

Positive or Negative? The Influence of Message Framing, Regulatory Focus, and Product Type

HSIAO-CHING LEE¹

SHU-FANG LIU

National Kaohsiung University of Applied Sciences, Taiwan

YA-CHUNG CHENG

IKEA Co., Taiwan

This study compares positive and negative message framing, and examines how product type and the consumer's regulatory focus moderate ad effectiveness. We conducted a 2 (message framing: positive vs. negative) × 2 (product type: hedonic vs. utilitarian) × 2 (regulatory focus: promotion focus vs. prevention focus) between-subjects experiment in which we measured individual differences in regulatory focus. The results indicate that, regardless of product type, ads with positively framed messages are more effective than those with negatively framed messages for promotion-focused consumers. However, for prevention-focused consumers, positively framed messages are more effective than negatively framed ones when the advertised product is utilitarian. By contrast, negatively framed messages are more effective than positively framed ones for such consumers when the advertised product is hedonic. Therefore, marketers can more effectively target consumers by matching the framing of the message with the advertised product.

Keywords: ad effect, message framing, regulatory focus, product type

In communication, the presentation of the message is paramount. More consumers are persuaded and sales increase when the message is appropriately framed (Martin & Marshall, 1999). Therefore, understanding how framing affects the advertising message can help marketers develop more creative and effective advertising copy and layouts (Arora, 2000). Van de Velde, Verbeke, Popp, and Van Huylenbroeck (2010) listed various definitions of *message framing*. This study focuses on *goal framing*, in which "the goal of an action or behavior is framed" (Levin, Schneider, & Gaeth, 1998, p. 150). In this type

Hsiao-Ching Lee: hclee@kuas.edu.tw

Shu-Fang Liu: sfliu@kuas.edu.tw

Ya-Chung Cheng: jasy0820115@gmail.com

Date submitted: 2017–05–31

¹ This research was supported by the National Science Council, Taiwan, Project NSC 102-2410-H-151-010-MY2. We would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback.

Copyright © 2018 (Hsiao-Ching Lee, Shu-Fang Liu, and Ya-Chung Cheng). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at <http://ijoc.org>.

of framing, a "positive" frame involves a consumer obtaining a gain or avoiding a loss by purchasing a certain product, whereas a "negative" frame entails forgoing a gain or experiencing a loss by not purchasing a particular product (Chang, 2007; Krishnamurthy, Carter, & Blair, 2001; Levin et al., 1998; Loro, 2007; Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990; Obermiller, 1995; Yi & Baumgartner, 2008). Frame type is frequently used in persuasive communication (i.e., Chang, 2007; Krishnamurthy et al., 2001; Levin et al., 1998; Loro, 2007; Obermiller, 1995).

However, previous studies on the persuasive effects of message framing have had inconclusive results, and certain issues remain unresolved, especially those regarding choice behaviors (Homer & Yoon, 1992; Meyers-Levy & Maheswaran, 2004). Researchers have determined that message framing interacts with other marketing variables such as product characteristics (Chang, 2007) and consumer differences (Chang, 2007; Jain, Lindsey, Agrawal, & Maheswaran, 2007; Kim, 2006; Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990; Zhang & Buda, 1999). Promotion- and prevention-focused consumers respond differently to positively framed and negatively framed messages (Jain et al., 2007). Product attributes may also be related to the advertising appeal (Shavitt, 1992). However, the literature has been unclear regarding how the two types of message framing fit for various types of products (e.g., hedonic and utilitarian). This study examined ad effectiveness in Taiwan, and contributes to the message-framing literature by investigating how consumers' chronic regulatory focus and product type moderate the effect of message framing on ad effectiveness. This study also examined how ad effectiveness is impacted by the three-way interaction among message framing, consumers' regulatory focus, and product type.

Message Framing and Regulatory Focus

Previous research has indicated that the manner in which advertising messages are presented (i.e., the manner in which information is labeled and framed) may have considerable influence on consumers' judgments and decisions regarding the advertised products (Ganzach & Karsahi, 1995; Smith, 1996). Message framing refers to the positive or negative manner in which the ad information is presented (Levin & Gaeth, 1988). Positive framing emphasizes the benefits of purchasing the promoted product, whereas negative framing stresses the potential loss if the product is not purchased (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990). The effect of frame type is highly dependent on the topic and situational characteristics (e.g., detection vs. preventive health behavior, low vs. high participant involvement, etc.; Krishnamurthy et al., 2001; Levin & Gaeth, 1988; Levin et al., 1998; Loro, 2007; Obermiller, 1995; Rothman, Salovey, Antone, Keough, & Martin, 1993). This study examined how framing effects differ for promotion- versus prevention-focused consumers.

Higgins (1997) proposed regulatory focus theory and posited two motivational orientations: promotion focus and prevention focus. Individuals who are promotion focused are concerned with aspirations and achievements, and focus on the presence and absence of positive outcomes. By contrast, individuals who are prevention focused care about responsibilities and safety, and focus on the presence and absence of negative outcomes (Shah, Higgins, & Friedman, 1998). Promotion-focused individuals are more "eager" to work toward a gain than to guard against a nongain, whereas prevention-focused individuals exhibit greater "vigilance" in preventing a loss rather than working toward a nonloss (Idson, Liberman, & Higgins, 2000).

