

BETTER TOGETHER?
SOCIAL INFLUENCES IN CONSUMER GOAL PURSUIT

by

LAUREN TRABOLD

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Date

Stephen Gould_____

Chair of Examining Committee

Date

Joseph Weintrop_____

Executive Officer

Lauren Block_____

David Luna_____

Chrissy Mitakakis_____

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

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Lauren Trabold

Advisor: Dr. Stephen Gould

Nearly everyone can recall a time when they established a goal, whether it was to resist the temptation of consumer goods or motivate oneself to get to the gym. It is a commonly implied by consumer information sources that having a partner who shares the same goal will have a positive influence on one's own goal pursuit. Previous literature has suggested that significant others represent a strong influence in shaping intrapersonal goals (Fitzsimons and Bargh 2003; Shah 2003; Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka and Finkel 2009). However, research thus far has not explored the influence that partnering with someone who is also pursuing the same goal has on perceptions of the goal, level of goal achievement, and related product choices. We hypothesize that consumers will perceive goal pursuit with a partner to be easier and feel that they have a greater likelihood of achieving their goal than if they did not have a partner. However, pursuing a goal jointly invites a variety of new social influences on one's goal pursuit. By collaborating with a partner, a consumer is inviting another person into their goal directed behavior. Research has shown that consumers may behave differently in the presence of others to better manage how they appear (Leary and Kowalski, 1990) and additionally may make different product choices

when others are included in the decision (Aldag and Fuller, 1993; Dhar, Menon, and Maach, 2004). Interestingly, these influences may vary depending upon the other's gender and, in particular, whether the two people have the same or opposite gender. The current research explores perceptions of goals for consumers pursuing them both with and without a partner, finding that those pursuing with a partner believe the goal is easier and have increased self-efficacy, or belief in their ability to achieve the goal. Furthermore, we illustrate that those pursuing a goal with a partner exhibit a higher level of goal achievement. Thirdly, we introduce the influence of others into consumer decision-making processes, by examining the influence that goal achievement with a partner vs. individually – goal pursuit structure - has on product choices. Specifically, we find that those pursuing a goal with a partner are more likely to make a better choice, which contains adequate levels of essential components, yet lacks unnecessary attributes. Lastly, we examine the importance of the gender of one's partner in a joint goal situation and find that, while it does not influence goal achievement, it influences the downstream consumer behavior, such as product choices, relevant to a goal pursued with a member of the opposite gender.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success.” – Unknown

When pursuing a goal, a commonly implied theory in consumer information sources is that having a partner to work with (e.g. someone to go to the gym with) will make it easier to successfully pursue the goal. This presumes that goals are easier to strive toward with a likeminded partner and that joint pursuit makes each person more likely to achieve the goal. Furthermore, age-old proverbs like the one above reinforce this belief and it is utilized in marketing campaigns for various consumer brands. For example, a sign at a local gym in New York suggests bringing a friend to the gym because you’ll have a new workout partner helping you succeed. Similarly, celebrity trainer Jillian Michaels suggests finding a “partner in crime” (http://www.jillian_michaels.com/fitness-and-diet-tips/workout-buddy), while MAC Cosmetics advertises for consumers to “Shop Together.” This extends to consumer learning as well, for example, those studying to be teachers learn about the benefits of group learning, and its’ positive influence on student achievement (Guvenc 2010). In the present research, I examine the veracity of these claims. Is a consumer really more likely to go to the gym if they are meeting a partner there? Are consumers more likely to acquire information if they are learning with a partner? And what ramifications will there be for consumers who choose to shop together? Given the pervasiveness of the information suggesting that jointly pursuing a goal will increase success, it is surprising that the truthfulness of this theory has not been formally tested in consumer behavior research.

In the current paper, I explore this phenomenon and build a natural extension from work regarding the influence of others on intrapersonal goals to the direct influence of another

consumer in a joint goal situation. This is important to study because it is naturally occurring situation about which people are given much previously untested information. Additionally, it is equally critical to examine the underlying mechanisms through which others can influence our goal pursuits and the resultant impact on downstream consumer behavior. We explore potential benefits of joint goal pursuit, such as increased positive perceptions of the goal, including ease and likelihood of successful goal achievement, and hindrances introduced by the addition of social factors, such as gender salience, in comparison to individual goal pursuit. Additionally, we observe the driving mechanism behind these differences, and subsequent influences on related product decisions such as willingness to pay and item choice.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Influence of Others on Goals

Research has illustrated that humans are unique in their capacity to understand the goal intentions of others and to subsequently engage in collaborative action toward the same goal (Tomasello et al. 2005). This innate human capability, combined with the general motivation for belonging, attachment, and relationships with others (Andersen and Chen 2002), is suggestive of the inherent nature of joint goal pursuit. Within the domain of consumer behavior, individuals are constantly setting goals to which they strive to adhere, and consumer information sources suggest that utilizing this unique ability to pursue goals with a partner will increase consumers' successful goal achievement. Given the ubiquitous nature of this information, studying the influence of goal pursuit structure is important. "Goal pursuit structure" is being used to describe whether a participant is engaging in a goal individually vs. jointly. By studying its influence on goal perceptions and achievement will be a fruitful extension of current research about interpersonal relationships and goal pursuit. Furthermore, exploring the underlying mechanisms of the influence of others in this context is necessary and, importantly, can aid consumers in their decisions regarding goal pursuit.

Extant literature has explored the influence of others on an individual's goal pursuit in a variety of domains. Given the omnipresent influence of interpersonal relationships in life, it is not surprising that research has suggested that relationship partners represent a strong influence in shaping individual's goals (Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka and Finkel 2009). However, research thus far has not explored joint goal pursuit in which two individuals possess the same goal and choose to strive together in order to reach their desired end state. Rather, literature has

focused on the dynamic influence of close interpersonal relationships, such as romantic partners, friends, parents, and spouses, and the influence that these partners have on an individual's personal goal pursuit (Fitzsimons and Bargh 2003; Shah 2003; Rusbult et al. 2009; Ackerman, Goldstein, Shapiro and Bargh 2009; Anderson and Chen 2002). While this research often asked one relationship partner to provide insightful information about their interpersonal goals rather than engaging in a joint task as we do in our studies, it can lend helpful insights into the joint goal process that we are investigating.

Much of this research has stemmed from the auto-motive model of non-conscious goal pursuit. This model suggests that situational cues such as environmental stimuli can non-consciously activate related goals (Bargh & Gollwitzer 1994; Bargh et al. 2001 as cited in Fitzsimons & Bargh 2003). When goals are non-consciously activated, they can influence behavior and stimulate goal-pursuit completely outside of conscious awareness. Fitzsimons and Bargh (2003) extended this model by demonstrating that relationship partners may act as relevant environmental cues for non-conscious goal activation, adding to the perceived ease of such goals.

Fitzsimons and Bargh (2003) studied interpersonal goals that a person may have, such as a basketball player trying to impress his coach or a child trying to make their mother proud (Fitzsimons and Bargh 2003). The influence of others was shown to increase goal performance. In addition, a variety of group behavior research also suggests that consumers will perceive joint goals to be easier than individually pursued goals.

Consumers may believe that their individual contributions are not visible and expend less effort when they are part of a group, as compared to working alone (Jackson and Harkins, 1985). When multiple people have teamed up to achieve a goal, consumers may focus on the combined

effort and view their individual contributions as less important than the combined contribution of the team. Thus, in a joint goal, consumers may view their partner as someone with whom to share in the work to achieve a goal. When multiple people are pursuing the same goal, members of the group tend to perceive a diffusion of responsibility (Myers, Murdoch, and Smith, 1970); therefore feeling as though they personally have less responsibility. This research suggests that consumers will perceive the work required to reach a joint goal to be dispersed amongst themselves and their partner. This may result in consumers believing joint goals to be easier, as there is someone else to shoulder a portion of the work, whereas pursuing a goal individually requires the consumer to do all of the work themselves. Formally,

H1: Consumers will have more positive perceptions of the goal when pursuing it jointly vs. individually.

