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Journal of Business Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jbusres

I hope to protect myself from the threat: The impact of self-threat on prevention-versus promotion-focused hope

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Self-concept

Self-threat

Regulatory focus

Hope

Advertising

ABSTRACT

This research explored the impact of self-threat on two types of hope, distinguished by regulatory focus: prevention hope versus promotion hope. Two experimental studies were conducted. The results of Study 1 indicated that individuals are more likely to focus on prevention hope when their self-view is threatened. Additionally, the findings in Study 1 were extended in the next experiment using an advertising context. Study 2 revealed that prevention hope-focused advertising messages were more persuasive (namely, advertising trust and the attitude toward both advertising and the brand) and inspired consumers' behavioral intention (or purchase intention) more than promotion hope-focused advertising messages when self-threat occurred. The implications of the study's findings and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

1. Introduction

People often say, “I hope” and then hope for trivial to crucial things in their everyday lives. They hope for such things as shiny hair, “cool” outfits, to be accepted by their preferred graduate school, receive pay raises, find a wonderful spouse, prevent cancer, or avoid their problems, among others. Thus, hope arises from the desire to attain a certain goal, and relates to goal outcomes (Poels & Dewitte, 2008). One way to attain our goals is through consumption, and consequently, we consume a variety of products or services to fulfill our goals.

Given its importance in our life in general, and consumption behavior in particular, marketing scholars have revealed that hope significantly impacts consumer behavior, marketing, and public policy (MacInnis & De Mello, 2005). In fact, products and services can evoke feelings of hope by providing a means to attain desirable outcomes (i.e., fashion items to achieve glamorous looks) or avoid negative outcomes (i.e., the local gym to prevent obesity). Lazarus (1999) and Snyder (2002) suggest that hope arises in both satisfactory and unsatisfactory situations. Hope arises in the latter with a goal to avoid negative consequences, whereas hope in the former can be associated with desirable accomplishments. As hope is relevant to individuals' goal outcomes, the regulatory focus theory (RFT) can be employed to conceptualize two types of hope in the study: promotion hope versus prevention hope (Poels & Dewitte, 2008).

Social psychologists in previous years have been interested in the principles of self-regulation. According to the regulatory focus theory

(Higgins, 1997), which builds on the general hedonic notion that people approach pleasure and avoid pain, two types of desired goals make people feel good or bad about the target object or behavior. The first type of goal involves achieving positive gains by focusing on “promotion.” The promotion-focused goal relates to attaining such positive outcomes as advancement, achievement, and aspirations. The other type of goal involves fulfilling desired consequences by avoiding losses, with a focus on “prevention.” The prevention-focused goal is illustrated in avoiding such negative outcomes as responsibilities, obligations, and security. Therefore, individuals with promotion-focused goals regulate their motives and behaviors toward positive outcomes, while those with prevention-focused goals regulate their motives and behaviors to avoid negative outcomes (Aaker & Lee, 2001). Prior research on self-regulation has demonstrated the impact of these two distinct regulatory foci on cognitive processes (Crowe & Higgins, 1997), emotional responses (Higgins, Shah, & Friedman, 1997), and behavioral strategies (Higgins, Roney, Crowe, & Hymes, 1994).

Based on these theoretical underpinnings, Poels and Dewitte (2008) postulated that individuals with promotion hope strive to attain something positive (i.e., high in promotion and low in prevention), while those with prevention hope tend to avoid something negative (i.e., high in both promotion and prevention). Our research posits that threats to an important self-perception can temporarily shake an individual's confidence, resulting in a choice of hope (i.e., promotion versus prevention) that can help the individual cope with decreased self-confidence. We predict in this study that hope can assume the form

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.03.010>

Received 20 November 2016; Received in revised form 8 March 2018; Accepted 10 March 2018

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of either pursuing desirable outcomes or avoiding those that are undesirable. Individuals may be especially likely to be inspired by prevention hope when they feel threatened or anxious, which simultaneously represents both promotion and prevention. Further, they may be inspired by promotion hope, which represents promotion only, without self-threat.

While prior research offers insights into the impact of hope on marketing, advertising persuasion, CSR activities, and consumer behavior (Kim, Kang, & Mattila, 2012; MacInnis & De Mello, 2005; Poels & Dewitte, 2008), it is still unclear how self-threat interacts with hope in determining how consumers respond to attain their goals. As a result, several theoretical and managerial issues remain unsolved regarding the relationship between self-threat and hope in marketing and advertising contexts. Threats to self-concept are undeniably of critical importance and relevance to both marketing researchers and practitioners. Individuals are potentially exposed to some form of threat in their everyday lives, such as physical pain, emotional distress, or psychological threats. When their self-perceptions are threatened, they take a variety of actions to cope with low confidence. For example, threats to the psychological self, such as making a bad product decision and feeling unattractive, may result in evoking hope to cope with such threats. Product or service consumption can be a way of handling such self-threats as individuals hope to attain their goals. This study fills this gap in literature and offers an enhanced understanding of self-threat and regulatory focus effects, in conjunction with hope in an advertising context. This thereby provides both theoretical and managerial insights regarding various marketing-related topics.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Hope

People express the emotions they experience in their everyday lives (Lee & Woo, 2017). As emotions are major life components, researchers have suggested that the emotions experienced impact the formation of attitudes (Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994), memory (Cahill & McGaugh, 1998), assessments of life satisfaction (Kuppens, Realo, & Diener, 2008), information processing (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004), and judgment and choice (Lerner & Keltner, 2000). Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer (1999) defined emotions as an internal “mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts; [...] and may result in specific actions to affirm or cope with the emotion, depending on its nature and meaning for the person having it” (p. 184).

