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“I” Follow My Heart and “We” Rely on Reasons: The Impact of Self-Construal on Reliance on Feelings versus Reasons in Decision Making

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Results from six experiments support the hypothesis that an accessible independent self-construal promotes a greater reliance on feelings in making judgments and decisions, whereas an accessible interdependent self-construal promotes a greater reliance on reasons. Specifically, compared to an interdependent self-construal, an independent self-construal increases the relative preference for affectively superior options as opposed to cognitively superior options (experiments 1A and 1B) and strengthens the effects of incidental mood on evaluations (experiment 2). Further, valuations of the decision outcome increase when independent (interdependent) consumers adopt a feeling-based (reason-based) decision strategy (experiment 3). Finally, these effects are moderated by decision focus (whether the decision is made for oneself or for others; experiment 4) and need for justification during decision making (experiment 5). Theoretical implications and managerial implications are discussed.

Past research has suggested that consumer judgments and decisions can be made in either a cognitive, reason-based manner—by carefully assessing and weighing the target attributes (e.g., Shafir, Simonson, and Tversky 1993) or in an affective, feeling-based manner—by using one’s subjective affective reactions toward the target or momentary feelings (e.g., Pham 1998; Schwarz and Clore 1996). A

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growing body of research has examined and identified a number of unique properties associated with these two modes of decision making. For example, affective, feeling-based decision making tends to be faster (Pham et al. 2001) and more automatic (Zajonc 1980); in contrast, cognitive, reason-based decision making tends to be slower (Pham et al. 2001) and more deliberate (Kahneman and Frederick 2002). Moreover, compared to judgments and decisions based on cognitive reasoning, judgments and decisions based on affective feelings tend to be less sensitive to numerical quantities (Hsee and Rottenstreich 2004).

In addition to delineating the characteristics of the two modes of decision making, past research has explored the conditions under which consumers would rely on feelings versus reasons in making judgments and decisions. For example, it has been found that consumers are more likely to rely on their feelings in making a decision when their processing resources are limited (Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999) or when they have an experiential consumption goal (Pham 1998). In contrast, consumers are more likely to engage in cognitive, reason-based decision making when their processing resources are high (Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999) or when they have an instrumental consumption goal (Pham 1998).

In this research, we identify another factor that may influence consumers' relative use of feeling-based versus reason-based decision making: self-construal, which is how people view the self in relation to others and the social environment (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Past research suggests that self-construal is an important determinant of various aspects of consumption behavior, such as brand choice (Escalas and Bettman 2005), risk propensity (Mandel 2003), response to persuasive messages (Aaker and Lee 2001), price-quality judgments (Lalwani and Shavitt 2013), and response to price cues (Chen 2009). This stream of literature has focused on the impact of self-construal on consumers' *cognitive* styles, such as cognitive processes that consumers use in processing information (holistic vs. analytical thinking; e.g., Nisbett et al. 2001), cognitive modes of thinking (context-dependent versus context-independent modes of thinking; e.g., Kühnen, Hannover, and Shubert 2001), or cognitive consequences on speed, accuracy, and memory (e.g., Kühnen and Oyserman 2002). Moreover, previous research examines the downstream consequences of these cognitive processing differences in the consumer context, such as price-quality judgments (Lalwani and Shavitt 2013) or response to external versus internal price cues (Chen 2009). We extend this stream of research by examining the impact of self-construal on the relative reliance on cognitive versus affective modes of decision making. Specifically, we hypothesize and demonstrate that consumers with an independent self-construal are more inclined to rely on affective feelings in making their decisions, whereas consumers with an interdependent self-construal are more likely to rely on cognitive reasoning in their decision making.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Independent versus Interdependent Self-Construal

Research in cultural psychology suggests that people hold different views about the self. One important distinction is how people view the self in relation to others and the social environment (Markus and Kitayama 1991). The independent self-construal is characterized by the view of oneself as a unique individual, defined by his or her internal attributes and distinguishing characteristics. The independent self-construal emphasizes the self as being more separated and differentiated from others. In contrast, the interdependent self-construal is characterized by the view of oneself as part of a social context, bounded and defined by others and by social relationships. The interdependent self-construal emphasizes the self as being more connected to and less differentiated from others. These two self-construals are chronically nurtured in different cultures: Western cultures tend to foster an independent self-construal, whereas Eastern cultures tend to foster an interdependent self-construal (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Although earlier research in cultural psychology conceptualized self-construal as culturally determined, more recent research suggests that independent and interdependent self-construals can also be made temporarily accessible (Gardner, Gabriel, and Lee 1999).

We propose that these two divergent views of the self in relation to others have implications for how consumers rely on feelings versus reasons in making judgments and decisions. We make this proposition based on two rationales: First, self-construal might affect consumers' focus toward the self or toward others in making a decision, which would in turn influence their relative reliance on feelings versus reasons in decision making. Second, consumers with an independent versus interdependent self-construal vary in the extent to which they feel the need to justify their decisions, which would consequently affect their tendency to rely on feeling-based versus reason-based decision making. In the following section, we elaborate on these two main conceptual rationales underlying our proposition and then provide some empirical findings that provide indirect support for our hypothesis.

Independent Self-Construal and Reliance on Feeling-Based Decision Making

First, self-construal should influence the relative focus consumers place on the self or others when making a decision, which would in turn influence the reliance on feelings versus reasons in decision making. An independent self-construal involves an emphasis on the self and realizing one's own needs and wants (Singelis 1994), directing one's attention toward the self (Markus and Kitayama 1991). For independents, making a decision for the self is a personal matter that helps fulfill one's own goals and needs. In contrast, an interdependent self-construal emphasizes one's connections to others and one's social embeddedness, directing attention toward others in the social environment (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Thus, for interdependents, even making a decision for the self would still be perceived as being related to other people and more than just a personal matter. Therefore, we argue that an independent self-construal should encourage a greater focus on the self when making a decision, whereas an interdependent self-construal should encourage a greater focus on others when making a decision.

Several pieces of empirical evidence support the notion that self-construal encourages a differential focus (toward the self or toward others) when consumers form judgments. For example, in social cognition, it has been found that in forming personal opinions on an issue, participants with an interdependent self-construal were more willing to consider others' opinions than were those with an independent self-construal (Park 2001). Similarly, Aaker and Maheswaran (1997) found that members of interdependent cultures were more likely to integrate others' opinions into their own compared to members of independent cultures. Finally, recent neuroscience studies suggest a possible biological link between self-construal and the relative attention that individuals place on the self versus others. Obhi, Hogeveen, and Pascual-Leone (2011) found that, in an action-observation task, priming interdependent self-construal increased motor cortical output, which is an area of the brain that essentially tunes individuals to (or shields the individual from) social

input; in contrast, priming independent self-construal did not make a difference. Taken together, these findings are consistent with the notion that self-construal may shift the relative focus that consumers place in forming judgments and decisions such that consumers with an independent self-construal tend to focus more on the self, whereas consumers with an accessible interdependent self-construal tend to focus more on others.

Past research has further suggested that increased focus on the self encourages a relative reliance on affective feelings. For example, Gorn, Pham, and Sin (2001, experiment 2) observed that incidental affective feelings exerted a greater influence on judgments when individuals made self-referent evaluations (e.g., "I like the ad") than when they made object-referent evaluations ("The ad is good"). Studies have also shown that consumers rely more on their affective feelings in forming a decision when the decision is made for the self than when the decision is made for others (Forgas 1991; Hsee and Weber 1997; Loewenstein et al. 2001). For example, Forgas (1991) found that when participants were asked to choose a partner for themselves to work as a team, participants' moods had a significant impact on partner choice; however, when they were asked to choose for someone else, the effect of mood was no longer present. Together, these findings provide support for the notion that a greater focus on the self in decision making should promote a relative reliance on affective feelings. To the extent that a decision is more pertinent to the self and should thus induce a greater focus on the self for independent consumers than for interdependent consumers, an independent self-construal should promote relative reliance on feeling-based decision making compared to an interdependent self-construal.

Interdependent Self-Construal and Reliance on Reason-Based Decision Making

We further propose that self-construal also leads to a differential need to justify one's decision during decision making, which in turn influences consumers' relative reliance on feelings versus reasons in making their judgments and decisions. Compared to an independent self-construal whose goals are to establish one's uniqueness and to distinguish from others (Markus and Kitayama 1991), an interdependent self-construal motivates one to fit in with others (Markus and Kitayama 1991) and raises concerns for impression management (Lalwani, Shrum, and Chiu 2009). For interdependents, these concerns for gaining social approval and maintaining one's social image may make interdependents feel more susceptible to evaluation by others and greater social pressure to be able to justify their decisions to others. After all, in the case that the decision turns out poorly, one can still demonstrate the original merit of the decision if it is easy to justify. Thus, an interdependent self-construal should increase consumers' need to justify their choices during decision making so that they would be able to defend their decisions in the event of being evaluated by others. Consistent with our reasoning, research suggests that in the

face of public scrutiny and potential embarrassment, people tend to minimize the threat by favoring the most justifiable option (Larrick 1993).