Social Factors in Goal Pursuit

Social Support and Accountability

In a collaborative situation, a variety of social factors are introduced that are not present in individual goal pursuit. We believe these social factors may alter goal perceptions, as mentioned above, and subsequently have a large influence on each consumer's level of achievement beyond the impact of significant others as explored in extant literature regarding intrapersonal goals. As shown above, the information generally available to consumers consistently touts the necessity of a support system. Social support has been shown to positively impact a person's feelings of wellbeing, reduce susceptibility to stress, and positively impact bodily functions such as cardiovascular health and blood pressure, and boost self-esteem which

subsequently aid in goal achievement (Brunstein, Dangelmayer, Schultheiss 1996; Feeney, 2004; Uchino, Cacioppo, Kiecolt-Glaser 1996; Crocker and Canevello 2008).

Lack of social support was found to be a predictor of goal disengagement by participants in a weight loss intervention study, while those with an adequate system of social support were more likely to remain active participants in the study (Huisman, Maes, De Gucht, Chatrou, and Haak 2009). Furthermore, research also suggests that commitment to a difficult goal will be higher when others possess similarly difficult goals (Hollenbeck and Klein 1987). These studies suggest that the support of others, both directly in a consumer's goal and via their own attempts to achieve a goal of similar difficulty, has a positive influence on a consumer's success in goal pursuit. Thus we predict that those pursuing a goal jointly, versus individually, will be more successful at achieving their goals. Formally,

H2: Those pursuing a goal jointly (vs. individually) should achieve a higher level of goal achievement.

Self-Efficacy

Aside from having social support, consumers jointly pursuing a goal have the added responsibility of providing support for their partner. Thus there is a supplemental motivation not to let down their partner. Because consumers care about meeting the expectations that others have for them, they feel accountable to others to achieve what is expected of them (Ellingsen et al. 2010). Pursuing a goal jointly ensures that a significant other knows a consumer's goal intentions. Therefore, the act of jointly pursuing a goal creates public expectations regarding one's behavior, which may provide an additional incentive for achieving the goal (Salancik 1977

as cited in Hollenbeck and Klein 1987; Lee, Earley, Lituchy, and Wagner 1991; Carillo and Dewatripont 2008 as cited in Koch and Nafziger 2008).

The public nature of joint goal pursuit should positively influence commitment through the accountability to others; consumers do not want to appear unfavorably to others by behaving inconsistently with their declared behavioral intentions (Hollenbeck and Klein 1987), nor disappoint their significant other by failing to meet expectations (Ellingsen et al. 2010).

Accountability is often cited in consumer information sources, as illustrated above.

Accountability relies entirely on a goal being publicly known by others. This may encourage consumers engaging in joint goal pursuit to strive harder to achieve their goal than to those pursuing a goal individually; it is imminent that failure will be public in a joint goal situation and consumers will likely try to avoid the negative image that this will portray to their partner.

Moreover, Moisiso and Beruchashvili (2010) find that members of a weight loss support group consistently mention accountability to the group as the cornerstone of their successful goal pursuit. Ostensibly, membership in a group in which others are pursuing the same goal allows members to increase their goal achievement. Interestingly, the members had low self-efficacy and believed themselves to be unable to achieve their goals alone; they believed that their accountability to the group compensated for their inability to achieve the goal individually. This is suggestive of a belief that low self-efficacy, or low “beliefs about one’s capabilities to learn and perform behaviors” (Bandura 1986; Bandura 1997 as cited in Schunk 2003) can be counteracted by membership in a group of consumers that are pursuing the same goal.

Self-efficacy has been shown to have a large impact on consumer performance by influencing consumer motivation, learning, effort, and achievement of tasks (Schunk 1995 as cited in Schunk 2003). Those with higher levels of self-efficacy exhibit higher levels of

motivation, persistence, and effort, resulting in higher levels of achievement (Bandura and Wood 1989; Schunk 2003). Efficacy can also occur at a group level; collective efficacy refers to group's shared belief in its ability to achieve a desired level of performance (Bandura 1997 as cited in Sijts and Latham 2000) and has been shown to positively impact group performance (Seijts and Latham 2000).

H3: The influence of goal pursuit structure on achievement will be mediated by self-efficacy, such that those pursuing a goal with others (vs. individually) will experience higher (lower) self-efficacy, and subsequently result in greater (lower) goal achievement.

The Influence of Others on Consumer Choice

In addition to the influence that working with a partner will have on goal pursuit, we believe that this influence will extend into future decision making within the domain of the goal. We predict that consumers pursuing a goal jointly will receive an increase in self-efficacy and because efficacy is domain specific (Schunk 1990), the effects of efficacy should extend to consumer decisions within the domain of the goal. Those making a decision with a partner, and therefore experiencing higher self-efficacy, should make better decisions than those making decisions alone. People with higher confidence in their performance are less concerned with others' opinions and social rejection, better able to handle complex decision making processes (Bearden et al 2001), thus making a purposeful choice of the option that best suits their needs as a consumer. Those pursuing a goal individually, and therefore not experiencing any increased feelings of efficacy, may simply aim to choose the option that appears to be the best based upon heuristics (e.g. contains the greatest number of features or has the highest price), because they

will be unable to decipher how the product information will allow the options to satisfy their needs.

Moreover, we predict that, because consumers working together will better achieve their goals, consumers pursuing a goal jointly will attain a higher level of expertise in the domain of the goal, and therefore be more likely to utilize their knowledge to make an optimal product choice. Experts are able to identify the relevant information in their decision making process (Johnson and Russo 1984; Punj and Staelin 1983 as cited in Wood and Lynch 2002). Additionally, consumers with greater knowledge are able to weed out dominated alternatives, which should allow them to more accurately determine the inferior product option than consumers with a lower level of knowledge (Wood and Lynch 2002).

Social influence is common in product choices. Consumers often participate in collaborative shopping with a “purchase pal” (Zhu et al. 2010; Woodside and Sims 1976). It is not uncommon for consumers to shop with a partner in order to utilize their friend’s expertise, obtain information, and make the shopping experience more enjoyable (Morris 1987 as cited in Zhu et al. 2010). Consumers are especially likely to shop together when the product is relevant to both parties or if it is an expensive product (Lim and Beatty 2011). Given the natural occurrence of a situation in which consumers are pursuing a goal together that involves a product, the examination of joint product choice seems to be a worthwhile aspect of joint goal pursuit to examine in our research.

Formally,

H4: Consumers pursuing a goal with a partner (vs. individually) will be more (less) likely to choose the optimal product option.

In general, the existing literature on the influence of others on consumer goal pursuit mainly examines consumers' perceptions about others and their general influence on one's personal goals. Little research has examined the effect of two individuals actively collaborating toward a shared goal. In the present research, we specifically examine the situation in which two people are working jointly toward the same goal in order to determine if a partner lives up to consumer perceptions of increased likelihood of successful goal pursuit.

Influence of Other's Gender

Much extant literature on the influence of others asks participants to imagine and decision making scenario with their significant other, such as boyfriend, girlfriend, or spouse, mainly of opposite gender. In a recent study by Fitzsimons and Finkel (2011), subjects were asked to think about how their romantic partner can help with a goal. Subsequently, participants "outsourced" their regulatory efforts to their partner and put in less effort to plan their goal directed behavior. While this study would suggest that pursuing a goal with a partner might be detrimental to success, the participants simply imagined their goal pursuit; real behavior was not measured. Additionally, only female participants were recruited and were asked to indicate their perceptions of pursuing a goal with their male romantic partners. Gender research indicates that group behavior differs drastically between males and females, and group dynamics depend largely on the gender composition of the group and how salient gender is during group interaction.

Social dynamics shift in mixed gender, versus same gender, pairs and that men and women behave differently in a group situation. Extant literature has found females to be more cooperative than males, more relationship oriented, and to exhibit higher relational self-

construal, whereas men tend to be more task oriented (Kirschner and Tomasello 2010; Fisher and Gregoire 2006 as cited in Lim and Beatty 2011; Cross, Bacon, and Morris 2000). Therefore, group decision-making may be heavily influenced by the gender composition of the members. Partnering with someone of the same gender may facilitate cooperation in a joint goal situation (Chen et al. 2008), whereas, mixed gender pairings increase the evaluative concerns of both parties (Hertel, Kerr, and Messe 2000).

