



Marketing Science Institute Working Paper Series 2021

Report No. 21-111

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A Sales Promotion Framework for Admission-Based Experiences

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Keywords: sales promotions; experiences, deal frame; buyer-seller control

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Abstract

Traditional sales promotion practice prominently present offers (e.g., “50% Off”) followed by a quantity (“When you buy two”), duration (“Today only”) or other conditional restriction as a scarcity appeal to increase urgency. Placing a hurdle to clear before purchase eligibility frames the deal as under the seller’s control. Applying service-dominant logic to sales promotions suggests offers should signal collaboration, shared value and shared gain so the buyer feels in control of the exchange. In three studies we examine if leading with the restriction followed by the offer feels more like a reward to customers choosing to buy admission-based experiences such as sporting events, concerts, vacations, and other leisure services in advance. Compared to the traditional control (offer/restriction) frame, the first two studies reveal that customers presented with the choice frame (restriction/offer) feel like the exchange is more under their control and subsequently believe the deal to be more fair and a better deal, leading to purchase intentions. A third field study provides evidence of improved click-through and potential revenue from the choice frame over the control frame.

Service marketers perpetuate sales promotion tactics that may produce unintended effects. Prevailing practice presents an offer followed by some form of restriction. Consumers encounter weekly circulars containing deals (with restrictions) like 20% off Lowe's plumbing items (when buying 10 or more), \$10 off for Walmart grocery delivery (with use of TIMEBACK code and \$50 minimum), or \$50 off a Shimano SLX rod at Academy (when you buy the reel). Admission-based services have followed suit: At Disney World, save up to 20% on rooms (at select hotels, on select nights, for a limited time). Get Cirque du Soleil tickets for \$55 (on select sections; subject to availability). Get a free lift ticket (when you introduce someone to skiing) at Killington Ski Resort. Such deals frequently present the offer in large print followed by restrictions or limitations in smaller font. Left unexamined is whether framing the deal in this manner is the most effective way to present such offers.

Rooted in sales promotions for consumer-packaged goods, leading with the offer followed by a quantity, duration, or other conditional restriction is a scarcity appeal (Aggarwal, Jun and Huh 2011; Inman, Peter and Raghurir 1997) to signal short supply and to increase urgency. Such signals may be superficial more than factual. Admission-based service experiences, on the other hand, have inherent time and inventory limitations and conditions. Knowing availability is limited for a given date and time, consumers reserve cruises and vacations, buy seats for concerts, movie premieres, and sporting events, and rent rooms, cabins, cars and more in advance. For such hedonic experiences, scarcity is not just an appeal but more often a matter of fact.

When consumers encounter a deal for admission-based experiences, the choice to purchase brings a hedonic reward with meaningful or memorable pleasures (Alba and Williams 2013). Enjoyment occurs in anticipation, in the moment, and in retrospect. With such emotion-driven consumption decisions, is it better to lead with the offer and follow with strings attached? Or would

framing the offer as a reward for choosing a limited time, space or place perform better? This is the point of our research.

Figure 1 illustrates a sales promotion framework for admission-based experiences (ABE). Prior work suggests deal restrictions can lead to feelings of irritation or inconvenience (Inman, Peters and Raghurir 1997; Raghurir, Inman and Grande 2004). Indeed, over two decades ago Inman, Peters and Raghurir (1997) speculated that “framing the restriction as a hurdle that a consumer has to pass prior to being eligible for the deal versus framing the deal as a reward for a consumer who has already spent a fair amount in the store is likely to be differentially effective.” (p.78). No research to date has examined this simple but critical proposition.

Place Figure 1 about here.

We consider framing deals for admission-based experiences among buyers with previous experience. We examine if an appeal to the consumer’s freedom to choose versus a focus on the seller’s restricted access is differentially effective. We expect leading with the quantity, availability or limitation in the choice frame followed by the offer will increase deal salience and draw more attention to the offer as consumers process the benefits accruing in their favor (versus the seller) as a reward. Deals perceived to offer more of a choice under the buyer’s control (than the seller’s) will be evaluated as fairer and better deals, leading to purchase. Across three studies, we find opening with what one chooses (viz, formerly a restriction) followed by the offer ultimately leads to higher likelihood of consumers clicking on the offer to consider and committing to purchase.

Theoretically, we contribute to the literature by presenting a promotion framework for admission-based experiences in the context of advance selling of services (Shugun and Zie 2000; 2004) incorporating service-dominant logic. Research on pricing and promotions for services at the consumer level is scant, let alone for experience services (Wakefield and Wakefield 2018). We

integrate deal salience in service-dominant logic (Lusch, Vargo and O'Brien 2007; Vargo 2008) to explain why consumers respond more favorably to leading (vs. following) offers with a choice (vs. restriction) frame.

On a practical level, the influence of technological devices over daily lives leads many, particularly millennials, to seek out location or admission-based experiences in real life (see Jain 2019). Tech-centric research is emerging to adapt to the interactive needs of visitors (e.g., Liu et al. 2018; Ravi et al. 2019) once they arrive on location, but little is known about the pricing and promotion strategies most effective in getting them there.

Methodologically, we contribute a multi-item measure of buyer-seller control in service exchanges predictive of deal evaluation and behavioral intentions. Consumer perceptions of the offer as favoring consumer choice over the seller's attempt to control drives price information processing effects on consumer response.

