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Karar Sonrası Tüketicinin Bilgi Seçiciliği

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Özet: Bu çalışma "Bilişsel Çelişki" kuramından tüketici davranışları irdelemek bağlamında üretilmiş bazı hipotezleri test etmek amacıyla düzenlenmiştir. Bunlar; (1) Bilişsel çelişki yaşayan tüketici, toplam bilişsel çelişkiyi azaltmak amacıyla yeni bilgi arayışı içerisine girer ve bilişsel çelişkiyi arttıracak yeni bilgiden kendisini korur; (2) tüketici bilişsel çelişkisini azaltmayı başaramazsa ve sürekli olarak bilişsel çelişkisini arttıracak bilgi bombardımanı ile karşı karşıya kalırsa, kararını değiştirme noktasına varabilir. Ön-test sonuçları dikkate alındığında ilk hipotezin test edilmesinin daha uygun olacağı kararına varılmıştır.Araştırmada 56 denek yer almıştır. Deneklere bir pazar araştırmasına katılacakları söylenmiştir. Her bir deneğe sekiz farklı ürünle ilgili bir bilgi kartı verilmiştir. Her bir durumla ilgili olarak ön-karar aşinalığını arzu edilir bir noktaya getirebilmek maksadıyla çalışmanın bu aşamasında zaman manipüle edilmiştir. Bu ilk "bilgi" basamağından sonra, "Bilişsel Çelişkiyi Azaltma" grubunda olan deneklerden verilen "bilgi" yi hatırlamaları istenmiş, buna mukabil "Bilişsel Çelişkiyi Muhafaza" grubundaki deneklerden ise böyle bir şey istenmemiştir. Sonuçlar hipotezi desteklemektedir.
Anahtar Sözcükler: Bilgi seçiciliği, pişmanlık, tüketici kararı, bilişsel çelişki

The Selectivity of Information After a Consumer Decision

Abstract*:* An experiment was designed to test the following hypotheses derived from dissonance theory: (1) A person experiencing dissonance will actively seek new information that would reduce the total dissonance and will avoid new information that might increase the existing dissonance; (2) if a person is unable to reduce dissonance and he is continually confronted with dissonance-increasing information, he will reach a point where he will change or revoke his decision. On the basis of pretest result, it was decided to consider only the first hypothesis in the final experiment. In general, the procedure was as follows: Each of the (N=56) Ss was told he was participating in a market research. Each S was given an information card on each of eight products. Time was manipulated in this step to establish the desired degree of pre-decision familiarity in each condition. After this first information step, the Ss in the Dissonance Reduction group were asked to recall the information, whereas the Ss in the Dissonance Maintenance condition were not. The results generally support the hypopthesis.
Keywords: Selectivity of Information, Regret, Consumer Decision,Cognitive Dissonance

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1. Introduction

1.1. Significance of the Decision

In recent years there has been developed in business and academic circles the concept known as the "marketing concept" which attempts to deliver "the right product at the right place at the right time." (Fram, 1965; Caruana, 2007) The key to success of this attempt is consumer acceptance. Until the consumer makes the decision to buy, neither the product, place, nor the time is "right." Because the consumer has controlling influence in the success of any business venture, increased emphasis has been given the area of consumer behaviour. Within this area, interest has centered on the decision process.

In considering the consumer decision process, observers have been able to draw on other disciplines, primarily sociology and psychology. Such contributors as Lewin and Festinger have done much to enlighten us concerning the decision process. Festinger especially has concentrated on decision making and the consequences of having made the decision. His theory of cognitive dissonance is the underlying stimulus of this paper. It is appropriate at this point to review aspects of Festinger' s theory which are relevant to consumer decision making and to this paper.

1.2. Festinger' s Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

In discussing the types of situations in which dissonance may arise, Festinger distinguishes these three: (1) "free choice," (2)"forced compliance," and (3) "exposure to information." Only the first two are actual decision situations. Of these two, the "free choice" situation is the one that would be most common in consumer decision making. Fort his reason, this type of situation was used in designing the experiment in this paper.

In clarifying and defining the "free choice" type of situation, it should be pointed out that the alternatives in any situation are viewed as possessing both positive and negative attributes. An alternative in which the positive attributes outweigh the negative attributes is said to be a positive alternative. A "free choice" situation is defined as one in which a choice must be made between positive alternatives, i.e., each alternative is attractive in and of itself. Each alternative considered alone has a number of elements which would lead to the selection of that alternative. Dissonance, resulting from elements which "don't fit together is a function of the relative number of cognitions favoring the unchosen alternatives. It follows from this last statement that the greater the number of alternatives from which to choose, the greater the dissonance after teh choice decision (Festinger, 1957).

