



Differential effect of excitement versus contentment, and excitement versus relaxation: Examining the influence of positive affects on adoption of new technology with a Korean sample [☆]



Dohyun Ahn ^a, Dong-Hee Shin ^{b,*}

^a Jeju National University, Dept. of Journalism and Public Relations, Republic of Korea

^b Dept. of Interaction Science, Sungkyunkwan University, 90327 International Hall, 53 Myungryun-dong 3-ga, Jongro-gu, Seoul 110-745, Republic of Korea

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ABSTRACT

Although affects such as interest, contentment, excitement, and relaxation are positive in valence, we argue that the cognitive and motivational functions of specific affects differ, making the effects of interest versus contentment and excitement versus relaxation differential in the adoption of new technology. We hypothesized that while interest and excitement will have positive associations with new technology adoption, contentment and relaxation may be negatively associated. The overall hypotheses were supported by the results of an online survey of 156 Korean adults. In addition, the results were consistent with the view that pleasure is a generic term encompassing various positive affects, such as interest and excitement. The effect of pleasure on new technology adoption was mediated by the specific affects of which it was comprised, including interest and excitement.

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1. Introduction

Media users experience various kinds of affects due to media use. Some might experience relaxation by relieving stress, while others might experience excitement by stimulating the prevention of boredom. In addition, some might feel interest by being able to explore new opportunities through the media, while others might feel contentment from their media use. Given that these affective experiences are generally positive, one might ask if they will be identical in terms of the influence of affective experiences on user decision making and judgment, such as the adoption of new technology. The answer to this question depends on how the cognitive and motivational functions of affects are understood.

When making decisions and judgments, individuals typically rely on their feelings, as feeling provides a more efficient way to estimate values in decision than reasoning (Cabanac, 1992; Peters, 2006; Peters, Lipkus, & Diefenbach, 2006; Vohs, Baumeister, & Loewenstein, 2007). With the rapid advancement of technology, decisions and judgments are becoming even more

complex. For example, when purchasing a new smartphone, numerous factors may influence consumer choice, including design, price, and performance. If consumers estimates the value of new smartphones through conscious calculation of all the related factors, the decision making process may reach a deadlock.

The traditional approach to understanding affects is mostly valence-based, distinguishing them into positive and negative (e.g., Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). From this perspective, the influence of affective experiences on decision making and judgment is mainly determined by the valence of the affective experiences (e.g., Schwarz & Clore, 1983). Although the valence-based approach informed us that affects have cognitive and motivational functions, distinguishing them simply by their positivity and negativity can limit our understanding of the precise functions of affects. Recently, research on the influence of affects on decision making and judgment focused on the role of specific affects, through which the differential effects of certain affects have been highlighted (Griskevicius, Shiota, & Neufeld, 2010; Griskevicius, Shiota, & Nowlis, 2010; Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001).

The present study focused on positive affects, because these have gained much less attention than negative affects, and the adoption of new technology fits well with such affects. Thus, the purpose of this research was to examine the associations among various positive affects and media selection, especially intention to adopt and use of new technology. To this end, theories on the cognitive and motivational function of affects were first reviewed,

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +82 2 740 1864.

E-mail addresses: dahn@jeju.ac.kr (D. Ahn), dshin@skku.edu (D.-H. Shin).

URL: <http://dshin.skku.edu/> (D.-H. Shin).

after which examination was carried out on how specific positive affects, including excitement, interest, relaxation, and contentment, are associated with intention to adopt and use of new technology in a divergent way.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Sections 2 and 2.1 provide a literature review on the functional approach to affect and decomposing positive affects, respectively; Section 3 proposes the rationales used in this study, and develops the hypotheses tested herein; Section 4 describes the research methods; Section 5 provides the results of empirical tests; and Section 6 presents an analytical discussion and the conclusions, along with some implications for practitioners and researchers. Finally, Section 6.4 ends with the limitations of this study, and the topics for future research.

2. Functional approach to affect

Affect is a generic term that includes various affective states, such as emotions and moods. Emotions are characterized by greater intensity and shorter duration in comparison to moods. They are also more specific than moods, in terms of both causal circumstances and motivational implications; however, both have an influence on cognition, behavioral inclination, and action in constructing values and preferences (Peters, 2006; Zillmann, 2003).

The core of affects consists of two independent affective states: positive and negative, *i.e.*, pleasure and displeasure (Barrett, Mesquita, Ochsner, & Gross, 2007). The valenced core affect (*i.e.*, positive and negative affects) has a fundamental role in the processes of valuation. Pleasure informs and guides individuals to approach helpful objects or events, whereas displeasure informs and guides individuals to avoid harmful objects or events (Barrett, 2006; Schwarz & Clore, 2007).

