

The Concept of Hope and Its Relevance to Product Evaluation and Choice

This conceptual article uses an appraisal theory perspective to define the construct of hope and describe its relevance to consumer behavior, marketing, and public policy in the domains of product evaluation and choice. Using the appraisal dimensions of hope, the authors identify a set of marketing tactics that are designed to stimulate hope. They posit that hope plays a moderating role in the relationship between well-known antecedent variables (e.g., involvement, expectations) on the one hand and evaluative judgments (e.g., attitudes, satisfaction) and consumer choices on the other hand. The authors advance specific propositions that describe the effects. Furthermore, they argue that the effects have implications for marketing and public policy. The article concludes with a call for additional research relevant to the study of hope.

Each day, millions of consumers engage in such behaviors as investing in the stock market, buying lottery tickets, attempting to lose weight, reading self-help books, undergoing cosmetic surgery, visiting therapists, and seeking a renowned physician for a given illness. What do all these consumption situations have in common? Among other things—hope.

Indeed, hope is a marketable entity that affects the economic viability of many industries. The beauty industry alone is a multibillion dollar business that influences the viability of cosmetics companies, pharmaceuticals, plastic surgeons, department stores, salons, spas, beauty parlors, magazines, and books. The latter two industries are sources of hope, promoting “secrets,” “tools,” “tips,” and “tricks” to better looks, a more alluring body, improved romantic relationships, and enhanced self-esteem. Charles Revson, the founder of Revlon, aptly captures the impact of the marketplace on hope: “In the factory we make cosmetics; in the store we sell hope.” It comes as no surprise that “hope” is a common word in everyday language; Shimanoff (1984) finds that, in everyday conversations, hope is among the most frequently named emotions.

In their motivational theory of emotions in advertising, Rossiter and Percy (1987) propose that hope is one of four basic emotions, along with fear, relief, and disappointment. Still, despite its relevance to human behavior in general and consumer behavior in particular, little has been written

about the concept of hope. Lazarus (1999, p. 653) writes, “With a modest number of exceptions ... there has been a great reluctance on the part of psychologists to address the concept of hope.” Averill (1991; Averill, Catlin, and Chon 1990) believes that the dearth of a systematic study of hope is attributable to traditional emotion theories’ failure to recognize it as an emotion. Such theories tend to focus on emotions that have a strong biological and physiological emphasis (e.g., fear, anger, love) that may not encompass more intellectual emotions such as hope. Only with the development of appraisal theory as a theoretical approach to emotions has hope emerged as a bona fide emotion (Frijda 2000; Lazarus 1991; Roseman 1991; Shaver et al. 1987; Smith and Ellsworth 1985).

The purpose of this conceptual article is to shed light on the relevance of hope to consumer behavior, marketing, and public policy. First, we use an appraisal theory perspective to define hope and to differentiate it from potentially related constructs. Second, we use the appraisal dimensions of hope to identify tactics that marketers use to stimulate hope. Third, we describe the relevance of hope to the discipline. Although its relevance is potentially wide reaching, we focus on product evaluation (e.g., attitudes, satisfaction) and consumer choices. We conclude with additional research questions relevant to the study of hope.

What Is (and Is Not) Hope: An Appraisal Theory Perspective

According to appraisal theory, emotions are caused by a person’s interpretation of a given situation (Frijda 1986, 1991; Roseman 1991; Smith and Ellsworth 1985). Although researchers have articulated several diverse appraisal theories of emotion, all contend that emotions are responses to a person’s interpretation or appraisals of the environment and its relevance to goals.

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Appraisal theorists suggest that people appraise their environment along several appraisal dimensions, namely, (1) goal congruency, (2) personal agency, (3) certainty, (4) normative/moral compatibility, and (5) importance.¹ According to appraisal theory, various appraisal dimensions combine to evoke a specific emotional response. Hope is a positively valenced emotion evoked in response to an uncertain but possible goal-congruent outcome. Of particular relevance to hope are the dimensions of goal congruency, certainty, and importance.

The goal-congruency dimension reflects the extent to which the environment is or is not conducive to goal fulfillment. In a benign environment, “goal congruent” means that a favorable outcome could occur. In an aversive or threatening environment, “goal congruent” means that a negative outcome could be avoided or solved. Environments appraised as goal congruent (incongruent) are evaluated as good or desirable (bad) and evoke positive (negative) emotions.

Research has empirically confirmed that hope is a positive emotion (Shaver et al. 1987) that arises from environments or outcomes characterized as goal congruent (e.g., Ellsworth and Smith 1988; Lazarus 1991) and uncertain but possible (e.g., Roseman 1991; Roseman, Spindel, and Jose 1990). Outcomes regarded as certain will not evoke hope. Averill, Catlin, and Chon (1990) find that college students reported terminating hope when the time during which the goal-congruent outcome should have occurred had passed (i.e., students were certain that the outcome would not happen) and/or when they were certain that the goal could not be achieved. A person feels hopeless when he or she is certain that a goal-congruent outcome will not occur (Seligman 1975).

In this article, we sometimes use the term “possible” as a shortcut to the expression “uncertain but possible” or simply “uncertain” for three reasons: (1) The term “possibility” is endemic in the definition of hope offered by several hope researchers (Gelwick 1979; Haase et al. 1992); (2) it is logically correct (i.e., a person does not hope for something that is uncertain per se but for something that is possible even though it is uncertain); and (3) from a clarity of exposition perspective, it is simpler (i.e., stating that a person regards an outcome as “impossible” is simpler than stating that a person is “certain that an outcome will not occur”). The term “possibility” is embedded in “uncertainty” and thus is strongly consistent with appraisal theory.

Although the existence of hope is predicated on appraisals of outcomes viewed as goal congruent and possible, appraisal theorists link its intensity to variation in the importance and goal-congruity dimensions. The more important a person perceives a goal-congruent outcome, the greater is the value attached to its occurrence and the more

severe are the potential consequences of its failure. Averill, Catlin, and Chon (1990) find that objects of hope are described as highly important. Hope is not viewed as an appropriate emotion when the outcome is trivial. Lazarus (1991) indicates that in some cases, the value or importance is driven by perceived deficiencies between the current and the desired end state. Lazarus (1999, p. 653) writes, “A fundamental condition of ... hope is that our current life circumstance is unsatisfactory—that is, it involves deprivation.” Consistent with this idea, Hamilton (1978) indicates that perceived deficiencies in economic assets stimulated hope for gold in the California Gold Rush. Similarly, participation in the lottery is greatest among consumers with the most limited economic means (Clotfelter and Cook 1989).

