

# Waiting for Merlot: Anticipatory Consumption of Experiential and Material Purchases



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## Abstract

Experiential purchases (money spent on *doing*) tend to provide more enduring happiness than material purchases (money spent on *having*). Although most research comparing these two types of purchases has focused on their downstream hedonic consequences, the present research investigated hedonic differences that occur *before* consumption. We argue that waiting for experiences tends to be more positive than waiting for possessions. Four studies demonstrate that people derive more happiness from the anticipation of experiential purchases and that waiting for an experience tends to be more pleasurable and exciting than waiting to receive a material good. We found these effects in studies using questionnaires involving a variety of actual planned purchases, in a large-scale experience-sampling study, and in an archival analysis of news stories about people waiting in line to make a purchase. Consumers derive value from anticipation, and that value tends to be greater for experiential than for material purchases.

## Keywords

experiential purchases, materialism, waiting, anticipation, open materials

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So tedious is this day  
As is the night before some festival  
To an impatient child that hath new robes  
And may not wear them.

—Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, Scene ii,  
lines 28–31 (Shakespeare & Durband, 1597/1985)

Think back to a time you waited in line. Was it a pleasurable experience, or did you feel a bit like Shakespeare's impatient child? We contend that your experience likely depended on what you were waiting for. Specifically, we propose that waiting for an experience tends to be more enjoyable than waiting to receive a material good. Waiting to get into a Black Friday sale, for example, is likely to differ from waiting to get tickets to "Saturday Night Live," even if your initial excitement about these two events is the same. We suspect that you would likely savor the amusing sketches you might see in the latter case, but experience a bit more impatience when waiting to get a coveted material possession, like an item of high-end clothing or the newest gadget.

To be sure, waiting is often an aversive experience. As the literature on temporal discounting indicates, people have a marked preference for consuming things now rather than later (McClure, Laibson, Loewenstein, & Cohen, 2004). But Loewenstein (1987) showed that anticipation sometimes has its benefits, and he defined *savoring* as the positive utility derived from the anticipation of future consumption. In a well-known study, he found that participants were willing to pay more to kiss their favorite celebrity 3 days in the future than to experience the kiss immediately, an indication that people get pleasure from anticipation. He argued that savoring is most likely when consumption is fleeting: In such cases, "anticipation (and sometimes memory) serves to extend

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the otherwise fleeting benefit provided by consumption” (Loewenstein, 1987, p. 672).

Most of the examples of savoring cited by Loewenstein (1987) involve experiences, an asymmetry that dovetails with research on experiential versus material purchases, or money spent on *doing* versus *having*. Van Boven and Gilovich (2003) found that experiences tend to produce more enduring satisfaction than do possessions. Subsequent research has explored the mechanisms underlying this difference. Experiential purchases tend to make people happier because they evoke fewer comparisons (Carter & Gilovich, 2010), are more associated with the self (Carter & Gilovich, 2012), and foster more social connection (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Kumar & Gilovich, 2014b; Kumar, Mann, & Gilovich, 2014; Van Boven, Campbell, & Gilovich, 2010). Other work has dealt with additional downstream consequences of experiential consumption. For instance, experiential purchases are more likely than material purchases to promote prosocial behavior (Kumar & Gilovich, 2014a).

Existing work on experiences and possessions has focused on what happens after a purchase has been made. What about beforehand? How people think about the future is often very different from how they think about the past (Caruso, Gilbert, & Wilson, 2008; Helzer & Gilovich, 2012), so it is unclear whether the retrospective benefits of experiential consumption apply to anticipation as well. We conducted the present research to find out. Specifically, we investigated whether people get more utility from the anticipation of experiential purchases than from the anticipation of material purchases. Study 1 examined whether people report that waiting is more pleasant for an experiential purchase than for a material purchase. In Study 2, we used experience sampling to explore whether thinking about upcoming experiences is associated with greater happiness than thinking about soon-to-be-acquired possessions. Study 3 employed an archival analysis of news articles about people in queues to examine whether customers waiting to purchase experiences tend to be in a better mood than those waiting to purchase possessions. Study 4 ruled out an artifactual interpretation of these archival results.

