

**‘Speaking of Purchases’: How Conversational Potential Determines Consumers’****Willingness to Exert Effort for Experiential versus Material Purchases**

WILSON BASTOS

Assistant Professor of Marketing; CATÓLICA-LISBON School of Business & Economics,  
Palma de Cima, 1649-023 Lisbon, Portugal; email: wilson.bastos@ucp.pt

Funding: This work was supported by the FCT – Portuguese Foundation of Science and  
Technology. Declarations of interest: none.

**Abstract**

Consumers spend much of their incomes in two types of purchases: experiences and material objects. Recent research has successfully used this purchase type categorization to predict various types of social and psychological consumer outcomes. The present investigation extends this research to a novel domain of primary relevance to firms—that of consumer effort. Specifically, this work advances and tests the prediction that consumers are more willing to exert effort to acquire experiential versus material purchases. Further, drawing on literatures on online and offline consumer interactions, it proposes that the greater conversational potential of experiences (vs. objects) explains this effect. Five studies employing mediation, moderation, and actual-choice approaches, using different methodologies to purchases (past, future, and framed purchases), and testing different types of acquisition effort (e.g., to save money, to wait in a line to make the purchase) offer converging evidence in support of the predicted model. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

*Keywords:* experiential purchase; material purchase; interpersonal conversation; word-of-mouth (WOM); consumer acquisition effort

**‘Speaking of Purchases’: How Conversational Potential Determines Consumers’****Willingness to Exert Effort for Experiential versus Material Purchases**

Researchers have grown interested in two domains where people invest their discretionary incomes: experiences and material objects (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Past work has shown that this categorization of purchases (as experiences vs. objects) predicts various consumer outcomes, most notably psychological—e.g., psychological adaptation (Nicolao, Irwin, & Goodman, 2009); happiness (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003)—, and social outcomes—e.g., interpersonal bonding (Caprariello & Reis, 2013). The present investigation extends this research by showing that the purchase type categorization can reliably predict a different type of consumer outcome, one that has direct implications to firms: consumers’ willingness to exert effort to acquire a purchase. Specifically, this work predicts and finds evidence that consumers are more willing to exert acquisition effort towards an experiential than a material purchase.

Based on their original definitions, this work conceptualizes experiential purchases as those made with the intention of living through an event or a series of events (i.e., consumers purchase an experience ‘to do’; e.g., a museum visit), and material purchases as those made with the intention of owning a tangible good (i.e., consumers purchase a material object ‘to have’; e.g., an electronic gadget; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Acquisition effort is defined here as consumers’ willingness to expend personal resources to obtain a purchase (Cardozo, 1965; Mohr & Bitner, 1995). In the consumer domain, effort has been studied with respect to certain categories (Beatty & Smith, 1987; Garbarino & Edell, 1997). The present investigation focuses on two commonly-studied categories of consumer effort: monetary (e.g., to save for the purchase; Sharma & Keller, 2017) and non-monetary effort (e.g., to wait in line in order to make the purchase; Leclerc, Schmitt, & Dubé, 1995).

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

Consumers' willingness to exert acquisition effort is consequential to firms. Due to firm-related or circumstantial factors, firms are sometimes unable to remove the need for a certain level of consumer effort. In such cases, the firm relies on consumers' willingness to exert a degree of effort to obtain the purchase, and it can lose business unless they are willing to do so. For example, an ice-cream shop moving to a new location hopes that customers from the previous neighborhood are willing to drive the additional distance instead of switching to another shop, a business with limited ability to offer instalment payment options to consumers hopes that they are willing to save in order to afford the purchase, and a theater with few ticket booths relies on consumers' willingness to wait in line for a moment and not walk away. Indeed, firms often miss on sales because consumers leave the checkout line at a store, give up a purchase due to long shipping periods, or abandon shopping carts online. A recent report by the UK Baymard Institute (Zipursky, 2013) documents that 68% of online shopping carts are left unpurchased, and that, to a large degree, structural challenges are to blame (e.g., the website crashed, the process was taking too long). Therefore, from a marketing manager's perspective, it is useful to learn what determines consumers' willingness to exert effort to acquire a purchase.

Why, as this work predicts, would consumers be more prone to exerting effort to acquire an experience than an object? There is substantial evidence that consumer effort is largely driven by their desire to socialize (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Mead, Baumeister, Stillman, Rawn, & Vohs, 2011). Although socialization can take many forms, one of people's most meaningful and valued types of socialization is that involving a conversation (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987). By offering consumers conversational content, purchases are often a means through which consumers socialize (Berger, 2014). However, purchases vary in their conversational potential—i.e., the extent to which they generate WOM conversations, both online and offline (Berger &

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

Schwartz, 2011; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). For reasons discussed next, this work predicts that consumers perceive experiential (vs. material) purchases to offer them greater conversational potential, which explains why they are more willing to exert effort to acquire experiences than objects. In other words, this investigation examines the intriguing idea that consumers find the conversational potential of purchases worthy of their efforts.

Conversational potential is defined here as consumers' inclination to converse about a purchase with others; such that purchases high on this attribute are preferred by consumers as a topic of conversation and are perceived as more conducive to WOM conversations. These WOM conversations can occur via traditional communication channels (offline; e.g., face-to-face interactions) or computer-mediated channels (online; e.g., social media interactions).

Therefore, the predicted framework centers on the higher conversational potential of experiences versus objects (the first link in the mediation model); and the positive influence of conversational potential on acquisition effort (the second link—see Figure 1). Below, the theoretical discussion follows this two-link structure. Importantly, as the theorization shows, the motivations behind traditional and online consumer conversations are closely matched, suggesting that the predicted model is relevant in both domains. Echoing this view, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004, p. 40) explain that, “Given the conceptual closeness of eWOM and traditional WOM communication, consumer motives that have been identified in the literature as being relevant for traditional WOM also can be expected to be of relevance for eWOM.”

—Insert Figure 1 about Here—

### **Theoretical Background**

#### **Experiential versus Material Purchases & Conversational Potential**

The first link in the proposed mechanism holds that experiences provide consumers with greater conversational potential than do objects. This idea finds support in the literature (Bastos & Brucks, 2017; Kumar & Gilovich, 2015). Compared to objects, experiences are closer to and more symbolic of the self (Carter & Gilovich, 2012). Since the self is one of people's preferred topic of conversation (estimates indicate that over 70% of everyday conversation and of social media posts are about the self—Dunbar, Marriott, & Duncan, 1997; Naaman, Boase, & Lai, 2010) and that a main function of conversation is to allow “the speaker to convey to other individuals a lot of information about him/herself as a person” (Dunbar et al., 1997, p. 241), experiential purchases seem especially suitable as a topic of conversation. Experiences are also more unique than objects (Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012). Two visits to the same national park but separated in time are unlikely to carry much resemblance, whereas two electronic gadgets of the same model but purchased at different times are likely to share much commonality, if not be virtually identical. Being unique is a valued quality in many Western societies (Hornsey & Jetten, 2004), hence people often find it desirable to be seen as distinct individuals (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001). One way to be regarded as a unique person is to associate oneself with unique purchases (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010). Given their greater uniqueness, experiences are likely to be a type of purchase that people are particularly inclined to associate themselves with and, likewise, tell others about. Also, talking about experiences is more enjoyable than talking about objects (Van Boven, Campbell, & Gilovich, 2010), perhaps because they are more likely to have a typical narrative structure with a beginning, middle, and end, thus facilitating storytelling (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Following this logic, the author predicts that consumers will likely perceive greater conversational potential in experiences than in objects.

### **Conversational Potential & Acquisition Effort**

The second link in the proposed mechanism holds that consumers consider the conversational potential of purchases worthy of their efforts. This proposition finds support in the interpersonal communications, consumer behavior, and political science literatures. First, people gain several psychological and social benefits from the conversations they engage in (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Langston, 1994). Consequently, conversations are commonly perceived as rewarding and desirable (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987). Naturally, to engage in conversation, people need to be equipped with conversation-worthy content; therefore, it makes sense that, given their desire to converse, people often seek content that they can use in future conversations—they attend to and collect information with the goal of telling others about it. For instance, Atkin (1972) finds that people seek news information that they expect to be useful in future interactions. Similarly, Chaffee and McLeod (1973) report that people seek political information more for its conversational usefulness than for their own intention to vote. Besides accumulating sharable information in anticipation of interpersonal conversations, recent research shows that people's desire to talk is so intense that they are willing to forego pecuniary gains in order to share about topics that they consider personally relevant (Tamir & Mitchell, 2012).

However, and differently from this past research on conversations about general topics, the present work examines a specific type of conversation—that centered on purchases. Here, a key question is whether consumers value opportunities to converse about their purchases and, accordingly, are more willing to exert effort towards purchases that offer them greater conversational potential. Expectedly, people value and exert effort towards things that can be beneficial for themselves or others (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). As discussed next, purchase-related conversations can bring various social and psychological

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

benefits, therefore people should be more willing to exert effort towards purchases that enable conversations than those that are not as conducive to conversations.

Online and offline conversations are known to afford myriad benefits (Gatignon & Robertson, 1986; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; King, Racherla, & Bush, 2014; Tamir & Mitchell, 2012). This manuscript draws from prominent WOM and eWOM frameworks (e.g., Berger, 2014; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) five major benefits that, together, provide the foundation for the prediction that conversational potential will positively affect acquisition effort.

First, talking about a purchase may bring that purchase's positive aspects to the forefront of the consumers' attention (capitalization—Langston, 1994; Rimé, 2009). This, in turn, can help revive the otherwise fading appeal common of material purchases (i.e., to fend off adaptation towards objects; Nicolao et al., 2009) and provide an opportunity for consumers to favorably reconstruct the memories they have of their experiential purchases (i.e., to build a “rosy view” of those experiences; Mitchell, Thompson, Peterson, & Cronk, 1997). Alluding to conversation as an opportunity to rehearse and relive positive emotions associated with a purchase, Dichter (1966, p. 149) talks about WOM conversation as a form of “verbal consumption”, which allows consumers to “relive the pleasure the speaker has obtained”.

