14

The Persuasive Power of Regulatory Fit

ANGELA Y. LEE
Northwestern University

E. TORY HIGGINS
Columbia University

Consumers are goal-driven. How they process information and make decisions is driven by their consumption goals (e.g., I need a cup of coffee) as well as by their self-regulatory goals, which service more fundamental needs. Research in the last decade has shown how people's fundamental needs for nurturance and security have influenced their judgment and behavior. According to regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 1998), people with a salient nurturance need regulate their attention, perception, attitudes, and behaviors toward approaching gains and avoiding nongains (i.e., they are promotion-oriented), whereas those with a salient security need regulate their attention, perception, attitudes, and behaviors toward avoiding losses and approaching nonlosses (i.e., they are prevention-oriented). And it is not unusual for the same consumption goal to be motivated by different regulatory focus orientations. For instance, as seen in some television advertising campaigns promoting Starbucks coffee, Glen and Stacy may both be loyal customers of Starbucks. However, Glen is drinking his DoubleShot espresso "to bring on the day," whereas Stacy is enjoying her Frappuccino moment to help ward off demanding bosses and colleagues.

Consumers' regulatory focus plays an important role in determining the kind of products and services they consume; their promotion or prevention orientation also influences the persuasiveness of advertising messages or the attractiveness of product offerings they encounter. This chapter reviews the recent developments in regulatory focus research and provides an overview of the persuasive nature of

regulatory fit on consumer judgment and choice. It should be noted that regulatory fit effects are not restricted to the case of regulatory focus orientations (e.g., Avnet & Higgins, 2003; Bianco, Higgins, & Klem, 2003). For example, regulatory mode theory distinguishes between locomotion and assessment as two different components of self-regulation (Kruglanski et al., 2000). Whereas the nature of locomotion as a regulatory orientation involves the initiating of movement away from a current state to a new state, the nature of assessment as a regulatory orientation is to measure, interpret, and evaluate. And people experience regulatory fit when they make decisions in a way that matches their locomotion or assessment orientation (Avnet & Higgins, 2003). However, the bulk of the regulatory fit research relating to consumer behavior has examined fit effects involving promotion and prevention orientations; thus, this will be the emphasis for this chapter.

In the next sections, we will first define regulatory fit and then review the different ways in which people may experience regulatory fit and the effects of regulatory fit on attitudes and behaviors. We then propose different mechanisms that may underlie the effects of regulatory fit on persuasion and identify potential boundary conditions. We close by discussing broader implications of regulatory fit on people's welfare and suggesting directions for future research.

WHAT IS REGULATORY FIT?

People are guided by their regulatory orientations in their goal pursuit activities. These guiding orientations may be chronically stable and reflect differences in cultural orientation (Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000) or childhood experience with caretakers (Higgins, 1998); or they may be situationally primed, as when people are prompted to think about their hopes and aspirations versus their duties and obligations (Freitas & Higgins, 2002), or about their financial investments in terms of stocks versus bonds (Zhou & Pham, 2004), or when their independent versus interdependent self-construal is made salient (Aaker & Lee, 2001). Regardless of whether their regulatory orientation is chronically accessible or temporarily primed, individuals with a promotion orientation strive toward growth and accomplishments. They focus on achieving their hopes and aspirations and are sensitive to the presence and absence of positive outcomes. They pursue their goals with eagerness, preferring strategies that ensure matches to their desired end-state; that is, they aim to approach gains and avoid nongains. On the other hand, individuals with a prevention orientation strive toward safety and security. They focus on fulfilling their duties and responsibilities and are sensitive to the presence and absence of negative outcomes. They pursue their goals with vigilance, preferring strategies that ensure against mismatches to their desired end-states; that is, they aim to avoid losses and approach nonlosses. Because of the different needs the two regulatory orientations service, certain goal-pursuit strategies may sustain one orientation (resulting in fit) but disrupt the other (resulting in nonfit). For example, an eager strategy that focuses on means of advancement (to attain gains and avoid nongains) would represent a regulatory fit for those with a promotion orientation but a regulatory nonfit for those with a prevention orientation. In contrast, a vigilant strategy that focuses on means of being careful (to avoid losses and maintain

nonlosses) would represent a regulatory fit for those with a prevention orientation but a nonfit for those with a promotion orientation.

When people experience regulatory fit, their goal pursuit activity feels right. They become more strongly engaged in whatever they are doing and develop more intense reactions toward the goal enabling (or disabling) objects (Higgins, 2000, 2005). In the context of consumer judgment and choice, regulatory fit has been shown to impact attitudes, willingness to pay, and brand choice.

