

Research Report

# Say no more! The liability of strong ties on desire for special experiences☆

Miranda R. Goode<sup>a,\*</sup>, Kendra Hart<sup>b</sup>, Matthew Thomson<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Ivey Business School, Western University, 1255 Western Rd., London, ON N6G 0N1, Canada

<sup>b</sup> Bissett School of Business, Mount Royal University, 4825 Mount Royal Gate S.W., Calgary, AB T3E 6K6, Canada

Accepted by Cornelia Pechmann, Editor; Associate Editor, Vicki Morwitz

Received 2 May 2013; received in revised form 30 March 2015; accepted 1 April 2015

Available online 8 April 2015

## Abstract

Interpersonal connections are often involved in the planning, consuming, and reminiscing of special consumption experiences. Yet we have limited understanding of how consumers in different stages (planning versus reminiscing) influence one another and how this might vary as a function of relationship strength. From two experiments, our findings suggest that when planning a novel special experience, consumers should be cautious of others' reminiscences and, specifically, of memories shared by strong ties. In study 1, we found that a memory shared by a strong tie increases a consumer's desire to switch a novel experience. In study 2, we unpacked this effect by examining the role of savoring and internalization of memory details. When a memory was shared by a stronger (versus weaker) tie, the expected utility of savoring was reduced, and the desire to switch to a new experience increased. Post analyses suggest that this may be due to differences in the extent to which the memory is assimilated as one's own experience. Crown Copyright © 2015 Published by Elsevier Inc. on behalf of Society for Consumer Psychology. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Experiential consumption; Special experiences; Savoring; Word-of-mouth; Social influence; Memorability

## Introduction

Special consumption experiences are dynamic, emotionally charged and important to an individual's identity. Complicating their understanding are the interpersonal connections involved in their planning, consuming, and reminiscing. While recent attention has focused on how individuals jointly consume (e.g., Raghunathan & Corfman, 2006; Ramanathan & McGill, 2007) or reminisce (e.g., Cooney, Gilbert, & Wilson, 2014), less understood is how individuals in different stages influence each other and how this might vary as a function of their relationship strength. We investigate how a memory shared in a conversation with a stronger (e.g., friend) versus weaker relationship tie

(e.g., stranger) may inadvertently decrease a consumer's desire for a novel, hedonic experience (study 1). Underlying this effect is a reduction of utility expected with savoring (study 2).

## Background and hypotheses

While planning a novel, hedonic experience, such as a haunted pub tour or hang-gliding adventure, consumers may seek out or coincidentally be exposed to reminiscences of a similar experience by individuals with whom relationship ties are stronger or weaker. The former are generally perceived as more influential (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Brown & Reingen, 1987), in part because of their superior understanding of the recipient's tastes (Kiecker & Hartman, 1994). However, an episodic memory shared by a strong tie may decrease an individual's desire for a novel, hedonic experience, as explained next.

Compelling evidence links tie strength to internalization, a process of assimilating another's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors as one's own experience (e.g., Aron & Fraley, 1999; Decety &

☆ Authors are listed alphabetically and contributed equally to the manuscript. Financial support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada awarded to Miranda Goode and Matthew Thomson is gratefully acknowledged. The authors are also grateful to Lisa Bitacola, Xin Wang, and Peter Nguyen for their assistance with the design and analysis of our Posttest.

\* Corresponding author. Fax: +1 519 661 3959.

E-mail addresses: [mgoode@ivey.ca](mailto:mgoode@ivey.ca) (M.R. Goode), [khart@mtroyal.ca](mailto:khart@mtroyal.ca) (K. Hart), [mthomson@ivey.ca](mailto:mthomson@ivey.ca) (M. Thomson).

Jackson, 2006; Gilbert, Killingsworth, Eyre, & Wilson, 2009; Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007; Kang, Hirsh, & Chasteen, 2010). Generally, the same information when shared by a stronger (weaker) tie is internalized to a greater (lesser) extent. We propose that the increased internalization that occurs with a strong tie may have an effect on people who have not yet consumed their own novel, hedonic experience. This is because consumers in the planning stage derive utility from savoring through anticipation and formulate expectations about the utility that will come from savoring a memory, both of which may succumb to a tie strength effect.