We first provide background and theoretical support for the promotion framework for admission-based experiences, followed by two studies to illustrate the underlying processes in the framework. A third study in the field (N = 329,647) replicating the first study demonstrates the practical effects. We conclude with theoretical and managerial implications and future price and promotion research for admissions-based experiences (ABE).

BACKGROUND

Pandemic notwithstanding, ABEs including music, cinema and sports are projected to grow from just over \$20 billion in 2019 in the United States to over \$30 billion in 2024. Worldwide, these same ABEs are expected to grow from \$53 billion to over \$81 billion (Statista.com 2020). As illustrated in Table 1, promotions to such experiences often use sales promotions with the offer followed by a restriction.

Place Table 1 about here.

The presence of a price promotion prompts consumers into a reward seeking state of mode (Shaddy and Lee 2020). Deal restrictions present a roadblock thwarting consumer freedom to gain the reward by limiting quantity, duration, or conditions (Inman, Peter and Raghurir 1997). Thus, fans of the Texas Rangers see the opportunity to “score 50% off Rangers tickets” only to read the very small print below: “Save and redeem by June 25th 2019 at 4:59am ET for tickets to select games. Availability limited terms apply. Qualifying [T-Mobile] plan required.” This promotion contains a form of each type of restriction in that quantities (availability) are limited, it is only good for a certain length of time (duration) and only on the condition the buyer is a T-Mobile customer.

Sales promotions can backfire. Consumers may infer poor brand quality (Darke and Chung 2005). High coupon values can lead consumers to infer unacceptably high prices when the final price is unspecified (Raghurir 1998). Free gifts can reduce conversion rates when the gift is undesirable (Simonson, Carmon, and O'Curry 1994) and may reduce future sales if the free gift is seen as cheap (Raghurir 2004). Sales promotions deemed too much of a hassle (e.g., rebates and cut-out coupons) lower likelihood of use (Fogel and Thornton 2008). Sales promotions following quality (versus value) primes can decrease product evaluations (Deval et al. 2013). Coupons with short durations, particularly for low values, can harm attitudes toward the service operator (Trump 2016). In short, sales promotions can produce unintended outcomes. The question is: Why might offer-restriction deal frames backfire?

Adopting standard sales promotion practices for a service presumes the method is effective and service characteristics (viz., service-dominant logic; Lusch, Vargo and O'Brien 2007) are inconsequential. S-D logic relies upon service to meet customer needs as a means of competition. Competitive advantage is gained through co-creation and collaboration.

Accordingly, hiding deal restrictions in smaller font following offers may signal the seller seeks control (not collaboration) and customer-orientation is suspect. We propose that the traditional sales promotion frame violates the principles of consumer control (over either the process or outcome) in conveying the value proposition of the service experience (Chandler and Lusch 2015) and detracts from the psychic benefits of enjoying the purchase of a hedonic experience to produce shared value or shared gain. S-D logic suggests positioning offers as win-win, inasmuch the buyer wants to go on those dates (duration restriction), with a given number in the party (quantity restriction), and under the conditions set forth.

The reversal of leading with the restriction is expected to change the salience of the offer and the perception of who is in control of the exchange. Going forward, the choice frame refers to when a sales promotion leads with a quantity, duration, or condition to purchase followed by the offer. The control frame refers to the traditional mode of presenting the offer first followed by a restriction based on quantity, duration, or other condition to purchase.

Leading with the restriction may signal the consumer has a choice to select seats, times/dates, or quantities they will enjoy (even more) at the price offered. Fundamental to S-D logic (Lusch, Vargo and O'Brien 2007) is that "expertise, control, physical capital, risk taking, psychic benefits, and economic benefits influence customers' motivation, desire, and amount of participation." (p.8) Specific to control, co-production occurs when the consumer exercises control over the process or outcome. If the consumer senses the seller is in control, only offering the experience with constraints, limitations, or restrictions, the consumer is apt to feel less in control. Further, "one of the primary reasons people engage in co-production is for pure enjoyment—the psychic (experiential) benefits," according to S-D logic (Lusch, Vargo and O'Brien 2007). S-D logic implies that pricing is linked to the seller's value proposition to offer

an enjoyable experience, such that gain sharing occurs (Lusch and Vargo 2006; Sawhney 2006). When the buyer wants to attend the off-peak matinee, vacation in the off-season, or take others with them so that the seller maximizes revenue from the limited time and space for the admission-based experience, both parties share in the gain.

The foregoing suggests the control frame leads consumers to perceive the seller is more in control of the exchange rather than sharing risk or control with the consumer. Therefore,

H1: The control (choice) frame decreases (increases) perceived seller control.

The more consumers feel like they do not have control, the less fair they perceive the deal. Lu et al. (2020) find when consumers feel controlled and exploited it results in reduced price fairness. Namasivayam (2004) finds greater perceived control in the service exchange is linked to perceived fairness. Consumers consider the motive of the seller in determining fairness (Campbell 2007). Encountering otherwise enticing offers followed by a restriction in the form of quantity required, limited availability, or other conditions to get the deal may make potential buyers feel like strings are attached that limit freedom of choice. Flatly, the deal seems unfair. Thus,

H2: The greater the seller control the less fair the deal.

Deals perceived fairer will be evaluated more positively (Carlson and Weathers 2008; Lee and Monroe 2008; White, Breazeale and Collier 2012).

H3: The greater the fairness the more positive the deal evaluation.

STUDY 1

A panel of individuals verified to have high interest (63.2%) or very high interest (36.8%) in following and watching NBA basketball (N = 270) was recruited to participate in an online

experiment manipulating the control/choice frame of an online ticket offer. Participants were predominantly male (63.9%), unmarried (54.6%), and median age of 35. The study was conducted on Black Friday of Thanksgiving week.

