



# Purchasing Happiness; It's Written All Over Your Face

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## Introduction

- ❖ Experiential Advantage: Discretionary income spent on experiential purchases, such as concerts and dining, have been shown to bring people more enduring happiness than material purchases, such as clothing and jewelry (Carter & Gilovich, 2014; Kumar, Killingsworth, & Gilovich, 2014).
- ❖ Self-reports of happiness, much like self-assessments of other valued characteristics, are susceptible to self-enhancing distortions (Wojcik, 2015).
- ❖ Facial behaviours appear to reliably indicate the valence of a person's emotional state (Russell, 1994).
- ❖ Facial Electromyography (fEMG) can measure facial activity too subtle to observe visually and may also be able to index aspects of emotional experiences that may not be reflected in self-reports (Johnson, Waugh, & Fredrickson, 2010)
- ❖ The goal of this study is to assess behavioral methods for positive affect (language, video, facial behavior) not used before to investigate convergence of the experiential advantage.



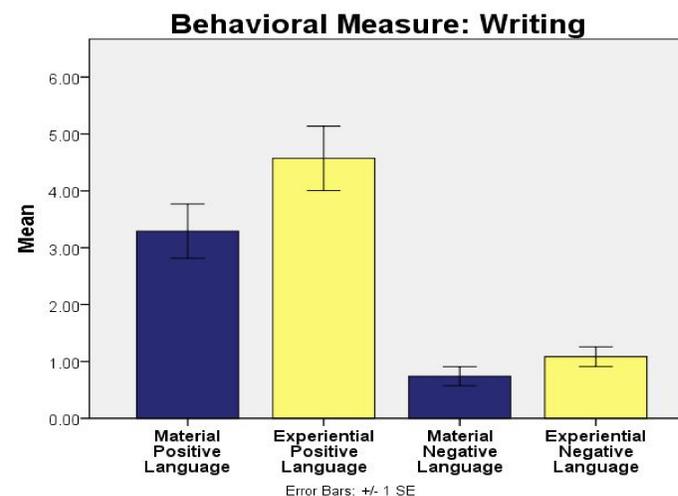
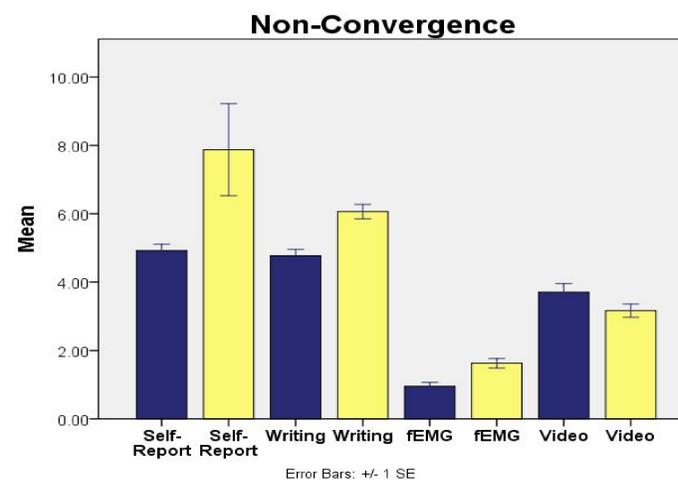
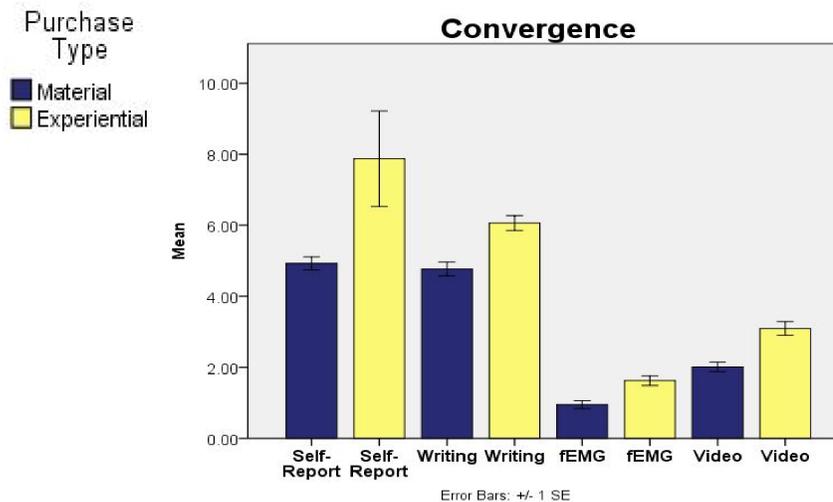
## Hypotheses