In some choice situations using mixed gender couples, female preferences tend to dominate the pair's decision (Beharry-Borg, Hensher, and Scarpa 2009), which might alter the influences of a partner in a product choice scenario in comparison to the choices made by same gender pairs. Furthermore, recent literature suggests that interacting with a member of the opposite sex heightens the appeal of unique products and causes males to be more risk-seeking in order to attract a mate (Griskevicius, Goldstein, Mortenson, Sundie, Cialdini, and Kenrick, 2009; Baker and Maner, 2008; Knutson, Wimmer, Kuhnen, and Winkielman, 2008 as cited in Griskevicius and Kenrick, forthcoming). Additionally, in the presence of women, men tend to spend money more freely and are willing to spend greater sums of money as a social signal designed to attract the opposite sex (Sundie, Griskevicius, Vohs, Kenrick, Tybur, and Beal 2011). In contrast, women become more cooperative and helpful in the presence of men, in order to attract a male mate (Griskevicius, Goldstein, et al. 2006; Griskevicius et al. 2007). Moreover, new research suggests that actual interaction or the mere anticipation of interaction with a female will diminish a male's cognitive performance; the same does not occur for females (Nauts, Metzmacher, Verwijmeren, Rommeswinkel, and Karremans 2012). This literature suggests that the aim of decision-making processes used in the presence of the opposite gender may differ from the decisions made when the objective is to make a good product decision.

This literature suggests that gender is an important factor in joint situations. We conjecture that the social dynamic introduced by interactions with the opposite sex will negatively impact joint goal achievement, such that consumers in opposite gender dyads will have a lower level of goal achievement than those in same gender dyads (H5). Additionally, this may negatively impact their decision-making in related product choices. Specifically, we believe that consumers partnered in opposite gender dyads will make a product choice that is the most expensive and advanced option (H6). Formally,

H5: Consumers pursuing a goal with a partner of the opposite gender (vs. pursuing the goal with a partner of the same gender) will have a lower (higher) level of goal achievement.

H6: Consumers in opposite gender dyads (vs. same gender dyads) will be less (more) likely to make an optimal product choice.

CHAPTER 3: THE CURRENT RESEARCH

We test our six hypotheses across 4 studies. In study 1, we examine consumer perceptions of joint versus individually pursued goals, specifically regarding perceptions of how easy the goal is and their perceptions of their ability to achieve the goal. In study 2, we determine whether or not there is truth to these perceptions in a real goal situation. Additionally, we examine achievement of a learning goal for both individuals and those pursuing goals jointly, in same gender dyads, in order to study the influence that a partner has on success. We measure goal achievement objectively by asking subjects to answer questions about the information they learned. In study 3, we rule out an alternative explanation that the performance of those in the joint condition (that both engaged in the learning task and responded together to the measures about the information they learned) was not simply an artifact due to the fact that “two heads are better than one.” Finally, in study 4, we examine the influence of gender on decision making within the domain of the consumer goal. Specifically, we engaged subjects in a goal to learn about a product in order to make a good product decision. Subjects either worked individually or were randomly assigned to be paired into same gender or opposite gender dyads so that we could examine the influence of gender on goal achievement, as well as the downstream influences on consumer behavior.

STUDY 1

PRETEST: DETERMINING POTENTIAL GOALS THAT CONSUMERS PURSUE TOGETHER

Method

In order to accurately test our hypotheses, we ran a pretest in order to determine a goal which consumers would pursue with a partner in their everyday lives. Sixteen students participated in our pretest. They were 56% male, 44% female and were recruited from a large northeastern university. We pretested six goals: saving money, studying, weight loss, following a healthy diet, learning about a new product, and exercising.

Results

Subjects were asked to “indicate how much you feel another person can help you successfully achieve each goal” on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not helpful at all) to 7 (very helpful). Descriptive analysis indicates that another person is perceived to be most helpful in a goal to learn about a new product ($M = 5.75$) and least helpful for a money savings goal (3.56). The means are displayed in Figure 1A. Based on a repeated measures analysis, both Saving Money and Studying had significantly lower means than the other 4 goals ($p < .05$). Similarly, based on a repeated measures analysis, both exercising and learning about a new product had significantly higher means than the other 4 goals ($p < .01$).

FIGURE 1A: The Helpfulness of Others in Successfully Achieving Goals

Goal	Mean	Standard Deviation
Saving Money	3.56	1.896
Studying	4.06	2.516
Losing Weight	4.63	1.628
Eating Healthy	4.81	2.257
Exercise	5.5	1.549
Learn About A New Product	5.75	1.183

Discussion

In order to conduct a conservative test of our hypotheses, we chose to use a savings goal in Study 1. The influence of a partner was rated to be the least helpful for a savings goal, relative to the other five goals that we pretested. Therefore, if we find support for our hypotheses regarding consumer perceptions of joint goals using a goal in which a partner is viewed to be the least helpful, this will strongly suggest that these perceptions do exist in consumers' minds.

EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF JOINT AND INDIVIDUAL GOALS

Method

In Study 1, we aimed to establish consumer perceptions of joint vs. individually pursued goals. Specifically, we tested that goals are more positively perceived when pursued with a partner (H1).

74 respondents participated in a 2 (goal pursuit structure: joint goal (JG) vs. individual goal (IG)) between-subjects design. Participants were 41% male and 59% female and were

recruited from a large northeastern university. All subjects were given an imaginary savings goal. In the IG condition, subjects were asked to imagine that they are going on a trip to Cancun and have set a goal to save \$500 in order to pay for it. In the JG condition, subjects were told they were going on the trip with a friend. In the IG condition, instructions stated “*You have decided to save money and have set a goal for yourself to save \$500 in order to pay for the trip.*” In the JG condition, instructions stated “*You have decided to save money together and have set a goal to each save \$500 in order to pay for the trip.*” Each subject, regardless of condition, was to imagine that they would be saving \$500; the major difference was simply whether or not someone else was also saving \$500. We showed participants the picture in Figure 1B in order to emphasize the fact that they were responsible for saving \$500 themselves, even in the JG condition. We then measured subjects’ perceptions of this goal.

FIGURE 1B: Savings Graphics Shown to Study Participants



Results

Goal Perceptions. In support of H1, analysis revealed that those in the JG condition felt the goal would be easier ($M_{JG} = 5.61$ vs. $M_{IG} = 5.05$, $F(1, 25) = 6.05$, $p < .03$) and had higher self-efficacy, or belief in their likelihood of successful goal achievement ($M_{JG} = 5.89$ vs. $M_{IG} = 5.47$, $F(1, 25) = 6.69$, $p < .02$) than those in the IG condition. Expectations of success are

considered to be conceptually analogous to self-efficacy (Schunk, 1990), and thus we measured it in this way. In Figures 1C and 1D, we illustrate the main results of study 1.

FIGURE 1C: The Effect of Imagined Goal Pursuit Structure on Perceptions of Ease

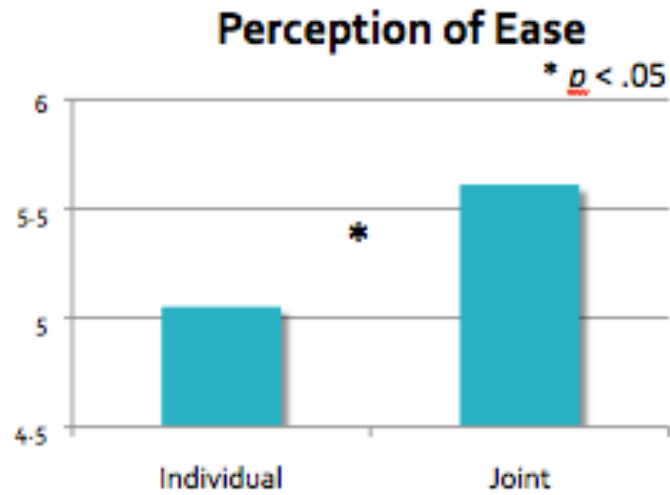


FIGURE 1D: The Effect of Imagined Goal Pursuit Structure on Perceptions of Self-Efficacy



Discussion

The results of study 1 indicate that consumer beliefs generally are reflective of consumer information; specifically, consumers perceive a goal to be easier and that they are more likely to achieve the goal when it is pursued with a partner, in support of hypotheses 1 and 2. Participants given a joint goal had more positive perceptions of the goal, as well as their ability to achieve the savings goal. However, participants merely imagined pursuing a goal; therefore, it is difficult to interpret their perceptions of control unless we measure them in a real joint goal scenario. We examine this further in our subsequent studies.

