Research Article

Powerfulness as a License to Indulge

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the influence of consumers' sense of power on consumer choice between hedonic and utilitarian options. Building on the approach-inhibition framework, possessing power leads to positive feelings and attention to rewards and self-gratification. Four experimental studies were conducted to examine the influence of power. Study 1A and 1B manipulated power through episodic recall of social power and personal power respectively, Study 2 measured individual sense of power, and study 3 manipulated power by having respondents imagined being a customer in the store and interact with a salesperson. Across three experiments, the paper showed that having high power lead to a relatively greater hedonic choice share. This effect can be understood as a sense of power and privilege licensing people to indulge. We tested the effect of power on choice in the advertising and retail contexts. The link between power and hedonic choice has important implications for communicating with customers who have low or high power and the retail setting in which power can be induced when a customer interacts with a salesperson.

Keywords: Power, Hedonic Choice, Indulgence, Privilege, Store Atmospherics

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้ศึกษาอิทธิพลของความรู้สึกมีพลังอำนาจของผู้บริโภคในการเลือกผลิตภัณฑ์ระหว่างผลิตภัณฑ์ที่เน้นประโยชน์ใช้สอย และผลิตภัณฑ์ที่เน้นความเพลิดเพลินทางอารมณ์ โดยผู้วิจัยได้อ้างอิงกรอบแนวคิด Approach-Inhibition ที่เสนอว่า การมีพลังอำนาจจะทำให้คนมีความรู้สึกในแง่บวก และให้ความสนใจกับการแสวงหาความพึงพอใจและรางวัลให้กับตนเอง งานวิจัยนี้ได้ทำการวิจัยเชิงทดลอง 4 การทดลองเพื่อทดสอบอิทธิพลของพลังอำนาจ การทดลองที่หนึ่งออกแบบการทดลองโดยให้ผู้เข้าร่วมวิจัยระลึกถึงเหตุการณ์ในอดีตที่เกี่ยวกับพลังอำนาจทางสังคมและอำนาจส่วนตัว การทดลองที่สองได้วัดความรู้สึกมีพลังอำนาจของผู้เข้าร่วมวิจัย และการทดลองที่สามออกแบบเพื่อทดสอบพลังอำนาจที่เกิดจากการปฏิสัมพันธ์ระหว่างลูกค้าและพนักงาน ผลการทดลองแสดงให้เห็นว่า คนที่มีพลังอำนาจมีโอกาสที่จะเลือกผลิตภัณฑ์หรือฟังก์ชันของผลิตภัณฑ์ที่เน้นความเพลิดเพลินทางอารมณ์ มากกว่าประโยชน์ใช้สอย ซึ่งผลดังกล่าวพบว่ามาจากความรู้สึกมีพลังและสิทธิพิเศษเหนือคนอื่น ซึ่งทำให้ผู้บริโภคที่มีพลังรู้สึกได้รับโอกาสให้สนองความต้องการตามใจตนเอง ทั้งนี้ผู้วิจัยได้ศึกษาอิทธิพลของความรู้สึกมีพลังอำนาจต่อการเลือกผลิตภัณฑ์ในบริบทการโฆษณาและการค้าปลีก ดังนั้นความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความรู้สึกมีพลังอำนาจและการเลือกผลิตภัณฑ์ที่เน้นความเพลิดเพลินทางอารมณ์ มีนัยสำคัญในการสื่อสารกับลูกค้าที่มีความรู้สึกมีพลังต่างกัน ระหว่างลูกค้าพลังอำนาจต่ำกับสูง และในการบริหารจัดการร้านค้าปลีก เนื่องจากความรู้สึกมีพลังอำนาจของลูกค้าสามารถถูกกระตุ้นได้จากการปฏิสัมพันธ์กับพนักงานขาย

คำสำคัญ : ความรู้สึกมีพลังอำนาจ ผลิตภัณฑ์ที่เน้นความเพลิดเพลินทางอารมณ์ การสนองความต้องการตนเอง สิทธิพิเศษ บรรยากาศในร้านค้า

1. INTRODUCTION

Often, a fundamental choice that people make in everyday life is between indulging and delaying gratification (Kivetz and Zheng 2006), or indulging with the hedonic option as compared with the utilitarian alternative (Khan, Dhar, and Wertenbroch 2005). Indulgence is generally referred to as a behavior that yields to unnecessary or sinful inclinations (Merriam-Webster 2017). Indulgent consumption thus emphasized unnecessary quality or delight (Berry 1994) which is served as a quick and effective way to reward oneself and allow him/her to enjoy the pleasure from an option considered as a treat compared with other options (Cavanaugh 2014; Wiggin, Reimann, and Jain 2018).

Indulgent consumption has been associated with the consumption of hedonics, luxuries, and other temptations (Baumeister 2002; Kivetz and Simonson 2002; Mukhopadhyay and Johar 2009). Previous research suggest that choosing hedonic over utilitarian products, which brings pleasure, often induces guilt and that consumer choice between the two depends on whether a hedonic item can be justified (Khan, Dhar, and Wertenbroch 2005). Most of the extant research suggests that a justified indulgence or indulging with a reason helps improve consumers' emotional experience and mitigate the tension between pleasure and costs associated with indulging as compared with indulging without a reason (Okada, 2005; Xu and Schwarz, 2009). Marketers thus often provides consumers with reasons to indulge. While justification play an important role in promoting indulgent products, relatively little is known about indulgences without a reason. How can a consumer indulge without a reason?

