Seize the Day! Encouraging Indulgence for the Hyperopic Consumer

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This article explores the phenomenon of "hyperopia," or an aversion to indulgence, as introduced by Kivetz and Keinan (2006) and Kivetz and Simonson (2002). We first develop a measure to capture hyperopia as an individual difference. Three empirical studies use this measure to demonstrate that hyperopia and high self-control are both conceptually and empirically distinct. Further, we show that altering the level at which an action or item is construed can make an indulgent goal or luxury product more appealing to the high hyperopia consumer by influencing its value in terms of an attractive long-term outcome.

Spending on luxury goods comes quite easily to many consumers. As a reflection of our general fluency with indulgence, the luxury market in the United States alone generated over $445 billion in sales in 2005 (Mintel 2005). However, recent research also suggests that consumers can sometimes show strong resistance to indulgence, displaying what has been called "hyperopic" behavior. In contrast to our usual pursuit of luxury, consumers exhibiting hyperopic behavior express a marked aversion to indulgence. As a result, these consumers experience profound negative effects on life satisfaction (Kivetz and Keinan 2006). In a society in which we seem to spend less time developing meaningful relationships and struggle to disengage ourselves from work, research regarding such hyperopic behavior has been heralded by the popular press for its far-reaching implications (Thompson 2006). In addition to possibly undermining their own happiness (Kivetz and Keinan 2006), hyperopic consumers constitute a substantial barrier for luxury goods marketers (Kivetz and Simonson 2002).

Importantly, hyperopic behavior is not likely to be restricted only to a narrow segment of society or extreme cases of indulgence. Rather, recent research suggests that some degree of "tightwaddedness," or underspending, may exist across a wide range of consumers (Rick, Cryder, and Loewenstein 2008). Also, given that luxury determinations are subjective (Kivetz and Simonson 2002), an inability to indulge may affect the purchase of a wide range of consumer goods, from name brand food products, which are seen as luxuries by those in low income groups (as seen in proprietary data from Spectra Suite, provided by AC Nielsen), to high-end automobiles, which are perceived as luxuries by a broad segment of the population. Therefore, understanding the nature, prevalence, and moderators of hyperopic tendencies may be important for both consumer well-being and marketer success.

In the present research, we conceptualize hyperopia as an individual difference. We first review extant research on hyperopia (Kivetz and Keinan 2006; Kivetz and Simonson 2002) and identify three key aspects of the construct. These three components form the basis of a simple measure developed to empirically capture individual-level hyperopia. We also highlight aspects of hyperopia that have been suggested but not empirically demonstrated in prior research. These suggestions are tested as part of our construct validation process. Furthermore, we explore the suggested relationship between hyperopia and self-control (Tangney, Baumeister, and Boone 2004). We argue that although the two traits share common focus and outcomes, they are in fact theoretically and empirically distinct. On the basis of this review, we then propose that construal level may act as a remedy for hyperopic tendencies, overcoming the high hyperopic consumer's aversion to luxury by increasing her focus on the possible long-term benefits of indulgent purchases or goals. Finally, we highlight a number of theoretically and substantively intriguing research questions raised by the present work.

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INSIDE HYPEROPIA: DEFINITION, MECHANISMS, AND REMEDIES

What Is Hyperopia?

Past research (Kivetz and Keinan 2006; Kivetz and Simonson 2002) characterizes behavior as hyperopic if it involves the choice of a restrictive or necessity option over an indulgent but potentially life-enriching choice. For example, a consumer might choose to study rather than go on a trip with friends over spring break or might use a windfall to pay bills rather than to provide himself or herself with personally rewarding experiences. This research provides empirical evidence for three major characteristics of hyperopia. First, and most obvious, hyperopia lowers a consumer's present likelihood of indulging. Individuals behaving hyperopically assume that short-term indulgence will undermine some long-term goal, and thus, it will be rejected without due consideration of its potential benefits. Second, hyperopic individuals acknowledge their difficulty with indulgence and therefore should be capable of reporting these tendencies (Kivetz and Simonson 2002). Kivetz and Simonson suggest that hyperopic behavior is quite common, stating that "a large segment of consumers . . . *perceive* themselves as having insufficient indulgence and seek ways to correct this imbalance in their lives" (200; italics added). To correct this perceived imbalance, a consumer must force himself to make indulgent purchases (Kivetz and Simonson 2002). Third, the hyperopic tendency to forgo indulgence can lead to retrospective regret and a sense of missing out on life (Kivetz and Keinan 2006). If consumers deny themselves an indulgence but feel no regret about their choice, their behavior may be characterized as simple abstention rather than hyperopia.

Generation of scale items will tap into these three distinct attributes of hyperopia. However, note that previous research has examined hyperopia primarily in terms of behaviors and long-term consequences of those behavioral patterns. Thus, the exact nature of hyperopia and its precise relationship to self-control warrant further exploration. We next identify three questions that are critical in advancing the study of hyperopia and validating our measure: (1) Does hyperopia operate simply by altering approach tendencies toward luxuries or by biasing perceptions of a given object as luxurious or indulgent? (2) Is hyperopia correctly identified as a preference for necessities, an aversion to luxuries, or both? (3) How are high self-control and hyperopia related?

Hyperopia and Product Perceptions. Hyperopia may first operate by altering the extent to which a given item is perceived to be luxurious. Clinical studies of compulsive behaviors demonstrate that an afflicted individual will consider a nonnormatively large number of items as part of their target avoidance category (Andreasen and Powers 1974). Similarly, recent research suggests that consumers' personality characteristics may influence their perception of products as luxuries or necessities (Poynor and Haws 2009). Since luxury products are interpreted as a threat to the hyperopic consumer's long-term goals, hyperopic consumers may be particularly sensitive to the possibility that a given item would be luxurious. As such, we anticipate the following:

H1: Consumers high in hyperopia will generally consider a given set of products as more luxurious than consumers low in hyperopia.

Hyperopia and Choice. The next unanswered question relates to hyperopic choices. Because choices in Kivetz and Simonson's (2002) work were dichotomous (luxury or necessity), it cannot clearly be seen whether hyperopic choices were driven by an aversion toward luxuries, as suggested in past conceptualizations, or simply by a strong preference for necessities, which generally prevails in the population (Giner-Sorolla 2001; Kivetz and Keinan 2006). As such, a valid measure of hyperopia should show that hyperopia is characterized by a higher-than-normal aversion toward indulgence goals or luxury products, above and beyond the common baseline priority on necessities. By demonstrating this key aspect of hyperopia, we can provide evidence supporting the suppositions of past research as well as provide further construct validation.

