

How Happiness Affects Choice

CASSIE MOGILNER
JENNIFER AAKER
SEPANDAR D. KAMVAR

Consumers want to be happy, and marketers are increasingly trying to appeal to consumers' pursuit of happiness. However, the results of six studies reveal that what happiness means varies, and consumers' choices reflect those differences. In some cases, happiness is defined as feeling excited, and in other cases, happiness is defined as feeling calm. The type of happiness pursued is determined by one's temporal focus, such that individuals tend to choose more exciting options when focused on the future, and more calming options when focused on the present moment. These results suggest that the definition of happiness, and consumers' resulting choices, are dynamic and malleable.

Over the past decade, the concept of happiness has enjoyed much resonance among researchers across disciplines. Psychologists, economists, and sociologists have made tremendous strides in determining best measures of happiness, ways to increase happiness, and why happiness is important (Diener and Chan 2011; Diener and Seligman 2002; Dunn, Aknin, and Norton 2008; Easterlin 2003; Kahneman et al. 2004, 2006; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade 2005; Mogilner 2010; Van Boven and Gilovich 2003).

This growing interest in happiness has also affected business, where researchers have begun to explore how to create brands that cultivate consumers' happiness (Isen, Labroo, and Durlach 2004; Mogilner and Aaker 2009) and how to design organizations to increase employees' happiness (Hsieh 2010; Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener 2005). Particularly in the face of the struggling economy, advertisers have increasingly looked to connect with consumers on a

more simple and fundamental level by promising happiness. Examples are numerous: Nesquik claims, "You can't buy happiness, but you can drink it." Dunkin' Donuts promotes a breakfast sandwich as "The happiest sandwich on Earth." Nivea offers a body lotion, "Happy Sensation." Hugo Boss offers "Orange, the fragrance of happiness," and Clinique similarly offers a perfume named "Clinique Happy." Through interactive campaigns, marketers have also sought to cultivate happiness. Coca-Cola launched the "Open Happiness" campaign, which recognizes life's simple pleasures and encourages consumers to take a small break from the day to connect and share happiness with others. BMW developed a "Stories of Joy" global communication campaign that hosts consumer-created videos highlighting the joy of driving. Whiskas encourages consumers to share their "Happiness with Whiskas" cat moments and become a member of the "Happy Together" online community for feline lovers. Lay's online "Happiness Exhibit" asks Americans to share their family photographs to help prove that happiness is simple. And Yahoo! started the "Purple Acts of Kindness" campaign, whose goal is to spread happiness by encouraging small acts of kindness.

Despite the growing interest in happiness, an empirical understanding of what happiness means, in terms of how it is experienced, is still limited. Even more scarce is research examining how such experiences of happiness affect choice. Does the promise of happiness drive consumer choice? Or does it depend on what happiness means to that particular individual?

To address these questions, we report the results of six studies that show there are indeed two distinct types of happiness—one more aligned with feeling excited, the other more aligned with feeling peaceful and calm. Furthermore, we show that the meaning of happiness is not stable, and

Cassie Mogilner is assistant professor of marketing at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, 3730 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104 (mogilner@wharton.upenn.edu). Jennifer Aaker is General Atlantic Professor at Stanford University, Graduate School of Business, Stanford, CA 94305 (aaker@gsb.stanford.edu). Sepandar Kamvar is associate professor at the MIT Media Lab, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, E14/E15, Cambridge, MA 02139-4307 (sdkamvar@mit.edu). Correspondence: Cassie Mogilner. This research was partially supported by Wharton's Dean's Research Fund. Great thanks to Allison Tatios for her happy logo designs and to Melanie Rudd, Nelson Ray, and Elena Evans for their contributions to this research. The authors are also grateful for the happiness they experienced, in both of its forms (starting with excitement and concluding with peacefulness), over the course of working on this project.

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we identify temporal focus (how present vs. future focused an individual is) to be a key factor that influences the type of happiness one experiences. Of central interest is that we show how one's meaning of happiness affects choice. In doing so, we hope to address foundational questions regarding the meaning of happiness and individuals' resulting decisions.

THE MEANING(S) OF HAPPINESS

Happiness is defined as "a state of well-being and contentment; a pleasurable or satisfying experience" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* 2009). Drawing on this definition, some researchers treat happiness as singular in nature, with happiness meaning the same thing to all individuals (Layard 2005; Myers and Diener 1995). Other researchers suggest that happiness is highly subjective, meaning distinct things to each individual (Gilbert 2006). Yet a third stream of research suggests that there are multiple types of happiness, which shift in frequency across culture (Tsai, Knutson, and Fung 2006) and age (Mogilner, Kamvar, and Aaker 2011). This third line of work hones in on two types of positive emotion that, when experienced, are each subject to being identified as happiness. The first includes excitement, elation, and enthusiasm and has been defined as positive affect that is high in arousal. The second includes calm, peacefulness, and serenity and has been defined as positive affect that is low in arousal (Barrett 1998; Bradley and Lang 1999; Russell and Barrett 1999). Although both excitement and calm are positive emotions, the desirability of each emotion, and thus the likelihood that it gets identified as feeling "happy," differs across individuals. For example, in a seminal article, Tsai et al. (2006) compared the ideal affect of European American college students and Hong Kong Chinese college students. The European American students valued high-arousal positive affect significantly more and low-arousal positive affect significantly less than their Hong Kong counterparts. Through this cultural lens, the particular type of happiness that an individual adopts is seemingly ingrained and influenced by such prevalent and stable cultural factors as interpersonal communication norms, child-rearing styles, religion, popular media, and children's literature (Tsai 2007).

Within the United States, age is another factor that has been found to influence which of these types of happiness individuals tend to adopt (Mogilner et al. 2011). An examination of over seventy thousand instances of happiness expressed on personal blogs revealed the meaning of happiness to steadily shift over the course of life from excited happiness when one is young to peaceful happiness as one gets older. Beyond blog-based data, this age-based effect was substantiated in a series of laboratory experiments and surveys.

Age, however, may simply be a proxy for a more basic underlying psychological factor—temporal focus. Indeed, research on the psychology of aging and longevity proposes a relationship between age and temporal focus (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, and Charles 1999). Because young individuals

have longer futures spanning out in front of them, their attention gets pulled in that direction. As individuals get older, however, their futures become less expansive, the present moment gains importance, and attention becomes more centered on the here and now (Carstensen et al. 1999). Thus, one's particular experience of happiness may stem from this underlying temporal focus, rather than age per se. That is, even though age might prove a useful signal of an individual's temporal focus, whether that individual is focused more on the future or the present moment may in fact be what determines whether happiness is associated more with excitement or calm.

A preliminary finding reported by Mogilner et al. (2011) hints at this possibility. The researchers asked a random set of young adults (who are chronically more future oriented) to participate in a Buddhist-like meditation that encouraged them to focus on the present, with instructions such as "Let everything that has happened in the past, that is happening later today, and that is supposed to happen tomorrow, wash away. Just focus on the present moment." Participants in a control condition were not exposed to this exercise. Next, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they define happiness as "feeling excited" and the extent to which they define happiness as "feeling peaceful." Whereas the young adults in the control condition defined happiness more as excitement, the young adults in the meditation condition defined happiness more as peacefulness. These findings underscore the possibility that temporal focus plays a role in influencing one's definition of happiness and further suggests that the particular type of happiness an individual adopts is not fully determined by such stable factors as culture and age, and instead seems to be highly malleable—subject to a simple shift in attention between the future and the present moment.

