

THE JOINT EFFECTS OF CHOICE ASSORTMENT AND REGULATORY FOCUS ON CHOICE BEHAVIOUR

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SUMMARY

Past research suggests that if a set of brand variants make up an alignable assortment, then increase in size of the assortment should result in an increase in market share of the brand. On the contrary, if a set of brand variants make up a non alignable assortment, then increase in size of the assortment should result in a decrease in market share of the brand. In other words, past literature illustrates the role of assortment type as a moderator that affects the relationship between assortment size and a brand's market share. In the present study we show that this is not always the case. We take into account the theoretical construct "consumers' self regulatory focus" and demonstrate that this moderating relationship is not applicable for promotion and prevention focused consumers uniformly.

Specifically we hypothesize that, for an alignable assortment in a within brand choice context, the confidence of promotion focused as well as prevention focused consumers about making the correct choice from the assortment and their level of preference for making a choice from the assortment will increase with increase in size of the assortment.

For a nonalignable assortment, the confidence of promotion focused consumers about making the correct choice from the assortment and their level of preference for making a choice from the assortment will decrease with increase in size of the assortment. However, the confidence of prevention focused consumers about making the correct choice from the assortment and their level of preference for making a choice from the assortment will increase with increase in size of the assortment.

In addition to our main hypotheses, we propose that the motivation to choose a compromise option can mitigate the need to maintain self regulatory focus for consumers making choices from alignable assortments. In relation to this proposition, we identify ‘need for justification of choice decisions to others’ as a potential moderator that can moderate the effect of consumers’ regulatory focus on their choice decisions when choices are made from alignable assortments consisting of compromise options.

We conduct two studies and report the findings obtained from those as empirical evidence supporting our propositions. We contribute to the existing literature by identifying a construct, viz., consumers’ self regulatory focus, which eliminates the moderating effect of assortment type on the market share of a brand.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent studies on the impact of assortment type on consumer brand choice suggests that the decision to increase the size of the brand assortment can decrease market share for the brand when the assortment type is “nonalignable” as opposed to when it is “alignable” (Gourville and Soman 2005). In other words, assortment type moderates the effect of assortment size on consumer brand choice decisions. However, existing literature does not take into account the consumers’ chronic self-regulatory focus as a construct while testing this moderating effect of assortment type on consumers’ brand choice.

Companies’ target segment may include both promotion focused and prevention focused consumers. Studies on regulatory focus theory suggest that, consumers’ evaluation of products and brand choice decisions are influenced by their regulatory goals (Higgins 2002). Aaker and Lee (2001) reported that an advertisement for Welch’s grape juice that emphasized vitamin C, energy and great taste was more effective than one that emphasized antioxidants and cardiovascular disease prevention, but only when the individual consumers were promotion focused. The reverse would be true when the advertisements target prevention focused consumers. Thus, it would be necessary to introduce consumers’ chronic self-regulatory focus as a theoretical construct while studying the impact of the moderator assortment type on

the effect of assortment size on consumer's brand choice. Specifically, we seek to answer the following question:

Will assortment type moderate the effect of assortment size on consumer's brand choice behavior differently for consumers with different chronic self-regulatory focus?

The present study aims to show that consumers' chronic self-regulatory focus acts as an important theoretical construct that affects the moderating impact of assortment type on consumers' brand choice behavior. Specifically we aim at showing that, for an alignable assortment in a within brand choice context, the perceived confidence level of promotion focused as well as prevention focused consumers in making the correct choice from the assortment and their level of preference for making a choice from the assortment increase with increase in size of the assortment. For a nonalignable assortment, however, the perceived confidence level of promotion focused consumers in making the correct choice from the assortment and their level of preference for making a choice from the assortment decrease with increase in size of the assortment. For prevention focused consumers, the corresponding perceived confidence level in making the correct choice from the nonalignable assortment and the level of preference for making a choice from the assortment increase with increase in size of the assortment.

From a theoretical stand point, the present study contributes to the existing literature in the following ways:

First, the study seeks to expand the domain of the research related to the effect of regulatory focus theory on consumer behavior by illustrating that consumers' chronic

self-regulatory focus can affect the impact of assortment type on consumers' brand choice behavior.

Secondly, the study explores the relatively understudied field of research which involves the impact of assortment type on consumer brand choice behavior and shows that assortment type may not necessarily influence consumer's brand choice behavior uniformly in a within brand choice context.

The study therefore underlies the importance of having consumers' self regulatory focus as a theoretical construct while studying the impact of assortment type on consumers' brand choice behavior.

The rest of the study is organized as follows:

(a) The theoretical background to our research proposition is examined by reviewing the existing literature and extending the definition of a nonalignable assortment.

The proposed theory and the corresponding hypotheses associated with it are explained.

(b) Experiments are designed and conducted to test our hypotheses.

(c) The experimental findings are examined to see if they validate our hypothesis.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Assortment type and its impact on the effect of assortment size in a consumer brand choice context

Consumers in the marketplace often have to make decisions on as to which brand to choose from amongst the different brand variants that are present in an assortment. Assortments can differ in alignability type, i.e., they can be alignable as well as nonalignable.

Alignable assortment is defined as a set of brand variants that differ along a single compensatory dimension, such that each brand variant has a specific quantity of that attribute. Examples would be several bottles of Advil-brand ibuprofen that vary in tablet count or air conditioners that vary in cooling capacity etc. (Gourville and Soman 2005).

A nonalignable assortment is one in which the brand variants vary along a multiple non compensatory dimension, such that while one alternative possesses one desirable feature, the second alternative possesses another desirable feature - these features being “all or nothing” in nature. Laptop computers that differ in configuration, with one having a CD-rom drive, a second having a floppy disc drive and a third having a zip drive would constitute a nonalignable assortment (Gourville and Soman 2005).

Literature shows that assortment alignability affects consumer brand choice decisions.

For example, Gourville and Soman (2005) show that, in a between brand choice context, assortment size positively impacts brand choice in case of an alignable assortment but negatively impacts brand choice in case of a nonalignable assortment.

In other words, assortment type moderates the effect of assortment size on consumer brand choice decisions.

Consumers' regulatory focus and its effects on consumer behavior in the marketplace

Regulatory focus theory (Higgins 1997) suggests that there are two types of consumers with different motivational orientations - promotion focused consumers and prevention focused consumers. Promotion focused consumers are motivated by achievements and are sensitive to opportunities for advancement whereas prevention focused consumers are motivated to avoid threats to security and safety. Consumers can be predisposed to be promotion focused or prevention focused (Zhao et al 2007). It is estimated that approximately half of the consumers are chronically promotion focused while the other half are chronically prevention focused (Higgins 1987, Lee et al. 2000, Lockwood et al. 2002). It has been found that these two types of consumers demonstrate strikingly different behavior in the marketplace. For example, when forming evaluations about a brand from an ad message, prevention focused consumers, as compared to promotion focused consumers, place greater weight on the substance of the ad message than on their affective responses to the ad message. Promotion focused consumers, on the other hand, as compared to prevention focused consumers place greater weight on their subjective affective responses to the ad than on the substance of the ad message (Pham and Avnet 2004). It has also been found that, relative to promotion focused consumers, prevention focused consumers have stronger preferences for status quo and are less likely to repurchase a product after experiencing positive emotions (Chernev 2004 , Louro et al. 2005).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The existing literature which studies the impact of the moderator assortment type on the effects of assortment size on consumer brand choice behavior does not take account consumer's chronic self-regulatory focus as a construct while testing their theoretical propositions. Taking note of the fact that consumers with different chronic self-regulatory focus exhibit strikingly different behavior in the marketplace, we aim at testing the interacting effects of consumers' self regulatory focus, assortment type and size of the assortment on consumers' brand choice behavior. Specifically, we want to test as to whether the use of consumer's chronic self-regulatory focus as a theoretical construct affects the impact of the moderator assortment type on the effects of assortment size on consumer brand choice decisions.

A relook at the definition of a nonalignable assortment

Before proceeding to find an answer to our research question, we take a relook at the definition of a nonalignable assortment. According to Gourville and Soman (2005), a nonalignable assortment is defined as one in which the brand variants vary along multiple non compensatory dimensions such that if one alternative possesses one desirable feature, a second alternative possesses another desirable feature - these features being "all or nothing" in nature.

We seek to extend the definition of a nonalignable assortment such that the unique yet negative or undesirable attributes of the items in an assortment can also contribute to its nonalignability. We, therefore suggest as follows:

An assortment with alternatives requiring tradeoffs across attributes such that each alternative in the assortment has a unique non compensatory attribute is a

nonalignable assortment. The unique non compensatory attributes contributing to the nonalignability of the assortment may be desirable, i.e., positive or undesirable, i.e., negative. For example, imagine that there is a pharmaceutical organization which produces and sells paracetamol under a particular brand, say Brand P. Paracetamol is used for curing fever, cold, cough, sore throats etc. Let us imagine that the organization has three brand variants of this particular brand P in the market. They are P1, P2 and P3 respectively. Further, the three brand variants have unique non compensatory positive or desirable attributes, e.g., P1 cures fever, P2 cures sore throat and P3 cures cough. Thus, these unique non compensatory positive attributes would contribute to the non alignability of the assortment. If the same three brands also have unique non compensatory negative or undesirable attributes such that P1 upon consumption causes nausea, P2 upon consumption causes heavy drowsiness and P3 upon consumption causes stomach problem, then these unique non compensatory negative attributes of the brand variants should also contribute to the non alignability of the assortment. Thus the above assortment can be termed as nonalignable, with unique non compensatory positive attributes as well as unique non compensatory negative attributes contributing to its non alignability.

PROPOSED THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Alignable assortment, variation in assortment size and consumers with different chronic regulatory focus

In an alignable assortment, the brand variants vary along the same compensatory dimension. Suppose we have an energy drink brand which has five brand variants. The brand variants vary along a single compensatory positive attribute, say Thiamin, and also along a single compensatory negative attribute, say Sulfonamide, such that if any two or more of the brand variants make up an assortment, the assortment will be alignable. The five brand variants are E1, E2, E3, E4 and E5. For an assortment of size 2, with brand variants E1 and E2, the alignable features are as follows:

Brand Variant	Proportion of Thiamin which may increase strength of muscles	Proportion of Sulfonamide which may cause sleep disturbances
E1	5 %	5 %
E2	7.5 %	7.5 %

The above assortment is thus alignable assortment 1.

We have chronic promotion as well as chronic prevention focused consumers who are deciding on whether to select E1 or E2 from the above assortment. Bargh (1990) argued that once a goal (at whatever level of abstraction) is activated, the strategies and plans of action associated with that goal should also be automatically activated and should direct subsequent behavior. Thus, chronically promotion focused and chronically prevention focused individuals should try to pursue an activity or try to pursue a desired end state with the aim of achieving the promotion or prevention goal. So, the very intent of pursuing an activity should activate a promotion or prevention goal for a chronic promotion or prevention focused individual. Once this chronic

promotion or prevention goal is activated, the strategies and plans associated with achieving this chronic self regulatory goal should also be automatically activated and it should thus direct subsequent behaviors.

Chronic Promotion Focused Consumers

For promotion focused individuals making a choice from amongst a given set of alternatives, the aim should be to select the alternative which is most favorable in terms of promotion goal fulfillment as compared to the other alternatives. Promotion goal fulfillment is achieved by maximizing the presence of positive outcomes and minimizing the absence of positive outcomes when an activity is pursued. With respect to behavioral outcomes, promotion focus makes salient the presence or absence of positive outcomes (Crowe & Higgins 1997, Chernev 2009). While deciding on which brand variant to select from the above alignable assortment, the promotion focused consumers should thus consider the positive attribute information offered by the alternatives in the assortment to be more relevant for fulfilling their promotion goal as compared to the negative attribute information offered by the alternatives. So in this case, they should perceive the information related to the positive compensatory attribute Thiamin as to be relevant to consider while deciding on which item to select from Assortment 1. The brand variant that contains the maximum proportion of Thiamin in assortment 1 is E2. Thus the chronic promotion focused consumers should consider E2 of being able to satiate their promotion goal to a greater extent as compared to the alternative E1 and they should thus select E2.

Let the size of the alignable assortment be increased to three with the inclusion of the brand variant E3 in the assortment. The alignable features in the assortment will then be:

Brand Variant	Proportion of Thiamin which may increase strength of muscles	Proportion of Sulfonamide which may cause sleep disturbances
E1	5 %	5 %
E2	7.5 %	7.5 %
E3	10 %	10%

The above assortment is alignable assortment 2.

Following the same logic as was used earlier, the chronic promotion focused consumers should find the brand variant E3 as to be fulfilling their promotion goal to a greater extent as compared to the alternatives E1 and E2 and they should thus select E3. When the chronic promotion focused consumers had made the selection from the assortment 1, they had selected E2 which fulfills their promotion goal to a greater extent as compared to one alternative in the choice set. However, when they select an alternative from assortment 2, they select an option E3 which fulfills their promotion goal to a greater extent as compared to two other alternatives in the choice set. The alternative E3 therefore will be perceived by the promotion focused consumers as to be superior in terms of promotion goal fulfillment as compared to two alternatives whereas the alternative E2 will be considered by them as to be superior in terms of promotion goal fulfillment as compared to one alternative only. Since the promotion focused consumers while making a choice aim to choose the most favorable alternative from amongst the options present in a choice set, greater is their perceived

success of having correctly selected the most favorable alternative, greater should be their confidence with the choice decision. Therefore, compared to when making a choice which is superior in terms of promotion goal fulfillment as compared to only one alternative, making a choice which is superior in terms of promotion goal fulfillment as compared to two alternatives, should give a higher level of perceived success to the promotion focused consumers of having correctly selected the alternative which best fulfills the promotion goal. Therefore, the confidence perceived by the promotion focused consumers about having made the correct choice decision should be greater when they select an alternative from an alignable assortment of size 3 as compared to when they select an alternative from an alignable assortment of size 2. Thus, with increase in size of an alignable assortment, we should see an increase in confidence of the promotion focused consumers about the correctness of their choice decision.

This increased confidence level of the promotion focused consumers on the correctness of their choice decision with the increase in size of the alignable assortment should also, therefore, translate into an increased level of preference of the promotion focused consumers for making a purchase from the alignable assortment as the size of the assortment increases. So with increase in the size of the alignable assortment, the promotion focused consumers' level of preference for making a choice from the alignable assortment should also increase.

Chronic prevention focused consumers

For prevention focused individuals, the aim is to minimize the presence of negative outcomes and maximize the absence of negative outcomes when an activity

is pursued. With respect to behavioral outcomes, prevention focus makes salient the presence or absence of negative outcomes (Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Chernev, 2009). While deciding on which brand variant to select from the alignable assortment 1, the chronic prevention focused consumers should, therefore, consider the negative attribute information offered by the alternatives in the assortment as to be more relevant to consider for fulfilling their prevention goals as compared to the positive attribute information offered by the alternatives. In other words, as success in a prevention focus is to minimize the presence of negative outcomes and maximize the absence of negative outcomes, the chronic prevention focused consumers should put more weight on the negative attribute information related to the alternatives in the assortment and put less weight on the positive attribute information offered by the alternatives in the assortment while making their choice decision. So, in this case, they should perceive the minimization of the compensatory negative attribute Sulfonamide as to be relevant to fulfill their prevention goal. The item that contains the minimum proportion of Sulfonamide in assortment 1 is E1. Thus, the chronic prevention focused consumers should consider E1 of being able to satiate their prevention goal better as compared to E2. They should thus reject the alternative E2 and select E1 from the alignable assortment 1. An assumption that we make over here and which we apply in this article while articulating our theory is that, unlike promotion focused consumers who, while making a choice from amongst a given set of alternatives, select their most favorable option, prevention focused consumers, while making a choice from amongst a given set of alternatives, adopt a “rejection process” i.e. they choose by rejecting the less desirable alternatives in a choice set.