H2: When differences in individual perceptions of products as luxuries or necessities are controlled for, consumers high in hyperopia will demonstrate lower purchase intentions for luxuries than consumers low in hyperopia.

Hyperopia and Self-Control. Aside from the demonstrations described above, hyperopia has been defined as "overcontrol and excessive farsightedness" (Kivetz and Keinan 2006), as the "opposite form of self-control" (Kivetz and Simonson 2002), and as "reverse self-control" (Trope, Liberman, and Wakslak 2007). We argue that both theory and empirical evidence suggest that although the two are conceptually related, defining hyperopia simply in terms of excessive self-control may be inadequate at best and incorrect at worst.

There are two fundamental similarities between hyperopic and high self-control behavior. First, both hyperopia and self-control have been characterized as driven by a focus on long-term goals (Baumeister 2002; Fujita et al. 2006). For example, high self-control individuals have been shown to regulate their behavior in response to a (usually restrictive) long-term objective (e.g., weight loss). Second, both high self-control and hyperopic consumers tend to reject indulgence (Baumeister 2002; Hoch and Loewenstein 1991; Mukhopadhyay and Johar 2005). That is, both the high self-control and the hyperopic individual would be more likely to choose the fruit salad than the chocolate cake given a weight loss goal. In light of this similarity in focus and outcome, it is quite logical to assume that hyperopia coexists with high self-control.

However, empirical evidence does not firmly establish that hyperopic behavior exists exclusively with high self-

control. While Tangney et al.'s (2004) research acknowledges the potential for too much self-control, their results do not empirically support negative consequences at the high end of the self-control spectrum. Specifically, Tangney et al. tested for curvilinear effects of self-control in domains such as psychological adjustments, relationships, success, and so forth and found no evidence of negative long-term consequences of high self-control. Their results therefore support previous accounts suggesting that self-control failure stems from either underregulation or misregulation of one's behavior, but not from overregulation (Baumeister, Heatherton, and Tice 1994; Carver and Scheier 1981). Thus, evidence that hyperopia occurs as a result of too much self-control is lacking, despite the conceptual similarities between the two concepts.

Therefore, it becomes important to identify aspects of the two constructs that may cause divergent patterns of behavior. Differences between hyperopia and self-control can be identified with respect to both the prospective judgments consumers make regarding a goal or choice and their retrospective feelings about those choices. First, consider the ways in which hyperopic consumers will judge indulgences. Hyperopic consumers view any indulgence as a threat to long-term objectives. Therefore, they will struggle with indulgence either as a goal or as an acceptable component of goal pursuit (Kivetz and Keinan 2006). Importantly, this systematic rejection of indulgences fails to account for the possible positive outcomes of indulging or to anticipate potential long-term regrets. High self-control consumers, however, can adeptly incorporate some indulgence into their overall long-term goals, for example, by the allowance of some indulgences as components of the goal itself (Tangney et al. 2004) or as rewards along the way (Hoch and Loewenstein 1991). As such, the high self-control consumer should be perfectly capable of indulging, as long as the indulgence can be made consistent with long-term goals.

Second, self-control and hyperopia differ in the emotions that restrictive actions generate in retrospect. A key component of hyperopia is a sense of regret or missing out on past forgone indulgences (Kivetz and Keinan 2006). High self-control individuals, rather than seeing past restriction as regrettable, have been characterized as those who successfully balance short- and long-term options and are unlikely to report negative feelings such as life dissatisfaction or shame when evaluating past decisions (Tangney et al. 2004). That is, for high self-control consumers, it may be possible to restrict behavior without feeling regret in the long term. Thus, they may not rate their own sense of regret over missing out as particularly high and therefore fail to be truly "hyperopic."

Thus, though high self-control and hyperopia share some notable features, they also differ in important ways. Throughout our studies we collect data with respect to both hyperopia and self-control in order to examine their relationship and the differential patterns of behavior generated by each trait.

Construal Level as Hyperopia Remedy

One way of further improving conceptual clarity regarding hyperopia is to identify means by which it may be moderated. We argue that construal level may be effective in altering the behavior patterns associated with hyperopia. We also suggest that construal level operates differently for the high hyperopic as opposed to the high self-control consumer. Further, the present empirical investigations pursuing this moderation seek to provide explicit evidence that hyperopic consumers' aversion to luxury is driven by their focus on long-term goals, as argued by Kivetz and Keinan (2006) and Kivetz and Simonson (2002).

Construal theory states that individuals view near-future or more proximal events in concrete terms, based on feasibility considerations, whereas distant-future or less proximal events are viewed in more abstract terms, based on desirability considerations (Liberman and Trope 1998; for reviews, see Liberman, Trope, and Stephan [2007] and Trope et al. [2007]). How might construal level help the hyperopic consumer? We have argued that hyperopic consumers operate under the assumption that indulgence-related behaviors are of little worth, always perceiving them as detrimental to long-term goals (Kivetz and Keinan 2006). If a focus on long-term outcomes is a driving force in hyperopia, construing an indulgence goal or luxury item at a higher level should reduce the perceived difficulty of the goal by aligning it with positive long-term outcomes, reducing its aversiveness as a threat and increasing its attractiveness as a long-term gain. Thus, the hyperopic consumer's ability to pursue an indulgence goal successfully should be increased through the use of a high-level construal.

Interestingly, this prediction suggests that hyperopia, rather than being synonymous with high self-control, responds to construal level much as low self-control does. Fujita et al.'s (2006) results show that participants exposed to a high-level construal exercised greater self-control, as measured by decreased preferences for immediate outcomes, lower evaluations of temptations, and increased physical endurance, than those exposed to low-level construals. Because they argue that the relationship between high self-control and high-level construal is so intimate that the two are nearly inextricable, it may be possible to extrapolate from this research that construal-level manipulations provide needed assistance for some consumers but not for others. Specifically, because high self-control consumers are already adept at pursuing regulatory goals, high-level construals may not be of much help to them. By contrast, high-level construals should help low self-control consumers in their pursuit of goals by helping them connect those actions to the enduring values they already possess. Therefore, the effect of construal level may be more similar for low self-control consumers and hyperopic consumers than it would be for high self-control and high hyperopia consumers, further supporting the thesis that high hyperopia and high self-control are distinct. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: The effect of hyperopia on perceived indulgence goal difficulty will be moderated by the level at which the goal is construed. High-level construals of indulgence goals will decrease the perceived difficulty of these goals more for higher-hyperopia consumers than for low hyperopia consumers and relative to low-level construals.

