



The consumer experience: The impact of supplier effort and consumer effort on customer satisfaction



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A B S T R A C T

Existing research on experiential offers often examines the impact of such offers on consumers' evaluations (e.g., customer satisfaction). Yet existing research has neglected that experiential offers typically involve effort from both the supplier and the consumer – and neglected that effort can influence evaluations. To address this gap, the present study examines the impact of supplier effort and the consumer's own effort on the consumer's evaluation of experiential offers in terms of customer satisfaction. Two experiments, comprising two different experiential offers, were carried out. In both experiments, supplier effort (low vs. high) and consumer effort (low vs. high) were manipulated. Customer satisfaction was the dependent variable. The results show that high supplier effort boosts customer satisfaction, and that the effects of consumer effort are either absent or indirect with a negative impact. Moreover, the results indicate that a supplier effort-consumer effort gap (i.e., the consumer perceives that the supplier has expended more effort than the consumer) contributes positively to customer satisfaction.

1. Introduction

Authors in fields such as retailing, tourism, and services have argued that firms should provide consumers with experiential offers, in the sense that the offer should be personal, engaging, compelling, memorable, and create intense positive reactions (Bharwani and Jauhari, 2013; Iglesias et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2012; Lemke et al., 2011; Manthiou et al., 2014; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015). One main reason is that services are becoming increasingly commoditized (Lemke et al., 2011), and experiential offers are seen as an option to make services more differentiated (Walls et al., 2011). Experiential offers are also likely to produce several other benefits for the firm – such as increased consumer satisfaction, affective commitment, loyalty, and word-of-mouth (Brakus et al., 2009; Dubé et al., 2003; Iglesias et al., 2011; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Manthiou et al., 2014; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015).

The experience construct is holistic and multi-dimensional (Brakus et al., 2009; Carù and Cova, 2008; Gentile et al., 2007; Lemke et al., 2011; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015; Verhoef et al., 2009), which means that many elements of an offer have to be considered by firms wishing to create experiential offers. Indeed, several such elements have been discussed in the literature (e.g., Bharwani and Jauhari, 2013; Dong and Siu, 2013; Lemke et al., 2011; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Yet we believe that (a) the existing experience literature has overlooked one general element, the

extent to which an offer involves effort, and that (b) effort is likely to contribute to consumers' overall evaluations of experiential offers. More specifically, we believe that effort, which we define here as the amount of energy or force put into a behavior or a series of behavior (Mohr and Bitner, 1995), is typically involved from both the consumer's and the supplier's point of view when it comes to experiential offers. This is particularly the case for experiential offers with a non-routine and extraordinary character. Consider, for example, river rafting (Arnould and Price, 1993), skydiving (Celsi et al., 1993), baseball games (Holt, 1995), and Burning Man (Kozinets, 2002); they demand more effort from both those who consume the offer and from the employees who produce it compared to non-experiential offers. Yet both supplier and customer effort, we argue, are at hand also for more mundane experiential offers.

We assume that the effort aspect is likely to play a role in consumers' evaluations of experiential offers, because psychologists have since long acknowledged that effort is a fundamental aspect of human behavior – with implications for many responses (Eisenberger, 1992). Some marketing-related studies, particularly in advertising, have examined consumers' reactions to suppliers' efforts in producing an offer, and a main pattern from such studies is that there is a positive link between consumers' perceptions of the supplier's effort and consumers' evaluations of the offer (Kirmani and Wright, 1997; Mohr and Bitner, 1995; Söderlund et al., 2017). Research on consumers' own effort is sparse (Sweeney et al., 2015), yet some studies imply that consumer

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effort in relation to an offer can boost evaluations of the offer (Cardozo, 1965; Norton et al., 2012; Sweeney et al., 2015). The literature on consumer effort, however, comprises considerable ambiguity with respect to the impact of consumers' own effort on their evaluations, because other studies imply that consumers are lazy misers who appreciate suppliers who make life easy for them and thus that consumers would punish effort-demanding offers with lower evaluations (Berry et al., 2002; Srivastava and Kaul, 2014). Moreover, some theories, particularly equity theory (Adams, 1963), imply that the levels of the two types of effort (sometimes referred to as "other-effort" and "own-effort") are likely to be compared by the consumer, and that the resulting outcome, in terms of a gap, influences evaluations. This particular aspect, however, has hitherto not been addressed in a consumer setting.

Taken together, existing theory and empirical research dealing with effort indicate that an explicit account of this variable may add to the understanding of consumers' evaluations.

Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to examine the potential for an impact of both supplier effort and consumer effort on the consumer's evaluation of experiential offers. The type of offer we focus on is service offers with a hedonic and non-routine character, which have the potential to produce personal, engaging, compelling, memorable, and intense positive reactions (Bharwani and Jauhari, 2013; Iglesias et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2012; Lemke et al., 2011; Manthiou et al., 2014; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015). In terms of existing experience typologies, then, the offers in focus here are likely to generate extraordinary experiences rather than ordinary experiences for the consumer (Bhattacharjee and Mogilner, 2014).

The main evaluation variable in the present study is customer satisfaction; we assume that it represents an important aspect of the consumer's overall evaluation of an offer (Anderson et al., 1994; Westbrook and Oliver, 1991), and that it has implications for several other variables of both theoretical and managerial concern (Szymanski and Henard, 2001). It has also been used frequently in previous research to capture consumers' overall evaluations of experiential offers (e.g., Brakus et al., 2009; Carlson et al., 2016; Dong and Siu, 2013). Two experiments, comprising two separate experiential offers, were carried out to examine the impact of the two effort types on customer satisfaction.

Our examination, we argue, contributes to the academic experience literature and its attempts to identify links between attributes of experiential offers and consumer evaluations, given that effort is often involved in both production and consumption of experiential offers (and given the existing experience literature's neglect of effort). The examination also serves the purpose of highlighting the effort aspect for managers; creating a strong customer experience is now a leading management objective (Carlson et al., 2016; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016), and if effort is indeed related to outcomes such as customer satisfaction, effort aspects call for managerial attention in an experience context. Moreover, few human activities in the marketplace (and indeed on our planet) take place without effort, so the examination underscores the potential of effort to contribute also to the understanding of consumers' evaluations in general. It should also be noted that existing studies have dealt with effort consequences in terms of either supplier effort (e.g., Kirmani and Wright, 1997; Mohr and Bitner, 1995) or consumer effort (e.g., Cardozo, 1965; Norton et al., 2012), yet the present study is an attempt to examine the impact of both types of effort on consumers' evaluations within the frame of the same study.

