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## Self-Congruency as a Cue in Different Advertising-Processing Contexts

*This study examines how self-congruent advertising messages affect ad and brand evaluations in different contexts. Within the Elaboration Likelihood Model, this study proposes that an ad message's congruency with subjects' self-concepts serves as a peripheral cue when subjects do not have the motivation to process information. Experiment 1 shows that subjects rely on messages' self-congruency in forming brand and ad attitudes in positive affective states, in which motivation to engage in message elaboration is low, whereas subjects in negative affective states do not. Moreover, in line with past evidence that the lack of motivation to process induced by positive affective states can be overridden by factors enhancing individuals' motivation, Experiment 2 demonstrates that when a product is high involving, as opposed to low involving, attitudes toward the product are less likely to be developed based on the messages' self-congruency, even when subjects' affective states encourage a peripheral mode of processing.*

Bombarded with a large quantity and variety of information every minute, individuals learn to process incoming information in selective ways. Self-concepts, being well-developed and salient cognitive structures, function readily as important reference frames when individuals engage in selective information processing (Markus, 1999). However, selective processing based on existing knowledge structures has been shown to be more likely to occur when an individual's motivation or ability to process information is constrained (Markus & Zajonc, 1985). In a similar vein, selectivity based on self-knowledge is more likely to happen when individuals' motivation to process information is low or when their cognitive capacity is limited. Part of the information load that people carry is directly related to the products available on the market. Therefore, selective processing on the basis of

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self-knowledge also applies to consumers who are exposed to a tremendous variety of product information.

A brand, like a person, can have a personality or image, which is one important component of brand equity (Biel, 1993). It is well recognized that people consume not only for utilitarian reasons but also for symbolic motivations (e.g., Belk, 1988). Arguing that consumption is one way to define self-images and fulfill self-completion, consumer researchers have generally demonstrated that to the extent that a product's image is congruent with an individual's ideal self-concept, the product is more likely to be appealing to the individual (Sirgy, 1982).

Advertising is a crucial force in creating brand image; some consumers are attracted to a product simply because of the personality that the advertisement portrays. Based on the consensually shared brand personality that is developed by advertising campaigns, consumers are able to decide which products to possess and which products to shun to appropriately express to others who they are and what their values or lifestyles are (Batra, Lehmann, & Singh, 1993). Furthermore, an individual's self-knowledge has been shown to interfere with his or her processing of advertising messages. When an advertisement contains a user portrayal that is congruent with the way that a viewer perceives himself or herself to be, it is more likely to generate more positive affective responses and more favorable product evaluations (e.g., Chang, 2000b; Hong & Zinkhan, 1995).

This study argues that the congruency effect between self-concepts and ad messages is not robust. Drawing on the elaboration likelihood model (ELM), this study suggests that the extent to which an individual is motivated to process ad messages will moderate the influence of the self-ad congruency effect. In situations in which individuals are motivated to engage in the diligent processing of product information, they are less likely to rely mainly on self-congruency to evaluate the ad or the product. In contrast, in situations in which individuals are less motivated to process ad messages, a peripheral-route mode of processing is more likely to occur. Under these conditions, self-congruency, being a readily accessible and salient cue (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), can render directional influence on individuals' responses to ads and products.

Two moderators that may affect how individuals process ad messages are explored under this research paradigm. The first moderator that is examined in this study is context-primed affective states. Past studies have shown that an individual's affective state can affect his or her processing strategies (see Schwarz & Bless, 1991; Schwarz, Bless, & Bohner, 1991). Positive affective states have been found to discourage message elaboration (e.g., see Bless, Bohner, Schwarz, & Strack, 1990) or schema-based processing (Bless, Clore,

et al., 1996; Bless, Schwarz, & Wieland, 1996). Negative affective states, on the other hand, increase individuals' motivation to process information in analytical ways (e.g., see Bless et al., 1990). Therefore, this study proposes that when individuals are in positive affective states and when motivation to process is low, self-congruency functions as a salient peripheral cue and determines how individuals evaluate the ads and brands. In contrast, when individuals are in negative affective states, their motivation to process product-related information increases, and thus, they do not simply rely on self-congruency to develop their evaluations of the ads and products. Experiment 1 tests the influence of context-primed affective states.

The second moderator concerns product involvement. Products vary in terms of the involvement that consumers are engaged in when formulating product evaluations. When a product is high involving, as opposed to low involving, individuals are more motivated to process product-related information (Laczniak, Kempf, & Muehling, 1999). For high-involving products, the motivation evoked by product involvement may override the lack of motivation induced by positive affective states and encourage individuals to elaborate on messages and engage in attribute-based information processing. Therefore, this study theorizes that even in positive affective states, when individuals' motivation to process is limited, a high-involving product motivates individuals to develop a more informed attitude, and as a result, self-congruency itself does not render significant influence, as it does for a low-involving product. Experiment 2 examines how product involvement may moderate the impact of self-congruency for individuals in different affective states.

## Self-Congruency Effects in Advertising Research

Continuing attention has been paid to the role that self-concept plays in consumer behaviors. It has been suggested that consumption is symbolic and that individuals maintain or enhance their self-concepts through consumption (Sentis & Markus, 1986). Therefore, to increase self-satisfaction, individuals approach products with personalities that are congruent with their ideal self-images and shun products whose perceived personalities are discrepant from what they desire. It has been well documented that brands with self-congruent images are preferred to brands with self-incongruent images (see Sirgy, 1982, for a review).

Self-congruency effects are not limited to product perception. The same concept has been applied to understanding how consumers process advertising messages and form their brand evaluations. Indeed, past studies have established that ad attitudes influence brand attitudes (e.g., MacKenzie,

Lutz, & Belch, 1986; Mitchell & Olson, 1981). Extending self-congruency effects to understand how consumers respond to advertising messages is thus reasonable, especially when product image is mainly developed via advertising campaigns. Consistent with the literature exploring the relationship between self-concepts and brand evaluations, studies exploring self-congruency effects in ad-processing contexts have shown that consumers' attitudes toward advertisements are also determined by the interactions of their self-perceptions and the brand personality depicted in ads. To the extent that they are congruent, consumers' responses to the ads and the advertised brand are more likely to be positive.

However, self-concept is not a unidimensional construct; rather, self-concept is said to contain multiple dimensions (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Therefore, testing self-congruency effects involves replications across different self-dimensions. Two types of self-concept dimensions have been better explored in advertising literature, namely, personality traits (e.g., Hong & Zinkhan, 1995; LaBarbera, Weingard, & Yorkston, 1998) and values (e.g., Leach & Liu, 1998; Wang & Mowen, 1997).

Regardless of what type of self-concept dimension is explored, consistent support for self-congruency effects has been documented. For example, Hong and Zinkhan (1995) have shown that advertising messages that are congruent with consumers' orientations on the dimension of introversion and extroversion, a personality trait, generate more favorable ad attitudes and brand evaluations (see also Chang, 2000b; LaBarbera et al., 1998). Chang (2000a) has indicated that female consumers respond more positively to ads depicting female users than those depicting male users. The matching effects of self-monitoring, also a personality trait, and ad appeals on ad and product evaluations have also been explored (e.g., DeBono & Packer, 1991; Snyder & DeBono, 1985).

In terms of values, Wang and Mowen (1997) first determined individuals' self-ratings on their orientations toward separateness and connectedness and then examined the participants' responses to ads with either a separate ad appeal or a connected ad appeal. Their findings have demonstrated that self-congruent messages generate more positive ad evaluations. Leach and Liu (1998) have shown that allocentric individuals favor in-group ad appeals, whereas idiocentric individuals prefer out-group ad appeals. Similarly, allocentric individuals have been demonstrated to favor social AIDS health campaign messages to functional AIDS health campaign messages, whereas idiocentric individuals rated functional AIDS health campaign messages more positively than social AIDS health campaign messages (Dutta, 1999).