## Study 1

We assigned participants to think about an upcoming experiential or material purchase and then asked them about their state of mind while waiting for their purchase. We predicted that participants asked about an experiential purchase would report feeling relatively more excitement than impatience compared with those asked about a material purchase. We also expected the former to think of waiting as more pleasant.

## Method

Ninety-seven Cornell students (60 females, 37 males; mean age = 20.59,  $SD = 2.06$ ) served as participants. They were given the definition of either experiential or material purchases (taken from Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003) and asked to think of an example of that type of purchase they intended to make “in the very near future.” Experiential purchases were defined as those “made with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience: an event or series of events that one personally encounters or lives through.” Material purchases were defined as those “made with the primary intention of acquiring a material good: a tangible object that is obtained and kept in one’s possession.” Participants then rated whether their anticipation of the purchase felt more like impatience or excitement, on a scale from  $-4$  (*much more like impatience*) to  $4$  (*much more like excitement*). They were then asked to rate the pleasantness of their anticipatory state on a scale from  $-4$  (*extremely unpleasant*) to  $4$  (*extremely pleasant*). Finally, they estimated the cost of the purchase and provided their age and gender.<sup>1</sup>

## Results

Participants reported planning a variety of material (e.g., clothing, laptops) and experiential (e.g., ski passes, concert tickets) purchases, but the experiential and material purchases did not differ in cost ( $t < 1$ ). However, as hypothesized, participants reported that the anticipation of an experience was more pleasant ( $M = 2.64$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ) than the anticipation of a possession ( $M = 1.37$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ),  $t(95) = 4.37$ ,  $p < .0001$ , Cohen’s  $d = 0.81$ , and that their anticipation was infused with relatively more excitement (and less impatience) for experiential purchases ( $M = 2.58$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ) than for material purchases ( $M = 1.06$ ,  $SD = 1.90$ ),  $t(95) = 4.48$ ,  $p < .0001$ , Cohen’s  $d = 0.84$ .

Note that participants’ responses tended to lie on the positive side of our scales in both conditions. That is, waiting to receive a material good is, not surprisingly, a positive experience. Our claim is that there is a difference in the *amount* of enjoyment people derive from waiting for experiential and material purchases. Waiting for any upcoming purchase has both positive and negative elements—pleasant feelings of excitement and unpleasant feelings of impatience. What we found is that the enjoyment associated with anticipation is more tinged with excitement when it comes to experiential purchases and more tinged with impatience when it comes to material purchases. Because impatience and excitement are not opposite ends of a unitary dimension, we also asked participants a straightforward question about how pleasant they found the anticipation of their purchase. The fact that we found converging results for the two measures

indicates that our findings regarding impatience and excitement were not due to anything unusual about that scale. In Study 2, we tested whether we would obtain further support for our hypothesis using a third measure—how happy participants said they were while waiting for experiences or possessions.

## Study 2

In Study 2, we used experience sampling to examine whether the same results would be observed for purchases that were on participants' minds spontaneously (as opposed to purchases that participants were instructed to consider). We also investigated whether people thinking about future experiential purchases were happier than people thinking about future material purchases.

