason condition, participants were asked to vividly imagine buying an expensive pair of jeans without any particular reason.

3.1.2. Measures

Participants reported their happiness ("considering each of the feelings below individually, please describe how you felt after you made the purchase of the jeans") by rating four items (happy, joyful, cheerful, thrilled) on scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). The happiness items were adapted from previous literature on emotions and indulgence (e.g., Ramanathan & Williams, 2007; Xu & Schwarz, 2009). The ratings were used to form an index of happiness (alpha = 0.93). We measured satisfaction with the purchase using two items ("how satisfied/pleased were you with the purchase of the designer jeans?;" $r = 0.89$, $p < 0.001$), ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much).

Lastly, as part of a supposedly unrelated study, participants completed the 10-item consumer spending self-control scale (Haws et al., 2012).We chose this scale because it is specific to the consumption domain. Given the context of our investigation, it was important that the scale was particularly sensitive to variations in self-control pertaining to consumption contexts. This scale is also relatively short, so it is practical to administer in a survey with consumers (Haws et al., 2012). Participants rated the extent to which they agreed with the items (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The scale was reliable (alpha = 0.88) and the reason manipulation did not affect the measure of self-control ($p > 0.75$).
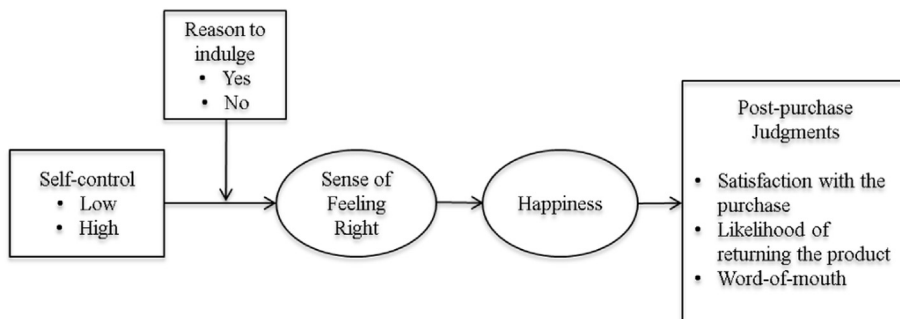

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

3.2. Results

3.2.1. Consumption happiness

To test our predictions we conducted a floodlight analysis (Spiller, Fitzsimons, Lynch, & McClelland, 2013) using the bias-corrected bootstrapping method (Hayes, 2013). A floodlight analysis is recommended in this case because self-control is continuous and all values of self-control are relevant for considering simple effects of reason versus no reason. When we consider the whole range of values we can better control for variations in the scale distribution due to, for instance, different samples (Spiller et al., 2013). In line with the recommendation of Preacher and Hayes (2008) and Shrout and Bolger (2002), we used bootstrapping method (5000 bootstrapping samples) to test the proposed indirect effects. We used the same procedures described in detail here in all subsequent studies.

We first conducted a regression with happiness as dependent variable and the reason to indulge manipulation (reason = 1, no reason = −1), mean-centered consumer spending self-control (M = 5.22, SD = 1.00), and their interaction as predictors. Results revealed only the predicted significant interaction (β = 0.46, SE = 0.11, t(171) = 4.34, $p < 0.001$). Consistent with our hypothesis, floodlight analysis revealed that participants with consumer spending self-control above 5.32 (0.1 SD above the average; 48% of the cases are above this Johnson-Neyman point) were happier when they indulged with a reason as opposed to when they indulged without a reason. That is, there was a significant positive effect of reason on happiness at the Johnson-Neyman point for high self-control consumers (β_{JN} = 0.21, SE = 0.11). In contrast, participants with consumer spending self-control below 4.21 (1.02 SD below the average, 14% of the cases are below this Johnson-Neyman point) were happier when they indulged without a reason, given a significant negative effect of reason on happiness (β_{JN} = −0.30, SE = 0.15). These results support H1 and are illustrated in Fig. 2.

3.2.2. Satisfaction

A similar regression with satisfaction as the dependent variable also revealed a significant interaction (β = 0.40, SE = 0.11, t(171) = 3.73, $p < 0.001$). For participants with high consumer spending self-control (above 5.45 or 0.23 SD above the mean, 46% of the cases are above this Johnson-Neyman point) there was a significant positive effect of the reason manipulation on satisfaction (β_{JN} = 0.22, SE = 0.11), and for participants with low consumer spending self-control (below 4.13 or 1.09 SD below the mean, 14% of the cases are below this Johnson-Neyman point) there was a significant negative effect of reason on satisfaction (β_{JN} = −0.31, SE = 0.16).