The basis of our assumption is that previous literature (e.g. Crowe and Higgins 1997) have discussed that because prevention centers on avoiding mismatches to desired ends, it seems to trigger a drive to protect against potential threats. This drive fosters a more vigilant form of exploration, in which the person is less willing to accept risks and seeks to maximize correct rejections and minimize false alarms. Chernev (2009) has discussed that individuals derive additional value from the degree to which the means used to pursue their goals are compatible with their regulatory focus such that promotion oriented individuals are likely to receive higher utility from approach means whereas prevention oriented individuals derive greater utility from avoidance means. In a similar vein, we construe that while making choice from amongst a given set of alternatives, prevention focused consumers will consider the different alternatives in the choice set as to be potential mismatches to their prevention goal. They will thus seek to correctly reject or avoid those alternatives which they think as to be mismatching their prevention goal and in the process arrive at a satisfactory choice decision, i.e., select an alternative which they think as to be least mismatching their prevention goal. When the chronic prevention focused consumers select an item from assortment 2, then applying similar logic as was mentioned earlier they should choose to select the brand variant E1. As is the case, while selecting an item from assortment 1, the chronic prevention focused consumers reject one alternative to get another, i.e. they reject E2 and select E1. However, while selecting an item from assortment 2 they are rejecting two alternatives and selecting one, i.e. they are rejecting the alternatives E2 and E3 to select the alternative E1. Prevention centers on maximizing correct rejections while pursuing an activity. Since the goal of prevention

focused individuals is to avoid any potential mismatch with the prevention goal while performing an activity, it can be construed that the act of rejection is in itself a means to avoid any potential mismatch with the prevention goal or in other words to achieve the prevention goal during execution of an activity. Thus, greater is the perceived success in being able to successfully execute this act of rejection, greater should be the perceived avoidance of mismatch with the prevention goal for prevention focused individuals and thus greater should be their prevention goal fulfillment. Therefore, while making a choice from amongst a given set of alternatives, greater is the perceived success of being able to rightfully reject the alternatives which can potentially mismatch with their prevention goal, greater should be the prevention goal fulfillment for the prevention focused consumers. When the size of the alignable assortment is two, as is shown in the example earlier, in order to arrive at their choice decision which is E1, the prevention focused consumers are making one correct rejection. When the size of the alignable assortment is three, the number of correct rejections that the prevention focused consumers are making in order to arrive at their choice decision E1 is two. For the chronic prevention focused consumers, therefore, the act of rightfully rejecting two potential mismatches with the prevention goal should be seen as to be a more successful execution of the act of rejection needed to be performed to fulfill the prevention goal as compared to when only one potential mismatch with the prevention goal is rejected. It can thus be said that, when chronic prevention focused consumers are asked to choose a brand variant from an alignable assortment, then with increase in size of the assortment due to an increase in the perceived fulfillment of their prevention goals, the perceived confidence level of the

prevention focused consumers about whether they are making the correct choice decision should increase.

Since with the increase in size of the alignable assortment, the perceived confidence level of the prevention focused consumers about whether they are making the correct choice from the assortment increases, this increased confidence level of the prevention focused consumers on the correctness of their choice decision with the increase in size of the assortment should translate into a greater level of preference of the prevention focused consumers for making a purchase from the alignable assortment as the size of the assortment increases. So, the prevention focused consumers' level of preference for making a choice from the alignable assortment should also increase with increase in size of the assortment.

We therefore see that both for chronic promotion focused and chronic prevention focused consumers, with increase in size of the alignable assortment, the consumers' perceived confidence level in making a correct choice from the assortment and their level of preference for making a choice from the assortment increases.

We thus propose the following *hypotheses* :

H1(a): In a within brand choice context, when the assortment type is alignable, and wherein the choices in the assortment consist of positive as well as negative attributes, the perceived confidence level of promotion focused consumers as well as that of prevention focused consumers about whether they are making the correct choice from the assortment will increase with increase in size of the assortment.

H2(a): In a within brand choice context, when the assortment type is alignable, and wherein the choices in the assortment consist of positive as well as negative

attributes, the level of preference of promotion focused consumers as well as that of prevention focused consumers for making a choice from the assortment will increase with increase in size of the assortment.

Nonalignable assortment, variation in assortment size and consumers with different chronic regulatory focus

In a nonalignable assortment, the alternatives vary along a non compensatory dimension or attribute such that selecting an item from the nonalignable assortment requires trade off across attributes.

Suppose we have an energy drink brand. The energy drink brand has five brand variants. Each brand variant possesses a unique desirable or positive attribute as well as a unique undesirable or negative attribute which the other brand variants do not have. So if any two or more of the brand variants make up an assortment, the assortment can be termed as nonalignable. Let us take an example of an energy drink brand. The brand has five variants in the market, viz., D1, D2, D3, D4, and D5. Let us take a nonalignable assortment of size 2, made out of variants of this energy drink brand. The assortment contains the brand variants D1 and D2. The nonalignable features of the variants D1 and D2 are present in the following form:

Brand Variant	<i>Biotin</i> [improves concentration]	<i>Guarana</i> [causes allergic reaction]	<i>Niacin</i> [improves reflex action]	<i>Sulfonamide</i> [causes sleep disturbance]
D1	Present	Present		
D2			Present	Present

The above assortment is thus nonalignable assortment 1.

Chronic promotion focused consumers

We have chronic promotion focused consumers who are deciding on which alternative to select from the above nonalignable assortment. They can select only one alternative. For chronic promotion focused individuals, the aim is value maximization, i.e. to maximize the presence of positive outcomes and minimize the absence of positive outcomes while pursuing an activity. Thus when making the selection from the above assortment, following similar logic as discussed earlier, the chronic promotion focused consumers will consider the information pertaining to the positive attributes of the two alternatives in the assortment as to be more relevant to satisfy or fulfill their promotion goal as compared to information pertaining to the negative attributes that are present in the two alternatives. Each of two alternatives in the assortment has one unique or non compensatory positive attribute - D1 contains Biotin which can help improve concentration while D2 contains Niacin which can help improve reflexes. So if the promotion focused consumers select one alternative from the above assortment, then either they can select the alternative which would help them to improve their concentration, i.e. D1 or else they can select the alternative which would help them to improve their reflexes, i.e. D2. In other words, they have to forego one positive attribute offered by one alternative to get another positive attribute offered by another alternative. Thus by selecting only one alternative from the assortment, although they can gain one positive attribute that is present in the alternative that they select, at the same time they fail to gain one positive attribute that is present in the alternative that they choose not to select.

Let us take that the size of the nonalignable assortment is increased to three. The alternatives that are present in this assortment are D1, D2, and D3. The nonalignable features of the variants D1, D2, D3 in this assortment are present in the following form:

Brand Variant	<i>Biotin</i> [improves concentration]	<i>Guarana</i> [causes allergic reaction]	<i>Niacin</i> [improves reflex action]	<i>Sulfonamide</i> [causes sleep disturbance]	<i>Taurine</i> [improves physical stamina]	<i>Ephedrine</i> [causes headache]
D1	Present	Present				
D2			Present	Present		
D3					Present	Present

The above assortment is named as nonalignable assortment 2.

Once again we have chronic promotion focused consumers who are deciding on which alternative to select from the above nonalignable assortment. As has been discussed earlier, in order to fulfill their promotion goal, chronic promotion focused consumers will consider the positive attribute information to be more relevant while making their choice decision as compared to the negative attribute information. The aim of the promotion focused consumers is to maximize the presence of positive attributes and minimize the absence of positive attributes in their chosen brand variant. The three brand variants in the nonalignable assortment 2 have three non compensatory positive attributes. Ideally, the chronic promotion focused consumers would like to have all the positive attributes present in their chosen item. However, they can select only one brand variant. So, irrespective of the alternative they select from the above assortment, they gain one positive attribute but at the same time they

fail to gain two positive attributes. For example, if they choose D3, they can gain the positive attribute that D3 offers to them, i.e. Taurine which can help them to improve their physical stamina. However, they fail to gain the positive attributes that D1 and D2 offer to them, i.e. Biotin and Niacin which could have helped them to improve their concentration and improve their reflexes respectively.

Thus, as we see, when the promotion focused consumers make a selection from the nonalignable assortment of size 2, they gain one positive attribute but also fail to gain one other positive attribute. When they make a selection from a nonalignable assortment of size 3, they gain one positive attribute but also fail to gain two other positive attributes. Proceeding similarly, when the size of the nonalignable assortment is increased to four, say, by including in the assortment another brand variant D4 which has an unique or non compensatory positive attribute which D1, D2, D3 do not have, the chronic promotion focused consumers, by choosing one alternative from the nonalignable assortment of size 4 will still gain only one positive attribute but will fail to gain three other positive attributes.

Again, when the size of the nonalignable assortment is increased to five by adding another brand variant D5, which has an unique or non compensatory positive attribute which neither of the other four alternatives in the assortment have, the chronic promotion focused consumers by selecting an alternative from the nonalignable assortment of size 5 will gain one positive attribute but will fail to gain four other positive attributes.

Success in a promotion focus is experienced as the presence of positive outcomes.

Failure in a promotion focus is experienced as the absence of positive outcomes.

As the size of the nonalignable assortment increases, since the number of positive attributes that the promotion focused consumers fail to gain increases while the number of positive attributes that they gain remains unchanged the perceived failure of the promotion focus consumers in not being able to fulfill their promotion goal should also increase. Thus, as the size of the nonalignable assortment increases, the promotion focused consumers will consider the variant selected from the assortment to be less able to fulfill or satiate their promotion goal. The chronic promotion focused consumers' perceived confidence level about whether they have made the correct choice from the nonalignable assortment should therefore decrease with increase in size of the assortment.

To summarize, with the increase in size of the nonalignable assortment, the perceived confidence level of the promotion focused consumers about whether they are making the correct choice from the assortment decreases. This decrease in confidence level of the promotion focused consumers on the correctness of their choice decision with the increase in size of the nonalignable assortment should also translate into a decrease in their level of preference for making a choice from the nonalignable assortment as the size of the assortment increases. So with increase in the size of the nonalignable assortment, the promotion focused consumers' level of preference for making a choice from the nonalignable assortment should also decrease.

Chronic Prevention Focused Consumers

We shift our focus on chronic prevention focused consumers who are deciding on which alternative to select from the nonalignable assortment 1. They can select only

one alternative. For chronic prevention focused individuals, the aim is to minimize the presence of negative outcomes and maximize the absence of negative outcomes while pursuing an activity. Thus when making the selection from the nonalignable assortment 1, following similar logic as has been discussed earlier, the chronic prevention focused consumers will consider the information pertaining to the negative attributes of the two alternatives in the assortment as to be more relevant in making a choice that satisfies or fulfills their prevention goal as compared to information pertaining to the positive attributes that are present in the two alternatives. Each of the two alternatives in the assortment contains one unique negative attribute - D1 contains Guarana which may cause allergic reactions and D2 contains Sulfonamide which causes sleep disturbances. The chronic prevention focused consumers adopt the “rejection process” to select their desired alternative. They would thus be rejecting one alternative in this case. By rejecting one of the two alternatives that are present in the assortment, they are able to avoid the presence of one negative attribute which is there in the alternative that they reject. However, they are not able to avoid the presence of one negative attribute which is there in the alternative that they do not reject. For example, if they choose to select the variant D2 from the nonalignable assortment 1, they are rejecting D1 and by doing so they are being able to avoid the presence of the negative attribute Guarana that is present in D1. However, they are selecting D2 in the process and by doing so; they are not being able to avoid the presence of the negative attribute Sulfonamide which D2 contains.

What if the chronic prevention focused consumers have to select an alternative from the nonalignable assortment 2, i.e. which contains three alternatives, or in other

words, the size of which is three? As has been discussed earlier, to fulfill their prevention goal, chronic prevention focused consumers will consider the negative attribute information to be more relevant to focus on while making their choice decision as compared to the positive attribute information. The three brand variants in the assortment have three unique negative attributes which the other brand variants in the assortment do not have. Suppose that the chronic prevention focus consumers decide to reject the alternatives D1 and D3 and select the alternative D2. The alternative D2 contains the negative attribute Sulfonamide. So by selecting D2, the chronic prevention focused consumers are not able to avoid the presence of the negative attribute Sulfonamide in their choice. However in the process of selecting D2, the chronic prevention focused consumers are rejecting the alternatives D1 and D3. D1 and D3 each contain two unique negative attributes Guarana and Ephedrine. So by rejecting D1 and D3 and by choosing to go for D2, the chronic prevention focused consumers are being able to avoid the presence of the two negative attributes Guarana and Ephedrine in their chosen item.

So, when the chronic prevention focused consumers choose an item from a nonalignable assortment which has a size 2, they get one negative attribute in their selected item. They are however able to avoid the presence of the negative attribute which is there in the alternative that they reject.

When the chronic prevention focused consumers choose an item from a nonalignable assortment of size 3, they are once again getting one negative attribute in their selected item. This time however, they are being able to avoid the presence of two negative attributes which are there in the alternatives that they reject.

Similarly if the size of the nonalignable assortment is increased to four, by including in the assortment another alternative D4, which contains an unique negative attribute that neither of D1, D2 or D3 have, then by selecting an item from that assortment, the chronic prevention focused consumers are getting one negative attribute in their selected alternative. They however are being able to avoid the presence of three unique negative attributes which are there in the alternatives that they reject.

Again, if the size of the nonalignable assortment is increased to five by including another alternative D5 in the assortment, then by selecting an item from the assortment, the chronic prevention focused consumers are getting one negative attribute in their selected alternative. However, they are being able to avoid the presence of four unique negative attributes which are there in the alternatives which they are rejecting.

So, for the chronic prevention focused consumers selecting an item from a nonalignable assortment, as the size of the assortment increases, the number of negative attributes that are present in their selected alternative remains constant. However, in the process of arriving at their selection decision, the combined number of negative attributes that are present in the alternatives that are rejected by them and whose presence they are able to avoid in their selected alternative increases with increase in size of the nonalignable assortment. Prevention goal fulfillment is attained by avoiding mismatches to desired ends. If we consider negative attributes as to be the source of perceived mismatch to desired ends, then greater is the combined number of negative attributes that are present in the alternatives that are rejected by the prevention focused consumers and whose presence they are able to avoid in the

alternatives that they select, greater should be their perceived avoidance of mismatch to desired ends. Thus, greater should be their prevention goal fulfillment. This should affect their confidence on their choice decision in a positive manner. That is, with increase in size of the nonalignable assortment, the chronic prevention focused consumers' perceived confidence of having chosen the correct item from the assortment should increase.

Since, with the increase in size of the nonalignable assortment, the perceived confidence level of the prevention focused consumers about whether they are making the correct choice from the assortment increases, this increase in confidence level of the prevention focused consumers about the correctness of their choice decision with the increase in size of the nonalignable assortment should translate into an increase in the prevention focused consumers' level of preference for making a purchase from the nonalignable assortment as the size of the assortment increases. So, with increase in the size of the nonalignable assortment, the prevention focused consumers' level of preference for making a choice from the nonalignable assortment should also increase.

We thus propose the hypotheses:

H1(b): In a within brand choice context, when the assortment type is nonalignable, and wherein the choices in the assortment consist of positive as well as negative attributes, the perceived confidence level of promotion focused consumers about whether they are making the correct choice from the assortment will decrease with increase in size of the assortment. However, for prevention focused consumers, their

perceived confidence level about whether they are making the correct choice from the assortment will increase with increase in size of the assortment.

H2(b): In a within brand choice context, when the assortment type is nonalignable, and wherein the choices in the assortment consist of positive as well as negative attributes, the promotion focused consumers' level of preference for making a choice from the assortment will decrease with increase in size of the assortment. However, for prevention focused consumers, the level of preference for making a choice from the nonalignable assortment will increase with increase in size of the assortment.

