

The Expectations, Experience, and Consequences of Curiosity Resolution

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation contributes to a better understanding of curiosity resolution. I investigate the premise that the experience of curiosity resolution is influenced both by the fact *that* curiosity is resolved, as well as *how* it is resolved. While the outcome associated with curiosity resolution can be positive or negative in nature, the experience of curiosity resolution itself is predicted to be pleasant in nature. Therefore, I propose that the degree to which each of these two resolution facets is salient will influence curiosity-related evaluations. In this dissertation, I investigate pre-resolution expectations as well as post-resolution downstream consequences. Prior to curiosity resolution, I propose that individuals are likely to be focused on the outcome they will obtain. However, when faced with uncertain outcomes, individuals strategically heighten anticipated feelings of disappointment in order to protect against actual disappointment when the outcome is revealed; thus, I predict and demonstrate in four studies that curious consumers will display heightened levels of pre-resolution feelings of anticipated disappointment. After curiosity resolution, I propose that individuals experience not only positive or negative feelings associated with the outcome obtained, but also positive feelings of resolution itself. In four studies, I investigate the power of curiosity resolution to buffer negative responses to relatively undesirable outcomes. Importantly, I also demonstrate that consumers' focus on either the outcome obtained or on the experience of resolution itself can be experimentally shifted, thereby mitigating the previously described effects.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

When people become curious, they are more likely to engage with and explore the object of their curiosity. In a marketing context, this can result in positive outcomes such as increased interest and responsiveness to ads. Thus, marketers may seek to induce consumer curiosity in order to obtain these beneficial responses. However, little is known about what happens when consumers' curiosity is resolved; individuals may react with a disappointed, 'big deal' response, or may experience more positive feelings of relief or reward. In this research, I seek to better understand curiosity resolution. I suggest that consumers may react positively or negatively to curiosity resolution depending on the outcome they receive. However, I also suggest that the experience of curiosity resolution itself, the feeling of finding out what you wanted to know, is positive. I suggest that these distinct sources of negative and positive feelings have different implications for consumers' expectations of curiosity resolution and for consumers' post-resolution evaluations. Prior to curiosity resolution, individuals are expected to be focused on the nature of the unknown outcome they will obtain. Thus, they engage in an 'expect the worst' process in which they anticipate feelings of disappointment in case the unknown outcome they obtain is negative. However, if they shift their focus to the experience of resolution itself, these feelings of disappointment are reduced. After curiosity resolution, feelings associated with the outcome obtained are predicted to be tempered by positive feelings associated with curiosity resolution itself. Thus, consumers who experience curiosity resolution, compared to those who don't, react less negatively to a relatively undesirable outcome. However, a shift in focus can change this reaction, such that a greater emphasis on the outcome obtained yields a more negative response to a relatively undesirable outcome.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Imagine that, while you are at work, you receive a notification that an unexpected package has been delivered to your home. You don't know whom the package is from or what it contains – it's a mystery niggling at your mind throughout the workday. As soon as you get home, you rush to open the package immediately. What were you expecting? How do you feel now that you have opened the box? How did the experience of not knowing all day influence these feelings?

This experience, of discovering desired information that was previously unknown, is termed curiosity resolution, and is the focus of the present work. Curiosity itself is “a form of cognitively induced deprivation that arises from the perception of a gap in one's knowledge,” (Loewenstein 1994, p. 75). Curiosity has long been a topic of interest for philosophers, educators, psychologists, and marketers. This interest arises from the recognition that curiosity can be a powerful motivator, as curious individuals are driven to close their perceived information gap (Litman and Jimerson 2004; Loewenstein 1994). Previous research has established that curiosity is so motivating that individuals seek to resolve their curiosity even when it is costly or is likely to yield negative outcomes (Hsee and Ruan 2016; Kang et al. 2009). Such is the power of curiosity, for good or for ill; for instance, curiosity is credited with driving great thinkers like Socrates and Galileo, but also resulting in their persecution. We lend the name of ‘curiosity’ to childhood hero Curious George and to NASA's Mars rover, yet curiosity is also blamed for Eve's bite of the apple and the fall of man, for Pandora's opening of the box and release of plagues, disease, and other evils, and, more colloquially, for the relatively minor offense of killing the cat. Curiosity's fickle yet powerful ability to lead individuals to achieve

great heights or fall to great depths is perhaps why it remains an enduring question for researchers and other thinkers.

Despite recognition of curiosity's importance, the consequences of curiosity are still poorly understood (Loewenstein 1994). In particular, research addressing curiosity resolution has yielded diverging conclusions. For instance, while previous research has suggested that curiosity is an aversive state, and thus curiosity resolution is rewarding (Kang et al. 2009; Unger and Kernan 1983), other work has cautioned that curiosity resolution may result in disappointment (Fazio, Herr, and Powell 1992). Furthermore, it is unclear whether curiosity serves to heighten or weaken pre-resolution expectations, or even whether it affects expectations at all (Fazio et al. 1992; Menon and Soman 2002). The influence of such expectations is important to explore, as post-resolution evaluations will likely be affected by pre-resolution expectations (Oliver 1980).

In the current work, I seek to address the understudied area of curiosity resolution and explore these divergent predictions. In doing so, I focus primarily on the distinction between the experience of curiosity resolution itself and the manner in which curiosity is resolved. For instance, to return to the introductory example of an unopened package, the relief or reward felt from opening the package itself may be distinct from the feelings of excitement experienced if the package contains a desirable item or feelings of disappointment if the package contains an undesirable item. Thus, I propose that post-resolution evaluations are influenced by both sources of (dis)satisfaction. I further suggest that evaluations can be influenced by shifting the salience of each of these aspects. Importantly, I demonstrate that a focus on the experience of curiosity resolution, relative to a focus on the outcomes obtained, serves to buffer negative consumer responses to curiosity resolution when outcomes are relatively undesirable.

This work is theoretically important, as little is known about how both curiosity and curiosity resolution affect consumer expectations and behavior (Loewenstein 1994; Menon and Soman 2002). Importantly, previous research has offered contradictory propositions regarding whether curiosity resolution is satisfying or disappointing (Loewenstein 1994). I propose that the experience of curiosity resolution depends, in part, on whether consumers focus on curiosity resolution itself or on the manner in which curiosity is resolved.

Additionally, research on curiosity resolution is of managerial relevance, as practitioners who create an information gap in hopes of harnessing the benefits of consumer curiosity may also resolve the curiosity thus elicited, as marketers often want to ensure that relevant information is successfully conveyed to consumers (Menon and Soman 2002). Thus, it is important for practitioners to understand the implications of eliciting and resolving consumer curiosity. Furthermore, to the extent that marketers are able to influence the extent to which curiosity resolution is positive or negative, as well as the aspects of curiosity resolution that consumers focus on, they may be able to influence the downstream consequences of curiosity resolution.

Dissertation Outline. This dissertation consists of two essays. My first essay is comprised of four studies in which I focus on anticipated and experienced feelings of disappointment associated with curiosity resolution. I first demonstrate that, relative to a low-curiosity condition, a high-curiosity condition results in higher levels of anticipated disappointment. Establishing the effect of curiosity on expectations is particularly important since post-resolution evaluations are influenced by how positively or negatively the revealed outcome compares to expectations (Oliver 1980). Consistent with such theorizing, I next compare anticipated disappointment prior to resolution to actual disappointment experienced post-resolution. The results of three studies

suggest that curious participants overestimate anticipated disappointment prior to resolution. Finally, I explore whether encouraging a focus on resolution itself, relative to a focus on outcomes, can reduce anticipated disappointment and increase likelihood of shopping at a store.

In my second essay, I turn my attention to downstream consequences of curiosity resolution in the context of relatively desirable and undesirable outcomes. In studies 5-7, I establish that curiosity resolution mitigates responses to a relatively undesirable outcome. Specifically, in the context of mystery ads, I explore the effect of curiosity resolution on interest in low and high discounts. Curiosity resolution increases participant interest in low-level discounts relative to a no-curiosity control condition. This finding supports the contention that satisfaction arising from the experience of curiosity resolution buffers against disappointment with the low-level discount outcome obtained. This proposition is more directly examined in study 8, in which I again explore the effect of focus on resolution relative to a focus on outcomes, but in a post-resolution context. A no-focus control condition was also included. I demonstrate that, in a low-level discount condition, an outcome focus yields reduced likelihood of subscribing to a service relative to both the resolution focus and no-focus control conditions. This study lends additional support to the hypothesis that satisfaction with the experience of curiosity resolution positively affects post-resolution evaluations.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

In the sections below, I first discuss early and contemporary conceptualizations of the nature and consequences of curiosity (for a review, see Loewenstein 1994). I then describe the understudied area of curiosity resolution and summarize divergent evidence regarding the experience of resolution. Finally, I propose a nuanced view of curiosity resolution to address the diverging findings of previous research and outline my predictions regarding consumer expectations, experiences, and downstream consequences of curiosity resolution.

What is curiosity?

Attempts to determine the exact nature of curiosity have a long history, and yield often-conflicting conceptualizations. For instance, while the Judeo-Christian tradition warns that curiosity in part arises from a prideful lack of faith, Greek philosophers alternatively viewed it as the wise recognition of one's own ignorance. Contemporary researchers are similarly divided. For instance, curiosity can be conceptualized as a joyful search for knowledge (Litman and Spielberg 2003), a painful awareness of that which we do not know (Loewenstein 1994), or sometimes both (Berlyne 1960; Litman 2008).

Curiosity researchers have also striven to clarify the relationship between curiosity and closely related constructs. For instance, both curiosity and a need for cognitive closure are characterized by a need to seek out information; however, they differ in their relationship to ambiguity. While ambiguous information sparks increased curiosity (Berlyne 1960), individuals with a need for cognitive closure instead reject ambiguous information, as they find ambiguity aversive (Kruglanski 1989). Similarly, heightened interest is recognized as an important outcome in curiosity research and is commonly evaluated as a dependent measure (e.g., Menon and

Soman 2002). However, some curiosity researchers believe that curiosity and interest are interchangeable terms reflective of the same underlying construct (Kashdan and Silva 2009), or that interest reflects one dimension of curiosity (Litman 2008). Yet other research suggests that, while curiosity and interest are closely related, they represent different constructs (Renninger, Hidi, and Krapp 1992). Specifically, Renninger et al. (1992) propose three key differences between curiosity and interest: that curiosity results from uncertainty, while interest may not; that curiosity is theorized to follow an inverted-U function, while interest may not have the same pattern of an optimal plateau; that curiosity is transient in nature, while interest may be more long-lived. These discrepant conceptualizations perhaps suggest that a better understanding of the causes and consequences of curiosity offers fertile ground for future research.

Contemporary attempts to clarify theoretical and empirical accounts of curiosity can often be traced to D. E. Berlyne's seminal work on curiosity in the 1950's and 1960's. In this work, Berlyne identified two dimensions by which to categorize curiosity. The first dimension relates to specific versus diversive curiosity; specific curiosity reflects the search for certain pieces of information that would reduce unpleasant feelings of uncertainty, while diversive curiosity instead aligns more closely with a general tendency to engage in sensation seeking behavior (Berlyne 1960; Spielberger and Starr 1994). The second dimension makes the distinction between curiosity aroused by novel stimuli (perceptual) and curiosity reflecting a desire for knowledge (epistemic; Berlyne 1954).

In keeping with Berlyne's specific-diversive distinction, curiosity researchers have largely focused on curiosity either as an individual difference or as a situationally aroused state phenomenon. The bulk of this research, particularly in the psychology literature, has been focused on gaining a better understanding of curiosity as an individual difference, or a general

tendency to feel curious. This work has found that curiosity is linked to a number of important consumer outcomes. For instance, curious individuals are likely to have higher job performance (Mussel 2010), higher academic performance (Vidler 1980; von Stumm, Hell, and Chamorro-Premuzic 2011), and higher life satisfaction (Park, Peterson, and Seligman 2004), and are more likely to be more creative (Karwowski 2012) and risk seeking (Maner and Gerend 2007).

In addition to exploring the link between trait curiosity and well-being and performance outcomes, researchers in this area are largely focused on creating a method by which to measure trait curiosity (e.g., Collins, Litman, and Spielberger 2004; Kashdan et al. 2009; Litman and Spielberger 2003; Naylor, 1981; Reio Jr., Petrosko, Wiswell, and Thongsukmag 2006). Taken together, these measures reflect several dimensions of curiosity. For instance, some researchers suggest that curiosity is reflective of a willingness to embrace the uncertain and a motivation to seek out knowledge (Kashdan et al. 2009), while others instead delineate curiosity as both a positive feeling of interest and a more negative feeling of deprivation (Litman 2008). Despite the fact that the majority of recent curiosity research has addressed curiosity as an individual difference, the variety of curiosity measures constructed is perhaps indicative of the lack of consensus regarding our understanding of what curiosity is and how it is manifested.

Though trait curiosity has received a lot of research attention in recent years, research addressing state curiosity, or curiosity evoked by situational stimuli, has been relatively sparse, particularly in the consumer behavior domain (Loewenstein 1994; Menon and Soman 2002). Importantly, research on state curiosity is particularly relevant for marketers seeking to elicit consumer curiosity and its potential benefits. State curiosity has historically been an elusive construct, though various attempts to classify and determine the underlying cause of state

curiosity have been made (see Loewenstein 1994 for a full review of different curiosity accounts and their respective limitations; also see Spielberger and Starr 1994).