In summary, research has generally supported the conclusion that ad effects vary depending on an ad processor's self-concepts, and the interaction

holds when different self-dimensions are examined. However, it is important to note that past research appears to assume that the congruency between ads and the self exerts influence on ad and brand assessments in all conditions. A closer examination shows that possible moderators of self-congruency effects have not been explored. Therefore, it is important to examine factors that may moderate the influence of self-congruency.

### Self-Congruency as an Affect-Laden Construct

Individuals' knowledge structures of the self, or self-concepts, are much more complex than their knowledge structures of other people or other objects (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). In addition, Fiske and Taylor (1991) have theorized that knowledge of the self is affect laden. Higgins (1987) has presented the self-discrepancy theory to suggest that self-incongruency has emotional consequences. When discrepancy is experienced, more negative emotions are evoked. Although Higgins's self-discrepancy theory mainly concerns the emotional consequences resulting from the discrepancy between a real self and an ideal self, Fiske and Taylor as well as Higgins have suggested that processing information that concerns one's self-concept or activates one's knowledge of the self tends to have emotional consequences. Indeed, Chang (2000b) has shown that self-congruent ad messages can generate more positive emotional responses than self-incongruent ad messages. In other words, seeing oneself represented in an ad is not only a cognitive process but also involves emotional responses. To the extent that the congruency is high, more positive emotional responses will be evoked.

Most important, Fiske and Taylor (1991) have argued, is that generalizations about oneself are different from generalizations about other people and objects in that they are more chronically accessible. It is reasonable to propose that when an ad message with user portrayals is processed, ad processors can readily perceive any discrepancy between the product users and themselves. Therefore, this study suggests that self-congruency serves as affect-laden information when processing ad messages. However, only in situations in which individuals do not have the motivation to adopt an analytical processing mode will self-congruency be a salient cue for developing ad and brand attitudes. Under these conditions, high self-congruency generates more positive evaluations, whereas low self-congruency induces more negative evaluations. In contrast, in situations in which individuals are more involved and motivated to elaborate on information, they are less likely to rely on peripheral cues to evaluate ads and brands, and thus self-congruency, regardless of its salience and accessibility, will not exert significant influence.

## Dual-Mode Processing

Dual-mode processing was introduced in the late 1970s and developed through the early 1980s (Chaiken, 1980, 1987; Petty, 1977; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981) and since then has profoundly influenced researchers' understandings and conceptualizations of how attitudes and social cognition are formed. In general, dual-mode processing suggests that individuals can adopt either an analytical mode of processing or a more limited mode of processing. Among the dual-mode models, the one most widely applied in advertising research appears to be the ELM proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1981). The ELM theorizes that when motivation is high and cognitive capacity allows, individuals will be oriented toward employing an analytical processing strategy that is based on the elaboration of a message's advocated position and argument. However, although individuals are willing to form an informed attitude toward an object, sometimes they are constrained by their cognitive capacities or motivations to do so. As a result, they rely on peripheral cues for attitude formation, and the importance of argument scrutiny thus decreases in contexts within which individuals do not have the capacity or motivation to process information in great detail.

Building on the ELM, this study argues that one important variable, affective states, influences individuals' motivation to process information and thus affects the extent to which they will rely on self-congruency cues for processing advertising messages. How affective states will affect individuals' processing motivation and lead individuals to adopt different processing modes is discussed in the next section.

## Affective States<sup>1</sup> and Processing Strategies

It has long been documented in social psychology literature (and is now generally accepted as a given) that how a person feels may influence how he or she thinks (see Schwarz, 1990; Schwarz & Bless, 1991; Schwarz et al., 1991). Feeling good or bad may either impair or facilitate a person's information processing in regard to attention to detail. It has generally been established that when people are in positive<sup>2</sup> affective states, they are more likely to ignore details and rely on heuristics, whereas when they are in negative affective states, they will engage in detail-oriented and step-by-step analytical processing (e.g., Bless et al., 1990).

One important explanation has been provided to explain why individuals in different affective states process information in different modes. The explanation is motivational in nature, and it suggests that individuals'

affective states signal different information to themselves (see Schwarz, 1990; Schwarz & Bless, 1991; and Schwarz et al., 1991, for discussions). Happy individuals perceive their environments to be unthreatening and are less likely to be alert. In addition, to maintain their positive affective states, they are less likely to engage in extensive thinking, which may ruin their affective states. Therefore, people in positive affective states will try to reduce the complexity of information to simplify their judgments and decision making (Isen, Means, Patrick, & Nowicki, 1982). By contrast, an individual's negative affective state sends a message to the individual suggesting that the current situation is distressing and requires close attention. Thus, individuals in negative affective states are more likely to engage in causal reasoning and to elaborate on messages (e.g., Bless et al., 1990).

One line of empirical research has adopted the ELM to explore the impacts of different affective states (i.e., positive and negative affective states) on information-processing modes (e.g., Bless et al., 1990; Kuykendall & Keating, 1990). Within the theoretical framework of the ELM, Petty, Gleicher, and Baker (1991) have reasoned that affect can influence the extent of information-processing activity. It has also been empirically demonstrated that positive affect during message exposure decreases systematic processing, whereas negative affect increases systematic processing, and as a result, the importance of argument scrutiny varies when individuals are in different affective states (Kuykendall & Keating, 1990).

As reviewed earlier, it has been proposed that positive affective states reduce an individual's motivation to process information, whereas negative affective states increase one's motivation to systematically process information. Bless et al. (1990) have examined the influence of affective states on argument scrutiny and have found support for the motivation explanation. They have demonstrated that sad individuals are influenced by persuasive messages only if the arguments delivered are strong, whereas happy individuals are equally influenced by strong and weak arguments. However, when happy individuals are instructed to pay attention to the content of the message, the superior effect of strong arguments is also demonstrated, suggesting that happy individuals require motivation to elaborate on messages. Based on what has been documented in past literature, this study hypothesizes that self-congruency only affects individuals' responses to ads and brands when they are in a positive affective state, when the motivation to elaborate on messages is low.

Experiment 1 was conducted to test Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2. As discussed earlier, self-concept is multidimensional (Markus & Wurf, 1987), and users in ads can be depicted with a wide variety of profiles. Specifically,



this experiment explored one dimension of self-concepts, that is, the individualism/collectivism self-values. It was expected that individuals who perceived themselves differently on this dimension would respond in different ways when ad messages portrayed either individualist or collectivist values. In other words, there would be a significant interaction between ad differences (i.e., ads portraying either individualist or collectivist values) and individual differences (i.e., individuals holding either individualist values or collectivist values), with self-congruent ads generating more positive effects than self-incongruent ads.

*Hypothesis 1:* When individuals are in positive affective states, self-congruency affects their evaluations of ads, whereas when individuals are in negative affective states, self-congruency does not affect their evaluations of ads.

*Hypothesis 2:* When individuals are in positive affective states, self-congruency affects their evaluations of brands, whereas when individuals are in negative affective states, self-congruency does not affect their evaluations of brands.

### *Experiment 1*

#### Design

This study was a three-factor experimental design. The two manipulated factors were ad difference (two ad user profiles: individualist vs. collectivist) and affective states (two levels: positive vs. negative). The third variable was individual difference along the dimension of individualism/collectivism self-values. Participants were categorized into different groups based on their self-ratings on Yamaguchi's (1994) Collectivism Scale.

#### Stimuli

Stimuli ads were created by professionals working at the Ogilvy and Mather Ad Agency in Taipei, Taiwan. Professional copywriters and creative people wrote ad messages to fit different value portrayals and created visuals to fit message descriptions. The product used in this study was instant coffee. Visuals and layouts were similar for ads with different user portrayals to reduce any possible confounding effects. Important product attributes that were generated from a pretest were also listed in the ads. All of the ads used in this study were pretested to ensure that message manipulation would be successful. To improve external validity, the ads were inserted between two real filler ads.