EXPERIMENT 1 - DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The objective behind conducting Experiment 1 was to test the hypotheses as have been mentioned earlier. A 2 (Consumer's self regulatory focus: Promotion vs. Prevention) * 2 (Assortment type: Alignable vs. Nonalignable) * 4 (Size of assortment: 2 vs. 3 vs. 4 vs. 5) between-subjects ANOVA is used for this experiment.

Experiment 1

Participants were 275 undergraduate students from NUS Business School. We randomly assigned participants to the different experimental conditions in which they were asked to complete questionnaires consisting of four different tasks. The number of participants who completed all the tasks was 252. We thus considered their responses for analyses only. Participants performed four different tasks:

Task 1, which was used to assess participants' self regulatory focus, required participants to complete an 18 item scale of regulatory focus.

Task 2 consisted of the main dependent measures that test our proposed hypotheses. Specifically, each participant was given a hypothetical assortment containing information about the brand variants of an energy drink. The size and alignability of the assortment presented to a participant differed based on the experimental condition to which the participant was assigned to. Individual participants, after having read the information, selected a brand variant of their choice from amongst the options present in the assortments that were given to them. Subsequently, they keyed in their responses to questions which actually were measures to test our hypotheses.

Task 3 consisted of process measures, responses on these measures being collected with the aim of illustrating that the findings obtained from Task 2 can be accounted for by our proposed theory.

Task 4 consisted of confound measures. Specifically, we aimed at ruling out the possibility that the findings obtained from task 2 were confounded with the participants' prevalent mood states during Task 2 and the difficulty level of Task 2 as perceived by the participants

Stimuli assortments and pretest

Alignable and nonalignable assortments of different sizes were designed containing brand variants of an energy drink brand, similar to as was used in the examples. The brand variants that were used to design the alignable assortments constituted one common positive feature and one common negative feature. There were two alignable features in the brand variants - one contributing to the alignability of the assortment along the positive scale and the other one contributing to the alignability of the assortment along the negative scale.

The alignable assortments of different sizes were presented to the participants in the following forms:

Alignable assortment of size 2
Features of Brand variants

Brand Variant	Proportion of Riboflavin which improves haemoglobin content in blood	Proportion of Glutamine which may cause stomach discomfort	Proportion of Thiamin which may increase strength of muscles	Proportion of Sulfonamide which may cause sleep disturbances
Variant 1	5%	5%	2.5%	2.5%
Variant 2	5 %	5%	5%	5%

Alignable Assortment of size 3
Features of Brand variants

Brand Variant	Proportion of Riboflavin which improves haemoglobin content in blood	Proportion of Glutamine which may cause stomach discomfort	Proportion of Thiamin which may increase strength of muscles	Proportion of Sulfonamide which may cause sleep disturbances
Variant 1	5%	5%	2.5%	2.5%
Variant 2	5 %	5%	5%	5%
Variant 3	5%	5%	7.5%	7.5%

Alignable Assortment of size 4
Features of Brand variants

Brand Variant	Proportion of Riboflavin which improves haemoglobin content in blood	Proportion of Glutamine which may cause stomach discomfiture	Proportion of Thiamin which may increase strength of muscles	Proportion of Sulfonamide which may cause sleep disturbances
Variant 1	5%	5%	2.5%	2.5%
Variant 2	5 %	5%	5%	5%
Variant 3	5%	5%	7.5%	7.5%
Variant 4	5%	5%	10%	10%

Alignable Assortment of size 5
Features of Brand variants

Brand Variant	Proportion of Riboflavin which improves haemoglobin content in blood	Proportion of Glutamine which may cause stomach discomfiture	Proportion of Thiamin which may increase strength of muscles	Proportion of Sulfonamide which may cause sleep disturbances
Variant 1	5%	5%	2.5%	2.5%
Variant 2	5 %	5%	5%	5%
Variant 3	5%	5%	7.5%	7.5%
Variant 4	5%	5%	10%	10%
Variant 5	5%	5%	12.5%	12.5%

The brand variants that were used to design the nonalignable assortment constituted of one common positive feature and one common negative feature. There were two nonalignable features in the brand variants - one contributing to the non alignability of the assortment along the positive scale and the other one contributing to the non alignability of the assortment along the negative scale. The nonalignable assortments of different sizes were presented to the participants in the following forms:

Nonalignable Assortment of size 2
Features of Brand variants

Brand Variant	<i>Creatinine</i> [improve blood circulation]	<i>Inositol</i> [Reduces water absorption]	<i>Biotin</i> [improves concentration]	<i>Guarana</i> [causes allergic reaction]	<i>Niacin</i> [improves reflex action]	<i>Sulfonamide</i> [causes sleep disturbance]
Variant 1	Present	Present	Present	Present		
Variant 2	Present	Present			Present	Present

Nonalignable Assortment of size 3
Features of Brand variants

Brand Variant	<i>Creatinine</i> [improves blood circulation]	<i>Inositol</i> [Reduces water absorption]	<i>Biotin</i> [improves concentration]	<i>Guarana</i> [causes allergic reaction]	<i>Niacin</i> [improves reflex action]	<i>Sulfonamide</i> [causes sleep disturbance]	<i>Taurine</i> [improves physical stamina]	<i>Ephedrine</i> [causes headache]
Variant 1	Present	Present	Present	Present				
Variant 2	Present	Present			Present	Present		
Variant 3	Present	Present					Present	Present

Nonalignable Assortment of size 4
Features of Brand variants

Brand Variant	<i>Creatinine</i> [improves blood circulation]	<i>Inositol</i> [Reduces water absorption]	<i>Biotin</i> [improves concentration]	<i>Guarana</i> [causes allergic reaction]	<i>Niacin</i> [improves reflex action]	<i>Sulfonamide</i> [causes sleep disturbance]	<i>Taurine</i> [improves physical stamina]	<i>Ephedrine</i> [causes headache]	<i>Peptide</i> [improves skin conditioning]	<i>Adbuten</i> [causes agitation]
Variant 1	Present	Present	Present	Present						
Variant 2	Present	Present			Present	Present				
Variant 3	Present	Present					Present	Present		
Variant 4	Present	Present							Present	Present

Nonalignable Assortment of size 5

Features of Brand variants

Brand Variant	<i>Creatinine</i> [improves blood circulation]	<i>Inositol</i> [Reduces water absorption]	<i>Biotin</i> [improves concentration]	<i>Guarana</i> [causes allergic reaction]	<i>Niacin</i> [improves reflex action]	<i>Sulfonamide</i> [causes sleep disturbance]	<i>Taurine</i> [improves physical stamina]	<i>Ephedrine</i> [causes headache]	<i>Peptide</i> [improves skin conditioning]	<i>Adbuten</i> [causes agitation]	<i>Galactose</i> [improves vision]	<i>Albuprofen</i> [causes digestive problems]
Variant 1	Present	Present	Present	Present								
Variant 2	Present	Present			Present	Present						
Variant 3	Present	Present					Present	Present				
Variant 4	Present	Present							Present	Present		
Variant 5	Present	Present									Present	Present

PRETEST FOR EXPERIMENT 1

We conducted a pretest with forty-five undergraduate students from NUS Business School to test as to whether the brand variants of the energy drink that were used to construct the nonalignable assortments are considered as to be equally weighted. Specifically, the participants were asked to rate their attitude towards each brand variant. We had three items measuring this. Participants were asked to rate on different seven point scales as to how good the brand variant was (1 = bad, 7 = good), how favorable the brand variant was (1 = unfavorable, 7 = favorable), to what extent did they like the brand variant (1 = like, 7 = dislike).

We reverse coded the participants' ratings on as to what extent they liked the brand. Participants' responses on the three items were then averaged to get their attitudes towards each of the brand variants (The five α values computed separately with the items measuring the attitudes towards each of the five brand variants ranged from .844 to .910). Comparisons using paired sample t-test revealed that the participants' possessed equivalent attitudes towards the brand variants (t 's < 1 , p 's $< .05$), in effect exhibiting that the brand variants that were used to construct the nonalignable assortments are equally weighted.

MEASURES - EXPERIMENT 1

Self regulatory focus measures used in Task 1

The regulatory focus scale has been validated in previous research (Lockwood, Jordon and Kunda 2002). The scale has 18 items, half of which measure promotion focus and the other half measure prevention focus. Using a scale with end points of 1 (“not at all true”) and 9 (“very true”), participants indicate the extent to which they endorse items related to a promotion focus (e.g., “I frequently imagine how I will achieve my hopes and aspirations”, “I often think about the person I would ideally like to be in the future”) and items relevant to a prevention focus (e.g. “I frequently imagine how I can prevent failure in my life”, “I am anxious that I will fall short of my responsibilities and obligations”).

Dependent measures used in Task 2

In task 2, participants are at first asked to choose a brand variant from amongst the options present in the hypothetical brand assortments that are given to them. Subsequently, they respond to the three main dependent measures, which we use to test our proposed hypotheses.

To test H1a and H2a, we use the dependent measure which is designated as “*Confidence about making the correct choice decision*”. The participants are asked to indicate as to how confident they are about making the correct choice decision when they are asked to choose an energy drink from amongst the options present in the assortments that are given to them (to recall, each subject is given a single assortment of a particular size and alignability depending on the experimental condition into which he is assigned). This is assessed on a scale of one to nine. Larger values of this

dependent measure indicate greater perceived confidence level of the participants about the correctness of their choice decisions.

To test H2 (a) and H2 (b), we use two dependent measures which are as:

(1) Preference for no choice option

We ask the participants to indicate their preferences for not making any choice from the assortments that are presented to them. This is assessed on a scale of one to nine. Larger values of this dependent measure indicate an individual participants' high level of preference for not making any choice from amongst the options present in the assortment that is given to him and vice versa. Recall that in H2 (a) and H2 (b), we predict about promotion and prevention focused consumers' levels of preferences for making choice from amongst options present in assortments of different alignability and different sizes. We construe that an individual participant's high level of preference in favor of deciding not to make any choice from a given assortment indicates a low degree of preference of him in favour of deciding to choose any item from that particular assortment if there is an option of not making any choice and vice versa.

(2) Satisfaction with choice decision

The other dependent measure is the participants' satisfaction with their choice decisions. This is assessed on a scale of one to nine. Larger values of this dependent measure indicate an individual participant's high level of satisfaction with his choice decision. We construe that an individual participant's high level of satisfaction with his choice decision i.e. when he is choosing an item from an assortment of a particular alignability and size is actually indicative of him having a high level of

preference for making a choice from the assortment, even if he has the option of not making any choice from the assortment and vice versa.

Process measures used in Task 3

To validate our assumption related to choice process

We assume that prevention focused consumers, while making a choice from a set of available alternatives, arrive at their choice decision by rejecting the alternatives which they think are unfavorable i.e. the ones which they think may cause a mismatch with their prevention goal.

Promotion focused consumers on the other hand arrive at their choice decision by selecting the most favorable alternative i.e. the one which best matches their promotion goal.

To validate these assumptions, we use two process measures. We ask the participants to indicate their levels of agreeability with the two statements:

Statement A: *While making my choice, I searched for the option that I thought was the most favorable.*

Statement B: *While making my choice, I looked at rejecting the options which I thought were unfavorable.*

The levels of agreeableness were assessed on a scale of one to nine. Larger values on the scale represent higher levels of agreeableness. We expected prevention focused participants to show a greater level of agreeability with Statement B as compared to with Statement A. For the promotion focused participants we expect to get results in opposite pattern.

To assess the role of attribute valence in choice decision

One basic premise of regulatory focus theory and which we apply to develop the theory of ours in this article is individuals' sensitivity to the presence or absence of positive (in case of promotion focus) or negative (in case of prevention focus) outcomes while performing an activity. It is the difference in the importance placed on positive and negative outcomes which causes us to see differences arising out of individuals' regulatory focus while performing an activity. With respect to the current study thus, we should be able to see participants having different self regulatory focus, placing different levels of attention on the positive or negative attributes present in the choice alternatives of the assortments of different alignability and size given to them while arriving at their choice decisions. We aim at validating this point by using two process measures. Specifically, we ask participants to indicate their levels of agreeableness with the two statements:

Statement A: *While making my choice, I focused more on the positive attributes of the given alternatives.*

Statement B: *While making my choice, I focused more on the negative attributes of the given alternatives.*

The levels of agreeableness were assessed on a scale of one to nine. Larger values on the scale represent higher levels of agreeableness. We expected prevention focused participants to show a greater level of agreeability with Statement B as compared to that with Statement A. For the promotion focused participants we expect to see results in the opposite patterns.

Choice process triggering regulatory goal fulfillment

We state in our theorization that promotion focused consumers make choices by choosing the most favorable from amongst available alternatives in a choice set. Since with increase in size of an alignable assortment, the number of options compared to which their preferred alternative is superior in terms of promotion goal fulfillment increases, this leads to an increase in their perceived success of them having rightly selected the alternative which best fulfills their promotion goal which in turn leads to an increase in confidence of them with their choice decisions.

We also state in our theorization that prevention focused consumers make choices by rejecting unfavorable alternatives in their choice set. Thus, in case of prevention focused consumers, since with increase in size of the alignable assortment, the number of alternatives which prevention focused consumers successfully reject in order to avoid mismatch with their prevention goal increases, this leads to an increase in their perceived success of them having been able to correctly avoid alternatives which misfit with their prevention goal, therefore increasing the prevention goal fulfillment, which in turn leads to an increase in confidence of them with their choice decisions.

Thus, the choice process itself is inadvertently playing a crucial role over here in fulfilling the self regulatory goal and determining the confidence of the consumers with different self regulatory focus on their choice decisions. As for example, for promotion focused consumers making choices from alignable assortments, selecting the most favorable alternative from amongst three options (i.e. when size of assortment is three) is making them more confident about the correctness of their

choice decision as compared to when they are selecting the most favorable alternative from amongst two options (i.e. when size of assortment is two). For prevention focused consumers making choices from alignable assortments, rejecting two unfavorable options to arrive at their choice decision(i.e. when size of assortment is three) is making them more confident about the correctness of their choice decision as compared to when they reject one unfavorable option to arrive at their choice decision(i.e. when size of assortment is two). So, the choice process as it appears is triggering a sense of self regulatory goal fulfillment which is contributing to the confidence on choice decision for consumers having different self regulatory focus. We should therefore be able to observe this empirically. We thereby adopt two process measures on which we collect responses from participants. Specifically, we ask the participants, choosing items from alignable assortments to rate their agreeableness with two statements as mentioned below :

***Statement A:** Choosing the best from amongst all available options is what makes me confident about a choice decision.*

***Statement B:** Being able to successfully reject all unfavorable options is what makes me confident about a choice decision.*

We expect prevention focused participants to show greater levels of agreeableness with Statement B as compared to that with Statement A. We expect to observe opposite patterns for promotion focused participants.

As support for theory leading to H2a

We contend in the theory leading to H2a that with increase in the size of a nonalignable assortment, for the prevention focused consumers, since the combined

number of negative attributes which are present in the alternatives that they reject increases, their perceived avoidance of mismatch with desired ends and consequently their prevention goal fulfillment increases. Thus, the confidence of the prevention focused consumers about the correctness of their choice decision increases with increase in size of the nonalignable assortment. We are thus pointing towards the fact that being able to do away with the negative attributes that are present in the rejected alternatives affects the confidence of the prevention focused consumers about the correctness of their choice decision.

On the other hand for the promotion focused consumers, since with increase in size of the nonalignable assortment, the combined number of positive attributes which are present in the alternatives that they do not select increases, their perceived fulfillment of promotion goal decreases. This causes them to be less confident about the correctness of their choice decision as the size of the nonalignable assortment increases. We are thus pointing towards the fact that foregoing positive attributes in the alternatives not selected affects the confidence on correctness of choice decision for the promotion focused consumers.