### *Savoring*

People seek new experiences for the stimulation that accompanies the process of discovery, such as meeting new people and consuming novel emotions and events (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014; Kahn, 1995; Menon & Kahn, 1995; Ratner, Kahn, & Kahneman, 1999). When planning a novel experience, people derive utility from fantasizing about the many ways it can unfold, unfurling powerful anticipatory emotions (Bar-Anan, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2009; Bryant & Veroff, 2007; Lee & Qiu, 2009; Van Boven & Ashworth, 2007). Pleasure is inherent in contemplating and fantasizing about the unknown (Wilson, Centerbar, Kermer, & Gilbert, 2005), but when ambiguity around an event is resolved, the outcome can be negative (Lee & Qiu, 2009; Wilson & Gilbert, 2008). Extending these findings to our investigation suggests that the previously discussed positive association between tie strength and internalization may correspond to a decrease in desire for a novel, hedonic experience. Hearing a person with whom one has a stronger (versus weaker) tie reminisce about a desired experience makes the unknown more known and limits the fantasy and speculation about the many ways in which the experience might unfold. In effect, the discovery and suspense associated with pre-consumption savoring—crucial sources of utility—are diminished.

Further, the savoring of a cherished memory is an important source of utility (Bryant, 2003). Consider that parents often delay special experiences until children are old enough to remember them and that consumers exert effort to protect special memories and seek out eclectic and sometimes less pleasurable experiences for their memorability (Keinan & Kivetz, 2011; Ratner et al., 1999; Zauberan, Ratner, & Kim, 2009). Underlying these behaviors is a relevant prospective concern with memorability (Keinan & Kivetz, 2011; Loewenstein, 1987; Zauberan et al., 2009). Since fantasizing about a desired experience and cherishing a special memory are important sources of utility, we account for expectations of both in our conceptualization of savoring. Specifically, a reduction in utility expected with savoring may explain why desire for an experience decreases when a detailed memory is shared by a stronger (versus weaker) tie. Thus we predict that:

**H1.** Hearing a detailed memory about a novel, hedonic experience from a person with a stronger (vs. weaker) tie will increase desire to switch the experience.

**H2.** Hearing a detailed memory about a novel, hedonic experience from a person with a stronger (vs. weaker) tie will decrease (increase) utility expected with savoring and, in turn, increase (decrease) desire to switch the experience.

Another explanation with intuitive appeal involves uniqueness motivation. Consumers have a fundamental motivation to be different (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Tepper Tian & McKenzie, 2001), which drives consumption decisions central to their identity (Belk, 1988; Tepper Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001). Thus, simply knowing that a strong tie has had an experience similar to one's own planned experience might increase desire to switch. We address this possibility in several ways in studies 1 and 2.

### **Study 1**

Our first study tests H1, whether a detailed memory shared by a stronger (versus weaker) tie increases desire to switch a novel, hedonic experience.

#### *Design, procedure, and dependent variables*

We employed a two-way (tie strength: weaker/stronger) between-subjects experimental design. Participants ( $n_{\text{total}} = 195$ ;  $n_{\text{useable}} = 144$ ) were recruited from an online panel and paid a nominal fee (see Appendix for details). First, participants imagined they had a ticket providing “free access to an experience you have never had before.” Five options were offered: a circus visit, a horseback riding trip, a hot-air balloon ride, a rafting excursion, and a skydiving lesson. We selected experiences that were likely to be emotion-inducing and novel, thereby characteristic of special experiences (Zauberan et al., 2009). Participants chose an experience ( $N_{\text{circus}} = 13$ ;  $N_{\text{horse ride}} = 23$ ;  $N_{\text{air balloon}} = 53$ ;  $N_{\text{rafting}} = 21$ ;  $N_{\text{skydiving}} = 34$ ) and were asked to imagine attending a party before using their ticket. Participants were randomly assigned to a tie strength condition:

When you go to the party, you find yourself talking to [*a new person you've just met* or *a good friend*]. You mention your upcoming [*choice of experience*]. It turns out this person has recently [*choice of experience*]. He or she proceeds to share the details with you.

Next, participants read a description outlining a memory shared by the person at the party and corresponding to their experience choice. All descriptions were similar in length and detail (see Appendix). We then assessed if participants wanted to switch their choice. In addition to age ( $M = 40$ ,  $SD = 11.6$ ) and gender (56% female), we measured disconfirmed expectations, to control for the influence of another person's memory on participants' original expectations for their chosen experience. Need for uniqueness (NFU) was also measured to control for individual differences in this trait intrinsic motivation (Lynn & Harris, 1997). See Appendix for details and summary statistics. Finally, we asked participants if they had previously consumed the chosen experience. A hypothesis probe was administered. No participant correctly guessed the hypotheses.