Second, conversing may enable learning (social learning theory; Bandura, 1969). This occurs because interpersonal interactions often benefit from social creativity, which helps the communicator arrive at new interpretations and discoveries that would be unlikely to emerge from that individual thinking alone (Hargadon & Bechky, 2006). In the context of the present investigation, when discussing about a purchase with others, consumers may gain insights on new ways to use an object they own or to better interpret and make sense of the events comprising an experience they had. Echoing this idea, King et al. (2014, p. 171) write that online



Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

platforms “provide forums for consumers to discuss products/services” where they can “learn from other customers how to better use products/services.”

Third, consumers often share to gain social approval and confirmation (Berger, 2014; Gatignon & Robertson, 1986). For example, when the consumer is an early adopter, talking about the purchase enables one to fulfill “the desire to look like a pioneer in having purchased the new product” (Feick & Price, 1987, p. 84) and, as a result, look favorably to others (Gatignon & Robertson, 1986). On the online domain, researchers have argued that approval seeking is the major reason consumers post online reviews (Lampel & Bhalla, 2007). Further, given the stigmas often associated with material pursuits (materialism; Fournier & Richins, 1991) and the positive regard often attributed to experiential pursuits (e.g., the notion that people accumulate experiences to build their “experiential CVs”; Keinan & Kivetz, 2010), talking about one’s experiences (vs. material objects) should elicit more favorable evaluations from others.

In addition, a person sharing about a purchase may receive compliments (Chan & Sengupta, 2013), which, besides boosting the self (self-enhancement theory—Allport, 1937; Fiske, 2001), serves as confirmation of a wise purchase (Gatignon & Robertson, 1986) and thus helps overcome potential feelings of doubt about the purchase (cognitive dissonance—Festinger, Riecken, & Schachter, 1956). In the online domain, this has been referred to as *approval utility* (Balasubramanian & Mahajan, 2001), and its positive impact can magnify there since, in this domain, comments are often expressed in a public fashion—as when an online community member praises the other on an open forum (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). With regards to the present work, this favorable feedback may alleviate the feelings of regret often associated with making material purchases (Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012), and reinforce one’s sense of having made a good investment in an experiential purchase (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003).

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

Fourth, to some consumers (e.g., market mavens, members of online communities), interpersonal conversations represent opportunities to help others by passing along one's expertise (Dichter, 1966; Feick & Price, 1987; Sundaram et al., 1998), which has been made easier with the Internet, since that channel "has also reduced the cost of information provision" (Kulkarni, Ratchford, & Kannan, 2012, p. 167). As a result of helping others, these individuals in turn feel good about their good deeds (Post, 2005). Indeed, evidence shows that the enjoyment of helping others is a main reason why people share electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM; Cheung & Lee, 2012). Previous work in eWOM has referred to these consumers as *true altruists* (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Interestingly, and despite its predominantly altruistic nature, this is a behavior that the information sender can use strategically to obtain rewards from the information receiver (Omarzu, 2000)—a group of communicators identified in eWOM research as *self-interested helpers* (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). According to social exchange theory (Homans, 1958, 1961) and social norms of reciprocity (Collins & Miller, 1994), providing information to others enables people to obtain, in return, information about which those individuals are particularly knowledgeable. This, in turn, offers a benefit discussed previously: learning. This information exchange is noticeably prevalent online, where consumers articulate a comment about their consumption situation and, moments later, receive informative comments from a large number of individuals (Balasubramanian & Mahajan, 2001).

Last, conversing is a primary way through which people connect and form social relationships (social penetration theory—Altman & Taylor, 1973; Dunbar, 1998, 2004; Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006). Therefore, purchases that enable conversations help pave the way for social bonding. This can be especially prominent in the online domain since, "[t]he strength of the Internet is that it enables weak ties, i.e., connections between sources that previous would

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

have been isolated and impossible to connect” (King et al., 2014, p. 171). In eWOM research, this ability of conversations to connect individuals has been referred to as a *social benefit* (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), which can come for example from articulating one’s thoughts to other members of a virtual community and, in this process, establishing one’s reputation and membership in that community. Corroborating this idea, empirical evidence shows that building social ties is a strong predictor of consumers’ platform visiting frequency and number of comments written on those online platforms (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

This substantial body of evidence suggests that conversing about one’s purchases can have real-world benefits. Importantly, these benefits are highly valuable as they are likely to help meet three psychological needs theorized, and empirically shown, to be central for optimal human functioning; namely, the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (self-determination theory; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Specifically, to learn and to garner approval and confirmation from others are ways to improve feelings of competence and self-efficacy (Deci & Ryan, 1985); to relive the positive emotions associated with one’s own purchases and to feel that one’s volitional actions have a positive impact on others contribute to one’s sense of autonomy and causality (Deci & Ryan, 2008); and to develop social connections enhances one’s feelings of having a secure relational base (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

In light of this theorization, it is reasonable to expect that consumers desire opportunities to converse about their purchases. Referring to this desire to share, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004, p. 44) write that, “consumer’s positive consumption experiences contribute to a psychological tension inside him or her because of a strong desire to want to share the joy of the experience with someone”, a tension that “may be reduced by writing comments on Web-based opinion platforms, a behavior that allows the consumer to share the experience with many others.”

Following this logic, are consumers likely to exert effort for the opportunity to converse? Existing research supports this possibility, with evidence suggesting that consumers often engage in behaviors with the primary aim of having future conversations. For example, similar to when individuals gather news and political information for the sake of future interactions (Atkin, 1972; Chaffee & McLeod, 1973), people in their role of consumers have been found to seek market information that they believe can be useful to others (Dichter, 1966). Moreover, past evidence indicates that opinion leaders attend more to information that they expect others will request them about than to information that is relevant to themselves (Richmond, 1977). Hence, previous findings suggests that consumers attempt to obtain content that will provide them a basis for conversations. Since purchases often become topics of conversation (i.e., they are sharable content), it should follow that consumers will be more willing to make an effort to obtain a purchase that enables conversations than one that is not as conducive to conversations.

Considered together, these theoretical frameworks and findings support the predictions that consumers will be more willing to spend acquisition effort toward experiences than objects; and the greater conversational potential of experiential versus material purchases will explain this effect. Therefore, this work hypothesizes that:

**Hypothesis 1.** Consumers will be more willing to exert acquisition effort for experiential (vs. material) purchases.

**Hypothesis 2.** Conversational potential will mediate the effect of purchase type (experiential vs. material) on consumers' willingness to exert acquisition effort.

### **Overview of Studies**

This manuscript reports five studies supporting the hypothesized relationships. First, three mediation-based studies show that consumers are more willing to work extra hours (Study

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

1), save (Study 2), and wait (Study 3) in order to purchase an experience versus an object; and that the greater conversational potential of experiences accounts for this effect. Further, a study manipulating (instead of measuring) the purchase's conversational potential (Study 4) demonstrates that when this aspect is removed, consumers are equally willing to exert effort towards experiential and material purchases. Last, Study 5 employs an actual-choice procedure to empirically establish consumers' greater inclination to exert effort for purchases that promote conversation (experiences) versus those that are not as conducive to conversation (objects).

### **Study 1—Establishing the Phenomenon via Mediation (Future Purchase)**

Study 1 uses a mediation approach to test the hypotheses that consumers are more willing to exert work effort for an experience (vs. object); and conversational potential drives this effect.

#### **Procedures**

A set of Master's level business students from a European university participated in Study 1 for course credit ( $N = 183$ ; females = 57%,  $M_{\text{age}} = 23.07$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ). The study adapted Van Boven and Gilovich's (2003) procedure of randomly assigning participants to think and write about either an experiential ( $n = 93$ ) or a material purchase ( $n = 90$ ) that they intended to make in the next 12 months. To control for extraneous influences of market value (Nicolao et al., 2009), the text instructed participants that the purchase should cost about €25 (please see Web Appendices A-E for the complete manipulation scripts and measures for all studies). The study assessed conversational potential with a five-item scale (e.g., "That experience/object makes for a good conversation"; 1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*;  $\alpha = .95$ ; Bastos & Brucks, 2017), and work effort with the item: "Let's say that to afford that experience/object you figured that you would have to put in 3 hours of extra-time at work. How likely is it that you would work those extra hours to afford that experience/object?" (1 = *Not at all likely*, 7 = *Very likely*).

## Results

**Effort.** An analysis with purchase type (experiential vs. material) as the independent variable and work effort as the dependent variable showed that participants reported significantly greater likelihood of exerting the effort for an experiential ( $M = 5.26$ ,  $SD = 1.79$ ) than a material purchase ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 1.96$ ;  $t(181) = 3.15$ ,  $p = .002$ , mean difference ( $MD$ ) = 0.88, 95% confidence interval (CI) = [0.33, 1.43], Cohen's  $d = 0.46$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1.

**Conversational potential as the mediator.** A bootstrapping analysis of mediation (PROCESS, model 4) with 10,000 resamples (the number of resamples used in all mediation analyses hereafter) tested whether conversational potential explained the effect of purchase type on effort. Results showed that purchase type (0 = material; 1 = experiential) influenced conversational potential ( $b = 2.02$ ,  $SE = 0.20$ ,  $t(181) = 9.83$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = [1.62, 2.43]). Further, conversational potential influenced effort ( $b = 0.46$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $t(181) = 4.87$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = [0.27, 0.64]), whereas the previously significant effect of purchase type was no longer significant ( $b = -0.05$ ,  $SE = 0.32$ ,  $t(180) = -0.17$ ,  $p = .86$ , 95% CI = [-0.69, 0.58]). Consistent with these results, the indirect effect of purchase type on effort via conversational potential was significant ( $b = 0.93$ ,  $SE = 0.22$ , 95% CI = [0.51, 1.41]), supporting Hypothesis 2.

## Discussion

Study 1 offers initial evidence that, when faced with the prospect of exerting additional effort to acquire a purchase, people report greater willingness to do so if the purchase is an experience versus an object; and the greater conversational potential of experiential (vs. material) purchases explains this effect. However, Study 1 has only looked at one type of acquisition effort consumers make, and importantly, an effort that is associated with time. This is relevant because, given the very nature of experiences as intangible and time-bounded, it is possible that the

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

findings of Study 1 stemmed from a fit/non-fit effect. To broaden the conclusions to other types of effort and rule out the fit/non-fit account, Study 2 tests the model with a different type of effort, a monetary one—people’s willingness to save in order to make the purchase. Also, Study 1 examined purchases that participants had yet to make, thus it is possible that participants’ willingness to exert effort was based on (mis)forecasting of the purchase’s conversational potential. Study 2 addresses this concern by examining purchases people had already made.

