

Decision Processes Colloquia

Monday, November 17, 2014

Where: 265 JMHH

When: 12:00 – 1:15 pm

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The Limits of Attraction

ABSTRACT: Consumer research has documented dozens of instances in which the introduction of an “irrelevant” third option affects preferences between the remaining two. In nearly all such cases, the unattractive dominated option enhances the attractiveness of the option it most resembles—a phenomenon known as the “attraction effect.” In the studies presented here, however, the authors contend that this phenomenon may be restricted to stylized product representations in which every product dimension is represented by a number (e.g., a toaster oven that has a durability rating of 7.2 and ease of cleaning rating of 5.5). Such effects do not typically occur when consumers experience the product (e.g., taste a drink) or when even one of the product attributes is represented perceptually (e.g., differently priced hotel rooms whose quality is depicted with a photo). The authors posit that perceptual representations of attributes do not support the sorts of comparisons that drive the attraction effect with highly stylized examples, and they question the practical significance of the effect.