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Consumer anticipation: antecedents, processes and outcomes

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CONSUMER ANTICIPATION: ANTECEDENTS, PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

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CONSUMER ANTICIPATION: ANTECEDENTS, PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

Abstract:

Marketing managers use anticipation as a marketing tool, particularly for new or improved products. Academic interest in consumer anticipation has focused on its outcomes, especially effects on the forthcoming substantive consumption. However, inadequate attention has been given to consumer anticipation as a complex process *per se*. A systematic review of the literature arrives at a conceptual definition which sees consumer anticipation as a mental process by which consumers consider the physical, experiential, social, emotional, or behavioural consumption outcomes that are expected to accrue to the self from a yet to be realized consumption decision or experience. Antecedents of consumer anticipation, its underlying mental processes, and consequences are identified and discussed. Frameworks for operationalising consumer anticipation in practical contexts are discussed.

Key words:

Consumer anticipation, delayed consumption, consumption evaluation, satisfaction

Summary statement of contribution

This study makes four major contributions. First, it defines consumer anticipation from the perspective of its key processes, rather than effects on subsequent behaviour. Secondly, the concept of consumer anticipation is differentiated from other proximal forward-looking concepts. Thirdly, it integrates anticipation into consumer behaviour theories, notably satisfaction theories. Lastly, practical recommendations regarding operationalization and measurement of consumer anticipation in empirical research are provided.

CONSUMER ANTICIPATION: ANTECEDENTS, PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

Introduction

Consumer anticipation occurs in situations of delayed consumption, *i.e.*, in situations where there is a delay between initial thoughts about a product and its subsequent experience. Such delayed consumption situations provide consumers with opportunities to visualise their future consumption by preparing or thinking about it. This may be typified by consumers booking their hotel rooms months before a vacation, reserving their new IPhone weeks before availability in stores, or ordering online products to be delivered some days later. In addition, anticipation has become an integral part of strategy in the marketing of many new or improved products. Emotionally evocative adverts that preview potential consumption outcomes, advance orders, reminders of release dates and pre-consumption dialogue typify companies' efforts to engage with customers, prior to consumption, and often prior to purchase commitment.

There is some evidence that preannouncement and anticipation enhance the success of new product launches (Lee & Colarelli O'Connor, 2003; Schatzel & Calantone, 2006). This may be typified by Apple fans or Harry Potter fans waiting outside the doors of an Apple store or a book store, being excited to be among the first ones to buy the latest iPhone or J. K. Rowling novel. There is also evidence that anticipation can, in some hedonic consumption situations, increase consumption enjoyment in comparison with an absence of anticipation (Nowlis, Mandel, & McCabe, 2004) and can increase consumers' evaluation of the subsequent consumption (Chan & Mukhopadhyay, 2010; Elster & Loewenstein, 1992; Frederick, Loewenstein, & O'donoghue, 2002; Kőszegi, 2010; Le Bel & Dubé, 1998; Loewenstein, 1987; Nowlis et al., 2004).

The marketing literature – noted above and explored in more detail below – provides strong evidence of a positive effect of consumer anticipation on consumption enjoyment and subsequent

consumption evaluation. However, despite this apparent causal relationship, very little research has investigated the nature of the anticipation period *per se* and the processes present during this period. It has been noted that consumers derive pleasure from anticipating future consumption, thus suggesting that the pleasure derived from the actual consumption may be just one component of the total pleasure associated with that consumption (Le Bel & Dubé, 1998). There is even anecdotal suggestion that anticipation is 'better than realization' (Alba & Williams, 2013, p. 7). In the case of routinely purchased services, consumers may engage in anticipatory problem-solving behaviours, such as planning, preparing, and gathering information (Harrison & Beatty, 2011). In this context, consumers' anticipation could be a strategy to reduce the impact of possible problems and discomforts that may arise during consumption: consumers engage in anticipatory problem-solving behaviours because of anticipatory worry experienced while thinking of possible future problems (Baumgartner, Pieters, & Bagozzi, 2008). Emotions felt during the anticipation period have also been found to be significantly associated with post-consumption emotions, behavioural intentions, and satisfaction (Koenig-Lewis & Palmer, 2014). These works notwithstanding, it appears that research so far has failed to 'specify what happens during the waiting period' (Chan & Mukhopadhyay, 2010, p. 506). Further insights would be useful to guide marketing managers' efforts to evoke anticipation (Lee & Colarelli O'Connor, 2003; Schatzel & Calantone, 2006).

More significantly, extending our knowledge of consumer anticipation is important because the answer to whether firms should encourage customers' sense of anticipation is not straightforward. Research in innovation (Schatzel & Calantone, 2006), economics (Caplin & Leahy, 2001; Elster & Loewenstein, 1992; Frederick et al., 2002; Kőszegi, 2010; Loewenstein, 1987) and consumer behaviour (Chan & Mukhopadhyay, 2010; Le Bel & Dubé, 1998; Nowlis et al., 2004) suggest that consumer anticipation should be encouraged because of its apparent 'short-term' effect, *i.e.*,

increased levels of product evaluation prior to actual consumption and high success rate of new product launches. However, it is less clear whether the 'long-term effect' of consumer anticipation (i.e., after consumption has occurred) is positive or negative. MacInnis and Price (1990), for instance, have demonstrated that imagery processing stemming from anticipation has a direct positive effect on satisfaction. However, if consumer anticipation is encouraged, there is also a resulting risk that subsequent consumption may fail to meet expectations (Chan & Mukhopadhyay, 2010; Dixon, Victorino, Kwortnik, & Verma, 2017). Consumer satisfaction has long been explained through Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory [EDT], whereby (dis)satisfaction arises from discrepancy between expectations formed prior to consumption and the perceived product performance (Oliver, 1980; Oliver & Linda, 1981; Oliver & Winer, 1987). Thus, EDT would suggest to lower expectations in order to reach higher satisfaction levels, and to discourage consumer anticipation because it may raise expectations. In summary, it is not clear whether consumer anticipation has a positive, a negative or no effect on consumer satisfaction.

The purpose of this conceptual article is to shed light on consumer anticipation. In the first section of this paper, we start by proposing a conceptual definition of consumer anticipation based on a systematic analysis of the literature. Then, we describe the mental processes involved in consumer anticipation, we differentiate consumer anticipation from potentially related processes and concepts and we locate consumer anticipation within the consumer decision making process. In the second section of the paper, we discuss the consumer anticipation process by (1) adopting a motivation, ability and opportunity framework to discuss the degrees to which consumers engage in anticipation, and (2) describing its affective, behavioural and cognitive consequences, with a focus on satisfaction with the consumption experience. Finally, we discuss measures of consumer

anticipation and conclude with discussion of the implications of consumer anticipation for marketing theory and practice and a roadmap for future research.

What is (and is not) consumer anticipation?

A proposed definition of consumer anticipation

We define consumer anticipation as a mental process by which consumers consider the physical, experiential, social, emotional, or behavioural consumption outcomes that are expected to accrue to the self from a yet to be realized consumption decision or experience. Key components of this definition are that (a) consumer anticipation is a psychological process, (b) it involves a consideration of a variety of potential outcomes (physical, experiential, etc.), (c) it focuses on outcomes that occur to the self (*versus* others in general), and (d) the process occurs in advance of realized consumption (i.e., there is a delay between outcome consideration (or anticipation) and consumption).

To arrive at this definition, we started by conducting an extensive literature review aiming at understanding how consumer anticipation is viewed in prior research. We were especially interested in delineating the scope of consumer anticipation, identifying its determinants and outcomes, and describing its underlying processes. We followed Rowe's (2014) recommendations when searching relevant papers to review. The key word ‘anticipation’ was used as the primary broad search string and sources were identified within the Business Source Complete database. We systematically screened English language academic journals in marketing, economics, and psychology to derive interdisciplinary insights. The relevance of papers was assessed by reference to their title, abstract, keywords and by examination of the paper. Manual searches of key papers identified in the reference lists were also conducted. The systematic review was limited to papers published in peer-reviewed journals between 1980 and 2018. We first looked for a definition of

‘anticipation’. When ‘anticipation’ was not defined, or only vaguely defined, we examined the paper thoroughly in order to identify the key elements of anticipation found in that paper. Our search resulted in 36 academic papers which were studied in detail. For each of these 36 papers, we listed and sorted (1) definitions, (2) characteristics, (3) antecedents, and (4) consequences of anticipation. Table 1 summarises the meanings extracted from the selected papers in respect of these criteria.