In exploring the cause of curiosity, many researchers, including Berlyne, postulated the existence of a curiosity drive. This categorization suggests that curiosity is an aversive state that individuals attempt to reduce via exploratory behavior (Berlyne 1955; Butler 1957; Loewenstein 1994). This categorization is supported by the finding that curiosity, like other drive states, increased arousal, intensified if unsatisfied, and resulted in motivated behavior (Berlyne 1954; Butler 1957; Hebb 1958; Smith, Malmö, and Shagass 1954). Importantly, Berlyne advanced the proposition that curiosity could be externally stimulated by that which is complex, novel, or surprising, whereas other drive researchers conceptualized curiosity as internally driven (Berlyne 1950).

Another stream of curiosity research revolved around the idea that curiosity is an arousing force elicited by incongruity in one's environment. Such conceptualizations stemmed from the finding that violated expectations served as important motivators of behavior (Hebb 1955). Importantly, such theories postulate an inverted-U shaped relationship between curiosity and the level of incongruity encountered. Incongruity theorists further suggest that, since individuals operate at an optimal level of incongruity, operating below or above this optimal level is aversive (Hebb 1949; 1955). If individuals are below this optimal level, curiosity-seeking allows them to reach this level of arousal; alternatively, if individuals are above their optimal level, curiosity resolution can bring their level of arousal back down. Similarly, other researchers proposed a competence perspective in which curiosity reflected the desire to achieve competence or to exert control over one's environment (White 1959; Deci 1975). Curiosity about novel stimuli is thus driven by the desire to gain control over the stimuli in one's environment; this

account is further supported by the finding that individuals are often curious about their own abilities (Loewenstein 1994).

Importantly, all of these accounts address certain aspects of curiosity, but fail to address other facets (see Loewenstein 1994 for a review). For instance, drive accounts suggest that curiosity is an aversive state; thus, it is a state that individuals should seek to avoid (Hebb 1955). However, this account is inconsistent with the finding that individuals often voluntarily seek out curiosity-inducing stimuli such as mystery novels. Similarly, though curiosity-seeking behavior is consistent with an incongruity account, such an account does not address congruous curiosity-inducing stimuli such as puzzles. Finally, a competency account does not address curiosity-inducing stimuli that are not relevant to the self, such as the desire for gossip. Thus, though each account contributes to our understanding of different aspects of curiosity, none of these accounts offer a complete account of curiosity.

In an attempt to coalesce and refine these varied accounts, Loewenstein (1994) introduced the information-gap perspective of curiosity. According to this perspective, curiosity arises when individuals become aware of an information gap, or a difference between that which they know and that which they want to know (Loewenstein 1994). Curiosity, then, is a cognitive deprivation; curious individuals seek to find information that will close the gap and reduce that feeling of cognitive deprivation. Thus, in accordance with a drive theoretic account, curiosity is depicted as an aversive state that individuals are motivated to resolve, though whether or not curiosity is a drive itself is left an open question. Recent explorations of state curiosity, particularly in consumer behavior, have adopted this framework (e.g., Hsee and Ruan 2016; Isikman, MacInnis, Ülkümen, and Cavanaugh 2016; Kang et al. 2009; Menon and Soman 2002; van Dijk and Zeelenberg 2007).

It is important to note that, though Loewenstein's account suggests that an information gap elicits curiosity, it does not suggest that consumers are made curious by all the information they do not know. The size of the gap elicited, for instance, may influence whether curiosity is successfully evoked; too large or too small, and consumer curiosity is unlikely to be engaged. However, the size of the gap is a subjective experience, as both what one knows and what one wants to know depends on a consumers' subjective, internal evaluation of the information (Loewenstein 1994). This suggests that though there may often be large differences between what consumers do know and what they want to know, it is the perceived magnitude of the gap that influences whether or not such gaps will successfully elicit consumer curiosity.

As the causes and consequences of state curiosity are still poorly understood, continued research in this area offers both rich theoretical contributions while also offering practically relevant insights. For instance, previous research has demonstrated that if marketers can successfully elicit consumer curiosity, they may reap a range of benefits. Curious consumers engage in more information seeking behavior (Hewett, 1975), are more responsive to ads (Menon and Soman 2002; Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1992), devote more attention to curiosity-evoking stimuli (Isikman et al. 2016), and have improved advertising recall (Hewett, 1975; MacLachlan and Jalan 1985). Conversely, however, curiosity can also act as a distractive force to reduce enjoyment (Isikman et al. 2016) and increase exposure to aversive or regret-inducing stimuli (Hsee and Ruan 2016; van Dijk and Zeelenberg 2007).

Curiosity Resolution.

If curiosity is successfully elicited, consumers are powerfully motivated to close the information gap and resolve their curiosity. Previous research, however, is conflicted on whether

such resolution is positive or negative in nature. For instance, Loewenstein (1994) describes both “the pleasure derived from satisfying curiosity” (p. 90) and curiosity resolution’s “tendency to disappoint” (p. 93). Though research on curiosity resolution remains sparse, previous findings lend initial support for such divergent effects of curiosity resolution.

Specifically, there is some theoretical and empirical support for the hypothesis that curiosity resolution is associated with positive affective outcomes such as feelings of reward or relief (Kang et al. 2009; Loewenstein 1994). Conceptually, the information-gap account suggests that, like drive-theoretic accounts, curiosity is an aversive state and thus resolving that state is satisfying, as eating when one is hungry is a satisfying experience (Loewenstein 1994). Similarly, the information-gap perspective accounts for voluntary curiosity-seeking behavior by proposing that those seeking out curiosity-inducing opportunities are anticipating that the pleasurable outcome of curiosity resolution outweighs the aversive experience of curiosity. In fact, Loewenstein (1994) even goes so far as to suggest that individuals may heighten their curiosity or delay resolution so as to increase the eventual satisfaction gained by curiosity resolution.

The hypothesis that curiosity resolution itself is rewarding has received some support from fMRI results; being asked curiosity-evoking questions is correlated with activity in caudate regions, which are linked to the anticipation of rewards (Kang et al. 2009). Furthermore, curiosity resulted in activity in the left prefrontal cortex; this is “consistent with the idea that curiosity is associated with an intrinsic value of learning” (Kang et al. 2009, p. 971). Similarly, previous research has suggested that reductions in uncertainty may generate positive affect (Obermiller 1985).

Empirical evidence also exists in support of curiosity resolution's negative effects. Previous research has suggested that consumers may be disappointed if their curiosity is met with mundane outcomes. For instance, curiosity-inducing mystery ads were effective for novel brands, but this effectiveness was mitigated for familiar brands (Fazio et al. 1992). As the authors note, if curiosity has been satisfied in an unexciting manner, a “‘big deal’ response seems likely” (p. 10). The authors propose that, when curiosity is elicited, consumers likely undergo a ‘reprocessing’ review procedure (Fazio et al. 1992). This reprocessing account suggests that information that resolves curiosity may be evaluated and compared to any self-generated hypotheses developed before curiosity resolution occurred. Thus, to the extent that consumers engage in a reprocessing procedure, the experience of curiosity resolution depends largely on how positively or negatively the revealed outcome compares to self-generated hypotheses (Oliver 1980).

In another demonstration of the disappointing potential of unexciting curiosity-resolving stimuli, previous research has explored consumers' feelings towards their mail. Individuals report that they are highly curious to find out what the daily mail delivery has brought them. However, after receiving their unexceptional daily mail, most individuals report feelings of disappointment (Felcher, Petrisson, and Wang 1993, cf. Loewenstein 1994).

Lastly, equity theory also lends support to the contention that resolution may be disappointing (Adams 1965; Campbell 1995; Oliver and Swan 1989). Previous research has demonstrated that, by increasing consumer processing, curiosity may create an imbalance between the consumers' investments and benefits and those of the advertiser (Campbell 1995).

These diverging findings regarding the consequences of curiosity resolution suggest the need for a more nuanced view of curiosity resolution. Specifically, I propose that the experience of curiosity resolution may depend both on the fact *that* curiosity is resolved (e.g., the experience of opening a package with unknown contents) as well as *how* it is resolved (e.g., finding desirable or undesirable items therein). This conceptualization of curiosity resolution suggests important implications for anticipated and actual curiosity resolution, as well as for downstream consequences of curiosity resolution.

Consistent with the findings outlined above, because curiosity is hypothesized to be an aversive state, the experience of curiosity resolution itself is predicted to be positive in nature. Furthermore, prior to resolution, consumer expectations regarding the experience of resolution itself are predicted to be positive; this hypothesis aligns with the observation that individuals voluntarily engage in curiosity-inducing activities due to their anticipation of the positive experience of resolution (Loewenstein 1994). However, curious participants may not focus on the experience of resolution and instead be motivated to focus on the outcome they will obtain, as this outcome will close their information gap.

I therefore suggest that, prior to curiosity resolution, individuals are more likely to focus on the outcome they may obtain instead of the experience of curiosity resolution itself. However, such outcomes are, by their nature, presently unknown to consumers. Previous research suggests that, when consumers are faced with unknown outcomes, they are likely to strategically adapt their expectations in order to avoid future disappointment (van Dijk, Zeelenberg, and van der Pijlt 2003). Specifically, consumers focused on outcomes may be concerned that the revealed outcome may prove to be disappointing when compared with their expectation; this contention is in line with the reprocessing approach described above (Fazio et al. 1992). Thus, individuals may

adjust their expectations to avoid experienced feelings of disappointment, for instance by anticipating higher levels of disappointment than they are likely to obtain. I therefore predict that, prior to curiosity resolution, curious individuals will display increased levels of anticipated disappointment. Furthermore, the actual outcome experienced is likely to result in less disappointment than what was anticipated (Oliver 1980). I therefore predict that, for high curiosity consumers, post-resolution experienced disappointment will be significantly lower than pre-resolution anticipated disappointment. These hypotheses are examined in studies 1-3.

Importantly, I suggest that this effect occurs because curious individuals are focusing primarily on the outcome they will receive. I suggest that shifting consumers' focus to a consideration of the positive experience of curiosity resolution may mitigate the effect of pre-resolution curiosity on anticipated disappointment. This hypothesis is examined in study 4.

The idea that curiosity resolution is influenced both by the outcome obtained suggests, unsurprisingly, the importance of the degree to which the outcome obtained is positively or negatively perceived. However, post-resolution, individuals are also influenced by the experience of resolution itself; thus, this divided focus is predicted to temper the impact of the positive or negative outcome obtained. Furthermore, because the experience of curiosity resolution itself is positive, I predict that post-resolution outcomes will be positively influenced. However, shifting consumers' focus to outcomes should mitigate this effect. These hypotheses, addressing post-resolution consequences, are investigated in a series of four studies in essay 2.

CHAPTER 3 – CURIOSITY RESOLUTION AND DISAPPOINTMENT

In my first essay, I examine the relationship between curiosity resolution and feelings of anticipated and experienced disappointment. In study 1, I investigate whether participants in a high-curiosity condition report increased or decreased levels of anticipated disappointment associated with curiosity resolution, relative to participants in a low-curiosity condition. In study 2, with high-curiosity participants only, I compare pre-resolution anticipated disappointment with post-resolution experienced disappointment. In study 3, I seek to replicate the findings of studies 1 and 2 by investigating pre-resolution anticipated disappointment and post-resolution experienced disappointment for participants in both low-curiosity and high-curiosity conditions. In my final study, I examine how a focus on resolution, versus a focus on the outcomes obtained, affects anticipated feelings of disappointment for both low- and high-curiosity condition participants. In addition, I also investigate behavioral intentions; more specifically, I examine how curiosity and focus impact participant likelihood of subscribing to a service.

In sum, I present results from four studies that test whether (1) curious participants report heightened levels of anticipated disappointment, and (2) whether such heightened levels of anticipated disappointment reflect an overestimation relative to experienced disappointment. Finally, I also examine whether (3) focus type moderates the effect of curiosity on anticipated disappointment and on subscription likelihood.

Study 1

In study 1, I focus solely on pre-resolution anticipated disappointment for high- and low-curiosity participants. Specifically, I investigate whether curiosity results in heightened or reduced levels of anticipated disappointment prior to curiosity resolution. Previous research

suggests that, after curiosity resolution, consumers may experience feelings of disappointment as a sort of ‘big deal’ response (Fazio et al. 1992). Given that the outcome is uncertain, and that it may in fact be disappointing, individuals may strategically inflate their feelings of anticipated disappointment in order to avoid future feelings of disappointment (van Dijk et al. 2003). In other words, curious participants may adopt an ‘aim low and you’ll never be disappointed’ approach in the face of uncertain outcomes.

Method

104 Mturk participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 35.35$, 40.38% female) participated in a one-factor, two-level (curiosity: low vs. high) between-subjects design in exchange for a nominal fee.