The intensity of hope also varies as a function of variation in goal congruity or of the degree to which the outcome is positive or desired. Averill, Catlin, and Chon (1990) find that people no longer feel hope when they no longer desire the outcome.

Following Lazarus (1991), we use the term “yearning” and conceptualize it as the joint combination of the degree of importance and goal congruity. Yearning, and thus the intensity of hope, can be conceptualized in terms of the degree to which the outcome is positive or goal congruent, weighted by the outcome’s importance. Hope is not equated with yearning; yearning for a goal-congruent outcome that is regarded as certain evokes emotions other than hope. Yearning for a goal-congruent outcome that is appraised as certain evokes emotions such as joy (when oriented toward the present) and nostalgia (when oriented toward the past). Likewise, yearning for a goal-congruent outcome that is appraised as certain not to occur evokes despair, not hope.

Distinguishing Hope from Other Constructs

Expectations. The distinguishing of hope from expectations is critical because several consumer behavior phenomena are predicated on the concept of expectation (e.g., expectancy value as in subjective expected utility and multi-attribute attitude models, expectancy disconfirmation in the satisfaction literature). First, hope is an emotion, whereas expectations are beliefs. Second, hope reflects situations described as goal congruent, whereas expectations and perceived probabilities encompass situations that are goal congruent, goal incongruent, or goal irrelevant. Third, feelings of hope are based on appraisals of possibility, not of probability. A person can experience hope even when the probability of an outcome is low. For example, many examples from medicine indicate that consumers experience hope about overcoming disease even in the face of overwhelming odds (Lazarus 1999) and that people given the exact same probabilities of survival vary greatly in the degree of hope that they feel. The difference is that some people interpret even extremely low probability estimates of survival as evidence of the possibility of recovery (Taylor and Brown 1988; Taylor et al. 2000).

Involvement. Park and Mittal (1985) define involvement as goal-directed arousal. Hope and involvement may be empirically related; for example, a consumer who has strong hope for a goal-congruent outcome (e.g., profiting

¹Although many different terms have been used to describe the appraisal dimensions, most fit the set of dimensions articulated by Johnson and Stewart (2004) and described herein.

from the stock market) may be highly involved in activities that support its occurrence (e.g., by consulting prospectus sheets, friends, and brokers).

However, the two concepts are conceptually distinct. First, whereas involvement reflects arousal or energy, hope is more: It is a positive emotion, and an emotion attached not to an advertisement, a message, a brand, a medium, or a decision but to a goal. Second, hope is linked to outcomes from a decision, not the decision itself. Third, importance is an antecedent to involvement, though it is a critical component of the yearning dimension of hope. Finally, hope can vary even when involvement is high. For example, two consumers may both be highly involved in finding a one-bedroom apartment in a large city, because the task is high both in personal relevance and in potential risk (e.g., economic, psychological, social, time). However, one of the consumers may have considerably stronger hope of finding an apartment because the goal-congruent outcome is both yearned for and uncertain. Specifically, one of the consumers may have greater yearning to find a one-bedroom apartment because he or she finds it important to self-esteem to create an independent life (perhaps because of

feelings of deficiency in the self-concept as an independent person) and/or finds the prospect of getting away from family problems at home highly goal congruent and desirable.

Marketing Tactics That Induce and Enhance Hope

Rossiter and Percy (1991, p. 103) suggest that “all ads make a ‘promise’ and thereby invoke hope—whether this hope be for termination of a negative state (negative reinforcement) or for onset of a positive state (positive reinforcement).” In other words, because hope is evoked when a goal-congruent outcome is uncertain but possible, varying the hope that consumers feel should be influenced by marketing activities that affect appraisals of possibility and/or the extent to which they yearn for the goal-congruent outcome. Table 1 summarizes an illustrative though nonexhaustive set of tactics that affect the appraisals and thus elicit hope. The first set of principles identifies factors that induce hope by making possible a goal-congruent outcome previously appraised as impossible. The second set identifies factors that enhance hope by affecting yearning.

TABLE 1
Tactics That Induce and Enhance Hope

Principle	Tactic
Turn Impossibility into Possibility	
Suggest possibilities in the product	Promote innovations: New product features to overcome obstacles to attainment of the hoped-for outcome (e.g., “Our new, state-of-the-art, patented formula brings you results you’ve never been able to achieve before!”)
	Promote product customization: The product or service can be adapted specifically to fit the needs of the consumer (e.g., “A diet plan just for you.”)
Suggest possibilities in the person	Appeal to personal control (e.g., “Just do it!”)
	Model others’ actions and outcomes (e.g., “Look at me now!”)
	Promote anticipatory imagery (e.g., “Just see yourself free of joint pain.”)
Suggest possibilities in the process	Imply knowledge revelation (e.g., “The best-kept secret for keeping sex alive.”)
	Reflect pathways thinking (e.g., “A new workout you can do at home, at work, or in the car.”)
Enhance Yearning	
Enhance perceived importance	Link to the achievement of higher-order goals (e.g., “Losing weight makes you healthier, increases your self esteem, and gains you respect and admiration from others.”)
	Comparisons with ideal others (e.g., upward comparisons to successful others, celebrities: “The same diet that changed Oprah’s life.”)
	Comparisons with ideal past self (e.g., “Remember when you were able to run five miles without breaking a sweat?”)
	Comparisons with ideal future self (e.g., “Be all that you can be.”)
Enhance the goal congruity of the outcome	Encourage positive fantasy (e.g., “What would you do with a million bucks?”)
	Suggest resolution of an approach-avoidance conflict (e.g., “Eat all you want and still lose weight!”)

Inducing Hope by Altering Certainty

Tversky and Fox (1995) suggest that events have the greatest impact on cognitive assessments of the environment when they turn an outcome perceived as impossible (certain not to occur) into one that is possible (and thus uncertain). As Table 1 shows, the possibilities may reside in the product, the person, or the process of goal pursuit.

Suggest possibilities in the product. Innovations reflect new products or attributes that imply possibilities for achieving goal-congruent outcomes that formerly were viewed as impossible. Therefore, marketing communications that imply possibilities of goal-congruent outcomes with respect to novel aspects of products should induce hope. Possibilities are inferred when communications claim that products involve “breakthrough technology” or offer “revolutionary” designs. Because the outcomes are breakthrough and the designs revolutionary, perceptions that the new product can make goal-congruent outcomes possible seem to be natural.