### **Study 2—Establishing the Phenomenon via Mediation (Past Purchase)**

Study 2 has three objectives: To boost the generalizability of the findings, rule out a potential fit/non-fit account, and address the issue of (mis)forecasting potentially present in Study 1. It thus employs a recall-based approach and examines a monetary effort that consumers are often faced with—to save money in order to make the purchase (Sharma & Keller, 2017).

### **Procedures**

Two hundred and twenty-one Master’s level business students from a European university participated in Study 2 for course credit (females = 47%,  $M_{age} = 23.98$ ,  $SD = 5.87$ ). Participants were randomly assigned to recall and write about an experiential ( $n = 114$ ) or a material purchase ( $n = 107$ ) they had purchased in the last 12 months for about €50. To assess their willingness to save in order to make that purchase, the questionnaire asked them: “Let’s say that to purchase that experience/object you figured that you would have to save money. How likely is it that you would save money to afford that experience/object?” (1 = *Not at all likely*, 7 = *Very likely*). To assess the conversational potential of the purchase, the questionnaire employed the same five-item measure as in Study 1 ( $\alpha = .94$ ). To confirm that participants considered purchases in line with the purchase type condition they had been assigned, the questionnaire

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

employed a three-item manipulation check measure (e.g., “In my view, the purchase I described earlier is:” 1 = *Definitely a material object*, 7 = *Definitely an event or an activity*;  $\alpha = .88$ ).

## Results

**Manipulation check for purchase type.** Confirming the success of the purchase type manipulation, results showed that experiential condition participants recalled purchases that were significantly more experiential ( $M = 5.91$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ) than did material condition participants ( $M = 2.16$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ,  $t(219) = 23.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MD = 3.75$ , 95% CI [3.43, 4.07], Cohen’s  $d = 3.13$ ).

**Effort.** Results indicated a significant effect, in the expected direction, of purchase type on participants’ willingness to save ( $M_{exp} = 5.09$ ,  $SD = 1.80$  vs.  $M_{mat} = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ,  $t(219) = 3.01$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $MD = 0.71$ , 95% CI [0.24, 1.16], Cohen’s  $d = 0.41$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1.

**Conversational potential as the mediator.** A mediation analysis (PROCESS, model 4) showed that purchase type significantly affected conversational potential ( $b = 1.72$ ,  $SE = 0.19$ ,  $t(218) = 9.04$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [1.35, 2.10]). Further, conversational potential significantly affected effort ( $b = 0.53$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $t(217) = 7.18$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.39, 0.68]). In this model, the previously significant effect of purchase type on effort was reduced to non-significant ( $b = -0.23$ ,  $SE = 0.24$ ,  $t(217) = -0.93$ ,  $p = .35$ , 95% CI [-0.72, 0.25]). Consistent with these results, and supporting Hypothesis 2, the indirect effect of purchase type on effort via conversational potential was significant ( $b = 0.93$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ , 95% CI [0.61, 1.32]).

## Discussion

Using a recall-based approach, Study 2 shows that when people are faced with the prospect of exerting a type of monetary effort—i.e., to save in order to make the purchase—, they indicate greater willingness to do so when the purchase is an experience than an object; and



Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

conversational potential explains this effect (please see Web Appendices A and B for four conceptual replications of these findings involving different types of acquisition effort).

The results from Studies 1 and 2 indicate that, if firms aim to elicit positive consumer reactions to the prospect of exerting effort, those selling experiences (vs. objects) are at an advantageous position due to the purchases' greater conversational potential. Given that many firms sell purchases that are inherently material, this scenario leaves a considerable proportion of firms unattended, or at a disadvantage. Study 3 examines a mental framing approach firms could use to increase the conversational potential of material purchases and, in turn, consumers' willingness to exert effort for those purchases. With this approach, Study 3 also aims to assuage an important concern associated with Studies 1 and 2. Namely, because participants in the previous studies were allowed to think and write about any purchases of their choice, the analyses made comparisons that may be deemed incompatible (e.g., a music concert vs. a new piece of furniture). Study 3's procedure keeps the focal purchase constant to address this issue.

### **Study 3—Establishing the Phenomenon with a Mental Framing Approach**

Study 3 examines whether a mental framing procedure can shift the way people perceive the very same purchase such that they react more positively to the prospect of exerting effort for that purchase. Further, this study aims to address the issue of (in)compatibility of the purchases considered by participants in Studies 1 and 2. To achieve these goals, Study 3 keeps the focal purchase constant (i.e., a BBQ grill) and manipulates only the way participants frame it in their minds: as an object or an experience (Bastos, 2019; Bastos & Brucks, 2017; Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012). Further, this study broadens the generalizability of the findings by examining a third type of acquisition effort—wait effort.

### **Procedures**

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

One hundred and one MTurk participants (65% females;  $M_{\text{age}} = 38.38$ ,  $SD = 11.51$ ) completed the study for financial compensation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions (BBQ grill framed as an: object [ $n = 53$ ] vs. experience [ $n = 48$ ]). Those in the material (experiential) framing condition read: “Imagine that while strolling around a store you see a BBQ grill. You stop for a moment. It has a price tag of \$100. In your mind you know that, at the end of the day, a grill is really an object (experience). It’s something people keep (use) for some time. You’re now considering the details of that object (experience). In some detail, please describe that object (experience). Focus on the characteristics of the object (experience) and on what it's like to have that object (experience).”

Next, the study assessed conversational potential with the same five-item measure as in Studies 1 and 2 ( $\alpha = .96$ ) and participants’ willingness to exert wait effort: “Imagine that to purchase that BBQ object/experience you would have to wait 30 minutes (in a line, or a waiting room, or somewhere else). How likely is it that you would wait in order to have that object/experience?” (1 = *Not at all likely*, 7 = *Very likely*). Then, participants completed a two-item manipulation check measure (e.g., “The BBQ I described earlier is:” 1 = *Definitely about a material object*, 7 = *Definitely about an event or an activity*;  $r = .81$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

It is possible that framing a purchase in experiential terms simply creates a more positive overall attitude toward it. To test this possibility, the study assessed participants’ attitude toward the grill with a two-item measure (“The impression I have of the grill I wrote about is:” 1 = *Very Negative/Very Unfavorable*, 7 = *Very Positive/Very Favorable*;  $r = .94$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

## Results

**Measurement model.** The measurement model aimed to capture three separate factors—conversational potential, wait effort, and attitude—however, a possible concern is whether the

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

measures indeed tapped distinct constructs. The author conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA; AMOS) to verify that the data fit the proposed three-factor model appropriately. Results yielded:  $\chi^2(12) = 26.16, p = .01, CMIN/DF = 2.18, RMSEA = .11, NNFI = .97, CFI = .99,$  and  $RMR = .04,$  indicating that the measurement model was in line with established parameters of adequate model fit (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). Based on the proper fit of the three-factor model, these factors were treated as separate constructs (please see Web Appendix C for a Summary Statistics table and additional information on convergent and discriminant validity).

**Manipulation check.** Experiential condition participants perceived the BBQ grill as significantly more experiential ( $M = 5.31, SD = 1.57$ ) than did material condition participants ( $M = 2.64, SD = 1.77, t(99) = 7.97, p < .001, MD = 2.67, 95\% CI [2.00, 3.33],$  Cohen's  $d = 1.59$ ), indicating that the framing manipulation had the intended effect.

**Effort.** Participants who framed the BBQ grill as an experience reported significantly greater willingness to wait in order to make the purchase ( $M = 4.96, SD = 1.57$ ) than did participants who framed it as an object ( $M = 3.70, SD = 1.76; t(99) = 3.78, p = .001, MD = 1.26, 95\% CI [0.59, 1.92],$  Cohen's  $d = 0.75$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1.

**Conversational potential as the mediator.** In this analysis of mediation (PROCESS, model 4) purchase type was entered as the independent variable, wait effort as the dependent variable, and conversational potential as the mediator. Besides conversational potential, attitude toward the grill was also entered as a potential mediator. Results showed that purchase type significantly influenced both conversational potential ( $b = 1.24, SE = 0.30, t(99) = 4.05, p < .001, 95\% CI [0.06, 1.84]$ ) and attitude ( $b = 0.49, SE = 0.22, t(99) = 2.19, p = .03, 95\% CI [0.04, 0.95]$ ). Further, conversational potential significantly affected effort ( $b = 0.35, SE = 0.12, t(97) = 2.78, p = .006, 95\% CI [0.10, 0.60]$ ) but attitude did not ( $b = 0.12, SE = 0.16, t(97) = 0.76, p =$

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

.44, 95% CI [-0.20, 0.46]). In this model, the previously significant effect of purchase type was reduced but remained statistically significant ( $b = 0.76$ ,  $SE = 0.33$ ,  $t(97) = 2.25$ ,  $p = .02$ , 95% CI [0.09, 1.42]). Consistent with these results, the indirect effect of purchase type on effort was significant via conversational potential ( $b = 0.43$ ,  $SE = 0.21$ , 95% CI [0.12, 0.97]) but not via attitude ( $b = 0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ , 95% CI [-0.09, 0.33])<sup>1</sup>, supporting Hypothesis 2.

## Discussion

This study demonstrates that when consumers think of a purchase along its experiential dimensions they are more willing to exert effort in the form of waiting to be able to acquire it than when they think of that same purchase in material terms. This effect is driven by the higher conversational potential attributed to the purchase when it is framed as an experience versus an object. Additionally, this study rules out attitude toward the purchase as a potential rival account.

By keeping the purchase constant and varying only the way participants framed it in their minds, Study 3 addresses an important concern associated with (in)compatibility of the purchases in Studies 1 and 2. This approach also helps assuage concerns associated with potential particularities of experiential versus material purchases (e.g., purchase frequency, familiarity). Moreover, this study sheds light on an important managerial implication of this work. It suggests that, by focusing consumers' attention on the experiential aspects of a purchase, managers can bring out its conversational potential and, in turn, elicit from them more positive reactions to the idea of exerting effort to acquire that purchase.