THE PERSUASIVENESS OF REGULATORY FIT

People experience regulatory fit when they process information or make trade-off decisions in a manner that aligns with their regulatory orientation. Decisions made under fit (vs. nonfit) conditions feel more right (Camacho, Higgins, & Luger, 2003), and the processing of fit (vs. nonfit) information is more fluent (Lee & Aaker, 2004; Labroo & Lee, 2006). When people's general reaction to a persuasive message or product is positive, the subjective experiences of feeling right and fluent processing can increase their willingness to pay, enhance the favorability of their attitudes, and facilitate their brand choice.

A review of the literature suggests there are at least three ways in which regulatory fit may be experienced. First, people may experience regulatory fit when they employ goal pursuit strategies that fit (vs. disrupt) their regulatory orientation. For example, Pham and Avnet (2004) showed that, when making a decision, individuals with a promotion orientation tend to rely more on their affect whereas those with a prevention orientation tend to rely more on reasons. Based on these findings, Avnet and Higgins (2006) asked research participants to choose between two brands of correction fluids either based on feelings or on reasons, and then indicate how much they would be willing to pay for the correction fluid. They found that promotion-oriented participants who evaluated the correction fluids based on their feelings were willing to pay 50% more for the product of their choice as compared to those who evaluated the correction fluids based on reasons; and prevention-oriented participants were willing to pay almost 40% more for the product when they evaluated the products based on reasons than on their feelings.

In another series of studies, research participants were asked to choose between a coffee mug and a pen by thinking what they would gain if they were to make each choice (i.e., an eager strategy favored by those with a promotion orientation) or what they would lose if they were not to make each choice (i.e., a vigilant strategy favored by those with a prevention orientation; Higgins, Idson, Freitas, Spiegel, & Molden, 2003). The results showed that promotion-oriented participants who focused on potential gains were willing to pay much more for the mug than were those who focused on potential losses. In contrast, prevention-oriented participants who focused on potential losses were willing to pay much more for the mug than were those who focused on potential gains.

A second way in which regulatory fit may be effected is when people process information that fits (vs. disrupts) their regulatory orientation. For example, in a study that examined the effectiveness of antismoking campaigns among teenagers, Zhao and Pechmann (2007) first measured the chronic regulatory orientation of

1200 ninth-graders and then exposed them to one of four different 30-second anti-smoking advertising messages. Each ad depicted an indoor gathering of a group of young college students and showed either a smoker lighting up a cigarette or a smoker putting out a cigarette. More specifically, one ad emphasized gains and showed people giving approving looks to a smoker after he put out the cigarette, and the smoker looking happy. Another ad emphasized nongains and showed people stop talking and smiling as the smoker lit up a cigarette, and the smoker looked sad when that happened. A third ad emphasized losses and showed people getting angry and giving disapproving looks to the smoker, and the smoker looking nervous; and the fourth ad emphasized nonlosses and showed people stop giving disapproving looks to the smoker after he put out the cigarette, and the smoker looked relieved. The authors found that promotion-oriented teenagers were most persuaded by the gain-framed ad to not smoke, whereas prevention-oriented teenagers were most persuaded by the loss-framed ad. These results showing that a gain (vs. nongain) frame is more persuasive for those with a promotion orientation and a loss (vs. nonloss) frame is more persuasive for those with a prevention orientation are consistent with the fit notion that striving toward gains involves more eagerness than does avoiding nongains, and avoiding losses involves more vigilance than does striving toward nonlosses (Idson, Liberman, & Higgins, 2000).

Keller (2006) demonstrated the regulatory fit effect by first priming participants with either a promotion or a prevention orientation, and then presenting them with a message advocating the use of sunscreen that highlights either an eager strategy that involves self-efficacy appraisals (e.g., how easy it is to use sunscreen) or a vigilant strategy that involves response efficacy appraisals (e.g., how effective the sunscreen is). Consistent with the regulatory fit hypothesis, promotion-oriented participants were more persuaded by the self-efficacy than by the response efficacy message whereas prevention-oriented participants were more persuaded by the response efficacy than by the self-efficacy message. Along similar lines, Cesario, Grant, and Higgins presented participants with a message advocating an after-school program (Cesario et al., 2004, Study 2). The program was described in either eager terms (e.g., advance, support, succeed) or vigilant terms (e.g., secure, prevent, failing). Their results showed that participants with a chronic promotion orientation were more persuaded by the eager (vs. vigilant) message, and the reverse was observed among those with a chronic prevention orientation. In another study, Werth and Förster (2007, Study 1) found that promotion-oriented participants were more persuaded by product information that emphasized comfort versus safety, and the reverse was observed among the prevention-oriented participants (see also Wang & Lee, 2006).