According to regulatory fit theory, motivational intensity increases when there is a match between one's goal orientation and the manner in which the goal is pursued. In other words, individuals experience a fit when they adopt goal pursuit strategies or engage in activities that sustain their regulatory orientation (Avnet & Higgins, 2006). Higgins (2002) indicated that when the fit between a regulatory goal and its strategic means is congruent, people tend to react in the following ways: (a) They have more positive feelings about desirable choices and more negative feelings about undesirable choices, (b) they evaluate goal pursuits more positively, and (c) they place a higher value on the chosen object. Lee and Aaker (2004) argued that motivational orientation and message format compatibility (or fit) increase the sense that "it feels right," and that such a feeling promotes persuasion. Because promotion-oriented individuals are more persuaded by gains, a positively framed comparative ad should lead to a higher evaluation of the ad and an increased purchase intention. By contrast, because prevention-oriented individuals are more persuaded by preventing a loss, a negatively framed comparison emphasizing the avoidance of a negative outcome should induce a more favorable evaluation of the ad and an increased purchase intention. Lin and Shen (2012) indicated that when promotion-focused individuals are matched with ads framed as a gain (i.e., positive framing), the ads are more persuasive. We proposed the following hypotheses:

H1a: Purchase intention and attitude toward the ad will be higher for promotion-focused individuals when the ad message is framed positively rather than negatively.

H1b: Purchase intention and attitude toward the ad will be higher for prevention-focused individuals when the ad message is framed negatively rather than positively.

Message Framing and Product Type

Several researchers have noted that certain types of products evoke distinct affective states (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994; Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Okada, 2005). These researchers have highlighted the distinction between hedonic and utilitarian consumption. Hedonic products are consumed mainly for affective or sensory gratification, whereas utilitarian products deliver more cognitively oriented benefits (Woods, 1960). In addition, hedonic products are pleasure oriented, and consumption is primarily induced by a desire for sensory experience, fantasy, and fun (e.g., eating chocolate cake or spending a week sunbathing in Hawaii). Products with these characteristics enable consumers to experience a feeling of self-indulgence and pleasure. Hedonic consumption is associated with imaginative constructions of reality and provides opportunities for self-expression, entertainment, and exploration (Singer, 1966). However, such goods are often labeled as frivolous or decadent, and can cause consumers to experience feelings of guilt before, during, and after consumption (Strahilevitz, 1999). By contrast, utilitarian products appeal to people's rational cognition because they are functional and practical, offering cognitively oriented benefits. Such goal-oriented consumption is motivated mainly by the desire to fulfill a basic need or accomplish a functional task (e.g., applying car wax or using a floor cleaner). Utilitarian products are typically labeled as practical or necessary, and consuming such products rarely leads to sensual pleasure or guilt (Strahilevitz, 1999).

Consuming hedonic products might cause people to be entertained (Singer, 1966) and experience sensual pleasure, and can also lead to guilt (Strahilevitz, 1999). Therefore, the guilt induced by purchasing a hedonic product could weaken the effectiveness of the ad, regardless of whether the ad message is positively or negatively framed. We predicted that, when the product is hedonic, there would be no substantial difference in the effects of positive and negative framing on purchase intention and attitude toward the ad.

Utilitarian products provide more cognitively oriented benefits (Woods, 1960), and entail goal-oriented consumption, in which consumers are motivated by the desire to fulfill a basic need or accomplish a functional task (Strahilevitz, 1999). Hence, by suggesting the possibility of obtaining gains or avoiding losses by purchasing the product, positive framing can improve consumers' attitude toward the ad and increase purchase intention more effectively than can negative framing, which suggests forgoing gains or experiencing losses by not purchasing the product. Thus, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H2a: Purchase intention and attitude toward the ad will be unaffected by the type of message framing when the advertised product is hedonic.

H2b: Framing the ad positively (rather than negatively) will lead to a stronger purchase intention and a more favorable attitude toward the ad when the advertised product is utilitarian.

Interrelationships Among Message Framing, Product Type, and Regulatory Focus

The consumer's regulatory focus and the product type are likely to influence the effects of message framing. We expected a three-way interaction among message framing, regulatory focus, and product type. The following arguments were developed in accordance with two regulatory foci: promotion focus and prevention focus. A difference in goal persuasion means that promotion-focused individuals focus on the presence and absence of positive outcomes, whereas prevention-focused individuals focus on the presence and absence of negative outcomes (Shah et al., 1998). Regulatory fit theory (Avnet & Higgins, 2006; Higgins, 2002; Lee & Aaker, 2004) can be applied to explain how individuals evaluate positively framed and negatively framed messages differently based on product type. According to regulatory fit theory, motivational intensity increases when there is a match between one's goal orientation and the manner in which the goal is pursued. This study focused on the effects of positive versus negative framing and hedonic versus utilitarian products.

