

Now or Never: Perceptions of Uniqueness Induce Acceptance of Price Increases  
for Experiences more than for Objects

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## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

**Abstract**

Seven studies test and support the prediction that consumers are more willing to accept a price increase for an experiential versus a material purchase; an effect explained by the greater uniqueness of experiences. Critically, the uniqueness model advanced here is found to be independent of the happiness consumers derive from the purchase. To gain a deeper understanding of the uniqueness mechanism, this investigation then advances and tests a four-facet framework of uniqueness (unique opportunity, unique purchase, unique identity, and counterconformity). Together, the findings converge on the conclusion that consumers perceive the opportunity to have a particular experience (vs. object) as more unique, and this *unique opportunity* increases their willingness to accept a price increase. Overall, this work extends the experiential versus material purchases literature into a new domain—that of pricing; identifies the dimension—uniqueness—and its precise facet responsible for the effect—unique opportunity; and demonstrates that this model unfolds in a pattern distinct from the oft researched model centered on consumer happiness. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

*Keywords:* experiential purchase; material purchase; uniqueness; price increase

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

### Now or Never: Perceptions of Uniqueness Induce Acceptance of Price Increases for Experiences more than for Objects

Researchers have grown increasingly interested in two domains where people spend their discretionary income—experiences and objects (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). So far, research in this domain has focused on two outcomes of consumers having experiences instead of owning material objects: the psychological and social benefits that these purchases afford. Specifically, experiences' greater ability to engender positive factors such as pre-purchase anticipation (Kumar, Killingsworth, & Gilovich, 2014), interpersonal conversations (Bastos & Brucks, 2017), and association with the self (Carter & Gilovich, 2012) makes them (vs. objects) a greater source of consumer happiness (see Dunn & Weidman [2015] for a review). Further, research has shown that experiences allow consumers to attain more favorable social impression (Van Boven, Campbell, & Gilovich, 2010) and develop stronger social ties (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Chan & Mogilner, 2017). Although these are significant findings, the focus on the psychological and social domains of the consumer leaves open an array of other domains for further discoveries. This work studies a monetary domain critical to both consumers and firms—pricing.

Pricing is one of the most central issues in marketing (Monroe, 2003); justifiably so, since, for the consumer, it represents the economic sacrifice necessary to obtain desired experiences and objects (Lichtenstein, Ridgway, & Netemeyer, 1993) and, for the firm, it is “one of the most critical and difficult decisions facing managers” (Kijewski & Yoon, 1990, p. 11). The challenges around pricing are especially pronounced when the manager's decision involves raising prices since consumers tend to be particularly sensitive to prices going up (vs. down; Kalyanaram & Winer, 1995). Indeed, higher prices figure as a major reason why consumers pass up on a purchase (Mohammed, 2012). However, despite potential demand backlashes, price

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

increases are often a necessary measure; and one that firms take frequently. To be precise, price increases account for approximately two thirds of price adjustments in the marketplace (Nakamura & Steinsson, 2008)—meaning that they are an ever present challenge for the manager. Therefore, an enhanced understanding of what determines consumer reaction to price increase is relevant to both practitioners and academics (Bijmolt, van Heerde, & Pieters, 2005).

Accordingly, the first purpose of this work is to examine whether the purchase type categorization can help determine consumer reaction to a price increase. Drawing on the existing literature, this work predicts that consumers respond more favorably to (i.e., they are more likely to make the purchase despite) a price increase of an experience as compared to that of an object.

This work's focus on consumer reaction to a price increase is novel in that, although increasing prices is often a necessary measure from the firm's perspective, higher prices are normally perceived as negative and undesirable by the consumer; an idea captured by the pain of paying phenomenon (Prelec & Loewenstein, 1998). These aspects directly contrast with the positivity and desirability of the outcomes examined thus far in the experiential versus material purchases literature—i.e., happiness and healthy social relationships.

Therefore, this work's first intended contribution is to extend the experiential versus material purchases literature beyond the positive psychological and social factors consumers derive from their purchases. It achieves this objective by showing that the purchase type categorization reliably predicts how consumers react to a negative, but necessary and ubiquitous situation—that of a price increase. This knowledge expands theory and informs practice.

A second purpose of this investigation is to offer an explanation for this effect. To this end, it tests six dimensions known to differ between experiential and material purchases: closeness to the self, conversational value, impression management, social relatedness,

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

uniqueness, and happiness. Although these dimensions suggest potential mechanisms, it is unclear whether any is likely to play a dominant role. That is, because prior research on experiential versus material purchases has not yet spoken to matters of pricing, the literature lacks firm theoretical ground on which one could theorize, ex-ante, for any single mechanism. Further, because these dimensions were advanced by research centered on psychological and social outcomes that differ substantially from the monetary outcome examined here, it is also possible that these dimensions operate differently in the pricing context and that none of them, or more than one, transmits the effect. However, instead of engaging in HARKing (Kerr, 1998), this investigation adopts a mix of approaches and lets the empirical evidence point to the answer.

Following evidence that uniqueness and happiness explain the effect, this work seeks a third purpose: To test whether the uniqueness model is distinct and independent from that centered on happiness—a model that has been examined extensively in the experiential versus material purchases literature. This work disentangles uniqueness from happiness by design and shows that the uniqueness process emerges independently of the level of happiness consumers derive from the purchase. The distinction and independence of the uniqueness model from that centered on happiness indicate that the present work advances a model that is, itself, unique.

Finally, pursuing its fourth purpose, this investigation seeks a refined understanding of the uniqueness mechanism. Drawing on the uniqueness literature, it advances a four-facet framework of uniqueness (unique opportunity, unique purchase, unique identity, and counterconformity) and tests these facets jointly to identify the one(s) underlying the effect. Mediation and moderation evidence supports unique opportunity as the primary underlying facet. This fine-grained understanding of the mechanism allows for more precise theorizing and more accurate managerial decision-making.

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

Overall, results support the following conclusion: Consumers perceive the opportunity to have a particular experience (vs. object) as more unique, and this *unique opportunity* increases their willingness to accept a price increase; even when controlling for the happiness they gain from the purchase (please see Figure 1 for a graphical depiction of this research).

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SEE FIGURE 1

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This manuscript is organized as follows: First, it theorizes for the six aforementioned differences between experiential and material purchases that should contribute to consumers reacting more positively to price increases of experiences. Next, it gathers behavioral data to test this main prediction (Studies 1a and 1b) and examines the six dimensions as potential mechanisms (Study 2a). After finding support for uniqueness and showing that it is independent of happiness (Study 2b), it retests the model with a mental framing intervention (Study 2c). Next, this work theorizes for and tests, via mediation, the four facets of uniqueness to identify which account(s) for the effect (Study 3a). Building on the finding that unique opportunity is the dominant facet, it retests and confirms this process via moderation (Study 3b). In closing, the manuscript elaborates on the theoretical and practical contributions of the findings, their limitations, and avenues for future inquiries.

### **Conceptual Background**

Six of the classic distinctions between experiential and material purchases include: closeness to the self, conversational value, impression management, social relatedness, uniqueness, and happiness. This work theorizes for and examines each.

#### **Closeness to the Self**

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

People are constantly constructing, refining, and conveying their sense of self; and the marketplace has long been a domain of choice for them to do so (Richins, 2013). People construct and communicate about the self by utilizing both the things they own (their objects) and the activities they do (their experiences). However, compared to objects, experiences are closer to and more representative of one's true self (Carter & Gilovich, 2012), which makes them a better tool for self-definition. Presumably, purchases closer to one's self-identity are valued more greatly, rendering higher willingness to pay an additional amount. Therefore, consumers should be more willing to accept a price increase for experiences (vs. objects).

### **Conversational Value**

Consumers seem to have a strong desire to share about their purchases (Berger, 2014), and experiences appear to provide more conversational content (Bastos & Brucks, 2017; Kumar & Gilovich, 2015) and engender more enjoyable conversations than do objects (Van Boven et al., 2010). Therefore, consumers should be more accommodating to an experiential (vs. material) price increase on the grounds that experiences enable more and better conversations.

### **Impression Management**

Gaining a favorable social impression is a pressing human desire and a strong driver of consumer behavior (Argo, White, & Dahl, 2006). People often buy, consume, display, and share about objects and experiences that can cast a positive light on themselves; and research shows that experiential purchases do a better job at attracting social approval (Van Boven et al., 2010). Given that experiences are superior in helping people put themselves in a favorable light, they should elicit greater consumers' willingness to accommodate a price increase.

### **Social Relatedness**

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

Another strong driver of human behavior is the desire to socially connect. The yearning for affiliation shapes not only what people buy (Mead, Baumeister, Stillman, Rawn, & Vohs, 2011), but also how much they spend (Kurt, Inman, & Argo, 2011). Because experiences are consumed socially more often than objects, they lead to more social relationship development (Caprariello & Reis, 2013). As superior facilitators of social interaction during consumption, experiences should elicit greater consumers' receptivity to a price increase.

### **Uniqueness**

While people often seek a sense of connection and commonality with others (Hornsey & Jetten, 2004) and can gain considerable satisfaction from ordinary (vs. unique) purchases (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014), they sometimes also desire distinctiveness (Huang, Dong, & Mukhopadhyay, 2014; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Indeed, people's need for uniqueness plays a crucial role in their behaviors as consumers (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010); and the marketplace provides various avenues for them to fulfill this need (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001). As consumers, people can obtain uniqueness in at least four different forms: by taking advantage of a *unique opportunity* to acquire a particular experience or object (Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012), consuming inherently *unique purchases* (Carter & Gilovich, 2010), using market offerings that can convey their *unique identity* (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980), and engaging in *counterconformity* behavior (Tian et al., 2001). Research indicates that experiential (vs. material) purchases are better suited to fulfill people's general desire for uniqueness (Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012), which should yield more favorable consumer responses to price increases.

### **Happiness**

People place great weight on the acquisition of experiences and objects in their pursuit of happiness (Pelletier, 2009). Since experiences advance happiness more than do objects (Van



## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

Boven & Gilovich, 2003), this happiness advantage should make people more receptive to a price increase when it is associated with an experience instead of an object.

Together, these theorizations support the hypothesis that, when faced with a price increase, consumers are likely to react more favorably to (i.e., proceed with the purchase of) an experience versus an object. Study 1a performs an initial test of this hypothesis.

### **Study 1a: Establishing the Phenomenon via Recalled Behavior**

Study 1a examines this work's main question: When faced with a higher price, do people more often go ahead with the purchase if it is an experience instead of an object? It does so by inquiring about people's behaviors in real-life situations where they encountered a higher price and had to decide whether to make the purchase.

### **Procedure**

One hundred and thirty-seven Master's level business students from Católica-Lisbon School of Business and Economics (63% females,  $M_{age} = 23.28$ ,  $SD = 4.30$ ) completed this between-subjects study for class credit. The study aimed to examine actual situations involving increased prices, so participants who had been randomly assigned to the experiential ( $n = 59$ ) or material purchase condition ( $n = 78$ ), first answered the qualifying question: "It sometimes happens that people consider purchasing an experience (object) and, in this process, they check on its price. Some examples of experiences are travels, meals at restaurants, theater performances, and music concerts (some examples of objects are clothes, furniture, jewelry, and various types of electronic devices). Then, later, when they finally decide to purchase the experience (object), they find out that its price has increased (it is now higher than the price they had seen before). Has this situation ever happened to you?" (0 = *Yes*; 1 = *No*). Those who answered affirmatively ( $n = 116$ ) next completed the measure of interest: "Please recall the last

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

time that a situation like that happened to you. With that in mind, please answer the following question. When that situation happened:" (0 = *I decided to purchase the experience/object anyways*; 1 = *I decided to not purchase the experience/object*; please see Methodological Details Appendix [MDA] A for the complete manipulation texts and measures for all seven studies).

A potential concern with this study is social desirability. Namely, participants could be driven to report that they bought the higher priced experience (vs. object) to assuage their concerns about social impression (Van Boven et al., 2010). To account for this possibility, the study assessed social desirability with ten items from the Marlowe and Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960;  $\alpha = .56$ ).

### Results and Discussion

A  $z$ -test shows that, among the 53 participants faced with a higher price for an experience, 74% reported having gone ahead with the purchase; a proportion that is significantly greater than that among the 63 participants faced with a higher price for an object (46%,  $z = 3.00$ ,  $p = .002$ ; see MDA B for more details on this and other studies' analyses).

There were no differences in social desirability between participants in the experiential or material condition who went ahead with the purchase and those who gave it up as a result of the higher price (all  $ps > .51$ ), indicating that social desirability is unlikely to account for the effect.

Inquiring about people's past behaviors, this study finds that consumers seem to be more receptive to a price increase of an experiential versus a material purchase. Moreover, it rules out social desirability as a potential explanation (MDA C reports a direct replication of these results). Next, Study 1b examines the replicability of these findings with actual behavior.

### Study 1b: Establishing the Phenomenon via Actual Decision Behavior

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

This study engages people in an actual and consequential purchase decision to reexamine whether, when faced with an equivalent price increase for both purchase types, they choose to buy the experience more often than the object.

### **Procedure**

A set of MTurkers ( $N = 564$ ; 61% females,  $M_{\text{age}} = 35.87$ ,  $SD = 10.64$ ) completed this within-subjects study for financial compensation. The study aimed to examine purchases that participants actually intended to make, hence, to cover the various experiences and objects that they would likely list, the two purchase types were operationalized in the form of vouchers. They were informed that the study was about how people use vouchers to buy experiences and objects, and that, by participating in the study, they could win two \$20 vouchers that were accepted by most businesses. They then read the definitions of each purchase type (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003) and wrote down an experience and an object that they intended to buy in the next three months for about \$20 each. The two slots (one for each purchase type) appeared in random order.

Next, participants were asked to wait a few seconds for the online system to check whether the researchers had vouchers to cover the experience and the object they had listed. After getting confirmation of voucher availability, participants read that, “Because these vouchers are leftovers from a large study we recently did, we can offer each \$20 voucher to you for \$5.” The questionnaire then explained, “Here is how this works. In this study, you will be entered into a raffle for \$10 (which enables you to get the two vouchers, since each costs \$5). If you win the \$10 raffle, you have two options:” to “Use the \$10 to buy the two vouchers, one for that experience and the other for that object.” or to “Receive the \$10 in cash.” The 258 participants who selected to buy the vouchers proceeded while the 306 who selected the cash option were released from the rest of the study.

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

To introduce the possibility of a higher price, the participants who proceeded read: “Most of the states from where we mail our vouchers charge zero tax and no mailing fees. But let’s just check.” After indicating the state they were in and waiting for a system check, all participants were informed of the higher price for each of the two vouchers, which originally cost \$5: “The closest state where we can mail the vouchers to you charges 6% in taxes. The final price for each voucher (already including mailing) is \$9.21. This higher price means that, if you win the \$10 raffle, there will be enough funds to cover only one of the two vouchers. Which one are you more willing to pay the higher price for, the experience or the object? If you win, we will mail you that \$20 voucher.” The experience and object that participants had listed earlier appeared in random order and they were asked to “Please select the one you want to pay that higher price for (click next to it):” Besides the two purchases, participants also had a third option: “If I win the raffle, I prefer the \$10 in cash.”, reflecting the real world possibility of not buying either purchase and instead keeping their money (19% selected this third option). Next, the study assessed whether participants believed their choice was consequential: “I believe that if I win the raffle the researchers will indeed send me my prize.” (1 = *Strongly disagree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*). Last, social desirability was assessed with the same ten items as in Study 1a ( $\alpha = .69$ ).