Similar effects of regulatory fit on persuasion are documented elsewhere. In striving for growth and accomplishments, individuals with a promotion orientation are more likely to represent their desired end-states at a more abstract, global level to ensure against missing any hits. And in striving for safety and security, those with a prevention orientation are more likely to represent their desired end-states at a more concrete, local level to avoid any mishaps. Thus, information construed at an abstract, high level should fit with a promotion orientation, whereas information construed at a concrete, low level should fit with a prevention orientation. Indeed,

Semin, Higgins, Gil de Montes, Estourget, & Valencia (Study 3, 2005) showed that promotion-oriented individuals were more persuaded by messages constructed with abstract predicates involving adjectives, whereas prevention-oriented individuals were more persuaded by messages constructed with concrete predicates involving action verbs. Keller, Lee, and Sternthal (2006) also found that advertising messages that address high-level desirability concerns lead to more favorable attitudes among those with a promotion orientation, whereas messages that address low-level feasibility concerns lead to more favorable attitudes among those with a prevention orientation. Conversely, Förster and Higgins (2005) manipulated whether participants first processed information globally or locally prior to choosing between two objects. More specifically, participants were presented with a series of global letters that were each made up of rows of closely spaced local letters, and were asked to identify either the global letter or the local letter. Then participants were instructed to choose between a mug and a pen by thinking about either what they would gain by choosing the pen or the mug (an eager strategy) or what they would lose by not choosing the pen or the mug (a vigilant strategy). The authors found that those who had just performed the global task assigned a higher price to their chosen object if they used eager means to make their decision rather than vigilant means, whereas the reverse was true for those who had just completed the local task. These results offer convergent evidence for a fit relationship between one's regulatory orientation and construal level. For an excellent discussion of high- versus low-level processing, please see the chapter on construal level theory by Eyal, Liberman, and Trope in this volume.

More recent research showed that regulatory fit may also be created by nonverbal behaviors of the source of the message. More specifically, Cesario and Higgins (2007) showed that gestures, speech rate, and body position and movements that convey a sense of eagerness versus vigilance during message delivery resulted in a more effective message for recipients with distinct regulatory orientations. Recipients' "feeling right" experience was thought to underlie the regulatory fit effect on message effectiveness.

Finally, regulatory fit may be operationalized within a message that renders the message more persuasive, independent of the regulatory orientation of the message recipients (e.g., Cesario et al., 2004, Study 1; Lee & Aaker, 2004). The idea is that a message advocating an end-state may be represented in the recipient's mind as a servicing promotion or prevention goal, and fit (vs. nonfit) is effected when the message prompts the recipient also to think about fulfilling that goal using either eager or vigilant means. For example, Lee and Aaker (2004) presented participants with advertising messages that address either promotion concerns that emphasized growth (e.g., get energized) or prevention concerns that emphasized safety (e.g., prevent clogged arteries). Their results showed that promotion messages are more persuasive when they focus on gains (e.g., get energized) than on nongains (e.g., miss out on getting energized); and prevention messages are more persuasive when they focus on losses (e.g., miss out on preventing clogged arteries) than on nonlosses (e.g., prevent clogged arteries).

Thus, the evidence is clear that fit messages can be more persuasive than nonfit messages. It is important to note that these regulatory fit effects observed

are reflective of a self-regulatory goal system that is distinct from a simple approach-avoidance system. In particular, regulatory focus theory distinguishes between two separate approach-avoidance systems: a promotion system that approaches gains and avoids nongains, and a prevention system that approaches nonlosses and avoids losses (see Higgins, 1997). This distinction was highlighted by Labroo and Lee (2006), who tested whether the fit effect conforms to the hedonic principles of approach and avoidance (i.e., greater persuasion occurs when there is a valence match of positive vs. negative outcomes), or to the regulatory orientations of promotion and prevention (i.e., greater persuasion occurs when there is a regulatory focus match of promotion vs. prevention). In their study, they first presented participants with either a gain-framed (e.g., "feeling confident") or a loss-framed (e.g., "feeling humiliated") prime, and then asked them to evaluate a nongain-framed (e.g., "not feeling great") or a nonloss-framed ("freedom from embarrassment") target. If the fit effect relies on a valence match of approach and avoidance, then gain-primed participants should evaluate the nonloss target more favorably than the nongain target, and loss-primed participants should evaluate the nongain target more favorably than the nonloss target. On the other hand, if the fit effect relies on a regulatory focus match of promotion and prevention, then gain-primed participants should evaluate the nongain target more favorably than the nonloss target, and the reverse should hold for the loss-primed participants. The results were consistent with a regulatory focus match and provided clear evidence that the regulatory fit effect on persuasion is *not* a hedonic matching effect.

What is also becoming clear is that the two distinct regulatory focus orientations represent two complex motivational systems. Table 14.1 provides a summary of what we currently know about these two complex systems. The implication is that any combination of the elements within each system can potentially be used to create fit and in turn affect judgment and choice. Further, each of these elements may potentially moderate established regulatory fit effects by introducing nonfit. Empirical evidence of these effects awaits future research.

MECHANISMS UNDERLYING THE REGULATORY FIT EFFECTS

What drives the regulatory fit effect on persuasion?