In considering other general factors which increase the magnitude of dissonance the following statements can be put forth: (1) "The magnitude of

post decision dissonance is an increasing function of the general importance of the decision." (2) "The greater the relative attractiveness of the chosen alternatives to the chosen alternatives, the greater the magnitude of dissonance." (3) "The magnitude of dissonance increases as cognitive overlap (the number of cognitive elements of the chosen alternative which correspondidentically with cognitive elements of the chosen alternative) decreases."

Festinger states two basic hypotheses underlying this theory of cognitive dissonance. These are: *(1) "The exixtance of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance." (2) "When the dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance."* (Festinger, 1957, p.3)

In discussing ways of reducing dissonance, Festinger expands the above hypotheses and states that *"in the presence of dissonance, a person might be expected to actively seek new information that would reduce the total dissonance and to avoid new information that might increase the existing dissonance."* (Festinger, 1957, p. 13, p. 264) Festinger adds that if the person is unable to avoid the dissonance-increasing information then *"the maximum dissonance that can possibly exist between any two elements is equal to the total resistance to change of the less resistant element. The magnitude of dissonance cannot exceed this amount because, at this point of maximum possible dissonance, the less resistant element would change, thus eliminating the dissonance."* (Festinger, 1957, p. 28) In other words, in the above situation the individual would change or revoke his decision.

1.3. Hypotheses

Upon an investigationof the progredd in confirming various tenets of dissonance theory, it will be noted that there are two related areas in which the results of experimentation have been inconsistent and lacking. These two areas are the selectivity of information seeking and the reversal of the decision. The first of these is central to the theory itself since it is partially one of Festinger' s two basic hypotheses. In this area lies perhaps the greatest weakness of the theory. The second area, cocerning the rversal of the decision, appears to have been given little consideration. It is because of these reasons, and with the hope of contributing to the improvement of the theory that the following two hypotheses will be considered.

1. A person experiencing dissonance will actively seek new information that would reduce the total dissonance and will avoid new information that might increase the existing dissonance.

2. If a person is unable to reduce dissonance and is continually confronted with dissonance-increasing information, he will reach a point where he will change or revoke his decision.

1.4. Related Research

In general, previous research on the psychological consequences of having made an initial decision is of greatest relevanceto this study. More specifically this involves the following areas: (1) the selectivity of information seeking, and (2) the tendency to reverse the initial decision. Since there have been many general experiments in these two areas, only those experiments having significance for dissonance theory will be reviewed here. Other studies, although they are interesting have not controlled certain important variables and consequently for our purposes are relatively insignificant. The following sections will discuss the related and relevant studies in the above order.

The selectivity of Information Seeking

The first six experiments in this section fall into a general pattern. There are three original studies an done replication of each of these. In his first book, Festinger (1957) discusses the first experiment conducted in this area. Festinger, Ehrlich and Schonbach developed the following design. The situation was a two-sided gambling game in which the S was allowed to choose which side he would play. The impression was given that one side was much better than the other. After choosing, the S could not change sides without paying a penalty. By manipulating the S' s winning or losing, consonance or dissonance could be created. After 12 trials, the S was shown a graph thet purported to show the true probability of his side being the winning side. It was reasoned that an individual' s tendency to expose himself to the graph would be a function of his consonance or dissonance. Specifically the following was expected: (1) if the individual was experiencing consonance there would be little or no motivation to acquire information, (2) if there was appreciable dissonance there would be exposure to consonant information and active avoidance of dissonant information, (3) if dissonance became large enough the individual would expose himself to **dissonance-increasing information**(Dieter, 1982; Blake, at., all. 2003; Kneer, at. all., 2012) . Cohen, Brehm, and Latane (1959) used the same experimental design and set forth the same hypotheses. The results of both studies agree: (1) when there was consonance, exposure was not very great; (2) when there was moderate dissonance the amount of exposure reached a peak; (3) as dissonance increased after this point avoidance also increased; and (4) when dissonance became very large exposure to dissonance-increasing information occured. Except for the second result, the expectation

were confirmed. Festinger explained this apparent divergence by pointing out that although the individual was experiencing moderate dissonance he perhaps consulted the graph in an attempt to confirm the correctness of his original selection and thereby reduce dissonance.

Following up an actual consumer purchase Ehrlich, Guttman, Schonbach, and Mills (1957) measured advertisement readership for new and old car owners. They found that new car owners read advertisements of their own make more than advertisements of both yhe "considered cars" and others not involved in the choice. However, new car owners did not read advertisements of considered cars less often than of other cars. It was found that readership of car advertisements in general was greater among new car owners.