Deal frame

Subjects were instructed: “Assume you are a customer (previous attender) of this NBA team. Today, on Black Friday, you receive the following email ticket offer early in the morning. Take a moment to read the message and offer your opinions.” Subjects in the control frame received the offer presented in Panel A in Figure 3. Subjects in the choice panel received the offer presented in Panel B in Figure 3.

Place Figure 3 about here.

Following the offer, deal evaluation ($\alpha = .926$, $M = 5.46$, $SD = 1.03$) was measured with three 7-point bi-polar scales (“A bad buy—a good buy,” “not worth the cost—worth the cost,” and “a bad deal—good deal”) along with a single-item 7-point fairness scale (very unfair—very fair; $M = 5.43$, $SD = 1.13$) from Campbell (1999). Perceptions of seller control was measured with five items ($\alpha = .805$; $M = 3.30$, $SD = 2.06$) with 11-point (0-10) Likert scales (not at all—extremely) developed to describe the offer:

1. Feels like a restriction they put on me to get a ticket.
2. Takes advantage of me for being a fan.
3. Makes me feel everything is under their control.
4. Makes it difficult to get the deal I want.
5. Feels like strings are attached.

Analysis

SmartPLS (Ringle, Wende and Becker 2015) was employed to test the relationships. The deal frame significantly influenced seller control ($-0.126, t = 2.07, p < .01$). As expected, the control frame ($M = 3.52$) was seen as more under the seller's control compared to the choice frame ($M = 2.96$). H1 is supported. In turn, the greater the seller control, the lower the perceived fairness of the deal ($B = -0.393, t = 7.04, p < .01$), supporting H2. The greater the perceived fairness, the more positive the deal evaluation ($B = 0.614, t = 12.80, p < .01$).

We tested the possibility that fairness mediates a path between seller control and deal evaluation. A model without fairness showed seller control to have a significant negative effect on deal evaluation ($B = -0.271, t = 4.544, p < .01$). With fairness in the model, that path is not significant ($-0.016, t = 0.287, p > .70$). An examination of the bias corrected confidence intervals (.508--.697) for the fairness \rightarrow deal evaluation path does not contain zero, indicating fairness mediates the path from seller control to deal evaluation. Overall, the model explains 38.5% of deal evaluation and 15.4% of deal fairness.

Discussion

Consumers in the control frame see the offer as more under the seller's control. Compared to the choice frame, consumers perceive the deal is more difficult to obtain. The 30% discount with the select seats and limited time frame feels more like a restriction with strings attached that takes advantage of them (as a fan). Though this measure captures seller control, we lack evidence the choice frame leads to greater consumer control of the exchange, participating in co-creating value and sharing gain. We expand our measure to include seller-buyer control in the second study, while adding processes and outcomes consistent with S-D logic and our framework. Figure 4 illustrates the relevant model for Study 2.

Place Figure 4 about here.

Attention and salience. When consumers encounter the choice frame, attention should increase and salience of the offer enhanced. The desired quantity, duration, or condition acts as a filter to attract the attention of buyers who pre-qualify themselves to attend to the offer.

Consumers searching for cruises, vacations, sporting events, concerts, ski lift tickets or other admission-based experiences sold in advance should be more attentive to offers that begin with the number in the party (e.g., buy two, get two free; with four in the party), the duration (e.g., weekday afternoon matinee when someone is off work), or other conditions that suit interests.

In contrast, beginning with the offer operates as a broad funnel to attract many potential buyers to the offer (e.g., save 50%). The restriction narrows the scope to those willing to accept the restriction (e.g., when you do or buy X). For those unqualified or disinterested, following with the restriction detracts from the offer, reducing its salience relative to the restriction.

Consumers may be attracted to the offer in the traditional control frame but may be distracted by the seller's restriction on who gets to enjoy the exchange given the quantity, duration, or conditions.

Compared to the control frame, the choice frame should make the deal or offer more salient (Bordalo, Gennaioli and Schleifer 2013) or more heavily weighted in evaluating the deal. The structure of the choice frame lends itself to if-then reasoning (e.g., "If I want to go on a Bahamas cruise the week after New Year's, then I get a deal.") that aids cognitive ease (Schwartz 2004). The control frame, instead, produces cognitive load as the consumer processes the offer but hits a potential hurdle to achieve the desired goal. Therefore,

H1: The choice (control) frame increases (decreases) attention to the offer.

H2: The choice (control) frame increases (decreases) the salience of the offer.

As salience of the offer presented in the deal increases so should attention.

H3: The greater the salience the greater the attention to the offer.

Buyer-seller control. Consistent with S-D logic, we expect the effect of the choice frame on attention and deal salience to lead to more positive feelings of being in control of the exchange. When the consumer attends to the message and finds the offer salient, the consumer is apt to perceive the offer is a reward received for incurring a cost. The consumer processes the deal as a bonus for buying and being a customer (or fan). Customers encountering the choice frame should perceive that it is easy to get the deal they want. They may freely choose what they want to buy.

Individuals engaged, attentive, and interested in meaningful online interactions may perceive greater control (O'Brien and Toms 2008). When consumers choose to pay greater attention to an offer, they are in control. Consistent with the choice frame, causal thinking (viz., "If I do X, then I get Y.") leads to greater perceived control (Perry, Chipperfield and Stewart 2010). Therefore,

H4: The greater the attention to the offer the greater the buyer control.