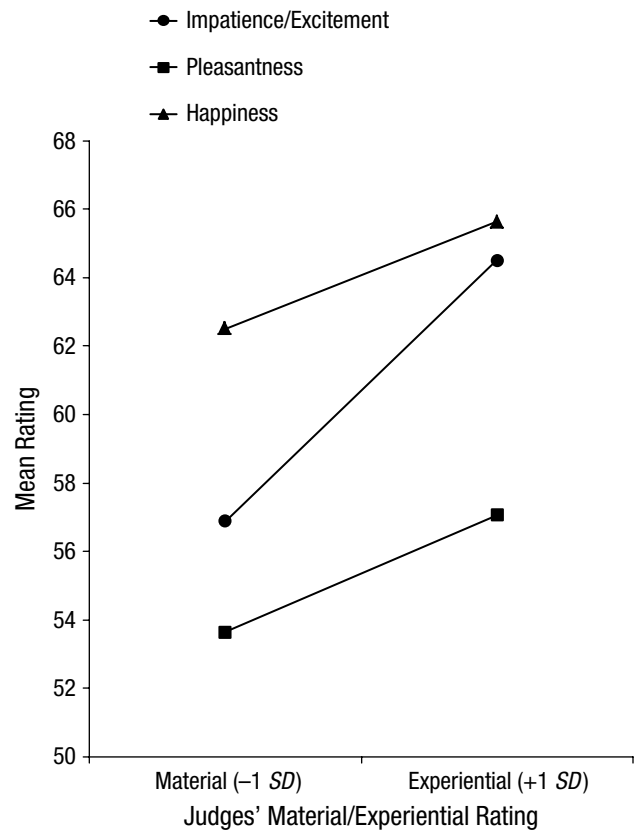
## Method

Participants were 2,266 adults engaged in a large-scale experience-sampling project hosted at [trackyourhappiness.org](http://trackyourhappiness.org) (Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010). Their median age was 33 (range = 18–74), 61% were female, 68% were from the United States, and the median annual household income for the U.S. participants was \$80,000 ( $M = \$121,300$ ,  $SD = \$186,214$ ). Eight U.S. participants reported annual household incomes above \$2,000,000. These incomes distorted the mean and standard deviation for income and were therefore entered into the analyses as \$2,000,000.

Participants were signaled at random times during their waking hours by an iPhone notification and were asked a variety of questions. Participants first answered a *happiness* question (“How happy are you feeling right now?”) using a sliding scale with endpoints labeled *very bad* (0) and *very good* (100). They were then asked a *purchase-thought* question: “Are you currently thinking about a purchase you intend to make (either a material good like a TV or item of clothing, or an experience like a vacation or concert)?”; the response options were “yes” and “no.” If participants answered “yes,” we asked three follow-up questions: an open-ended *purchase-content* question (“What future purchase are you thinking about?”), a *pleasantness* question (“Is waiting to make this purchase more unpleasant or pleasant?”) answered on a sliding scale from *unpleasant* (0) to *pleasant* (100), and an *excitement/impatience* question (“Would you describe the nature of your anticipation as more like impatience or more like excitement?”) answered on a sliding scale from *more like impatience* (0) to *more like excitement* (100).

## Results

Participants reported thinking about a future purchase in response to 19.1% of the probes. Two coders who were



**Fig. 1.** Results from Study 2: mean happiness, pleasantness, and excitement ratings for purchases 1 standard deviation above and below the mean of the judges' material/experiential ratings.

blind to the purposes of the study rated how material or experiential each purchase was. They were given definitions of experiential and material purchases (from Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003) and rated each purchase on the following scale: 1 = *definitely material*, 2 = *largely material*, 3 = *unclear/ambiguous*, 4 = *largely experiential*, 5 = *definitely experiential*. The coders tended to agree with each other ( $\alpha = .8$ ), and their ratings were averaged for the following analyses. People reported thinking about 586 future purchases that were rated on the experiential side of the scale, 318 future purchases that were on the material side, and 272 future purchases that were rated as ambiguous.

Figure 1 presents the estimates for the happiness, pleasantness, and excitement/impatience ratings for purchases located 1 standard deviation above and below the mean of the judges' material/experiential ratings. As the figure makes clear, compared with purchases that were more material, experiential purchases were associated with higher levels of happiness,  $b = 1.30$ ,  $p < .05$ ; more pleasantness,  $b = 1.42$ ,  $p < .05$ ; and more excitement (and less impatience),  $b = 3.17$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Although these data are nested, with multiple probes per person, and would ordinarily be analyzed using

multilevel regression, the vast majority of participants provided only one “yes” response to the purchase-thought question, and the preceding results are consequently based on a regression performed on the first “yes” sample provided by each participant (so that there was exactly one sample per participant). However, when all samples were included and analyzed using multilevel regression, the effect estimates and  $p$  values remained qualitatively unchanged (happiness:  $b = 1.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ; pleasantness:  $b = 1.40$ ,  $p < .05$ ; excitement/impatience:  $b = 2.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Note that these effects, although statistically significant, are not huge. But we would not expect them to be, as our participants were looking forward to purchases intended to advance their interests and make them happier. On balance, they no doubt succeeded. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that even in this restricted range of nearly-all-positive circumstances, the psychological state of waiting tended to be systematically more positive for experiences than for possessions.