Table 1: Definitions, characteristics, antecedents, and consequences of consumer anticipation

	Academic Field	References
Consumer anticipation is defined as:		
a source of utility	Economics	Loewenstein (1987)
a source of pleasure	Marketing	Alba & Williams (2013)
waiting	Marketing	Chan & Mukhopadhyay (2010); Gilbert & Abdullah, 2002; Nowlis et al. (2004)
elaborated imagery processing, imagination, mental images, pre-factual thinking, a representation of the pleasure (of eating in case of taste anticipation), anticipatory thinking	Marketing, Psychology	Aurier & Guergana, 2014; Dixon et al., 2017; Krishnamurthy & Sujan, 1999; MacInnis & Price (1990); Moore & Lee, 2012; Sevilla, Zhang, & Kahn, 2016; Shiv & Huber, 2000
a 'forward-looking effect that gives customers some degree of control over an uncertain future by permitting imagined pleasure in the present'	Marketing (Services Management)	Dixon et al., 2017, p. 948)
Consumer anticipation involves:		
savouring, experiencing anticipatory emotions	Economics, Marketing, Psychology	Alba & Williams, 2013; Baumgartner et al., 2008; Elster & Loewenstein, 1992; Dixon et al., 2017; Elster & Loewenstein, 1992; Loewenstein, 1987

Consumer anticipation occurs (or is more likely to occur) when:		
consumption is delayed	Economics, Marketing	E.g., Chan & Mukhopadhyay (2010); Frederick, Loewenstein, & O'donoghue (2002); Nowlis, Mandel, & McCabe (2004)
involvement is high	Marketing	MacInnis & Price (1990); Palmer and Koenig-Lewis (2011a, 2011b)
uncertainty is high	Marketing (Services Management)	Dixon et al., 2017 ; Harrison & Beatty, 2011
Consumer anticipation results in:		
increased value of choices that are inter-temporal, that results from savouring; increased evaluation of hedonic choices when inter-temporal is short and choice is voluntary made.	Economics, Marketing	Elster & Loewenstein (1992); Loewenstein (1987); Chan & Mukhopadhyay (2010)
increased satisfaction as a result of elaborated imagery, especially among consumers with low previous experiences	Marketing	MacInnis & Price (1990)
enhanced brand attitudes when consumers use anticipatory self-referencing	Marketing	Krishnamurthy & Sujan (1999)
preferences change through mental imagery processing when anticipated satisfaction is encouraged	Marketing	Shiv & Huber (2000)
well-being (when anticipation is related to a hedonic consumption, *i.e.*, holidays)	Marketing	Gilbert & Abdullah (2002)
increased consumption enjoyment	Marketing	Nowlis et al., 2004;
negative and positive emotional expectations that have a positive effect on satisfaction; anticipated emotions that influence decision making; anticipated emotions that are strongly associated with post consumption emotions; negative anticipated emotions that negatively impact satisfaction in high-involving contexts	Marketing, Psychology	Aurier & Guergana, 2014; Bagozzi, Belanche, Casalo, & Flavian, 2010; Koenig-Lewis & Palmer (2014); Palmer & Koenig-Lewis (2011a)

problem-solving behaviours, that involves planning, preparing, avoiding, adjusting, seeking support, and gathering information; preparatory consumption	Marketing	Harrison & Beatty (2011); Dixon et al., 2017; Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2011b
pleasure	Marketing	Le Bel & Dubé (1998)

After reviewing the identified papers, diverse views emerged on the concept of consumer anticipation and there is a lack of a broad definition that would summarize the key components of consumer anticipation, *i.e.*, consumer anticipation is first and foremost a psychological process that involves consideration of potential outcomes to the self of consumptions that are not yet realized.

Consumer anticipation as mental activities

In this section, we discuss mental processes involved in consumer anticipation which were found during the initial literature review. Consumer anticipation involves diverse forms of mental activities, such as imagery processing, elaboration, forming cognitive expectations and affective forecasts, pre-factual thinking, planning and savouring (Aurier & Guergana, 2014; Bagozzi et al., 2010; Krishnamurthy & Sujan, 1999; MacInnis & Price, 1987, 1990; Moore & Lee, 2012; Sevilla et al., 2016; Shiv & Huber, 2000).

Krishnamurthy and Sujan (1999, p. 57) assert that 'anticipations are necessarily imaginations' and imagery has been mentioned as a mental process involved in consumer anticipation by many researchers (e.g., Aurier & Guergana, 2014; MacInnis & Price, 1990; Shiv & Huber, 2000). It is suggested that while anticipating future consumption, consumers are forming mental images in order to feel the future experience or to make decisions when different options are available (Aurier & Guergana, 2014; MacInnis & Price, 1990; Shiv & Huber, 2000). For example, an individual may visually imagine the launch of the next iPhone and use that scenario as a basis for solving issues that may arise (e.g., sold out of the new iPhone). In addition, levels of cognitive elaboration have been found to impact imagery processing (MacInnis & Price, 1987, 1990).

Previous research has also investigated the effect of consumer anticipation on satisfaction (Koenig-Lewis & Palmer, 2014; MacInnis & Price, 1990; Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2011a), suggesting that

cognitive expectations and affective forecasts formed while anticipating may impact satisfaction (Oliver, 1980; Oliver & Linda, 1981; Oliver & Winer, 1987; Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2011a; Patrick, Macinnis, & Park, 2006). Palmer & Koenig-Lewis (2011a), for instance, found that negative anticipated emotions have a negative effect on satisfaction, anticipated emotions being defined as emotions expected 'to be experienced in the future if certain events do or do not occur' (Baumgartner et al., 2008, p. 685), 'a type of affective forecast' (Moore & Lee, 2012, p. 110). In another study conducted in the context of high involvement services, it was demonstrated that participants' self-reported anticipated emotions, both positive and negative, had no impact on satisfaction but were strongly associated with emotions measured after consumption (Koenig-Lewis & Palmer, 2014).In addition, previous research has identified pre-factual thinking, *i.e.,* forming beliefs about causal linkages between actions and outcomes (If action X is taken, it will lead to outcome Y), as a mental process involved in consumer anticipation (Baumgartner et al., 2008; Epstude, Scholl, & Roese, 2016). Planning has been suggested as one of its consequences (Baumgartner et al., 2008).

Finally, many authors highlight the fact that consumer anticipation involves savouring (e.g., Alba & Williams, 2013; Dixon et al., 2017; Elster & Loewenstein, 1992; Loewenstein, 1987). Elster and Loewenstein (1992) define savouring as 'the process of deriving positive utility from anticipation of desirable events' (p. 224), suggesting that savouring is inherent to anticipation of pleasant future consumption experiences.

How is consumer anticipation different from related constructs?

A conceptual contribution can be made by a new concept where it is differentiated from potentially related constructs (MacInnis, 2011). So, is consumer anticipation a distinctive construct in its own right? In the following section, consumer anticipation will be distinguished from other constructs

found during the literature review discussed in the previous section. We start by providing a definition for each construct. Then, we discuss their points of similarity and difference with consumer anticipation, and specifically whether each construct is consistent with or different from the components of consumer anticipation we introduced earlier (1) a psychological process, (2) consideration of a variety of potential outcomes, (3) outcomes that occur to the self, (4) in advance of realized consumption).

1) Imagery is a '(1) process (not a structure) by which (2) sensory information is represented in working memory' (MacInnis & Price, 1987, p. 473). Similar to consumer anticipation, imagery is a psychological process. However, the two constructs are distinct. Whereas consumer anticipation is outcome focused, imagery involves concrete sensory representations of ideas, feelings and memories (MacInnis & Price, 1987). For example, one can imagine eating an apple and one can anticipate the outcomes of doing so, but one can also 'imagine an apple' and not 'anticipate an apple' as imagery also involves static entities. Imagery can involve outcomes that accrue to others, and furthermore, involves not only the future, but also the present and the past (MacInnis & Price, 1990). For instance, many products are purchased for their role in stimulating imagery at the time of consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

2) Elaboration reflects 'the extent to which new information in working memory is integrated with prior knowledge structures' (MacInnis & Price, 1987, p. 475). Similar to consumer anticipation, elaboration is a psychological process. However, the two constructs can be distinguished. First, one can of course elaborate on the outcomes of future consumption experiences, but one can also elaborate on many things, including static objects, ideas, etc., thus elaboration is not necessarily outcome focused. In addition, elaboration can involve information processing regarding outcomes that accrue to others (e.g., elaboration on an innovative product

one is not considering purchasing). Finally, elaboration can regard products that have been consumed in the past, or that are currently consumed, or that will be consumed in the future.