Although Studies 1-3 provide convergent support for the proposed model, the evidence for the mediating role of conversational potential is correlational and therefore cannot

---

<sup>1</sup> Expectedly, this result holds in a mediation analysis (PROCESS, model 4) with conversational potential as the only mediator (indirect effect:  $b = 0.50$ ,  $SE = 0.20$ , 95% CI [0.19, 0.99]). Of note, the result is robust to analytical method, as a mediation analysis with conversational potential as the only mediator and attitude as a covariate yielded the same conclusions (indirect effect:  $b = 0.29$ ,  $SE = 0.15$ , 95% CI [0.07, 0.71]).

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

conclusively establish the direction of the effect—i.e., from conversational potential to effort (Hayes, 2013). It is possible, for example, that experiential purchases have higher conversational potential precisely because consumers are more willing to exert effort for them. In other words, effort becomes a talking point. Study 4 manipulates conversational potential to conclusively test the predicted direction—i.e., conversational potential → effort.

#### **Study 4—Establishing the Phenomenon via Moderation**

Instead of measuring conversational potential (as in Studies 1-3), Study 4 manipulates it to obtain a firmer conclusion about causal directionality. Specifically, this study employs a control and a low-conversationality condition. In the control condition, where experiences are expected to have higher conversational potential than objects, people should show greater willingness to exert effort for experiential than for material purchases (Hypothesis 1). However, if conversational potential drives effort, people's greater willingness to exert effort for experiences should attenuate or disappear when the conversational potential of the two purchase types is removed because, in this case, experiences' conversational superiority over objects' is no longer present. To test this notion, Study 4 adapted a procedure from Kumar and Gilovich (2015), with the necessary modifications to fit the current research. This procedure exposed the low-conversationality condition participants to a context where the conversational potential of both purchases was removed, and next inquired all participants, in both the low-conversationality and the control conditions, about the same type of effort as Study 1: work effort.

Study 4 also examined several potential alternative accounts. Considering the stigma often associated with material pursuits (Van Boven et al., 2010), it is possible that people's reporting on effort are influenced by social desirability motivations. This study assessed social desirability to test this possibility. Additionally, past evidence indicates that feelings of financial

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

constraint tend to increase people's preference for material purchases (Tully, Hershfield, & Meyvis, 2015). Drawing on findings that feelings of scarcity in one life domain may create a parallel feeling in another life domain (Johnson & Krueger, 2006), it could be that Study 4's experimental removal of conversational potential in the low-conversationality condition elicits a corresponding attenuation on participants' perceived financial resources, and that this perceived financial constraint, instead of the manipulated void of conversational potential, drives the predicted increase in preference for material purchases in that condition. The study measured perceived financial constraint to examine this possibility. Further, Study 4 assessed materialism (Richins & Dawson, 1992) as another potential rival account.

### **Procedures**

A set of MTurk participants ( $N = 103$ ; 68% females;  $M_{\text{age}} = 38.86$ ,  $SD = 13.40$ ) took part in the study for financial compensation. Participants read the definition of each purchase type (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003) and were asked to write down two experiences and two objects they intended to purchase in the next 12 months for about \$50 each. The two pairs of slots (one pair for each purchase type) appeared in random order. The study requested two purchases of each type (instead of only one of each type) to lower the odds that the specific experience or object participants listed had particularities (e.g., high level of intimacy) that could potentially put it in a disadvantageous condition in terms of conversational potential. Asking for two examples of each purchase type ensured that participants always had a second option to resort to.

Next, participants read that, "In this part of the study, we are interested in learning about people's decisions", and that they would read a scenario in which they should imagine themselves and about which they would later be asked. To manipulate conversational potential, participants in the low-conversationality condition (but not those in the control condition) were

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

asked to imagine that the seller of each of the four purchases they had earlier listed informed them that the experience/object was in beta mode, meaning that it was fully designed and approved by the authorities but that the firm was not fully ready to release it to all customers yet. The seller thus humbly requested that the individual not share about the experiences/objects. Participants were asked to imagine that they sympathized with the request and decided that, if they were to purchase it, they would not tell about it to any friends or family.

To assess their willingness to exert effort, the questionnaire showed all participants the question: “It often happens that, to be able to purchase an experience or an object that they want, people realize that they have to make an extra effort.” Imagine that “to have any single object or experience you listed earlier, you would have to put in 3 hours of extra-time at work. If you were to make that effort, but you were willing to do so for only one of the four purchases, which one would it be?” At this point, the four purchases participants had listed earlier populated in random order on the online questionnaire and they were asked to click next to the purchase for which they would be most willing to exert that effort.

Next, they answered a two-item manipulation check measure of conversational potential (e.g., “I would share about that purchase with many friends and family”; 1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*;  $r = .89$ ,  $p < .001$ ), the thirteen-item version of Marlowe and Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Reynolds, 1982; e.g., “No matter who I’m talking to, I’m always a good listener”;  $\alpha = .78$ ), the sixteen-item version of Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (Hart, Ritchie, Hepper, & Gebauer, 2015; e.g., “I have not always been honest with myself”;  $\alpha = .84$ ), a two-item measure of financial constraint created based on Tully et al.’s (2015) definition of the construct (e.g., “How financially constrained do you feel in your life right now?”; 1 = *Not*

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

at all, 7 = *Very much*;  $r = .76$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and the seven-item scale from Richins and Dawson's (1992) materialism scale (e.g., "I usually buy only the things I need";  $\alpha = .79$ ).

## Results

**Manipulation check for purchase type.** To confirm that the purchases fit the two categories of interest (experiential vs. material), two trained coders rated each purchase by indicating whether they perceived it as: 1 = *Definitely a material object*, 7 = *Definitely an event or activity*. The coding attained satisfactory levels of intercoder reliability for the two experiential ( $ICC(2, k) = .67$ ) and the two material purchases ( $ICC(2, k) = .80$ ). Results showed that the two experiences participants listed were interpreted by the coders as belonging to the experiential purchases category ( $M = 6.75$ ,  $SD = 0.41$ ), a value that is significantly different, in the expected direction, from the neutral value of 4 ( $t(101) = 66.37$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MD = 2.75$ , 95% CI [2.67, 2.83]). Similarly, the two objects were interpreted as belonging to the material purchases category ( $M = 1.80$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ), a value that is significantly different, also in the expected direction, from the neutral value of 4 ( $t(101) = -22.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MD = -2.20$ , 95% CI [-2.38, -1.99]). This confirms that participants listed purchases in line with the categories of interest.

**Manipulation check for conversational potential.** This analysis tested whether, as intended by the manipulation, conversational potential was perceived by participants to be equally low for the two purchase types in the low-conversationality condition, and to be higher for experiences than for objects in the control condition; a pattern that should yield an interaction effect. A moderation analysis using PROCESS (model 1) with conversationality (0 = low; 1 = control) and choice (0 = object; 1 = experience) as independent variables, and the manipulation check measure as the dependent variable showed a significant and positive effect of conversationality ( $b = 2.04$ ,  $SE = 0.47$ ,  $t(99) = 4.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ), a non-significant effect of choice



Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

( $b = 0.09$ ,  $SE = 0.44$ ,  $t(99) = 0.20$ ,  $p = .84$ ), and a significant interaction of conversationality by choice ( $b = 1.27$ ,  $SE = 0.64$ ,  $t(99) = 1.97$ ,  $p = .05$ ). As expected, contrast analyses showed that in the control condition participants attributed significantly higher conversational potential to the experiential than the material purchase ( $b = 1.36$ ,  $SE = 0.46$ ,  $t(99) = 2.92$ ,  $p = .004$ ). Differently, in the low-conversationality condition, participants attributed similar levels of conversational potential to the two purchase types ( $b = 0.09$ ,  $SE = 0.44$ ,  $t(99) = 0.20$ ,  $p = .84$ ). These results indicate that the control condition retained the typically higher conversational potential of experiential (vs. material) purchases, whereas, as intended by the manipulation, the low-conversationality condition equalized that dimension of the purchases (Figure 2).

—Insert Figure 2 about Here—

**Choice of purchase to exert effort.** Results support the predicted differences within and across the two conversationality conditions. In the control condition ( $n = 51$ ), a significant majority of participants (65%) selected an experiential purchase as the one for which they would be more willing to exert effort, a proportion that is significantly higher than the indifference value of 50% ( $z = 2.14$ ,  $p = .01$ ). In contrast, in the low-conversationality condition ( $n = 52$ ), the greater inclination to expend effort for experiences disappeared (experiences = 44%,  $z = -0.86$ ,  $p = .19$ ). Further, a logistic regression on the type of purchase that participants selected to exert the effort showed the expected result—i.e., experiences were selected significantly more frequently in the control than in the low-conversationality condition ( $\text{Exp}(b) = 2.31$ ,  $SE = 0.40$ ,  $p = .03$ ). These results support the prediction that, under typical circumstances (control condition), people display greater willingness to expend acquisition effort for experiential than material purchases; but when their conversational potential is removed and both purchases are at par in terms of this attribute (low-conversationality condition), the effort difference neutralizes (Figure 3).

—Insert Figure 3 about Here—

**Potential rival accounts.** Four analyses of moderation (PROCESS, model 1) with conversationality (0 = low; 1 = control) and choice (0 = object; 1 = experience) as independent variables showed non-significant main and interaction effects for social desirability ( $ps > .2$ ), desirable responding ( $ps > .3$ ), perception of financial constraint ( $ps > .5$ ), and materialism ( $ps > .2$ ), suggesting that these factors are unlikely to account for the effect. To inquire further, a parallel multiple mediator analysis including all four factors as potential mediators (PROCESS, model 4) examined whether any transmitted the effect of conversationality on choice. Results indicated that none mediated the effect, as all four confidence intervals included zero.<sup>2</sup>

## Discussion

Using a moderation approach, Study 4 shows that, under normal conditions (control condition), people are more inclined to exert effort for a purchase they perceive to facilitate conversation—an experience—than one they perceive to be less conducive to conversation—a material object. However, when the conversational potential of the two purchases is removed, (low-conversationality condition), people report similar willingness to exert effort for them. These findings provide additional evidence that a purchase's ability to enable conversations affects consumers' decisions about where to invest their purchase-related effort.