From an integrated information processing perspective, attentional focus, stimulus salience and attentional control are interrelated (Peschard and Philippot 2016). Making valued attributes salient to individuals leads to greater perceived control in decision-making (c.f., Blekher, Danziger and Grinstein 2020). In the context of ABE, as the offer (e.g., 50% off) becomes more salient and obtainable, feelings of being in control of the exchange should increase.

H5: The greater the deal salience the greater the buyer control.

Consumers pay attention to offers they think are fair (Bolton, Warlop and Alba 2003). Fundamental to price information search is finding fair prices. Fair promotions correspond with fair prices (Xia, Kukar-Kinney and Monroe 2010). Deals that attract (positive) attention or notice are more apt to be fair and those ignored to be less fair. Price frames frequently influence price fairness and fairness in turn leads to positive evaluations and subsequent purchase intentions (Weisstein, Monroe and Kukar-Kinney 2013; Xia, Monroe and Cox 2004). Consistent with the first study:

H6: The greater the attention to the offer the greater the fairness.

H7: The greater the fairness the greater the deal evaluation.

In keeping with SD-logic, when consumers perceive they have input and control over the exchange and gain a reward as a customer (viz., Lusch, Vargo and O'Brien 2007; Vargo and Lusch 2004), they will see the deal as fair, evaluate the offer positively, and be more likely to purchase.

H8: The greater the buyer control the greater the deal fairness.

H9: The greater the buyer control the greater the deal evaluation.

H10: The greater the buyer control the greater the likelihood of purchase.

Ultimately, offers evaluated as good deals should lead to higher purchase likelihood.

H11: The greater the deal evaluation the greater the likelihood of purchase.

Study 2

Participants (N=310) were recruited from an online panel (Male=51.3%, Unmarried=56.1%, Median Age=35, range 18-70), 86.1% of whom bought a ticket to a music, sports, arts and theatre, family show or other event in the previous 12 months. Individuals were assigned at random to either

a choice (“When you buy two tickets save 50%”) or control (“Save 50% when you buy two tickets”) frame, with the latter replicating a Ticketmaster sales promotion. (See Figure 5.)

Place Figure 5 about here.

Participants were instructed to assume they were in Chicago with a companion and decided to look for two tickets to an event, prompting a visit to www.ticketmaster.com. Participants viewed a Ticketmaster screen listing events followed by otherwise identical screens from the Ticketmaster website. The offer contained nine hotspots (“Click once on the spots on this offer you like. Double-click on the spots you do not like.”) to register positive, neutral or negative responses. On average, study participants spent 113 seconds reviewing the webpage.

In addition to the hotspots to capture salient aspects of the deal, subjects were asked, “What stood out most about this offer?” with a counterbalanced single-item 7-point bi-polar scale (When you buy two tickets--Save 50%; $M = 5.34$, $SD = 1.91$). Attention to the deal ($\alpha = .858$) was measured with three 7-point Likert scales (Is stimulating; One I’d definitely notice; Would draw my attention). As in the first study, deal evaluation ($\alpha = .927$, $M = 5.47$, $SD = 1.16$) was captured with three 7-point bi-polar scales (a bad buy—a good buy; not worth the cost—worth the cost; a bad deal—a good deal) and deal fairness with the same single-item ($M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.27$). For purchase likelihood ($\alpha = .949$), subjects were asked how likely they would be to purchase tickets with this offer ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.45$), using three 7-point bi-polar scales (unlikely--very likely; not probable--probable; impossible--very possible; counterbalanced and randomized).

To expand upon the seller control measure from the first study, we developed six bi-polar statements ($\alpha = .839$) counterbalanced and randomly displayed for which participants selected the statement which best represents their opinions. With seller control items scored as zero and buyer control items scored as one, scale scores ranged from zero to six ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.91$).

Seller Control

Feels like a restriction they put on me to get a ticket
Feels like strings are attached
Makes me feel everything is under their control
Makes it difficult to get the deal I want
Takes advantage of me for being a customer
Lets them offer what they want to sell

Buyer Control

Feels like a reward I earn for incurring a cost
Feels like a bonus for buying
Makes me feel everything is under my control
Makes it easy to get the deal I want
Rewards me for being a customer
Lets me to choose what I want to buy

Results

We again employed SmartPLS to analyse the data. Composite reliability and Cronbach alpha for all scales exceeded .70. The Fornell-Larcker Criterion was highest for each construct compared to all other loadings and an examination for cross-loadings reveal all items load with the appropriate constructs. See Table 2.

Place Tables 2 and 3 about here.

Table 3 contains the results. All hypothesized paths were significant ($p < .05$) in the proposed direction. The choice frame led to greater attention (H1, .181, $t = 3.28$) and deal salience (H2, .129, $t = 2.28$). As salience of the 50% off in the offer increased, so did attention (H3, .268, $t = 4.47$). In turn, as attention to the deal increased, buyers felt more in control of the exchange compared to the seller being in control (H4, .388, $t = 6.44$). Enhanced salience of the 50% offer also increased feelings of buyer control (H5, .158, $t = 2.75$). Those reporting they would pay more attention to the deal also evaluated the deal as fairer (H6, .341, $t = 5.95$). Fairness, in turn, led to greater deal evaluation (H7, .452, $t = 8.79$). Those who felt more in control of the exchange were more likely to believe the deal was fair (H8, .306, $t = 5.17$), to evaluate the deal positively (H9, .305, $t = 5.73$), and to intend to purchase (H10, .290, $t = 5.10$). Finally, positive deal evaluations led to greater purchase likelihood (H11, .580, $t = 11.59$).

