Productivity Mindset and the Consumption of Collectable Experiences

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Abstract

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This research examines why consumers desire unusual and extreme consumption experiences, and voluntarily choose leisure activities, vacations, and celebrations that are unpleasant and even aversive. For example, many consumers choose to stay at freezing ice hotels and eat at restaurants serving peculiar foods, such as bacon ice cream. I propose that such choices are driven by consumers’ continual striving to use time productively, make progress, and reach accomplishments (i.e., a productivity mindset). I argue that choices of collectable or memorable (unusual, aversive, extreme) experiences lead consumers to feel productive even when they are engaging in leisure activities, as they “check off” items on an “experiential check list” and build their “experiential CV.” A series of nine laboratory and field studies shows that the consumption of collectable experiences is driven and intensified by (situational or chronic) productivity mindset.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Man is so made that he can only find relaxation from one kind of labor by taking up another." Anatole France

"Finally, a to-do list you’ll really want to do.”
Advertisement for Mohegan Sun hotel, casino and spa

Recent marketing trends suggest that many consumers are attracted to unusual and aversive consumption experiences and choose vacations, leisure activities, and celebrations that provide low predicted and experienced utility. A fascinating example is the increasing popularity of Ice Hotels, where visitors sleep on beds made of ice in frigid temperature of 25° F. A similar trend is observed in consumers’ dining preferences: many restaurants are trying to attract consumers by offering unusual entrées and desserts. Such gastronomic innovations include tequila-mustard sorbet, bacon-flavored ice cream, and chocolate truffles with vinegar and anchovies.

Why do consumers desire these unusual consumption experiences, and voluntarily engage in activities that are uncomfortable, unnecessary, and even aversive? The sensation-seeking literature has tried to explain this as an “irrational” preference, suggesting that consumers seek unusual experiences because they provide immediate pleasure. As Zuckerman (1994, p. 66) states “an intrinsic pleasure from sensation and activities seems to motivate sensation seeking”. This vast literature is premised on the
notion that such paradoxical consumption is counterproductive and reflects myopic, impulsive, and spontaneous tendencies and individuals.

I challenge the assumptions of the sensation-seeking literature and propose that there is something farsighted and purposeful in this seemingly irrational behavior. The present research demonstrates that consumers derive utility from collecting new experiences and "checking off" items on their "experiential check list" (or "experiential CV"). I explain this phenomenon by the continual striving of many consumers to use time efficiently and productively. This desire to constantly improve oneself and achieve is so powerful that it not only affects consumers’ performance in achievement settings, but can also influence their consumption and leisure preferences and non-vocational choices. By collecting memorable experiences, consumers obtain a sense of accomplishment and progress, and enhance their self-worth.

Consistent with this proposition, a series of nine laboratory and field studies shows that the consumption of collectable experiences is driven (and intensified) by productivity mindset. The studies demonstrate that priming productivity and time efficiency, or creating a desire to correct unproductive usage of time, enhances the preference for unusual and collectable experiences. Furthermore, the studies show that farsighted and planned consumers, who are concerned about time efficiency and productivity, are more likely to desire collectable experiences. Such consumers measure their own worth in terms of productivity and accomplishment and are inclined to see all situations (including consumption and leisure choices) as opportunities to be productive and build their "experiential CV." In addition to testing the proposed conceptualization,
the studies examine alternative explanations, involving such factors as misprediction of hedonic experiences and present-oriented sensation-seeking.

The paper is organized as follows. I first introduce the concept of "productivity mindset" and discuss its impact in non-vocational consumption activities, including vacations, leisure, and the hobby of collecting. I then introduce the concept of "collectable experiences" and propose that the need for productivity drives consumers to choose collectable experiences and intentionally create special memories. Next, a series of nine studies are reported; these studies examine the relationship between productivity mindset and the consumption of collectable experiences. Finally, the theoretical and practical implications of the findings are discussed and alternative explanations are ruled out.
CHAPTER 2

PRODUCTIVITY MINDSET

Productivity and time efficiency have become major concerns among consumers in modern societies. The accelerated pace of life accompanying industrialization and the protestant work ethic, which discourages frivolous use of time, foster the perception of time as “the ultimate scarcity” (Gross 1987; Lewis and Weigert 1981; Weber 1930). According to Gleick (2000) western society has been transformed “from one with time to fill and time to spare to one that views time as a thing to guard, hoard, and protect”. The US in particular is characterized as a “nation of clock watchers” (Bell 1976). In addition, since today’s lifestyles offer more options, consumers are striving to “have it all” and aspire to achieve accomplishments in multiple domains.

As a result of these technological and cultural trends consumers are constantly concerned with being productive, making progress, and accomplishing more in less time - a tendency that I label “productivity mindset.” This tendency is consistent with recent research on “hyperopia” (excessive farsightedness and over-control), which demonstrates that consumers tend to overemphasize work and production at the expense of pleasure and consumption (Kivetz and Simonson 2002; Keinan and Kivetz 2006; Kivetz and Keinan 2006).

This continual striving to use time efficiently and productively is also evident in the proliferation of time saving products and services (e.g. labor-saving appliances, multitasking products, express lanes in fast-food restaurants) and time-management
books. The book “Getting Things Done”, for example, is a national bestseller. An audio version of the book is available for consumers who want to get other things done, while learning “the art of productivity.” Moreover, Gleick (2000, p. 11) argues that “Companies like FedEx and McDonald’s have created whole new segments of the economy by understanding, capitalizing on- and then in their own ways fostering- our haste.”

Satisfying the need to be productive has important consequences for well-being and self-worth. Economic analysis of the “psychic cost” of unemployment finds that (controlling for other factors such as loss of income) being unemployed dramatically reduces well-being, self-esteem, and mental health (Clack and Oswald 1994; Feather 1990). Similarly, one of the emotional challenges that accompany chronic pain and illness is the frustration of feeling unproductive (Pratt 2005). Moreover, research on the quality of work and leisure experiences finds that “the most positive experiences in people’s lives seem to come more frequently from work than from leisure settings” (Csikszentmihalyi et al. 1989, p. 820). The authors further suggest that people could improve the overall quality of their lives with a more conscious and more active use of leisure. Relatedly, Carver and Scheier’s (1990) cybernetic control model suggests that a sense of progress towards a goal generates positive affect.

These psychological benefits from engaging in productive and purposeful activities can explain why many people who can afford to retire comfortably prefer to continue working. Since productivity is a central value in western society, many consumers tend to define their identity and measure their own worth in terms of productivity and accomplishment. According to Rapaille (2006, p. 116) “Americans very strongly believe that they are what they do in their jobs… they believe that if they are
‘doing’ nothing, then they are nobodies.” I argue that the need for productivity and the
desire to constantly define and improve oneself is so powerful that it not only drives
consumers to allocate more time to production, but it also affects the kind of activities
consumers pursue during the small amount of time they allocate to consumption (e.g.
consumers’ leisure preferences and vacation choices).

Productivity Mindset in Consumption Activities

I propose that consumers who measure their self-worth in terms of productivity
and accomplishment, tend to be in “production mode” even when consuming. Such
consumers do not take a break from self-evaluation even when doing so is appropriate
(e.g. when engaging in non-vocational activities) and see all situations (including leisure
and consumption activities) as opportunities to be productive and obtain new
accomplishments.

Accordingly, recent marketing trends in the travel and leisure industries suggest
that many consumers seek productive activities even when they engage in leisure and
recreation. Such leisure activities and vacations include “working vacations” (e.g. “Chef
for a Day” where consumers pay $150 to work a four-hour kitchen shift), “learning
vacations” (workshops, personal growth programs), “boot camp vacations” (military-
style training), “survival vacations” (Robinson Crusoe-style), and “volunteer vacations.”

Another common and productive leisure activity is engaging in hobbies, a concept
that emerged during the 1930s. Hobbies were recommended during the great depression
to make unemployed individuals feel more fulfilled and productive. By making leisure
more work-like, hobbies affirmed the centrality of work in American ideology, thus “the work ethic was no longer just for work” (Gelber 1991). The government and the media endorsed using leisure time more productively and “turning from carnal, physical, and passive diversions weak in philosophic merit to more productive pastimes” (New York Times 1932). The hobby of collecting (e.g. the collection of stamps or antiques) was praised as a beneficial and productive hobby, and was often seen as being closer to work than to leisure.
CHAPTER 3

THE CONSUMPTION OF COLLECTABLE EXPERIENCES

Collecting as a Productive Activity

The hobby of collecting is a widespread and pervasive phenomenon that is viewed as a fulfilling pastime activity, which “provides collectors with a noble sense of purpose” (Belk 1995). Nearly one in every three people in North America collects something (O’Brien 1981, Pearce 1994). Consequently, sales in the collectibles industry grew to $8.2 billion in 1995 (Unity Marketing 1997). Since collecting is seen as “serious leisure” (Stebbins 1982), it can make consumers feel productive and efficient, and contribute to collectors’ identity and self-worth.

