

Katie S. Mehr

The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania
532.4 Jon M. Huntsman Hall, 3730 Walnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104
kmehr@wharton.upenn.edu | katie-mehr.com

Education

The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania 2018 - 2023

Ph.D. in Operations, Information, and Decisions – Decision Processes

Dissertation Title: How Does Rating Specific Features of an Experience Alter Consumers' Overall Evaluation of That Experience?

Dissertation Committee: Joseph Simmons (advisor), Alice Moon, Deborah Small

Rutgers University, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick Campus 2014 - 2018

B.S. *summa cum laude* with Highest Honors in Economics, Minors in Mathematics and Statistics

Publications and Manuscripts in the Review Process (abstracts on page 4)

Mehr, Katie S. and Joseph P. Simmons, "How Does Rating Specific Features of an Experience Alter Consumers' Overall Evaluation of That Experience?" revising for third-round re-submission to the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Mehr, Katie S. and Joshua Lewis, "Risky or Typical? How Perceived Diagnosticity Affects Consumers' Responses to Rater Disagreement," under review at *Management Science*.

Mehr, Katie S., Amanda E. Geiser, Katherine L. Milkman, and Angela L. Duckworth (2020), "Copy Paste Prompts: A New Nudge to Promote Goal Achievement," *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, 5(3), 329-334.

Mehr, Katie S., Jackie Silverman, Marissa A. Sharif, Alixandra Barasch, and Katherine L. Milkman, "The Motivating Power of Streaks: Increasing Persistence Is as Easy as 1, 2, 3," under second-round review at *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*.

Selected Research in Progress

Mehr, Katie S. and Joseph P. Simmons, "Response Separation: How Question Order Affects Consumers' Evaluations," collected data from 11 studies.

Mehr, Katie S. and Alice Moon, "I See It, I Want It: The Salience of Extra Product Features Increases

their Perceived Importance,” collected data from 6 studies, manuscript in preparation for submission to the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Mehr, Katie S., Katherine L. Milkman, and Angela L. Duckworth, “Do Streaks Motivate Achievement?: A Field Experiment,” working with corporate partner to run field study.

Conference Presentations

(includes only presentations that I delivered)

How Does Rating Specific Features of an Experience Alter Consumers’ Overall Evaluation of That Experience?

- Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Judgment and Decision Making preconference, Virtual, 2022. (flash talk)
- Society for Judgment and Decision Making, Virtual, 2021.
- Society for Judgment and Decision Making, Virtual, 2020. (poster)

Risky or Typical? How Perceived Diagnosticity Affects Consumers’ Responses to Rater Disagreement.

- Association for Consumer Research, Virtual, 2021.

Copy Paste Prompts: A New Nudge to Promote Goal Achievement.

- Society for Judgment and Decision Making, Montreal, Canada, 2019. (flash talk)

The Motivating Power of Streaks: Increasing Persistence Is as Easy As 1, 2, 3.

- Society for Judgment and Decision Making, Virtual, 2020.
- Association for Consumer Research, Virtual, 2020.
- Society for Consumer Psychology, Huntington Beach, CA, 2020.
- Society for Judgment and Decision Making, Montreal, Canada, 2019. (poster)

Awards and Honors

Wharton Risk Center Russell Ackoff Doctoral Student Fellowship Award, 2019, 2020, 2021

Wharton Mack Institute for Innovation Management Doctoral Student Fellowship Award, 2021

Honorable Mention Poster Award, Society for Judgment and Decision Making, 2019

Henry Rutgers Scholar, 2018

Matthew Leydt Society, 2018

Phi Beta Kappa, 2017

Teaching Experience

Guest Lecturer

- Evaluating Evidence (Undergraduate, Spring 2022)

Teaching Assistant

- Managerial Decision Making (MBA, Spring 2022)
- Negotiations (MBA, Spring 2021)
- Decision Processes (Undergraduate, Fall 2019)

Undergraduate Advising

- University of Pennsylvania College Achievement Program Graduate School Mentoring Initiative (Undergraduate, Spring 2021 - Spring 2022)
- Judgment and Decision Making Research Immersion (Undergraduate, Fall 2018 – Spring 2022)
- Senior Honors Thesis Advising (Undergraduate, Fall 2018 - Spring 2019)

Course Coordination

- Judgment and Decision Making Research Immersion (Undergraduate, Spring 2020 - Spring 2021)

Professional Service

- Mentor, Wharton Doctoral Council (2020-2022)

Professional Affiliations

Association for Consumer Research, Society for Consumer Psychology, Society for Judgment and Decision Making

Research Abstracts

Mehr, Katie S. and Joseph P. Simmons, “How Does Rating Specific Features of an Experience Alter Consumers’ Overall Evaluation of That Experience?” revising for third-round re-submission to the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