Consumers may experience the possibility of a goal-congruent outcome thwarted by existing products’ inability to achieve the goal-congruent outcome, even given the personal or environmental contingencies that hinder goal achievement. However, customization implies the possibility of a goal-congruent outcome by creating a match between a specific product configuration and a consumer-specific yearned outcome. It also implies the possibility of goal achievement by eliminating or greatly reducing personal or environmental contingencies that may thwart goal achievement. For example, personalized weight-loss programs “custom designed” to fit a person’s metabolism may enhance a person’s hope to achieve previously unattainable goals.

Suggest possibilities in the person. In contrast, it may be proposed that possibilities for achieving the goal-congruent outcome lie in the person (see Table 1). Curry and colleagues (1997) indicate that the difference between people who feel strong hope and people who feel weak hope is that the former perceive that they have personal control over the occurrence of goal-congruent outcomes, because control suggests that achievement of such outcome is inherent in the person. Analogously, Seligman (1975) indicates that people feel hopeless when the situation affords no control over aversive outcomes (see Bandura 1997). Therefore, products, brand names, and marketing communications that suggest that they help consumers control a consumption outcome should enhance hope. Titles of books in the self-help industry usually imply that a person has power and can take charge of life forces to achieve hoped-for outcomes. Nike’s “Just do it!” slogan also implies that control resides in the consumer.

Consumers may also perceive that the possibility for achieving a goal-congruent outcome lies with them when communications model similar others who have successfully achieved the yearned-for outcome. Such models evoke hope because achievements by similar others are perceived as diagnostic of possibilities that a person may achieve him- or herself (Bandura 1997). For example, the weekly announcement of new lottery winners and before-and-after

pictures of similar others lead to the inevitable conclusion: “If it can happen to them, why not me?”

Anticipatory self-imagery may also promote the perception that goal-congruent outcomes are possible and reside in the person. Considerable research suggests that imagining future outcomes increases people’s assessments that a goal-congruent outcome will occur (for a review, see Johnson and Sherman 1990). As evidence of the impact of anticipatory self-imagery on hope, Wilkinson (1990) finds that anticipatory self-imagery of positive outcomes helped cancer patients replace depression and despair with hope.

Suggest possibilities in the process. Achievement of goals is impossible if a person does not know how to do so. Accordingly, perceptions that a goal-congruent outcome is possible should be enhanced by knowledge revelation, specifically, by revealing secrets, or previously unknown steps to achieving them. Several advertisements, books, and magazines suggest that goal-congruent outcomes are now possible given the revelation of “secrets,” “tips,” or “tricks.”

Considerable research suggests that “pathways” thinking (i.e., the perceived ability to generate multiple, plausible routes to achieve a goal-congruent outcome) enhances hope by affecting perceptions of possibility (Curry et al. 1997; Snyder 2000). When multiple pathways are identified, the attainment of the goal-congruent outcome is still regarded as possible, should any one pathway be blocked. For example, in a personal selling context, salespeople stimulate consumers’ pathways thinking by showing multiple ways to achievement associated with product use. For example, such is the case when a salesperson at a gym demonstrates the many machines and classes that can facilitate fitness and points out the location of affiliated clubs near home, work, and travel destinations.

Enhancing Yearning

Hope can also be induced by enhancement of the degree of yearning for the goal-congruent outcome. The antecedents to yearning (i.e., importance and goal congruence) can be used to effect this inducement.

Enhance perceived importance. Products should be regarded as more important when they achieve lower-order goals, but they also are instrumental to achieving higher-order goals (Austin and Vancouver 1996). For example, greater yearning should be created by claims that a product helped a consumer not only lose weight but also have a more romantic and physical relationship with his or her spouse, thereby enabling higher-order goals such as social approval and love.

Because the importance of an outcome can be stimulated by perceived deficiencies, yearning and hope should also be enhanced by affecting perceived deficiencies through comparisons of current states with ideal states. Such comparisons may enhance hope not only by making salient what could be (i.e., by affecting possibility) but also by enhancing yearning with a focus on the discrepancy between the current and the ideal states.

Consumers can also make social comparisons to an ideal other, an ideal past self, or an ideal future self. Appeals to any of these ideal entities should enhance yearning.

ing. For example, lottery advertisements that emphasize the glamorous life achieved by the few lucky winners induce a comparison and perceived discrepancy between this ideal life state and a person's current state. Similarly, weight loss and beauty advertisements that feature ultraslim and super-fit models who epitomize beauty and athletic prowess induce perceived deficiencies and create yearning for the achievement of that ideal state. Advertisements that affect self-deficiencies by inducing consumers to make comparisons between themselves now and an ideal past are likely to create similar effects.

Enhance the degree of goal congruity. Enhancement of the degree to which an outcome is regarded as goal congruent and desired should also affect hope. Research in psychology links positive fantasy imagery with desire (Oettingen 1996; Przybyla, Byrne, and Kelley 1983). Evidence of tactics that stimulate fantasy is found in lottery advertisements that encourage consumers to fantasize about what they would do with a winning jackpot. The dating industry induces fantasies of finding a "soul mate" and emphasizes how much better life is when shared with the right partner.

Another tactic designed to enhance the degree of goal congruity is to suggest that the product resolves an approach or avoidance conflict (Rossiter and Percy 1987). For example, several diet advertisements and packages claim that products enable consumers to lose weight even when they eat as they normally would. Some skin care systems claim to provide outcomes that are as good as what could be provided by a dermatologist, but without the expensive dermatology bills; most abdominal machines guarantee great abdominal muscles with little effort.

The elicitation of hope takes on additional significance when its effects on consumer behavior are considered. We argue that the relevance of hope lies in its moderating effect on well-established antecedents of product evaluation and choice and that the moderating effects not only augment consumer behavior theory but also have important implications for marketing management and public policy (Table

2). We also argue that hope has effects that differ from what might be anticipated for expectations and involvement and that it explains consumer phenomena (e.g., susceptibility to fraud) in ways that have not yet been identified.

Moderating Role of Hope on the Involvement–Brand Attitude Relationship

A long-standing body of research suggests that the impact of advertising content on brand attitudes depends on involvement. Theoretical accounts, including the elaboration likelihood model (Petty and Cacioppo 1983) and the systematic-heuristic processing model (Eagly and Chaiken 1993), propose effects such as the ones summarized in the first two columns of Table 3. Specifically, when involvement is low (because of lack of personal relevance), product evaluation is based on easily processed (peripheral or heuristic) persuasion cues, such as the valence of the pictures, the likeability of the source, or the pleasantness of background music. Attention to, search for, and elaboration of message-relevant information is limited. In contrast, when involvement is high, consumers engage in central route or systematic processing. Consumers attend to arguments, elaborate on their merit, and form enduring attitudes based on their assessment of argument strength. Several empirical studies support the moderating role of involvement on the advertising content–attitude favorability relationship (e.g., Chaiken and Trope 1999; Eagly and Chaiken 1993; Petty and Cacioppo 1986).

