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경영학 석사학위논문

**How Indulgent Food Choices for Oneself Lead to
Indulgent Food Choices for Others**

자신을 위한 탐닉적 음식 선택이 타인을 위한
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ABSTRACT

How Indulgent Food Choices for Oneself Lead to Indulgent Food Choices for Others

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Prior research on indulgence has focused on how consumers achieve an intrapersonal balance between prior indulgent choices and subsequent restrained choices. The current research proposes that indulgence also leads individuals to achieve an interpersonal balance between self-indulgent choices and other-indulgent choices. Two experiments demonstrate that consumers who have made indulgent food choices for the self are more likely to make indulgent food choices for their friend and this phenomenon occurs because indulgent food choices for oneself increases negative self-conscious affect, which in turn increases motivation to involve others. The effect of indulgent food choice for oneself on indulgent food choice for others are moderated by perceived similarity of others to the self. This research makes theoretical contributions to indulgence, self-regulation, and emotion literature by exploring a novel downstream consequence of food choices for oneself on food choices for others.

Keywords: choices for oneself, choices for others, indulgence, guilt,
motivation to involve others, food choice

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Introduction

Indulgent food consumption is common. Although many people intend to eat healthier and lose weight, they still easily fall into the temptation of indulging their craving for delicious but fattening food. While indulgent food consumption naturally brings about positive affect such as short-term delightfulness, indulgent food consumption entails long-term costs, and thus, in general, causes negative self-conscious feelings of guilt and regret (Fletcher, Pine, Woodbridge, & Nash, 2007; Ramanathan & Williams, 2007) and a negative evaluation of the self (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994). Then, what reparative actions can a consumer take to resolve such negative self-conscious affect following indulgent food consumption? This research suggests that one way to do this may be through engaging others in indulgent food consumption.

Prior research on indulgence suggests that consumers apply a variety of tactics to deal with the negative self-conscious feelings of guilt following a self-indulgent consumption. However, prior work has primarily focused on how consumers achieve an *intrapersonal* balance, counterbalancing the self-indulgence (Allard & White, 2015; Huber, Goldsmith, Mogilner, 2008; Laran, 2010). For example, consumers who have engaged in an indulgence might try to balance their behaviors by engaging in virtuous behaviors, such as having low-fat meal or going to the gym and exercising (Huber et al., 2008) or by making justification, such as distorting their memories of prior consumption (May & Irmak, 2014).

In this research, we move beyond consumer motivation to make an intrapersonal balance in response to self-indulgence and demonstrate that consumers can also take a reparative action that would achieve an *interpersonal* balance between the self and others. Specifically, we show that consumers who have made indulgent food choices for themselves are likely to make an indulgent (vs. non-indulgent) food choices for others out of motivation to involve others in the similar experiences. To the best of our knowledge, this represents a novel demonstration of consumers manipulating their social context to counterbalance negative self-evaluation between the self and others.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Indulgent food consumption

Every day, consumers are confronted with food choice decisions whether to indulge in delicious but unhealthy food for the short-term gratification or to consume healthy food for long-term health benefits. For many consumers, indulgence decisions are ridden with conflicts. On the one hand, unhealthy food itself is appealing—it is considered tastier and more satisfying than healthy foods (Raghunathan, Naylor, & Hoyer, 2006); thus, unhealthy food consumption elicits strong positive affective reactions. On the other hand, unhealthy food is generally considered “vice”; unhealthy food consumption represents evidence of lack of self-control (Ramanathan & Williams, 2007) and leaves negative self-conscious affect, such as guilt and regret (Kivetz & Keynan, 2006; Kuijer & Boyce, 2014).

Although consumers are aware of the costs that indulgent food consumption entails in the long-term (e.g., obesity), many consumers find it difficult to resist the immediate benefits of eating unhealthy food and yield to the temptation of engaging in an indulgence (O’Donoghue & Rabin, 2000; Shiv & Fedorikhin, 2002) and suffer from consequent negative feelings of guilt.