The results support the prediction that people seek consonant (supporting) information after an important decision in an attempt to reduce dissonance. The prediction that people avoid dissonance-increasing information was not substantiated. However the authors concluded that the data were not sufficient to reject the hypothesis. In replication of this study, Engel (1963) found a significant difference between new and old car owners on only one of three measures of car advertisement readership. He concluded that there was little evidence that the new car purchaser was a dissonant consumer. However, because of a serious methodological limitation, his results are somewhat questionable.

In an attempt to extend the evidence, Mills, Aronson, and Robinson (1959) conducted the following experiment. The Ss were the choice of taking an essay or an objective examination in a college course. Each group (essay and objective) was further divided into a high and a low importance condition by telling them that the test counted 70 per cent or 5 per cent, respectively, of the final grade. The Ss were then presented with a list of articles about the two alternative types of examinations and were asked to indicate which articles they preferred to read. In discussing the results, the authors concluded that apparently the importance of the decision did not influence the selectivity of exposure to information (contrary to the prediction from dissonance theory). However, there was a significant selectivity favoring articles expounding positive aspects of the chosen alternative over the articles expounding positive aspects of the rejected alternative. There was no indication of selectivity favoring articles emphasizing negative aspects of the rejected alternative over articles stressing negative aspects of the chosen alternative. In a replication of the above study Rosen (1961) obtained the same results.The authors of both studies acknowledged the operation of

Festinger' s selectivity hypothesis (i.e. the seeking of supportive information and the avoidance of discrepant information).

In another study Adams (1961) measured the opinion of mothers on whether they thought a child' s behavior is mostly learned or inborn. The Ss then listened to a tape recording which advocated an opinion contrary to the one they expressed. The Ss were then given an opportunity to select to attend a discussion on child rearing. If they decided to attend, they were given a choice between attending a pro-heredity or pro-environment discussion. A measure of the child-behavior opinion was taken to the end. Adams found that Ss in whom dissonance had been created expressed a greater desire to attend an authoritative talk than the controls in whom no dissonance was created. He cocludes, *"it is clear, therefore, that under conditions of free choice subjects attempt to reduce dissonance by seeking information."*

In Festinger' s book(1964) it is pointed out that all previous studies on "exposure" make one or both of two methodological errors. These are: (1) the failure to control the usefulness of information, and (2) the creation of new additional dissonance when the additional information, clearly labeled as supporting or non-supporting, is made available to the S after his decision. Under this second condition, whether a person seks or avoids the available information depends on his **self confidence**. The following experiments were designed with the intention of controlling these additional factors.

The Jecker experiment (1964) was specifically concerned with controlling "usefulness" of additional information. The Ss were told the study was an investigation of the relationship between personality factors and the type of strategy chosen in a competitive game involving teams of unequal size. Information was made available to the Ss according to three conditions: before decision, after decision, or after preference. Analzing the aggregate results, Jecker found no post decision selectivity in exposure to information. However he noticed an internal pattern which when considered showed a preference in the post-decision condition for supporting rather than non-supporting information. This difference was significantly different from zero at the .05 level. There was no evidence of selectivity in the pre-decision or the uncertain conditions. However, Jecker concluded "the evidence fort he occurence of selective exposure is quite weak – just as it has been in all previous studies."

In an attempt to reconcile the above results and those of previous studies with dissonance theory, Festinger makes the observation that all the studies have made the same methodological error. The information made available to the Ss was clearly labeled so that the effect was to create additional dissonance. This in turn raised the question as to what effect self-confidence

had on selectivity. In an attempt to answer this question, Canon (1964) designed the following experiment. The Ss were required to select the "correct" alternative solution to business problems. Both usefulness of dissonant information and the S' s self-confidence relevant to the decision were manipulated. Canon found that when the dissonant material was potentially useful and the person was quite confident, there was a large preference for exposing oneself to the dissonant material. An usefulness and/or self-confidence decreased the S' s wilingness to expose hiself to dissonant information decreased. Both effects were highly significant.Whether there was active avoidance could not be determined. Cannon concluded these results *"certainly seem to provide a basis for understanding the weak effects obtained in previous studies. Lack of control over the perceived usefulness of the dissonant information, and lack of control over the confidence the subjet feels in being able to reduce the dissonance if he exposes himself to its concrete details, would produce very large variability in the pattern of selective exposure."*

These studies bring us up to the present status on the question of selectivity of exposure to information. The present situation can be summarized as follows: the hypothesis that a person experiencing dissonance will seek out consonant information has been partially substantiated; the hypothesis that a dissonant individual will avoid dissonant information has not.

