Me, myself, and my choices: The influence of private self-awareness on preference-behavior consistency

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The Influence of Private Self-Awareness on Preference-Behavior Consistency

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Research presented in this article examines the impact of private self-awareness on consumer decision making. Three studies report converging evidence that by increasing self-awareness, consumers encounter fewer problems in determining their product attitudes and, thereby, behave in a way that is more consistent with their own personal product preferences. In study 1, the authors found that the compromise effect and the attraction effect are both dramatically reduced under self-awareness, suggesting that self-awareness helps individuals in identifying which attributes are really important to them. This conjecture was confirmed by study 2, in which it was found that the effect of self-awareness on context effects was mediated by more articulated attribute preferences and indistinguishable from the effects of a manipulation that induced people to think of their preferences in advance. In study 3, the authors found that self-aware consumers are more likely to stick to their personal favorite choice options when composing a product set. These findings are consistent with the idea that self-awareness increases consumers' sense of their personal attitudes towards each choice option.

For a long time consumers have been assumed to be rational decision makers with well-defined preferences. Classical theory of choice assumes that each alternative has a utility or subjective value, and that consumers select the alternative with the highest value. Experimental research, however, suggests that, in a buying context, there is often uncertainty about the true value of alternatives, leading to inconsistent choices. This uncertainty has been shown (e.g. Simonson 1989) to increase the choice probability of the alternative that is supported by the ‘best overall reasons’. However, in this search for reasons, a dominance relationship known with certainty may offer a better reason and thus override considerations as attribute values, which often are uncertain. In this way, relations among alternatives (Huber, Payne, and Puto 1982) may influence choices and increase preference-behavior inconsistencies during choice making. We show that by contextually manipulating private self-awareness, we can reduce preference uncertainty and make consumers less susceptible to relations among alternatives. Moreover, we found evidence that self-awareness decreases consumer’s natural tendency to sometimes switch away from their favorite choice options (Ratner, Kahn, and Kahneman 1999).

SELF-AWARENESS THEORY

The original self-awareness theory (Duval and Wicklund 1972) starts from the assumption that, at any given time, attention may be focused on the self or on the environment, but not on both at the same time. People are usually not self-focused, but certain situations can cause people to focus attention inward. Some examples of self-focusing situations include gazing into a mirror, standing in front of an audience, and seeing oneself on a photograph or videotape. When attention is directed to the self, the person is said to be in a state of ‘objective self-awareness’. Further developments of self-awareness theory (e.g. Buss 1980; Carver and Scheier 1981; Froming, Walker, and Lopyan 1982) made a distinction between public and private self-awareness. *Public self-awareness* is the awareness of oneself from the imagined perspective of others (e.g., when standing in front of an audience), while *private self-awareness* is the awareness of oneself from a personal perspective (e.g., when seeing oneself in a mirror) (Fejfar and Hoyle 2000). Attention to the private self has been found to result in behavior that reflects personal attitudes, while attention to the public self may cause behavior to

become more consistent with societal expectations (Froming, Walker, and Kopyan 1982). The effects of public self-awareness, often induced by the presence of an audience or video camera, on preference-behavior consistency have recently received attention by consumer behavior researchers, most notably by Ariely and Levav (2000) and Ratner and Kahn (2002). They found that public pressure to appear interesting induces people to switch away from favorite items when their behavior is public. More specifically, when their decisions are subject to public scrutiny, people often incorporated non favorite items in their choice set as they expected this to be evaluated as more interesting. The concept of private self-awareness theory on the other hand, although it has stimulated a lot of research in social psychology, received little attention in consumer behavior literature. In this research we examined to what extent private self-awareness can play a role in consumer decision making.