How might interdependents' greater need for decision justification influence the relative reliance on feelings versus reasons in their decision making? Past research shows that people are more likely to prefer easy-to-justify avoidant options (e.g., status quo options) when they are held accountable for the decision than when they are not held accountable (Tetlock and Botzger 1994). Interestingly, this greater preference for easy-to-justify options is not necessarily the result of less effortful decision process (Simonson 1989). Rather, people who are held accountable tend to think in more elaborate and integratively complex ways about the decision problem (Tetlock and Botzger 1994). Previous research has also shown that a greater need or pressure for justification leads to more analytical processing (Hagafors and Brehmer 1983) and a more elaborate choice process (Huber and Seiser 2001). Similarly, research in social judgments has shown that when people have social pressures to justify their views to others, they are more likely to engage in analytical and cognitive processing (Tetlock and Kim 1987), use cognitively complex decision strategies (McAllister, Mitchell, and Beach 1979), and process persuasive messages in more detail and a more cognitively effortful manner (Chaiken 1980). These findings converge on the idea that people who feel more pressure to justify their decisions to others tend to consider information more carefully and use more cognitive processing to arrive at a defensible position (Tetlock 1985). To the extent that need for justification is greater for interdependent consumers than for independent consumers, an interdependent self-construal should encourage a greater tendency toward reason-based decision making compared to an independent self-construal.

Preliminary Evidence for the Differential Reliance on Feelings versus Reasons under Different Self-Construals

Preliminary evidence for our hypothesis that self-construal promotes differential reliance on feelings versus reasons comes from research in cross-cultural psychology. In line with our conjecture that an independent self-construal promotes a greater reliance on feelings, a number of studies have found a stronger correlation between affective feelings and individualist cultures than between affective feelings and collectivist cultures. For example, Suh et al. (1998) found in a correlational study that emotions are stronger predictors of life satisfaction in individualist cultures than they are in collectivist cultures. Participants from individualistic cultures also anticipated feeling more comfortable expressing emotions than did participants from collectivistic cultures (Stephan, Stephan, and Cabezas de Vargas 1996). In contrast, collectivist cultures tend to value cultural norms more than individuals' inner subjective experiences in making global self-judgments (Kitayama and Markus 1995; Suh et al. 1998). To the extent that individualist cultures (e.g.,

North American cultures) tend to foster an independent self-construal and collectivist cultures (e.g., East Asian cultures) tend to foster an interdependent self-construal (Markus and Kitayama 1991), these findings imply a greater positive association between affective feelings and an independent self-construal compared to an interdependent self-construal.

Taken together, we postulate that self-construal would encourage differential reliance on feeling-based versus reason-based decision making. Specifically, we hypothesize that consumers with an independent self-construal would be more likely to follow feeling-based decision making than those with an interdependent self-construal. In comparison, consumers with an interdependent self-construal would be more likely to adopt reason-based decision making than those with an independent self-construal.

OVERVIEW OF THE EXPERIMENTS

We tested our hypothesis in a series of six experiments. Across the experiments, we operationalized self-construal by either situationally inducing an independent versus interdependent self-construal or measuring participants' chronic self-construals. We also employed a variety of decision and evaluation tasks to provide converging evidence for our hypothesis. The main decision tasks across the studies involve apartments and laptops, as they are relevant to our participants, who are college students with moderate knowledge about these categories.

The first four experiments (experiments 1A, 1B, 2, and 3) test our main hypothesis—the effect of self-construal on relative reliance on feelings versus reasons in decision making—using several different testing methods. Specifically, experiments 1A and 1B test our basic prediction by observing consumers' choice between an option superior on affective dimensions and an option superior on cognitive dimensions (see Chang and Pham 2013; Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999 for a similar testing method). The rationale is that if an independent self-construal indeed encourages a greater reliance on feelings versus reasons in decision making compared to an interdependent self-construal, then independent consumers should be more likely to choose the affectively superior option over the cognitively superior option than are interdependent consumers. Experiment 1B replicates the finding from experiment 1A and provides further evidence for our hypothesis by showing that participants' self-reported relative reliance on feelings versus reasons in making the decision mediates the observed effect of self-construal on relative preference.

Experiment 2 examines the impact of incidental mood (i.e., mood that is irrelevant to the focal task) on consumers' judgments of a target option. Prior research has shown that incidental feelings can be misattributed to and influence the judgment of an unrelated target in a mood-congruent manner—positive mood leads to more positive judgments and negative mood leads to more negative judgments (Schwarz and Clore 1983). If an independent self-construal indeed prompts a greater reliance on feelings than an interdependent self-construal, then independent consumers

should be more likely to be influenced by incidental mood in making judgments and thus exhibit a more pronounced mood-congruent effect. Conversely, if an interdependent self-construal prompts a reason-based mode of decision making, then interdependent consumers' judgments should be less susceptible to the influence of incidental mood.

Experiment 3 tests our predictions using another well-established testing method. Past research suggests that value is derived when people adopt a decision strategy that fits with their goal orientation, which can be transferred to the valuation of the decision outcome (Higgins et al. 2003). If self-construal is indeed associated with differential inclinations to rely on feelings versus reasons in decision making, then we should observe increased valuations of the decision outcome when independent (interdependent) consumers adopt a feeling-based (reason-based) strategy.

While the first four experiments test the basic effect of self-construal on the relative reliance on feelings versus reasons, the next two experiments (experiments 4 and 5) explore two theoretically derived boundary conditions of the hypothesized effect. Specifically, we posit that the hypothesized effect is driven by (a) the differential focus on the self versus others when making decisions and (b) the differential need for justification during decision making. Consistent with our theorizing, experiment 4 demonstrates that decision focus moderates the effect of self-construal on relative reliance on feelings versus reasons. Specifically, independents rely less on feelings when they are making a decision for others than when they are making a decision for themselves. In contrast, there is little difference for interdependents regardless of whether the decision is made for themselves or for others, presumably because interdependents would have already taken others into account even when they are making decisions for themselves. Finally, experiment 5 shows that the need to justify one's decision moderates the effect of self-construal on use of feeling-based versus reason-based decision making. In particular, independent consumers are more likely to rely on reasons than feelings in decision making when they are explicitly told prior to the decision task that they need to justify their decisions. In contrast, interdependent consumers do not exhibit this difference, presumably because they would have already felt the need to justify their decisions even without being explicitly told to do so.

EXPERIMENT 1A: MANIPULATED SELF-CONSTRUAL AND CHOICE BETWEEN AFFECTIVELY AND COGNITIVELY SUPERIOR OPTIONS

Experiment 1A tests the basic prediction that consumers with an independent self-construal are more likely to rely on affective feelings in making decisions, whereas consumers with an interdependent self-construal are more likely to rely on cognitive reasoning. To test our hypothesis, we manipulated participants' self-construal and asked them to choose between two options: one that is superior on affective

dimensions and one that is superior on cognitive dimensions. This testing strategy has been used in previous research to indicate consumers' relative engagement in affective, feeling-based versus cognitive, reason-based decision making (e.g., Chang and Pham 2013; Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999). We predicted that participants primed with an independent self-construal would exhibit a greater relative preference for the affectively superior option compared to those primed with an interdependent self-construal. In contrast, participants primed with an interdependent self-construal would exhibit a greater relative preference for the cognitively superior option than would participants primed with an independent self-construal.

Method

Participants and Design. Sixty undergraduate students (35 females) at Singapore Management University participated in the study in exchange for course credit. They were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions (self-construal: independent vs. interdependent).

Pretest for the Self-Construal Manipulation. To induce self-construal, we adopted a manipulation that has been widely used in previous research (e.g., Gardner et al. 1999; Krishna, Zhou, and Zhang 2008). Specifically, the manipulation involved asking participants to read a scenario about a visit to the city. This hypothetical scenario had identical descriptions between the two self-construal conditions, except that different pronouns were used to activate the relative accessibility of different self-construals. In the independent condition, the pronouns were all singular (e.g., I, my, me); in the interdependent condition, the pronouns were all plural (e.g., we, our, us). Although this manipulation has already been validated in previous research (Gardner et al. 1999), to test its effectiveness with our subject population, we conducted a pretest with 76 participants from the same pool as our main experiments. After reading the scenario, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which reading the scenario made them think about themselves and about their friends and family on two separate 7-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *a lot*). To check the validity of the self-construal manipulation, we conducted a 2 (self-construal: independent vs. interdependent) \times 2 (thought type: self vs. other) mixed ANOVA with self-construal as a between-subjects factor and thought type as a repeated measure. The analysis yielded a significant main effect of thought type such that participants had more thoughts about themselves ($M = 4.34$) than about their friends and family ($M = 2.93$; $F(1, 74) = 29.04$, $p < .001$). More importantly, the interaction between self-construal and thought type was significant ($F(1, 74) = 16.98$, $p < .001$). Participants primed with an independent self-construal thought more about themselves ($M = 4.78$) than did those primed with an interdependent self-construal ($M = 3.71$; $F(1, 74) = 6.15$, $p < .05$). In contrast, participants primed with an interdependent self-construal thought more about their friends and family ($M = 3.42$) than did those primed with an independent self-construal ($M = 2.60$;

$F(1, 74) = 4.38$, $p < .05$). From a different angle, these results suggest that participants primed with an independent self-construal thought more about themselves ($M = 4.78$) than about their friends and family ($M = 2.60$; $F(1, 74) = 55.43$, $p < .001$); on the other hand, participants primed with an interdependent self-construal thought equally about themselves ($M = 3.71$) and about their friends and family ($M = 3.42$; $F < 1$). The fact that interdependents did not differ in the extent to which they thought about themselves and about their family and friends is consistent with prior findings that an interdependent self-construal does not necessarily entail neglecting the self but rather increases the relative focus on others compared to an independent self-construal (e.g., Lee, Aaker, and Gardner 2000). For example, Lee et al. (2000, studies 2 and 3) found that participants in the independent self-construal condition thought more about themselves than about others; however, for participants in the interdependent condition, the number of thoughts about others were equivalent to thoughts about themselves. Taken together, these results confirmed the effectiveness of this manipulation in priming an independent versus interdependent self-construal with our subject population.

