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# The Presenter's Paradox Revisited: An Evaluation Mode Account

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Three experimental studies demonstrate that evaluation mode influences the assessment of product bundles. Consumers' preferences for product bundles are more pronounced in a joint evaluation mode, where the bundle is directly contrasted to its single counterpart (i.e., the bundle without its add-on), than in a separate evaluation mode, where the bundle is evaluated in isolation. An attentional explanation is suggested: consumers pay more attention to the unique features of a product bundle (i.e., the add-on) and, therefore, prefer the bundle more strongly in joint rather than in separate evaluation. This account bears relevance for Weaver, Garcia, and Schwarz's *presenter's paradox*, according to which presenters (i.e., people deciding what to offer to others) prefer bundle options, whereas evaluators (i.e., people deciding what to get for themselves) prefer single options. In the original research, presenters and evaluators provided judgments in joint and separate evaluation, respectively. Disentangling role (presenter vs. evaluator) and evaluation mode, our results show that, independent of role, people prefer bundle over single options in joint evaluations and are largely indifferent in separate evaluations. Thus, a substantial part of the original findings is attributable to evaluation mode. The presenter's paradox is revised in light of the current account.

For decades, product bundling has been a widely used marketing strategy to sell consumer products and industrial goods (Gaeth et al. 1991). At a general level, bundling can be defined as "the practice of marketing two or more products and/or services in a single 'package'" (Guitinan 1987, 74). A very common form of product bundling is to include a small add-on to a main product. For instance, an MP3 player includes an additional music download, small toys are added to children's cereal boxes, a bottle of shampoo comes with a sample of conditioner, or the booking of a hotel room includes a free dinner on the first night. The

goal of these marketing strategies is to increase the attractiveness of an offer by including an additional item.

## THE PRESENTER'S PARADOX

Recent research by Weaver, Garcia, and Schwarz (2012) suggests that the advantages of bundling as a marketing strategy may not be as straightforward as previously thought. In particular, the authors argue that a person's role—that is, whether a person is a *presenter* or an *evaluator*—is a critical determinant of whether including an add-on to a main product increases or decreases an offer's attractiveness. According to Weaver et al., presenters (i.e., people deciding what to offer to others; typically marketers) see an offer as more attractive when the add-on is included, despite the fact that the respective evaluators (i.e., people deciding what to get for themselves; typically consumers) find it more attractive without the add-on. As a consequence, a *presenter's paradox* emerges whereby presenters may endorse bundling as a marketing strategy even though it may be detrimental from an evaluator's perspective.

In Weaver et al.'s (2012) original research on the presenter's paradox, several studies provided consistent evidence for these hypotheses as well as for differences in terms of the underlying processing styles of how product bundles

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are assessed across the two roles. However, in Weaver et al.'s studies, presenters and evaluators were in different evaluation modes when judging the products. Whereas presenters were always able to assess both the bundle and the single option (i.e., the bundle without the add-on) in a joint evaluation, evaluators could only assess either the bundle or the single option in separate evaluations that were collected in a between-participants design. Thus, evaluations of presenters and evaluators were made on different grounds. Although this experimental setup may reflect many real-world situations, the current research disentangles the influence of people's role and their evaluation mode, in order to clarify their independent effects.

## EVALUATION MODE

At the theoretical level, the distinction between evaluating an option in isolation versus in the context of an alternative refers to the notion of *evaluation mode*. According to *general evaluability theory* (Hsee and Zhang 2010), any evaluation is formed in one of two modes: *joint evaluation mode* (JE) refers to decision contexts in which two or more values are available and can be directly compared, whereas *separate evaluation mode* (SE) refers to decision contexts in which only a single value is available that is evaluated in isolation. Thus, directly contrasting bundle and single options as in the case of presenters represents an instance of JE, whereas evaluating the bundle and the single option alone as in the case of evaluators represents an instance of SE. Importantly, past research has demonstrated significant preference reversals across many domains as a function of evaluation mode (for an overview, see Hsee et al. 1999).

The goal of the current research is to explore the consequences of evaluation mode when it comes to evaluating single versus bundle options, thereby shedding new light on the presenter's paradox (Weaver et al. 2012). In particular, we hypothesize that the attention that is paid to the bundle's add-on differs when it is presented in JE versus SE and that this difference affects evaluations across the two modes. We expect consumers to be more likely to notice the add-on, and therefore to prefer the bundle more strongly, when both options are presented jointly than when the bundle is presented in isolation.