The choice frame ($M = 5.67$) produced higher salience of the 50% off compared to the control frame ($M = 4.87$; $F = 13.32$, $p < .001$). The hotspot analysis also confirms that the choice frame increases the salience of the 50% off deal. The single-item salience measure is strongly related ($.163$, $t = 2.87$, $p = .004$) to the selection of the “Save 50%” hotspot. In turn, those clicking on the “Save 50%” hotspot to indicate liking were more likely ($.185$, $t = 3.66$, $p < .001$) to also like “when you buy two.” Together these indicate the choice frame enhances the salience of the offer itself and the choice/restriction of buying two to get the deal. Of practical interest, those married were more likely ($.131$, $t = 2.50$, $p = .013$) to pay attention to this deal (to buy two tickets) than singles. Overall, the model explains 59.1% of purchase likelihood, 30% of deal fairness, 42.2% of deal evaluation 21.1% of buyer control, and 13.8% of attention to the deal.

Discussion

The first two studies apply service-dominant logic in a promotion framework for admission-based experiences to illustrate the processes by which the choice frame should perform better than the control frame. The results suggest consumers are more likely to think it’s a good, fair deal when they sense the service exchange feels like a bonus or a reward for buying, that it is under their control, and the deal is easy to choose and get what they want. The if-then causal thinking increases the salience of the offer (save 50%) in the choice frame, producing an overall more positive evaluation of the deal and subsequent intentions to buy the tickets in advance.

We now replicate the first study in the field, followed by general discussion of theoretical and managerial implications.

Study 3

In cooperation with an NBA team, the Dallas Mavericks, this study examines the role of the control-choice frame in an email marketing campaign. Identical to the first study, the discount was

30% off and the restriction was that it was only available for select seats for a limited time. The Black Friday promotion lasted until 3:00 PM (See Figure 1). Study participants were 329,647 basketball fans who received one of the two email offers: “30% OFF SELECT MAVS TICKETS” or “SELECT MAVS TICKETS 30% OFF.” The two conditions were matched on the team’s database in terms of contacts, accounts, and leads. The dependent measure was the click-through rate.¹

The choice frame produced an 8% higher click-through rate (3.51%, $N = 5,788$) than the control frame (3.25%, $N = 5,358$, $Z = 4.14$, $p < .01$). The team’s web analytics reveal that typically 12.5% of those who click-through convert to purchases averaging \$115/order. Thus, the additional 430 click-throughs lead to an estimated incremental revenue of \$6,181.

General Discussion

We begin with the managerial implications to highlight the practical importance of using the choice frame to improve competitive advantage for the service provider. We follow with theoretical and methodological contributions and close with calls for future research.

Managerial implications. The decision to present deals using the control frame or choice frame is perpetual in the advance selling of admission-based experiences. The service provider faces limited space or inventory, for specific dates and times, and for different quantities or price tiers. As one senior executive at a National Hockey League team shared, “*We need to cap the number of discounts or give-aways in order to limit financial exposure, but we worry that fans will be turned off by the restriction.*” Our studies reveal ABE operators employing the choice frame can avoid turning off customers. Instead, leading with the restriction can increase response rates and engender

¹ The team tracks open and clicks but does not track through to purchase.

customer feelings of shared gain as they feel rewarded for being a customer, find it easy to get what they want, and feel like it's a bonus for buying.

While the single-game incremental revenue may seem trivial for an NBA team, sports venues run email marketing campaigns for virtually every homestand, much like other leisure service operators do for seasonal promotions. Some Major League Baseball teams run over 100 sales promotions for an 81-game season at home (Brown 2018). Based on the results above, an NBA team with 41 home games and a conservative estimate of 20 email marketing campaigns with offers might produce incremental revenue of up to \$123,620 with the choice frame compared to the control frame. Sellers that continue with traditional practices year-after-year forego substantive opportunity costs.

Referring to Table 1, the choice frame (see inset) should produce better financial results than the control frames in these instances. Even if equivalent results, our studies suggest the choice frame produces more positive evaluations of fairness and deals offered than does the control frame. Thus, over the long term, the service provider should improve competitive advantage over those maintaining a selling orientation.

Experience	Restriction	Choice Frame
Texas Rangers	Conditions	For select games score 50% off Rangers tickets
Manilow on Broadway	Conditions	On select tickets save \$20
Fandango Movies	Conditions	Buy \$40 gift card: Get a free ticket to any movie
Arizona Snowbowl	Conditions	On select weekends enjoy 40% off
Disneyland	Duration	On a 3-Day Disneyland Resort child ticket save \$86
Events Center	Condition	On select tickets save 20% or more
Royal Caribbean	Quantity	Second guest 60% off 3 rd and 4 th guests 30% off
AXS (NBA tickets)	Condition	On select Clippers games no taxes no fees
Ski and summer resort	Condition	Buy full-price lift ticket get free lodging

A secondary managerial implication is that perceived fairness improves when offers are presented in the choice frame with the restriction plainly in view. Marketers suffer from an image

and trust problem with consumers (Sheth and Sisodia 2005). Media frequently report on failures or negative aspects of marketing (Cluley 2016). Marketing tactics often discourage price search (Lindsey-Mullikin and Petty 2011). Consumers have long distrusted sales advertisements (Aditya 2001) and attitudes have worsened to the point that over two-thirds do not trust brand advertising in general (Tenzer and Chalmers 2017). In short, consumers believe marketers do not play fairly. Greater use of the choice frame is one step in the right direction to marketing in a more transparent approach.