## Results and discussion

An omnibus ANCOVA (see Table 1) was conducted with tie strength as the predictor and disconfirmed expectations, NFU, gender, and age as covariates. For analyses without the covariates, see the Appendix. Disconfirmed expectations ( $F [1,138] = 3.19, p = .08$ ), NFU ( $F [1,138] = .75, p = .39$ ), gender ( $F [1,138] = 1.49, p = .23$ ), and age ( $F [1,138] = .76, p = .39$ ) did not predict switching. In support of H1, tie strength significantly affected switching ( $F (1,138) = 7.63, p = .01; d = .46$ ). A memory shared by a stronger ( $n = 79; M = 2.14; SD = 1.56$ ) versus weaker tie ( $n = 65; M = 1.32; SD = .71$ ) resulted in a greater desire to switch the experience, thus providing evidence for the liability of strong ties. Our results suggest that this effect is not explained by disconfirmed expectations or a uniqueness motivation.

## Study 2

Study 2 tests H1 and H2 and further explores the role of uniqueness motivation. Simply knowing that a stronger tie has had an experience similar to one's planned experience might increase desire to switch. Consequently, we manipulated whether a shared memory was more or less detailed. If a uniqueness motivation underlies the effect, then a memory will increase desire to switch regardless of the level of detail shared.

### Design, participants, and procedure

We used a 2 (tie strength: weaker/stronger)  $\times$  2 (shared memory detail: less/more) between-subjects experimental design. Participants ( $n = 176; M_{Age} = 50, SD = 12; 53\%$  female) were recruited from an online panel and paid a nominal fee. First, participants responded to the NFU measure as in study 1 ( $\alpha = .87, M = 2.97, SD = 1.24$ ). Next, we instructed participants:

Imagine that you have won a ticket to take a two-hour hang-gliding lesson (regularly priced at \$160), where you will be partnered with an experienced instructor who will hang-glide with you. Please take a moment to imagine what the experience would be like.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions (see Appendix). To manipulate tie strength, participants imagined a coffee shop scenario with either a friend (stronger tie) or

stranger (weaker tie). Two pretests showed that tie strength was perceived as stronger with a friend than a stranger (Pretest 1,  $n = 60: M_{stronger} = 4.79$  vs.  $M_{weaker} = 2.00, F [1, 58] = 74.70, p < .01$ ; Pretest 2,  $n = 59: M_{stronger} = 4.83$  vs.  $M_{weaker} = 1.93, F [1, 57] = 98.29, p < .01$ ). Tie strength was assessed using a validated measure of interpersonal closeness (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). To manipulate memory detail, participants read either a short or long description of the person's hang-gliding experience.

### Dependent variables and mediators

Supported by results from a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CMIN/DF = 2.66; NFI = .96; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .10), desire to switch was a composite measure comprised of items related to attitude and desire to try and switch the experience ( $\alpha = .97$ ; see Appendix for details and summary statistics). Increasing scores on the composite reflect less positive attitudes, less willingness to try and more willingness to switch. The savoring measure ( $\alpha_{study 2} = .96; \alpha_{pretest} = .95$ ) was adapted from Bryant (2003). Participants also responded to an open-ended question, "Please take a few moments to tell us in your own words what you expect your hang-gliding experience will be like". Lastly, participants indicated whether they had previously hang-glided and how carefully they had completed the instrument and an open-ended question to assess hypothesis guessing. We removed one participant whose answer showed he had not taken the instrument seriously (i.e., scored less than 4/7) and nine participants with hang-gliding experience. Like study 1, we excluded participants whose completion time was at the bottom or top 5% of the sample. Our final usable sample was 156. No participant correctly guessed the hypotheses.

### Results and discussion

We first conducted a 2 (tie strength: weaker/stronger)  $\times$  2 (shared memory detail: less/more) full factorial ANCOVA controlling for age and gender (see Table 2 for condition means for desire to switch and savoring, Table 3 for omnibus ANCOVA results, and the Appendix for analysis without the covariates). Tie strength affected switching ( $F [1,150] = 4.28, p = .04; \eta^2 = .03$ ): A memory shared by a stronger ( $n = 76; M = 3.53; SE = .20$ ) versus weaker tie ( $n = 80; M = 2.95; SE = .20$ ) significantly increased desire to switch. The effect of memory detail ( $n = 78; M_{less} = 3.49, SE = .20$  vs.  $n = 78; M_{more} = 2.99, SE = .20, F [1,150] = 3.09, p = .08; \eta^2 = .02$ ) was marginal as was the interaction term ( $F [1,150] = 2.94, p = .09; \eta^2 = .02$ ). In support of H1, pairwise analyses revealed that when a more detailed memory was shared by a stronger (versus weaker) tie, desire to switch was greater ( $M_{stronger} = 3.53$  vs.  $M_{weaker} = 2.46; t[74] = 2.42, p = .009$ ). When a less detailed memory was shared, desire to switch did not significantly differ between a memory shared by a stronger ( $M = 3.54$ ) versus weaker tie ( $M = 3.44; t[74] = .89, p = .81$ ), a result that suggests a uniqueness explanation is not operating.