3.2.3. Mediation analysis

To test the impact of happiness on satisfaction with the purchase (H3), we examined whether happiness mediated the conditional effect of indulging with/without a reason at high and low levels of self-control on satisfaction with the purchase. We followed Hayes' (2013) Model 8 bias-corrected bootstrapping method (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). We included presence of reason as predictor, consumer spending self-control as moderator, happiness as mediator, and satisfaction as dependent variable. Results show a significant overall mediation index (ab = 0.39; 95% CI: 0.1681 to 0.6260), and the effect of happiness on satisfaction was positive and significant (β = 0.86, SE = 0.04, t(171) = 20.70, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. The mediation of happiness was conditional on self-control: The conditional indirect effect of reason was significant both at high (ab = 0.61; 95% CI: 0.3007 to 0.9173) and low (ab = −0.41; 95% CI: −0.8156 to −0.0329) levels of self-control. Because zero was not included
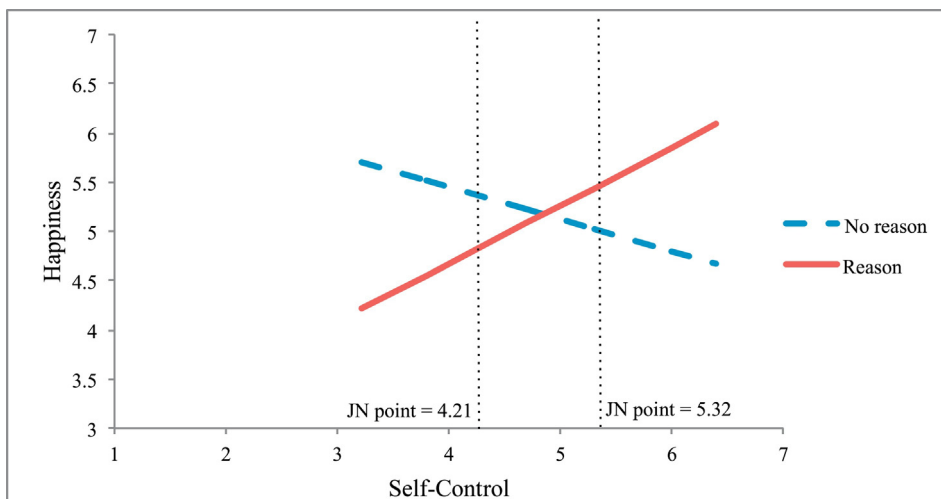

Fig. 2. Reason to indulge and self-control influence happiness following an indulgent purchase. Note. 1. The graph is based on the regression estimates. 2. The vertical dotted lines crossing the graph indicate the Johnson-Neyman (JN) points where the difference between the solid and the dashed lines starts to become significant.

in the lower and upper bounds of these confidence intervals, we can conclude that there was a significant indirect effect of indulging with a reason on satisfaction through happiness at both levels of consumer spending self-control (Hayes, 2013).

3.3. Discussion

Supporting H1, we find that consumers with high levels of self-control are happier after indulging with (vs. without) a reason, while consumers with low levels of self-control are happier after indulging without (vs. with) a reason. Supporting H3, we found that consumer happiness affects downstream satisfaction with the indulgent purchase.

4. Study 2: the consequences.

The main purpose of this study is to examine downstream consequences of the effect. In this study we use a manipulation of reason to indulge adapted from previous research: getting a good grade in a course (Xu & Schwarz, 2009). When participants think about getting a good grade before (vs. after) the indulgent purchase, we expect participants to consider the good grade to be a reason to indulge (Xu & Schwarz, 2009). Thus, in the reason condition we present the good grade scenario before the purchase, and in the no reason condition we present this scenario after the purchase.

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Design and procedure
The study design included one between-subjects factor (reason vs. no reason) and one measured factor (trait consumer spending self-control). One hundred ninety four students (64.4% male, average age = 22.28) completed the online study in exchange for extra credit or monetary compensation. Participants were asked to vividly imagine that they were in the situations described. In the reason condition, participants were first asked to vividly recall getting a good grade in a course. Participants were instructed to take their time, immerse themselves in their memories, and describe details of the experience (e.g., when they found out about the grade, what course it was, where they were at the moment they found out). Participants were asked to imagine that after learning about the good course grade, they went to a shopping mall and found a pair of luxury sunglasses that they really liked and decided to purchase. Consistent with Xu and Schwarz (2009), we expected participants in this condition to use the good grade as a reason to indulge. In the no reason condition participants first completed the sunglasses purchase scenario and then were asked to recall having received a good grade. In this condition, we did not expect participants to use the good grade as a reason to indulge, and therefore we expected results to conceptually replicate our "no reason" condition in previous studies. Following these two tasks, we asked participants to think about the purchase of the luxury sunglasses and answer questions about this situation.