The collecting literature describes collecting as a constructive leisure time activity (Menninger 1942) and as an act of production as well as consumption (Gelber 1992). By expanding their collection, collectors obtain a sense of accomplishment and feelings of pride. The desire of collectors for closure in completing or filling gaps in a collection may be seen as a form of symbolic self-enhancement. To complete the collection is symbolically to complete the self (Belk 1988). Further, in a materialistic society, the quality and quantity of our possessions are broadly assumed to be an index of our success in life in general (Belk et al. 1988, Belk 1992).
I propose that just as the need for productivity and self-enhancement drives consumers to collect physical (tangible) items, the desire to make progress and enhance the sense of self also motivates consumers to collect memorable (intangible) experiences.

Collecting Experiences

Consumer researchers have examined how consumers’ (autobiographical) memories affect them (e.g. Baumgartner, Sujan, and Bettman 1992; Sujan, Bettman, and Baumgartner 1993). However, there is scant literature that examines how consumers influence and manage their memories. I propose that consumers often seek and choose consumption experiences with the intention of creating and collecting special memories. Similar to the psychological benefits of collecting physical items, consumers derive utility from collecting new experiences and “checking off” items on their “experiential check list” (or “experiential CV”). By expanding their collection of memorable experiences, consumers obtain a sense of accomplishment and progress, and enhance their self-worth.

Building on definitions of collecting (Belk 1995), I define the collection of experiences as the process of actively and selectively acquiring memorable experiences as a part of a set of non-identical experiences. Following the principle of “no two alike” (Danet and Katriel 1989), despite sharing something in common with other objects in the collection, the items comprising the collection must not be identical. Therefore consumers who go through experiences for the sake of collecting memories would obtain low utility from repeating the same experience.
What makes a consumption experience collectable? Kenseth (1991) offers a typology for the characteristics of collectable items (natural and artificial physical objects). These dimensions, characterizing the traditional collection of objects, can be applied to the domain of experiences. Figure 1 lists the dimensions of collectable items and the “experiential equivalent” of each characteristic. For example, the “novelty and rarity” characteristic suggests that experiences that represent rare opportunities would be more collectable. A related typology of experiences, proposed by Deighton (1992), classifies performances based on the realism-to-fantasy dimension and the observation-to-participation dimension. Based on the characteristics of collectable items, realistic and involving experiences would be perceived as more collectable.

The common feature describing the collectable experiences listed in figure 1 is the memorability of the event. Experiences that encompass several “collectability characteristics” are likely to be highly memorable. Since collectable experiences are often extreme, unusual, and unconventional, they might be uncomfortable, less pleasurable than familiar options, and even aversive. Consumers who choose such collectable consumption experiences are willing to trade off immediate enjoyment for the utility derived from producing special memories.

To conclude, I propose that consumers derive utility from collecting new experiences and “checking off” items on their experiential check list or CV. I explain this phenomenon using the notion of productivity mindset - the continual striving of many consumers to use time efficiently and productively. I argue that this desire to constantly improve oneself and achieve can influence consumers’ leisure preferences and motivate them to collect memorable (but sometimes less pleasurable) experiences. Next, the paper reports a series of
nine laboratory and field studies demonstrating that the consumption of collectable experiences is driven (and intensified) by productivity mindset.
CHAPTER 4

THE EFFECT OF PRODUCTIVITY MINDSET ON THE CONSUMPTION OF COLLECTABLE EXPERIENCES

A series of nine studies was conducted to test the proposed conceptualization. I begin with a pilot study that demonstrates the intriguing marketing trend discussed in the introduction: consumers’ tendency to choose unusual and even aversive consumption experiences. I then report a series of eight studies that explain this phenomenon using the constructs of productively mindset and collectable experiences. Studies 1a and 1b examine the effect of priming productivity mindset on the choice of collectable experiences (and ordinary experiences that are framed as collectable). Study 2 investigates the effect of priming the collection of physical items on vacation preferences, and demonstrates the similarity between collecting items and collecting (intangible) experiences. The study examines the conditions under which consumers spontaneously mention collectable characteristics when describing desirable vacations. Study 3 examines the effect of creating a need to correct unproductive use of time on a real choice of a familiar versus exotic restaurant. Study 4 explores how the need for productivity affects consumers’ preferences for retirement activities and demonstrates that collecting experiences is related to consumers’ sense of identity. Studies 1 - 4 also explore individual differences in productivity mindset and their impact on consumer choice. Studies 5a and 5b, employ observational measures of “productivity mindset,” such as consumers’ tendency to set their watch fast and use their waiting for a train productively. The paper concludes with a field study that was conducted at
Times Square on New Year’s Eve. The study explores the effect of increasing the collectability and memorability of aversive experiences. In addition to testing the proposed conceptualization, the nine studies examine alternative explanations, involving such factors as misprediction of hedonic experiences and present-oriented sensation-seeking.

Pilot Study: Discrepancy Between Predicted and Decision Utility

I begin by demonstrating an intriguing and growing phenomenon: consumers’ tendency to choose unusual and aversive consumption experiences. A common assumption in discussions of utility is that people generally desire and choose that which they predict to enjoy, especially in the context of consumption of pleasures (e.g. when choosing a vacation or having a dessert). The pilot study demonstrates a discrepancy between decision utility and predicted utility (Kahneman and Snell 1990): it shows that consumers choose experiences that they predict to be less pleasurable. This study also provides initial evidence suggesting that such choices are motivated by a desire to create special memories.

Method. The pilot study examined five choices in the context of pleasurable consumption (e.g. choosing vacations or desserts). In each choice task participants had to choose between two alternatives. One of the alternatives in each choice was more collectable and contained several “collectability characterizes” (e.g. once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, unusual, extreme, rare, exotic). In the first choice (Budapest choice): participants were asked how they would like to spend a six-hour layover in Budapest.
airport: either stay at the airport and watch DVDs on their laptop computer or explore the city in extremely cold weather. In the *vacation choice* participants were asked to make a choice between staying at the Marriott Florida hotel and staying at the Quebec ice hotel. In the *dessert choice* participants had to choose between a chocolate cake and a goat cheese dessert. In the *restaurant choice* participants chose between a familiar and an exotic restaurant. And finally in the *chocolate choice*, participants chose between a familiar chocolate (Ferrero Rocher) and an unfamiliar treat ("Krembo"). For each of these choices, 48 participants were asked 1) “Which experience would be more memorable?” 2) “Which experience would be more pleasant?” (corresponding to their predicted utility), and 3) “Which would you choose?” (corresponding to their decision utility).

**Results.** As summarized in figure 2, participants chose what they saw as less pleasurable. In each of the five choices, the alternative that was perceived to be more memorable was also perceived to be less pleasant. But despite being less pleasurable, memorable alternatives were chosen by the majority of participants (except for the dessert choice). For example, 77% of respondents chose exploring Budapest in extremely cold weather even though the majority (66%) predicted that staying at the airport and watching DVDs would be more pleasurable. These findings suggest that many consumers are willing to trade off immediate pleasure for the sake of creating special memories. As suggest by the Roman philosopher Seneca, “Things that were hard to bear are sweet to remember.” The next studies examine under what circumstances people are more likely to choose these experiences, and what types of consumers are more likely to make such choices.
Study 1: Priming Productivity Mindset

Studies 1a and 1b examine whether priming productivity mindset can enhance the preference for unusual and collectable experiences. It is predicted that priming the need to accomplish more in less time will motivate consumers to select more collectable and memorable experiences. Furthermore, the studies examine individual differences and predict that farsighted and planned consumers, who are concerned with time efficiency and productivity, will be more likely to desire collectable experiences; since such achievement motivated consumers are inclined to see all situations (including consumption and leisure choices) as opportunities to be productive and build their “experiential CV.”