The behavioral consequences of private self-awareness are said to derive in large part from 'self-criticism': The self-focused person is more concerned with what type of action is most appropriate. If a discrepancy between a standard and current behavior is perceived, self-focus should enhance the motivation to reduce that discrepancy (Gibbons 1990). Thus, when possible, the self-aware person conforms to internalized standards of *correct* behavior, which may or may not coincide with the common social standard of conduct. For example, self-focused attention has been found to decrease cheating (Vallacher and Silodky 1979) and to increase willingness to help (Berkowitz 1987). Sometimes, however, no behavioral standard is accessible. Experimental research (e.g., Hormuth 1982) has indicated that in this case (privately) self-aware persons behave in a manner that is congruent with their *own* personal standards or ideas (Gibbons 1990). For example, self-focused individuals have been shown to stick more to their own opinion in group discussions (Gibbons and Wright 1983), and to become more conscious of their presence, attitudes, and beliefs (Gibbons 1990). Basing ourselves on these findings, we expect private self-awareness to decrease preference uncertainty and, thereby, to reduce preference-behavior inconsistencies during choice making.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The compromise effect and the attraction effect, both resulting from preference uncertainty (Simonson 1989), offer a suitable test problem for our research hypothesis on the moderating effects of private self-awareness on preference uncertainty and preference-behavior consistency. The ‘compromise’ effect refers to the phenomenon that options with extreme values on some key attribute dimensions are less attractive than options with intermediate values. This effect proposes that an alternative would tend to gain market share when it becomes a compromise or middle option in the set (Simonson 1989). For example, the attractiveness of a medium quality – medium price alternative will increase in comparison to a lower quality – low price alternative when a high quality – high price product is added, as it now constitutes the ‘ideal’ compromise between quality and price. The ‘attraction effect’, on the other hand, refers to the finding that an asymmetrically dominated alternative can increase the attractiveness of the dominating alternative. Thus, adding to an existing core set of two alternatives, for example A which has a high quality and high price and B which has a medium quality and a medium price, a third alternative (a decoy – for example, C which has lower quality and a higher price than B) that is dominated by one of the original alternatives (B) but not by the other (A) increases the attractiveness and the choice probability of the now asymmetrically dominating alternative (Huber and Puto 1983).

As private self-awareness should increase insight in attribute preferences, we expected self-awareness to decrease context effects. This conjecture was tested in the first two studies. In the first study, we found that self-aware participants are less likely to choose a compromise or an asymmetrically dominating option than when they are not self-aware. In a second study, we replicate the results from the first experiment and we further show that these effects are primarily the result of more articulated attribute preferences. In a third and final study, we show that self-awareness also influences the natural tendency of people to sometimes switch away from their favorite choice options: self-aware participants tend to stick more to their favorite choice options than low self-aware participants.

STUDY 1

The first two studies involved choice tasks designed to investigate the hypothesis on the role of private self-awareness in context effects. In the first study, two factors were manipulated in a 2×2 (self-awareness $\times$ either two or three options in the choice set) between-subjects design. In the main part of the experiment half of the participants made a choice from a 2-options choice set and half of them from a 3-options choice set. The 3-options set contained two product options that were identical to those of the 2-options set and it additionally contained either a product option that was related to the 2-options set with a compromise or a dominance relationship. That is, we added either an option with extreme attribute values (compromise effect) or an asymmetrically dominated option (attraction effect). Appendix A presents the choice sets used. We crossed the size of choice set with a manipulation of private self-awareness. In line with Fenigstein and Levine (1984), we gave participants a list of 20 words and asked them to write a story using these words. Whereas 15 of the 20 words were used in both conditions, five words varied across conditions to manipulate self-awareness. In the self-awareness condition, the list included the words “I, me, myself, alone, and mirror”; in the control condition, the list contained the words “he, himself, him, together, and picture”. Participants in the self-awareness condition were asked to write a story about themselves, while those in the control condition were asked to write a story on the King of Belgium. This technique was pretested in the current population as a manipulation of self-awareness ($n = 52$) in the form of a ‘foreign language ability’ test: Participants were given a series of sentences written in Russian. All pronouns were underlined. They were instructed to try to determine which pronouns corresponded to the Russian foreign pronouns. There were 19 sentences, containing a total of 50 pronouns. They were told to choose from the following list of pronouns: I, me, mine, myself, you (singular), your, he, she, his, hers, our, we, you (plural), them, theirs, it. It has been shown that to the extent that a participant is self-aware, he/she is more likely to guess that an unknown pronoun corresponds to I, we, me, my, etc rather than to those such as he, she, it, etc (Carver and Scheier 1978).