In this study, an information gap was created by varying the clarity of visual information provided. Specifically, in the low-curiosity condition, participants viewed clear images, and in the high-curiosity condition, participants viewed blurred images; all participants were tasked with identifying the person featured in the image. Similar blurred image tasks have been used in prior literature (Berlyne and Borsa 1968; Jepma et al. 2012; see Appendix A for study stimuli). A post-test ($N = 58$) confirmed that the blurred images elicited significantly more curiosity than the clear images (1 = Not at all Curious, 7 = Very Curious; $M_{\text{blurred}} = 4.62$ versus $M_{\text{clear}} = 3.38$; $t(56) = 2.91$, $p = .005$).

Prior to beginning the image task, all participants were instructed that, given the prevalence of movies and TV in daily life, the study was exploring familiarity with Hollywood figures. Participants in the low-curiosity [high-curiosity] condition were then told that they would be shown 5 [blurred] images of Hollywood actors and actresses and asked to guess the identity of the figure in each image. They then viewed 5 images of well-known actors and

actresses (Sandra Bullock, Will Smith, George Clooney, Meryl Streep, and Jackie Chan). After each image, participants guessed who the actor or actress was (open response) and indicated their certainty in their answer (1 = Not Certain at All, 7 = Very Certain). Following each response, participants in the high curiosity condition received feedback about whether their guess was correct or not; such feedback facilitates curiosity elicitation (Loewenstein 1994). Participants in the low curiosity condition did not receive feedback about their responses. Finally, all participants indicated the extent to which they anticipated feeling disappointed after viewing the identities (1 = Not at All, 7 = Very Much). Participants then viewed clear images of the Hollywood figures in which the figures were identified by name and completed demographic measures.

Results and Discussion

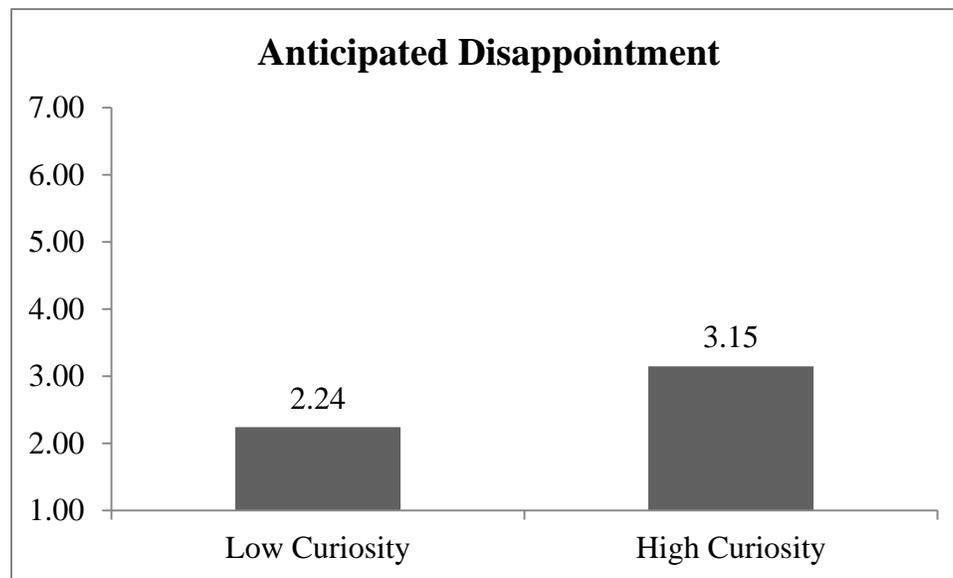
Manipulation check. Participants in the low curiosity condition were better able to correctly guess the identity of the person depicted than participants in the high curiosity condition ($M_{\text{low curiosity}} = 84\%$, $M_{\text{high curiosity}} = 38\%$, $t(102) = 10.8$, $p < .0001$). More important than their actual accuracy, however, was their confidence in their guesses; participants in the low curiosity condition were also more certain about their accuracy than those in the high curiosity condition ($M_{\text{low curiosity}} = 6.28$, $M_{\text{high curiosity}} = 3.26$, $t(102) = 11.71$, $p < .0001$).

Anticipated disappointment. An independent samples t -test was conducted to compare anticipated disappointment for participants in the low curiosity condition to that of participants in the high curiosity condition. As predicted, participants in the high curiosity condition indicated significantly higher levels of anticipated disappointment ($M = 3.15$) than participants in the low curiosity condition ($M = 2.24$; $t(102) = -2.67$, $p = .009$; see Figure 1). Thus, study 1 provides

initial evidence in support of the hypothesis that higher levels of curiosity result in greater feelings of anticipated disappointment.

FIGURE 1:

Low versus High Curiosity and Anticipated Disappointment (Study 1)



This finding is in agreement with previous research suggesting that, in the face of uncertain outcomes, individuals may adjust their expectations in order to avoid greater feelings of disappointment once the outcome is revealed (van Dijk et al. 2003). However, it is unclear whether participants in the high-curiosity condition are accurately estimating their actual feelings of disappointment, or if their heightened responses were instead an overestimation of the disappointment they would feel as a result of resolution. If curious participants successfully inflate their anticipated disappointment in order to guard against actual feelings of disappointment, then, absent an unexpectedly disappointing outcome, actual feelings of disappointment should be relatively low (Oliver 1980).

Study 2

I seek to provide an initial comparison of consumer expectations and experiences of disappointment in response to curiosity resolution. In study 1, only pre-resolution feelings of anticipated disappointment are explored; participants in the high-curiosity condition exhibited relatively high levels of anticipated disappointment.

Thus, in study 2, I examine pre-resolution feelings of anticipated disappointment and post-resolution feelings of actual disappointment for high-curiosity participants. In addition to shedding light on the expected versus actual experience of curiosity resolution, this study lends additional support to the contention that participants strategically inflate their anticipated feelings of disappointment to protect against future disappointment. This would suggest that, unless the outcome is exceedingly disappointing, post-resolution disappointment should be comparatively low. Thus, I predict that, as in study 1, participants will report relatively high levels of anticipated disappointment prior to resolution; however, after curiosity resolution, participants will report relatively lower levels of experienced disappointment.

Method

63 Mturk participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 33.77$, 58.73% female) participated in a one-factor, two-level (dependent measure presentation: before vs. after resolution) between-subjects design in exchange for a nominal fee.

The procedure of study 2 mimics that of study 1, with a few notable differences (see Appendix B for study materials). First, this study includes only the high-curiosity, blurred image condition. The same images, of the same actors and actresses, were used. Second, importantly,

this study includes a between-subject measure of pre-resolution anticipated disappointment and post-resolution experienced disappointment.

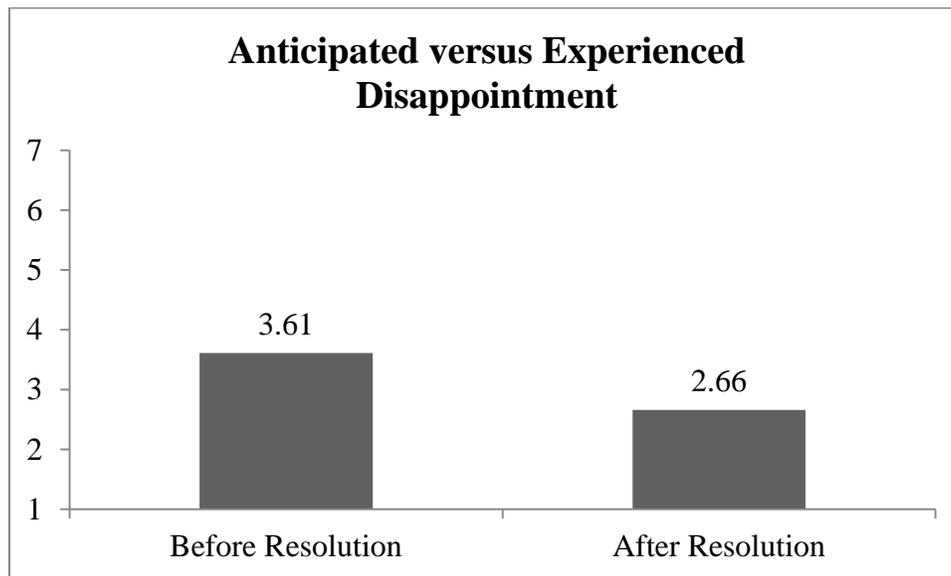
Once again, all participants viewed blurred images of actors and actresses, indicated their guess of who was depicted (open response), and indicated their certainty in their guess (1 = Not Certain at All, 7 = Very Certain). Following the image task, participants either indicated their anticipated disappointment before their curiosity was resolved or had their curiosity resolved and then indicated their experienced disappointment. Specifically, in the before-resolution conditions, participants were told that they had to complete a few questions before the identities of the Hollywood figures were revealed. They then indicated the extent to which they anticipated feeling disappointed after finding out the identities of the figures (1 = Not at All, 7 = Very Much). Participants were then shown clear images of the actors and actresses in which each individual was identified by name, and completed demographic measures. In the after-resolution conditions, participants first viewed clear images with identifying information before indicating how disappointed they felt (1 = Not at All, 7 = Very Much) and completing demographic measures.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation check. On average, participants were able to correctly guess the identity of the person depicted only 38% of the time. More important than their actual accuracy, however, was their confidence in their guesses; on average, participants were uncertain about their accuracy (1 = Not Certain at All, 7 = Very Certain; $M = 3.38$, significantly lower than the midpoint ($t(61) = -3.42, p = .001$).

Anticipated versus experienced disappointment. An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare anticipated disappointment for participants in the before-resolution condition to experienced disappointment for participants in the after-resolution condition. There was a significant difference in disappointment for those in the before-resolution ($M = 3.61$) and after-resolution conditions ($M = 2.66$; $t(61) = 2.28$, $p = .03$; see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2:
Pre-Resolution Anticipated Disappointment and
Post-Resolution Experienced Disappointment (Study 2)



As predicted, there was a disconnect between anticipated and actual disappointment such that curious participants anticipated higher levels of disappointment prior to resolution than that experienced by curious participants post-resolution. Taken together with the results of study 1, these findings suggest that curious individuals strategically alter their expectations of disappointment in order to protect against expectancy disconfirmation and post-resolution

feelings of disappointment. Furthermore, the comparatively low levels of post-resolution experienced disappointment suggest that this strategy may have been successful.

Though study 2 provided convergent evidence that curious individuals exhibit relatively high levels of pre-resolution anticipated disappointment, it notably lacked a low-curiosity condition. Thus, I could not examine whether or not participants in a low-curiosity condition would exhibit similarly reduced post-resolution experienced disappointment, or whether this pattern is unique to high-curiosity participants. In study 3, I sought to replicate the effects of both studies 1 and 2 with the inclusion of a low-curiosity control condition. Additionally, in study 3, I explore the relationship between curiosity resolution and expected and actual disappointment in a new context.

Study 3

In study 3, my primary objective was to replicate the preliminary findings of studies 1 and 2 regarding heightened levels of anticipated disappointment in high curiosity conditions prior to resolution. This study explores curiosity resolution in the context of click-bait headlines. Such headlines create a clear information gap by withholding key features of the article; the success of websites like Upworthy and BuzzFeed speak to the success of click-bait headlines at harnessing curiosity to drive web traffic (Thompson 2013).

Method

145 Mturk participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 38.31$, 46.21% female) participated in a 2 (curiosity: low vs. high) x 2 (dependent measure presentation: before vs. after resolution) between-subjects design in exchange for a nominal fee.

Participants were instructed to imagine that, as they browsed online, they encountered an article headline. A real click-bait headline from the website Upworthy (Kovac 2016) was adopted for the purposes of this study; Upworthy is website recognized for its click-bait headlines. In the high-curiosity condition, participants were presented with a headline that read “The amazing reason a 16-year old student carried his little brother on his back for 111 miles” (see Appendix C for all study materials). An information gap was created by omitting the reason for the student’s walk; therefore, a low-curiosity headline was created in which the formation of an information gap was prevented by revealing the reason. Participants in the low-curiosity condition were presented with a headline that read “16-year old student carried his little brother on his back for 111 miles to raise awareness for cerebral palsy.” A pretest ($N = 56$) confirmed that there was a significant difference in curiosity in the high-curiosity headline condition ($M = 5.11$) and the low curiosity headline condition ($M = 3.68$; $t(54) = 2.83$, $p = .007$).

As in study 2, in the before-resolution conditions, participants completed the anticipated disappointment measure (1 = Not at All, 7 = Very Much) before reading the article the student’s walk and completing demographic measures. In the after-resolution conditions, participants first read the article and then rated their feelings of experienced disappointment and completed demographic measures.