A potential limitation of this study is that those in the joint condition were told that they were saving \$500 and that their partner was also saving \$500. The total amount to be saved was \$1000, versus \$500 total in the individual condition. We did emphasize that each person would be saving \$500, however we cannot control for subject perceptions of the total amount to be saved. We were sure to emphasize that each person would be saving \$500 both in the verbal instructions as well as illustrating this graphically by showing money savings jars illustrated in Figure 1B. Furthermore, as our results show, participants in the JG condition perceived the goal to be easier to achieve. Therefore, we are confident that subjects clearly understood that their individual responsibility was the same regardless of condition and that our results reflect differences in perceptions due to our manipulation.

STUDY 2

PRETEST: PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS

Method

The results of study 1 indicate that the perceived benefits of pursuing a goal jointly are widely held. In study 2, we wanted to test whether these perceptions were accurate in a real goal situation, and, importantly, whether achievement of the goal differs between those pursuing a goal jointly vs. individually (H3). Additionally, we wanted to examine the underlying mechanism and test whether differences in achievement are mediated by self-efficacy (H4). We predict that those pursuing a goal jointly (vs. individually) will experience higher (lower) self-efficacy, and subsequently result in greater (lower) goal achievement.

In study 2, we decided to utilize a goal scenario in which participants learned about a new product, in order to compare whether pursuing this goal with a partner would result in greater acquisition of knowledge. As shown in our goal pretest, consumers believe that others can be very helpful in achieving the goal of learning about new products; learning about a new product was ranked highest in terms of the influence of a partner in successfully achieving the goal. Thus, we can assume it is a realistic goal scenario. Additionally, this goal is related to a person's everyday consumer behavior, making it an optimal choice to pursue in the context of marketing and consumer product choices. In order to ensure that the learning task we used in study 2 could be completed and measured in the lab, we ran a pretest in order to determine the length and content of our product description.

Thirty-six students participated in a 2 cell (product description: long vs. short) between subjects design. Subjects were 47% male and 53% female and were recruited from a large

northeastern university. Subjects were randomly assigned to read either a one-page or two-page product description of the Canon SX30 IS camera and were given 5 minutes to do so, under the guise of learning about the product in order to make an informed evaluation. At the end of 5 minutes, participants were no longer able to refer back to the product description.

Subjects were then given 10 multiple-choice questions based on the product information asking about a variety of camera features (see Appendix B) designed to assess the subjects' level of learning. Both the one-page and two-page product descriptions contained adequate information for subjects to answer all 10 questions correctly; the two-page description contained the same first page as the one-page description, followed by a second page that simply went into greater detail about various camera functions. After completing these 10 questions, subjects were asked a variety of measures regarding the amount and adequacy of the information, their affective state, purchase likelihood, willingness to pay and self-efficacy. Finally, respondents were asked to report demographics such as their age, income, and gender.

Results

Goal Achievement. We ran an ANOVA to compare the mean number of multiple-choice questions about the camera information correctly. Our results suggest that there was no effect of the length of the product description on the number of questions answered correctly ($M_{\text{short}} = 5.53$ vs. $M_{\text{long}} = 5.79$, $F(1, 35) = 0.114$, $p > .05$).

Self-Efficacy. Additionally, subjects were asked to indicate their level of self-efficacy reflected in their ability to correctly answer the questions on a scale from 0 (no questions correct) to 10 (all questions correct). We ran an ANOVA to compare the mean responses and found there

to be no effect of the length of the product description on participants self-efficacy ($M_{short} = 5.29$ vs. $M_{long} = 4.79$, $F(1, 35) = 0.317$, $p > .05$).

Perceptions of Product Description. Furthermore, we measured participants students' perceptions of having enough information (measured on a scale from 1 = not enough to 7 = too much) and there was no effect of product description length on their perceived ability to answer the questions ($M_{short} = 4.29$ vs. $M_{long} = 5.11$, $F(1, 35) = 2.312$, $p > .05$) or to make a camera purchase ($M_{short} = 5.12$ vs. $M_{long} = 4.74$, $F(1, 35) = 0.702$, $p > .05$). Interestingly, when asked how much of the product description they were able to read in the allotted time on a scale from 1 (none of it) to 7 (all of it), participants in the two-page condition reported that they were able to read marginally more than those in the one-page condition ($M_{short} = 5.06$ vs. $M_{long} = 6.11$, $F(1, 35) = 4.038$, $p = .052$).

Affect. Finally, we created an index of the measures of negative affect (frustration, rebelliousness, anger) and again found no effect of the length of the product description on participants affective state ($M_{short} = 3.68$ vs. $M_{long} = 2.96$, $F(1, 35) = 4.038$, $p > .05$).

Discussion

Based on the results of our pretest, the product descriptions that we tested did not differ significantly on students' ability to complete our measures of their level of learning. The main difference between product descriptions was simply the amount that students were able to read in the allotted time. Counterintuitively, students in the two-page description condition reported that they were able to read marginally more of the information. It is, of course, ideal that students

read the entire product description, and they indicate reading more of it when it is two pages in length, rather than one page.

JOINT VERSUS INDIVIDUAL GOAL PERFORMANCE

Method

As a result of our pretest, we chose to utilize the two-page product description (see Appendix A). Ninety-four subjects participated in a 2 cell (goal pursuit structure: joint (JG) vs. individual (IG)) between subjects design. Our participants were of 41% male and 59% female and were recruited from a large northeast university. In the IG condition, we had 23 males and 31 females. In the JG condition we had 20 total pairs of students, of which 8 were male-male and 12 were female-female. All subjects were given a real learning goal in which their objective was to learn information about a camera under the guise of making an informed product evaluation.

Subjects in the IG condition worked individually for the entire task. JG participants were paired into same gender dyads. Extant literature suggests that same-gender pairs facilitate cooperative goals (Chen et al. 2008) and opposite-gender pairs increase evaluative concerns (Hertel, Kerr, and Messe 2000). We wanted to avoid the influence of gender in the present study, and sought guidance in the literature that has previously used same-gender pairs. Additionally, we chose to use a camera because research has illustrated that presence of social influence in product decisions with a “large functional component” such as electronics (Price and Feick 1984).

We used a learning goal because it was supported by our pretest, and, additionally, extant literature illustrates that prospective teachers study the benefits of cooperative learning (Guvenc

2010), which suggests that the perceived benefits of joint goal pursuit exist in the domain of learning in general. Participants were provided with the two-page description of the Canon SX30IS and given five minutes to read and learn the information. Those in the JGS condition were encouraged to interact with their partners during this time and were subsequently given one minute to discuss the information with their partner after learning the information. Those in the IG condition were asked to think about the product for one minute, as they did not have a partner with whom to discuss the camera. Next we measured subjects' objective achievement of the learning goal using the 10 multiple-choice questions about the camera used in our pretest (see Appendix B). Lastly, we measured perceptions of both the goal and their level of achievement; all participants completed these measures individually.

Results

Goal Perceptions. Participants' perceptions of their goal replicate those from study 1. Specifically, subjects in the JG condition felt the goal would be easier ($M_{JG} = 4.63$ vs. $M_{IG} = 3.69$, $F(1, 93) = 7.498$, $p < 0.01$) than those in the IG condition, as illustrated in Figure 2A. In further support of H1, we again found that those in the JG condition had higher self-efficacy such that they believed they were able to answer more of the 10 multiple-choice camera questions correctly ($M_{JG} = 7.80$ vs. $M_{IG} = 5.74$, $F(1, 93) = 20.431$, $p < 0.000$) than the IG subjects.

Goal Achievement. Most importantly, JGS subjects exhibited a higher level of achievement than IG subjects ($M_{JG} = 7.53$ vs. $M_{IG} = 5.87$, $F(1, 93) = 15.07$, $p < 0.000$); this supports H2 and is illustrated in Figure 2B.

