

“Guilt and Its Effects on Pleasure and Consumption”

Ravi Dhar

George Rogers Clark Professor of Management and Marketing
Director, Yale Center for Customer Insights

My talk will focus on two related projects, which take somewhat of a contrarian view. In one set of studies, we show that because of the belief that guilt and pleasure are linked, activating feelings of guilt can actually enhance the pleasure of a stimulus. This is especially true for ambiguous experiences (connects Steve Hoch's work on ambiguity and advertising to automatic goal activation to make a simple point). The second project argues that activating guilt does not just activate a negative emotion but rather a goal to reduce guilt. That leads to crazy effects—e.g., providing a diet coke leads to consuming more unhealthy stuff when guilt is primed.