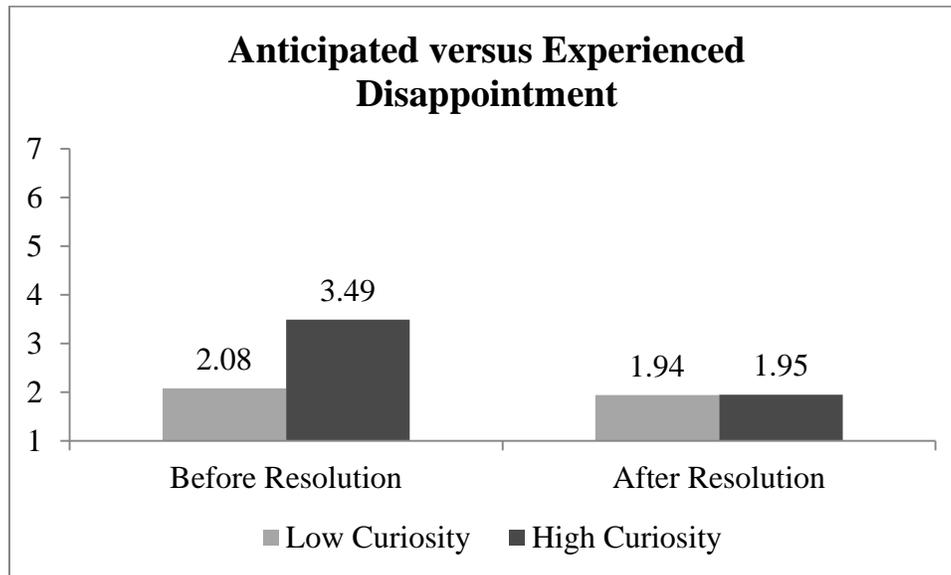
Results and Discussion

An ANOVA with curiosity, dependent measure presentation, and their interaction predicting disappointment revealed a significant main effect of curiosity ($F(1,141) = 8.55$, $p = .004$) and a significant main effect of dependent measure presentation ($F(1,141) = 12.23$, $p =$

.0007), qualified by the predicted curiosity x dependent measure presentation interaction ($F(1,141) = 8.35, p = .005$; see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3:

The Effect of Low versus High Curiosity on Pre-Resolution Anticipated Disappointment and Post-Resolution Experienced Disappointment (Study 3)



Planned contrasts revealed that, in the high-curiosity condition, anticipated disappointment before resolution was significantly higher than experienced disappointment after resolution ($M_{\text{before resolution}} = 3.49, M_{\text{after resolution}} = 1.95; F(1,141) = 20.65, p < .0001$), thereby replicating the finding of study 2 that participants inflate their pre-resolution anticipated disappointment relative to experienced post-resolution disappointment; this difference did not occur in the low-curiosity condition ($M_{\text{before resolution}} = 2.08, M_{\text{after resolution}} = 1.94; F(1,141) = .16, p = .69$).

Additionally, before curiosity resolution, participants in the high-curiosity condition reported significantly higher levels of anticipated disappointment than did participants in the

low-curiosity condition ($F(1,141) = 16.90, p < .0001$). Alternatively, after curiosity resolution, there was no difference in disappointment between the low-curiosity and high-curiosity participants ($F(1,141) = .00, p = .99$).

Importantly, studies 1-3 provide convergent evidence that pre-resolution, curious participants inflate their ratings of anticipated disappointment relative to both low-curiosity pre-resolution participants and high-curiosity post-resolution participants. Furthermore, this study provides additional evidence that, in the face of uncertain outcomes, higher levels of anticipated disappointment seems to successfully buffer against post-resolution feelings of disappointment.

However, these studies only allowed for a comparison between anticipated and actual feelings of disappointment, but did not allow for a better understanding of curiosity resolution as being influenced both by the experience of curiosity resolution itself as well as the outcome obtained. It is possible, however, that the finding that high-curiosity participants chose to heighten their ratings of anticipated disappointment in the face of an unknown and potentially disappointing outcome is indicative of a focus primarily on the outcome to be obtained. Study 4 directly investigates a focus on outcome and focus on resolution via moderation.

Study 4

In study 4, I investigate curiosity resolution and anticipated disappointment in a new context; that of monthly subscription snack boxes, much like existing services NatureBox or MunchPak. These subscription services often operate by sending customers a set amount of unknown items, thereby eliciting curiosity about what each month's package contains. In fact, according to one *Forbes* article on subscription boxes, customers recognize the appeal of

curiosity in this context; one customer was quoted as saying that “surprise is definitely part of the draw – that curiosity of what’s going to come next” (Hayes 2013).

In this context, I introduce a new dependent measure: likelihood to subscribe. Importantly, in this study I also investigate the power of a resolution focus and an outcome focus to influence ratings of anticipated disappointment. If curiosity resolution can be decomposed into the experience of resolution itself and the outcome obtained, then shifting focus should highlight the salience of each aspect of curiosity resolution.

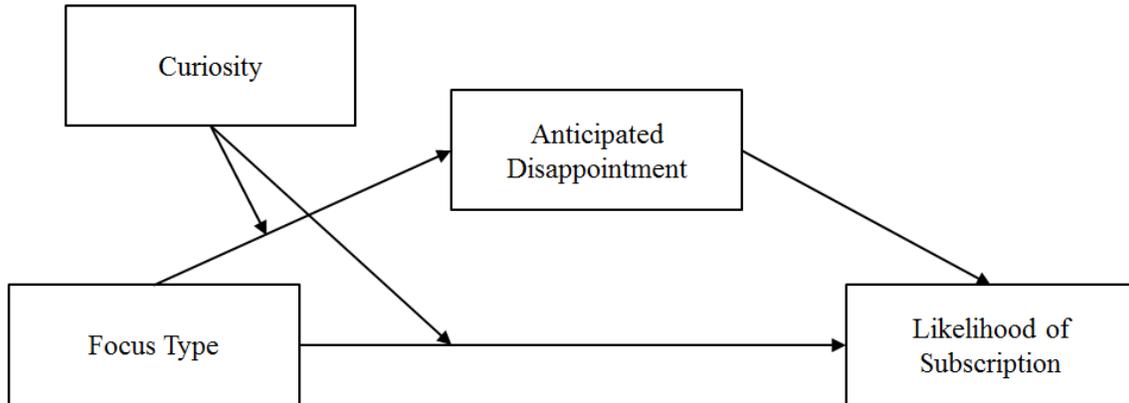
In the outcome focus conditions, curious participants are expected to be concerned with uncertain outcome they will obtain. Thus, as in studies 1-3, curious participants in the outcome focus condition are expected to exhibit heightened levels of anticipated disappointment in an attempt to buffer against the potential for the unknown post-resolution outcome to result in experienced disappointment.

Alternatively, if participants’ ratings of anticipated disappointment are influenced both by expected outcomes and by the expected positive experience of curiosity resolution, as is predicted to occur in the resolution focus condition, then participants should exhibit reduced sensitivity to the uncertain outcome they will obtain. In other words, they will feel a reduced need to buffer against potential feelings of disappointment, and therefore will indicate lower levels of anticipated disappointment (see Figure 4).

Likelihood of subscribing is predicted to be similarly effected; for participants in the high curiosity condition, an outcome focus is predicted to result in a relatively lower likelihood of subscribing than a resolution focus, since they are characterized by differing levels of concern with the unknown outcome.

FIGURE 4:

Conceptual Model of the Effect of Focus Type and Curiosity
on Disappointment and Subscription Likelihood



Method. 159 Mturk participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 35.77$, 37.74% female) participated in a 2 (curiosity: low vs. high) x 2 (focus type: resolution vs. outcome) between-subjects design in exchange for a nominal fee.

Participants were asked to view a promotion from a fictional snack subscription service, SnakBox. They were told that SnakBox offers monthly deliveries of specialized snacks. In the low curiosity condition, participants were told that the first Snakbox package includes five selective snacks: Caramel popcorn, Milk chocolate covered almonds, Dark chocolate pretzel crisps, Peanut caramel bars, and Shortbread cookies (see Appendix D for study stimuli). In the high-curiosity condition, an information gap was created by listing only two of the five snacks (Caramel popcorn and Milk chocolate covered almonds) and emphasizing that three additional, unknown snacks would also be included in the package.

Resolution and outcome focus were also manipulated within the SnakBox promotion. In the resolution focus condition, the promotion included a tagline addressing the experience of resolution itself by focusing on the discovery of previously unknown information. Specifically, the tagline read “Imagine what it would be like to open your SnakBox package!” In the outcome focus condition, the tagline instead directly addressed the outcome that they could potentially obtain: “Imagine what it would be like to receive your SnakBox treats!” After viewing the promotion, participants indicated the likelihood of subscribing to the snack service (1 = Not Likely at All, 7 = Very Likely) and completed the anticipated disappointment and demographic measures.

Results and Discussion

Anticipated disappointment. I ran an ANOVA with curiosity, focus, and their interaction predicting anticipated disappointment, which revealed only a significant curiosity x focus interaction ($F(1,155) = 4.63, p = .03$).

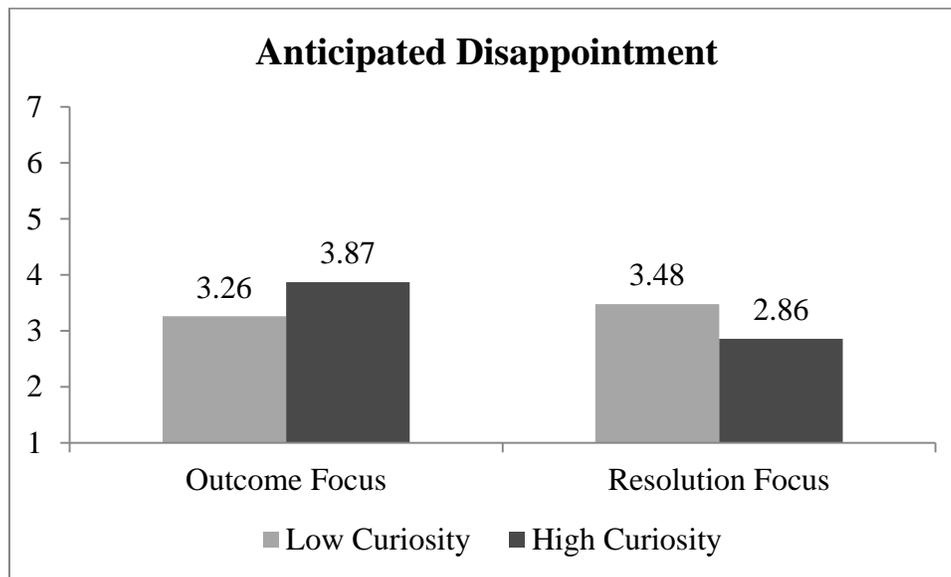
Planned contrasts revealed that, for participants in the high curiosity condition, a focus on resolution significantly reduced participants’ anticipated disappointment relative to a focus on the outcome ($M_{\text{resolution}} = 2.86, M_{\text{outcome}} = 3.87, F(1, 155) = 5.96, p = .02$). In the low curiosity condition, there was no significant effect of focus ($M_{\text{resolution}} = 3.48, M_{\text{outcome}} = 3.26, F(1, 155) = .96, p = .58$).

Within the outcome focus condition, the effect of curiosity was directional, such that higher curiosity elicited non-significantly higher levels of anticipated disappointment ($F(1, 155) = 2.32, p = .13$). Within the resolution focus condition, the effect of curiosity was similarly non-

significant but directional, such that higher curiosity elicited somewhat lower levels of anticipated disappointment ($F(1, 155) = 2.32, p = .13$; see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5:

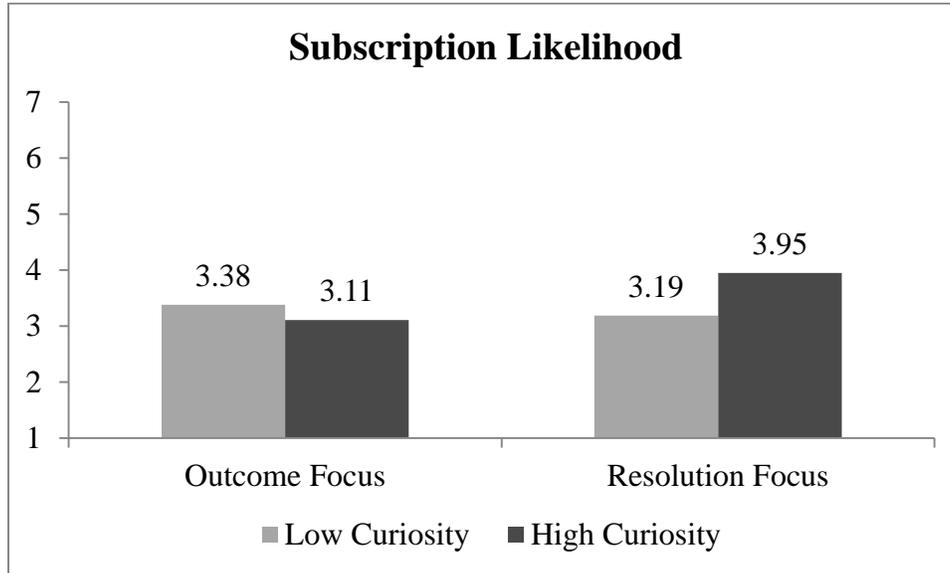
The Effect of Outcome Focus versus Resolution Focus and Low versus High Curiosity on Anticipated Disappointment (Study 4)



Likelihood of subscribing. An ANOVA with curiosity, focus, and their interaction predicting likelihood of subscribing revealed a marginal curiosity x focus interaction ($F(1,155) = 3.06, p = .08$). Planned contrasts revealed that, in the high curiosity condition, participants with a focus on curiosity resolution were significantly more likely to subscribe to SnakBox’s service than participants with focus on potential outcomes ($M_{\text{resolution}} = 3.95, M_{\text{outcome}} = 3.11, F(1, 155) = 3.85, p = .05$). Furthermore, in the resolution focus condition, participants in the high curiosity condition were marginally more likely to subscribe than participants in the low curiosity condition ($M_{\text{low curiosity}} = 3.19, F(1, 155) = 3.26, p = .07$; see Figure 6). No other effects were significant.