Theoretical implications. Nearly 700 journal articles focused on service-dominant logic have been published since 2004 (viz., Vargo and Lusch 2004). In our search, we found none to have examined its application to sales promotions. Application of S-D logic to pricing issues is limited (viz., Ingenbleek 2014) and to-date non-existent with respect to advance selling of admission-based experiences.

We provide a framework to apply S-D logic to sales promotions for the advance selling of admission-based experiences that should apply in other settings. Presenting consumers with a choice to obtain a deal if they fit the description should signal shared gain and, as our studies show, stronger feelings or perceptions that the buyer is in control rather than at the mercy of the seller. Individuals have a basic need for control (Pervin 1963). Individuals are less willing to take a risk to buy something if anxious or feeling out of control (e.g., Benthin, Slovic and Severson 1993). Thus, applying S-D logic to the presentation of offers with a choice frame prompts feelings of buyer control over seller control and is apt to produce the results demonstrated in Study 3 not only in ABEs, but in a variety of consumption contexts.

To the extent S-D logic is applicable to tangible goods as much as intangible services, our framework contributes to the sales promotion and price information pricing literature beyond the

scope of ABEs. Our findings reinforce early work suggesting restrictions may represent a hurdle producing feelings of inconvenience and irritation (Inman, Raghurir and Davis 1997). These studies add to the literature on price promotion framing and design specifically (e.g., Krishna, et al. 2002; Garnefeld et al. 2018), and scarcity effects more generally (Cannon, Goldsmith, and Roux 2019; Hamilton et al. 2018). If restrictions in the control frame are meant to signal scarcity (actual or not), these findings suggest the choice frame presents the offer in a way that does less to make consumers feel manipulated and more to feel like they are getting what they want to buy.

Accordingly, subject to future research, we expect Lowe's would do better to reframe plumbing supply offers to "When you buy 10 or more save 20%." Walmart would benefit from reframing grocery delivery offers with, "Spend \$50 or more and get \$10 off." Academy would find more takers for, "Buy the reel and get \$50 off a Shimano SLX rod." Such research might also explore consumer perceptions of retailers who more frequently use choice frames than control frames. Such research would extend S-D logic further into retail sales promotion and price information processing literature.

Methodological contribution. The measures of seller control in study 1 and buyer-seller control in study 2 provide the basis for future research in buyer-seller relationships consistent with S-D logic in promotion contexts. Inherent in promotions is a change in the value proposition. The change invites consumers to mental bargaining to assess the fairness and value of the proposition. S-D logic is premised upon reciprocal, interactional, relational, co-created, customer-oriented value propositions that are uniquely determined by the consumer's experience, context, and assigned meanings (Vargo and Lusch 2008; Vargo 2009). The consumer assesses the exchange to determine if the balance of power or control rests more with the seller or with the buyer.

The first two studies demonstrate process. The choice frame garners attention and makes the offer more salient, thereby enhancing the perception buyers are in control of the exchange. These factors are notably important in the advance selling context. Tickets and reservations are sold via intermediaries (viz., Ticketmaster; Hotwire), primary sellers (viz., Dallas Mavericks; Hilton Hotels) and resellers (individual buyers or brokers) for many experiences. Information asymmetry is relatively high given supply and demand fluctuations such that buyers may miscalculate the value of changes in prices (Wakefield and Wakefield 2018). Thus, commercial enterprises must consider how their value propositions are perceived given the fact sellers have more information on inventory supply and demand fluctuations than do consumers—and consumers are apt to be wary of the disadvantage. With the ease of online ad testing, sellers can readily assess perceived buyer-seller control of offers before market launch.

Finally, since price promotions trigger reward seeking (Shaddy and Lee 2020), our studies show it is better to frame offers with a choice that models if-then reward logic: “If I incur cost X, then I get reward Y.” Or, in the case of being a customer or a fan, the mechanism or frame should follow the same logic: “If I am a fan, then I get a reward.” Our measure of buyer-seller control strongly influences the purchase decision, both directly and indirectly by improving the perceptions of a fair, good deal. Thus, future sales promotion research should account for the predictive and explanatory power afforded by understanding if the offer is consistent with S-D logic and, in short, provides a competitive advantage through service.

Future Research and Limitations

Future research might examine the promotion frame, buyer-seller control, and individual differences (viz., reward sensitivity, price sensitivity, etc.) in different situations on reward-

seeking behavior (Shaddy and Lee 2020; Wadhwa, Shiv and Nowlis 2008; Wakefield and Inman 2003).

Further work is needed to determine limitations or other boundaries to the effectiveness of the choice frame, including discount or savings levels and how they are presented (viz., Suri, Monroe and Koc 2013). Traditional control frames typically present the offer in larger font size and follow with the restriction in small or even footnoted print. Further work could evaluate attentional control (Peschard and Philippot 2016) via eye-tracking or other means to determine the presentation effects.

Even though sporting events are a critical category within the advance selling of admission-based services, these studies are limited to that domain. Future work in other domains oriented toward hospitality and tourism is needed. Further, the scope of our work in sales promotions is limited to service-dominant businesses, but we expect the choice frame to produce similar results in the sales of packaged goods. Future research is needed to determine if differences exist.