FIGURE 2A: The Effect of Goal Pursuit Structure on Perceptions of Ease

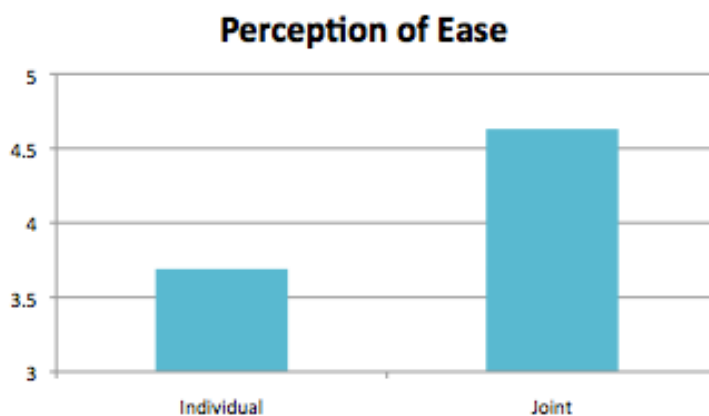
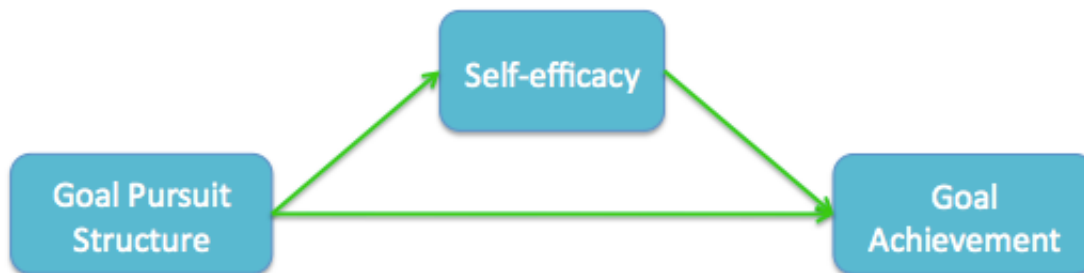


FIGURE 2B: The Effect of Goal Pursuit Structure on Goal Achievement



Mediation by Self-Efficacy. To test the underlying process (H3) we conducted a mediation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS model 4. In accordance with our prediction, the indirect effect of goal pursuit structure (individual vs. joint) on objective achievement of the learning goal through self-efficacy is significantly different from zero. JG exhibited higher perceptions of efficacy, which mediated the influence of goal pursuit structure on performance, illustrated by a 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval based on 5,000 bootstrap samples ($CI = 0.2953$ to $.8503$, $\beta = 0.5312$).

FIGURE 2C: Mediation of the Effect of Goal Pursuit Structure on Goal Achievement by Self-Efficacy



Discussion

The findings of study 2 support our hypothesized effect of joint vs. individual goal pursuit on goal perceptions, goal achievement, and the underlying process. The influence of pursuing a goal with a partner (vs. individually) was found to have a positive impact on goal achievement, such that those in the JG condition exhibited a higher level of knowledge about the camera than did IG participants, in support of H2.

Furthermore, the presence of another person pursuing the same goal seems to boost consumer self-efficacy, subsequently resulting in increased goal achievement. Our results support H3, in that the increased level of camera knowledge for those in the JG condition was mediated by increased self-efficacy, as indicated by their perceptions of how well they did on the goal task. This is interesting because consumers perceive that their partner will help increase the level of goal achievement, and this belief becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy by boosting consumers beliefs in their ability to achieve the goal. This is supported by previous research that suggests that higher expectations induce higher levels of commitment and can help sustain motivation (Hollenbeck and Klein 1987; Schunk 2003).

STUDY 3: RULING OUT ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

Method

An alternative explanation for the results found in study 2 is simply that “two heads are better than one” or that the input of two participants, such as those in the JG condition, makes them more likely to get more questions right about the camera because they are able to combine their knowledge. However, we conjecture that working with a partner increased their feelings of self-efficacy, leading to higher performance, as suggested by our results. In order to rule out the alternative explanation and reinforce our conclusions, we ran study 3.

In study 3, we added an additional joint condition in order to conduct a more stringent test of the influence of the presence of a partner on goal achievement. Two hundred forty one students participated in a 3 cell (goal pursuit structure: joint shared outcome (JG), joint individual outcome (JGI), individual (IG)) between subjects design. Subjects were 53% male and 47% female and were recruited from a large northeastern university. The IG condition was composed of 42 males and 41 females. In the JGI condition there were 22 male pairs and 15 female pairs; in the JG condition there were 21 male pairs and 21 female pairs.

If the alternative explanation holds and working together mimics a greater knowledge level simply because it is combining the knowledge of two people rather than one, we would expect to see no difference between the IG and JSI conditions in goal achievement, because in both conditions participants responded to measures of how much information they learned individually. Furthermore, we would expect to replicate the results of study 1, such that subjects in the JGS condition would outperform JGI and IG subjects.

Conversely, if our theory is correct and the presence of a partner increases participants' self-efficacy, which leads to higher goal performance, then we would not expect to see any differences in the performance of JGI and JGS conditions, regardless of whether they answer the measures about their camera knowledge together or separately. If participants in the JGI condition perform equally as well as those in the JG condition, this would rule out the alternate explanation that greater goal achievement is simply an artifact of the procedure used in study 1, because it would illustrate that subjects answering the questions individually can perform equally as well as subjects answering the questions in pairs. This is supported by extant literature, which suggests that, regardless of context, knowledge is acquired in an individual process (Mitchell, Boyle, and Nicholas 2009).

The procedure was identical to study 1. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions when they entered the lab. Subjects in the JG and JGI condition were paired up with a partner before starting the study. Individuals were seated alone. In all conditions, participants were again told they had a goal to learn the information about the Canon SX30IS that would be provided to them in order to make an informed product evaluation. Subjects were all given five minutes to learn the product information and one minute to think about (IG) or discuss (JG and JGI) the product description.

Participants in both joint conditions engaged in the learning task together, however, those in the JG condition responded to the measures of how much information was learned together, while those in the JGI condition responded to the measures individually. If the presence of a partner boosts self-efficacy, resulting in higher levels of goal achievement as we hypothesized, we would expect the JG and JGI participants to perform equally as well on the measures of how much information was learned, and both JG and JGI conditions should outperform the IG

condition. This would rule out the alternative explanation that two heads are simply better than one when responding to the measures because participants in the JGI condition were split from their partners and answered the questions alone. This would suggest that our results from study 1, in which the JG subjects outperformed the IG subjects on the learning task, are in line with our hypotheses (H2 and H3) and not an artifact due to the method of measuring their learning.

Results

Goal Achievement. Regarding level of goal achievement, results indicate no significant difference between JG and JGI conditions ($M_{JG} = 6.83$ vs. $M_{JGI} = 6.69$, $F(1, 157) = 0.216$, $p > 0.05$). Furthermore, JGI participants answered significantly more questions about the camera correctly than subjects in the IG condition ($M_{JGI} = 6.69$ vs. $M_{IG} = 5.94$, $F(1, 156) = 6.141$, $p < 0.05$);. This is illustrated in Figure 3A.

FIGURE 3A: The Effect of Goal Pursuit Structure on Goal Achievement



Mediation by Self-Efficacy. We replicated results of study 1 regarding the underlying process. Mediation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS model 4 suggests that the indirect effect of goal pursuit structure (IG vs. JG vs. JGI) on objective achievement of the learning goal through self-efficacy is significantly different from zero. JG (with JGI as a covariate) exhibited higher perceptions of efficacy, which mediated the influence of goal pursuit structure on performance, illustrated by a 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval based on 5,000 bootstrap samples ($CI = 0.1333$ to $.6869$, $\beta = 0.3679$).

Discussion

The results of this study support our initial conclusions from study 2 and rule out the alternative explanation that subjects in the JG condition appeared to learn more information simply because they answered the questions together and “two heads are better than one.” In study 2, participants in the JG condition could not have responded to more measures about the camera information correctly than IG subjects simply because they could combine the knowledge pool of two people. The present study shows that those in the JGI condition achieved the same level of objective goal achievement as JG, despite the fact that they responded to the questions individually, which measured how much information was learned.

STUDY 4

PRETEST: DESIGNING THE PRODUCT CHOICE SET

Method

Thus far we have illustrated the positive impact of joint goal pursuit (vs. individual goal pursuit) on goal perceptions and achievement, as well as the underlying process, namely, self-efficacy. In study 3, we examine the resultant impact on consumer product choices that occur within domains related to the goal. We test whether consumers making a choice with a partner are more likely to choose the best option (H4) and whether gender will influence joint goal pursuit and joint product choices (H5 and H6).

We developed a choice set comprised of three cameras that differ in both attributes and price, adapted from Novemsky, Dhar, Schwarz, and Simonson (2007). The choice set was designed such that the least advanced option did not possess adequate levels of necessary attributes, and would therefore be a subpar camera. In contrast, the most advanced option was designed to contain a variety of advanced options that are non-essential and therefore unnecessary (iSAPS technology, video stabilizer, and HDMI output). The middle option was designed to possess adequate levels of all fundamental attributes (adequate megapixels, zoom, screen size, and video recording capability), without the additional unnecessary features, making it the optimal choice.