This raises the question of how the happiness experienced when thinking about these different types of purchases compares with the happiness experienced when not thinking about a future purchase at all. To find out, we used the samples in which participants answered “no” to the purchase-thought question as the reference in a multilevel regression and compared the happiness of those who responded “no” with the happiness of those who indicated that they were thinking of experiential, material, or indeterminate (equally material and experiential) purchases. Compared with not thinking about a future purchase, thinking about an experiential purchase was associated with a higher level of happiness ( $b = 2.44$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but thinking about a material purchase ( $b = 0.33$ ,  $t < 1$ ) or an indeterminate purchase ( $b = -0.88$ ,  $t < 1$ ) was not associated with a different level of happiness.

Furthermore, because many participants who provided a “yes” response to our purchase-thought question on one occasion responded “no” on another, we were able to perform an analysis that compared reports in which a person was thinking about an anticipated purchase with the very same person’s reports when not anticipating an upcoming purchase. This analysis was necessarily restricted to our happiness measure, as this was the only outcome measure collected when participants answered “no” to the purchase-thought question. In this within-person analysis, participants were marginally happier when anticipating an experiential purchase than when not anticipating a purchase of any kind ( $b = 1.20$ ,  $p = .07$ ). They were not any more or less happy when anticipating a material purchase ( $b = 0.30$ ,  $t < 1$ ) or a purchase that was judged to be neither experiential nor material ( $b = 0.67$ ,  $t < 1$ ) than when not anticipating any sort of purchase. These results help to dispel any concern that our main findings may have stemmed from a simple

selection effect—that the people who tend to be thinking about upcoming experiences are a cheerier lot than those who tend to be thinking about the imminent acquisition of material goods.<sup>2</sup>

Although any difference between the kind of people thinking about upcoming experiences and the kind of people thinking about upcoming material acquisitions cannot account for our findings, might respondents have been happier thinking about upcoming experiences simply because they thought of better, more expensive experiences than material goods? To examine this possibility, we had five independent coders rate how expensive all of the purchases participants listed were. (We did not have the participants themselves list the cost of each purchase because of the need to limit the number of questions asked when using experience-sampling methods.) The coders rated each purchase in two ways. First, they estimated the expensiveness of the purchase on a 10-point scale (1 = *less expensive purchases, like a cup of coffee or school supplies*; 10 = *more expensive purchases, like a car or paying for a wedding*). Second, they simply estimated the dollar cost of each purchase.

Coders were consistent in their use of both scales (both  $\alpha > .9$ ), so their ratings for each measure were averaged. Because of skewness in the dollar estimates, we used the natural log of average cost in our analyses (and indeed, the correlation between expensiveness ratings and the natural log of average cost was .93, as opposed to .45 before taking the natural log). The effect of type of purchase remained largely unchanged when rated expensiveness was included as a covariate in an analysis of the first “yes” sample provided by participants,  $p < .05$  for happiness,  $p = .127$  for pleasantness, and  $p < .001$  for excitement/impatience. Using the multilevel models with rated expensiveness included as a covariate, we obtained  $p$  values of less than .05, .10, and .001, respectively. When estimated cost was used as a covariate, the  $p$  values from the analyses of participants’ first “yes” response were as follows—happiness:  $p = .06$ ; unpleasantness:  $p = .07$ ; and excitement/impatience:  $p < .001$ ; in the multilevel models, the  $p$  values were less than .05 for happiness and pleasantness and less than .001 for excitement/impatience. These results make it clear that our findings are not an artifact of participants simply anticipating “better,” more expensive experiences than possessions.

### Study 3

Does the more pleasant experience of waiting for an experience rather than a possession have implications for how people behave while waiting to make their purchase? Specifically, does the greater impatience observed in people thinking about a material purchase make them more likely to act in impulsive ways while waiting to make their purchase? To find out, we conducted an analysis of newspaper

accounts of people waiting in line for a commercial transaction. We predicted that their mood and behavior would be more negative if they were waiting for a material good than if they were waiting for an experience.