Regulatory fit makes people "feel right" about what they are doing and makes them engage more strongly in what they are doing (Higgins, 2000). These two factors are obviously related given that engaging strongly and fluently in what one is doing is likely to make what one is doing "feel right"; and "feeling right" about what one is doing is likely to make one engage more strongly in it. Although related in these ways, it is still possible for each of these factors to have its own separate influence on persuasion. How these two factors may have separate, conjoined, or interactive effects on persuasion is a central question for future research on regulatory fit and persuasion. Given that any answer to this question would be mostly speculative at this point, we will not address these issues in this chapter, except to recognize that regulatory fit can influence persuasion through either the "feeling

TABLE 14.1 Potential Matches within the Promotion and Prevention Systems

Promotion System	Prevention System	Source
Nurturance Needs	Security Needs	Higgins, 1997
Ideal Self-Standards	Ought Self-Standards	Higgins, 1997
Independent Self-Construal	Interdependent Self-Construal	Lee et al., 2000
Cheerfulness/Dejection	Calmness/Agitation	Higgins, 1997
Gain/Nongain Incentives	Loss/Nonloss Incentives	Higgins, 1997
Eagerness Strategies	Vigilance Strategies	Higgins et al., 2003
Abstract, Global Construal	Concrete, Local Construal	Semin et al., 2005 Förster & Higgins, 2005
Distant Temporal Distance	Proximal Temporal Distance	Pennington & Roese, 2003
Creative	Analytical	Crowe & Higgins, 1997 Friedman & Förster, 2001 Zhu & Meyers-Levy, 2007
Affect-Based Processing	Reason-Based Processing	Pham & Avnet, 2004 Avnet & Higgins, 2006
Change, Attainment	Stability, Maintenance	Liberman et al., 1999 Brodscholl et al., 2007
Speed, Quantity	Accuracy, Quality	Förster et al., 2003
Additive Counterfactuals	Subtractive Counterfactuals	Roese et al., 1999

right" or engagement strength mechanism and that the psychological processes underlying the effects of these two mechanisms need not be the same. Because most previous research testing regulatory fit effects on persuasion have been more concerned with the "feeling right" experience than with engagement strength per se, we will emphasize here the regulatory fit factor of "feeling right."

When people experience regulatory fit, the goal pursuit activity "feels right." One way that this "feeling right" experience could influence persuasion is that it informs the individual about something, just as other kinds of feelings can be informative (Schwarz, 1990; Schwarz & Clore, 1983, 1988; for a review see Pham, this volume). In this way, for example, "feeling right" while processing a message could persuade people to eat more fruits and vegetables (Cesario et al., 2004), make an after-school program more worthy of supporting (Camacho et al., 2003), or render certain products more attractive (Higgins et al., 2003; Labroo & Lee, 2006).

There are different ways in which "feeling right" could be informative and potentially influence persuasion. For example, the message recipients may "feel right" about the goal advocated in the message (e.g., implementing an after-school program), resulting in more favorable attitudes toward the goal. Alternatively, they may "feel right" about the message and consider the arguments put forth to be more persuasive, which in turn leads to more favorable attitudes toward the target. It is also possible that message recipients "feel right" about their reaction to the message, in which case, their reaction will be intensified—positive attitudes

become more positive, and negative attitudes become more negative (e.g., Cesario et al., 2004).

That greater persuasion can come from people "feeling right" about their reactions receives some support from the research by Higgins and colleagues (2003). In particular, their results showed that the higher value of some chosen products for those who "feel right" from regulatory fit is *not* due to some simple inference process, such as the following: (1) My decision to choose this product must be good if I feel right about it; and (2) if I made a good decision in choosing this product, then the product must be good. Higgins and colleagues (2003) report that regulatory fit does not make people believe that their decision-making process was better or more effective. Rather, regulatory fit seems to involve a general state of feeling right that can create value by intensifying people's evaluative response to something. Further, the effect of regulatory fit can go beyond the task at hand to influence subsequent evaluations. In other words, the influence of regulatory fit on value creation and persuasion can be an incidental, ambient effect and need not be task-specific or integral to the target. Higgins and colleagues (2003, Study 4) demonstrated this ambient effect of regulatory fit by asking people to first think about their hopes and aspirations (a promotion induction) or their duties and obligations (a prevention induction), and then write down either five eagerness-related (a promotion strategy) or five vigilance-related (a prevention strategy) action plans. Later, all participants were asked to rate how good-natured some dogs are in an allegedly unrelated study. Participants who experienced fit (i.e., those who generated eagerness action plans to fulfill hopes and aspirations and those who generated vigilance action plans to fulfill duties and obligations) rated the dogs as more good-natured than did those who experienced nonfit (i.e., those who generated vigilance action plans to fulfill hopes and aspirations and those who generated eagerness action plans to fulfill duties and obligations).