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Given a service offer that produces a memorable and positively charged experience for the consumer, the thesis in the present study is that both (a) supplier effort in producing the offer and (b) the consumer's own effort in consuming the offer are likely to have an impact on customer satisfaction. We treat both effort variables in perceptual

terms from the consumer's point of view; that is to say, effort is defined in terms of consumer perceptions. In the case of the impact of supplier effort on customer satisfaction, we assume a mediating role for perceived quality; in the case of consumer effort, it is assumed that perceived value is a main mediator.

2.1. Supplier effort

In general, effort is the amount of energy or force put into a behavior or a series of behavior, while *perceived* effort is the amount of energy an observer believes an actor has invested in a behavior (Mohr and Bitner, 1995). In existing consumer behavior-related research dealing with consumers' reactions to suppliers' offers, focus has been on perceived effort. It is this focus that we adopt here, and within this frame supplier effort has been conceptualized as the consumer's perception of how much money, managerial time, and hard work that lies behind the supplier's activities (Kirmani and Wright, 1997; Modig et al., 2014; Söderlund et al., 2017).

With respect to the consequences of such effort perceptions, several authors have stressed that there is a positive link between perceived supplier effort and consumers' quality perceptions (Ambler and Hollier, 2004; Kirmani, 1997; Kirmani and Rao, 2000; Kirmani and Wright, 1989; Kruger et al., 2004). One reason is that perceived supplier effort signals confidence and commitment (Kirmani and Wright, 1997; Modig et al., 2014), and these factors can have a positive impact on consumers' quality perceptions. An additional reason behind the effort-quality link is that high supplier effort signals high supplier motivation (Mohr and Bitner, 1995), and the level of perceived motivation is likely to go hand in hand with quality perceptions. Another possible underlying mechanism is suggested by Morales (2005); she assumes that we humans in general feel that others have a moral responsibility to work hard, and that we reward those who indeed do so with positive emotions. And such emotions could color quality perceptions in a valence-congruent way (Forgas, 1995). Empirical indications of a perceived effort-positive emotions-quality chain are provided by the measurement items used by Buell and Norton (2011). Moreover, a perceived effort-quality link has also been observed in leader-subordinate dyads in organizations, in the sense the level of perceived effort of the other party goes hand in hand with the level of the perceived quality of the interpersonal relationship (Maslyn and Uhl-Bien, 2001).

In the next step of the consumer's information processing activities, it is expected that perceived quality would be positively related to overall evaluations; several studies suggest that perceived quality and overall evaluations are two discrete constructs, that quality perceptions are antecedents to overall evaluations, and that there is a positive link between perceived quality and overall evaluations (Baker and Crompton, 2000; Carlson et al., 2016; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; de Ruyter et al., 1997). It should also be noted that some service encounter studies have identified a positive association between consumer perceptions of the service person's effort and customer satisfaction (Mohr and Bitner, 1995; Specht et al., 2007). Here, given a supplier effort-perceived quality link and a perceived quality-satisfaction link, we assume that perceived quality is likely to be a mediating variable. With respect to the impact of perceived supplier effort on customer satisfaction, then, the following is hypothesized:

H1. Perceived supplier effort in producing an experiential offer is positively associated with customer satisfaction

H2. Perceived service quality mediates the perceived supplier effort-customer satisfaction association

2.2. Consumer effort

Consumer effort has been defined as the physical, mental, and financial resources expended by the consumer to obtain a product

(Cardozo, 1965). Not all authors, however, include financial resources in the consumer effort construct; some view consumer effort as a set of additional costs beyond the monetary price that has to be paid (Gibbs and Drolet, 2003). This is the view adopted also here; we deal with consumer effort in terms of cognitive and physical effort. In the arguments below, it is assumed that both cognitive and physical effort can be subsumed under the same general effort construct (Eisenberger, 1992). Moreover, consumer effort is typically defined in terms of consumer perceptions and, as indicated above, this is also how we deal with this variable in the present study. The literature on consumer effort, however, is relatively limited (Sweeney et al., 2015). And when it is juxtaposed with research on the effects of the individual's effort carried out outside a consumer context, a pattern of ambiguity emerges with respect to the impact of effort on evaluations.

On the one hand, some authors argue that consumer effort in relation to an object is likely to be positively associated with consumers' overall evaluations of the object (Cardozo, 1965; Norton et al., 2012, Van Raaij and Pruyn, 1998). As a first step in the process leading to evaluations, it has been suggested that the individual's own level of expended effort has a signaling function for the individual; a main assumption is that high own effort in relation to an object signals that the object is important (Cardozo, 1965), useful (Labroo and Kim, 2009), desirable (Kivetz, 2005), attractive (Eisenberger, 1992), and valuable (Cialdini, 1988; Lewis, 1965; Mochon et al., 2012; Norton et al., 2012). The assumption that own effort is positively related to perceived value is particularly prevalent in the literature. One reason behind this relation is that the history of the individual may be such that high effort in the past has been related to valuable rewards, and this may generalize to new situations where effort induces expectations of valuable rewards (Lewis, 1965). Then, in the next step, when the high effort-requiring offer (which is seen as valuable) has been consumed, and when evaluations are to be formed, Cardozo (1965) and Klein et al. (2005) have proposed that a dissonance-based mechanism is set in motion, and that the net effect is that the consumer is likely to enhance his or her evaluations of the offer to reduce the potential for dissonance. Similarly, Norton et al. (2012) suggest that this mechanism leads the consumer to like a high effort offer more than a low effort offer. It is also possible that one's own effort induces feelings of competence (Mochon et al., 2012) and that the ability to endure effort produces a sense of mastery (Aronson, 1961), and these states can boost the perceived value of engaging in an effortful activity. Moreover, as for the consequences of perceived value, several studies show that perceived value has a positive impact on overall evaluations such as customer satisfaction (Carlson et al., 2016; Cronin et al., 2000; Tam, 2004). Given this, then, one would assume that consumer effort is positively associated with customer satisfaction due to a mediating role of perceived value.

On the other hand, however, effort aversion has a long history. Ancient Greeks and Romans viewed work as dishonorable, and during medieval times work was seen as a punishment for man's original sin (Schaltegger and Torgler, 2010). Several empirical studies indicate that such views persist: hard work is an aversive activity for human beings (Lewis, 1965; Scollon and King, 2004). This is mirrored in a consumer context by a frequently made assumption that consumers prefer to minimize effort when engaged in information processing (Berry et al., 2002; Dellaert and Stremersch, 2005; Huppertz and Mower, 1992), and by empirical findings suggesting a positive association between shopping convenience and customer satisfaction (Srivastava and Kaul, 2014). Indeed, according to the Sweeney et al. (2015), most consumers prefer activities involving low effort levels. Given that effort per se has a negative charge, it has been argued that an activity requiring high consumer effort can result in the consumer finding the activity less pleasant, more fatiguing, and more frustrating (Cardozo, 1965). Results of this type are reported by Franke and Schreier (2010), who found a negative association between consumer effort and the enjoyment of the process called for in self-designing a product. To this it can be added that – in marketing communications – copious firms promise that their

offers comprise low effort benefits (e.g., convenience, easiness, and accessibility 24/7/365), and massive exposure to such messages may in the aggregate create expectations that consumers are not supposed to expend effort when dealing with firms. This would be consonant with Berry et al.'s (2002) argument that there has been a continuous increase in consumer demand for convenience. This reasoning based on effort aversion thus suggest that high consumer effort can *reduce* perceived value for the consumer and, given a positive link between perceived value and customer satisfaction, that the net effect would be reduced satisfaction.