## THE CANCELLATION AND FOCUS MODEL

Our reasoning is based on the cancellation and focus model (Dhar and Sherman 1996; Houston and Sherman 1995; Sherman, Houston, and Eddy 1999), which makes predictions about the salience of shared versus unique features when comparing choice alternatives. According to this model, features that are shared across alternatives are cancelled out in the decision process, whereas unique features are salient and focused on—a hypothesis that was recently backed up by eye-tracking data (Sütterlin, Brunner, and Opwis 2008).

Drawing on the cancellation and focus model, we predict

differences in feature salience across evaluation modes when judging single versus bundle products. In JE, the add-on is represented as a unique feature that is only provided by the bundle option, whereas the main product is represented as a shared feature that is provided by both the bundle and the single option. Therefore, in JE, we expect the bundle's add-on to be more salient than the main product. In SE, however, unique and shared features do not exist because only a single option is available, rendering neither the add-on nor the main product particularly salient.

On the basis of this account, the preference asymmetries across roles that were obtained in Weaver et al.'s (2012) research may be attributable to presenters and evaluators being in JE and SE, respectively. The added value of the bundle may have been more salient to presenters than to evaluators, thereby increasing presenters' endorsement of the bundle over the single option.

## HYPOTHESES

Directly contrasting a product bundle with a single product in a joint comparison highlights the added value of the bundle (i.e., the add-on) as a unique feature. Thus, we expect consumers in JE to prefer bundle over single options independent of their role. Formally:

**H1:** In a joint evaluation mode, bundle options are preferred to single options.

Moreover, because in JE the added value of the bundle is more salient than in SE, we expect the bundle to be perceived as more attractive in JE than in SE.

**H2:** Bundle options are perceived as more attractive in a joint evaluation mode than in a separate evaluation mode.

These first two hypotheses are concerned with the consequences of evaluation mode for the assessment of bundle versus single options; the next two deal with the underlying mechanism. Namely, we investigate whether contrasting a product bundle with its respective single version increases the salience of the add-on as a unique product feature, therefore making the add-on more salient in JE rather than SE. Formally:

**H3:** The added value of bundle over single options (i.e., the add-on) is more salient in a joint rather than in a separate evaluation mode.

Finally, we expect that add-on salience is related to preferences. When consumers pay more attention to the added value of a bundle, they should perceive it as more attractive than when they do not pay much attention to it.

**H4:** With increasing salience of a bundle option's added value (i.e., add-on), the bundle is perceived as more attractive.

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## THE CURRENT STUDIES

To test these hypotheses, we developed the following research plan. In study 1, we extended the design of Weaver et al.'s (2012) first study by orthogonally manipulating evaluation mode and role to test for their independent effects. In studies 2 and 3, we investigated add-on salience as a mechanism underlying preference asymmetries across evaluation modes. Following Spencer, Zanna, and Fong's (2005) recommendation to investigate hypotheses concerning mediators that are both measurable and manipulable in an *experimental causal chain* design, add-on salience was measured (study 2) and manipulated (study 3).

For three reasons, we believe that these studies make a novel and substantial contribution. First, study 1 sheds new light on the presenter's paradox (Weaver et al. 2012) by assessing to what degree role and evaluation mode independently affect preferences for bundle versus single products. Second, the current research brings together lines of research that were developed independently and had not been integrated before: building on what is known about evaluation mode (Hsee and Zhang 2010; Hsee et al. 1999) and the cancellation and focus model (Houston and Sherman 1995; Sherman et al. 1999), we investigate attentional asymmetries across evaluation modes (studies 2 and 3). Third, the current research has significant implications for the marketing of product bundles. If the added value of a bundle promotion indeed goes largely undetected when it is not contrasted against a single alternative, the potential of this marketing strategy may be significantly reduced. We return to these points in the General Discussion.

### STUDY 1

To test our hypotheses that (1) bundles are preferred to singles in JE and that (2) bundles are perceived as more attractive in JE than in SE, we replicated and extended the design of Weaver et al.'s (2012) first study. In the original study, the single option was an 8-gigabyte iPod Touch, and the bundle option was the same iPod Touch along with a free music download. Presenters always received both options in a within-participants design, whereas evaluators received either the single or the bundle option in a between-participants design. Moreover, presenters indicated their preferences by making a choice between bundle and single, whereas evaluators indicated their willingness to pay (WTP) for one or the other option.

We extended the original method in two regards. First, we expanded the design by introducing an evaluator condition in which both options were presented in JE and a presenter condition in which both options were presented in SE to obtain a full factorial design. Second, we assessed both dependent variables (i.e., choice and WTP) for both roles.

### Method

*Participants.* Using the same data collection website as in the original study (Weaver et al. 2012), we collected data

from 120 US Americans (47 females; age  $M = 31.37$ ,  $SD = 11.00$ ) via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk; see Buhrmester, Kwang, and Gosling 2011).