FIGURE 6:

The Effect of Outcome Focus versus Resolution Focus and
Low versus High Curiosity on Subscription Likelihood (Study 4)



Moderated mediation. I conducted a moderated mediation analysis (1000 bootstrapping samples, Model 8, Hayes 2013) with likelihood of subscribing as the dependent variable, focus as the independent variable, curiosity as the moderator, and anticipated disappointment as the mediator. The index of moderated mediation was significant (95% CI: .06-.83). In the high curiosity condition, anticipated disappointment mediated the effect of focus on subscription likelihood ($B = .26$, 95% CI: .06-.65). However, in the low curiosity condition, disappointment did not significantly mediate this effect ($B = -.06$, 95% CI: -.33, .13).

Discussion

In sum, in essay 1 I focused on anticipated and experienced feelings of disappointment related to curiosity resolution. Study 1 provides initial support for the hypothesis that curious consumers strategically anticipate higher levels of disappointment as a self-protective

mechanism. This hypothesis is in line with research suggesting that, when there is potential for an uncertain outcome to be negative and thus yield feelings of disappointment, consumers may strategically lower their expectations (van Dijk et al. 2003). In study 2, I compare ratings of pre-resolution feelings of anticipated disappointment with ratings of post-resolution experienced disappointment for curious participants. The findings of study 2 suggest that, prior to resolution, curious individuals overestimate their disappointment relative to what they experience after resolution. This finding is further investigated in a new context in study 3 with the addition of a low-curiosity condition. Study 3 replicates the findings of studies 1 and 2, providing additional support that, prior to resolution, curious participants anticipate higher levels of disappointment than participants in a low-curiosity condition. Furthermore, highly curious participants' pre-resolution anticipated disappointment was once again significantly higher than post-resolution experienced disappointment.

Lastly, in study 4, I examine the effect of a resolution focus and an outcome focus on participants in low and high curiosity conditions. Focus did not affect participants in the low-curiosity condition, but for participants in the high-curiosity condition, a resolution focus significantly reduced anticipated disappointment relative to an outcome focus. In addition, study 4 introduced a new dependent measure: likelihood of subscribing to a monthly snack service. For highly curious participants, a resolution focus significantly increased likelihood of subscribing; a moderated mediation analysis is also reported.

CHAPTER 4 – CURIOSITY RESOLUTION AND HIGH OR LOW DISCOUNTS

In studies 5-8, I explore the downstream consequences of curiosity resolution in the context of mystery ads. Mystery ads, which traditionally delay the provision of brand or product information, are one method by which marketers can create an information gap about “what is it” being advertised (Campbell 1995; Fazio et al. 1992). A classic, though much maligned, example of a mystery ad comes from a 1989 Nissan commercial in which viewers watched a flock of geese peacefully flying while a voiceover described how the concepts of nature and beauty influence automotive design. At the end of the commercial, the Nissan Infiniti logo fades in, though the car itself is never featured. Recently, however, marketers are relying on a new type of mystery ad to capture consumers’ attention. Instead of withholding product or brand information, marketers announce a promotional discount, but the magnitude of the discount itself is hidden. I broadly categorize such promotions as “discount mystery ads,” defined as appeals in which a discount is being offered, but in which the magnitude of the discount is not initially identified.

In one example, Loft recently sent out an email promotion proclaiming “Today only in stores and online – ?! off everything – find out what you’ll save”; consumers had to click through to Loft’s website to discover the magnitude of the discount offered. In another example, Kohl’s sent out coupons in which the mystery discount was concealed by an opaque covering; consumers had to scratch off the covering to find out what discount they’d receive (Quinn 2015; see Appendix E for examples of real mystery ads). The curiosity research suggests that such ads, which contain cues that highlight the source of the information gap, may be particularly effective at generating curiosity and therefore attention and interest (Menon and Soman 2002).

In three studies, I establish the ability of curiosity resolution to impact consumer interest in the promotion being offered. Importantly, examining curiosity resolution in the context of discount mystery ads allows for an examination of the effect of relatively desirable and relatively less desirable outcomes. Previous research has distinguished between low-level discounts (10% off or less) and high-level discounts (Cai, Bagchi, and Gauri 2015). Absent curiosity resolution, consumers are expected to evaluate the discounts solely on the merits of the outcome obtained, and find high level discounts to be relatively appealing and lower level discounts to be relatively unappealing. However, if post-resolution evaluations are influenced by both by the experience of curiosity resolution as well as the outcomes obtained, then participants should exhibit reduced sensitivity to the magnitude of the discount. Furthermore, because curiosity resolution is theorized to yield positive affective reactions, post-resolution evaluations should be positively influenced.

I therefore propose that discount mystery ads increase consumer interest while decreasing consumer sensitivity to discount magnitude. Therefore, such ads should be particularly effective for discounts for which there is not much initial interest, such as low-level discounts offering 10% off or less. Alternatively, I anticipate that the beneficial effect of discount mystery ads will be attenuated for a discount for which there is already a high level of consumer interest, such as a high-level discount. This may arise because a reduced focus on outcomes and thus less sensitivity to positive outcomes operates in combination with the positive impact of a focus on resolution itself.

Importantly, in addition to shedding light on the implications of curiosity resolution, exploring the moderating role of discount magnitude offers a practical contribution, as low-level discounts are commonly encountered in real life, but little research has explored consumer

responses to such discounts (Cai et al. 2015). Therefore, in addition to demonstrating initial downstream consequences of satisfying curiosity resolution, I establish the effectiveness of a new type of mystery ad and demonstrate a condition under which such ads are most impactful.

It is important to note that discount mystery ads elicit curiosity by introducing ambiguity regarding the magnitude of the discount to be received. I focus primarily on discount mystery ads in which no reference amount is included (such as those including a potential discount range; for example, a Kohl's ad containing "Make it a winning March with this mystery offer – 40%, 30%, or 20% off!" or a Walgreen's ad stating "Reveal your secret savings of up to 50% off!"). Instead, the focus of this work is a discount mystery ad in which ambiguity is solely introduced via the delay of discount information. Furthermore, though consumers may generate internal reference prices, no external one is provided on which consumers can anchor.

In four studies, I seek to demonstrate the power of discount mystery ads to affect consumer interest. The first three studies explore curiosity resolution in a new context, in which curiosity resolution information is supplied in the form of discount magnitude. Providing such information offers several insights into the nature of curiosity, curiosity resolution, and the effectiveness of discount mystery ads. If, contrary to predictions, curiosity resolution results in disappointment or negative affective reactions, then discount mystery ads should elicit lower levels of consumer interest than control ads. Individuals should also then be especially sensitive to discount magnitude, such that low-level discounts are more greatly affected. Alternatively, if discount mystery ads elicit increased levels of consumer interest, then these studies offer convergent support for the satisfying nature of curiosity resolution and the positive downstream consequences of such resolution. In study 8, in high-curiosity mystery ad conditions, I

manipulate focus type and discount magnitude in order to gain a better understanding of how the experience of resolution and the outcomes obtained influence post-resolution evaluations.

Study 5

The next four studies include curiosity resolution information in the form of a revealed discount magnitude. Discount mystery ads are expected to increase consumer interest, and therefore are predicted to be especially effective for low level discount ads for which initial interest levels are low; this effectiveness is predicted to be attenuated at high discount levels. Furthermore, in keeping with the perspective that both the experience of curiosity resolution and the outcome obtained factors into post-resolution evaluations, viewers of discount mystery ads are expected to demonstrate decreased levels of sensitivity to the magnitude of the discount. Such decreased sensitivity in the discount mystery ad conditions is predicted to be evidenced by less steep slopes across differing discount magnitudes.

Method

171 Mturk participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 36.05$, 45.88% female) completed a 2 (ad type: control ad vs. mystery ad) x 2 (discount magnitude: 5% vs. 50% off) between-subjects design in exchange for a nominal fee.

All participants were told to imagine that they had signed up for a clothing store's email newsletter, and that they had received a promotional email from the store. Participants then viewed an ad adapted from a real promotion from a mid-range clothing store. In the control ad conditions, participants viewed an ad proclaiming a storewide sale of 5% [50%] off everything in stores and online. In the mystery ad conditions, the discount value was replaced by “??% off” and included a small subheading instructing viewers to “find out what you'll save”. On the

subsequent screen, participants in the mystery ad conditions were told that clicking the link to find out much they saved brought them to a webpage informing them that the storewide sale was 5% [50%] off (see Appendix F for all study stimuli).

Participants then rated their interest in the promotion (1 = Not at All, 7 = Very Much) and completed covariates addressing how often they shopped and how often they took advantage of sales. To ensure that participants in all conditions paid attention to the discount magnitude, they then completed an open response question in which they were asked to recall the percent off offered. Lastly, participants completed demographic measures.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation check. Recall of the discount value was coded as a 1 if correct, 0 if otherwise. Recall levels were high across conditions (over 90%); I ran a logistic regression of ad type, discount magnitude, and their interaction predicting discount recall to ensure recall was not impacted by the ad or discount manipulations. As predicted, the regression revealed no significant effects (all p 's > .20), suggesting that the discount manipulation worked as expected, and that recall was high across conditions.

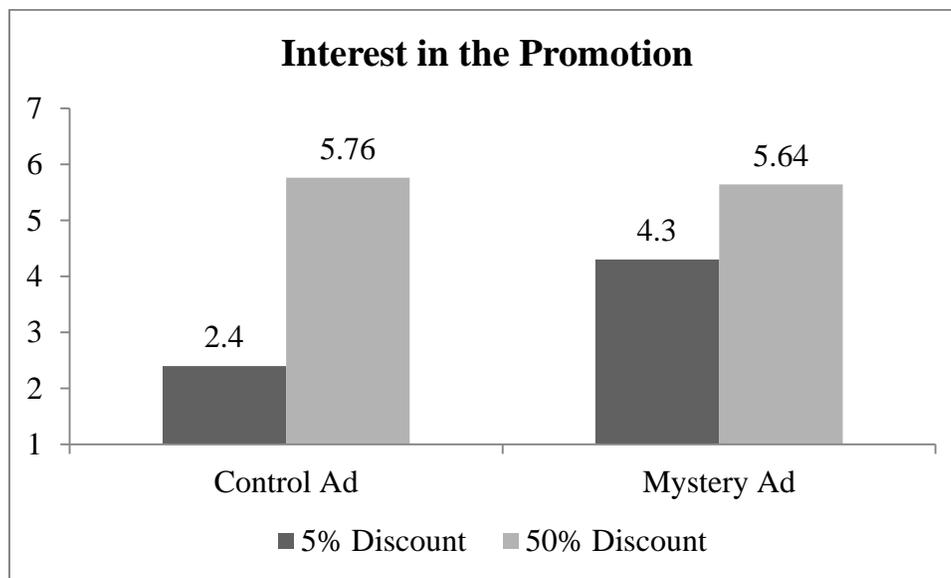
Interest in the promotion. Discount magnitude was coded as a categorical variable in all analyses. An ANOVA with ad type, discount magnitude, and their interaction as independent variables predicting interest in the sale revealed a main effect of discount magnitude ($F(1, 167) = 78.68, p < .0001$) and a main effect of ad type ($F(1, 167) = 11.58, p = .0008$), qualified by the predicted ad type x discount magnitude interaction ($F(1, 167) = 14.68, p = .0002$).

Importantly, the significant interaction indicates that the slopes in the ad conditions significantly differed; a regression revealed that participants displayed a decreased sensitivity to

discount magnitude in the discount mystery ad condition, as evinced by a less steep slope ($\beta = 1.33$) relative to those in the control ad condition ($\beta = 3.36$; see Figure 7).

Planned contrasts revealed that, as predicted, in the 5% discount condition, participants who viewed the discount mystery ad were significantly more interested in the sale than participants who viewed the control ad ($M_{\text{control ad}} = 2.40$, $M_{\text{mystery ad}} = 4.30$, $F(1, 167) = 26.16$, $p < .0001$). However, in the 50% discount condition, participants who viewed the discount mystery ad and the control ad were equally interested in the promotion ($M_{\text{control ad}} = 5.76$, $M_{\text{mystery ad}} = 5.64$, $F(1, 167) = .10$, $p = .75$).

FIGURE 7:
The Effect of Ad Type and Discount Magnitude
on Interest in the Promotion (Study 5)



Additionally, two covariates were measured; participants were asked how often they shop and how often they take advantage of sales. Including these measures as covariates did not affect the pattern of results in this or any subsequent study and are therefore not discussed further.