Method

Participants were 159 college students (96 men, 63 women) fulfilling a course requirement. They were told that the experiment concerned the relationship between writing styles and choice behavior. Participants were first asked to construct a story from the given set of words (story-writing task) which would supposedly be used to assess style of word usage. They were given 10 minutes to write their stories. Upon completion of the first task, participants were asked to make a product choice. The presented choice set varied on several dimensions between participants: Apart from size (two or three alternatives) which served as a way to produce the context effects, the sets varied on product category (apartment, tooth paste, mobile phone, or DVD recorder), and, for the three options condition, the presence of a compromise option (cf. compromise effect) or an asymmetrically dominated option (cf. attraction effect). Each alternative was described with two attributes. Participants were told that the alternatives were similar in all other attributes. An effort was made to include only product categories relevant to college student participants. Following these tasks, participants completed the PANAS scale. This 20-items scale measures both positive and negative affect (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988). This allowed us to control for mood effects caused by the presence of a mirror (Fejfar and Hoyle 2000) on choice behavior (Kahn and Isen 1993; Menon and Kahn 1995).

Results

Effect of Self-Awareness on Choice Making. Across the two self-awareness conditions, the share of the B-option was tested. As can be seen in Appendix A, the B-option is present in the 2-option set as well as in the 3-option set. However, in the 3-option set the B-option is either a compromise option or an asymmetrically dominating option. Across the two self-awareness conditions, the share of the B-option in the two-option set was tested against the share of the B-option (in relation to the other option that was available in the two-option set) in the three-option set. Consistent with previous studies, in the control condition, the B-option gained share in the 3-option set (share_{set size 3} = 75%) compared with the 2-option set (share_{set size 2} = 36.6%), $Wald \chi^2(1) = 10.73, p < .01$. Thus, an alternative's choice probability increases when it becomes a compromise choice or an asymmetrically dominating option. In contrast, in the self-

awareness condition, these context effects are reduced: the share of the B-option is not significantly different in the binary (share_{set size 2} = 41%) and the trinary sets (share_{set size 3} = 37,2%), $Wald \chi^2(1) = .12$, NS. These data are summarized in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1
THE INFLUENCE OF SELF-AWARENESS ON CONTEXT EFFECTS

The significance of the observed effects was examined by testing a model in which the choice of the B-option was a function of self-awareness, set size, and their interaction. Binary logistic regression showed that the impact of set size on the choice of the B-option is moderated by self-awareness ($Wald \chi^2(1) = 7.13$, $p < .01$). This effect did not differ between the two types of context effects (compromise vs. attraction effect), three-way interaction: $Wald \chi^2(1) = 0.75$, NS.

Effect of Self-Awareness on Negative Affect. We did not find any effect of self-awareness on negative mood ($F(1, 157) = 1.65$, NS). Also, negative affect did not moderate the impact of set size on the choice of the B-option ($Wald \chi^2(1) = .86$, NS) indicating that negative affect cannot explain the above-found effects.

Discussion

The first study finds that increased self-awareness reduces the effect of context effects: We found complete suppression of the otherwise robust context effects. The observed results suggest that individuals who are self-aware have fewer problems in determining his/her attribute preferences. This conjecture is explicitly tested in study 2.

STUDY 2

The objective of study 2 was twofold. First we wanted to demonstrate the robustness of the suppression effect of self-awareness on context effects, using a different manipulation of self-awareness. The second goal was to improve confidence in the mechanism underlying this effect. Above, we suggested that the effect of self-awareness on context effects can be explained by more articulated attribute preferences. In this study, we explicitly tested this assumption (1) by measuring participants' awareness of attribute preferences and (2) by manipulating preference awareness directly. As a measure of attribute preference awareness, we registered the time needed to identify the most important attributes in making a choice in a given product category. As a manipulation of preference awareness, we asked participants to articulate their attribute preferences by describing their ideal choice (Chernev 2003). A pilot study ($n = 54$) showed that this manipulation did not increase self-awareness $F(1, 52) = 0.97$, NS).

Thus, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (Control, Self-Awareness, or Preference Awareness). We used another manipulation of private self-awareness for the sake of generalization. In line with Carver and Scheier (1978), we manipulated self-awareness by means of a mirror. In the mirror condition, a mirror (40 cm $\times$ 120 cm) was affixed to the wall, approximately 1 m in front of the participant and at his/her eye level. This manipulation has been shown to produce differences in private self-awareness effectively in many studies and was pretested in the same way as in the first experiment.