### Participants

A total of 214 participants was recruited for this study. Participants were recruited from the campus of a university in a metropolitan area in Taiwan<sup>3</sup> and were paid for their participation. Of the participants, 52% were male. All of the participants were randomly assigned to one of the four affective states by ad difference conditions.

### Procedure

At the beginning of the experiment, participants were told that a professor from the psychology department was collecting happy and sad life events for use in experiments, and the participants were asked to do the professor a favor by writing down a real-life event that they had experienced. This mood-induction procedure<sup>4</sup> was adopted from Strack, Schwarz, and Gschneidinger (1985).

The second part of the experiment began with the participants' ratings of their affective states. Then, the second coordinator of the experiment told them that the primary study was designed to examine the effects of various ad formats or techniques on consumers' information processing. This story was designed to discourage them from guessing the purposes of the study. The participants then read a filler ad, which was followed by the stimuli ad and another filler ad. After reading the ads, the participants rated their perceptions of the user images in the ads, after which they rated their ad attitudes and product attitudes. Finally, they rated themselves on Yamaguchi's (1994) Collectivism Scale as well as other self-related scales,<sup>5</sup> including Snyder's (1974) Self-Monitoring Scale and Bem's (1974) Sex Role Inventory. After the participants finished the tasks, the coordinator provided a short debriefing.

### Independent Variables

*Affective states.* As described in the Procedure section, a mood-induction procedure was adopted from Strack et al. (1985). At the outset of the experimental session, participants were informed that before the study was conducted, a professor from the psychology department was collecting life stories to develop stimuli for psychology experiments. Participants were asked to help out by providing their personal stories, and all of the participants complied with the request. Detailed instructions were handed out. In the written instructions, the respondents were informed that each of them had been selected to provide a different type of life event and that he or she happened to

be assigned to provide a happy or sad story. They were then presented with a story describing a happy or sad event and were instructed to look back and describe a happy or sad life event that they had experienced.

A total of 19 items was selected from the University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology (UWIST) Mood Adjective Checklist (Matthews, Jones, & Chamberlain, 1990) to measure the participants' affective states. Participants rated their agreement with each item on a 19-item, 7-point Likert-type scale. Factor analyses with varimax rotation generated three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. The first factor comprised 8 items and was labeled Positive Emotions.<sup>6</sup> The second factor, Sad Emotions, consisted of 7 items. The third factor, Calmness, contained 2 items. The remaining 2 items with split loading were dropped from further analyses. The scale was treated as if it had three subscales. Positive Emotions contained mainly items that represented happiness, whereas Negative Emotions was composed primarily of items depicting sadness. Because this study examined only the two primary prototypical affective states—happy versus sad—manipulation checks were conducted only on Positive Emotions and Negative Emotions. Cronbach's reliability alphas for Positive Emotions and Negative Emotions were satisfactory at .92 and .86, respectively. Ratings on items in the two subscales were summed and averaged. An ANOVA indicated that participants in a positive affective state had significantly higher ratings on the Positive Emotions subscale,  $F(1, 143) = 78.37, p < .01, M_{\text{positive}} = 4.79 (SD = .13), M_{\text{negative}} = 3.11 (SD = .14)$ , than did those in a negative affective state. On the other hand, participants in a negative affective state condition generated significantly higher ratings on the Negative Emotions subscale,  $F(1, 143) = 21.54, p < .01, M_{\text{positive}} = 3.17 (SD = .11), M_{\text{negative}} = 3.92 (SD = .12)$ , than did those in a positive affective state. Therefore, the results of the manipulation checks were satisfactory.

*Individual difference: Self-ratings on individualism / collectivism.* Participants rated their agreement regarding whether it was ideal to have the characteristics listed in Yamaguchi's (1994) 10-item Collectivism Scale. Factor analyses with varimax rotation generated two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 (see Appendix A). The first factor, Sacrifice for the Benefit of the Group, comprised 7 items. The second factor consisted of 3 items and was labeled Blind Compliance. The first factor captured the positive side of collectivism, and the second factor captured the negative side of collectivism. Due to social desirability, participants might not provide true self-ratings on the negative side of collectivism. Therefore, only the subscale pertaining to the positive side of collectivism was employed to categorize participants. Cronbach's reliability alpha for this subscale was satisfactory at .77.

Subsequently, the respondents were categorized into one of three groups (i.e., individualist, collectivist, or aschematic) by adopting an approach similar to Markus's (1999) approach. Participants who rated themselves at one extreme of Yamaguchi's scale were termed *collectivists* ( $n = 78$ ) and accounted for 36.4% of the study participants. Participants who rated themselves on the opposite end of the scale were termed *individualists* ( $n = 66$ ) and accounted for 30.8% of the study participants. Respondents who rated themselves in the middle range on the scale were termed *aschematics* ( $n = 70$ ) and accounted for 32.7% of the study participants. The three groups differed significantly on how they rated their self-values on the Collectivism Scale,  $F(2, 214) = 332.71$ ,  $M_{\text{individualist}} = 4.14$  ( $SD = .08$ ),  $M_{\text{aschematic}} = 4.99$  ( $SD = .08$ ),  $M_{\text{collectivist}} = 5.88$  ( $SD = .08$ ). Because aschematics did not strongly hold individualist or collectivist self-views, neither ads portraying individualist users nor those portraying collectivist users were congruent with their self-images. Therefore, the data for aschematics were not analyzed.

*Ad difference: Product user image on individualism/collectivism.* One of the important ways to develop product image is through the depiction of product users (Biel, 1993). Therefore, this study created product images through the description of users in the ads. Participants were exposed to ads containing messages delineating ad characters with either individualist or collectivist values. The Collectivism Scale was employed as a manipulation check measure. Participants rated how accurately they believed each item described the product users on a 7-point basis.

Factor analyses with varimax rotation generated the same two factors as when the scale was used to measure participants' self-concepts. Therefore, to be consistent, only the items for the positive side of collectivism were employed for manipulation checks for ad difference and for categorizing the participants. Cronbach's reliability alpha for this was satisfactory at .86. An ANOVA indicated that the users portrayed in the collectivist value ad received significantly higher ratings on collectivism than did the ad characters depicted in the individualist value ad,  $F(1, 143) = 9.12$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $M_{\text{collectivist}} = 5.22$  ( $SD = .09$ ),  $M_{\text{individualist}} = 4.85$  ( $SD = .09$ ). Therefore, the result of the manipulation check was satisfactory.

#### Dependent Measures

*Ad attitude.* An eight-item, 7-point Likert-type scale was used to measure participants' attitudes toward the ads. The following four items were adopted from Madden, Allen, and Twible (1988): "interesting," "good," "likable," and "pleasant." The other four items were adopted from Beltramini's (1982)

Advertising Believability Scale. Those four items were “believable,” “convincing,” “reasonable,” and “authentic.” Cronbach’s reliability alpha for ad attitude was deemed satisfactory at .89.

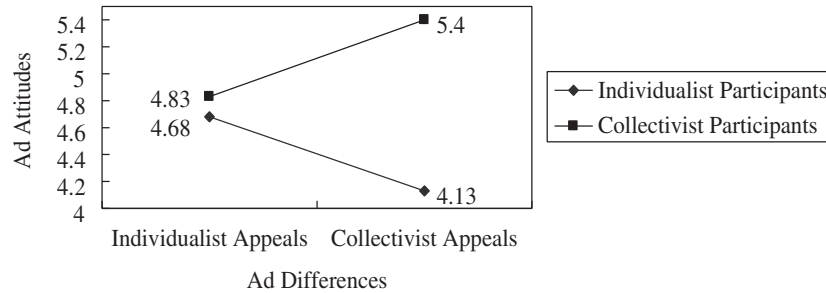
*Brand attitude.* Brand attitudes were measured with a 7-point Likert-type scale. The following five items were adopted from Mitchell and Olson (1981) and Holbrook and Batra (1987): “good,” “like,” “pleasant,” “positive,” and “high quality.” Cronbach’s reliability alpha was deemed satisfactory at .90.