In sum, study 5 offers a preliminary investigation of the downstream consequences of curiosity resolution. Discount mystery ads resulted in heightened levels of interest, and were particularly effective for low-level discounts which consumers are otherwise relatively uninterested in. Furthermore, I establish the power of discount mystery ads to decrease sensitivity to discount magnitude, as evidenced by the significantly less steep slope across the discount mystery ad conditions. These findings lend support to the proposition that post-resolution evaluations are influenced both by the outcome obtained and by the experience of resolution itself.

Study 6

The primary objective of study 6 was to replicate the findings of study 5 over a wider range of discounts, thereby demonstrating the robustness of the effect. To achieve this goal, two low-level discounts were included: 5% and 10%. As in study 5, I expect the discount mystery ad to increase interest for both low-level discounts; however, I predict that the discount mystery ad will not increase interest in high-level discounts which already engage a high level of consumer interest (see Appendix G for study stimuli).

Method

219 Mturk participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 5.09$, 39.27% female) completed a 2 (ad type: control ad vs. mystery ad) x 3 (discount magnitude: 5% vs. 10% vs. 50% off) between-subjects design in exchange for a nominal fee.

Other than the addition of a second low-level discount magnitude, the procedure mirrored that of study 5. Participants in the control ad conditions viewed an ad proclaiming a 5% [10%/50%] off discount. Participants in the mystery ad conditions viewed an email

promotion in which a “??% off” discount was announced. On the subsequent screen, mystery ad participants were told that the store’s website indicated the promotion was 5%[10%/50%] off. Participants then indicated how interested they were in the sale and completed recall and demographic measures.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation check. Recall of discount magnitude was once again high (over 89% in all conditions). As predicted, a logistic regression revealed no significant main or interaction effects on discount magnitude recall (all $ps > .44$).

Interest in the promotion. Discount magnitude was once again treated as a categorical variable. An ANOVA with ad type, discount magnitude, and their interaction predicting interest in the sale revealed a main effect of discount magnitude ($F(2, 216) = 49.33, p < .0001$) and a main effect of ad type ($F(1, 216) = 7.92, p = .005$), qualified by the predicted ad type x discount magnitude interaction. ($F(2, 216) = 14.78, p < .0001$).

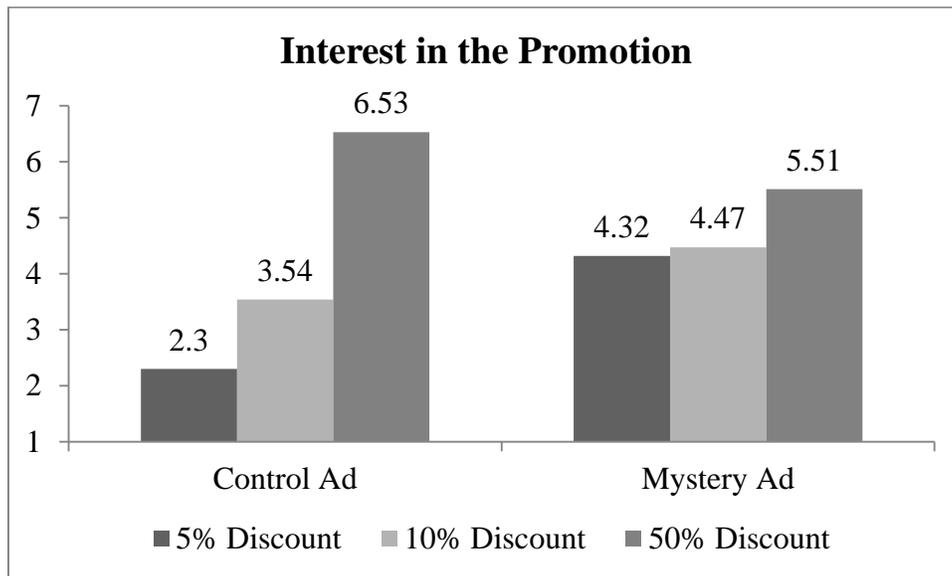
Once again, participants in the discount mystery ad conditions were less sensitive to discount magnitude, as evinced by the significant interaction; a regression analysis further revealed a steeper slope in the control ad conditions ($\beta = 2.11$) relative to the slope in the discount mystery ad conditions ($\beta = .59$; see Figure 8).

As predicted, planned contrasts revealed that, for both low-level discounts, viewing the mystery ad significantly increased interest in the sale relative to viewing the control ad (5% discount condition: $M_{\text{control ad}} = 2.30, M_{\text{mystery ad}} = 4.32, F(1, 216) = 25.21, p < .0001$; 10% discount condition: $M_{\text{control ad}} = 3.54, M_{\text{mystery ad}} = 4.47, F(1, 216) = 5.20, p = .02$).

Unexpectedly, for the high-level discount condition, participants in the mystery ad actually reported reduced interest in the sale relative to those in the control ad condition ($M_{\text{control ad}} = 6.53$, $M_{\text{mystery ad}} = 5.51$, $F(1, 216) = 6.32$, $p = .01$). Though such a finding was not predicted, it is the only study in which this pattern emerged and should thus be interpreted with caution. This difference seems to be driven by the interest level in the 50% control condition, which is substantially higher than the interest ratings in the high-discount control conditions in studies 5 and 7.

FIGURE 8:

The Effect of Ad Type and Discount Magnitude
on Interest in the Promotion (Study 6)



Study 6 therefore replicates the primary finding of study 5, in which viewing a discount mystery ad increased consumer interest in low-level discounts. Importantly, this effect persisted for both low-level discount conditions. Furthermore, participants in the mystery ad conditions demonstrated reduced sensitivity to the magnitude of the discount. Taken together, these results

provide additional evidence for the proposed role of both outcomes and the experience of curiosity in post-resolution evaluations.

Study 7

In study 7, I seek to replicate the findings of studies 5 and 6, such that participants in the mystery ad condition exhibit reduced sensitivity to the magnitude of the discount and demonstrate increased levels of interest in response to low-level discounts. I also seek to demonstrate that this effect generalizes to a new shopping context, that of a pizzeria, and to an undergraduate student population. I once again include two low-level discounts, 5% off and 10% off, and additionally introduce a new high-level discount: 60% off. Replicating the effects of studies 5 and 6 in a new context provides convergent evidence for my hypothesis that participants in the mystery ad condition are influenced not only by the outcome obtained, but also by the experience of resolution itself.

Method

202 undergraduate students ($M_{\text{age}} = 21.14$, 46% female) participated in a 2 (ad type: control ad vs. mystery ad) x 3 (discount magnitude: 5% vs. 10% vs. 60% off) between-subjects design in exchange for course credit.

In this study, participants evaluated a pizzeria's promotional email. All participants viewed ads offering a discount on the entire order, for that weekend only. Each ad also included two images of pizzas. In the control ad conditions, participants viewed an ad proclaiming a discount of 5% [10%/60%] off the entire order, for that weekend only (see Appendix H for study 7 stimuli). In this study, I also take the opportunity to include a call to action in all conditions; in prior studies, only the discount mystery ad included a call to action. Therefore, the control ads

included a small subheading instructing participants to “Click here to save”. In the mystery ad conditions, the discount value was replaced by “??% off,” and the small subheading instead included “Click here to find out how much you’ll save”. As in studies 5 and 6, participants in the discount mystery ad condition were then told that clicking the link to find out much they saved brought them to a webpage informing them that the storewide sale was 5% [10%/60%] off. Finally, participants indicated their interest in the promotion and completed the open-response recall measure and demographic measures.

Results

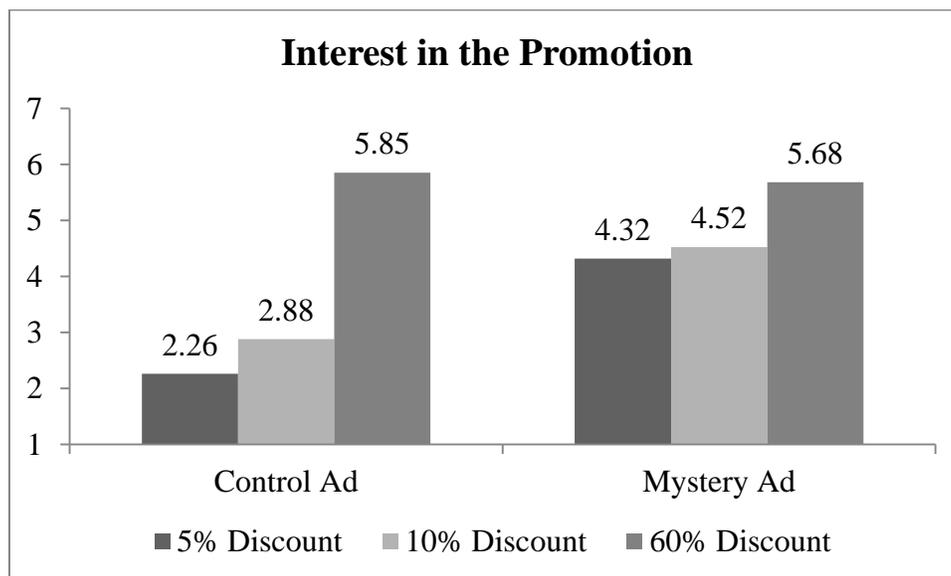
Manipulation check. Recall was coded as 1 if correct, 0 if incorrect. Reported recall of discount magnitude was once again high (over 88%), and, again as predicted, a logistic regression yielded no significant main or interaction effects on discount magnitude recall (all p s > .55).

Interest in the promotion. An ANOVA with ad type, discount magnitude, and their interaction predicting interest in the promotion once again revealed a main effect of discount magnitude ($F(2, 195) = 45.08, p < .0001$) and a main effect of ad type ($F(1, 195) = 26.62, p < .0001$), qualified by the predicted ad type x discount magnitude interaction ($F(2, 195) = 9.03, p = .0002$). Importantly, in the discount mystery ad conditions, the slope was less steep ($\beta = .68$) than the control ad conditions ($\beta = 1.79$), once again replicating the finding that consumers viewing a mystery ad are less sensitive to discount magnitude than those viewing a control ad (see Figure 9). As predicted, discount mystery ads were especially effective for both low-level discounts. Planned contrasts revealed that, for both low-level discounts, viewing the mystery ad significantly increased interest in the sale relative to viewing the control ad (5% discount

condition: $M_{\text{control ad}} = 2.26$, $M_{\text{mystery ad}} = 4.32$, $F(1, 195) = 27.58$, $p < .0001$; 10% discount condition: $M_{\text{control ad}} = 2.88$, $M_{\text{mystery ad}} = 4.52$, $F(1, 195) = 16.91$, $p < .0001$). Consistent with study 5, for the high-level discount condition, there was no significant difference in interest level for participants in the control ad condition or the mystery ad condition ($M_{\text{control ad}} = 5.85$, $M_{\text{mystery ad}} = 5.68$, $F(1, 195) = .19$, $p = .66$).

FIGURE 9:

The Effect of Ad Type and Discount Magnitude on Interest in the Promotion (Study 7)



In sum, in studies 5-7, across a range of discounts and two different shopping scenarios, I use the context of discount mystery ads to investigate the impact of curiosity resolution and discount magnitude on consumer interest. In the control ad conditions, participants' interest is solely influenced by the outcome obtained; thus, participants exhibit low interest for low-level discounts and higher interest for higher-level discounts. However, in three studies, participants in the mystery ad conditions demonstrated reduced sensitivity to the magnitude of the discount

obtained and relatively high interest levels for low-level discounts. Therefore, these findings support my hypothesis that, in the mystery ad conditions, evaluations are not solely based on the outcome obtained, but perhaps are also influenced by the experience of curiosity resolution itself. This proposition is directly examined in study 8.

Study 8

In study 8, I focus only on the mystery ad conditions and directly manipulate resolution focus and outcome focus. I also include a new dependent measure: likelihood of shopping at the store. Participants in the outcome focus conditions are expected to shift their focus to the outcome obtained, and are thus expected to exhibit high levels of sensitivity to the discount magnitude as well as low likelihood of shopping at the store when presented with a low-level discount. In the resolution focus condition, however, participants are expected to demonstrate reduced sensitivity to the magnitude of the discount, and will be relatively more likely to shop at the store in the low-level discount condition. In addition, I include a no-focus control condition. If, as in studies 5-7, participants in this condition mimic the resolution focus condition and exhibit reduced sensitivity to discount magnitude, then this study will support the contention that curiosity resolution evaluations are impacted both by the outcome obtained and by the experience of resolution itself.

Method. 301 MTurk participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 36.85$, 48.17% female) participated in a 2 (discount magnitude: 5% vs. 50% off) x 3 (focus type: outcome focus vs. resolution focus vs. control) between-subjects design in exchange for a nominal fee.

In this study, participants evaluated a clothing store's promotional email, similar to that used in studies 5 and 6. All participants viewed a mystery ad offering a discount of "??% off",

today only in stores and online. As in study 4, focus was manipulated by the inclusion of different instructional taglines in each of the ads (see Appendix I for study stimuli). In the resolution focus condition, the promotion included a tagline addressing the experience of resolution itself. Specifically, the tagline read “Imagine the experience of finding out your mystery discount!” In the outcome focus condition, the promotion included the tagline “Imagine how much you can save with your mystery discount!” In the no-focus control condition, no instructional tagline was included. As in studies 5-7, participants were then told that clicking the link to find out much they saved brought them to a webpage informing them that the storewide sale was 5% [50%] off and indicated their likelihood of shopping at the store (1 = Not Likely at All, 7 = Very Likely) before completing the open-response recall measure and demographic measures.