Negative self-conscious affect and reparative actions

Guilt, one of the “self-conscious emotions”, has characteristics of involving a self-evaluation of one’s current state of affairs (Allard & White, 2015; Tracy & Robins, 2004). Guilt develops from the awareness of not having lived up to some

important self-standard of behavior regarding what is deemed to be good, correct, appropriate, or desirable (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). Guilt is associated with a negative evaluation of the self (Baumeister et al., 1994) and the propensity to take reparative actions aiming to resolve the negative self-evaluation in some way (Allard & White, 2007).

Previous work on the downstream consequences of self-indulgence has shown that indulgence results in forces of *intrapersonal balance* out of consumer desire to counterbalance guilt-inducing consumption. That is, consumers tend to lift the self up to repair their negative self-evaluation resulted from indulgence. One such means is to compensate with virtuous behaviors. For example, in sequential food choices, consumers tend to balance indulgent food items (e.g., high-fat entrée) with healthy food items (e.g., low-fat dessert; Huber et al., 2008; Laran, 2010). Also, a well-known study shows that reminders of one's indulgent behavior, which are likely to activate feelings of guilt, increase prosocial behaviors (Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006). Recent research also suggests that individuals who had feelings of guilt may additionally enhance their self-worth by striving for success (Allard & White, 2005).

As another means, consumers often attempt to make justification for their indulgence. For instance, when sufficient ambiguity exists around how to categorize consumption, people leverage this fuzziness to classify their indulgent consumption (e.g., spending) as being more reasonable (Cheema & Soman,

2006). Consumers also draw on justification to defend their choice of indulgent consumption if the context presents viable excuses (Mishra & Mishra, 2011). Consumers even distort their memories of prior consumption (May & Irmak, 2014) or exaggerate foregone consumption (Effron, Monin, & Miller, 2013).

Motivation to involve others

This research proposes that indulgence also results in forces of making an interpersonal balance out of consumer desire to consume fairly and equitably in the interpersonal context. That is consumers who have made self-indulgent consumption choices have the motivation to involve others in the guilt-inducing consumption in order to reduce negative self-conscious affect resulted from own indulgence. Prior research links indulgence for oneself and motivation to involve others in another indulgence.

First, the link is based on the notion that guilt, which is associated with negative self-evaluation, stems not only from intrapersonal aspects but also from interpersonal aspects. In the interpersonal aspects, guilt stems from the desire to consume fairly and equitably (Lee-Wingate & Kim, 2009). Thus, comparison to others can make the guilt-inducing situation either better or worse. If others are consuming for pleasure as much as we are, we may feel less consumption guilt. If others are consuming less, making more restrained choices, we may feel more guilt in comparison (Baumeister et al., 1994; Lee-Wingate & Kim, 2009). Thus,

making others involving in indulgent consumption would help restore own sense of interpersonal balance.

Also, by involving others in indulgence, individuals who have engaged in self-indulgence become less of a target of downward social comparison and can protect their self-evaluation in an interpersonal context. Performance of self-regulation functions as a criterion of upward and downward social comparison (Van, 2017). Thus, when individuals have engaged in indulgence, whether others have also engaged in an indulgence or not can be an important factor influencing self-evaluation. Indeed, prior research on self-evaluation maintenance theory (Tesser, 1998) supports this notion. Specifically, the outstanding performance of others causes own performance to pale by comparison and decreases self-evaluation. Thus, as one way to avoid a decrease in self-evaluation through the comparison process, individuals sometimes affect another's performance (e.g. by hiding a sibling's favorite items)

Such an account implies the following hypotheses.

H1: Consumer food choices for others are more indulgent when consumers make indulgent (vs. non-indulgent) food choices for the self.

H2: Indulgent (vs. non-indulgent) food choice for the self increases negative self-conscious affect.

H3: This negative self-conscious affect increases consumer motivation to involve others in the choice experience.

H4: Negative self-conscious affect and motivation to involve others serially mediate the effect of food choice for oneself on food choice for others.

Perceived similarity of others to the self

This research further proposes that the extent to which motivation to involve others in making indulgent food choices will depend on the perceived similarity of the target recipient to the self. Specifically, when the target recipient is perceived to be more similar to the self, the effect of indulgent food choice for the self on the indulgent food choice for others is strengthened.