### *Results and Analyses*

Because females are more likely to be collectivists than are males (e.g., Markus & Oyserman, 1988), gender was run as a covariate. ANCOVAs revealed that the three-way interactions both on ad attitude,  $F(1, 143) = 3.93$ ,  $p = .05$ , and brand attitude,  $F(1, 143) = 6.61$ ,  $p = .01$ , were significant. The significant interactions qualified further lower level analyses.

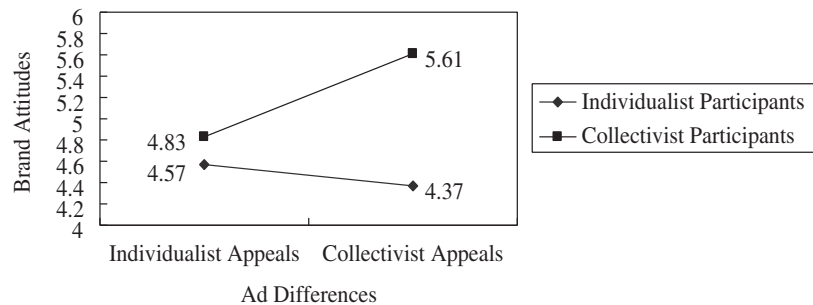
Hypothesis 1 proposes that when individuals are in positive affective states, self-congruency affects their evaluations of ads, whereas when individuals are in negative affective states, self-congruency does not affect their evaluations of ads. When responses of participants in the positive affective state condition were analyzed, a significant two-way interaction between ad difference and individual difference on ad attitude emerged,  $F(1, 78) = 5.91$ ,  $p = .02$ , with the individualist respondents generating more favorable responses when exposed to the individualist ad appeal as opposed to the collectivist ad appeal ( $M_{\text{individualist ad}} = 4.68$ ,  $SD = .23$ ;  $M_{\text{collectivist ad}} = 4.13$ ,  $SD = .25$ ) (see Figure 1) and collectivist respondents generating less favorable responses when exposed to the individualist ad appeal when compared with the collectivist ad appeal ( $M_{\text{individualist ad}} = 4.83$ ,  $SD = .22$ ;  $M_{\text{collectivist ad}} = 5.40$ ,  $SD = .19$ ). On the other hand, when responses of the participants in the negative affective mood condition were analyzed, no significant interaction between ad difference and individual difference emerged,  $F(1, 64) = 0.06$ ,  $p = .82$ . This indicates that individuals in negative affective moods did not generate different responses when ad appeals were either congruent or incongruent with their self-concepts. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is fully supported.

Hypothesis 2 suggests that when consumers are in positive affective states, self-congruency affects their evaluations of brands, whereas when consumers are in negative affective states, self-congruency does not affect their evaluations of brands. When responses of the participants in the positive affective state condition were analyzed, a significant two-way interaction between ad difference and individual difference on brand attitude



**Figure 1. The Interaction of Ad Differences (Ads Portraying Individualist Values vs. Collectivist Values) and Individual Differences (Participants Holding Individualist Values vs. Collectivist Values) on Ad Attitudes**

Note. The two-way interaction between ad differences and individual differences on ad attitudes (7-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) is significant,  $F(1, 78) = 5.91, p = .02$ .



**Figure 2. The Interaction of Ad Differences (Ads Portraying Individualist Values vs. Collectivist Values) and Individual Differences (Participants Holding Individualist Values vs. Collectivist Values) on Brand Attitudes**

Note. The two-way interaction between ad differences and individual differences on brand attitudes (7-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) is significant,  $F(1, 78) = 4.74, p = .03$ .

emerged,  $F(1, 78) = 4.74, p = .03$ , with the individualist participants generating more favorable brand attitudes when exposed to the individualist ad appeal as opposed to the collectivist ad appeal ( $M_{\text{individualist ad}} = 4.57, SD = .23$ ;  $M_{\text{collectivist ad}} = 4.37, SD = .25$ ) (see Figure 2) and the collectivist participants generating less favorable brand attitudes when exposed to the individualist ad appeal in comparison with the collectivist ad appeal ( $M_{\text{individualist ad}} = 4.83, SD = .22$ ;  $M_{\text{collectivist ad}} = 5.61, SD = .19$ ). On the other hand, when responses of participants in the negative affective state condition were analyzed, no

significant interaction between ad difference and individual difference was found,  $F(1, 64) = 2.04, p = .16$ . Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is fully supported.

## Discussion

As expected, the interaction between ad differences and individual differences appeared when participants were in positive affective states but not when participants were in negative affective states. The findings are in line with the assumption in emotion literature that individuals' processing strategies are tuned to their motivation levels in different affective states. Positive affective states are accompanied by an avoidance to elaborate on messages, whereas negative affective states are accompanied by a readiness to process messages in an analytical way. Due to these differences, self-congruency exerted determining effects on ad and brand evaluations in the former context, but it did not generate significant influence in the latter context. In summary, affective states appear to be important factors in moderating individuals' processing strategies and altering the degree to which individuals rely on self-congruency information for making judgments.

The processes via which ad attitudes can mediate ad perceivers' brand attitudes have been well established in past literature (MacKenzie et al., 1986). Consistent with this research, similar patterns for participants' responses to the ads and brands appear in the present study. This study shows that when individuals are in positive affective states, self-congruency functions as a peripheral cue in determining individuals' ad attitudes and brand evaluations.

It is also interesting to note that the results listed in Table 1 reveal that the collectivist participants, in general, expressed significantly more positive responses toward the ads and brands than did their counterparts, that is, the individualist participants. There are, of course, many potential explanations for this difference. For example, it is likely that collectivist individuals are more sensitive to the demands of researchers and are less likely to express negative feelings toward either the ads or the brands presented to them. However, there is another, more intriguing possibility, which is that individuals with different value orientations may have different levels of motivation to improve their self-images or that they may view the environment from different perspectives and, as a consequence, respond differently to ads as well as to brands.

Past studies have pointed out the importance of product involvement in understanding how consumers process advertising messages (e.g., Lacziak et al., 1999). However, Experiment 1 tested only a single product—instant coffee—that was assumed to be relatively less involving than other products,

Table 1  
*Multivariate and Univariate Results for the Effects of Independent Variables on Ad and Brand Attitudes for Experiment 1*

Variable	Ad Attitude		Brand Attitude	
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender	3.42	.07	0.17	.69
Affective states (M)	0.04	.84	2.09	.15
Ad difference (A)	0.87	.35	1.92	.17
Individual difference (I)	22.71	.01	19.97	.01
M × A	0.77	.38	0.03	.88
M × I	0.27	.61	0.03	.88
A × I	2.02	.16	0.28	.60
M × A × I	3.93	.05	6.61	.01

such as computers and CD players. Evidence in persuasion literature has shown that altering the processing goals can override the influence of affective states (Bless et al., 1990). Accordingly, it seems plausible to assume that when a product is more involving, individuals may be more motivated to elaborate on advertising messages and that the enhanced motivation may override the influence of the individuals' affective states. Therefore, a replication involving products evoking different levels of involvement seemed warranted.

### Product Involvement and Processing Strategies

A consumer's involvement can determine the manner in which he or she processes and responds to advertising messages (e.g., Lacziak et al., 1999; Petty & Cacioppo, 1983; Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983). For example, studies categorizing individuals into high and low advertising message involvement groups have shown that high-involved individuals generate more product cognition, and their product-related cognition plays an influential role when they formulate their brand attitudes (e.g., Muehling & Lacziak, 1988). On the other hand, low-involved individuals rely primarily on their ad attitudes for brand attitude formation.