## Method

We searched the LexisNexis ([www.lexisnexis.com](http://www.lexisnexis.com)) database for a 2-year period from January 2011 through December 2012. To search for stories of people waiting in long lines, we used the terms “line AND wait,” “queue AND wait,” “line OR queue AND hours,” “wait AND hours,” “line OR queue AND crowd,” “crowd AND hours,” “line OR queue OR wait AND long,” “line up OR lining up AND wait,” “long AND line AND wait,” and “line OR wait OR queue OR waiting OR lines OR queues AND long OR slow.” We did not include duplicate articles about the same event occurring on the same date. Our search yielded 149 articles. We recorded the title of each article, its source, the date of the article, what people were waiting in line for, and comments on the mood and behavior of the people in line (usually a crowd).

Two coders who were unaware of the hypothesis were given this information and definitions of material and experiential purchases (from Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). They were asked to rate the extent to which whatever the individuals were waiting in line for was material or experiential, using a 5-point scale labeled as follows: 1 = *definitely material*, 2 = *somewhat material*, 3 = *ambiguous or unclear*, 4 = *somewhat experiential*, 5 = *definitely experiential*. Two different independent coders, who were also unaware of the hypothesis (and the material/experiential ratings made by the other pair of coders), read the portions of the articles that described the mood or behavior of the people waiting in line and rated how negative or positive their mood or behavior seemed, using a 5-point scale labeled as follows: 1 = *very negative*, 2 = *somewhat negative*, 3 = *ambiguous or unclear*, 4 = *somewhat positive*, 5 = *very positive*.

## Results

The coders' material/experiential ratings were highly correlated ( $\alpha > .90$ ) and were therefore averaged. Likewise, the negative/positive ratings were highly correlated ( $\alpha > .95$ ) and were also averaged. As predicted, people waiting for an experience seemed to be better behaved and in a better mood than those waiting for a material possession. That is, there was a significant linear relationship between how experiential the source of the wait was and how positive the experience of waiting appeared to be,  $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $p < .0001$ .

Probing this relationship more closely, we found that 18 of the articles mentioned clearly negative behavior on

the part of the people waiting in line (e.g., smashing windows, rioting), and the mean experiential/material rating of what these individuals were in line to buy was 2.39 ( $SD = 1.01$ ), significantly below the scale's midpoint in the material direction,  $t(17) = -2.57$ ,  $p < .02$ . Twenty of the articles mentioned clearly positive behavior (e.g., singing, playing games), and the mean experiential/material rating of what these individuals were in line for was 4.63 ( $SD = 0.72$ ), significantly above the scale's midpoint in the experiential direction,  $t(19) = 10.05$ ,  $p < .0001$ . People waiting for an experience were clearly cheerier and better behaved than those waiting to get a material possession.

One might wonder whether this effect was driven by scarcity. Perhaps people waiting for material goods were more anxious and ill behaved because they were worried that the items they were waiting for might run out, whereas those waiting in line for experiences already had their tickets in hand and had no reason to worry. To address this issue, we took all of the experiential purchases (those rated higher than 3) and divided them according to whether scarcity was an issue (e.g., people were in line to buy tickets) or was not an issue (e.g., the people already had tickets). When we examined only those experiential stories that involved scarcity (55 of the 93 experiential stories), the effect remained statistically significant,  $\beta = 0.34$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Our results are not an artifact of differential scarcity and desperation.

To control for any differences in the cost of the purchases for which these people were waiting in line, we again had independent raters estimate the cost (in dollars) of what they were waiting for and rate how expensive it was (on the same 10-point scale as in Study 2). Interrater reliability was high for the scale ratings ( $\alpha = .9$ ), but low for the cost estimates ( $\alpha = .3$ ). When we reran our original analyses using the scale ratings of expensiveness as a covariate, the material/experiential nature of what the people in line were waiting for continued to predict ratings of the positivity of their mood and behavior,  $\beta = 0.37$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $p < .0001$ . When we reran the analyses using the natural log of the dollar estimates as a covariate, the material/experiential nature of what the people were waiting for still predicted the positivity of their mood and behavior,  $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Again, our results do not appear to be an artifact of the cost of the purchases for which the people in line were waiting.

It seems that waiting in line for an experiential purchase tends to be more pleasurable than waiting in line for a material purchase. The reporter's mantra “if it bleeds, it leads” is thus more likely to come into play during Black Friday sales on gadgets and sneakers than when people are lined up for tickets to see their favorite performers or taste the offerings at the newest food truck.