3) Cognitive expectations are pre-consumption beliefs about the likely performance of a product, and provide a benchmark against which the functional performance of the product is subsequently compared (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1993; Koenig-Lewis & Palmer, 2014; Olson & Dover, 1976; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1993). Unlike consumer anticipation, which is a psychological process, cognitive expectations are beliefs, and are therefore mental constructs. However, cognitive expectations are related to consumer anticipation in the sense that consumers may form them while anticipating, and are similar to consumer anticipation in the sense that they are outcome focused and are formed in advance of consumption. However, cognitive expectations are predictions regarding the level of functional product performance (Koenig-Lewis & Palmer, 2014; Olson & Dover, 1976; Zeithaml et al., 1993) and do not consider other outcomes (e.g., social, experiential, affective). In addition, cognitive expectations involve predictions regarding products that consumers may consider purchasing or not (e.g., developing predictions regarding the functional performance of an innovative product one is not considering purchasing).

4) Affective Forecasts involve 'prediction of the emotional consequences of decision outcomes' (MacInnis & Patrick, 2006, p. 226). Other authors refer to them as anticipated emotions (Baumgartner et al., 2008) or affective expectations (Chun, Diehl, & MacInnis, 2017; Wilson, Lisle, Kraft, & Wetzel, 1989). Like cognitive expectations, affective forecasts are mental constructs, therefore distinct from consumer anticipation which is a psychological process. However, affective forecasts are related to consumer anticipation in the sense that they may be formed while anticipating, and are similar to consumer anticipation in the sense that they are outcome focused and are formed in advance of consumption. However, affective forecasts are

predictions regarding emotions expected to be experienced in the future (Patrick et al., 2006) and do not consider other outcomes (e.g., physical, behavioural). In addition, affective forecasts involve predictions regarding emotions resulting from consuming products that consumers may consider purchasing or not (e.g., developing forecasts regarding fun felt while consuming a hedonic product one is not considering purchasing).

5) Pre-factual thinking is the forming of causal beliefs that an action, if taken, results in a given outcome with a high degree of certainty (Epstude et al., 2016). Similar to consumer anticipation, pre-factual thinking is a psychological process occurring in advance of consumption that is outcome focused and may consider a diversity of outcomes. However, pre-factual thoughts are beliefs regarding causal relationships between actions and results that do not necessarily accrue to the self (e.g., 'If I fail to book the concert tickets in advance, they won't be able to attend it').

6) Planning involves 'translating an abstract goal into a specific set of actions that will pave the way to the goal' (Townsend & Liu, 2012, p. 689). Similar to consumer anticipation, planning is a psychological process occurring in advance of consumption that is outcome focused and may consider diverse outcomes. However, and unlike consumer anticipation, planning may involve outcomes that accrue to others.

7) Savouring is 'a cognitive process involving awareness of current pleasure from a target-specific consumption experience' (Chun et al., 2017, p. 97). Similar to consumer anticipation, savouring is a psychological process that is outcome focused and may consider a high diversity of outcomes that may accrue to the self. However, savouring is distinct from consumer anticipation in that consumers can savour past, ongoing and upcoming consumption experiences (Chun et al., 2017). Consumers may also savour pleasant memories (Alba & Williams, 2013; Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt, & Routledge, 2006; Zauberman, Ratner, & Kim, 2008).

To conclude, imagery processing, forming cognitive expectations and affective forecasts, pre-factual thinking, planning and savouring might *accompany* consumer anticipation but are *distinct* from consumer anticipation. It also appears that consumer anticipation may involve more or less processing of information related to the object of consumption, and that individuals may differ in how elaborated their information processing is. By discussing consumer anticipation's points of similarity and differentiation with the different mental processes involved, it appears that consumer anticipation is a combination of different mental processes but is not completely synonymous with any of them. A summary of similarities and differences is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Differentiating Consumer Anticipation from Potentially Related Constructs

Construct Definition	Psychological Process	Involves consideration of physical, social, experiential, affective, and behavioural outcomes	Emphasizes outcomes that accrue to the self	Occurs only in advance of consumption
Consumer anticipation is a mental process by which consumers consider the physical, experiential, social, emotional, or behavioural consumption outcomes that are expected to accrue to the self from a yet to be realized consumption decision or experience	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Imagery is a '(1) process (not a structure) by which (2) sensory information is represented in working memory' (MacInnis & Price, 1987, p. 473).	Yes	Not necessarily	Not necessarily	Not necessarily
Elaboration reflects 'the extent to which new information in working memory is integrated with prior knowledge structures' (MacInnis & Price, 1987, p. 475).	Yes	Not necessarily	Not necessarily	Not necessarily
Cognitive expectations are pre-consumption beliefs about the likely performance of a product, and provide a benchmark against which the functional performance of the product is subsequently compared (Boulding et al., 1993; Koenig-Lewis & Palmer, 2014; Olson & Dover, 1976; Zeithaml et al., 1993).	No	Involves consideration of functional product performance outcomes	Not necessarily	Yes
Affective Forecasts involve 'prediction of the emotional consequences of decision outcomes' (MacInnis & Patrick, 2006, p. 226). Other authors refer to them as 'anticipated emotions' (Baumgartner et al., 2008) or affective expectations (Wilson et al., 1989).	No	Involves consideration of affective outcomes	Not necessarily	Yes

Pre-factual thinking is forming causal beliefs that an action, if taken, results in a given outcome with a high degree of certainty (Epstude et al., 2016).	Yes	Yes	Not necessarily	Yes
Planning involves 'translating an abstract goal into a specific set of actions that will pave the way to the goal (Townsend & Liu, 2012, p. 689)	Yes	Yes	Not necessarily	Yes
Savouring is 'a cognitive process involving awareness of current pleasure from a target-specific consumption experience' (Chun et al., 2017, p. 97).	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not necessarily

Where in the Decision-Making process does consumer anticipation arise?

Consumption is traditionally viewed as a process that proceeds through several stages, typically pre-consumption, purchase, core consumption experience, and post consumption (e.g., Arnould, Price, & Zinkhan, 2004; Tynan & McKechnie, 2009; Zauberman, Diehl, & Ariely, 2006). Nicosia (1966) introduced an early comprehensive model of buyers' behaviour (Jones, Shaw, & McClean, 2009; Milner & Rosenstreich, 2013), using four 'fields' to explain consumers' decision making. The first field represents the process by which a consumer's attitude is influenced by a seller's communication and the consumer's predisposition. Subsequently, the consumer searches and evaluates choices (second field), makes the decision (third field) which results in purchase and consumption (fourth field). Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell proposed another widely cited model (EKB model, 1968, pp. 688-690) comprising five sequential stages: 1) problem recognition and awareness, 2) information search, 3) evaluation of alternatives, 4) purchase and 5) post-purchase evaluation.

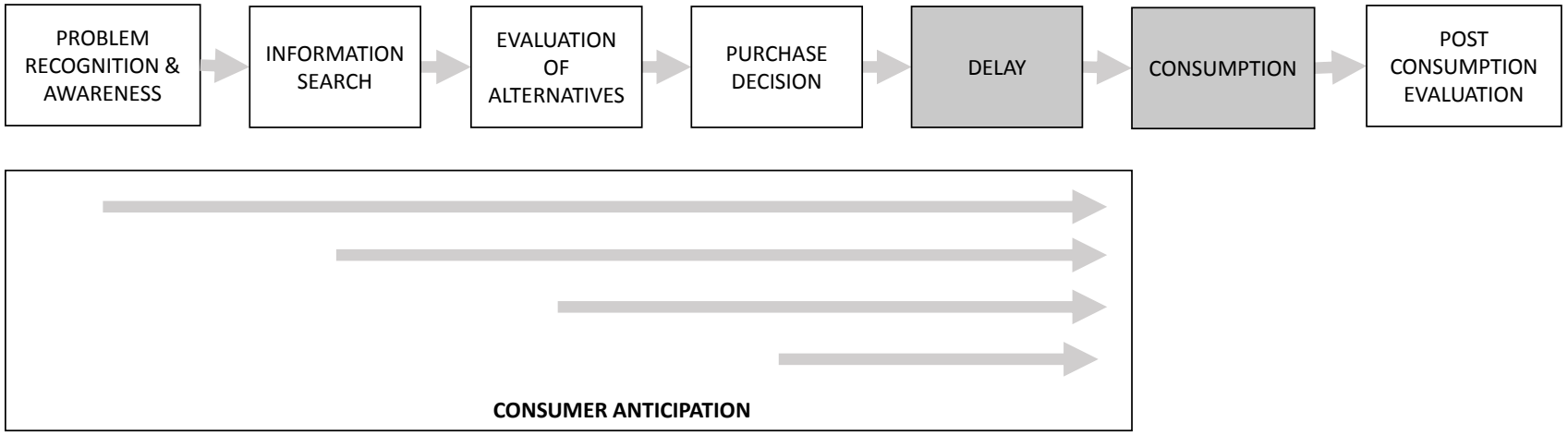
We suggest that consumer anticipation may start at any stage of the decision making process before consumption actually takes place. In other words, applied to the EKB model, consumers may anticipate:

1. at the problem recognition stage, when they start considering the product for future consumption,
2. at the information search stage, while retrieving internal information from memory or collecting external information,
3. at the evaluation of alternatives stage, while processing information to make a choice.