The ambient effect of regulatory fit was also demonstrated by Hong and Lee (2008, Study 4). Participants in their study were first presented with a message about getting tested for hepatitis C and were asked to evaluate the persuasiveness of the message. Then the regulatory fit manipulation was introduced, followed by participants indicating their intention to get tested for hepatitis C. Because regulatory fit was manipulated using an induction that was unrelated to hepatitis C *after* participants read the message, results showing no difference in participants' evaluation of the message prior to the fit manipulation but greater intention to get tested for hepatitis C among those who experienced fit (vs. nonfit) provide further support for the notion that regulatory fit creates value through intensifying reactions rather than through inferential reasoning involving message persuasiveness.

If the regulatory fit effect on persuasion can occur because people attribute their "feeling right" experience from regulatory fit to feeling right about their response to something else, then alerting people to the true source of their feeling should eliminate the regulatory fit effect. To test this, Cesario and colleagues (2004, Study 3) directed half of their participants' attention to the correct source of their feeling right experience by telling them that "sometimes thinking about using the right means to attain each goal can make people 'feel right' about their goal pursuit" and asking them to indicate the extent to which they "felt right." As

predicted, this manipulation eliminated the regulatory fit effect on judgment. The effects of "feeling right" are in many ways similar to those observed when people experience positive mood (e.g., Schwarz & Clore, 1983; see also the review on mood by Pham in this volume). However, the "feeling right" experience is distinct from hedonic positive mood. In particular, Cesario and colleagues (2004, Studies 3 and 4) found that regulatory fit and hedonic positive mood each had significant independent effects on attitudes; the effect of regulatory fit remained significant when participants' mood was controlled for in the model.

The findings from these studies suggest that people "feel right" when they adopt strategies that fit with their regulatory orientations. When people are not aware of the source of their "feeling right" experience, this fit experience can intensify their evaluative response to something else. However, "feeling right" is not the only mechanism through which regulatory fit can influence judgment. Regulatory fit also enhances engagement strength, as demonstrated by Hong and Lee (2008), who showed that participants experiencing regulatory fit relative to a control group were able to squeeze a handgrip longer and solve more anagrams, and had more willpower to resist temptation. In contrast, participants who experienced regulatory nonfit showed weakened engagement strength relative to those in the control group.

It is notable that the mechanism of increased engagement strength from regulatory fit could also contribute to people's evaluative response being intensified (see Higgins, 2006). That is, both "feeling right" from fit and increased engagement strength from fit can contribute to the same regulatory fit effect—intensified reactions to something. Further, both mechanisms can also contribute to another regulatory fit effect documented in the literature—increased fluency of message processing (Labroo & Lee, 2006; Lee & Aaker, 2004). Such a fluency effect of fit was first documented in Lee and Aaker's (2004) research, where regulatory fit was operationalized not by a match between people's regulatory orientation and their decision-making strategies, but by a match between different elements of the message. Lee and Aaker (2004) reported that a fit message is easier to process than a nonfit message. More specifically, participants read either a promotion or prevention message advocating the benefits of Welch's grape juice, and the message was framed either positively or negatively. Some participants subsequently completed a perceptual identification task whereby they were asked to identify target words presented very briefly on the computer screen (50 ms). The results showed that participants could more readily identify words that came from fit versus nonfit messages (Study 4b). In another study, participants indicated that the fit messages were easier to process and to understand than nonfit messages. Mediation analysis shows that the regulatory fit effect on persuasion was mediated by participants' perceived processing fluency of the message (Study 4a). Interestingly, participants were also asked to generate reasons why one would drink Welch's grape juice. Although participants exposed to the fit messages generated more support reasons than did those exposed to the nonfit messages, the number of reasons did not mediate the regulatory fit effect observed (Study 5). Once again, these findings suggest that regulatory fit effects on persuasion are not driven by inferential reasoning but by mechanisms—the "feeling right" experience and increased engagement

strength—that can intensify people's reactions. (For a more thorough discussion of the effects of processing fluency and retrieval ease, please see the chapter on ease by Schwarz, Song, & Xu in this volume.)

Considering that the regulatory fit experience involves both "feeling right" and engagement strength, the question of how these two constructs relate naturally follows. It is possible that fluent processing of the fit message may be the result of stronger engagement from fit, and fluent processing of the fit message may offer a "feel right" experience for the message recipient that can lead to more favorable attitudes. Further investigations of the relationship between engagement, processing fluency, and "feeling right" within the nomological network of regulatory fit effects should provide a fruitful avenue of future research.

BOUNDARY CONDITIONS OF THE REGULATORY FIT EFFECT

Most the studies reviewed so far suggest that regulatory fit has a positive effect on value generation and persuasion. However, it is important to note that there are at least two conditions under which a more positive outcome may not be observed. The first boundary condition involves the valence of people's response. When people experience regulatory fit, they "feel right" about the goal-pursuit activity and become more strongly engaged in the activity. However, this heightened engagement or "feeling right" experience does not necessarily lead to more favorable evaluations. As discussed earlier, regulatory fit intensifies, rather than enhances, reactions. Thus, if people's evaluation of a target is positive, their assessment becomes more positive when they experience regulatory fit; but if their evaluation is negative, their assessment becomes more negative when they experience regulatory fit.