Petersen, Dretsch, and Loureiro (2018) suggest that indulging with a reason is not always pleasurable with everyone. They found that high (low) self-control consumers are happier when they have (do not have) a reason for the indulgent purchase. Since the ability to control is related to power, the current research introduces a novel mechanism underlying consumer indulgence without a reason through consumer's sense of power.

Power is generally defined as one's capacity to control resources for oneself and others without interference (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, and Magee 2003). In everyday life, some people have more power than others based on the social strata in which they are born (Bourdieu 1984) and the roles/positions they acquire in society (French and Raven 1959), which determine their access to resources and thus their well-being. Power is not merely a structural variable but also a psychological experience (i.e., feeling powerless or powerful independent of one's structural position) (Rucker, Hu, and Galinsky, 2014). Within the same status or role, some people may personally feel more powerful or powerless than others (Lammers, Stoker, and Stapel 2009) due to their personality and physical characteristics (Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson 2003). Even within the same person, on some days one feels more powerful than on other days depending on situations, mood, and the environment and people with whom one interacts (see Wongkitrungrueng, forthcoming, for review).

Power has long been recognized to govern a wide range of human behavior, demonstrated in the sociology, psychology, and organizational behavior literatures (Magee and Galinsky 2008). For example, possessing power was found to affect one's confidence and risk-taking behaviors (Anderson and Galinsky 2006), ability to take action (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, and Magee 2003), behavior disinhibition (Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson, 2003), goal pursuit (Guinote 2007), and resistance to persuasion and conformity (Briñol et al. 2007). Because power is related to confidence and action, possessing power would be likely to license one to indulge oneself, whereas a lack of power leads to less indulgence.

The current research therefore intends to examine the effect of consumers' sense of power on consumer indulgent choice. This research extends previous research on power and consumer behavior that focused on status consumption to a more generalized consumption choice between hedonic and utilitarian alternatives, underexamined in prior research examining consequences of power (see Galinsky, Rucker, and Magee 2015 for review). Additionally, since previous studies focused on the effect of power arising from social factors (e.g., socioeconomic status and hierarchical roles) rather than taking into account contextual factors, this paper also considers consumers' sense of power, induced when consumers interact with a salesperson in the retail setting. Examining the role of powerfulness/powerlessness on consumer's everyday choice in the natural settings has broad implications for retail management and marketing communication because power is ubiquitous in interpersonal relationships. Salespersons should understand the nature of their products and customers, and use appropriate words/behaviors in communicating to customers with different levels of power.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Indulgent consumption

In everyday life, consumers often trade off among alternatives that may give pleasure (hedonic) but may not be useful or that serve functional needs with less pleasure (utilitarian)(Batra and Ahtola 1990). The hedonic-utilitarian umbrella comprises two related perspectives (Khan, Dhar, and Wertenbroch 2005). The first perspective is concerned with the choice between options that induce pleasure and that serve utilitarian or instrumental purposes (e.g., hedonic-utilitarian, luxury-necessity, affect rich-poor). The second perspective that falls in the domain of time-inconsistency contrasts consumption for immediate pleasure with that for longer-term benefits (e.g., vice-virtue, should-want, affective-cognitive preference). It should be noted that products can be concurrently high or low in both utilitarian and hedonic attributes (Khan, Dhar, and Wertenbroch 2005). Also, most consumers' evaluation of alternatives is based on the degree to which alternatives satisfy utilitarian and hedonic goals (Batra and Ahtola, 1990). Therefore, to determine whether an item is perceived as primarily hedonic or utilitarian, it depends on consumption usage and motives (Pham, 1998).

Hedonic consumptions are perceived to be more enjoyable and provide greater and immediate reward as compared with utilitarian consumption (Bechara 2005; Nowlis, Mandel, & McCabe, 2004). The choice between hedonic and utilitarian options is driven by emotional desires versus cognitive deliberations. Emotional desires often dominate functional motives in the choice of products (Maslow 1968) and particularly when the two are presented jointly (Okada 2005), when cognitive resources are diminished (Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999), and when consumers feel certain emotions (e.g., Cryder et al. 2008; Hirt and McCrea 2000; Winterich and Haws 2011). Also, some types of consumers may be more likely to indulge than others such as hyperopic or impulsive consumers (e.g. Sengupta and Zhou 2007; Haws and Poynor 2008; Haws, Bearden, and Nenkov 2012).

According to prior research and lay theory, choosing a hedonic, indulgent choice or vice is often involves a feeling of guilt and hesitation (Lascu, 1991; Khan, Dhar, and Wertenbroch 2005), and thus, consumers attempt to justify the chosen option (Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000) or to control hedonic temptations (Wertenbroch 1998). On the one hand, consumers must arduously construct counterarguments regarding such abstract concepts as the affordability and practicality of the item and the future impact of purchasing it (Malter, 1996). On the other hand, consumers may justify an indulgent purchase by adopting tactics that reduce the guilt or negative attributions or facilitate the purchase. These tactics include reward justification (O'Curry and Strahilevitz, 2001), the effortful consumption requirement (Kivetz and Simonson, 2002), and donation to charity (Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998). In addition to guilt-reducing mechanisms, Khan and Dhar (2006) proposed a licensing effect whereby committing to a virtuous act prior to indulging tends to reduce the negative self-attributions associated with the purchase of indulgent goods. This licensing effect operates by providing a temporary boost in the relevant self-concept and thus works as a guilt-reducing mechanism (Khan and Dhar, 2006).