Results and Discussion

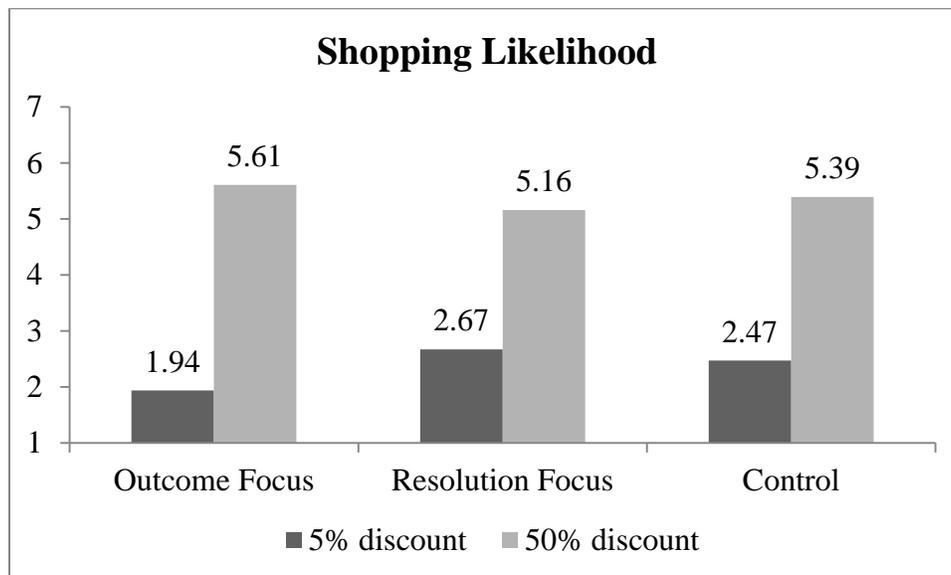
Manipulation check. Recall (coded as 0 if incorrectly recalled, 1 as correctly recalled) was once again high (over 86% in all conditions), and a logistic regression yielded no significant main or interaction effects on discount magnitude recall (all $ps > .26$).

Shopping likelihood. An ANOVA with discount magnitude, focus, and their interaction predicting likelihood of shopping revealed a main effect of discount magnitude ($F(1, 295) = 354.59, p = .01$), qualified by the predicted discount magnitude x focus type interaction ($F(2, 295) = 4.51, p = .01$). Importantly, in the outcome focus condition, the slope was steeper ($\beta = 3.68$) than in both the control ($\beta = 2.92$) and resolution focus conditions ($\beta = 2.49$), thereby providing support for my hypothesis that consumers viewing an outcome focus ad are more sensitive to discount magnitude than those viewing a control ad or a resolution focus ad (see

Figure 10). Planned contrasts revealed that, as predicted, in the low-level discount conditions, a focus on the outcome yielded a decrease in likelihood of shopping ($M_{\text{outcome}} = 1.94$) relative to both the control condition and the focus on resolution condition ($M_{\text{control}} = 2.47$, $F(1, 295) = 3.63$, $p = .06$; $M_{\text{resolution}} = 2.67$, $F(1, 295) = 6.97$, $p = .008$). Importantly, the control and resolution conditions did not differ from one another ($F(1, 295) = .54$, $p = .46$), providing initial support that the insensitivity observed in the no-instruction control is due to an increased focus on resolution. For the high-level discount conditions, there were no significant differences across focus conditions (all p 's > .12).

FIGURE 10:

The Effect of Focus and Discount Magnitude
on Shopping Likelihood (Study 8)



Discussion

In sum, in essay 2 I focused on downstream consequences associated with curiosity resolution. In studies 5-7, across different shopping contexts and across a range of discounts, I

investigate the power of mystery ads to influence consumer interest in the face of relatively desirable and undesirable outcomes. In these studies, participants in the control ad conditions made evaluations in line with the desirability of the outcome obtained. In other words, low discounts elicited low levels of interest, while high-level discounts elicited significantly higher levels of interest. Participants in the mystery ad conditions, however, instead demonstrated a reduced sensitivity to the magnitude of the discount obtained and furthermore demonstrated an increased interest in low-level discounts, which otherwise elicit little interest. These findings offer preliminary evidence that participants in the mystery ad conditions shifted their focus from sole consideration of the outcome obtained, and were possibly also considering the positive experience of curiosity resolution itself.

In study 8, all participants viewed a mystery ad, which allowed me to directly evaluate the post-resolution effect of a resolution focus, an outcome focus, and a no-focus control in the presence of high and low level discounts. Participants in the outcome focus condition revealed relatively greater sensitivity to the magnitude of the discount, such that a low level discount resulted in low likelihood of shopping, while a high level discount significantly increased the likelihood of shopping. Participants in the resolution focus and no-focus control conditions, however, revealed relatively less sensitivity to discount magnitude, and, relative to those with an outcome focus, exhibited an increased likelihood of shopping when faced with low level discounts. This pattern of results suggests that, though participants with an outcome focus primarily form their post-resolution evaluations on considerations of the outcome obtained, participants in the other two focus conditions were, to a greater extent, also influenced by considerations of the experience of resolution itself.

CHAPTER 5 – GENERAL DISCUSSION

In two essays comprised of eight studies, I seek to contribute to a better understanding of curiosity resolution. This research helps to refine and clarify diverging predictions of previous research, which alternately suggested that curiosity resolution may yield positive affective responses such as relief or reward (Kang et al. 2009; Loewenstein 1994) or negative affective responses such as disappointment (Campbell 1995; Fazio 1992). I propose that these diverging findings arise because curiosity resolution is in part influenced by the experience of resolution itself, as well as by the outcome obtained.

In my first essay, I focus on anticipated and experienced disappointment associated with curiosity resolution. I suggest that, in the face of uncertain outcomes, curious consumers are motivated to strategically increase their level of anticipated disappointment in order to protect against the potential for the unknown outcome obtained to elicit unpleasant feelings of experienced disappointment (Oliver 1980). Thus, prior to resolution, high curiosity participants were predicted to exhibit heightened levels of anticipated disappointment relative both to low-curiosity participants and to the actual disappointment experienced after curiosity was resolved. This pattern was demonstrated in studies 1-3 using both an image task (studies 1 and 2) and a clickbait article task (study 3).

In study 4, I focused on anticipated disappointment of high and low curiosity consumers using a snack subscription box scenario. In this study, I also introduced manipulations of resolution focus and outcome focus. I predicted that curious participants with an outcome focus would similarly seek to buffer against potential experienced disappointment and would therefore exhibit high levels of anticipated disappointment. Alternatively, I predicted that resolution

focused participants would be influenced both by considerations of the outcome and considerations of the experience of resolution itself. I predicted that this shifted focus would yield less extreme levels of anticipated disappointment. Curious participants in the outcome focus condition exhibited greater levels of anticipated disappointment relative to those in the resolution focus condition, lending initial support for the existence of both a focus on outcomes and a focus on the experience of resolution itself.

In my second essay, I investigate the downstream consequences of curiosity resolution. I introduce a novel marketing context, that of discount mystery ads, which allows for comparison across more and less desirable discount magnitudes. In studies 5-7, across a range of discounts between 5% off and 60% off, and with both clothing store and pizzeria promotion scenarios, I examine the efficacy of mystery ads for high and low discounts. Participants in control conditions, whose evaluations of the promotion were largely influenced by the magnitude of the discount, exhibited high levels of sensitivity to discount magnitude. In other words, control participants were uninterested in low-level discounts, but were significantly more interested in high-level discounts. Alternatively, participants in the mystery ad conditions exhibited reduced sensitivity to discount magnitude, such that interest increased for the otherwise low-interest <10% discounts.

Finally, in study 8, I again directly investigated the role of outcome focus and resolution focus via moderation in order to examine how a shift in focus impacted post-resolution outcomes; only the low and high discount mystery ad conditions were included. A no-focus control condition was also included. When participants were encouraged to adopt an outcome focus, they displayed high levels of sensitivity to discount magnitude, such that low level discounts resulted in low likelihood of shopping, while higher level discounts were met with a

significantly higher likelihood of shopping at the store. In both the no-focus control condition and the resolution focus condition, however, participants displayed a relative insensitivity to discount magnitude, as well as relatively higher likelihood of shopping at the store in the low-level discount conditions. This effect was predicted to occur due to the increase in focus on the positive experience of resolution itself.

Interestingly, though only limited conclusions can be based on the largely directional results of study 4, it allows for an interesting pre-resolution and post-resolution comparison with the results of study 8. In study 4, curious participants exhibited heightened levels of pre-resolution anticipated disappointment; this pattern mirrors that found in studies 1 and 3, in which no focus instructions were provided. Conversely, in study 8, which investigates post-resolution effects of focus, participants exhibited relative insensitivity to discount magnitude in both the no-focus control and resolution conditions. This pattern mirrors that which is found in the mystery ad conditions in studies 5-7, though no focus instructions were provided in those studies. These findings perhaps suggest that, pre-resolution, curious consumers are predisposed to exhibit a heightened focus on the potential outcome obtained; such a contention is theoretically consistent with conceptualizations of curiosity in which consumers are motivated to close an information gap. Furthermore, the pattern in essay 2 perhaps suggests that, after curiosity resolution, consumers' focus automatically shifts to include a greater focus on the experience of resolution relative to a focus on the outcomes obtained.

This research is both theoretically and practically relevant. Specifically, the current work offers a theoretical contribution by not only offering a more nuanced view of curiosity resolution, but also by providing an initial exploration of the consequences of such a conceptualization. In the studies included herein, the underlying mechanism of a relative focus

on the experience of curiosity and a focus on the outcome obtained was investigated via moderation procedures; the power of these foci to mediate curiosity resolution effects may be explored in future research. Importantly, studies 4 and 8 provide evidence suggesting that both researchers and practitioners can, to a certain extent, shift consumers' focus from considerations associated with the outcome obtained to considerations associated with curiosity resolution itself, and vice versa. Future work may seek to further investigate situational determinants influencing which focus consumers are likely to more heavily weigh.

This work suggests that, when eliciting and resolving curiosity, practitioners would do well to be aware of the differential ways in which consumers may react to anticipated and actual curiosity resolution. For instance, when consumers consider that future curiosity resolution yields an unknown outcome, they may strategically alter their expectations in order to avoid future disappointment. Therefore, marketers may want to attempt to explicitly manage consumers' expectations regarding the unknown outcome they will obtain. However, it is possible that previous experience with a consumption situation would serve to attenuate this effect, as consumers may then have internally generated reference points upon which to form expectations. Alternatively, a list of potential outcomes may prevent consumers from strategically altering their expectations; however, such an approach may result in expectancy disconfirmation effects.

Practitioners may also be interested in harnessing the power of curiosity in situations in which the outcome delivered is relatively undesired. For instance, as seen in studies 5-8, mystery ads significantly increased interest in and likelihood of shopping in the context of low-level discounts. However, when practitioners are offering desirable outcomes, such as high-level discounts, mystery ads are equally as effective as control ads.

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APPENDIX A: STUDY 1 MATERIALS

Instructions:

In this study, we're interested in examining the impact movies have had on people's daily lives. Specifically, we want to assess your familiarity with important Hollywood figures.

You will view 5 [blurred] images of Hollywood actors and actresses. After each image, you will be asked to enter the name of the actor/actress depicted.

Note that you should include the commonly accepted first and last name of the actor or actress. For instance, Christopher Robert Evans is more commonly known as "Chris Evans". Please attempt to spell these names correctly and capitalize appropriately, or else the computer will not recognize your answer as correct.

Manipulation check and dependent measure:

What is this actress' [actor's] name? (open response)

How certain are you that you have correctly named the actress in the image? 1 = Not Certain at All, 7 = Very Certain

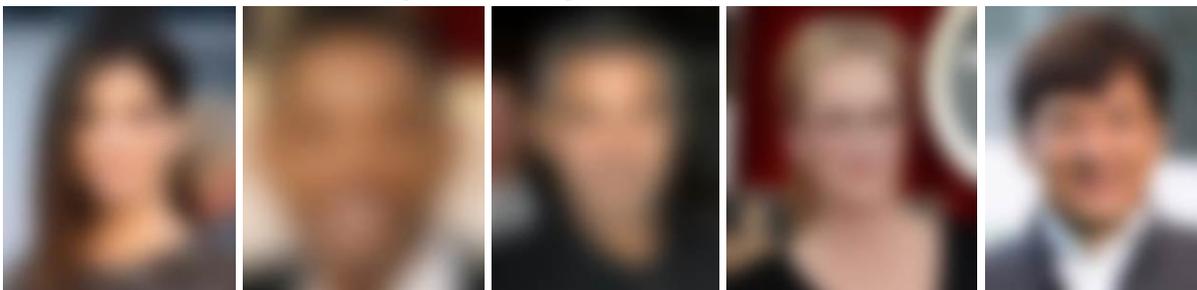
To what extent do you anticipate feeling disappointed after viewing the identities? 1 = Not at All, 7 = Very Much

Images used in the study (not actual size):

Images in the low-curiosity condition



Images in the high-curiosity condition



APPENDIX B: STUDY 2 MATERIALS

Instructions:

In this study, we're interested in examining the impact movies have had on people's daily lives. Specifically, we want to assess your familiarity with important Hollywood figures.