*Design.* The study followed a 2 (role: presenter vs. evaluator)  $\times$  3 (evaluation mode: JE vs. SE/single first vs. SE/bundle first)  $\times$  2 (target item: single vs. bundle) experimental design with the first two factors varying between and the latter within participants. Participants in the two SE conditions (i.e., SE/single first and SE/bundle first) were also presented the other option (bundle and single, respectively) after having provided their initial judgment. Thus, choice data are also available for these participants. Note, however, that choices by their very nature represent JE rather than SE. Accordingly, only the first judgment in the SE/single first and SE/bundle first conditions was considered for analyzing preferences in SE.

*Procedure.* Participants received one of six scenarios, dependent on condition, which were taken and adapted from the original study (Weaver et al. 2012). In particular, presenters in the SE/single first [JE] condition read: "Imagine you are in charge of creating packages for iPods. You have the option to offer customers [either] an 8-gigabyte iPod Touch and cover [or the same 8-gigabyte iPod Touch and cover along with one free music download]." The SE/bundle first condition was analogous, except that the bundle was mentioned instead of the single option. In the JE condition, where both options were presented simultaneously, the order of single and bundle options was counterbalanced.

Evaluators in the SE/single first [JE] condition read: "Imagine you are looking to buy a gift for a friend and you are considering purchasing an iPod Touch. In the store you see the following [two] iPod package[s] for sale: [You have the option to buy either] an 8-gigabyte iPod Touch and cover [or the same 8-gigabyte iPod Touch and cover along with one free music download]." Just as in the presenter condition, the SE/bundle first condition was created by mentioning the bundle instead of the single option and the order of both options was counterbalanced in the JE condition.

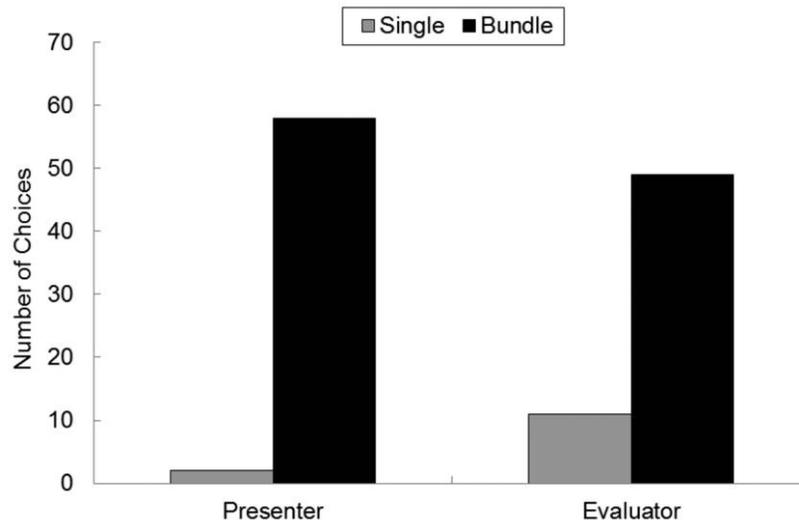
*Dependent Variables.* In both JE conditions, presenters [evaluators] first answered a choice measure ("If your goal is to have consumers believe the package is more valuable [to choose the package you consider more valuable], which one would you choose?"). Then, they indicated customers' [their own] WTP for both options in counterbalanced order ("How much do you think prospective customers [you] would be willing to pay for the 8-gigabyte iPod Touch and cover [along with one free music download]?").

In the four SE conditions, the procedure was adjusted so that participants first expressed their WTP for one option without yet knowing about the existence of another option. After providing their answers, they received the respective scenario (presenter vs. evaluator) from the JE conditions; that is, they were presented with both options simultaneously and were thus able to indicate a choice. Finally, they indicated their WTP for the second not-yet-rated option.

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FIGURE 1

CHOICES OF THE SINGLE VERSUS BUNDLE OPTION BY ROLE (STUDY 1)



## Results

*Choice.* Overall, there was a strong preference for the bundle over the single option. In total, 89% of all participants chose the bundle ( $\chi^2(1) = 73.63, p < .001$ ). This main effect was qualified by an interaction of role and evaluation mode, such that the bundle option was chosen more frequently by presenters than by evaluators ( $\chi^2(1) = 6.99, p = .008$ ; see fig. 1). Nevertheless, the fact that 97% of presenters and 82% of evaluators chose the bundle (both  $\chi^2(1) > 24.07, p < .001$ ; note that the rate of presenters choosing the bundle option is very similar to the 92% reported by Weaver et al. [2012]) provides support for our hypothesis that consumers in JE generally prefer bundle over single options.