Given the conflicting arguments regarding the impact (positive or negative) of consumer effort on customer satisfaction, then, the first consumer effort hypothesis in the present study is formulated in a non-directional way. In addition, we hypothesize that perceived value serve as a mediator.

H3. Consumer effort in consuming an experiential offer is associated with customer satisfaction

H4. Perceived value mediates the consumer effort-customer satisfaction association

2.3. The supplier's effort level versus the consumer's effort level

We humans seem to be highly sensitive to how much effort we expend in relation to the effort expended by our interaction partners (Adams, 1963). Presumably, this can explain why we typically detect free riders and social loafers relatively easy and why hunter-gatherer societies had elaborated rules for food sharing between those who actually contributed with the food and others in the same tribe (Flannery and Marcus, 2012). Moreover, the presence of the two types of effort in exchange situations comprising an individual and an exchange partner is likely to invite the individual to compare effort levels. And several theories suggest that a gap between the levels may affect evaluations. More specifically, equity theory (Adams, 1963) implies that the individual's evaluation of an exchange situation is likely to be higher when his or her inputs are lower than another person's input, because individuals are inherently egoistic and prefer personally advantageous outcomes. In addition, according to prospect theory (Tversky and Kahneman, 1981), the negative aspect of losing in the comparison (by expending more effort than the other party) is likely to be more negative than the positivity of winning. In empirical studies in an organizational behavior context, effort imbalance in terms of higher other-effort than own-effort in leader-subordinate relations has been found to positively impact outcome variables such as perceived relationship quality and loyalty (Maslyn and Uhl-Bien, 2001). In other words, we humans seem to like it more when our exchange partners expend more effort than we do. Therefore, the following is hypothesized for consumers' reactions to experiential offers:

H5. The gap between supplier effort and consumer effort is associated with customer satisfaction in such a way that customer satisfaction will be higher when supplier effort is higher than consumer effort

Two experiments were employed to test Hypotheses 1–5; in both experiments, supplier effort (low vs. high) and consumer effort (low vs. high) were the manipulated factors, and customer satisfaction was the dependent variable.

3. Experiment 1

3.1. Procedure and participants

In Experiment 1, H1–H5 were tested with a between-subjects experiment in which the participants were exposed to an experiential offer. Supplier effort (low vs. high) and consumer effort (low vs. high) were manipulated. Four versions of a role-play scenario describing an

event in a sport store were used for the manipulations. Scenarios of this type are used frequently in service-related research (e.g., Bitner, 1990; Karande et al., 2007; Söderlund and Rosengren, 2008), and one main advantage is that they allow for homogenous treatments within each condition (and control of other factors). The participants ($n = 113$; $M_{age} = 23.37$; 40 men and 73 women), a convenience sample, were undergraduates in business administration courses. Main arguments in favor of using student samples can be found in, for example, Calder et al. (1981) and Katz (1972). The participants were randomly allocated to one of four scenario versions and, after exposure, they were asked to respond to a set of questionnaire items regarding the offer and their overall evaluations in terms of customer satisfaction.

3.2. Stimulus development

It has been suggested that one way for suppliers to produce experiential offers is to stage out-of-the ordinary events (Pine and Gilmore, 1998), and this was used as the point of departure here. In the present case, the participants were asked to assume the role of a fan of one particular athlete, who was described as a global celebrity. According to the scenario (see Appendix 1), the fan had heard rumors that the athlete would make a rare appearance in an event organized by a sport store; the athlete would talk about career issues, future plans, and possibly also show some exercises. The fan investigated this and found that the athlete would indeed come to such an event, the fan registered for the event, and turned up at the sport store. The athlete was there, as promised, and produced an event that was described in such terms that it would imply the presence of all the four experiential components proposed by Brakus et al. (2009). To facilitate the participants' absorption in the scenario, and acknowledging that different athletes differ in popularity, the identity and the gender of the athlete were not disclosed (i.e., these aspects were supposed to be "filled in" by the participants).

Given the prevalence of events of this type for promotional purposes, it can be assumed that it must have been relatively clear for the participants that the store had persuasion motives. Consumer perceptions of such motives, however, are likely to attenuate effort's impact on various consumer responses (Morales, 2005), so the present setting can be seen as a relatively strong test for the effort hypotheses.

The four versions in Appendix 1 were used to manipulate perceived supplier effort (in persuading the athlete to come to the store) and consumer effort (in finding out about the event, in gaining access to it, and in participating in it once it had started).

3.3. Measures

All items below were captured with 10-point itemized rating scales. *Supplier effort*, in terms of consumers' perceptions of the supplier's effort, was measured with the question "To organize this event, from the store's point of view, must have been...", followed by the adjective pairs "not effortful-effortful", "easy-difficult", and "required little work-required a lot of work" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .97$). Similar items have been used by, for example, Gibbs and Drolet (2003), Mohr and Bitner (1995), and Morales (2005). For *consumer effort*, the question was "For me, to take part in the event was...", followed by the same three adjective pairs as for supplier effort ($\alpha = .94$). *Customer satisfaction* was measured with the question "What is your overall evaluation of this store visit?", followed by three satisfaction items used in several national satisfaction barometers (Fornell, 1992) and adapted to a store setting: "How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your visit to the store?" (1 = very dissatisfied, 10 = very satisfied), "To what extent does this store visit meet your expectations?" (1 = not at all, 10 = totally), and "Imagine a sport store that is perfect in every respect. How near or far from this ideal do you find this store visit?" (1 = very far from, 10 = cannot get any closer). Alpha for this scale was .84.

Moreover, to be able to assess the potential for mediation of two

types, supplier effort-perceived quality-satisfaction and consumer effort-perceived value-satisfaction (thus in tune with the conceptual reasoning above), the following measures were used: (a) the *perceived quality* of the event was measured with the adjective pairs "low quality-high quality", "poor-good", and "low standard-high standard" ($\alpha = .96$), while (b) the *perceived value* of the event was measured with the adjective pair "worthless-valuable".