Study 1a: The Chocolate Truffles Study

Method. Participants were 65 students at a large East Coast university, who completed a series of (supposedly) unrelated studies in a behavioral lab. They were randomly assigned to one of two (between-subjects) conditions. In both conditions, participants first completed a priming task, which was presented as a reading comprehension study. Participants were given a book excerpt and were asked to give an example of how they can apply what they have just read. In the productivity-mindset priming condition, participants were given an excerpt from the book “100 simple secrets of successful people.” The excerpt was titled “manage your time efficiently” and included time management advice: “...to manage your time effectively keep a list of specific items to be
done each day.... another suggestion is to combine several activities into one time spot.” Examples for participants’ applications of the time management advice they received (in the productivity-mindset priming condition) included: “Clean the house while talking to my sister on the phone,” “During dinner I am going to study for my frontiers of science final exam,” and “Watch American idol while I pay my bills.” In the control condition participants were given a paragraph from the book “100 simple secrets of great relationships.” The excerpt was tilted “keep in touch with your friends” and suggested that “…our lives are fuller with friends; we can be close with our friends, even if they live far away.” Examples for participants’ applications of the relationship advice they received (in the control condition) included: “Call my friend who took his specialization,” “Send birthday cards to my friends,” and “Keep in touch with my friends after graduation.”

Following the priming tasks, participants received a (supposedly) unrelated study titled “evaluating products.” In this study, participants were presented with a choice between two chocolates: “a chocolate truffle with caramel and pecans” and “a chocolate truffle with spices and flowers” (a less pleasurable but more memorable option). Next, participants went through 45 minutes of unrelated studies. In the last study participants completed the achievement motivation scale (Ray 1979, 1984), which measures individual differences in farsightedness, planning behaviors, and concerns with productivity and efficiency. The scale includes items such as “I tend to plan ahead for my job and career,” “I get restless and annoyed when I feel I am wasting time,” and “I have always worked hard in order to be among the best in my own line (school, organization, profession).” At the conclusion of this and all subsequent experiments, before participants were debriefed and thanked, they were probed for suspicion and asked to
indicate what they thought was the purpose of the various studies. None suspected that the priming tasks were intended to influence their subsequent choices and none guessed the actual purpose of the research or articulated the hypotheses being tested.

**Results.** As predicted, the priming had a significant effect on (supposedly) unrelated choices of unusual over pleasurable chocolate truffles. Participants in the productivity-mindset priming were significantly more likely to choose the chocolate truffles with spices and flowers, compared to the control priming group (55% vs. 32%, \( z = 1.9, p < .05 \)). This main effect was mainly driven by the low achievement motivation participants (participants were divided into two groups, high and low achievement motivation, based on a median split of their achievement motivation scores; means and standard deviations of achievement motivation scores in the high vs. low achievement motivation groups were 5.9 [SD=.68] vs. 4.6 [SD=.41]). As shown in figure 3 (top panel), high achievement motivation participants (who are in a chronic productivity mindset) tended to chose the collectable experience in either condition (57% vs. 42%, n.s.). Conversely, low achievement motivation participants (who are unlikely to be in a productivity mindset) do not naturally think of collecting experiences. These participants were significantly more likely to select the collectable experience (the chocolate truffle with spices and flowers) after reading about time-management (productivity prime) rather than about relationships (control prime; 53% vs. 20%, \( z = 2.1, p < .05 \)).

To summarize, the findings suggest that both a chronic state of productivity mindset (measured using an individual difference scale) and a situational state of productivity mindset (manipulated using a time-management prime) can enhance the
preference for collectable experiences. In addition, the study demonstrates that while high achievement consumers are constantly seeking collectable experiences, low achievement consumers only seek collectable experiences when placed in a productive mindset.

Study 1b: The Krembo Study

Study 1a examined a truly unusual, novel, and possibly aversive product, namely chocolate truffles with spices and flowers. Study 1b demonstrates that marketers can take an ordinary product and just frame it as collectable. Specifically, the study examines choices of “Krembo,” which is simply marshmallow fluff covered with chocolate. To position this treat as a collectable experience, “Krembo” was described as a strange and unique product. Study 1b also explores a different method for priming productivity mindset.

Method. Participants were 80 students at a large East Coast university. They were randomly assigned to one of two (between-subjects) conditions. In both conditions, participants first completed the priming task, which was presented as a “well-being study” conducted by the psychology department. In the productivity-mindset priming condition participants were told that “one important factor that has been shown to dramatically increase well-being is engaging in activities that provide a sense of achievement and accomplishment.” Participants were then asked to describe activities that provide them with a sense of achievement and accomplishment. In the second condition participants were told that “one important factor that has been shown to dramatically increase well-
being is engaging in activities that provide pleasure and enjoyment.” Participants were then asked to describe activities that provide them with pleasure and enjoyment.

Following the priming manipulation, participants received a (supposedly) unrelated study titled “food preferences and product choice.” In this study, participants were presented with a choice between two treats: “Ferrero Rocher,” which was described as “a combination of creamy milk chocolate, and a light, crispy wafer,” and “Krembo,” which was described as “a strange combination of a biscuit, a creamy filling (vanilla egg-foam) and a thin chocolate covering. Krembo is a unique European treat, and is not available in the US.” Participants were asked to indicate their treat preference using a seven-point scale with (1) indicating a strong preference for Ferrero Rocher and (7) indicating a strong preference for “Krembo.” Similar to Study 1a, after 45 minutes of participating in a series of unrelated surveys, the respondents completed the achievement motivation scale.

**Results.** As predicted, the priming task had a significant effect on (supposedly) unrelated choices of unfamiliar over popular treats. Participants in the productivity-mindset priming condition were significantly more likely to prefer the unfamiliar treat compared to participants who were primed with enjoyable activities (5.2 vs. 3.8, $t = 2.5, p < .05$). However, replicating the results of Study 1a, this main effect was mainly driven by the low achievement motivation participants (participants were divided into two groups, high and low achievement motivation, based on a median split of their achievement motivation scores; means and standard deviations of achievement motivation scores in the high vs. low achievement motivation groups were 5.8 [SD=.48]
vs. 4.5 [SD=.45]). As shown in figure 3 (lower panel), high achievement motivation participants (who are constantly concerned with being productive) tend to chose the collectable experience in either condition (5.2 vs. 4.8, n.s.). Conversely, low achievement motivation participants (who are less concerned with productivity) had a significantly higher preference for the collectable experience (the Krembo) when primed with a productivity mindset (5.1 in the productivity primed group vs. 3.1 in the enjoyment primed group, \( t =3.1, p < .05 \)).

In summary, Studies 1a and 1b demonstrate that while high achievement motivation consumers (who are chronically concerned with being productive) constantly seek collectable experiences, low achievement consumers (who are less concerned with productivity) choose collectable experiences only when primed with a productivity mindset. These findings suggest that there is something purposeful and productive in the seemingly irrational preferences for unusual, less pleasurable, and even aversive products and experiences. By consuming such unfamiliar and bizarre products consumer “check off” an item on their “experiential check list” and obtain a sense of accomplishment and progress. Study 2 further demonstrates that such choices are driven by a desire to expand one’s collection of memorable experiences.

Study 2: The Effect of Priming the Collection of Physical Items

Study 2 examines the proposition that expanding one’s collection of memorable experiences can provide consumers with the same psychological benefits obtained from collecting physical items. That is, just as the need for productivity and self-enhancement
drives consumers to collect tangible items (e.g., stamps, butterflies, baseball cards), the desire to make progress and enhance the sense of self can also motivate consumers to seek novel and memorable experience (e.g. explore unfamiliar vacation destinations and “see as much of the world as possible”). More specifically, Study 2 examines the effect of priming “the collection of physical items” (i.e. asking participants to describe their childhood collections) on participants’ vacation preferences.

The present study also employs a different methodology for examining the preference for collectable experiences (unfamiliar vacation destinations). In Study 1, participants chose between two alternatives, one of which was more unusual and collectable; in contrast, the current study employs open-ended questions to examine whether participants spontaneously think of collectable experiences, even when such experiences are not mentioned in the question. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate their vacation preferences and explain their choices.

Method. Participants were 104 students at a large East Coast university. They were randomly assigned to one of two (between-subjects) conditions. In the physical collections priming condition, participants were asked to describe the physical collections they owned and the tangible objects they liked to collect as kids. Participants were also asked to recall and describe a specific occasion during their childhood in which they found something new to add to their physical collection. In the second (control) condition, participants were asked to describe the kinds of food and treats that they really liked to eat as kids. They were also asked to recall and describe a specific occasion during their childhood in which they were given a food treat that they really liked.
Following the priming manipulations, participants received a (supposedly) unrelated survey titled “vacation preferences.” In this study, participants were first asked to list the places they would like to visit for vacation and were given two lines to indicate their preferences. Next participants were asked to explain their choice of vacation destinations by completing the following sentence: “I want my vacation be…” Then, on the next page of the survey, participants were asked to go back to the list of places they would like to go to for vacation and circle all the places they have not visited yet. Participants then completed a few unrelated studies for about 45 minutes, and finally, completed the achievement motivation scale. At the conclusion of the last study participants were asked to indicate what they thought was the purpose of the various studies. None suspected that the priming tasks were intended to influence their subsequent choices and none guessed the actual purpose of the research or articulated the hypotheses being tested.

