

## PROMOTIONAL FRAMES AND CONSUMER DECISION MAKING: IT'S WHAT YOU OFFER AND HOW YOU OFFER IT

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Consumer research suggests product purchases are influenced by whether a product is seen as hedonic or utilitarian and whether the consumer is given several choices or just one. For example, Okada (2005) found people prefer hedonic alternatives when choices are presented singly, but choose utilitarian options in joint presentations. She theorized that this preference reversal is due to guilt over hedonic purchases.

This study was designed to investigate choices in a sales promotion context. Forty-two university student volunteers were divided into five groups. Four of the groups read a description of one of four \$15 promotional offers (plain t-shirt, school t-shirt, designer t-shirt, \$15 in cash) and the fifth saw all four offers; respondents were asked whether the offer(s) would prompt them to travel to a store 20 miles away to purchase a \$100 pair of jeans. They were also asked to rate the item(s) on a hedonic scale and a utilitarian scale.

A comparison of promotions presented singly with promotions presented jointly did not support Okada's theory of preference reversal. In this study, the plain t-shirt (high utility/low hedonism) elicited more positive responses when presented alone,  $\chi^2(1, N = 18) = 6.77, p < .01$ ; the designer t-shirt (low utility/high hedonism) drew more positive responses when presented in a set,  $\chi^2(1, N = 17) = 5.03, p < .05$ , suggesting a contrast effect rather than a guilt effect.

*Keywords:* promotional frames, consumers, decision making, hedonic, utilitarian, presentation.

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