Interestingly, even though Nicosia's (1966) and Engel et al.'s (1968) models have been found to be effective and useful for understanding how consumers make decisions (e.g., Ashman,

Solomon, & Wolny, 2015; Solomon, Askegaard, Bamossy, & Hogg, 2013), they tend to assume that consumption follows immediately after decision or purchase and overlook consumption situations where consumers must wait for consumption to occur. Therefore, we propose that in many consumption situations, there is a waiting stage between purchase decision (e.g., online ordering or advance booking) and actual consumption where consumer anticipation may also occur. Figure 1 illustrates how we locate consumer anticipation in a modified EKB model that includes a delay between purchase decision and consumption, typical of delayed consumption contexts.

Figure 1: Consumer anticipation and the Decision-Making Process



A discussion of the consumer anticipation process

We propose that consumer anticipation occurs as a process. This process is enabled by diverse drivers, and results in some specific outcomes. Consumer anticipation as a process is discussed in the following section.

Drivers of consumer anticipation: an Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity framework

We suggest that the level of consumer anticipation is influenced by consumers' Motivation, Ability and Opportunity. The Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity (AMO) framework was initially developed in the context of advertising research to determine the level of information processing from adverts and its subsequent effect on brand attitudes (MacInnis, Moorman, & Jaworski, 1991; Maclnnis & Jaworski, 1989). This framework explains how motivation, ability and opportunity drive mental processes, and has been applied to explain different types of consumption behaviours such as customer-to-customer online know-how exchange (Gruen, Osmonbekov, & Czaplewski, 2006), or selection of online channels (Ramaswami, Strader, & Brett, 2000).

1) Motivation: Motivation is a goal-directed arousal (MacInnis et al., 1991; Park & Mittal, 1985). In the current context, the goal is the anticipation of a future consumption experience and motivation refers to a consumer's willingness and desire to allocate mental resources to anticipate a future consumption experience.

The diverse mental processes involved in consumer anticipation all require a high level of cognitive effort. The principle of cognitive economy suggests that people will be willing to dedicate time and efforts into mental activities only if they are motivated to do so (Rosch, 1987), therefore we suggest that involvement is the main driver of consumer anticipation. This is consistent with Chan and Mukhopadhyay's (2010) research which has shown that the increase in

evaluation due to consumer anticipation is driven by intrinsic motivation toward the object of consumption and occurs if the object of consumption is of inherent interest.

If there is no involvement, there will be no willingness and desire to allocate mental resources to anticipate a future consumption experience. Involvement is a state of motivation, arousal or interest that can be enduring, *i.e.*, category specific, or situational, *i.e.*, driven by a specific consumption decision (Richins, Bloch, & McQuarrie, 1992; Rothschild, 1984). For instance, in their study of consumers' anticipation of vacation activities, MacInnis and Price (1990) found that high situational involvement, as manifested by money spent and days away, was a predictor of pre consumption imagery. In the same way of thinking, it may be suggested that the same situational characteristic, *i.e.*, money spent and days away, may also trigger extra planning. Category involvement may also trigger consumer anticipation. For example, consumers highly interested in JK Rowling's work (category involvement) may have actively anticipated the launch of the Fantastic Beasts movie: they may have elaborated on the characteristics of the movie by collecting information about the actors and the director, they may have formed cognitive expectations (e.g., the beasts will be well executed) and affective forecasts (e.g., the way the beasts will be well executed will surprise me), they may have savoured in advance the pleasure of watching the movie, and they may have formed pre-factual thoughts (e.g., 'If I read the book in advance, I won't be surprised'). Thus, we propose:

> *Proposition 1: The more involved consumers are in the product category and/or in the decision making, the more detailed and elaborate their anticipation of the future consumption experience will be, as involvement provides the motivation to dedicate time and efforts to the mental processes involved in consumer anticipation.*

Uncertainty is another main motivational driver of consumer anticipation. Uncertainty is the degree to which situations are unpredictable or cannot be adequately understood (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Delayed consumption situations may differ in their perceived level of uncertainty. For instance, a vacation is a typical example of delayed consumption. However, the level of uncertainty about how the vacation may unfold may be much lower for a habitual destination (e.g., a visitor returning habitually to a ski resort) than for a novel destination (e.g., a European going for the first time to an Asian destination). It is well established that perception of uncertainty may be painful because it produces anxiety, which must be dealt with by the consumer (Taylor, 1974). We suggest that anxiety caused by uncertainty may motivate consumers to anticipate in different ways, as highlighted by Elster and Loewenstein's (1992, p. 215): 'anticipation of future has its own unique characteristics. Unlike the past, we can exert at least a weak influence on the future. Moreover, the future is inherently uncertain, so we have greater freedom to imagine it as we wish than is the case with memory'. First, consumers may deal with uncertainty by trying to reduce it. This can take the form of elaboration, pre-factual thinking and planning, all mental processes aiming to make the future consumption situation more predictable and easier to understand. Second, imagery and savouring may be a way to deal with uncertainty: imagining the good things that may happen in the future and savouring imagined pleasure in the present provide consumers with some degree of control over an uncertain situation (Dixon et al., 2017). From this, we may infer that to deal with anxiety caused by uncertainty, consumers focus on the 'here and now' by experiencing the pleasure associated with imagining and savouring. Thus, we propose:

Proposition 2: The more uncertain consumers perceive the future consumption to be, the more detailed and elaborate their anticipation of the future consumption experience will

be, as uncertainty produces anxiety that consumers will try to (1) reduce by engaging themselves in mental activities aiming to make the future consumption situation more predictable and easier to understand, and (2) cope with by experiencing the pleasure associated with consumer anticipation.

Another way to look at 'here and now' emotions, *i.e.*, the way consumers are feeling while anticipating, is the concept of goal-congruity from cognitive appraisal theory (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Watson & Spence, 2007). Goal congruency appraisal refers to the extent to which a current situation is conductive to goal fulfilment and determines the valence of currently felt emotions. In our field of investigation, an appraisal that the current situation is congruent with goal fulfilment, *i.e.*, a future consumption experience that is going to occur as desired, will evoke positive emotions. On the other hand, an appraisal that the current situation is incongruent with goal fulfilment, *i.e.*, a future consumption experience that is not going to occur as desired, will evoke negative emotions. The negative emotions felt if the situation is appraised as goal-incongruent may favour problem-solving mental processes to change the situation from a goal-incongruent to a goal-congruent one, such as extra planning or pre-factual thinking. For instance, consumers hear that there will be a transport strike during their vacation, thus they feel angry, afraid and frustrated, and may therefore engage in pre-factual thinking to find options that secure the vacation. On the other hand, positive emotions felt if the situation is appraised as goal-congruent, do not call for problem-solving mental processes. Consumers not worrying that they may not go on vacation may simply imagine and savour their vacation in advance. Thus, we propose:

Proposition 3: Consumers anticipating a future consumption experience perceiving the current situation as being goal-incongruent will engage in problem-solving mental

processes to change the situation from a goal-incongruent to a goal-congruent one, as situations appraised as goal-incongruent evoke negative emotions.

We conclude our discussion of the motivational drivers of consumer anticipation by recognizing that consumers' willingness and desire to allocate mental resources to anticipate a future consumption experience may be influenced by the nature of the anticipated consumer experience. First, the anticipated consumption experience may vary in how its goals evoke emotions. For instance, books, movies, music are more purchased for the emotionality of the consumption experience they provide than for their functional attributes. We are not suggesting here that affective forecasting depends on whether a product is functional, symbolic or experiential (e.g., consumers planning to purchase a dishwasher may expect to experience feelings of relief when having a machine doing their washing chore), but we suggest that affective forecasts may outweigh cognitive expectations when the goals of consumption are predominantly emotional (because functional goals focus attention on functional performance of the product whereas hedonic goals focus attention on affective factors (Patrick et al., 2006). In the same way of thinking, it has been demonstrated that emphasizing hedonic (*i.e.*, the pleasure associated with consumption) rather than utilitarian aspects of the same future consumption experience activates imagery processing, which in turn stimulates the formation of affective forecasts (Moore & Lee, 2012).

Thus, we propose:

Proposition 4: The more emotional consumers perceive the anticipated consumption experience to be, the more their affective forecasts are likely to outweigh their cognitive expectations.