Reversal of the Initial Decision

In discussing the difficulty of reversing decisions Festinger (1957) points out that after the initial decision a change in the attractiveness of alternatives may occur. This change would theoretically be in the direction of dissonance reduction and would have the effect of making a decision-reversal difficult. Martin (1922) demonstrated this experimentally. The experiment involved a number of hypothetical and actual decisions. Trained Ss gave an introspective account of the decision-making process. On the basis of these verbal reports, Martin distinguished three types of decisions: (1) ***preference*** – the chosen alternative was clearly beter then the other available alternatives, (2) ***conflict*** – all alternatives were nearly equal in attractiveness, and (3) ***indifference*** – the decision was highly unimportant. In terms of difficulty of reversal, preference was the most difficult, conflict was quite difficult and indifference was quite easily reversed. The results were explained by pointing out that the indifference decision was not very important and therefore little dissonance was created. Consequently there was little dissonance reduction (change in the attractiveness of alternatives) and therefore little difficulty in reversing the decision.

Lewin (1952) also discusses a number of studies on the effectiveness of producing change in behavior. In general, a group decision produces more change than a persuasive lecture.

While these studies are consistent with dissonance theory, their results cannot be solely attributed to it since a number of other explanations are also possible. Bennett (1955) also found that an explicit decision created more change in behavior than in a no-decision situation. In all these studies, the effect of the decision can be explained in terms of dissonance reduction which "justified" the originel decision and made reversal (going back on the decision) more difficult.

According to Festinger (1964) after a decision has been made there is immediate post decision salience of dissonance, i.e., as soon as the decision is made all the negative aspects of the chosen alternative and all the positive aspects of the rejected alternative became salient for the person. Phenomenally such salience of dissonance might be experienced as a feeling of regret. This phenomenon has been noted by Lewin (1938), Festinger (1957), and Brehm and Cohen (1962). Considering the significance of regret, Festinger states that *"if during the period when dissonance is salient, a person were given the opportunity to reconsider, he should show some inclination tor everse his decision."* (1964)

The regret studies(Rosenzweig, at. all., 2012;Jochen, at. all. 2010; Martinez, at. all., 2011) were prompted by an experiment by Brehm, Cohen and Bears (1960). In this study the Ss ranked a number of products. They were than told they would have a choice between two specific (closely) rated items. They were again asked to rank all the items and then allowed to make their choice. The results showed a 40 per cent reversal from the priority expressed in the original ranking. This study prompted a similar one by Festinger and Walster (1964). The Ss were told the study was a market research study on hair styles. After the initial rating, one group ("No-Prior-Decision") was asked to rank the hair styles and then were allowed their choice; whereas, the other group ("Prior Decision") was told which two styles they could choose between, then asked to rank all the styles (thereby making an implicit choice) and then allowed to make their choice. The results showed the prior-decision condition had a significantly higher incidence of decision reversal. In another experiment Walster (1964) considered the temporal sequence of post decision processes. The situation involved: (1) a decision that was reasonably important, (2) a choice between alternatives with both positive and negative aspects, and (3) difficulty of dissonance reduction. Specifically, the Ss were supposedly choosing their job assignment in the Army. The results showed there eas a period of post decision regret (i. e., a reduction in

the attractiveness of the chosen alternative and an increase in the attractiveness of the rejected alternative) followed by the customary process of dissonance reduction. Walster concluded, *"if one were to set up a situation in which dissonance reduction was even more difficult, almost impossible, the effect of focusing on and unseccessfully trying to reduce the dissonance might result in a stesdy increase in the importance of the dissonance and a steady narrowing of the discrepancy between the alternatives."*(1964) The author of this research reasons that such a situation should facilitate decision reversal.

2. Method

2.1 Manipulation

Davidson(1964) found that pre-decision familiarity, that is time spent before the decision thinking about the details of the alternative object, *"does actually facilitate post-decision dissonance reduction and does, indeed, seem to be substitutable for time spent after the dissonance exist."*

Festinger (1964) concludes *"the process of dissonance reduction does, indeed, require that time be spent in thinking about the characteristics of the alternatives. If such detailed cognitive familiarity is acquired before a decision, dissonance reduction seems to proceed more quickly because the person does not have to spent comparable time after to acquire that cognitive familiarity."*

Based on the above, it was reasoned that individuals who were able to attain pre-decision familiarity (by spending time before the decision thinking about characteristics of the alternatives) would select additional information in a manner which would enable dissonance reduction. In other words, the pattern of selectivity of information would be that predicted by the theory of cognitive dissonance. On the other hand, individuals who were unable to achieve as much pre-decision cognitive familiarity would not be as prepared and consequently would not select information in a manner consistent with dissonance theory.