How does the way companies elicit ratings from consumers affect the ratings that they receive? In 11 pre-registered experiments, we find that consumers rate subpar experiences more positively overall when they are also asked to rate specific aspects of those experiences (e.g., a restaurant’s food, service, and ambiance). Studies 1-4 established the basic effect across different scenarios and experiences. Study 5 found that the effect is limited to being asked to rate specific features of an experience, rather than providing open-ended comments about those features. Study 6 found that the effect holds even when consumers are told that they are going to rate specific aspects on a subsequent page. Studies 7-10 provided evidence that the effect does not emerge because rating positive aspects of a subpar experience reminds consumers that their experiences had some good features. Rather, it emerges because consumers give less weight to negative aspects of an experience in their overall evaluation when they are invited to directly rate those aspects. Lastly, study 11 found that asking consumers to rate attributes of a subpar experience reduces the predictive validity of their overall rating. We discuss implications of this work and reconcile it with conflicting findings in the literature.

Mehr, Katie S. and Joshua Lewis, “Risky or Typical? How Perceived Diagnosticity Affects Consumers’ Responses to Rater Disagreement,” under review at *Management Science*.

Do consumers prefer products for which raters agree (e.g., two 3-star ratings) or disagree (e.g., a 1-star and a 5-star rating)? Five preregistered studies show that when there are only very few ratings, consumers prefer products with rater disagreement (controlling for average rating). This disagreement benefit occurs in attribute ratings (Studies 1, 3, & 4), word-of-mouth (Study 2), and one-dimensional overall ratings (Study 5). In the literature, the dominant explanation for this effect is based on consumers’ risk preferences, specifically that consumers are risk-seeking in losses. But in this paper, we do not find evidence in support of this risk-based account, and instead propose a diagnosticity-based account: consumers usually rely on the product ratings, but when there are few ratings and those ratings disagree, consumers perceive them as non-diagnostic and rely more on their (typically high) prior expectations. Accordingly, the disagreement benefit attenuates when we induce low expectations (Study 3). As previously mentioned, risk-seeking preferences could explain this inclination towards disagreed-upon products (which seem riskier). However, the disagreement benefit arises even when participants are risk-averse, contradicting this explanation (Study 4). Instead, consistent with the diagnosticity account and consumer risk-aversion, the disagreement benefit reverses for products with many ratings, because many ratings make consumers infer risk from disagreement, rather than non-diagnosticity (Study 5). These findings challenge the dominant risk-based account of how consumers perceive rater agreement and presents an alternative diagnosticity framework for reconciling mixed findings in the ratings dispersion literature.

Mehr, Katie S., Amanda E. Geiser, Katherine L. Milkman, and Angela L. Duckworth (2020), “Copy Paste Prompts: A New Nudge to Promote Goal Achievement,” *Journal of the*

Association for Consumer Research, 5(3), 329-334.

Consumers often struggle to achieve self-set, life-improving goals. We introduce a novel, psychologically wise nudge - the copy-paste prompt - that encourages consumers to seek out and mimic a goal-achievement strategy used by an acquaintance. In a large (N = 1,028) preregistered, longitudinal study, participants randomly assigned to receive a copy-paste prompt spend more time exercising the following week than participants assigned to either a quasi-yoked or simple control condition. The benefits of copy-paste prompts are mediated by the usefulness of the adopted exercise strategy, commitment to using it, effort put into finding it, and the frequency of social interaction with people who exercise regularly. These findings suggest that further research on the potential of this virtually costless nudge is warranted.

Mehr, Katie S., Jackie Silverman, Marissa A. Sharif, Alixandra Barasch, and Katherine L. Milkman, “The Motivating Power of Streaks: Increasing Persistence Is as Easy as 1, 2, 3,” under second-round review at *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*.

Financial incentives are one of the most frequently-used and effective tools for motivating employee persistence. We build on a growing literature showing that the efficacy of incentive schemes can be enhanced when insights from behavioral science are incorporated into their design. Specifically, we introduce and test the value of a psychologically-motivated incentive structure: “streak incentives,” or rewards that offer people increasing payouts for completing multiple consecutive desired behaviors. We theorize that such incentives motivate persistence by conveying a social norm, encouraging goal setting, and boosting self-efficacy. Across five pre-registered studies, we show that, contrary to the predictions of the “rational actor” model of standard economic theory, people show greater persistence when rewarded with streak incentives than when they are rewarded with larger, flat incentives. This effect is not driven by the increasing nature of streak incentives; rather, people are motivated by the requirement that they complete work tasks consecutively to earn higher payment amounts. Moreover, mediation analyses provide some evidence for all three theorized mechanisms: social norms, goal setting, and self-efficacy. Taken together, our results suggest that encouraging streaks is an easy, low-cost way to increase persistence in organizations and other contexts.