Second, the outcomes of an anticipated consumption experience may also vary in the valence of their pleasantness to the consumer. Consumers typically consider vacations as pleasant and dentistry appointments unpleasant. Whether a future consumption experience is evaluated as being pleasant or not is influenced by the valence of past similar experiences. For example, some consumers may find air travel pleasant whereas others with negative past experiences (delays, not enough time to connect flights, finding damaged luggage on arrival, etc.) may think the opposite. Perceived pleasantness of the anticipated consumption experience is a key motivational driver of consumer anticipation as some mental processes involved in consumer anticipation are more likely to occur if the anticipated consumption experience is pleasant. First, imagery has been identified as being valence biased because consumers are more likely to imagine future outcomes that are positive than negative (MacInnis & Price, 1987, 1990; O'Neal, 1974). Second, anticipated unpleasant experiences evoke dread rather than pleasure and only anticipated pleasant experiences trigger savouring (Loewenstein, 1987). Thus, it may be suggested that perceived pleasantness of the anticipated consumption experience is a pre-requisite for imagery and savouring to occur.

Thus, we propose:

> *Proposition 5: The expected valence of pleasantness of the future consumption experience has an effect on consumer anticipation. If the outcomes of a future consumption experience are considered to be pleasant, consumers (1) are more likely to imagine the future consumption experience, and (2) will savour it. On the other hand, if the outcomes of the future consumption experience are considered to be unpleasant, consumers (1) are less likely to imagine the future consumption experience, and (2) will not savour it.*

2) Ability: In a consumer anticipation context, we define ability as constraints of competence that may limit the extent to which consumers may engage in the different mental processes involved in

anticipation. We identify knowledge available in memory as the main ability driver that may impede or facilitate consumer anticipation, as available and accessible knowledge structures provide the foundation for performing complex mental processes involved in consumer anticipation. Knowledge can be internal (stemming from prior similar experiences or prior learning episodes) or external (provided by marketers' communication and word of mouth, for example, marketers' communication containing vivid product depictions have been found to stimulate greater imagery generation (Petrova & Cialdini, 2005). Additional knowledge may also be acquired as a consequence of perceived uncertainty or goal-incongruity. Indeed, such perceptions enhance mental processes that may result in gathering information to make the future consumption situation more predictable and easier to understand, or to change the situation from a goal-incongruent to a goal-congruent one. Firstly, elaboration refers to the extent to which new information in working memory is integrated with prior knowledge structures. This implies an absence of elaboration where there are no existing knowledge structures. In the same way of thinking, consumers also need a knowledge base on which to build plans and pre-factual thoughts. Knowledge also provides consumers with norms on which to build their cognitive expectations and affective forecasts (Zeithaml et al., 1993). Additionally, consumers with no or limited knowledge may be less likely to imagine future outcomes because of the small store of information in memory from which to form images. Furthermore, given the imagery positivity bias mentioned earlier, consumers with no prior similar experiences are likely to focus only on positive possible outcomes. On the other hand, more experienced consumers have a rich knowledge base on which to form images, which includes both positive and negative outcomes, and may therefore engage in more elaborated imagery (MacInnis & Price, 1987).

Thus, we propose:

Proposition 6: Consumers with high knowledge regarding a future consumption experience are likely to elaborate in more detail their anticipation of the consumption experience, as available and accessible knowledge structures provide the foundation for performing the complex mental processes involved in consumer anticipation.

3) Opportunity. In an anticipation context, opportunity reflects the extent to which circumstances affect consumers' anticipation. We identify time as the main opportunity driver that may impede or facilitate consumer anticipation, as a delay between outcome consideration and consumption is a prerequisite for consumer anticipation to occur. Thus, we propose:

Proposition 7: Time provides consumers with the opportunity to anticipate: the shorter the delay between outcome consideration and consumption, the less detailed and elaborate consumer anticipation of the future consumption experience will be, as consumers lack time to engage into the mental processes involved in consumer anticipation.

A broader research agenda has investigated the effects of passage of time on the valuation of delayed consumption (Chan & Mukhopadhyay, 2010; Loewenstein, 1987). Chan and Mukhopadhyay (2010) have demonstrated that a negative discounting effect is stronger when the anticipation period is short (one week) than when it is long (two weeks / one month), but that this effect is observed only for consumption activities of high intrinsic interest. Regarding the length of the waiting period, their study confirmed an inverted U-shape effect previously identified by Loewenstein (1987), *i.e.*, in contexts of delayed consumption, valuation is first increased and then decreased with the passage of time. This suggests that an optimal length of delay may exist for consumer anticipation to occur. Even though the authors 'do not specify what happens during the waiting period' (Chan & Mukhopadhyay, 2010, p. 506), they provide a discussion of the interplay between time and motivation, suggesting that motivation to anticipate may decrease if delay

between outcome consideration and consumption is too long. The optimal time delay for consumer anticipation to occur is not uniform, and varies across contexts (Chan & Mukhopadhyay, 2010). While time is a pre requisite for consumer anticipation to occur, marketing tactics and information obtained from other consumers provide opportunities for consumers to look forward. Regardless of the, opportunity drivers such as pre-release buzz, imagery loaded communications and word of mouth may also encourage consumers to anticipate. For example, pre-release consumer buzz is a forward looking phenomenon that may stimulate consumers' interest for a new product (Houston, Kupfer, Hennig-Thurau, & Spann, 2018). Thus, we propose:

> *Proposition 8: The more attention consumers pay to information provided by marketers and others while anticipating, the more detailed and elaborate their anticipation of the future consumption experience will be, as marketing tactics, marketing communication, and additional information will encourage consumers to engage in mental processes involved in consumer anticipation.*

Consequences of consumer anticipation

The outcomes of consumer anticipation described in the literature are diverse in nature, and, in this section, we discuss its affective, behavioural and cognitive consequences.

1. Affective consequence: Consistent with the view of savouring as a way of prolonging and enhancing positive emotional experiences, anticipation of desirable goals has been shown to trigger pleasurable emotions (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2002; Loewenstein, 1987; Macleod & Conway, 2005; Schubert, 2012). For example, people waiting for their vacation are happier than people not going on vacation (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2002). The literature refers to this type of emotions as *anticipatory* emotions (Moore & Lee, 2012; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988). *Anticipatory* emotions are distinguished from *anticipated* emotions, the former being a feeling held now, while

the latter is how an individual expects to feel in the future Anticipatory emotions are emotions 'currently experienced due to the prospect of a future event' (Baumgartner et al., 2008, p. 685). Anticipatory emotions do not involve only positive emotions, and 'hope and fear are the prototypical categories of positive and negative anticipatory emotions' (Baumgartner et al., 2008, p. 686). Hope reflects pleasure about the prospect of a desired future event, with excitement, feeling of optimism and confidence being common emotional facets. For example, consumers may be very excited while imagining the future consumption experience, or being really optimistic that it will unfold as expected. Against this, fear indicates discontent about the forecast of an undesired future event, with worry, anxiety or stress being typical emotional facets. For example, consumers can experience a sudden emotion of fear when pre-factual thoughts lead them to realize a risk that the future consumption experience may not unfold as expected, or they may feel anxious when thiking of a future consumption experience they perceive to be unpredictable.

2. Behavioural consequences: Some studies suggest that consumer anticipation results in anticipatory behaviours (Baumgartner et al., 2008; Dixon et al., 2017; Harrison & Beatty, 2011; Houston et al., 2018; Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2011b). For example, anticipating a future consumption may involve gathering and processing information about it prior to consumption, or preparatory consumption (e.g., buying new clothes and equipment) (Dixon et al., 2017; Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2011b). Consumers' anticipation can also take the form of an active strategy to reduce the impact of problems and discomforts that may arise from routine service consumption: when consumers think of possible problems that could occur, they experience anticipatory worry which leads to preparatory behaviours, including preparing and gathering information (Harrison & Beatty, 2011). Consumers highly involved in forthcoming consumption may also share their thoughts and emotions with peers, before the consumption occurs (Palmer & Koenig-Lewis,

2011b). Finally, preparatory behaviours may also be a consequence of pre-factual thinking (Baumgartner et al., 2008): when imagining undesired outcomes associated with forthcoming consumption, the anticipated negative emotions associated with these outcomes (e.g., 'If I cannot be among the first ones to purchase the new iPhone, I will feel desperate') provide motivation for a specific course of actions (e.g., 'I will organise myself to be among the first ones in front of the Apple Store on the launch day').