When hope is strong, by definition, outcomes are regarded as personally relevant. Personal relevance should stimulate involvement and result in systematic processing. Furthermore, because it is linked to outcomes appraised as uncertain, hope should trigger systematic processing so as to reduce uncertainty (Tiedens and Linton 2001). However, we argue that the yearning component of hope alters the nature of information processing. When hope is strong (because of

TABLE 2
Why Study Hope

Implications	Moderating Role of Hope on Product Evaluation	Moderating Role of Hope on Choice and Consumption Behavior
	Attitude-Formation Processes	Effects of Advertised Risks on Choice
For consumer behavior theorists	Systematic versus motivated processing	Factors that affect risk encoding
For managers	Enhancing attitude favorability	Reducing the negative impact of advertising risks
For public policy	Consumer susceptibility to fraud	Susceptibility to product harm
Implications	Postconsumption Satisfaction	Effects of Marketing Practices on Self-Regulatory Outcomes
For consumer behavior theorists	Understanding satisfaction processes	Understanding self-regulatory efficacy
For managers	Tactics to enhance satisfaction	Tactics to enhance success of self-regulation programs
For public policy	Competitive pressures for market improvements	Efficacy of public health campaigns

intense yearning), consumers are motivated to preserve their feelings of hope. In reducing their uncertainty about the possibility of attaining their goal-congruent outcome, they prefer to conclude that such an outcome is possible, not impossible. In other words, when hope is strong, processing is tainted with directionality, and consumers seek to reduce uncertainty in the direction of the possibility (rather than the impossibility) of the outcome.² Thus, we suggest that when hope is strong, attitude favorability is based less on the strength of message arguments than on the extent to which the arguments suggest that the goal-congruent outcome is possible. Rather than engaging in objective and systematic processing, consumers engage in motivated reasoning, another form of high-involvement processing.

We define “motivated reasoning” as a desire to think about and evaluate information in a way that supports a particular directional conclusion. Although both motivated and objective reasoning involve “motivation,” the former involves a motivation to arrive at a yearned-for conclusion, whereas the latter involves a motivation to arrive at an accurate conclusion. With hope, the conclusion that consumers yearn for is that the goal-congruent outcome is possible. The greater the yearning for this goal-congruent outcome, the more motivated consumers are to process information in a way that suggests its possibility.

The potential impact of hope on motivated reasoning is supported by research that describes the seductive power of hope in judgment processes. Chaiken, Lieberman, and Eagly (1989) suggest that motivated reasoning is likely when people are ego-involved with an issue, as might be the case when an outcome is not only goal congruent but also associated with strong yearning (i.e., desired, important, and entailing deficiency). In a related vein, Alcock (1995) notes that people are most vulnerable to believing what they want to believe when they strongly yearn for a goal-congruent outcome. The third column of Table 3 summarizes how hope-induced motivated reasoning produces outcomes that differ from the ones expected under conditions of high-involvement objective processing.

Attention to Information

Research on attention reveals an encoding bias called perceptual defense, which is evidenced when the valence of information affects the likelihood that information is encoded and the speed with which it is processed (Bruner and Postman 1947; Matlin and Stang 1978). Because the outcomes people hope for are goal congruent, we expect that consumers are more likely to encode information that suggests that the outcome is possible (rather than impossible). The intensity of hope, driven by yearning, should magnify the extent of perceptual defense. As such, we anticipate outcomes such as the ones we describe in P₁.

²In Tiedens and Linton’s (2001) experiments, the uncertainty emotion under study was incidental and dissociated from the cognitive task that followed. Participants were motivated to reduce uncertainty, but they did not have a directional motivation as to the outcome of the evaluation. However, the emotion of hope is intimately linked to the evaluative task at hand and depends on the yearning associated with the outcome related to the evaluation.

P₁: Under conditions in which involvement is high and hope is weak, consumers attend to message arguments that relate to the assessment of the true merits of the product. In contrast, when involvement is high and hope is strong, consumers attend to the message arguments that suggest that a goal-congruent outcome is possible.

As P₁ suggests, such a bias should not be evident when hope is weak (and processing is thus objective).

Length of Information Search

With objective processing, consumers attend to information carefully and thus search for and process message-relevant arguments. Thus, the length of information search should be affected by the number of message-relevant arguments or by the length of the message. However, when hope is strong, the length of information search should be affected less by the number of message-relevant arguments or message length than by the extent to which claims suggest that the goal-congruent outcome is possible. Edwards and Smith (1996) argue that people should terminate information search earlier when the information supports a desired conclusion than when it does not. We surmise that this is the case when hope is strong. Because additional search runs the risk of a person identifying information that does not support the outcome’s possibility, we expect that search terminates when consumers have evidence that the goal-congruent outcome is possible. The greater the yearning is for the outcome, the faster consumers may terminate search when information supports the outcome’s possibility. Thus:

P₂: When involvement is high and hope is weak, information search is affected by the number of message arguments and/or the length of the message. In contrast, when involvement is high and hope is strong, information search is affected by the extent to which the information supports the possibility of the goal-congruent outcome; the more quickly consumers identify information that supports the possibility of the goal-congruent outcome, the more quickly they terminate search.

Elaboration of Information

When involvement in a message is high and consumers engage in objective processing, they generate support and counterarguments based on the strength of message arguments. Strong (weak) arguments generate support arguments (counterarguments). However, when involvement in a message is high and hope is strong, the nature of the elaboration process may differ, because support and counterarguments are based less on the strength of the message arguments than on the extent to which they suggest that the goal-congruent outcome is possible. Because hope is dependent on the favorability of such evaluation, the uncertainty reduction that Tiedens and Linton (2001) predict should be directed not so much by an accuracy goal but by the favored hypothesis that the product is effective, that is, that the outcome is possible. Reviews by Frey, Schulz-Hardt, and Stahlberg (1996) and Kunda (1990) indicate that when reasoning is motivated, people tend to focus on cases that confirm a favored hypothesis, a bias labeled as the “confirmation bias.”