Psychologists have characterized experienced emotions by appraising valence. Individuals judge the appraisal of valence depending on whether the particular event is positive or negative, or feels pleasant or unpleasant (Schwarz, 1990). For instance, anger, sadness, fear, guilt, and anxiety are considered as negative valence, whereas enjoyment, happiness, liking, pride, and hope are considered as positive valence. Additionally, experienced emotions are conceptualized by arousal, or levels of certain heightened emotions; specifically, whether they feel quiet or active (Wundt, 1924).

Prior research, in reflecting emotions' importance to individuals, has revealed that emotions also play a significant role in advertising persuasion, resulting in attitude formation (Malhotra, 2005) as well as cognitive and behavioral responses (Geuens, De Pelsmacker, & Fasseur, 2011). Consequently, marketing scholars and consumer psychologists have explored diverse emotions in advertising and marketing contexts: regret (Tsiros & Mittal, 2000), dissatisfaction (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004), sympathy and empathy (Escalas & Stern, 2003), and anger (Sharifi & Aghazadeh, 2016). Among various emotions, hope has recently received increasing attention from scholars, and has been researched in such contexts as marketing (MacInnis & De Mello, 2005), health communication (Chadwick, 2014), corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities (Kim et al., 2012), academic performance

(Snyder, 2002), life significance (Feldman & Snyder, 2005), and advertising (Poels & Dewitte, 2008).

Hope is undeniably a common word used in everyday life. In an effort to conceptualize hope, Lazarus (1991) postulated that hope essentially arises when individuals desire to obtain a particular goal. Hope is formed from reality-based evaluations of volition and ways of fulfilling uncertain, goal-congruent outcomes (MacInnis & De Mello, 2005; Snyder et al., 1991). Specifically, hope is a future-oriented emotion because it focuses on actions and stems from outcomes that have not yet been achieved (Lazarus, 1991; Smith, Haynes, Lazarus, & Pope, 1993). Hence, Bagozzi, Baumgartner, Pieters, and Zeelenberg (2000) postulated that similar to fear and anxiety, hope involves anticipated emotional outcomes, and not experienced outcomes. Scholars address the emotional aspects of hope (e.g., Lazarus, 1991) based on appraisal theories, wherein accounting emotions are extracted from one's assessments of a situation or stimuli. To experience feelings of hope, individuals should appraise a goal congruent to its outcomes (Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 1991; Smith et al., 1993). Goal congruency in a satisfactory situation is represented by the occurrence of a favorable outcome, whereas goal congruency under threatening circumstances involves avoiding or solving a negative outcome (MacInnis & Chun, 2007; Snyder, 2002). Additionally, hope can be experienced depending on how much the individual yearns for the outcomes. Literature that studies hope defines yearning as the degree of desire for a goal-congruent outcome, associated with the importance of both desirable outcomes and unfavorable circumstances (Lazarus, 1991; Stotland, 1969). Prior research indicates that hope is likely to be felt when desirable future outcomes are perceived as possibly occurring, but uncertain (Lazarus, 1991; Smith et al., 1993). Researchers have agreed over decades of study that hope is an emotion that is difficult to control, is a common experience, and motivates behavior (Averill, Catlin, & Chon, 1990; Bruininks & Malle, 2005).

MacInnis and Chun (2007) collect the identified components of hope to define it as a “positive emotion that varies as a function of the degree of yearning for a goal-congruent, future-oriented outcome, appraised as uncertain, yet possible.” Hope, in other words, is likely to be invoked when an individual's desirable outcome is important, can possibly occur in the future, and is expected to be achieved, but is also uncertain. Two different hope-evoking situations have been proposed in considering the fundamental characteristics of hope relevant to long-term goal outcomes. Hope can be induced in unsatisfactory situations, in which withdrawal, deficiency, damage, or self-threats exist, as well as in satisfactory situations, if outcomes can potentially improve (Lazarus, 1999; Snyder, 2002). Specifically, hope can contribute to creating a goal of avoiding unfavorable circumstances or outcomes to escape from unsatisfactory situations; individuals might hope to reach a goal to accomplish desirable circumstances, or outcomes to enhance satisfactory situations.

Given goal congruence's crucial role relative to the desired outcome to experience hope in compliance with circumstances, past hope research has applied either a promotion or a prevention focus (Pham & Higgins, 2005; de Mello & MacInnis, 2005). The current study parallels prior empirical research and follows previous scholars' efforts to conceptualize hope (Kim et al., 2012; Poels & Dewitte, 2008) by relying on the well-established regulatory focus theory to distinguish the two types of hope. The following section discusses the regulatory focus theory, and the distinction between the two types of hope: prevention and promotion.