Results. To examine participants’ preferences for novel vacation destinations, we calculated for each participant the percent of unfamiliar vacation destinations that she listed (the percent of destinations that each participants circled, indicating she has not visited that destination yet). As predicted, the priming had a significant effect on the (supposedly unrelated) preferences for vacation destinations. Participants in the collecting prime condition were significantly more likely to list unfamiliar vacation destinations compared to participants in the control group (78% vs. 69%, $t = 1.9, p < .05$). Replicating the results of Study 1, this main effect was mainly driven by the low achievement motivation participants (participants were divided into two groups, high and low
achievement motivation, based on a median split of their achievement motivation scores; means and standard deviations of achievement motivation scores in the high vs. low achievement motivation groups were 5.6 [SD=.45] vs. 4.3 [SD=.63]). As shown in figure 4 (top panel), high achievement motivation participants (who are constantly focused on being productive) tended to prefer unfamiliar vacation destinations in either condition (82% vs. 75%, n.s.). However, low achievement motivation participants (who are less concerned with productivity) listed a higher percent of unfamiliar vacation destinations when primed with collecting (75%) than with tasty food treats (59%), $t = 2.0, p < .05$.

*Characteristics of collectable experiences.* To further examine whether consumers spontaneously think of, and desire, collectable experiences two judges coded participants’ open-ended explanations for their vacation preferences. Specifically, two independent judges, who were unaware of the hypotheses, coded participants’ answers based on whether or not the explanation explicitly mentioned elements from the typology of collectable experiences presented earlier in figure 1. For example, the following words and expressions were coded as containing characteristics of collectable experiences: “once-in-a-lifetime,” “unusual,” “exotic,” “novel,” “one-of-a-kind,” “full of exploration and adventure,” “I want to remember it forever,” “memorable,” “where I have not yet traveled,” “experience something not likely to be done or seen in any other place on earth,” “exploring new places,” “see as much of the world as possible.” The inter-judge reliability was 92%, and disagreements were resolved by discussion.

The analysis of the open-ended explanation revealed a similar pattern to the results reported earlier. As summarized in figure 4 (lower panel), compared to the control
group, participants primed with collecting physical items were significantly more likely to mention characteristics of collectable experiences (68% vs. 45%, $z = 2.4, p < .05$). While the high achievement motivation participants mentioned such characteristics regardless of the priming condition (75% vs. 57%, n.s.), the low achievement motivation participants were more likely to mention such characteristics when primed with collecting physical items (62% vs. 29%, $z = 2.5, p < .05$).

In summary, the findings so far suggest that while consumers who are concerned with productivity (high achievement motivation) spontaneously seek collectable experiences, consumers who are less concerned with productivity (low achievement motivation) only think of collecting memorable experiences when primed with a productivity mindset (Studies 1a and 1b) or with collecting physical items, which is a form of productive behavior (Study 2). The priming manipulations discussed in Studies 1 and 2 were intended to increase the cognitive accessibility of productivity. Next, Study 3 examines the effect of creating a need to correct an unproductive (past) usage of time on participants' real choices.

Study 3: Correcting Unproductive Use of Time

A question that naturally arises is when are consumers more likely to seek collectable experiences. Engaging in activities that expand one's "experiential CV" provides consumers with a sense of progress and satisfies their need to feel productive. Accordingly, consumers who feel unproductive may be more likely to seek "non-vocational accomplishment" and collectable experiences. For example, consumers who
do not obtain a sense of progress and accomplishment in their vocational activities (and consumers that are unemployed or retired) will tend to seek leisure activities that that help define their identity and enhance their self-worth. Indeed, research on trends in the collection of physical items (e.g. the collection of stamps and coins) finds that, during the great depression in the thirties, unemployed individuals satisfied their need to feel productive by collecting objects and engaging in fulfilling pastime hobbies (Gelber 1991). In addition, as demonstrated subsequently in Study 4, consumers often seek post-retirement activities that make them feel productive and fulfilled.

Study 3 is intended to make consumers feel unproductive using a manipulation that reminds them of a recent situation in which they wasted time. It is predicted that causing participants to feel unproductive will enhance their preference for collectable and memorable experiences over familiar and pleasurable experiences. Specifically, the study examines how the need to correct unproductive use of time affects consumers’ real choice between lottery prizes.

Method. Participants (105 train travelers) were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: (a) feeling unproductive (b) control, and (c) feeling excessively productive. In the “feeling-unproductive” condition, participants read the following instructions: “please describe a specific situation from last week in which you used your time inefficiently. That is, describe a situation in which you wasted time and did not use your time productively.” The purpose of the task was to create a need to correct an unproductive use of time. In the control condition, participants were given a task unrelated to feelings of unproductively; specifically, they read the following instructions: “please describe a specific situation from
last week in which you had to choose between using a disposable product and a non-disposable product, and you chose using the disposable product.” In the “feeling-excessively-productive” condition, participants read the following instructions: “please describe a specific situation from last week in which you were too concerned about using your time efficiently. That is, describe a situation in which you were too focused on using your time productively, and did not "stop to smell the roses" and enjoy yourself.”

Participants in all conditions were next offered a real choice between two lottery prizes. They were instructed to tear off the bottom half of the lottery form and keep it as a receipt. This lottery receipt had a number on it and a website address on which participants could subsequently check whether they had won. The two prizes, representing a familiar and a collectable experience were, respectively, (a) “Dinner at Carmines” and (b) “Dinner at Loft”. The familiar restaurant, Carmine’s, was (truthfully) described as “one of the most popular Italian restaurants in New York. Serves delicious and freshly made Italian-American classics and hard-to-resist desserts.” The exotic restaurant, Loft, was (truthfully) described as “the winner of the TimeOut 2006 Eat Out Award for Most Innovative Use of Exotic Spices. Serves a truly unusual assortment of bizarre entrees and inventive desserts.” To control for location preferences, the description indicated that both restaurants are located in the upper west side of Manhattan. As in previous studies, all participants completed the achievement motivation scale at the end of the study.

Results. As predicted, the priming had a significant effect on the (supposedly) unrelated choice of restaurant. Participants in the “feeling unproductive” condition were significantly more likely to choose the collectable experience (exotic rather than the
familiar restaurant) compared to participants in the “feeling-excessively-productive” condition (67% vs. 44%, $z = 2.0, p < .05$). As expected, the choice shares in the control condition fell between those in the two priming conditions and were significantly different from those in the “feeling unproductive” condition (67% vs. 47%, $z = 1.7, p < .05$). However, the control condition was not significantly different from the “feeling-excessively-productive” condition. Additionally, replicating the results of Studies 1-3, this main effect was mainly driven by the low achievement motivation participants (participants were divided into two groups, high and low achievement motivation, based on a median split of their achievement motivation scores; means and standard deviations of achievement motivation scores in the high vs. low achievement motivation groups were 5.6 [SD=.32] vs. 4.5 [SD=.38]). As shown in figure 5, high achievement motivation participants (who are chronically focused on being productive) tend to chose the collectable experience in either condition (69%, 56%, 63%, $p > .2$ for all pair-wise comparisons). However, low achievement motivation participants (who are less concerned with productivity) do not naturally think of collecting experiences. These participants were more likely to choose the collectable experience when they were reminded they have been unproductive: 65% participants in “feeling unproductive” condition chose the exotic restaurant, compared to only 39% in the control group and only 25% in the “feeling-excessively-productive” condition (for low achievement participants, the “feeling unproductive” condition, was significantly higher than either the control group ($z = 1.7, p = .05$) and the “feeling-excessively-productive” condition ($z = 2.6, p > .05$).
In summary, the findings of Study 3 demonstrate that high achievement motivation consumers (who are concerned with productivity) constantly seek collectable experiences, but low achievement consumers (who are less concerned with productivity) are more likely to choose collectable experiences when they feel they have been unproductive. Consistent with previous studies, these findings suggest that the consumption of collectable experiences is perceived to be more productive and purposeful than the consumption of familiar and pleasurable experiences. In particular, having dinner at an exotic rather than familiar restaurant provides an opportunity to produce a memorable experience and build one’s experiential CV.

