

Far Makes Green: The Effect of Construal Level on Green Behaviors

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Green communications so far have focused mainly on how to make people realize that global warming is an urgent issue. However, no matter how marketers in green industry try to make it look urgent, green issues, to consumers, feel comparatively very far away. Taking the perspectives from construal level theory, we try to promote green behaviors by priming consumers with high construal level. Since the green issue itself is of high construal, it is believed to be effective to use high construal level priming when promoting green behaviors. Two different experiments support this proposition that taking high construal level perspectives leads to more green behaviors.

Pitfalls of Current Green Communications

- Marketers and researchers in green industry only try to make green issues look more urgent, more risky and currently approaching (Laroche and Bergeron 2001; Weber 2006).
- However, environmental issues always sound very abstract and often seem very far away from now. (Troupe et al. 2007; Spence and Pidgeon 2010).

Construal Level Theory

- Construal level theory is defined as “a theory in social psychology that describes the relation between psychological distance and the extent to which people’s thinking (e.g., about objects and events) is abstract or concrete” (Troupe and Liberman 2010).
- High construal level is associated with abstract, desirability, goal-oriented, why-questions, etc. while low construal level is associated with concrete, feasibility, process-oriented, how-questions, etc. (Troupe and Liberman 2003).
- Construal level dimension
 1. Time: Now vs. Distant future
 2. Space: Here vs. There
 3. Social: Me vs. Close others vs. Distant others
 4. Hypothetical: Likely vs. Unlikely
- Construal levels can be exchanged across the dimensions (Troup et al. 2007)

Hypothesis Building

- Priming consumers with high-construal levels would encourage them to prefer green options since green issue itself is of high construal level.
- Intangible benefits are more abstract than tangible benefits, thus they are of higher construal level.
- Socially distant perspectives are more distant from oneself than first-person perspectives, thus they are of higher construal level.
- **Hypothesis1:** People are more willing to buy environmentally friendly products when they think of their intangible benefits, compared to when they think of their tangible benefits.
- **Hypothesis2:** People are more willing to do actions for the environment when they take socially distant perspectives, compared to when they take first-person perspectives.

Conclusion

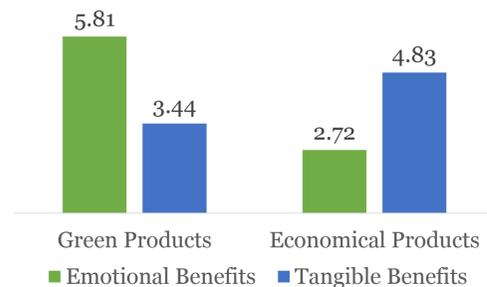
- People are more willing to buy green products when they think of their **emotional benefits**, compared to when they think of tangible benefits.
- People are more willing to do green behaviors when they take **children perspectives**, compared to when they take their own perspectives.

STUDY 1

- **Participants:** 66 Amazon Mturk Workers, Living in the US (49 Males, 23 Females and 4 Unspecified; Average Age=33.28)
- **Method:** Divided participants into two groups (emotional benefits vs. tangible benefits) and asked them willingness to choose each product: green product & cheap product
 1. When you care about your emotional (tangible) benefits, how much would you like to choose green products?
 2. When you care about your emotional (tangible) benefits, how much would you like to choose cheap products?

- **Analysis:** ANOVA with repeated measures

Figure1: Willingness to Choose Products Depending on Different Benefit Priming

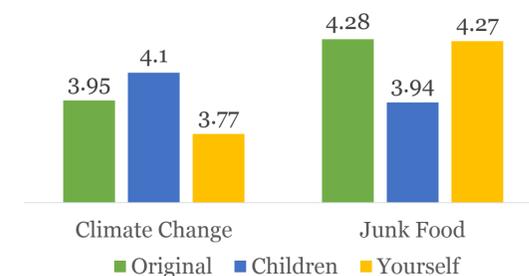


- Main effect of product type: $F(1,70)=4.92, p=.03$
- Interaction effect between product type and benefit type: $F(1,70)=34.27, p<.0001$

STUDY 2

- **Participants:** 133 Amazon Mturk Workers, Living in the US (57 Males, 63 Females and 13 Unspecified; Average Age=34.89)
- **Method:** Divided participants into two groups (climate change vs. junk food) and asked them to evaluate three advertisements with the same image and three different catch phrases
 1. Stop Climate Change (Junk Food) Before It Changes You
 2. Stop Climate Change (Junk Food) Before You Change Your Children
 3. Stop Climate Change (Junk Food) Before You Change Yourself
- **Analysis:** ANOVA with repeated measures

Figure2: Evaluations on Advertisements with Different Catch Phrases



- Interaction effect between catch phrase and context: $F(2,117)=5.11, p=.007$