Similarly, consider the hyperopic consumer's aversion to luxury products. As discussed above, hyperopic consumers may see the purchase of a luxury automobile as a threat to their long-term goal of financial security. High-level construal of the same product, however, may prompt high hyperopia consumers to redirect attention to the luxury purchase's ability to promote a long-term goal, for example, making a good long-term investment. Thus, the inconsistency between a luxury option and the hyperopic tendency of consumers is reduced, and the likelihood of choosing the luxury option increases. As Trope et al. (2007) observe, Kivetz and Simonson's (2002) results suggest this relationship, demonstrating that increased temporal distance strengthens the likelihood that consumers will precommit to a luxury over a necessity (i.e., they will sense and remedy their own hyperopic tendencies). We suggest that this higher level of abstraction allows the consumer to reframe the luxury as part of a larger-scale "life satisfaction," "financial well-being," or "just reward" goal. Formally, we propose the following hypotheses:

H4: The effect of hyperopia on purchase intentions for luxury products will be moderated by the level at which the product is construed. High-level construals of indulgence products will increase purchase likelihood more for high hyperopia than for low hyperopia consumers and relative to low-level construals.

H5: The increase in the likelihood of purchasing luxury products seen in hyperopic consumers will be mediated by the extent to which the high-level construal increases perceptions of the luxury product as a long-term gain.

In study 2, we manipulate individuals' construal of an indulgence goal and demonstrate the effect of construals on perceived indulgence goal difficulty for low and high hyperopia consumers as compared to low and high self-control consumers. In study 3 we manipulate the level at which luxury products are construed in advertising communications and directly demonstrate the importance of long-term goals to hyperopic consumers as the mediator of their attraction to luxury products.

MEASUREMENT DEVELOPMENT

In this section, we describe an abbreviated scale development process used to construct a valid and reliable measure of hyperopia. In addition, analysis of four separate samples distinguishes hyperopia's unique characteristics from those of self-control, establishes its association with related traits, shows its reliability over time, and suggests robustness across age groups and gender.

Sample 1

We began the measurement development process by generating a list of 11 items intended to measure hyperopia, taken from our conceptualization of hyperopia based on the work of Kivetz and Keinan (2006) and Kivetz and Simonson (2002). In a research session, 109 undergraduate students responded to the 11 hyperopia items as part of a larger battery of measures, including the self-control measure of Tangney et al. (2004).

An exploratory factor analysis of the hyperopia measures revealed a one-factor model fitting our 11 items. It was determined that six items (see the appendix), all with factor loadings of at least .65, would be retained to measure our focal construct. Coefficient alpha provided additional evidence of reliability at .86. These data suggested no relationship between our six-item scale level of hyperopia and one's general level of self-control as captured in the Tangney et al. (2004) measure ($r = .02$, NS). Further, an exploratory factor analysis on the six hyperopia items and the 13 self-control items revealed that the hyperopia items all loaded on one factor (loadings ranging from .51 to .78) whereas the 13 self-control items all loaded on a separate factor (loadings ranging from .43 to .73), suggesting that self-control and hyperopia may be distinct personality traits.

Samples 2a, 2b, and 2c

Three additional samples were then collected to demonstrate relationships between hyperopia and potentially related constructs and to validate the six-item scale's behavior outside the undergraduate population.

Discriminant Validity. Sample 2a included 164 respondents who completed the six-item hyperopia scale, the 13-item Tangney et al. (2004) general self-control scale ($\alpha = .82$), the eight-item frugality scale (Lastovicka et al. 1999; $\alpha = .79$), the nine-item impulsive buying scale (Rook and Fisher 1995; $\alpha = .79$), the six-item version of the materialism scale (Richins 2004; $\alpha = .79$), and the four-item tightwad-spendthrift scale (Rick et al. 2008).

In sample 2a, hyperopia was again uncorrelated with the general measure of self-control ($r = -.11$, NS). However, the measure of hyperopia did demonstrate theoretically plausible relationships with other traits: more hyperopic consumers are generally also more frugal ($r = .17$, $p < .05$), less likely to buy impulsively ($r = -.21$, $p < .01$), less materialistic ($r = -.20$, $p < .01$), and more likely to be tightwads ($r = .22$, $p < .01$) than consumers lower in hyperopia. These modest correlations, while consistent with expectations regarding hyperopia, satisfy the requirements for discriminant validity set forth by Fornell and Larcker (1981). In addition, an exploratory factor analysis of all items collected revealed that the six hyperopia items loaded together

and that the set of six items loaded on a factor separate from that of any of the other measures. A series of confirmatory factor analyses between hyperopia and self-control, frugality, and impulsiveness revealed substantially better fit for each of the two-factor models than for the one-factor models including hyperopia and each of the related constructs, as reflected in the decreased chi-square values (self-control: $\Delta\chi^2 = 230.41$; frugality: $\Delta\chi^2 = 208.22$; impulsiveness: $\Delta\chi^2 = 197.58$, $p < .01$; Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Thus, these analyses demonstrate that the items measure our intended hyperopia construct and not another related construct.

In sample 2b, 280 participants at Texas A&M University completed a series of measurements including our six-item hyperopia scale, the general self-control scale (Tangney et al. 2004), and an additional impulsivity measure (Puri 1996). In this sample, we found a small but significant negative correlation between hyperopia and self-control ($r = -.17$, $p < .01$). This negative correlation suggests that high levels of hyperopia may exist at low levels of self-control, a result still not consistent with the characterization of hyperopia as "overcontrol." The Puri impulsiveness measure was not correlated with our measure of hyperopia ($r = .08$, NS) but was rather strongly correlated with general self-control ($r = .46$, $p < .001$). We then conducted a factor analysis, as with sample 2a. This analysis reveals that the six hyperopia items loaded together and on a factor separate from both self-control and impulsiveness. Again, pairs of confirmatory factor analyses demonstrated distinctions between hyperopia and the other constructs.

We also wanted to ensure that the inconsistent relationship between the Tangney et al. (2004) measure and the hyperopia measure was not due to a spurious failure of the Tangney scale. In order to show that the Tangney scale did, in fact, reliably predict construct-associated outcomes, we collected two additional measures (used by Tangney et al.) from the study 2b participants that had previously demonstrated theoretical and empirical links with general self-control but should not be related or as closely related to hyperopia: Saucier's (1994) eight-item measure of conscientiousness and grade point average (GPA). Results demonstrate the expected correlations with self-control (conscientiousness: $r = .44$, $p < .001$; GPA: $r = .21$, $p < .001$) but weaker or null relationships with hyperopia (conscientiousness: $r = .15$, $p < .05$; GPA: $r = .006$, NS). In addition, the correlations with self-control compare favorably with Tangney et al.'s (2004) results in which conscientiousness and GPA were correlated at .48 and from .15 to .39, respectively, with self-control.