60 consumers participated in a pretest on Amazon Mechanical Turk to test whether subjects would gain enough expertise to ascertain that the middle option is the best alternative after following the learning procedure utilized study 2. Participants were 67% male and 33% female and were recruited on Amazon Mechanical Turk in return for compensation paid on the

part of the researcher. Respondents were given shown the identical product description and given 5 minutes to learn the information, as our study participants are given.

Results

Unnecessary Camera Attributes. Results were convergent with the design of our choice set. Participants were asked to indicate whether or not each camera attribute was essential. Responses were binary (1 if the attribute is a necessity, 0 if not). For the attributes that are specific to the most advance camera model, we found the majority of participants did not find them to be necessary. Specifically, iSAPS technology was deemed unnecessary by 63% of participants, HDMI output was considered unnecessary by 41.7% of participants, and a video stabilizer by 58.3% of participants. Every other attribute tested was rated unnecessary by 30% or less of the participants, with the exception of the SD card. This is unimportant because SD cards are the most commonly used memory cards for digital cameras, regardless of brand, price, or features, and therefore would not be a deciding factor when choosing a camera. Additionally, all three of our camera options were stated to include an SD card.

Acceptable Attribute Levels. Participants were asked to indicate the lowest acceptable level of the four camera features for which the attribute level varied between camera options (megapixels, zoom, video resolution, and screen size). The largest percentage of participants indicated that the level offered by the middle camera was the lowest acceptable attribute level for zoom (55%), video resolution (45%) and screen size (56.7%). For megapixels, the highest percentage of people (44%) indicated that the level of the most advanced camera was the least acceptable number of megapixels, whereas 33% indicated the middle camera had the lowest acceptable level.

Discussion

Overall, the least advanced model appears to possess subpar attributes according to our participants, and the additional features provided by the most advanced model were seen to be unnecessary. Therefore, as intended, the middle camera option provides both adequate levels of essential attributes and no superfluous features, making it the optimal product choice.

JOINT VERSUS INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCE ON PRODUCT CHOICE

After pretesting our choice set, we ran study 3 with the objective of examining the influence of joint versus individual goal pursuit, and its subsequent influence on consumer behavior. Specifically, we look at the resultant impact that learning about a product jointly versus individually has on decision-making in a context that requires a product choice.

Additionally, in each of the previous three studies, we have asked participants to imagine working with someone of the same gender (study 1) or paired subjects with a partner that was of the same gender (studies 2 and 3). In study 4, we extend our findings to include opposite-gender pairs. In much extant literature, participants are asked to report on imagined behavior when interacting with a spouse, whom is generally of opposite gender. Thus, by examining opposite-gender pairs, the current research provides a fruitful extension of extant literature to a real goal scenario. In this study we test whether the added impression management concerns introduced by interactions with the opposite sex will impact joint goal achievement differently than pairing with someone of the same sex (H5). Additionally, we test whether this will impact their decision making in related product choices, such that they will not be able to identify that the middle camera is the optimal choice in a mixed gender pair, and therefore be likely to make the most

expensive and advanced, yet less optimal, product choices as those choosing a product with someone of the same gender (H6).

Method


In this study, 189 students participated in a 3 (goal pursuit structure: JG-Shared choice (JGS), JG-Individual choice (JGSI), individual (IG) x 2 (pair gender: same vs. opposite) mixed design study. Our participants were 47% male, 53% female and were recruited from a large northeastern university. In the IG condition there were 39 participants, 16 of which were male, 23 of which were female. In the same gender pair conditions there were 80 participants composing 19 male teams and 21 female teams. In the opposite gender pair conditions there were 70 participants composing 35 male-female teams.

The procedure was similar to study 2; we utilized a similar learning goal and product description. In this study, participants were told they would be learning camera information in order to make an informed product choice. The camera information was nearly identical, however was framed as detailing the features of the Canon SX line of cameras (rather than a single model Canon SX30IS as in study 2), so that we could then ask subjects to choose between three different camera models from the line described in the product information. Subjects were again given five minutes to learn the information jointly (JGS and JGSI) or separately (IG), followed by one minute of discussion with their partner for those in the joint conditions and one minute of thinking about the information for those in the individual condition.

We again utilized 10 multiple choice questions to measure the amount of information learned. In this study, participants in both the JGS and JGSI condition engaged in the learning task and measures together. We had all joint subjects complete the measures together because

those completing them separately in study 2 did not behave different than the individual condition. Subjects then made a choice between three cameras that varied in attributes and price, shown in Figure 4A. Those in the JGS conditions made the choice together, and those in the JGSI conditions made the choice separately. Thus we had all joint subjects complete the measures of their knowledge together, and then differ in how they make their choice, in order to isolate whether the simple presence of another person is the driving factor in any differences found in product choice. Furthermore, the same-gender versus opposite-gender pairs will further illuminate the influence that others have in product choices. We then asked perceptions of the decision making process and, finally, the same measure from study 2 regarding their perceptions of their goal achievement and the learning process. All subjects completed these measures independently.

FIGURE 4A: Camera Options Given For Product Choice

		
<p>Canon SX10IS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •8.1 megapixels •15x wide-angle optical zoom (24-840mm) •480p HD video recording capability •1.9-inch Vari-angle LCD screen •Lithium-ion battery <p>\$199</p>	<p>Canon SX20IS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •11.1 megapixels •25x wide-angle optical zoom (24-840mm) •720p HD video recording capability •2.3-inch Vari-angle LCD screen •Lithium-ion battery •Optical image stabilizer increases photo clarity •New Zoom Framing Assist button <p>\$299</p>	<p>Canon SX30IS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •14.1 megapixels •35x wide-angle optical zoom (24-840mm) •1080p HD video recording capability •2.7-inch Vari-angle LCD screen •Lithium-ion battery •Optical image stabilizer increases photo clarity •New Zoom Framing Assist button •iSAAPS technology ensures accurate focus •HDMI output •Dynamic image stabilizer increases video clarity •SD memory card included <p>\$399</p>

Results

Level of Goal Achievement. Results suggest no main effect of Pair, such that there were differences between level of goal achievement between same-gender and opposite-gender pairs ($M_{\text{SAME}} = 6.44$ vs. $M_{\text{OPPOSITE}} = 6.61$ $F(1, 149) = 0.307, p > 0.05$). Additionally, there was no main effect of Pair on self-efficacy; both same-gender and opposite-gender pairs exhibited equal levels of efficacy ($M_{\text{SAME}} = 6.43$ vs. $M_{\text{OPPOSITE}} = 6.67$ $F(1, 149) = 0.471, p > 0.05$). Because there was no main effect of Pair on these variables, we combined the pairs in order to conduct further comparison against the IG condition and mediation analysis.

We replicated the results of study 2 regarding goal achievement of joint versus individual goals. Those in the joint conditions exhibited a higher level of objective goal achievement than those in the individual condition ($M_{\text{All-Joint}} = 6.52$ vs. $M_{\text{IG}} = 5.21$ $F(1, 188) = 13.24, p < 0.000$), as well as a higher level of efficacy than those in the individual condition ($M_{\text{All-Joint}} = 6.54$ vs. $M_{\text{IG}} = 5.36$ $F(1, 188) = 8.988, p < 0.01$).

Mediation Analysis. In order to test H5, we conducted an ANOVA on goal achievement between same and opposite gender pairs. We found that there was no significant difference in information learned ($M_{\text{Same}} = 6.44$ vs. $M_{\text{Opposite}} = 6.61, F(1, 149) = 3.17, p > 0.05$). This contradicts our prediction in H5.

Additionally, we replicate results from previous studies. Using Hayes' Process (2012) Model 4, we find that the increased goal achievement by those in the joint conditions (regardless of the gender of their partner) is again mediated by self-efficacy. The indirect effect of goal pursuit structure (IG, JGSI, JGS) on objective achievement of the learning goal through self-efficacy is significantly different from zero. Joint participants (vs. IG) exhibited higher

perceptions of efficacy, which mediated the influence of goal pursuit structure on performance, illustrated by a 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval based on 5,000 bootstrap samples ($CI = 0.0995$ to 0.8974 , $\beta = 0.4523$).

