

The Fox and the Grapes: Anticipated Motor Costs Affect Valuation

Martin STROBEL

(Maastricht University)

Abstract:

A fundamental question in decision making research is how humans compute the values that guide their decisions. Several studies showed that people assign higher values to goods that are closer to them - even when physical proximity is irrelevant for the decision. We hypothesize that anticipated motor costs associated with physically obtaining a good may be automatically integrated in the value-computation process. Participants had to state their valuation for snack food while the effort that would be incurred when reaching for it was manipulated. Even though reaching was not required during the experiment, we find that willingness to pay was significantly lower when subjects wore heavy wristbands on their arms. Thus, items that would be more difficult to grasp are perceived as less valuable. Our results suggest automatic interactions of motor and valuation processes which are unexplored to this date and can account for irrational decisions that occur when reward is physically close.