The observation that high achievement motivation participants were less affected by the priming task could be due to a ceiling affect. That is, achievement-oriented participants already have a strong preference for collectable experiences, and there is not much room for this high tendency to increase. The next study attempts to eliminate this apparent ceiling effect in two ways. First, the study examines a context that is less associated with collecting experiences, namely retirement choices. Conversely, in Studies 1-3 the opportunity to try something new and collect an experience was relatively salient, either because one of the available options was unusual and exotic (bizarre and unfamiliar chocolates in Study 1, exotic restaurant in Study 3), or because the context itself was a situation in which consumers usually explore and collect experiences (vacation preferences in Study 2). Second, and more importantly, the study examines a priming task that is more likely to affect achievement-oriented participants. Specifically, it examines the effect of priming self-identity on productivity concerns and preference for collectable experiences. It is predicted
that the priming effect will be stronger for participants who view productivity as more central to their identity and self-worth (i.e., more achievement oriented consumers).

Study 4: The Retirement Study

The present study examines the impact of productivity mindset on the consumption of collectable experiences after retirement. Examining retirement preferences is important for both theoretical and practical reasons. First, retirement is an interesting context to demonstrate the notion of productivity mindset in consumption activities. Retirement is a period in consumers’ life, in which it is both socially acceptable and financially feasible to be unproductive. However, consumers who are used to defining their identity and measuring their self-worth in terms of productivity and accomplishment will continue to seek purposeful and fulfilling activities. It is therefore predicted that achievement motivated consumers will pursue post-retirement activities that make them feel productive, consequentially choosing to consume collectable experiences.

Understanding the influence of productivity mindset in retirement decisions also has important implications for marketers. Retired Baby Boomers (which are the largest, fastest growing, and most affluent demographic group in the U.S.) spend large amounts of time and money on collectable experiences (e.g., adventure trips, unusual learning experiences, and educational vacations), purchase 80% of luxury travel, and eat out more than three times a week (AARP survey 2001; boomersgroups.com 2006). Marketers can
target retired consumers, who seek alternative ways to satisfy their need for productivity, and offer them fulfilling experiences.

To demonstrate that such retirement preferences are driven by consumers’ tendency to measure their self-worth in terms of productivity, the study examines the effect of priming self-identity. It is predicted that asking participants to describe activities that contribute to their identity will enhance the preference for productive leisure activities and collectable experiences. Further, this manipulation is predicted to have a stronger influence on high than low achievement motivation consumers, since productivity and accomplishment are central to the formers’ sense of identity and self-esteem. In addition, Study 4 attempts to eliminate the apparent ceiling effect observed in Studies 1 – 3. Specifically, in the previous studies, high achievement motivation participants were less affected by the priming manipulation, since they already had strong preferences for collectable experiences. Study 4 aims to reduce this ceiling effect by examining a context that is less associated with collecting experiences (retirement choices), by using a different methodology (open-ended answers rather than choice of collectable experiences), and by priming self-identity, which is more likely to affect high than low achievement-oriented participants.

Method. Participants (81 train travelers) were randomly assigned to one of two (between-subjects) conditions. In the identity-priming condition, participants were asked to describe activities (work or leisure) that they think contribute to their identity and to defining “who they are.” In the control-priming condition, participants were asked to describe activities (work or leisure) that they think contribute to their well-being. Next all
participants were asked about their retirement preferences. To examine whether participants spontaneously mention a desire to feel productive and consume collectable experiences I used open-ended questions. Participants were asked to think of the kind of activities they might want to do after they retire and were asked to indicate their preferences by completing two sentences: “After I retire I want to do things that would make me feel…” and “After I retire I want to do things that are…” Finally, participants completed the achievement motivation scale and were probed for demand. None suspected that the priming tasks were intended to influence their subsequent choices and none guessed the actual purpose of the research or articulated the hypotheses being tested.

Results. Desire to feel productive after retirement: to examine whether participants desire to feel productive after retirement, we coded their open-ended completions of the sentence “After I retire I want to do things that would make me feel…” Participants’ answers were coded based on whether or not they explicitly included the following adjectives: “productive,” “accomplished,” “purposeful,” “fulfilled,” “occupied,” “useful,” and “needed.” To examine individual differences, participants were divided into two groups, high and low achievement motivation, based on a median split of their achievement motivation scores; means and standard deviations of achievement motivation scores in the high vs. low achievement motivation groups were 5.8 [SD=.41] vs. 4.5 [SD=.68]. As predicted, high than low achievement motivation participants were more likely to write adjectives relating to feeling productive after retirement (50% vs. 29%, z = 2.0, p < .05). In addition, as predicted, the identity-priming enhanced the desire for feeling productive after
retirement (49% vs. 30%, $z = 1.8, p < .05$). As shown in figure 6 (upper panel), this priming effect was mainly driven by the high achievement motivation participants, who see productivity as a central part of their identity (67% vs. 36%, $z = 2.0, p < .05$). For the low achievement motivation participants, the effect of identity-priming was in the expected direction (35% vs. 22%) but not statistically significant ($p > .1$). Thus, the ceiling effect observed in previous studies (i.e., the strong tendency of high-achievers to choose collectable experiences in all priming conditions) was eliminated by using a manipulation (priming self-identity) that is theoretically expected to influence high-achievers more than low achievers. More specifically, the self-identity prime evoked productivity concerns only among achievement-oriented consumers, who tend to define their identity and measure their own worth in terms of productivity and accomplishment.

*Desire to collect experiences after retirement.* To explore participants’ desire to collect experiences after they retire, two independent judges coded participants’ open-ended completions of the second sentence “After I retire I want to do things that are…” Specifically, two judges, who were unaware of the hypotheses, coded participants’ answers based on whether or not they explicitly mentioned elements from the typology of collectable experiences presented earlier in figure 1). For example, the following words and expressions were coded as containing characteristics of collectable experiences: “new,” “unusual,” “see places I never seen,” “I haven’t experienced yet,” “different from things I do now,” “adventurous,” “take me to new lands,” “foreign,” “travel the world,” “exploratory,” “challenging,” “on my list of things that I want to do since I was young.” The inter-judge reliability was 93%, and disagreements were resolved by discussion. As predicted high achievement motivation participants were more likely to mention collectable
experiences (62% vs. 42%, \( z = 1.8, p < .05 \)). In addition, as shown in figure 6 (lower panel) the identity-priming enhanced the desire for such experiences, but only for the high achievement motivation participants. While there was no significant difference for the low achievement motivation participants, high achievement motivation participants were more likely to mention collectable experiences in the identity-priming condition (76% vs. 50%, \( z = 1.8, p < .05 \)).

A mediation analysis indicated that concerns with feeling productive mediated the effect of the identity-priming on the desire for collectable experiences (for the high achievement motivation participants). The following three conditions for mediation were supported: (1) the independent variable (i.e. priming condition) significantly affected the mediator (concern with productivity, \( t = 2.0, p < .05 \)) (2) the independent variable significantly affected the dependent variable (i.e. desire for collectable experiences \( t = 1.7, p < .05 \)); and (3) the mediator affected the dependent variable when the independent variable was also included in the analysis (\( t = 3.0, p < .005 \)), and thus the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variables was attenuated (\( t = 0.8 \), n.s.). These results support the notion that high achievement motivation consumers see the consumption of collectable experiences as a purposeful activity that enhanced their identity and self-worth.

In conclusion, the findings of Study 4 suggest that high achievement motivation consumers, who view productivity as a central part of their self-identity, tend to seek leisure activities that provide a sense of progress and purpose, and consequently consume collectable experiences. More generally, the study demonstrates that by collecting memorable experiences consumers obtain a sense of accomplishment and enhance their
self-worth. Study 4 also helped generalize the proposed conceptualization using a different decision context (retirement) and experimental methodology (open-ended answers).

Next, I investigate how consumers' preferences for collectable experiences depend on an alternative measure of chronic productivity mindset; in particular, I examine observable individual differences in the tendency to set one's watch faster (than the real time) and the tendency to use one's waiting time (for a train) productively.

Study 5: Observational Measures for Productivity Mindset

The individual differences measured so far were based on participants' self-reports; participants completed the achievement motivation scale and indicated how concerned they are with being productive, using time efficiently, making progress, and being farsighted and planned. Studies 5a and 5b examine more "objective" measures for need for productivity. The studies employ measures that do not rely on participant's subjective reports, but rather directly observe participants' behaviors and tendencies.