Furthermore, the specific emotion (excitement or calm) that is experienced as happiness likely aligns with the individual's current temporal focus. That is, we propose that in addition to differing in their levels of arousal, excitement and calm both have a distinct temporal focus: whereas people tend to feel excited for something that they anticipate will happen in the future, they tend to feel calm when soaking up the present moment. Therefore, even though individuals can and do experience both types of emotions irrespective of temporal focus (and age), when one's current feeling aligns with his or her temporal focus, that emotion will be experienced as particularly positive and thus identified as "feeling happy." So, when people are focused on the future (either because of a situational factor that draws attention to the future, or chronically because of young age), excitement tends to be experienced as happiness. However, when people are focused on the present moment (either because they have been reminded to focus on the here and now, or because they are older), feeling calm is experienced as happiness. Building on insights into the meaning(s) of happiness as the foundation, this research explores how temporal focus and these distinct types of happiness play out to influence the choices consumers make.

HAPPINESS AND CHOICE

Emotions, such as happiness, can have a powerful influence on choice. Indeed, a vast literature shows that being in a positive mood affects individuals' cognitive processing, which can influence the types of choices they make. For instance, when people are in a positive mood, they are more likely to engage in heuristic processing (Schwarz and Clore 1983), to be optimistic about favorable events occurring (Wright and Bower 1992), to think abstractly rather than focus on immediate and proximal concerns (Labroo and Patrick 2009), to be creative in their problem solving (Isen 1999; Isen, Daubman, and Nowicki 1987), and to evaluate people and objects more favorably (Adaval 2003; Forgas 1990; Forgas and Ciarrochi 2001; Isen and Shalcker 1982; Meloy 2000). Positive mood also influences choice directly—both in terms of the way in which people make choices (e.g., producing faster decisions; Isen and Means 1983) and in terms of the choices people make. For example, people in a positive mood tend to choose less risky options (Isen and Patrick 1983), more variety across options (Kahn and Isen 1993), and more prosocial alternatives (Fishbach and Labroo 2007; Oishi, Diener, and Lucas 2007). People feeling happy have also been shown to make healthier choices both in their personal lives (e.g., drinking less alcohol, smoking less) and in their professional lives (e.g., behaving in less retaliatory ways to coworkers, searching for and securing more job interviews; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, et al. 2005).

Although much research has focused on mood, documenting how choosers' levels of happiness affect choice, surprisingly little work has examined whether and how happiness drives choice. Marketers have been working under the assumption that promising happiness will pull consumers to their products, but happiness is just one of multiple motivators driving decisions (sense of purpose, control over life, and social status are other key drivers of choice; Benjamin et al., forthcoming). The question thus arises—does happiness affect the choices consumers make, and if yes, how?

Furthermore, the existing work that examines the impact of happiness on choice neglects the possibility that happiness means different things to different people. However, if individuals differ in how they define happiness, the allure of a particular option should vary according to whether it resonates with one's particular definition. For instance, someone who defines happiness as feeling calm should be more likely to choose a product (e.g., herbal tea), experience (e.g., a beach vacation), or activity (e.g., yoga) that promises peacefulness over options (e.g., coffee, an adventure vacation, running) that promise excitement.

Indeed, prior work has shown that feelings of excitement and calm influence product evaluations. Specifically, participants who were led to feel excited evaluated an ad promising an adventurous vacation more favorably, whereas those who were led to feel calm evaluated an ad promising a serene vacation more favorably (Kim, Park, and Schwarz 2010). Building on these findings, we test for the critical role of

experiencing these emotions as happiness in determining their impact on choice. To the degree that happiness is a desirable state and consumers are motivated to experience it, whether consumers define happiness more as excitement or calm should affect subsequent choices.

H1: An individual's definition of happiness affects choice, whereby (a) defining happiness more as excitement increases the tendency to choose an exciting option over a calming option; and (b) defining happiness more as feeling calm increases the tendency to choose a calming option over an exciting option.

In addition to happiness, age has been shown to influence choice (e.g., Williams and Drolet 2005). For instance, older people tend to choose emotionally fulfilling social interactions, whereas younger people tend to choose social interactions that provide novelty (Carstensen et al. 1999). Older people tend to also be more persuaded by messages that serve emotionally meaningful goals (vs. knowledge-related goals; Fung and Carstensen 2003), and they perceive prevention goals as relatively more important than promotion goals (Pennington and Roese 2003). Moreover, when choosing among brands, older consumers tend to prefer familiar options whereas younger consumers are more apt to choose new, unknown brands (Lambert-Pandraud and Laurent 2010; Lambert-Pandraud, Laurent, and Lapersonne 2005).

Why do we observe these effects on choice? We propose that it is through a change in temporal focus, and the associated shift in the meaning of happiness, that age affects the choices consumers make. Even though older people tend to be more present focused and less concerned with the future than younger people (Fingerman and Perlmutter 1995), we argue that individuals' temporal focus can be influenced by situational factors and can thus influence choice. More formally, we hypothesize that the extent to which one is more focused on the future versus the present will determine which meaning of happiness gets adopted and thus whether an exciting or calming option will be chosen. When focused on the future, happiness is defined more as feeling excited, so consumers should be more likely to choose an option that makes them feel excited. However, when focused on the present, happiness is defined more as feeling calm, so consumers should be more likely to choose a calming option (see fig. 1).

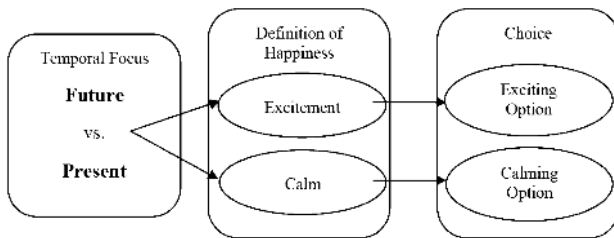
H2: Temporal focus influences choice, whereby (a) a future focus increases the tendency to choose an exciting product over a calming product; and (b) a present focus increases the tendency to choose a calming product over an exciting product.

OVERVIEW

To test these hypotheses, we conducted six studies. First, we conducted two pilot studies to determine whether the two types of happiness (excitement and calm) differ along

FIGURE 1

CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR THE EFFECT OF TEMPORAL FOCUS ON HAPPINESS AND CHOICE



a temporal dimension. Adopting a multiple-methods approach comprising a blog analysis and survey, the two pilot studies examined whether feeling excited is more future oriented and whether feeling calm is more present oriented. Next, we conducted two experiments where temporal focus was manipulated, definitions of happiness were measured, and choice was assessed. In experiment 1, young participants (who tend to be more future focused) were influenced to be more present focused, and in experiment 2, older participants (who tend to be more present focused) were influenced to be more future focused. We measured participants' definitions of happiness and their choices between an exciting or calming tea (experiment 1) and between an exciting or calming song (experiment 2). In experiment 3, we relied on age to determine temporal focus so as to more precisely test the driving role of temporal focus on individuals' definitions of happiness, as well as the driving role of definitions of happiness on choices between an exciting and calming product. Finally, in experiment 4, we manipulate both future focus and present focus to examine participants' anticipated happiness from and choices between two bottled waters: one positioned as offering calm and the other positioned as offering excitement.