*WTP in Separate Evaluation Mode.* Analyzing only the first rating in the SE/single first and SE/bundle first conditions, WTP judgments were submitted to a 2 (role: presenter vs. evaluator)  $\times$  2 (target item: single vs. bundle) between-subjects ANOVA. Presenters ( $M = 198.33, SD = 108.40$ ) expected their prospective customers to be generally willing to pay more than evaluators actually were ( $M = 139.58, SD = 89.99; F(1, 75) = 6.71, p = .012, \eta_p^2 = .08$ ). No general preference for either option and no interaction were obtained (all  $F < 1$ ; see table 1).

*WTP in Joint Evaluation Mode.* Joint WTP values were submitted to a 2 (role: presenter vs. evaluator)  $\times$  2 (target item: single vs. bundle) mixed-model ANOVA. A main effect of target item emerged whereby participants were generally willing to pay more for the bundle than the single option ( $F(1, 39) = 8.06, p = .007, \eta_p^2 = .17$ ). This main effect was qualified by an interaction of role and target item

( $F(1, 39) = 6.30, p = .016, \eta_p^2 = .14$ ), suggesting that the trend to prefer the bundle was more pronounced for presenters than evaluators (see table 1).

As another way to analyze WTP in JE, we computed a preference index based on WTP by subtracting WTP for the single from WTP for the bundle such that each participant could be classified as preferring the bundle (positive scores), preferring the single (negative scores), or being indifferent (zero score). Submitting these scores to a 2 (role: presenter vs. evaluator)  $\times$  3 (preference based on WTP: single vs. bundle vs. indifference) chi-square test of independence re-

TABLE 1

EFFECTS OF EVALUATION MODE AND ROLE ON WILLINGNESS TO PAY (STUDY 1)

	iPod		iPod plus download		t-value (df)
	M	SD	M	SD	
SE:					
Presenter	209.70	124.39	186.37	90.45	.667 (37)
Evaluator	131.65	73.19	147.50	105.51	.552 (38)
JE:					
Presenter	177.29	64.55	186.24	67.29	2.815 (20)*
Evaluator	157.80	88.92	158.35	88.83	.709 (19)
SE	170.67	108.21	166.44	99.14	.181 (77)
JE	167.78	77.05	172.63	78.81	2.726 (40)**

NOTE.—Final column displays *t*-values comparing iPod and iPod plus download in the respective row (between and within participants for separate and joint evaluations, respectively). Last two rows display results averaged across both roles. SE = separate evaluation; JE = joint evaluation.

\* $p < .05$ .\*\* $p < .01$ .

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vealed that preferences were not equally distributed across roles ( $\chi^2(2) = 8.50, p = .014$ ). Whereas presenters were more likely than evaluators to prefer the bundle (55% vs. 30%;  $\chi^2(1) > 4.41, p = .036$ ), evaluators were more likely than presenters to be indifferent (58% vs. 33%;  $\chi^2(1) > 4.01, p = .043$ ). Preferences for the single option were equally low for both roles (both 12%). Critically, considering only those participants who showed a preference, both presenters and evaluators preferred the bundle over the single option (both  $\chi^2(1) > 4.84, p < .028$ ).

*Joint versus Separate Evaluation Mode.* Finally, we analyzed the preference for bundles over singles across the two evaluation modes. To be able to compare SE (where data were collected between participants) with JE (where data were collected within participants), we computed the difference between WTP for the bundle versus single for participants in JE, and we compared these values to the average difference between WTP for the bundle versus single across all participants in SE (obtained from subtracting the average WTP for singles from the average WTP for bundles in SE). As expected, participants in JE had a stronger preference for the bundle over the single than did participants in SE (one-sample  $t(40) = 5.10, p < .001, d = 0.80$ ; see table 1).

## Discussion

Evaluation mode affects consumers' preferences for bundle versus single options. First, bundle options are preferred to single options in JE, whereas consumers are largely indifferent between the two options in SE. Second, the relative preference for the bundle is more pronounced in JE than in SE. We believe that these findings were obtained due to the higher salience of the add-on in JE as compared with SE. Directly contrasting an offer of an iPod that includes a music download with an offer that does not presumably directed participants' attention to the download and increased their preference for that offer. The goal of the next two studies will be to investigate this idea experimentally.