One manifestation of productivity mindset is the desire to use one's waiting time efficiently. Customers waiting for service or travelers waiting for a delayed train may feel they are expending a scarce resource - their valuable time (Kumar et al. 1997). Consequently, such consumers may try to use their waiting time productively. This desire to be productive while waiting is so prevalent that CNN.com has recently published suggestions for airport travelers to prevent them from "idling away at the airport" and help travelers "keep themselves occupied" (CNN, August 2006). Study 5a examines
travelers' attempts to use their waiting time productively while sitting in a major train station’s waiting area. I posit that such behavior reflects a concern with using time efficiently (i.e. a productivity mindset).

Study 5b examines another manifestation of productivity mindset, peoples’ tendency to set their watch faster than the accurate time. I conjecture that setting a watch faster reflects farsighted and planned behavior as well as a general concern with time, making progress, and "getting ahead." I predict that consumers, who tend to set their watch faster or try to use their waiting time productively, will be more likely to choose consumption experiences that are collectable (e.g., prefer memorable vacations, exotic restaurants, and unusual birthday celebrations). I also predict a positive correlation between the tendency to use waiting time productively and the tendency to wear a faster watch, since both are manifestations of a concern with time and more generally a chronic productivity mindset.

Study 5a: Productive Waiting Time Study

Method. Participants were 57 train travelers sitting at a waiting area in a major train station. The study examined how travelers choose to spend their time while waiting for the train. The experimenter sampled only travelers who were traveling alone and wearing a watch. Before approaching each participant, the experimenter observed whether the traveler was trying to do something productive while waiting for a train or rather sitting idle. Participants who were reading, writing, using a laptop, or looking at their map / travel book were coded as “attempting to use waiting time productively.” Participants who were sitting
doing nothing, or just listening to music (using a portable CD or MP3 player) were coded “not attempting to use waiting time productively.”

To examine the preference for collectable experiences, each participant was asked to make two choices. The first choice was between two vacation options: a week in Maui, Hawaii or in Costa Rica. The Hawaiian vacation was described as a pleasurable and enjoyable experience (“Relax at a luxurious resort. Enjoy the perfect weather and beautiful beaches”), while the Costa Rica vacation was described as more collectable, authentic, and adventurous (“Explore the authentic culture, rainforests, volcanoes, and wildlife adventures”). The second choice examined participants’ preference for their birthday celebration. Participants were asked which of the following options they would prefer for celebrating their birthday: doing something pleasurable and enjoyable (e.g., going to a familiar restaurant) or doing something unusual and memorable (e.g. going to an exotic restaurant). After completing the survey participants were asked to show the experimenter their watch and indicate what is the exact time on their watch. The time on participants’ watch was compared to an accurate watch, to examine whether participants’ watches were slow, accurate, or fast.

Results. As summarized in figure 7 (upper panel), the choice shares among the “productive” and “unproductive” participants were significantly different in the expected direction (z = 3.4 for the vacation choice, and z = 2.7 for the birthday celebration choice, p < .05 for both choices). Consistent with the proposed conceptualization, participants who were trying to do something productive while waiting for the train were more likely to choose the collectable experiences (75 % chose the authentic and adventurous Costa
Rican vacation over the Hawaiian Resort vacation, and 86% chose the unusual and memorable birthday celebration over the pleasurable and enjoyable celebration). By contrast, participants who were not trying to use their time productively were significantly less likely to choose collectible experiences (only 35% chose the Costa Rican vacation and only 55% chose the unusual celebration).

Moreover, the two observational measures of chronic productivity mindset were significantly correlated ($z = 2.7, p < .05$): while 57% of the productive travelers’ watches were fast, only 24% of the travelers who were not trying to use their time productively had a fast watch. Study 5b further demonstrates that consumers who tend to set their watch faster are more likely to choose collectable experiences.

Study 5b: The Fast Watch Study

Method. Participants were 61 park visitors in a major East Coast city who were wearing a watch. To examine the preference for collectable experiences, each participant was asked to make two choices. The first choice was between two restaurant options: American cuisine and Faroe Islands cuisine. The Faroe Islands restaurant was described as serving exotic and unusual food. In addition, we conducted a pretest for the Faroe Islands restaurant and found that none of the participants have been to the Faroe Islands or know were they are located, and none were familiar with Faroe Islands cuisine. The second choice examined participants’ preferences between two vacation destinations: a Florida vacation versus an Alaskan Ice Hotel vacation. After completing the survey, participants were asked to show the experimenter their watch and indicate what is the exact time on their watch. The
time on participants’ watch was compared to an accurate watch, to examine whether participants’ watches were slow, accurate, or fast.

Results. As summarized in figure 7 (lower panel), participants who set their watch faster were significantly more likely to choose the collectable experiences (86% chose the Faroe Islands restaurant over the American restaurant and 73% chose the ice hotel over the Florida vacation), compared to participants who had slower watches (47% chose the Faroe Islands restaurant and only 29% chose the ice hotel vacation; \( z = 2.8, p < .05 \) for the restaurant choice, and \( z = 3.0, p < .05 \) for the vacation choice). The choice shares of participants who had accurate watches fell between (and were marginally significant from) the choice shares of participants who has slow or fast watches (68% chose the Faroe Islands restaurant and 55% chose the ice hotel vacation). In summary, Studies 5a and 5b demonstrate the relationship between productivity mindset and the consumption of collectable experiences using objective, observational measures of the need for productivity.

Study 6: The New Year’s Eve Field Experiment

Study 6 examines two methods for increasing the attractiveness of an aversive experience. Namely, increasing the collectability of the event and making the memorability of the event more salient. The study explores “Spending New Years Eve at Times Square in New York City,” an experience that contains many characteristics of collectable experiences (and is thus rated as a popular goal on 43things.com - a website
for listing personal goals and experiences). Interestingly, the majority of the visitors on this website, who have participated in this celebration, wholeheartedly indicate that it was "worth doing," but at the same time they decisively specify that "once is enough." For example, these bloggers indicate that spending New Year’s Eve at Times Square “is just one of those things you need to do, once,” “It is totally worth doing once, but you’ll want to die afterwards,” and “It is a once-in-a-lifetime kind of experience, having done it once I don’t think I would ever see the need to fight the crowds and security, etc. to do it again.” These comments are consistent with the principle of “no two alike” suggesting that items comprising the collection must not be identical. In addition, the comments demonstrate that consumers seek such experiences, not for the immediate pleasure, but rather for the opportunity to add the (often aversive) experience to their “experiential CV.”

On December 31st 2005, more than 750,000 people went to Times Square, to watch the famous New Year's Eve Ball descend from the flagpole at midnight. Revelers arrived at Times Square early in the day and stood outdoors for hours in extremely cold weather, waiting for midnight. It was predicted to snow that evening, and a pretest (confirming the obvious) indicated that snow is perceived to be an aversive experience when standing outdoors for hours in freezing weather. The main study examined whether increasing the collectability of the snow occasion or making the memorability of the event more salient can increase the preference for snow (rather than clear sky).

*Method.* The study was conducted at Times Square on New Year’s Eve. Participants were 82 revelers who were waiting for midnight and were already standing
outdoors for several hours. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (memorability salience) x 2 (collectability level) between-subjects design. The questionnaire first manipulated the salience of creating memories. In the low-memorability-salience condition participants were asked “are you happy right now about your choice to come to Times Square tonight?” In the high-memorability-salience condition participants were asked “10 years from now, when you will look back at your choice to come to Times Square tonight, do you think you will be happy about your choice to come to Times Square?” The purpose of the question was to remind revelers that they are there to create a special memory, something they will remember ten years from now when they will look back at the 2006 New Year’s Eve. Participants indicated their satisfaction with their decision to come to Times Square using a seven-point scale ranging from “Not happy at all about my choice” (1) to “Very happy about my choice” (7). Next, participants in all conditions were told that “Tonight it is expected to snow in New York.” To manipulate the collectability of the event, participants in the increased collectability condition were also told that “This would be the first time in the last 15 years it will be snowing on New Year’s Eve, in New York, at Midnight.” The dependent variable was preference for snow: all participants were asked to indicate whether they hope the sky will be clear at midnight or rather hope that it will snow.

**Results.** As summarized in figure 8, both manipulations increased the preference for snow (rather than clear sky). While the majority of participants (67%) in the control condition indicated that they hope for clear sky, the majority of participants in all three treatment conditions indicated that they hope it will snow. As expected, making the
memorability of the event more salient had a significant effect on participants’ preference for snow. Participants who were asked to anticipate their satisfaction ten years from now (reminded of the memories they would create) were more likely to prefer snow over a clear sky (80% vs. 54%, z = 2.6, p < .05). In addition, participants who were told that this would be the first time in the last 15 years it will be snowing on New Year’s Eve, in New York, perceived the snow occasion to be a collectable experience and were therefore more likely to prefer the snow over clear sky (74% vs. 56%, z = 1.7, p < .05).