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Figure 1 A Sales Promotion Framework for Admission-Based Experiences

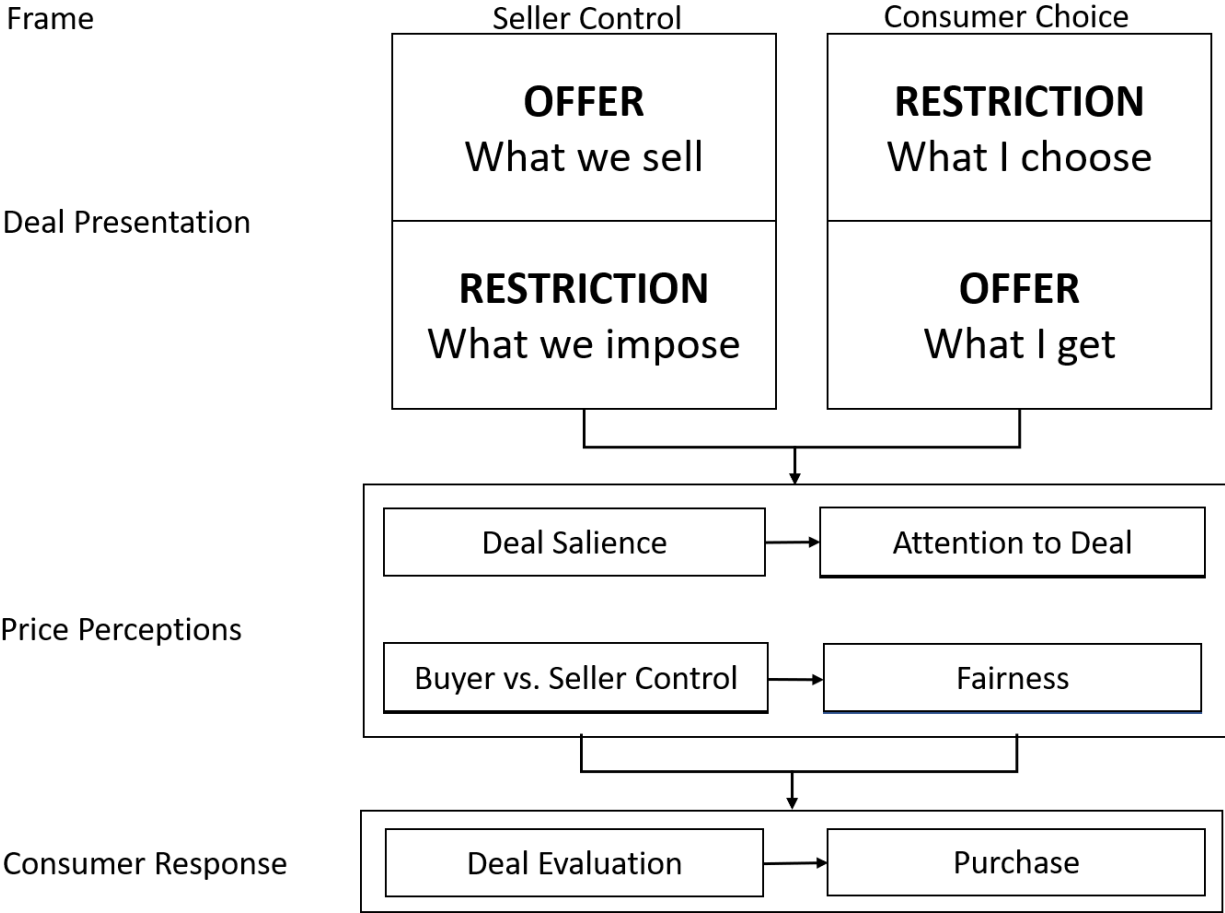
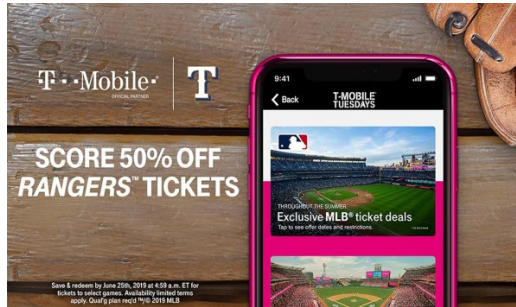