This prediction is based on the notion that social comparison and motivation to make an interpersonal balance is more likely for similar others. Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) proposes that people have the drive to evaluate the self through comparison with others and similar others are preferred for comparison. Specifically, Festinger stated: “The tendency to compare oneself with some other specific person decrease as the difference between his ... ability and one’s own increases (Festinger, 1954: 120).

Typically, similarity has been operationalized in terms of similarity of performance in a certain domain (Gastorf & Suls, 1978). In the eating context, the performance of health- or diet-related goal can be one criterion for the similarity. For instance, if an individual is on a calorie goal, those who have a similar goal are likely to be perceived to be more similar than those who do not

have such goals. Thus, motivation to involve others in making an indulgent food choice and make an interpersonal balance is more likely when the target recipient is perceived to have similarity with the self.

H5: Perceived similarity between the self and others moderate the impact of motivation to involve others on food choices for others. Specifically, for the person consumers perceive greater (vs. less) similarity, motivation to involve others is more (vs. less) likely to lead to indulgent food choice for others.

The overall hypotheses are summarized into a research model depicted in Figure 1.

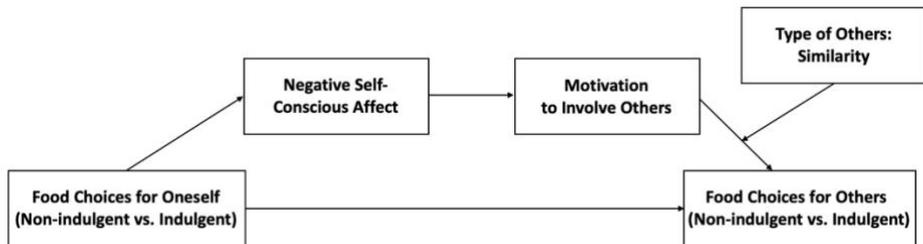


Figure 1. Research model

Study 1

Study 1 is an experiment that tests the relationship between indulgent food choice for oneself and indulgent food choice for others. Specifically, in Study 1, we aim to examine whether participants who imagine to make an indulgent (vs. non-indulgent) food choice for the self are likely to make an indulgent (vs. non-indulgent) food choice for their friend.

Method

Participants and design. 99 UK participants were recruited through Prolific Academic (76% women; $M_{age} = 35.13$, range = 18-66) for nominal payment. Study 1 employs 2 (food choice for oneself: non-indulgent vs. indulgent) between-participants design.

Procedure. Participants completed the study on their personal computer and were randomly assigned to one of the two food choice conditions. Participants in the both conditions first envisioned a scenario of making a sequential food choice.

“Imagine that you are in a small café after dinner to have dessert. In this café, there are two types of ice cream available:

- Ice cream A: low-fat, light ice cream
- Ice cream B: full-fat, heavy ice cream

You wonder whether you should eat the low-fat, light ice cream (Ice cream A) or the full-fat, heavy ice cream (Ice cream B). Eating the full-fat, heavy ice cream (Ice cream B), rather than the low-fat, light ice cream (Ice cream A), will definitely cause you to consume extra calories for the day.

Now, you and your friend are about to order. You make your order before

your friend”

Then, participants in the indulgent choice condition received additional scenario information designed to manipulate making an indulgent choice:

“Giving in to the temptation of the full-fat, heavy ice cream, you finally choose "Ice cream B" instead of "Ice cream A (low-fat, light ice cream).”

Participants in the non-indulgent consumption condition received additional scenario information designed to manipulate making a non-indulgent choice:

“Resisting the temptation of the full-fat, heavy ice cream, you finally choose "Ice cream A (low-fat, light ice cream)" instead of "Ice cream B".”

Then, participants in both conditions are asked to imagine themselves in this situation and write a brief statement about how they would feel. After the writing task, participants answered questions regarding the choices they would make for their friends, indulgence perception of their food choices (manipulation check), and demographics.