To illustrate, Cesario and colleagues (2004, Study 4) first induced the experience of regulatory fit or nonfit among their participants, and then presented them with a proposal for an after-school program. Participants were asked to evaluate the proposal and also to list their thoughts about the possible consequences of the proposal. The results showed that when participants felt right about their positive thoughts, they developed more favorable attitudes toward the proposal, whereas when they felt right about their negative thoughts, they developed *less* favorable attitudes toward the proposal. Further evidence that regulatory fit intensifies reaction is presented by Aaker and Lee (2001, Study 3). In their study, the authors manipulated argument strength and regulatory fit in an advertising message about tennis racquets. Regulatory fit was operationalized by priming participants' independent or interdependent self-construal, which has been shown to be associated with distinct regulatory orientation (Lee et al., 2000), and by making salient either eager means (to win the tennis tournament) or vigilant means (to not lose the tennis tournament) of goal pursuit in the message. They found that participants evaluated the tennis racquet more positively when they were presented with the fit than the nonfit message, but only when the arguments were strong. Participants evaluated the tennis racquet in the fit (vs. nonfit) message less positively when the arguments were weak.

A second boundary condition of the regulatory fit effect on persuasion involves motivation. Lee and Aaker (2004) showed that the regulatory fit effect on participants' evaluations of the product was *not* mediated by the number of support reasons they generated; rather, the effect was mediated by processing fluency. Thus, the regulatory fit effect seems to reflect people relying on their "it feels right" experience rather than on the strength of their arguments for judgment and decision making. When they are alerted to the source of this feeling, the regulatory fit effect disappears (Cesario et al., 2004), presumably because people are motivated to make good, unbiased decisions. The implication is that when people are explicitly motivated to process information by way of reasoned action, the regulatory fit experience has less influence over their judgment. Of course, this moderating effect of involvement should depend on whether the regulatory fit effect on persuasion derives from the "feeling right" mechanism or from the strength of engagement mechanism. A bias from "feeling right" may be more easily controlled when people are motivated, but a bias from engagement strength may be more difficult to detect and in turn control.

Recent research by Wang and Lee (2006) further illustrates the importance of taking into account people's initial motivation to process information in studying the regulatory fit effect on persuasion. The authors manipulated involvement in their studies by telling participants that they were part of either a small select group of respondents whose opinion really mattered (high involvement) or a large sample of respondents whose evaluation would be averaged for consideration (low involvement). Their results showed that the regulatory fit effect on information search, judgment, and choice was observed only in the low-involvement condition. When participants were motivated to process information, the regulatory fit effect disappeared. Hong and Lee (2008) also showed that people who experienced regulatory fit were more likely to get tested for hepatitis C, but only when they did not perceive themselves to be at high risk. Participants who thought they were vulnerable to the disease were equally likely to get tested in the fit and nonfit conditions. One explanation for such findings is that high personal or issue involvement creates high engagement strength by itself, without the need for regulatory fit. The implication is that only when engagement strength is relatively low or moderate, as when personal or issue involvement is not high, will regulatory fit effects from increasing engagement strength (or from "feeling right") be observed.

In summary, the regulatory fit effect is observed when people are not highly motivated to process information (Hong & Lee, 2008; Wang & Lee, 2006), or when they are not aware of the source of their "feeling right" experience (Cesario et al., 2004). Further, the regulatory fit experience—both "feeling right" and engagement strength—is better conceptualized as a magnifier than as an enhancer of attitudes. Generally speaking, when people experience regulatory fit, their reactions are intensified—positive reactions become more positive, and negative reactions become more negative.

Finally, it should be noted that regulatory nonfit, which is an interesting psychological experience in its own right, has been shown to dampen willingness to pay (e.g., Avnet & Higgins, 2006), foster less favorable attitudes (e.g., Aaker & Lee, 2001; Lee & Aaker, 2004), and lower probability of brand choice (e.g., Wang

& Lee, 2006). However, the general feeling that something does not feel right (feels wrong, is problematic) may signal that more scrutiny is necessary. And this increased scrutiny may lead to more positive response if the initial incongruity can be resolved and/or if systematic or elaborated processing reveals that a product's attributes or a message's arguments are of high quality. In this light, regulatory nonfit effects on persuasion also merit more research attention in the future.