In addition to these strong and consistent effects of evaluation mode, differences in bundle versus single preferences also emerged as a function of role. Presenters indicated relatively stronger preferences than did evaluators for the bundle in (1) the choice measure, (2) the WTP measure in JE (however, not in SE), and (3) the preference index based on WTP. Thus, there still may be differences in terms of presenters' and evaluators' processing styles when evaluating bundles, as suggested by Weaver et al. (2012). However, contrary to the original notion of the presenter's paradox, in none of the analyses did evaluators prefer the single option. In fact, a clear majority of evaluators chose the bundle when confronted with the same choice that presenters faced in the original study. Thus, although presenters tended to overestimate evaluators' interest in the bundle, evaluators did not prefer the single option over the bundle.

## STUDY 2

Studies 2 and 3 investigated the attention paid to the add-on as an underlying factor to mediate the influence of evaluation mode on bundle preferences in an experimental causal chain design (Spencer et al. 2005). Thus, in study 2, we manipulated evaluation mode and assessed whether participants paid more attention to the added value of the bundle in JE versus SE. To that end, participants received a series of consumer products that came as a bundle (e.g., a camera plus a camera backpack). Participants in the SE condition only received the bundle version of each product, whereas participants in the JE condition received both the bundle and a single version of the same product (e.g., only a camera). After providing purchase intentions for all eight products, participants worked on a change detection task, which was designed to assess how salient the add-on was when purchase intentions were provided. The change detection paradigm has been used in both visual cognition research (Simons and Levin 1997) and psycholinguistics (Sturt et al. 2004) to assess the extent to which certain stimuli are paid attention to and are carefully processed. If it is indeed the case that the add-on is more salient when a bundle is contrasted to its respective single version, then participants in JE should be more likely to detect changes in the description of the add-on than are participants in SE.

## Method

*Participants.* Seventy-eight US Americans (27 females; age  $M = 32.94, SD = 10.23$ ) participated via MTurk and were randomly assigned to either the JE or the SE condition.

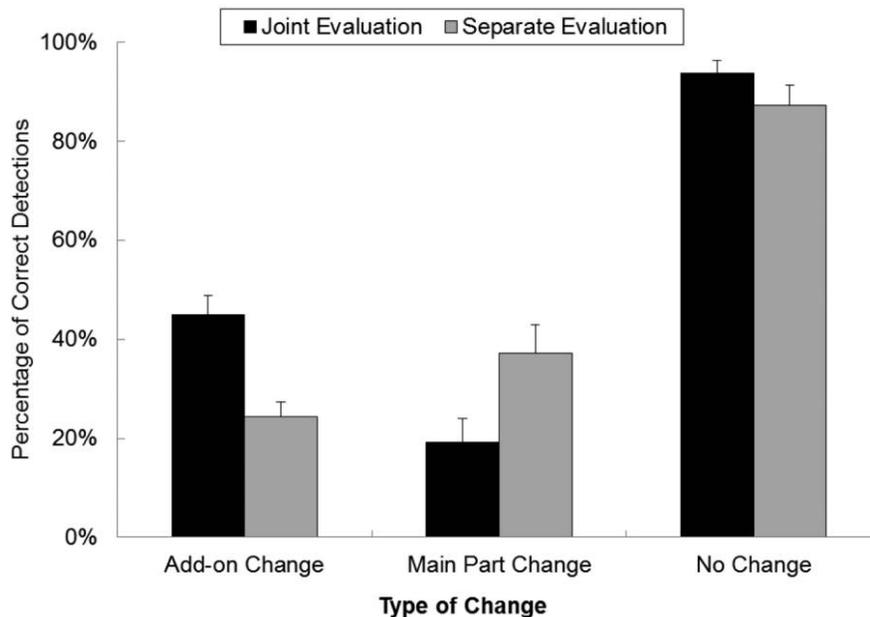
*Procedure.* Participants saw eight consumer products (e.g., laptop, coffeemaker, TV) in random order. Each product existed in a single, as well as in a bundle version. Product descriptions were taken from amazon.com; participants thus rated existing consumer products. For instance, the digital camera bundle was described as "Canon PowerShot A2500 16MP Digital Camera with 5x Optical Image Stabilized Zoom and 2.7-Inch LCD (Red) along with a Canon Deluxe Camera Backpack." The single version was identical to this bundle version except for the camera backpack not mentioned. To manipulate evaluation mode, participants in the JE condition saw both versions (i.e., single and bundle), whereas participants in the SE condition only saw the bundle version. After reading the description of a product, participants indicated their purchase intention ("How likely would you buy this option?"; 7-point scale).