3. Cognitive consequences: The most well documented cognitive effect of consumer anticipation is the negative discounting effect that occurs in situations of delayed hedonic consumption. The negative discount model emphasizes the presence of utility in anticipating a future reward (Loewenstein, 1987). Negative discounting implies that consumers delay desirable outcomes to savour the future beneficial outcomes and reduce fear by accelerating undesirable outcomes. In his study, Loewenstein (1987) found empirical support for negative discounting by showing that people evaluated a kiss with a movie star of their choice higher when the option was delayed than when it was offered immediately. Loewenstein's seminal paper has led to extensive research in consumer behaviour and economics (e.g., Bilgin & LeBoeuf, 2010; Caplin & Leahy, 2001; Chan & Mukhopadhyay, 2010; Kőszegi, 2010; Kuznitz, Kandel, & Fos, 2008; Schubert, 2012) and these studies have demonstrated the general applicability of negative discounting: consumers evaluate pleasurable delayed consumption more than immediate consumption because of the 'anticipation' of the consumption.

These studies' focus was on the outcome of consumer anticipation *before* consumption occurs and previous consumer anticipation research has disregarded the outcome of consumer anticipation *after* consumption has taken place. Some exceptions are the works of Chan and Mukhopadhyay (2010 – study 3), Chun et al. (2017), MacInnis and Price (1990), Nowlis et al. (2004), and Palmer

and Koenig-Lewis (2011a, 2011b). Chan and Mukhopadhyay (2010) investigated the effect of duration of consumer anticipation on post-consumption evaluation. Chun et al. (2017) have shown that savouring an upcoming experience creates affective memory traces that are integrated in the remembered consumption experiences. MacInnis and Price (1990) have demonstrated that imagery processing stemming from consumer anticipation has a direct positive effect on satisfaction. This effect is observed even if the anticipated event did not unfold as imagined, and is stronger for individuals with low experience of the product category. Nowlis et al. (2004) found that consumers to whom a delay had been imposed enjoyed more the consumption of a pleasant product than those with no delay. In their investigation of the role of anticipation (prior enrolment) on students' intention to recommend their institution (post enrolment), Palmer and Koenig-Lewis (2011b) have shown that both positive (happiness, excitement, pride, and interest) and negative (anxiety, sadness, boredom, and anger) pre-enrolment emotions were good predictors of the same emotions felt post-enrolment.

These different studies suggest that consumer anticipation has an impact on post-consumption evaluations, and, in the following section, we discuss this effect through the lens of consumer satisfaction linking pre-consumption behaviour and post-consumption evaluation.

Does consumer anticipation help or hurt satisfaction with the consumption experience?

Satisfaction is 'an outcome of purchase and use resulting from the buyer's comparison of the rewards and costs of the purchase in relation to the anticipated consequences' (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982, p. 493). Affective Misforecasting and Expectancy Disconfirmation theories suggest that the satisfaction process occurs in a series of steps in which the consumer forms affective and cognitive expectations, evaluates actual functional performance of the product and felt emotions, and compares performance and felt emotions to expectations: high expectations may

result in lower post-consumption satisfaction, and lowering expectations may lead to higher satisfaction (Oliver, 1980; Oliver & Linda, 1981; Patrick et al., 2006; Phillips & Baumgartner, 2002). Both theories involve some misprediction but Expectancy Disconfirmation is based on cognitive expectations, *i.e.,* predictions about functional product attributes whereas Affective Misforecasting is based on affective forecasts, *i.e.,* anticipated emotions. From this perspective, encouraging consumer anticipation 'may ironically not be the wisest strategy for marketers to follow' (Chan & Mukhopadhyay, 2010, p. 506) because consumer anticipation may lead to an increase in evaluation before consumption actually takes place, generating higher expectations and causing lower satisfaction. In other words, encouraging consumer anticipation may not be a clever strategy as it may result in unreachable expectations.

Several mental processes involved in consumer anticipation may indeed heighten expectations, because they are positively biased, *i.e.,* they are a characterised by a focus on possible positive outcomes of the anticipated consumption experience. Imagery, for instance, is positively biased. Thus, encouraging consumers to imagine a future consumption may result in high expectations because consumers would mostly focus on the potential positive outcomes (MacInnis and Price, 1987; 1990). Savouring is also positively biased as encouraging consumers to savour the future consumption experience induces positive affective forecasts (Chun et al., 2017). In addition, as suggested by Figure 1, in many consumption situations, there is a waiting stage between purchase decision (e.g., online ordering or advance booking) and consumption during which consumer anticipation may occur if there is sufficient motivation and ability. The specificity of this stage is that a consumption decision has been made, and therefore, consumers may experience cognitive dissonance. Dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) posits that dissonance occurs when a negative attitude (i.e., regret) toward a choice is inconsistent with a behaviour (i.e., purchase or decision to

purchase). Cognitive dissonance motivates individuals to regain cognitive balance (Gregory-Smith, Smith, & Winklhofer, 2013; Kim, 2011; O'Neill & Palmer, 2004), for example by an increase in positive attitude toward the choice. Consistent with this line of reasoning, it has been demonstrated that consumers increase their favourable attitude toward products after they are chosen (e.g., Litt & Tormala, 2010; Shultz & Lepper, 1996). Another strategy to reduce cognitive dissonance is seeking consonant information that reaffirms the choice (Bawa & Kansal, 2008). In other words, cognitive dissonance felt during the waiting period may motivate consumers to elaborate on the forthcoming consumption in order to regain cognitive balance. However, we suggest elaboration to be positively biased (i.e., new information in working memory is integrated with prior knowledge structures as long as it is consistent with the existing knowledge that is positively valenced) because consumers will mostly elaborate on information or arguments that support the purchase decision. From this perspective, elaboration may heighten affective and cognitive expectations.

However, consumer anticipation is a combination of different mental processes and the positive bias induced by imagery, savouring and elaboration (to regain cognitive balance) may be counter-balanced by other mental processes. The fading optimism effect described by Monga and Houston (2006) illustrates how consumers are able to counter balance for the positive bias of some mental processes when anticipating a future consumption experience. The fading-optimism effect suggests that optimism about a product's quality diminishes when the performance of the product is about to be revealed: optimism regarding future consumption is highest immediately after a consumption decision has been made and then fades because consumers tend to minimize expectations to reduce the likelihood of being dissatisfied (Monga & Houston, 2006). In other words, when anticipating a future consumption experience, consumers are exposed to diverse

information, including positive and negative information about the future consumption, on which they can elaborate. While cognitive dissonance theory suggests that consumers tend to focus only on positive information to regain cognitive balance, the fading-optimism effect suggests they are more receptive to negative information when consumption approaches. This may encourage consumers to engage in extra planning and pre-factual thinking to be well prepared for the possible negative aspects of the future consumption experience. For example, a consumer who is waiting for a concert learns from his social-network friends that the singer is always late. The consumer is then mentally prepared for this imperfection and does not expect that the concert will start promptly. Another illustration of consumers ability to counter balance for the positive bias of some mental processes when anticipating a future consumption experience is provided by defensive pessimism (Kopalle & Lehmann, 2001; Kopalle, Lehmann, & Farley, 2010; Norem & Cantor, 1986). Defensive pessimism could be viewed as a form of pre-factual thinking that helps consumers to control for the effect of unrealistic expectations. Defensive pessimism describes the deliberate behaviour of consumers who are aware that high expectations may lead to dissatisfaction and who strategically decrease their expectations in order to increase future satisfaction and to diminish potential dissatisfaction (Kopalle & Lehmann, 2001; Kopalle et al., 2010; Norem & Cantor, 1986). We posit that this deliberate behaviour is a form of pre-factual thinking because it relies on consumers' ability to form a causal belief that an action (decreasing expectations) results in a given outcome (diminishing potential dissatisfaction). In addition, defensive pessimism decreases the likelihood of dissatisfaction because defensive pessimists are likely to not only make more conservative predictions but also engage in activities prior consumption takes place that mitigate the likelihood that experiences will be negative (Patrick et al., 2006).

Measuring consumer anticipation: review and critique

Consumer anticipation has been operationalized in at least three different ways as illustrated in Table 3. The first method for operationalizing consumer anticipation is to assess whether there is a delay between decision / choice and consumption and/or to manipulate the duration of the delay (Chan & Mukhopadhyay, 2010; Gilbert & Abdullah, 2002; Nowlis et al., 2004). Here, consumer anticipation is measured in absolute terms: either there is a delay between decision or choice and consumption (e.g., people going on holidays in the near future *versus* people not going on holidays in the near future, Gilbert & Abdullah, 2002), or there is a measure of the duration of the delay (e.g., no delay / 1 week delay / 2 week delay / 1 month delay, Chan & Mukhopadhyay, 2010). This approach implies that consumer anticipation starts once a consumption decision has been taken.