Furthermore, we wanted to rule out an alternative explanation. Self-aware participants may get distracted from the experimental stimuli by their focus on the self. As a result, they possibly process the stimuli less carefully. As context effects have been shown to depend on the extent to which consumers engage in effortful compensatory trade-offs of the alternatives (Dhar, Nowlis, and Sherman 2000), diminished processing of the stimuli may have decreased susceptibility to context effects in study 1. As a consequence, increased preference-behavior consistency in a state of high self-awareness may be just a side effect of distraction. To rule out the role of reduced vigilance in the suppression effect, we included a lexical decision task (Marsh et al. 2003).

Method

A total of 66 undergraduate students (35 men, 31 women) participated in this experiment. Thirty-seven students participated in exchange for course credit. Twenty-nine participants were paid €7 each for their participation. Type of reward did not affect the results and is further ignored. Two participants were deleted from the analysis as they were suspicious about the presence of the mirror. All participants were asked to make choices in three product categories: apartments, tooth pastes, and mobile phones. All decisions involved three alternatives, with each alternative defined on two attributes. The choice sets were similar to the trinary choice sets of study 1 and included a compromise option or an asymmetrically dominating option (see Appendix A). Before making their choices, participants in the preference awareness condition were asked to articulate their attribute preferences by describing their ideal choice.

Following this task, in order to more fully understand the underlying mechanism, participants were asked which criteria they considered as the most important ones when making a choice in the given product categories. They were given a list of criteria, ten in each product category, and were asked to indicate the three most important criteria—for example, “Indicate which three criteria you find most important when making a choice between a number of apartments: distance, condition, neighborhood, size, number of apartments in the building, cleanliness of communal rooms, furniture, internet connection, television, garden.” We registered the time participants needed to fulfill this task as a measure of how articulated one’s own attribute preferences are.

Next, we included a lexical decision task (similar to the task used by March et al. 2003). To measure how carefully experimental stimuli are processed, participants were shown 50 words on the computer screen. Upon seeing each word, the participants had to decide as quickly as possible whether the shown word was an existing word or not by pushing a green button (existing) or a red button (non-existing).

Results

Effect of Self-Awareness on Choice Making. For each participant, we counted the number of times he/she chose a compromise or an asymmetrically dominating option (B-option). This number differed significantly between conditions ($F(2, 61) = 4.32, p$

<.05) (see Figure 2). Consistent with study 1, the choice data showed that participants in the self-awareness condition ($M_{SA} = 1.29$) opted less often for a B-option than participants in the control condition ($M_{Control} = 1.86$), $F(1, 44) = 4.92, p < .05$. Moreover, the self-awareness condition did not significantly differ from the average number of B-options chosen by participants in the preference awareness condition ($M_{PA} = 1.11$), $F(1, 40) = 0.54, NS$), suggesting a close relationship between self-awareness and insight in attribute preferences. As expected, the mean number of B-options in the preference awareness condition was significantly smaller than the mean in the control condition ($F(1, 38) = 6.58, p < .05$).

FIGURE 2
THE INFLUENCE OF SELF-AWARENESS AND PREFERENCE AWARENESS
ON CONTEXT EFFECTS

Preference Awareness. Further analyses confirmed the close relationship between self-awareness and one's awareness of attribute preferences. We found a significant effect of the awareness condition on the time participants needed to decide which attributes were most important to them: $F(2, 61) = 5.87, p < .01$. Participants in the self-awareness condition needed significantly less time ($M_{SA} = 12.24$ sec) than participants in the control condition ($M_{Control} = 15.82$ sec; $F(1, 44) = 6.24, p < .05$) and as little time as participants in the preference awareness condition ($M_{PA} = 12.26$ sec; $F(1, 40) = 0.08, NS$). Further, as expected, participants in the preference awareness condition needed less time than participants in the control condition ($F(1, 38) = 7.47, p < .01$). These data are summarized in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3
THE INFLUENCE OF SELF-AWARENESS AND PREFERENCE AWARENESS
ON TIME NEEDED TO DECIDE ON IMPORTANT ATTRIBUTES

More importantly however, further analyses showed that the increase in attribute preference awareness (reflected in reduced time needed to find the most important attributes) mediated the effect of the awareness manipulation on the number of B-options. When both self-awareness and the average time needed to decide which attributes are most important were included in the analysis, the main effect of condition weakened ($F(2, 60) = 2.02$, NS), reducing the mean squares (MS)¹ for this effect by 46%, while the effect of average time was significant ($F(1, 60) = 6.04$, $p < .02$). Although the Sobel test was only marginally significant ($Z = -1.84$, $p < .07$), the bootstrapped estimate of the indirect effect was significant with 99% confidence (Preacher and Hayes 2004). We may conclude that more articulated attribute preferences are responsible for the decrease in susceptibility to context effects.