Measures. Choices for others. First, participants indicated food choice for their friend: “Now, it’s your friend’s turn to order. Your friend has not yet fully decided which option to choose from. If you could select one of the two options for your friend, which option would you choose?” The two options were “Low-fat, light ice cream (Ice Cream A)” and “Full-fat, heavy ice cream (Ice Cream B)”. The choice was measured in a binary choice (0 = *Low-fat, light ice cream (Ice cream A)*, 1 = *Full-fat, heavy ice cream (Ice cream B)*).

Manipulation checks. Then, participants rated the extent to which the food choice they have made for themselves are indulgent, “In this scenario, how

indulgent is the ice cream choice you have made for yourself? (1 = *not at all indulgent*, 7 = *very indulgent*).

Demographic measures. Finally, participants indicated demographic measures including gender, age, and ethnicity.

Results

Manipulation check. A one-way ANOVA on the perceived indulgence of the food choice for oneself revealed that participants in the indulgent choice condition perceived their choices to be more indulgent ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.74$) than participants in the non-indulgent choice condition ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.63$), $F(1,97) = 61.27$, $p < .001$.

Choices for others. A binary logistic regression with the food choice for oneself as the independent variable (0 = non-indulgent food choice, 1 = indulgent food choice) and the food choice for the friend as the dependent variable (0 = non-indulgent food choice, 1 = indulgent food choice) revealed that, as predicted, participants in the indulgent choice condition were more likely to make indulgent choices for their friend (74.5%) than participants in the non-indulgent choice condition (31.3%; $\chi^2(1) = 18.60$, $p < .001$ (See Figure 2). Thus, H1 was supported.

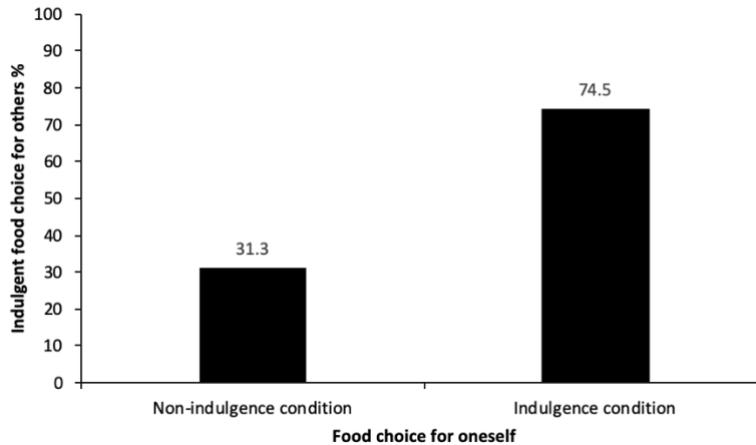


Figure 2. The effect of indulgent food choice for oneself on indulgent food choice for others (Study 1)

Discussion

Study 1 tested whether indulgent food choice for oneself increases indulgent food choices for others in sequential food ordering. The results showed that as expected, participants in the indulgent choice condition were more likely to make an indulgent choice for their friend and supported hypothesis 1. Study 2 further tests the underlying mechanism of increased negative self-conscious affect and motivation to involve others and tests all of our hypotheses concurrently.

Study 2

Study 2 builds on Study 1 in three ways. First, Study 2 replicates the main effect shown in Study 1 in the different food ordering context. Whereas Study 1 utilizes simultaneous sequential ordering context in which consumers first make an indulgent food choice and make a food choice for social other, Study 2 utilizes non-simultaneous ordering context in which consumers first finish eating an indulgent food item and then make a food choice for another. Second, Study 2 examines the motivational process underlying how indulgent food choices for oneself influences indulgent food choices for others. Specifically, we explore how negative self-conscious affect of guilt and the motivation to involve others in the indulgence experience serially mediate the relationship between indulgent food choice for oneself and indulgent choice for others. Lastly, Study 2 examines a moderating role of perceived similarity between the self and other.

Method

Participants and design. 101 UK participants were recruited through Prolific Academic (70.3% women; $M_{\text{age}} = 38.18$, range = 18-67) for nominal payment. Study 1 employs 2 (food choice for oneself: non-indulgent vs. indulgent) between-participants design.

Procedure. Participants completed the study on their personal computer and were randomly assigned to one of the two food choice conditions.