4.1.2. Measures
We measured participants' happiness, satisfaction with the purchase, likelihood of returning the product, and word-of-mouth. Happiness (alpha = 0.94) and satisfaction ($r = 0.88$, $p < 0.001$) were measured with the same items used previously. Likelihood of returning ("how likely would you be to return the sunglasses?") and word-of-mouth ("how likely are you to tell your friends about this purchase?") were measured with one item each, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). Because the four items of post-purchase judgments (satisfaction, likelihood of returning, and word of mouth) are naturally correlated (all $p < 0.001$) and the pattern of results was similar and significant with each measure individually, we combined these items (likelihood of return reverse-coded) in an index of post-purchase judgments (alpha = 0.85). To check whether participants perceived the purchase as an indulgence, participants were also asked the extent to which the purchase was necessary (1) or a splurge (7). At the end of the study, and as part of an ostensibly unrelated study, participants completed the consumer spending self-control scale as in study 1 (alpha = 0.93).

4.2. Results

4.2.1. Perception of the indulgence
We regressed perceptions of the purchase (necessary-splurge) on contrast-coded reason, consumer spending self-control, and their interaction. This analysis revealed no significant effects (all $p > 0.30$). Given these results and that the average rating was significantly above the middle point of the scale (M = 5.59, SD = 1.54; $t(193) = 14.45$, $p < 0.001$) we conclude that participants across conditions and across levels of self-control perceived the purchase situation consistently as a splurge.

4.2.2. Happiness
We used the approach described in study 1 to conduct a floodlight analysis and test our predictions (Spiller et al., 2013). Regressing happiness on the reason manipulation, consumer spending self-control (M = 4.98, SD = 1.24), and their interaction revealed only a significant interaction ($\beta = 0.31$, SE = 0.08, $t(190) = 3.62$, $p < 0.001$). The Johnson-Neyman technique (Spiller et al., 2013) revealed that there was a significant positive effect of reason on happiness for participants with self-control above 6.00 (1.02 SD above the mean; 25% of the cases; $\beta_{JN} = 0.27$, SE = 0.13), and there was a significant negative effect of reason on happiness for participants with self-control below 4.38 (0.60 SD below the mean; 30% of the cases; $\beta_{JN} = -0.23$, SE = 0.12).

4.2.3. Post-purchase judgments

A similar regression with the post-purchase judgments index as dependent variable revealed a significant interaction ($\beta = 0.29$, SE $= 0.08$, t(190) $= 3.62$, $p < 0.001$). The Johnson-Neyman technique shows that there was a significant positive effect of reason on satisfaction for participants with self-control above 5.57 or 0.59 SD above the mean (41% of the cases; $\beta_{JN} = 0.22$, SE $= 0.11$), and there was a significant negative effect of reason on satisfaction for participants with self-control below 3.95 or 1.03 SD below the mean (21% of the cases; $\beta_{JN} = -0.26$, SE $= 0.13$).

4.2.4. Mediation analysis

We examined whether happiness mediated the conditional effect of indulging with a reason at high and low levels of self-control on post-purchase judgments following the procedure detailed in study 1 (Hayes, 2013; Model 8). Results support the proposed mediation (mediation index: $ab = 0.25$; 95% CI: 0.0879 to 0.4123). The effect of happiness on satisfaction was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.80$, SE $= 0.04$, t(190) $= 20.69$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. The conditional indirect effect was significant both at high ($ab = 0.29$; 95% CI: 0.0194 to 0.5669) and low ($ab = -0.47$; 95% CI: -0.8011 to -0.1504) levels of self-control.

4.3. Discussion

In this study we again find that greater consumption happiness emerges when high (low) self-control consumers have (do not have) a reason to indulge. Interestingly, the mere availability of a reason does not force high self-control consumers to use that reason to justify an indulgence: they are only happier when the reason comes before the indulgence (i.e., when they really have a reason to indulge, as opposed to "when a rationalization is available"), which is consistent with our theory.

In addition, we find that consumption happiness positively affects downstream satisfaction with the indulgent purchase, as in study 1, as well as decreases the likelihood of returning the product and increases word-of-mouth. The items we used to measure post-purchase judgements are highly correlated, but we suggest that future research more closely investigate when happiness affects post-purchase judgements and which judgments it may or may not affect.

5. Study 3: the process

In this study we examine the predicted process (H2) and rule out two alternative explanations. Recall that we expect that happiness will emerge from a sense that the indulgent consumption context feels right to high self-control consumers when they indulge with a reason, and to low self-control consumers when they indulge without a reason. However, it is possible that high and low self-control consumers will perceive the purchase context of indulging with or without a reason, respectively, as more rewarding, which could lead to increases in happiness. In addition, the presence or absence of a reason to indulge may differentially influence perceptions of morality of indulgent consumption for high versus low self-control consumers.

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Design and procedure

The study design included one between-subjects factor (reason vs. no reason) and one measured factor (trait consumer spending self-control). The study design and procedure were the same used in the previous study (good grade before or after the indulgent purchase). Three hundred fifty seven students from an online panel (42% male, average age $= 26.40$) completed the study in exchange for monetary compensation.