### Results and Discussion

A  $z$ -test examined whether, when faced with the price increase, participants showed preference for buying the voucher for either purchase type. As expected, a majority selected the voucher for the experience (57%), a proportion that is significantly different from the indifference value of 50% ( $z = 2.01, p = .04, 95\% \text{ CI } [49.97, 63.83]$ ).

Participants indicated believing in the consequentiality of the study ( $M = 4.85, SD = 2.04$ ), a score significantly greater than the neutral value of 4 ( $t(258) = 6.71, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI}$

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

[0.60, 1.10]. Additionally, there were no differences in believability among participants who selected the experience, the object, or the cash option (all  $p$ s > .60). Further, a possible concern is that, despite being asked to “Please answer the following [believability] question as honestly as you can.”, participants manifested belief in the experiment(er) simply to appear appropriate and maximize their odds of obtaining the prize. If so, one would expect an association between the belief measure and participants’ concern with appearing appropriate. A correlation analysis including belief and social desirability does not show that association ( $r = 0.01$ ,  $p = .89$ ). Hence, in general, participants believed in the cover story, this belief was consistent across conditions, and it has no relationship with people’s desire to appear appropriate.

Finally, there was no difference in social desirability between participants who chose the experience versus object voucher ( $p = .89$ ), suggesting that it is unlikely to be behind the effect.

Using an actual and consequential purchase decision, this study shows that when people are faced with the decision of paying a higher price to acquire a voucher for either an experience or an object, they more often decide for the experience (MDA C reports a direct replication of this result). Also, this study indicates that (un)believability and social desirability are unlikely to account for this difference.

Next, this work seeks its second objective: To identify the general mechanism behind this effect. To do so, it tests, jointly, six known differences between experiential and material purchases (closeness to the self, conversational value, impression management, social relatedness, uniqueness, and happiness) and examines which, if any, explains the effect.

### **Study 2a: Test of the Mechanism**

Study 2a initiates this work’s exploration of the mechanism. Using a recall procedure, it examines the six aforementioned dimensions along which the two purchase types differ.

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

### Procedure

A set of MTurkers ( $N = 154$ ; 53% females,  $M_{age} = 36.01$ ,  $SD = 11.39$ ) participated for financial compensation. One participant did not complete any of the mediator measures and was removed, leaving a final sample of 153. Including this participant does not change any of the conclusions. Participants were randomly assigned to recall and write about either an experience ( $n = 80$ ) or an object ( $n = 74$ ) they had purchased for about \$50 and turned out well. Cost was restricted to \$50 to control for effects of market value (Nicolao, Irwin, & Goodman, 2009). Next, participants answered the dependent variable measure: “Let's suppose that when you were about to purchase that experience/object, you found out that its price had recently gone up 10%. How likely is it that you would have still made that purchase?” (1 = *Not at all likely*; 7 = *Very likely*).

To cover all possibilities, the present work performed experiments where the measures of the mediators were presented to participants in a single order and in random order. Study 2a adopted the former. Participants answered, in this order, a three-item measure of uniqueness (e.g., “I perceive that experience/object as unique.”;  $\alpha = .88$ ), a five-item measure of conversational value (e.g., “That experience/object makes for a good conversation.”;  $\alpha = .94$ ), a two-item measure of impression management (e.g., “I think people have a more positive view of me after learning about my experience/object.”;  $r = .87$ ,  $p < .001$ ), a three-item measure of closeness to the self (e.g., “That experience/object is closely associated with my identity.”;  $\alpha = .92$ ), a three-item measure of social relatedness (e.g., “The experience/object allows me to build social ties.”;  $\alpha = .89$ ; 1 = *Strongly disagree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*), and a two-item measure of consumer happiness (e.g., “When you think about that experience/object, how happy does it make you?”;  $r = .69$ ,  $p < .001$ ; 1 = *Not at all*; 7 = *Very much*; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003).

### Results

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

**Measurement model.** Prior to testing the relations among the focal variables, a factor analysis examined whether the items designed to measure the variables of interest (i.e., one dependent variable and six potential mediators) indeed tapped distinct constructs. A test with Direct Oblimin rotation extracted five relevant factors (Eigenvalues  $> 1$ ), together accounting for 80% of the variance. While the items designed to measure uniqueness loaded on a separate factor (all loadings  $> .6$ ), cross-loading was observed among the items measuring the other potential mediators (loadings  $> .3$ ). The dependent variable item loaded on its own factor, with impression management and happiness cross-loading on that factor (loadings  $> .3$ ). To obtain a clearer solution, the analysis established the extraction parameter to seven factors. This solution showed that the seven constructs indeed hold conceptual independence (Table 1).

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SEE TABLE 1

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**Reaction to a price increase.** A *t*-test shows that, when faced with a proportionally equivalent price increase of 10%, participants indicated significantly greater likelihood of going ahead with the experiential ( $M = 5.80, SD = 1.34$ ) than the material purchase ( $M = 5.19, SD = 1.52; t(151) = 2.62, p = .01, MD = 0.61, 95\% CI [0.15, 1.07]$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.42$ ; similar results were obtained for 100% price increase and WTP—please see MDA B for details).

**Mediation.** A parallel multiple mediator analysis (PROCESS, model 4, Hayes, 2013) with 10,000 resamples (the number of resamples used in all PROCESS analyses hereafter) tested whether any of the six mechanisms transmitted the effect. This test is especially useful because it informs about the effect of each indirect pathway while holding constant those of the others; and it enables one to compare the sizes of the indirect effects and identify whether any is dominant (Hayes, 2013). Results indicate that uniqueness ( $\beta = 0.10, SE = 0.08, 95\% CI [0.003, 0.36]$ ) and

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

happiness transmitted the effect ( $\beta = 0.26$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ , 95% CI [0.07, 0.52]). Further, there is no evidence that either accounts for a significantly larger amount of variance in the dependent variable (contrast analysis:  $\beta = -0.001$ ,  $SE = 0.15$ , 95% CI [-0.31, 0.32]). None of the other four variables yielded significant indirect effects as their confidence intervals included zero.

### **Discussion**

This study replicates the finding that people react more positively to a price increase of an experiential (vs. a material) purchase. Importantly, results show that uniqueness and happiness explain this difference. Of note, the mediation analysis indicates that uniqueness explains a portion of the indirect effect distinct from that which happiness explains—i.e., uniqueness accounts for the effect above and beyond happiness. This is an interesting finding, suggesting that each mechanism unfolds independently of the other. Study 2b disentangles the two constructs by design and tests whether uniqueness explains the effect even when happiness is neutralized.

#### **Study 2b: Using Purchase Valence to Disentangle Uniqueness from Happiness**

This study's main goal is to separate uniqueness from happiness by design and examine whether the uniqueness mechanism is independent from happiness. It uses valence to do so.

The studies presented thus far involved purchases that are predominantly positive; a circumstance where experiences are known to generate more happiness than objects. To disentangle uniqueness from happiness, this study investigates also purchases that turned out negatively; a circumstance where the happiness superiority of experiential purchases is known to disappear (Nicolao et al., 2009) but their uniqueness superiority is expected to hold. Specifically, past research suggests that uniqueness is unaffected by outcome valence (Keinan & Kivetz, 2010). In fact, unexpected, unpleasant, and even outright negative aspects of experiential and



## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

material purchases are sometimes at the heart of what makes the purchase unique (Cialdini, 2007). Accordingly, the greater uniqueness of experiences should hold for purchases that turn out negatively. Conversely, research has shown that the happiness superiority of experiential purchases is eliminated for negative purchases (Nicolao et al., 2009). Hence, if uniqueness alone can explain consumers' greater willingness to accept a price increase for experiences (vs. objects), this effect should manifest for positive as well as negative purchases. Otherwise, if the mechanism is dependent on happiness, the effect should be present only for positive purchases.

### Procedure

A set of MTurkers ( $N = 251$ ; 64% females;  $M_{\text{age}} = 33.38$ ,  $SD = 10.35$ ) completed the study for financial compensation. In a 2 (purchase type: experiential vs. material) by 2 (outcome valence: positive vs. negative) between-subjects design, they were randomly assigned as follows: experiential-positive ( $n = 62$ ), experiential-negative ( $n = 58$ ), material-positive ( $n = 71$ ), and material-negative ( $n = 60$ ). As in Study 2a, participants recalled and described either an experiential or a material purchase they had made for about \$50. To manipulate outcome valence, the study adapted Nicolao et al.'s (2009) script. Next, they answered measures similar to those in the previous studies to report on uniqueness ( $\alpha = .84$ ), happiness ( $r = .80$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and reaction to a 15% price increase. The three blocks of measures appeared in random order and order did not qualify any of the effects (all interaction  $ps > .18$ ). Last, participants answered a two-item manipulation check measure of outcome valence: "The purchase I described above turned out:" (1 = *Very Negatively/Unfavorably*; 7 = *Very Positively/Favorably*;  $r = .97$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### Results

**Manipulation check.** The valence manipulation had the intended effect: Participants in the positive (vs. negative) condition reported that the purchase turned out significantly more

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

positively ( $M_{\text{pos}} = 6.46, SD = 0.79$  vs.  $M_{\text{neg}} = 2.27, SD = 1.49$ ;  $F(1, 247) = 786.29, p < .001, \eta^2 = .76$ ). Neither purchase type nor the interaction showed significant effects ( $ps > .38$ ).

**Uniqueness.** An analysis of moderation (PROCESS, model 1) with purchase type (0 = material; 1 = experiential) as independent variable, outcome valence (0 = negative; 1 = positive) as moderator, and uniqueness as dependent variable shows significant effects for purchase type ( $\beta = 0.72, SE = 0.28, t(247) = 2.56, p = .01, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.16, 1.27]$ ) and outcome valence only ( $\beta = 0.55, SE = 0.26, t(247) = 2.08, p = .03, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.03, 1.08]$ ). Results show a non-significant interaction ( $p = .55$ ). As expected, experiences were perceived as more unique in both the positive ( $\beta = 0.95, SE = 0.26, t(247) = 3.57, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.42, 1.47]$ ) and the negative valence conditions ( $\beta = 0.72, SE = 0.28, t(247) = 2.56, p = .01, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.16, 1.27]$ ; Figure 2).

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SEE FIGURE 2

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**Happiness.** A similar analysis of moderation shows a significant effect for outcome valence only ( $\beta = 2.87, SE = 0.23, t(247) = 12.00, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [2.40, 3.34]$ ). Neither purchase type nor the interaction was significant ( $ps > .27$ ). Critically, and replicating previous research (Nicolao et al., 2009), experiences advanced more happiness than objects in the positive ( $\beta = 0.57, SE = 0.23, t(247) = 2.40, p = .01, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.10, 1.04]$ ) but not in the negative valence condition ( $\beta = 0.19, SE = 0.25, t(247) = 0.76, p = .44, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.30, 0.68]$ ).

**Reaction to a price increase.** A similar analysis of moderation shows significant effects for purchase type ( $\beta = 0.99, SE = 0.33, t(247) = 2.94, p = .003, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.32, 1.65]$ ) and outcome valence only ( $\beta = 1.85, SE = 0.32, t(247) = 5.77, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.22, 2.48]$ ). Revealingly, and reflecting the non-significant interaction ( $p > .65$ ), the simple effects were significant in both the positive ( $\beta = 1.20, SE = 0.31, t(247) = 3.76, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.57, 1.82]$ )

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

and the negative valence conditions ( $\beta = 0.99$ ,  $SE = 0.33$ ,  $t(247) = 2.94$ ,  $p = .003$ , 95% CI [0.32, 1.65]), supporting the uniqueness account and its independence from happiness.

### Discussion

Experiences maintain their greater uniqueness over objects when the outcome is negative and, in line with this work's theory, people react more favorably to a price increase of a negative experience than that of a negative object. Interestingly, this result emerges despite the fact that, when the outcome is negative, the two purchase types advance *equal* levels of happiness. Put differently, people's willingness to accommodate a price increase is, at least in part, based on the purchase's uniqueness and is independent of the happiness the purchase affords them. Overall, these findings play a critical role in showing the independence of the present framework from that centered on consumer happiness (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003).

While, from a generalizability perspective, it is a strength to have allowed participants in Studies 1a-2b to freely select a purchase and, as a result, have an array of different purchases represented across these studies, each purchase is likely to have idiosyncrasies. It would be theoretically and managerially interesting to test whether similar patterns of results can be obtained by merely influencing whether consumers think of the very same purchase as an experience versus an object. Study 2c tests this possibility. Additionally, Study 2c seeks to broaden the scope of the conclusions beyond the 10% (Study 2a) and 15% (Study 2b) levels.

### Study 2c: Mental Framing

This study uses a framing procedure to neutralize purchase idiosyncrasies and examine whether results replicate when consumers think of the same purchase as an experience versus an object. Moreover, it investigates a different level of price increase—i.e., 30%.

### Procedure

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

One hundred and two MTurkers (54% females;  $M_{\text{age}} = 33.59$ ,  $SD = 11.74$ ) participated for financial compensation. They were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions: BBQ grill framed as an experience ( $n = 58$ ) versus an object ( $n = 44$ ). All participants were asked to imagine strolling around a store and seeing a BBQ grill that cost \$100. To manipulate framing, those in the experiential (vs. material) framing condition were encouraged to think of and describe the grill as an experience (vs. object)—e.g., “You know that a grill is something people use (keep) for some time. You’re now considering the details of that BBQ experience (object).” Next, participants used measures similar to those in Studies 2a and 2b to report on uniqueness ( $\alpha = .79$ ) and reaction to a 30% price increase. These measures appeared in random order and order did not influence any of the effects (all interaction  $ps > .71$ ).

A potential concern associated with this study is that thinking of a purchase in experiential (vs. material) terms could engender a more positive attitude towards it, which in turn could drive the effect. To examine this possibility, a two-item measure assessed participants’ attitude towards the grill: “The impression I have of the grill I wrote about is... (1 = *Very Negative/Unfavorable*; 7 = *Very Positive/Favorable*;  $r = .87$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### Results

Participants who framed the BBQ grill as an experience (vs. object) indicated greater likelihood of still making the purchase despite the price increase ( $M_{\text{exp}} = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 1.72$  vs.  $M_{\text{mat}} = 2.61$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ;  $t(100) = 2.11$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $MD = 0.65$ , 95% CI [0.04, 1.25], Cohen’s  $d = 0.43$ ).

A bootstrap test using PROCESS model 4, with framed purchase (0 = material; 1 = experiential) as independent variable, uniqueness and attitude as mediators, and reaction to a price increase as dependent variable shows that uniqueness transmitted the effect ( $\beta = 0.30$ ,  $SE = 0.16$ , 95% CI [0.07, 0.73]) but attitude did not (95% CI [-0.03, 0.29]).