THE TEMPORAL DIMENSION OF EMOTION: PILOT STUDIES

To lay the foundation for the subsequent studies, we conducted two pilot studies to test whether calm and excitement vary in the extent to which they are focused on the future or the present. In our first pilot study, we examined personal blogs containing the phrase "I feel" to determine which temporal words tend to co-occur with feeling excited or calm. Unlike traditional methods of studying human emotion, which rely on asking a convenience sample to report their feelings, this method gauges the broader population's unsolicited emotional experience (Mogilner et al. 2011). The unobtrusive nature of this method thus provides a window into people's naturally generated thoughts and feelings (Cohn, Mehl, and Pennebaker 2004; Pang and Lee 2008). For this study, we examined 12 million feeling sentences

posted on blogs between August 2005 and December 2009 that had been collected using the We Feel Fine web crawler (Kamvar and Harris 2009, 2011) for analysis in Mogilner et al. (2011). Of these feeling sentences, we focused on the sentences that contained the words "excited," "calm," and "peaceful." Based on a total of 31,876 sentences comprising this sample set, there were 16,863 sentences that contained "excited" and 15,013 sentences that contained "calm" or "peaceful."

We then identified all of the sentences in the sample set that contained a word or phrase with a temporal connotation. The most common words that indicated a future orientation were: "future," "tomorrow," "start," "starting," "ready," "forward," "beginning," and "soon." The most common words and phrases that indicated a present orientation were: "now," "this moment," "this morning," "today," and "tonight." We then manually curated these sentences into present-focused sentences ($n = 3,307$) and future-focused sentences ($n = 1,861$). For a sample of these sentences, see table 1.

An analysis revealed that future-focused sentences expressed excitement more often, whereas present-focused sentences expressed calm more often. Of the 1,861 sentences that indicated future orientation, 1,381 expressed excitement (compared to an expected value of 984.5 assuming independence; $p < .0001$). Of the 3,307 sentences that indicated present orientation, 1,739 expressed calm and peacefulness (compared to an expected value of 1,557.5 assuming independence; $p < .0001$). These results suggest a relationship between future orientation and excitement, and a relationship between present orientation and peacefulness. To check whether these results are reliant on age, we conducted this same set of analyses for just bloggers in their teens and 20s, and separately for bloggers in their 30s and 40s. Importantly, this pattern persisted for both the younger bloggers (for excitement and future, $p < .0001$; and for calm and present, $p < .0001$) and the older bloggers (for excitement and future, $p < .0001$; and for calm and present, $p < .0001$), which suggests that the relationship between temporal focus and these emotions holds irrespective of age.

Although personal blogs provide a rich source of data that represent racial diversity and both genders, blogger demographics tend to skew young (Lenhart and Fox 2006). Therefore, we conducted an online survey to test the robustness of the finding, to extend our investigation to a broader age range, and to get a better sense of how these two emotions differ. Forty-three individuals (79% female; ages 20–65, $M = 40$) from across the United States participated for the chance to win \$100. Participants were presented with a list of emotions, and for each emotion they were asked to rate on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much) the extent to which each emotion could be described as being future oriented, present oriented, past oriented, high arousal (i.e., high energy), low arousal (i.e., low energy), positive, and negative.

Consistent with prior research (Barrett 1998; Tsai et al. 2006), the results confirmed that calm and excitement are

TABLE 1
PILOT STUDY 1: EXAMPLES OF BLOGGERS' TEMPORAL FEELING SENTENCES

Temporal focus (present)		Temporal focus (future)	
Excited	Calm	Excited	Calm
"I'm feeling very excited today."	"I feel very Zen today, quite peaceful and content."	"I feel a wee bit better and I am excited about our field trip tomorrow."	"I feel calm, relaxed, and cool about the future."
"I'm excited but feeling slightly undertrained at the moment."	"I feel so calm right now, it's pretty weird, very humbling, yet it feels like I'm getting stronger for some reason . . . maybe the tiring workout."	"I am really excited about my future. I've been thinking about it all day today you know that crazy butterfly feeling."	"I can feel sleep coming once again, but this time I know I'll be able to rest peacefully without waking again until tomorrow comes."
"I know I'm excited right now, and I love the feeling of being admired."	"I don't know how I can feel so peaceful right now, even though it's 4:30 am and I haven't slept yet."	"I will be in the hospital tomorrow getting ready to have my baby and I feel so excited to see this being that has been growing inside me for so long."	"I should be stressed out as my future is on the line this week, but instead I feel calm and comfortable."

highly and equally positive in valence ($t(42) = 1.68, p = .10$). Calm was rated significantly more positive ($M = 5.72, SD = 1.33$) than negative ($M = 1.81, SD = .98; t(42) = 13.40, p < .001$). Similarly, excitement was rated significantly more positive ($M = 6.07, SD = 1.03$) than negative ($M = 1.77, SD = 1.13; t(42) = 15.73, p < .001$). Also consistent with prior research, excitement was rated to be higher in arousal than calm ($t(42) = 10.75, p < .001$), whereas calm was rated to be lower in arousal than excitement ($t(42) = -8.88, p < .001$). Specifically, calm was rated more low arousal ($M = 4.70, SD = 1.92$) than high arousal ($M = 2.67, SD = 1.73; t(42) = -3.95, p < .001$), and excitement was rated more high arousal ($M = 6.44, SD = 1.08$) than low arousal ($M = 1.70, SD = 1.06; t(42) = 17.67, p < .001$).

To examine whether calm and excitement differ in their temporal focus in addition to differing in their levels of arousal, we conducted a mixed model analysis on participants' temporal focus ratings for the two emotions, controlling for individual and each emotion's level of arousal (high or low). The results revealed a significant interaction effect ($F(1, 42) = 32.67, p < .001$). An examination of the estimated marginal means showed that calm is more present focused ($MS = 6.09, SE = .21$) than future focused ($MS = 4.25, SE = .30; t(42) = 5.64, p < .001$), and excitement is more future focused ($MS = 5.79, SE = .19$) than present focused ($MS = 4.96, SE = .25; t(42) = 2.99, p < .01$). Relatedly, calm is more present focused than excitement ($t(42) = 3.13, p < .01$), and excitement is more future focused than calm ($t(42) = 3.88, p < .001$). Having controlled for arousal, these results suggest that excitement and calm have different temporal orientations, and their temporal focus is distinct from their level of arousal. The results of this study are thus consistent with prior findings that specify calm and excitement as emotions that are positive in valence and that vary in arousal. They further suggest that these emotions vary along a dimension of temporal focus, with

excitement being a more future-focused emotion and calm being a more present-focused emotion. And perhaps most importantly, these results lay the foundation for the key questions: Are these emotions experienced as two types of happiness? Do they influence the choices consumers make? And why?

BEING PRESENT AND CHOOSING TEA: EXPERIMENT 1

Existing research has proposed that young people are chronically more focused on the future than older people (Carsensen et al. 1999; Fingerma and Perlmutter 1995; Mogilner et al. 2011). In experiment 1, we therefore focused on a sample of young adults, shifting their focus to the present moment so as to determine whether temporal focus affects definitions of happiness and choices between an exciting or calming option.

Method

Fifty-one students between the ages of 18 and 24 ($M = 20; 59\%$ female) participated in a session comprising a series of studies conducted in a laboratory at Stanford University. The students received a \$10 Amazon.com gift card for their participation.

Participants were randomly assigned to either a control condition or treatment, which consisted of a breathing exercise designed to direct attention to the present moment (Mogilner et al. 2011). The manipulation was inspired by meditations based in the Buddhist tradition that have been shown to increase one's present focus (Brown and Thurman 2006; Tolle 1999). Specifically, participants in the present-focus condition put on earphones and listened to a 5-minute recording that instructed them to close their eyes and bring their attention to the present moment. The instructions continued, "Let everything that has happened in the past and

that is supposed to happen tomorrow wash away. Just focus on the present moment.” The recording then went on to instruct participants to silently repeat to themselves a series of phrases, including “I am here in the present moment.” Participants in the control condition were not exposed to this exercise before completing the study. Participants then completed a survey that measured their definition of happiness by rating on 7-point scales (1 = not at all, 7 = very much) the extent to which they define happiness as “feeling excited” and the extent to which they define happiness as “feeling peaceful.” Along with ancillary measures, the survey included manipulation checks: participants were asked to rate on 7-point scales (1 = not at all, 7 = very much) the extent to which they were “in the here and now” and “in the present moment” ($\alpha = .88$).