Test-Retest Reliability. Participants from sample 2a were contacted by e-mail 2 weeks after initial measure collection and asked to complete the hyperopia items a second time. Thirty-five participants completed the second set of hyperopia measures ($\alpha = .90$). The first and second measures were significantly correlated ($r = .80$, $p < .001$), providing evidence of test-retest reliability.

Adult Validation Sample. Sample 2c was gathered from 41 students in the MBA program at the University of South Carolina in order to verify previous relationships using a different group of consumers. Ages ranged from 23 to 47 years with a mean of 32 years, and 65% of the respondents were male. This sample allowed us to see that neither gender ($F(1, 38) = .04$, $p > .8$) nor age ($F(1, 38) = .29$, $p > .5$) was a significant predictor of hyperopia. As in samples 1 and 2b, there was a nonsignificant correlation between hyperopia and self-control ($r = .04$, $p > .7$). Consistent with sample 2a, the Puri (1996) impulsiveness measure was not correlated with our measure of hyperopia ($r = -.04$, $p > .7$) but was again strongly correlated with general self-control ($r = .61$, $p < .0001$).

STUDY 1: PRODUCT RATINGS AND PURCHASE LIKELIHOODS

Study 1 applies the validated scale in order to test hypotheses 1 and 2 while also providing additional evidence regarding conceptual differences between self-control and hyperopia. Specifically, we demonstrate that consumers' hyperopic tendencies operate on a perceptual level, affecting overall ratings of products as either more "necessity" or more "luxury" (Kivetz and Simonson 2002). The same effects are not created by self-control levels. In addition, we further validate our conceptualization and measure by showing that while hyperopia measures are negatively related to purchase intentions of luxury products, differences in hyperopia do not affect purchase intentions of necessities.

Method

A total of 159 undergraduate participants completed this study as part of a laboratory session. Subjects first responded to the six-item hyperopia scale as well as the 13-item general self-control measure of Tangney et al. (2004). After several filler tasks, participants were presented with a list of 20 common products (listed below). In counterbalanced order, participants completed two tasks related to the list of products. One task involved rating the products on a 1–7-point scale ranging from "total necessity" to "total luxury"; the other task involved purchase intentions for each product on a 1–7-point scale ranging from "very unlikely to buy" to "very likely to buy."

Results

We first tested hypothesis 1, which states that an individual's level of hyperopia will predict a tendency to rate products as more luxury rather than necessity. To do so, we created a summed index of all 20 products based on their necessity-luxury ratings. Next, a regression analysis including both hyperopia and self-control as continuous predictors of the summed necessity-luxury perceptions revealed that consumers higher in hyperopia do in fact generally rate products as more luxury than necessity ($F(2, 157) = 5.37$, $p < .05$, $b = 2.70$); self-control was not related to differences in luxury ratings ($F(2, 157) = .31$, $p > .5$, $b = .73$).

In addition, we note that hyperopia and self-control were uncorrelated in this sample ($r = -.11$, NS).

Hypothesis 2 predicts that differential purchase likelihoods would be evidenced for luxuries based on hyperopia. To test this hypothesis, it was first necessary to determine whether the products to which participants responded were objectively classified as luxuries or necessities. Thus, we subjected the luxury rating data to a factor analysis. Including the set of 20 products in an exploratory factor analysis using a varimax rotation yielded two main factors. These two factors conceptually and statistically grouped together into a set of luxuries (massage, designer jeans, MP3 player, trip to Mexico, restaurant dinner, pizza, car stereo, concert, movie, and downloaded song) and necessities (athletic shoes, groceries, laptop, interview suit, backpack, haircut, batteries, textbook, oil change, and cell phone). Each product had a factor loading of .45 or higher on the respective product category factor. Additional support for these classifications was revealed in the significant differences in average luxury ratings across the two constructed 10-item categories ($M_{lux} = 5.20$, $M_{nec} = 2.49$; $t(158) = 29.90$, $p < .001$). Using these classifications, we created a necessity and a luxury purchase likelihood index by summing across the purchase likelihoods for the 10 products in each set of items.

To test hypothesis 2, separate regression analyses were conducted for the two purchase likelihood measures. As predicted, the hyperopia measure was a significant predictor of purchase likelihood for luxury products ($F(1, 158) = 12.86$, $p < .001$, $b = -4.33$) such that consumers higher in hyperopia were less likely to purchase the luxury products. A second regression analysis included each individual's overall luxury perceptions of the total group of 20 products in order to determine if the effect of purchase likelihood for luxuries still emerged after controlling for overall differences in luxury perceptions. Indeed, both predictors were significant in determining purchase likelihood for luxuries (hyperopia: $F(1, 156) = 8.62$, $p < .01$, $b = -3.46$; luxury perceptions: $F(1, 156) = 15.72$, $p < .001$, $b = -.32$), demonstrating the significance of differences based on hyperopia above and beyond differences in luxury perceptions. By contrast, the self-control measure was not a significant predictor of purchase likelihood for luxuries ($F(1, 156) = .19$, NS, $b = -.03$), indicating that high self-control consumers do not uniformly reject the incorporation of luxury into their self-control plans.

Note, however, that there is no reason for purchase intentions for necessity products to vary on the basis of one's level of hyperopia. With the purchase likelihood index for the set of 10 necessity products, similar regression analyses were conducted and revealed that hyperopia did not predict the purchase intentions of necessities either with or without the luxury perception index included in the model. Specifically, using just the hyperopia measure resulted in a nonsignificant relationship ($F(1, 158) = .17$, $p > .2$, $b = -.82$). Again, the significant effect of individuals' luxury perceptions as a whole did predict purchase likelihood of necessities when included in the model, but the effect of hyperopia remained nonsignificant (hyperopia: $F(1, 156) = .17$, $p > .6$, $b = -.31$; luxury perceptions: $F(1, 156) = 12.56$, $p < .001$, $b = -.18$). As such, hyperopia predicted the likelihood that consumers would purchase luxuries but not necessities.

Discussion

This study first suggests that hyperopia acts on a fundamental, perceptual level. Consumers demonstrating greater hyperopia generally perceive a given set of products more as luxuries than as necessities. High self-control, by contrast, does not generate the same perceptual effect. As such, this study provides further validation for our measure, such that hyperopia can be seen to conform to basic predictions offered by its characterization in extant literature. In addition, these findings provide some evidence that, beyond its nonsignificant trait correlation, hyperopia generates effects distinct from high levels of self-control. Second, even when one takes into account the differential perceptions of luxury and necessity expressed by participants, more hyperopic consumers are also less likely to purchase luxuries than less hyperopic consumers, as suggested by prior research. Importantly, though, purchase likelihood for necessities does not differ systematically on the basis of one's level of hyperopia, providing further empirical validation for our measure.