Still, we further addressed the role of uniqueness motivation by conducting a second ANCOVA and included, as in study 1,

Table 1  
Study 1 omnibus results with disconfirmed expectations, NFU, gender, and age as covariates.

Factor	DV: desire to switch	
	F	p<
Corrected model	3.06	.05
Intercept	11.45	.01
Disconfirmed expectations	3.19	.09
NFU	.75	.40
Gender	1.49	.24
Age	.76	.40
Tie strength (weaker/stronger)	7.63	.01

Table 2  
Study 2 condition means.

Condition	DV: desire to switch <sup>a</sup>				Mediator: savoring				
	NFU absent		NFU present		NFU absent		NFU present		
	Weaker tie	Stronger tie	weaker tie	Stronger tie	Weaker tie	Stronger tie	Weaker tie	Stronger tie	
Less detailed memory	n	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	
	M	3.44 <sup>a</sup>	3.54 <sup>a</sup>	3.33 <sup>b</sup>	3.51 <sup>b</sup>	4.96 <sup>c,d</sup>	4.78 <sup>c</sup>	5.02 <sup>c,f</sup>	4.80 <sup>f</sup>
	SE	.28	.28	.28	.28	.26	.27	.27	.26
More detailed memory	n	41	37	41	37	41	37	41	37
	M	2.46	3.53 <sup>a</sup>	2.56	3.56 <sup>b</sup>	5.58 <sup>d</sup>	4.73 <sup>c</sup>	5.53 <sup>c</sup>	4.71 <sup>f</sup>
	SE	.28	.29	.27	.29	.26	.28	.26	.27

<sup>a</sup> Composite of Switch, Attitude (r) and Try Again (r) ( $\alpha = .97$ ); both analyses contain gender and age as covariates; cells that share a superscript are not significantly different at  $p < .05$  except for <sup>d</sup> where the difference is marginal ( $p = .10$ ).

NFU as a covariate (see Table 3). NFU was a significant predictor ( $F [1,149] = 6.80, p = .01; \eta^2 = .04$ ) of switching but was somewhat confounded with age, which was a marginal predictor in the first ANCOVA ( $F [1,149] = 3.22, p = .07; \eta^2 = .02$ ) but not in the second ANCOVA ( $F [1,149] = .56, p = .46; \eta^2 = .00$ ). Further, the effect of tie strength remained relatively unchanged ( $F [1,149] = 4.59, p = .03; \eta^2 = .03$ ), but this was not the case with both memory detail ( $F [1,149] = 1.68, p = .20; \eta^2 = .01$ ) and the interaction term ( $F [1,149] = 2.18, p = .14; \eta^2 = .01$ ). Pairwise analyses showed a similar pattern as before. In support of H1, when a more detailed memory was shared by a stronger (versus weaker) tie, desire to switch was significantly greater ( $M_{\text{stronger}} = 3.56$  vs.  $M_{\text{weaker}} = 2.56; t[73] = 2.31, p = .01$ ; see Table 2). When a less detailed memory was shared by a stronger ( $M = 3.51$ ) versus weaker ( $M = 3.33; t[73] = .39, p = .65$ ) tie, desire to switch did not significantly differ (see Table 2). Despite this pattern of results, the inclusion of NFU as a covariate seems to have a material effect on switching that overlaps with variance explained by the shared memory detail manipulation.

To disentangle how this uniqueness motivation operates in relation to our tie strength effect, we used the Hayes (2012) SPSS PROCESS macro (Model 8, 5,000 iterations, 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals) with tie strength as the independent variable (X), memory detail as the moderator (W) and savoring as the mediator (M) (see Fig. 1). We modeled NFU (along with gender and age) as a covariate that simultaneously predicts both the mediator and outcome (Y). This approach is consistent with current best practice for

assessing indirect effects (Hayes, 2009, 2013; Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010).

In support of H2, savoring mediated the effect of tie strength on desire to switch when a more detailed memory was shared (Indirect Effect<sub>ab</sub> = .76, CI = .14, 1.40). There was no effect when a less detailed memory was shared (Indirect Effect<sub>ab</sub> = .20, CI = -.56, .94) (see Table 4). NFU did not affect savoring ( $\beta = .17, SE = .12, p = .18$ ) or mitigate the role of savoring as an important mediator, but did affect switching ( $\beta = -.18, SE = .06, p < .01$ ). However, the latter effect was in the direction opposite to what might be expected if a uniqueness motivation were operating.