In advertising research specifically testing the ELM, high-involved consumers have been shown to elaborate more on ad messages with strong arguments, as opposed to weak arguments, and to generate more positive thoughts toward ad messages with strong arguments, whereas low-involved consumers do not respond differently to ad messages that have different argument qualities (Andrews & Shimp, 1990; Petty & Cacioppo, 1983; Petty



et al., 1983). Low-involved individuals form ad attitudes and brand evaluations primarily through relying on peripheral cues such as music (Park & Young, 1986), voice characteristics (Gelinas-Chebat & Chebat, 1992), source characteristics (Andrews & Shimp, 1990; Petty & Cacioppo, 1983; Petty et al., 1983), and argument numbers (Petty & Cacioppo, 1983).

Although most studies that have examined processing strategy differences manipulate situational factors to induce different levels of advertising message involvement (e.g., Celsi & Olson, 1988; Petty et al., 1983), Laczniak et al. (1999) have demonstrated that a consumer's level of advertising message involvement is not only caused by situational manipulation but also is the result of a consumer's preexisting product class involvement (see also Muehling & Laczniak, 1992). It is not difficult to understand that high-involving products, generally involving more potential risks as opposed to low-involving products, increase individuals' motivation to process advertising messages. In a similar vein, social psychologists have proposed that selective processing is less likely to occur when the cost of being wrong is increased (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Therefore, product involvement appears to be an important variable to consider when examining how individuals respond to advertising messages.

Most important, Bless et al. (1990) have shown that a mood-induced lack of motivation to engage in analytical processing can be overridden by other attempts to motivate individuals to focus on the quality of the messages. In that study, participants were explicitly instructed to attend to the quality of the arguments. As a result, participants in positive moods, who lack motivation to elaborate on messages unless explicitly instructed to do so, are persuaded to a greater extent by strong arguments than by weak arguments. Therefore, the current study argues that product involvement may override the impact of mood states on message elaboration. Specifically, this article hypothesizes that even in positive affective states, when the motivation to engage in analytical processing is limited, individuals are motivated to process ad messages for high-involving products. Therefore, their attitudes toward high-involving products are not developed simply on the basis of self-congruency. In contrast, in positive affective states when product involvement is low, consumers' ad and brand evaluations are affected by self-congruency.

Specifically, this experiment explores product involvement levels and affective states as well as one of the other dimensions of self-concepts, that is, introversion and extroversion. When individuals are in positive affective states and the advertised product is low involving, individuals who perceive themselves differently on this dimension respond in different ways when ad messages portray either introvert or extrovert images. In other words, in this

condition, there is a significant interaction between ad differences (i.e., ads portraying introverts or extroverts) and individual differences (i.e., introvert or extrovert personality traits), with self-congruent ads generating more positive effects than self-incongruent ads. In contrast, when individuals are in negative states or when the advertised product is high involving, there is no significant interaction between ad differences and individual differences.

*Hypothesis 3:* When individuals are in positive affective states and an ad is for a low-involving product, self-congruency affects their evaluations of the ad. However, when individuals are in positive affective states and an ad is for a high-involving product, self-congruency does not affect their evaluations of the ad. By contrast, when individuals are in negative moods, self-congruency does not affect their ad evaluations either when high-involving or low-involving products are advertised.

*Hypothesis 4:* When individuals are in positive affective states and an ad is for a low-involving product, self-congruency affects their evaluations of the brand. However, when individuals are in positive affective states and an ad is for a high-involving product, self-congruency does not affect their evaluations of the brand. By contrast, when individuals are in negative moods, self-congruency does not affect their brand evaluations either when high-involving or low-involving products are advertised.

## *Experiment 2*

### Design

This study was a four-factor mixed experimental design. Three manipulated factors were Ad Difference (two levels: introvert user profile vs. extrovert user profile), Affective State (two levels: positive vs. negative), and Product Involvement, which was a within-subject factor. Given that Experiment 2 explored individual differences along the dimension of introversion/extroversion, participants were categorized into different groups based on their self-ratings on Eysenck, Eysenck, and Barrett's (1985) Introvert/Extrovert Scale.

### Stimuli

Stimuli ads were created by professionals working at the Ogilvy and Mather Ad Agency in Taipei, Taiwan. Professional copywriters wrote ad messages to fit different personality portrayals, and creative people provided visuals to fit message descriptions. Visuals and layouts were similar for ads with introvert user portrayals and ads with extrovert user portrayals to reduce any possible confounding effects. Important product attributes that were generated from

a pretest were also listed in ads for both high-involving and low-involving products. To improve external validity, the stimuli ads were inserted among three real filler ads.

### Participants

A total of 396 participants was recruited for this study. Participants were recruited from the campus of a university in a metropolitan area in Taiwan and were paid for their participation. They were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions.

### Procedures

The procedures for Experiment 2 were similar to those used in Experiment 1. The same mood-induction procedure was adopted for this experiment. After the mood-induction procedure, the participants rated themselves on a scale measuring their affective states. Then, the second coordinator told the participants that the primary study was concerned with how ad formats or techniques affect consumers' information processing. The participants then read a stimuli package containing five ads, that is, two stimuli ads dispersed among three filler ads. The order of the two stimuli ads was rotated to counterbalance any possible order effect. After reading the ads, the participants rated their perceptions of the user images in the ads, after which they rated their ad attitudes and product attitudes. In addition, they rated themselves on Eysenck et al.'s (1985) Introvert/Extrovert Scale as well as other distracter scales. Because neither the order effect—on ad attitudes,  $F(1, 260) = 3.00, p = .08$ , and on brand attitudes,  $F(1, 260) = 0.84, p = .36$ —nor the interaction between order and product involvement was significant—on ad attitudes,  $F(1, 260) = 2.10, p = .15$ , and on brand attitudes,  $F(1, 260) = 0.98, p = .32$ —participants' responses to the two ads with different presentation orders were collapsed for the analyses.

### Independent Variables

*Product involvement.* A pretest was conducted to identify products at high- and low-involvement levels. Different individuals ( $N = 20$ ) from the same university were asked which product, among those that they had purchased before or were planning to purchase in the future, were high involving or low involving. Definitions of high-involving versus low-involving products were provided. Coding of the participants' open-ended responses indicated that

computers were mentioned most (65%) for the high-involving category, followed by mobile phones (55%) and stereo systems (35%). On the other hand, drinks were mentioned most (75%) for the low-involving category, followed by pens (50%) and notebooks (30%). Therefore, laptop computers and bottled water were chosen to fulfill the high-involving and low-involving product difference conditions, respectively. The 10 items for product involvement were adopted from Laurent and Kapferer (1985).<sup>7</sup> A repeated measure ANOVA indicated that the involvement difference for the two products was significant,  $F(1, 260) = 8.01, p < .01, M_{\text{computer}} = 4.76 (SD = .08), M_{\text{water}} = 4.51 (SD = .09)$ . Cronbach's reliability alphas were .90 for laptop computers and .89 for bottled water.

*Affective states.* The same mood-induction procedure as in Experiment 1 was employed in this experiment, and the same 19-item, 7-point Likert-type scale derived from the UWIST Mood Adjective Checklist was applied for manipulation checks. Similarly, factor analyses with varimax rotation generated three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, which corresponded well to the three factors generated by Experiment 1. The first factor, Positive Emotions, included 9 items.<sup>8</sup> The second factor, Negative Emotions, consisted of 5 items. The third factor, Calmness, contained 3 items. A total of 3 items with split loading was dropped from further analyses. The scale was treated as if it had three subscales. Similar to Experiment 1, only the Positive Emotions and Negative Emotions factors were analyzed for manipulation checks. Cronbach's reliability alphas for Positive Emotions and Negative Emotions were satisfactory at .88 and .81, respectively. Ratings on items for the two factors were summed and averaged. An ANOVA indicated that participants in the positive affective state condition had significantly higher ratings on Positive Emotions,  $F(1, 261) = 98.18, p < .01, M_{\text{positive}} = 4.84 (SD = .11), M_{\text{negative}} = 3.38 (SD = .10)$ , than did the participants in the negative affective state condition. On the other hand, participants in the negative affective state condition generated significantly higher ratings on Negative Emotions,  $F(1, 261) = 40.68, p < .01, M_{\text{positive}} = 2.74 (SD = .11), M_{\text{negative}} = 3.73 (SD = .11)$ , than did the participants in the positive affective state condition. Therefore, the results of the manipulation checks were satisfactory.