Pretests for the Decision-Task Stimuli. The main decision task used in this experiment was adopted from Chang and Pham (2013, experiment 1) with minor modifications for our participant pool. All participants were given a choice between two apartments, each described with six attributes. Three of the attributes were designed to operationalize cognitive or functional dimensions: apartment size, access to public transportation, and amount of closet space. The remaining three attributes were designed to operationalize affective dimensions: view from the apartment, amount of sunlight, and look of the interior décor. Apartment A was designed to be superior on the cognitive dimensions, whereas apartment B was designed to be superior on the affective dimensions (see app. A).

To establish the validity of the stimuli with our participant pool, we conducted two pretests. The first pretest was to verify that the six attributes did pertain to the affective and cognitive dimensions as intended. An independent group of 51 participants from the same pool as our main experiments was asked to rate each of the six attributes on a 7-point scale (1 = *appeals to my thoughts*, 7 = *evokes my feelings*). Results from factor analysis revealed that the ratings loaded onto two factors: All three attributes designed to be more cognitive loaded highly on the first factor, and all three attributes intended to be more affective loaded highly on the second factor. Thus, we formed a mean rating for the three cognitive dimensions and a mean rating for the three affective dimensions. A one-way repeated-measure ANOVA on the two mean ratings revealed a significant effect of dimension type such that the affective dimensions indeed evoked more feelings than they appealed to reasons ($M = 4.40$) compared to the cognitive dimensions ($M = 2.89$; $F(1, 50) = 33.96$, $p < .0001$). These results confirmed the validity of using these attributes to operationalize affective versus cognitive dimensions for the apartment stimuli.

A second pretest was conducted to further validate that choosing between an affectively superior option and a cognitive superior option can be indicative of people's tendency to use feeling-based versus reason-based decision strategy. An independent group of 37 undergraduate students from the same participant pool was asked to choose between two options using a specific decision strategy. Half of the participants were asked to follow a feeling-based decision strategy in which they were told to make their decisions based on "how [they] feel about each of the options" and "focus on [their] emotions and feelings toward each of the options." In contrast, the remaining half of the participants were asked to follow a reason-based decision strategy in which they were told to make their decisions "based on [their] reasoning" and "focus on the logical reasoning of the pros and cons of each of the options" (Pham et al. 2001). Participants were then given the same two decision tasks as used in experiments 1A (apartment) and 1B (laptop, which will be described later in experiment 1B).

Results showed that participants instructed to follow a feeling-based strategy were more likely to choose the affectively superior option over the cognitive superior option than those instructed to follow a reason-based strategy, both in the apartment scenario (85% vs. 52.9%, $\chi^2(1) = 4.52, p < .05$) and in the laptop scenario (70% vs. 23.5%, $\chi^2(1) = 7.94, p < .01$). These findings suggest that, consistent with past research (e.g., Chang and Pham 2013; Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999), the relative preference between an affectively superior and a cognitively superior option can be seen as indicative of the differential reliance on feeling- versus reason-based decision strategy.

Procedures. Participants first received the self-construal manipulation as mentioned in the pretest. After the self-construal manipulation, participants were given a choice task. They were told to imagine that they were going to rent an apartment and were shown descriptions of two one-bedroom apartments in the same price range. The apartment descriptions contained the six attributes used in the pretests. Apartment A was superior on all three cognitive dimensions (apartment size, access to public transportation, and amount of closet space), whereas apartment B was superior on all three affective dimensions (view from the apartment, amount of sunlight, and look of the interior décor as depicted in a picture). Participants were asked to indicate their choice between the two apartments, which served as the main dependent measure. They then reported their mood on four 7-point scales: *happy*, *sad* (reverse coded), *peaceful*, *anxious* (reverse coded). Finally, participants reported demographic information and were thanked and debriefed.

Results

Preliminary Checks. To ensure that our self-construal manipulation did not inadvertently affect participants' mood, which may have in turn influenced their apartment choice, a mood index was created by averaging participants' ratings on the mood items ($\alpha = .69$). A one-way ANOVA on the

mood index indicated that the self-construal manipulation did not affect participants' mood ($F(1, 58) = 1.22, p > .27$), ruling out mood as an alternative explanation.

Apartment Choice. A chi-square test revealed a significant effect of self-construal on participants' apartment choice ($\chi^2(1) = 4.21, p < .05$). As predicted, participants primed with an independent self-construal were more likely to choose the affectively superior apartment (55.2%) than those primed with an interdependent self-construal (29.0%). Given that the decision task involved relative preferences, these results also suggest that participants primed with an interdependent self-construal were more likely to choose the cognitively superior option (71.0%) than those primed with an independent self-construal (44.8%).

Discussion

We found that participants primed with an independent (interdependent) self-construal were more likely to choose an apartment superior on affective (cognitive) dimensions, demonstrating a greater relative use of affective, feeling-based (cognitive, reason-based) decision making. These results provide initial support for our hypothesis that consumers with an independent self-construal rely more on feelings, whereas consumers with an interdependent self-construal rely more on reasons in their decision making. One may wonder why independent participants, on an absolute level, did not seem to prefer the affectively superior option more strongly compared to interdependent participants. This result is not inconsistent with our hypothesis. The baseline choice proportion between the affectively superior and the cognitive superior option is a matter of calibration of the stimuli (e.g., suppose that the affective dimensions are far superior to the cognitive dimensions, then the baseline proportion will tilt toward the affectively superior option, irrespective of self-construal). What is central to our hypothesis is the shift in the relative preference for the affectively (vs. cognitively) superior option as a function of self-construal, as we observed in the results.

EXPERIMENT 1B: MEASURED SELF-CONSTRUAL AND PREFERENCE BETWEEN AFFECTIVELY AND COGNITIVELY SUPERIOR OPTIONS

Experiment 1B was designed with several objectives: First, in experiment 1A, participants' relative reliance on feelings versus reasons was inferred from their choice between an affectively superior option and a cognitively superior option. In this experiment, we aimed to provide more direct evidence for the process underlying the effect observed in experiment 1A by directly assessing the extent to which participants relied on their feelings versus reasons in making their decisions. Second, we wanted to replicate our findings from experiment 1A using an alternative operationalization of self-construal. Whereas participants' self-construal was made accessible temporarily by situational

prime in experiment 1A, experiment 1B measured participants' chronic self-construal. We also adopted a different product category for the decision task to increase the generalizability of our findings. Finally, we examined a plausible alternative explanation of our findings in experiment 1A. Past research has shown that an independent self-construal is characterized by a promotion focus, which is concerned with growth, accomplishments, and aspirations; in contrast, an interdependent self-construal is characterized by a prevention focus, which is concerned with safety, responsibilities, and obligations (Aaker and Lee 2001). Moreover, in the context of persuasion, it has been found that promotion-focused participants tend to base their evaluations more on their subjective affective responses to an advertisement (i.e., the attractiveness of the ad's execution), whereas prevention-focused participants rely more on the substantive content of an ad (i.e., the strength of the ad claims; Pham and Avnet 2004). Thus, the effect of self-construal on preference for the affectively versus cognitively superior option observed in experiment 1A could be due to the different regulatory focus associated with an independent versus interdependent self-construal.

Method

Pretest for Task Stimuli. In this experiment, we extended the decision context from apartments to laptop computers. Similar to experiment 1A, six attributes were selected to describe the laptop options. Three attributes pertained to the cognitive dimensions (size of hard drive, battery life, and warranty), and three attributes pertained to the affective dimensions (customizable colors, design, and visual appeal of the laptop; see app. B). To establish that these six attributes did relate to either cognitive or affective dimensions as intended, a separate pretest was conducted with an independent group of 36 participants from the same population as in the main experiment. Participants were asked to rate each of the six attributes on a 7-point scale (1 = *appeals to my thoughts*, 7 = *evokes my feelings*). Results from factor analysis revealed that the ratings of the attributes loaded onto two factors: The three attributes designed to be more cognitive loaded highly on the first factor, and the three attributes intended to be more affective loaded highly on the second factor. Thus, we formed a mean rating for the three affective dimensions and a mean rating for the three cognitive dimensions. A one-way repeated-measure ANOVA on the two mean ratings revealed a significant effect of dimension type such that the affective attributes indeed evoked more feelings than they appealed to reason ($M = 4.97$) compared to the cognitive attributes ($M = 2.11$; $F(1, 35) = 80.81, p < .0001$). These results suggested that these laptop attributes did relate to affective versus cognitive dimensions as intended. An additional pretest demonstrated that the relative preference between the affectively superior laptop and the cognitively superior laptop is indicative of the differential reliance on feelings versus reasons (reported in experiment 1A).

Procedures. Fifty-five undergraduate students (31 females) at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology participated in the study in exchange for course credit. The procedures were similar to those of experiment 1A except for the following changes: First, instead of manipulating participants' self-construal, we measured their chronic self-construal prior to the decision task using the self-construal scale (Singelis 1994). The self-construal scale consists of 24 items that assess people's chronic self-construal, of which 12 are related to an independent self-construal and 12 are related to an interdependent self-construal. Participants' chronic regulatory focus was also measured by asking them to indicate their upbringing on a 7-point scale (1 = *emphasis on duties, obligations, responsibilities*, 7 = *emphasis on hopes, wishes, aspirations*).