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

**Additional analysis.** It is possible that writing about the material (vs. experiential) aspects of a purchase is more difficult, which could drive the effect. This study examined this possibility by testing whether the two framing conditions differed on two indicators of writing difficulty: The number of words ( $p = .44$ ) and the time participants used to describe the grill ( $p = .83$ ). That no differences emerged suggests that writing difficulty is unlikely to account for the effect.

### Discussion

When consumers think of a purchase along its experiential (vs. material) dimensions, they respond more favorably to a price increase (see MDA D, Study 3, for a conceptual replication of this result). This effect is driven, at least in part, by the higher uniqueness attributed to the purchase when it is framed as an experience instead of an object; and is not driven by attitude or writing difficulty.

Complementing Studies 2a and 2b, this study enlarges the breadth of the conclusions to include a higher percentage increase (i.e., 30%). Additionally, its framing approach addresses the idiosyncrasies across the purchases in Studies 1a–2b and, equally important, sheds light on a managerial implication of this work. It suggests that, by focusing consumers' attention on the experiential aspects of a purchase, marketing managers can bring out its uniqueness and, in turn, elicit more positive reactions to pricing strategies.

Although not reported here, additional analyses documented on MDA B show that, when treated as dependent variables, reaction to a price increase and attitude react similarly to the same antecedents, suggesting that reaction to a price increase and subjective valuation share conceptual grounds (Galinsky, 2017).

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

Thus far the evidence converges on the findings that people react more positively to a price increase of an experiential (vs. material) purchase, and uniqueness accounts for this difference. As previously discussed, at least four facets of uniqueness (i.e., unique opportunity, unique purchase, unique identity, and counterconformity) may, jointly or individually, drive the effect. This investigation proceeds by theorizing for each facet and performing two additional tests to pinpoint, precisely, which one(s) is (are) responsible for the mechanism.

### **Theoretical Discussion: Four Facets of Uniqueness**

Next, drawing on different literatures, this work advances and theorizes about a four-facet framework of uniqueness. Although these four facets may conceptually overlap to some extent, I argue that there are theoretically meaningful differences among them and that these differences can be observed empirically, through measures that capture each separately. To my knowledge, this is the first work to conceptualize and test these four facets jointly.

#### **Unique Opportunity**

A purchase may be perceived as unique because the opportunities to have it are limited (Cialdini, 2007). Purchases that may not be available to the individual at other times in the future create the perception of a *unique opportunity*—the perception that one’s freedom to obtain the purchase in the future is limited. By their own nature, experiences are dependent on the present circumstances. They are shaped by the current conditions (e.g., time, location, agents), making it impossible that two experiences of the same type (e.g., visits to the Grand Canyon), but separated by a time interval, carry much resemblance. On the other hand, two objects of the same type (e.g., electronic gadgets of a specific model), bought at different times, will likely share various commonalities, if not be virtually identical. Following this rationale, experiential purchases are more likely to be perceived as a ‘one time offer’, a more unique opportunity.

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

By definition, a unique opportunity represents the possibility that something will not be available in the future—a threat to the individual’s freedom of access. According to reactance theory (Brehm, 1966), when people feel that their free behaviors are restricted or threatened with restrictions, they experience a state of psychological reactance—defined as a motivational state directed toward reattaining the restricted freedom. One way people respond to this motivation is by valuing and desiring the restricted option more—they become increasingly invested in obtaining it (Miron & Brehm, 2006). Cialdini (2007, p. 184) explains that, “whenever free choice is limited or threatened, the need to retain our freedoms makes us desire them (as well as the goods and services associated with them) significantly more than previously. So when increasing scarcity—or anything else—interferes with our prior access to some item, we will *react against* the interference by wanting and trying to possess the item more than before”.

In this work, the more ephemeral nature of experiential versus material purchases creates an unavailability threat, which, based to reactance theory, should increase their desirability and value (Brehm, 1966), and therefore people’s willingness to accept a price increase.

### **Unique Purchase**

Irrespective of whether a person will have other opportunities to obtain a similar purchase in the future, the uniqueness of the purchase may be grounded on its own distinctiveness—termed here as *unique purchase*. While material purchases often result from a system of mass-production and uniformity (Johnson & Nilsson, 2000), experiential purchases tend to be ‘manufactured’ at the moment of consumption and without such a firm mould, making their outcome comparatively more varied. Consequently, each experience is more likely to be ‘one of a kind’, to be singular (Carter & Gilovich, 2010). Singularity can contribute to the valuation of purchases in several ways. For objects, it may represent rarity and thus value (Cialdini, 2007).

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

For experiences, singularity allows “consumers [to] derive utility from collecting new experiences and ‘checking off’ items on their ‘experiential check list’” (Keinan & Kivetz, 2010, p. 937). Consumers may find these benefits worthy of the additional investment.

### **Unique Identity**

Taking a more social perspective, the uniqueness of a purchase may be rooted in its capacity to position the purchaser as a distinct individual (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). The greater singularity of experiences versus objects suggests that, when one’s experiences (vs. objects) become known by others, they portray that individual as someone who pursues and associates with uniqueness, someone of a unique identity. Because people value opportunities to portray themselves as distinct (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980), experiences’ greater ability to depict people as unique may enable them (vs. objects) to elicit a more favorable reaction to a price increase.

### **Counterconformity**

Previous research has noted that, in their search for uniqueness, people may go a step beyond consuming purchases that are simply deemed singular and in fact engage in *counterconformity*, by behaving in ways “so as to be in noncongruence with the norm” (Tian et al., 2001, p. 50). Because counterconformity consumption is inherently based on unpopular choices that are normally not readily available in the marketplace, this consumption style often requires the enactor to modify popular purchases in a way that makes them deviant (Tian et al., 2001). Although objects can afford the individual a level of control over its characteristics via alteration (Tian, 1997), experiences often are what the person makes them to be, making them more suitable for counterconformity. This property could prove valuable to some people who, in turn, react more favorably to an experiential (vs. material) price increase.



## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

These four facets of the uniqueness construct may, uniquely or jointly, shape people's response to a price increase. Study 3a explores these possibilities.

### Study 3a: Identifying the Dominant Facet(s) of Uniqueness

#### Procedure

A set of MTurkers ( $N = 151$ ; 63% females,  $M_{age} = 33.17$ ,  $SD = 11.08$ ) participated for financial compensation. They were randomly assigned to write about an experience ( $n = 72$ ) or an object ( $n = 79$ ) they had purchased for about \$100. Then, they answered a dependent variable measure similar to that in Studies 2a–2c, with a 10% price increase. Next, they completed two-item measures of unique opportunity (e.g., “That may have been my only opportunity to have that experience/object.”;  $r = .92$ ,  $p < .001$ ), unique purchase (e.g., “It is distinct from the other purchases I have had before.”;  $r = .70$ ,  $p < .001$ ), unique identity (e.g., “It communicates my uniqueness as a person.”;  $r = .74$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and counterconformity (e.g., “That experience/object enabled me to go against the prevailing rules of my social group regarding what to buy or do.”;  $r = .82$ ,  $p < .001$ ; 1 = *Strongly disagree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*; Tian et al., 2001).

#### Results and Discussion

**Measurement model.** This analysis examined whether the items designed to measure the four facets of uniqueness indeed tapped distinct facets, and are conceptually distinct from the dependent variable. A test with Direct Oblimin rotation extracted four factors (Eigenvalues  $> 1$ ), together accounting for 84% of the variance. Each pair of items designed to assess a facet of uniqueness loaded on a separate factor (all loadings  $> .8$ ), and none cross-loaded. However, the item measuring the dependent variable cross-loaded on three factors (loadings  $> .3$ ). To obtain a clearer solution, the analysis requested a five-factor extraction. Results confirm the conceptual independence of the four facets and their distinction from the dependent variable (Table 2).

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SEE TABLE 2

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**Reaction to a price increase.** Participants reported significantly greater likelihood of going forward with an experiential ( $M = 5.63$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ ) than a material purchase ( $M = 4.90$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ;  $t(149) = 2.74$ ,  $p = .007$ ,  $MD = 0.73$ , 95% CI [0.20, 1.25], Cohen's  $d = 0.45$ ).

**Mediation.** A parallel multiple mediator analysis (PROCESS, model 4) indicates that, of the four facets, only unique opportunity significantly transmitted the effect ( $\beta = 0.19$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ , 95% CI [0.05, 0.44]). None of the other facets did, as their confidence intervals included zero.

This study therefore replicates the finding that people are more accepting of an experiential price increase and, importantly, it shows that, among the examined facets of uniqueness, unique opportunity is the dominant mechanism. This key result offers a more precise understanding of how the uniqueness mechanism unfolds. Interestingly, this finding also suggests that when people perceive an experience and an object similarly in terms of unique opportunity, they should be equally willing to accept a price increase for both. Study 3b manipulates (instead of measuring) unique opportunity to retest the mechanism via moderation.

### **Study 3b: Manipulation of the Dominant Facet—Unique Opportunity**

Study 3b uses a moderation-based test to reexamine the finding that unique opportunity drives willingness to accept a price increase. This test is important for several reasons: First, in regression-based mediation tests like the one performed in Study 3a, “the path between mediator and outcome is a (partial) correlation” and, as such, “it does not imply causation” (Pieters, 2017, p. 694). Contrary to the causal claim made here (i.e., unique opportunity  $\rightarrow$  willingness to accept a price increase), one could argue that consumers tend to ascribe positive attributes (e.g., unique opportunity) to those purchases for which they are willing to accommodate a price increase;

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

perhaps as a strategy to help justify their positive reaction to the higher price. Second, gathering evidence of a different nature, based on moderation instead of mediation, can be beneficial since “an argument for causality can best be made when various classes of evidence all converge on the same conclusion” (Lyubomirsky & Diener, 2005, p. 804). Thus, Study 3b uses a moderation-based technique to conclusively establish causal directionality (Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005) and provide a different class of evidence for the mechanism.

In light of Study 3a’s finding that unique opportunity helps explain why experiential (vs. material) purchases elicit more favorable reactions to a price increase, it follows that when consumers see the two purchase types similarly with regards to unique opportunity, they should react similarly favorably towards both. It is thus expected that, in the control condition, where unique opportunity is not manipulated, consumers will react more favorably to an experiential (vs. material) price increase, replicating previous results. However, in the unique opportunity condition, where both purchase types (experiential and material) are seen as (more) similar in terms of unique opportunity, the difference in reaction to a price increase should attenuate or disappear. Overall, Study 3b is expected to yield an interaction of purchase type (experiential vs. material) by unique opportunity (control vs. unique) on reaction to a price increase.

### **Procedures**

A set of Master’s level business students from Católica-Lisbon School of Business and Economics ( $N = 212$ ; 53% females,  $M_{\text{age}} = 22.80$ ,  $SD = 1.93$ ) participated for class credit. In a 2 (purchase type: experiential vs. material) by 2 (unique opportunity: control vs. unique) between-subjects design, participants were randomly assigned to condition as follows: experiential-control ( $n = 47$ ), material-control ( $n = 51$ ), experiential-unique ( $n = 62$ ), and material-unique ( $n = 52$ ). All participants were first asked to “Please write down the name of a current singer you

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

like.” The term current was included to avoid the mention of deceased singers. Then, experiential [material] condition participants were instructed to “Imagine that you’ve been thinking of buying a ticket to see (singer’s name populated here) live in concert [a (singer’s name) shirt]. The ticket [shirt] costs \$30.” To manipulate unique opportunity, participants in the unique conditions were presented with additional information, which participants in the control conditions did not receive. Those in the unique experiential [material] condition read that “Imagine also that, because of unexpected health issues, (singer’s name) has recently announced that s/he will soon retire for good, so you are aware that this is definitely your last chance to see him/her in concert [to get his/her limited-edition shirt]. It feels to you like a very unique opportunity.” This study excluded any mention of the terms experience, material, object, and their derivatives to, together with Studies 1a and 1b, assuage potential concerns about social desirability (Van Boven et al., 2010).

Following, participants completed a two-item manipulation check measure (e.g., “This could be my last chance to attend that concert/buy that shirt.”; 1 = *Strongly disagree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*;  $r = .79, p < .001$ ) and the measure of willingness to accept a 10% price increase, similar to those in Studies 2a–3a. These two measures appeared in random order and order had no effect on the results (all interaction  $ps > .95$ ).

### Results and Discussion

**Manipulation check for unique opportunity.** A moderation analysis (PROCESS, model 1) with purchase type (0 = material; 1 = experiential) as independent variable, unique opportunity (0 = control; 1 = unique) as moderator, and the measure of unique opportunity as dependent variable shows significant effects for purchase type ( $\beta = 2.76, SE = 0.30, t(208) = 9.17, p < .001, 95\% CI [2.16, 3.34]$ ), unique opportunity ( $\beta = 2.49, SE = 0.29, t(208) = 8.50, p <$

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

.001, 95% CI [1.91, 3.06]), and, critically, their interaction ( $\beta = -1.36$ ,  $SE = 0.41$ ,  $t(208) = -3.33$ ,  $p = .001$ , 95% CI [-2.17, -0.56]). As intended by the manipulation, control condition participants reported greater unique opportunity for experiences ( $\beta = 2.76$ ,  $SE = 0.30$ ,  $t(208) = 9.17$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [2.16, 3.34]), a difference that maintains but is significantly attenuated in the unique condition ( $\beta = 1.38$ ,  $SE = 0.27$ ,  $t(208) = 4.96$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.86, 1.93]; Figure 3).

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SEE FIGURE 3

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**Reaction to a price increase.** A similar analysis shows significant effects for purchase type ( $\beta = 3.46$ ,  $SE = 0.33$ ,  $t(208) = 10.28$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [2.80, 4.12]), unique opportunity ( $\beta = 1.62$ ,  $SE = 0.32$ ,  $t(208) = 4.95$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.97, 2.27]), and, more important, their interaction ( $\beta = -1.31$ ,  $SE = 0.45$ ,  $t(208) = -2.85$ ,  $p = .004$ , 95% CI [-2.22, -0.40]). Reflecting the pattern observed above for unique opportunity, control condition participants reacted more positively to an experiential than a material price increase ( $\beta = 3.46$ ,  $SE = 0.33$ ,  $t(208) = 10.28$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [2.80, 4.12]), a difference that maintains but is significantly attenuated in the unique condition ( $\beta = 2.15$ ,  $SE = 0.31$ ,  $t(208) = 6.86$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [1.53, 1.76]; Figure 4).

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SEE FIGURE 4

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Using a moderation-based approach, this study finds that, under normal circumstances (control condition), experiential purchases elicit more favorable reactions to a price increase than do material purchases—replicating previous results. However, when people’s perceptions of unique opportunity for the two purchase types converge (unique condition), so do their reactions to a price increase (please see MDA C for a replication). Besides offering moderation-based

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

evidence for the unique opportunity mechanism, this approach conclusively demonstrates the direction of the indirect effect. Here, variations in (the manipulated) unique opportunity cannot be attributed to differences in reaction to a price increase, whereas variations in reaction to a price increase can be attributed to the manipulated levels of unique opportunity.