After the study was ostensibly over, participants packed up to leave the lab. At that moment, the experimenter approached each participant individually and presented a basket full of tea bags from which all participants were invited to take a bag of tea home with them as an additional thank you. The basket contained two types of tea; both were herbal and in blue packaging. They only differed in whether the flavor and slogan indicated that the tea would be calming or exciting. The calming tea option was “Sweet Dreams, a relaxing blend of chamomile and mint”; the exciting tea option was “Peppermint, a refreshing peppermint blend.” Participants picked one of the tea bags (100% participated), unaware that their choice was observed.

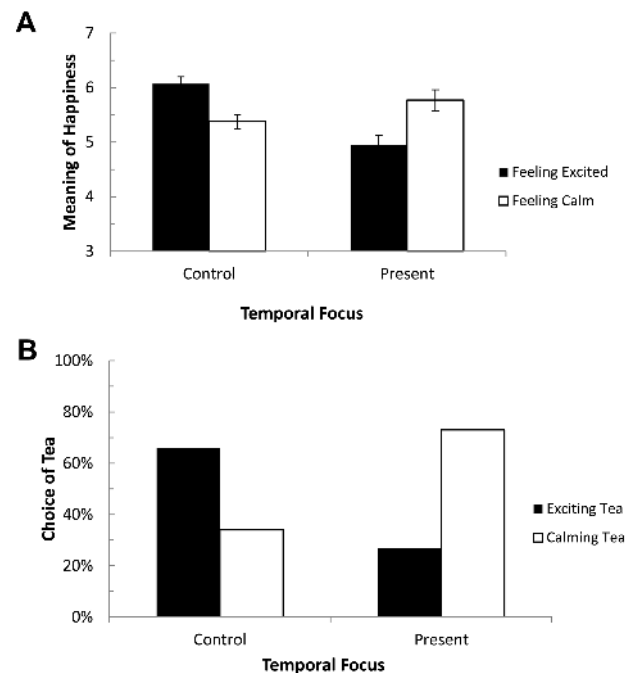
Results and Discussion

The manipulation checks confirmed that those in the present-focus condition ($M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.19$) felt like they were more “in the here and now” and “in the present moment” than those in the control condition ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.47$; $F(1, 49) = 5.81$, $p < .05$).

A repeated-measures ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between condition and the extent to which participants defined happiness as feeling excited versus calm ($F(1, 49) = 14.22$, $p < .01$; see fig. 2A). Students in the control condition defined happiness more as feeling excited ($M = 6.07$, $SD = .96$) than calm ($M = 5.38$, $SD = .90$; $F(1, 49) = 5.39$, $p < .05$). However, students who focused on the present moment defined happiness more as feeling calm ($M = 5.77$, $SD = 1.38$) than excited ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.29$; $F(1, 49) = 5.75$, $p < .05$). These results suggest that although these young individuals naturally tended to define happiness more as feeling excited than calm, increasing their focus on the present moment led them to define happiness more as feeling calm (like older individuals). Thus, temporal focus indeed appears to affect whether individuals associate happiness with feeling excited or calm.

Of central interest, participants’ choice of tea reflected their definitions of happiness ($\chi^2(7.32)$, $p < .01$). Students in the control condition were more likely to choose the tea that would make them feel excited (66%) over the tea that would make them feel calm (34%), whereas those who were focused on the present moment were more likely to choose

FIGURE 2
EXPERIMENT 1: EFFECT OF TEMPORAL FOCUS ON YOUNG INDIVIDUALS’ MEANING OF HAPPINESS AND CHOICE



the tea that would make them feel calm (73%) over the tea that would make them feel excited (27%).

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE AND CHOOSING MUSIC: EXPERIMENT 2

Experiment 1 showed that young people could be influenced to define happiness like older people and to choose accordingly by increasing their focus on the present moment. The goal of experiment 2 was to examine whether older people could be influenced to define happiness and make choices like young people by increasing their focus on the future. Such an effect would provide further support for the role of temporal focus on what happiness means to individuals and their resulting choices. In addition, experiment 2 aimed to establish the generalizability of the effect by (a) manipulating temporal focus through a priming exercise using sentence unscrambles, (b) measuring participants’ meaning of happiness in a different way, and (c) examining choices between options that actually evoke calmness or excitement.

Method

A sample of 50 older individuals between the ages of 50 and 71 ($M = 55$; 68% female) from across the United States participated in the online experiment for a chance to win

\$100. The experiment involved two ostensibly unrelated studies: the first served to make half of the participants more future focused, and the second induced feelings of calm or excitement and measured happiness and choice. This experiment thus followed a 2 (prime: future vs. neutral) between-subjects \times 2 (emotion: excited vs. calm) within-subjects design.

First, participants completed a task that primed them to either think about the future or not. Specifically, participants were presented with a sentence unscramble task that exposed them to either future-related words or neutral words (originally adapted from Srull and Wyer [1979] and similarly used in Mogilner and Aaker [2009]). For example, participants in the future condition were asked to construct three-word sentences out of such word sets as *future claim the your*, and participants in the neutral condition were asked to construct three-word sentences out of such word sets as *milk claim the your*. Participants were given 3 minutes to construct as many sentences as possible from a list of 18 word sets.

In light of research showing music to be an effective method of manipulating emotions (Juslin and Sloboda 2001; Tamir, Mitchell, and Gross 2008), we followed procedures used by Mogilner et al. (2011) to make participants feel excited or calm by listening to an exciting or calming version of the song “Such Great Heights.” Participants listened to both versions of the song; the order in which the songs were presented was counterbalanced between participants.

Our selection of music segments was informed by a pretest conducted by Mogilner et al. (2011) in which 21 participants, who ranged in age from 21 to 78, were presented with pairs of exciting and calm versions of five discrete songs and asked to rate on 5-point scales (1 = not at all, 5 = very much) the extent to which each song made them feel various emotions. The two versions of the song “Such Great Heights” were selected as the experiment’s stimuli because they differed only in how excited ($M_{\text{calm}} = 1.81$, $SD = .98$ vs. $M_{\text{exciting}} = 2.67$, $SD = 1.24$; $t(20) = 3.41$, $p < .01$) and calm ($M_{\text{calm}} = 3.00$, $SD = 1.10$ vs. $M_{\text{exciting}} = 2.29$, $SD = 1.38$; $t(20) = 2.25$, $p < .05$) they made participants feel; they did not differ in familiarity, likability, or how happy they made participants feel (all $p > .10$).

During the experiment, participants listened to the exciting and calming versions of the song, the order of which was counterbalanced between participants. While listening to each version of the song, participants reported on a 5-point scale how happy they felt (1 = not at all, 5 = very much). As manipulation checks, measures were included to assess on 5-point scales how excited and calm (calm, peaceful, serene; $\alpha = .87$) each song made participants feel. To measure choice, after participants listened to both songs and reported their experienced emotions for each, they were asked to choose which MP3 they would like—that of the exciting song or that of the calm song (referred to participants as the “first” or “second” song they heard). They then received their chosen MP3 as an additional thank you for their participation.