Second, to increase the generalizability of experiment 1A's findings, the decision task involved a different product category: laptop computers. Participants were presented with two 13-inch laptop options and were told that they were comparable in price. The two laptop options were described on the six attributes as mentioned in the pretest. Laptop A was superior on all three affective dimensions (customizable colors, design, and visual appeal of the laptop as depicted in a picture), and laptop B was superior on all three cognitive dimensions (size of hard drive, battery life, and warranty). The main dependent measure was participants' relative preference for the two laptops, which was assessed on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly prefer laptop A*, 7 = *strongly prefer laptop B*). Participants' relative preference was reverse-coded such that higher scores indicate a preference for the affectively superior option and lower scores indicate a preference for the cognitively superior option.

Finally, to gain insight about participants' decision-making process, participants were asked to indicate how they made their choices on two 7-point items (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). One item assessed the extent to which participants relied on their feelings in making their decisions ("I made my decision based on my feelings about the options"). The other item measured the extent to which participants relied on cognitive assessments in making their decisions ("I made my decision based on the functionality of the options"). Responses to these two items formed an index of participants' relative reliance on feelings versus reasons in which higher scores indicated a greater reliance on feelings and lower scores indicated a greater reliance on reasons (Chang and Pham 2013; see also Wang and Lee [2006] and Yoon, Sarial-Abi, and Gürhan-Canli [2012] for conceptually similar data treatments).

Results

Laptop Preference. Following past research (e.g., Kitayama et al. 2009; Wu, Cutright, and Fitzsimons 2011), we first computed a dominant chronic self-construal score by subtracting participants' mean ratings on the interdependent items from their mean ratings on the independent items. A higher score indicates a dominant independent self-construal

and a lower score indicates a dominant interdependent self-construal. A regression analysis with participants' dominant chronic self-construal score (mean-centered) as the predictor yielded a significant effect of self-construal such that participants with a dominant independent (vs. interdependent) self-construal exhibited a greater relative preference for the affectively superior option ($B = .77, p < .05$), replicating our results from experiment 1A.

To examine whether promotion focus (vs. prevention focus) increases relative preference for the affectively superior option, we conducted a regression analysis with participants' chronic regulatory focus as the predictor. Consistent with prior research (Pham and Avnet 2004), the analysis yielded a significant effect of regulatory focus such that participants with a chronic promotion focus showed a greater relative preference for the affectively superior option ($B = .45, p < .05$). More importantly, when we included both participants' chronic self-construal and chronic regulatory focus scores in the model to predict their relative preference, both the effects of self-construal ($B = .64, p < .05$) and regulatory focus ($B = .39, p < .05$) remained significant. These findings suggest that the effect of self-construal and the effect of regulatory focus on people's preference for the affectively superior versus cognitively superior options are independent of each other.

Mediation. To provide direct evidence for the process underlying the effect of self-construal, we conducted a mediation analysis. First, as mentioned earlier, participants with a dominant independent (vs. interdependent) self-construal indicated a greater relative preference for the affectively superior option ($B = .77, p < .05$). Next, a regression model with participants' chronic self-construal as the predictor of the relative reliance index showed that participants with a dominant independent self-construal reported a greater relative reliance on feelings than reasons ($B = .62, p < .05$) compared to participants with a dominant interdependent self-construal. In addition, a greater relative reliance on feelings (vs. reasons) was associated with a greater preference for the affectively superior option ($B = .40, p < .01$). Finally, when participants' self-construal score and their relative reliance index were both included in the model to predict their preference, the effect of self-construal became marginally significant ($B = .57, p < .08$) while the effect of the relative reliance index remained significant ($B = .32, p < .05$). The significance of the indirect effect was tested using bootstrapping procedures (Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes 2007). The procedures generated a 95% confidence interval around the indirect effect with zero falling outside of the confidence interval (95% CI = .02 to .60), indicating that the mediating pathway was significant. These results confirmed that the observed effect of self-construal on preference for the affectively superior versus the cognitively superior option was driven by participants' differential reliance on feelings versus reasons in forming their preference.

Discussion

We replicated experiment 1A's findings by measuring participants' chronic self-construal and using a different product category. We found that participants with a chronic independent self-construal were more likely to choose an affectively superior option, whereas those with a chronic interdependent self-construal were more likely to choose a cognitively superior option. In addition, participants with a chronic independent self-construal reported a greater reliance on feelings than reasons compared to participants with a chronic interdependent self-construal. More importantly, our mediation analysis demonstrates that the observed effect of self-construal on participants' relative preference was mediated by their relative reliance on feelings versus reasons in making the decision. This provides direct process evidence for our hypothesis that consumers with an independent self-construal tend to rely more on their feelings in decision making, whereas those with an interdependent self-construal tend to rely more on reason. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the effect of self-construal on people's reliance on feelings versus reasons is independent of the effect of regulatory focus.

Taken together, experiments 1A and 1B provide converging evidence for the hypothesized effect of self-construal on relative reliance on feelings versus reasons by observing participants' choices between an affectively superior and a cognitively superior option. However, one limitation of the testing method is that information content was varied across the options. To address this issue, the next study uses an alternative method that allows us to hold the information content of the options constant.

EXPERIMENT 2: RELIANCE ON INCIDENTAL FEELINGS AMONG INDEPENDENTS VERSUS INTERDEPENDENTS

Experiments 1A and 1B tested our hypothesis by examining consumers' reliance on integral affect toward the options (i.e., affective reactions directly elicited by the target options; Bodenhausen 1993) versus cognitive assessment of the options. One limitation of this method is that the different attributes used to operationalize affective versus cognitive dimensions might have been inadvertently correlated with different self-construals. Although the mediation evidence in experiment 1B alleviates this concern to some extent, in experiment 2 we employed a different strategy to completely rule out this possibility. In this experiment, we manipulated participants' incidental feelings (i.e., feelings from sources irrelevant to the target, such as preexisting moods). This allows us to manipulate participants' feelings without varying any information about the target option.

Past research on affect as information has shown that people often misattribute incidental feelings as genuine feelings elicited by the target and use these feelings in their judgments (Schwarz and Clore 1996). Thus, incidental mood

could influence judgments in a mood-congruent manner (i.e., more favorable judgments when they are in a positive mood and less favorable judgments when they are in a negative mood). If an independent (vs. interdependent) self-construal indeed promotes a greater reliance on feelings than reasons, then incidental feelings arising from preexisting moods should have a greater influence on judgments for consumers with an independent self-construal than for those with an interdependent self-construal (see Chang and Pham [2013] for a similar strategy). In this experiment, we manipulated participants' incidental mood and self-construal orthogonally and observed the effect of mood on their judgments of the target option. We predicted that participants' moods would produce a stronger mood-congruent effect on judgments in the independent self-construal condition than in the interdependent self-construal condition.

Method

Participants and Design. One hundred thirty-six undergraduate students (77 females) at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology participated in the study in exchange for course credit. They were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions of a 2 (self-construal: independent vs. interdependent) \times 2 (mood: positive vs. negative) between-subjects design.

Procedures. Participants were told that they would take part in several unrelated studies. First, participants were told to complete a word-association task, which was in fact a mood manipulation that has been used in prior research (e.g., Fishbach and Labroo 2007; Isen, Daubman, and Nowicki 1987; Labroo and Mukhopadhyay 2009). Specifically, participants were shown a list of words and asked to write down their first associations for each word in the list. In the positive mood condition, participants saw 10 positive words (e.g., music, butterfly, vacation); in the negative mood condition, participants saw ten negative words (e.g., exam, spider, enemy). After the word-association task, participants completed the same self-construal manipulation task as in experiment 1A.

Participants were then asked to complete a supposedly unrelated decision task. They were shown descriptions of a *single* apartment (which was the same as apartment B in experiment 1A). As the main dependent measure, participants were asked to rate their intention to rent this apartment on a 7-point scale (1 = *definitely not rent*, 7 = *definitely rent*). To check the effectiveness of the incidental mood manipulation, participants reported how they felt as they were completing the word-association task on a 7-point scale (1 = *bad mood*, 7 = *good mood*). Finally, participants reported demographic information and were thanked and debriefed.

Results

Manipulation Check. To check the adequacy of our mood manipulation, we ran a 2 (self-construal) \times 2 (mood)

ANOVA on participants' mood ratings. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of mood: Participants in the positive mood condition reported feeling more positive ($M = 5.00$) than did those in the negative mood condition ($M = 4.65$; $F(1, 132) = 3.96$, $p < .05$), suggesting that the mood manipulation was successful. Neither the main effect of self-construal nor the interaction was significant (all $p > .16$).