A second approach to operationalize consumer anticipation is to manipulate stimuli that encourage anticipation. For example, Shiv and Huber (2000) manipulated opportunity to imagine by instructing respondents to engage /not engage in mental imagery. Mogilner, Aaker, and Pennington (2008) manipulated the content of fictitious ads (prevention *versus* promotion focus) regarding a delayed consumption experience (a future vacation in Europe) and investigated the extent to which prevention *versus* promotion focus affected the amount consumers would be willing to pay. Results suggest that a promotion frame encourages savouring because it emphasizes the pleasure deriving from the future consumption experience. In their study of positive surprise *versus* positive anticipation (i.e., savouring), Dixon et al. (2017) manipulated the description of a service experience so that its peak was designed either to be a surprise to consumers or to be anticipated by them (i.e., either they knew about the peak of the experience in advance or not).

These two methods for operationalizing consumer anticipation share the common characteristic of ineffectively tapping the construct itself as they measure and/or manipulate opportunity drivers of

consumer anticipation (i.e., time or instructions/information communicated to consumers). In operationalizing consumer anticipation in terms of its opportunity drivers, these approaches disregard the motivational and ability drivers, and assume that consumers engage in the mental processes involved in consumer anticipation as long as there is a delay between product consideration and consumption, or encouragement to do so. In addition, none of these methods measure the construct itself. An additional issue with the first approach (analysing the delay between decision and consumption) is its implication that consumer anticipation starts after consumption decision and disregards mental processes that may start earlier in the decision making process.

A third method for measuring consumer anticipation is to assess directly the extent to which consumers are engaging in one its mental processes, or how elaborate and detailed these processes are. For example, MacInnis and Price (1987) measured imagery processing by asking consumers to report (1) the extent to which they had generated imagery regarding an anticipated future consumption experience, and (2) the extent to which imagery processing was elaborated and detailed (i.e., the extent to which thinking had produced different images, and how much time they had spent imagining). In the same way of thinking, Palmer and Koenig-Lewis (2011a) measured affective forecasts by asking participants to report on the extent they were expecting to experience different positive and negative emotions during the future anticipated consumption experience. This third method shows greater correspondence with the construct definition than the other methods discussed. This methodological approach taps the construct itself (i.e., mental processes at work when consumer are anticipating a future consumption experience) and may also allow assessment of causal linkages between processing antecedents (i.e., motivational, ability and

opportunity drivers), consumer anticipation and processing consequences (e.g., anticipatory emotions, evaluation, enjoyment, satisfaction).

The main issue, however, is that consumer anticipation is a combination of different mental processes. Thus, any rigorous measure of consumer anticipation should take into account each of the different mental processes, and assess (1) how intensively consumers perceive to have been engaged in the different processes, and (2) the extent to which the mental process was detailed and elaborate. If this approach offers the advantage of clearly measuring the consumer anticipation construct, it raises clear operationalisation issues in terms of length of the questionnaire and respondents' motivation to complete the questionnaire with caution. Thus, an alternative approach could be to measure each of the different mental processes with one or two scale items, or to focus on a generic term that would capture the different mental processes at stake.

Table 3: Operationalization of consumer anticipation

	Operationalization	Context of consumption
Consumer anticipation operationalized by the existence and/or duration of the waiting period		
Chan & Mukhopadhyay (2010)	Manipulated consumer anticipation by manipulating the delay between choice and consumption: no anticipation *versus* 1 week *versus* 2 weeks *versus* 1 month delays	Pleasant consumption (theatrical drama, music concert, chocolate)
Gilbert & Abdullah (2002)	Measured whether consumers were waiting for a future consumption experience or not (yes or no measure)	Pleasant consumption (vacation)
Nowlis et al. (2004)	Manipulated consumer anticipation by manipulating the delay between choice and consumption: No delay *versus* 30 minutes	Pleasant (chocolate) and unpleasant (prune juice[1]) consumption
Consumer anticipation operationalized by a manipulation of stimuli encouraging/influencing consumer anticipation		
Dixon et al. (2017)	Manipulated the description of a service experience so that its peak is designed either to be a surprise to consumers or to be anticipated by them	Pleasant consumption (city tour)
Krishnamurthy & Sujan (1999)	Manipulated instructions (anticipatory *versus* retrospective self-referencing) and level of ads contextual detail	Pleasant consumption (vacation)
Mogilner et al. (2008)	Manipulated the content of fictitious ads (prevention *versus* promotion focus) regarding a delayed consumption experience	Pleasant consumption (vacation)
Moore & Lee (2012)	Manipulated ad content to highlight either the utilitarian or the hedonic aspects of the anticipated consumption experience	Pleasant consumption (food)
Shiv & Huber (2000)	Manipulated opportunity to imagine by instructing respondents to or not to engage in mental imagery	Utilitarian consumption (computer, apartment renting)

[1] As demonstrated by respondents' ratings of drinking prune juice during the experimentation (Nowlis, Mandel, and McCabe, 2004)

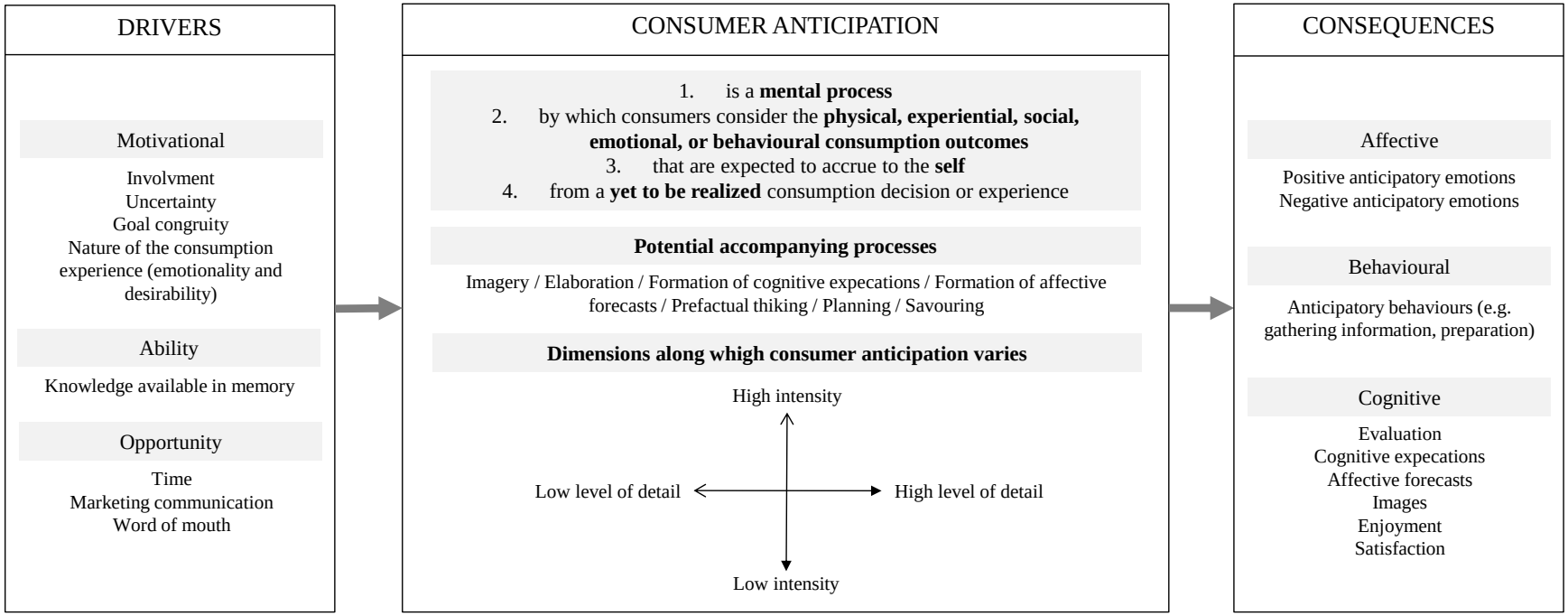
Consumer anticipation operationalized by a measure of its mental processes		
MacInnis & Price (1987)	Measured imagery processing by measuring (1) the extent to which consumers had generated imagery regarding an anticipated future consumption experience, and (2) the extent to which imagery processing was elaborated and detailed	Pleasant consumption (vacation)
Chun et al. (2017)	Measured savouring by asking participants to report to which extent (1) they are feeling joy at the prospect of the future consumption experience, and (2) they are aware of this	Pleasant consumption (watching a movie)
Palmer & Koenig-Lewis (2011a)	Measured affective forecasts by asking participants to report to which extent they were expecting to experience different positive and negative emotions during the future anticipated consumption experience	Pleasant consumption (graduating ceremony)

Conclusion: Implications and future research

The objective of this paper was to provide a definition of consumer anticipation and to highlight its *processes*, thereby supplementing a literature which has concentrated on its *outcomes*. Building on an extensive literature review, we propose a conceptual definition of consumer anticipation as *' a mental process by which consumers consider the physical, experiential, social, emotional, or behavioural consumption outcomes that are expected to accrue to the self from a yet to be realized consumption decision or experience'*. In addition, we have specified that consumer anticipation occurs as a process. First, we have identified its motivational, ability and opportunity drivers. Second, we have discussed the different mental processes involved in consumer anticipation. By exploring their points of similarity and differentiation with consumer anticipation, we make a theoretical contribution by highlighting the fact that consumer anticipation is a combination of different mental processes. Third, we provide a discussion of consumer anticipation consequences, with a focus on whether encouraging anticipation may foster satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Finally, we conclude with a review of how consumer anticipation has been operationalized in empirical research in the past, and some suggestions regarding its measure.