TABLE 3
Moderating Role of Hope on Brand Attitudes and Attitude-Formation Processes

	Low Involvement	High Involvement, Weak Hope	High Involvement, Strong Hope
Type of processing	Heuristic/Peripheral Route Processing: Evaluation of information is based on easily processed persuasion cues	Systematic/Central Route Processing: Evaluation of credibility of information based on its true merits	Motivated Processing: Evaluation of information based on its suggestion that achieving a yearned-for, goal-congruent outcome is possible
Attention to information	Limited: Attention to easily processed persuasion cues	Extensive: Pay attention to all information relevant to assessing true merits of the argument	Selective (perceptual defense): Attend only to information that suggests that a goal-congruent outcome is possible
Length of information search	Limited	Extensive: Search terminates when sufficient evidence to pass judgment has been gathered	Depends on the nature of the information encountered: If information confirms that goal-congruent outcome is possible, search terminates; if it suggests it is not, search continues.
Elaboration of information	Limited	Extensive: Elaborate on information to evaluate the true merits of the argument	Because of yearning and uncertainty components of hope, elaboration is extensive if information suggests that achievement of yearned-for, goal-congruent outcome is possible; limited if information suggests that achievement of yearned-for, goal-congruent outcome is not possible (biased hypothesis testing). Confirmation bias for information suggesting that achievement of yearned-for outcome is possible; disconfirmation bias for information suggesting that it is not.
Criteria for judging information	Limited	High	Selective: Because of yearning and uncertainty components of hope; weaker acceptance criteria for information, suggesting that yearned-for, goal-congruent outcome is possible; stronger acceptance criteria for information, suggesting that yearned-for, goal-congruent outcome is not possible.
Attitude toward advertised brand	Dependent on the heuristic/emotional nature of peripheral cues	Dependent on strength of message arguments	Dependent on extent to which arguments suggest yearned-for outcome is possible

The yearning dimension associated with hope should affect the magnitude of the confirmation bias. If consumers are confronted with information that supports the possibility of the congruent outcome, they generate support arguments. In contrast, consumers may tend to ignore or counterargue information that suggests that the goal-congruent outcome is not possible, which is known as the disconfirmation bias (Lord, Ross, and Lepper 1979). Edwards and Smith (1996) find that “emotional conviction” affects the magnitude of the confirmation and disconfirmation bias; greater bias is exhibited when people are most committed to the desired conclusion. Likewise, Ahluwalia, Burnkrant, and Unnava

(2000) find that when consumers have strong commitment to a company, they are more likely to counterargue negative publicity written about the firm. Therefore, we expect that the more intensely a person hopes (yearns) for a goal-congruent outcome, the more confirmation and disconfirmation biases we will observe. Thus, we propose the following:

- P₃: When involvement is high and hope is weak, consumers elaborate on message claims, generating support arguments to claims that are strong and counterarguments to claims that are weak. When hope is strong, consumers elaborate on message claims, generating support arguments to claims that suggest that the goal-congruent out-

come is possible and counterarguments to claims that suggest it is impossible.

The existence of confirmation and disconfirmation biases may be driven by variation in acceptance criteria for message arguments; previous research has linked motivated reasoning to differential acceptance criteria. For example, Edwards and Smith (1996) find that when people are confronted with information that goes against a favored conclusion, they tend to judge it as weaker than information compatible with a favored conclusion. Thus, we expect that consumers who hope that an outcome is possible may have more lenient acceptance criteria for information that supports the outcome's possibility and also stricter acceptance criteria for information that suggests its impossibility. When processing is objective, the perceived strength of an argument should not depend on the extent to which information supports the possibility of a goal-congruent outcome. For example, consider the argument "stays fresh longer" for a chewing gum designed to help consumers stop smoking. When involvement in the message is high and hope is weak, consumers may evaluate this argument as relatively weak because it does not pertain to the true merits of the product as a smoking-cessation device. However, when hope is strong, the consumer may interpret this argument as evidence of the product's efficacy at staving off tobacco cravings for a longer period. We anticipate:

P₄: When involvement is high and hope is strong, consumers' evaluations of the strength of message arguments depend on whether the product information suggests that the goal-congruent outcome is possible or impossible. The possibility of the outcome does not affect assessments of argument strength when involvement is high and hope is weak.

Implications for Marketers

The preceding section suggests that under conditions in which consumers have strong hope for an outcome, marketers can enhance brand attitude favorability by including cues and message factors that support the possibility that consumers can achieve the goal-congruent outcome with product use, as is suggested in the tactics we described previously (see Table 1). The efficacy of the tactics is further enhanced when an advertisement contains cues that increase yearning (and thus intensity of hope) for the outcome. The preceding section also suggests that when hope is strong, brand attitudes are more favorable when advertisements focus on outcomes from product use than on the product and its attributes, because the former speaks more clearly to the goal-congruent outcome and its possible achievement through product use. Finally, the preceding section suggests that when hope is strong, disclaimers and product warnings are relatively ineffective as input to attitude formation or change because they are unlikely to be processed in light of perceptual defense and search termination. Even if encoded, disclaimers may have less impact because they may be counterargued or subjected to stronger acceptance criteria. Although prior research has identified a set of advertising and cognitive factors that impact disclaimer/product warning effectiveness (e.g., Johar and Simmons 2000), no previous research has considered the impact of emotional factors such as hope on their efficacy.

Implications for Public Policy

Scams and fraud deprive U.S. consumers of more than \$100 billion annually (Langenderfer and Shimp 2001). An important public policy implication of P_1 – P_4 is that when hope is strong, consumers are more susceptible to fraudulent activities. Prior research indicates that vulnerability to fraud is affected by demographic, social, and cognitive factors (e.g., Lee and Soberon-Ferrer 1997); however, research has not considered how emotional factors such as hope affect vulnerability. Indeed, a reason that poor, less educated, and older consumers may be more vulnerable to fraud is that they are the most deficient in money and/or products, experience greater yearning, and thus are more willing to act on scam-oriented transactions that imply the possibility of deficiency reduction. Thus, scams may work by suggesting that what is yearned for but seemingly impossible is actually possible; that is, they induce hope.

Another implication is that hope may make consumers vulnerable to products that have no scientific backing or make outlandish claims about outcomes (e.g., as is true of many diet and sexual-enhancement products), because information processing focuses not on the true merits of the product or service but on its promise of making the goal possible. A laissez-faire doctrine that places the onus of deciding whether a product is appropriate for consumption on the consumer may not be effective, because motivated reasoning may preclude objective product evaluation. More stringent policies that regulate marketing communications coupled with consumer education and awareness programs may be necessary. Notably, and in support of the previous public policy implications, stricter standards for diet and nutritional supplements and products that claim to treat or cure disease (Anthony 2003), contexts in which hope is likely to be strong, are under consideration by the Federal Trade Commission.