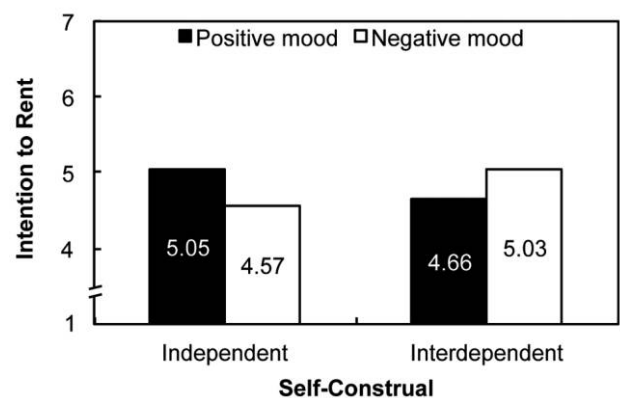
Intention to Rent. If an independent (vs. interdependent) self-construal indeed promotes a greater relative reliance on feelings versus reasons as hypothesized, then incidental moods should exert a greater influence on behavioral intentions for independent participants than for interdependent participants. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a 2 (self-construal) \times 2 (mood) ANOVA on participants' intentions to rent. Results showed that neither the main effect of self-construal nor that of mood was significant (all $F < 1$). Central to our prediction, the interaction between self-construal and mood was significant ($F(1, 132) = 6.21$, $p < .05$; see fig. 1). Planned contrasts showed that incidental moods had a significant mood-congruent effect on participants' intentions to rent in the independent condition ($M_{\text{positive}} = 5.05$ vs. $M_{\text{negative}} = 4.57$; $F(1, 132) = 4.00$, $p < .05$) but not in the interdependent condition ($M_{\text{positive}} = 4.66$ vs. $M_{\text{negative}} = 5.03$; $F(1, 132) = 2.33$, $p = .13$). These results suggest that participants with an independent self-construal relied more on their feelings in making judgments than did those with an interdependent self-construal.

Discussion

The results from experiment 2 show that incidental moods had a stronger influence on judgments for participants with an independent self-construal than for those with an interdependent self-construal. In the independent condition, participants' behavioral intentions exhibited a mood-congruent

FIGURE 1

THE EFFECT OF SELF-CONSTRUAL AND INCIDENTAL MOOD ON BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS (EXPERIMENT 2)



pattern, suggesting that independent participants relied more on their feelings. However, this pattern was not observed in the interdependent condition, suggesting that interdependent participants did not seem to rely on their feelings in their judgments. Interestingly, there seemed to be a directional reversal of mood effect in the interdependent condition (albeit not statistically significant). This pattern is not inconsistent with our conceptualization. Previous studies have shown that when people consciously attempt to exclude the influence of certain contextual inputs (e.g., incidental feelings) in making their judgments, they sometimes overcorrect, resulting in a contrast effect in the final judgment (Martin, Seta, and Crelia 1990; Schwarz and Bless 1992). Thus, it is possible that participants with an interdependent self-construal overcorrected for the influence of incidental mood.

An alternative explanation is that our mood manipulation may have inadvertently activated different regulatory focus: The positive mood induction might have activated a promotion focus and the negative mood induction might have activated a prevention focus. Prior research has suggested that an independent self-construal is associated with a promotion focus and an interdependent self-construal is associated with a prevention focus (Lee et al. 2000). Thus, one may wonder whether the observed results might have been influenced by the fit between self-construal and regulatory focus. However, our results do not seem to support this alternative explanation: This alternative explanation would predict a symmetric fit effect for the independent versus the interdependent self-construal. However, our results demonstrated an asymmetric effect across the self-construal conditions, which is more in line with our prediction that the effect of incidental mood is more pronounced under an independent self-construal than under an interdependent self-construal.

By keeping the information content of the option constant and varying participants' incidental feelings, experiment 2 complements our earlier results by ruling out a content-based account for the observed effect. Taken together, experiments 1A, 1B, and 2 provide converging evidence for our hypothesized effect of self-construal on consumers' reliance on feelings versus reasons in making judgments and decisions. In the next experiment, we provide further evidence for the hypothesized effect by directly manipulating the decision process participants use in decision making.

EXPERIMENT 3: FIT BETWEEN SELF-CONSTRUAL AND FEELING-BASED VERSUS REASON-BASED DECISION STRATEGIES

Experiment 3 was designed to provide a more direct test of our predictions on the effect of self-construal on reliance on feelings versus reasons. Past research suggests that independent of the decision outcome, value derives when people adopt a decision strategy that fits with their goal orientation. This value can be transferred to the valuation of

the decision outcome (Higgins et al. 2003). For example, Higgins et al. asked participants to choose between a coffee mug and a pen (in which pen was an inferior option) using an eagerness or a vigilance strategy that either fit or did not fit with their motivational orientation. Despite the fact that all participants chose the mug, their willingness to pay (WTP) for the mug was substantially greater when they adopted a decision strategy that fit (vs. did not fit) with their motivational orientation. To the extent that self-construal is a key determinant of people's goals and motivations (Markus and Kitayama 1991), we expect that when consumers adopt a decision strategy that fits with their self-construal, their valuation of the chosen option would increase as a result of the fit. Thus, further evidence for our hypothesis would be obtained if consumers with an independent self-construal have higher valuation of the chosen option when they make a decision using a feeling-based strategy than when using a reason-based strategy; the opposite should occur for those with an interdependent self-construal. To test our hypothesis, in this experiment we explicitly instructed participants to make a choice following either a feeling-based or reason-based decision strategy.

Method

Participants and Design. Ninety-five undergraduate students (57 females) from Hong Kong University of Science and Technology participated in the study in exchange for course credit. They were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions of a 2 (self-construal: independent vs. interdependent) \times 2 (decision strategy: feeling-based vs. reason-based) between-subjects design.

Procedures. The procedures were similar to those of experiment 1A except for three changes: First, after the self-construal manipulation, participants were given the task of choosing between two apartments. But, unlike in experiment 1A, before they were presented with the options, participants were explicitly told to follow a specific decision strategy in making their choice. Half of the participants were asked to follow a feeling-based decision strategy in which they were told to make their decisions based on "how [they] feel about each of the options" and "focus on [their] emotions and feelings toward each of the options." In contrast, the remaining half of the participants were asked to follow a reason-based decision strategy in which they were told to make their decisions "based on [their] reasoning" and "focus on the logical reasoning of the pros and cons of each of the options" (Pham et al. 2001).

Second, after reading instructions on the decision strategy to use, participants were given a modified version of the apartment choice task used in experiment 1A. To ensure that participants' valuations of the chosen apartment were comparable, the options were designed such that one option was clearly dominant regardless of the decision strategy used. Specifically, both apartments were described on the same six attributes as used previously. But, unlike in experiment 1A, apartment A dominated apartment B on four attributes

(apartment size, access to public transportation, view from the apartment, and look of the interior décor as depicted in a picture) and was identical to apartment B on the remaining two attributes (amount of closet space, amount of sunlight). Participants were then asked to choose their preferred apartment and to indicate how much monthly rent they were willing to pay for the chosen apartment. Their WTP was the main dependent measure. Finally, as a manipulation check for decision strategy, after participants made their apartment choice, they were asked to indicate how they made their choice on four 7-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Two scales measured the extent to which participants relied on their feelings in making their decision (“I made my decision based on my feelings about the options”; “I made my decision based on my intuitive impressions of the options”), and the other two scales measured the extent to which participants relied on reasoning in making their decision (“I made my decision based on the logical reasoning of how good the options are”; “I made my decisions based on careful thinking of the option attributes.”)

Results

Three participants who did not choose the dominant option were excluded from all analyses, leaving 92 observations for all subsequent analyses.

Manipulation Check. We first checked whether our decision-strategy manipulation was successful. Two decision-strategy indices were created: (a) a feeling-based decision-strategy index was calculated by averaging the two items that measured participants’ reliance on feelings in making the decision ($r = .70$), and (b) a reason-based decision-strategy index was calculated by averaging the two items that measured their reliance on reasoning in making the decision ($r = .69$). A 2 (self-construal) \times 2 (decision strategy) ANOVA on the feeling-based decision-strategy index showed a significant main effect of decision strategy such that participants instructed to adopt a feeling-based strategy indicated a greater reliance on feelings in making their decisions ($M = 5.33$) than did those instructed to follow a reason-based strategy ($M = 4.81$; $F(1, 88) = 4.75$, $p < .05$). Neither the main effect of self-construal nor the interaction was significant (all $F < 1$). A similar analysis on the reason-based decision-strategy index also revealed a significant main effect of decision-strategy manipulation: Participants instructed to adopt a reason-based strategy indicated a greater reliance on cognitive reasoning in making their decisions ($M = 5.58$) than did those instructed to follow a feeling-based strategy ($M = 4.94$; $F(1, 88) = 7.78$, $p < .01$). There was also a significant main effect of self-construal such that participants in the interdependent condition reported a greater reliance on reasons in making their decisions ($M = 5.52$) than did those in the independent condition ($M = 5.01$; $F(1, 88) = 4.26$, $p < .05$). The interaction between self-construal and decision strategy was

not significant ($F < 1$). Together, these results suggest that our decision-strategy manipulation was successful.