Most previous work suggest that consumers experience less negative feelings when indulgence is justified (Kivetz and Simonson 2002; Mick and DeMoss, 1990). Petersen et al. (2018) suggest, based on the relationship between self-control (i.e. ability to monitor and regulate one's thoughts/decisions in accordance with self-imposed standards) and hedonic vs. utilitarian consumption (Baumeister, 2002; Haws et al., 2012) that there are differences not only in how high or low self-control consumers make decisions about when and how to indulge, but also in how they experience indulgence. They demonstrated that indulging with a reason is pleasurable for consumers with high self-control but not for low self-control people. Given that justification of indulgence is not always effective for everyone, the question remains under which condition can consumers indulge without a reason. Is there a fundamental construct that drive consumer to indulge? Since self-control is related to willpower, we predict that one's sense of power may determine consumer's indulgent choice.

2.2 A Sense of Power

Power is not only about asymmetric control over resources but also a psychological property of the individual or a sense of power (i.e., "I feel powerful")(Bugental, Blue, and Cruzcosa, 1989; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, and Magee 2003). People can form internal representations of their power relative to others in specific contexts/relationships (Bugental, Blue, and Cruzcosa, 1989) and across contexts (Anderson, John, and Keltner 2012). A sense of power can be defined as a perception of one's capacity to influence others (e.g., control joint decisions, influence others' opinions and behaviors, satisfy one's own desires) (Anderson, John, and Keltner 2012). Anderson et al. (2012) suggested that individuals' sense of power is distinct from socio-structural indicators (e.g., social position, status) of their power, and individual's perceptions of their power can shape their actual influence over others, beyond the effects of their socio-structural position. Individuals can feel powerful chronically due to their social status, physical characteristics (e.g., height, attractiveness), or personality traits (e.g., dominance) or feel powerful during a particular moment of the day depending on contextual factors (e.g., the relative power of others) (Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson 2003).

Because the definition of power comprises two components—a capacity to control own and others' resources—Lammers, Stoker, and Stapel (2009) distinguished between power over others (social power) and freedom from others (personal power). Social power is a person's capacity to influence and exercise control over others by making them do things that they would not otherwise do (Copeland 1994; French and Raven 1959). Personal power is a capacity to control one's own outcomes, to do and obtain what one wants without being influenced and constrained by others and to feel independent (Van Dijke and Poppe 2006; Overbeck, Tiedens, and Brion 2006). Social and personal power were found to have unique effects on behavior because they were differentially associated with interdependence and independence. Lammers, Stoker, and Stapel (2009) found that when the distinction between interdependence and independence is relevant, personal power increases behaviors that go against social norms, whereas social power decreases such behaviors. However, if the distinction is irrelevant, such as in the case of the behavioral approach (Anderson and Berdahl, 2002), personal power and social power have parallel effects, and are correlated with a general sense of power (e.g., "I experience power in my day to day life")(Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson 2003). Thus, a person who believes that he/she has a high sense of power would depend less on others and have freedom to pursue their own interests more easily. Therefore, elevated power increases the experience and expression of positive affect, the sensitivity to rewards, the automaticity of cognition, and the likelihood of approach-related behavior including risk taking. In contrast, reduced power increases negative affect, sensitivity to threat and punishment, controlled and deliberate cognition, and behavioral inhibition (Keltner et al. 2003). These effects of power have implications for consumer choice of products that involve some risks, such as eating chocolate, which can increase one's weight, or buying gifts, which wastes money that could be used for other items more necessary for one's life.

2.3 Power as License to Indulge Hypothesis

Powerfulness, typically experienced along with confidence and controllability, can direct people to focus on pleasure from consuming hedonic choices and bypass the negative self-attributions (e.g., "I am careless", "I am a spendthrift", "I lack self-control") and therefore may license consumers to indulge. In contrast, lacking power is associated with negative emotions, attention to threats, controlled and deliberate cognition, and behavioral inhibition. Thus, powerless people could overestimate risks involved in hedonic, indulgent consumption, engage in more ruminative thinking, and thus become reluctant to indulge. Another study supporting the proposition is Maimaran and Simonson (2008), who divided consumer choices into 'bold' and 'timid'. The 'bold' choice options include risky, hedonic, innovative, unique, and action-oriented options. The timid choice options include standard, sure-gains, utilitarian, traditional, and inaction-oriented options. Maimaran and Simonson (2008) found that priming 'boldness' constructs (e.g., adventurous, change, extreme, risky, unique, unusual), led people to choose more 'bold' options, compared with those in the 'timid' conditions. Finally, Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson (2003) suggested that impulsivity can be categorized under the behavioral approach system, while consumer impulsivity is associated with hedonic consumption (Loewenstein, 1996). Thus, the main hypothesis is that consumer's sense of power lead to a greater hedonic choice share. Consumers in a state of high power are more likely to engage in hedonic, indulgent consumptions than those in a state of low power.

3. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

To demonstrate the relationship between consumer's sense of power and hedonic versus utilitarian choice, three experiments were conducted using different manipulations of power, different perspectives of utilitarian and hedonic, and different contexts and dependent variables. In the social psychological research, there are four main ways to manipulate power (Galinsky, Rucker, and Magee 2015). These include 1) varying control over a resource, 2) activating the experience via episodic recall or imagined role manipulation 3) priming power concept through word puzzles or photo 4) altering an individual's physical posture or nonverbal behavior.

Study 1A aims to test the main hypothesis using an episodic recall of social power and examined the effect of power on the choice between vice and virtue (the second perspective of utilitarian/hedonic concepted mentioned in the literature review. Study 1B used a personal power measure instead and examined its influence on the choice between the hedonic versus utilitarian feature of the same product (the first perspective of utilitarian/hedonic concept).