The conditions of high pre-decision familiarity and low pre-decision familiarity were established by varying the amount of pre-decision "thinking" time. At the start of the experiment all Ss were given eight product information cards to read. The Ss in the high pre-decision familiarity condition, hereafter referred to as the dissonance Reduction condition, were given thirty seconds to read each card and an additional thirty seconds to "think the information over" before being given the next information card. After the "thinking" time on the last card, the Ss in the Dissonance Reduction condition were then asked to take two minutes to recall as much

of the information as possible. The Ss in the low pre-decision familiarity condition, hereafter referred to as the Dissonance Maintenance condition, were asked to read each card and to return the card after they had read it. They were then given the next card without any "thinking" time between cards. There was no recall step in this condition, instead the Ss went right to the next part of the experiment.

Diagram 1. Diagram of the Manipulations

Manipulation Condition	Thinking Time After Each Card	Recall Step
Dissonance Reduction Condition	**YES**	**YES**
Dissonance Maintenance Condition	**NO**	**NO**

2.2. Procedure

Each S was received in the office and told he was participating in a market research study. The S was then taken to theresearch room and upon entering was again told that he was participating in a market research study involving the eight products an a table. Each product was pointed out by name as they appeared on the table (original position selected by random and rotated after each run). The S was seated at another table so that he was facing the eight products. He was then given the first information cards and time was manipulated according to the condition. Next the S was asked to rate the attractiveness of the products. The S was then offered a choice of one of four highly rated products if he would return next week. All Ss agreed to return and made a choice.

After this the S was offered a chance to select additional information on the product advantages already covered. The S was told this information was not new additional information but that it related to the previous statements and would help him decide how significant or important the previous statements actually were. After the S indicated the order in which he would like to see the cards (each S was allowed eight selections), he was allowed to read them in the order he indicated. Again time was varied according to the condition. Actually the cards merely rephrased the information previously given. The S once again reted the items for attractiveness and was given the opportunity to change his choice. A third rating was obtained and the true purpose of the study was explained to the S.

2.3. Subjects

All Ss were enrolled in a communication skills course at the University of Mersin and were attending spring quarter between 2008-2010. As part of

their course requirement, the students were required to participate in a business study.

In the pretest, 14 Ss were run through the Dissonance Reduction condition and 12 were run through the Dissonance Maintenance condition. For the final experiment 30 Ss were run through each condition. These students were randomly assigned to one of the conditions. In the final study, four Ss were excluded because they were either uncooperative or were familiar with similar studies.

2.4. Pretest Results and Modifications of the Procedure

In the process of the pretest a number of necessary revisions became apparent. In the step offering additional information, the 16 cards (four alternative products with four cards each) were lined up in four rows and four columns. Each column referred to a specific product and the two top cards in each column referred to the "previously given advantages." The two bottom cards in each column referred to the "previously given disadvantages." This physical layout tended to confuse the S and also allowed him to easily fall into a selection pattern or sequence. As a result, it was decided to lay the cards out in a random order. Thus the cards would be laid out in such a manner that there would be no inherent pattern.

On the basis of the pretest it was decided to drop the stepoffering the S a chance to change his choice. This was done for two reason. The main reason was the fact that the offer was a verbal one and it was widely accepted that unintentional verbal inflections may influence the S' s decision (Boyd, at., all., 1956). Furthermore, only one S in each condition decided to change. Because the offer to change was dropped, the third rating was also eliminated. Another minor problem became apparent in the first information step. One of the disadvantages of the ski poles was that the poles " cost more than poles made of other materials." It was pointed out that this disadvantage would become an advantage if the ski poles were selected as the individual' s choice. As a result a new disadvantage was made up.