Effect of Self-Awareness on General Distraction. A possible alternative explanation for the effect of self-awareness on preference-behavior consistency may be increased distraction. Self-aware participants may get distracted from the experimental stimuli by their focus on the self, and as a result be less susceptible to context effects. However, the results revealed no evidence of differential distraction across conditions ($F(2, 61) = 1.51$, NS). Participants in the self-awareness ($M_{SA} = 584.85$ sec), in the control condition ($M_{Control} = 560.48$ sec), and in the preference awareness condition ($M_{PA} = 593.6$ sec) did not differ in mean reaction times indicating that self-awareness did not affect stimulus processing time. The results also showed no difference in the number of wrong answers (identifying a non-existing word as ‘existing’ or identifying an existing

word as ‘non-existing’) between the self-awareness condition ($M_{SA} = 2.12$), the control condition ($M_{Control} = 1.81$) and the preference awareness condition ($M_{PA} = 1.94$, $F(2, 61) = 0.18$, NS). In the same line, the number of B-options chosen was not related to the mean reaction times ($r = -.06$, NS), nor to the number of wrong answers ($r = -0.8$, NS).

Effect of Self-Awareness on Negative Affect. Again, we did not find any effect of awareness condition on negative mood ($F(2, 61) = 0.90$, NS). Negative affect was not related to the number of B-options chosen ($r = -.05$, NS), nor to the time needed to decide which attributes are important ($r = -.18$, NS). These results indicate that negative affect cannot explain the above-found effects.

Discussion

As in study 1, we again demonstrated that, by contextually manipulating the participants’ self-awareness, we could influence their susceptibility to context effects. Moreover, the data furnished by study 2 offer direct evidence that more articulated personal attribute preferences mediate the impact of self-awareness on choice. Self-awareness seems to increase articulation of one’s personal preferences, which decreases one’s susceptibility to context effects. In this way the increased self-awareness seems to have the same effect on context-effects as increased preference awareness. These results attest to the role of preference availability in the relationship between private self-awareness and preference-behavior consistency.

STUDY 3

Both study 1 and study 2 support the hypothesis that self-aware participants encounter fewer problems in determining their product preferences. We found evidence that more articulated preferences help self-aware individuals to be less susceptible to compromise and attraction effects. In the third study, we generalize our findings by examining whether more articulated preferences also influence consumers’ natural tendency to sometimes switch away from their favorite choice options (Kahn 1998, Ratner, Kahn, and Kahneman 1999). Therefore we asked participants to choose five frozen meals from a set of six. Two weeks earlier, they had provided us with their

ratings of the same six frozen meals in a context where they did not have to choose (preference phase). We tested whether participants' state of private self-awareness in the choice situation (choice phase) influenced the consistency between their preferences as measured in the preference phase and their actual choices. Private self-awareness should increase participants' sense for personal attitudes towards each choice option, and thus, of what they like the most. Therefore, we expected private self-awareness to increase preference-behavior consistency. Self-awareness was manipulated in the same way as in the second experiment (i.e. by means of a mirror).

Method

Ninety-nine Dutch-speaking undergraduate students (50 men, 49 women) participated in this experiment for course credit. Six participants for whom we did not have complete data were excluded from the analyses. The preference phase of the experiment took place two weeks before the actual experimental session. All registered participants were asked to complete an online survey in which they had to give their personal liking ratings for various frozen meals on a 5-point scale. They were led to believe that a company specialized in frozen meals, needed this product information for the assortment management of a new local store. Two weeks later (choice phase), all participants came to the lab in groups of six to eight. They were told that the local store offered them an additional reward for participating in the questionnaire. They were offered the chance to win five frozen meals. To that purpose they had to indicate on a contest form which meals they would like (lasagna, sea food pasta, pita, meat assortment, pollock, or vegetable dish). Thus, each participant was asked to choose five meals out of six (they were allowed to choose an item more than once). Next, they were asked to complete the PANAS scale (Watson et al. 1988).