We included the less detailed memory conditions to demonstrate that uniqueness motivation may not fully account for our tie strength effect. Our results support this, but the fact that NFU affected desire to switch (but not savoring), and in the direction opposite to our expectation, suggests a potentially more complicated explanation beyond the scope of this paper. It is clear, however, that savoring remains an important factor through which the tie strength effect operates.

Finally, we previously discussed that internalization of memory details likely underpins the tie strength effect. There is compelling empirical evidence in the extant literature supporting this (e.g., Aron & Fraley, 1999; Decety & Jackson, 2006; Gilbert et al., 2009; Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007; Kang et al., 2010). Although we did not include an explicit measure of internalization, our open-ended question allowed us to explore this further. Two independent research assistants, blind to the hypotheses, coded the number of emotional inferences mentioned in

Table 3  
Study 2 omnibus results with and without NFU as a covariate.

Factor	DV: desire to switch <sup>a</sup>				Mediator: savoring			
	F	p<	F	p<	F	p<	F	p<
Corrected model	2.81	.02	3.57	.01	1.51	.19	1.58	.16
Intercept	10.78	.01	17.75	.01	88.72	.01	33.22	.01
NFU	–	–	6.80	.01	–	–	1.86	.18
Gender	.54	.47	.19	.66	.15	.70	.05	.82
Age	3.22	.08	.56	.47	.95	.33	.17	.68
Shared memory detail (less/more)	3.09	.08	1.68	.20	1.14	.29	.65	.42
Tie strength (weaker/stronger)	4.28	.04	4.59	.03	3.76	.05	3.85	.05
Shared memory X tie strength	2.94	.09	2.18	.14	1.57	.21	1.24	.27

<sup>a</sup> Composite of Switch, Attitude (r) and Try Again (r) ( $\alpha = .97$ )

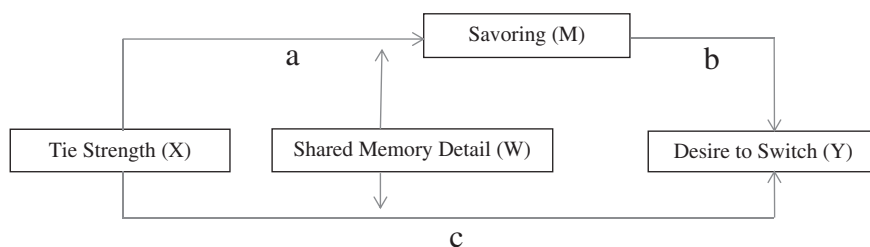


Fig. 1. Conditional process path model with savoring as a mediator.

participants’ written responses. Consistent with Goode, Dahl, & Moreau (2010), emotional inferences were identified as any emotions or feelings expected to occur while hang-glider. Emotions repeated from the description were not counted. The identification of a higher number of novel emotions is assumed to reflect a greater level of internalization.

Agreement between coders was high (ICC = 92%) with differences resolved through discussion with the authors. An ANCOVA (with gender, age, and NFU as covariates) was conducted with the number of emotional inferences as the dependent measure (see Appendix). There was no effect of memory detail ( $M_{\text{less}} = 1.32$  vs.  $M_{\text{more}} = 1.11$ ,  $F [1,149] = 1.71$ ,  $p = .19$ ;  $\eta^2 = .01$ ). However, the main effect of tie strength was significant ( $M_{\text{stronger}} = 1.38$  vs.  $M_{\text{weaker}} = 1.05$ ,  $F [1,149] = 4.64$ ,  $p = .03$ ;  $\eta^2 = .03$ ). While the interaction term was not significant ( $F [1,149] = 2.40$ ,  $p = .12$ ;  $\eta^2 = .02$ ), pairwise analyses showed that when a more detailed memory was shared by a stronger (versus weaker) tie, participants identified significantly more emotional inferences ( $M_{\text{stronger}} = 1.40$  vs.  $M_{\text{weaker}} = .82$ ;  $t[73] = 2.38$ ,  $p = .01$ ). When a less detailed memory was shared by a stronger (versus weaker) tie, the number of emotional inferences did not significantly differ ( $M_{\text{stronger}} = 1.36$  vs.  $M_{\text{weaker}} = 1.27$ ;  $t[73] = .47$ ,  $p = .68$ ). Paralleling the results with desire to switch and savoring as outcomes, this provides some indirect empirical support for the underlying role of internalization.

Posttest: tie strength and internalization

To provide additional support for the relationship between tie strength and internalization, we conducted a posttest ( $n = 25$ ;  $M_{\text{age}} = 20$ ;  $SD = 5$ ; 58% female). Using an approach similar to prior research (e.g., Kang et al., 2010), heart rate was used as a psychophysical proxy for internalization. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two detailed memory conditions used in study 2. The same instructions and scenario descriptions were used (see the Appendix for methodological details).