## Study 4

Although Study 3 highlights a notable consequence of the difference between waiting for an experience and waiting for a possession, the results are correlational and therefore subject to alternative interpretation. Perhaps the people who choose to wait in line for experiences are simply better behaved generally than those waiting for possessions. To test this possibility, we randomly assigned participants to think of a time when they waited in line for an experience or a possession and then asked them to report how they felt.

## Method

Ninety-seven Cornell students (53 females, 44 males; mean age = 18.63,  $SD = 1.39$ ) served as participants. All participants read a brief statement explaining that waiting can often be an unpleasant experience, as people sometimes report feeling impatient while waiting, but that waiting can also sometimes be pleasant and exciting. They were then randomly assigned to read a description of either experiential or material purchases and asked to take a moment to recall a specific instance when they waited in a long line for the type of purchase that had just been defined for them. After recalling such an instance, they were asked to rate how unpleasant or pleasant the experience of waiting had been, using a scale from  $-4$  (*extremely unpleasant*) to  $4$  (*extremely pleasant*). Finally, they provided their age and gender.

## Results

Participants who were asked to recall an instance of waiting for an experiential purchase reported that their waiting had been more pleasant ( $M = 0.28$ ,  $SD = 1.89$ ) compared with those who were asked to think of an instance of waiting for a material purchase ( $M = -0.66$ ,  $SD = 1.95$ ),  $t(95) = 2.41$ ,  $p < .02$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.49$ . This finding is consistent with the archival data in Study 3, indicating that the more positive experience enjoyed by people waiting to make an experiential purchase relative to those waiting to make a material purchase is not the result of different types of people waiting for these two different types of purchases. These results thus reinforce our contention that waiting to have an experience tends to be more enjoyable than waiting to receive a possession.

## General Discussion

Waiting can be pleasurable or aversive. We found that waiting for an experience elicits significantly more

happiness, pleasantness, and excitement than waiting for a material good. Waiting for a material purchase is often “edgier”—fraught with more impatience.

Previous research has focused on the differences between experiential and material purchases in terms of how much satisfaction they bring (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003), how likely they are to spark comparisons (Carter & Gilovich, 2010), how connected they are to one's sense of self (Carter & Gilovich, 2012), and how much they foster feelings of social connectedness (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009; Kumar & Gilovich, 2014b; Kumar et al., 2014). Those differences emerge after a purchase is made. The present research is the first to identify the benefits that result from experiential purchases before consumption. This is a significant contribution to the literature for two reasons. First, the differences between prospecting and retrospection can be stark (Caruso et al., 2008; Helzer & Gilovich, 2012), so one cannot assume that retrospective differences in the satisfaction people derive from material and experiential purchases apply prospectively as well. The present research establishes that they do—that is, that people “consume” their expectations and get more utility from doing so for experiences than for possessions.

Second, the utility people derive from a purchase—or any event—is not only in the here and now, but also in anticipation. To advance well-being, then, it is important to understand the variables that influence the utility that comes from looking forward to events, such as whether one is looking forward to a material or experiential purchase. Scholars of well-being have distinguished between *experienced* and *remembered* utility (Kahneman, 2000), and we think it is important to add the concept of *anticipatory* utility (Loewenstein, 1987). After all, experienced utility comes and goes in a moment, and much of the enjoyment that people derive from the things they buy or do comes from looking forward to them.

One reason that people are often tempted to spend their money on material goods rather than experiences is that the here and now of experiences is so fleeting. People often say, “If I opt for the [experience], it will be over in a flash, but at least I'll always have the [possession].” The irony is that although this is true in a material sense, it is not true psychologically. A vast literature attests to people's remarkable capacity for adaptation (Frederick & Loewenstein, 1999), which robs them of the ability to appreciate things to which they are constantly exposed, like their couches, clothes, and cars. In contrast, the fleetingness of experiences can make them resistant to habituation, allowing them to compensate in recall and story utility (Kumar & Gilovich, 2014b)—and, as shown here, in anticipation—what they lack in here-and-now extension.