### **General Discussion**

Recent research has advanced a distinction between purchases as experiential versus material and shown that this categorization can help predict psychological and social outcomes central to the consumer. Building on this literature, this investigation reveals a novel, monetary-based outcome central to both consumers and firms—i.e., consumer reaction to price increases. Seven studies employing different operationalizations of purchase type (past, present, and framed), forms of consumer decisions (past, hypothetical, and actual decisions), and levels of price increase (10%, 15%, 30%, and 100%) show that consumers are more accepting of a price increase associated with an experience than an object (please see MDA G for a single-paper meta-analysis of this effect across studies 2a–3b and six additional studies reported in the MDAs D–E [McShane & Böckenholt, 2017]). Next, searching for the mechanism, this work adopts a broad-to-narrow approach. It first explores six general dimensions known to differ between the two purchase types and finds evidence that uniqueness and happiness help explain the effect (Study 2a). However, when uniqueness and happiness are disentangled by design and happiness is neutralized, uniqueness transmits the effect independently of happiness (Study 2b). Next, this investigation demonstrates that the observed effects can be obtained with a fairly simple framing intervention (Study 2c).

Last, this research advances a four-facet framework of uniqueness (i.e., unique opportunity, unique purchase, unique identity, and counterconformity) and tests these facets

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

jointly to identify the one(s) primarily responsible for the effect. Mediation-based evidence points to unique opportunity as the dominant facet (Study 3a). That is, consumers find the opportunity to purchase a particular experience (vs. object) more ephemeral—a more unique opportunity—and, consistent with reactance theory’s notion that perceived unavailability increases valuation (Brehm, 1966), unique opportunity increases their willingness to accept a price increase. Study 3b replicates this finding with a moderation-based approach, which affords it the additional benefit of establishing the direction of the effect: unique opportunity → reaction to a price increase (see MDA F for additional studies backing uniqueness as the general dimension—Study 1—and unique opportunity as the specific facet behind the effect—Study 2).

Together, the evidence obtained in this research converges on the following conclusion: Unwilling to pass up the *unique opportunity* to have an experience (vs. object), consumers tend to respond more favorably to an experiential (vs. material) price increase; a phenomenon that is independent of the happiness they gain from the purchase.

### **Contributions and Implications**

Theoretically, this research makes four main contributions. First, it extends the experiential versus material purchases literature to a new domain—that of pricing. Past research has shown that this purchase type categorization is useful in predicting two classes of benefits that consumers derive from their purchases: psychological and social benefits. However, as the present work shows, the full predictive potential of the categorization is yet to be realized. The findings make an incremental contribution in this direction by showing that the purchase type categorization reliably predicts another class of outcome: consumer reaction to price increase. This outcome is distinct from the positive psychological and social ones in that it is centered on a monetary circumstance normally seen negatively by consumers.

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

Second, the findings provide a detailed understanding of the process mechanism. Benefiting from earlier research showing numerous dimensions along which experiential and material purchases differ (e.g., Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012), this work examines these dimensions and identifies the one responsible for the mechanism—uniqueness. More important, by going deeper into the mechanism and pinpointing the specific facet responsible for the effect—unique opportunity—, the findings bring an additional level of precision to the experiential versus material purchases literature.

Third, this work shows that the uniqueness process unfolds independently of happiness. Given that happiness already encompasses a wide range of life's positive aspects (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999) and exerts substantial influence on what people do (Gilbert, 2006), it is surprising that even after happiness is neutralized, a conceptually simpler construct such as uniqueness still accounts for the effect. This finding distinguishes the uniqueness framework from the oft researched one centered on happiness—a contribution at the framework level (please see MDA B for preliminary results showing the conceptual distinction between happiness and the dependent variable—reaction to a price increase. These results may spur additional research and insight at the construct level).

Fourth, by advancing the four-facet framework of uniqueness and showing empirically that the facets are conceptually independent, this work offers a model that can help researchers conceptualize and study uniqueness in the consumer domain. Here, this model enabled the finding that, when consumers deliberate about a higher price, their perception of the purchase's future (un)availability looms larger than do the purchase's singularity, the opportunity to convey a unique identity, or the possibility of counterconforming.



## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

This work has important implications to practice as well. Although the results do not imply a green light for indiscriminant price increases, they show that managers working with purchases that are normally seen as experiential may have at their disposal relatively greater flexibility in their pricing maneuvers, especially if they succeed in bringing out the unique opportunity aspect of the purchase. Attempting to capitalize on this idea, online reservation platforms like booking.com and Airbnb respectively inform browsing individuals about the number of other people currently considering the same hotel room, and that a certain accommodation “is usually booked”. For the manager involved with material purchases, this investigation offers a tool to increase the uniqueness of the objects—motivating consumers to think of them in experiential terms (Study 2c).

Naturally, firms want to do good, but occasionally things can go awry and they fail to deliver at their best (they transgress; Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004). When transgression and the need to raise prices coexist, firms can benefit from the knowledge that uniqueness’ positive effect on consumer reaction to a price increase operates independently of consumer happiness. That is, firms can use uniqueness to help elicit more favorable consumer reaction to price increase also when purchases turn out negatively (Study 2b).

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

The present investigation has a number of limitations. First, the conclusions advanced here are limited to price increases. While these account for most price adjustments in the marketplace (Nakamura & Steinsson, 2008), research could investigate price decreases as well.

Also, although Study 3b yielded the expected interactions for both the manipulation check and the outcome variable, experiences still scored higher than objects in the experimental (i.e., the unique) condition. It is possible that a stronger intervention could equalize the two

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

purchase types. However, this result may also represent a natural difficulty in creating the perception that objects are as unique opportunities as experiences. Research could examine these possibilities. Nonetheless, theory and practice benefit from the knowledge that unique opportunity has a positive causal influence on consumer reaction to price increase for both experiences and objects.

This work studies monetary expenditures, but consumers also invest other types of resources to obtain the purchases they desire. Research could examine whether similar patterns emerge for consumers' willingness to invest time and effort (Beatty & Smith, 1987). Should they find support for these effects, a natural next step would be to identify the dominant mechanism. Whereas uniqueness may emerge again, mounting evidence points to how money and time, as distinct constructs, are driven by different determinants (Okada & Hoch, 2004). However, should the general construct of uniqueness drive these effects, the four-facet framework of uniqueness can prove useful again in advancing a more precise understanding of this process.

Further, although uniqueness leads to more favorable reactions towards an experiential (vs. material) price increase, the findings do not allow for conclusions beyond the pricing context and do not imply a general consumers' preference towards experiences. Indeed, research has shown that in other contexts, different reasons drive people's preference for experiences (e.g., Carter & Gilovich, 2012), and, in some cases, objects (e.g., Tully, Hershfield, & Meyvis, 2015).

### **Conclusion**

The experiential versus material purchases literature has reached a level of maturity with respect to psychological and social outcomes. This is a ripe time to progress in this domain so that the literature can continue to flourish. The current work makes a small contribution in this

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

direction by taking this research program into a novel sphere, informing theory and practice, and opening new avenues for future discoveries.

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## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

Table 1

*Factor Analysis—Study 2a.*

Constructs	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Uniqueness_1			.65				
Uniqueness_2			.95				
Uniqueness_3			.92				
Conversational Value_1	.90						
Conversational Value_2	.89						
Conversational Value_3	.89						
Conversational Value_4	.73						
Conversational Value_5	.68						
Impression Management_1				-.83			
Impression Management_2				-.85			
Closeness to Self_1		.90					
Closeness to Self_2		.85					
Closeness to Self_3		.87					
Social Relatedness_1					.77		
Social Relatedness_2					.89		
Social Relatedness_3					.86		
Happiness_1							-.75
Happiness_2							-.83
DV						1.00	

*Note.* All blank loadings < .3.

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

Table 2

*Factor Analysis—Study 3a.*

Constructs	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Unique Opportunity_1	.98				
Unique Opportunity_2	.96				
Unique Purchase_1			.90		
Unique Purchase_2			.94		
Unique Identity_1				.93	
Unique Identity_2				.92	
Counterconformity_1		-.97			
Counterconformity_2		-.93			
DV					.99

*Note.* All blank loadings < .3.

UNIQUENESS AND PRICING

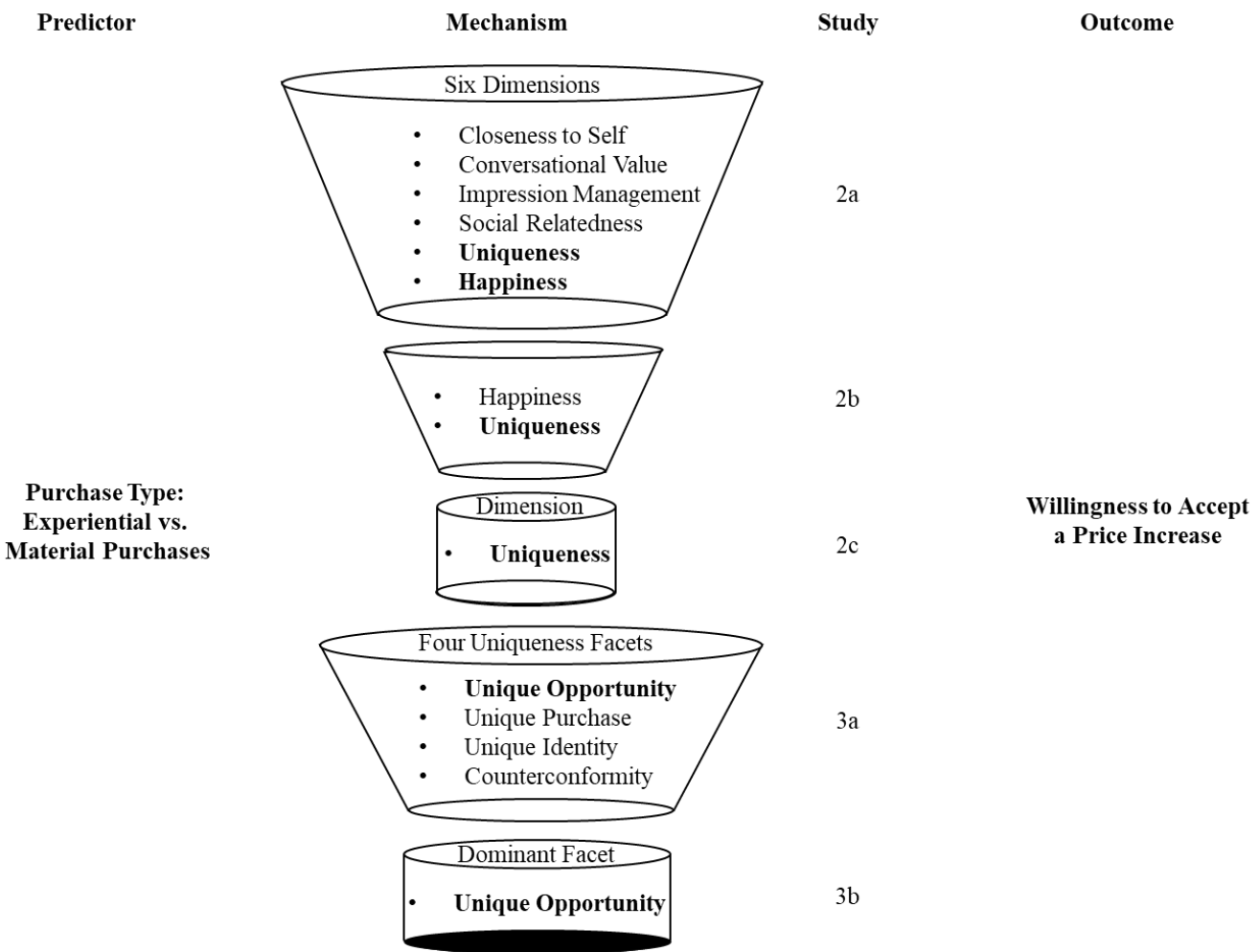
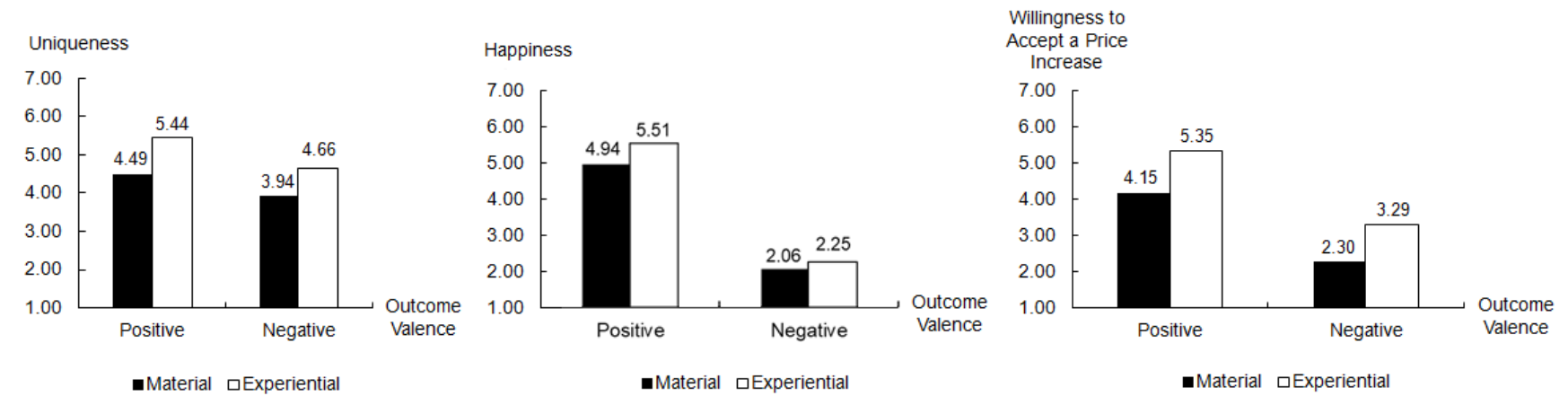


Figure 1. Graphical representation of this research.

## UNIQUENESS AND PRICING



*Figure 2.* Uniqueness, Happiness, and Willingness to Accept a Price Increase for Purchase Type by Outcome Valence—Study 2b.