- ❖ Four measures will converge to show greater happiness with an experiential purchase over a material purchase.
- ❖ Self-report; Participants will indicate being happier with their experiential purchase.
- ❖ Behavioral (Writing); Language analysis of writing will evidence more positive language when describing the experiential purchase.
- ❖ Behavioral (Video); Judges coding will evidence more positive affect facial expressivity when participants are talking about their experiential purchase.
- ❖ Behavioral (fEMG): Facial muscle activation of smiling will be expressed more when participants relive (imagine) their experiential purchase.

## Methods

- SFSU Undergraduate Psychology Students.
  - Within-subjects design.
  - ❖ Write a vivid and descriptive narrative about the best material and experiential purchase in the last three months.
  - ❖ Record a video describing your favorite aspect of these two purchases.
  - ❖ Read and vividly relive these two memories.
- Measures:
- 1) Self-report
  - 2) Language
  - 3) Judges rating
  - 4) Facial muscle activation

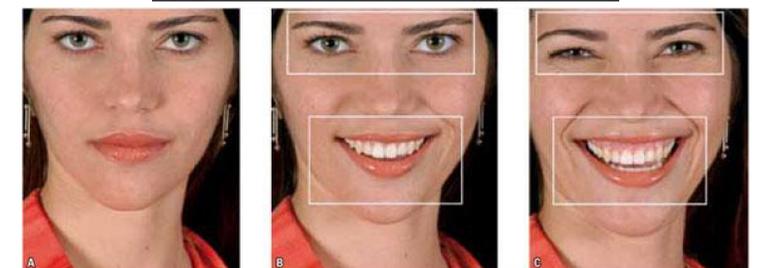
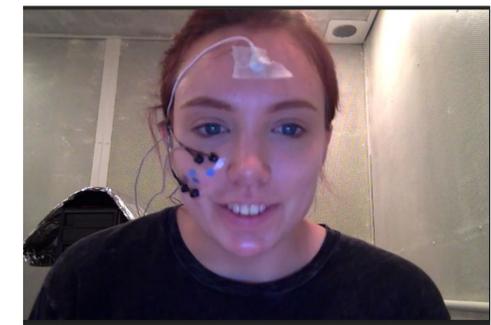
## Results



- Behavioral Measure (Writing):
- ❖ Participants used more positive language when writing about a prior experiential purchase ( $M = 4.57, SD = 1.79$ ) than a prior material purchase ( $M = 3.29, SD = 1.51$ ),  $t(9) = 2.15, p = .06$ . This difference is marginally significant.

## Discussion

- ❖ Measurements across a variety of methods (e.g. subjective, behavioral and physiological) is necessary to understanding happiness as a multi-faceted construct.
- ❖ Convergence: If the experiential advantage exists, support for this effect should be evidenced outside of subjective self-report measures.
- ❖ Non-Convergence: Behavioral measures supporting a material advantage may reflect the tendency toward self-enhancement bias and/or a beneficial consequences to material purchases.



## Future Directions

- ❖ Experiential products present a third category to investigate with behavioral methods.
- ❖ The use of physiological measures (e.g. EEG, GSR, HRV, fEMG) are invaluable tools in helping to understand the body's response to different types of purchases.
- ❖ Investigate self-enhancement tendencies as a false presentation or potentially adaptive (i.e. facilitating psychological adjustment).

## References

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