To measure the *supplier effort-consumer effort gap* (i.e., to test Hypothesis 5), the difference between the supplier effort variable and the consumer effort variable was computed for each participant. Caution has been called for in using such difference scores, because the components forming the scores may be highly correlated, which reduces the reliability of a difference score. This, in turn, attenuates the difference score variable's ability to correlate with other variables (Peter et al., 1993). In addition, gaps based on difference scores may be subject to variance restriction problems, in the sense that one component consistently reach higher levels than the other component (ibid.). In the present case, however, the zero-order correlation between the components was modest ($r = .17$, $p < .10$) and the reliability of the difference score variable (i.e., the gap variable) was acceptable ($r_D = .94$) according to the Peter et al. (1993) formula. A comparison between the four cells showed that the gap variable (a positive sign indicates that supplier effort had reached a higher level than consumer effort) was subject to a significantly lower mean level ($M_{gap} = -2.02$) for the low supplier effort/high consumer effort participants compared to all other cells. It also reached its highest cell mean level, as expected, for the high supplier effort/low consumer effort participants ($M_{gap} = 4.84$). Variance was thus not restricted.

In addition, to examine the contribution of the two effort variables to customer satisfaction in relation to previously examined components of experiential offers, measures of Brakus et al.'s (2009) four *experience components* (three items were used for each component, as in the original Brakus et al. scales) were included. Finally, to assess the *experiential content* of the stimulus event, the participants were asked about their agreement with the statement "I would describe this event as an experience". The overall experience mean was 8.82, and no cell mean differences were significant (all $p > .10$). This thus indicates that the event was perceived as experience-charged by the participants. In the end of the questionnaire, the participants were also asked if they had imagined a particular athlete in the scenario and, if so, who they saw as the athlete. The most frequent answer was soccer player Zlatan Ibrahimovic, closely followed by runner Usain Bolt. Tiger Woods, Serena Williams, and Michael Jordan were also mentioned.

3.4. Analysis and results

A manipulation check with the supplier effort variable revealed that the two high supplier effort treatment versions produced a higher supplier effort mean ($M = 9.06$) than the two low supplier effort versions ($M = 5.72$). This difference was significant ($t = 11.33$, $p < .01$). The manipulation check for the consumer effort variable resulted in a higher consumer effort level for the high consumer effort versions ($M = 8.07$) than for the low consumer effort versions ($M = 3.48$), and this difference was significant ($t = 14.16$, $p < .01$). The manipulations thus behaved as intended.

To test H1 and H3, we employed a 2×2 ANOVA with supplier effort (low vs. high) and consumer effort (low vs. high) as the factors. Customer satisfaction was the dependent variable. The resulting means are presented in Table 1.

The main effect of supplier effort was significant ($F = 10.91$, $p < .01$), thus providing support for H1. The main effect for consumer effort, however, was not significant ($F = .61$, $p = .44$). This means that H3 was not supported. The interaction was not significant ($F = .45$, $p = .51$). The same pattern, with only a significant main effect for supplier effort, was obtained when the four Brakus et al. (2009) experiential offer components (shown in previous research to have an impact on

Table 1
Customer satisfaction means for the treatment groups in Experiment 1.

	Low consumer effort	High consumer effort
High supplier effort	8.32	8.29
Low supplier effort	7.49	7.04

customer satisfaction) were used as covariates in an ANCOVA. As an alternative approach, supplier effort and consumer effort were regressed on customer satisfaction. This analysis showed (as expected given the ANOVA and ANCOVA results) that supplier effort was significantly and positively associated with customer satisfaction ($b = .24$, $p < .01$) and that consumer effort had no significant impact ($b = -.08$, $p = .14$). It should be noted that the sign for consumer effort was negative, thus suggesting that the two types of effort may represent qualitatively different types of currency in the consumer's exchange with a supplier.

Our theoretical reasoning implies that perceived quality is likely to mediate the supplier effort-satisfaction link (Hypothesis 2), while perceived value is likely to mediate the consumer effort-satisfaction link (Hypothesis 4). It should be noted, however, that perceived quality and perceived value can be seen as interrelated variables, in the sense that perceived quality has been shown to enhance perceived value (Chen and Chen, 2010; Cronin et al., 2000; Sweeney et al., 1999). Thus there are reasons to believe that the two mediators would behave in a similar way, despite the fact that we discussed them in isolation from each other in the theory section. To explore this issue empirically, we also examined if perceived value would mediate the supplier effort-satisfaction link and if perceived quality would mediate the consumer effort-satisfaction link. The Preacher and Hayes approach (cf. Zhao et al., 2010) was used for our assessment. For each effort variable, the two mediators were assessed separately. First, with respect to the supplier effort prediction in Hypothesis 2, a mediation analysis with supplier effort as the independent variable, perceived quality as the mediator, and customer satisfaction as the dependent variable indicated that there was a significant indirect effect from the bootstrap analysis of .09 (5000 bootstrap samples, 95% CI limits .01 and .21). The direct effect was also significant (.13, $p < .05$). H2 was thus supported. The same analysis with perceived value as the mediating variable indicated that there was a significant indirect effect from the bootstrap analysis of .06 (5000 bootstrap samples, 95% CI limits .01 and .13). Also in this analysis, the direct effect was significant (.16, $p < .05$). For supplier effort, then, its effects on customer satisfaction were both indirect and direct; mediation should therefore be regarded as being of the complementary type according to the Zhao et al. (2010) framework for mediation analysis. Second, with regards to consumer effort, no significant mediation was found, neither for perceived value (H4) nor for perceived quality (and there were no significant direct effects).

Finally, to assess H5, the zero-order correlation (on the overall sample level) between the effort gap variable and customer satisfaction was computed. The gap variable was significantly and positively associated with customer satisfaction ($r = .27$, $p < .01$), thus indicating support for H5. That is to say, the higher the supplier effort in relation to the consumer's own effort, the higher the level of satisfaction.

3.5. Discussion

Experiment 1 revealed that (a) supplier effort had a positive impact on customer satisfaction, that (b) this impact was mediated by both perceived quality and perceived value, that (c) consumer effort did not contribute significantly to customer satisfaction, neither directly nor indirectly, and that (d) consumers for which perceived supplier effort was higher than the consumer's own effort responded with the highest

levels of satisfaction.

It should be noted, however, that Experiment 1 comprised only one of many specific types of experiential offers (a temporary event in a retail setting). Moreover, the manipulation of consumer effort in Experiment 1 comprised both cognitive and physical effort. The assumption was that both types of effort can be subsumed under the same general effort construct (Eisenberger, 1992). More recently, Schmidt et al. (2012) have provided evidence that physical and cognitive effort are driven by a single motivational brain module. Yet some authors distinguish between specific effort types. In addition, gap variables of the type employed to assess H5 is subject to debate in the literature (Peter et al., 1993). Therefore, to address these issues, a second experiment was conducted.

