

Decision Processes Colloquia

Monday, February 3, 2020

Where: 270 JMHH

When: 12:00 – 1:20 pm

Aner Sela

Associate Professor, Marketing
University of Florida, Warrington College of Business

Product Lineups: The More You Search, The Less You Find

ABSTRACT:

Consumers often try to visually identify a previously encountered product among a sequence of similar items, guided only by their memory and a few general search terms. What determines their success at correctly identifying the target product in such “product lineups”? The current research finds that the longer consumers search sequentially, the more conservative and – ironically – inaccurate judges they become. Consequently, the more consumers search, the more likely they are to erroneously reject the correct target when it finally appears in the lineup. This happens because each time consumers evaluate a similar item in the lineup, and determine that it is not the option for which they have been looking, they draw an implicit inference that the correct target should feel more familiar than the similar items rejected up to that point. This causes the subjective feeling of familiarity consumers expect to experience with the true target to progressively escalate, making them more conservative but also less accurate judges. The findings have practical implications for consumers and marketers, and make theoretical contributions to research on inference-making, search, and product recognition.