You will view 5 [blurred] images of Hollywood actors and actresses. After each image, you will be asked to enter the name of the actor/actress depicted.

Note that you should include the commonly accepted first and last name of the actor or actress. For instance, Christopher Robert Evans is more commonly known as "Chris Evans". Please attempt to spell these names correctly and capitalize appropriately, or else the computer will not recognize your answer as correct.

Measures:

What is this actress' [actor's] name? (open response)

How certain are you that you have correctly named the actress in the image? 1 = Not Certain at All, 7 = Very Certain

Before [after] resolution instructions:

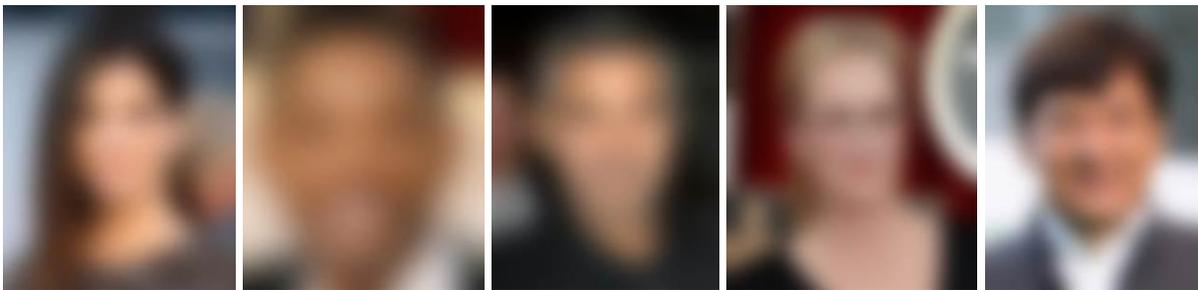
On the next page, we'll ask you about the task itself [we'll reveal the identities of the Hollywood figures presented in this study]. We will then reveal the identities of the Hollywood figures presented in this study [ask you about the task itself].

Anticipated disappointment measure: To what extent do you anticipate feeling disappointed after viewing the identities? 1 = Not at All, 7 = Very Much

Experienced disappointment measure: How disappointed do you feel after finding out the identities of the Hollywood figures? 1 = Not at All, 7 = Very Much

Images used in the study (not actual size):

Images (high-curiosity)



APPENDIX C: STUDY 3 MATERIALS

Instructions:

The internet is a big part of many people's daily lives. In this study, we're interested in examining the impact this medium has had. On the next screen, you will be presented with a common internet scenario. You will then be asked questions about that scenario on the following screens.

Stimuli for low [high] curiosity conditions:

Imagine that you're online, browsing through various websites. As you browse, you come across the following headline:

16-Year Old Student Carried His Little Brother on His Back For 111 Miles to Raise Awareness for Cerebral Palsy [The Amazing Reason a 16-Year Old Student Carried His Little Brother on His Back For 111 Miles]

Before [after] resolution instructions:

On the next page, we'll ask you about how you feel about the headline you read [reveal the content of the article related to the headline you read]. We will then reveal the content of the article related to the headline [ask you about how you feel about the headline].

Anticipated disappointment measure: How much do you anticipate feeling disappointed after reading the article? 1 = Not at All, 7 = Very Much

Experienced disappointment measure: How disappointed do you feel after reading the article? 1 = Not at All, 7 = Very Much

Article (was accompanied by appropriate low or high curiosity headline):

By Sarah Kovac

An 111-mile walk would be a meaningful accomplishment for anyone. But it was even more so for Hunter and Braden Gandee, neither of whom would have started the journey if not for the other. Braden, 9, was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at age 1. He usually uses a walker to get around. But, inspired by a dream their mom had, Braden's 16-year-old older brother Hunter decided to take a walk with Braden on his back to raise awareness for CP. Hunter said he is inspired by "just seeing my brother fight through all the struggles and how he battles everything with a positive attitude."

"I thought the idea was crazy," Braden said. Crazy or not, he agreed to go along for the ride. The brothers, who live with their family in Temperance, Michigan, first walked together in June 2014 for 40 miles, then they did it again the following year for 57 miles. This year's walk was the longest yet for the brothers, totaling a whopping 111 miles and taking five days to complete.

"There was never point where I was tempted to quit," Hunter said, "but there was a point where I was worried we might not be able to go on. On the fourth day, I started having a lot of pain in my hip, and it got really bad at a few points." He says a friend prayed for him, and he was able to complete the journey.

Hunter carried Braden on his back for all but the last half mile, which Braden completed with his walker. The journey took them from the steps of Bedford High School to the Michigan capitol. Friends, family, and complete strangers joined in along the trek. Hunter is the oldest of four siblings, including Kerragan, 15, Braden, and Kellen, 8. All four Gandee siblings participated in the walk, which they've started calling The Cerebral Palsy Swagger. "Me and my siblings are just like normal siblings," Hunter says. "We fight, laugh, and have fun together. Braden just has some extra needs, so we have to be there for him a little extra." Braden goes to therapy every day, and he says he has to "learn how to do things like walking that most others don't have to learn."

Cerebral palsy is a neurological disorder that affects body movement, muscle coordination, and balance. It usually affects the part of the brain that's in charge of muscle movements, and while it cannot be cured, early treatment can make a big difference. "I wish that people would realize that people with CP are just like other people," Braden said about his condition. "They just have to work a little bit harder."

"Our goal for this walk was to challenge the world at all levels to take the necessary steps towards inclusion," Hunter says. He also helped to build an accessible playground at Braden's school and hopes that their walks bring awareness to those flaws in our society that create unintentional barriers for people who happen to have disabilities. "I hope more people will learn about cerebral palsy so they can raise awareness," Braden said. This will be their last Cerebral Palsy Swagger as Braden is now 70 pounds and Hunter is getting ready for college next year. But I have a feeling their journey toward inclusiveness won't stop here.

APPENDIX D: STUDY 4 MATERIALS

Instructions:

In this study, we're interested in examining how individuals evaluate products. On the next screen, you will be presented with a promotion from a snack subscription service. You will then be asked questions about that promotion on the following screens.

The snack food subscription service offers monthly deliveries of specialized snacks.

Study stimuli (not actual size):

Resolution focus, low and high curiosity conditions, respectively:

SnakBox

Your first package includes:

- Caramel Popcorn
- Milk Chocolate Covered Almonds
- Dark Chocolate Pretzel Crisps
- Peanut Caramel Bars
- Shortbread Cookies

... all five selective snacks sent to sweeten your day!

Sign up today for mouthwatering treats delivered right to your door!

Imagine what it would be like to open your SnakBox package!



SnakBox

Your first package includes:

- Caramel Popcorn
- Milk Chocolate Covered Almonds

... and three more of our selective snacks sent to sweeten your day!

Sign up today for mouthwatering treats delivered right to your door!

Imagine what it would be like to open your SnakBox package!



Outcome focus, low and high curiosity conditions, respectively:

SnakBox

Your first package includes:

- Caramel Popcorn
- Milk Chocolate Covered Almonds
- Dark Chocolate Pretzel Crisps
- Peanut Caramel Bars
- Shortbread Cookies

... all five selective snacks sent to sweeten your day!

Sign up today for mouthwatering treats delivered right to your door!

Imagine what it would be like to receive your SnakBox treats!



SnakBox

Your first package includes:

- Caramel Popcorn
- Milk Chocolate Covered Almonds

... and three more of our selective snacks sent to sweeten your day!

Sign up today for mouthwatering treats delivered right to your door!

Imagine what it would be like to receive your SnakBox treats!



Dependent measures:

How likely are you to subscribe to Snakbox? 1 = Not Likely at All, 7 = Very Likely.

To what extent do you anticipate feeling disappointed after opening the package? 1 = Not at All, 7 = Very Much

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE DISCOUNT MYSTERY ADS

Selection of real mystery discount mystery ads:

ONLINE ONLY
MYSTERY SAVINGS
TODAY ONLY

20%

A promotional banner for 'Mystery Savings' featuring a colorful dotted border around the text. Below the text are several black ovals, one of which contains a purple '20%' discount.

BANANA REPUBLIC
MEN WOMEN PETITES

ONE
OF LIFE'S
LITTLE
MYSTERIES

WHAT WILL YOU SAVE?*

Exclusively online.

[SOLVE YOUR MYSTERY NOW](#)

A Banana Republic advertisement with a clean, minimalist design. It features the brand name at the top, navigation links for 'MEN', 'WOMEN', and 'PETITES', and large, bold typography for the headline. A call to action button is located at the bottom.

LOFT NEW ARRIVALS | OUTFIT IDEAS | PETITES | SALE | HOROSCOPES

FREE SHIPPING ON ORDERS OF \$125*

**t o
m o
r r
o w**

we're kicking off
Memorial Day Weekend
(with a *really* big sale)

Until then...
[SEE WHAT'S NEW >](#)

A vertical advertisement for Loft with a green background. The word 'tomorrow' is written in large, colorful, lowercase letters. The text below promotes a Memorial Day Weekend sale.

What starts in stores & online in

0 4 : 3 1 : 0 6 ?
HOURS MINUTES SECONDS

**A once-
in-a-
season
kind of
sale**

Until then...
[SEE WHAT'S NEW >](#)

A vertical advertisement with a blue background. It features a pink header with a countdown timer '04:31:06?' and the text 'What starts in stores & online in'. The main headline reads 'A once-in-a-season kind of sale'.

APPENDIX F: STUDY 5 MATERIALS

Instructions:

In this study, imagine that you recently signed up for a clothing store's email newsletter.

Imagine that you received a promotional email from the clothing store. This promotional email will be displayed on the next screen; after viewing the promotional email, you will be asked to evaluate the promotion on the following screens.

Study stimuli (not actual size):

5% control ad:



50% control ad:



Mystery ad:



NEXT SCREEN [mystery ad conditions only]

The email promotion included a link you can click to find out what you'll save. When you click the link, you see the webpage below:

5% condition:



50% condition:



Dependent measure and manipulation check:

To what extent do you feel interested in the promotion? 1 = Not at All, 7 = Very Much.

What was the percent off offered in the promotion? (open response; coded as 0 if incorrect, 1 if correct)

APPENDIX G: STUDY 6 MATERIALS

Instructions:

In this study, imagine that you recently signed up for a clothing store's email newsletter.

Imagine that you received a promotional email from the clothing store. This promotional email will be displayed on the next screen; after viewing the promotional email, you will be asked to evaluate the promotion on the following screens.

Study stimuli (not actual size):

5% control ad:



10% control ad:



50% control ad:



Mystery ad:



NEXT SCREEN [mystery ad conditions only]

The email promotion included a link you can click to find out what you'll save. When you click the link, you see the webpage below:

5% condition:



10% condition:



50% condition:



Dependent measure and manipulation check:

To what extent do you feel interested in the promotion? 1 = Not at All, 7 = Very Much.

What was the percent off offered in the promotion? (open response; coded as 0 if incorrect, 1 if correct)

APPENDIX H: STUDY 7 MATERIALS

Instructions:

In this study, imagine that you recently signed up for a pizzeria's email newsletter.

Imagine that you received a promotional email from the pizzeria. This promotional email will be displayed on the next screen; after viewing the promotional email, you will be asked to evaluate the promotion on the following screens.

Study stimuli (not actual size):

5% control ad:



10% control ad:



60% control ad:

THIS WEEKEND ONLY

60% OFF

YOUR ENTIRE ORDER



Click here
to save!

Mystery ad:

THIS WEEKEND ONLY

??% OFF

YOUR ENTIRE ORDER



Click here to find
out how much
you'll save!

NEXT SCREEN [mystery ad conditions only]

The email promotion included a link you can click to find out what you'll save. When you click the link, you see the webpage below:

5% condition:



10% condition:



60% condition:

THIS WEEKEND ONLY
60% OFF
YOUR ENTIRE ORDER



Dependent measure and manipulation check:

To what extent do you feel interested in the sale? 1 = Not at All, 7 = Very Much.

What was the percent off offered in the promotion? (open response; coded as 0 if incorrect, 1 if correct)

APPENDIX I: STUDY 8 MATERIALS

Instructions:

In this study, imagine that you recently signed up for a clothing store's email newsletter.

Imagine that you received a promotional email from the clothing store. This promotional email will be displayed on the next screen; after viewing the promotional email, you will be asked to evaluate the promotion on the following screens.

Study stimuli (not actual size):

Control no-focus condition:



Resolution focus condition:



Outcome focus condition:



NEXT SCREEN

Low discount condition:

The email promotion included a link you can click to find out what you'll save. When you click the link, you see the webpage below:



High discount condition:

The email promotion included a link you can click to find out what you'll save. When you click the link, you see the webpage below:



Dependent measure and manipulation check:

How likely are you to shop at this clothing store? 1 = Not Likely at All, 7 = Very Likely.

What was the percent off offered in the promotion? (open response; coded as 0 if incorrect, 1 if correct)