

MARKETING COLLOQUIA

SPRING 2023

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Thursday, February 2, 2023

Where: 260 JMHH

When: 12:00 PM to 1:20 PM

BACK TO THE PRESENT: HOW DIRECTION OF MENTAL TIME TRAVEL AFFECTS THOUGHTS AND BEHAVIOR

ABSTRACT:

Many consumers fail to save for the future at the rate they say they want to, and the current research looks at this savings behavior problem from a persuasive messaging standpoint. With the goal of helping people to take better care of their future selves, we build on a stream of research that suggests that the way people view their identity over time dramatically affects the savings decisions they make. Past research on similarity judgments between these selves across time has always started in the present and moved forward to the future; yet similarity could theoretically be measured by starting at any point in time. Our research explores the possibility of backward time travel, which asks people to start in the future and then return to the present. Across eleven studies, we find that mentally traveling from the future to the present increases similarity judgments between the selves across time by reducing the uncertainty of the destination self. As an important outcome of this novel intervention, mentally traveling from the future to the present increases savings intentions as well as consequential savings behaviors in large-scale field settings.