

WHARTON MARKETING CAMP

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Keith Wilcox is the Barbara and Meyer Feldberg Associate Professor of Marketing at the Columbia Business School. His research focuses on consumer judgment and decision-making, with an emphasis on how feelings influence self-control and motivation. He has published numerous articles in leading academic journals including the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Marketing* and *Journal of Consumer Research*. Additionally, his research has been featured in several major media outlets including the *New York Times*, *Time Magazine*, *Fox News* and *Wired Magazine*. Keith has also spent several years consulting with companies on their advertising, branding and marketing strategy.

Restraint that Blinds: Attention Narrowing and Consumers' Response to Numerosity in Self-Control Decisions

Abstract: Research on numerosity demonstrates that consumers' judgment can be influenced by the scale on which product benefit information is presented. However, only a limited amount of research has examined how consumers respond to the numerosity of cost information (e.g., prices, nutritional content) in decisions that involve self-control. The results of a pilot study and five experiments demonstrate that numerosity primarily influences self-control when consumers are high in restraint. Because restrained consumers regulate their behavior by anticipating negative emotions, they experience a narrowing of attention during self-control decisions that makes them more reliant on cues for judgment. As a result, consumers who are situationally primed and predisposed to be high in restraint display less self-control when cost information is presented on a contracted scale compared to an expanded scale. The same effect does not emerge when consumers are less focused on restraint because these consumers do not experience a similar narrowing of attention during self-control decisions.