*Ad difference: Product user image on introversion and extroversion.* Participants were exposed to ads containing messages delineating ad characters with either introvert characteristics or extrovert characteristics. Eysenck et al.'s (1985) Introvert/Extrovert Scale was applied to measure participants' perceptions of the product users portrayed in the ads, with lower ratings

indicating more of the introversion personality trait and higher ratings indicating more of the extroversion personality trait (see Appendix B). This scale was composed of 12 items. Cronbach's reliability alpha estimates for the scale were satisfactory at .96 for laptop computers and .98 for bottled water. A repeated measures ANOVA indicated that users portrayed in the introvert ads did generate significantly lower ratings than did product users in the extrovert ads,  $F(1, 259) = 450.82, p < .01, M_{\text{introvert}} = 3.13 (SD = .08), M_{\text{extrovert}} = 5.42 (SD = .08)$ . Further analyses indicated that users portrayed in the introvert ad for laptop computers had significantly lower ratings on the scale than did users portrayed in the extrovert ad,  $F(1, 259) = 133.68, p < .01, M_{\text{introvert}} = 3.43 (SD = .10), M_{\text{extrovert}} = 5.10 (SD = .10)$ . Similarly, users portrayed in the introvert ad for bottled water had significantly lower ratings on the scale than did users portrayed in the extrovert ad,  $F(1, 259) = 576.72, p < .01, M_{\text{introvert}} = 2.82 (SD = .09), M_{\text{extrovert}} = 5.75 (SD = .09)$ .

*Individual difference: Self-image on introversion/extroversion.* The participants rated themselves on Eysenck et al.'s (1985) 12-item, 7-point Likert-type Introvert/Extrovert Scale. Cronbach's reliability alpha was judged satisfactory at .82. The participants' responses to the 12 items were combined and averaged. Those who rated themselves at one extreme of this scale were termed *introverts* ( $n = 128$ ) and represented 32.7% of the participants. Those who rated themselves on the opposite end of the scale were termed *extroverts* ( $n = 132$ ) and represented 33.7% of the participants. The participants who rated themselves in the middle range of the scale were termed *aschematics* ( $n = 132$ ) and represented 33.7% of the participants. The ANOVA analyses showed that the three groups differed significantly in their self-ratings on the scale,  $F(2, 392) = 777.15, p = .01, M_{\text{introvert}} = 3.88 (SD = .04), M_{\text{aschematic}} = 4.82 (SD = .03), M_{\text{extrovert}} = 5.82 (SD = .03)$ . Following Markus (1999), however, only those participants who rated themselves on the two extremes of the scale were included for subsequent analyses. In total, 262 respondents' data were analyzed for the hypotheses.

#### Dependent Measures

*Ad attitude.* The same scale used in Experiment 1 was employed again. Cronbach's reliability alphas were deemed satisfactory at .92 for both bottled water and laptop computers.

*Brand attitude.* The same scale used in Experiment 1 to measure brand attitude was employed again in Experiment 2. Cronbach's reliability alphas

Table 2  
*Multivariate and Univariate Results for the Effects of Independent Variables on Ad and Brand Attitude for Experiment 2*

Variable	Ad Attitude		Brand Attitude	
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender (G)	0.57	.45	0.01	.94
Ad difference (A)	0.35	.55	0.56	.46
Affective states (M)	0.01	.95	0.05	.82
Individual differences (I)	11.89	.01	12.08	.01
A × M	1.00	.32	0.03	.87
A × I	0.11	.74	0.54	.46
M × I	0.49	.49	0.01	.95
A × M × I	0.23	.63	0.11	.74
Within subjects				
Product (P)				
P × G	0.11	.74	0.96	.33
P × A	0.48	.49	0.08	.78
P × M	0.32	.57	0.59	.44
P × I	1.32	.25	1.13	.29
P × M × I	2.86	.09	0.32	.57
P × A × M	0.25	.62	0.68	.41
P × A × I	4.54	.03	0.77	.38
P × M × I	0.48	.49	0.07	.80
P × A × M × I	1.73	.19	4.03	.05

for this scale were deemed satisfactory at .93 for both bottled water and laptop computers.

### *Results and Analyses*

When results of the univariate ANCOVA were examined, they revealed that the four-way interaction on ad attitude was not significant,  $F(1, 253) = 1.73$ ,  $p = .19$  (see Table 2), yet the four-way interaction on brand attitude was significant,  $F(1, 253) = 4.03$ ,  $p = .05$ . However, because some researchers argue that simple-level comparison or low-level interactions are acceptable for theory-based hypotheses (e.g., Winer, Brown, & Michels, 1991), further analytical tests were conducted.

Hypothesis 3 proposes that when individuals are in positive affective states and an ad is for a low-involving product, self-congruency affects their evaluations of the ad. However, when individuals are in positive affective states and an ad is for a high-involving product, self-congruency does not affect their evaluations of the ad. By contrast, when individuals are in negative moods, ad congruency does not affect their ad evaluations either when

high-involving or low-involving products are advertised. When the responses of participants in the positive affective state condition were analyzed, a significant three-way interaction between ad difference, individual difference, and product involvement on ad attitude emerged,  $F(1, 118) = 5.52, p = .02$ . Further analyses of the participants' responses to the high-involving product indicated that as expected, the interaction between ad difference and individual difference was not significant,  $F(1, 118) = 1.08, p = .30$  (see Table 3 and Figure 3). On the other hand, analyses of the participants' responses to the low-involving product produced an interaction with a  $p$  value of .06,  $F(1, 118) = 3.64$  (see Figure 4), which was not significant if the traditional .05 significance level was used. However, the mean was in the expected direction.

In contrast, as expected, when responses of participants in the negative affective state condition were analyzed, no significant interaction between ad difference, individual difference, and product involvement emerged,  $F(1, 132) = 0.37, p = .55$ . Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is partially supported.

Hypothesis 4 suggests that when consumers are in positive affective states and an ad is for a low-involving product, self-congruency affects their evaluations of the brand. However, when consumers are in positive affective states and an ad is for a high-involving product, self-congruency does not affect their evaluations of the brand. By contrast, when individuals are in negative moods, ad congruency does not affect their brand evaluations either when high-involving or low-involving products are advertised.

When responses of the participants in the positive affective state condition were analyzed, a significant three-way interaction between ad difference, individual difference, and product involvement on brand attitude emerged,  $F(1, 118) = 4.98, p = .03$ . Further analyses of participants' responses to the high-involving product indicated that as expected, the interaction between ad difference and individual difference was not significant,  $F(1, 118) = 0.44, p = .51$  (see Figure 5). In contrast, the interaction between ad difference and individual difference for the low-involving product was significant,  $F(1, 118) = 3.99, p = .05$  (see Figure 6). The means were in the expected directions.

As expected, when responses from the participants in the negative affective state condition were analyzed, no significant interaction among ad difference, individual difference, and product involvement was found,  $F(1, 132) = 0.63, p = .43$ . Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is fully supported.