Figure 2 Admission-Based Experiences with Offer Followed by Seller's Restriction



Major League Baseball



Broadway Shows



Movie Theater



Skiing



Disneyland



Events Center



Cruises



National Basketball Association



Resort Lodging

Figure 3 Stimuli used for Study 1 and Study 3

Mavs Black Friday Promotional Offer

Panel A
Control Frame



Panel B
Choice Frame



Figure 4 Study 2 Model

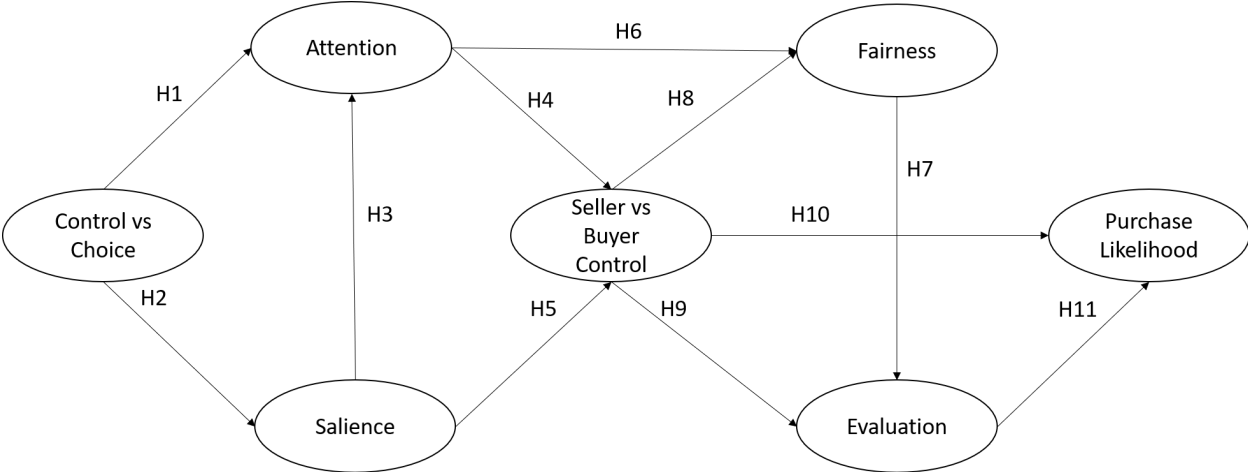
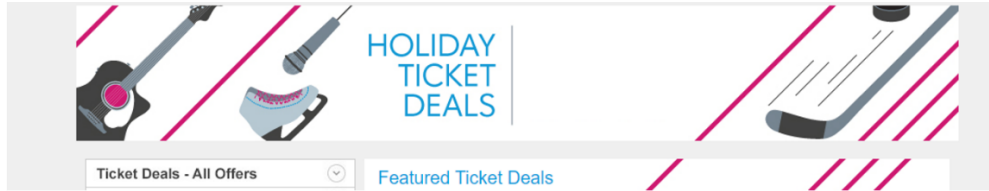


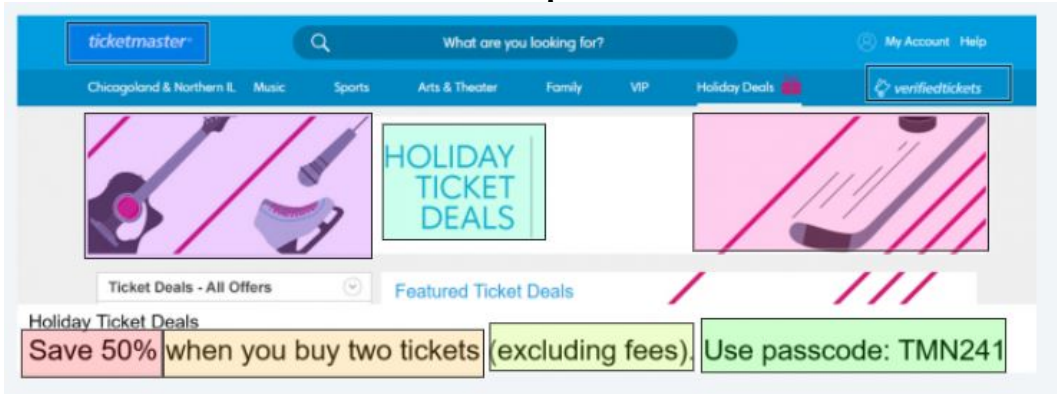
Figure 5 Study 2: Ticketmaster Control vs. Choice Frames

Panel A: Control Frame



Holiday Ticket Deals
Save 50% when you buy two tickets (excluding fees). Use passcode: TMN241

Hot Spots



Panel B: Choice Frame



Holiday Ticket Deals
When you buy two tickets save 50% (excluding fees). Use passcode: TMN241

Hot Spots



Table 1 Study 2 Cross-loadings

	B-S	Deal					
	Attention	Control	Eval.	Fairness	Frame	Purchase	Salience
Frame	.227	-.019	.197	.166	1	.041	.129
Salience	.290	.271	.276	.224	.129	.232	1
Attention1	.857	.335	.684	.424	.200	.574	.229
Attention2	.903	.404	.651	.439	.235	.595	.322
Attention3	.886	.409	.598	.387	.160	.573	.206
PI1	.601	.533	.670	.486	.007	.947	.201
PI2	.647	.576	.715	.528	.056	.968	.222
PI3	.632	.563	.693	.479	.053	.943	.241
BS1	.370	.776	.42	.373	-.023	.481	.183
BS2	.337	.800	.419	.411	-.039	.473	.212
BS3	.251	.728	.343	.320	-.058	.388	.174
BS4	.382	.763	.397	.341	.021	.466	.220
BS5	.352	.703	.388	.290	.050	.439	.242
BS6	.198	.674	.270	.262	-.053	.324	.168
Deal1	.690	.471	.939	.589	.270	.686	.285
Deal2	.697	.483	.918	.488	.091	.681	.240
Deal3	.661	.475	.945	.574	.185	.670	.248
Fair	.473	.454	.590	1	.166	.523	.224

Table 3 Study 2 Results

H		Path	B	t-value	P
H1	Frame	→ Attention	.181	3.28	.001
H2	Frame	→ Saliency	.129	2.28	.023
H3	Saliency	→ Attention	.268	4.47	.001
H4	Attention	→ Buyer Control	.388	6.44	.001
H5	Saliency	→ Buyer Control	.158	2.75	.006
H6	Attention	→ Fairness	.340	5.90	.001
H7	Fairness	→ Deal Evaluation	.452	8.79	.001
H8	Fairness	→ Purchase Likelihood	.144	2.13	.033
H9	Buyer Control	→ Fairness	.306	5.17	.001
H10	Buyer Control	→ Deal Evaluation	.305	5.73	.001
H11	Deal Evaluation	→ Purchase Likelihood	.642	11.54	.001