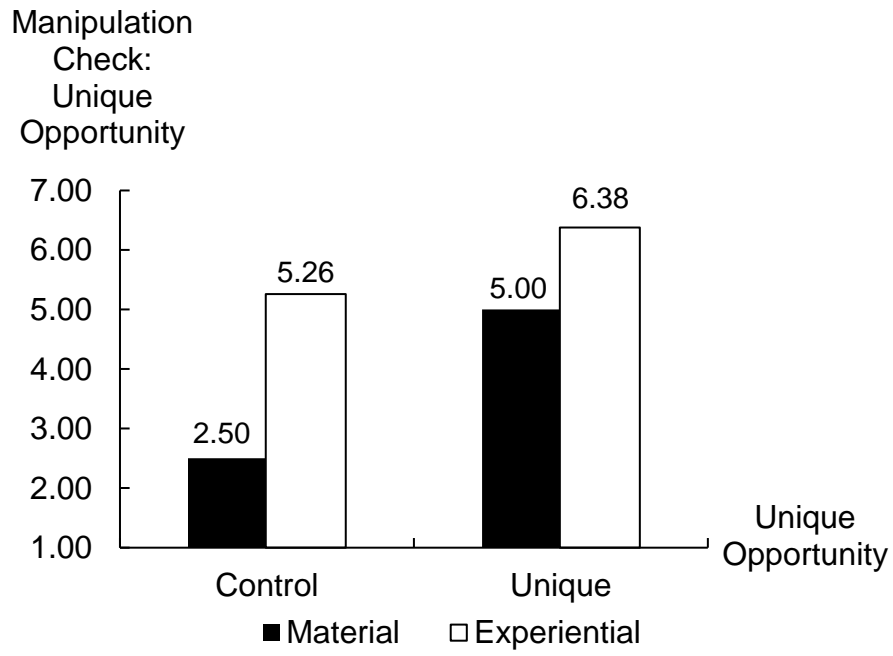
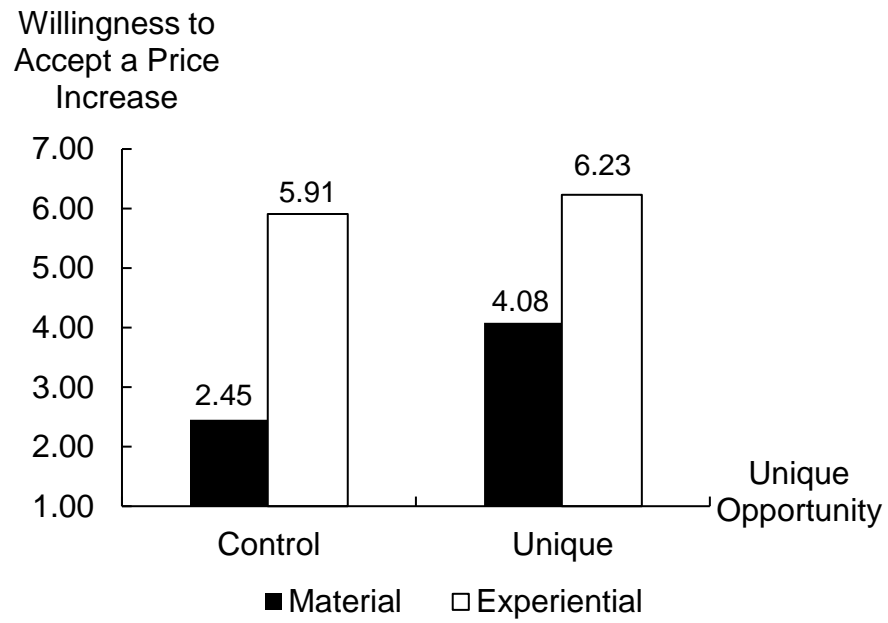


Figure 3. Effect of Purchase Type and Unique Opportunity on Manipulation Check (Unique Opportunity)—Study 3b.



*Figure 4.* Effect of Purchase Type and Unique Opportunity on Willingness to Accept a Price Increase—Study 3b.



**Methodological Details Appendix (MDA)****List of Methodological Details Appendices**

MDA A – Study Materials and Measures for All Studies

MDA B – Additional Statistics and Results (Studies 1a, 2a, 2b, 2c, and 3a)

MDA C – Conceptual Replications of Studies 1a, 1b, and 3b

MDA D – Three Supplemental Studies with 40, 50, and 100% Price Increases

MDA E – Three Studies Showing the Conceptual Correspondence between Willingness to Accept a Price Increase and WTP

MDA F – Two Studies Examining the Mechanism with a Choice Approach

MDA G – Single-Paper Meta-Analysis

**MDA A: Manipulation Texts and Measurement Items for All Studies****Study 1a—Establishing the Phenomenon via Recalled Behavior****Manipulation—Experiential Purchase Condition**

It sometimes happens that people consider purchasing an experience and, in this process, they check on its price. Some examples of experiences are travels, meals at restaurants, theater performances, and music concerts. Then, later, when they finally decide to purchase the experience, they find out that its price has increased (it is now higher than the price they had seen before). Has this situation ever happened to you?

**Manipulation—Material Purchase Condition**

It sometimes happens that people consider purchasing an object and, in this process, they check on its price. Some examples of objects are clothes, furniture, jewelry, and various types of electronic devices. Then, later, when they finally decide to purchase the object, they find out that its price has increased (it is now higher than the price they had seen before). Has this situation ever happened to you?<sup>1</sup>

—New Page—

**Measure of the DV**

Please recall the last time that a situation like that happened to you. With that in mind, please answer the following question.

When that situation happened:

---

<sup>1</sup> The study was available only to participants with IP addresses from the United States or Canada, and required a minimum of 100 tasks previously approved (these criteria were used in all the studies involving MTurkers; except Study 2a, which required a minimum of 50 previously approved tasks). For all studies, all conditions and measures were included in the analyses. In addition, all exclusions in all studies are reported. The raw data for all studies are available upon request. Minimum sample size of 45 participants per condition was determined based on an unreported pre-test (Cohen's  $d = 0.55$ ) suggesting that  $n = 41$  per condition provided sufficient power ( $1 - \beta > .80$ ) to detect an effect of this magnitude. The sample size for all studies was determined before any data analysis.

\_\_I decided to purchase the experience/object anyways.

\_\_I decided to not purchase the experience/object.

—New Page—

### **Social Desirability Scale**

1. I like to gossip at times.
2. There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.
3. I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.
4. I always try to practice what I preach.
5. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.
6. At times I have really insisted on having things my own way.
7. There have been occasions when I felt like smashing things.
8. I never resent being asked to return a favor.
9. I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.
10. I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.

**Study 1b: Establishing the Phenomenon via Actual Decision Behavior**

We are a group of professors who study how people use vouchers to buy experiences or objects.

In this study, you can get two \$20 vouchers that are accepted by most businesses in the US.

People use vouchers to buy objects and experiences. Let us clarify what we mean by that:

Experiences are an event or a series of events that the person lives through. Some examples of experiences are travels, meals at restaurants, theater performances, and music concerts. These are things people spend money to do something, and they are left with their memories of the experience.

Objects are something tangible that the person gains ownership over and can keep in her/his possession for a while. Some examples of objects are furniture, clothes, jewelry, and various types of electronic devices. These are things people spend money to own something, and they are left with something tangible.

Please think of an experience you intend to buy in the next 3 months for about \$20. In a few words, write down that experience.

The experience is: \_\_\_\_\_

Please think of an object you intend to buy in the next 3 months for about \$20. In a few words, write down that object.

The object is: \_\_\_\_\_

Great, our system shows that you wrote down the following experience and object:

[The two purchases listed earlier appeared here]

Let us check if we have vouchers that cover those two purchases.

—New Page—

Please wait for the system to check. The result will show automatically once the check is done.

[Participants waited for six seconds while a progress bar moved on the page]

—New Page—

Our system shows that we do have vouchers for that experience and that object. Because these vouchers are leftovers from a large study we recently did, we can offer each \$20 voucher to you for \$5.

Here is how this works. In this study, you will be entered into a raffle for \$10 (which enables you to get the two vouchers, since each costs \$5). If you win the \$10 raffle, you have two options:

\_\_Use the \$10 to buy the two vouchers, one for that experience and the other for that object (remember, each voucher is worth \$20).

\_\_Receive the \$10 in cash.

—New Page—

Great, you indicated that you will use the raffle money to buy the two vouchers. We will get to the raffle in just a minute. Let's take care of a few details first.

Most of the states from where we mail our vouchers charge zero tax and no mailing fees. But let's just check. Please select below the state you're in.

[Drop down menu]

—New Page—

Please wait for our system to check.

[Participants waited for six seconds while a progress bar moved on the page]

—New Page—

### **Measure of the DV**

Result: The closest state from where we can mail the vouchers to you charges 6% in taxes. The final price for each voucher (already including mailing) is \$9.21. This higher price means that, if you win the \$10 raffle, there will be enough funds to cover only one of the two vouchers. Which one are you more willing to pay the higher price for, the experience or the object? If you win, we will mail you that \$20 voucher<sup>2</sup>.

Here is the experience and the object you listed. Please select the one you want to pay that higher price for (click next to it):

One of the purchases appeared here [randomized order]

The other purchase appeared here [randomized order]

If I win the raffle, I prefer the \$10 in cash.

### **Believability Measure**

I believe that if I win the raffle the researchers will indeed send me my prize.

---

<sup>2</sup> Two randomly selected winners were awarded \$20 each via additional compensation on the TurkPrime platform. The direct replication reported in MDA C adopted the exact same procedure. This procedure was used to ensure participant anonymity.

**Study 2a: Test of the Mechanism****Manipulation—Experiential Purchase Condition**

Please recall a time when you spent about \$50 on an experience. Examples of experiences are vacations, meals at restaurants, theater performances, and music concerts. You bought the experience to increase your happiness. It turned out well and you did enjoy the purchase.

Describe that experience in some detail.

**Manipulation—Material Purchase Condition**

Please recall a time when you spent about \$50 on an object. Examples of objects are clothes, furniture, jewelry, and various types of electronic devices. You bought the object to increase your happiness. It turned out well and you did enjoy the purchase.

Describe that object in some detail.

**Measures***Willingness to accept a 10% price increase*

Let's suppose that when you were about to purchase that experience/object, you found out that its price had recently gone up 10%. How likely is it that you would have still made that purchase?

*Willingness to accept a 100% price increase*

I would have purchased that experience/object even if its price were twice what I actually paid for it.

*Willingness to pay*

Let's say the firm offering that experience/object was considering raising its price. If the firm were to do so, what is the maximum price you would have paid for that experience/object? (enter the numbers below rounding up to the next dollar)

*Uniqueness*

I perceive that experience/object as unique.

That experience/object is different from others I have had.

That experience/object is distinct.

*Conversational value*

I want to talk to others about that experience/object.

That experience/object makes for a good conversation.

That experience/object is a good topic to talk about.

I feel excited about telling others about my experience/object.

I desire to talk to people about my experience/object.

*Impression management*

I think people have a more positive view of me after learning about my experience/object.

I think people regard me more highly after learning about that experience/object.

*Closeness to the self*

That experience/object reflects who I am as a person.

That experience/object is close to my sense of self.

That experience/object is closely associated with my identity.

*Social relatedness*

While consuming that experience/object I feel a sense of social connectedness.

Through that experience/object I am able to connect to others.

The experience/object allows me to build social ties.

*Happiness*

When you think about that experience/object, how happy does it make you?

How much does that experience/object contribute to your happiness in life?



**Study 2b: Using Purchase Valence to Disentangle Uniqueness from Happiness****Manipulation—Purchase Type (Experiential) and Outcome Valence (Positive)**

Please recall a time when you spent about \$50 on an experience. Examples of experiences are vacations, meals at restaurants, theater performances, and music concerts. The experience turned out well and you did enjoy the purchase.

Describe that experience in some detail.

**Manipulation—Purchase Type (Material) and Outcome Valence (Positive)**

Please recall a time when you spent about \$50 on an object. Examples of objects are clothes, furniture, jewelry, and various types of electronic devices. The object turned out well and you did enjoy the purchase.

Describe that object in some detail.

**Manipulation—Purchase Type (Experiential) and Outcome Valence (Negative)**

Please recall a time when you spent about \$50 on an experience. Examples of experiences are vacations, meals at restaurants, theater performances, and music concerts. The experience did not turn out well and you did not enjoy the purchase.

Describe that experience in some detail.

**Manipulation—Purchase Type (Material) and Outcome Valence (Negative)**

Please recall a time when you spent about \$50 on an object. Examples of objects are clothes, furniture, jewelry, and various types of electronic devices. The object did not turn out well and you did not enjoy the purchase.

Describe that object in some detail.

**Measures**

*Willingness to accept a 15% price increase*

Let's suppose that when you were about to purchase that experience/object, you found out that its price had recently gone up 15%. How likely is it that you would have still made that purchase?

*Uniqueness*

I perceive that experience/object as unique.

That experience/object is different from others I have had.

That experience/object is distinct.

*Happiness*

When you think about this purchase, how happy does it make you?

How much does this purchase contribute to your happiness in life?

*Manipulation check*

The purchase I described above turned out:

1 = *Very Negatively/Unfavorably*; 7 = *Very Positively/Favorably*

### Study 2c—Mental Framing

#### Manipulation—Experiential Framing Condition

Imagine that while strolling around a store you see a BBQ grill. You stop for a moment. It has a price tag of \$100. You're now thinking: It could be nice to have a BBQ experience. You know that a grill is something people use for some time. You're now considering the details of that BBQ experience. In some detail, please describe that experience. Focus on the characteristics of the experience itself and on what it's like to have that experience.

#### Manipulation—Material Framing Condition

Imagine that while strolling around a store you see a BBQ grill. You stop for a moment. It has a price tag of \$100. You're now thinking: It could be nice to have a BBQ object. You know that a grill is something people keep for some time. You're now considering the details of that BBQ object. In some detail, please describe that object. Focus on the characteristics of the object itself and on what it's like to have that object.

#### Measures

##### *Willingness to accept a 30% price increase*

Imagine that right before purchasing the BBQ grill you learn that its price has recently gone up 30%. How likely is it that you would still make the purchase?

##### *Uniqueness*

I perceive that experience/object as unique.

That experience/object is different from others I have had.

That experience/object is distinct.

##### *Attitude*

The impression I have of the grill I wrote about is...

1 = *Very Negative/Unfavorable*; 7 = *Very Positive/Favorable*

**Study 3a: Identifying the Dominant Facet(s) of Uniqueness****Manipulation—Experiential Purchase Condition**

Please recall a time when you spent about \$100 on an experience. Examples of experiences are vacations, meals at restaurants, theater performances, and music concerts. You bought the experience to increase your happiness. It turned out well and you did enjoy the purchase.

Describe that experience in some detail.

**Manipulation—Material Purchase Condition**

Please recall a time when you spent about \$100 on an object. Examples of objects are clothes, furniture, jewelry, and various types of electronic devices. You bought the object to increase your happiness. It turned out well and you did enjoy the purchase.

Describe that object in some detail.

**Measures***Willingness to accept a 10% price increase*

Let's suppose that when you were about to purchase that experience/object, you found out that its price had recently gone up 10%. How likely is it that you would have still made that purchase?

*Unique opportunity*

That may have been my only opportunity to have that experience/object.

That could have been my only chance to have it.

*Unique purchase*

It is distinct from the other purchases I have had before.

It has characteristics that none of my other purchases has.

*Unique identity*

It communicates my uniqueness as a person.

That experience/object creates a personal image for myself that can't be duplicated.

*Counterconformity*

That experience/object enabled me to go against the prevailing rules of my social group regarding what to buy or do.

It allowed me to challenge the prevailing taste of people I know by buying something they wouldn't seem to accept.

**Study 3b: Manipulation of the Dominant Facet—Unique Opportunity**

Please write down the name of a current singer you like:

**Manipulation—Purchase Type (Experiential) and Unique Opportunity (Control)**

Imagine that you've been thinking of buying a ticket to see (singer's name) live in concert. The ticket costs \$30.

**Manipulation—Purchase Type (Material) and Unique Opportunity (Control)**

Imagine that you've been thinking of buying a (singer's name)'s shirt. The shirt costs \$30.

**Manipulation—Purchase Type (Experiential) and Unique Opportunity (Unique)**

Imagine that you've been thinking of buying a ticket to see (singer's name) live in concert. The ticket costs \$30. Imagine also that, because of unexpected health issues, (singer) has recently announced that s/he will soon retire for good, so you are aware that this is definitely your last chance to see him/her in concert. It feels to you like a very unique opportunity.