In an attempt to garner support for this theorization, we use a number of process measures. Participants who are assigned to the different experimental conditions concerning different sizes of the nonalignable assortments are asked to rate their agreeableness with a set of two statements which actually are process measures assessing the source of the participants' confidence about the correctness of their choice decision. Specifically, statements presented to participants who were assigned to the condition in which the size of the nonalignable assortment was five were as:

***Statement A:** If I choose one option from amongst the five options that are present, I am having one positive attribute in my chosen option. However, I am being able to avoid the presence of four negative attributes from the alternatives that I do not choose and that is what makes me confident about my choice.*

***Statement B:** If I choose one option from amongst the five options that are present, I am having one negative attribute in my chosen option. That is not very important to me. What is more important to me is that my selected alternative does not contain the four positive attributes which are there in the alternatives that I do not choose and this makes me less confident about my choice.*

Statements presented to participants who were assigned to the condition in which the size of the nonalignable assortment was four were as:

***Statement A:** If I choose one option from amongst the four options that are present, I am having one positive attribute in my chosen option. However, I am being able to avoid the presence of three negative attributes from the alternatives that I do not choose and that is what makes me confident about my choice.*

***Statement B:** If I choose one option from amongst the four options that are present, I am having one negative attribute in my chosen option. That is not very important to me. What is more important to me is that my selected alternative does not contain the three positive attributes which are there in the alternatives that I do not choose and this makes me less confident about my choice.*

Similar sets constituting two statements were presented to participants who were assigned to experimental conditions in which the sizes of the nonalignable assortments were two and three respectively, the numerals in the statements (e.g. the

number of negative attributes whose presence is avoided or the number of positive attributes that are not present in the chosen alternative) being in accordance with the size of the assortment, (Refer to Appendix B).

We therefore have eight statements or rather eight measures in total being used here (two statements in each experimental condition concerning nonalignable assortments - there are four such experimental conditions). The agreeableness with each statement is assessed on a scale of 1 to 9. Larger values represent greater levels of agreeableness. For each set of statements, we expect the prevention focused participants to show a greater level of agreeableness with Statement A as compared to that with Statement B. For the promotion focused participants, we expect to get results in opposite patterns.

Confound measures used in Task 4

To assess participants' mood states

Since promotion goal fulfillment produces cheerfulness/dejection related emotions whereas prevention goal fulfillment produces quiescence/agitation related emotions (Higgins 1996b), the mood questions were constructed to include positive and negative items from each of these two emotional dimensions: (a) cheerfulness related feeling (happy), dejection related feelings (sad), agitation related feeling (tense), quiescence related feeling (worried). The mood terms were taken from Crowe & Higgins (1997). For each mood term, the respondents were asked to indicate how their current mood state was with respect to a particular mood term on a scale of one to seven while making the choice decision in task 2 (e.g., "How happy were you while making the choice decision?", "How worried were you while making the

choice decision?"). Larger values on a scale indicate strong presence of the corresponding mood item while performing Task 2.

To assess participants' perceived task difficulty levels

Participants were asked to indicate their responses to two questions measuring perceived task difficulty on a scale of one to seven. Larger values indicate greater levels of perceived task difficulty. The questions were as:

- (1) How difficult or how easy was it to make the choice decision in task 2?
- (2) How much attention do you think is needed to make the choice decision in task 2 ?

Measures similar to these have been used in Keller and Macgill (1994) to assess perceived task difficulty.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS OBTAINED FROM EXPERIMENT 1

Assessment of participants' self regulatory focus (Task 1)

We followed the methodology that has been used in past research (Zhao & Pechman; 2007) in order to classify participants as promotion or prevention focused. Firstly, we averaged the responses of each participant on the promotion and prevention measures ($\alpha = .83$ for promotion focus and $.77$ for prevention focus). We then created a measure of dominant regulatory focus by subtracting the prevention score from the promotion score. Subsequently, we classified participants as promotion or prevention focused on the basis of a median split ($Mdn = .778$). Participants whose dominant regulatory focus scores were greater than $.778$ were considered as to be promotion focused whereas participants having dominant regulatory focus scores as less than $.778$ were considered as to be prevention focused. Based on our classification, 123 participants were prevention focused and 129 participants were promotion focused.

Tests of Hypotheses 1a and 1b (Task 2)

We analyzed the results concerning Hypothesis 1a and Hypothesis 1b applying a 2 (Consumers' self regulatory focus: Promotion vs. Prevention) * 2 (Assortment type: Alignable vs. Nonalignable) * 4 (Size of the assortment: 2 vs. 3 vs. 4 vs. 5) between-subjects ANOVA on the dependent variable which asked them to indicate how confident they are about making the correct choice decision when they are asked to choose an energy drink from amongst the options present in the assortments that are given to them. Summarily, we expected the confidence levels of the promotion focused as well as of the prevention focused consumers to increase with increase in

size of the assortment when the assortment type is alignable (H1a). When the assortment type is nonalignable, we expected the confidence levels of the promotion focused consumers to decrease with increase in size of the assortment while we expected the confidence levels of the prevention focused consumers to increase with increase in size of the assortment (H1b). We thus predicted a significant three-way interaction of consumers' self regulatory focus, assortment type, and size of the assortment with consumers' perceived confidence about the correctness of their choice decision as the dependent variable. The results confirmed our predictions. There was a significant three-way interaction as expected ($F(3, 236) = 4.97, p < .01$). We convey nature of interaction in figures 1A and 1B.

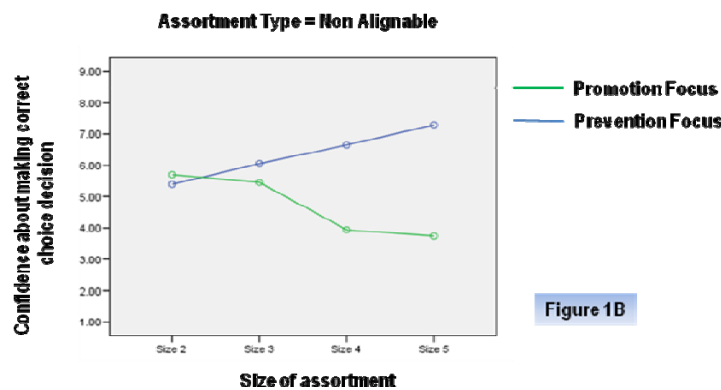
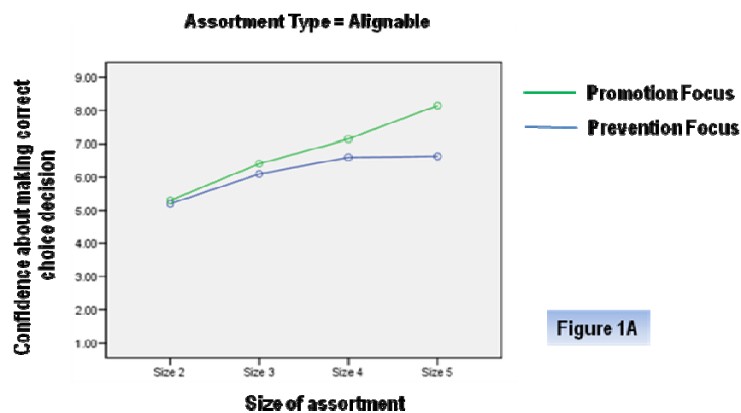


Fig. 1A & B: Three - way Interaction of Consumers' Self Regulatory Focus, Assortment Type and Size of Assortment with 'Confidence' DV - Experiment 1.

Figure 1A exhibits the nature of the changes in the confidence level of the participants having different self regulatory focus about the correctness of their choice decision with changes in size of assortment from which they make a choice, the assortment type being alignable. Figure 1B relates to the corresponding results concerning the nonalignable assortment type.

To test whether the significant three-way interaction term covaries with participants' mood state at the time of performing Task 2 and the difficulty level of task 2 as perceived by the participants, we performed separate 2 (Consumers' self regulatory focus: Promotion vs. Prevention) * 2 (Assortment type: Alignable vs. Nonalignable) * 4 (Size of the assortment: 2 vs. 3 vs. 4 vs. 5) between subjects' ANOVA tests, with the mood measures and the perceived task difficulty measures being included as covariates.

With mood measures as covariates

The three-way interaction term remained significant after controlling for the participants' mood states at the time of performing Task 2:

With "happiness" as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 4.90, p < .01.$

With "worried" as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 4.98, p < .01.$

With "calmness" as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 4.67, p < .01.$

With "sadness" as covariate: $F(3, 214) = 4.89, p < .01.$

Additionally, we observed a significant effect of the mood measure "calmness" on participants' confidence about the correctness of their choice decision

$(F(1, 235) = 6.89, p < .01).$

With perceived task difficulty measures as covariates

The three-way interaction term remained significant after controlling for the participants' perceived difficulty level of Task 2:

With “difficulty of task” as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 4.89, p < .01$.

With “attention needed to solve task” as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 4.99, p < .01$.

Additionally, we observe a marginally significant effect of the perceived task difficulty measure “attention needed to solve the task” on participants' confidence about making the correct choice decision ($F(1, 235) = 5.84, p = .016$).

Since the three-way interaction testing Hypothesis 1a and 1b remained significant after controlling for participants' mood states and the difficulty perceived by them in performing Task 2, we dropped the mood measures and perceived task difficulty measures while conducting further analysis concerning these hypotheses.

Analysis of results when assortment type is alignable

We consider conditions in which the assortment type is alignable (Figure 1A). To analyze the results, we applied a method similar to that which has been used in Gourville & Soman (2005). Specifically, we contrasted the confidence about making the correct choice decision when the assortment size was comparatively “small” (i.e. when $n = 2$ or 3) as compared to when it was comparatively “large” (i.e. $n = 4$ or 5), for promotion and prevention focused participants.

Consistent with H1a, for promotion focused participants, the confidence about making the correct choice decision was significantly higher when the assortment size was “large” as opposed to when it was “small” ($M_{\text{Large}} = 7.65$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 5.79, t(236) = 3.61, p < .05$).

Also consistent with H1a, for prevention focused participants, the confidence about making the correct choice decision was higher when the assortment size was “large” as opposed to when it was “small”, the difference in confidence levels being marginally significant when tested at a significance level of .05 ($M_{\text{Large}} = 6.8$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 5.65$, $t(236) = 1.961$, $p = .051$).

Analysis of results when assortment type is nonalignable

We consider conditions in which the assortment type is nonalignable (Figure 1B). Similar to the analysis of the results related to alignable assortment, we analyzed our results by contrasting the confidence of making the correct choice decision when the assortment size was comparatively “small” (i.e. when $n = 2$ or 3) as compared to when it was comparatively “large” (i.e. $n = 4$ or 5), for promotion and prevention focused participants.

Consistent with H1b, for promotion focused participants, the confidence about making the correct choice decision was significantly lower when the assortment size was “large” as opposed to when it was “small” ($M_{\text{Large}} = 3.93$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 5.53$, $t(236) = -3.611$, $p < .05$).

Also consistent with H1b, for prevention focused participants, the confidence about making the correct choice decision was significantly higher when the assortment size was “large” as opposed to when it was “small” ($M_{\text{Large}} = 6.78$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 5.85$, $t(236) = 2.38$, $p < .05$).

To augment our findings regarding H1b, we ran a two way between-subjects ANOVA test to test the interaction between the variables consumers’ self regulatory focus and size of the assortment on consumers’ perceived confidence level about

making the correct choice decision, with the data regarding nonalignable assortments being considered for analysis. We conducted this analysis to test the significance of the difference in directionality between the promotion and prevention focused consumers' changes in perceived confidence level about the correctness of their choice decisions with changes in assortment size, as is observable from Figure 1B. The interaction term is statistically significant ($F(3,142) = 9.902, p < .01$). This further confirms our predictions concerning H1b that increase in size of a nonalignable assortment affects the confidence levels of prevention and promotion focused consumers about the correctness of their choice decision in opposite directions.

Tests of the hypotheses 2a and 2b (Task 2)

We analyzed the results concerning Hypothesis 2a and Hypothesis 2b applying a 2 (Consumers' self regulatory focus: Promotion vs. Prevention) * 2 (Assortment type: Alignable vs. Nonalignable) * 4 (Size of the assortment: 2 vs. 3 vs. 4 vs. 5) between-subjects ANOVA separately on two dependent variables as mentioned earlier:

(1) Preference for no choice option.

(2) Satisfaction with choice decision.

Analysis of results with the 'preference for no choice' as dependent variable

Summarily, we expected in support of H2a, and H2b that, for the promotion focused as well as for the prevention focused consumers, the level of preference for not making any choice from amongst the given options will decrease with increase in size of the assortment when the assortment type is alignable.

When the assortment type is nonalignable, we expected that for promotion focused consumers the level of preference for not making any choice will increase with increase in size of the assortment while for the prevention focused consumers, the level of preference for not making any choice will decrease with increase in size of the assortment. We thus predicted a significant three-way interaction of consumers' self regulatory focus, assortment type, and size of the assortment with 'preference for no choice option' as the dependent variable. The results confirmed our predictions. There was a significant three-way interaction as expected ($F(3, 236) = 3.16, p < .05$). We convey the nature of interaction in figures 2A and 2B.

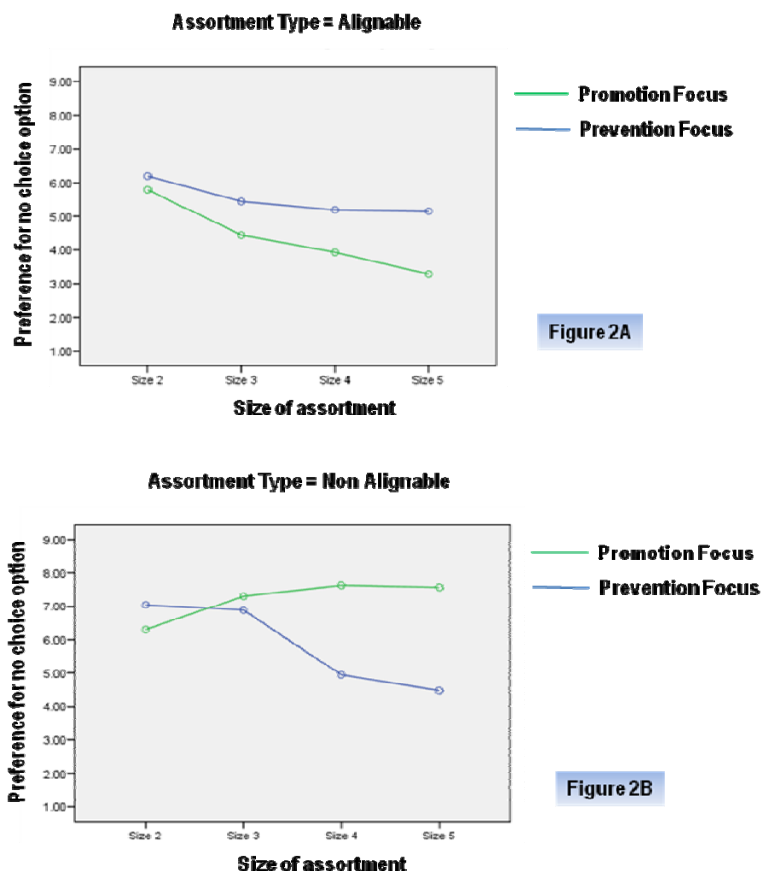


Fig. 2A & B: Three - Way Interaction of Consumers' Self Regulatory Focus, Assortment Type and Size of Assortment with 'Preference for No Choice' DV - Experiment 1.

Figure 2A exhibits the nature of the changes in the preference for no choice option of participants having different self regulatory focus with changes in size of assortment from which they make a choice, the assortment type being alignable. Figure 2B relates to the corresponding results concerning the nonalignable assortment type.

We performed separate 2 (Consumers' Self regulatory focus: Promotion vs. Prevention) * 2 (Assortment type: Alignable vs. Nonalignable) * 4 (Size of the assortment: 2 vs. 3 vs. 4 vs. 5) between subjects' ANOVA tests, with the mood measures and the perceived task difficulty measures being included as covariates.