2.2. The regulatory focus theory and hope

Social psychologists over the years have been interested in the principles of self-regulation. The regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997) builds on the general hedonic notion that as people approach pleasure and avoid pain, two types of desired goals exist that make people feel good or bad about the target object or behavior. The first

type of goal involves achieving positive gains by focusing on “promotion.” Individuals with this promotion focus attend to positive outcomes from success, and the absence of positive outcomes from failure. The promotion-focused goal relates to attaining such positive outcomes as advancement, achievement, and aspirations. The other type of goal involves fulfilling desired consequences by avoiding losses, with a focus on “prevention.” Individuals with this prevention focus pay close attention to the absence of negative outcomes from success and the presence of negative outcomes because of failure. The prevention-focused goal is illustrated in avoiding such negative outcomes as responsibilities, obligations, and security. Therefore, individuals with promotion-focused goals regulate their motives and behaviors toward positive outcomes, whereas those with prevention-focused goals regulate their motives and behaviors away from negative outcomes (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Hur & Choo, 2016; Kim & Ulgado, 2014). Prior research has demonstrated the impact of these two distinct regulatory foci on cognitive processes (Crowe & Higgins, 1997), emotional responses (Higgins et al., 1997), and behavioral strategies (Higgins et al., 1994) regarding self-regulation.

Poels and Dewitte (2008) and Kim et al. (2012) differentiated and confirmed the presence of two types of hope based on the regulatory focus theory: promotion hope and prevention hope. Given that the nature of hope involves approaching something positive (i.e., a positive emotion), and hope-related goals depend on situational factors, it seems plausible that both types of hope have a high promotion focus. For example, Poels and Dewitte (2008) suggested that prevention hope is more likely to be evoked by wanting to avoid undesirable outcome(s) when individuals are faced with unwanted situations, thereby resulting in both high promotion and prevention foci. A goal to accomplish desired outcomes, in contrast, can engender satisfactory conditions and arouse promotion hope, resulting in high promotion but low prevention focus. Poels and Dewitte (2008) tested two distinct types of hope that differ in terms of self-regulatory goals, and discovered that the promotion hope group scored low on prevention items and high on promotion items, while the prevention hope group demonstrated high promotion and prevention items. Prior researchers have offered similar conceptualizations regarding promotion and prevention hope (de Mello & MacInnis, 2005; Nesse, 1999).

2.3. Self-concept and self-threat

Over the last several decades, focus has increased on the self-concept across diverse disciplines. The self-concept provides a framework for the perception and organization of the self, as well as in comprehending others' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Markus, Smith, & Moreland, 1985). Specifically, how we perceive and understand our and others' behaviors is particularly influenced by our own self-concept.

Many perspectives and definitions exist regarding the self. Markus and Kitayama (1991) suggested that these divergent views of the self significantly impact various aspects of individuals' cognition, emotion, and motivation. For example, the self-concept has been defined as “the totality of an individual's thought and feeling having reference to himself as an object” (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 7). This involves reflected appraisal, or others' perceptions of the self; self-attribution, or inference from one's own behavior; and psychological centrality, or the hierarchical organization of different self-concepts (Rosenberg, 1979; Sirgy, 1982). Markus et al. (1985) defined the self-concept as a set of self-schemas that organize past experiences, and are used to recognize and interpret relevant stimuli in the social environment. “Self-schema” refers to the “cognitive generalization about the self, derived from past experience that organizes and guides the processing of self-related information contained in the individual's social experiences” (Markus, 1977, p. 64). This generalization process helps the individual understand the particular features of his or her disposition and behavior (Markus, 1977).

Understanding the self-concept is important in marketing and

consumer research, as this closely relates to many consumer attitudes and behaviors (Park & Ko, 2011). Consequently, the self-concept's role has been investigated in many contexts, such as brand perception and choice, purchase intention, advertising perception, and advertising effectiveness. The current study suggests that one approach to comprehending the impact of self-concept in social and consumer psychology involves *self-threat*.

Self-threat refers to a hazard to the self-concept (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999). Baumeister, Smart, and Boden (1996) noted that self-threat occurs “when favorable views about oneself are questioned, contradicted, impugned, mocked, challenged, or otherwise put in jeopardy” (p. 8). When people experience successes or failures, they strive to maximize emotional highs and avoid emotional lows (Park & Maner, 2009). Prior research suggests that individuals respond to threats to the self-concept with a variety of actions to restore their self-confidence. For instance, Zhong and Liljenquist (2006) found that when subjects recalled a past unethical deed, they attempted to bolster their moral purity, suggesting that temporarily thinking about how one is immoral can result in feelings of low morality. Additionally, individuals tend to cope with lowered self-confidence by seeking more objective information to resolve their uncertainty (Tiedens & Linton, 2001). Brand consumption can also serve as a means of coping with low confidence in specific self-perceptions (Gao, Wheeler, & Shiv, 2009). For instance, Gao et al. (2009) found that subtle manipulations affect self-confidence, leading consumers to choose self-view-bolstering products in different self-view domains. Further, Park (2017) suggested that negative emotions elicited by social exclusion (e.g., being rejected by others) in a shopping context may impact consumers' decision making.

As Lazarus (1999) suggested, hope relates to goal outcomes; this suggests that hope arises from the desire to obtain certain goals. Hope is essentially an important coping resource in threatening life circumstances (Lazarus, 1999; Poels & Dewitte, 2008). When hope arises in an unsatisfactory situation, it is associated with a goal of avoiding unwanted outcomes, whereas hope stemming from a satisfactory situation relates to a goal of obtaining desirable outcomes (Poels & Dewitte, 2008; Snyder, 2002). Thus, it is plausible to posit that when some aspect of the self is threatened (i.e., an unsatisfactory situation), people are more likely to avoid negative things (i.e., ought goals). Consequently, we predict that self-threats may elicit negative effects, and individuals will evoke hope to avoid something negative and obtain something desirable (prevention hope). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Consumers who feel threatened are more likely to have a higher level of prevention hope than those without self-threat, while controlling for chronic regulatory focus.