By experimentally manipulating conversational potential, Study 4 provides a sound basis for causal directionality: conversational potential → effort. By its own nature, this strategy neutralizes the alternative causal pathway because differences in conversational potential cannot be attributed to effort, whereas differences in effort can be attributed to the manipulated levels of

---

<sup>2</sup> Social desirability ( $b = 0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ , 95% CI  $[-0.18, 0.39]$ ), desirable responding ( $b = -0.20$ ,  $SE = 0.15$ , 95% CI  $[-0.44, 0.23]$ ), perception of financial constraint ( $b = 0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ , 95% CI  $[-0.06, 0.24]$ ), materialism ( $b = 0.003$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ , 95% CI  $[-0.13, 0.18]$ ).

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

conversational potential (Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005). Establishing the direction of the effect in this way is important to disconfirm the possible alternative interpretation that experiential purchases offer greater conversational potential precisely because consumers are more willing to exert acquisition effort for them. Further, this study rules out social desirability, desirable responding, financial constraint, and materialism as potential rival accounts (please see Web Appendix A, Study 2, for an analysis of mediation ruling out of these same four potential accounts while also demonstrating the predicted indirect effect via conversational potential).

The evidence thus far has indicated but not empirically shown that consumers more often choose to exert effort for purchases that are more conducive to conversations. Put differently, participants in Studies 1-4 reported greater likelihood of exerting effort for purchases that enable conversation. Will this difference manifest when people have to make an actual choice of a purchase to make effort for? Study 5 uses an actual-choice procedure to answer this question.

### **Study 5—Establishing the Phenomenon with an Actual Choice**

This work's main proposition is that consumers are comparatively more prone to exerting effort towards purchases with high conversational potential (experiences) than those with low conversational potential (objects). Study 5 was designed to demonstrate this difference with an actual-choice approach. Specifically, this study examines whether, when people are faced with the possibility of actually expending effort towards a purchase with high (vs. low) conversational potential, they choose systematically more often the one that promotes conversation.

### **Procedures**

One hundred and four Master's level business students from a European university (55% females,  $M_{\text{age}} = 22.88$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ) participated in the study for course credit. The data from one participant failed to get registered on the online system due to computer malfunction. The data

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

from all the other 103 participants were used in the analyses. Employing a within-subjects design similar to Study 4's, this study instructed participants to think of an experiential and a material purchase they intended to purchase in the next 12 months for about €50. They then wrote down what the purchase was and the name of an organization/firm that could provide them that purchase (the order of writing the two purchases types was randomized).

Next, they completed the choice task and answered a measure of conversational potential (order for these parts was randomized). The instructions for the choice task read: "We want to give you a chance to possibly enter a drawing. The drawing is for a voucher for one of the two purchases you wrote earlier. You can choose which one. To be eligible for the drawing, you would just need to put in a bit more time and cognitive effort. That is, you would complete another questionnaire that lasts about one hour. We will later give you more detail on that, but let's first decide on which of the two purchases you will want the voucher for." At this point, the two purchases populated in random order. Participants then read: "Here are the two purchases you listed. If you win the drawing, we will get you a voucher from the firm/organization you wrote earlier. Please select the one you want to make the effort for (click next to it):"

To measure conversational potential, the questionnaire employed two pairs of items drawn from the five-item measure used in Studies 1-3 (e.g., "That experience/object will likely be a good topic to talk with others about";  $r_{\text{exp}} = .69, p < .001$ ;  $r_{\text{mat}} = .62, p < .001$ ; the two questions for object appeared first). Since participants answered the same measure twice (for the two purchase types), this shortened version of the measure was used to avoid participant fatigue.

Next, to confirm that the purchases that participants listed corresponded to the two categories of interest, they were again shown, in random order, the two purchases they had written down and asked the same question for each purchase ("In my opinion, this purchase is

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

categorized as...”; 1 = *Something tangible that I can keep in my possession*, 7 = *An event or a series of events that I live through*). Last, participants were debriefed, thanked, and released.

## Results

**Manipulation check for purchase type.** A paired-samples *t*-test showed that participants perceived the experiential (vs. material) purchase as significantly more experiential ( $M_{exp} = 6.32$ ,  $SD = 1.28$  vs.  $M_{mat} = 1.57$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ,  $t(101) = 18.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MD = 4.75$ , 95% CI [4.25, 5.25], Cohen’s  $d = 3.44$ ). Further, two one-sample *t*-tests indicated that participants’ perceptions of the experiential ( $t(101) = 18.28$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MD = 2.32$ , 95% CI [2.07, 2.58]) and the material purchases ( $t(101) = -16.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MD = -2.43$ , 95% CI [-2.72, -2.14]) were significantly different from the neutral value of 4, both in the expected directions. Hence, the two purchases that participants listed were in line with the two categories of interest.

**Conversational potential.** Participants perceived the experience to offer greater conversational potential ( $M = 6.10$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ) than the object ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ,  $t(102) = 15.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MD = 2.75$ , 95% CI [2.38, 3.11], Cohen’s  $d = 2.07$ ), replicating Studies 1-4.

**Choice of purchase to exert effort.** A *z*-test examined whether participants showed preference for investing effort towards acquiring either purchase type. As expected, a substantial majority (61%) chose the experiential (vs. material) purchase (replicating Study 4’s result, where 65% of control condition participants selected an experience). This 61% proportion is significantly greater than the indifference value of 50% ( $z = 2.23$ ,  $p = .02$ ). Of note, this result is robust to analytical method, as a *t*-test with object coded as 0 and experience coded as 1 yielded the same conclusion:  $t(102) = 2.31$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $MD = 0.11$ , 95% CI [0.02, 0.21].

## Discussion

This study replicates previous results with an actual-choice approach. Findings indicate that when people are faced with an actual decision of which purchase type to expend effort for, they are more prone to doing so for a purchase that facilitates conversation (an experiential purchase) than one that is not as conducive to conversation (a material purchase).

### **General Discussion**

The main objectives of this investigation were to examine whether consumers react more positively to the prospect of exerting effort toward experiential versus material purchases; and whether the conversational potential of the purchase explains this effect. Evidence from five studies employing different approaches (mediation, moderation, and actual-choice), methodologies to purchases (past, future, and framed purchases), and types of consumer effort (e.g., to work additional hours, to save money) confirms both relationships (please see Web Appendix F for a single-paper meta-analysis summarizing the main effect across Studies 1-3 and the four additional studies reported in Web Appendices A and B [McShane & Böckenholt, 2017]). Therefore, a major takeaway from this research is that consumers are willing to expend effort for the opportunity to converse about their purchases.

### **Theoretical and Managerial Contributions**

This work makes several theoretical contributions. First, it extends the experiential versus material purchases literature to a new domain—that of consumer effort. Past work in this literature has mostly focused on two domains where this purchase type categorization has shown predictive potential: the social (e.g., interpersonal relationships [Caprariello & Reis, 2013]) and psychological domains of the consumer (e.g., psychological adaptation [Nicolao et al., 2009]). However, as this work shows, the predictive potential of the purchase type categorization is

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

wider than previously known. Specifically, it reliably predicts another outcome of substantial relevance to firms—consumers’ reaction to the prospect of exerting effort to acquire a purchase.

Second, the finding that conversational potential explains the effect is particularly interesting because it contributes to the WOM and eWOM literatures in various ways. First, we now know that, besides influencing important factors such as consumers’ membership in online communities, their awareness about a potential purchase, and their intension to retransmit purchase-related information to others online (Baker, Donthu, & Kumar, 2016; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Van den Bulte & Wuyts, 2009), a purchase’s ability to facilitate consumer conversations also determines the degree to which consumers are willing to exert acquisition effort.

Further, the notion that WOM and eWOM can bring benefits to the firm in the form of consumer effort because it is, first, intrinsically rewarding to the consumer suggests a framework through which to view the benefits that WOM can generate. Adding to the traditional way of viewing the benefits of online and offline WOM as primarily pertaining to the firm (Buttle, 1998; Kaplan, 2012; Kim & Hanssens, 2017; Kim & Ko, 2012), this perspective focuses on the desirability of WOM as seen by the *consumer*; who in turn ‘pays back’ the firm. In other words, and now focusing on the online domain, this work goes beyond seeing consumer engagement in social media as simply a marketing tool (e.g., Kozinets, Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010; Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009) to considering its broader implications for the consumer first and foremost; implications those that trickle down to the firm in the form of consumer effort.

Still in the WOM domain, researchers in this area have acknowledged that existing findings “allow conclusions at the aggregate level, but make it difficult to detect differences between different kinds of goods and services” (Chakravarty, Liu, & Mazumdar, 2010, p. 186).

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

Recent research has started to address this limitation by considering specific categories of either experiences (movies, music; Dhar & Chang, 2009; Kim & Hanssens, 2017) or material objects (automobiles; Feng & Papatla, 2012). By considering and comparing the two purchase categories against each other (experiential versus material purchases), the present work directly speaks to and helps address this limitation in the literature.

Although not tested empirically in the present work, and therefore still speculatively, the findings of this research might also help explain the dual causality effect between WOM volume and product sales documented in recent research (Feng & Papatla, 2012). Specifically, Feng and Papatla (2012) reported evidence from two automobile-related websites showing that increases in WOM lead to more sales, and vice-versa; and as the authors acknowledge, “our results do not provide obvious explanations for why this may be so” (p. 100). The findings from the present research can shed a light. That is, the WOM → sales effect could result, at least in part, from the fact that purchases that facilitate WOM conversation elicit greater consumer willingness to try harder to acquire them. In turn, the sales → WOM effect could emerge, at least to a degree, from the fact that, as a topic of conversation, purchases that sell more and “are, therefore, likely to have substantially larger customer awareness and interest” (Feng & Papatla, 2012, p. 100) offer more benefits of the types discussed in the present work—e.g., social approval, socially bonding conversations. Future research may consider examining these possibilities.