With mood measures as covariates

The three-way interaction term remained significant after controlling for the participants' mood states at the time of performing Task 2:

With "happiness" as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 3.11, p < .05$.

With "worried" as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 3.20, p < .05$.

With "calmness" as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 2.87, p < .05$.

With "sadness" as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 3.09, p < .05$.

Additionally, we observed a marginally significant effect of the mood measure 'calmness' on participants' 'preference for no choice option' ($F(1, 235) = 3.25, p = .073$).

With perceived task difficulty measures as covariates

The three-way interaction term remained significant after controlling for the participants' perceived difficulty level of Task 2:

With "difficulty of task" as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 2.99, p < .05$

With “attention needed to solve task” as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 3.17, p < .05$.

Additionally, we observe a marginally significant effect of the perceived task difficulty measure “attention needed to solve the task” on participants’ ‘preference for no choice option’ ($F(1, 235) = 3.15, p = .062$).

Since the three-way interaction testing Hypothesis 2a and 2b remained significant after controlling for participants’ mood states and the difficulty perceived by them in performing Task 2, we dropped the mood measures and perceived task difficulty measures while conducting further analysis concerning these hypotheses with ‘preference for no choice option’ as the dependent variable.

Analysis of results when assortment type is alignable

We consider the conditions in which the assortment type is alignable (Figure 2A). To analyze our results, we contrasted the preferences of going for the no choice option when the assortment size was comparatively “small” (i.e. when $n = 2$ or 3) as compared to when it was comparatively “large” (i.e. $n = 4$ or 5), for promotion and prevention focused participants. Consistent with H2a, for promotion focused participants, the preference of going for a no choice option was lower when the assortment size was “large” as opposed to when it was “small”, the difference in the preference levels being marginally significant when tested at a significance level of $.05$ ($M_{Large} = 3.71$ vs. $M_{Small} = 5.07, t(236) = -1.94, p = .053$). Consistent with H2a, for prevention focused participants, the preference of going for a no choice option was lower when the assortment size was “large” as opposed to when it was “small”. The difference in preference levels however did not achieve statistical significance ($M_{Large} = 5.1$ vs. $M_{Small} = 5.95, t(236) = -1.06, p = .288$).

Analysis of results when assortment type is nonalignable

Next, we consider the conditions in which the assortment type is nonalignable (Figure 2B). We contrasted the values concerning preferences of going for the no choice option when the assortment size was comparatively “small” (i.e. when $n = 2$ or 3) as compared to when it was comparatively “large” (i.e. when $n = 4$ or 5), for promotion and prevention focused participants. Consistent with H2b, for promotion focused participants, the preference of going for a no choice option was higher when the assortment size was “large” as opposed to when it was “small”. The difference in preference levels however did not achieve statistical significance ($M_{\text{Large}} = 7.54$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 6.92$, $t(236) = 1.041$, $p = .299$). For the prevention focused participants however, we found statistically significant findings. Consistent with our predictions in H2b regarding prevention focused consumers, the preference in favor of going for the no choice option of the prevention focused participants was significantly lower when the assortment size was comparatively “large” as opposed to when it was comparatively “small” ($M_{\text{Large}} = 4.91$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 6.7$, $t(236) = -3.34$, $p < .05$).

To analyze our findings concerning the data for nonalignable assortments further, we ran a two way between-subjects ANOVA test to test the interaction between the variables consumers’ self regulatory focus and size of the assortment on consumers’ preference for going for a no choice option with the data regarding nonalignable assortments being considered for analysis. We conducted this analysis to test the significance of the difference in directionality between the promotion and prevention focused consumers’ changes in preference levels regarding going for a no choice option with changes in assortment size i.e. when the assortment type is nonalignable

and as is observable from Figure 2B. The interaction term is statistically significant ($F(3,142) = 5.50, p < .01$). This further supports our predictions concerning H2b that increase in size of a nonalignable assortment can affect prevention and promotion focused consumers' preference for making a choice from a nonalignable assortment in opposite directions.

Analysis of results with 'satisfaction with choice decision' as dependent variable

Summarily, in support of H2a and H2b we expected that, when the assortment type is alignable, with increase in size of the assortment, the level of satisfaction of promotion focused as well as of prevention focused consumers with their choice decision will increase with increase in size of the assortment. When the assortment type is nonalignable, the level of satisfaction of promotion focused consumers with their choice decision will decrease with increase in size of the assortment. The level of satisfaction of prevention focused consumers however will increase with increase in size of the assortment. We thus expected to observe a significant three-way interaction between the variables consumers' self regulatory focus, assortment type, and size of assortment with the 'satisfaction with choice decision' as dependent variable. The results confirmed our predictions. There was a significant three-way interaction as expected ($F(3, 236) = 4.92, p < .01$). We convey the nature of interaction in figures 3A and 3B.

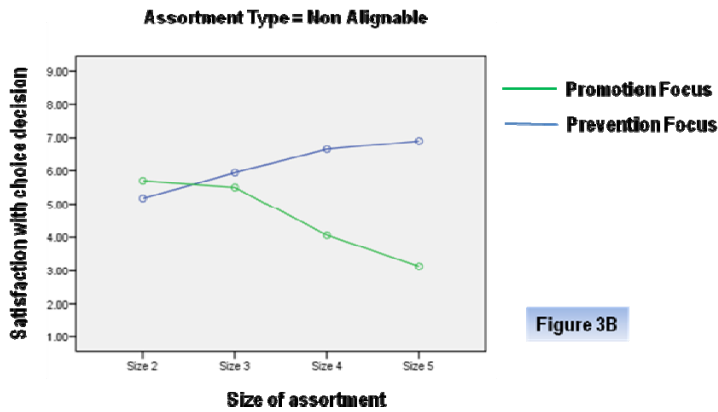
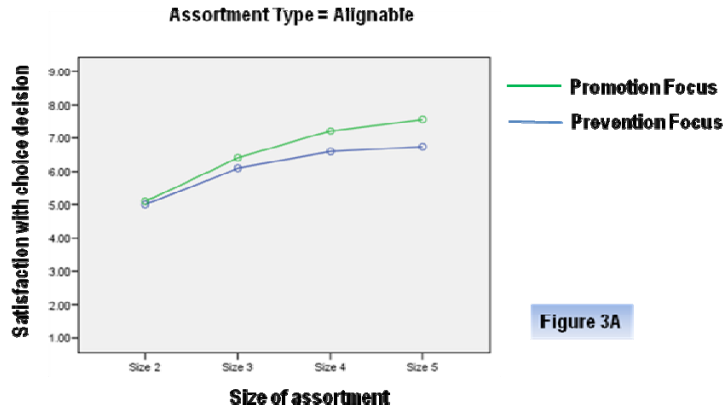


Fig. 3A & B: Three - Way Interaction of Consumers' Self Regulatory Focus, Assortment Type and Size of Assortment with 'Satisfaction' DV - Experiment 1.

Figure 3A exhibits the nature of the changes in the level of satisfaction with choice decision of participants having different self regulatory focus with changes in size of assortment from which they make a choice, the assortment type being alignable. Figure 3B relates to the corresponding results concerning the nonalignable assortment type.

We performed separate 2 (Consumers' self regulatory focus: Promotion vs. Prevention) * 2 (Assortment type: Alignable vs. Nonalignable) * 4 (Size of the assortment: 2 vs. 3 vs. 4 vs. 5) between subjects' ANOVA tests, with the mood measures and the perceived task difficulty measures being included as covariates.

With mood measures as covariates

The three-way interaction term remained significant after controlling for the participants' mood states at the time of performing Task 2:

With "happiness" as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 4.88, p < .01$.

With "worried" as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 5.08, p < .01$.

With "calmness" as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 4.66, p < .01$.

With "sadness" as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 4.81, p < .01$.

With perceived task difficulty measures as covariates

The three-way interaction term remained significant after controlling for the participants' perceived difficulty level of Task 2:

With "difficulty of task" as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 4.84, p < .01$

With "attention needed to solve task" as covariate: $F(3, 235) = 4.93, p < .01$.

Additionally, we observed a marginally significant effect of the perceived task difficulty measure "attention needed to solve the task" on participants' 'satisfaction with choice decision' ($F(1, 235) = 6.13, p = .014$).

Since the three-way interaction testing Hypotheses 2a and 2b remained significant after controlling for participants' mood states and the difficulty perceived by them in performing Task 2, we dropped the mood measures and perceived task difficulty measures while conducting further analysis concerning these hypotheses with 'satisfaction with choice decision' as the dependent variable.

Analysis of results when assortment type is alignable

We consider conditions in which the assortment type is alignable (Figure 3A). To analyze the results, we contrasted the participants' satisfaction with their choice decision when the assortment size was comparatively "small" (i.e. when $n = 2$ or 3) as compared to when it was comparatively "large" (i.e. $n = 4$ or 5), for promotion and prevention focused participants. Consistent with H2a, for promotion focused participants, the level of satisfaction with the choice decision was significantly higher when the assortment size was "large" as opposed to when it was "small" ($M_{\text{Large}} = 7.4$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 5.78$, $t(236) = 3.1$, $p < .05$).

Also consistent with H2a, for prevention focused participants, the level of satisfaction with the choice decision was higher when the assortment size was "large" as opposed to when it was "small", the difference in satisfaction levels being marginally significant when tested at a significance level of .05 ($M_{\text{Large}} = 6.67$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 5.55$, $t(236) = 1.85$, $p = .066$).

Analysis of results when assortment is nonalignable

We consider conditions in which the assortment is nonalignable (Figure 3B).

We contrasted participants' satisfaction with their choice decision when the assortment size was comparatively "small" (i.e. when $n = 2$ or 3) as compared to when it was comparatively "large" (i.e. $n = 4$ or 5), for promotion and prevention focused participants.

Consistent with H2b, for promotion focused participants, the level of satisfaction with the choice decision was significantly lower when the assortment size was "large" as

opposed to when it was “small” ($M_{\text{Large}} = 3.63$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 5.51$, $t(236) = -4.09$, $p < .05$).

Also consistent with H2b, for prevention focused participants, the level of satisfaction with the choice decision was significantly higher when the assortment size was “large” as opposed to when it was “small” ($M_{\text{Large}} = 6.65$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 5.6$, $t(236) = 2.43$, $p < .05$).

We ran a two way between-subjects ANOVA to test the interaction between the variables consumers’ self regulatory focus and size of the assortment with the ‘satisfaction with choice decision’ as the dependent variable, with the data regarding nonalignable assortments being considered for analysis. We conducted this analysis to test the significance of the difference in directionality between the promotion and prevention focused consumers’ changes in level of satisfaction with their choice decisions with changes in assortment size i.e. for a nonalignable assortment as is observable from Figure 3B. The interaction term is statistically significant ($F(3,142) = 11.797$, $p < .01$). This further supports our predictions concerning H2b that increase in size of a nonalignable assortment can affect prevention and promotion focused consumers’ preference for making a choice from a nonalignable assortment in opposite directions.

Analyses of results concerning Task 3

Assumption related to choice process

To validate our assumption that prevention focused consumers while making a choice from amongst a given set of alternatives, arrive at their choice decision by

rejecting the alternatives which they think are unfavorable, we compared the prevention focused participants' mean levels of agreeability with the two statements:

Statement A: While making my choice, I searched for the option that I thought was the most favorable.

Statement B: While making my choice, I looked at rejecting the options which I thought were unfavorable.

We used paired sample t-test to make the comparison. The results validated our assumption. The mean level of agreeability of prevention focused participants with Statement B was significantly higher than their corresponding mean level of agreeability with Statement A ($M = 7.19$ vs. $M = 5.95$, $t(122) = 3.804$, $p < .01$).

To validate our assumption that promotion focused consumers while making a choice from amongst a given set of alternatives, arrive at their choice decision by making out as to which amongst the given alternatives is most favorable, we carried out a similar paired sample t-test analysis, to compare the mean levels of agreeability of the promotion focused participants with Statement A and Statement B. The results validated our assumptions. The mean level of agreeability of promotion focused participants with Statement A was significantly higher than their corresponding mean level of agreeability with Statement B ($M = 7.36$ vs. $M = 6.25$, $t(128) = 3.745$, $p < .01$).

Role of attribute valence in choice decision

To validate the point that prevention and promotion focused consumers place different levels of importance on the positive and negative attributes while making a choice from amongst a given set of alternatives, we did a separate comparison of the

mean levels of agreeability of the prevention and promotion focused participants with the two statements:

Statement A: While making my choice, I focused more on the positive attributes of the given alternatives.

Statement B: While making my choice, I focused more on the negative attributes of the given alternatives .

We expected the prevention focused participants to attach more importance to the negative attributes of the given alternatives while arriving at their choice decision.

The results confirmed our expectations. Paired sample t test revealed that the mean levels of agreeability of the prevention focused participants with the Statement B was significantly higher as compared to the corresponding mean agreeability level with Statement A ($M = 6.59$ vs. $M = 5.56$, $t(122) = 3.203$, $p < .01$).

On the contrary, we expected the promotion focused participants to attach more importance to the positive attributes of the given alternatives as compared to the negative attributes while arriving at their choice decision. The results confirmed our expectations. Paired sample t test revealed that the mean level of agreeability of the promotion focused participants with Statement A was significantly higher as compared to the corresponding mean agreeability level with Statement B ($M = 6.58$ vs. $M = 4.97$, $t(128) = 4.508$, $p < .01$).

Choice process triggering self regulatory goal fulfillment

In order to validate that choice process triggers self regulatory goal fulfillment which in turn contributes to the confidence of promotion and prevention focused consumers on their choice decision, we had asked participants making choices from

alignable assortments to demonstrate their levels of agreeability with the two statements:

***Statement A:** Choosing the best from amongst all available options is what makes me confident about a choice decision.*

***Statement B:** Being able to successfully reject all unfavorable options is what makes me confident about a choice decision.*

We had expected the prevention focused participants to exhibit higher levels of agreeableness with Statement B as compared to with Statement A. We had expected to observe opposite patterns for promotion focused participants. We used paired sample t-test to compare the levels of agreeability separately for promotion and prevention focused consumers.

The results confirmed our expectations. Prevention focused participants exhibited significantly higher levels of agreeability with Statement B as compared to the that exhibited with Statement A ($M = 7.15$ vs. $M = 5.56$, $t(43) = 2.62$, $p < .05$). Contrary to this, promotion focused participants exhibited significantly higher levels of agreeability with Statement A as compared to that exhibited with Statement B ($M = 6.77$ vs. $M = 5.53$, $t(57) = 2.598$, $p < .05$).

Support for theory leading to H2a

As discussed earlier, in order to garner support for our theorization on H2a, in each of the experimental conditions concerning nonalignable assortments of different sizes we had collected participants' responses in the form of agreeableness ratings on two statements which actually were process measures assessing the source of confidence of participants about the correctness of their choice decision. Statements

presented to participants who had made a choice from the nonalignable assortment of size 5 were as:

***Statement A:** If I choose one option from amongst the five options that are described, I am having one positive attribute in my chosen option. However, I am being able to avoid the presence of four negative attributes from the alternatives that I do not choose and that is what makes me confident about my choice.*

***Statement B:** If I choose one option from amongst the five options that are described, I am having one negative attribute in my chosen option. That is not very important to me. What is more important to me is that my selected alternative does not contain four positive attributes which are there in the alternatives that I do not choose and this makes me less confident about my choice.*

In support for our proposed theory, we had expected the prevention focused participants to exhibit a greater level of agreeableness with Statement A as compared to the agreeableness rating exhibited with Statement B. For the promotion focused participants, we had expected to get results in opposite patterns. Results confirmed our expectations. Paired sample t-tests revealed that, prevention focused participants exhibited a significantly stronger level of agreeability with Statement A as compared to that exhibited with Statement B ($M=6.33$ vs. $M=4.42$, $t(20)=2.376$, $p < .05$). Promotion focused participants showed significantly stronger levels of agreeability with Statement B as compared to that shown with Statement A ($M=6.52$ vs. $M = 4.47$, $t(22) = 2.33$, $p < .05$). Similar sets constituting of two statements each were presented to participants in the experimental conditions involving nonalignable assortment

having sizes two, three, four respectively. Comparisons using paired sample t-test revealed that:

When the assortment size was two, prevention focused participants exhibited a significantly stronger level of agreeability with Statement A as compared to that exhibited with Statement B ($M = 7.08$ vs. $M = 5.83$, $t(22) = 2.393$, $p < .05$).

