

Abstract

Many models try to explain people's decisions in multi-alternative scenarios but these models have not yet tested for the effect of interpersonal relationships that might affect people's choices. Tversky (1972) introduced the Similarity Hypothesis: people tend to choose a dissimilar item over two similar items in the same set. To expand this finding and have a better understanding of what the impact of interpersonal relationships might have, we use an online survey of the Giving and the Taking conditions with a set of two similar items and one dissimilar item.

Research Questions

- How will the interpersonal relationship affect our decision-making in the similarity effect context?
- When there is no information available, how would people make decisions?

General Method

- 600 participants recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk fill out the two studies, the Giving and the Taking scenarios.

Reference

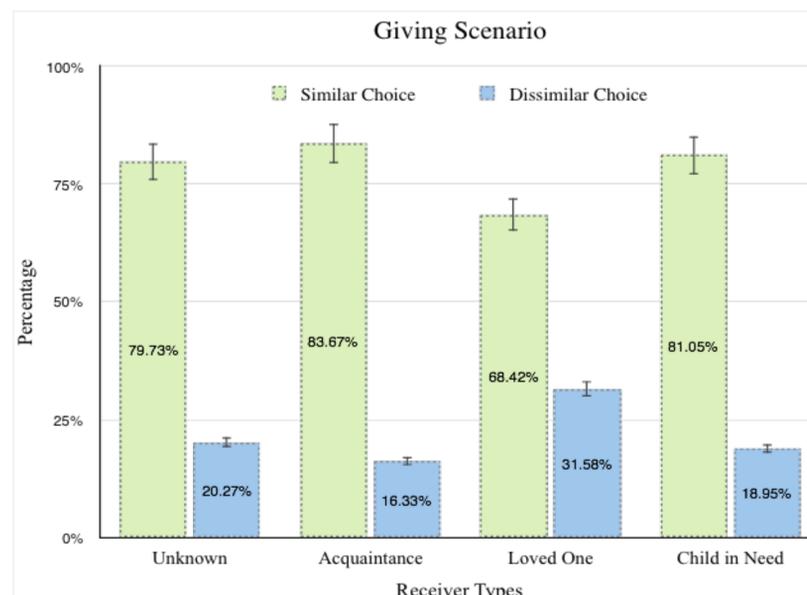
Tversky, A. (1972). *Elimination by aspects: A theory of choice*. Psychological review, 79(4), 281.

Study 1: Giving Scenario

- Choosing to *give away* M&M® jars to...
- 3 conditions: an unknown, an acquaintance, a loved one and a child in need



- Prediction: none of the receiver types would have a significant effect on subjects' decisions



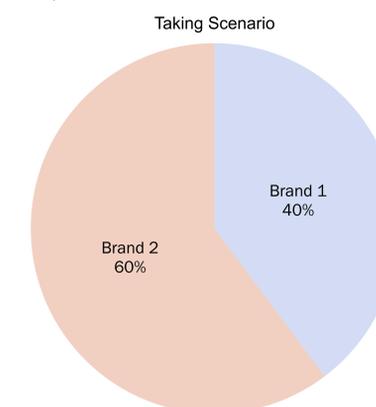
- There is a significant effect of receiver types on similarity effect, ($\chi^2(3) = 12.026, p = .007$).
- Particularly, on average, participants in the loved one condition tended to give away the *dissimilar choice* to the recipient at a higher rate than participants in the other conditions, ($\chi^2(1) = 11.329, p = .001$).

Study 2: Taking Scenario

- Choosing to buy a toothpaste from the shelf when the choices' qualities are unknown



- Prediction: people use the *quantity* of the toothpastes left on the shelf as a clue and choose Brand 2 (dissimilar item)



39.7% of participants chose Brand 1 and 60.2% chose Brand 2

Discussion and Conclusion

- Interpersonal relationships can influence our decisions, specifically when we think about people who we have a close relationship with, such as people we care about.
- A possible explanation for the Taking scenario: when seeing only the quantity available for each choice in the purchasing context, without other information about each alternative available, people tend to make an assumption about the popularity of the item that "this brand must be somewhat popular, such that previous customers have already picked this brand."