Dual-tasking, temporal embedding or having fun: When does time fly?

Presented by

Sonia Noemi Vilches-Montero

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (with coursework component)

Discipline of Marketing

Faculty of Business, Bond University
Queensland, Australia

April 2011

ABSTRACT

Time is a major variable of interest to consumer behaviour theory. However, the debate regarding how to conceptualize and theorize time in consumer research still remains unsolved and a "lack of theoretical development" in the discipline has been acknowledged (Bettany & Gatrell, 2009).

Using two experimental studies, this dissertation moves into an exploration of the "*neural-clock model*" according to which individuals are expected to generate a decision about the passage of time based on the amount of interval-filling information available in memory. Taken together, findings from these two studies show that subjective time deviates from real time, and time perception is significantly affected by active information processing, time delay and stimulus' level of enjoyment.

Most important, findings provide evidence for theoretical discussions and new research avenues. Time perception for events past is significantly distorted when subjects are cued to reconstruct and estimate the experience as a whole, as opposed to retrieving and estimating its different subparts. Both studies illustrate that in time perception "the whole is not equal to the sum of its parts", and this effect is enhanced when duration estimates are produced after a time delay and when subjects perform active stimulus information processing. This is an interesting finding because it provides support for the application of literature in event structure and memory psychophysics regarding reconstruction of physical objects and events into time perception research. Thus, findings show that time perception seems to depend on how individuals reconstruct the experience, and not only on the amount of information stored in memory, as the neural-clock model proposes.

We know that misestimating time has profound ramifications on consumer behaviour, and marketing researchers have dedicated considerable effort to understanding the effects that time perceptions play in consumers' decision-making. However, very little is known regarding how marketers may distort the subjective experience of time to their own benefit. This dissertation attempts to fill that gap.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This thesis is submitted to Bond University in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. This thesis represents my own original work towards this research degree and contains no material which has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at this University or any other institution, except where due acknowledgement is made.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My times are in thy hand
Psalm 31:15

I want to give thanks to God my Heavenly Father. *The God who is feeding me from my being unto this day (Genesis 48:15)*. He owns all my ways. Praised be the Lord.

I want to thank my husband Renzo and my children Catalina and Daniel for their love and commitment. Waiting for mum to come home and watching mum working late has become your speciality all these years, and you never complained.

I want to give thanks to my mother and sister for their inexhaustible provision of love and care. No daughter has had a better mum.

I want to thank my friends Ian, Sue, Daniel, Crystal and Allison for being our family in Australia. So many good memories!

I want to thank my supervisor Dr. Mark Spence for being my counsellor and mentor. What a fascinating topic of research this has been. I have fully enjoyed it. You suggested it, you made me love it, and now I do not want to give it up!

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