For the pretest 12 Ss were run in the Dissonance Maintenance condition and 14 in the Dissonance Reduction condition. To test the selectivity hypothesis, the proportion of each S' s choices favorable to the theory was determined. Choices "favorable" to the theory were those which the theory predicted the individual would select in order to reduce dissonance, i.e., the advantages of the chosen and the disadvantages of the rejected alternatives. For the dissonance Reduction group the mean proportion of "favorable" choices was 46.6 per cent. Fort he Dissonance Maintenance group the corresponding proportion was 55.0 per cent.The difference between the two conditions was not significant. However, as has been pointed out, the physical layout of the

additional information may have influenced the selectivity process. As a check of manipulations, the second rating was compared to the original. The theory predicts that a person experiencing dissonance would tend to increase the attractiveness of the chosen article and decrease the attractiveness of the rejected articles. Therefore, if the conditions were successfully established, the Dissonance Reduction group would show a net reduction of dissonance per person while the Ss in the Dissonance Maintenance condition should not. Such was the case, the former group showed a mean change in the ratings in the direction of net reduction of dissonance of 1.43 units, while the latter group actually showed a mean change of .25 in the direction of increased dissonance. The following differences were significant at the .10 level.

A completely unexpected result occured when the Ss were offered a chance to select information. All Ss were told they would be allowed a certain number of choices and tahn would be stopped. In the Dissonance Reduction condition 5 of the 14 Ss (%35.7) **voluntarily requested to stop selecting**. None of the Ss in the other condition acted in this manner. Again this was in the direction consistent with the theory and further substantiated the manipulations – the Ss in the Dissonance Reduction condition, being able to reduce dissonance more quickly, would have less need for selecting dissonance-reducing information. In view of this unexpected result, it was decided to incorporate in the directions an offer for individual to voluntarily stop selecting information before the experimenter stopped him.

3. Results

3.1. Expected from the Hypothesis

According to dissonance theory, after a person has made a decision he will experience cognitive dissonance. Furthermore, as a result of this dissonance the individual will attempt to reduce dissonance. One way he may do this is by seeking consonant information and avoiding dissonant information. Also, as was pointed out in the previous chapter, both time and preparation are necessary before a person can start reducing dissonance.

Since the Dissonance Reduction Ss have put in both the prerequsite time and preparation, whereas the Dissonance Maintenance Ss have put in another, the former SS should be ready to start reducing dissonance and would be expected to select information in a manner consistent with the theory (i.e., the theory would predict that the individuals would select advantagesof the chosen product and disadvantages of the rejected products, and they would avoid the disadvantages of thechosen and disadvantages of the rejected). Similarly, The Ss in the Dissonance Maintenance group would not be ready

to start reducing dissonance and would not be expected to select information in a manner consistent with the theory.

As a check on the manipulations used to establish the two conditions, the Ss in the Dissonance Reduction group would be expected to Express dissonance reduction through their rating behavior, whereas the Ss in the Dissonance Maintenance group would not be expected to Express such reduction.

3.2. Comparison of the Two Conditions

Table 1 shows the total selectivity of information for each condition. In interpreting this table, it will be helpful to keep in mind that each S was allowed to select a choice from four alternativeproducts in return for agreeing to participate in the study in the following week. Thus for each S there was one chosen and threerejected alternative products. The information offered each S consisted of two cards on the advantage and two cards on the disadvantages of each alternative product.

Table 2 compares the two conditions on over-all selectivity of information. The test was conducted in the following manner. For each S the number selections against dissonance theory (i.e., information the theory would predict the individual would avoid rather then select) were subtarcted from the number of selections in favor of the theory (i.e., selections the theory would predict an individual would select in an effort to reduce dissonance). Thus for each S a value was obtained which indicated net behavior in favor of (or against) dissonance theory. The t-test was then conducted in the usual manner. As can be seen in Table 2 the Ss in the Dissonance Reduction condition did select in a manner predicted by dissonance theory ($p<.05$) whereas selectivity in the Dissonance Maintenance group was not significant.

Table 1. Selectivity of Information on the Chosen and Rejected Items for Each Condition

Nature ofInformation	Dissonance Reduction			Dissonance Maintenance		
	Information selected on:			Information selected on:		
	Chosen	Rejected	Total	Chosen	Rejected	Total

Advantages	36	46	82	44	63	107
Disadvantages	50	81	131	41	72	113
Total	86	127	213	85	135	220

Table 2. Reduction of Dissonance Through Selectivity of Information

	t	df
Dissonance Reduction Condition	1.73*	29
Dissonance Maintenance Condition	1.00	29

* p<.05

Table 3. Comparisons of Selectivity of İnformation for the Two Conditions

Selectivity on:	Dissonance Reduction Group	Dissonance Maintenance Group
	t	t
Chosen: Advantages v Disadvantages*	-2.61*	.50
Rejected: Advantages vs Disadvantages*	-2.90*	-.61
Advantages: Chosen* vs Rejected	4.31*	5.45*
Disadvantages: Chosen* vs Rejected	5.65*	4.83*
Total Selectivity		
Advantages vs Disadvantages*	-3.54*	-.28
Chosen* vs Rejected	6.60*	6.49*

*p<.01

Table 3 shows more specific comparisons within selected categories of information. The t-test were conducted in the same manner as previously described. Since there were three rejected alternatives and only one chosen

alternative product for each S, chance alone would favor selectivity of information on the rejected products. A correction was mad efor this bias in the "chosen versus rejected" comparisons. In the tablet he asterisk indicates the type of information preferred in each comparison. Foe example, in the first comparison the Ss in the Dissonance Reduction group showed a significant preference for disadvantages of the chosen; the Ss in the Dissonance Maintenance group did not show a significant difference in this comparison.