Results

Effect of Mirror Presence on Preference-Behavior Consistency. Participants' personal liking ratings of each frozen food allowed us to compute the consistency between these ratings and the choice they made on the contest form (see Appendix B). This consistency measure ranges between zero and one: it equals one for individuals who

choose only his/her favorite options (i.e. those meals that they gave the highest score in the preference phase) and zero for individuals who choose only those meals that they gave the lowest score in the preference phase. Consistent with the prediction that high self-awareness increases attitude-behavior consistency, we found that participants in the mirror condition ($M_{\text{mirror}} = 0.88$) stuck more to their favorite meals than participants in the no-mirror condition ($M_{\text{no-mirror}} = 0.78$), $F(1, 91) = 7.80, p < .01$.

Effect of Mirror Presence on Negative Affect. To rule out mood effects, we analyzed the effect of the mirror on negative affect and the effect of negative affect on the preference-behavior consistency. Analyses showed no significant effect of mirror presence on negative affect ($F(1, 91) = .64$, NS). Negative affect was not related to preference-behavior consistency ($r = -0.10$, NS). Both null findings indicate that negative affect cannot explain the increase in attitude-behavior consistency.

Discussion

The data of the third study provide additional evidence that high self-aware participants behave in a manner more consistent with their personal preferences than low self-aware participants. More specifically, self-aware participants stick more to the choice options they like the most. We attribute this result to consumers' increased awareness of his/her attitudes towards each choice option in a state of private self-awareness.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Summary

At the core of self-awareness theory lays the idea that self-aware participants try to decrease discrepancies between their current behavior and personal standards. Our research shows that this self-criticism has a direct and consequent impact on consumer's decision making. The three studies reported in this article yielded convergent evidence that by increasing self-awareness consumers encounter fewer problems in determining their product attitudes and, thereby, behave in a way that is more consistent with their own personal product preferences. In study 1, we found that the compromise effect and

the attraction effect are both dramatically reduced under self-awareness, suggesting that self-awareness also helps individuals in identifying which attributes are really important to them. This conjecture was confirmed by study 2, in which we found that the effect of self-awareness on context effects was mediated by more articulated attribute preferences and indistinguishable from the effects of a manipulation that induced people to think of their preferences in advance. In study 3, we found that self-aware consumers are more likely to stick to their personal favorite choice options when composing a product set. This is consistent with the idea that self-awareness increases consumers' sense of their personal attitudes towards each choice option. In general, this pattern of results supports private self-awareness theory (Gibbons 1990) by showing that self-aware people are motivated to reduce inconsistencies between attitudes and behavior. Moreover, our results emphasize the importance of the distinction between two aspects of the self: the private self and the public self. While we found that attention on the private aspects of the self results in choice behavior that reflects personal attitudes, previous research has shown us that audience presence causes behavior to become more consistent with societal expectations. Indeed, contrary to the above-found results, the presence of an audience has been found to encourage people to opt more for non-favorite items (Ratner and Kahn 2003) and for compromise and asymmetrically dominating options (Simonson 1989).

Future Research and Limitations

In sum, we can conclude that contextual private self-awareness is able to increase consumers' sense for what they like the most when choosing between choice options. This makes them less susceptible to decision factors that lead consumers to make inconsistent choices, like the tendency to switch away from favorite options, or the presence of a compromise or an asymmetrically dominated option. However, although this research focused only on these two decision factors, our framework might be extended to other factors that impact preference-behavior consistency, like framing (Levin and Gaeth 1988) or attribute balance (Chernev 2005).

Other questions still open and in need of future research are related to possible boundary conditions. For example, an important moderating factor deals with the extent

to which personal preferences in the product category to choose from exist. That is, our research shows that increased self-awareness helps consumers to remember which product they like the most and to decide which attributes are important to them. However, it is possible that this is of no use, for example, when a consumer does not have a favorite option in the choice set. Or, when the product category, and its attributes, are unfamiliar to him/her. Additional research is needed to identify the moderating role of favorite product availability and expertise in the product category.