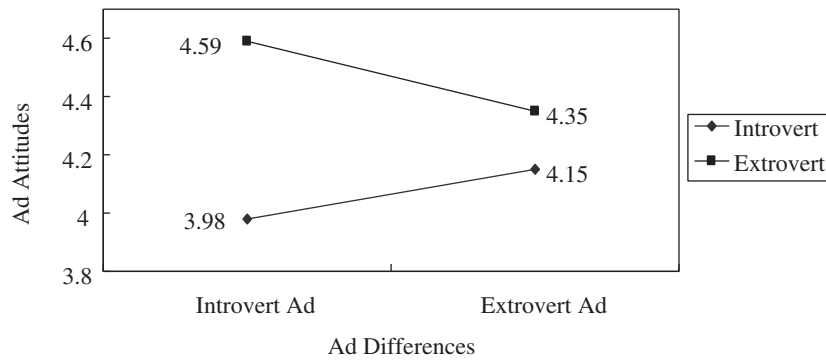
## Discussion

Consistent with expectations, product involvement overrode the influence of affective states and discouraged participants' reliance on self-congruency for making judgments. The interactions between ad differences and product

Table 3  
*Results of Two-Way Interaction on Ad Attitudes and Brand Attitudes for High-Involving and Low-Involving Products When Participants Are in a Positive Affective State Condition for Experiment 2*

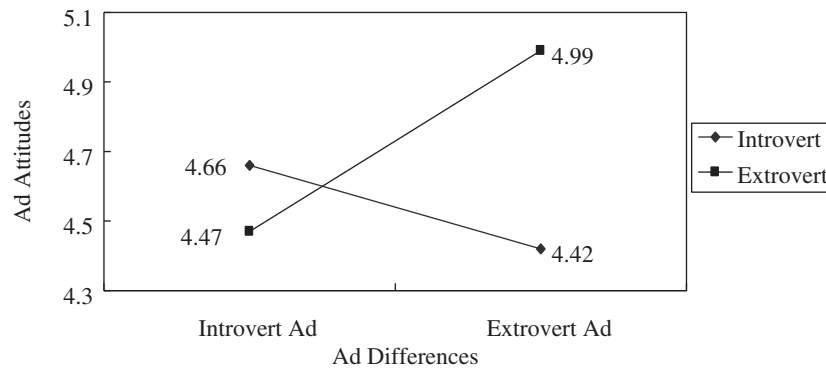
Two-Way Interaction	Dependent Variable	Positive Affective State				Negative Affective State			
		High-Involving Product		Low-Involving Product		High-Involving Product		Low-Involving Product	
		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Ad difference × Individual difference	Ad attitudes	1.08	.30	3.64	.06	0.23	.63	0.07	.79
	Brand attitudes	0.44	.51	3.99	.05	0.41	.52	0.11	.75





**Figure 3. The Interaction of Ad Differences (Introvert Ads vs. Extrovert Ads) and Individual Differences (Introverts vs. Extroverts) on Ad Attitudes for High-Involving Products in the Positive Affective State Condition**

Note. The two-way interaction between ad differences and individual differences on ad attitudes (7-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) is not significant,  $F(1, 118) = 1.08, p = .30$ .

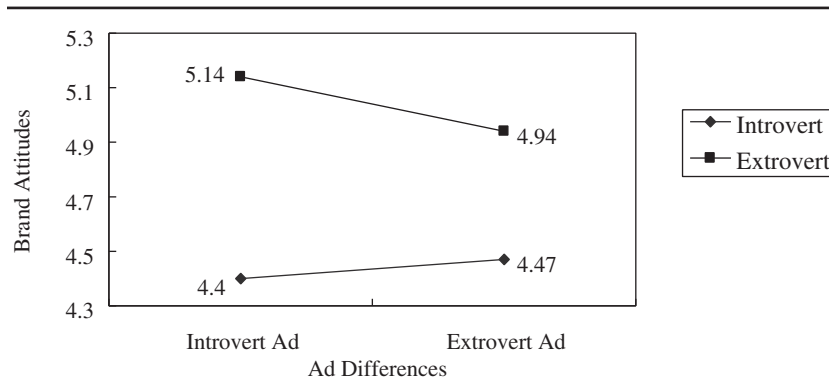


**Figure 4. The Interaction of Ad Differences (Introvert Ads vs. Extrovert Ads) and Individual Differences (Introverts vs. Extroverts) on Ad Attitudes for Low-Involving Products in the Positive Affective State Condition**

Note. The two-way interaction between ad differences and individual differences on ad attitudes (7-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) has a  $p$  value of .06,  $F(1, 78) = 3.64$ .

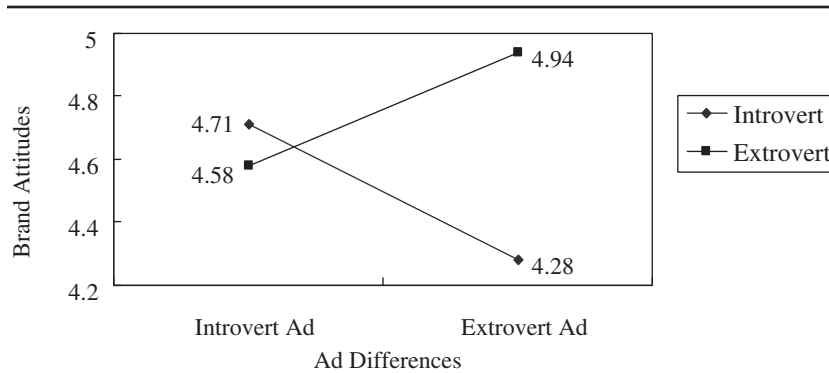
differences emerged only when participants were in positive affective states and the product was relatively low involving. In the same affective states, significant interactions between ad differences and individual differences were not documented when the product was relatively high involving.

Surprisingly, findings from Experiment 2 also indicated that individuals who rated themselves high on extroversion responded more positively to the



**Figure 5. The Interaction of Ad Differences (Introvert Ads vs. Extrovert Ads) and Individual Differences (Introverts vs. Extroverts) on Brand Attitudes for High-Involving Products in the Positive Affective State Condition**

Note. The two-way interaction between ad differences and individual differences on brand attitudes (7-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) is not significant,  $F(1, 118) = 0.44, p = .51$ .



**Figure 6. The Interaction of Ad Differences (Introvert Ads vs. Extrovert Ads) and Individual Differences (Introverts vs. Extroverts) on Brand Attitudes for Low-Involving Products in the Positive Affective State Condition**

Note. The two-way interaction between ad differences and individual differences on brand attitudes (7-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) is significant,  $F(1, 118) = 3.99, p = .05$ .

ads and brands than their counterparts, that is, introverts. This is parallel to the findings in Experiment 1, showing that the collectivist participants responded significantly more positively toward the ads and brands than did the individualist participants. The evidence seems to argue that individuals who differ from others in terms of certain personality orientations or values,

in addition to self-ad congruency, may respond differently to advertising messages and advertised brands.

## General Discussion

Past research exploring self-concepts in consumption behaviors has provided us with a good understanding of how consumers approach products congruent with their self-images and favor advertising messages with self-congruent user portrayals. However, what has been lacking in the research is a discussion with respect to whether self-congruency has a dominant influence in certain contexts and not in others. This study specifically explored the contingencies under which self-congruency may play a dominant role in determining ad and brand evaluations.

Within the ELM framework, this study suggests that self-congruency, like music, source credibility, or other elements of messages, could function as a peripheral cue when consumers engage in a limited mode of information processing. Consistent with expectations, findings showed that the selectivity of judgment based on self-knowledge was limited to situations in which individuals' processing loads were heavy and in which they did not have the motivation to process information in an analytical way. Findings from Experiment 1 provided empirical evidence for the idea that when consumers are in positive affective states, self-knowledge serves as an important processing frame through which information is evaluated in a biased way. In contrast, when consumers are in negative affective states, when their motivation to process is likely to be high, message self-congruency does not have a significant impact on ad and brand evaluations.