Study 2 designed the context to be more relevant to the retail/service settings when a sense of power may be induced by how consumers are treated by a salesperson. Instead of using the episodic recall as in study 1A/1B, study 2 created a novel way of manipulating power through imagined role

manipulation adopted before such as in Dubois, Rucker, & Galinsky, (2010) by asking people to either imagine being a boss in charge of employees. Such context may be less relevant to their everyday life shopping. Respondents were asked to imagine being a customer experiencing different treatment from a salesperson. Instead of asking people to choose between a hedonic or utilitarian option as in study 1A/1B, study 2 asked respondents to indicate their preference for two different option (one is more utilitarian, the other is more hedonic). Study 2 also test the role of the sense of power as a variable that mediates the relationship between the power manipulation and preference for hedonic products.

3.1 Study 1

The purpose of study 1 was to examine the effect of power on the choice between a vice or a virtue. A vice can be conceptualized as an affective want motivated by impulses, whereas a virtue is a more reasoned and cognitively preferred choice option (Khan, Dhar, and Wertenbroch 2005). A relative vice is preferred to a relative virtue when considering the immediate consequences of consumption. Because impulse is related to behavioral approach, it is predicted that activating high (versus low) power over others will lead to a greater choice of vice (versus virtuous) option.

3.1.1 Method

Participants and design: One hundred twenty-five undergraduates from several universities in Bangkok, Thailand (63% women) were recruited via a mall intercept and were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions: low power, high power, and control).

Procedure: Participants were asked to participate in two unrelated studies in exchange for 50 THB. First, they completed the power manipulation portrayed as a study about human characteristics. Second, they were presented with photographs[1] of two snacks and asked which snacks they would like to receive if an experimenter were to give snacks to them as a token. Finally, they completed a questionnaire asking them to evaluate the snacks and rate their preference and food habits.

Power manipulation: Power was manipulated following an experiential prime procedure used by Galinsky et al. (2003) with an additional control condition adapted from Rucker and Galinsky (2009). Participants were asked to recall a particular incident in their lives. The participants in each condition were instructed as follows:

[1] Shiv and Fedorikhin (1999) showed that the use of the photographs of the chocolate cake and fruit compared to the real cake and fruit are not significantly different in terms of similarity rating.

In the *high-power* condition, the participants read:

"Please recall a particular incident in which you had power over another individual or individuals. By power, we mean a situation in which you controlled the ability of another person or persons to get something they wanted, or were in a position to evaluate those individuals. Please describe this situation in which you had power—what happened, how you felt, etc."

In the *low-power* condition, the participants read:

"Please recall a particular incident in which someone else had power over you. By power, we mean a situation in which someone had control over your ability to get something you wanted, or was in a position to evaluate you. Please describe this situation in which you did not have power—what happened, how you felt, etc."

In the *control* condition, the participants read:

"Please describe your daily life. What do you do each day?"

Choice and measures: After completing the essay, the participants were asked to choose between two snacks (chocolate cake versus tropical fruit). This choice is used in prior study examining hedonic and utilitarian choice such as in Shiv and Fedorikhin (1999) and Wongkitrungrueng, Valenzuela, and Sen (2018) and was successfully pretested that fruit is perceived to be less hedonic[2] than chocolate cake ($M_{fruit} = 3.91$ versus $M_{cake} = 5.38$, $t(28) = 2.99$, $p < .01$). Participants were then asked to rate the extent to which they were health conscious, chocolate fanatics, and fruit fanatics on a 7-point scale (1 = seldom would describe me; 7 = usually would describe me) (Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999). Finally, the respondents indicated whether they were on a diet, and their gender and age. Of these measures, only the chocolate and fruit fanatics can predict the outcome, and were included in the analysis.

3.1.2 Results

Manipulation check and affective reaction: Two independent judges blind to condition coded the priming writing how much power the participant seemed to have in the situation using a 7-point scale (0 = no power at all, 6 = a lot of power) (Smith and Bargh, 2008). A third judge settled any disagreements about relationship classification. Because the control writing almost never involved power and often did not involve any one relationship, it was not included in this coding. As expected, the participants described themselves as having more power in the high-power essays ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 0.59$) than in the low-power essays ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 0.79$), $t(105) = 8.28$, $p < .001$. The coders also categorized the emotions (e.g., anger, sadness, neutral, confidence and happiness) of the participants in the low-

[2] How hedonic each food was perceived was assessed on a scale of 1–7 (not at all to extremely hedonic). Hedonic food is food that you eat because of its look, taste, smell, and texture. Seeing it makes your mouth water. Eating it makes you feel good. You tell yourself you want to eat it. Sometimes you want to spoil yourself while other times you have to exercise some control over eating it.

and high-power conditions. Table 1 shows the greater number of participants in the low-power condition who felt sad and angry compared with those in the high-power condition, who mostly felt either indifferent or happy. A chi-square test revealed a statistically significant relationship between the type of feelings and power ($\chi^2(3) = 46.45$, $p < .001$).