Conversely, we ran Hayes Process (2012) Model 8 to test for moderated mediation. Specifically, we found the influence of goal pursuit structure on goal achievement through self-efficacy is moderated by gender pair does not differ from zero, as illustrated by a 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval based on 5,000 bootstrap samples ($CI = -0.5205$ to 0.5972). This is contradictory to our prediction in H5.

Product Choice. In order to test the influence of pursuing a goal jointly versus individually on product choice, we ran a logistic regression using only same-gender pairs (as were used in the prior three studies). Results suggest, when controlling for participant age, income, increased knowledge that participants in the joint condition exhibited for advanced camera attributes, as well as their reported ability to understand the camera information, those in the JGS condition (the participants that made the camera choice together) were less likely to just the more advanced camera option, and therefore more likely to choose the optimal camera option, than those in the JGSI ($p < .05$) and IG ($p < .05$) conditions, supporting H4. Interestingly, this effect occurs when controlling for their increased knowledge, which was specifically for advanced camera attributes such as the function of iSAPS technology (ensures accurate focus) ($p < .01$) that were available only in the most advanced camera alternative.

Pair Gender. To test H6 and examine the influence of a partner's gender on camera choice between JGSI and JGS conditions, we ran Hayes Process Model 1. Results illustrate that the influence of goal pursuit structure x pair gender on product choice is significant ($CI = 0.1979$ to $.7955$). Thus, in support of H6, we find that subjects in opposite gender pairs who made their

camera choice with their partner tended to choose the most advanced and expensive option more so than subjects in same gender pairs.

Moreover, analysis of participants' willingness to pay for the camera indicates a similar moderating effect of partner gender. Using Hayes Process Model 1, we were able to illuminate the effect of goal pursuit structure x gender on willingness to pay for a product, such that the effect of a x b yields a significant confidence interval ($CI = 33.0601$ to 335.4878). Subjects were willing to pay more when choosing the product together with someone of the opposite gender; this was not replicated in the same-sex condition.

Discussion

The results of study 4 illustrate the extensive impact that pursuing goals jointly vs. individually has on both goal achievement and downstream consumer product decisions, as well as the importance of the genders of the pair of consumers.

We again replicated the results of joint vs. individual goal pursuit structure on perceptions of the goal, as well as achievement level. The finding that opposite-gender pairs performed equally as well as same-gender pairs on the measures of camera knowledge was contradictory to H5. Our results suggest that the presence of another consumer during the learning process does result in increased achievement, regardless of the gender of one's partner.

As far as the influence of a goal pursuit partner in downstream related product choices, it seems that the presence of others with a shared goal cause consumers to not only be more informed about product features, but, when working with a partner of the same sex, consumer are able to use their increased knowledge to steer their choice away from the most expensive option and choose the best product alternative. Those in the same-gender JGS condition exhibited

higher knowledge than JGSI and IG of camera attributes that were unique to the most advanced camera model, yet those in the JGS condition were also less likely to choose this option than both JGSI and IG participants. Instead, they weighed the benefits provided by the camera features and the price and were able to choose the camera that was a better option.

Interestingly, participants in the opposite-gender JGS condition exhibited the same high level of knowledge as same-gender JGS subjects, however their camera choice does not reflect this knowledge. Instead, our results suggest the social pressures of interaction with a person of the opposite sex led participants to choose the most advanced camera option, similar to the less knowledgeable subjects in the JGSI and IG conditions. We found the same pattern of results for willingness to pay, such that subjects in opposite gender pairs were willing to pay more for the camera. These findings are supported by gender literature, which suggests males and females will alter their behavior in the presence of someone from the opposite sex. Specifically, literature suggests that social dynamics introduced by the presence of a person of the opposite sex may cause consumers, particularly males, to spend money more freely and are willing to spend greater sums of money as a social signal designed to attract the opposite sex (Sundie, Griskevicius, Vohs, Kenrick, Tybur, and Beal 2011; Griskevicius et al. 2012). Furthermore, females become more cooperative in the presence of men (Griskevicius et al. 2006; Griskevicius et al. 2007) and may simply agree with the male's more expensive choice. This suggests that the gender of the person with whom a consumer decides to pursue a goal may influence the downstream behaviors related to the goal.

It may be argued that our results in the same-gender pairs are simply an illustration of the compromise effect (a context effect in which an option increases in attractiveness when it is the middle option in a set of three alternatives, relative to when it is an extreme option in a set of

three options) (Kivetz, Netzer, and Srinivasan 2004a). Notably, this effect occurs in situations in which people expect to justify their decision to others and has been theorized, but not tested, to occur in a group decision-making context (Kivetz, Netzer, and Srinivasan 2004b).

However, while we similarly predict and find the choice of the middle option to be more likely in a joint decision making situation than in an individual product choice, this is simply a function of the choice set used in the present study, in which the optimal product choice is the middle option. As our pretest 3a shows, the least advanced option does not include adequate levels of fundamental attributes (e.g. 8.1 megapixels), whereas the most advanced camera option contains unnecessary attributes (e.g. iSAPS technology), making the middle option the optimal choice. Based on our pretest, this option should be chosen by consumers that thoroughly learned the camera information provided to subjects and this is supported by the results of study 3. Additionally, we did not find evidence of the compromise effect in either of the individual choice conditions. Furthermore, in opposite-gender pairs, we do not find any evidence of a compromise effect in their camera choices.

Another alternative explanation to the results in study 4 is that, for opposite gender participants, the relative influence and preferences of both members of the dyad were simply combined and led to a choice of the camera with the most attributes. Research in cooperative decision-making suggests that when consumers are making a decision together, one person's preferences may weigh more heavily in the decision process, particularly if they have a greater preference intensity or expertise (Corfman and Lehmann 1987). However, expertise was not a significant covariate in analysis for Study 4 (and was therefore not reported). Furthermore, participants did not indicate that they engaged in any conflict with their partners ($M_{JGS} = 2.26$ vs. $M_{JGSI} = 2.28$ $F(1, 149) = 0.008, p > .05$), nor that either they ($M_{JGS} = 2.87$ vs. $M_{JGSI} = 2.88$ $F(1,$

149) = 0.007, $p = .930$) nor their partner ($M_{JGS} = 2.50$ vs. $M_{JGSI} = 2.65$ $F(1, 149) = 0.245, p >$
.05) dominated the decision process.

CHAPTER 4: GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this research, we have examined the influence that consumers have on one another when they are pursuing the same goals. Thus far, our findings suggest that partnering with another consumer when pursuing goals may positively influence each person's perception of their goal, causing them to view it to be easier to achieve and increasing their beliefs in their ability to successfully achieve the goal. In turn, consumers pursuing a goal jointly are then more likely to achieve their goals than if they had pursued them individually.

Moreover, our research suggests that consumers may also make different product choices, depending upon whether their initial goal to learn information in order to make a good product choice was pursued jointly or individually. When pursuing jointly, consumers will better learn the information about their product and therefore be better prepared to make an optimal decision between available alternatives, compared to consumers doing so individually. However, the outcome of a joint choice is dependent upon whether or not the person with whom they are pursuing the goal is of the same or opposite gender. When pursuing a goal with a person of the same gender, consumers are able to utilize their knowledge and make an optimal product choice. Specifically, they make a choice that is balanced between its benefits and costs. In our study, participants that learned about cameras and then chose a camera jointly had a better understanding than the rest of the participants of what the most advanced camera would offer them in terms of features, yet they were more likely than their peers to choose the middle option. In this case, their higher level of expertise allowed for a more balanced choice, weighing both the product features and the price of the camera.

However, when working with someone of the opposite gender, consumers become concerned with attracting a potential mate, which influences their behavior and subsequently their product choice. We found opposite-gender pairs to make the same, higher priced and more advanced camera choice as the less knowledgeable participants that were pursuing the goal individually. Extant gender literature supports our findings. Consumers' choices are heavily influenced by the gender of the other consumer (Gould, Semaan, and Trabold 2012). Consumers also tend to alter their behavior in the presence of members of the opposite sex in order to appear attractive to them; specifically, males will tend to spend money more freely and women will try to appear cooperative in interactions with the opposite gender (Griskevicius and Kenrick forthcoming). The pattern of results found in study 4 is supported by this work.