We expected to see elevated heart rates in the stronger tie condition if participants internalized the memory more than when shared by a weaker tie. Heart rates (baseline-adjusted) were higher, although only directionally, when a memory was shared by a stronger ( $n = 12$ ,  $M = 2.26$ ) versus weaker tie ( $n = 13$ ;  $M = 0$ ) ( $t(22) = 1.67$ ,  $p = .11$ ). These results strike us as promising and parallel, if only directionally, the brain activity results in Kang et al. (2010), which also showed that the same information is internalized to a greater (lesser) extent when shared by a stronger (weaker) tie.

On the whole, our findings suggest that when the source of a detailed memory is a strong tie, the utility expected with savoring is lower and desire to switch to a new experience is greater; thus, again, providing evidence for the liability of strong ties. We also provide some initial evidence for the underlying role of internalization.

Table 4  
Main effects, interactions, indirect effects, and direct effects for the effect of tie strength and shared memory detail on desire to switch through savoring.<sup>a</sup>

	(M) savoring				(Y) desire to switch			
	$\beta$ (SE)	$t$ ( $p <$ )	Conditional indirect effect ab (SE)	CI	$\beta$ (SE)	$t$ ( $p <$ )	Conditional direct effect c (SE)	CI
Constant	<b>5.03 (.98)</b>	<b>5.16 (.01)</b>	–	<b>3.10, 6.96</b>	<b>8.27 (.50)</b>	<b>16.51 (.01)</b>	–	<b>7.28, 9.26</b>
(X) tie strength	–.22 (.37)	.59 (.56)	–	–.96, .52	–.03 (.18)	.15 (.89)	–	–.38, .32
(M) savoring	–	–	–	–	<b>–.93 (.04)</b>	<b>24.03 (.01)</b>	–	<b>–1.00, –.85</b>
(W) memory detail	1.12 (.85)	1.32 (.19)	–	–.55, 2.79	–.57 (.40)	1.41 (.17)	–	–1.36, .23
XW	–.60 (.54)	1.11 (.27)	–	–1.66, .46	.27 (.26)	1.06 (.30)	–	–.23, .77
NFU	.17 (.12)	1.36 (.18)	–	–.07, .40	<b>–.18 (.06)</b>	<b>3.05 (.01)</b>	–	<b>–.29, –.06</b>
Age	–.01 (.01)	.41 (.68)	–	–.03, .02	.01 (.01)	.84 (.41)	–	–.01, .01
Gender	–.06 (.27)	.23 (.82)	–	–.60, .47	.07 (.13)	.53 (.60)	–	–.19, .32
Less memory detail	–	–	.20 (.39)	–.56, .94	–	–.15 (.89)	–.03 (.18)	–.38, .32
More memory detail	–	–	<b>.76 (.32)</b>	<b>.14, 1.40</b>	–	1.33 (.19)	.24 (.18)	–.12, .60
	$R^2 = .06$ ; $F(6,149) = 1.58$ , $p = .16$				$R^2 = .82$ ; $F(7,148) = 97.37$ , $p < .01$			

<sup>a</sup> NFU, age and gender are modeled to explain both M and Y. Bolded values indicate significance (CI does not contain 0).

## General discussion

Although the utility of meaningful experiences is widely accepted, we know little about the effect of interpersonal communication on individuals planning a novel, hedonic experience. Yet, this effect has relevance given that planning frequently involves hearing of similar experiences from others, and often from those who know them best (Kiecker & Hartman, 1994). Intuitively, one might expect such information would have a positive effect. However, our results reveal a more insidious effect. In study 1, we showed that a memory shared by a strong tie increases an individual's desire to switch a novel experience. In study 2, we unpacked this effect by examining how expectations of an experience's utility in the planning and reminiscing stages may be affected. When a memory is shared by a stronger (versus weaker) tie, the expected utility from savoring is reduced, in turn increasing desire to switch to a different experience.

For the experiences we investigate (e.g., balloon ride, hang-gliding), the core consumable is intangible. While immersed in the experience, utility comes from the process of discovery (i.e., experiencing the previously unknown) and its accompanying emotions (Bar-Anan et al., 2009; Lee & Qiu, 2009; Wilson et al., 2005). Before the experience, consumers value anticipating and fantasizing how the experience may unfold (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). Our findings reinforce this valuation and, importantly, demonstrate the susceptibility of savoring to memories shared by others.