1. Study 1

We tested our first hypothesis by first examining whether self-threat with subtle manipulations would result in an increase in the two different types of hope. Specifically, when individuals experience self-threat, they will be guided by prevention hope, while those without such threats will be inspired by promotion hope. We employed a particular self-view (intelligence) to shake participants' self-confidence. Additionally, we tested our conceptualization by providing some participants the opportunity for self-recovery prior to the final task. As this opportunity in an intervening task will result in a decreased likelihood of prevention hope activation in the final task, the opportunity for self-recovery reduces the viability of alternative explanations for our findings (Gao et al., 2009).

2.4. Method

2.4.1. Participants and procedure

This experiment involved participation by 70 undergraduate

students ($M_{age} = 22.93$) from a major university in Seoul in exchange for \$5. Prior research suggests that robust gender differences exist in specific domains of the self-concept (e.g., Hattie, 1992; Kling, Hyde, Showers, & Buswell, 1999; Marsh, 1989). For instance, Kling et al. (1999) conducted a meta-analysis to examine gender differences in global self-esteem, and their findings suggest that males score higher on standard measures of global self-esteem than females, although the difference is small. Additionally, past work indicates that females score higher in such domains as reading, and relationships with same-sex friends, but males score higher in such domains as physical ability, math, and appearance (e.g., Hyde, Fennema, Ryan, Frost, & Hopp, 1990). Although Study 1 focuses on the intelligence domain, only female students participated in the study to control for any potential gender effects.

Prospective participants received an invitation e-mail, and were told that the study aimed to learn about stress among college students during final exams. Upon arrival at their scheduled session, participants were first asked to complete an 18-item questionnaire to assess their chronic regulatory focus (Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002). They were then randomly assigned to one of three conditions (intelligence self-threat, intelligence self-threat with opportunity for recovery, or no intelligence self-threat). Participants in the self-threat condition were asked to write about their weaknesses as well as the personal characteristics that depicted them as unintelligent (Gao et al., 2009). Participants in the self-threat with opportunity for self-recovery condition followed the same procedure as the self-threat condition, but then engaged in an intervening task, with an opportunity to restore their self-view. Specifically, they were given five minutes after the self-threat manipulation to use their smartphones with no restrictions. Finally, those in the no-threat condition were asked to list all the objects in the room in which they were located.

2.4.2. Dependent variables

Following Poels and Dewitte's (2008) method, participants were first asked to imagine their upcoming final exam week and record any hopes that they could think of (i.e., both promotion and prevention hopes). For example, they were asked to write down what they aspire to achieve (or prevent) during their final exam week. Participants generated a number of both promotion- and prevention-focused hopes. Promotion-focused hope included such responses as "I want to achieve a higher GPA than in the previous semester," "I hope to remember everything I studied," or "I hope to achieve an A in my major course." In contrast, participants generated the following prevention-focused hopes: "I want to avoid oversleeping and missing the exam," "I want to avoid procrastinating on my final project," or "I hope to avoid making a C in one of my classes." We included their listed promotion and prevention hopes as dependent variables for the analyses.

Additionally, as another key dependent measure, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they were concerned with either promotion goals (four items, such as: "I am focused on achieving such positive outcomes as scholarships or high final exam grades," "My major goal for the final is to achieve my academic ambitions") or prevention goals (four items, such as: "I am focused on preventing negative outcomes, such as low grades or failing the final exam," "My major goal for the final is to avoid academic failure"). A single index was formed for each of the promotion and prevention goals by averaging the corresponding items, and this was used for another set of dependent variables to test our prediction. Participants also submitted their demographic information.

2.5. Results

We predicted that individuals in the self-threat condition would be more likely to have a higher level of prevention hope than those in the "self-threat with opportunity for self-recovery" and the "no-threat" conditions. We also expected that, in contrast, no such differences

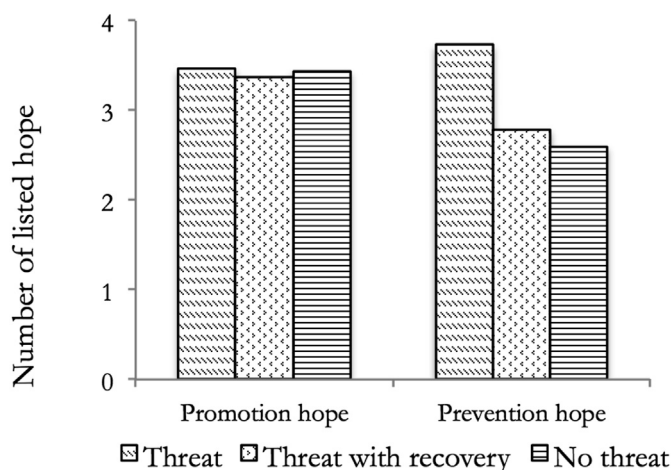


Fig. 1. Number of hopes listed as a function of self-threat.

would exist for promotion hope. An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) model was employed to test our predictions, using two covariates. Promotion and prevention regulatory foci were both entered as covariates to control for participants' chronic regulatory focus factors, which could otherwise influence participants' types of hope during their final exams. The degrees of freedom for the ANCOVAs reported below were 1 and 65, unless otherwise specified.