Overall, this study demonstrates that consumers seek unpleasant experiences when they are reminded of the opportunity to create memories. Moreover, individuals that were not reminded of investing in memories preferred the aversive event only when it was framed as a collectable experience. This tendency to prefer memorable but less pleasant experiences is part of a broader phenomenon that I define as “memory management.” The general discussion reviews additional steps that consumer take to manage their memories.
CHAPTER 5

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Apter (1992, p. xi) argues that “one of the most obvious, but at the same time most puzzling features of human behavior would appear to be the pointlessness of so much of it.” In the present research I propose that consumption activities that are regarded in the sensation seeking literature as paradoxical, pointless, counterproductive, and even irrational, could actually be perceived as farsighted and purposeful. I demonstrate that consumers choose such activities, with the intention to create memories and collect experiences.

Main Findings and Alternative Explanations

The present research introduced two concepts that capture recent trends in time allocation and consumption preferences. I first introduced the concept of productivity mindset - a continual striving to use time efficiently and productively, and argued that this desire to constantly improve oneself and achieve can also influence consumption and leisure preferences. I then discussed the consumption of collectable experiences and suggested that consumers choose and consume experiences with the intention to create special memories, and “check off” items on their “experiential check list” (or “experiential CV”).

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A series of studies examined the relationship between productivity mindset and the consumption of collectable experiences and showed that choices of unusual, novel, and memorable experiences are driven (and intensified) by a need for productivity. Studies 1-4 demonstrate the effect of priming productivity mindset and "collections mindset" using a variety of methods and measures, including choice tasks, closed-ended ratings, and open-ended protocols. In addition, the present research employed different methodologies to measure the effect of individual differences in the chronic activation of the productivity mindset. Whereas Studies 1-4 explore individual differences that are measured using self-reports, Studies 5a and 5b replicate the results with observational measures for "productivity mindset," such as consumers' tendency to set their watch fast and use their waiting time productively. A field study further demonstrated that consumers seek unpleasant experiences when they are reminded that these experiences are memorable and collectable. Next, I discuss how the studies rule out alternative explanations for the observed preference for unusual experiences, namely hedonic mispredictions, sensation-seeking, and variety-seeking.

Hedonic Mispredictions. The paper began by asking why consumers voluntarily engage in activities that are uncomfortable, unnecessary, and even aversive; why do consumers not just choose those alternatives that would provide them with the most pleasurable experience? Why do consumers choose to sleep on ice beds (in 25° F), stand outdoors in freezing weather for hours, and eat bizarre and untasty food? One possible explanation is that consumers make prediction errors about their future tastes and predict a less-pleasurable alternative to be more pleasurable (Loewenstein and Schkade 1999). However, the pilot study demonstrates that consumers do predict such experiences to be
less pleasant. The study shows that consumers knowingly choose unusual and unpleasant consumption experiences because they are more memorable and collectable. Study 6 further demonstrates that consumers prefer an aversive experience when they are reminded that such an experience will generate special memories.

**Sensation Seeking.** According to the sensation-seeking literature, consumers seek unusual experiences because they provide "an intrinsic pleasure from sensation" (Zuckerman 1994, p. 66). The vast sensation-seeking literature is premised on the notion that the consumption of unusual and novel experiences reflects myopic, impulsive, and spontaneous tendencies and individuals (Barratt and Patton 1983; Zuckerman 1994). In contrast, Studies 1-5 show that farsighted and planned consumers are actually the ones that are more likely to choose such experiences, and that priming productivity rather than pleasure and enjoyment enhances the preference for unusual experiences. Study 6 also demonstrates that considering a longer-term perspective increases rather than decreases the preference for unusual and collectable experiences. Taken together, these studies demonstrate that consumers choose novel experiences, not for the immediate pleasure, but rather for the opportunity to add items to their "experiential CV."

**Variety seeking.** Like the sensation seeking literature, the variety seeking literature also derives from research on optimal level of stimulation (Berlyne 1960). Variety seeking has traditionally been explained by satiation and boredom (Howard and Seth 1969; Raju 1980; Menon and Kahn 1995), and more recently by uncertainty about future preferences (Simonson 1990; Kahn and Lehmann 1991), interpersonal factors (Ariely and Levav, 2000; Ratner and Kahn 2002), and global evaluations of overall experience (Ratner, Kahn, and Kahneman 1999). The present research offers another antecedent of variety seeking -
the desire to collect and accumulate diverse and memorable experiences. However, variety seeking is just one of various behaviors and tendencies that are motivated by the need to collect experiences. Many intriguing consumption phenomena cannot be explained by variety seeking, but are clearly driven by the need to collect experiences. For example, some people decide to take a detour while traveling, just so they could drive through another state and add it to the list of states they have visited. In fact, under certain conditions (depending on how the collection is defined) the need to collect experiences can even reduce variety seeking. For example, a person who eats at a Hard Rock Café in every city she visits forsakes (gastronomic) variety for collecting more Hard Rock Café experiences.

Theoretical Implications and Future Research

The collection of memorable experiences can be seen as a part of a broader phenomenon that I label memory management. The active and farsighted management of memorable experiences could be divided into three stages: first, creating and collecting experiences; second, during the consumption experience, documenting and tangibleizing the experience; and finally, after the consumption experience, preserving (Zauberma, Ratner, and Kim 2007) and editing the memory. Future research could investigate the phenomenon of memory management among different populations and demographic groups. For example, consistent with research on age-related differences (Williams and Drolet 2005), it is predicted that younger consumers would be more concerned with collecting new experiences and documenting ("memorizing") them, while older consumers would more
concerned with preserving ("remembering") existing memories. Similarly, Olson (1985) found that young couples’ favorite possessions are those that relate to their future plans and goals, but older couples’ favorite objects are those that relate to their past experiences.

Relatedly, it would be interesting to further examine the relationship between collecting physical objects and collecting intangible experiences (as I did in Study 2). Collectors of objects see the items in their collections “not as objects occupying a cell in taxonomy, but as a package of memories” (Belk 1995). Similarly, consumers who collect memorable experiences invest in tangibilizing the experience by collecting souvenirs and memorabilia.

Collecting experiences as a materialistic pursuit. Collecting may be seen as a materialistic pursuit. Collectors are acquisitive, possessive, and passionately involved with the objects collected. These are the factors normally thought to comprise materialism (Belk 1985, Richins and Dawson 1992). Although we tend to consider experiential purchases as non-materialistic (see Van Boven and Gilovich 2003) it is possible that the collection and acquisition of experiences has become the “new materialism.” Future research can examine memories as possessions and apply research on materialism to the domain of intangible experiences and purchases.

Farsighted and Myopic Indulgences. Collectable experiences could be classified as farsighted indulgences, since they are often consumed with the intention to remember the experience. I propose a typology of indulgences based on the future utility obtained from remembering the experience: *myopic indulgences* are hedonic experiences that do not offer a special memory when looked upon in perspective (e.g., watching TV, eating junk food). In contrast, *farsighted indulgences* are often consumed with the intention to
remember them and provide utility when looked back upon (see also Elster and Loewenstein 1992, Wertenbroch and Carmon 1997). The distinction between these types of indulgences is not dichotomous but rather lays on a continuum varying on the level of intention to create a memory.

While some indulgences are clearly farsighted and memorable (i.e., collectable experiences), many indulgences do not necessarily seem memorable and special when considered under a short-term perspective. However, Keinan and Kivetz (2006; see also Kivetz and Keinan 2006) demonstrate that broader time perspective can make ordinary indulgences seem like a special opportunity or a memorable experience. By assessing their regrets, choices, and lives from a broader time perspective, consumers view a vacation opportunity as “a special time that can never be recovered” and as “a memory for your entire life.”

**Cross-Cultural Research.** Research in sociology and anthropology has observed variations across cultures in concerns with time efficiency. Industrialized societies tend to be future-oriented and tend to perceive time as a valuable resource. Members of such future-oriented societies often view present activities as means to ends rather than ends in themselves; time spent in the past that did not contribute to a desirable present state is viewed as wasted. In contrast, members of nonindustrialized or developing societies tend to be oriented to the present or past (maximizing present rather than future utility) and tend to experience time as relatively abundant (Augessey 1977; Graham 1981). Future research can examine the relationship between culture, productivity mindset, and the consumption of collectable experiences. For example, researchers can examine whether countries that have a fast pace of life (e.g., Japan and the U.S., Levine 1990), are also countries in which
collecting is more pervasive and where there is a high tendency to spend large amounts of
time, money, and energy on documenting experiences (e.g., taking pictures).