Managerial Implications

On a more practical note, our findings point out the substantive power of self-awareness. On the one hand, the intentional manipulation of consumers' self-awareness could prove beneficial: by increasing self-awareness, consumers are able to make choices that match their personal preferences better, which, in turn, might result in higher choice satisfaction. Conceivably, this could be achieved in a variety of ways including, for instance, strategically placing mirrors in a store, addressing the customer by name, or other means that have been shown to prime the consumer's self. However, on the other hand, marketers need to understand that the general advantage of some selling strategies (e.g., presenting a product as a compromise option) can disappear with self-attentive consumers. In addition, it will be harder to push a consumer towards a certain product in such conditions. In this way, certain selling environments might be more likely to benefit from selling strategies which draw attention away from the self. In general, the present research implies that marketers ought to consider the side effects of their store arrangement (e.g. mirrors) or their sales talk (e.g. small talk) on self-awareness, as any incidental cue that re-directs the consumer's focus inward will result in greater self-awareness and, consequently, an increased consistency with their 'own' preferences.

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FOOTNOTES

1 We report the percent reduction of the MSs of the mediated effect because, in ANCOVA, the changes in the magnitude of the experimental effect (ω^2) reflect also changes in the MS error, which are unrelated to the experimental factor of interest (Pham and Muthukrishnan 2002).

APPENDIX A
CHOICE SETS USED IN STUDY 1

Product category	Attribute 1	Attribute 2	Choice sets	
			2-option set	3-option set
Apartment/ student residence (compromise effect)	Distance	General condition		
Option A	1 km	65		×
Option B	2 km	80	×	×
Option C	3 km	95	×	×
Tooth paste (attraction effect)	Whitening effectiveness	Fresh breath effectiveness		
Option A	50	***	×	×
Option B	70	**	×	×
Option C	70	*		×
Mobile phone (compromise effect)	Design	Price		
Option A	***	€ 230	×	×
Option B	**	€ 190	×	×
Option C	*	€ 150		×
DVD recorder (attraction effect)	Quality	User friendliness		
Option A	80	++	×	×
Option B	90	+	×	×
Option C	88	+		×

APPENDIX B

CONSISTENCY MEASURE USED IN STUDY 3

$$\zeta = 1 - \frac{\sum \Delta_{\text{obs}} - \sum \Delta_{\text{min}}}{\sum \Delta_{\text{max}} - \sum \Delta_{\text{min}}}$$

Hereby, Δ_{obs} is the observed quantity choice minus the theoretically best quantity choice; Δ_{min} is the practically best quantity choice minus the theoretically best quantity choice; Δ_{max} is the worst quantity choice minus the theoretically best quantity choice. This index refers to the difference, summed over the choice set options, between one's actual choice pattern and the worst possible choice, compared to the difference between the most and least consistent possible choice. The worst quantity choice pattern is the most discrepant behavior a person could make given his food ratings. In general, this means that one chooses five times the meal he/she has rated worst. The theoretically best choice is a choice which contains only those meals that a person gave the highest score. Clearly, it is not always possible for a consumer to behave theoretically optimally, because our participants had to make integer choices although the choice rule may have implied to choose a decimal quantity (e.g., 0.66) of a meal. We subtracted $\sum(\Delta_{\text{min}})$ in the numerator as well as in the divisor to ensure that the quantity, ζ ranges between zero and one.

Example

meal ratings:	<i>lasagna</i>	4	choice behavior:	<i>lasagna</i>	0
	<i>sea food pasta</i>	3		<i>sea food pasta</i>	0
	<i>pita</i>	5		<i>pita</i>	2
	<i>meat mix</i>	4		<i>meat mix</i>	1
	<i>pollock</i>	3		<i>pollock</i>	0
	<i>vegetable dish</i>	5		<i>vegetable dish</i>	2

	<i>Theoretically best choice</i>	<i>Practically best choice</i>	<i>Worst choice</i>
<i>lasagna</i>	0	0	0
<i>sea food pasta</i>	0	0	5
<i>pita</i>	2,5	2	0
<i>Meat assortment</i>	0	0	0
<i>pollock</i>	0	0	0
<i>vegetable dish</i>	2,5	3	0

Consistency: 0,973

$$\begin{aligned}\sum(\Delta_{\text{obs}}) &= (0-0)^2 + (0-0)^2 + (2-2,5)^2 + (1-0)^2 + (0-0)^2 + (2-2,5)^2 \\ \sum(\Delta_{\text{min}}) &= (0-0)^2 + (0-0)^2 + (2-2,5)^2 + (0-0)^2 + (0-0)^2 + (3-2,5)^2 \\ \sum(\Delta_{\text{max}}) &= (0-0)^2 + (5-0)^2 + (0-2,5)^2 + (0-0)^2 + (0-0)^2 + (0-2,5)^2\end{aligned}$$