Table 1: Power, Feelings, and Choice

Feeling	Low Power		High Power	
	Chocolate	Fruit	Chocolate	Fruit
Sad	5	9	1	1
Angry	10	16	3	–
Indifferent	5	6	10	10
Happy	2	2	19	7
Total	22	33	33	18

Choice: A logistic regression in which the indulgent choice was the dependent variable and power manipulation, fruit and chocolate fanatics were independent variables revealed a significant main effect of power ($\chi^2 = 6.48$, $p < .05$) along with the effect of fruit fanatics ($\chi^2 = 29.57$, $p < .001$) and chocolate fanatics ($\chi^2 = 16.16$, $p < .001$). The participants were more likely to make an indulgent choice when they were primed with high power (60%) compared with the low-power group (41%, $z = 2.64$, $p < .01$). There was no significant difference in indulgent choice between the low-power condition and control conditions (48%, $z = 0.74$, $p > .4$) and between the high-power and control ($z = 1.26$, $p > .2$). This finding suggests that a hedonic product is a more favored choice when subjects feel more powerful and a utilitarian product is more favored when subjects feel that they have low power. These findings support our predictions that high power would lead to a preference for hedonic indulgences and vices and low power to a preference for the utilitarian or virtuous option.

3.2 Study 1B

As Lammers, Stapel and Stoker (2009) and Malkoc and Duguid (2012) suggested, it is important to distinguish social and personal power; in study 1B, power was manipulated through an experiential prime from Lammers, Stapel and Stoker (2009) asking the respondents to recall experiences when they had (no) power to obtain what they wanted. Another difference from study 1A is the choice alternative. Study 1B used the same product, portrayed as superior in either a hedonic or utilitarian feature, instead of using different categories (cake versus fruit) as in study 1A.

3.2.1 Method

Participants and design: Seventy-eight undergraduates from a university in Nakhon pathom, Thailand (56% women) were recruited for extra credit and were randomly assigned to a high or low power condition.

Procedure: The participants were asked to participate in two unrelated studies in exchange for 5% extra credit. First, they completed the power manipulation, portrayed as a study about consumer personality. Second, they were asked to choose between utilitarian and hedonic features.

Power manipulation: Personal power was manipulated following an experiential prime procedure used by Lammers, Stapel and Stoker (2009). The participants were asked to recall a particular incident in their lives. The participants in each condition were instructed as follows:

In the *high-power* condition, the participants read:

"Please recall a particular incident in which you personally had power to get what you wanted. By power, we mean a situation in which you were independent from the influence of others. This means you could fully determine what you would do or get. Please describe this situation in which you had power—what happened, how you felt, etc."

In the *low-power* condition, the participants read:

"Please recall a particular incident in which you personally had no power to get what you wanted. By power, we mean a situation in which you were dependent on the influence of others. This means you could not fully determine what you yourself would do or get. Please describe this situation in which you lacked power—what happened, how you felt, etc."

Choice and measures: After completing the essay, participants were asked to participate in the unrelated study about consumer choice. The choice adapted from Dhar and Wertenbroch (2000) in which consumers have to choose an apartment with a better view (relatively hedonic feature) or an apartment with a shorter commute to work (relatively utilitarian feature).

In this study, they were asked to imagine that they were about to buy a laptop and were considering two choices; one is superior in a utilitarian attribute and the other is superior in a hedonic attribute, all else being equal (see Table 2). A pretest on a 7-point scale (1 = predominantly utilitarian; 7 = predominantly hedonic[3]) (Voss et al., 2003) confirmed that Laptop 1 was considered more hedonic than Laptop 2 ($M_1 = 4.76$ versus $M_2 = 3.23$; $t(30) = 4.98$; $p < .001$). They were presented with short product descriptions of these two choices and asked to select the choice they preferred.

[3] Primarily utilitarian defined as useful, practical, functional, something that helps you achieve a goal. Primarily hedonic defined as pleasant and fun, something that is enjoyable and appeals to your senses (Strahilevitz and Myers 1998).

Table 2: Stimuli for Study 1B

Choice	Design	Function	Decision
Laptop 1	Stylish, metallic design	Moderate performance	☐
Laptop 2	Simple, black box design	High performance	☐

Finally, the respondents indicated their gender and consumer impulsivity. The respondents were asked to rate on a 7-point scale how well the following adjectives described them: "impulsive," "careless," and "easily tempted" (1 = "seldom would describe me"; 7 = "usually would describe me") (Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999). Both covaried significantly with the dependent measure in this experiment.

3.2.2 Result

A logistic regression revealed a significant main effect of power condition ($\chi^2 = 7.52$, $p < .01$) along with the effect of gender ($\chi^2 = 10.49$, $p = .001$) and impulsivity ($\chi^2 = 4.22$, $p < .05$). The participants were more likely to choose the hedonically superior alternative when they were primed with high power (73%) compared with the low-power group (42%, $z = 3.29$, $p = .001$). Consistent with Lammers, Stapel and Stoker (2009), priming social power (study 1A) and personal power had parallel effects on consumer approach to hedonic choice. As predicted, high power led to a greater preference for the hedonic alternative compared with low power.

3.3 Study 2

In this study the participants were asked to indicate their relative preference for the advertising taglines which suggest hedonic or utilitarian benefits of the same product category.

Instead of manipulating power as in study 1, study 2 measured individuals' dispositional power. This study aimed to examine if effects on consumer choice vary between dispositional power and situational power.

3.3.1 Method

Participants and design: One hundred twenty-three undergraduates from several universities in Bangkok, Thailand were recruited via a mall intercept. They were exposed to ten taglines of five products. Power was measured as an individual difference.

Procedure: The participants completed a study ostensibly interested in consumers' evaluation of the advertising taglines of five products (see Table 6). Subsequently, a sense of power was measured.