4. Experiment 2

4.1. Procedure and participants

Experiment 2 was designed to test H1–H5 with a between-subjects experiment in which the participants were exposed to an experiential offer. As in Experiment 1, supplier effort (low vs. high) and consumer effort (low vs. high) were manipulated with a role-play scenario approach comprising four scenarios. In Experiment 2, however, only cognitive effort was manipulated, and the experiential offer was a concert with a pop band. The participants ($n = 132$; $M_{age} = 21.34$; 56 men and 76 women), again a convenience sample, were undergraduates in business administration courses. They were randomly allocated to one of the four scenario versions, and they were asked to respond to a set of questionnaire items regarding the offer and their overall evaluations in terms of customer satisfaction.

4.2. Stimulus development

The setting for Experiment 2 was a concert with a pop band. The participants were asked to assume the role of a fan who went to a concert with the band, and the scenario described the concert in such terms that it would imply the presence of all the four experiential offer components proposed by Brakus et al. (2009). The four versions in Appendix 2 were created to manipulate supplier effort (the band's effort expended to conduct the concert) and consumer effort (in terms of cognitive effort involved in attending the concert).

4.3. Measures

All items below were captured with 10-point itemized rating scales. *Supplier effort*, again in terms of consumers' perceptions of supplier effort, was measured with the question "To organize this concert, from the band's point of view, must have been...", followed by the same adjective pairs as in Experiment 1 (Cronbach's alpha = .93). For *consumer effort*, the question was "For me, to attend this concert was...", which was followed by the three adjective pairs used in Experiment 1 (alpha = .84).

For the *customer satisfaction* measure, the intention was to use the same three Fornell (1992) items as in Experiment 1. However, the expectation item reduced the internal consistency of the scale (it was weakly correlated with the other two items and reached a lower mean level). Therefore, only the two non-expectation items from the Fornell scale were used, as well as two additional items dealing with the consumer's overall impressions in evaluative terms. These items were (1) an assessment of the concert with the adjective pair "negative-positive" (1 = negative, 10 = positive), and (2) the statement "To go to this concert was rewarding" (1 = do not agree at all, 10 = agree completely). Alpha for this four-item satisfaction scale was .78. In addition, to examine if the mediation assessment from Experiment 1 would be replicated, the same three-item *perceived quality* measure (alpha = .94) and the same single-item measure of *perceived value* were used also in

Experiment 2.

For the *supplier effort-consumer effort gap*, two alternative measures were employed. The first was the same type of difference score (supplier effort minus consumer effort, computed for each participant) as used in Experiment 1. In Experiment 2, the components of the difference score variable (i.e., supplier effort and consumer effort) were unrelated ($r = .011, p = .89$), and reliability, according to the Peter et al. (1993) formula for difference scores, was acceptable ($r_D = .88$). As in Experiment 1, the difference score variable thus appeared to be unproblematic from a psychometric point of view. Second, the statements “It felt as if my effort to go to the concert was larger than the effort from the band to give the concert”, “I had to spend more energy in participating than the energy needed by the band to carry out the concert”, and “This concert produced more effort for me than for the band” were used ($\alpha = .95$). This, then, is a direct comparison operationalization recommended by those who view difference score-based operationalizations as suspect (e.g., Peter et al., 1993). As expected, these two alternative measures were negatively associated ($r = -.41, p < .01$), and both measures were used to assess the gap hypothesis (i.e., H5).

Finally, to assess the *experiential content* of the stimulus event, the same item as in Experiment 1 (adapted to a concert setting) was used; the participants were asked about their agreement with the statement “I would describe this concert as an experience”. The overall experience mean in the sample was 9.31, and no cell mean differences were significant (all $p > .05$). This thus indicates that the stimulus event was perceived as experience-charged by the participants.

4.4. Analysis and results

A manipulation check with the supplier effort variable revealed that the two high supplier effort treatment versions produced a higher supplier effort mean ($M = 7.46$) than the two low supplier effort versions ($M = 4.65$). This difference was significant ($t = 8.86, p < .01$). The manipulation check for the consumer effort variable resulted in a higher consumer effort level for the high consumer effort versions ($M = 6.01$) than for the low consumer effort versions ($M = 5.20$), and this difference was significant ($t = 2.18, p < .05$). The manipulations thus behaved as intended.

To test H1 and H3, we used a 2×2 ANOVA with supplier effort (low vs. high) and consumer effort (low vs. high) as the factors. Customer satisfaction was the dependent variable. The resulting means are presented in Table 2.

The main effect of supplier effort was significant ($F = 5.42, p < .05$), which provides support for H1. The main effect for consumer effort, however, was not significant ($F = 2.58, p = .11$). This means that H3 was not supported. The interaction was not significant ($F = 2.02, p = .16$). Again, as in Experiment 1, and as an alternative approach, supplier effort and consumer effort were regressed on customer satisfaction. This analysis showed that supplier effort was significantly and positively associated with customer satisfaction ($b = .20, p < .05$) and that consumer effort had no significant impact ($b = -.16, p = .06$). In both analyses, consumer effort was thus close to being significant, yet it failed to pass the 5% demarcation line employed in this study. Moreover, as in Experiment 1, the sign for consumer effort was negative, again suggesting that the two type of efforts may represent

Table 2
Customer satisfaction means for the treatment groups in Experiment 2.

	Low consumer effort	High consumer effort
High supplier effort	9.32	8.72
Low supplier effort	8.57	8.54

qualitatively different factors with respect to the impact on evaluations.

For the mediation aspects, the same approach as in Experiment 1 was employed. First, supplier effort and the two mediators (quality and value) were examined. For the supplier effort–quality–satisfaction analysis (i.e., H2), the results indicated that there was a significant indirect effect from the bootstrap analysis of .05 (5000 bootstrap samples, 95% CI limits .01 and .10). The direct effect was not significant (.05, $p = .13$). H2 was thus supported. Moreover, for the supplier effort–value–satisfaction chain, there was a significant indirect effect from the bootstrap analysis of .06 (5000 bootstrap samples, 95% CI limits .01 and .12). Also in this case, the direct effect was not significant (.04, $p = .22$). Thus the impact of supplier effort on customer satisfaction was mediated by both quality and value perceptions. Second, for consumer effort and the consumer effort–value–satisfaction chain (H4), there was a significant indirect and negative effect from the bootstrap analysis of $-.09$ (5000 bootstrap samples, 95% CI limits $-.16$ and $-.03$) and no significant direct effect. This provides support for H4. In addition, the analysis of the potential for also a consumer effort–quality–satisfaction chain resulted in a significant indirect and negative effect from the bootstrap analysis of $-.09$ (5000 bootstrap samples, 95% CI limits $-.15$ and $-.03$). The direct effect was not significant. In contrast to Experiment 1, then, both perceived value and perceived quality mediated the consumer effort variable's impact on customer satisfaction.