Participants in the both conditions first envisioned a scenario of being given an opportunity to make an indulgent food consumption:

“Imagine that you are in a small café in the afternoon waiting for your friend. While waiting for your friend, you decide to eat some ice cream. On the menu, you find two options: (1) Ice Cream A: low-fat, light ice cream, (2)Ice Cream B: full-fat, heavy ice cream.

You wonder whether you should eat the low-fat, light ice cream (Ice Cream A) or the full-fat, heavy ice cream (Ice Cream B). You have not exercised or eaten well today, so you are already far above your calorie budget for the day. Eating the full-fat, heavy ice cream (Ice Cream B), rather than the low-fat, light ice cream (Ice Cream A), will definitely cause you to go over your calorie goal.”

Then, participants in the indulgent choice condition received additional scenario information designed to manipulate making a choice of an indulgent consumption:

“Finally, giving in to the temptation of the full-fat, heavy ice cream, you choose “Ice Cream B” rather than “Ice Cream A (low-fat, light ice cream)”. Now, you are almost done with eating the ice cream.”

Participants in the non-indulgent choice condition received additional scenario information designed to manipulate making a choice of a non-indulgent consumption:

“Finally, resisting the temptation of the full-fat, heavy ice cream, you choose “Ice Cream A (low-fat, light ice cream)” rather than "Ice Cream B”. Now, you are almost done with eating the ice cream.”

Then, participants in both conditions are asked to imagine themselves in this situation and write a brief statement about how they would feel. After the writing task, participants answered questions regarding the choices they would make for their friend, negative self-conscious feelings of guilt about the ice cream choice they have made for themselves, motivation to involve others, as well as

indulgence perception of their food choices (manipulation check) and demographics.

Measures. Choices for others. First, participants indicated food choice for their friend: “Now, your friend arrives at the café. Your friend also wants to eat ice cream. If you could select one of the two options for your friend, which option would you choose?”. The two options were “Low-fat, light ice cream (Ice Cream A)” and “Full-fat, heavy ice cream (Ice Cream B)”. The choice was measured in a binary choice (0 = *Low-fat, light ice cream (Ice cream A)*, 1 = *Full-fat, heavy ice cream (Ice cream B)*).

Negative self-conscious affect. Then, participants rated negative self-conscious affect of guilt with two items: “In this scenario, you have chosen to eat low-fat, light ice cream [full-fat, heavy ice cream]. Please indicate how you would feel about your ice cream choice” (1 = *not at all guilty/not at all regretful*; 7 = *very guilty/very regretful*; Cronbach’s alpha = .95; Ramanathan & Williams, 2007).

Motivation to involve others. Then, participants rated motivation to involve others with a single item: “I don’t want to be the only one who selects this ice cream” (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Perceived similarity of others. Then, participants rated perceived similarity of their friend with two items: “In this scenario, my friend would currently have calorie goal as I have” (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Manipulation checks. Then, participants rated the extent to which the food choice they have made for themselves are indulgent, “In this scenario, how

indulgent is the ice cream choice you have made for yourself? (1 = *not at all indulgent*, 7 = *very indulgent*).

Demographic measures. Finally, participants indicated demographic measures including gender, age, and ethnicity.

Results

Manipulation check. A one-way ANOVA on the perceived indulgence of the food choice for oneself revealed that participants in the indulgent choice condition perceived their choices to be more indulgent ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.49$) than participants in the non-indulgent choice condition ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 2.01$), $F(1,99) = 51.79$, $p = .001$.

Choices for others. A binary logistic regression with the food choice for oneself as the independent variable (0 = non-indulgent food choice, 1 = indulgent food choice) and the food choice for the friend as the dependent variable (0 = non-indulgent food choice, 1 = indulgent food choice) revealed that, as predicted, participants in the indulgent choice condition were more likely to make indulgent choices for their friend (65.3%) than participants in the non-indulgent choice condition (34.6%; $\chi^2(1) = 9.51$, $p = .002$ (See Figure 3). Thus, H1 was supported.