The results indicated that participants in the self-threat condition were more likely to list prevention hope, such as preventing low final exam grades ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.28$), than their counterparts in the self-threat with opportunity ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 1.43$) and no-threat conditions ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 0.71$) ($F = 6.06$, $p < 0.01$, $\omega^2 = 0.16$), while controlling for chronic levels of both promotion and prevention hope ($F_s < 1$). However, no significant primary self-threat effect was found for promotion hope ($F = 0.02$, $p = 0.98$, $\omega^2 = 0.00$) (self-threat $M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.68$; self-threat with recovery $M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.38$; no self-threat $M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.12$). Again, chronic levels of both promotion and prevention foci did not significantly influence the dependent variable ($p_s > 0.10$). Fig. 1 illustrates the number of hopes listed as a function of self-threat.

The ANCOVAs then further tested the hypothesis using another set of dependent variables, or the measured indices for both promotion and prevention hope. The primary effect of self-threat was significant for prevention hope ($F = 10.97$, $p < 0.001$, $\omega^2 = 0.25$), with self-threat participants more focused on prevention hope ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 1.07$) than those in the self-threat with recovery ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.81$) and no self-threat groups ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.06$). The chronic prevention regulatory focus was significant ($F = 21.26$, $p < 0.001$), but the promotion regulatory focus did not significantly influence the dependent variable ($F < 1$). Moreover, no significant primary effect of self-threat was found for promotion hope ($F = 1.30$, $p = 0.28$, $\omega^2 = 0.03$), and the mean difference was not significant ($M_{self-threat} = 5.47$, $SD = 1.05$; $M_{self-threat \text{ with recovery}} = 5.59$, $SD = 0.84$; $M_{no \text{ self-threat}} = 5.86$, $SD = 0.89$). Fig. 2 illustrates the mean plot for regulatory focused hope.

2. Study 2

The results of Study 1 paralleled expectations by demonstrating that consumers who feel threatened are likely to be inspired by prevention hope, which is highly represented in both promotion and prevention foci. Further, they are likely to be inspired by promotion hope, which is highly represented in promotion only, either without self-threat or with the opportunity for self-recovery. We used a design more relevant to advertising in Study 2, and aimed to replicate and extend the findings from Study 1. Specifically, we predicted that participants are more likely to be persuaded by advertising messages when they feel

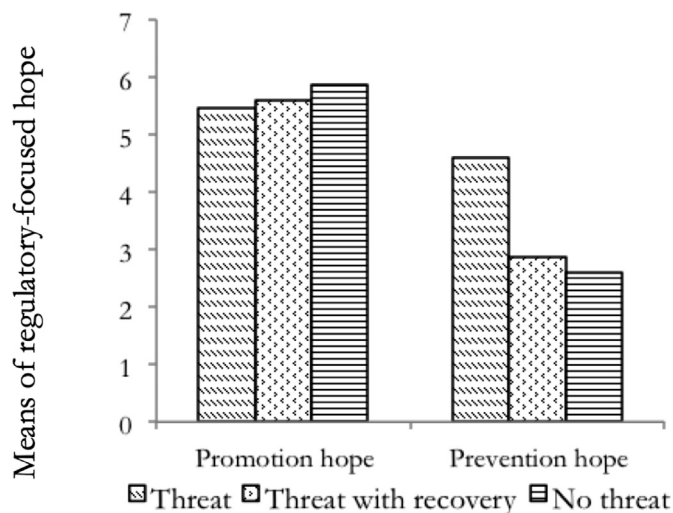


Fig. 2. Means of regulatory-focused hope as a function of self-threat.

threatened, including both promotion and prevention goals (prevention hope), while controlling for their chronic regulatory focus (RF) orientation. In contrast, individuals may be likely to favor advertising messages focusing on promotion goals (promotion hope) when they feel no self-threat, while controlling for their chronic RF orientation. Accordingly, we hypothesize that:

H2. When consumers feel threatened, they are more likely to be persuaded by advertising messages focusing on prevention hope versus promotion hope, while controlling for chronic regulatory focus; those without self-threat will more favorably respond to advertising messages focusing on promotion hope (versus prevention hope).

2.6. Method

2.6.1. Stimuli

A 2 (self-threat: yes versus no) \times 2 (advertising message: prevention versus promotion hope) between-subjects design was used. Two sets of two full-color advertisements were created for a gym, and two different sets were respectively developed for males and females to control for gender effects, in terms of respondents' identification with the characters in the ad (Poels & Dewitte, 2008). A fictitious gym brand (*Life-time*) was used to minimize any potential confounding effects from participants' prior brand exposure. The prevention hope slogan for males read, "Here comes fitness to protect you from having a fat body," and the body copy read, "Nighttime snacks, high-calorie meals. Do you think, 'My body is still fine'? Abdominal and body fat are about to cross your lifeline. Protect your lifeline with the 'Muscle for Man' program from LIFETIME Fitness!" In contrast, the promotion hope advertising slogan read, "Here comes fitness to make your dreams come true," followed by the body copy: "Do you want wide shoulders, robust arms, and striking back muscle? The body with gorgeous lines that you have always desired? You can achieve 'The Body' you want with the 'Muscle for Man' program from LIFETIME Fitness!" The slogan and tone are identical in the female advertisements, but a perfect bodyline was more highly emphasized without mentioning muscle. The two advertisements appear in Appendix A and B.