5.1.2. Measures

We measured participants' consumption happiness (alpha $= 0.95$) with the same items used previously. To test the process, we measured sense of "feeling right" about the purchase context ("This purchase event felt "right" to me"; 1 $=$ strongly disagree; 7 $=$ strongly agree), adapted from Malaviya and Sternthal (2009) and Wadhwa and Zhang (2014), and the extent to which the purchase event was rewarding (1 $=$ not at all rewarding; 7 $=$ very rewarding). We also measured the extent to which the purchase was necessary (1) or a splurge (7), as in the previous study, as well as the extent to which indulging was (1) morally inappropriate or (7) morally appropriate. At the end of the study, and as part of an ostensibly unrelated study, participants completed the consumer spending self-control scale used previously (alpha $= 0.92$). Differences in degrees of freedom are due to missing values where responses were not forced.

5.2. Results

5.2.1. Perception of the indulgence

Regressing perceptions of the purchase (necessary-splurge) on reason, consumer spending self-control, and their interaction revealed only a main effect of self-control ($\beta = 0.26$, SE $= 0.06$, t(353) $= 4.07$, $p < 0.01$; other $ps > 0.6$). The average rating was significantly above the middle point of the scale (M $= 5.97$, SD $= 1.29$; t(356) $= 28.82$, $p < 0.001$). Regressing perceptions of the purchase (morally inappropriate-morally appropriate) on contrast-coded reason, self-control, and their interaction revealed no significant effects (all $ps > 0.2$; M $= 4.90$, SD $= 1.44$). These results suggest that perceptions of the indulgence do not change as a result of having a reason to indulge or not and therefore cannot explain the results we find.

5.2.2. Consumption happiness

Regressing happiness on the reason manipulation, self-control (M = 5.29, SD = 1.07), and their interaction revealed only the predicted significant interaction (β = 0.24, SE = 0.08, t(353) = 3.15, p < 0.001). The Johnson-Neyman technique (Spiller et al., 2013) revealed that there was a significant positive effect of reason on happiness for participants with self-control above 6.30 or 1.01 SD above the mean (19% of the cases; β_{JN} = 0.22, SE = 0.11), and there was a significant negative effect of reason on happiness for participants with self-control below 4.58 or 0.71 SD below the mean (23% of the cases; β_{JN} = −0.19, SE = 0.10).

5.2.3. Sense of feeling right and reward

A similar regression with sense of feeling right as the dependent variable revealed only the predicted interaction (β = 0.25, SE = 0.09, t(353) = 2.84, p < 0.01). The Johnson-Neyman technique shows that there was a significant positive effect of reason on sense of feeling right for participants with self-control above 6.09 (0.80 SD above the mean; 26% of the cases; β_{JN} = 0.23, SE = 0.12), and there was a significant negative effect of reason on sense of feeling right for participants with self-control below 4.02 (1.28 SD below the mean; 10% of the cases; β_{JN} = −0.29, SE = 0.15).

A similar interaction was obtained for reward (β = 0.24, SE = 0.09, t(350) = 2.75, p < 0.01). The Johnson-Neyman technique shows that there was a significant positive effect of reason on reward for participants with self-control above 5.63 (0.34 SD above the mean; 39% of the cases; β_{JN} = 0.19, SE = 0.10), and there was a significant negative effect of reason on reward for participants with self-control below 3.04 (2.25 SD below the mean; 2% of the cases; β_{JN} = −0.42, SE = 0.21). While we observe a similar interaction pattern for sense of feeling right and reward, our theory predicts the sense of feeling right to be the mediator of the conditional effect of reason on happiness at high and low levels of self-control.

5.2.4. Mediation analyses

We examined whether the sense of feeling right mediated the conditional effect of indulging with a reason on happiness following the procedure described in study 1 (Hayes, 2013; Model 8). Results support the proposed mediation (mediation index: ab = 0.18; 95% CI: 0.0511 to 0.2959), revealing a significant indirect effect both at high (ab = 0.28; 95% CI: 0.0367 to 0.5463) and low (ab = −0.21; 95% CI: −0.3862 to −0.0245) levels of self-control.

When reward was considered the mediator, although the overall mediation index was significant (ab = 0.16; 95% CI: 0.0313 to 0.2920), reward only mediated the results for high self-control (ab = 0.32; 95% CI: 0.0763 to 0.5677); the mediation for low self-control was not significant (ab = −0.13; 95% CI: −0.3331 to 0.0599). We speculate that deriving a feeling of reward from the indulgent context is more similar to experiencing the positive emotion of happiness than to the psychological process of feeling right. Shedding light on this contention, we found that sense of feeling right significantly mediated the conditional effect of indulging with a reason on reward (ab = 0.19; 95% CI: 0.0650 to 0.3257), both at high (ab = 0.30; 95% CI: 0.0399 to 0.5845) and low self-control levels (ab = −0.23; 95% CI: −0.4220 to −0.0517). This suggests that the sense of feeling right is the psychological process leading to an emotional reaction, which is consistent with the theory, and that reward is actually similar to happiness, that is, a pleasurable response to a situation that is consistent with consumers' personality. Reversing this mediation did not yield significant results (ab = 0.13; 95% CI: −0.3331 to 0.0599).