According to regulatory fit theory, positively framed messages match the goals of promotion-focused individuals. Therefore, promotion-focused individuals prefer positively framed messages to negatively framed messages. Positively and negatively framed messages do not differ in their effects in the context of hedonic products because both framings can mitigate the guilt caused by consuming such products. We predicted that for promotion-focused individuals, positively framed messages would be more effective than negatively framed messages in ads for hedonic products. For utilitarian products, positively framed messages would be more effective than negatively framed ones, because positively framed messages deliver more cognitively oriented benefits that match consumers' goal-oriented consumption of such products (Strahilevitz, 1999; Woods, 1960). Furthermore, we predicted that for promotion-focused

individuals, positively framed messages would be more effective than negatively framed messages in ads for utilitarian products. Collectively, for promotion-focused individuals, positively framed messages would be more likely to lead to an increase in purchase intention and a more positive attitude toward the ad than would be negatively framed messages, regardless of the product type being advertised.

H3a: Purchase intention and positive attitude toward the ad will increase for promotion-focused individuals when the ad is framed positively, rather than negatively, regardless of whether the advertised product is hedonic or utilitarian.

Prevention-focused individuals care about responsibilities and safety, and focus on the presence and absence of negative outcomes (Shah et al., 1998). According to regulatory fit theory (Avnet & Higgins, 2006; Higgins, 2002; Lee & Aaker, 2004), negatively framed messages that stress the potential loss if consumers do not purchase a product (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990) match the goals of prevention-focused individuals. Thus, negatively framed messages are more effective than positively framed messages for prevention-focused individuals. We expected the hedonic product type to exert a considerable effect when combined with both positively framed and negatively framed messages. Hence, for prevention-focused individuals, we predicted that negatively framed messages would be more effective than positively framed messages when the product is hedonic. However, we expected utilitarian products to be favorably matched with positively framed messages. Considering the combined effects of a prevention focus and a utilitarian product type, we predicted that prevention-focused individuals would react the same way to positively or negatively framed ads for utilitarian products. We proposed the following hypothesis:

H3b: Purchase intention and positive attitude toward the ad will increase for prevention-focused individuals when the ad for a hedonic product is framed negatively rather than positively. However, message framing will have no impact on purchase intention and attitude toward the ad when the advertised product is utilitarian.

Method

We designed a 2 (message framing: positive vs. negative) × 2 (product type: hedonic vs. utilitarian) × 2 (regulatory focus: promotion focus vs. prevention focus) between-subjects experiment in which we measured individual differences in regulatory focus.

Pretest

We conducted a pretest involving 56 undergraduate students to select the products to be featured in our advertising copy. Participants were given a list of 16 possible items for the experiment, along with definitions of hedonic and utilitarian products derived from previous studies (Okada, 2005). To assess product attributes, we asked participants to determine a product type for each of the 16 items. Fifty-five participants considered a hair dryer to be a utilitarian product, and only one participant considered it to be a hedonic product. All participants considered a music CD to be a hedonic product, and no one considered it to be a utilitarian product. Also, participants' familiarity with these two products was

similar. Thus, a hair dryer and a music CD were chosen to represent utilitarian and hedonic products, respectively. Respondents to the pretest did not participate in the main study.

A fictitious English brand name, JCSION, was used for both the hair dryer and the music CD to prevent triggering brand associations that might bias participant responses. To ensure a similar price level of the two products, a negative-ion hair dryer and a set of light-music CDs were used in the experiment.

Experimental Stimuli

We designed four distinct leaflets and ensured that the positively and negatively framed versions of the advertisements provided the same quality and amount of information, except for the obvious difference in gains and losses. The leaflet included three sections: (a) keeping your hair (mood) for life, (b) pictures of the hair dryer (light-music CD set), and (c) benefits of using the product (costs of not using the product).

Participants were presented with one of four ads that presented the advertising appeal of the respective products. In the positive framing condition, participants viewed a version of the ad that emphasized the benefits of purchasing the product. In the negative framing condition, the ad stressed the potential loss if the product is not purchased. Regarding product type, half of the participants read the ad for the utilitarian product (i.e., negative-ion hair dryer), and the other half read the ad for the hedonic product (i.e., a set of light-music CDs). Three marketing experts who reviewed the ads agreed that they were plausible and representative of the type of ad seen in magazines. The details of the experimental materials are presented in the Appendix.

Measures

Regulatory focus. Participants' regulatory focus was assessed using an 18-item regulatory-focus scale developed by Lockwood, Jordan, and Kunda (2002), in which nine items concerned promotion focus ($\alpha = .87$) and nine items concerned prevention focus ($\alpha = .86$). The sample was divided into promotion- and prevention-focus groups based on the promotion- and prevention-focus scores of the respondents. Respondents whose promotion-focus scores were higher than their prevention-focus scores were assigned to the promotion-focus group: $M_{\text{promotion focus}} = 5.43$, $M_{\text{prevention focus}} = 4.69$; $F(1, 248) = 56.93$, $p < .001$. Respondents whose prevention-focus scores were higher than their promotion-focus scores were assigned to the prevention-focus group: $M_{\text{promotion focus}} = 4.55$, $M_{\text{prevention focus}} = 5.35$; $F(1, 248) = 58.13$, $p < .001$.

Postmanipulation check. We adopted a measurement scale of attitude toward the ad with five items from Baker and Churchill (1977). Participants indicated their agreement regarding the extent to which they thought the advertisement was interesting, appealing, impressive, informative, credible, and persuasive, using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* ($\alpha = .88$).