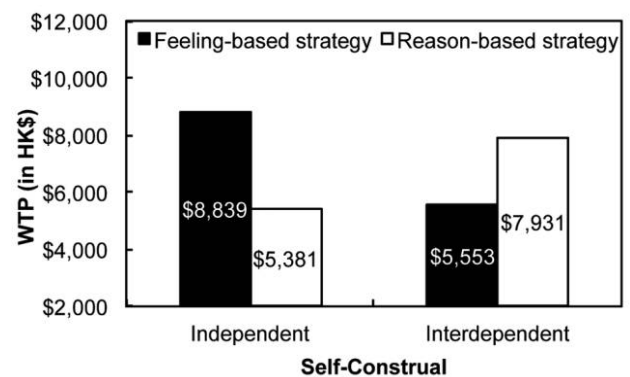
Willingness to Pay. We hypothesized that a feeling-based decision strategy should fit with an independent self-construal whereas a reason-based strategy should fit with an interdependent self-construal, as manifested in increased valuations of the target option. To test this prediction, we conducted a 2 (self-construal) \times 2 (decision strategy) ANOVA on participants’ WTP for the apartment’s monthly rent. (All the analyses were conducted with log-transformed WTP to correct for positive skewness, but the means provided are in raw numbers for ease of interpretation.) Results showed that neither the main effect of self-construal nor that of decision strategy was significant (all $F < 1$). Consistent with our prediction, there was a significant interaction between self-construal and decision strategy ($F(1, 88) = 13.63$, $p < .001$; see fig. 2). Planned contrasts showed that independent participants were willing to pay more for the target apartment when they made their decisions based on feelings ($M = \text{HK}\$8,839.29$) than when they made their decisions based on reasons ($M = \text{HK}\$5,380.95$; $F(1, 88) = 10.58$, $p < .005$). Interdependent participants were the opposite—they were willing to pay more when they made their decisions based on reasons ($M = \text{HK}\$7,930.79$) than when they made their decisions based on feelings ($M = \text{HK}\$5,552.63$; $F(1, 88) = 4.04$, $p < .05$). These results suggest that, as predicted, a feeling-based decision strategy was more compatible with an independent self-construal whereas a reason-based strategy was more compatible with an interdependent self-construal.

Discussion

By explicitly instructing participants to adopt a feeling-based versus a reason-based strategy and observing a fit effect between self-construal and decision strategy on valuation of the decision outcome, experiment 3 provides fur-

FIGURE 2

THE EFFECT OF SELF-CONSTRUAL AND DECISION STRATEGY ON WILLINGNESS TO PAY (EXPERIMENT 3)



ther evidence for the effect of self-construal on reliance on feelings versus reasons in decision making. These results also illustrate an important downstream consequence: A fit between a consumer's self-construal and the decision strategy would lead to increased valuation of the decision outcome, even when it is the same decision outcome. Taken together, using different testing methods, experiments 1–3 support the hypothesis that independents are more likely to use feeling-based decision making and interdependents are more likely to adopt reason-based decision making. In the next two studies, we sought to examine two theoretically derived boundary conditions.

EXPERIMENT 4: SELF-CONSTRUAL AND MAKING DECISIONS FOR ONESELF VERSUS FOR OTHERS

The main objective of experiment 4 is to test a boundary condition for the effect of self-construal on the use of feeling-based versus reason-based decision making. As discussed in our conceptualization, one rationale for the effect of self-construal on relative reliance on feelings versus reasons relates to how self-construal prompts a different focus on the self versus others in decision making. For independents, making a decision for the self is a personal matter and they should therefore focus more on the self in making their decisions; in contrast, for interdependents, even making a decision for the self is perceived as related to other people, and therefore they should be more likely to take others into account in making their decisions. If this is the case, we should expect the observed effect of self-construal to be moderated by whether people make a decision for themselves or for others. To the extent that making a decision for others invokes a greater focus on others and that one's own affective feelings are less relevant in this case (Forgas 1991), we should expect that independent participants would be less likely to rely on feelings when they are making decisions for others than for themselves. In contrast, for interdependents, since they would have taken others into consideration even when making decisions for themselves, there should be little difference between making decisions for themselves and for others.

Method

Participants and Design. Ninety-eight undergraduate students (45 females) at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology participated in the study in exchange for course credit. They were randomly assigned to one of the two decision-focus conditions (decision for the self vs. decision for others). In addition, their chronic self-construal was measured using the self-construal scale (Singelis 1994).

Procedures. The procedures were similar to those of experiment 1B with one important difference: The focus of the decision was manipulated by asking participants to choose between two laptops either for themselves or for a friend. In the decision-for-the-self condition, participants

were asked to imagine that they were looking for a new laptop computer and came upon two laptop computers in the same price range. In the decision-for-others condition, participants were asked to imagine that their friend was looking for a new laptop computer and came upon two laptop computers in the same price range. They were told that their friend was to choose between these two laptop computers and wanted their opinion. The same two laptop computers from experiment 1B were presented. As the main dependent measure, participants were asked which one of the laptops would they get (decision for the self) or recommend their friend to get (decision for others) on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly prefer laptop A*, 7 = *strongly prefer laptop B*). As in experiment 1B, this measure was reverse-coded such that higher scores indicate a greater preference for the affectively superior option and lower scores indicate a greater preference for the cognitively superior option. Participants then completed the self-construal scale (Singelis 1994).

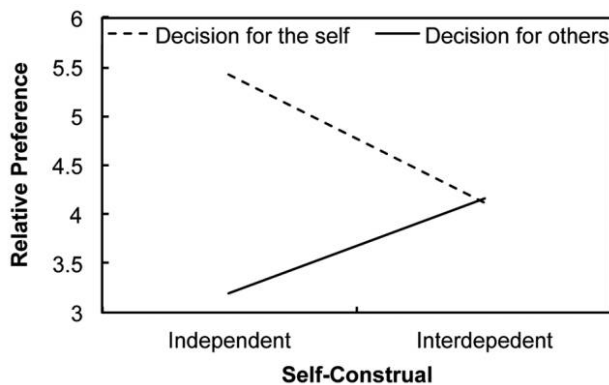
Results

Laptop Preference. We first computed a dominant chronic self-construal score as in experiment 1B. A higher score indicates a dominant independent self-construal, and a lower score indicates a dominant interdependent self-construal. To test our hypothesis, a regression analysis was conducted with participants' dominant chronic self-construal score (mean centered), decision focus ($-1 = \textit{decision for others}$; $1 = \textit{decision for the self}$), and their interaction term as predictors of participants' relative preference for the laptop. The results revealed a significant main effect of decision focus: Participants had a greater preference for the affectively superior option over the cognitively superior option when the decision was made for themselves than when it was made for others ($B = .54$, $t(1, 94) = 3.00$, $p < .01$). This pattern is consistent with past findings that consumers are more likely to rely on their feelings when making decisions for themselves than when making decisions for others (Forgas 1991; Hsee and Weber 1997). The main effect of self-construal was not significant ($t < 1$).

More central to our hypothesis, the interaction between self-construal and decision focus was significant ($B = .43$, $t(1, 94) = 2.95$, $p < .01$). To understand the nature of the interaction, following Aiken and West (1991), we conducted a spotlight analysis at ± 1 SD from the mean of the dominant self-construal score (see fig. 3). Consistent with our predictions, participants with a dominant independent self-construal indicated a greater relative preference for the affectively superior option when the decision was made for themselves than when it was made for others ($\beta = 1.11$, $t(1, 94) = 4.14$, $p < .001$); however, for those with a dominant interdependent self-construal, there was no difference in their preference between making the decision for themselves and for others ($\beta = -.02$, $t < 1$).

FIGURE 3

THE EFFECT OF SELF-CONSTRUAL AND DECISION FOCUS ON RELATIVE PREFERENCE FOR THE AFFECTIVELY SUPERIOR OPTION (EXPERIMENT 4)



Discussion

Extending our earlier findings, experiment 4 documented a boundary condition of the effect observed in experiments 1–3. We found that decision focus moderated the effect of self-construal on use of feeling-based versus reason-based decision making. Specifically, independent participants were more likely to prefer the affectively superior option than the cognitively superior option when they were making the decision for themselves than when they were making the decision for others. In comparison, interdependent participants were comparable in their relative preference whether the decisions were made for themselves or for others. These results are consistent with the notion that the hypothesized effect was due to the differential decision focus induced by self construal, which in turn influences the reliance on affective feelings in decision making. In the next experiment, we examine another theoretically derived boundary condition of the hypothesized effect.

EXPERIMENT 5: SELF-CONSTRUAL AND DECISION JUSTIFICATION

Experiment 5 was designed with two objectives: First, we aimed to demonstrate the robustness of our findings using a different manipulation of self-construal. More importantly, we wanted to examine another boundary condition for the effect of self-construal on the relative reliance on feelings versus reasons in decision making. In our conceptual development, we reasoned that interdependent consumers have a greater need to justify their decisions than independent consumers, which leads to a greater use of reason-based decision making. If this is the case, then the hypothesized effect should be moderated by consumers' need for decision justification. To test this prediction, we asked participants to choose from two apartments—an affectively superior op-

tion and a cognitively superior option. Half of the participants were told prior to the decision task that they would need to justify their choice, whereas the other half of the participants were not given this additional instruction. It was predicted that when participants were not told to justify their choices, independent participants would be more likely to prefer the affectively superior option than would interdependent participants. However, among participants who were explicitly told to justify their choices, independent participants would be as likely to rely on reasons as would interdependent participants.

Method

Participants and Design. One hundred ten participants (48 females) from Amazon Mechanical Turk participated in the study in exchange for payment. They were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions of a 2 (self-construal: independent vs. interdependent) \times 2 (need for justification: no need to justify vs. need to justify) between-subjects design.