Anticipation, suspense, and the perceived memorability of the experience are harmed when a memory is shared by a strong tie. Our findings provide insight into a factor that influences savoring beyond investigations of individual differences (e.g., Bryant, 1989; Heaps & Nash, 1999; Paddock, Joseph, Chan, Terranova, Manning, & Loftus, 1998). We are also the first to demonstrate that memory protection should be of concern prospectively. People should protect the future enjoyment and memorability of an experience by being cautious of others' reminiscences, especially from those with whom they are closest.

### *Limitations and future directions*

When participants in previous scenario-based studies were asked to predict their behavior and feelings in a novel experience (as with our investigation), their predictions matched expectations for those immersed in a real experience (e.g., Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Cooney et al., 2014; Kumar & Gilovich, 2014). However, interesting discrepancies materialized when these expectations were compared with post-experience outcomes (e.g., Cooney et al., 2014); thus, examining whether the tie strength effect persists during and after an actual novel experience seems worthwhile, as its persistence would increase the ecological validity of this effect and offer insight into its longevity.

Social pressures to conform and undertake an experience may be more salient when a memory is shared face to face by a stronger versus weaker tie, creating a situation not conducive to

our effect. Replicating with individuals actually planning a novel experience would provide additional validation. Alternatively, we may find that the tie strength effect is limited to communication in online posts, emails, or chats, which inspired our stimuli.

Although our results persist even when accounting for a uniqueness explanation, other trait measures (e.g., novelty-seeking and risk aversion) should be investigated. For a novelty-seeking person, the tie strength effect may be exacerbated because stimulation and novelty are more greatly valued. Conversely, for a risk-averse person, the spoiling effect of a strong tie may be mitigated. Greater internalization of a memory shared by a strong tie may reduce the perceived risk of a novel experience and enhance desire.

Preliminary support for the role of internalization was provided through post-hoc coding of emotional inferences and with a posttest measuring heart rate differences in response to a memory shared by a stronger (versus weaker) tie. Although results mirrored prior findings (e.g., Kang et al., 2010), replications or extensions of our work should employ more direct internalization measures. Most promising is the use of electroencephalography (EEG), which is less susceptible to self-report biases and hypothesis guessing and has previously been effective in capturing tie strength differences in internalization (Kang et al., 2010).

In our studies, we did not measure if participants imagined the experience with others. Investigating if the tie strength effect occurs when a planned experience involves a group seems worthwhile. The expected utility from savoring may be retained when hearing a memory from a strong tie because of increased uncertainty about the additional individuals' roles and reactions. Therefore, when planning a group experience, hearing of another's similar experience may not pre-emptively harm fantasizing and make the unknown known, since pleasure could still be derived from imagining others' reactions.

We live in an experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), wherein special experiences are highly sought, and marketers seek competitive advantages by expanding to experiential offerings or positioning material goods as experience enablers. This focus is mirrored by a growing body of experience-based academic research. However, the confluence of interpersonal relationships and experiential consumption remains under-researched. By investigating situations involving individuals at different stages of experiential consumption (planning versus reminiscing), we hope to inspire further research in this area.

## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2015.04.001>.

## References

- Aron, A., Aron, E. N., & Smollan, D. (1992). Inclusion of other in the self scale and the structure of interpersonal closeness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 241–253.