2.6.2. Participants and procedure

A total of 83 undergraduate students ($M_{age} = 23.1$; 51 female) were recruited from a major university in Seoul, Korea, in exchange for \$5. Participants were told that the study's objective was to learn about consumers' reactions to a service brand (a gym) and its advertisements being considered for introduction around the campus.

Upon arrival at their scheduled session, participants were first asked to complete an 18-item questionnaire assessing their chronic regulatory focus (Lockwood et al., 2002). They were then randomly assigned to one of two self-threat manipulation conditions. Study 2 relies on the previously validated self-threat procedure employed by Park and Maner (2009) to affect confidence in a particular self (appearance). Participants in the appearance threat condition were asked to consider aspects of their body or physical appearance that they do not like, and to list them in the space provided. In contrast, participants in the no-appearance self-threat condition were instructed to look around the room, think about all the objects they saw in the room, and then list them.

Participants that completed the self-threat manipulation were led to one of two advertisements (promotion or prevention hope). They responded to a series of questions upon viewing the advertisement regarding not only their evaluation of the ad, but also the brand terms associated with ad trust (3 items; $\alpha = 0.95$), attitude toward the ad (3 items; $\alpha = 0.92$), attitude toward the brand (3 items; $\alpha = 0.96$), purchase intention (3 items; $\alpha = 0.88$), and the message framing manipulation. A single index for each dependent variable was formed by averaging the corresponding items. All participants provided demographic information after they completed all questionnaires.

2.7. Results

Participants were asked to rate the extent to which the advertisement's message concerned promotion or prevention hope to assess the effectiveness of the manipulation of hope through the advertising messages. As hope is generally a promotion-oriented emotion (Higgins et al., 1997), we anticipated high scores on the promotion hope items across all conditions. In contrast, we predicted relatively higher prevention hope scores for the prevention hope condition than for promotion hope. As anticipated, subjects in the prevention hope message condition indicated that the advertisement more closely related to prevention hope ($M = 4.34$) than those in the promotion hope message condition ($M = 2.19$, $t = 8.70$, $p < 0.001$). Further, subjects in the promotion hope message condition believed that the message more closely involved promotion hope ($M = 5.73$) than those in the promotion condition ($M = 5.14$, $t = -2.31$, $p < 0.05$). No significant difference was observed regarding evoked hope ($M_{promotion} = 4.85$ vs. $M_{prevention} = 4.44$, $t = -0.09$, $p = 0.16$), suggesting that evoked hope did not differ across the conditions. Finally, we conducted a series of t -tests to ensure that the stimuli for both male and female results did not vary. The results revealed no significant differences between them (Male $M_{ad\ trust} = 3.59$ versus Female $M_{ad\ trust} = 3.44$; Male $M_{ad\ attitude} = 3.86$ versus Female $M_{ad\ attitude} = 3.57$; Male $M_{brand\ attitude} = 3.70$ versus Female $M_{brand\ attitude} = 3.49$; Male $M_{PI} = 3.17$ versus Female $M_{PI} = 3.19$) ($ps < 0.01$).

Two-way ANCOVAs examined our prediction, with chronic promotion focus and prevention focus as covariates, and ad trust, ad attitude, brand attitude, and purchase intention as dependent variables. The ANCOVAs' degrees of freedom as reported below were 1 and 77, unless otherwise specified. The ANCOVAs' results revealed no primary effects for either self-threat or hope message manipulation ($ps > 0.1$). However, the self-threat \times hope interaction was significant, as predicted ($F_{ad\ trust} = 20.12$, $p < 0.001$, $\omega^2 = 0.21$; $F_{ad\ attitude} = 18.95$, $p < 0.001$, $\omega^2 = 0.20$; $F_{brand\ attitude} = 23.43$, $p < 0.001$, $\omega^2 = 0.23$; $F_{PI} = 13.15$, $p < 0.01$).

Planned one-tailed contrasts were conducted to further and directly examine interaction effects. The prevention hope ad message induced more positive ad trust, attitudes toward the ad and the brand, and greater purchase intent ($M_{ad\ trust} = 4.27$; $M_{ad\ attitude} = 4.37$; $M_{brand\ attitude} = 4.28$; $M_{PI} = 3.87$) than the promotion hope ad message ($M_{ad\ trust} = 3.01$; $M_{ad\ attitude} = 3.36$, $M_{brand\ attitude} = 3.28$; $M_{PI} = 2.93$) ($ps < 0.001$) for subjects in the self-threat condition. However, subjects in the no self-threat condition demonstrated more favorable attitudes toward the ad and the brand. Further, they indicated stronger

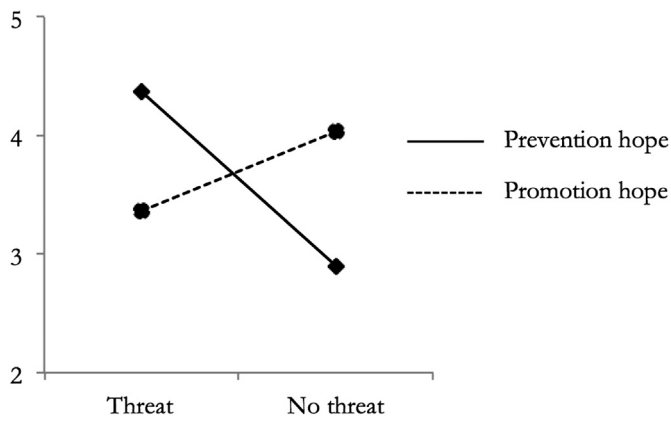


Fig. 3. Attitude toward the ad.