Figure 2 summarises the consumer anticipation process. It highlights that consumer anticipation is a combination of different mental processes by which consumers consider the consumption outcomes of a yet to be realized consumption decision or experience. These mental processes vary in (1) how intensively consumers engage in them, and (2) how detailed and elaborate they are. The different motivational, opportunity and ability drivers contribute to determine (1) whether consumers will engage in some of these mental processes, and (2) the extent to which they engage in them as stipulated in our propositions. Finally, consumer anticipation has affective, behavioural and cognitive consequences.

Figure 2: The process of consumer anticipation



Implications for practice

Many empirical findings suggest that consumer anticipation should be encouraged because it enhances the success of new product launches, increase consumers' evaluation of the object of consumption, and increases consumption enjoyment of hedonic products (Chan & Mukhopadhyay, 2010; Chun et al., 2017; Elster & Loewenstein, 1992; Frederick et al., 2002; Kőszegi, 2010; Le Bel & Dubé, 1998; Lee & Colarelli O'Connor, 2003; Loewenstein, 1987; Nowlis et al., 2004; Schatzel & Calantone, 2006). These are desirable outcomes for companies. The answer to the question of whether consumer anticipation enhances satisfaction is more nuanced, and therefore suggests that marketers should be cautious when encouraging consumer anticipation. In particular, they should be mindful that an optimal combination of the mental processes involved in consumer anticipation may diminish the risks associated with the positivity biases of imagining, savouring and elaborating (to reduce cognitie dissonnance). Below, we summarize and illustrate a non-exhaustive set of tactics that could firstly induce consumer anticipation and secondly enhance its effects for consumer facing organisations.

First, our investigation of the motivational drivers of consumer anticipation suggests that consumer anticipation is more likely to occur if involvement in the forthcoming consumption is high. Involvement is determined by 'an interaction between a person, a stimulus, and a situation' (Swaminathan, Zinkhan, & Reddy, 1996, p. 52). To enhance involvement and to foster consumer anticipation, the interaction between person, stimulus and situation should be encouraged. This may, for example, comprise reminder emails about upcoming trips which facilitate consumers' interaction with members of their consumption group, or Facebook posts from a singer about how he/she prepares his/her next concert, thereby facilitating replies and involvement by fans. It is

indeed suggested that when consumers are highly involved with a product, they are attentive to information about it (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979; Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983)

Second, uncertainty associated with consumer anticipation should motivate consumers to look for more information about their future consumption. Strategically providing only partial information about future consumption may create curiosity and trigger consumers to be more involved in anticipation through further information seeking. Selective dissemination of limited unattributed information prior to formal pre-announcement of new product launches, rumours about possible performers at a music concert, backstage clips revealing selective details about the concert may induce consumer anticipation based on uncertainty. However, a careful distinction must be made between such secondary information and the core product information which is important to consumers and whose absence may create anxiety and worry instead of anticipation. Uncertainty may also be decreased by encouraging consumers to plan. For example, by enabling customers to pre-plan their visit, e.g., by helping them to anticipate their future consumption experience, Disney is reducing the uncertainty regarding the visit to the park (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Third, Loewenstein (1987) suggests that people should delay desirable outcomes in order to savour pleasurable anticipation. However, consumers may perceive this delay as being a *waiting* period, and they may find waiting frustrating and uncomfortable (Nowlis et al., 2004). Thus, consumers should be facilitated in realizing that anticipation can be a source of pleasure as well as the consumption itself. According to Schubert (2012, p. 248), pursuing happiness which encompasses 'the process of anticipating and approaching pleasurable outcomes over time' generates current hedonic well-being. Marketing programmes such as messages from brands to encourage consumers to enjoy planning and imaging before the consumption takes place should encourage anticipation. For example, vacation operators may send destination-specific presentations or

language videos of useful phrases for countries of destination to encourage consumers to savour the consumption activity in advance (Chun et al., 2017).

To summarize, we suggest a few key tactics that may induce and enhance consumer anticipation: 1) increasing involvement in the intended future consumption, 2) where appropriate, transforming complete certainty of future consumption into modest uncertainty, and 3) encouraging contemplation of current pleasure induced by anticipation of the future consumption.

Research Agenda

This paper started with the observation that although we now know a lot about the consequences of consumer anticipation in consumer contexts, we still know relatively little about its processes *per se*. We have contributed to our understanding of consumer anticipation through a synthesis of the literature which arrives at a framework for understanding its processes. However, like any research which synthesizes an extensive and diverse literature, the synthesis generates questions for further research.

First, the conceptual definition and the eight propositions that emerged from our study need to be empirically tested, through a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. In particular, the consumer behaviour literature has mostly focused on anticipation of pleasant consumption experiences, as illustrated in Table 3 (Context of consumption). However, there are many situations that are not pleasant but for which the delay is imposed (e.g., going to the dentist, having a meeting with your banker). It has been found that, in such contexts, consumer anticipation may result in decreased consumption enjoyment (Nowlis et al., 2004). Future research is needed to investigate consumer anticipation when the outcomes of the anticipated consumption experience are unpleasant to consumers, as suggested by Proposition 5. In addition, qualitative approaches might be particularly useful for probing consumers' construction of the meaning of anticipation.

Last but not least, empirical studies are needed to further investigate the effect of consumer anticipation on satisfaction, especially the conditions in which high levels of anticipation may result in raised or lowered levels of subsequent satisfaction.

Second, future research may integrate literature of anticipation that appears in other human related disciplines, such as biology, cognitive psychology, and religion. Integration of other disciplines benefits consumer behaviour research because 'the boundaries of consumer behaviour involve an almost unmanageably large number of disciplines in the humanities as well as the social and natural sciences' (Zaltman, 2000, p. 424). Consumer researchers may, for example, broaden their perspective on consumers' construction of anticipation by understanding its role in religions, which often incorporate some form of anticipation of rewards to be bestowed on an individual by some greater power.

Third, in our review of how consumer anticipation has been operationalised in past empirical research, we have identified two major issues related to consumer anticipation measurement. The first issue stems from the lack of match between the construct of consumer anticipation and its operationalisations which typically occurs when consumer anticipation is measured in terms of its opportunity drivers. The second issue pertains to the lack of one single and holistic measure of consumer anticipation. If the literature offers many relevant measures of the different mental processes involved in consumer anticipation, to the extent of our knowledge, there is no existing measure that would tap (1) how intensively consumers are anticipating, and (2) the extent to which anticipation is detailed and elaborate. We hope that this discussion will encourage future empirical research aiming at developing a measurement tool of consumer anticipation.

Fourth, previous research has identified many potential moderators of the consumer anticipation process. For example, Nowlis et al. (2004) have shown that pleasantness of the consumed product

moderates the effect of consumer anticipation on consumption enjoyment. Individual differences have been found to moderate the effect of marketing communication on imagery processing (Mac Innis & Price, 1987). Chun et al. (2017) have demonstrated that the quality level of anticipated consumption experiences moderates the effect of savouring on consumption enjoyment. Future research may identify and test the different moderators of the consumer anticipation process.

Finally, research would help us to understand differences in individuals' propensity to anticipate. 'Propensity to anticipate' may be a measurable basis for psychographic segmentation, used for targeting segments who respond in different ways to messages encouraging anticipation (Venter, Wright, & Dibb, 2015). In addition, it would be useful to investigate whether individuals' propensity to anticipate is related to personality traits. Time-orientation may be particularly relevant as anticipation is a future oriented phenomenon, and previous studies have associated cross-cultural differences with differences in time orientation (Legohérel, Daucé, Hsu, & Ranchhold, 2009).

To conclude, we make a conceptual contribution by delineating consumer anticipation as a domain of investigation in consumer behaviour (MacInnis, 2011): we have proposed that consumer anticipation is a mental process taking place between product consideration and its consumption, we have described its key processes, and we have provided a roadmap for future research. The concept of consumer anticipation is rich in its potential to provide insight to consumer behaviour and marketing practice.

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