Results and Discussion

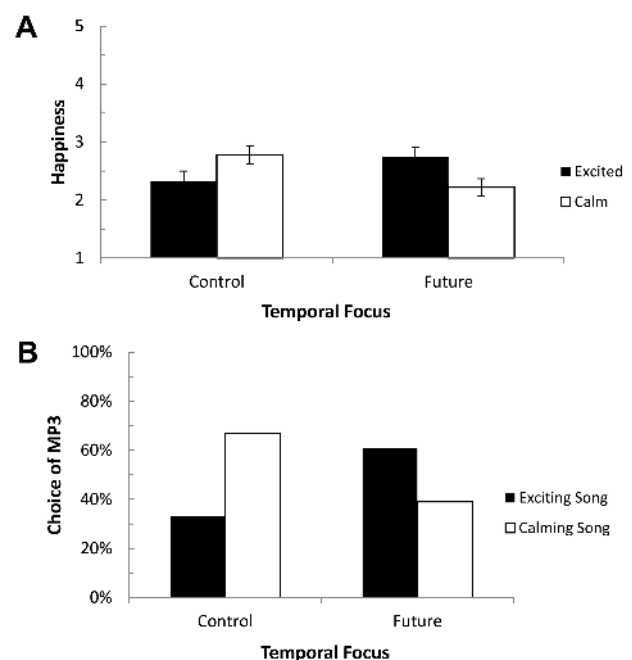
The manipulation checks confirmed that participants listening to the exciting song felt more excited ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.16$) than those listening to the calm song ($M = 1.62$, $SD = .95$; $t(49) = 5.54$, $p < .001$), and participants listening to the calm song felt calmer ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.03$) than those listening to the exciting song ($M = 2.12$, $SD = .93$; $t(49) = -3.47$, $p = .001$).

A repeated-measures ANOVA showed a significant interaction between prime and song version on participants’ reported happiness ($F(1, 48) = 9.87$, $p < .01$; see fig. 3A). Participants in the neutral condition felt happier when they were made to feel calm ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.12$) than when they were made to feel excited ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.18$; $F(1, 48) = 4.54$, $p < .05$). However, when participants were led to think about the future, they felt happier when they felt excited ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 1.18$) than when they felt calm ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.09$; $F(1, 48) = 5.33$, $p < .05$). These results suggest that although older consumers naturally tend to associate happiness more with feeling calm than excited, shifting their focus to the future leads them to associate happiness more with feeling excited (like younger consumers). These results thus provide additional support for the role of temporal focus in what happiness means to individuals.

More importantly, these differences in happiness were

FIGURE 3

EXPERIMENT 2: EFFECT OF TEMPORAL FOCUS AND FELT EMOTION ON OLDER INDIVIDUALS’ HAPPINESS AND CHOICE



reflected in participants' choice of song ($\chi^2(3.79), p = .05$). As shown in figure 3B, those in the neutral condition were more likely to choose an MP3 of the song that made them feel calm (67%) over the song that made them feel excited (33%). In contrast, those who were primed to think of the future were more likely to choose the MP3 of the song that made them feel excited (61%) over the song that made them feel calm (39%).

These results imply that our finding in experiment 1 that young adults naturally define happiness in terms of excitement (rather than calm) is likely the result of their tendency to think about the future. Thus, older adults who are influenced to shift their focus away from the present and toward the future are more likely to experience a "young" form of happiness and to choose products accordingly.

AGE PROXIES TEMPORAL FOCUS: EXPERIMENT 3

In the previous experiments, we found that an individual's temporal focus can be situationally influenced, but that younger adults are chronically more future focused and older adults are chronically more present focused. In this next experiment, we rely on participants' age to determine their temporal focus. The goal of experiment 3 was to more precisely examine the relationships between age, temporal focus, one's meaning of happiness, and choice. As reported in Mogilner et al. (2011), we manipulated whether people (younger and older adults) felt excited or calm and then measured happiness. We built on the previously described results by also examining measures of temporal focus and choice. In doing so, we test whether the effect on choice is mediated by individuals' definitions of happiness, as determined by temporal focus.

Method

For this study, we analyzed measures of choice and temporal focus that had been gathered in the course of conducting study 3 in Mogilner et al. (2011), but which had not been analyzed. In the study, a sample of 44 younger adults (between the ages of 18 and 25 years) and 30 older adults (between the ages of 50 and 68 years) from across the United States (54% female) participated in the online experiment for the chance to win \$100. Like in experiment 2, participants were made to feel excited or peaceful by listening to an exciting or calming version of the song "Such Great Heights." Participants listened to both versions of the song. With age measured, the experiment followed a 2 (age: young vs. old) between-subjects \times 2 (emotion: excited vs. calm) within-subjects design.

In the Mogilner et al. (2011) study, participants listened to both versions of the song, and the order in which the songs were presented was counterbalanced between participants. While listening to each version of the song, participants reported on a 5-point scale how happy they felt (1 = not at all, 5 = very much). As manipulation checks, measures were included to assess on 5-point scales how excited

and calm (calm, peaceful, serene; $\alpha = .85$) each song made participants feel. After participants listened to both songs and indicated their experienced emotions for each, they were asked to choose which of the two songs they would like in the form of an MP3. They then received an MP3 of their chosen song as an additional thank you for their participation in the experiment.

The experiment concluded with a measure of temporal focus. This allowed us to test whether temporal focus underlies any age-related differences. Participants were asked the extent to which they agreed with five statements ($\alpha = .89$; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree): "I often think about the present moment," "I typically focus on the present moment," "It's important to me that my thoughts are in the here and now," "My mind often focuses on what is happening now," and "I like to be present." After completing the study, participants were debriefed, paid, and thanked.

Results and Discussion

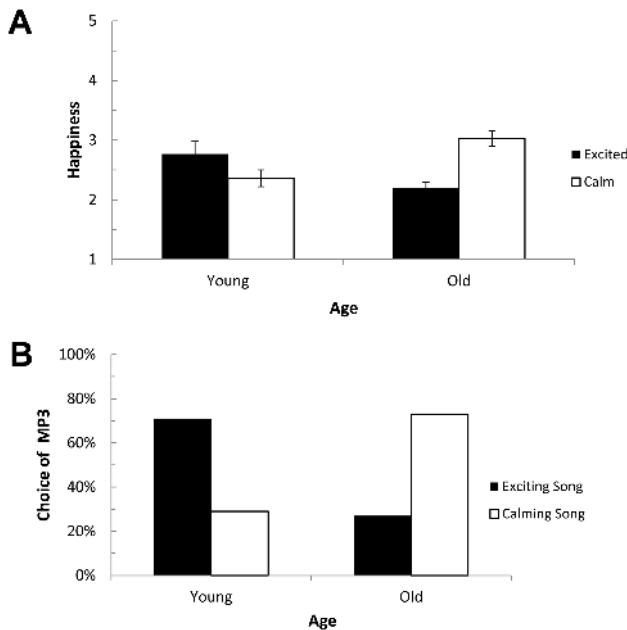
The manipulation checks confirmed that, irrespective of age, participants listening to the exciting song felt more excited ($M = 2.42, SD = 1.08$) than those listening to the calm song ($M = 1.78, SD = 1.04$; $F(1, 72) = 22.21, p < .001$), and participants listening to the calm song felt calmer ($M = 2.80, SD = 1.11$) than those listening to the exciting song ($M = 2.32, SD = .93$; $F(1, 72) = 20.28, p < .001$).