- Aron, A., & Fraley, B. (1999). Relationship closeness as including other in the self: Cognitive underpinnings and measures. *Social Cognition, 17*, 140–160.
- Bansal, H. S., & Voyer, P. A. (2000). Word-of-mouth processes within a services purchase decision context. *Journal of Service Research, 3*, 166–177.
- Bar-Anan, Y., Wilson, T. D., & Gilbert, T. (2009). The feeling of uncertainty intensifies affective reactions. *Emotion, 9*, 123–127.
- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of Consumer Research, 15*, 139–168.
- Bhattacharjee, A., & Mogilner, C. (2014). Happiness from ordinary and extraordinary experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research, 41*, 1–17.
- Brown, J. J., & Reingen, P. H. (1987). Social ties and word-of-mouth referral behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research, 14*, 350–362.
- Bryant, F. B. (1989). A four-factor model of perceived control: Avoiding, coping, obtaining and savoring. *Journal of Personality, 57*(4), 773–797.
- Bryant, F. B. (2003). Savoring beliefs inventory (SBI): A scale for measuring beliefs about savoring. *Journal of Mental Health, 12*(2), 175–196.
- Bryant, F. B., & Veroff, J. (2007). *Savoring: A new model of positive experience*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Carter, T. J., & Gilovich, T. (2012). I am what I do, not what I have: The differential centrality of experiential and material purchases to the self. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 102*, 1304–1317.
- Cooney, G., Gilbert, D. T., & Wilson, T. D. (2014). The unforeseen costs of extraordinary experience. *Psychological Science, 25*, 2259–2265, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0956797614551372>.
- Decety, J., & Jackson, P. L. (2006). A social-neuroscience perspective on empathy. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 15*, 54–58.
- Gilbert, D. T., Killingsworth, M. A., Eyre, R. N., & Wilson, T. D. (2009). The surprising power of neighborly advice. *Science, 323*, 1617–1619.
- Goldstein, N. J., & Cialdini, R. B. (2007). The spyglass self: A model of vicarious self-perception. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 92*(3), 402–417.
- Goode, M. R., Dahl, D. W., & Moreau, C. P. (2010). The effect of experiential analogies on consumer perceptions and attitudes. *Journal of Marketing Research, 47*(2), 274–286.
- Hayes, A. F. (2009). Beyond Baron and Kenny: Statistical mediation analysis in the new millennium. *Communication Monographs, 76*, 408–420.
- Hayes, A. F. (2012). PROCESS: A versatile computational tool for observed variable mediation, moderation, and conditional process modeling. White paper, retrieved from the author's website: <http://www.afhayes.com/>
- Hayes, A. F. (2013). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Heaps, C., & Nash, M. (1999). Individual differences in imagination inflation. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review, 6*(2), 313–318.
- Kahn, B. E. (1995). Consumer variety-seeking among goods and services: An integrative review. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 2*(3), 139–148.
- Kang, S. K., Hirsh, J. B., & Chasteen, A. L. (2010). Your mistakes are mine: Self-other overlap predicts neural response to observed errors. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 46*, 229–232.
- Keinan, A., & Kivetz, R. (2011). Productivity orientation and the consumption of collectable experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research, 37*, 935–950.
- Kiecker, P., & Hartman, C. L. (1994). Predicting buyers' selection of interpersonal sources: The role of strong and weak ties. In C. T. Allen, & D. R. John (Eds.), *Advances in Consumer Research, 21*. (pp. 464–469). Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.
- Kumar, A., & Gilovich, T. (2014). *Some "thing" to talk about? Differential story utility from experiential and material purchases*. (Revise and resubmit at Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin).
- Lee, Y. H., & Qiu, C. (2009). When uncertainty brings pleasure: The role of prospect imageability and mental imagery. *Journal of Consumer Research, 36*, 624–633.
- Loewenstein, G. (1987). Anticipation and the valuation of delayed consumption. *Economic Journal, 97*, 666–684.
- Lynn, M., & Harris, J. (1997). Individual differences in the pursuit of self-uniqueness through consumption. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 27*, 1861–1883.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review, 98*, 224–253.
- Menon, S., & Kahn, B. E. (1995). The impact of context on variety seeking in product choices. *Journal of Consumer Research, 22*, 285–295.
- Paddock, J. R., Joseph, A. L., Chan, F. M., Terranova, S., Manning, C., & Loftus, E. F. (1998). When guided visualization procedures may backfire: Imagination inflation and predicting individual differences in suggestibility. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 12*, 563–575.
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The experience economy: Work is theatre and every business is a stage*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Ragunathan, R., & Corfman, K. (2006). Is happiness shared doubled and sadness shared halved? Social influence on enjoyment of hedonic experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research, 43*, 386–394.
- Ramanathan, S., & McGill, A. L. (2007). Consuming with others: Social influences on moment-to-moment and retrospective evaluations of an experience. *Journal of Consumer Research, 34*, 506–523.
- Ratner, R. K., Kahn, B. E., & Kahneman, D. (1999). Choosing less-preferred experiences for the sake of variety. *Journal of Consumer Research, 26*, 1–15.
- Tepper Tian, K., Bearden, W. O., & Hunter, G. L. (2001). Consumers' need for uniqueness: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Consumer Research, 28*, 50–66.
- Tepper Tian, K., & McKenzie, K. (2001). The long-term predictive validity of the consumers' need for uniqueness scale. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 10*, 171–193.
- Van Boven, L., & Ashworth, L. (2007). Looking forward, looking back: Anticipation is more evocative than retrospection. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 136*, 289–300.
- Wilson, T. D., Centerbar, D. B., Kermer, D. A., & Gilbert, D. T. (2005). The pleasures of uncertainty: Prolonging positive moods in ways people do not anticipate. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88*, 5–21.
- Wilson, T. D., & Gilbert, D. T. (2008). Explaining away: A model of affective adaptation. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 3*, 370–386.
- Zauberman, G., Ratner, R. K., & Kim, B. K. (2009). Memories as assets: Strategic memory protection in choice over time. *Journal of Consumer Research, 35*, 715–728.
- Zhao, X., Lynch, J. G., Jr., & Chen, Q. (2010). Reconsidering Baron and Kenny: Myths and truths about mediation analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research, 37*(2), 197–206.