This research also adds to knowledge in interactive marketing in the following way. Researchers in interactive digital media have given considerable attention to the experiences consumers have in this domain (Petit, Velasco, & Spence, 2019). As Hanna, Rohm, and Crittenden (2011, p. 267) explain, “the social media ecosystem centers on the consumer experience”; an idea echoed by marketing practitioners. As NHL’s director of social media



Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

marketing and strategy, Mike Dilorenzo, once asserted: “Social networks aren’t about Web sites. They’re about experiences” (Wyshynski, 2009). The present work shows that, for theory and practice, the idea of ‘consumer experience’ matters for not only what consumers *do* online—the experiences they have while interacting online—but also what they *talk* about online—the experiences they converse with each other while interacting online. Importantly, and as the discussion below illustrates, this work also provides marketing managers with tools to encourage consumers to converse about their experiences (or the experiential aspects of their material purchases).

The knowledge presented in this paper is relevant for firms because, due to circumstantial events (e.g., store relocation) or resource constraints (e.g., the inability of a theater to hire additional ticket counter attendants) firms can miss business opportunities unless consumers are willing to exert a level of effort. Hence, it is useful for the manager to know that increasing the conversational potential of purchases is likely to increase consumers’ willingness to persist in such situations. Study 3 offers a viable and simple way to do so—by encouraging consumers to think of an object along its experiential instead of material dimensions. Of note, the online environment (e.g., eWOM) offers unprecedented opportunities for firms to exert such influence. For example, firms could employ automated software to identify online forums where consumers often talk about their purchases. Then, by using keyword dictionaries (Pennebacker, Boyd, Jordan, & Blackburn, 2015), they could monitor, in real-time, the “direction of change” of each conversation (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011, p. 244)—that is, they could identify whether the conversation is going in the direction of the material or the experiential aspects of the purchase. When the material aspects of the object appear to predominate, the firm could strategically place cues (e.g., a pop-up ad) highlighting and reminding consumers of the

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

experiential dimensions of that purchase. Previous research has shown that subtle reminders that appear outside of the consumers' focal area of attention increase consumers' awareness of an advertised brand (Nielsen, Shapiro, & Mason, 2010). Similarly, it is likely that such reminders can bring the experiential aspects of an object to the top of consumer's minds and, consequently, increase the likelihood that those aspects are talked about. Interestingly, these experience-focused conversations would likely engender two desirable outcomes: They would motivate consumers to keep sharing, since consumers are more excited about talking about the experiential than the material aspects of their purchases (Study 3); and they would serve as exemplary manifestations of the conversational potential of the purchase for other consumers observing the online conversation.

Exerting this type of influence is even more obtainable when the firm hosts the forum where the conversations unfold. For example, Apple ([discussions.apple.com](http://discussions.apple.com)) and eBay ([forums.ebay.com](http://forums.ebay.com)) host within their own websites forums where brand community members can interact—referred to in the literature as firm-hosted online brand communities (Gruner, Homburg, & Lukas, 2014) or organization-sponsored virtual communities (Porter, 2004). Naturally, this gives the host firm substantial control over the content and context that consumers are exposed visually and auditorily. As Gruner et al. (2014) explain, firms have considerable room to influence what is discussed in the forums they administer themselves. They can, for instance, “guide member communication [toward the purchase's experiential aspects] through occasional questions” (Gruner et al., 2014, p. 33) or, more directly, initiate eWOM discussions centered on the experiential aspects of a purchase and let the discussion evolve from there (Kietzmann et al., 2011). For the latter, they could take advantage of the relative ease of identifying online influencers (e.g., bloggers whose blogs register daily traffic above a desired

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

threshold) and delegate the role of conversation initiator to these influential ‘consumers’ via, for example, ‘seeding’ campaigns (Kozinets et al., 2010). Additionally, the firm could use new features of growing popularity to cue conversing individuals. One example is predictive text. To make use of it, the firm could program its social media software to suggest, for example, the word ‘experience’ (instead of, say, ‘exact’ or ‘explain’) whenever conversing individuals type the initial letters ‘ex’. To assist with these various initiatives, firms should consider creating custom dictionaries of keywords associated with experiential and material purchases; and the existing literature can be helpful here as it provides a starting list of terms often used to refer to the two types of purchases (e.g., activities, events, and doing vs. objects, goods, and owning; Bastos, 2019; Gilovich & Gallo, 2019; Nicolao et al., 2009; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003).

Overall, given the possibilities now available to firms in the online domain, the knowledge presented here is especially timely. With the advent of the Web and social media, firms have at their disposal a wealth of tools to facilitate consumer interaction (Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins, & Wiertz, 2013), and, indeed, some firms have utilized them profitably (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007). Although initiatives to encourage and enable consumers to converse virtually can be demanding on the company’s resources (Sheng, 2019), the findings presented here point to a novel benefit firms should consider when evaluating programs of this nature—i.e., the potential to elicit greater consumers’ willingness to exert effort to acquire a purchase. Ultimately, this research helps make consumer conversation more manageable for the firm. This is important because, as much of the academic discourse about online consumer conversation illustrates, the Internet has democratized communication and companies no longer have a firm control over what is said or how to administer this type of exchange (Bastos, 2016; Kietzmann et al., 2011). Reflecting these notions, researchers have

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

argued that “Communication about brands happens, with or without permission of the firms in question” (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 242), that “many of these companies do not truly understand how to manage social media effectively” (Hanna et al., 2011, p. 269), and that “not overly many firms seem to act comfortably in a world where consumers can speak so freely” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 50); leading some to refer to the online space as “very much a Wild West” (Vranica, 2010) or a “jungle” (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 241). In a small yet relevant way, the present work offers some guidance and shows managerially applicable measures that can help firms in this regard. In doing so, it adds practical knowledge to the area of word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM)—the area concerned with “the intentional influencing of consumer-to-consumer communications by professional marketing techniques” (Kozinets et al., 2010, p. 71).

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This research has several limitations, some of which point to opportunities for future inquiries. Whereas this work examines various representations of consumer effort, the data do not speak to a myriad of other types of effort that consumers make—e.g., adaptation and familiarization, de-attachment from currently owned purchases, and bargaining. Although theoretically the author expects the findings to generalize to these other forms of effort since they involve the expenditure of some of the same personal resources studied here, future research could examine whether this is the case. Additionally, while this investigation examined experiential and material purchases in general, future research could take a more nuanced view within each of these categories. For example, are there identifiable sub-categories of experiences and objects that are uniquely capable of facilitating consumer conversations? Also, experiential and material purchases differ along other dimensions besides conversational potential (e.g.,

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Carter & Gilovich, 2010, 2012; Nicolao et al., 2009). Nonetheless, possible concerns associated with alternative distinctions should be assuaged by Study 4, which directly manipulated conversational potential and provided consistent results.

Future work could also test the boundaries of the model advanced here. It is possible that certain individual or situational factors make WOM conversation irrelevant or even undesirable (Pennebaker, 1993). In this case, the effort differential would likely attenuate or disappear. For example, a purchase's conversational potential may be less valuable to introverts than extraverts (Goldberg, 1990), and may be less applicable when the purchase is to be kept under secrecy (Commuri, 2009). In addition, although this work's theorization implies that the model holds for online as well as traditional consumer conversations, future research could examine empirically whether certain communication channels magnify the effects observed in this research. Face-to-face, spoken communication is, by nature, ephemeral, whereas much of eWOM comes in written form that can 'live' for long (e.g., opinions posted on the Web; Park & Lee, 2009). Future work could study whether the more enduring nature of certain WOM channels makes WOM conversations more desirable and, therefore, better able to elicit consumers' effort. Further, previous research has shown that, when making choices, information seekers attend to different types of information depending on whether it is transmitted online (rating information is more salient to them) versus offline (recommendation information is more salient to them; Kulkarni et al., 2012). Researchers could examine whether consumers sharing about their purchases also display different patterns in the content they transmit online versus offline, and whether this affects the appeal of a purchase's conversational potential. In addition, another potentially interesting possibility is to examine consumers who tend to display different types of behaviors in the online social media ecosystem. As identified by Bernoff and Li (2008), consumers

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

interacting online can be classified as: creators (who generate content), critics (who comment and rate), collectors (who accumulate, save, and share), joiners (who connect with others), and spectators (who read and consume the content). Given their more active role in creating and spreading eWOM, *creators* may be the group most desiring and willing to exert effort for the opportunity to share about a purchase. Future research could examine this possibility.

Finally, this work discussed theoretically, but did not test empirically, five major benefits associated with WOM and eWOM conversations. Future research could consider which role, if any, those benefits play in a nomological network where conversational potential plays a central role. For example, it is possible that one or more of those benefits explains the effect on the right side of the model—the link ‘conversational potential → acquisition effort’. Alternately, they may help explain why people are more inclined to converse about experiential than material purchases—the link ‘purchase type → conversational potential’.

Whichever direction future research in this domain takes, the author trusts that the present investigation will seed additional work in the areas of experiential versus material purchases, WOM conversation both offline and online, and consumer effort, with beneficial implications for theory and practice.

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

Acknowledgements: The author expresses gratitude to Ana Bianchi de Aguiar, Merrie Brucks, Andrew Hafenbrack, Sidney J. Levy, Fernando Machado, and Sarah G. Moore for their helpful comments on prior versions of the manuscript.

### References

- Allport, Gordon W. (1937), *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*. New York: Holt.
- Altman, Irwin and Dalmas A. Taylor (1973), *Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Atkin, Charles K. (1972), "Anticipated Communication and Mass Media Information-Seeking," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36, 2, 188-99.
- Bagozzi, Richard P. and Youjae Yi (1988), "On the Evaluation of Structural Equation Models," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 16, 1, 74-94.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and Utpa Dholakita (1999), "Goal Setting and Goal Striving in Consumer Behavior," *Journal of Marketing*, 63, 4, 19-32.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and Youjae Yi (2012), "Specification, Evaluation, and Interpretation of Structural Equation Models," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 40, 1, 8-34.
- Baker, Andrew M., Naveen Donthu, and V. Kumar (2016), "Investigating How Word-of-Mouth Conversations about Brands Influence Purchase and Retransmission Intentions," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 53, 2, 225-39.
- Balasubramanian, Sridhar and Vijay Mahajan (2001), "The Economic Leverage of the Virtual Community," *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 5, 3, 103-38.
- Bandura, Albert (1969), "Social-Learning Theory of Identificatory Processes" in *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research*, D. Goslin, ed. Chicago: Rand McNally, 213-62.
- Bastos, Wilson (2016), "The Brand the Social Media" in *The Theory of The Brand*, Sidney J. Levy, ed. IL: DecaBooks LLC. 7, 83-123.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and Merrie Brucks (2017), "How and Why Conversational Value Leads to Happiness for Experiential and Material Purchases," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 44, 3, 598-



612.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2019), “Now or Never: Perceptions of Uniqueness Induce Acceptance of Price Increases for Experiences More than for Objects,” *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, (in press).