Happiness. As reported in Mogilner et al. (2011), a repeated-measures ANOVA showed a significant interaction between age and song version on reported happiness ($F(1, 72) = 20.48, p < .001$; see fig. 4A). Planned contrasts revealed that the younger participants felt happier when they were made to feel excited ($M = 2.77, SD = 1.79$) than when made to feel calm ($M = 2.36, SD = 1.24$; $F(1, 72) = 5.48, p < .05$), whereas the older participants felt happier when they were made to feel calm ($M = 3.03, SD = 1.16$) than when made to feel excited ($M = 2.20, SD = .89$; $F(1, 72) = 15.50, p < .001$). These findings support an age-based difference in the experience of happiness. For the younger participants, happiness stemmed more from feeling excited, and for the older participants, happiness stemmed more from feeling calm.

Building on the previously reported results, we next identified temporal focus as the factor driving this age-based shift in the meaning of happiness by examining the extent to which participants were focused on the present moment. An ANOVA revealed that the older participants ($M = 5.68, SD = .91$) were more present focused than the younger participants ($M = 5.04, SD = 1.05$; $F(1, 72) = 7.45, p < .01$). We then conducted a mediation analysis to test whether older participants' (vs. younger participants') greater focus on the present moment drove their tendency to associate happiness with feeling calm. Age had a significant effect on present focus ($\beta = .32, t = 2.73, p < .01$), and present focus had a significant effect on the happiness participants experienced from the calming song ($\beta = .39, t = 2.90, p$

FIGURE 4

EXPERIMENT 3: EFFECT OF AGE AND FELT EMOTION ON HAPPINESS AND CHOICE



< .01). The mean indirect effect ($\beta = .13$) from the bootstrap analysis was significant, with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero (.03 to .29). The direct effect ($\beta = .21$) of age on happiness from feeling calm was not significant ($p = .15$). This suggests an indirect-only mediation (Zhao, Lynch, and Chen 2010), which is the form of mediation that is consistent with full mediation in Baron and Kenny's (1986) procedure. These results thus reveal that a greater focus on the present moment was responsible for the older participants experiencing greater happiness from feeling calm.

Choice. Of central interest, the differences in happiness played out in participants' choices ($\chi^2(13.72)$, $p < .001$). As shown in figure 4B, younger adults were more likely to choose an MP3 of the exciting song (71%) over the MP3 of the calm song (29%), whereas older adults were more likely to choose an MP3 of the calm song (73%) over the MP3 of the exciting song (27%).

Finally, a mediation analysis revealed that the effect of age on participants' likelihood of choosing the MP3 of the exciting song (over that of the calm song) was driven by the happiness experienced from feeling excited versus calm. Specifically, there was a negative effect of age on the mediator, such that older participants experienced more happiness from the calming song than the exciting song ($\beta = -.62$, $t = -4.53$, $p < .001$). And there was a positive effect of the mediator on choice, whereby the more happiness

participants felt when listening to the exciting song (over the calming song), the more likely they were to choose an MP3 of the exciting song ($\beta = .63$, $z = 2.27$, $p = .02$). The mean indirect effect ($\beta = -.39$) from the bootstrap analysis was negative and significant, with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero (-1.09 to -.03). The direct effect ($\beta = -.64$) of age on choice was also negative and significant ($p < .05$). Together, this is suggestive of complementary mediation, a form of mediation consistent with partial mediation in Baron and Kenny's (1986) procedure. These results suggest that the happiness participants experienced from feeling excited versus calm was partially responsible for their ultimate choice of song. This suggests that what happiness means to individuals affects their choices: defining happiness more as excitement increases the tendency to choose an exciting option, whereas defining happiness more as feeling calm increases the tendency to choose a calming option.

It is important to note that it was the happiness participants experienced from feeling excited or calm that drove their choice of MP3, rather than how excited or calm they felt. That is, participants were not more likely to choose an MP3 of the exciting song because they were feeling more excited. Indeed, a correlation between whether participants chose the exciting song (over the calming song) and how excited they felt listening to the exciting song versus the calming song was not significant ($r(74) = -.02$, $p = .87$). This, along with the nonsignificant effects of age on how calm and excited the two songs made participants feel (all $p > .10$), indicate that happiness is critical to the effect of temporal focus on choices between exciting and calming options.

PURSuing HAPPINESS IN BOTTLED WATER: EXPERIMENT 4

In the previous experiments, we relied on age to determine temporal focus, and we manipulated present focus among young adults in experiment 1 and future focus among older adults in experiment 2. To more conclusively test whether preferences between exciting and calming options are an effect of temporal focus, this final experiment directly manipulated both present and future focus among adults ranging in age. Temporal focus was manipulated with a sentence unscramble task (as in experiment 2) to rule out concern from experiment 1 that the manipulation was confounded with feeling calm (or excited). An additional goal of this experiment was to highlight the marketing implications of the effects shown thus far by creating a fictitious brand that promises happiness through either excitement or calm. Using professionally designed logos, we examined participants' choices between two distinctly positioned bottled waters.

Method

A sample of 51 adults from across the United States (ages 21–49, $M = 35$; 61% female) were recruited through Mechanical Turk to participate in this online experiment in

exchange for 50 cents. The experiment involved two ostensibly unrelated studies: the first served to direct participants' focus to either the future or the present moment, and the second measured participants' choices between an exciting and calming product and their anticipated happiness from each.

Using a similar temporal focus manipulation as in experiment 2, we first primed participants to think about either the future or the present moment. Participants were presented with a sentence unscramble task that exposed them to either future-related words or present-related words. For example, participants in the future condition were asked to construct a three-word sentence out of the word set *the future matters my*, and participants in the present condition were asked to construct a three-word sentence out of the set *the present matters my*. Participants were given 3 minutes to construct as many sentences as possible from a list of 14 word sets.

Participants were then asked to complete a New Product Survey for which they were told that a new brand of enhanced water was being introduced to the market. A graphic designer had designed two logos for a fictitious brand of water, "Happiness Water." One of the logos depicted a calming product incorporating a soothing green-colored drop and the descriptor "Pure Calm." The other logo depicted an exciting product with a bright orange-colored drop and the descriptor "Pure Excitement." See the logos in the appendix. Presented with the two logos side by side, participants were asked to choose between the two types of Happiness Water. Then for each product, participants reported on a 5-point scale how happy drinking this water would make them feel (1 = not at all, 5 = very much). As manipulation checks, measures were also included to assess on 5-point scales how excited and calm (calm, peaceful, serene; $\alpha = .85$) drinking the water would make them feel. The order in which the individual logos and related questions were presented was counterbalanced between participants. Finally, we included ancillary measures to explore potential correlates of temporal focus (e.g., regulatory focus, construal level, and certainty) in hopes of gaining deeper insight on why temporal focus might affect the type of happiness consumers assume (although no differences were found; all $p > .10$). After completing the study, participants were paid and thanked.

Results and Discussion

The manipulation checks confirmed that, irrespective of temporal focus, participants believed the bottled water with the exciting logo would make them feel more excited ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.44$) than that with the calming logo ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 1.16$; $F(1, 48) = 7.29$, $p = .01$), and the bottled water with the calming logo would make them feel more calm ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.36$) than that with the exciting logo ($M = 1.85$, $SD = .90$; $F(1, 48) = 12.56$, $p = .001$).