Table 3: Stimuli for Study 2

Product	Tagline	
	Hedonic value	Utilitarian value
Air fresheners	Welcoming scent of home	Get odors out
Car	Definition of luxury	Precision-crafted performance
Chocolate	A moment of enjoyment	Gives you energy
Shampoo	Soft and Silky Hair	Healthy, natural clean
Vitamin C	Collagen for Beautiful Skin	Antioxidant for Immune Protection

Measures: The participants indicated their preference for the hedonic-focused or utilitarian-focused taglines using a 15-point scale (where –7 = strongly prefer the hedonic-focused taglines; 0 = indifferent between the two taglines; and 7 = strongly prefer the utilitarian-focused taglines). Next, the participants completed a two-item social and personal sense of power scale (r = .73) adapted from (Lammers, Stapel and Stoker 2009). In keeping with a definition of social and personal power, the participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed with the following items: "To what extent do you have power over other people in your social network such that you can get people to do what you want?" and "To what extent do you have power over yourself such that you can get what you want?" on a scale from 1 ('Strongly Disagree') to 7 ('Strongly Agree').

3.3.2 Results

Multivariate regression was carried out, using the five taglines as dependent variables and the sense of power as the independent variable. The test for the overall model indicate that respondents' sense power ($F(5, 121) = 2.84$, $p < .05$) has a significant effect on preference for product attributes.

Further, a separate regression on each product showed a negative relationship between sense of power and preference for utilitarian value (air freshener: $z = -2.25$, $p < .05$; car: $z = -2.18$, $p < .05$; chocolate: $z = -2.49$, $p < .05$, shampoo: $z = -2.47$, $p < .05$; vitamin: $z = -1.96$, $p = .052$) (see Table 7). Across taglines of five products, high-power consumers prefer taglines that focus on hedonic attributes to utilitarian attributes of products, and the reverse was found for low-power people. To facilitate interpretation, simple slopes analyses at one standard deviation above and below the mean for sense of power revealed the significant difference in tagline preference between low and high power (see Table 8).

Table 4: Regression Results for Each Product

Outcomes	Coefficient	SE	t-value	R^2
Air fresheners	–.79	.35	–2.25*	0.03
Car	–.66	.30	–2.18*	0.03
Chocolate	–.87	.35	–2.49*	0.04
Shampoo	–.88	.36	–2.47*	0.03
Vitamin C	–.63	.32	–1.96*	0.02

Note: * $p \leq .05$

Table 5: Mean Taglines Preference for Low and High Power Respondents

Outcomes	Low power	High power	SE	t-value
Air fresheners	1.96	–.13	.92	2.25*
Car	4.13	2.36	.80	2.18*
Chocolate	.28	–2.03	.93	2.49*
Shampoo	2.02	–.31	.94	2.47*
Vitamin C	3.48	1.81	.85	1.96*

Note: * $p \leq .05$

In sum, studies 1–2 provided a background sense that a sense of power can affect consumer choice. Individuals can feel powerful chronically based on individual traits/dispositions. They can also have power temporarily depending on situational contexts (e.g., authority/status/role, social interaction) (Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson 2003). Choices are often made in stores because consumers are influenced by store environments (Baker, Levy and Grewal, 1992). Store atmospheric variables include both social factors (characteristics and behaviors of employees or other customers) and non-social factors, such as exterior, interior, design, and decoration variables (Turley and Milliman 2000). Therefore, consumer experience, which includes feeling powerful, may be induced by store atmospherics factors. The next study aims to examine the effect of power on choice in the retail context.

3.4 Study 3

Extant research found that exposure to a more powerful other can lead to a feeling of awe (Keltner and Haidt, 2003), postural constriction (Tiedens and Fragal, 2003), and behavioral inhibition (Anderson and Berdahl, 2002). In a retail setting, how a salesperson treats a customer can make the

customer feel powerful or powerless momentarily. Study 3 aims to examine the effect of power that is elicited when a customer interacts with a salesperson.

To explore situations in which consumers can feel powerful or powerless in the retail environment, the pretest was conducted with 25 students in the same population as those in the main study. It sought to create several situations in which consumer power could be influenced by salesperson behavior. The respondents read 13 short sentences about salesperson behavior commonly experienced in retail stores and rated to what extent they thought that they, as consumers, had power in each situation (1 = low power; 7 = high power). The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 6: Situations Related to Power

Situation	Mean	SD
When a salesperson ignores you and treats another customer better	1.96	1.14
When a salesperson looks at you from head to toe	3.04	1.95
When a salesperson tries to pressure you to buy products	3.48	1.83
When you enter a high-end store where a seller looks elegant	3.80	1.44
When you lack information about products that you buy and you don't know whether what a salesperson say is true	3.88	1.33
When you don't like products in the store and have to excuse yourself to leave the store	4.16	1.70
When a waitress is stooping and kneeling to fulfill your order and serve you food	4.16	1.84
When a salesperson looks poor and does not seem to be good at sales	4.28	1.62
When a salesperson kneels down to help you try on shoes	4.32	1.82
When a salesperson raises her/his hand to greet you politely	4.88	1.51
When a seller offers you special gifts/discounts because you are the first customer of the day	5.08	1.32
When a salesperson serves you a glass of water while you look around the store	5.28	1.31
When a salesperson addresses you politely, e.g., sir, madam	5.56	1.04

3.4.1 Method

Participants and design: One hundred eighty undergraduates from one business school in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand participated in exchange for 5% extra credit. They were randomly assigned to a high- or low-power condition.