Procedures. Participants were told that they would take part in a series of unrelated studies. First, participants' self-construal was varied using a well-established manipulation (e.g., Gardner et al. 1999; Trafimow, Triandis, and Goto 1991). Specifically, participants were asked to read a story about an ancient warrior who needed to decide whom to put in command of his army. In the independent condition, the warrior considered the benefits for himself and chose the person who was the best individual for the job. In the interdependent condition, the warrior considered the benefits for his family and chose a member of his family for the job. As manipulation checks, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which the warrior was thinking about himself and about his family on two separate 7-point scales (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *a lot*). Afterward, participants were given a decision task similar to that used in experiment 1A. They were asked to choose between two apartments—an affectively superior option and a cognitively superior option. In the no-need-to-justify condition, participants proceeded to the decision task without additional instructions, as in experiment 1A. However, in the need-to-justify condition, prior to making their decisions, participants were told that they would need to explain the rationale and justify their decisions (the audience to which they would need to justify the decisions was not explicitly specified). As the main dependent measure, participants were asked to indicate their preference between the two apartments on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly prefer apartment A*, 7 = *strongly prefer apartment B*). Higher scores indicate a greater relative preference for the affectively superior apartment, and lower scores indicate a greater relative preference for the cognitively superior apartment. Finally, participants reported demographic information and were thanked and debriefed.

Results

Manipulation Check. To check the effectiveness of the self-construal manipulation, we ran a 2 (self-construal) \times 2 (need for justification) \times 2 (thought type: self vs. other) mixed ANOVA of the manipulation check items with self-construal and need for justification as between-subjects factors and thought type as a repeated measure. The analyses yielded a significant main effect of thought type such that participants indicated that the warrior was thinking more about himself ($M = 5.80$) than about his family in making the decision ($M = 4.81$; $F(1, 106) = 39.97, p < .001$). The main effect of self-construal was also significant ($M_{\text{independent}} = 4.91$ vs. $M_{\text{interdependent}} = 5.66$; $F(1, 106) = 19.39, p < .001$). More importantly, the interaction between self-construal and thought type was significant ($F(1, 106) = 61.53, p < .001$). Specifically, compared to those primed with an interdependent self-construal, participants primed with an independent self-construal indicated that the warrior was thinking more about himself ($M_{\text{independent}} = 6.08$ vs. $M_{\text{interdependent}} = 5.54$; $F(1, 106) = 6.69, p < .05$) and less about his family ($M_{\text{independent}} = 3.75$ vs. $M_{\text{interdependent}} = 5.79$; $F(1, 106) = 60.92, p < .001$). No other effect was significant. These results suggest that the self-construal manipulation was successful.

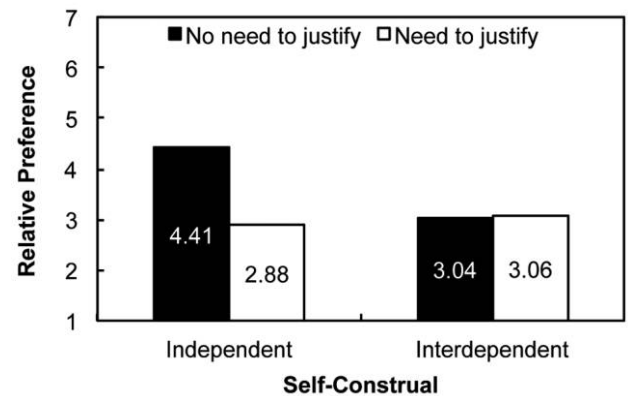
Apartment Preference. A 2 (self-construal) \times 2 (need for justification) ANOVA of participants' relative preference for the apartment revealed a marginally significant main effect of need for justification, such that participants showed a greater preference for the cognitively superior option when they had to justify their decision ($M_{\text{need to justify}} = 2.98$ vs. $M_{\text{no need to justify}} = 3.76$; $F(1, 106) = 3.41, p < .07$). This result is consistent with previous research suggesting that need for justification increases the likelihood of using cognitive processing and decision strategies (Chaiken 1980; McAllister et al. 1979; Tetlock and Kim 1987). The main effect of self-construal was not significant ($p > .15$). Central to our hypothesis, the analysis revealed a marginally significant interaction between self-construal and need for justification ($F(1, 106) = 3.65, p < .06$). When participants were not asked to justify their decision, independent participants showed a greater preference for the affectively superior option than interdependent participants ($M_{\text{independent}} = 4.41$ vs. $M_{\text{interdependent}} = 3.04$; $F(1, 106) = 5.67, p < .05$), replicating the findings in experiment 1A. However, when participants were asked to justify their decision, there was no difference between the two groups ($M_{\text{independent}} = 2.88$ vs. $M_{\text{interdependent}} = 3.06$; $F < 1$). In other words, participants primed with an independent self-construal showed a greater preference for the cognitively superior option when there was an increased need for decision justification ($M_{\text{need to justify}} = 2.88$ vs. $M_{\text{no need to justify}} = 4.41$; $F(1, 106) = 6.80, p < .05$; see fig. 4).

Discussion

Experiment 5 extends the findings of experiment 4 by identifying another boundary condition of the observed ef-

FIGURE 4

THE EFFECT OF SELF-CONSTRUAL AND NEED FOR JUSTIFICATION ON RELATIVE PREFERENCE FOR THE AFFECTIVELY SUPERIOR OPTION (EXPERIMENT 5)



fect of self-construal on the relative reliance on feelings versus reasons. We conceptualize that an interdependent (vs. independent) self-construal is associated with a greater need for decision justification, which encourages reason-based decision making. Consistent with our theorizing, we found that when need for justification was not made explicit, independent participants showed a greater preference for the affectively superior option relative to the cognitively superior option than interdependent participants, replicating our findings from experiment 1A. However, when need for justification was made explicit, independent participants were as likely to prefer the cognitively superior option as interdependent participants.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The current research examines the impact of self-construal on feeling-based versus reason-based decision making. In six experiments and across different operationalizations of self-construal (situationally activated self-construals in experiments 1A, 2, 3, and 5 and chronic self-construals in experiments 1B and 4), we provide converging evidence for the hypothesis that consumers with an independent self-construal are more likely to rely on their feelings, whereas consumers with an interdependent self-construal are more likely to rely on reasons in making judgments and decisions. Furthermore, we show that these effects are moderated by decision focus (whether the decision is made for oneself or for others; experiment 4) and need for justification during decision making (experiment 5).

Our results contribute to the extant literature on affect and decision making on multiple fronts. First, the current research identifies self-construal as an antecedent to consumers' relative reliance on feelings versus reasons in decision making. In addition, the results highlight an important

downstream consequence of using a feeling-based versus reason-based decision strategy, showing a striking 53% increase in WTP for the target option when the decision strategy used is compatible with participants' self-construal (feeling-based strategy under independent self-construal, reason-based strategy under interdependent self-construal) compared to when there was a nonfit (reason-based strategy under independent self-construal, feeling-based strategy under interdependent self-construal; experiment 3). Second, prior studies have suggested that consumers are more likely to rely on affective feelings when they are making decisions for themselves than when they are making decisions for others (Forgas 1991; Hsee and Weber 1997). Our studies extend these previous findings by identifying an important and previously unrecognized moderator: self-construal. The results from experiment 4 suggest that the finding that consumers are more likely to rely on feelings when they are making decisions for themselves than when they are making decisions for others is contingent on the self-construal accessible at the time of the decision. While independent consumers rely more on their feelings when making decisions for themselves (vs. for others), interdependent consumers are less inclined to rely on their feelings irrespective of for whom the decision is made. Third, past research on affect and risk taking suggests that people's decisions in risky situations are determined by both cognitive evaluations and emotional responses (e.g., fear, anxiety), and that risk aversion is partly driven by emotional reactions toward the situation at hand (Loewenstein et al. 2001). Our findings would thus predict that consumers with an accessible independent self-construal—who tend to rely more on feelings than reasons—might be more risk averse than those with an accessible interdependent self-construal. Indirect evidence to this proposition comes from research that has shown that Americans are more risk averse than Chinese in choosing between risky financial options and sure outcomes (Hsee and Weber 1999; Weber and Hsee 1998). To the extent that the American culture is associated with an independent self-construal and the Chinese culture is associated with an interdependent self-construal (Markus and Kitayama 1991), our research offers a potential novel process explanation for the observed cultural difference in risk preferences.

The current research also adds to extant literature on self-construal. Past research has focused on how self-construal influences consumer judgments and behaviors as a result of the different cognitive processing styles associated with different self-construals (e.g., Ahluwalia 2008; Krishna et al. 2008; Lalwani and Shiv 2013). People from independent cultures tend to process information in a more analytic thinking style, which involves viewing individual pieces of data as discrete and perceiving the object as being detached from the context; in contrast, people from interdependent cultures tend to process information in a more holistic thinking style, which involves viewing individual pieces of data as interconnected and perceiving the object as part of the context as a whole (Nisbett et al. 2001). Consequently, compared to those with an accessible independent self-construal, con-

sumers with an accessible interdependent self-construal have more favorable evaluations toward a moderate brand extension (Ahluwalia 2008), are more likely to assimilate to contextual cues in forming judgments (Zhu and Meyers-Levy 2009), and are more susceptible to the influence of contextual details in spatial judgments (Krishna et al. 2008). Extending this line of literature, the current research sheds light on how an independent versus interdependent self-construal affects *both* cognitive and affective styles of processing in judgments and decisions. Our findings may also help interpret previous findings on the impact of self-construal on impulsivity. A number of studies have suggested that independent consumers tend to engage in more impulsive consumption than do interdependent consumers. For example, Zhang and Shrum (2009) found that an independent self-construal is associated with more impulsive alcohol consumption compared to an interdependent self-construal. Similarly, Kacen and Lee (2002) found that an independent self-construal is positively correlated with impulsive purchasing behavior among Caucasians. To the extent that impulsive consumption is often linked to affect-based decision making (e.g., Mischel, Shoda, and Rodriguez 1989; Rook 1987), one interpretation of these previous findings may be that people with an independent self-construal are more likely to rely on feelings and consequently more impulsive in their consumption compared to people with an interdependent self-construal. It is important to note that because our studies do not involve any self-control dilemma or intertemporal trade-off (which is typically used to document consumer impulsivity), previous research on the effect of self-construal on impulsivity are less plausible as an alternative explanation to our findings.