5.2.5. Discussion

This study adds to the previous studies in an important way. Besides replicating the predicted interactive effect (H1) we find evidence that the process underlying this effect is a sense of feeling right, while ruling out moral perceptions about the indulgence and a sense of reward. We note that the mediator and alternative explanations are all measured with a single item, which can potentially make the reliability unclear. This is a limitation that may be addressed in future research.

6. Study 4: positive versus negative emotional experience

Positive and negative emotions are not opposite ends of the same continuum (i.e., they are independent) and can co-exist, so it is important to investigate positive emotions separately (e.g., Ramanathan & Williams, 2007). Guilt and regret are two commonly examined negative emotions in the context of indulgence and were included in this study to ensure comparison of our results with previous findings (e.g., Keinan et al., 2016) and to examine whether the predicted effect holds primarily for positive emotions as we expect.

According to appraisal theories of emotion, while happiness is a basic emotion and can emerge from the appraisal of congruency with one's personality conveyed from the presence or absence of reason to indulge (Lazarus, 1991), guilt and regret are more complex emotions that require additional, conscious, and socially-oriented appraisals (Roseman, 1984, 1991). Thus, we anticipate the conditional effect of reason to indulge for low and high trait self-control consumers on happiness, but not for guilt or regret. In contrast, consistent with previous research (e.g., Keinan et al., 2016) we expect only a main effect of reason on guilt and regret because it works as a justification for the indulgence, reducing such negative emotions. Study 4 aims to provide evidence for the robustness of our effect showing that the positive emotional experience we predict is different from a negative emotional experience explored by prior research in the context of indulgent consumption.

6.1. Method

6.1.1. Design and procedure

The study design included one between-subjects factor (reason vs. no reason) and one measured factor (trait consumer spending self-control). One hundred thirty five female students and members of a sorority from a large university (average age = 20.01) completed the online study and entered a lottery draw of gift certificates. They were presented with a scenario and were asked to vividly imagine that they were in that situation as part of a "vivid imagination exercise" (Xu & Schwarz, 2009). All participants were told that they were window shopping and saw an expensive dress that they really liked and were considering to purchase. The scenario guided participants to imagine that they tried the dress on and eventually decided to buy it. Participants were either given a reason to purchase the dress (reason condition) or not (no reason condition). In the reason condition, participants read that by making another purchase they could get a discount on the total purchase, and thus they decided to buy the dress and a pair of shoes for work ("This store has a good deal – if I buy one item I get the next at 50% off. I hadn't planned on getting anything today, but I do need a new pair of shoes for work. If I buy some shoes here I can get the discount."). Thus, in the reason condition we expect that participants use the discount as the reason to indulge. This manipulation was developed based previous literature, which reveals that not depleting income or depleting it to a lesser extent is perceived as a reason to indulge (Kivetz & Zheng, 2006; Mick & DeMoss, 1990). In the no reason condition, participants learned that they decided to treat themselves without any particular reason and bought the dress.

6.1.2. Measures

Participants reported their happiness on the same four items used previously (alpha = 0.86) on scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). In addition to the happiness items, participants reported how guilty and regretful they felt. After participants completed a short task for a different study, we measured consumer spending self-control (alpha = 0.80). The reason manipulation did not affect self-control ($p > 0.61$).

6.2. Results and discussion

6.2.1. Consumption happiness

As in prior studies, we conducted a floodlight analysis to test our predictions (Spiller et al., 2013). Regressing happiness on the reason manipulation, self-control (M = 3.91, SD = 1.01), and their interaction revealed only a significant interaction ($\beta = 0.24$, SE = 0.08, $t(131) = 2.90$, $p < 0.001$). This analysis revealed that there was a significant positive effect of reason on happiness for participants with self-control above 4.94 (1.03 SD above the mean; 13% of the cases; $\beta_{JN} = 0.23$, SE = 0.12), and there was a significant negative effect of reason on happiness for participants with self-control below 3.06 (0.85 SD below the mean; 19% of the cases; $\beta_{JN} = -0.22$, SE = 0.11).

6.2.2. Guilt and regret

We conducted an identical analysis with guilt and regret as dependent measures. We found only a main effect of the reason manipulation on both guilt ($\beta = -0.41$, SE = 0.14, $t(131) = -2.85$, $p < 0.01$; other $ps > 0.8$) and regret ($\beta = -0.29$, SE = 0.13, $t(131) = -2.27$, $p < 0.05$; other $ps > 0.2$), indicating that participants felt less guilty and less regretful with a reason to indulge. These results are consistent with the extant literature and provide evidence that our results are unique to consumption happiness.