Procedure: The participants were asked to read a short scenario taking place in a retail store. Since power may lead to non-linear pattern (Anicich and Hirsh, 2017), one more condition: medium power is added. Considering three levels of power has recently gained attention in the literature as it refines past theorizing that has merely relied on two levels of power, representing polar opposite (Anicich and Hirsh, 2017; Schaerer et al., 2018).

The participants in each condition were instructed as follows:

In the *high-power* condition, the participants read:

"Imagine that you want to buy a pair of shoes. You go to the shopping mall and enter one store that sells a wide range of shoes. The salesperson comes to greet you politely and asks what kinds of shoes you are looking for so she can find the right one for you. While you are looking around the store, she tells you to take your time and offers you a glass of water".

In the *medium-power* condition, the participants read:

"Imagine that you want to buy a pair of shoes. You go to the shopping mall and enter one store that sells a wide range of shoes. The salesperson comes to greet you and asks what kinds of shoes you are looking for. You ask for two pairs of shoes and wait at the chair. Upon her return, she stoops and kneels to hand you the pairs of shoes".

In the *low-power* condition, the participants read:

"Imagine that you want to buy a pair of shoes. You go to the shopping mall and enter one store that sells a wide range of shoes. The salesperson sees you, looks at you briefly, and does not seem to be interested in you. Later on, another customer enters the store. She welcomes that customer more warmly".

Choice and measures: The participants were asked how they would feel if they were in the abovementioned scenario. They were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed that they had power and the extent to which they had privilege. Both items were assessed on 7-point scales with 1 anchored with "strongly disagree" and 7 anchored with "strongly agree." (Anderson, C., John, and Keltner, 2012). Thus, higher numbers indicated a perception that a greater sense of power was provided. These items were correlated ($r = .8$) and combined to form a sense of power index. The participants were asked if they were in this scenario and interested in two pairs of shoes (see Table 4) which pair of shoes they would be more likely to buy. They were asked to rate the relative preference for two pairs of shoes on a scale ranging from "most likely to buy shoe A" (1) to "most likely to buy shoe B" (7). Shoe A was depicted as being functional, whereas shoe B was stylish. A pretest on a 7-point scale (1 = predominantly utilitarian; 7 = predominantly hedonic) confirmed that shoe A was considered more hedonic than shoe B ($M_A = 4.50$ versus $M_B = 2.88$; $t(24) = 4.37$; $p < .001$).

Table 7: Stimuli for Study 3

Shoe A	Shoe B
• German design	• Italian design
• Made of cow leather known for durability and quality but less stylish	• Made of lamb leather to look impressive and stylish
• Regular weight	• Lightweight

3.4.2 Results

Preference for a hedonic product: Data were analyzed using ANCOVA. The dependent variable was the preference for shoe. Independent variables included the power manipulation and gender. There was a main effect of power condition ($F(1,176) = 3.68$, $p < .05$) and gender ($F(1,176) = 7.81$, $p < .01$). The participants in the high-power condition were more likely to buy a stylish pair (shoe B) than a functional pair (shoe A) than those with low power ($M_{High} = 5.5$; $SD = .31$, $M_{Low} = 4.41$; $SD = .24$; $F(1,176) = 7.23$; $p < .01$) and medium power ($M_{Med} = 4.72$; $SD = .23$; $F(1,176) = 3.92$; $p < .05$). The difference between low and medium power was not significant ($F(1,176) = 0.81$; p = NA). There was also a main effect of gender. Female respondents reported a higher preference for a hedonic product ($M_{Male} = 5.13$; $SD = .19$ versus $M_{Low} = 4.29$; $SD = .22$; $F(1,176) = 7.81$; $p < .005$).

Sense of power: There was a significant main effect of the power manipulation on the sense of power induced by the interaction with a salesperson ($F(1,176) = 63.00$, $p < .001$). In the high-power condition, the participants rated their sense of power higher than those in the low-power condition ($M_{High} = 5.07$, $SD = .23$; $SD = .24$ versus $M_{Low} = 1.87$; $SD = .18$), $F(1,176) = 119.41$; $p < .001$) and medium-power condition ($M_{Med} = 3.66$, $SD = .17$, $F(1,176) = 24.63$; $p < .001$). There was also a significant difference between the medium and low power ($F(1,176) = 52.17$; $p < .001$).

Mediation: To test whether the sense of power induced by salesperson behavior mediated the effect of power manipulation on preference for hedonic products, a simultaneous regression of preference for the hedonic product on power and the sense of power induced by salesperson behavior was conducted (see figure 1). Before adding the sense of power as a mediator, respondents in the high power condition significantly preferred hedonic goods more than those in the low power condition ($\beta = 1.07$, $t(176) = 2.69$, $p < .01$). When the sense of power was added, the power manipulation no longer had a significant effect on the preference ($\beta = .09$, $t(175) = 0.18$, p = NA), whereas the sense of power was found to significantly predict the preference for the hedonic product ($\beta = .31$, $t(175) = 3.11$, $p < .01$). Using the bootstrapping techniques to test indirect effects confirmed the mediating role of sense of power (95% confidence intervals excluding zero; .14 to .86). The respondents had a feeling of power and status supporting them in choosing a more hedonic than functional item.