Purchase intention was assessed in terms of the value of the promoted item, the likelihood of purchasing it, and the probability of recommending it to family members and friends, based on a 7-point

Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990; $\alpha = .87$).

Manipulation check. For message framing, respondents assessed whether the leaflets emphasized the benefits of using or the costs of not using the product. The manipulation check measure on product type was similar to the pretest. Respondents assessed whether they considered the products to be hedonic or utilitarian.

Background demographics. We assessed the following demographics: age, gender, academic major, and disposable income. Related demographics were considered as potential variables that might confound the results of the experiment.

Participants and Procedure

We adopted a translation and back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1987) to create the Chinese version of each measure. To ensure the reliability of the measures, we pilot tested the Chinese version of the survey on a sample of 30 MBA students from a marketing research course. The sample for the main study comprised 276 undergraduate and graduate students. Twenty-six answer booklets were discarded because of excessive missing data. The final sample comprised 250 respondents (119 men and 131 women) whose ages ranged from 19 to 35 years ($M = 21.33$ years, $SD = 2.77$).

Results

Manipulation Checks

The results of the manipulation check for message framing showed that most participants perceived the message framing as intended (positive framing: 111 of 130 participants considered the messages to be positive, $\chi^2 = 65.11$, $p < .001$; negative framing: 90 of 120 participants considered the messages to be negative, $\chi^2 = 30.00$, $p < .001$). Thus, the manipulation of message framing was successful. Regarding the manipulation check for product type, the results showed that most participants correctly identified the product type conveyed by the ad (hedonic products: 117 of 121 participants considered the product to be hedonic, $\chi^2 = 105.53$, $p < .001$; utilitarian products: 120 of 129 participants considered the product to be utilitarian, $\chi^2 = 95.51$, $p < .001$). The results confirmed the successful manipulation of product type.

Analyses of Variance

Given that attitude toward the ad and purchase intention were first confirmed to be highly correlated ($\gamma = 0.60$, $p < .01$), we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance. The results indicated that there were significant main effects of message framing, $F(1, 242) = 7.02$, $p < .01$, and product type, $F(1, 242) = 4.60$, $p < .05$. Also significant were the interactions between message framing and regulatory focus, $F(1, 242) = 3.89$, $p < .05$, and message framing and product type, $F(1, 242) = 4.86$, $p < .01$. We found a marginally significant three-way interaction among message framing, regulatory focus, and

product type, $F(1, 242) = 2.80, p < .1$. We further examined the univariate results and mean comparisons. All univariate results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Univariate Results for Attitude Toward the Ad and Purchase Intention.

Variable	Attitude toward the ad		Purchase intention	
	$F(1, 242)$	η^2	$F(1, 242)$	η^2
Message framing (MF)	13.91**	.054	7.23*	.024
Regulatory focus (RF)	0.68	.003	1.04	.004
Product type (PT)	2.89	.012	1.23	.005
MF \times RF	9.65**	.038	4.17*	.017
MF \times PT	6.87**	.028	5.22*	.021
RF \times PT	0.78	.003	0.32	.001
MF \times RF \times PT	4.59*	.019	4.20	.017

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

Hypothesis Testing

The results of an analysis of variance showed that the main effect of message framing was significant. Compared with negative framing, positive framing significantly improved attitude toward the ad (hereafter ATT) and purchase intention (hereafter PI), $F_s(1, 242) > 6.08, ps < .05$.

Hypotheses 1a and b predicted that the influence of message framing on attitude toward the ad and purchase intention would depend on the regulatory focus. As expected, we found that the interaction between message framing and regulatory focus had a significant effect on ATT and PI, $F_s(1, 242) > 4.17, ps < .05$. For promotion-focused participants, positive framing was more effective than negative framing: ATT, $M = 4.56$ versus $3.81, F(1, 168) = 35.39, p < .01$; PI, $M = 4.23$ versus $3.58, F(1, 168) = 13.90, p < .01$. These results supported Hypothesis 1a. For prevention-focused participants, the effects of positive framing and negative framing were not significantly different: ATT, $M = 4.10$ and $4.05, F(1, 78) = 0.91, p > .7$; PI, $M = 3.78$ and $3.71, F(1, 78) = 0.90, p > .7$. These results did not support Hypothesis 1b.