STUDY 2: FACILITATING THE PURSUIT OF INDULGENCE GOALS

In study 2, we use the measure of hyperopia in conjunction with a manipulation of the level at which individuals construe an indulgence goal in order to test hypothesis 3. A key characteristic of hyperopia is one's recognition that pursuit of indulgence goals will be difficult for them (Kivetz and Keinan 2006; Kivetz and Simonson 2002). Thus, we predict that high hyperopia consumers who construe an indulgence goal at a high level will perceive that goal as easier to obtain than high hyperopia consumers who construe the same goal at a lower level.

Method

Participants were 79 undergraduates, participating in lab sessions in groups of 15–20. First, all participants were instructed to consider an indulgence goal:

> Imagine that you have decided that although your financial future is important, you really should enjoy life more by worrying less about how you are spending your money or sticking to a particular budget, and instead focus more on the overall enjoyment of your life.
>
> Please think about the financial objective stated above as you complete the rest of this survey.

Immediately following these instructions, the level of construal at which participants were to consider the indulgence

goal was manipulated using a laddering technique based on Fujita et al. (2006). For the low-level construal condition, participants were asked to consider how they might pursue the goal. The page consisted of the how instructions and a series of four descending boxes in which to explain how they would pursue the goal. Participants filled in each lower box with descriptions of more concrete and subordinate considerations related to enacting the statement written in the prior box. In the high-level condition, box 1 was at the bottom and participants moved upward to box 4, explaining why they might want to pursue the indulgence goal. In each successive box, they were asked to abstract to a more superordinate level, that is, a high level of construal. This procedure was intended to help participants connect the indulgence goal to their enduring values, as is generally expected in high-level construals.

Following the construal-level manipulation, participants completed the dependent measures. Specifically, two items were used to assess the perceived ease of achieving the indulgence goal (i.e., "not at all difficult to achieve" to "extremely difficult to achieve," 1–9 scale, reverse coded; and "not at all easy to achieve" to "extremely easy to achieve," 1–9 scale). These items formed an ease index ($r = .65$), which will serve as the primary dependent measure. This measure captures that, as pointed out by Kivetz and Keinan's (2006) and Kivetz and Simonson's (2002) work, hyperopic consumers are aware of their own difficulty in pursuing indulgences. Facilitation of an indulgence goal should be reflected in high scores on the ease index. After approximately 10 minutes of distracter tasks, participants completed individual difference measures using a computer program. Measures collected included the six-item hyperopia measure and Tangney et al.'s (2004) self-control measure ($\alpha = .82$).

Results

We first reviewed the responses to the laddering technique manipulation of construal level. If participants correctly interpreted the instructions and completed at least three out of the four boxes accordingly, they were coded as successful manipulations. Six participants were removed from the sample, resulting in a final sample size of 73. We then sought further evidence for the validity and reliability of our hyperopia construct. The six-item measure was of acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .85$) and was averaged to create a hyperopia score for each participant. Also, as in study 1, we noted that hyperopia was unrelated to general self-control ($r = -.04$, NS).

To understand how one's level of construal and hyperopia interact in determining responses to an indulgence goal, we conducted a regression with the construal condition, the hyperopia measure, and the interaction of the two as continuous predictors of ease of indulgence goal attainment. As expected, the interaction term was significant ($F(1, 71) = 4.92$, $p < .05$, $b = .78$). The effect of construal level was not significant ($F(1, 71) = .91$, $p > .3$), and the effect of hyperopia was marginally significant ($F(1, 71) = 3.73$, $p = .06$, $b = -.68$), such that individuals with greater hyperopia found the indulgence goal slightly more difficult than lower-hyperopia participants. In order to interpret the interaction, we followed procedures recommended by Aiken and West (1991) and Irwin and McClelland (2003). Hyperopia was mean centered, and values of the dependent measure were plotted at +1 and −1 standard deviation from their mean values, as shown in figure 1. Further analysis indicates that when consumers in the high-level construal condition were also high in hyperopia, their perceptions of the ease of achieving an indulgence goal were significantly increased relative to high hyperopia consumers who construed the goal at a low level, supporting hypothesis 3 ($F(1, 71) = 5.19$, $p < .03$). For consumers at the mean or lower in hyperopia, construing the indulgence goal at a higher level did not have a significant impact on the perceived difficulty of pursuing the goal (mean: $F(1, 71) = .92$, $p > .3$; low: $F(1, 71) = .74$, $p > .3$).

Using the self-control measure and construal level as predictors of perceived goal ease produced a different pattern of results. The effects of each factor taken separately were marginally significant, such that both greater self-control and higher-level construals made the goal seem slightly easier (self-control: $F(1, 71) = 2.60$, $p = .1$, $b = .76$; construal level: $F(1, 71) = 2.59$, $p = .1$, $b = .60$). More important, the interaction term was significant ($F(1, 71) = 5.17$, $p = .03$, $b = -1.07$), as shown in figure 2. Probing of this interaction demonstrates that high-level construal was of most benefit to low and moderate self-control consumers, who found the goal easier when it had been construed at a high level (low self-control: $F(1, 69) = 6.97$, $p = .01$; high self-control: $F(1, 69) = 6.76$, $p = .01$). Meanwhile, high