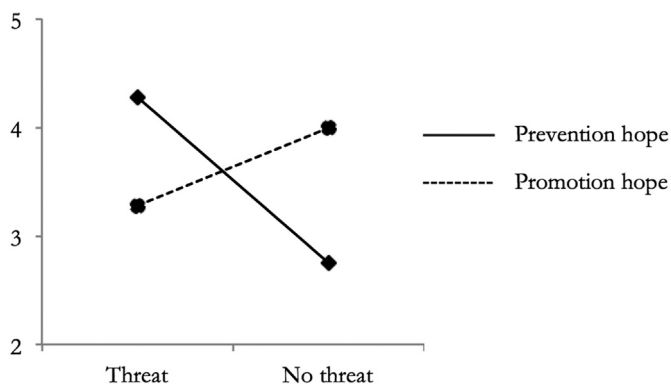


Fig. 4. Attitude toward the brand.

purchase intent ($M_{ad\ trust} = 3.79$; $M_{ad\ attitude} = 4.03$, $M_{brand\ attitude} = 4.00$; $M_{PI} = 3.43$) when exposed to the promotion hope ad message than the prevention hope ad message ($M_{ad\ trust} = 2.95$; $M_{ad\ attitude} = 2.90$, $M_{brand\ attitude} = 2.74$; $M_{PI} = 2.53$) ($ps < 0.05$). These results confirmed our prediction. Regarding covariates, neither the chronic promotion nor prevention foci significantly influenced any of the dependent variables ($ps > 0.1$). Figs. 3 and 4 illustrate the mean plot of attitude toward the ad and brand.

3. General discussion

As everyone experiences some form of threat at some point, it is important to understand how people respond to and cope with such threats. Further, how consumers evaluate promotion and prevention hope advertising messages is an important area of inquiry for marketing researchers and practitioners. This study aimed to augment the literature regarding self-threat and hope in advertising by investigating the self-threat's effects on the individual's choice of hope. Despite hope's important role in both marketing and consumer behavior, empirical research is limited on the use of hope as a marketing tactic (Poels & Dewitte, 2008). Our central argument in this research builds upon extant literature, in that self-threat increases the likelihood of individuals' positive evaluation of advertisements and brands when they are promoted with prevention hope ad messages (versus promotion hope messages). This premise received robust support across two experimental studies, which consistently indicated that people who experience threats via subtle manipulations (both intelligence and appearance threats) respond to such threats by focusing on prevention hope (i.e., high in both promotion and prevention goals) instead of promotion hope. Additionally, we revealed that these self-threat manipulations' effects on the type of hope could be eliminated when participants are provided with the opportunity for self-recovery.

This research contributes to marketing and consumer psychology literature on several fronts. First, our results parallel prior research (Gao et al., 2009) by suggesting that subtle manipulations were sufficient to temporarily shake individuals' confidence and lead to the choice of prevention hope, which manages decreased self-confidence. Specifically, our findings not only further support prior literature, but also highlight the malleability of the self (Aaker, 1999; Markus & Kunda, 1986; Sung & Choi, 2011). Psychology literature suggests the coexistence of multiple selves within the individual, and that particular selves will be activated at a given time depending on the situational cues that make them salient (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Briley, Morris, & Simonson, 2000; Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000).

By understanding the self as a fluid, pliable entity, the two experimental studies' findings suggest that subtle actions can affect self-confidence. Additionally, prior research has indicated that individuals can adopt many coping strategies to handle their lowered self-confidence. Our findings suggest that participants primed with appearance self-threats tend to favor both advertising messages and their endorsed product using prevention hope (vs. promotion hope) ad messages. Thus, these results provide novel evidence that individuals are more likely to be inspired by prevention hope in response to self-threats. This highlights the importance of self-concept in advertising persuasion, and consumption goals in handling self-threats and maintaining stable self-perceptions. Undeniably, our findings are somewhat inconsistent with those from Poels and Dewitte's (2008) experiments, indicating that prevention hope leads to more goal-directed behavior (i.e., a higher recollection of product information, willingness to use products, and intention) than promotion hope in an advertising context. One possible explanation may be the use of different products. Poels and Dewitte (2008) used both a vitamin complex and cell phone provider, which are inherently more prevention-oriented product categories. Consequently, their findings consistently demonstrated that prevention hope ads perform better than promotion hope ads in terms of memory and action (Poels & Dewitte, 2008). However, the product used in Study 2 (a gym) may be more promotion-oriented in nature, in that consumers are more likely to be promotion-oriented. Thus, promotion hope ads were more effective than prevention hope without any self-threat circumstances, while prevention ads were ultimately better in terms of its persuasion in the presence of self-threat.