3.3. Rating Behavior

As a check on whether or not the manipulations successfully established the desired conditions, Table 4 shows a comparison of rating behavior. Interest is focused on the change between the pre and post ratings.

It appears the manipulation was quite successful in establishing the desired conditions. As has been pointed out, if the conditions were established the Ss in the Dissonance Reduction condition should be able to reduce dissonance through the re-rating whereas the Ss in the Dissonance Maintenance condition would not be successful. Table 4 shows the Ss in the Dissonance Reduction condition were able to reduce dissonance through the ratings on the three rejected items whreas the Ss in the Dissonance Maintenance condition were able to reduce dissonance only through the rating on the most desired reject.

3.4. Voluntarily Stopping to Seek Information

The consideration of whether the Ss in one group would be more likely to voluntarily stop seeking information does not warrant further analysis since only nine Ss stopped themselves in the Dissonance Reduction condition and eight Ss behaved similarly in the Dissonance Maintenance condition. Needless to say, the difference between the two groups is not significant.

Table 4. Dissonance Reduction Through the Rerating of the Attractiveness of Alternatives

Condition		Alternative			
		Choice	Most desired reject	Second most desired reject	Least desired reject
Dissonance Reduction	x_1-x_2	-.03	-.62	-.40	-.35
	t	-.21	3.90*	-1.88**	-3.01*
Dissonance Maintenance	x_1-x_2	.07	-.70	-.20	-.25
	t	.50	-4.15*	-.83	-.15

* p<.01; **p<.05

4. Discussion

It will be recalled that the Ss in neither condition reduced dissonance by increasing the attractiveness of the chosen producton the post-rating. It was expected that the Ss in the Dissonance Reduction condition would reduce dissonance in this manner whereas the Ss in the Dissonance Maintenance condition would not. The rating behavior can perhaps be explained by the nature of the rating procedure. In the post rating, the reason the chosen did not increase in desirability may be explained in terms of the pre-rating evaluation of the chosen article. In most cases the chosen was either rated extremely desirable (the highest possible) or very highly desirable (next to the highest possible rating). Increasing the attractiveness of the chosen in these cases would be either impossible or psychologically difficult.

The selectivity of information becomes clearer when we consider the data and comparisons in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3. The hypothesis would predict that an individual would attempt to reduce dissonance by seeking the advantages of the chosen and the disadvantages of the rejected. The same individual would avoid the disadvantages of the chosen and the advantage of the rejected. As Table 2 shows, in general, the Ss in the Dissonance Reduction condition behaved in this manner ($p<.05$) whereas the Ss in the Dissonance Maintenance condition did not. As we pointed out earlier the Ss in the Dissonance Reduction condition would theoretically be expected to express this behavior to a greater extent than the Ss in the Dissonance Maintenance condition. The following results are apparent from Table 3:

1. The Ss in the dissonance Reduction group showed a significant preference ($p<.01$) fort he disadvantages of the chosen over the advantages of the chosen. The Ss in the Dissonance Maintenance group showed no preference.
2. The Ss in the Dissonance Reduction group showed a preference ($p<.001$) for the disadvantages of the rejected items over the advantages of the rejected items whereas the Ss in the Dissonance Maintenance group did not.
3. The Ss in both conditions showed a selectivity preference ($p<.001$) fort he advantages of the chosen over the advantages of the rejected.
4. On the selectivity on the disadvantages, Ss in both the Dissonance Reduction and the Dissonance Maintenance condition showed a preference ($p<.001$) for disadvantages of the chosen over the disadvantages of the rejected .
5. On total selectivity the Ss in the Dissonance Reduction group showed a preference ($p<.001$) for disadvantages over advantages. The Ss in the Dissonance Maintenance condition showed no preference between these two categories of information.
6. Again on total selectivity, the Ss in both Dissonance Reduction and the Dissonance Maintenance conditions showed a preference ($p<.001$) for information on the chosen over information on the rejected items.