Turning to H5, and as a first test, the zero-order correlation between the difference score variable and customer satisfaction was significant and negative ($r = .26, p < .01$). This result is very similar to Experiment 1. As a second test, the direct comparison variable was used; the zero-order correlation between this variable and customer satisfaction was (as expected) negative but not significant ($r = -.13, p = .15$). Hence H5 was only supported by the difference score variable test.

4.5. Discussion

Experiment 2 produced the same findings as Experiment 1 with respect to supplier effort (consumer perceptions of supplier effort had a positive impact on customer satisfaction) and the supplier effort-consumer effort gap (consumers for which perceived supplier effort was higher than the consumer's own effort responded with the highest levels of satisfaction).

Moreover, Experiment 2 generated similar findings also for consumer effort, in terms of H3 and H5. Yet both the (negative) direct impact and the (negative) indirect impact of consumer effort were stronger in Experiment 2. In both experiments, consumer effort was measured with the same general effort items, yet in Experiment 1 both cognitive and physical effort were involved in the manipulation, while the Experiment 2 manipulation was focused on cognitive effort. We believe that this aspect has influenced the results, in the sense that the consumer effort measure is likely to have become relatively more causally potent when it was employed to capture only one type of effort. This calls for concerns regarding measures of effort in further studies, particularly with respect to consumer effort, and we return to this issue in the subsequent limitation section.

5. General discussion

5.1. Summary of main results

Both experiments revealed that perceived supplier effort in producing an experiential offer had a positive impact on customer satisfaction, and the data from both experiments indicated that this effect was mediated by the consumer's perceptions of quality and value. For consumer effort, however, there was no main effect, yet the Experiment 2 data indicated a negative and significant mediation by perceived value and perceived quality. Thus the findings suggest that supplier effort was the main effort antecedent to customer satisfaction, and that

supplier effort and consumer effort can have opposing effects. Moreover, both experiments showed that the presence of a supplier effort–consumer effort gap had a positive impact on customer satisfaction, thus indicating that the consumer's overall evaluation was boosted when he or she felt that supplier effort exceeded his or her own effort.

5.2. Contributions

The main rationale behind the two experiments was that (a) experiential offers seem to involve special effort from both the supplier and the consumer, (b) such effort has been neglected in the existing marketing-related experience literature, yet (c) other literature suggests that effort is likely to have an impact on the individual's overall evaluations.

The findings with respect to the impact of *supplier effort* on consumer evaluations are in tune with previous research dealing with advertising (Kirmani, 1997; Kirmani and Wright, 1997), packaging (Söderlund et al., 2017), and service encounters (Mohr and Bitner, 1995). Taken together, they suggest a general response pattern of the type “what-requires-effort-from-the-supplier-is-good”. In relation to existing research, the findings also contribute by adding that both perceived quality and perceived value served as mediating variables. In broader terms, the finding that the consumer rewards a high effort supplier with higher evaluations appears to mirror both traditional Protestant beliefs about the value of (others') hard work (Furnham, 1982; Mudrack, 1997) and beliefs about the benefits of competition and a relentless, continuous struggle in organizations to improve performance (i.e., beliefs that have come to permeate an increasing number of sectors in society). In this context, then, a supplier perceived as lazy and lethargic should expect a lower level of sympathy from consumers. Assuming that experiential offers require more (objective) effort from the supplier than mundane service offers, it seems as if further research on consumers' reactions to experiential offers would benefit if the supplier effort aspect is explicitly taken into account. Moreover, given that our stimuli comprised interactions between the consumer and representatives of a supplier in terms of a service encounter, the findings also contribute to the service encounter literature – a research area in which only a limited number of studies hitherto have explicitly acknowledged that employee effort may have an impact on consumers' evaluations (Mohr and Bitner, 1995; Specht et al., 2007). The findings thus suggest that the service encounter literature may benefit if more attention is allocated to employee effort. For example, the observations that a low number of employees, idle employees, and no visible employees in service environments represent negatively charged aspects for consumers (Söderlund, 2016) call for interpretations in terms of perceived lack of supplier effort.

The findings regarding *consumer effort* are consonant with the part of the effort literature stressing the negative charge of one's own effort. Consumer effort's direct impact on satisfaction was not significant, yet (in Experiment 2) it produced a negative and mediated impact when perceived value (and perceived quality) served as mediating variables. On the one hand, this is in contrast to the part of the literature suggesting a positive impact of consumer effort. For example, given the arguments that one's own effort is value-enhancing, one would have expected a satisfaction-boosting effects for high consumer effort. On the other hand, however, the negative effects are consonant with arguments based on effort aversion. Perhaps many years of firms (and marketing scholars) stressing that “the customer is king” have created expectations that we – in our roles as consumers – are supposed to be relieved from the toil and labor that have been demanded from us ever since we were hunters and gatherers. In any case, our findings regarding the negative and indirect impact of consumer effort (Experiment 2) call for more research to determine if positive and negative effects of the consumer's own effort may co-exist and can somehow cancel out each other – or if specific moderating variables are

involved in boosting and attenuating such effects. It may be noted that some authors have criticized the existing experience literature's view of consumers as essentially passive (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015), and in the light of such critique an explicit account of consumer effort may contribute to allowing for a more active consumer construct.

However, it was found (in both experiments) that there was an additional type of impact of consumer effort, in the sense that the *supplier effort–consumer effort gap* positively influenced customer satisfaction. This suggests that consumer effort may be a causally potent variable in terms of representing a comparison standard vis-à-vis perceptions of supplier effort. This part of the results are consonant with the assumptions that (a) we humans are prone to compare own-effort and other-effort in exchange situations and (b) the outcome of such comparisons affects evaluations positively when we appear to be winners rather than losers (Adams, 1963). The comparison aspect with respect to exchange of resources should be seen in the light of an increased emphasis on resource exchange in the service literature, in terms of co-creation of value (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), yet this stream of research has to date not explicitly acknowledged exchange partners' effort and its implications for information processing activities and their outcomes.

5.3. Managerial implications

The results indicate that firms can boost consumers' overall evaluations of an experiential offer by enhancing consumers' perceptions regarding the firm's effort in producing the offer. One way to accomplish this is with interventions in terms of organizational variables known to increase employee effort. Organizational commitment is one such variable, which in turn is influenced by the employee's job satisfaction (Testa, 2001). Interventions may therefore be targeted at organizational aspects with a well-documented and positive impact on job satisfaction, such as job feedback, close supervisor-employee relations, and relevant rewards (Brown and Peterson, 1993).