7. General discussion

Our findings show that while high self-control consumers are happier when they have a reason to indulge compared to when they do not have a reason, low self-control consumers are happier when they do not have a reason. Our results show that this happens because high (low) self-control consumers perceive indulging with (without) a reason as the "right" purchase context to indulge. This happiness leads to enhanced downstream judgments related to the indulgent purchase, such as greater satisfaction, lower likelihood of returning the product, and higher likelihood of engaging in word-of-mouth.

Understanding the conditions that improve consumers' emotional response to indulgent purchases seems particularly important for consumer research. Consumer behavior researchers should more carefully document how consumption contexts affect not only behavior but also consumer emotions in an effort to design marketing strategies that are more respectful of consumer happiness (Mogilner & Norton, 2015). The added value of our findings to marketers is in light of the technologies that enable precision in targeting consumer segments that were not previously accessible (e.g., trait self-control as opposed to demographics such as gender).

7.1. Theoretical implications

Our findings provide theoretical insight into the conditions under which having a reason to indulge produces more consumption happiness. First, we contribute to research on affect and self-regulation by showing that different consumers (i.e., those high vs. low in self-control) report different emotional experiences as a result of indulging with or without a reason. This finding is important for consumer research not only because positive emotional responses to indulgence have been relatively neglected in the literature compared to negative emotional responses, but also because it adds to and qualifies extant research. First, previous

research has focused on the role of justifications to reduce the experience of negative emotions (e.g., guilt) following indulgence (Keinan et al., 2016). We find that positive emotions can be enhanced following indulgence independently of negative emotions.

Second, recent research has found that consumers actual or recalled positive emotional reactions to indulgence do not change whether they indulge with or without a reason (Xu & Schwarz, 2009). Our findings reveal consumer spending self-control as a source of consumer heterogeneity, a moderator that qualifies these results (Hutchinson et al., 2000). We find that a reason to indulge (or lack thereof) can change consumers' happiness following indulgence in a luxury purchase when we consider consumers' level of trait self-control. Thus, we extend previous findings on reason-based indulgence by showing that high (low) self-control consumers experience more happiness with (without) a reason because indulging with (without) a reason produces a sense of feeling right. The opposite pattern of happiness that we observe for high or low self-control consumers may explain the null effect of reason on positive emotions found by Xu and Schwarz (2009). Our findings thus re-open the discussion on how to enhance positive emotional responses to indulgence in luxury purchases.

7.2. Managerial and consumer implications

Marketers can also benefit from this research. Currently, marketing managers commonly provide all consumers either reasons to indulge or to be spontaneous in mass market campaigns. For example, a recent Chrysler 300′s ad communicates to consumers that "luxury feels better earned." According to our results, this message may better resonate with high consumer spending self-control consumers because it references a reason to indulge; if the marketer suspects that Chrysler 300′s customers are likely to be low in self-control, this ad may be ineffective. Yet, an ad with copy similar to Lexus' recent "dare to be spontaneous" may resonate better with low self-control consumers. In another example, watchmaker Patek Philippe has a series of ads where the firm communicates that "you never actually own a Patek Philippe. You merely look after it for the next generation." If "looking after it for the next generation" is perceived as a reason to indulge and their customers are high in self-control, this ad could be particularly effective in making customers' happiness and satisfaction with that purchase more positive. Our findings suggest that for low self-control consumers this messaging strategy may backfire. If a luxury brand is more likely to have low self-control consumers, promoting spontaneous indulgence without a particular reason might be more effective, as with the chocolate dessert maker and café Chocolate Origin, whose tag line reads, "you don't need a reason for indulgence." Luxury marketers can potentially increase their sales and are likely to gain more satisfied customers when their communications are aligned with what "feels right" to their customers.