Of the above results, the second and third findings support the hypothesis (i.e., the individual experiencing dissonance will seek consonant information and avoid dissonant information). The first and fourth findings are contrary to the hypothesis but are consistent with the findings of previous studies. The fifth and sixth findings are interesting and helpful in understanding the other results, although they are not directly interpretable in terms of dissonance theory.

On the basis of the results of this experiment, it can be concluded that the dissonant individual does seek new information that reduces his total dissonance. This experiment also yields mixed results on the expectation that the dissonant individual will avoid new information that might increase of his dissonance.

It is significant to note that the results obtained in this study agree quite closely with the results obtained Mills, Aranson, and Robinson (1959) and Rosen (1961) studies. It will be recalled from that both studies found the following results: (1) There was a significant selectivity favoring articles expounding the positive aspects of the chosen alternative over articles expounding positive aspects of the rejected alternative –compare this to 3 above-, (2) there was no indication of selectivity favoring articles emphasizing negative aspects of the rejected alternative over articles stressing negative aspects of the chosen –the present study found selectivity in favour of the disadvantages on the chosen, see 4 above-. Mills, Aranson, and Robinson (1959) explained their results through the use of two hypothesis. (1) "*Persons tend to seek out information that supports their choice and to avoid discrepant information*, and (2) persons *seek more information about the thing they have chosen*." For the first finding of the Mills, etal. study, the effects of the above two tendencies are in the same direction. For the second finding, the two effects would have worked in opposite directions.

The present study found that Ss in both the Dissonance Reduction and Dissonance Maintenance conditions showed a preference for information on the chosen –see 6 above-. As a result, the hypotheses that Mills, et al. proposed were in effect working against each other. This may explains why the results expected from dissonance theory were not obtained in 4 above.

The results in 1 and 4 may also become a little more clear if we consider the usefulness of information. As Festinger (1964) points out, information which is useful may be selected for its inherent value irrespective of whether it is consonant or dissonant with a previous decision. Accordingly, the present experiment was designed with the intention of controlling the usefulness of new information. The Ss had no way of determining the true usefulness of additional information. The Ss were told the aditional information would help them decide whether previous statements were or were not significant or important. With these instructions the Ss had no way of telling which information was the most useful. However, it became apparent that the Ss "projected" usefulness into the information relating to the disadvantages of the chosen and in soma cases to the advantages of the rejected items. The usefulness "projected" into the information was of two types: (a) How to use

the chosen product: A number of Ss selected information on the disadvantages of the chosen product because "such disadvantages would become apparent through using the product; however, that' s the hard way to learn about the limitations or shortcomings of the product." By learning about the disadvantages beforehand, some Ss thought they could minimize or avoid the disadvantages. If they could not minimize the disadvantages, at least they were aware of how not to use the product. The above behavior (seeking disadvantages of the chosen article) can be explained in terms of anticipation of dissonance. The Ss seemed to prefer to consider possible disadvantages of the chosen product (dissonant information) in an effort to avoid even greater dissonance (occuring through misuse of the product). It seems reasonable to prefer to know disadvantages of a chosen product if knowing these disadvantages assures that you will not use the product in the wrong way and as a result forego all use of it. Such an interpretation means that individual may be selecting short-term dissonant information in an effort to avoid greater long-term dissonant information. (b) Nodification of behavior dependent on the additional information: A number of Ss also mentioned that the additional information would be useful in modifying their pas tor future behavior. Dissonance theory requires commitment to a decision before selectivity predicted by the theory would be expected to ocur. Selectivity would be most clear where the decision is irrevocable. However, perhaps neither of these can be expected in the consumer' s world. In the great majority of consumer purchases, the individual can return the purchase. Many Ss expressed interest in the disadvantages of the chosen product for just this reason. Other Ss indicated an interest in the disadvantages of the chosen not to return the article but to modify future purchasing behavior. If the product was found to have serious disadvantages the individual said he would "purchase a different brand in the future." Interest was expressed in both the advantages of the rejected and the disadvantages of the chosen for another reason. Often an individual expressed interest in the above information because he had been, or would be, thinking of purchasing a gift in the near future. In other words, the selectivity of information was not cocerned with the present decision as much as it was with a future (irrelevant) purchase decision.

One other comment was made which raised an interesting question. One S commented that he was interested in the disadvantages of the chosen product so that he would know what performance to expect. This raised the question as to whether there is interaction between level of expectation and level of actual performance, and, if so, how does this affect future levels of

expectations of performance. This would be very similar to the aspiration-achievement effect on future levels of aspirations.

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