FIGURE 1

STUDY 2: EASE OF INDULGENCE GOAL AS PREDICTED BY HYPEROPIA LEVEL AND CONSTRUAL

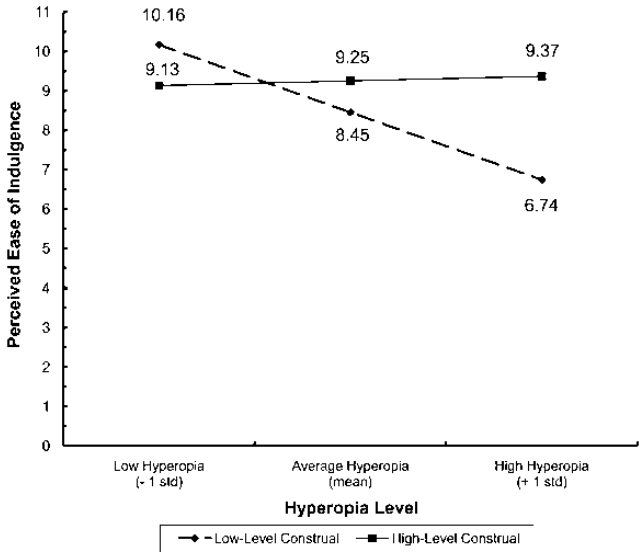
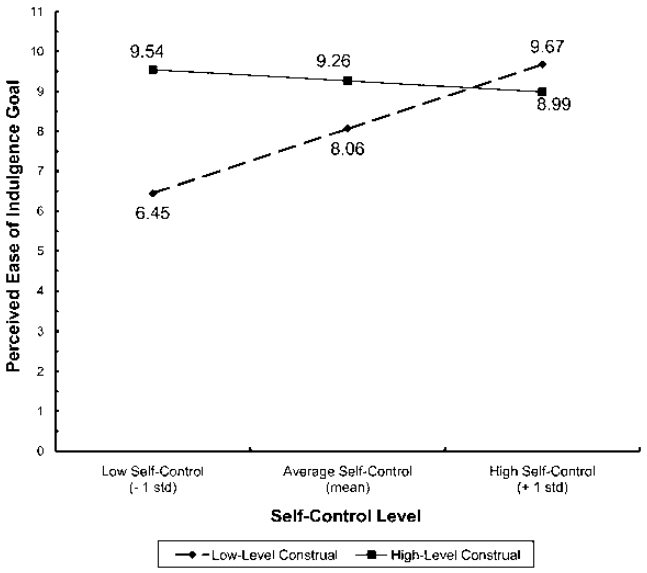


FIGURE 2

STUDY 2: EASE OF INDULGENCE GOAL AS PREDICTED BY SELF-CONTROL LEVELS AND CONSTRUAL



self-control consumers found the goal relatively easy, regardless of construal level ($F(1, 69) = .34$, $p > .5$).

Discussion

Study 2 demonstrates that construal level can moderate the high hyperopia consumer's perceptions of an indulgence goal. Our results first further validate our scale by showing that more hyperopic consumers feel that indulgence goals will generally be more difficult (Kivetz and Keinan 2006). Second, they suggest that externally cued construals of indulgence goals may moderate the hyperopic's tendency to feel disempowered with regard to indulgence goals. The manipulation undertaken by participants forced them to connect the indulgence goals to higher-level objectives and, thus, made the goal seem less insurmountable. Further analysis reveals that the effect of construal level increases with hyperopia, such that it is primarily the high hyperopia consumer who benefits from a high-level construal of an indulgence goal.

This study also demonstrates the effects of high self-control and high construal level as distinct from those of high hyperopia and high construal level. Overall, results support findings from Fujita et al. (2006) but also suggest that their findings may not be equal across individuals: low self-control consumers benefit the most from high-level construal prompting, whereas high self-control consumers may not need such an intervention to make them feel that an indulgence goal is achievable. Rather, high self-control consumers appear aware that they possess the regulatory tools to pursue this type of regulatory goal successfully and do not express difficulty with the goal regardless of whether they have been prompted to connect it to higher-level objectives. Once again, self-control and hyperopia were uncorrelated on an individual level.

Though not focal in the present work, this study also provides the intriguing finding that low-level construal made the indulgence goal seem more difficult to low self-control consumers than high-level construal. This finding may reflect the fact that low self-control consumers are not highly adept at developing implementation intentions similar to those required by the low-level construal manipulation (Poynor and Haws 2009). The cognitive difficulty associated with this task may have been used as metacognitive input into goal evaluation, making indulgence pursuit seem more onerous than it would in the absence of instructions to create an implementation plan (Schwartz 2004). Alternatively, it may be that highlighting the actual actions associated with an indulgence goal raises feelings of guilt rather than justification for low self-control individuals who have in the past experienced negative consequences of indulgence. However, as these explanations remain to be tested and the robustness of this surprising finding established, we hesitate to overstate the importance of the result. Nonetheless, if replicated, this result may make the somewhat counterintuitive suggestion that asking low self-control consumers how they plan to binge may make it seem harder for them to do so.

STUDY 3: INDULGENT PURCHASES AS INVESTMENTS

We next turn to the question of whether marketers can make luxury products more attractive to the hyperopic consumer by externally manipulating the manner in which the product is construed in marketing communications. Study 3 uses advertisements as a means of externally changing the construal level of an indulgent product. Use of advertisements allows us to test whether moderation of hyperopic tendencies could be achieved by framing a luxury product at a high level of construal. If high hyperopia consumers can be encouraged to view the luxury product as a good investment (i.e., as a long-term gain), it should become less of a threat to their long-term outcomes and therefore mediate purchase likelihood, consistent with hypotheses 4 and 5.

Method

Participants and Procedure. A total of 54 undergraduate students participated in study 3 as part of a session involving numerous other unrelated studies. The study followed a hyperopia × construal level (high or low) between-subjects design, where hyperopia was measured and construal level was manipulated.

Participants first completed the six-item hyperopia measure and the Tangney et al. (2004) self-control measure. After completion of filler tasks taking approximately 30 minutes, participants were randomly given an advertisement conforming to either high- or low-level construal based primarily on the distinction between abstract and concrete prod-

uct descriptions (Fujita et al. 2006). Participants were told that companies were pretesting these ads and that they should provide their opinions regarding the ads and products depicted. In the high-level construal condition, participants read the following ad copy, based closely on actual text used on the BMW Web site and pretested to appropriately manipulate high- and low-level construal:

> BMW750Li: The Luxury You Deserve
>
> Enjoy life to the fullest in this luxurious sedan. The pleasure derived from taking life's curves in the driver's seat of the 750Li will make the investment worthwhile. When you start with the ultimate driver's luxury car, and then add more comfort, what you get is the BMW 750Li. On top of the excellent performance and luxury found in the 750i, the 750Li offers extravagance for both you and your passengers. The enjoyment provided to the driver of such an extraordinary mode of transport is practically immeasurable.

In the low-level construal condition, participants read the following:

> BMW750Li: Loaded with Features
>
> This automobile provides a variety of features designed for your safety and comfort. When you start with the ultimate driver's luxury car, and then add over five more inches to the wheelbase, what you get is the BMW 750Li—and even more reason to remain behind the wheel as long as possible. On top of the excellent performance and luxury found in the 750i, with a 123.1 inch wheelbase, the 750Li offers more legroom for rear-seat occupants, standard 20-way comfort front seats, and chrome roof moldings.

Ad copy was presented with an identical picture of the car in both ad versions. After reviewing the advertisement, participants completed ad and product assessment items as well as the dependent measures.