It should be noted, however, that supplier effort is a perceptual variable, which means that organizational interventions to increase effort in the firm may have a modest impact on consumer perceptions of supplier effort if the interventions do not produce visible effects from the consumer's point of view. An alternative approach, then, is to explicitly provide consumers with clues signaling high supplier effort. Previous research indicates that the time spend by employees in customer interactions is one such clue (Mohr and Bitner, 1995). Managers can thus encourage employees to make service encounters longer in order to boost consumers' perceptions of supplier effort. It has also been shown that information about how much time (Kruger et al., 2004; Morales, 2005) and how much “sweat” (Bechwati and Xia, 2003) it takes to produce an offer are positively associated with perceived supplier effort, so such aspects can be explicitly stressed in communications with consumers. Moreover, our results regarding the positive effects of a supplier effort–consumer effort gap on satisfaction indicate that firms should consider emphasizing the gap in interactions with consumers (e.g., by facilitating comparisons of how much each party contributes in effort terms).

Firms interested in attempts to explicitly signal their effort, however, should be mindful of arguments suggesting that consumers may interpret such attempts in terms of persuasion motives – and if this happens, the impact of perceived effort may be attenuated (Morales, 2005). Yet not much is known about how likely it is that consumers make interpretations in terms of hidden motives when others signal effort. Yet it is known that individuals at work often use impression management strategies comprising signaling of effort, for example, to work especially hard when supervisors are looking and never taking long lunches (Bolino and Turnley, 2003). Similar strategies are indeed used by students in educational institutions (Weiner, 1994). Given that most consumers would be familiar with such strategies from their own work and education activities, and given that they recognize them as

influence attempts, the impact of deliberate leakage of effort signals in commercial settings may thus backfire.

In any event, it should be underscored that across many occupations and sectors, objective work effort has become more intense over time, in the sense that there has been an increase in the proportion of effective labor performed for each hour of work (Green, 2004). Therefore, deviations from this pattern (i.e., firms or employees that do not appear to put in much effort) may catch the consumer's attention and can have negative implications for his or her evaluations, meaning that firms should seriously consider how the effort undertaken by employees can be communicated.

In addition, the results suggest caution in deliberately increasing consumer effort (e.g., by creating obstacles and difficulties for the consumer). Some authors, such as Brown (2001), have suggested that there may be a brand-enhancing potential in making life harder for the consumer, yet the present results are consonant with such practices only if they also communicate that supplier effort is even higher than what is demanded from the consumer.

5.4. Limitations and suggestions for further research

The effort constructs (for both supplier effort and consumer effort) were conceptualized and measured in general terms, thus no specific distinctions between physical and cognitive effort were made. As already indicated, several authors assume that physical and cognitive effort can be subsumed under the same and general effort construct (Eisenberger, 1992; Schmidt et al., 2012). Yet studies specifically on physical effort suggest that it has an impact on cardiovascular and neuromuscular activities (Youngstedt et al., 1993), and on information processing activities (Dietrich and Sparling, 2004; Smit et al., 2005), of the type that cognitive effort may not have. It also seems clear that physical effort in leisure activities (e.g., exercise) produce substantial positive effects such as better health, better mood, higher self-esteem, and higher life satisfaction (Fox, 1999; Rejeski and Mihalko, 2001). Such aspects may influence consequences of physical effort in consumer settings so that its impact on other variables will not be the same as for cognitive effort. Indeed, our findings (in terms of the potency differences for consumer effort between the two experiments) suggest that general items for measuring consumer effort has the potential to produce different results (in terms of both direct and indirect impact on other variables) depending on what type of effort they are employed to capture. Further research, then, may benefit if cognitive and physical effort are dealt with as discrete effort variables. In addition, as for the distinction between supplier effort and consumer effort, it is possible that the role-play scenario approaches per se contributed to making supplier effort a more causally potent factor than consumer effort, in the sense that one's own effort may be harder to simulate in a role play. Additional research, such as field studies, is needed to come to terms with this aspect. The experiments were also limited to examining the impact of effort(s) on one specific outcome variable, customer satisfaction. Clearly, experiential offers can have an impact on also other outcomes, such as memories (Manthiou et al., 2014) and loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009), and further research is needed to establish the role of effort for such outcomes.

Moreover, and with respect to mediating variables, it was found that perceived value and perceived quality mediated the effort-satisfaction association in the case of supplier effort (both experiments), and that they produced negative mediation effects in relation to consumer effort (Experiment 2). Yet other mediating variables are likely to be involved, too. Future research should pay attention to the role of emotions, because effort – both supplier effort and consumer effort – is likely to evoke emotions. Given the ambiguity in the literature on the impact of consumer effort, this type of effort deserves particular attention in emotional terms. The possibility that consumer effort can be both positively and negatively charged indeed calls for approaches allowing for both negative and positive emotions to co-exist (cf. Söderlund and

Dahlen, 2010).

As for moderating variables, it is possible that the type of offer may influence effort's impact on satisfaction. Our empirical studies comprised experiential offers of the hedonic and non-routine type (an event in a sport store and a concert), thus further research should examine the role of effort for other types of experiential offers. In addition, given that effort is a fundamental aspect of human behavior – with implications for many responses (Eisenberger, 1992) – it seems worthwhile to examine the potential for the impact of effort also in cases with more mundane services. A distinction between hedonic and utilitarian offers may be useful in the search for such moderating variables, because it has been suggested by Berry et al. (2002) that consumers using services with a high hedonic value may view convenience aspects as less important and thus they may be less sensitive to the potential of their own effort to reduce evaluations. It may be noted that several types of activities in firms beyond an experiential offer context involve consumer effort, for example, co-creating activities (Hoyer et al., 2010) and providing opportunities for customization (Dellaert and Stremersch, 2005), and they deserve attention from an effort point of view. Another possible moderating variable is the individual's view of effort; different individuals may be subject to variation with regard to the valence they associate with effort (both own effort and others' effort), and this may have an impact on the associations between effort and other variables. A closely related variable is the Protestant work ethic when it is seen a personality variable; several studies have shown that individuals' scores in this dimension of personality are associated with various beliefs and attitudes (Furnham, 1982; Mudrack, 1997), thus there may be an impact also on evaluations of commercial offers.

Finally, it should be observed that the experiential offers in both our experiments resulted in relatively high levels of customer satisfaction under each specific experimental condition (cf. the high cell means in Table 1 and Table 2). Poor firm performance, resulting in low satisfaction, however, may represent a situation in which the impact of both supplier and consumer effort is different. Further research on the role of effort should therefore examine also offers generating relatively low levels of customer satisfaction.

Appendix 1. The scenarios used for Experiment 1*

Imagine this:

You have heard that an athlete that you like very much may come to visit a sport store; the athlete would talk about life as an athlete and perhaps also show some training methods. **You use Google to find out more and you immediately find that it is true: the athlete is indeed coming to a store – within walking distance from your home. The time for this event fits well with your calendar. So you decide that you would like to come, too. You have to register on the store's website, and this is what you do. You only need to write your name, that's all. You immediately get a confirmation stating that you are welcome.** Then you call some friends and they would also like to come; later the same day, however, they tell you that it was too late to register, because the event became fully booked more or less instantly. After all, this athlete is a real celebrity on a global scale.