**Manipulation—Purchase Type (Material) and Unique Opportunity (Unique)**

Imagine that you've been thinking of buying a (singer's name)'s shirt. The shirt costs \$30.

Imagine also that, because of unexpected health issues, (singer) has recently announced that s/he will soon retire for good, so you are aware that this is definitely your last chance to get his/her limited-edition shirt. It feels to you like a very unique opportunity.

**Measures**

*Unique opportunity (manipulation check)*

To attend that concert [buy that shirt] feels like a unique opportunity.

This could be my last chance to attend that concert [buy that shirt].

*Willingness to accept a 10% price increase*

Let's suppose that right before purchasing the concert ticket [shirt] you learn that its price has recently gone up 10%. How likely is it that you would still make the purchase?



**MDA B: Additional Statistics and Results**

The sections below show additional results, descriptive statistics per purchase type condition, and summary statistics data for Studies 1a, 1b, 2a (Tables B1 and B2), 2b (Tables B3 and B4), 2c (Tables B5 and B6), 3a (Tables B7 and B8), and 3b (Tables B9 and B10).

**Study 1a: Establishing the Phenomenon with Recalled Behavior**

The 74% proportion observed among the experiential condition participants is also significantly greater than the neutral value of 50% ( $z = 3.49, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [60.12, 85.08]$ ).

**Study 1b: Establishing the Phenomenon with Actual Decision Behavior**

*Social Desirability*:  $M_{\text{exp}} = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.90$  vs.  $M_{\text{mat}} = 4.27$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ,  $t(183) = 0.12$ ,  $p = .89$ ,  $MD = 0.01$ , 95% CI  $[-0.24, 0.28]$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.02$ .

**Study 2a: Test of the Mechanism**

Table B1

*Means and Standard Deviations of Outcome Variables by Purchase Type—Study 2a.*

	Experiential Purchase		Material Purchase	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Uniqueness*	5.34	1.36	4.76	1.61
Conversational Value**	5.25	1.26	4.59	1.63
Impression Management*	4.24	1.53	3.60	1.61
Closeness to Self**	4.70	1.51	4.02	1.56
Social Relatedness***	5.10	1.35	3.93	1.57
Happiness***	5.84	0.99	5.10	1.25
WAPI*	5.80	1.34	5.19	1.52

*Note.* WAPI = willingness to accept a price increase.\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table B2

*Summary Statistics Data—Study 2a.*

Labels Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>X</i>	Correlations						<i>Y</i>
				<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M3</i>	<i>M4</i>	<i>M5</i>	<i>M6</i>	
<i>X</i> Purchase Type	.52	.50	--							
<i>M1</i> Uniqueness	5.06	1.51	.19	(.88)						
<i>M2</i> Conversational Value	4.93	1.49	.22	.50	(.94)					
<i>M3</i> Impression Management	3.93	1.60	.19	.46	.52	(.87)				
<i>M4</i> Closeness to Self	4.37	1.57	.21	.43	.48	.51	(.92)			
<i>M5</i> Social Relatedness	4.54	1.57	.37	.38	.51	.61	.52	(.89)		
<i>M6</i> Happiness	5.48	1.18	.31	.45	.60	.39	.58	.56	(.69)	
<i>Y</i> WAPI	5.50	1.46	.20	.30	.19	.18	.27	.28	.37	--

*Note.* WAPI = willingness to accept a price increase.  $N = 154$ . Purchase type (*X*) coded as 1 = Experiential ( $n = 80$ ), 0 = Material ( $n = 74$ ). Uniqueness consists of the average of three 7-point items. Conversational value consists of the average of five 7-point items. Impression management consists of the average of two 7-point items. Closeness to self consists of the average of three 7-point items. Social relatedness consists of the average of three 7-point items. Happiness consists of the average of two 7-point items. Reliability values of multi-item measures on the diagonal ( $r$  for two-item measures and Cronbach's alpha for measures with more than two items).

### Results for 100% Price Increase and Willingness to Pay

Study 2a also assessed and found consistent results for a substantially higher price increase of 100% ( $M_{\text{exp}} = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 2.01$  vs.  $M_{\text{obj}} = 2.69$ ,  $SD = 1.99$ ,  $t(151) = 4.73$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MD = 1.53$ , 95% CI [0.89, 2.18], Cohen's  $d = 0.76$ ) and WTP ( $M_{\text{exp}} = 87.56$ ,  $SD = 28.52$  vs.  $M_{\text{obj}} = 70.94$ ,  $SD = 18.34$ ,  $t(135) = 4.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MD = 16.62$ , 95% CI [8.45, 24.79], Cohen's  $d = 0.69$ ; the analyses for WTP excluded 16 outliers (see footnote 3 in MDA E for the exclusion criteria).

Results of a simple mediator analysis (PROCESS, model 4) show that uniqueness mediates the effect on 100% price increase ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ , 95% CI [0.05, 0.53]) but not WTP ( $\beta = 1.30$ ,  $SE = 1.02$ , 95% CI [-0.003, 4.38]). The measures of WTP, 100% price increase, and 10% price increase correlated significantly (all  $r_s > .4$ , all  $p_s < .001$ ).

### **Examination of Conceptual Overlap: Results for Happiness and Reaction to a Price**

#### **Increase, Both as DVs**

It is informative to consider a possible conceptual overlap between reaction to a price increase and happiness. For example, it is possible that people's reaction to a higher price is simply a proxy for or a behavioral manifestation of their (anticipated) happiness with the purchase. One way to examine this empirically is to look at whether, as dependent variables, the two constructs are predicted by similar antecedents (Galinsky, 2017; Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin, & White, 2008). Previous research examining the same potential mechanisms as the present study (i.e., closeness to the self, conversational value, impression management, social relatedness, and uniqueness) reported that happiness, as a dependent variable, is multiply determined by a two-step sequential mediation model comprised by four of these variables (Bastos & Brucks, 2017). In the present work, a parallel multiple mediation analysis (PROCESS, model 4), with reaction to a price increase as dependent variable and the same five potential mechanisms as mediators, shows that only uniqueness transmitted the effect ( $\beta = 0.12$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ , 95% CI [0.01, 0.37]). That happiness and reaction to a price increase are predicted by different mechanisms provides empirical evidence that they are conceptually distinct constructs.

**Study 2b: Using Purchase Valence to Disentangle Uniqueness from Happiness**

Table B3

*Means and Standard Deviations of Outcome Variables by Purchase Type—Study 2b.*

	Experiential Purchase		Material Purchase	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Manipulation Check—Positive Condition	6.52	0.78	6.41	0.80
Manipulation Check—Negative Condition	2.35	1.56	2.20	1.43
Uniqueness—Positive Condition	5.44	1.28	4.49	1.64
Uniqueness—Negative Condition	4.66	1.48	3.94	1.63
Happiness—Positive Condition	5.51	1.12	4.94	1.32
Happiness—Negative Condition	2.25	1.63	2.06	1.35
WAPI—Positive Condition	5.35	1.65	4.15	1.91
WAPI—Negative Condition	3.29	2.11	2.30	1.61

*Note.* WAPI = willingness to accept a price increase.

Table B4

*Summary Statistics Data—Study 2b.*

Labels	Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Correlations			
				X	M1	M2/Y2	Y1
X	Purchase Type	.48	.51	--			
M1	Uniqueness	4.63	1.60	.25	(.84)		
M2/Y2	Happiness	3.77	2.05	.07	.35	(.80)	
Y1	WAPI	3.81	2.13	.24	.41	.52	--

*Note.* WAPI = willingness to accept a price increase.  $N = 251$ . Purchase type (X) coded as 1 = Experiential ( $n = 120$ ), 0 = Material ( $n = 131$ ). Uniqueness consists of the average of three 7-point items. Happiness consists of the average of two 7-point items. Reliability values of multi-item measures on the diagonal ( $r$  for the two-item measure of happiness and Cronbach's alpha for the three-item measure of uniqueness).



**Study 2c: Mental Framing**

Table B5

*Means and Standard Deviations of Outcome Variables by Purchase Type—Study 2c.*

	Experiential Purchase		Material Purchase	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Uniqueness**	4.21	1.45	3.38	1.45
Attitude ( $p = .06$ )	6.07	1.12	5.63	1.29
WAPI*	3.26	1.72	2.61	1.22

*Note.* WAPI = willingness to accept a price increase.\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table B6

*Summary Statistics Data—Study 2c.*

Labels	Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Correlations			
				X	M1	M2/Y2	Y1
X	Purchase Type	.57	.49	--			
M1	Uniqueness	3.85	1.50	.27	(.79)		
M2/Y2	Attitude	5.88	1.21	.18	.45	(.87)	
Y1	WAPI	2.98	1.55	.20	.44	.30	--

*Note.* WAPI = willingness to accept a price increase.  $N = 102$ . Purchase type (X) coded as 1 = Experiential ( $n = 58$ ), 0 = Material ( $n = 44$ ). Uniqueness consists of the average of three 7-point items. Attitude consists of the average of a two 7-point items. Reliability values of multi-item measures on the diagonal ( $r$  for the two-item measure of attitude and Cronbach's alpha for the three-item measure of uniqueness).

### **Examination of Conceptual Overlap: Results for Attitude and Reaction to a Price Increase, Both as DVs**

Presumably, the purchases consumers are more willing to accept a price increase are those they subjectively value more highly—i.e., reaction to a price increase and the more abstract construct of subjective valuation may share conceptual common grounds. To examine this possibility, the analyses below tested whether willingness to accept a price increase and attitude towards the purchase (used here as a proxy for subjective valuation) behaved similarly when predicted by the same set of antecedents—purchase type and uniqueness (Galinsky, 2017).

An ANOVA shows that framing the BBQ grill as an experience (vs. object) created a more positive attitude, albeit marginal ( $M_{\text{exp}} = 6.07$ ,  $SD = 1.12$  vs.  $M_{\text{mat}} = 5.63$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ;  $t(100) = 1.83$ ,  $p = .06$ ,  $MD = 0.44$ , 95% CI  $[-0.03, 0.91]$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.36$ ). Further, a mediation test (PROCESS model 4) shows that uniqueness transmits this effect ( $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $SE = 0.12$ , 95% CI  $[0.08, 0.60]$ ). Therefore, as outcome variables, attitude and reaction to a price increase behave similarly when predicted by purchase type and uniqueness, suggesting a conceptual overlap.

**Study 3a: Identifying the Dominant Facet(s) of Uniqueness**

Table B7

*Means and Standard Deviations of Outcome Variables by Purchase Type—Study 3a.*

	Experiential Purchase		Material Purchase	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Unique Opportunity**	3.95	2.21	2.84	1.96
Counterconformity	2.70	1.56	2.42	1.51
Unique Identity	3.86	1.65	3.43	1.68
Unique Purchase ( $p = .09$ )	4.79	1.70	4.33	1.71
WAPI**	5.63	1.65	4.90	1.59

*Note.* WAPI = willingness to accept a price increase.\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table B8

*Summary Statistics Data—Study 3a.*

Labels	Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Correlations					
				X	M1	M2	M3	M4	Y
X	Purchase Type	.48	.50	--					
M1	Unique Opportunity	3.37	2.15	.25	(.92)				
M2	Counterconformity	2.55	1.53	.09	.30	(.82)			
M3	Unique Identity	3.64	1.68	.12	.35	.41	(.74)		
M4	Unique Purchase	4.55	1.71	.13	.34	.19	.29	(.70)	
Y	WAPI	5.25	1.66	.21	.28	-.07	.20	.19	--

*Note.* WAPI = willingness to accept a price increase.  $N = 151$ . Purchase type (X) coded as 1 = Experiential ( $n = 72$ ), 0 = Material ( $n = 79$ ). Unique opportunity, counterconformity, unique identity, and unique purchase are each an average of two 7-point items. Reliability values of multi-item measures on the diagonal ( $r$  for the two-item measures of the four facets of uniqueness).

**Study 3b: Manipulation of the Dominant Facet—Unique Opportunity**

Table B9

*Means and Standard Deviations of Outcome Variables by Purchase Type—Study 3b.*

	Experiential Purchase		Material Purchase	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Manipulation Check—Control Condition	5.26	1.61	2.50	1.53
Manipulation Check—Unique Condition	6.38	1.00	5.00	1.76
WAPI—Control Condition	5.91	1.58	2.45	1.61
WAPI—Unique Condition	6.23	1.39	4.08	2.03

*Note.* WAPI = willingness to accept a price increase.

Table B10

*Summary Statistics Data—Study 3b.*

Labels	Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Correlations		
				X	M	Y
X	Purchase Type	.51	.50	--		
M	Unique Opportunity	4.86	2.05	.52	(.79)	
Y	WAPI	4.72	2.25	.62	.82	--

*Note.* WAPI = willingness to accept a price increase.  $N = 212$ . Purchase type (X) coded as 1 = Experiential ( $n = 109$ ), 0 = Material ( $n = 103$ ). Unique opportunity, is an average of two 7-point items. The reliability value of this measure is reported on the diagonal ( $r$ ).

### MDA C: Replication of Studies 1a, 1b, and 3b

#### Replication of Study 1a—Establishing the Phenomenon via Recalled Behavior

This study provides a direct replication of Study 1a, except that it recruited participants from MTurk (instead of Master's level business students—Study 1a).

#### Procedure

One hundred and one MTurk participants (50% females,  $M_{\text{age}} = 35.86$ ,  $SD = 10.12$ ) completed the study for financial compensation. As in Study 1a reported on the manuscript, this between-subjects study randomly assigned participants to the experiential or material purchase condition. Participants who reported having faced a price increase for that particular type of purchase ( $n = 90$ ) were then asked to indicate whether they bought it. Next, participants completed the same ten-item measure of social desirability ( $\alpha = .71$ ). Finally, and differently from Study 1a, participants were also asked to write down the experience/object they had thought about in the beginning of the study. This allowed for a check of whether participants considered examples of purchases in line with the experimental condition they were in (experiential vs. material).

#### Results

Two trained coders judged whether the purchases participants listed were: 1 = *Definitely a material object*; 7 = *Definitely an experience*. The coding attained a high level of intercoder reliability ( $ICC(2, k) = .91$ ). Results indicate that the purchases listed by participants in the experiential purchase condition were interpreted by coders as significantly more experiential ( $M = 6.13$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ) than those listed by participants in the material purchase condition ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ ,  $t(86) = 10.10$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MD = 3.42$ , 95% CI [2.75, 4.10], Cohen's  $d = 2.18$ ). This

assessment confirms that participants considered purchases in line with the experimental condition they had been assigned to.

**Purchase decision.** A  $z$ -test shows that, among the 49 participants who had faced a higher price for an object, 32% went ahead with the purchase. That percentage is significantly higher among the 41 participants in the experiential condition (68%,  $z = 3.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Social desirability.** Participants who decided to go forward with the purchase and those who gave it up as a result of the higher price were statistically indistinguishable in social desirability for both the material ( $M_{\text{yes}} = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 0.81$  vs.  $M_{\text{no}} = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ,  $t(47) = 0.39$ ,  $p = .69$ ,  $MD = 0.09$ , 95% CI  $[-0.38, 0.57]$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.12$ ) and the experiential conditions ( $M_{\text{yes}} = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 0.68$  vs.  $M_{\text{no}} = 4.36$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ,  $t(39) = -0.45$ ,  $p = .65$ ,  $MD = -0.11$ , 95% CI  $[-0.63, 0.40]$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.14$ ).