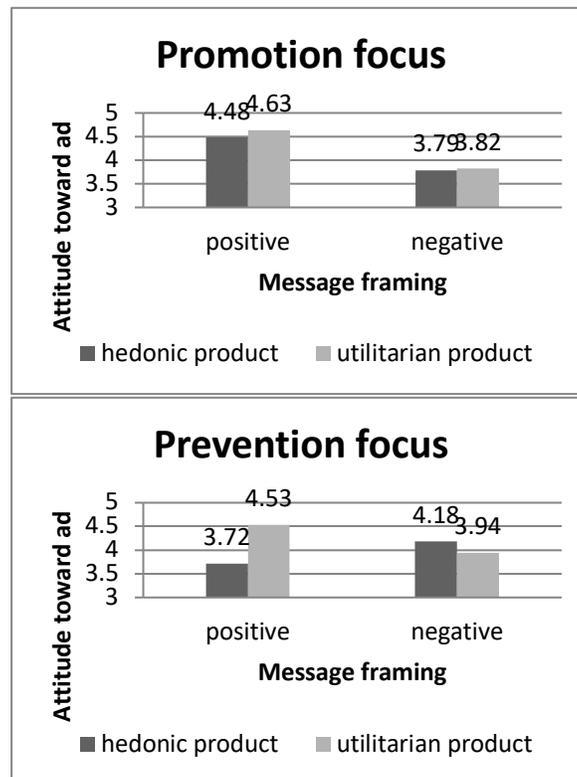
Regarding Hypotheses 2a and 2b, the interaction between message framing and product type had a significant effect on ATT and PI, $F_s(1, 242) > 5.22, ps < .05$. For hedonic products, the effects of positive framing and negative framing on PI were not significantly different, $F(1, 119) = 1.28, p > .2$. However, positive framing had a significantly greater effect on ATT than did negative framing, $F(1, 119) = 4.14, p < .05$. These results gave partial support to Hypothesis 2a. For utilitarian products, the results showed that positive framing had a greater effect on ATT and PI than did negative framing, $F_s(1, 127) > 13.30, p < .01$. The results supported Hypothesis 2b.

Lastly, regarding Hypotheses 3a and 3b, the results showed a significant three-way interaction effect among message framing, regulatory focus, and product type on ATT and PI, $F_s(1, 242) > 4.20, ps < .05$, as depicted in Figure 1. For promotion-focused participants, we found that the two-way interaction between message framing and product type had no significant effect on ATT and PI, $F_s(1, 166) < 0.17, ps > .6$. However, we observed the main effect of message framing for both hedonic products—ATT, $M =$

4.48 versus 3.79, $F(1, 79) = 14.38, p < .01$; PI, $M = 4.35$ versus 3.72, $F(1, 79) = 6.12, p < .05$ —and utilitarian products—ATT, $M = 4.63$ versus 3.82, $F(1, 87) = 20.43, p < .01$; PI, $M = 4.14$ versus 3.43, $F(1, 87) = 8.27, p < .01$. These findings provided support for Hypothesis 3a.

For prevention-focused participants, the results showed that the influence of message framing on ATT and PI depends on the product type, $F_s(1, 76) > 9.12, p_s < .01$. Regarding hedonic products, the effect of negatively framed messages on ATT was marginally more significant than that of positively framed messages, $M = 3.72$ versus 4.18, $F(1, 38) = 3.63, p = .06$. Negative framing was significantly more effective than positive framing for PI, $M = 3.51$ versus 4.09, $F(1, 38) = 4.33, p < .05$. Contrary to our prediction, positive framing was more effective than negative framing in ads for utilitarian products: ATT, $M = 4.53$ versus 3.94, $F(1, 38) = 6.07, p < .05$; PI, $M = 4.07$ versus 3.37, $F(1, 38) = 4.81, p < .05$. Thus, Hypothesis 3b was partially supported.

Dependent variable: Attitude toward ad
(Panel A)



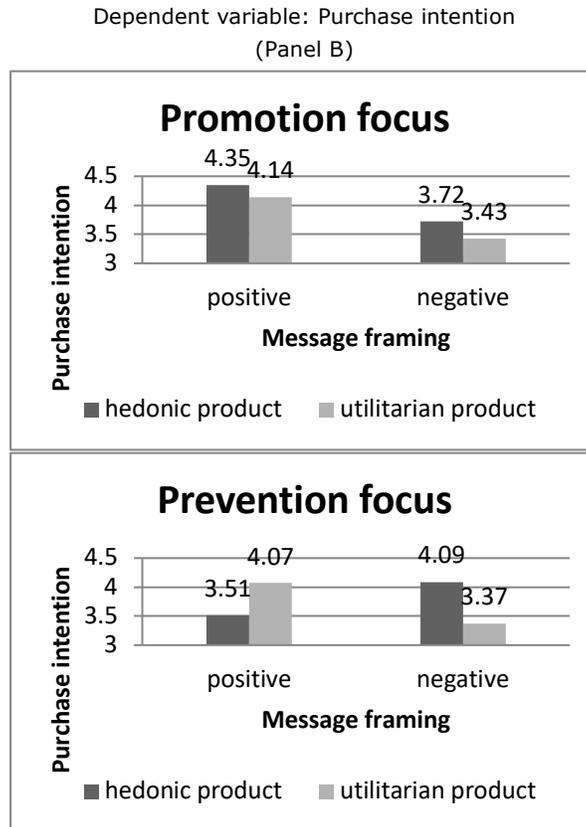


Figure 1. Interactive effects of message framing and product category on attitude toward ad and purchase intention.

Discussion

This study investigated the relevance of message framing in advertising by identifying the boundary conditions associated with the influence of positive and negative framing on consumer evaluations of an advertised product. The results demonstrate that the influence of message framing on an ad's effectiveness differs depending on the consumer's regulatory focus and the product type. The findings indicate that focusing only on a comparison of two types of message framing without considering other factors might be overly simplistic. Four specific observations are presented.