When you arrive to the event the athlete is there. You get a good seat in the front row. It is almost hard to believe that you are sitting so close to this person. *The store manager is there, too; she says that she happened to be on the same flight as the athlete, and she used this opportunity to invite the athlete to come to the store – and the athlete said yes immediately. "It's fantastic that it was so easy to persuade you to come, because I know that so many people are trying to get in touch with you all the time and that you are more or less fully booked for several years, so many, many thanks for coming!" says the store manager when she is introducing the athlete.*

The athlete, dressed in training clothes, begins by talking about the athlete's career. You get to know certain things that you did not know anything about before. For example, mass media has reported about the

athlete's conflicts with one particular coach, and now you get new information about what happened. The athlete also tells about future plans, which so far have been kept secret.

Then it is time for the athlete to show some exercises. "I would like to show some things that I have learned abroad; these are things that have really made me faster. But I need some volunteers", says the athlete. Several persons in the audience come forward. The athlete comes to you and asks if you want to participate, too. **Yet you say no thanks.**

Music is now heard – music personally selected as the favorite music by the athlete. The athlete talks a bit about the songs that will be played. In the next step, the display of exercises begins with the athlete as the coach. You have not seen these exercises before and they are really hard; **soon the athlete and the volunteers are sweating and moaning.** These are indeed high pulse exercises. When this ends, the athlete says thanks to the volunteers and to the audience, and a long line of people who want autographs is formed. Before beginning to write autographs, however, the athlete comes to you with a mobile telephone. The athlete asks if it is OK to take a selfie with you. "**Not that many persons say no to me!**" says the athlete to you. "And I am sorry, I think I forgot to emphasize one thing regarding the second exercise I showed, it's really important that your legs are bent at a 90 degrees angle", says the athlete and shows you how this is to be done.

Then the athlete is surrounded by fans. And a couple of television crews are approaching. You hang around for a while, and when the autograph writing and the interviews are beginning to come to an end, you leave the store. You see that the street is crowded with people who were not allowed to come inside. You walk home.

*For the high supplier effort scenarios, the text in italics was replaced with the following:

The store manager is there, too; she says that she had to contact many persons, which included trips to other countries, to get the athlete to appear in the store. The process went on for almost a year."The agent was particularly hard to persuade, I must say; for example, I had to serve as his personal guide for a full weekend when he happened to visit this country. Yet it's fantastic that it finally was possible to persuade you to come, because I know that so many people are trying to get in touch with you all the time and that you are more or less fully booked for several years, so many, many thanks for coming!" says the store manager when she is introducing the athlete.

For the high consumer effort scenarios, the text in bold was replaced with the following:

- (1) You use Google to find out more, but after an hour you realize that nothing can be found. You really want to know more about this, so you make calls and send mails to some sport personalities that may know something, and after a couple of days you get a confirmation that the athlete is indeed coming to a store event. It will take about one and a half hour with train from your home to get to this store. And the timing of the event is definitely not optimal, because you have already agreed to take part in another activity at the same time as the event with the athlete. Yet you decide that you want to go to the event with the athlete. You have to register on the store's website – this is a part of the site for which Google gives no useful information – and after some hassle with the registration, and a few days later, you receive information that you are indeed welcome.
- (2) With some hesitation, you say yes.
- (3) soon the athlete, the other volunteers and you are sweating and moaning.
- (4) "Not that many persons hesitate when I ask for something!"

Appendix 2. The scenarios used for Experiment 2*

Imagine this:

A very good friend, who you have not seen for a long time, gets in touch with you. This friend will be in town for a short stay. And the

friend has two tickets to the Saturday concert with a band that both of you like very much.

Yet while talking about the concert you realize that this is exactly the Saturday when you have already promised to help another good friend who is moving to a new apartment; you have promised to help by driving to IKEA. You really want to go to the concert instead, and you explain the situation to your friend with the tickets. You say that you are going to call your moving friend and cancel your help.

You call your friend with the new apartment and explain the situation; unfortunately, you cannot help out on the coming Saturday. Your friend says that this is perfectly OK, because many others will come and help. Then you call your ticket friend and you say that the situation has been settled; you will indeed come to the concert.

Saturday arrives, and you go to the concert with your ticket friend. All tickets have been sold out, it is hot and crowded. Everyone is sweating. This is pure magic. *Yet the band members seem relaxed and cool.* This is a long concert, involving a break. During this break, someone touches your shoulder and when you turn around you see that the band's singer has come to you. He says that he saw that you were very involved in the music, and he asks if he may take a selfie with you. Of course you say yes. He says that he felt that you particularly liked one of the songs, he says that a kind of "Part II" of this song is to be released soon, and he begins to explain the band's idea regarding this. However, a number of people are approaching the singer and begins to touch him and pull his shirt and he says to you that it is time to return to the stage. One girl from a music magazine approaches you and says that she noticed that you talked to the singer and she asks if she may do an interview with you after the concert.

The concert continues. *In the talk between songs, the singer says that this is the first time the band plays in this country, that it was so easy to make this concert happen in comparison to many other countries, and he thanks the host country for being such a highly organized country in which one has the opportunity to take it easy. "It's a pure vacation to play here!" says the singer.* The band's performance is highly professional and they play all their popular songs. After the concert the girl from the music magazine comes to you for a brief interview, your photo is taken, and when you see the result later, on the Internet, you realize that you really look awesome on the picture.

*For the high supplier effort scenarios, the text in italics was replaced with the following:

- (1) And the very highest energy comes from the band members, they are indeed sweating.
- (2) In the talk between songs, the singer says that this is the first time the band plays in this country, and that it was so difficult to make this concert happen in comparison to many other countries, because so many contracts had to be read and signed. The logistics became awkward, too; the band really wanted to play in this country, but the only date that would work was between an Amsterdam and a Brussels gig on what was supposed to be a day of rest. "Sleep is something one will have to do to some other time, in another life!" says the singer.

For the high consumer effort scenarios, the text in bold was replaced with the following:

You call your friend with the new apartment and explain the situation; unfortunately, you cannot help out on the coming Saturday. Your friend becomes extremely disappointed and explains that you were the one that should help and that nobody else could come this day. You suggest that you and your ticket friend could come and help during a part of the day, but this makes your friend upset. These two friends do not know each other, and your moving friend does not want any stranger to be around all the private stuff exposed in moving from one place to another. "You promised!" says your friend who is almost crying now. Yet you realize that you never promised anything, it was more of a

suggestion, and that this is not the first time when this friend actively misinterprets what you say. You have to say, firmly and explicitly, that there never was a promise, and that you have decided that you want to go to the concert instead. Your friend hangs up violently. Then you call your ticket friend and you say that the situation has been settled; you will indeed come to the concert.

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