After judgments were provided for all eight products, participants proceeded to the change detection task (in order not to influence participants' behavior in the initial evaluation task, they were not informed about this second task at the beginning of the experiment). In this task, participants received all eight product bundle descriptions a second time. This time, however, their task was to detect whether there was any difference in the description from the original version. From the eight items to be judged in this task, four

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FIGURE 2

CHANGE DETECTIONS BY EVALUATION MODE AND TYPE OF CHANGE (STUDY 2)



NOTE.—Error bars indicate +1 SE.

items contained only a change to the add-on, two hybrid items contained changes to both the add-on and the main part, and two items contained no change at all (participants were informed in advance that there could be one, two, or no changes to the original description). Participants first indicated whether they detected a change, and if they did, they described it briefly in a text box. Change detections were only considered correct when the description correctly identified the change.

## Results

**Purchase Intentions.** Participants in JE ( $M = 5.47$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ) expressed higher purchase intentions for the bundle than did participants in SE ( $M = 3.92$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ;  $t(76) = 6.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.49$ ). Also, participants in JE expressed higher purchase intentions for the bundle than for the single item ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ; paired  $t(38) = 9.57$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.54$ ). Purchase intentions for the bundle in SE were not significantly different from purchase intentions for the single in JE ( $t(76) = 1.65$ , NS).

**Change Detection.** Across the six items in which an add-on change occurred, participants in JE ( $M = 2.69$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ) detected more changes than did participants in SE ( $M = 1.46$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ;  $t(76) = 4.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.97$ ; see fig. 2). Change detection for the two control items, where

no changes occurred, did not differ across conditions ( $t(76) = 1.33$ , NS; for these two items the correct answer was to not mention any change).

Change detections for the two hybrid items were analyzed in a 2 (evaluation mode: JE vs. SE)  $\times$  2 (type of change: add-on vs. main part) mixed model ANOVA. The critical interaction ( $F(1, 76) = 20.70$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .21$ ) indicated that participants in JE detected add-on changes ( $M = 1.10$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ) more frequently than main part changes ( $M = 0.38$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ; paired  $t(38) = 4.74$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.77$ ), whereas participants in JE performed equally well across both types of change (paired  $t(38) = 1.42$ , NS). Yet, overall change detection performance did not differ across evaluation modes ( $F < 1$ ). Finally, participants were generally more successful at detecting add-on changes than main part changes ( $F(1, 76) = 7.45$ ,  $p = .008$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .09$ ).

**Effects of Change Detection on Purchase Intentions.** Participants expressed stronger purchase intentions for those bundles for which they correctly detected an add-on change ( $M = 4.92$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ ), as compared with bundles for which they did not detect it ( $M = 4.42$ ,  $SD = 1.72$ ; paired  $t(63) = 2.38$ ,  $p = .020$ ,  $d = 0.28$ ; 14 participants that either detected no or all changes were not considered in this analysis). Moreover, in a mixed-effects regression model considering all six items where an add-on change was implemented (with change detection scores and the intercept

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FIGURE 3

STUDY 3 CONDITIONS



NOTE.—A, SE/control salience condition. This image was also used as the bundle option in the JE condition. B, SE/high salience condition. C, Single option used in the JE condition.

included as random effects to the model), change detection significantly predicted purchase intentions ( $F(1, 61.42) = 11.98, p = .001$ ).

## Discussion

Study 2's results demonstrate that evaluation mode affects how much attention is paid to the different components of a product bundle. In JE, the contrast of the bundle with a single option highlights the difference between the two. JE renders the add-on salient and, therefore, emphasizes the relative advantage of the product bundle, increasing its attractiveness. In SE, however, the contrast to the single option is missing. As a result, the add-on's salience and the bundle's attractiveness are lower as compared with JE. In this regard, the analysis of the two hybrid items is revealing: it was not the case that participants in either of the two evaluation modes were generally better at detecting changes. Instead, those in JE were specifically good at detecting changes in the add-on, whereas those in SE were equally good at detecting add-on and main part changes. Finally, results demonstrated that salience matters for purchase intentions: participants who detected a change in the add-on indicated higher purchase intentions than did participants who did not.

## STUDY 3

The goal of study 3 was to provide experimental evidence for the second path of our causal chain design by manipulating add-on salience and measuring its impact on bundle preferences. We designed two different SE conditions in which the bundle's add-on was either made salient or not and compared them to a JE condition. If JE indeed enhances the attractiveness of the bundle via add-on salience, then increasing the add-on's salience in SE should have a comparable effect on the bundle's attractiveness. Thus, we expected the bundle to be considered more attractive in JE and under high salience in SE than under low salience in SE.

## Method

**Participants.** One hundred and fifty US Americans (55 females; age  $M = 33.21$ ,  $SD = 11.41$ ) participated in the experiment via MTurk and were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions (JE, SE/high salience, SE/control salience).