Baumeister, Roy F. and Mark R. Leary (1995), “The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation,” *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 3, 497–529.

Beatty, Sharon E. and Scott M. Smith (1987), “External Search Effort: An Investigation across Several Product Categories,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14, 1, 83–95.

Berger, Jonah and Eric M. Schwartz (2011), “What Drives Immediate and Ongoing Word of Mouth?,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, 48, 5, 869–80.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2014), “Word of mouth and Interpersonal Communication: A Review and Directions for Future Research,” *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 24, 4, 586–607.

Bernoff, Josh and Charlene Li (2008), *Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing.

Brown, Jo, Amanda J. Broderick, and Nick Lee (2007), “Word of Mouth Communication within Online Communities: Conceptualizing the Online Social Network,” *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 21, 3, 2–20.

Buttle, Francis A. (1998), “Word of Mouth: Understanding and Managing Referral Marketing,” *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 6, 3, 241–54.

Caprariello, Peter and Harry Reis (2013), “To Do, To Have, or To Share: The Value of Experiences Over Material Possessions Depends on the Involvement of Others,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 104, 2, 199–215.

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

- Cardozo, Richard N. (1965), "An Experimental Study of Customer Effort, Expectation, and Satisfaction," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 2, 3, 244–49.
- Carter, Travis J. and Thomas Gilovich (2010), "The Relative Relativity of Material and Experiential Purchases," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98, 1, 146–59.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (2012), "I Am What I Do, Not What I Have: The Differential Centrality of Experiential and Material Purchases to the Self," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102, 6, 1304–17.
- Chaffee, Steven H. and Jack M. McLeod (1973), "Individual vs. Social Predictors of Information Seeking," *Journalism Quarterly*, 50, 2, 237–45.
- Chakravarty, Anindita, Yong Liu, and Tridib Mazumdar (2010), "The Differential Effects of Online Word-of-Mouth and Critics' Reviews on Pre-Release Movie Evaluation," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 24, 31, 85–97.
- Chan, Elaine and Jaideep Sengupta (2013), "Observing Flattery: A Social Comparison Perspective," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40, 4, 740–58.
- Cheema, Amar and Andrew M. Kaikati (2010), "The Effect of Need for Uniqueness on Word of Mouth," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 47, 3, 553–63.
- Cheung, Christy M.K. and Matthew K.O. Lee (2012), "What Drives Consumers to Spread Electronic Word of Mouth in Online Consumer-Opinion Platforms," *Decision Support Systems*, 53, 1, 218–25.
- Collins, Nancy L. and Lynn Carol Miller (1994), "Self-Disclosure and Liking: A Meta-Analytic Review," *Psychological Bulletin*, 116, 3, 457–75.
- Commuri, Suraj (2009), "The Impact of Counterfeiting on Genuine-Item Consumers' Brand Relationships," *Journal of Marketing*, 73, 3, 86–98.

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Reed Larson (1987), "Validity and Reliability of the Experience-Sampling Method," *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 175, 9, 526–36.

Deci, Edward L. and Richard M. Ryan (1985), *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*. New York: Plenum Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (2008), "Hedonia, Eudaimonia, and Well-being: An Introduction," *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 9, 1, 1–11.

Dhar, Vasant and Elaine A. Chang (2009), "Does Chatter Matter? The Impact of User-Generated Content on Music Sales," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 23, 4, 300–07.

Dichter, E. (1966), "How Word-of-Mouth Advertising Works," *Harvard Business Review*, 44, 6, 147–60.

Dunbar, Robin, Anna Marriott, and Neil C. Duncan (1997), "Human Conversational Behavior," *Human Nature*, 8, 3, 231–46.

\_\_\_\_\_ and Robin Ian MacDonald Dunbar (1998), *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2004), *The Human Story*. London: Faber and Faber.

Feick, Lawrence F. and Linda L. Price (1987), "The Market Maven: A Diffuser of Marketplace Information," *Journal of Marketing*, 51, 1, 83–97.

Feng, Jie and Purushottam Papatla (2012), "Is Online Word of Mouth Higher for New Models or Redesigns? An Investigation of the Automobile Industry," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26, 2, 92–101.

Festinger, Leon, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter (1956), *When Prophecy Fails*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

- Fiske, Susan T. (2001), "Social and Societal Pragmatism: Commentary on Augustinos, Gaskell, and Lorenzi-Cioldi," in *Representations of the Social: Bridging Research Traditions*. Kay Deaux, Gina Philogene, editors. New York: Blackwell. 249–53.
- Fornell, Claes and David F. Larcker (1981), "Evaluating Structural Equation Models with Unobservable Variables and Measurement Error," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18, 1, 39–50.
- Fournier, Susan and Marsha Richins (1991), "Some Theoretical and Popular Notions Concerning Materialism," *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 6, 6, 403–14.
- Gable, Shelly L., Gian Gonzaga, and Amy Strachman (2006), "Will You Be There for Me When Things Go Right? Supportive Responses to Positive Event Disclosures," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91, 5, 904–17.
- Garbarino, Ellen C. and Juile A. Edell (1997), "Cognitive Effort, Affect, and Choice," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24, 2, 147–58.
- Gatignon, Hubert and Thomas Robertson (1986), "An Exchange Theory Model of Interpersonal Communication," *Advances in Consumer Research*, 13, 534–38.
- Gensler, Sonja, Franziska Völckner, Yuping Liu-Thompkins, and Caroline Wiertz (2013), "Managing Brands in the Social Media Environment," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27, 4, 242–56.
- Gilovich, Thomas and Iñigo Gallo (2019), "Consumers' Pursuit of Material and Experiential Purchases: A Review," *Consumer Psychology Review*, (In press).
- Goldberg, Lewis R. (1990), "An Alternative 'Description of Personality': The Big-Five Factor Structure," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 6, 1216–29.

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

- Gruner, Richard L., Christian Homburg, and Bryan A. Lukas (2014), "Firm-Hosted Online Brand Communities and New Product Success," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 42, 1, 29–48.
- Hanna, Richard, Andrew Rohm, and Victoria L. Crittenden (2011), "We're All Connected: The Power of The Social Media Ecosystem," *Business Horizons*, 54, 3, 265–73.
- Hargadon, Andrew B. and Beth A. Bechky (2006), "When Collections of Creatives Become Creative Collectives: A Field Study of Problem Solving at Work," *Organization Science*, 17, 4, 484–500.
- Hart, Claire. M., Timothy D. Ritchie, Erica G. Hepper, and Jochen E. Gebauer (2015), "The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding Short Form (BIDR-16)," *SAGE Open*, 5, 4, 1–9.
- Hayes, A. (2013), *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Hennig-Thurau, Thorsten, Gwinner P. Kevin, Walsh Gianfranco, and Gremler D. Dwayne (2004), "Electronic Word-of-Mouth Via Consumer-Opinion Platforms: What Motivates Consumers to Articulate Themselves on the Internet?," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18, 1, 38–52.
- Homans, George C. (1958), "Social Behavior as Exchange," *Journal of American Sociology*, 63, 6, 597–606.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1961), *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

Hornsey, Matthew J. and Jolanda Jetten (2004), "The Individual within the Group: Balancing the Need to Belong with the Need to be Different," *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 8, 3, 248–64.

Johnson, Wendy and Robert F. Krueger (2006), "How Money Buys Happiness: Genetic and Environmental Processes Linking Finances and Life Satisfaction," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90, 4, 680–91.

Kaplan, Andreas M. and Michael Haenlein (2010), "Users of The World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media," *Business Horizons*, 53, 1, 59–68.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2012), "If You Love Something, Let It Go Mobile: Mobile Marketing and Mobile Social Media 4x4," *Business Horizons*, 55, 2, 129–39.

Keinan, Anat and Ran Kivetz (2010), "Productivity Orientation and the Consumption of Collectable Experiences," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37, 6, 935–50.

Kietzmann, Jan H., Kristopher Hermkens, Ian P. McCarthy, and Bruno S. Silvestre (2011), "Social Media? Get Serious! Understanding the Functional Building Blocks of Social Media," *Business Horizons*, 54, 3, 241–51.

Kim, Ho and Hanssens M. Dominique (2017), "Advertising and Word-of-Mouth Effects on Pre-Launch Consumer Interest and Initial Sales of Experience Products," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 37, February, 57–74.

Kim, Angella J. and Eunju Ko (2012), "Do Social Media Marketing Activities Enhance Customer Equity? An Empirical Study of Luxury Fashion Brand," *Journal of Business Research*, 65, 10, 1480–86.

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

- King, Robert A., Pradeep Racherla, and Victoria D. Bush (2014), "What We Know and Don't Know About Online Word-of-Mouth: A Review and Synthesis of the Literature," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28, 3, 167–83.
- Kozinets, Robert V., Kristine De Valck, Andrea C. Wojnicki, and Sarah J. S. Wilner (2010), "Networked Narratives: Understanding Word-of-Mouth Marketing In Online Communities," *Journal of Marketing*, 74, 2, 71–89.
- Kulkarni, Gauri, Brian T. Ratchford, and P. K. Kannan (2012), "The Impact of Online and Offline Information Sources on Automobile Choice Behavior," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26, 3, 167–75.
- Kumar, Amit and Thomas Gilovich (2015), "Some "Thing" To Talk About? Differential Story Utility from Experiential and Material Purchases," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41, 10, 1320–31.
- Lampel, Joseph and Ajay Bhalla (2007), "The Role of Status Seeking in Online Communities: Giving the Gift of Experience," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12, 2, 434–55.
- Langston, Christopher A. (1994), "Capitalizing on and Coping with Daily-Life Events: Expressive Responses to Positive Events," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 6, 1112–25.
- Leclerc, France, Schmitt H. Bernd, and Dube Laurette (1995), "Waiting Time and Decision Making: Is Time Like Money?," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22, 1, 110–19.
- McShane, Blakeley B. and Ulf Böckenholt (2017), "Single-Paper Meta-Analysis: Benefits for Study Summary, Theory Testing, and Replicability," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 43, 6, 1048–63.