First, the effects of message framing depended on the individual's regulatory focus. Message framing exerted an influence on the attitude and purchase intention of promotion-focused individuals. Positive message framing was more effective on promotion-focused participants. This result is consistent with Lin and Shen (2012). Furthermore, our investigation of the three-way interaction among message

framing, product type, and regulatory focus revealed that this effect was consistent, regardless of whether the product was hedonic or utilitarian in nature. However, these differences were not apparent in prevention-focused participants. These findings suggest that positive message framing is more likely than negative message framing to successfully persuade promotion-focused consumers. Our results are consistent with but differ from those of other relevant research (Kim, 2006; Lee & Aaker, 2004) that has stated that positive (gain) framing is more persuasive when the message is promotion-focused. However, our findings showed that prevention-focused individuals are not influenced by negatively framed messages only. The explanation for this is that the effect of message framing on prevention-focused individuals depends on the product type.

Second, we observed an interaction between message framing and product type. By comparing two product types, we found that these constructs have asymmetric effects on consumer responses. The results demonstrate that when utilitarian value is highlighted, positively framed messages are more likely to lead to a more positive attitude and an increased purchase intention than are negatively framed messages. When facing a product with utilitarian value, an individual is prone to evaluate the advertising claim based on cognitively oriented benefits (Woods, 1960). A positively framed message matches the goal-oriented consumption of a consumer who is motivated by the desire to fulfill a basic need or accomplish a functional task (Strahilevitz, 1999). For hedonic products, framing the ad message positively or negatively has the same effect because both frame types can mitigate the consumer guilt associated with the purchase of such a product (Strahilevitz, 1999).

Third, negatively framed messages have an advantage when hedonic products are promoted to prevention-focused consumers. Ads using negative framing that stresses the potential loss if consumers do not purchase a product (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990) seem to suggest more benefits to prevention-focused consumers than merely preventing a loss. In addition, the excuse of preventing a loss matches the goal pursued by prevention-focused consumers, so this message framing is especially effective when such consumers face hedonic products. Therefore, the interaction between message framing and regulatory focus for hedonic products reflects regulatory fit theory (Avnet & Higgins, 2006; Higgins, 2002) in that persuasion is optimized when the demands of an advertising execution match the goal pursued by the ad viewer.

Fourth, positively framed messages have an advantage when utilitarian products are promoted to prevention-focused consumers. We found that positively framed messages were consistently more effective than negatively framed ones. Prevention-focused consumers facing a utilitarian product tend to be influenced by the utilitarian nature of the product and are more likely to be persuaded by positively framed messages than by negatively framed ones.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study has several theoretical implications. First, this research expands and deepens the persuading marketing/communication literature by examining the application and causal effects of message framing outside of U.S. and European contexts. In addition, this article demonstrates that the effects of message framing depend on the consumer's regulatory focus and the product type. These

findings help compare and expand message framing and regulatory fit theory as explored in previous studies (e.g., Kim, 2006; Lee & Aaker, 2004; Lin & Shen, 2012).

Second, this study expands the theoretical applicability of the arguments of Johar and Sirgy (1991) and Shavitt (1992) that utilitarian appeals are persuasive when the product is utilitarian. Our study found some significant two-way interactions between message framing and product type. Specifically, we found that, for utilitarian appeals, a positively framed message for a utilitarian product is more persuasive than a negatively framed message.

Third, according to Motyka et al. (2014), regulatory fit may come from different sources. In contrast to Lin and Shen (2012), we measured consumers' regulatory focus instead of manipulation, which led to different findings regarding three-way interactions. The underlying reason for the different result is that, compared with the self-generated priming in Lin and Shen, measuring regulatory orientation led to weaker effects of regulatory fit on evaluation and behavioral intention (Motyka et al., 2014). The current research measured regulatory fit, which, as a consumer characteristic, is a chronic and stable orientation. Most of our findings confirm the goal-frame fit theory (Lee & Aaker, 2004). However, based on the current findings, when product attributes are considered, the goal and frame might not fit, depending on the type of product.

Our findings have crucial implications for advertising practitioners. Strategically speaking, the ad message should, of course, convey product value. The current investigation provides guidance on how to frame the value of a product by choosing the right message framing for the ad. First, basing market segmentation on consumers' regulatory focus may offer potential benefits to advertisers who strive to discover and take advantage of a diversity of audience characteristics. Advertisers who would like to frame messages in their ads have no means by which to administer consumer regulatory focus scales to members of their target audience; however, this difficulty does not diminish the importance of understanding how regulatory focus affects consumers' interactions with certain product types. This research suggests that the persuasiveness of the advertising message can be strengthened through either advertising copy, promotional messages, or positioning strategies.

Second, perceived utilitarian or hedonic value determines the message framing that should be used. In particular, ads for utilitarian products should contain positively framed messages. An appropriately presented message should also fit the product nature to increase advertising effectiveness when addressing consumers with different regulatory foci. For food marketers, for example, our findings suggest that if a brand or product is associated with utilitarian benefits, marketers can increase ad effectiveness by using a positively framed message to improve consumers' attitude toward the brand and enhance purchase intentions.

