

Losing Self-Control but Finding Myself: Authenticity and Choice Satisfaction in Self-Control Conflicts

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Short Abstract

We examined how resolving consumer self-control conflicts by making a high (vs. low) self-control choice may reduce choice satisfaction for some consumers through undermining authenticity (i.e., the subjective feeling that one behaves in line with one's true self). We propose that individual differences in lay rationalism (i.e., the use of reason versus feelings to guide decisions) moderate the effect of low versus high self-control choices on choice satisfaction and that this interaction effect is mediated by authenticity. In three experiments with various methodologies and across consumer domains, we found that a low (vs. high) self-control choice made consumers whose decisions are driven more by feelings (low in lay rationalism) feel more authentic and more satisfied with their choice, but made consumers whose decisions are driven more by reason (high in lay rationalism) feel less authentic and less satisfied with their choice. Our research contributes to the literature on consumption and identity, self-control, and authenticity, and has practical implications for self-control interventions and current debates on nudges and choice architecture.

The paper was nominated for the Best Paper Award

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