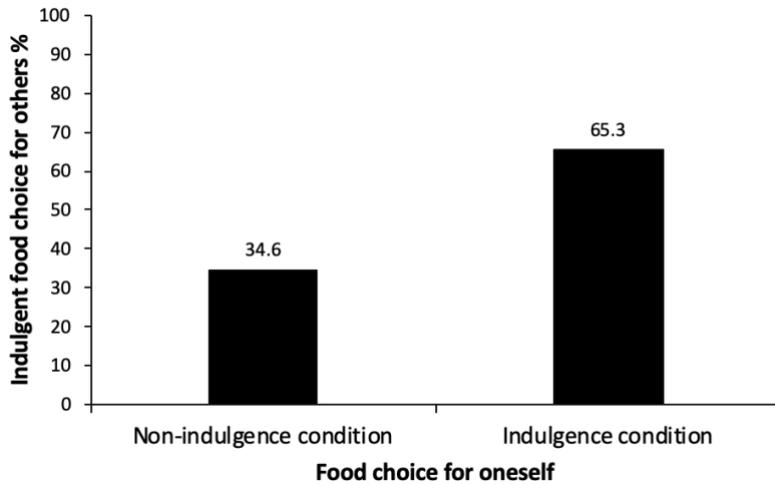


Figure 3. The effect of indulgent food choice for oneself on indulgent food choice for others (Study 2).

Negative self-conscious affect. A one-way ANOVA revealed that participants in the indulgent choice condition felt more negative self-conscious affect ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 2.01$) than participants in the non-indulgent choice condition ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 1.44$), $F(1,99) = 18.72$, $p < .001$. Thus, H2 was supported.

Motivation to involve others. A one-way ANOVA revealed that the difference in motivation to involve others between the participants in the indulgent choice condition ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 2.18$) and participants in the non-indulgent choice condition ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 2.25$) was not significant, $F(1,99) = 0.86$, $p = .36$. However, more importantly, mediation analysis indicated that negative self-conscious affect underlies the effect of food choice for the self on the motivation to involve others, $b = 0.53$, $SE = .23$, 95% CI [0.13, 1.02]. Thus, H3 was supported.

Moderated serial mediation analysis. We examined the serial mediation pathway: indulgent food choice for oneself → negative self-conscious affect → motivation to involve others → indulgent food choice for others. We expect this mediation pattern to hold when the target recipient is perceived to be high in similarity, but not when the target recipient is perceived to be low in similarity. We conducted a moderated serial mediation using 5,000 bootstrap samples (Model 87; Hayes, 2018). Food choice for oneself was included as the predictor (X: 0 = non-indulgent food choice, 1 = indulgent food choice), food choice for others as the outcome (Y: 0 = non-indulgent food choice, 1 = indulgent food choice), negative self-conscious affect as the first mediator (M1), motivation to involve others as the second mediator (M2), and perceived similarity of others to the self as the moderator (W). The results revealed that as predicted, the moderated serial mediation was significant, $b = .06$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI [0.00, 0.22]. Specifically, when the friend is perceived to be high in similarity (+1 $SD = 5.05$), the indirect effect of food choice for oneself on food choice for others through negative self-conscious affect and motivation to involve others was significant ($b = 0.20$, $SE = .17$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.66]). However, when the friend is perceived to be low in similarity (-1 $SD = 1.74$), the indirect effect of food choice for oneself on food choice for others was not significant ($b = -0.01$, $SE = .09$, 95% CI [-0.18, 0.20]). Thus, H4 and H5 were supported. See Figure 4 for the full model.

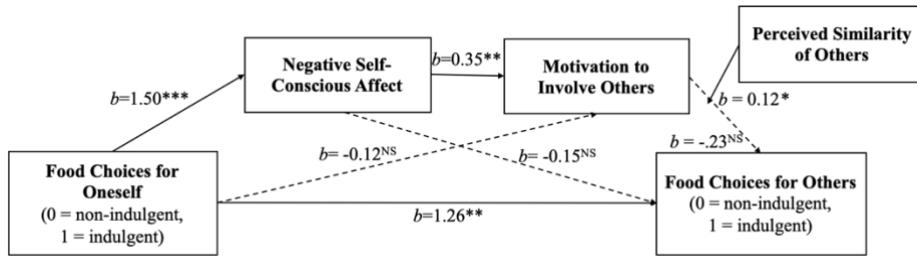


Figure 4. The moderated mediation model (Study 2)

