

Free to Choose: An Experimental Investigation of the Value of Free Choice*

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Abstract

This study is the first economic experiment that tests the economic significance of the theory of psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966). For this purpose, I design an economic experiment in which subjects are asked to express their valuation of two-choice situations. In one case, subjects are given absolute freedom, whereas in another, the extent of their freedom of choice is limited. As the experimental data revealed, subjects' valuation of free and limited choice situations did not differ significantly. Thus, in the experiment, the subjects did not display signs of reactance. In the end, the potential reasons of why the subjects did not exhibit reactance are discussed. The lessons derived from this study may serve as a future guide for testing the economic significance of the reactance theory.

Abstrakt

Tato studie je prvním ekonomickým experimentem, který testuje ekonomický význam teorie psychické reaktance (Brehm, 1966). Za tímto účelem jsem navrhl ekonomický experiment, ve kterém participanti jsou požádáni, aby vyjádřili své ocenění dvou situací obsahující rozdílné volby. V jednom případě, participantům je dána úplná svoboda, zatímco v druhém je omezen rozsah svobody jejich volby. Experimentální data ukázala, že ocenění participantů situací se svobodným a omezeným výběrem se významně nelišíly. Tedy, v daném experimentu, participanti nevykazovali známky reaktance. V závěru jsou diskutovány potenciální důvody, proč participanti nevykazovali známky reaktance. Poznatky získané z této studie mohou sloužit jako východisko pro budoucí testování ekonomického významu teorie reaktance.

Keywords: psychological reactance, freedom of choice, law enforcement

JEL Classification: K0, C90, A1

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