BEYOND PERSUASION

The effects of regulatory fit and nonfit are not limited to persuasion effects (see Higgins, 2005). As just one example, recent research by Hong and Lee (2008) suggests that the experience of regulatory fit strengthens self-regulation (which underlies successful goal attainment), whereas the experience of regulatory nonfit undermines self-regulation. In a series of studies, they examined the effects of regulatory fit and nonfit using a variety of self-regulation tasks. The results showed that participants who experienced regulatory fit could squeeze a handgrip longer and were more likely to get tested for hepatitis relative to those who experienced regulatory nonfit. Further, relative to a control group, participants who experienced regulatory fit were less likely to yield to temptation; in particular, these participants were more likely to choose an apple versus a chocolate bar for a snack relative to a control group, whereas those who experienced regulatory nonfit were more likely to choose the chocolate bar versus the apple relative to the control.

There is also evidence that the "feeling right" experience from regulatory fit can increase one's well-being because it involves experiencing oneself as behaving in a suitable and appropriate manner. This experience of responding in the right way to objects and events in the world has been shown to produce beneficial effects on physical health, as evidenced from a daily diary study on emotional well-being that using strategies that fit one's dominant regulatory focus when coping with life hassles is beneficial (Grant, Higgins, Baer, & Bolger, 2005).

These findings have important implications for people's welfare in general, and consumers in particular, especially in the health domain. First, regulatory fit may enhance subjective well-being by invoking an "it feels right" experience. The regulatory fit effect on persuasion may enhance compliance with various health-related initiatives by rendering the arguments more valid or the advocated cause more worthy of pursuit. Further, the "feeling right" experience and increased engagement strength may promote confidence and heighten motivation, both of which may serve to buffer the anticipatory anxiety that so often prevents people from taking diagnostic tests or discourages them from seeking treatment for different medical conditions. Finally, the regulatory fit effect on self-regulation may help tackle the many health-related problems such as obesity, substance abuse, and impulsive behaviors that require significant self-control.

CONCLUSION

Consumers are goal-driven. Regardless of whether their needs for nurturance and security are chronically accessible or temporarily made salient situationally,

consumers' regulatory focus orientation has a significant influence on how they process information, evaluate products, and make brand choice decisions. In this chapter, we have limited our review of the literature to the persuasion effects of regulatory fit from regulatory focus (see also Cesario, Higgins, & Scholer, 2007). We have offered only a glimpse into the role of two complex motivational systems in regulatory fit and the resultant effects of fit on persuasion. There is a lot more to learn about the effects of regulatory fit and nonfit.

For example, we have identified two possible mediators of the regulatory fit effect on persuasion: the "feeling right" experience and engagement strength. What are the conditions under which each of these mediators may account for the regulatory fit effect? Do these constructs interact, and if so, how? We have also identified three ways in which regulatory fit may be operationalized: (1) when individuals use goal-pursuit strategies that match (vs. disrupt) their regulatory orientations, (2) when individuals process information that makes salient certain goal pursuit strategies that match (vs. disrupt) their regulatory orientation, and (3) when elements within a message are represented as fit (vs. nonfit) in the recipients' mind. Do different mechanisms underlie the regulatory fit effect depending on how regulatory fit is operationalized? We have discussed regulatory fit as exerting an ambient, incidental effect versus an integral, task-specific effect on judgment. Are these effects different or similar? Many questions remain unanswered, and more are yet to surface.

REFERENCES

Aaker, J. L., & Lee, A. Y. (2001). I seek pleasures and we avoid pains: The role of self regulatory goals in information processing and persuasion. *Journal of Consumer Research, 28*, 33–49.

Avnet, T., & Higgins, E. T. (2003). Locomotion, assessment, and regulatory fit: Value transfer from "how" to "what." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 39*, 525–530.

Avnet, T., & Higgins, E. T. (2006). How regulatory fit affects value in consumer choices and opinions. *Journal of Marketing Research, 43*, 1–10.

Bianco, A. T., Higgins, E. T., & Klem, A. (2003). How "fun/importance" fit impacts performance: Relating implicit theories to instructions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29*, 1091–1103.

Brodscholl, J. C., Kober, H., & Higgins, E. T. (2007). Strategies of self-regulation in goal attainment versus goal maintenance. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 37*, 628–648.

Camacho, C. J., Higgins, E. T., & Luger, L. (2003). Moral value transfer from regulatory fit: What feels right is right and what feels wrong is wrong. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 84*, 498–510.

Cesario, J., Grant, H., & Higgins, E. T. (2004). Regulatory fit and persuasion: Transfer from "feeling right." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 86*, 388–404.

Cesario, J., & Higgins, E. T. (2007). How nonverbal behaviors can increase persuasion by making message recipients "feel right." Manuscript submitted for publication.

Cesario, J., Higgins, E. T., & Scholer, A. A. (2007). Regulatory fit and persuasion: Basic principles and remaining questions. Unpublished manuscript, Michigan State University.

Crowe, E., & Higgins, E. T. (1997). Regulatory focus and strategic inclinations: Promotion and prevention in decision-making. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 69*, 117–132.

Förster, J., & Higgins, E. T. (2005). How global vs. local perception fits regulatory focus. *Psychological Science, 16*, 631–636.