Measures. In order to ensure that the advertisements used did not differ in overall attractiveness, participants first assessed them by responding to a series of semantic differential questions beginning with the phrase "The ad was . . ." and followed by scales anchored with (1) unattractive to (9) attractive, (1) not believable to (9) believable, and (1) not informative to (9) informative. In order to ensure that the product itself was seen as equally attractive, participants also completed a series of semantic differential items beginning with the phrase "The product featured in the ad was . . ." and followed by scales anchored as (1) unappealing to (9) appealing and (1) unfamiliar to (9) familiar.

Dependent measures were then collected, embedded with a number of distracter questions such as "I am familiar with the brand of the featured product" and "The product in the ad is one other people would notice." Purchase likelihood was measured first, as participants responded to the item "I am likely to buy the product featured" using a 7-point Likert-type scale anchored at (1) strongly disagree, (4) neutral, and (7) strongly agree. The extent to which the ad generated a perception of the product as a long-term investment was determined by asking the extent to which "This product is a good long-term investment," using the same 7-point Likert-type scale.

Results

Measurement and Manipulation Checks. As in prior studies, the hyperopia measure demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .90$), and an average hyperopia score was created for each participant. Also as in prior studies, the hyperopia average score did not show a significant association with the Tangney et al. (2004) general self-control measure ($r = -.08$, $p > .5$). Manipulation checks revealed that the ads were equivalent in attractiveness (low vs. high, 6.18 vs. 6.82; $F(1, 54) = .27$, $p > .6$), believability (6.07 vs. 5.48; $F(1, 54) = 1.68$, $p > .2$), informativeness (5.03 vs. 4.62; $F(1, 54) = .41$, $p > .5$), the extent to which they displayed the product as appealing (6.26 vs. 6.59; $F(1, 54) = .27$, $p > .6$), and the level of product familiarity participants felt (6.04 vs. 6.03; $F(1, 54) = .00$, $p > .9$).

Investment Assessments. A regression analysis was conducted using the extent to which individuals saw the luxury product as a good investment as the dependent measure and construal condition, individual-level hyperopia, and their interaction as predictors, again following procedures recommended by Aiken and West (1991) and Irwin and McClelland (2003). Hyperopia responses were mean centered, and construal condition was contrast coded as -1 (low) or 1 (high). Neither the main effect of construal level ($F(1, 50) = .12$, $p > .7$) nor hyperopia ($F(1, 50) = 2.01$, $p > .15$) was a significant predictor of the investment potential of the car. However, as predicted, a significant interaction of construal condition and hyperopia emerged ($F(1, 50) = 8.29$, $p < .01$, $b = .46$) such that the high-level construal ad prompted high hyperopia participants to perceive the luxury product as a good investment more than the low-level construal ad and that, in fact, the pattern of the effect of construal level was reversed for the lower-hyperopia participants. Plotting the values of perception of the luxury car as a good investment at +1 and -1 standard deviation from the mean value of hyperopia yields the depiction shown in figure 3. The interaction of self-control and construal level, by contrast, was not significant ($F(1, 50) = .04$, $p > .8$).

Purchase Likelihood. A similar analysis was also conducted using purchase likelihood as the dependent measure. Again, neither the main effect of construal level ($F(1, 50) = .28$, $p > .6$) nor hyperopia ($F(1, 50) = .01$, $p > .9$) was significant. As predicted by hypothesis 3, though, the construal level × hyperopia interaction was again significant ($F(1, 50) = 5.01$, $p < .05$, $b = .39$) such that high-level construals increased high hyperopia consumers' purchase likelihood for the luxury car. Further analysis revealed that high hyperopia individuals reading about the product construed at a high level showed a significantly higher pur-

FIGURE 3

STUDY 3: INTERACTION OF CONSTRUAL LEVEL AND HYPEROPIA ON PERCEPTION OF LUXURY PRODUCT AS A GOOD INVESTMENT

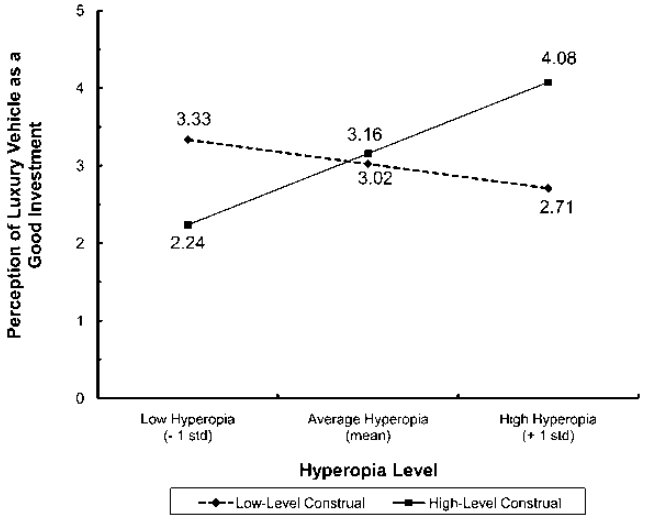
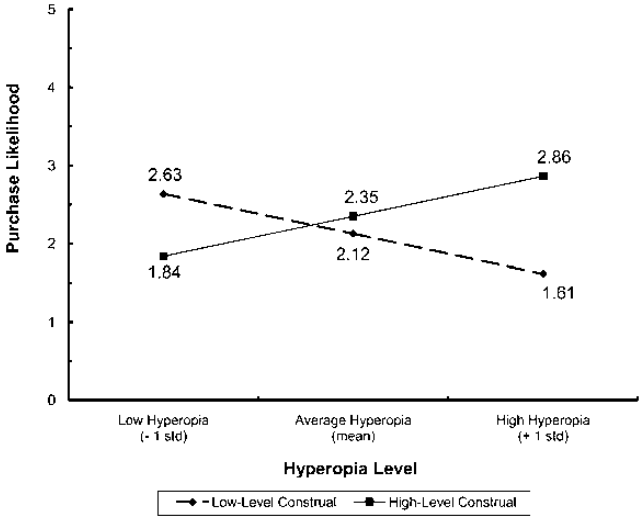


FIGURE 4

STUDY 3: INTERACTION OF CONSTRUAL LEVEL AND HYPEROPIA ON PURCHASE LIKELIHOOD FOR LUXURY PRODUCT



chase likelihood than high hyperopia individuals who read about the product construed at a low level, supporting hypothesis 3 ($F(1, 50) = 3.89$, $p < .05$). For consumers at the mean or lower in hyperopia, however, construing the indulgent product at a higher level had nonsignificant impacts on their purchase likelihood (mean: $F(1, 50) = 2.46$, $p > .1$; low: $F(1, 50) = 1.69$, $p > .2$). See figure 4 for details.