Third, message effectiveness can be enhanced when there is a match between regulatory orientation, message framing, and product type. For example, in developing copy for ads, it is beneficial to match the message framing and consumers' goal orientations. Positively framed messages are always effective for gain-pursuing individuals, regardless of whether the benefits offered by the brand are hedonic or utilitarian.

Limitations and Future Research

The findings of this study indicate areas of research that should be investigated more deeply, such as comparing these effects among various cultures. This research focused on the advertising effects on Taiwanese participants only. Singelis (1994) suggested that, relative to the U.S. culture, East Asian cultures tend to nurture a more accessible interdependent versus independent self-view. Lee, Aaker, and Gardner (2000) indicated that interdependent people tend to be prevention focused, whereas independent people tend to be promotion focused. Thus, future research may involve examining the interactive effects of regulatory focus and message framing among individuals from the two cultures.

Motyka et al. (2014) laid out the different regulatory fit moderators: the source of regulatory focus (self-primed, situation-primed, chronic), the orientation (prevention, promotion), how fit is created (sustained, matched), how fit is constructed (action, observation), the scope of fit (incidental, integral), and the fit route (route: verbal, nonverbal; involvement: high, low). This current study focused specifically on the chronic orientation-related aspects of regulatory fit. Future studies could investigate how other types of regulatory fit moderate the effectiveness of message framing, and compare their findings with the results of this study.

Conclusion

The findings of this research suggest that not all types of message framing are equal. When seeking the advantages that positively and negatively framed messages provide in obtaining and sustaining attention, advertisers should consider the product type and the particular regulatory focus of their target audience. Such knowledge is useful to advertisers endeavoring to maximize the impact of their advertising efforts.

References

- Arora, R. (2000). Message framing and credibility: Application in dental services. *Health Marketing Quarterly*, 18(1-2), 29-44.
- Avnet, T., & Higgins, E. T. (2006). How regulatory fit affects value in consumer choices and opinions. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 43(1), 1-10.
- Babin, B. J., Darden, W. R., & Griffin, M. (1994). Work and/or fun: Measuring hedonic and utilitarian shopping value. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(4), 644-657.
- Baker, M. J., & Churchill, G. A., Jr. (1977). The impact of physically attractive models on advertising evaluation. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 14(4), 538-555.

- Brislin, R. W. (1987). The wording and translation of research instruments. In W. J. Lonner & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *Field methods in cross-cultural research* (pp. 137–164). Beverly Hills: CA: SAGE Publications.
- Chang, C.-T. (2007). Health-care product advertising: The influences of message framing and perceived product characteristics. *Psychology & Marketing, 24*(2), 143–169.
- Dhar, R., & Wertenbroch, K. (2000). Consumer choice between hedonic and utilitarian goods. *Journal of Marketing Research, 37*(1), 60–71.
- Ganzach, Y., & Karsahi, N. (1995). Message framing and buying behaviors: A field experiment. *Journal of Business Research, 32*(1), 11–17.
- Higgins, E. T. (1997). Beyond pleasure and pain. *American Psychologist, 52*(12), 1280–1300.
- Higgins, E. T. (2002). How self-regulation creates distinct values: The case of promotion and prevention decision making. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 12*(3), 177–191.
- Hirschman, E., & Holbrook, M. (1982). Hedonic consumption: Emerging concepts, methods and propositions. *Journal of Marketing, 46*(3), 92–101.
- Holbrook, M., & Hirschman, E. (1982). The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research, 9*(2), 132–140.
- Homer, P. M., & Yoon, S.-G. (1992). Message framing and the interrelationships among ad-based feelings, affect, and cognition. *Journal of Advertising, 21*(1), 19–33.
- Idson, L. C., Liberman, N., & Higgins, E. T. (2000). Distinguishing gains for nonlosses and losses from nongains: A regulatory focus perspective on hedonic intensity. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 36*(3), 252–274.
- Jain, S. P., Lindsey, C., Agrawal, N., & Maheswaran, D. (2007). For better or for worse? Valenced comparative frames and regulatory focus. *Journal of Consumer Research, 34*(1), 57–65.
- Johar, J. S., & Sirgy, M. J. (1991). Value-expressive versus utilitarian advertising appeals: When and why to use which appeal. *Journal of Advertising, 20*(3), 23–33.
- Kim, Y.-J. (2006). The role of regulatory focus in message framing in antismoking advertisements for adolescents. *Journal of Advertising, 35*(1), 143–151.
- Krishnamurthy, P., Carter, P., & Blair, E. (2001). Attribute framing and goal framing effects in health decisions. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 85*(2), 382–399.