Förster, J., Higgins, E. T., & Bianco, A. T. (2003). Speed/accuracy decisions in task performance: Built-in trade-off or separate strategic concerns? *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 90*, 148–164.

Freitas, A. L., & Higgins, E. T. (2002). Enjoying goal-directed actions: The role of regulatory fit. *Psychological Science, 13*, 1–6.

Friedman, R. S., & Förster, J. (2001). The effects of promotion and prevention cues on creativity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 81*, 1001–1013.

Grant, H., Higgins, E. T., Baer, A., & Bolger, N. (2005). Coping style and regulatory fit: Emotional ups and downs in daily life. Unpublished manuscript, Columbia University.

Higgins, E. T. (1997). Beyond pleasure and pain. *American Psychologist, 52*, 1280–1300.

Higgins, E. T. (1998). Promotion and prevention: Regulatory focus as a motivational principle. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 30, pp. 1–46). New York: Academic Press.

Higgins, E. T. (2000). Making a good decision: Value from fit. *American Psychologist, 55*, 1217–1230.

Higgins, E. T. (2005). Value from regulatory fit. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 14*, 208–213.

Higgins, E. T. (2006). Value from hedonic experience *and* engagement. *Psychological Review, 113*, 439–460.

Higgins, E. T., Idson, L. C., Freitas, A. L., Spiegel, S., & Molden, D. C. (2003). Transfer of value from fit. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*, 1140–1153.

Hong, J., & Lee, A. Y. (2008). Be fit and be strong: Mastering self-regulation with regulatory fit. *Journal of Consumer Research, 36*, 682–695.

Idson, L. C., Liberman, N., & Higgins, E. T. (2000). Distinguishing gains from nonlosses and losses from nongains: A regulatory focus perspective on hedonic intensity. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 36*, 252–274.

Keller, A. P. (2006). Regulatory focus and efficacy of health messages. *Journal of Consumer Research, 33*, 109–114.

Keller, P., Lee, A. Y., & Sternthal, B. (2006). Construing fit to judgment: The effects of regulatory focus and level of construal. Working paper, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University.

Kruglanski, A. W., Thompson, E. P., Higgins, E. T., Atash, M. N., Pierro, A., Shah, J. Y., & Spiegel, S. (2000). To "do the right thing" or to "just do it": Locomotion and assessment as distinct self-regulatory imperatives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*, 793–815.

Labroo, A., & Lee, A. Y. (2006). Between two brands: A goal fluency account of brand evaluation. *Journal of Marketing Research, 18*, 374–385.

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*, 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*, 1122–1134.

Liberman, N., Idson, L. C., Camacho, C. J., & Higgins, E. T. (1999). Promotion and prevention choices between stability and change. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 77*, 1135–1145.

Pennington, G. L., & Roese, N. J. (2003). Regulatory focus and temporal perspective. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 39*, 563–576.

Pham, M., & Avnet, T. (2004). Ideals and oughts and the reliance on affect versus substance in persuasion. *Journal of Consumer Research, 30*, 503–518.

Roese, N. J., Hur, T., & Pennington, G. (1999). Counterfactual thinking and regulatory focus: Implications for action versus inaction and sufficiency versus necessity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 77*, 1109–1120.

Schwarz, N. (1990). Feelings as information: Informational and motivational functions of affective states. In E. T. Higgins & R. M. Sorrentino (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation and cognition: Foundations of social behavior* (Vol. 2, pp. 527–561). New York: Guilford Press.

Schwarz, N., & Clore, G. L. (1983). Mood, misattribution, and judgments of well-being: Informative and directive functions of affective states. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 45*, 513–523.

Schwarz, N., & Clore, G. L. (1988). How do I feel about it? The informative function of affective states. In K. Fiedler and J. Forgas (Eds.), *Affect, cognition and social behavior* (pp. 44–62). Toronto: C. J. Hogrefe.

Semin, G. R., Higgins, E. T., Gil de Montes, L., Estourget, Y., & Valencia, J. (2005). Linguistic signatures of regulatory focus: How abstraction fits promotion more than prevention. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 89*, 36–45

Wang, J., & Lee, A. Y. (2006). The role of regulatory focus in preference construction. *Journal of Marketing Research, 43*, 28–38.

Werth, L., and Förster, J. (2007). The effects of regulatory focus on braking speed. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 44*, 671–687.

Zhao, G., & Pechmann, C. (in press). The impact of regulatory focus on adolescents' response to antismoking advertising campaigns. *Journal of Marketing Research*.

Zhou, R., & Pham, M. (2004). Promotion and prevention across mental accounts: When financial products dictate consumers' investment goals. *Journal of Consumer Research, 31*, 125–135.

Zhu, R., & Meyers-Levy, J. (2007). Exploring the cognitive mechanism that underlies regulatory focus effects. *Journal of Consumer Research, 34*, 89–96.