We measured and controlled for the participants' chronic regulatory focus in both experiments, and found that the self-threat effect, for which the prevention hope preference increases, holds true for both promotion- and prevention-focused participants. Thus, the findings illuminate self-threat's effects on participants' evaluations of subsequently encountered advertising and brand messages, regardless of their chronic regulatory focus orientations. This offers a superior understanding of the cognitive activities induced prior to ad exposure and their effects on persuasiveness. Moreover, people are exposed to many social situations that threaten their important self-perceptions. This research demonstrates that mere self-threat manipulations may render certain consumption goals and hopes more salient, which consequently influences advertising effectiveness and persuasiveness. Therefore, this research contributes to the body of literature on advertising placements and contexts.

3.1. Limitations and future directions

As with all research, limitations exist in this study, which future research must consider. Although we employed two different types of self-threats (intelligence and appearance), this research still relied on limited types of threats, and only one product category (a gym). Further research, using a larger set of product and service categories and various threat conditions, is required to increase the generalizability of this study's findings. Further, previous research (Gao et al., 2009; Park & Maner, 2009) has typically used such self-threat priming procedures as handwriting procedures in writing essays about dissatisfying self-

aspects. We employed the same essay-writing self-threat manipulation in the current study, paralleling prior literature (Park & Maner, 2009). However, this manipulation procedure lacks external validity, as it is not realistic in the advertising persuasion and decision-making processes. Thus, future research would benefit from employing a more realistic and direct self-threat priming process, highly relevant to advertising and consumer behavior. For example, social networking sites are pervasive in our everyday lives, as platforms on which people can judge and threaten others based on the content posted. Studies could employ more realistic self-threat manipulations in social media (e.g., providing negative feedback on “selfies,” posts, etc.), and examine the responses to such self-threats among social media users.

Future research could also examine other potential antecedents (e.g., individual difference variables) that determine the effectiveness of hope messages. For instance, the agency model posits that a core trait of narcissism is its strong approach and weak avoidance motivations

(Rose & Campbell, 2004). Foster and Trimm (2008) found that narcissists reported the strong motivation to approach desirable outcomes, but weak motivation to avoid negative ones. Thus, future empirical research is warranted to understand the mechanism that links such individual difference variables to regulatory goals and hope, and to identify other antecedents of promotion and prevention hope in an advertising context.

Finally, prior cross-cultural psychology literature suggests that the nature and structure of the self is more discrepant than assumed across cultures (Ackerman & Chung, 2012; Lam, Liu, & To, 2011). Thus, future empirical cross-cultural research is required to provide theoretical insight into the cultural differences involved in the psychological responses and coping strategies in self-threat situations. Further, managerial implications exist for international advertisers, who often expand their markets globally and must appeal to culturally diverse groups worldwide.

Appendix A. Advertisement for male



당신의 꿈을 이뤄주는 피트니스가 온다!

넓은 어깨, 탄탄한 팔, 튼튼한 등근육의 몸매를 원하시나요?
당신이 항상 원하던 라인이 사는 몸매!

LIFETIME fitness만의 머슬포맨프로그램
(Muscle for Man)으로 당신이 원하는 '바로 그 몸매'를
이룰 수 있습니다!



LIFETIME fitness와 함께 여러분의 희망을 이루세요

< Promotion-focused hope >



당신의 꿈을 이뤄주는 피트니스가 온다!

넓은 어깨, 탄탄한 팔, 튼튼한 등근육의 몸매를 원하시나요?
당신이 항상 원하던 라인이 사는 몸매!

LIFETIME fitness만의 머슬포맨프로그램
(Muscle for Man)으로 당신이 원하는 '바로 그 몸매'를
이룰 수 있습니다!



몸짱 탈출을 도와줄 피트니스가 온다!

짙은 술자리, 고지방, 고칼로리의 안주들.
수많은 음식의 유혹들 사이에서 '내 몸매는 괜찮아'라고
생각하십니까? 당신이 모르는 사이, 늘어나는 복부지방과
체지방은 당신 인생의 line을 넘으려고 있습니다.

LIFETIME fitness만의 머슬포맨프로그램
(Muscle for Man)으로 당신의 라인을 지키세요!

LIFETIME fitness와 함께 여러분의 희망을 이루세요

< Prevention-focused hope >

Appendix B. Advertisement for female



당신의 꿈을 이뤄주는 피트니스가 온다!

아름답고 탄력있는 몸매를 원하시나요?
당신이 항상 원하던 라인이 사는 몸매!

LIFETIME fitness만의 바디라인프로그램 (BodyLine)으로
당신이 원하는 '바로 그 몸매'를 이룰 수 있습니다!



LIFETIME fitness와 함께 여러분의 희망을 이루세요

< Promotion-focused hope >



당신의 꿈을 이뤄주는 피트니스가 온다!

아름답고 탄력있는 몸매를 원하시나요?
당신이 항상 원하던 라인이 사는 몸매!

LIFETIME fitness만의 바디라인프로그램 (BodyLine)으로
당신이 원하는 '바로 그 몸매'를 이룰 수 있습니다!



몸뺑 탈출을 도와줄 피트니스가 온다!

세상에는 맛집도 많고, 먹을것도 많다.
수많은 음식의 유혹들 사이에서 '내 몸매는 괜찮아'라고
생각하십니까? 당신이 모르는 사이, 살들은 당신 인생의 line을
넘으려하고 있습니다.

LIFETIME fitness만의 바디라인프로그램 (BodyLine)으로
당신의 라인을 지키세요!

LIFETIME fitness와 함께 여러분의 희망을 이루세요

< Prevention-focused hope >

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