**Replication of Study 1b: Establishing the Phenomenon via Actual Decision Behavior**

This study provides a conceptual replication of the actual behavior Study 1b reported on the manuscript. It uses the same experimental procedures with a different set of participants drawn from the same online pool as Study 1b.

**Procedure**

A set of MTurkers ( $N = 452$ ; 57% females,  $M_{\text{age}} = 35.40$ ,  $SD = 11.36$ ) completed this within-subjects study for financial compensation. The study employed the same procedures as Study 1b. In the first choice task, 237 participants selected to buy the vouchers and proceeded, while 215 selected the cash option and were released from the rest of the study. In the second and final choice task following the price increase, 22% selected the cash option. This study assessed social desirability with the same set of items ( $\alpha = .69$ ) but it did not assess believability.

**Results and Discussion**

A z-test shows that, when faced with the price increase, a majority of participants selected the voucher for the experience (59%), a proportion that is significantly different from the indifference value of 50% ( $z = 2.44$ ,  $p = .01$ , 95% CI [51.55, 66.16]).

There was no difference in social desirability between participants who chose the voucher for the experience versus the object ( $p = .89$ ), indicating that social desirability is unlikely to be behind the effect.

Using a different set of online participants, this study replicates Study 1b showing that, when people are faced with the decision of paying a higher price to acquire a voucher for either an experience or an object, they more frequently choose the one for the experience; and social desirability is unlikely to account for this difference.

**Replication of Study 3b—Manipulation of the Dominant Facet—Unique Opportunity**

Using procedures and materials identical to those of Study 3b, this study tests the replicability of the results with a different sample population—MTurk participants (instead of university students—Study 3b).

**Procedures**

One hundred and eighty-one MTurk participants (57% females,  $M_{age} = 26.51$ ,  $SD = 10.76$ ) completed the study for financial compensation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions in a 2 (purchase type: experiential vs. material) by 2 (unique opportunity: control vs. unique) between-subjects design. Participants were distributed by condition as follows: experiential-control [ $n = 38$ ], material-control [ $n = 35$ ], experiential-unique [ $n = 54$ ], and material-unique [ $n = 54$ ]. After following experimental procedures identical to those of Study 3b, participants completed the same manipulation check measure ( $r = .75$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the same measure of willingness to accept a price increase. As in Study 3b, these two measures appeared in random order and order had no influence on the results (all interaction  $ps > .28$ ).

**Results**

**Manipulation check for unique opportunity.** An analysis of moderation (PROCESS, model 1) with purchase type (0 = material; 1 = experiential) as independent variable, unique opportunity (0 = control; 1 = unique) as moderator, and the measure of unique opportunity as dependent variable shows significant effects for purchase type ( $\beta = 1.65$ ,  $SE = 0.32$ ,  $t(177) = 5.11$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [1.01, 2.28]), unique opportunity ( $\beta = 2.03$ ,  $SE = 0.29$ ,  $t(177) = 6.80$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [1.44, 2.62]), and, more important, a marginal interaction ( $\beta = -0.80$ ,  $SE = 0.41$ ,  $t(177) = -1.93$ ,  $p = .054$ , 95% CI [-1.63, 0.01]). Decomposition of these results indicates that, as expected, control condition participants reported greater unique opportunity for experiential than

material purchases ( $\beta = 1.65$ ,  $SE = 0.32$ ,  $t(177) = 5.11$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [1.01, 2.28]), a difference that maintains but is significantly reduced in the unique condition ( $\beta = 0.84$ ,  $SE = 0.26$ ,  $t(177) = 3.17$ ,  $p = .001$ , 95% CI [0.31, 1.36]; see Figure C1). These results confirm that the manipulation had the intended effect of bringing the two purchase types closer in terms of unique opportunity.

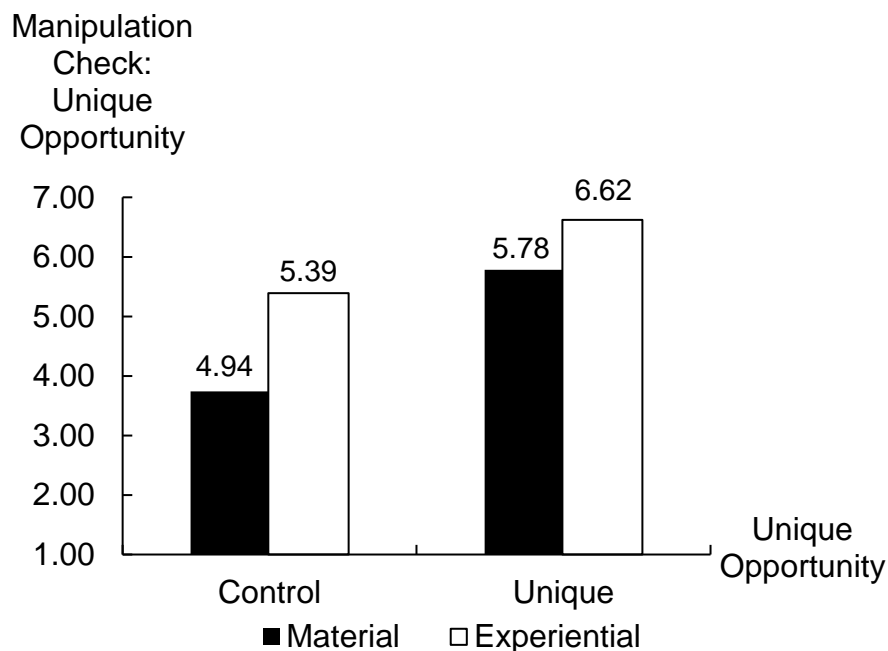
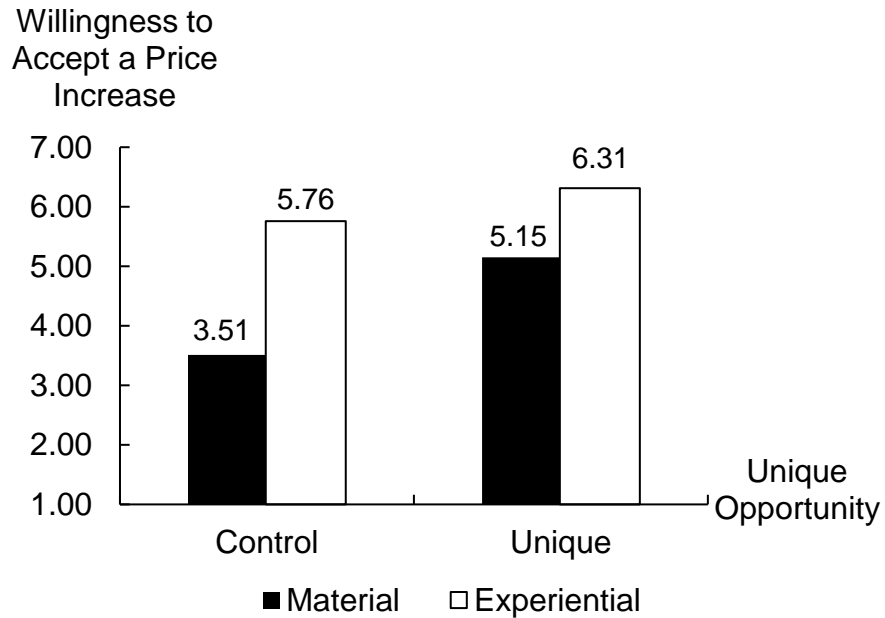


Figure C1. Effect of Purchase Type and Unique Opportunity on Unique Opportunity—Manipulation Check.

**Reaction to a price increase.** A similar analysis of moderation indicates significant effects for purchase type ( $\beta = 2.24$ ,  $SE = 0.35$ ,  $t(177) = 6.29$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [1.54, 2.95]), unique opportunity ( $\beta = 1.63$ ,  $SE = 0.33$ ,  $t(177) = 4.93$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.98, 2.28]), and, more important, their interaction ( $\beta = -1.08$ ,  $SE = 0.46$ ,  $t(177) = -2.33$ ,  $p = .02$ , 95% CI [-1.99, -0.16]). Reflecting the pattern observed above for unique opportunity, control condition participants reported significantly greater willingness to accept an experiential than a material price increase ( $\beta = 2.25$ ,  $SE = 0.35$ ,  $t(177) = 6.29$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [1.54, 2.95]), a difference

that maintains but is significantly attenuated in the unique condition ( $\beta = 1.16$ ,  $SE = 0.29$ ,  $t(177) = 3.97$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.58, 1.74]; see Figure C2).



*Figure C2.* Effect of Purchase Type and Unique Opportunity on Willingness to Accept a Price Increase.

### Discussion

Using the same manipulation procedure as Study 3b but a different sample population (an online sample instead of university students), this study replicates the effect. Results indicate that, under normal circumstances (control condition), experiential purchases evoke more positive reactions to a price increase than do material purchases. However, when people perceive the two purchase types as more similar in terms of being unique opportunities (unique condition), their willingness to accept a price increase converges accordingly. That the same results emerge from such different sample populations increases the confidence in and the generalizability of the conclusions.



**MDA D: Three Supplemental Studies Testing Different Percentage Increases****Supplemental Study 1—Future Purchase (40% Price Increase)**

This study employs a procedure based on a future purchase to examine the effect of purchase type on reaction to a 40% price increase.

**Procedure**

One hundred and seventy participants from MTurk (46% females,  $M_{\text{age}} = 32$ , ranging from 18 to 71) completed the study for financial compensation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two purchase type conditions (experiential vs. material) and asked to “think and write, in some detail, about an experience/object you intend to purchase some time in the future.” The experiment assessed the dependent variable with the same item as in the studies reported in the manuscript, except for the higher percentage increase—i.e., 40%. Finally, the questionnaire assessed the estimated real price of the future purchase (“How much will you pay for that experience/object?”).

**Results**

**Estimated real price of the purchase.** The average price of the experiential purchases was higher ( $M = \$4.820$ ,  $SD = 17.342$ ) than that of the material purchases, although the difference does not reach the conventional .050 level of statistical significance ( $M = \$1.626$ ,  $SD = 5.904$ ,  $F(1, 168) = 2.76$ ,  $p = .09$ , Cohen’s  $d = 0.24$ ). This presumably makes this study a conservative test since an equivalent percentage increase in price translates into a higher price increase, in absolute terms, for experiential (vs. material) consumers.

**Reaction to a price increase.** An ANOVA shows that, when faced with a proportionally equivalent price increase of 40%, experiential condition participants reported a significantly

greater likelihood of making the purchase ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 1.80$ ) than did material condition participants ( $M = 3.40$ ,  $SD = 1.72$ ;  $F(1, 168) = 6.27$ ,  $p = .01$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.38$ ).

### **Supplemental Study 2—Past Purchase (50% Price Increase)**

This study uses a recall approach to examine people's reaction to a 50% price increase for experiential versus material purchases.

#### **Procedure**

Ninety-six MTurk participants (62% females,  $M_{\text{age}} = 35$ , ranging from 19 to 71) completed the study for financial compensation. Participants were asked to recall and describe either an object or an experience they had purchased in the last 12 months for about 50 dollars. Next, they answered the same dependent variable measure as in the studies reported in the manuscript, except for the higher percentage increase—i.e., 50%.

#### **Results**

An ANOVA shows that experiential condition participants were significantly more likely to go ahead with the purchases than material condition participants ( $M_{\text{exp}} = 4.44$ ,  $SD = 1.94$  vs.  $M_{\text{mat}} = 2.59$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ;  $F(1, 94) = 24.28$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 1.02$ ).



### **Supplemental Study 3—Framed Purchase (100% Price Increase)**

This study replicates the reported Study 2c, but among a population of university students (instead of MTurk participants) and with a substantially higher price increase associated with the framed purchase (100%; vs. 30% in Study 2c).

#### **Procedure**

Eighty Master's level business students from Católica-Lisbon School of Business and Economics (49% females;  $M_{age} = 24$ , ranging from 18 to 65) completed the study for class credit. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions (BBQ grill framed as an: object vs. experience). The manipulation text first asked them to imagine that they had bought a BBQ grill. Next, those in the material framing condition read: "You kept that object for some time and may still have it. In some detail, please describe that object. Focus on the characteristics of the object and on what it is like to have that object." Differently, those in the experiential framing condition read: "You used it for some time and may still use it. In some detail, please describe the experience of using it. Focus on the characteristics of the experience and on what it is like to have that experience."

Next, the questionnaire measured participant's reaction to a 100% price increase with the item: "I would purchase that grill even if its price were twice what I actually paid for it." (1 = *Strongly disagree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*).

#### **Results**

Three participants were excluded for not following study instructions (i.e., participants in the material-framing condition who wrote about the BBQ grill in experiential terms, and vice-versa), leaving a final sample of 77 participants.

**Reaction to a price increase.** Results indicate that, when faced with a doubled price, participants who framed the BBQ grill as an experience were significantly more likely to still make the purchase than those who framed it as an object ( $M_{\text{exp}} = 2.35$ ,  $SD = 1.73$  vs.  $M_{\text{obj}} = 1.59$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ;  $F(1, 75) = 5.27$ ,  $p = .02$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.53$ ).

It is worth noting that, in this study, testing reaction to a 100% price increase, the mean values associated with both purchases were considerably lower than in the previous two supplemental studies (Studies 1 [40% price increase] and 2 [50% price increase]). This reflects the notion that, although consumers are more receptive of a price increase for an experiential purchase, they react strongly to substantial price increases for either type of purchase.

Finally, it is also informative that consistent results for 100% price increase were observed in studies using substantially different approaches: Study 2a, where participants were free to select a purchase for the study, and the current mental framing study.

**MDA E: Three Studies Showing the Conceptual Correspondence between Willingness to Accept a Price Increase and WTP**

This MDA first presents the materials for Studies 1, 2 (identical studies), and 3. Next, it summarizes the results across three tables.

**(Identical) Materials for Studies 1 and 2**

**Manipulation Texts**

*Experiential purchase condition*

Please recall a time when you spent about \$50 on an experience. Examples of experiences are vacations, meals at restaurants, theater performances, and music concerts. You bought the experience to increase your happiness. It turned out well and you did enjoy the purchase.

Describe that experience in some detail.

*Material purchase condition*

Please recall a time when you spent about \$50 on an object. Examples of objects are clothes, furniture, jewelry, and various types of electronic devices. You bought the object to increase your happiness. It turned out well and you did enjoy the purchase. Describe that object in some detail.

**Measures**

*Willingness to accept a price increase*

Let's suppose that when you were about to purchase that experience/object, you found out that its price had recently gone up 10%. How likely is it that you would have still made that purchase? (1 = *Not at all likely*; 7 = *Very likely*).

