Experiencing Conflicting Emotions: The Role of Cognitive Resources in Reappraisal as Coping Mechanism

Abstract

Consumption experiences often include sequences of positive and negative emotions. We argue that evaluations of such experiences are a function of consumers’ likelihood to reappraise them favorably, and that such reappraisal requires cognitive resources that are created when positive and negative emotions follow each other in close, rather than distant, proximity. Three studies confirm that relatively close (versus distant) temporal proximity of conflicting emotions provides individuals the cognitive resources necessary to reappraise the experience in a more favorable light. The reappraisal process, in turn, helps lower feelings of discomfort otherwise associated with such experiences, thereby resulting in more favorable evaluations.