Theoretical Implications

Relation to Regulatory Focus Theory. An interesting alternative explanation of the underlying process involves whether different regulatory focus associated with the independent versus interdependent self-construal could explain the observed effects. Past research has shown that an independent self-construal is characterized by a promotion focus and an interdependent self-construal is characterized by a prevention focus (Aaker and Lee 2001). Moreover, in the context of persuasion, promotion-focused participants tend to base their evaluations more on their subjective affective responses toward the advertisement whereas prevention-focused participants rely more on substantive content of the advertisement. Thus, it is possible that the effect of self-construal on reliance on feelings versus reasons operate through regulatory focus. We postulate that the mechanisms underlying the regulatory focus effect and the self-construal effect are conceptually different. Regulatory focus seems to exert its effect through the vigilance and eagerness associated with different focus: Prevention-focused people are more likely to rely on substantive information because a prevention focus is associated with vigilance, which encourages learning from the external environment. In contrast, a promotion focus is associated with eagerness, which

encourages the use of heuristics such as affective responses (Pham and Avnet 2004). The effect of self-construal, on the other hand, seems to operate through (a) a differential decision focus toward the self versus toward others and (b) a differential need for decision justification. Our results in experiment 1B provide initial evidence that the effects of self-construal and regulatory focus are indeed independent of each other. More systematic research is warranted to empirically disentangle the mechanisms underlying these two effects.

Relation to Construal Level Theory. It is interesting to consider how our studies involving choosing between an affectively superior and a cognitively superior option relate to construal level theory (CLT; Trope and Liberman 2003). According to CLT, high-level construal people put more weight to desirability in making a decision, while those with low-level construals put more weight on feasibility considerations (Liberman and Trope 1998). Our operationalization of the cognitive dimensions in experiments 1A and 1B (e.g., apartment size, laptop battery life) may correspond to feasibility considerations and the operationalization of the affective dimensions (e.g., view from the apartment, laptop design) may map onto the desirability dimensions. Some research has shown that people with an interdependent self-construal perceive future events as temporally more proximal (low-level construal), whereas those with an independent self-construal perceive future events as temporally more distant (high-level construal; Lee, Lee, and Kern 2011). This would imply that independents prefer affectively superior options and interdependents prefer cognitively superior options, a prediction consistent with our findings in experiments 1A and 1B. However, it is also important to note that other research has shown that Asians (characterized by an interdependent self-construal) tend to have higher chronic construal levels than Americans (characterized by an independent self-construal; Hong and Lee 2010), which would imply the opposite prediction: independent people would prefer options superior on cognitive dimensions, whereas interdependents would prefer affectively superior options. Thus, it would be important to systematically explore the link between self-construal and construal level and examine the indirect effect of self-construal through construal level on reliance on feelings versus reasons.

Idiosyncratic versus Commonly Shared Preferences. Given that an independent self-construal is characterized by the view of oneself as a unique individual and the interdependent self-construal is characterized by the view of oneself as part of the social environment, it is plausible that an independent self-construal promotes an idiosyncratic preference, whereas an interdependent self-construal promotes a commonly shared preference. One may thus wonder whether feeling-based preferences correspond to idiosyncratic preferences and reason-based preferences to commonly shared preferences. While there are situations in which this may be the case, we believe that it is better to conceptualize affective/cognitive values and idiosyncratic/

commonly shared values as orthogonal dimensions. For example, in experiment 1A, one of affective attributes used to describe the apartments was “look of the interior décor.” One option included a picture of an attractive interior décor (apartment B), whereas the other option showed a picture of a substantially less attractive interior décor (apartment A). Thus, apartment B is an affectively superior option, yet it is also a commonly shared preference since most people would prefer the attractive interior décor. Additional results from a separate posttest (not reported in the article) showed that choice shares observed in our experiments were indicative of the use of feeling-based versus reason-based decision making and not of idiosyncratic versus commonly shared preferences. We believe that an interesting and plausible theoretical extension of self-construal would be to test its effect on idiosyncratic versus commonly shared preferences, whereby idiosyncratic versus commonly shared aspects of the options are varied independently from their affective versus cognitive value.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

One limitation of the current research is that although we theorize that an independent self-construal promotes a greater reliance on affective feelings because feelings are informative when people make decisions for the self, we did not directly test this underlying process explanation. Pham (2009) argues that affective feelings provide various distinct types of informational input to individual judgments and decision making: Information about value, strength of preference, risk and conviction, situational demands and characteristics, and goals and motives that need to be prioritized. Therefore, affective feelings can have ecological validity for the objects people evaluate (Pham 2004). For example, Lee, Amir, and Ariely (2009) found that individual decisions based on affective feelings lead to greater intra-personal preference consistency (measured by transitivity across decisions) compared to decisions based on cognitive reasoning. An important avenue for future research is to directly test the informational account underlying the link between self focus and affect-based decision making.

Another limitation of the current research is that our theorizing and empirical studies focused on *general* affective responses. Our studies involved genuine affective responses elicited by the evaluative target (integral affect; experiments 1A, 1B, 3–5) as well as those that are incidental but misattributed to the evaluative target (incidental affect; experiment 2). We speculate that, however, our findings may not extend to certain *specific* emotions (see Cohen, Pham, and Andrade [2008] for a discussion of the conceptual differences between affect and specific emotions). Past cultural research has shown a differential preference for ego-focused emotions (e.g., pride, happiness) versus other-focused emotions (e.g., empathy, peacefulness) between members of individualist cultures and those of collectivist cultures (Aaker and Williams 1998). To the extent that collectivist cultures are associated with an interdependent self-construal and individualist cultures are associated with an independent self-

construal, this finding suggests that self-construal may promote a differential reliance on self-focused versus other-focused emotions. Thus, a systematic investigation of the effect of self-construal on reliance on specific emotions, particularly between self-focused and other-focused emotions, awaits future research.

The current research also presents another fruitful avenue for future research. Specifically, previous research has shown that people are more likely to rely on affective reactions in judgments when the judgment is based on hedonic criteria than when it is based on utilitarian criteria (Adaval 2001; Pham 1998). For example, in a product evaluation task, participants whose mood was varied were asked to evaluate a piece of clothing (e.g., jeans) described by a hedonic or utilitarian criterion. Results showed that participants' evaluations were influenced by incidental moods—exhibiting a mood-congruent pattern—when the product was described by a hedonic criterion but not when it was described by a utilitarian criterion (Adaval 2001). The results from our research would thus suggest that self-construal may have an effect on independent versus interdependent consumers' preference for hedonic versus utilitarian options and attributes.

Managerial Implications

Our research also offers some implications for marketing practitioners. In advertising campaigns, marketers often encourage consumers to engage in either a feeling-based or reason-based mode of decision making. For example, Hyun-

dai launched a “*Think about It*” campaign a few years ago, which included a series of commercials that ask the audience to think about the different advantages of Hyundai cars—such as Hyundai's price, fuel economy, and long warranties—over cars from other automakers. Ford, on the other hand, launched a commercial that focused on depicting how people feel when they see a Ford Edge driven past them. The current research suggests that these two types of campaigns may have differential effectiveness depending on the audience's self-construal. Specifically, campaigns encouraging a feeling-based decision strategy might be more effective for an audience with an independent self-construal, such as in Western cultures; in contrast, campaigns promoting a reason-based decision strategy might be more effective for an audience with an interdependent self-construal, such as in East Asian cultures. However, these managerial implications should be taken with caution as these two different cultures also differ on dimensions other than self-construal.

DATA COLLECTION INFORMATION

The collection of data for the six experiments was administered at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (experiments 1B–4), Singapore Management University (experiment 1A), and Amazon Mechanical Turk (experiment 5) between autumn of 2009 and autumn of 2013. The experiments were conducted by research assistants under the supervision of the two authors. Data across the experiments were jointly analyzed by the two authors.

APPENDIX A

Apartment A



- Courtyard view from living room
- Spacious closet space
- Single window in living room and small window in bedroom
- 630 sq. ft.
- Short walk to the nearest MTR

Apartment B



- Breathtaking view from most rooms
- Limited closet space
- Oversized windows with lots of sunlight throughout the apartment
- 450 sq. ft.
- Four bus stops from the nearest MTR

APPENDIX B

Laptop A



- 13.3" screen size
- 250 GB hard drive for storage
- Ultraportable, sleek design
- Battery life up to 3 hours
- 1 year warranty
- Available in a wide range of unique, configurable colors

Laptop B



- 13.3" screen size
- 500 GB hard drive for storage
- Traditional design
- Battery life up to 5 hours
- 3 year warranty
- Available in silver

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