Moderating Role of Hope on the Outcome Valence–Satisfaction Relationship

Beyond attitude formation processes, we anticipate that hope is also relevant to consumer satisfaction. Consumers' satisfaction with products has important implications for marketers, given satisfaction's effects on repeat purchasing, negative or positive word of mouth, and complaining behavior. As such, several theoretical perspectives have been leveraged to identify antecedents to satisfaction judgments (e.g., Spreng, MacKenzie, and Olshavsky 1996; Szymanski and Henard 2001). For example, the expectancy disconfirmation perspective suggests that consumers compare actual performance levels with expected performance levels. If the product performs worse (better) than expected, a negative (positive) disconfirmation occurs, and consumers are dissatisfied (highly satisfied) (e.g., Oliver and DeSarbo 1988). Equity theory suggests that satisfaction is based on the ratio of input to output (cost to benefit) received from the product in comparison with a referent other (Fisk and Young 1985). The emotions perspective proposes that emotions such as contentment, anger, or joy experienced during

consumption can leave affective tags on the product's memory trace that are accessed in satisfaction evaluations (Westbrook and Oliver 1991). Finally, attribution theory (Folkes 1988) proposes that consumers' dissatisfaction with a failed product depends on whether they blame the manufacturer, uncontrollable factors in the environment, or themselves for failed outcomes. For the most part, these perspectives are noncompeting, and there is evidence for all of them.

Although all prior theories contend that satisfaction evaluation is contingent on the valence of the consumption outcome, we anticipate that hope moderates the impact of outcome valence on satisfaction because hope affects many of the previously identified antecedents to satisfaction, specifically (1) whether consumers perceive a disconfirmation, (2) the extent to which they perceive the exchange as equitable, (3) the nature of the emotions they experience on achievement of the goal-congruent outcome (or lack thereof), and (4) to whom they attribute product success or failure.

When the Goal-Congruent Outcome Is Realized

Consider the impact of hope on satisfaction when the goal-congruent outcome is realized and thus the outcome valence is positive. We expect that consumers are more likely to be satisfied with the same product experience when hope is strong than when it is weak. First, consumers are more likely to experience a positive disconfirmation when hope is strong rather than weak, because the yearning associated with strong hope should engender motivated reasoning, thus encouraging consumers to engage in tactics such as biased information search, selective attention, and biased hypothesis testing so as to conclude that the outcome is possible.

Second, greater yearning associated with more intense levels of hope suggests that consumers are willing to bear whatever costs are necessary to achieve the outcome. Thus, from an equity perspective, the cost-benefit ratio decreases as the benefits are strongly yearned and loom large in relation to the costs incurred.

Third, the uncertainty surrounding the occurrence of the goal-congruent outcome should magnify the intensity of positive emotions such as joy, happiness, and potential relief (if the goal-congruent outcome is driven by others or by environmental factors) or pride (if it is due to personal efforts). Van Dolen and colleagues (2001) show that the intensity of positive emotions such as these positively affects product satisfaction.

Finally, because achievement of the outcome is appraised as uncertain, consumers may attribute its occurrence to the product, because they themselves may not have been able to make the outcome happen in absence of the product. Thus, we anticipate effects such as the ones we describe in the subsequent P_{5a}.

When the Goal-Congruent Outcome Is Not Realized

Consider how hope affects consumer satisfaction when product purchase or use does not result in achievement of the goal-congruent outcome. We predict that consumers experience less dissatisfaction when hope is strong than when it is weak. Again, the yearning and uncertainty

appraisals of hope explain this counterintuitive result. The yearning component of hope affects the magnitude of the *disconfirmation*. The more consumers yearn for the goal-congruent outcome, the more motivated they are to perceive that the outcome has actually occurred or that some positive benefit, even if not the one originally intended, has been realized. Thus, consumers may notice that though a given product does not eliminate their wrinkles, it does seem to make their skin look more "dewey." Consumers may also use selective attention and notice that the product does seem to have made the lines around their lips finer (and not notice that it has had no impact on lines around the eyes). It is entirely possible that hope-induced motivated reasoning also causes consumers to fail to encode a product failure as such. Taylor and colleagues (2000) have found evidence of such illusions of success and well-being. Likewise, Gilovich (1983) finds that gamblers "rewrite" their histories of success and failure by scrutinizing and explaining away their losses; they count some losses as "near-wins." Similarly, a consumer who strongly hopes to achieve a goal through product usage may rewrite the product's failure into a quasi success. This logic may explain consumers' continued use of products (e.g., nutritional supplements, antiaging creams) despite their negligible effects.

Even if consumers perceive a product failure, they may not see the costs borne in product acquisition and usage as significant (e.g., "What did I have to lose by trying?"). Thus, perceptions of equity may not be negative. Furthermore, because the outcome is uncertain, consumers may have already anticipated potential failure, which in turn should minimize negative emotions such as disappointment. Finally, consumers may attribute lack of outcome achievement (if perceived) to their own unrealistic expectations or to other circumstantial factors (e.g., "It is very difficult to lose weight over the holidays"). On the basis of the preceding, we predict the following:

- P_{5a}: Under conditions in which the outcome is positive, consumers for whom hope is strong are more satisfied with the product than are consumers for whom hope is weak.
- P_{5b}: Under conditions in which the outcome is negative, consumers for whom hope is strong are less dissatisfied with the product than are consumers for whom hope is weak.

Although it may appear odd that actual product performance is potentially unrelated to satisfaction, Szymanski and Henard's (2001) meta-analysis reveals that actual product or service performance is not a significant predictor of satisfaction. Thus, situations are possible in which a product fails to perform yet consumers do not become dissatisfied.

Implications for Marketers

The foregoing suggests that marketers are often in a favorable position by enhancing consumers' hope, because high levels of hope create delight and consumer satisfaction if the product delivers the goal-congruent outcome and limited dissatisfaction if it does not. Notably, the effects are not explained by the concept of consumer expectations. Although marketers may always be in a positive position by enhancing hope, their enhancing expectations may cause negative effects for them because it sets consumers up for a potentially negative expectancy disconfirmation. Moreover,

if hope has an effect on an expectation disconfirmation process, it operates through the disconfirmation component, not the expectancy component. Indeed, that consumers regard the goal-congruent outcome as possible but uncertain suggests that they may have relatively weak expectations of the occurrence of the outcome. Furthermore, we argue that the impact of hope on satisfaction and dissatisfaction operates through not only disconfirmation but also additional antecedents to satisfaction, such as equity and attributions.