**Procedure.** Participants in all three conditions judged the attractiveness of a product bundle composed of a coffee-maker and an additional milk frother, presented in a photograph. In the SE/control salience condition (see fig. 3A), participants saw an actual promotional photograph of the bundle that was taken from the website of an online shop selling the product. In this photograph, the milk frother was placed right next to the coffeemaker within the same frame such that both items blended in. In the SE/high add-on salience condition (see fig. 3B), the coffeemaker and the milk frother were spatially separated, and each of the two objects was placed inside its own frame, making the add-on much more conspicuous as it visually stuck out from the main item. In the JE condition, the bundle photograph from the SE/control salience condition was placed right next to a photograph of the single product alone (fig. 3C). In all three conditions, participants judged the attractiveness of the bundle offer on a 7-point scale from "very unattractive" to "very attractive." In the JE condition, participants also judged the single option on the same scale.

## Results

As predicted, participants preferred the bundle more strongly in JE ( $M = 5.62$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ), and in SE under high add-on salience ( $M = 5.44$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ), as compared with the SE/control salience condition ( $M = 4.76$ ,  $SD = 1.77$ ;  $F(2, 147) = 4.46, p = .013, \eta_p^2 = .06$ ). Contrast analyses revealed that there was no difference between JE and the SE/high salience condition ( $t < 1$ ). Yet, both of these

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conditions differed significantly from the SE/control salience condition (all  $t > 2.20$ ,  $p < .030$ ,  $d > 0.44$ ). Moreover, replicating the results from both previous studies, participants in JE preferred the bundle over the single option ( $M = 4.66$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ; paired  $t(49) = 3.47$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $d = 0.50$ ). Finally, the attractiveness rating of the single product in JE was only different from the attractiveness rating of the bundle in SE under high add-on salience ( $t(102) = 2.99$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $d = 0.59$ ), not under low add-on salience ( $t < 1$ ).

## Discussion

Study 3's results complete the causal chain of experiments: manipulating the salience of the add-on, participants indicated higher attractiveness ratings for the bundle when the add-on was salient than when it was not. In fact, the preference for the bundle in SE can be as high as the preference for the bundle in JE as long as its added value is clearly noticeable. However, not highlighting the add-on in SE makes the bundle appear less attractive than when the add-on is salient and no more attractive than the single product in JE.

Study 3's results are consistent with our attentional account and with study 2's finding that paying attention to the add-on increases the attractiveness of the bundle. Still, we cannot preclude alternative interpretations. The visual salience manipulation that was used in this study might have also affected the perceived numerosity of items in the bundle and, therefore, the attractiveness of the offer. Indeed, according to the Weber-Fechner law and the concept of diminishing marginal utilities, the utility of two single items can be higher than the utility of the compound of the two. Note, however, that neither of these accounts would be mutually exclusive with regard to our attentional explanation.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Evaluation mode matters for the assessment of product bundles. In JE, attention is directed to the added value of a bundle over a single offer; in SE, this attentional advantage of the add-on is missing. As a result, first, consumers in JE prefer product bundles over single products and, second, consumers in JE prefer product bundles more than do consumers in SE.

The purpose of the current research was threefold: first, we sought to reinvestigate the presenter's paradox by also taking evaluation mode into account. Second, building on the cancellation and focus model (Houston and Sherman 1995; Sherman et al. 1999), our goal was to explore attentional processes underlying people's preferences across evaluation modes. And third, we were interested in the managerial implications of evaluation mode for the marketing of product bundles. We now discuss each of these aspects.

### The Presenter's Paradox Revisited

Weaver et al. (2012) proposed a presenter's paradox whereby people in a presenter role prefer bundles over sin-

gles, whereas people in an evaluator role prefer singles over bundles. Yet, in the original research, presenters and evaluators provided their judgments in JE and SE, respectively. Disentangling role and evaluation mode, the current research sheds new light on these findings. Both presenters and evaluators had strong and consistent preferences for the product bundle in JE, whereas neither role expressed a clear preference in SE. Thus, a substantial part of the effects described in the presenter's paradox is attributable to evaluation mode.

Nevertheless, several intriguing results regarding the role factor provide starting points for future research. First, even though a clear majority of both presenters and evaluators chose the bundle in JE, it was still the case that evaluators did so to a lesser degree than presenters. Also, presenters indicated a higher WTP for the bundle than did evaluators (however, this tendency was only statistically significant in JE). Thus, the proposal that presenters overvalue evaluators' appreciation for product bundles remains unchallenged. In this regard, it may well be that, even when holding evaluation mode constant, presenters and evaluators do engage in different processing styles that affect their product evaluations, as suggested by Weaver et al. (2012).