Happiness. A repeated-measures ANOVA showed a significant interaction between temporal focus and product type on reported happiness ($F(1, 48) = 16.58$, $p < .001$). As

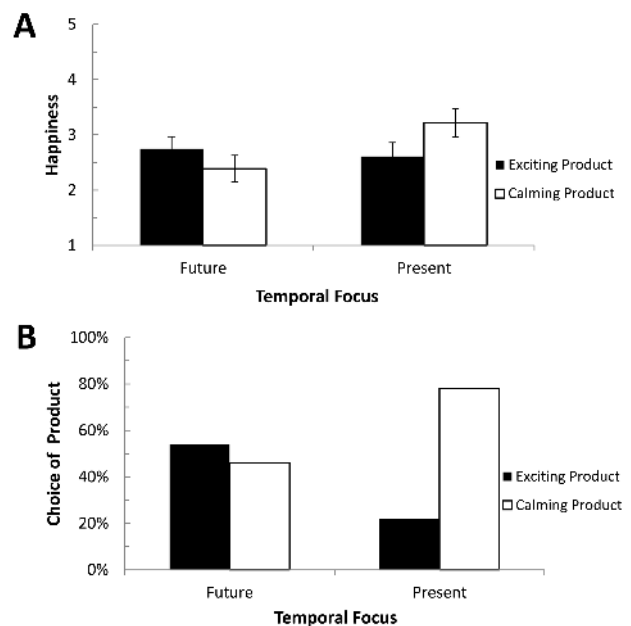
shown in figure 5A, planned contrasts revealed that those focused on the future expected to feel happier from the exciting product ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 1.14$) than the calming product ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.20$; $F(1, 48) = 5.02$, $p < .05$). In contrast, those focused on the present expected to feel happier from the calming product ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.31$) than the exciting product ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 1.23$; $F(1, 48) = 12.01$, $p = .001$). These results confirm that one's temporal focus determines whether people believe happiness flows more from feeling excited or calm.

Choice. Whether participants were more focused on the future or the present moment influenced their likelihood of choosing the exciting or calming product ($\chi^2(5.37)$, $p = .02$). As shown in figure 5B, those focused on the future were more likely to choose the exciting product (54%) over the calming product (46%), whereas those focused on the present were more likely to choose the calming product (78%) over the exciting product (22%).

Finally, a mediation analysis revealed that participants' anticipated happiness determined their choices. Specifically, the analysis demonstrated that the effect of temporal focus on participants' likelihood of choosing the exciting product (over the calming product) was driven by the happiness anticipated from feeling excited versus calm. There was a significant effect of temporal focus on the mediator such that future-focused participants anticipated more happiness from the exciting product than the calming product ($\beta =$

FIGURE 5

EXPERIMENT 4: EFFECT OF TEMPORAL FOCUS ON ANTICIPATED HAPPINESS AND CHOICE



-.97, $t = -4.13$, $p < .001$). There was also a significant effect of the mediator on choice, whereby the more happiness participants anticipated from the exciting product (over the calming product), the more likely they were to choose the exciting product ($\beta = 3.12$, $z = 3.50$, $p < .001$). The mean indirect effect ($\beta = -3.02$) from the bootstrap analysis was significant with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero (-12.47 to $-.69$), and the direct effect ($\beta = .75$) of temporal focus on choice was not significant ($p > .10$). Together, this is suggestive of indirect-only mediation, a form of mediation consistent with full mediation in Baron and Kenny's (1986) procedure. These results suggest that the happiness participants anticipated feeling from the exciting and calming products (as determined by temporal focus) drove their choice of product. These findings therefore indicate that the meaning of happiness affects choices, such that anticipating happiness more from excitement increases the tendency to choose an exciting option, whereas anticipating happiness more from feeling calm increases the tendency to choose a calming option.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Most everyone seeks to be happy, no matter where they are from, how much money they make, or how old they are. And every day, people make decisions toward that pursuit. In light of this universal drive toward happiness, it is surprising that the nature of the end point (and thus which options will best get them there) remains unclear. What *is* the meaning of happiness, and how does that meaning influence our choices? This research sheds light on these age-old questions by examining how happiness is experienced and by identifying one factor that determines what happiness means—temporal focus.

The results of six studies show that the meaning of happiness is malleable, shifting both moment to moment and over the course of one's life. When one is more focused on the future, happiness is more strongly associated with feeling excited, whereas when one is more focused on the present moment, happiness is more strongly associated with feeling calm. Although age tends to influence temporal focus, it is not the only predictor; the degree to which one is focused on the present (vs. the future) can be altered by primes and situational characteristics. In fact, it seems to be temporal focus, rather than age per se, that shifts individuals' experiences of happiness. Perhaps most importantly, the results reveal that the specific meaning of happiness individuals adopt determines the choices they make—such as the music they listen to, the type of tea they drink, and the brand of water they buy.

These findings contribute to the current understanding of consumer psychology and happiness in several ways. First, this work moves the research on happiness beyond behavioral correlates, antecedents, and consequences of happiness (Dunn et al. 2008; Nicolao, Irwin, and Goodman 2009; Van Boven and Gilovich 2003) and toward an understanding of what "happiness" means across people and situations. In particular, the meaning of happiness appears to depend on

one's temporal focus. Recent work has shown that thinking about time in the broad sense increases happiness by leading people to behave in interpersonally connecting ways (Mogilner 2010). Building on these findings, the current studies suggest that the specific component of time (the present vs. the future) should be considered because the types of activities that make one happy likely differ, as would the kinds of interpersonal connection. Indeed, prior work has identified such daily activities as sex, socializing with friends, relaxing, meditating, and exercising to be associated with the greatest feelings of happiness (Kahneman et al. 2004). Incorporating the distinction between exciting and calming activities, along with one's temporal focus, would provide more fine-grained insight into which activities one should choose in order to feel happy. For instance, exercise and sex might prove more enjoyable among future-focused individuals, whereas relaxing and meditating might prove more enjoyable among present-focused individuals. The allure of socializing likely depends on the particular context (e.g., hip dance club vs. quiet restaurant) and the particular friends. The current results similarly speak to work linking temporal focus and happiness. For example, in a recent study, Killingsworth and Gilbert (2010) showed that being focused on the present leads to increased daily happiness. Our findings suggest that only one particular type of happiness would be influenced: calm happiness. In contrast, excited happiness is more likely to be elicited when one's mind wanders toward the future.

More broadly, our identification of the temporal dimension of emotions contributes to the larger stream of work on emotions, which to date has focused primarily on valence (pleasantness) and arousal (bodily activation; Barrett and Russell 1999; Shapiro, MacInnis, and Park 2002; Tsai et al. 2006) and, to a lesser extent, on levels of uncertainty (Smith and Ellsworth 1985; Tiedens and Linton 2001), forms of appraisal (Lerner and Keltner 2000), and associated goals (Raghunathan, Pham, and Corfman 2006). Extant research on emotions, however, has not explored the temporal orientation of specific emotions. Because emotions serve to guide reactions to the environment so as to appropriately inform behavior (Elliot and Thrash 2002), it is perhaps not surprising that emotions are linked to time. For instance, integral to an emotional reaction is whether it pertains to an event now or in the future. In this research, we focus on two types of happiness, excitement and calm, and examine whether they differ in their temporal focus in addition to their levels of arousal. The results of our pilot studies reveal they do: excitement is a more future-focused emotion and calm is a more present-focused emotion.

Consistent with this finding, bloggers tend to express feeling calm, blessed, and peaceful in the context of present events, and they tend to express excitement for future events (Kamvar and Harris 2009). Building on this insight, we asked a sample of 52 adults between the ages of 18 and 67 ($M = 37$; 35% male) what "feeling excited" means, and "looking forward to something" was the most frequently generated definition. The large majority of the definitions

generated for feeling calm included the word “being,” which suggests that calm indeed pertains to the present state. Thus, this work identifies temporal focus as another important way to categorize emotions. Future research is needed to explore what other emotions fall near the end points of this present-future temporal continuum (e.g., hope is a future-focused emotion; MacInnis and de Mello 2005), what types of emotions are associated with the past (e.g., regret, shame, pride), and what are the downstream consequences of an emotion’s temporal orientation (e.g., are emotional states tied to the future associated with a greater propensity to act?).