*Willingness to pay*

Let's say the firm offering that experience/object was considering raising its price. If the firm were to do so, what is the maximum price you would have paid for that experience/object? (enter the numbers below rounding up to the next dollar)

### **Materials for Study 3**

#### **Manipulation Texts**

##### *Experiential purchase condition*

We sometimes spend our money on experiences. These are purchases that we are left with nothing tangible (nothing we can touch with our hand) at the end of the experience except for our memories. Some examples of experiences are travels, meals at restaurants, theater performances, and music concerts. Please recall an experience that you purchased in the last 12 months for about \$50 and that turned out well.

The experience I recalled was a(an) \_\_\_\_\_

If I were to describe it in more detail, I would say that \_\_\_\_\_

##### *Material purchase condition*

We sometimes spend our money on objects. These are purchases that we acquire something tangible (something we can touch with our hand) and own it. Some examples of objects are clothes, furniture, jewelry, and various types of electronic devices. Please recall an object that you purchased in the last 12 months for about \$50 and that turned out well.

The object I recalled was a(an) \_\_\_\_\_

If I were to describe it in more detail, I would say that \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Measures**

##### *Willingness to accept a price increase*

Imagine that right before purchasing that experience/object you learned that its price had recently gone up 10%. How likely is it that you would still make the purchase? (1 = *Not at all likely*; 7 = *Very likely*).

*Willingness to pay*

What is the maximum price you would be willing to pay for that experience/object? (please enter the amount below, rounding up to the next dollar)

Table E1

*Statistics for Willingness to Accept a 10% Price Increase.*

	$N^3$	Experiential		Material		$t$	$p$	95% CI		$d$
		$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$			$LL$	$UL$	
Study 1	90	5.65	1.53	4.90	1.54	2.30	.02	0.10	1.39	0.48
Study 2	88	5.71	1.50	4.88	1.55	2.55	.01	0.18	1.48	0.54
Study 3	165	5.95	1.19	4.75	1.77	5.02	< .001	0.73	1.66	0.79

**Conclusion from Table E1:** Across the three studies, participants were significantly more willing to accommodate a price increase for an experiential than a material purchase.

<sup>3</sup> The analyses excluded outliers, using 3 standard deviations above the mean as the cutoff value (Howell, 1998; Mattan, Quinn, Apperly, Suy, & Rotshtein, 2015). Consecutive removals were performed in each dataset. The recursive removal process ended when no more outliers were detected in the dataset. Ten outliers were identified in Study 1; eight in Study 2; and 23 in Study 3. Analyses including the outliers yield: Study 1 (Willingness to accept a 10% price increase as the DV:  $p = .007$ ; WTP as the DV:  $p = .66$ ; Correlation between the two measures:  $r = .23$ ,  $p = .01$ ), Study 2 (10% price increase:  $p = .003$ ; WTP:  $p = .09$ ;  $r = .28$ ,  $p = .004$ ), and Study 3 (10% price increase:  $p < .001$ ; WTP:  $p = .06$ ;  $r = -.03$ ,  $p = .63$ ).

Table E2

*Statistics for Willingness to Pay.*

	<i>N</i>	Experiential		Material		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI		<i>d</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
Study 1	90	82.92	31.60	68.07	18.25	2.65	.009	4.21	25.47	0.57
Study 2	88	83.40	31.75	67.90	18.45	2.72	.008	4.19	26.80	0.59
Study 3	165	93.64	51.18	75.57	35.83	2.65	.009	4.61	31.85	0.40

**Conclusion from Table E2:** Across the three studies, participants indicated significantly greater WTP for experiential than material purchases.

Table E3

*Correlation between Willingness to Accept a 10% Price Increase and WTP across the Three Studies.*

	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Study 1	.37	< .001
Study 2	.37	< .001
Study 3	.32	< .001

**Conclusion from Table E3:** The measures of willingness to accept a price increase and WTP correlated significantly across the three studies.

**Overall Conclusion:** That willingness to accept a price increase and WTP are similarly affected by a common predictor (Galinsky, 2017) and their measures are strongly associated suggest that the two belong in the same conceptual realm.

**MDA F: Two Studies Examining the Mechanism with a Choice Approach**

The two studies documented here use the same approach to examine the general dimension (Study 1) and the specific fact of uniqueness responsible for the effect (Study 2).

**Choice Study 1—Choice among Five Dimensions**

Using a choice approach, this study tests five of the classic dimensions known to differ between experiences and objects (i.e., closeness to the self, conversational value, impression management, social relatedness, and uniqueness) to gain an understanding of people's different reactions to an experiential versus material price increase.

**Procedure**

One hundred and fifty-one participants from MTurk (58% females;  $M_{\text{age}} = 32.68$ ,  $SD = 10.45$ ) completed the study for financial compensation. Nine participants were removed for not following instructions,<sup>4</sup> leaving a final sample of 142. The study presented participants with the definitions of each purchase type and asked them to write down two objects and two experiences that they had purchased in the last 12 months for about \$100 each. The two slots for each purchase type (experiential vs. material) appeared in random order. The study asked participants for two purchases of each type (instead of only one of each type) to attenuate the likelihood that the specific experience or object they recalled had particularities (e.g., high level of intimacy) that could potentially put it in a disadvantageous condition with respect to the potential mediators (e.g., impression management, uniqueness). Requesting two examples of each purchase type ensured that they always had a second option to resort to.

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<sup>4</sup> The removed participants either failed to write all four examples of purchases—leaving one or more slots blank—or wrote all four examples but failed to provide exactly two examples for each type of purchase. These removals were critical because failing to list precisely two examples of each purchase type caused the two categories to be unequally represented in the subsequent choice part.



To assess whether participants react differently to a price increase of an experience versus an object, the questionnaire asked: “Suppose that instead of the price you actually paid for each of those four purchases, the price of each was 10% higher. If there was only one purchase that you were willing to pay this higher price for, which of the four would it be? In other words, which purchase would you be more likely to still make despite its 10% price increase?” At this point the four examples participants had written earlier populated on the screen in random order and they were instructed that, “Here are the four purchases you listed. Please select the one you would have still made despite its 10% price increase (click next to it).”

To gather evidence for the mechanism, the questionnaire next showed participants a list of “some common reasons that people in the same situation as yours give for the purchase they selected to go ahead with, despite its price increase.” Participants were asked to indicate the reason that best explained their selection. They were shown the following statements, in random order: “It reflects who I am as a person.” (closeness to the self); “It makes for a good topic of conversation to share with other people.” (conversational value); “It allows me to create a positive image for myself.” (impression management); “While consuming it, I felt a sense of social relatedness.” (social relatedness); “I perceive it as unique.” (uniqueness). This study did not assess happiness.

## **Results and Discussion**

A  $z$ -test shows that a majority of participants (64%) selected an experiential purchase as the one they would more likely make despite the price increase, a proportion that is significantly different from the indifference value of 50% ( $z = 3.33$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [55.53, 71.88]).

Next, I examined whether any of the five reason-statements predominated among participants who selected an experience versus an object. Such difference would point to a

potential explanation for participants' greater inclination to go forward with an experiential (vs. a material) purchase. Uniqueness was the only reason provided significantly more often among the 91 participants who selected an experience (34.1%) versus the 51 who selected an object (17.6%,  $z = 2.02$ ,  $p = .04$ ; see Table F1—one participant failed to select a reason-statement).

Table F1

*Reason for Choice of Purchase to Buy Despite Price Increase—Choice Study*

1.

Reasons for Selection	Experiential	Material	Statistics	
	( $N = 91$ )	( $N = 50$ )	$z$	$p$
Uniqueness	34.1%	17.6%	2.02	.04
Closeness to the Self	26.4%	33.3%	-0.95	.34
Impression Management	5.5%	25.5%	-3.49	< .001
Conversational Value	12.1%	7.8%	0.75	.45
Social Relatedness	22.0%	13.7%	1.15	.25

Using a different approach from those in the studies reported in the manuscript, this study replicates the finding that people are more accepting of a price increase associated with an experience than an object. Further, the greater uniqueness of experiences (vs. objects) emerges again as a primary explanation for this difference.

### Choice Study 2—Choice among Four Facets of Uniqueness

Using a similar choice approach as Study 1 above, this study examines the four facets of uniqueness to identify the one(s) likely responsible for the effect.

#### Procedure

Two hundred and seven MTurkers (62% females,  $M_{\text{age}} = 33.25$ ,  $SD = 10.45$ ) participated for financial compensation. Based on the same criteria as Choice Study 1, 14 participants were excluded, leaving a sample of 193. Modeled after Choice Study 1, this study asked participants to list two objects and two experiences they had purchased in the past and to indicate the one they would have still purchased despite a 10% price increase. Next, four statements representing the facets of uniqueness appeared in random order and participants indicated the one that best explained their previous selection: “That may have been my only opportunity to have it.” (unique opportunity), “It is distinct from the other purchases I have had before.” (unique purchase), “It communicates my uniqueness as a person.” (unique identity), “It enabled me to go against the prevailing rules of my social group regarding what to buy or do.” (counterconformity).

#### Results and Discussion

A majority of the participants selected an experience (57%); a proportion that is greater than the indifference value of 50%, although the difference does not reach the conventional .050 level of statistical significance ( $z = 1.94$ ,  $p = .051$ , 95% CI [49.69, 64.09]).

Unique opportunity is the only facet selected significantly more often among the 110 participants who chose an experience (60.0%) versus the 83 who chose an object (41.0%,  $z = 2.62$ ,  $p = .008$ ; see Table F2).

Table F2

*Facet of Uniqueness as Reason for Choice of Purchase to Buy Despite Price Increase—Choice Study*

2.

Facets of Uniqueness	Experiential	Material	Statistics	
	( <i>N</i> = 110)	( <i>N</i> = 83)	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Unique Opportunity	60.0%	41.0%	2.62	.008
Unique Purchase	37.3%	45.8%	-1.19	.23
Unique Identity	2.7%	10.8%	-2.31	.02
Counterconformity	0%	2.4%	-1.63	.10

This study replicates the finding that people tend to react more favorably to a price increase of an experience versus an object. Moreover, results indicate that the perception that experiences are a more unique opportunity appears determinant for this difference, replicating Study 3a documented in the manuscript.

### MDA G: Single-Paper Meta-Analysis

This single-paper meta-analysis (SPM; McShane & Böckenholt, 2017) provides a synthesized view of the effect of purchase type on willingness to accept a price increase as captured by the evidence obtained in Studies 2a-3b<sup>5</sup> (reported in the manuscript), the three supplemental Studies 1-3 (MDA D), and Studies 1-3 (MDA E; see Table G for the statistics from each study used in the SPM).

Across these 11 studies, experiential purchases elicited greater willingness to accept a price increase than did material purchases. The SPM of these data estimates the effect at 1.13 (95% CI [0.64, 1.62]), indicating that people are more accommodating of a price increase for an experience than an object.  $I^2$  is estimated at 97.32% (95% CI [96.66, 97.84]), suggesting that heterogeneity is high, with method factors accounting for a substantial variation in the observed effect beyond that attributable to the experimental treatment. This was expected given that the studies employed a variety of manipulation procedures (McShane & Böckenholt, 2017). The visual convergence of effects demonstrated in Figure G is particularly encouraging, as it indicates the robustness and generalizability of the findings.

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<sup>5</sup> Because outcome valence did not qualify the effect in Study 2b, this analysis compared type of purchase across both valence conditions. For Study 3b, where unique opportunity qualified the effect, this analysis includes only the control conditions.

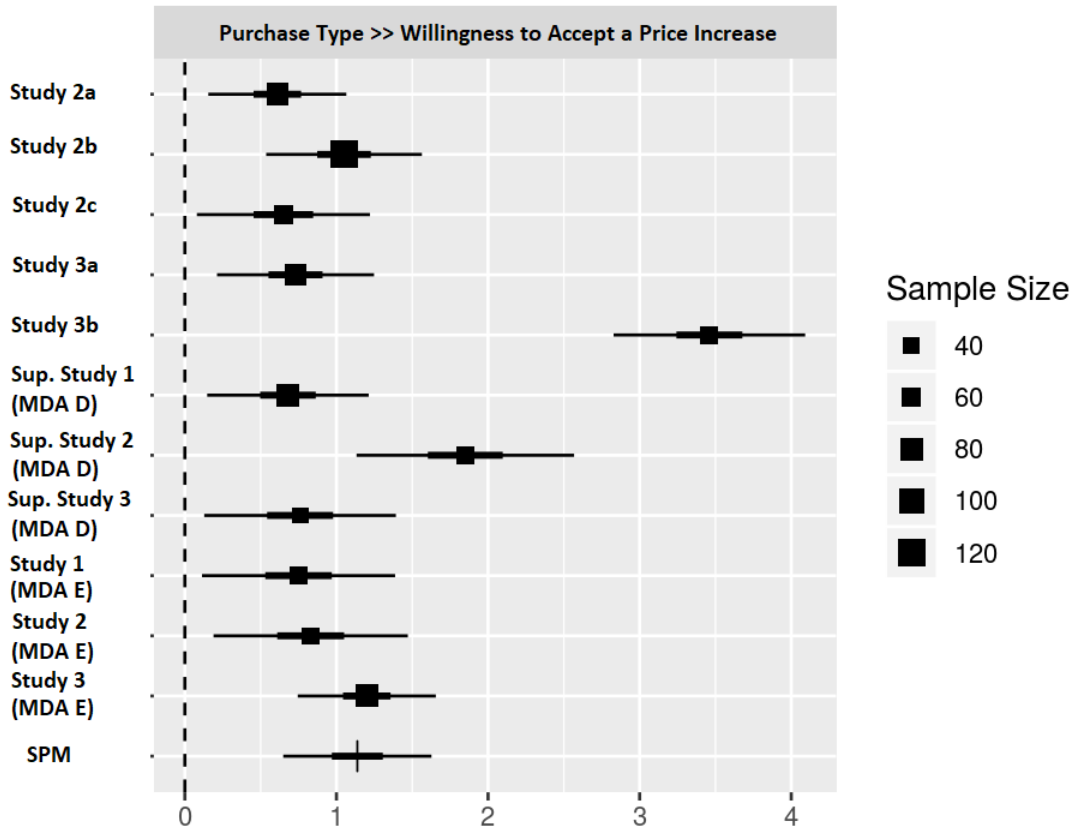


Figure G. Meta-Analysis Results.

SPM tool used for this Analysis: <https://blakemcshane.shinyapps.io/spmeta/> (McShane & Böckenholt, 2017)

Table G

*Statistics from the 11 Studies Used in the SPM.*

Purchase Type	Experiential			Material		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Study 2a	5.80	1.34	79	5.19	1.52	74
Study 2b	4.36	2.14	120	3.31	2.00	131
Study 2c	3.26	1.72	58	2.61	1.22	44
Study 3a	5.63	1.65	72	4.90	1.59	79
Study 3b	5.91	1.58	47	2.45	1.61	51
Supplemental Study 1; MDA D	4.08	1.80	77	3.40	1.72	93
Supplemental Study 2; MDA D	4.44	1.94	55	2.59	1.64	41
Supplemental Study 3; MDA D	2.35	1.73	40	1.59	1.04	37
Study 1; MDA E	5.65	1.53	49	4.90	1.54	41
Study 2; MDA E	5.71	1.50	48	4.88	1.55	40
Study 3; MDA E	5.95	1.19	77	4.75	1.77	88

*Note.* MDA = Methodological

Details Appendix.

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