The idea that evaluators prefer the single option was, however, not supported by the current results. In study 1, evaluators' WTP in SE was not higher for the single than for the bundle option (in fact the opposite trend was observed). On the basis of the current theorizing, it seems unlikely that consumers in SE would prefer singles over bundles—if anything, neither option should be preferred without a reference context, which is what our results suggest. In studies 2 and 3, add-ons were used that might not have been as mildly favorable as the ones used in the original studies (such as the free music download in study 1)—that may have contributed to the differences between the current and Weaver et al.'s (2012) results.

Weaver et al. (2012) suggested differences in holistic versus piecemeal processing to account for stronger preferences for singles and bundles, respectively. Holistic processing refers to an integrated focus on the big picture or the whole, whereas piecemeal or analytic processing refers to a segregated focus on an object's individual components (see, e.g., Nisbett et al. 2001). Interestingly, the current study's theorizing about the psychological processes involved in JE versus SE can be related to this distinction of piecemeal versus holistic processing: both JE and piecemeal processing foster the perception of a bundle's add-on as an individual component that is added to the main product to increase its value; both SE and holistic processing foster the perception of the bundle as a whole undermining the prominence of the bundle's add-on.

Finally, Weaver et al.'s (2012) and the current research can be reconciled when taking into consideration that, in many real-world situations, presenters and evaluators are in JE and SE, respectively. While presenters (often marketers) assemble choice options for other people, evaluators (often consumers) can only choose what has been provided to them. Thus, presenters are typically confronted with a wider

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range of options than evaluators, which may provide them with a perspective more similar to JE than it is for evaluators.

### The Role of Attention across Evaluation Modes

Previous research on evaluation mode has predominantly been concerned with attribute evaluability as a process through which evaluation mode affects preferences (Hsee 1996; Hsee and Zhang 2010; Hsee et al. 1999). By providing a contextual reference standard, the decision weight of certain attributes (particularly those that are hard to evaluate) is enhanced in JE, which can lead to preference reversals in comparison to SE. The current research suggests an additional route through which evaluation mode affects preferences. People tend to focus on features that are unique across options and cancel out features that are shared. The salience is higher for the former than the latter (Dhar and Sherman 1996; Houston and Sherman 1995). Applying this logic to JE versus SE, the current research provides evidence for differences in feature salience across evaluation modes. By definition, JE is about the comparison of at least two alternatives, whereas SE is about the evaluation of alternatives in isolation. Therefore, unique and shared features along with respective attention asymmetries only exist in JE not in SE.

Two predictions arise from this account: first, in JE unique features receive more attention than shared features, whereas in SE both types of feature receive comparable attention. Second, unique features receive more attention in JE than in SE. Both hypotheses are supported by study 2's results: first, participants in JE were better at detecting add-on changes (i.e., unique features) than main part changes (i.e., shared features), whereas participants in SE did not differ in performance across change types. Second, participants in JE were generally much better at detecting add-on changes than were participants in SE.

Furthermore, the current research highlights the importance of such attention asymmetries for the evaluation of product bundles. In study 2, when participants correctly identified a change in the description of a bundle's add-on and, in study 3, when the add-on was visually made salient, the attractiveness of the bundle increased considerably.

### Implications for Consumer Behavior and Marketing

The current research has straightforward and substantial implications for the marketing of product bundles. Using an actual promotional image taken from an online shop, results of study 3 indicated that not highlighting a bundle's added value can significantly undermine the potential of the marketing strategy. In fact, when the add-on was not made salient, the bundle's attractiveness was judged to be as low as that of the single product.

As a natural means of highlighting a bundle's added value over a single product, the current research suggests to directly contrast both alternatives. Pragmatically, shops selling bundles should present the respective single products as

well, with the purpose of making the bundle appear maximally attractive. Alternatively, by visually increasing the add-on's salience, a similar effect can be obtained (cf. study 3). However, such marketing strategies may potentially backfire for add-ons with a negative utility. In the current studies, the add-on in the bundle always represented an advantage over the single alternative. Yet, when marketing add-ons with negative value, JE versus SE may actually decrease a bundle's attractiveness.

In conclusion, product bundling is a frequently used marketing strategy across a wide range of consumer domains. The current research demonstrates the pervasive role of evaluation mode and add-on salience for the assessment of product bundles and that these factors should be taken into consideration when designing bundle marketing campaigns.

### DATA COLLECTION INFORMATION

The first and third author jointly managed the collection of data in study 1 using the Mechanical Turk panel described in the Method section in July 2013. The first and second author managed the collection of data in studies 2 and 3 from the same panel in April 2014. The data were analyzed, interpreted, and discussed jointly by all three authors.

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