Implications

This phenomenon has many managerial implications. Companies may be more or less inclined to encourage consumers to learn and shop for product together depending on their product. For example, Gold's Gym, who's advertising of bringing a friend to the gym because "you'll have a new workout partner helping you succeed!" initially sparked this research, may be on to something more than simply encouraging more people to join the gym to increase their sales. Assuming the gym members are pursuing health and fitness goals, it should be beneficial for them to pursue these goals jointly, by increasing the feelings of ease, self-efficacy, and positively impacting consumer fitness achievement.

Limitations

While the current research suggests that jointly pursuing a goal will yield greater success than pursuing a goal alone, it is limited by the fact that a learning goal was utilized in all studies in which participants fulfilled a real goal. Further research in additional goal domains will provide more support for the suggested effects. Furthermore, examining additional goal domains will provide greater insights into the role that others play in joint goals in general and provide a deeper understanding as to how others boost self-efficacy. Similarly, in study 4, we tested the influence of others on a downstream product choice, however we are limited to a single product category. Furthermore, the cameras in our choice set, while based on those used by Novemsky and colleagues (2007), vary on many factors (number of attributes, value of attributes, and price), making it difficult to be certain that camera 2 is truly the optimal camera choice. Additional pretesting to determine the alternative true experts in the field view as the best choice or the development of a different choice set in which fewer factors vary would be helpful to further support Hypotheses 4 and 6.

Additional research is necessary to examine whether the influence of others is consistent with our results across different product categories (such as products used together, or products used entirely individually) and using a more standardized set of product alternatives.

Future Research

In order to reduce some limitations of the present research, extending the current work to additional goal domains would be a fruitful extension of the line of research. For example, research may explore the influence of others on short fitness tasks, such as the number of squeezes on a stress ball in order to illustrate a replication of our results in other goals.

Additionally, we believe it is valuable to examine the experience of consumers pursuing goals both jointly and individually in their lives under real-world circumstances. We plan to conduct qualitative interviews in order to gain insight into these experiences and are in the preliminary stages of designing a field study to examine the influence that pursuing a goal with a partner has on perceptions of the goal and goal achievement in a naturally occurring setting. We plan to interview members of a local gym that are pursuing health and fitness goals, both those that attend the gym with a workout partner and those that attend by themselves. Moreover, a gym will have quantitative information regarding the frequency that the participants attend the gym. This will allow us to definitively test the influence of others using objective data, as well as gain insights regarding the experience of pursuing a goal jointly versus individually based on participant interviews. This is useful in its own right, and can additionally be used to inform further experimental research.

APPENDIX A: PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Technical Details

- 35x wide-angle optical zoom (24-840mm) with Optical Image Stabilizer
- Improvements to Movie modes: use the Optical Image Stabilizer in the wide-angle setting; Optical Zoom is now available while shooting video
- 720p HD video with stereo sound; HDMI output
- New Zoom Framing Assist button; DIGIC 4 Image Processor and 14.1 megapixels
- Capture images and video to SD/SDHC/SDXC memory card, MultiMediaCard, MMC Plus Card, HC MMC Plus Card (not included)
- Lithium-ion NB-7L battery

Product Details

- **Product Dimensions:** 4.2 x 4.8 x 3.7 inches ; 1.3 pounds
- **Shipping Weight:** 1 pounds
- **Shipping:** This item is also available for shipping to select countries outside the U.S.
- **ASIN:** B0041RSPR8
- **Item model number:** SX30IS
- **Average Customer Review:** 4.2 out of 5 stars_

The PowerShot SX30 IS has got you prepared for your next extreme photo opportunity. This point-and-shoot digital camera comes with a massive 35x Wide-Angle (24-840mm) Optical Zoom lens--a first for any PowerShot! It also comes with a 2.7-inch Vari-angle LCD, 14.1 Megapixels, High Dynamic Range, Zoom Framing Assist, iSAPS technology for accurate focus and much more.



Continued on next page...

Canon PowerShot SX30 Highlights

35x wide-angle optical zoom (24-840mm) with Optical Image Stabilizer

The PowerShot SX30 IS is equipped with a 35x Optical Zoom lens with a focal length of 4.3-150.5mm (35mm equivalent: 24-840mm) that allows you to shoot any scene from wide-angle to telephoto. The camera uses a VCM (Voice Coil Motor) for high-speed, quiet, energy-efficient lens movement with precise control. Focal length is conveniently indicated on the lens barrel.

The lens is optimized to fully exploit its zoom length and wide shooting angle in concert with the camera's high 14.1 Megapixel resolution. UD glass effectively suppresses chromatic aberration, while enhanced negative refractive power ensures that distortion at the wide-angle is also corrected. Further aberration is controlled with the inclusion of a double-sided aspherical glass-molded lens and ultra-high refraction index lens.

The SX30 IS is equipped with Canon's acclaimed Optical Image Stabilizer Technology that automatically detects and corrects camera shake--one of the leading causes of fuzzy or blurred shots. Even when zoomed in, you can get the steady, crisp, brilliant images you'll be proud to shoot and share. And Canon's Optical Image Stabilizer Technology is convenient to use. It functions perfectly with or without a flash.

Improvements to Movie modes: Dynamic mode enables users to use the Optical Image Stabilizer while shooting video

Dynamic IS allows you to capture video with more precision and ease than ever before! Without having to make any additional camera adjustments, Dynamic IS automatically operates the moment you start recording video. This image stabilizer continuously readjusts throughout the camera's entire zoom range to correct a broad range of motion -- especially when shooting in the wide-angle end, so footage comes out steady and clear even while you're walking and recording at the same time!

And with a powerful 35x Optical Zoom, you'll never be too far away from capturing your greatest memories! Best of all, the Optical Zoom can now be used while shooting video--a first for any of the Canon PowerShot SX digital cameras! So no matter the distance or environment, Canon lets you stay confident that you'll capture the footage you want.

APPENDIX B: OBJECTIVE MEASURES OF LEARNING GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

1. What kind of media card does the Canon SX30IS use?
 - a. XD card
 - b. MD card
 - c. SD card
 - d. USB card

2. What zoom does the lens have?
 - a. 28-200mm
 - b. 18-55mm
 - c. 55-250mm
 - d. 24-840mm

3. How much does the Canon SX30IS weigh?
 - a. 1 pound
 - b. 1.3 pounds
 - c. 1.9 pounds
 - d. 2.4 pounds

4. What resolution does the Canon SX30IS shoot pictures in?
 - a. 7.2 megapixels
 - b. 13.9 megapixels
 - c. 14.1 megapixels
 - d. 28.8 megapixels

5. This camera comes with _____ to make the pictures crisp and clear.
 - a. a tripod
 - b. optical image stabilizer
 - c. optical zoom lens
 - d. a photo editing program

6. How big is the screen on the back of the Canon SX30IS?
 - a. 1.5 inches
 - b. 1.8 inches
 - c. 2.4 inches
 - d. 2.7 inches

7. You can view your photos on your television by connecting it via _____.
 - a. your laptop
 - b. DVI connection
 - c. S-Video connection
 - d. HDMI connection

8. iSAPS technology allows the Canon SX30IS to _____.
- focus more quickly and accurately
 - take multiple shots quickly
 - record video clips
 - take pictures at night
9. What type of battery does the Canon SX30IS use?
- Duracel NA-7L
 - Copper-ion NC-7L
 - 9 Volt
 - Lithium-ion NB-7L
10. The Canon SX30IS captures video at what resolution?
- 1080i
 - 840mm
 - 14.1p
 - 720p

CONCLUSION

Pursuing a goal requires consumers to. Thus far, we have found that the presence of a partner during the learning process and the retrieval of the information results in consumers exhibiting higher levels of learning and therefore greater goal achievement. Importantly, the process followed by JGI and JGS differed, such that those with a partner throughout their entire goal pursuit process and outcome experienced beliefs that the goal was easier, felt more in control, higher self-efficacy, and thus performed better. IG and JGI participants' progress was not determined by the same mediating variables.

Overall, it seems that consumers are correct in their lay theory that pursuing a goal with a partner will result in higher levels of goal achievement than pursuing a goal without a partner. Pursuing a goal with a partner leads to more positive perceptions of one's goals, specifically perceptions of ease, control, and self-efficacy. These feelings subsequently influence performance, causing those pursuing a goal jointly to have greater objective success in goal pursuit. We have tested this using two goals, a consumer savings goal and a consumer learning goal, and we are currently extending this research to examine whether the presence of a partner alters the influence of context effects, such as the compromise effect, within the domain of the jointly pursued goal.

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