Our findings also suggest that a luxury brand manager might consider when and how to promote a reason to purchase rather than using mass-mediated campaign copy, such as the above. Recent research revealing the effectiveness of persuasive messages (i.e., advertisements) that align specifically with consumers' personality traits (Hirsh et al., 2012) adds to a body of work showing the benefits of congruence effects between messages tailored to an individuals' motivational orientation. Recent research has already uncovered the potential to personalize advertising messages based on personality traits to maximize impact (Hirsh et al., 2012). In fact, personality traits linked with self-control (i.e., agreeableness and conscientiousness; Back et al., 2010; Jensen-Campbell, Knack, Waldrip, and Campbell 2006) have been a central focus in the development of personality trait-based identification and targeting efforts in recent years. In this line of work, researchers use accessible consumer data such as Facebook likes and updates to accurately predict personality traits (Schwartz et al., 2013), which marketers, such as upscale hotelier Hilton have successfully used to target with trait-specific advertisements (LaMontagne, 2015). New ways of making messages more effective, such as targeting based on personality profiles, offers a practical way for marketing managers to tailor appropriate messages based on either a single measurement instrument (i.e., a personality scale) or correlating traits. Research examining factors such as age and culture corresponding to self-control in shopping contexts suggests that marketers can profile consumers in order to better target them (Kacen & Lee, 2002). More recent work points to advances in e-commerce techniques to allow for customer profiling to infer or identify consumers' trait impulsivity, such as inferring online browsing behavior and web site preferences (Wells, Parboteeah, and Valacich 2011), Given that self-control relates to a number of other dimensions identifiable to marketers, including credit card usage (Bearden & Haws, 2012), better educational performance (Tangney et al., 2004), higher job success (Daly, Delaney, Egan, and Baumeister 2015), and fewer hours spent watching television (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005), among others, it is possible for marketers to predict consumers' likely level of self-control for strategic messaging purposes based on personality trait inferences. In fact, Facebook profile information contains indicators of personality linked to self-control (Back et al., 2010; Jensen-Campbell et al., 2006; Schwartz et al., 2013), as does smartphone and app data (Finley, 2014).

The challenge of identifying personality traits in order to target marketing is being met with advances in computer science that show that data-based predictive analytics can accurately identify personality through social media content even better than humans can (Youyou, Kosinski, and Stillwell 2015). For example, marketers can and currently do use Facebook likes or language to make personality judgments about agreeableness and conscientiousness, which correlate specifically with trait self-control (Park et al., 2015; Youyou, Kosinski, & Stillwell, 2015). These findings imply that marketers can use such information to target consumers based on correlates for trait self-control with marketing communications that will better resonate with them. Indeed, companies such as Hilton Hotels are already starting to target their ad messages using such information, including the traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness, linked to high trait self-control, and observe increases in clickthrough rates (LaMontagne, 2015).

Such marketing practice is likely to become more pervasive as consumers increasingly share traits with marketers through quizzes, surveys, and apps (LaMontagne, 2015). Given advances in psychographic segmentation, it is possible for managers to directly ask key personal identification questions such as those about shopping tendencies (e.g., "I carefully consider my needs

before making purchases" or "I do certain things that are bad for me, if they are fun," Haws et al., 2012, Poynor & Haws, 2009) that might identify degree of consumer trait self-control using quizzes or apps (Finley, 2014; LaMontagne, 2015). Indeed, consumers' own propensity for personalization may advance this notion organically, as marketing managers develop opportunities for consumer/brand engagement (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). For example, consumers interact with Lincoln's Black Label campaign, either in person with a brand representative or online, and indicate "what defines you?". Similarly, individuals can use Good & Co.'s web site to indicate whether they are a "planner" or "spontaneous" (typical of high and low trait self-control, respectively). Representatives then direct consumers to appropriate marketing messages and offerings. Our research supports the robustness of this variable and consumers' ease in answering simple questions about themselves to identify level of trait self-control (Davis & Haws, 2017).

What is the lesson for consumers? Before indulging, they can consider if the situation "feels right". The subjective experience of fit between one's personality and the purchase context manifests through the experience that the context "feels right". For some consumers, indulging with a reason will feel right; for others, it feels right to indulge in the spur of the moment. Previous research has shown that people systematically fail to choose what maximizes their happiness, and one of the reasons this happens is because they cannot identify situations that make them happy (Hsee & Hastie, 2006). Yet, consumers - especially from recent generations, who tend to have an inherent sense of optimism, - have become increasingly focused on their own daily happiness (Boston Consulting Group, 2013; Rudgard, 2017). The recent "Pay as you Feel" happiness workshop in Wimbledon, England is one example of how industry is catering to this pursuit; attendees receive guidance on how to focus on the pursuit of happiness as well as literature and tools to explore happiness in their daily lives. There is no cost, but everyone has the opportunity to donate to support the workshop (Whittingham, 2017). Thus, learning to identify whether the situation feels right before making an indulgent purchase may help consumers make better decisions to increase their happiness and ultimate satisfaction with indulgent purchases.

7.3. Limitations and future research

One limitation of our research is that we used only luxury items such as designer jeans and sunglasses as indulgent purchases in our experimental manipulations. However, we would expect our findings to extend to other forms of indulgences - such as food consumption - given that previous research suggests that self-control tends to be generally similar and stable across domains (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996; Tangney et al., 2004). We also only considered trait self-control. The idea that consumers appraise congruency between a purchase situation and their personal preferences is open to the possibility that "personal preferences" are determined either by personality traits or active goals. Thus, it is possible that activating (high or low) self-control goals may produce similar patterns. Although this is an interesting venue for future research, we recommend caution because active goals may override personality traits, which tend to be robust and stable (Baumeister, 2002; Bearden & Haws, 2012), only under certain specific conditions. It is also possible that similar patterns may emerge with related personality traits. Haws et al. (2012) have shown the uniqueness of consumer spending self-control in comparison with related constructs such as impulsivity or frugality, making these less likely alternative explanations. The fact that we find the effect with consumer spending self-control, which is a specific form of self-control focused on financial decision making, helps us limit the range of personality characteristics that are playing a role. However, an empirical comparison of the effect we report with other measures may further refine our theory in respect to which specific aspects of personality are important to produce the effect, potentially making it stronger.