Notes. The path coefficients are unstandardized betas. Values in parentheses indicate the effect of food choice for oneself on food choice for others after controlling for the mediator. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

Study 2 tested whether indulgent food choice for the self increases indulgent choices for others, the underlying mechanism is negative self-conscious affect and motivation to involve others, the moderating role of perceived similarity of others to the self. The results showed that as expected, participants in the indulgent choice condition were more likely to make indulgent choice for their friend and negative self-conscious affect and motivation to involve others fully mediated the effect of indulgent choice for oneself on indulgent choice for others and this indirect path is more prominent when the target recipient is perceived to be more similar to the self.

General Discussion

Together, two studies provide support for the idea that consumer food choices for others are more indulgent when consumers first make indulgent food choices for themselves. Specifically, In our studies, we find that participants preferred to make indulgent (vs. non-indulgent) food choices for their friend when they first make indulgent (vs. non-indulgent) food choices for themselves and this phenomenon is explained by their increased negative self-conscious affect and motivation to involve others in their experiences.

Our results bring important novel insight into the literature on self-regulation and indulgence. While prior research has focused on consumer behaviors of achieving intrapersonal balances between self-indulgence and self-regulation (e.g., Allard & White, 2005; Laran, 2010), current research focuses on consumer behaviors of achieving interpersonal balances between self-indulgence and other-indulgence. Also, prior research has mainly focused on how social interaction influences indulgent consumption (e.g., McFerran, Dahl, Fitzsimons, & Morales, 2010). The current research extends this literature by showing that self-regulation and self-indulgence can also affect social interaction (i.e., with whom and how people interact).

Our findings also extend the literature on emotions, especially on negative self-conscious affect, which have demonstrated a wealth of tactics people take as a reparative action. Prior research has mainly examined how

people lift the self up and achieve intrapersonal balances to repair their negative self-evaluation resulted from guilt (e.g., Allard & White, 2005). The current research presents a novel behavioral outcome on how people lift others down and achieve interpersonal balance.

The current research is limited to the context in which indulgence induces negative conscious affect and how consumers cope with the affect. However, as prior research also implies, indulgence also brings positive affect such as short-term pleasure (Ramanathan & Williams, 2007). Future research could seek other underlying mechanisms why consumers make indulgent food choices for others based on the positive affect indulgence induces. This will help fully understand the relationship between indulgent food choices for the self and indulgent food choices for others.

Also, while we focused on food choice domain here, many other indulgence domains (e.g., finance, work) are relevant and remains as an exciting possibility for follow-up research.

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국문초록

자신을 위한 탐닉적 음식 선택이 타인을 위한 탐닉적 음식 선택에 미치는 영향

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기존의 많은 연구들은 소비자가 어떻게 탐닉적 소비와 절제된 소비사이에서 내적 균형을 맞추는지에 관해 연구하였다. 본 연구는 탐닉적 소비가 소비자 내적 균형 뿐만 아니라, 자신을 위한 탐닉적 소비와 타인을 위한 탐닉적 소비 사이에 대인적 균형 또한 맞추게 함을 검증한다. 구체적으로 본 연구는 두 개의 실험을 통해 자신을 위해 탐닉적인 음식을 선택한 소비자들은 타인에게도 탐닉적인 음식을 선택해주는 경향이 있음을 밝혔고, 이는 자신을 위한 탐닉적인 음식 선택이 부정적인 자의식 감정과 타인을 자신의 행동에 연루시키고자 하는 내적 동기에 의해 발생하는 현상임을 밝혔다. 또한, 자신을 위한 음식 선택이 타인을 위한 음식 선택에 미치는 영향은 인지된 타인의 유사성에 의해 조절됨을 추가적으로 밝혔다. 본 연구는 탐닉적 소비, 자기 통제, 감정 문헌에 이론적인 기여를 한다.

주요어: 자신을 위한 선택, 타인을 위한 선택,
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