The function of affect in the valuation of objects and events can be accounted for more specifically by the affect as common currency hypothesis. Valuation is complex because decision-makers typically have to deal with conflicting motivations, such as the desire to seek new opportunities while also being content with the status quo. Even after deciding to take chances, decision-makers typically have to deal with more complex situations. For example, when purchasing a new smartphone, as mentioned above, numerous factors including design, price, and performance may influence choice. If an individual tires to value objects or events by relying on the conscious calculation of all factors, this will become too complex to adequately deal with the valuation process. Thus, there needs to be a simpler way than the conscious calculation of cost-benefit and other tradeoffs to carry out the valuation process (Cabanac, 1992; Witt & Binder, 2011).

The affect as common currency hypothesis suggests that relying on affect is a simple way of dealing with conflicting motivations when perceiving usefulness (Cabanac, 1992). Positive affects serves as indicators of usefulness, like common currency in commerce, allowing decision-makers to estimate the usefulness of objects or experiences simply by applying the principle of pleasure: seeking, if feeling pleasure; and avoiding, if feeling displeasure. Decision-makers just have to follow their feelings, whether they communicate pleasure or displeasure for objects or experiences, ranking all motivations to actuate the behavioral final common path by satisfying the most urgent need first. In this way, people can optimize their behaviors without having to undertake complex calculations of multiple utility. In other words, people perceive usefulness through experience of pleasure (Cabanac, 1992; Peters, 2006; Peters et al., 2006).

Indeed, positive affect were found to be a major determinant of the adoption and use of new technology, such as computers in the workplace (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1992; Shin, 2013). Numerous studies confirmed the role of positive affect as a

predictor of using new technology, which was studied in a variety of contexts, including the World Wide Web (Agarwal & Karahanna, 2000; Moon & Kim, 2001), a movie website (van der Heijden, 2004), mobile Internet (Cheong & Park, 2005; Kim & Hwang, 2012), mobile/smart phones (Chun, Lee, & Kim, 2012; Wakefield & Whitten, 2006), mobile games (Ha, Yoon, & Choi, 2007), online games (Hsu & Lu, 2004; Lin & Bhattacharjee, 2010), social network games (Shin & Shin, 2011), Smart TVs (Shin, Hwnag, & Choo, 2013), satellite digital multimedia broadcasting (DMB) (Shin, 2009), information systems (Venkatesh, 2000), instant messengers like MSN (Gu, Fan, Suh, & Lee, 2010), and online shopping (Childers, Carr, Peck, & Carson, 2002).

2.1. Decomposing positive affect

Although valenced affect is the core of affective experiences, recent advances have highlighted the functions of specific affects, such that different emotions with the same valence were found to influence cognition and behavior in different ways (Griskevicius, Shiota, & Neufeld, 2010; Griskevicius, Shiota, & Nowlis, 2010; Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001; Tiedens & Linton, 2001). For example, while the valences of both fear and anger are negative, they have opposing effects on risk perception. Fear leads people to estimate risks in a pessimistic way and thus to take risk-averse choices, whereas anger leads them to estimate risk in an optimistic way, through which they tend to make risk-seeking choices (Lerner & Keltner, 2001). Likewise, while the valences of pride and contentment are both positive, they have opposing effects on cognition and behavior. Pride motivates people to draw attention from others, causing proud individuals to prefer products to be seen by others, whereas contentment motivates people to be in a comfortable place, stimulating a preference for products that are not used for public display (Griskevicius, Shiota, & Nowlis, 2010).

In the context of adoption of new technology, this study focused on positive affect, or pleasure, rather than negative affect, or displeasure, because the adoption of new technology involves approaching helpful objects or events, rather than avoiding harmful ones. Interest, contentment, excitement, and relaxation were chosen for analysis, because their cognitive and motivational functions can be different, displaying opposition despite having the same valence.

2.2. Pleasure as the positive affect

Pleasure, in daily life, is so obvious that it is unnecessary to explain what it is; however, it is often impossible to describe in words, because it arises in a number of different guises, such as sensations (Frijda, 2009). Because of these guises, people typically experience pleasure without awareness of the nature and function it carries. Of the two dimensions of affective experiences (*i.e.*, valence and activation), the valence dimension refers to the axis of pleasantness and unpleasantness, while the activation dimension refers to the axis of activation and deactivation of either pleasantness or unpleasantness (Barrett & Russell, 1998, 1999). The valence axis serves as the primary and core affective experience (Barrett et al., 2007; Russell & Barrett, 1999). Thus, pleasure, as the positive affect, is a generic term encompassing a family of subjective positive psychological states, from sensory pleasure to higher pleasure, which includes pleasure from helping others, from achieving goals, from finding meaning in one's life, or from savoring beauty (Kringelbach & Berridge, 2009). Pleasure can be defined as "a positive experienced state that we seek and that we try to maintain or enhance" (Rozin, 1999, p. 112). From this perspective, the function of pleasure is to motivate individuals to partake in useful behaviors (Cabanac, 1992).

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