Promotion focused participants showed a significantly stronger level of agreeability with Statement B as compared to that shown with Statement A ($M = 6.52$ vs. $M = 4.47$, $t(9) = 2.751$, $p < .05$).

When the assortment size was three, prevention focused participants exhibited a stronger level of agreement with Statement A as compared to that exhibited with Statement B ($M = 6.63$ vs. $M = 5.15$, $t(18) = 1.943$, $p = .068$), the difference in the levels of agreeability being marginally significant when tested at a significance level of .05. Promotion focused participants showed a significantly stronger level of agreement with Statement B as compared to that shown with Statement A ($M = 6.54$ vs. $M = 3.5$, $t(21) = 2.751$, $p < .05$).

When the assortment size was four, prevention focused participants exhibited a significantly stronger level of agreement with Statement A as compared to that exhibited with Statement B ($M = 6.11$ vs $M = 4.05$, $t(16) = 2.244$, $p < .05$). Promotion focused participants showed a significantly stronger level of agreement with Statement B as compared to that shown with Statement A ($M = 6.33$ vs. $M = 3.93$, $t(14) = 2.987$, $p < .05$).

DISCUSSION ON EXPERIMENT 1

The findings from this experiment support our theory that the effect of assortment alignability and size on consumer choice behavior may not necessarily be uniform for consumers having different self regulatory focus. An important issue that needs to be addressed relates to the alignable assortment conditions. In our theorization, we argue that consumers while making choices from alignable assortments make their choice decisions in accordance with their self regulatory focus with the aim of fulfilling their self regulatory goal. With increase in the size of assortment, as consumers make their choices, perceived fulfillment of their self regulatory goal increases. This leads to an increase in the confidence of consumers on their choice decision with increase in the size of the assortment. Furthermore, in consistence with the theorizing, for alignable assortments, we expect that the promotion (prevention) focused consumers would prefer to select an option which has the maximum (minimum) proportion of the positive (negative) attribute in it. In this regard, although the findings were in line with these specific choice predictions, the empirical evidence is not as reliable primarily because of the small sample sizes in which the observation was made.

In addition, an alternate prediction for choice behavior in an alignable assortment can be made from the compromise effect literature (Simonson; 1989). For instance, the compromise effect would suggest consumers would choose the middle option of an alignable assortment size of five. Why was this then not observed in experiment 1's results? We propose that the need to maintain one's self regulatory focus may have mitigated the tendency to compromise. If this is indeed so, it implies that if we were to identify conditions where the motivation to choose the compromised option is

heightened, we should more likely observe a choice behavior that is commensurate with the compromise effect. In this respect, experiment 2 examines the role of justification as a moderating predictor.

Simonson (1989) has theorized and illustrated that when consumers expect to justify their choice decisions to others, then as compared to when they do not expect to justify their choice decisions, compromise effect will play a stronger role since under high need for justification, due to uncertainty about the preferences of others, selection of a compromise/middle option is perceived by consumers as to be the safest option with the smallest maximum error, easier to justify and less likely to be criticized. Note that in experiment 1, the participants do not expect to justify their choice decisions. Thus, for the participants choosing a brand variant from the alignable assortment of size 5, the need for maintaining one's self regulatory focus might have mitigated the tendency to select the compromise option. Had there been on the contrary an experimental condition in which the participants making choices from an alignable assortment of size 5 did expect to justify their choice decisions, then in accordance with Simonson (1989), the uncertainty in the minds of promotion (prevention) focused participants about the weights that would be placed by the evaluator on positive (negative) attributes of the brand variants in the assortment should have heightened their motivation to select the safer middle or compromise choice option. This is also consistent with the theorization of Tetlock (1985) which states that justifying choice decisions to others based on attribute weights can be perceived as to be a risky strategy by consumers if they are uncertain about the evaluator's perceptions regarding the weights of the attributes. Thus, need for

justification of one's choice decision to others can be a potential moderator which moderates the effect of consumers' self regulatory focus on their choice decisions while they make choices from alignable assortments having a compromise option.

In summary, therefore, based on our discussion, we can postulate the following hypothesis which we would like to test by conducting experiment 2:

H3: When consumers while making choice from alignable assortments consisting of compromise options, with the choice options in the assortment consisting of positive as well as negative attributes, expect to justify their choice decisions to others then the need to maintain their self regulatory focus should be mitigated by the motivation to select the compromise option. The choice decision should thus be the compromise option irrespective of consumers' self regulatory focus.

When consumers while making choice from alignable assortments consisting of compromise options, with the choice options in the assortment consisting of positive as well as negative attributes, do not expect to justify their choice decisions to others then the motivation to select the compromise option should be mitigated by the need to maintain their self regulatory focus. The choice decision should thus be in accordance with the self regulatory focus of consumers.

Results from experiment 1 had showed that for consumers making choices from alignable assortments, the need to maintain one's self regulatory focus can mitigate the tendency to compromise. The motivation of conducting experiment 2 is to identify a condition wherein the tendency to compromise can mitigate the need to maintain self regulatory focus for consumers making choices from alignable assortments. Thus, the results of experiment 2 should enable us to create a framework

for our main findings from experiment 1. In addition, in experiment 1, participants responded to the main dependent measures right after they had provided their responses to the items measuring their regulatory focus. As such, there may have been a “Carryover Effect” from the regulatory focus to the dependent measures. We introduced a significant delay between the two sets of measures in experiment 2 to address this concern.

EXPERIMENT 2 - DESIGN OF AND METHODOLOGY

The overall design of the experiment is 2 (Consumers' self regulatory focus: Promotion vs. Prevention) x 2 (Assortment type: alignable vs. nonalignable) x 2 (Size of assortment: 2 vs. 5) plus one more experimental condition in which a 'justification-need' manipulation is induced.

Participants: In total, one-hundred and ninety-four undergraduate students from NUS Business School participated in this experiment. They received course credits in exchange of their participation. The experiment was conducted over two consecutive days. The participants were present on each day of the experiment to perform respective tasks as were required.

Tasks conducted on Day 1

On day 1 of experiment 2, in order to assess the self regulatory focus of participants, we required participants to complete an 18 item scale of regulatory focus, the scale used being similar to the one that was used in experiment 1.

Participants then performed a second task which was unrelated to the current study and were asked to leave for the day. They were required to come back on the next day i.e. 24 hours after they performed the 'self regulatory focus task' to complete the remaining portion of the experiment. The fact that the 'self regulatory focus' task on day 1 and the tasks which were to be performed on day 2 were actually components of the same study was not disclosed to them. Thus, the responses to the measures collected on day 2 (to be discussed hereafter) can be deemed as to be not affected by any "Carryover Effect" resulting from the self regulatory focus ratings done by the participants on day 1.

Tasks conducted on Day 2

The assortments we used in this experiment were of different types of alignability with their sizes being kept as 2 & 5. The orders of the variants in the assortments were counterbalanced. The features of the assortments were similar to those used in experiment 1.

Alignable Assortment of size 2

Features of Brand variants

Brand Variant	Proportion of Riboflavin which improves haemoglobin content in blood	Proportion of Glutamine which may cause stomach discomfiture	Proportion of Thiamin which may increase strength of muscles	Proportion of Sulfonamide which may cause sleep disturbances
Variant 1	5%	5%	2.5%	2.5%
Variant 2	5 %	5%	5%	5%

Alignable Assortment of size 5

Features of Brand variants

Brand Variant	Proportion of Riboflavin which improves haemoglobin content in blood	Proportion of Glutamine which may cause stomach discomfiture	Proportion of Thiamin which may increase strength of muscles	Proportion of Sulfonamide which may cause sleep disturbances
Variant 1	5%	5%	2.5%	2.5%
Variant 2	5 %	5%	5%	5%
Variant 3	5%	5%	7.5%	7.5%
Variant 4	5%	5%	10%	10%
Variant 5	5%	5%	12.5%	12.5%

Nonalignable Assortment of size 2
Features of Brand variants

Brand Variant	<i>Creatinine</i> [improves blood circulation]	<i>Inositol</i> [Reduces water absorption]	<i>Biotin</i> [improves concentration]	<i>Guarana</i> [causes allergic reaction]	<i>Niacin</i> [improves reflex action]	<i>Sulfonamide</i> [causes sleep disturbance]
Variant 1	Present	Present	Present	Present		
Variant 2	Present	Present			Present	Present

Nonalignable Assortment of size 5
Features of Brand variants

Brand Variant	<i>Creatinine</i> [improves blood circulation]	<i>Inositol</i> [Reduces water absorption]	<i>Biotin</i> [improves concentration]	<i>Guarana</i> [causes allergic reaction]	<i>Niacin</i> [improves reflex action]	<i>Sulfonamide</i> [causes sleep disturbance]	<i>Taurine</i> [improves physical stamina]	<i>Ephedrine</i> [causes headache]	<i>Peptide</i> [improves skin conditioning]	<i>Adbuten</i> [causes agitation]	<i>Galactose</i> [improves vision]	<i>Albuprofen</i> [causes digestive problems]
Variant 1	Present	Present	Present	Present								
Variant 2	Present	Present			Present	Present						
Variant 3	Present	Present					Present	Present				
Variant 4	Present	Present							Present	Present		
Variant 5	Present	Present									Present	Present

Replication of findings obtained from experiment 1

To seek replication of the findings obtained from Experiment 1 in support of H1a/H1b and H2a/H2b, we adopted a 2(Consumers’ regulatory focus: Promotion vs Prevention) * 2 (Assortment Alignability: Alignable vs Nonalignable) * 2 (Size of assortment: 2 vs 5) between-subjects’ ANOVA approach. On the second day of the experiment, one hundred and forty-four participants were presented with the hypothetical assortments which have been illustrated earlier. Each participant was given one assortment only. They were then required to make a choice from amongst the options present in the assortments. Subsequently, they responded to the same set of dependent measures that were used in experiment 1 (viz. confidence, no choice and satisfaction) to test hypotheses 1a and 1b. Additionally, these participants responded to the same set of confound measures and process measures that were used in experiment 1.

^aTable 1: Cell sizes of the different experimental conditions in Experiment 2 to test H1/H2 ^d.

Cell Sizes	Alignable assortment				Nonalignable assortment			
	Size 2		Size 5		Size 2		Size 5	
	Promotion ^b	Prevention ^c	Promotion	Prevention	Promotion	Prevention	Promotion	Prevention
	N=15	N=15	N=26	N=29	N=14	N=14	N=17	N=14
N=30		N=55		N=28		N=31		

^a The total number of participants for testing H1/H2 in Experiment 2 is one-hundred and forty-four.

^b Promotion refers to promotion focused participants.

^c Prevention refers to prevention focused participants.

^d We assessed the regulatory focus of participants based on their responses to the regulatory focus measures. For details on the classification, see subsection on Pg 81 titled “Assessment of Self Regulatory Focus”.

To test Hypotheses 3

Summarily, the objective of testing hypothesis 3 is to compare the choice decisions of participants who are making choices from alignable assortments

consisting of compromise options at different levels of justification-high and low. It is the alignable assortment of size 5 which consists of a “compromise” or “middle” option viz. Variant 3. The alignable assortment of size 2 does not consist of any compromise option. Thus, hypothesis 3 can be tested only with the alignable assortment of size 5. Hence, comparisons of choice decisions at high and low levels of need for justification are done for participants making choices from alignable assortments of size 5 only.

Low need for justification condition

We consider the fifty-five participants indicated in table 1 in the alignable assortment - size 5 experimental condition to be in the low need for justification condition. Note that, these participants were not given any information regarding the need for them to justify their choice decisions to others. This should therefore not increase their expectation to justify their choice decisions.

High need for Justification manipulation

Taking cue from Simonson (1989), we induced a ‘high need for justification’ experimental condition for a separate set of fifty participants (these participants are not amongst the ones in table 1). Each of these participants was presented with the same alignable assortment of size 5 that has been illustrated earlier. They were asked to make a choice from amongst the options present in the assortment given to them. The manipulation was induced simultaneously along with the choice statement. Specifically, the participants were informed that a booklet containing choice decisions of all participants ordered alphabetically by their last names will be prepared. Their choice decisions would be evaluated by the experimenter and they will be contacted

and asked to justify their choice decision by the experimenter. They were then asked to write their names on their questionnaires. These manipulation statements should increase their expectation to justify their choice decisions. We state the cell sizes in the high and low need for justification experimental condition in table 2.

Table 2: Cell sizes of High and Low need for Justification Condition - Hypothesis 3

Cell Sizes	Alignable Assortment of Size 5	
	High Need for Justification	Low Need for Justification
	50	55

Manipulation Check

For the justification-need manipulation, we used the same “confidence on choice” (i.e., the DV) measure as an indicant of successful manipulation. We expect that if the manipulation works, then in accordance with Simonson (1989), the level of uncertainty in the minds of participants in the high need for justification condition regarding the preferences of the experimenter will be significantly greater as compared to the corresponding level of uncertainty in the minds of participants in the low need for justification condition. Thus, the level of confidence of the ‘high need for justification’ participants about they having made the correct choice decision will be significantly lower as compared to the corresponding confidence level of participants in the low need for justification condition.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS OBTAINED FROM EXPERIMENT 2

Test of Hypothesis 3

Manipulation Check

To illustrate that our ‘high need for justification’ manipulation works, we contrasted the confidence levels of participants on they having made the correct choice decision in the high need for justification condition with the corresponding confidence levels of participants in the low need for justification condition. We had expected the confidence levels of participants in the high need for justification condition to be significantly lower as compared to the corresponding confidence level of participants in the low need for justification condition. The results confirmed our expectations. The confidence levels of participants on the correctness of their choice decisions in the high need for justification condition was significantly lower as compared to the corresponding confidence levels of participants in the low need for justification condition($M = 5.29$ vs $M = 6.92$, $t(97) = 3.34$, $p < .05$).

Choice of compromise vs. non compromise options made by participants possessing different levels of concern regarding choice decision being evaluated by others

In support of hypothesis 3, we construed that as compared to when participants in the low need for justification condition choose a brand variant from an alignable assortment of size 5, the presence of “Compromise Effect” will be stronger when participants in the high need for justification condition choose a brand variant from an alignable assortment of size 5. Accordingly, we had expected that, amongst the participants who were in the high need for justification condition, the need to maintain self regulatory goal should be mitigated by the tendency to choose the compromise

option irrespective of the participants' self regulatory focus. Thus, the share of the compromise option (i.e. Variant 3) should be significantly greater as compared to the share of the non compromise options in between these participants. On the contrary, for the participants who were in the low need for justification condition, the tendency to choose the compromise options should be mitigated by the need to maintain self regulatory goal. Thus, in between these participants, the share of the non compromise options should be significantly greater as compared to the share of the compromise option.

The results confirmed our expectations. Out of the fifty participants who made choices from alignable assortment of size 5 and who were in the high need for justification condition, 70% (N = 35) selected the compromise option whereas 30% (N = 15) selected the non compromise options, the difference between the shares of the compromise and non compromise options being statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = 8.0$, $p < .05$).