Marketing Implications

Traditional consumer research has focused on studying objects, not experiences. In recent years, however, there has been growing interest in the consumption and marketing of experiences (e.g., Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). As Deighton (1992) points out “many consumer transactions involve not possessions but performances. What we do, and what we have done to us and for us, for entertainment or for edification, makes up much of the fabric of our experience as consumers.” Consequently, marketers are starting to realize that we have become “the experience economy” (Pine and Gilmore 1998) and that “brands are first and foremost providers of experiences” (Schmitt 1999, 2003).

Consumers may be more hesitant to spend large amounts of money on intangible experiences rather than durable products. For example, splurging on a luxurious watch could be seen as an investment in an item that will be used for many years, and could also be passed on to the next generation. However, indulging in a luxurious cruise seems wasteful since once the vacation is over the consumer has nothing (tangible) to show for his large expense. The findings suggest that firms can market such intangible experiences as investments in consumers’ collection of memorable experiences. For example, advertisements for the Jersey Shore remind consumers that by spending time at the beach they “fill [their] mental picture album” and “build tomorrow’s vacation memories.”
Similarly, the Lion King Broadway show advertisement says “See it now. Remember it forever.” Continental Airlines reminds consumers that by traveling, they collect new experiences and memories and “add souvenirs to [their] collection and stamps to [their] passport.” This strategy can also help marketers overcome resistance to highly innovative products (Gourville 2005). By positioning novel experiences as collectable and memorable, marketers can increase the trial of new products and technologies.

The tendency to see experiences as a part of a set or collection of non-identical experiences provides both challenges and opportunities for marketers. Since collectable experiences are, by definition, the kind of experiences consumers want to go through only once, it may be difficult to obtain loyalty and retention. To address this challenge and encourage repurchase, marketers can frame each service encounter as a non-identical experience, which is a part of a set of collectable experiences. For example, The Crazy Horse Bar in Bloomington Indiana has a loyalty program titled “80 beers around the world.” Instead of a single experience, this bar offers customers a set of eighty non-identical experiences to collect. Customers at The Crazy Horse Bar receive a card with a checklist of 80 domestic and important beers. Customers get their card punched every time they try a new beer and receive a reward upon completion of the checklist. Such loyalty programs that force customers to collect diverse experiences may be more effective than traditional loyalty programs in capturing the loyalty of “butterfly consumers”. In such programs, the consumption is seen not only as an effort towards obtaining a reward but also as an opportunity to form and complete a collection of experiences. Similarly, Hard Rock Café positions each of its restaurants as a different experience, and encourages customers to visit all Hard Rock Café locations.
As discussed earlier, documenting is an integral part of the collection of memorable experiences. Providing customers with the opportunity to tangibilize the experience can both increase the attractiveness of the collectable experience and provide an additional source of revenue for the experience provider. The bar mentioned above, for example, provides an opportunity to document the collection of beer experiences by providing customers with a checklist of the 80 beers, a souvenir t-shirt, and a plaque upon completion of the list. Moreover, souvenirs and memorabilia (such as Hard Rock café’s t-shirts and pins) are usually sold at high premiums. The value consumers place on such souvenirs is the value of, or the utility from, remembering the experience.

The present findings suggest that marketers of unusual consumption experiences and innovative products should target consumers who are concerned with being productive (and collecting experiences). Study 4 further suggests that marketers should target the 80 million Baby Boomers who will retire over the next couple of decades and will seek fulfilling leisure activities and collectable experiences. In addition, marketers could target consumers who are reaching significant milestones in their lives (e.g. graduating, celebrating significant birthdays or anniversaries). Such milestones are often viewed as deadlines for personal checklists. These are times when consumers tend to take stock of their achievements and experiences and question whether they have “made the most out of their lives” so far. For many consumers feeling that “they lived” means having accumulated diverse collectable and memorable experiences. As Jean Jacques Rousseau once said “the person who has lived the most is not the one with the most years but the one with the richest experiences.”
REFERENCES


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FIGURE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLECTABLE EXPERIENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Collectable Objects (Kenseth 1991)</th>
<th>Collectable / Memorable Consumption experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novelty and rarity</td>
<td>Once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, activities that can only be done at a certain place or time, not available forever or not available to everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The foreign and exotic, strange and bizarre</td>
<td>Exotic food and vacation destinations. Doing things in an unconventional way (unusual celebrations: spend Christmas on the beach, get married unusually)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety (cumulative effect of diverse objects)</td>
<td>Accumulating diverse experiences (systematically visiting states or countries, surfing famous beaches, playing famous golf courses, bird-watching, train spotting, aircraft spotting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The unusually large and the unusually small</td>
<td>Extreme experiences: extreme sports, experiencing extreme weather, extreme flavors (very spicy food), experiencing extreme emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration of supreme technical skill or virtuosity. The triumph over difficult problems and the achievement of the seemingly impossible</td>
<td>Overcoming human limitations / adventurous and risky experiences (running a marathon, racecar driving, high hang gliding, riding a hot air balloon, bungee jumping, sphereing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vividness and verisimilitude</td>
<td>Live and authentic events. Being there (rather than watching it on TV): nature events (erupting volcano, solar and lunar eclipses, storms) media events (Olympics, concerts, celebrations, important demonstrations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The transcendent and sublime</td>
<td>Visiting famous places, meeting famous people, participating in famous and important events, breathtaking scenery / art performances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The surprising and unexpected</td>
<td>Unexpected experiences (surprise party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principle of “no two alike”: items comprising the collection must not be identical</td>
<td>Once is enough: repeating an experience does not expand the collection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 2: PREDICTED AND DECISION UTILITY (PILOT STUDY RESULTS)

MEMORABLE VS. PLEASANT VS. CHOICE

Exploring Budapest (vs. watching DVDs) 90%  34%
Ice hotel (vs. Florida hotel) 98%  77%
Goat cheese dessert (vs. chocolate cake) 87%  72%
Exotic (vs. familiar) restaurant 92%  32%
Unfamiliar (vs. familiar) chocolate 89%  87%

Memorable □ Pleasant ■ Choice

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FIGURE 3: THE EFFECT OF PRIMING PRODUCTIVITY MINDSET
(STUDIES 1A & 1B RESULTS)

% CHOOSING THE FLOWERS AND SPICES
CHOCOLATE (STUDY 1A)

![Bar chart showing the percentage of choosing flowers and spices between low and high achievement motivation with and without productivity priming.]

PREFERENCE FOR KREMBO OVER FERRERO
(STUDY 1B)

![Bar chart showing the preference for Krembo over Ferrero between low and high achievement motivation with and without enjoyment and productivity priming.]

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FIGURE 4: THE EFFECT OF PRIMING THE COLLECTION OF PHYSICAL ITEMS
(STUDY 2 RESULTS)

% OF UNFAMILIAR VACATION DESTINATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low Achievement Motivation</th>
<th>High Achievement Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Food Priming (control)</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Collections Priming</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% MENTIONING CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLECTABLE EXPERIENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low Achievement Motivation</th>
<th>High Achievement Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Food Priming (control)</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Collections Priming</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 5: CREATING A NEED TO CORRECT UNPRODUCTIVE USE OF TIME
(STUDY 3 RESULTS)

% CHOOSING THE EXOTIC RESTAURANT

- Feeling excessively productive
- Control
- Feeling unproductive

Individual Difference

Low Achievement Motivation
- 25% (Feeling excessively productive)
- 39% (Control)
- 65% (Feeling unproductive)

High Achievement Motivation
- 63% (Feeling excessively productive)
- 56% (Control)
- 69% (Feeling unproductive)
FIGURE 6: PREFERENCES FOR RETIREMENT ACTIVITIES
(STUDY 4 RESULTS)

% MENTIONING THEY WANT TO FEEL/productive after they retire

- Well-being Priming (control)
- Identity Priming

% MENTIONING COLLECTABLE EXPERIENCES
WHEN DESCRIBING RETIREMENT ACTIVITIES

- Well-being Priming (control)
- Identity Priming
FIGURE 7: OBSERVATIONAL MEASURES FOR PRODUCTIVITY MINDSET
(Studies 5A & 5B Results)

STUDY 5A: PRODUCTIVE WAITING TIME

- Study 5A: Productive waiting time
- Study 5B: The Fast Watch Study

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FIGURE 8: THE NEW YEARS’ EVE FIELD EXPERIMENT

(STUDY 6 RESULTS)

% INDICATING THEY HOPE IT WILL SNOW

Timing of choice evaluation

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