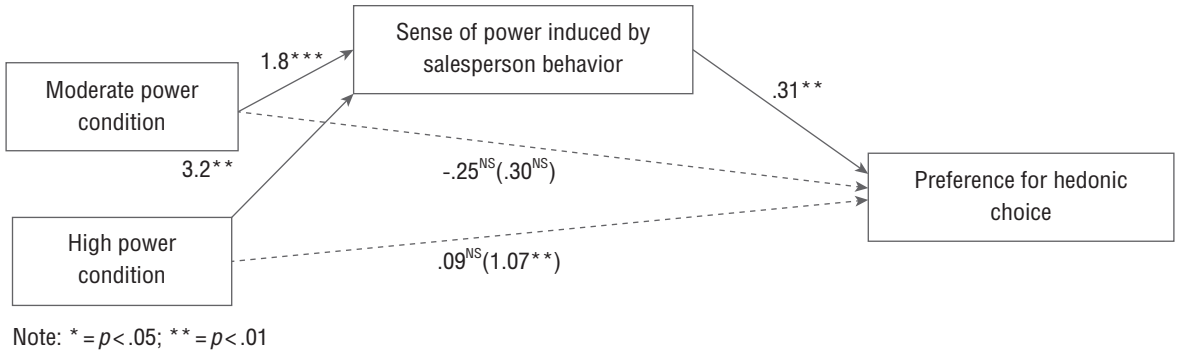

Figure 1: Mediation of power on consumer choice

4. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

Across three experiments, we found evidence consistent with the approach-inhibition framework that having power increases preference for indulgent choice (study 1A) and hedonic attributes (studies 1B, 2, 3). Previous research suggested that exerting more effort or engaging in virtuous acts can reduce guilt and license the subsequent preference for hedonic items. This paper proposed that possessing power gives the privilege to choose hedonic items that bring pleasure to consumers. In contrast, a lack of power restrains a consumer from indulging with hedonic items. The present research also extends previous studies in this stream of research by relating to consumer choice in the retail context. In this paper, power was measured (study 2) and manipulated using a recall task with no specified context (study 1) and an experiential prime in the retail context (study 3). Power is not only generated from individual appearance and personality and role in society but can also be induced temporarily by contextual factors, such as store atmospherics. Salesperson behavior could affect a consumer's feeling of power or powerlessness, which in turn could affect consumer choice.

Our findings have the following implications for marketers. The basic finding suggests marketers to induce consumers' sense of power or choose the advertising messages that emphasize or boost customer power when their products are primarily hedonic. A simple ad message (e.g., "We all feel powerless (powerful) in the morning: Treat yourself to delicious bagels") is found to activate a sense of low (high) power (Dubois et al., 2012). Since most products have both hedonic and utilitarian benefits, marketers can devise advertising strategies to link hedonic (utilitarian) product features a concept of power with to influence consumers' attitude. Marketers can highlight hedonic benefits or utilitarian benefits of the same product, depending on marketer's assessment of their consumers' sense of power. Marketers can highlight hedonic dimensions of a primarily utilitarian product for customers in a state of high power.

However, concepts of power may vary with different cultures. Individualist culture is associated with personal power (i.e. power for advancing one's personal status and prestige) while collectivist culture is associated with social power (i.e. power for influencing others) (Torelli and Shavitt, 2010). Therefore, communication messages aimed to influence consumers' power have to be adjusted in different cultural context.

Since the findings suggest the importance of power in determining the choice, judging the power level of customers through their appearance, personality, verbal and nonverbal behaviors (e.g. gestures and posture) (Carney, Cuddy, and Yap 2010), and adjusting the way to market the product to people at different levels of power can lead to successful selling. When selling products to customers in a state of high-power, marketers should emphasize hedonic attributes of a product, and elaborate on the message that customers deserve the pleasure of a product. However, for customers in a state of low-power, marketers should focus on utilitarian attributes of a product, or empower the potential buyer before they make an indulgent purchase.

Furthermore, study 3 suggested that certain behaviors of salespeople or service providers can influence consumers' sense of power. For example, a welcome bow/drink, a polite greeting can induce a sense of power, and encourage people to leverage their power and make a purchase decision. A store manager should carefully train and monitor salespeople to ensure that how they treat customers will not negatively affect consumers' sense of power. Similar to salespeople behaviors, the appearance of the store environment and salespeople or service providers (for more information about determinants of power in the retail/service settings, see Wongkitrungrueng (in press) should also influence consumers' sense of power and finally consumer's indulgence and finally willingness to spend. For example, the elegant appearance and personality of employees at the high-end store may cause some customers to feel less powerful, and less likely to spend (Rucker et al., 2010).

The present research is based on the approach-inhibition framework to explain why having power leads to purchasing hedonic items. Focusing on psychological states of low power, Rucker and Galinsky (2008, 2009) proposed based on a compensatory perspective that lack of power is aversive and thus the powerless are willing to pay higher for products associated with status to compensate for lacking power. Future studies should examine under which circumstances the lack of power leads to inhibition versus compensation. Future research should explore different situations in the retail setting that can influence consumers' sense of power. For example, color in a store design (Bellizz and Hite 1992), shelf position and shelf height (Valenzuela et al., 2014; Wongkitrungrueng et al., 2018) might affect consumers' comfort and perceived power. Antecedents of power may vary across cultures, and thus, a cross-cultural study would be another interesting area of research. These antecedents include social factors (characteristics and behaviors of salespeople or other customers) and ambience and design factors. For example, in the pilot study, Thai respondents reported higher perceived power

from small things, such as being offered a glass of water rather than salespeople kneeling down and touching their feet. Additionally, future studies should test the role of power in field retail settings and examine the mismatch between dispositional power and power induced by environmental factors (Valenzuela et al., 2014; Wongkitrungrueng et al., 2018).

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