Finally, these findings inform marketers looking to connect with consumers by promising happiness. Since happiness does not mean the same thing to everyone, marketers might benefit from considering the consumer segment they are trying to reach when attempting to cultivate happiness. Importantly, how happiness is conveyed matters—from product benefits, to the personality of the brand, through to the appropriate color pallet. For example, in one study, we asked 50 consumers between the ages of 19 and 68 ($M = 37$; 32% male) what makes them feel excited and calm. The results suggest that hot colors (e.g., red) tend to excite, whereas cool colors (e.g., blue) tend to calm. Furthermore, certain brands were mentioned as highly exciting (e.g., Nike, Target, Apple) and other brands were noted to be calming (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, Lululemon, Borders). Also evocative of excitement are certain people (e.g., friends, kids) and activities (e.g., dancing, running, having sex). In contrast, calm is associated with other people (e.g., spouses, parents) and activities (e.g., reading, walking, doing yoga). These insights suggest that as marketers develop and communicate products so as to make consumers’ lives happier, they should consider the demographics of their consumers (i.e., age) as well such psychographics as temporal focus.

Caveats and Future Research

The current research is limited in several ways, which affords opportunities for future work. For example, we only focused on choices within three product categories (tea, music, and bottled water). Given that people make such critical choices as occupation, where to live, and who to marry in pursuit of a happy life, it is important to further examine whether life stage and temporal focus determine when exciting or calming options will be chosen in these highly consequential contexts. Such research might also address the stability of decisions over time, as the meaning of happiness shifts and the drivers of happiness change. For instance, the role of meaningfulness and savoring (Frederickson 2001; Izard 1977) may start to play a greater role in decision making as individuals learn to focus more on the present moment and happiness becomes synonymous with peaceful contentment.

Future research is also needed to increase the generalizability of these findings to different cultures. To start, understanding how the meaning(s) of happiness map onto ideal affect is needed. For example, Tsai et al. (2006) found that

how people want to feel (“ideal affect”) is influenced by culture, such that European Americans value high-arousal positive affect (e.g., excitement) more than Chinese people, but Chinese people value low-arousal positive affect (e.g., calmness) more than European Americans. It has been proposed that these differences stem from such culturally embedded factors as interpersonal communication norms, child-rearing styles, religion, popular media, and children’s literature (Tsai 2007). The degree to which these cultures are oriented toward the present or the future may be yet another factor that explains differences in ideal affect across cultures. Of theoretic interest is whether the effects we found among North Americans remain robust in cultures where the meaning of emotions in general, and excitement and peacefulness in particular, fundamentally differ (Aaker, Benet-Martinez, and Garolera 2001).

Relatedly, in the current work, we focused on the emotional life cycle by honing in on younger and older individuals. However, much anecdotal and empirical work suggests that feeling young versus old may be more psychologically based than chronologically based (Carstensen et al. 1999). For instance, people report feeling “old” during their late 20s and mid-30s (Kamvar and Harris 2009). Further, although one can feel young or old regardless of actual age, people of different ages may view these experiences differently. For instance, those in their youth may associate feeling old with being boring, whereas those with many years under their belt may associate feeling young with being overly wild. Our research suggests that whether feeling young or old is viewed in a positive light could depend on one’s definition of happiness. For instance, if a young person is currently more focused on the present (vs. the future), happiness should be more strongly associated with peacefulness (vs. excitement), and feeling old would not be viewed as boring but rather as stable, secure, and settled. More generally, work is needed to understand the subjective experience of feeling young and old, as well as the implications of that subjective experience for choice.

Future research is also needed to explore the deeper mechanism underlying our core effects. That is, why is it that focusing on the future tends to lead to happiness experienced as excitement, and focusing on the present leads to happiness experienced as calm? The null results of experiment 4 suggest that regulatory focus, certainty, and construal level are not involved; however, it could be that the measures we used were not sufficiently sensitive to identify their roles. Another possibility is that the two types of happiness have discrete functions, which are differentially adaptive depending on the situation. Since excitement is high in arousal and thus associated with action (Rucker and Petty 2004; Russell 2003), excited happiness may be highly adaptive when gearing up to act and preparing for future events. In contrast, because calm is low in arousal and associated with mindfulness and absorbing the present moment (Brown and Ryan 2003), calm happiness may be more adaptive at the

end of an experience or when a goal has been reached. Indeed, the broaden-and-build theory posits that experiences of positive emotions broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires, which serve to build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources (Frederickson 2001). Future work is needed to explore whether these resources, which help individuals at the beginning of a project or experience, are associated with excited happiness, and whether appreciation of the present (associated with calm happiness) may be adaptive when concluding a project or experience.

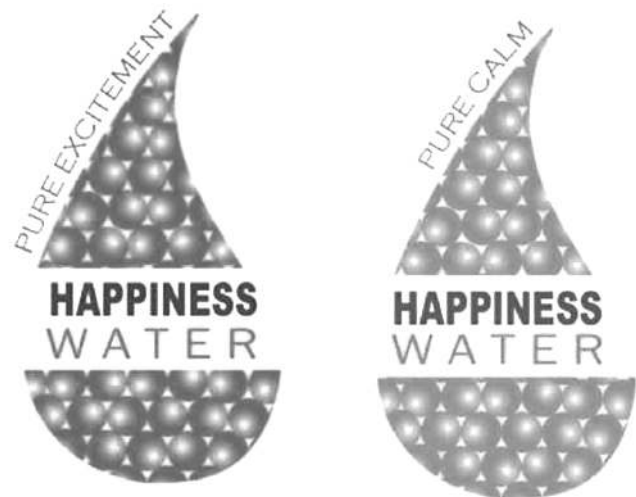
Finally, a broader examination of different types of happiness beyond excitement and calm is needed (e.g., joy, awe, nostalgia), as is a deeper examination into the meaning of excitement and peacefulness. For example, one feature of excitement, which is distinct from peacefulness, is its potential to be mixed in valence. Indeed, in their exploration of feelings expressed on personal blogs, Kamvar and Harris (2009) report that excitement is not only future focused but is also associated with feelings of high intensity, which can sometimes be negative. When people report feeling excited, they also frequently report feeling nervous, apprehensive, scared, terrified, anxious, and hopeful. Excitement often accompanies change, like moving to a new place, getting married, and taking a job. Along with the uncertainty associated with that change comes the potential for the co-occurrence of positive and negative feelings. Indeed, "although most people feel a happy excitement, a nervous and scared excitement is also very common" (Kamvar and Harris 2009, 93). In contrast, because there is little uncertainty associated with peacefulness, this type of happiness tends not to be associated with high-arousal negative emotions (Kamvar and Harris 2009, 66). If true, the types of choices people make when happiness-as-excitement guides their decisions might in fact be more volatile, less stable, and more prone to change over time.

Summary

People from all walks of life have wondered, "What is the meaning of happiness?" This research begins to shed light on the answer to this question by exploring the dynamic meaning of happiness, showing how it naturally changes over the course of time. Moreover, the type of happiness one experiences can also shift in a given moment, suggesting that we can choose which happiness we want to feel. From this perspective, the current research qualifies the adage "happiness is a choice" by suggesting that the *type* of happiness we want to feel is a choice we make, and this influences the choices we make. In this light, the studies here address foundational questions regarding the meaning of happiness and consumers' resulting decisions and, we hope, serve to further fuel the stream of work on happiness in consumer behavior.

APPENDIX

EXPERIMENT 4: EXCITING AND CALMING PRODUCT OPTIONS



NOTE.—Color version available as an online enhancement.

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