An obvious question is what is responsible for the effects we have demonstrated. Why does waiting for experiential purchases tend to be more pleasurable than waiting for material purchases? One possibility involves the level of abstraction of people's thoughts about their upcoming purchases. People may think about future experiential consumption at a higher level of construal than future material consumption (Trope & Liberman, 2003). When one is thinking about an article of clothing or a piece of furniture, the images that arise are likely to be concrete. One knows that the coat is wool and the desk is cherry. When one is thinking about an upcoming vacation or theater performance, however, although some of one's thoughts will surely focus on details, other thoughts may be more focused on higher-level considerations, such as the purpose of the vacation ("adventure") or how the theater performance might provide a connection to other people ("I finally have something to say to the *Spamalot* fanatics at work"). These more abstract thoughts about experiences can make them seem more significant, and hence more gratifying.

Another possibility is that material goods might prompt a more competitive mind-set than experiences do. People have difficulty deciding whether they would rather have a higher absolute salary that is lower than their peers' or a lower absolute salary that is higher than their peers' (Solnick & Hemenway, 1998). The decision is hard because more money is preferred to less, but people want to "keep up with the Joneses" and not fall behind their peers. But this problem disappears when it comes to experiential goods: People have no difficulty deciding between 2 weeks of vacation when their peers get only a week or 4 weeks of vacation when their peers get 8. People do not care much about the comparison and opt for 4 weeks rather than 2.

This difference in social comparison likely contributes to the finding that asking people to reflect on experiential purchases encourages prosocial behavior (Kumar & Gilovich, 2014a). The sorts of social benefits that come from reflecting on past experiential purchases (Kumar & Gilovich, 2014b; Kumar et al., 2014) may arise during anticipation as well. Just as people are more likely to talk about experiential purchases than about material purchases after the fact (Kumar & Gilovich, 2014b), they may be more likely to talk about future experiential consumption than about future material consumption. Indeed, this difference might have contributed to the findings of Study 3: People waiting in line for an experiential purchase rather than a material purchase might be more likely to strike up conversations with their fellow consumers, which in turn would make them feel more connected and make the experience of waiting more pleasurable (Kumar & Gilovich, 2014b; Kumar et al., 2014).

If waiting for experiential purchases feels good, why not extend the wait? Evidence suggests that people do just that. Because the anticipation of experiences is pleasurable, people prefer to hold off on experiential consumption, whereas material purchases foster more of a "give it to me *now*" mind-set (Kumar & Gilovich, 2014c). Given the present results, it makes sense that people would rather avoid the feelings associated with waiting for material purchases and choose to consume material goods more immediately, whereas they would rather savor just how wonderful their experiences will be. People are less inclined to wait for a Volvo, Polo, or Lenovo than to sip Pernod, take a furlough, or open a Merlot because waiting for the latter is simply more pleasurable.

### Author Contributions

A. Kumar and T. Gilovich developed the study concept, and all three authors contributed to study design. Testing and data collection were performed by A. Kumar for Studies 1, 3, and 4 and by M. A. Killingsworth for Study 2. A. Kumar and M. A. Killingsworth performed the data analysis and interpretation under the supervision of T. Gilovich. All authors drafted the manuscript and approved the final version of the manuscript for submission.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared that they had no conflicts of interest with respect to their authorship or the publication of this article.

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### Open Practices



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### Notes

1. For all studies reported here, we have reported all conditions and analyzed all dependent measures; no data were excluded from any of our analyses. Moreover, the data were not analyzed until collection was complete. No significant main effects of age

or gender, and no interactions of age or gender with experimental condition, were found for any dependent measures in any of the studies.

2. A follow-up study with a much bigger sample (more than 13,000 responses in which participants reported recently thinking about a future purchase) replicated the main findings reported here. It also allowed us to conduct a within-subjects analysis that compared participants' happiness, pleasantness, and excitement ratings when thinking about an upcoming experiential purchase versus an upcoming material purchase (among participants who reported, on separate occasions, recently thinking about both types of purchase). Results cast further doubt on a selection artifact; participants rated their anticipatory state as significantly more pleasant,  $t(8913) = 4.60$ , and more exciting,  $t(8913) = 8.70$ , for an upcoming experiential purchase than for an upcoming material purchase. They were also happier waiting for an experiential purchase, but not significantly so,  $t(8913) = 0.95$ .

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