Mediation Analysis. A mediation analysis was conducted to see if the extent to which individuals perceived the luxury product as a good investment explained their purchase intentions, as predicted by hypothesis 4. As expected, the two measures were related but distinct ($r = .37$, $p < .01$). In addition to the direct effect of the hyperopia × construal level interaction on purchase intentions reported above, a simple regression confirms that the mediator (perception of the item as a good investment) was a significant predictor of purchase likelihood ($F(1, 54) = 9.85$, $p < .01$). When individuals' perception of the car as a good investment was included in the model predicting purchase likelihood, the effect of the interaction of construal level and hyperopia dropped to nonsignificance ($F(1, 49) = 1.43$, $p > .2$), but the effect of the perception of the investment quality of the car remained significant ($F(1, 49) = 7.03$, $p < .01$; Baron and Kenny 1986). A Sobel test confirmed the significance of the mediation (Sobel test statistic = 1.91, $p < .05$).

Discussion

Study 3 enriches our understanding of the way in which construal level may interact with hyperopic tendencies to alter behaviors. We argued that hyperopic consumers' strong aversion to luxury products could be overcome by presenting luxury goods in terms of their higher-level benefits. In such cases, hyperopic consumers are prompted to perceive the indulgence as an investment that has implications for long-term financial health rather than simply as a threat to their long-term financial prosperity. To the extent that this shift is effected, the consumer exhibits a higher purchase likelihood for the product than he would had it been presented in terms of lower-level, more concrete benefits. Importantly, the effect of high-level construal is moderated by individual-level hyperopia. That is, purchase intentions of low and moderate hyperopic consumers do not gain substantially from such framing, as shown in figure 3.

Thus, study 3 contributes both to our understanding of hyperopia and to the growing literature on the multifaceted nature of construal-level theory (Kardes, Cronley, and Kim 2006; Trope et al. 2007). By using different levels of construal, marketers are able to change perceptions of products' attractiveness, thereby reducing the aversion of hyperopic consumers. This study also points out that construal level, though powerful, may yield divergent effects with regard to the same purchase situation depending on an individual's underlying personality traits.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Summary and Contributions

The present work demonstrates that hyperopia is an important and distinct construct in consumer research. As part of our investigation, we introduce a reliable, valid measure of hyperopic tendencies at an individual level. By reconceptualizing hyperopia as an individual trait rather than

only as a description of behavior, we are therefore able to (1) show that it may exist in different degrees across the population and (2) depict its operation more precisely. Specifically, we reveal that hyperopia operates at a fundamental, perceptual level, creating an upward tendency in the degree to which a given item is seen as luxurious. Furthermore, hyperopic consumers express lower purchase intentions for luxury products, even when we control for their own luxury perceptions. The fact that hyperopia is empirically distinct from self-control also sheds light on conflicting evidence regarding the presence (Kivetz and Keinan 2006; Kivetz and Simonson 2002) or absence (Tangney et al. 2004) of negative consequences rooted in "too much" self-control. This recognition carves out a conceptual space for hyperopia that offers considerable potential for future research.

Studies 2 and 3 demonstrated how construal levels interact with differences in hyperopic tendencies to influence the likelihood that consumers will pursue indulgences. Essentially, we show that construal level moderates the effect of trait hyperopia. Importantly, we also demonstrate that this occurs by altering the extent to which the luxury is seen as a long-term investment or gain and is therefore consistent with the hyperopic consumer's tendencies. Thus, the present research also provides insight into means of overcoming hyperopic tendencies (Kivetz and Simonson 2002). These theoretical contributions suggest that marketing communications can influence construal levels in ways that make luxury products less unappealing to high hyperopia consumers. Practically, the present research suggests that retailers and consumers can create situations that are conducive to the hyperopic individual's ability to occasionally "seize the day!" by making the most out of the opportunities life has to offer.

Implications and Directions for Future Research

This research first suggests that full exploration of the relationship between self-control and hyperopia offers fertile ground for future research. As noted, all but one sample showed a nonsignificant relationship between self-control and hyperopia. However, a meta-analysis using all samples ($n = 886$) reveals a small but significant negative correlation ($r = -.10$, $p < .05$) between the two constructs (Rosenthal and Rosnow 1991). While a conclusive statement that hyperopia and self-control are inversely correlated is not clearly warranted, future research should further pursue this relationship. Furthermore, if self-control and hyperopia are distinct personality traits as the present data suggest, various combinations of hyperopia and self-control may exist across consumers. Future work may undertake systematic research exploring various combinations of the two traits and their outcomes. Also, future research may explore the extent to which hyperopia can be temporarily invoked beyond trait differences, as has been established in prior investigations of self-control (Mukhopadhyay and Johar 2005). Priming consumers to value long-term goals and denigrate luxury may successfully alter hyperopic tendencies temporarily. However, for the consumer with low trait-level hyperopia, such a situational manipulation may also generate patterns of reactance that warrant deeper investigation.

The present research viewed as primary characteristics of hyperopia difficulty with indulgence and aversion to luxury purchases. In addition, we examined reconstruals as a mechanism for overcoming hyperopic tendencies. Future research may explore other remedies for and outcomes of hyperopia (Kivetz and Keinan 2006). Some research in this vein is already under way, which suggests that increasing anticipated long-term regret may help consumers choose nonhyperopically (Keinan and Kivetz 2008). However, it remains unclear if highly hyperopic consumers would experience the same positive affect when they indulge that less hyperopic consumers typically experience. Is indulgent consumption also tainted by individual-level hyperopia, such that the guilt generated after luxury consumption outweighs life enjoyment benefits or undermines product satisfaction for these consumers?

We also wish to offer a caution. Attempts to overcome hyperopia may lead to overindulgence. If this occurs, consumers may suffer negative consequences much like those associated with myopic self-control failure (Hoch and Loewenstein 1991; Tangney et al. 2004). Future research should investigate how the present results affect more long-term patterns of consumption as well as the corresponding impact on overall life satisfaction judgments (Diener, Lucas, and Scollon 2006). Clearly, striking an appropriate balance between more "responsible" and more "indulgent" behavior would most favorably affect a consumer's overall well-being. By providing a tool to capture hyperopia and taking steps toward a richer conceptualization of the construct, the present research contributes a framework for a wide range of future research into hyperopia, its relationship with self-control, its optimal levels of enactment, and its impact on long-term life satisfaction.

APPENDIX

HYPEROPIA ITEMS

1. I often fail to enjoy attractive opportunities.
2. It's hard for me to make myself indulge.
3. I regret missed opportunities to enjoy rich experiences in the past.
4. I have difficulty pampering myself.
5. "Seizing the day" is difficult for me.
6. I rarely enjoy the luxuries life has to offer.

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