Another limitation is that the studies reported scenario-based responses. While it is possible that imagined and actual responses may differ, a good deal of previous research has shown that consumption scenarios are able to effectively simulate emotional responses to actual consumption (e.g., Cohen et al., 2008). However, it would be interesting to show the effect in a more naturalistic scenario, especially to corroborate the results on judgments such as satisfaction, likelihood of return, and word-of-mouth. In this research we tested a couple of specific reasons to indulge adapted from previous research. It would be interesting to conduct a more systematic test of other reasons to indulge. For instance, recently Olsen, Slotegraaf, and Chandukala (2014) found that communicating socially responsible actions has positive consequences for attitudes toward a brand of "vice" products such as luxury products. That is, a brand's socially responsible actions may act as a reason to indulge. This is consistent with some research showing that engaging in charitable behavior may be a justification for indulging (Dhar & Simonson, 1999; Khan & Dhar, 2006; Strahelevitz and Meyers 1998). If that is so, knowing when to communicate socially responsible actions can be of particular interest to luxury brands.

Future research can also investigate how our results would develop over time. Some research on hedonic adaptation, including Frederick and Loewenstein (1999), Ramanathan and Williams (2007), and Richins (2013), describe how intensively feelings fade after purchase or consumption for different consumers. Our findings suggest that happiness with the luxury purchase can enhance consumers' judgments with the purchased indulgence. Future research examining whether or how these positive feelings fade can be important for understanding, for instance, longitudinal effects of emotions on satisfaction (Dube & Morgan, 1998) or the loyalty process (Homburg et al., 2006). It would also be interesting to compare these effects across material or experiential indulgences. Recent research has shown that happiness from material purchases tends to last longer and occur more frequently compared to experiential purchases, providing consumers with more opportunities to experience positive emotions (Weidman & Dunn, 2016).

Finally, given the counterintuitive finding that low self-control consumers are happier when they do not have a reason to indulge, this research brings several implications for low self-control consumers in particular. The self-control literature has typically described a high self-control personality in very positive terms. Indeed, high self-control has been linked to a variety of positive consequences (e.g., higher GPA, better adjustment, less binge eating and alcohol abuse, better relationships and interpersonal skills,

secure attachment, and more optimal emotional responses, Tangney et al., 2004; less unplanned spending, less use of credit, more saving for retirement, less tense social interactions related to spending, and stress related to spending, Bearden & Haws, 2012). Given the stability of this personality trait, are low self-control people deemed to fail in life? Should they try to become (or behave like) high self-control people, or should they assume their personality and look for what works for them? These are overarching questions that are clearly outside of our scope, but our results suggest that finding contexts that are consistent with a low self-control personality and "feel right" to them can increase their happiness. We find that low self-control consumers seem to enjoy spontaneous situations and derive more pleasure from them, and this may help them, potentially opening up more possibilities for them to enjoy the life benefits of experiencing more positive emotions. It is also possible that low (vs. high) self-control consumers have different long-term life goals (e.g., have a life filled with enjoyable experiences vs. have a life filled with achievements such as high GPA and promotions at work). Encountering situations that are consistent with these goals can make low self-control people happy and, thus, although they may seem to not pursue commonly valued success goals, they are perfectly capable of being happy and adjusted individuals. That is, it does not mean that they will be less happy in life if they do not achieve the success marks that high self-control people often pursue and achieve. The finding that the emotion of happiness may in fact precede and lead to success (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005) creates the intriguing possibility that low self-control people may actually be happy in life and successful in the long run. Finding those situations that fit with their personality and make them happy can actually help them to be more adaptive. Thus, we contribute to a growing body of research that considers an under-investigated aspect of consumer welfare, namely how to help low self-control people to better adjust themselves, be happier, and make more optimal decisions (e.g., Davis & Haws, 2017).

Appendix A. Appendix

Consumer Spending Self-control Scale (Haws et al., 2012)

Please rate the degree to which you agree/disagree with the following statements:
1. I closely monitor my spending behavior.
2. I am able to work effectively toward long term financial goals.
3. I carefully consider my needs before making purchases.
4. I often delay taking action until I have carefully considered the consequences of my purchase decisions.
5. When I go out with friends, I keep track of what I am spending.
6. I am able to resist temptation in order to achieve my budget goals.
7. I know when to say when regarding how much I spend.
8. In social situations, I am generally aware of what I am spending.
9. Having objectives related to spending is important to me.
10. I am responsible when it comes to how much I spend.
Items measured with a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

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