On the contrary, out of the fifty-five participants who made choices from alignable assortment of size 5 and who were in the low need for justification condition, only 18% (N = 10) selected the compromise option whereas 82% (N = 45) selected the non compromise options the difference between the shares of the compromise and non compromise options being statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = 22.2$, $p < .05$).

Table 3: ^a Impact of the High and Low Need For Justification Conditions on magnitude of Compromise Effect ^b

^c Choice Options ^d	Justification-Need Condition	Share ^e
Compromise	High	70%
Non Compromise	High	30%
Compromise	Low	18%
Non Compromise	Low	82%

^a The participants made choices from alignable assortment of size 5 illustrated earlier.

^b The number of participants in the high need for justification condition was fifty and that in the low need for justification condition was fifty-five.

^c The compromise choice option mentioned in table 3 represents Variant 3 in the alignable assortment of size 5.

^d The non compromise choice option mentioned in Table 3 represents the choice options other than Variant 3 in the alignable assortment of size 5 viz. Variant 1, Variant 2, Variant 4, Variant 5.

^e The shares of the compromise and non compromise choice options are significantly different at the 0.05 level in both the justification-need conditions- high and low..

Sub analysis of participants' choice decisions in the high need for justification condition

In congruence with Hypothesis 3, we expected to observe that amongst the participants making choices from alignable assortment of size 5 in the high need for justification condition, the share of the compromise option as compared to that of the non compromise options would be significantly greater for both promotion focused participants and prevention focused participants when their choice decisions are analyzed separately.

Choice data of promotion focused participants

We had twenty-four promotion focused participants who made choices from alignable assortment of size 5 and who were in the high need for justification condition. Of them, 71 % (N = 17) selected the compromise option whereas 29% (N = 7) selected the non compromise options, the difference between the shares of the compromise and non compromise options being statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = 4.16$, $p < .05$).

Table 4: ^a Choice data of promotion focused participants in the High Need for Justification Condition ^b

Choice Options	Share ^e
Compromise ^c	71%
Non Compromise ^d	29%

^a Choices were made from alignable assortment of size 5 illustrated earlier.

^b There were twenty-four promotion focused participants who made choices from alignable assortment of size 5 in the high need for justification condition.

^c The compromise choice option mentioned in table 4 represents Variant 3 in the alignable assortment of size 5.

^d The non compromise choice option mentioned in table 4 represent the choice options other than Variant 3 in the alignable assortment of size 5 viz. Variant 1, Variant 2, Variant 4, Variant 5.

^e The difference between the shares of the compromise and the non compromise choice options is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Choice data of prevention focused participants

We had twenty-six prevention focused participants who made choices from alignable assortment of size 5 and who were in the high need for justification condition. Of them, 69% (N = 18) selected the compromise option whereas 31% (N = 8) selected the non compromise options, the difference between the shares of the compromise and non compromise options being statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = 3.84$, $p < .06$).

Table 5: ^a Choice data of prevention focused participants in the High Need for Justification Condition ^b

Choice Options	Share ^e
Compromise ^c	69%
Non Compromise ^d	31%

^a Choices were made from alignable assortment of size 5 illustrated earlier.

^b There were twenty-six prevention focused participants who made choices from alignable assortment of size 5 in the high need for justification condition.

^c The compromise choice option mentioned in table 5 represents Variant 3 in the alignable assortment of size 5.

^d The non compromise choice option mentioned in Table 5 represents the choice options other than Variant 3 in the alignable assortment of size 5 viz. Variant 1, Variant 2, Variant 4, Variant 5.

^e The difference between the shares of the compromise and non compromise choice options is statistically significant at the 0.06 level.

Sub analysis of participants' choice decisions in the low need for justification condition

In further support of Hypothesis 3, we expected to observe that amongst participants who made choices from alignable assortment of size 5 in the low need for justification condition, promotion focused participants buoyed by the need to maintain their self regulatory goal would have a tendency to choose variant 5 which consists of the greatest proportion of the positive attribute Thiamin as compared to the other alternatives in the choice set. Thus, the share of variant 5 will be significantly greater amongst promotion focused participants making choices from alignable assortment of size 5 in the low need for justification condition as compared to the shares of the other options present in the assortment (and this includes the compromise option also).

For similar reasons, prevention focused participants making choices from alignable assortment of size 5 and who were in the low need for justification condition, would have a tendency to choose variant 1 which consists of the lowest proportion of the negative attribute Sulfonamide as compared to the other alternatives in the choice set. Thus, the share of variant 1 will be significantly greater amongst prevention focused participants making choices from alignable assortment of size 5 in the low need for justification condition as compared to the shares of the other options present in the assortment (and this includes the compromise option also).

Analysis of choice data confirmed our expectations.

Choice data of promotion focused participants

We had twenty-seven promotion focused participants who made choices from alignable assortment of size 5 and who were in the low need for justification

condition. Of them, 70% (N = 19) selected Variant 5 whereas 30% (N = 8) selected the four other variants, the difference between the share of Variant 5 and the combined share of the other variants being statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = 4.48, p < .05$).

Table 6: ^a Choice data of promotion focused participants in the Low Need for Justification Condition ^b

Choice Options	Share ^e
Variant 5 ^c	70%
Non Variant 5 ^d	30%

^a Choices were made from alignable assortment of size 5 illustrated earlier.

^b There were twenty-seven promotion focused participants who made choices from alignable assortment of size 5 in the low need for justification condition.

^c Variant 5 represents the choice option with the highest proportion of positive attribute Thiamin in the alignable assortment of size 5.

^d Non Variant 5 represents the choice options other than Variant 5 in the alignable assortment of size 5 viz. Variant 1, Variant 2, Variant 3, Variant 4.

^e The difference between the share of Variant 5 and that of the other variants is statistically significant at 0.05 level.

Choice data of prevention focused participants

We had twenty-eight prevention focused participants who made choices from alignable assortment of size 5 and who were in the low need for justification condition. Of them, 68% (N = 19) selected Variant 1 whereas 32% (N = 9) selected the four other variants, the difference between the shares of Variant 1 and the combined share of the other variants being statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = 3.57, p < .06$).

Table 7: ^a Choice data of prevention focused participants in the Low Need for Justification Condition ^b

Choice Options	Share ^e
Variant 1 ^c	68%
Non Variant 1 ^d	32%

^a Choices were made from alignable assortment of size 5 illustrated earlier.

^b There were twenty-eight prevention focused participants who made choices from alignable assortment of size 5 in the low need for justification condition.

^c Variant 1 represents the choice option with the lowest proportion of negative attribute Sulphonamide in the alignable assortment of size 5.

^d Non Variant 1 represents the choice options other than Variant 1 in the alignable assortment of size 5 viz. Variant 2, Variant 3, Variant 4, Variant 5.

^e The difference between the share of Variant 1 and that of the other variants is statistically significant at 0.06 level.

Replication of findings obtained from experiment 1

Assessment of self regulatory focus

We classified the one hundred and forty-four participants selected for re-testing H1a & H2a/ H1b & H2b as promotion focused and prevention focused by adopting a similar ‘median split’ methodology as was used in experiment 1. Based on the classification, seventy-two out of the one hundred and forty-four participants were promotion focused and seventy-two were prevention focused.

Analysis of results concerning re-testing of H1a & H1b

To re-test H1a and H1b, we used the same “Confidence” dependent measure which was used in experiment 1. We analyzed the results concerning H1a and H1b by applying a 2 (Consumers’ self regulatory focus: Promotion vs. Prevention) * 2 (Assortment type: Alignable vs. Nonalignable) * 2 (Size of the assortment: 2 vs. 5) between-subjects ANOVA on the “Confidence” DV. There was a significant three-way interaction as expected ($F(1,136) = 10.82, p < .01$). We convey the nature of interaction in figures 4A and 4B.

Figure 4A exhibits the nature of the changes in the confidence level of the participants having different self regulatory focus for the alignable assortment type. Figure 4B relates to the corresponding results concerning the nonalignable assortment type.

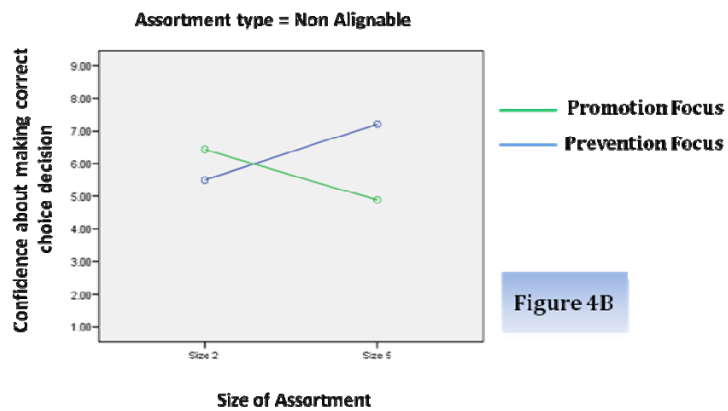
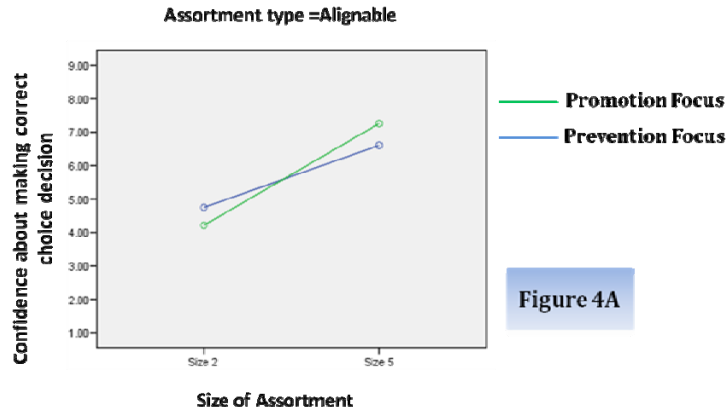


Fig. 4A & B : Three - way Interaction of Consumers’ Self Regulatory focus, Assortment Type and Size of Assortment with ‘Confidence’ DV -Experiment 2.

With mood measures and perceived task difficulty measures as covariates

We had used the same set of confound measures as were used in experiment 1 to test if the three-way interaction covaries with participants’ mood states and their perceived task difficulty levels. The three-way interaction term remained significant after controlling for the confound measures (p 's < .01) (For details, see Appendix C).

Analysis of results when assortment type is alignable

We consider conditions in which the assortment type is alignable (Figure 4A). Contrast analysis similar to experiment 1 showed that, consistent with H1a, the promotion focused consumers’ confidence about making correct choice decision was

significantly higher when the assortment size was “large”(N = 5) as opposed to when it was “small”(N = 2) ($M_{Large} = 7.26$ vs. $M_{Small} = 4.0$, $t(136) = 5.19$, $p < .05$).

Similar trend was observed with the prevention focused participants ($M_{Large} = 6.62$ vs. $M_{Small} = 5$, $t(136) = 2.62$, $p < .05$).

Analysis of results when assortment type is nonalignable

We consider conditions in which the assortment type is nonalignable (Figure 4B). Contrast analysis showed that, consistent with H1b, the promotion focused participants’ confidence about making the correct choice decision was significantly lower when the assortment size was “large” (N = 5) as opposed to when it was “small” (N = 2) ($M_{Large} = 4.8$ vs. $M_{Small} = 6.42$, $t(136) = - 2.2$, $p < .05$).

Also consistent with H1b, the prevention focused participants’ confidence was significantly higher when the assortment size was “large” (N = 5) as opposed to when it was “small” (N = 2) ($M_{Large} = 7.2$ vs. $M_{Small} = 5.3$, $t(136) = 2.33$, $p < .05$).

Analysis of results concerning re-testing of H2a & H2b

We analyzed the results concerning Hypothesis 2a and Hypothesis 2b applying a 2 (Participants’ Self regulatory focus: Promotion vs. Prevention) * 2 (Assortment type: Alignable vs. Nonalignable) * 2 (Size of the assortment: 2 vs. 5) between-subjects ANOVA separately on two dependent variables which were the same as used in Experiment 1 viz. “Preference for no choice option” and “Satisfaction with choice decision”.

Analysis of results with the ‘preference for no choice’ as dependent variable

Summarily, we expected to get in support of H2a and H2b a significant three-way interaction of consumers’ self regulatory focus, assortment type, size of the assortment

with the ‘preference for no choice option’ DV. The results confirmed our predictions. There was a significant three-way interaction as expected ($F(1,136) = 10.72, p < .01$).

We convey the nature of interaction in figures 5A and 5B.

Figure 5A exhibits the nature of the changes in the level of ‘preference for no choice option’ of the participants having different self regulatory focus for the alignable assortment type. Figure 5B relates to the corresponding results concerning the nonalignable assortment type.

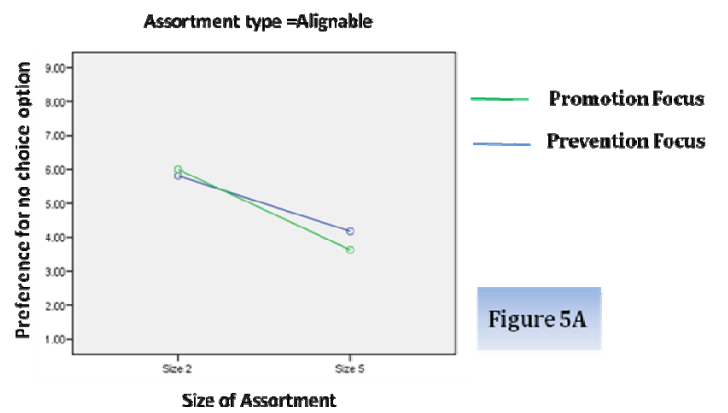


Figure 5A

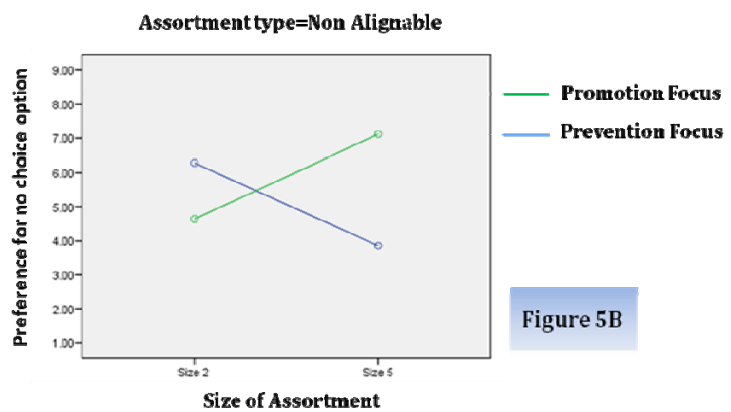


Figure 5B

Fig. 5A & B: Three - way Interaction of Consumers’ Self Regulatory Focus, Assortment Type and Size of Assortment with ‘Preference for No Choice’ DV –Experiment 2

With mood measures and perceived task difficulty measures as covariates

The three-way interaction term remained significant after controlling for the mood measures and perceived task difficulty measures (p 's < .01) (For details, see Appendix D).

Analysis of results when assortment type is alignable

Contrast analysis similar to experiment 1 showed that, consistent with H2a, the promotion focused participants' preference of going for a no choice option was significantly lower when the assortment size was "large" ($N = 5$) as opposed to when it was "small" ($N = 2$) ($M_{\text{Large}} = 3.80$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 6.06$, $t(136) = -2.79$, $p < .05$). Similar trend was observed with the prevention focused participants ($M_{\text{Large}} = 4.0$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 5.73$, $t(136) = -2.18$, $p < .05$).

Analysis of results when assortment type is nonalignable

Next, we consider the conditions in which the assortment type is nonalignable (Figure 5B). Contrast analysis showed that, consistent with H2b, the promotion focused participants' preference of going for a no choice option was significantly higher when the assortment size was "large" ($N = 5$) as opposed to when it was "small" ($N = 2$) ($M_{\text{Large}} = 7.11$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 4.64$, $t(136) = 2.75$, $p < .05$). Also consistent with H2b, the prevention focused participants' preference of going for no choice option was significantly lower when the assortment size was "large" ($N = 5$) as opposed to when it was "small" ($N = 2$) ($M_{\text{Large}} = 3.85$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 6.28$, $t(136) = -2.58$, $p < .05$).