Implications for Public Policy

The potentially limiting effect of hope on dissatisfaction has consequences for both the individual consumer and the marketplace as a whole. Insensitivity to product failure or the cataloging of a previous failure as a near-success may result in continued expenditures on useless products as well as disincentives for marketers to invest in significant product improvements.

In addition to the effects of hope on product evaluation, hope may also influence consumer choice. We examine two choice-relevant contexts: (1) the impact of advertised risks on choice and (2) consumption choices in the context of self-regulation.

Moderating Role of Hope on the Advertised Risks–Choice Relationship

Perceived risk reflects the extent to which use of a product or service is perceived as having (1) uncertain, (2) personal, and (3) severe consequences (Bauer 1960; Cunningham 1979). Because several products entail risk (e.g., investments, gambling, cosmetic surgery, diets), marketers are encouraged to warn consumers of the risks associated with product use in advertising. Indeed, in certain industries such as pharmaceuticals, government mandates require explicit risk information in advertising (Dickinson 1999). However, marketers are ambivalent about advertising risks because of the potentially negative impact of risk advertising on choice, as is reflected by their use of creative tactics to avoid explicit advertising of risks (Adams 2002).

We argue that hope moderates the negative relationship between advertised risk and choice; specifically, when hope is strong, the negative impact of advertising risks on choice is diminished compared with conditions in which hope is weak. The reason is that one or more appraisal dimensions of hope (e.g., goal congruity, importance) affect one or more dimensions of perceived risk (e.g., uncertainty, personal nature, severity of consequences).

First, research from several areas suggests that the yearning associated with hope should affect consumers' uncertainty about the consequences of risky choice, which shifts their assessment to the possibility that negative consequences will *not* occur. Research in the medical domain shows that consumers overestimate medical risk when their emotions are negative, and they underestimate medical risk when their emotions are positive (Bowen et al. 2003). In a marketing domain, Chaudhuri (2002) finds that negative

(positive) emotional experiences induce greater (lower) perceptions of product risk. Because hope is a positive emotion whose intensity is affected by yearning, we expect that stronger levels of hope are associated with stronger perceptions that product usage does not result in negative consequences.

Uncertainty about the consequences of product use may also be affected by the yearning component of hope through its effects on motivated reasoning. Perceptual defense processes may focus consumers' attention on non-risk-related message information. If risk information is processed, consumers may counterargue it or use stricter acceptance criteria. Combined, such processes should reduce uncertainty about the consequences by making negative consequences seem less likely.

Second, the yearning and uncertainty components of hope may reduce the perceived severity of the consequences. Specifically, the yearning component of hope may encourage elaborated imagery (MacInnis and Price 1987), because consumers envision the positivity of life when the goal-congruent outcome occurs. If consumers imagine negative outcomes at all, they may imagine outcomes that are more benign or less severe. This is because the positivity associated with hope brings to mind favorable images associated with achieving a goal-congruent outcome rather than unfavorable outcomes, which makes the latter less salient and less available.

Finally, independent of risk perceptions, hope may moderate the relationship between advertised risks and choice, because the yearning component of hope alters consumers' perceptions of the risk–reward trade-off (Bell 1995). That is, when hope is strong, consumers may yearn for the goal-congruent outcome so intensely that they are willing to bear whatever risk is involved to achieve it. Considerable anecdotal evidence supports this effect. Peiss (1998) and Brumberg (1998) discuss several risky practices that women historically have engaged in to look more beautiful, such as taking the poison belladonna to achieve “bedroom eyes,” ingesting arsenic to improve their complexion, or undergoing carcinogenic X-ray treatments to reduce acne. Today, consumers who hope to look beautiful use botulism to smooth wrinkles, silicone implants to achieve a more attractive bosom, and cosmetic surgery to attain a youthful appearance. Consumers who hope to overcome illness are willing to take untested medications and controversial, expensive methods of alternative healing. In the interpersonal domain, teens who hope to be “cool” adopt such risky behaviors as underage smoking, drinking, drug use, shoplifting, and unprotected sex. Childless couples who desperately hope for children are willing to undergo expensive and potentially dangerous physical procedures to become pregnant. Hamilton (1978) indicates that people risked lives, families, fortunes, and the ability to return to their homeland for the hope of striking it rich during the Gold Rush. Thus:

P₆: The impact of advertised risks on decisions not to purchase a product is considerably greater when hope is weak than when it is strong because more intense levels of hope (a) increase perceptions that positive outcomes will occur, (b) reduce perceptions that negative consequences may

occur to the self and/or (c) be severe, and (d) increase the risk–reward trade-off.

The effects in P_6 cannot be explained by involvement or expectations. High involvement coupled with weak hope would induce systematic processing, thus increasing the attention to and processing of advertised risks because they constitute strong arguments as to why the product should not be chosen. Such processing should increase expectations that risks could occur to the self.

Implications for Marketers

P_6 leads to the conclusion that consumers are more prone to undertake risks when hope for the outcome is strong. Consistent with this idea, Averill, Catlin, and Chon (1990) report that respondents indicated that they took additional risks and “stuck their neck out” for things they hoped for. The previous anecdotal information also supports this idea. Thus, by enhancing consumers’ hope or by targeting markets of consumers whose hope is strong, marketers of innovative products may be able to turn normally conservative buyers (i.e., late adopters) into innovators who are willing to adopt the product despite the risks of buying early. In other words, hope may cause a steeper slope of the product adoption curve of goods and services that position themselves as means to attaining goal-congruent outcomes.

In addition, hope may reduce consumers’ price sensitivity. Although a high price entails economic risk, consumers may be willing to bear higher levels of economic risk when their hope for a goal is strong. Thus, an advertised high price may prove less of a deterrent to choice for consumers for whom hope is strong rather than weak.

Implications for Public Policy

P_6 also suggests that hope may affect consumers’ vulnerability to product harm (Smith and Cooper-Martin 1997). Although the Spring 1995 Special Issue of *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* indicates that medically underserved, poor, older, and rural consumers are more vulnerable to product harm, research has not considered that vulnerabilities may be tied to hope. That is, it is the consumers who yearn most for a goal-congruent outcome (e.g., the ones who are in-need) who are most likely to ignore, discount, or assume as unlikely risks from consumption.