- Lee, A. Y., & Aaker, J. L. (2004). Bringing the frame into focus: The influence of regulatory fit on processing fluency and persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 86*(2), 205–218.
- Lee, A. Y., Aaker, J. L., & Gardner, W. L. (2000). The pleasures and pains of distinct self-construals: The role of interdependence in regulatory focus. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78*(6), 1122–1134.
- Levin, I. P., & Gaeth, G. J. (1988). How consumers are affected by the framing of attribute information before and after consuming the product. *Journal of Consumer Research, 15*(3), 374–378.
- Levin, I. P., Schneider, S. L., & Gaeth, G. J. (1998). All frames are not created equal: A typology and critical analysis of framing effects. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 76*(2), 149–188.
- Lin, H. F., & Shen, F. (2012). Regulatory focus and attribute framing: Evidence of compatibility effects in advertising. *International Journal of Advertising, 31*(1), 169–188.
- Lockwood, P., Jordan, C. H., & Kunda, Z. (2002). Motivation by positive or negative role models: Regulatory focus determines who will best inspire us. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83*(4), 854–864.
- Loroz, P. S. (2007). The interaction of message frames and reference points in prosocial persuasive appeals. *Psychology & Marketing, 24*(11), 1001–1023.
- Maheswaran, D., & Meyers-Levy, J. (1990). The influence of message framing and issue involvement. *Journal of Marketing Research, 27*(3), 361–367.
- Martin, B., & Marshall, R. (1999). The interaction of message framing and felt involvement in the context of cell phone commercials. *European Journal of Marketing, 33*(1/2), 206–218.
- Meyers-Levy, J., & Maheswaran, D. (2004). Exploring message framing outcomes when systematic, heuristic, or both types of processing occur. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 14*(1/2), 159–167.
- Motyka, S., Grewal, D., Puccinelli, N. M., Roggeveen, A. L., Avnet, T., Daryanto, A., . . . Wetzels, M. (2014). Regulatory fit: A meta-analytic synthesis. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 24*(3), 394–410.
- Obermiller, C. (1995). The baby is sick, the baby is well: A test of environmental communication appeals. *Journal of Advertising, 24*(2), 55–70.
- Okada, E. M. (2005). Justification effects on consumer choice of hedonic and utilitarian goods. *Journal of Marketing Research, 42*(1), 43–53.

- Rothman, A. J., Salovey, P., Antone, C., Keough, K., & Martin, C. D. (1993). The influence of message framing on intentions to perform health behaviors. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 29*(5), 408–433.
- Shah, J. Y., Higgins, E. T., & Friedman, R. S. (1998). Performance incentives and means: How regulatory focus influences goal attainment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74*(2), 285–293.
- Shavitt, S. (1992). Evidence for predicting the effectiveness of value-expressive versus utilitarian appeals: A reply to Johar and Sirgy. *Journal of Advertising, 31*(2), 47–51.
- Singelis, T. M. (1994). The measurement of independent and interdependent self-construals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 20*(5), 580–591.
- Singer, J. L. (1966). *Daydreaming: An introduction to the experimental study of inner experience*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Smith, G. E. (1996). Framing in advertising and the moderating impact of consumer education. *Journal of Advertising Research, 36*(5), 49–64.
- Strahilevitz, M. A. (1999). The effects of product type and donation magnitude on willingness to pay more for a charity-linked brand. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 8*(3), 215–241.
- Van de Velde, L., Verbeke, W., Popp, M., & Van Huylenbroeck, G. (2010). The importance of message framing for providing information about sustainability and environmental aspects of energy. *Energy Policy, 38*(10), 5541–5549.
- Woods, W. A. (1960). Psychological dimensions of consumer decision. *Journal of Marketing, 24*(3), 15–19.
- Yi, S., & Baumgartner, H. (2008). Motivational compatibility and the role of anticipated feelings in positively valenced persuasive message framing. *Psychology & Marketing, 25*(11), 1007–1026.
- Zhang, Y., & Buda, R. (1999). Moderating effect of need for cognition on responses to positively versus negatively framed advertising messages. *Journal of Advertising, 28*(2), 1–15.

Appendix. Experimental Materials

	Positive framing <i>Keeping your hair for life!</i>	Negative framing <i>Keeping your hair for life!</i>
Utilitarian product		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People who use a JCSION negative-ion hair dryer benefit from protecting their hair with negative ions, and can effectively keep their hair moist and healthy. ● With a JCSION negative-ion hair dryer, you can be more confident that your hair is healthy. In addition, you will enjoy smooth hair. ● With smooth hair, you will sparkle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People who do not use a JCSION negative-ion hair dryer do not benefit from protecting their hair with negative ions, and effectively cause their hair to become dry and unhealthy. ● Without a JCSION negative-ion hair dryer, you may be less confident that your hair is healthy. In addition, you might suffer from unhealthy hair. ● With unhealthy hair, you will feel dull.
Hedonic product	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Keeping your mood for life!</i></p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Keeping your mood for life!</i></p> 
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People who listen to JCSION light music benefit from enjoying gentle melodies, which allow the listener to effectively release the pressure caused by daily work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People who do not listen to JCSION light music do not benefit from enjoying gentle melodies, and therefore do not enjoy the possibility of effectively releasing

-
- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● With JCSION light music, you can indulge in the melodies of nature and easily refresh a tired body as well as wake a drowsy mind. In addition, you will have a positive mood all day.● Having a pleasurable time, you could keep yourself in a good mood all day! | <p>the pressure caused by daily work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Without JCSION light music, you might not indulge in the melodies of nature, and might find it hard to activate a tired body and wake a drowsy mind. In addition, you might experience a negative mood all day.● Losing a pleasurable opportunity, you will be in a bad mood all day! |
|--|--|
-