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

Mead, Nicole L., Roy F. Baumeister, Tyler F. Stillman, Catherine D. Rawn, and Kathleen D.

Vohs (2011), "Social Exclusion Causes People to Spend and Consume Strategically in the Service of Affiliation," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37, 5, 902–19.

Mitchell, Terence R., Leigh Thompson, Erika Peterson, and Randy Cronk (1997), "Temporal Adjustments in the Evaluation of Events: The "Rosy View"," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 33, 4, 421–48.

Mohr, Lois A. and Mary J. Bitner (1995), "The Role of Employee Effort in Satisfaction with Service Transactions," *Journal of Business Research*, 32, 3, 239–52.

Naaman, Mor, Jeffrey Boase, and Chih-Hui Lai (2010), "Is it Really About Me? Message Content in Social Awareness Streams," Proceedings of the 2010 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work. *Association for Computing Machinery: Savannah, GA*. p. 189–92. (February 6–10, 2010).

Nielsen, Jesper H., Stewart Shapiro, and Charlotte H. Mason (2010), "Emotion and Semantic Onsets: Exploring Orienting Attention Responses in Advertising," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 46, 7, 1138–50.

Nicolao, Leonardo, Julie R. Irwin, and Joseph K. Goodman (2009), "Happiness for Sale: Do Experiential Purchases Make Consumers Happier than Material Purchases?," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36, 2, 188–98.

Omarzu, Julia (2000), "A Disclosure Decision Model: Determining How and When Individuals Will Self-Disclose," *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4, 2, 174–85.

Park, Cheol and Thae M. Lee (2009), "Antecedents of Online Reviews' Usage and Purchase Influence: An Empirical Comparison of US and Korean Consumers," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 23, 4, 332–40.



Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

Pennebaker, James W. (1993), "Putting Stress into Words: Health, Linguistic, and Therapeutic Implications," *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 31, 6, 539–48.

\_\_\_\_\_ Ryan L. Boyd, Kayla Jordan, and Kate Blackburn (2015), *The Development and Psychometric Properties of LIWC2015*.

Petit, Olivia, Carlos Velasco, and Charles Spence (2019), "Digital Sensory Marketing: Integrating New Technologies into Multisensory Online Experience," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 45, February 42–61.

Porter, Constance E. (2004), "A Typology of Virtual Communities: A Multi-Disciplinary Foundation for Future Research," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10, 1, JCMC1011.

Post, Stephen G. (2005), "Altruism, Happiness, and Health: It's Good to Be Good," *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 12, 2, 66–77.

Reynolds, William M. (1982), "Development of Reliable and Valid Short Forms of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale," *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 38, 1, 119–25.

Richins, Marsha L. and Scott Dawson (1992), "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement: Scale Development and Validation," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19, 3, 303–16.

Richmond, Virginia P. (1977), "The Relationship between Opinion Leadership and Information Acquisition," *Human Communication Research*, 4, 1, 38–43.

Rimé, Bernard (2009), "Emotion Elicits the Social Sharing of Emotion: Theory and Empirical Review," *Emotion Review*, 1, 1, 60–85.

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

Rosenzweig, Emily and Thomas Gilovich (2012), "Buyer's Remorse or Missed Opportunity?

Differential Regrets for Material and Experiential Purchases," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102, 2, 215–23.

Ryan, Richard M. and Edward L. Deci (2000), "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being," *American Psychologist*, 55, 1, 68–78.

Sharma, Eesha and Keller A. Keller (2017), "A Penny Saved is Not a Penny Earned: When Decisions to Earn and Save Compete for Consumer Resources," *Journal of The Association for Consumer Research*, 2, 1, 64–77.

Sheng, Jie (2019), "Being Active in Online Communications: Firm Responsiveness and Customer Engagement Behaviour," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 46, May, 40–51.

Spencer, Steven J., Mark P. Zanna, and Geoffrey T. Fong (2005), "Establishing a Causal Chain: Why Experiments Are Often More Effective than Mediational Analyses In Examining Psychological Processes," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89, 6, 845–51.

Tamir, Diana I. and Jason P. Mitchell (2012), "Disclosing Information About the Self Is Intrinsically Rewarding," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109, 21, 8038–43.

Tian, Kelly T., William O. Bearden, and Gray L. Hunter (2001), "Consumers' Need for Uniqueness: Scale Development and Validation," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28, 1, 50–66.

Trusov, Michael, Randolph E. Bucklin, and Koen Pauwels (2009), "Effects of Word-Of-Mouth versus Traditional Marketing: Findings from an Internet Social Networking Site," *Journal of Marketing*, 73, 5, 90–102.

Running head: CONSUMER CONVERSATION AND ACQUISITION EFFORT

Tully, Stephanie M., Hal E. Hershfield, and Tom Meyvis (2015), "Seeking Lasting Enjoyment with Limited Money: Financial Constraints Increase Preference for Material Goods Over Experiences," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 42, 1, 59–65.

Tversky, Amos and Daniel Kahneman (1981), "The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice," *Science*, 211, 4481, 453–58.

Van Boven, Leaf and Thomas Gilovich (2003), "To Do or to Have? That is the Question," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85, 6, 1193–1202.

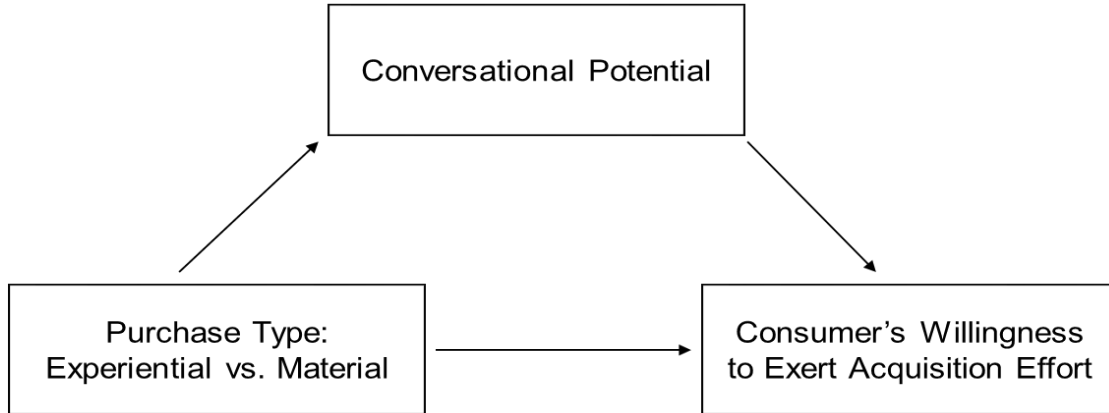
\_\_\_\_\_, Margaret C. Campbell, and \_\_\_\_\_ (2010), "Stigmatizing Materialism: On Stereotypes and Impressions of Materialistic and Experiential Pursuits," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 36, 4, 551–63.

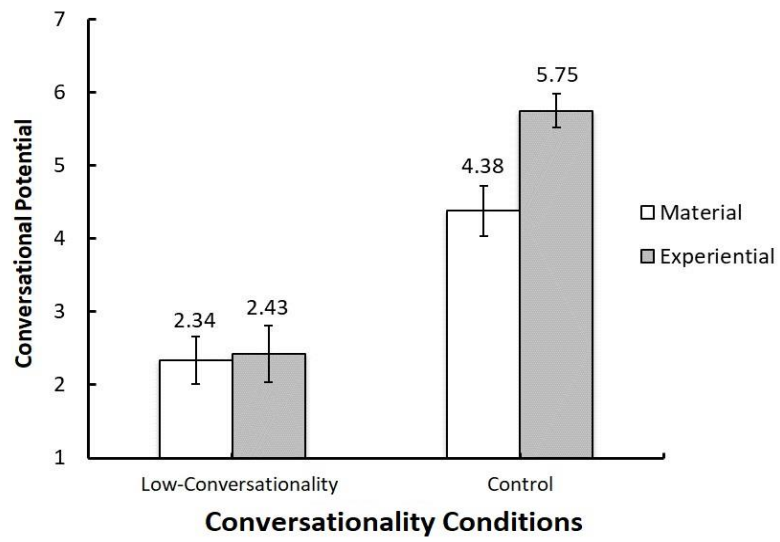
Van den Bulte, Christophe and Stefan Wuyts (2009), "Leveraging Customer Networks". In Jerry Yoram Wind, and Paul Kleindorfer (Eds.), *The Network Challenge: Strategy, Profit and Risk in an Interlinked World*, (243–58). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Wharton School Publishing.

Vranica, Suzanne (2010), "Social Media Draws A Crowd," Retrieved August 1, 2019, from: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703722804575369132582357888>

Wyshynski, Greg (2009), "Inside the NHL's Social Media Innovations, Growing Pains," Retrieved August 20, 2019, from: <https://sports.yahoo.com/blogs/nhl-puck-daddy/inside-nhls-social-media-innovations-growing-pains--nhl.html>

Zipursky, Michael (2013), "Why Online Retailers Are Losing 67.45% of Sales and What to Do About It [Blog Post]," Retrieved August 6, 2018 from: <https://www.shopify.com/blog/8484093-why-online-retailers-are-losing-67-45-of-sales-and-what-to-do-about-it>

*Figure 1.* The Predicted Framework.

*Figure 2. Manipulation Check for Conversational Potential—Study 4.*

*Figure 3.* Likelihood of Choosing an Experience to Exert Effort—Study 4.