To reduce vulnerability to product harm, communications may demonstrate safer means to achieving the yearned, goal-congruent outcome or may reduce hope by demonstrating the possibility of severe and negative consequences, thus shifting yearning to other outcomes that entail lesser risks. Notably, though, prior research has found that tactics that highlight the possibility of harm also result in defensive and biased processing, because such tactics induce fear, an emotional concomitant of hope (Pechmann et al. 2003). That research supports the impact of intense anticipatory emotions on biased processing, and it also suggests that public policy campaigns are least likely to induce biased processing and thus be more effective if they show consumers how to prevent aversive consequences through their own actions.

Moderating Role of Hope on the Marketing Practices–Self-Regulatory Outcomes Relationship

Many consumers are beset by problems of self-regulation as evidenced by overeating, compulsive shopping, gambling, drug use, smoking, and alcoholism. In many cases, problems exist despite consumers’ rational knowledge that their consumption means forgoing a larger and more important long-term goal. Hoch and Lowenstein (1991) call these “time-inconsistent preferences,” because the immediate behavior that consumers want to engage in is inconsistent with the longer-term goal they would like to achieve. Time-inconsistent preferences occur when the desire for a given behavior (e.g., eating, drinking, smoking) is greater than the consumer’s willpower to forgo the behavior in light of a larger goal (e.g., weight loss, sobriety, nicotine-free living). Recent research has verified that desire and willpower are indeed related to time-inconsistent preferences, at least in the domain of economic spending (Karlsson 2003).

Although the marketplace is often a source of temptation, consumers also turn to marketplace products, services, and self-help groups to help them reduce desire and enhance willpower. Unfortunately, little is known about factors that may moderate the relationship between desire (or willpower) on the one hand and self-regulatory success on the other hand. We argue that an important moderator is hope.

Specifically, we posit that whether desire enhances the likelihood of a time-inconsistent choice depends on whether hope is strong or weak. The yearning and possibility dimensions of hope enhance willpower, thus rendering the impact of desire on time-inconsistent preferences less significant. As such, desire may affect time-inconsistent choices only when hope is weak. Several factors underlie our reasoning.

First, the uncertainty dimension of hope reminds consumers that the goal-congruent outcome is possible and thus makes the benefits of the long-term goal salient in light of the more immediate outcome. Second, yearning for the longer-term goal may render the immediate choice less desirable when weighed against the longer-term, yearned-for outcome. Finally, yearning associated with the goal-congruent outcome may cause consumers to imagine the anticipated regret they might feel from forgoing a longer-term, yearned-for goal for a short-term, time-inconsistent choice. Combined, these factors suggest the following:

P_7 : The impact of desire on time-inconsistent choice is minimized when hope is strong rather than weak. Thus, consumers will more successfully resist time-inconsistent choice when hope is strong.

Implications for Marketers

The preceding propositions have several implications for marketers of self-regulatory products and services. Specifically, marketers should be better able to enhance the success of their self-regulatory products and services to the extent that they create hope in consumers. For example, consider the success of programs such as Weight Watchers: The organization influences hope in meetings as attendees

relate their success stories and achievements publicly. Such stories remind other attendees that goal achievement is possible. They also reinforce yearning as attendees relate the many and varied ways that goal achievement results in higher-order, yearned-for goals related to weight loss (e.g., greater energy, respect and admiration from others, better romantic interactions).

Implications for Public Policy

Several nonprofit organizations engage in public health campaigns designed to encourage consumers to give up smoking, drinking, drugs, and the like. Considerable scholarly research in the public health arena is devoted to understanding the efficacy of advertising practices that encourage cessation of self-destructive and problematic consumption behaviors (e.g., Pechmann et al. 2003). If hope is related to consumers' motivation to achieve self-regulatory outcomes, advertisers that promote cessation of maladaptive consumption practices may be more successful if they enhance consumers' hope about cessation and thus their motivation to heed social marketing messages. Specifically, enhancement of hope may also increase a critical predictor of intentions to stop consumption: self-efficacy. Consumers may be more likely to believe that they can stop a behavior if they are made to understand that stopping is possible. Hope may also enhance another critical predictor of intentions to stop: beliefs about the consequences of stopping. The yearning component of hope may enhance beliefs that the consequences of quitting are positive. Thus, marketing messages that encourage hope about cessation of the maladaptive behavior may be more effective than ones that do not.

Discussion

The objective of this conceptual article is to introduce the concept of hope and suggest its potential relevance to product evaluation and choice. Using appraisal theories of emotion, we argue that hope is a positively valenced emotion whose intensity is a function of the extent to which a goal-congruent outcome is yearned for and appraised as uncertain but possible. We also identify tactics that can stimulate hope, and we suggest that hope moderates well-established relationships that are relevant to marketing and public policy, including the relationships between (1) involvement

and attitude-formation processes, (2) outcome valence from product use and satisfaction, (3) advertised risks and choice, and (4) marketing tactics and self-regulatory behaviors. Several additional research questions relevant to evaluation and choice and other contexts warrant attention. Given space constraints, we briefly identify a few.

In the domain of attitudes, managerial and theoretical research based on the multiattribute attitude model has been extremely useful in understanding consumer behavior and in guiding managerial practice. It is not known whether multiattribute attitude formation based on attribute yearning and possibility leads to attitudes that differ in valence, strength, or behavioral prediction from attitudes based on traditional attribute evaluation and belief strength, as well as the extent to which hope moderates the relationship between attitudes and behaviors.

Notable questions pertaining to the impact of hope on choice timing can be identified. Does the intensity of hope encourage impulsive buying? Are consumers more likely to delay gratification and delay choice, so as to live off the hope that the product, when purchased, results in the goal-congruent outcome? For example, consumers sometimes delay scratching off lottery tickets to savor the hope of a win. Is waiting more difficult or easier as hope becomes stronger?

The normative and ethical implications of creating hope should also be examined. Although the inducement and enhancement of hope may create positive social welfare outcomes (e.g., self-regulation), it may also create outcomes that are negative from the standpoint of social welfare (e.g., susceptibility to risk, susceptibility to fraud) as well as others we have not considered. For example, does hope for products lead to excessive consumption and subsequent debt or credit abuse? Does hope for outcomes achieved through the marketplace encourage materialism? To what extent do the poor feel hopeless and in despair when they perceive consumption of yearned-for products impossible?

At present, answers to these and other provocative questions remain elusive. The concept of hope is rich in its potential to provide insight into consumer behavior, marketing practice, and public and social policy. Although the discussion here only alludes to hope's potential, we hope that it can guide theoretical and empirical work in the future.

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