Analysis of results with ‘satisfaction with choice decision’ as dependent variable

Summarily, in support of H2a and H2b we expected to see a significant three-way interaction of the variables consumers’ self regulatory focus, assortment type and size of assortment with the ‘Satisfaction’ DV. The results confirmed our predictions. There was a significant three-way interaction as expected ($F(1,136) = 11.01, p < .01$). We convey the nature of interaction in figures 6A and 6B.

Figure 6A exhibits the nature of the changes in the satisfaction level of the participants having different self regulatory focus for the alignable assortment type. Figure 6B relates to the corresponding results concerning the nonalignable assortment type.

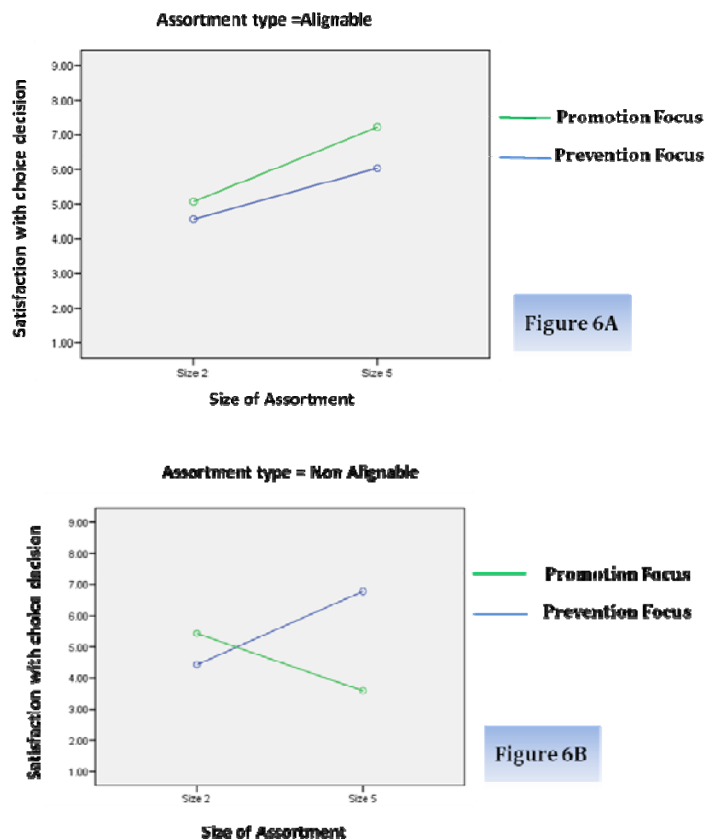


Fig. 6A & B: Three - Way Interaction of Consumers’ Self Regulatory Focus, Assortment Type and Size of Assortment with ‘Satisfaction’ DV- Experiment 2.

With mood measures and perceived task difficulty measures as covariates

The three-way interaction term remained significant after controlling for the mood and perceived task difficulty measures (p 's < .01) (For details, see Appendix E).

Analysis of results when assortment is alignable

We consider conditions in which the assortment type is alignable (Figure 6A). Contrast analysis similar to experiment 1 showed that, consistent with H2a, the promotion focused participants' satisfaction with choice decision was significantly higher when the assortment size was "large" ($N = 5$) as opposed to when it was "small" ($N = 2$) ($M_{\text{Large}} = 7.07$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 4.8$, $t(136) = 3.28$, $p < .05$). Similar trends were observed with the prevention focused participants ($M_{\text{Large}} = 6.20$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 4.80$, $t(136) = 2.06$, $p < .05$).

Analysis of results when assortment is nonalignable

We consider conditions in which the assortment is nonalignable (Figure 6B). Contrast analysis showed that, consistent with H2b, the promotion focused participants' satisfaction with the choice decision was significantly lower when the assortment size was "large" ($N = 5$) as opposed to when it was "small" ($N = 2$) ($M_{\text{Large}} = 3.89$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 5.42$, $t(136) = -2.38$, $p < .05$). Also consistent with H2b, the prevention focused participants' satisfaction was significantly higher when the assortment size was "large" ($N = 5$) as opposed to when it was "small" ($N = 2$) ($M_{\text{Large}} = 6.92$ vs. $M_{\text{Small}} = 4.15$, $t(136) = 3.29$, $p < .05$).

Analysis of results concerning process measures

Assumption related to choice process

Similar to experiment 1, we compared the participants' mean levels of agreeability with the two statements:

Statement A: *While making my choice, I searched for the option that I thought was the most favorable.*

Statement B: *While making my choice, I looked at rejecting the options which I thought were unfavorable.*

Confirming our assumptions, the prevention focused participants showed greater agreeability with Statement B as compared to Statement A ($M = 6.86$ vs. $M = 5.58$, $t(71) = 2.27$, $p < .05$). The promotion focused participants showed greater agreeability with Statement A as compared to Statement B ($M = 7.40$ vs. $M = 6.41$, $t(71) = 2.55$, $p < .05$).

Role of attribute valence in choice decision

Similar to experiment 1, we compared the participants' mean levels of agreeability with the two statements:

Statement A: *While making my choice, I focused more on the positive attributes of the given alternatives.*

Statement B: *While making my choice, I focused more on the negative attributes of the given alternatives.*

Confirming our assumptions, the prevention focused participants showed greater agreeability with Statement B as compared to Statement A ($M = 6.0$ vs. $M = 4.73$, $t(71) = 2.36$, $p < .05$). The promotion focused participants showed greater agreeability

with Statement A as compared to Statement B ($M = 6.08$ vs. $M = 4.88$, $t(71) = 2.25$, $p < .05$).

Choice process triggering self regulatory goal fulfillment

Similar to experiment 1, we compared the participants' mean levels of agreeability with the two statements:

Statement A: *Choosing the best from amongst all available options is what makes me confident about a choice decision.*

Statement B: *Being able to successfully reject all unfavorable options is what makes me confident about a choice decision.*

Confirming our assumptions, the prevention focused participants showed greater agreeability with Statement B as compared to Statement A ($M=5.88$ vs. $M=4.13$, $t(43) = 3.02$, $p < .05$). The promotion focused participants showed greater agreeability with Statement A as compared to Statement B ($M = 5.95$ vs. $M = 4.80$, $t(40) = 2.89$, $p < .05$).

Support for theory leading to H1b

Similar to experiment 1, we compared the mean level of agreeability of participants in the nonalignable assortment size 5 experimental condition with the two statements:

Statement A: *If I choose one option from amongst the five options that are described, I am having one positive attribute in my chosen option. However, I am being able to avoid the presence of four negative attributes from the alternatives that I do not choose and that is what makes me confident about my choice.*

Statement B: *If I choose one option from amongst the five options that are described, I*

am having one negative attribute in my chosen option. That is not very important to me. What is more important to me is that my selected alternative does not contain four positive attributes which are there in the alternatives that I do not choose and this makes me less confident about my choice.

Confirming our expectations, the prevention focused participants showed greater agreeability with Statement A as compared to Statement B ($M = 6.64$ vs. $M = 3.85$, $t(13) = 2.76$, $p < .05$). Promotion focused participants showed significantly stronger level of agreeability with Statement B as compared to that shown with Statement A ($M = 5.11$ vs. $M = 3.17$, $t(16) = 2.79$, $p < .05$). Similar agreeability results were observed with participants in the nonalignable assortment - size 2 condition (all p 's $< .05$).

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In this study, we explore the relatively understudied field of research which involves the impact of assortment type on consumer brand choice behavior. We seek to expand the domain of the research related to the effect of regulatory focus theory on consumer behavior by illustrating that consumers' self regulatory focus can affect the impact of assortment type on consumers' brand choice behavior. The findings of Experiment 1 show that assortment type may not necessarily influence consumer's brand choice behavior uniformly in a within brand choice context. Specifically, we show that, the confidence of both promotion and prevention focused consumers about the correctness of their choice decision as well as their satisfaction with their choice decisions increase with increase in size of an assortment if the assortment type is alignable. In case of a nonalignable assortment type, the confidence of promotion focused consumers about the correctness of their choice decisions and their satisfaction with their choice decisions decrease with increase in size of the assortment. However, the corresponding confidence and satisfaction levels of prevention focused consumers increase with increase in size of the assortment. The findings from experiment 2 draw a boundary condition with respect to the findings obtained from Experiment 1 and illustrate a situation wherein choices made by consumers from alignable assortments are affected by Compromise Effect and not by their self regulatory focus. Current literature related to the effects of consumers' self regulatory focus as well as that related to the effects of assortment alignability - on consumer choice behavior- has ignored the interaction effect of consumers' self regulatory focus and assortment type on consumer choice behavior. The findings of

our study highlights the importance of studying the interaction of these two streams of work as they exhibit that the interaction of these two streams can bring out interesting patterns in consumers choice behavior hitherto left understudied in consumer research. In the present research, we develop our hypotheses and support them by conceptualizing and using assortments of different alignability types and sizes, with the attributes of the components present in the assortment being of positive as well as of negative valence.

An interesting proposition for future research can be to think about experimental conditions in which the brand variants present in assortments of different alignability types and sizes consist of positively valenced attributes only. Conceptually, for promotion focused consumers, the changes in confidence about the correctness of their choice decisions and the changes in satisfaction with their choice decisions should be in similar patterns as referred to in H1a/H1b, since they are concerned more about the presence or absence of positive attributes while arriving at a choice decision. However, since for prevention focused consumers, attributes of negative valence are the ones which are weighted more while arriving at choice decisions, an interesting proposition will be to test the applicability of the main hypotheses in this article in the context of such assortments.

In the current article, we have stressed on the valence of the attributes present in the brand variants in assortments of different alignability types and sizes to derive our theory. There can be another interesting research proposition to look at. Pham & Avnet (2004) have illustrated in ad evaluation context that promotion focused consumers rely more on the affective information content of an ad while evaluating it.

On the contrary, prevention focused consumers rely more on substantive information content of an ad while evaluating it. Imagine a situation wherein consumers of different regulatory focus have to make choice decisions regarding which brand variant to choose from assortments of different alignability types and sizes, with the information present in relation with the attributes of the brand variants having affective as well as cognitive components. An interesting research agenda in this context can be to formulate and test hypotheses similar to as have been tested in the current research in such attribute contexts. Similar lines of research can be proposed, with the nature of the attributes present in brand variants being hedonic or utilitarian.

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APPENDIX A

Summary of main findings

Hypotheses	Findings
<p>H1a: Increase in perceived confidence level of promotion and prevention focused consumers about making correct choice decision with increase in size of alignable assortment.</p> <p>H1b: Increase in perceived confidence level of prevention focused consumers about making correct choice decision with increase in size of nonalignable assortment. Decrease in the corresponding confidence levels of promotion focused consumers with increase in size of nonalignable assortment.</p>	<p>Significant three-way interaction observed using 2*2*4 between subjects' ANOVA with consumers' self regulatory focus, assortment type, size of assortment as the independent variables and 'confidence about making the correct choice decision' as the dependent variable at a significance level of .01. Hence, hypotheses supported.</p>
<p>H2a: Increase in the preference levels of promotion and prevention focused consumers for making a choice from an alignable assortment with increase in size of the assortment.</p> <p>H2b: Increase in preference levels of prevention focused consumers for making a choice from a nonalignable assortment with increase in size of the assortment. Decrease in the preference levels of promotion focused consumers for making a choice from the nonalignable assortment with increase in size of the assortment.</p>	<p>Significant three-way interactions observed using two separate 2*2*4 between subjects' ANOVA studies with consumers' self regulatory focus, assortment type, size of assortment as the independent variables and 'preference for no choice option' and 'satisfaction with choice decision' as the dependent variables at significance levels of .05 and .01 respectively. Hence, hypotheses supported</p>
<p>H3: For consumers making choice from alignable assortments consisting of</p>	<p>Comparison of choice decisions of participants making choice from alignable</p>

<p>compromise options, the need to maintain self regulatory focus is mitigated by the motivation to select compromise option when there is a high level of need for justification of choice decision to others.</p> <p>Motivation to select compromise option is mitigated by the need to maintain self regulatory focus when there is a low level of need for justification of choice decision to others.</p>	<p>assortment - size 5 at different 'justification-need' levels supports our hypothesis.</p>
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APPENDIX B

Process measures in Experiment 1 used to support theory leading to H2a in nonalignable assortment size 2 and nonalignable assortment size 3 conditions:

For size of nonalignable assortment = 2

Statement A: If I choose one option from amongst the two options that are described, I am having one positive attribute in my chosen option. However, I am being able to avoid the presence of one negative attribute from the alternative that I do not choose and that is what makes me confident about my choice.

Statement B: If I choose one option from amongst the two options that are described, I am having one negative attribute in my chosen option. That is not very important to me. What is more important to me is that my selected alternative does not contain one positive attributes which is there in the alternatives that I do not choose and this makes me less confident about my choice.

For size of nonalignable assortment = 3

Statement A: If I choose one option from amongst three options that are described, I am having one positive attribute in my chosen option. However, I am being able to avoid the presence of two negative attribute from the alternatives that I do not choose and that is what makes me confident about my choice.

Statement B: If I choose one option from amongst the three options that are described, I am having one negative attribute in my chosen option. That is not very important to me. What is more important to me is that my selected alternative does not contain two positive attributes which are there in the alternatives that I do not choose and this makes me less confident.

APPENDIX C

Significant three way interaction of Consumers' Self Regulatory Focus, Assortment Type, and Size of Assortment with "Confidence" DV after controlling for participants' mood states and their perceived task difficulty levels in Experiment 2:

With mood measures as covariates

With "happiness" as covariate: $F(1,135) = 11.02, p < .01$.

With "worried" as covariate: $F(1,135) = 10.80, p < .01$

With "calmness" as covariate: $F(1,135) = 10.34, p < .01$.

With "sadness" as covariate: $F(1,135) = 10.62, p < .01$.

With perceived task difficulty measures as covariates

With "difficulty of task" as covariate: $F(1,135) = 10.59, p < .01$.

With "attention needed to solve task" as covariate: $F(1,135) = 10.34, p < .01$.

APPENDIX D

Significant three way interactions of Consumers' Self Regulatory Focus, Assortment Type, and Size of Assortment with "Preference For No Choice" DV after controlling for participants' mood states and their perceived task difficulty levels in Experiment 2:

With mood measures as covariates

With "happiness" as covariate: $F(1, 135) = 10.81, p < .01$.

With "worried" as covariate: $F(1, 135) = 10.71, p < .01$.

With "calmness" as covariate: $F(1, 135) = 10.05, p < .01$.

With "sadness" as covariate: $F(1, 135) = 9.99, p < .01$.

With perceived task difficulty measures as covariate:

With "difficulty of task" as covariate: $F(1, 135) = 10.48, p < .01$.

With "attention needed to solve task" as covariate: $F(1, 135) = 10.34, p < .01$.

APPENDIX E

Significant three way interaction of Consumers' Self Regulatory Focus, Assortment Type, and Size of Assortment with "Satisfaction" DV after controlling for participants' mood states and their perceived task difficulty levels in Experiment 2:

With mood measures as covariates

With "happiness" as covariate: $F(1, 135) = 10.99, p < .01$

With "worried" as covariate: $F(1, 135) = 10.93, p < .01$.

With "calmness" as covariate: $F(1, 135) = 10.78, p < .01$.

With "sadness" as covariate: $F(1, 135) = 10.49, p < .01$.

With perceived task difficulty measures as covariates

With "difficulty of task" as covariate: $F(1, 135) = 10.76, p < .01$.

With "attention needed to solve task" as covariate: $F(1, 135) = 10.64, p < .01$.