Although this study did not specifically examine the influence of program-induced affective states, given that the affective states in these two experiments were induced prior to advertising exposure, as is common in regular viewing situations in which the preceding program or editorial material primes viewers' or readers' various affective states, evidence from this study has potential implications for media planners. Although past research has demonstrated how program-induced affective responses influence how consumers favor advertising messages (e.g., Goldberg & Gorn, 1987; Pavelchak, Antil, & Munch, 1988; Singh & Hitchon, 1989), little attention has been paid to the influence of program-induced affective states on consumers' ad-processing strategies. Given that the contextual materials in which an advertisement is embedded have already been shown to induce different affective states (Goldberg & Gorn, 1987), findings regarding how affective states implicate message perceivers' processing strategies can help advertising professionals develop more effective media plans. For example, for an image ad

that appeals to the product user's lifestyle or psychological characteristics, a comedy may be a better placement choice than a news program.

Yet it has been demonstrated that the impacts of affective states can be overridden by factors that motivate ad perceivers to elaborate on messages (Bless et al., 1990). Therefore, Experiment 2 was conducted to understand whether product involvement overrides the influence of low motivation induced by positive affective states. The results indicate that when the products being considered are more involving, self-congruency is not as important a determinant of product evaluations as when products are less involving. This is consistent with ELM theorization, namely, that the elements of ad messages serve as peripheral cues and dominate attitude formation when information perceivers have no motivation to process in a systematic, detail-oriented way. Accordingly, research into the interplay of affective states and ad message processing may profit from a more thorough examination of other factors that motivate ad perceivers to engage in effortful, detail-oriented processing strategies.

This study demonstrates the importance of examining self-concepts to understand how consumers respond to advertising messages. Unfortunately, the role of the self in processing advertising messages has been relatively less explored in past literature than has the effectiveness of different appeals or message content. The self, being a salient and readily accessible concept, deserves more research attention. Consistent with what social psychologists would expect, when individuals' motivation to process information in details is low, self-ad congruency provides sufficient information for individuals to make product judgments. Most important, it is encouraging to note that this evidence suggests that exploring ad effectiveness on the basis of self-concepts may be a fruitful framework for future advertising research.

In addition to support for the interaction of self-concepts and product images, other interesting findings regarding self-concept differences also emerged. Individuals with different self-views on personality traits or value orientations appeared to respond to advertising in significantly different ways. Specifically, in contrast with the introvert participants, the extroverts generate more positive evaluations of the ads and brands. In addition, as opposed to the individualists, the collectivists express more favorable responses toward ads and brands. One plausible explanation for these findings is that individuals with certain self-concepts, such as collectivist values or an extrovert orientation, may have stronger urges to improve their self-images, and this stronger urge may enhance their readiness to respond to ad messages. The motivation difference may further determine how favorably they respond to ad messages. More systematic research seems warranted to

provide a clearer view of this aspect of the interaction between self-concepts and product images.

It has been suggested that developing a product personality is one important way to establish brand equity (Biel, 1993). Nevertheless, findings from this study suggest two concerns for marketers when employing an ad campaign to shape product image. First, this study demonstrates that each individual responds to an advertisement with a specific personality portrayal in a way that reflects his or her personal preferences. Just as a person can have a set of personality traits that he or she desires and another set of personality traits from which he or she disassociates himself or herself, any specific product personality or value can appeal to some consumers while being perceived as unattractive by others. Therefore, it is important for marketers to understand what kind of product personality their target segments desire. Most important, when appealing to product image, media planning should be orchestrated to enhance the effectiveness of image appeals. Second, in situations in which consumers' motivation to process is high, even though product image is congruent with consumers' self-images, this congruency does not guarantee that consumers will necessarily favor the ad or the product. In these situations, product personality may not be as important and diagnostic as the specific attributes or functions the product offers.

Finally, this study's findings must be interpreted within their limitations. First, whether individuals engage in central-route processing when they are in negative affective states has not been specifically tested. What we can claim from these two experiments is that when individuals have low motivation, they are more likely to treat self-congruency as a peripheral cue for judgment making. However, findings do not provide sufficient evidence to claim that when individuals are highly motivated, they will engage in analytical processing. Second, whether self-congruency exerts any influence in high-involving conditions has not been tested. It is likely that self-congruency may become an argument when consumers are more motivated to process advertising messages, and together with individuals' assessments of product attributes, it will influence their brand evaluations.

Although this study suggests that self-ad congruency is an important variable that influences consumers' brand and ad evaluations, much regarding the correspondence between the self and product image is not well understood. For example, it is not clear whether the same dimensions we use to describe self-concepts can be applied to product images. Therefore, one important direction for future study may involve more thorough and systematic examinations of the correspondence between self-concepts and product images. Another possible approach for those who are interested in the role of self-concepts in processing messages is to explore how and why individuals

with different personality traits or value orientations respond to advertising messages in different ways.

### Appendix A

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#### Factor 1

1. I sacrifice self-interest for my group.
2. I act as fellow group members would prefer.
3. I stick with my group through difficulties.
4. I maintain harmony in my group.
5. I respect the majority's wish.
6. I respect decisions made by my group.
7. I make an effort to avoid disagreements with my group members.

#### Factor 2

1. I support my group whether they are right or wrong.
  2. I remain in my group if they need me, even when I may be dissatisfied with them.
  3. I avoid arguments within my group, even when I strongly disagree with other members.
- 

### Appendix B

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1. You are a talkative person.
  2. You are rather lively.
  3. You enjoy meeting new people.
  4. You usually let yourself go and enjoy yourself at a lively party.
  5. You usually take the initiative in making new friends.
  6. You easily get some life into a rather dull party.
  7. You tend to keep in the background on social occasions.
  8. You like mixing with people.
  9. You like plenty of bustle and excitement around you.
  10. You are mostly quiet when you are with other people.
  11. Other people think of you as being lively.
  12. You can get a party going.
- 

## Notes

1. In past literature, different terms have been used to refer to perceivers' affective states. The most commonly used terms are *affect*, *moods*, and *emotions*. A critical question concerning emotion research then is how affect, moods, and emotions differ. Past reviews have tried to distinguish between these three concepts. For example, Clore, Schwarz, and Conway (1994) defined affects simply as "valence—the positive and negative aspect of things" (p. 326). Moods and emotions, according to them, are both affective states; however, moods and emotions differ in terms of "external versus internal concerns, present versus future orientation, and object versus objectless focus" (p. 326). The focus of this study is on individuals' affective states, including both moods and

emotions. Because most of the past literature exploring the impact of affective states on persuasion did not clearly outline whether moods or emotions were induced in their manipulation of individuals' affective states, this study thus adopts an umbrella term—*affective states*—throughout the review to refer to both moods and emotions.

2. A variety of different types of positive emotions has been previously identified. However, most past studies on the impacts of affective states on persuasion mainly induced happiness and treated happiness as the prototypical positive emotion (Clone et al., 1994). Similarly, although negative emotions come in various forms such as fear, anger, sadness, disgust, and guilt (e.g., Nabi, 1999), sadness has been used as the prototype in past persuasion literature. Therefore, for the sake of continuity and clarity, this study focuses only on happiness as the prototypical positive affective state and sadness as the prototypical negative affective state.

3. All of the scales were translated into Chinese following Brislin's (1987) translation and back-translation procedure.

4. It is important to note that past research regarding emotion and persuasion tends to apply mood-induction strategies (e.g., Bless, Clone, et al., 1996). In other words, affective states are not solely caused by persuasive messages but also by stimuli in the context. Indeed, Jorgensen (1998) has noted that models explaining the impact of affect on the persuasion process fall into two primary categories: models of message-relevant effects and models of message-irrelevant effects. The message-relevant model concerns how affect can serve as a peripheral cue or how affect can determine the valence of our cognitive responses and further influence the persuasion process. Message-irrelevant effect models, on the other hand, examine how a perceiver's emotional state affects his or her motivation or cognitive capacity to process information. Because this study aims to understand perceiver's processing strategies, both when his or her cognitive capacity is and is not limited, it is reasonable to adopt the context-priming approach to understand how individuals' affective states can enhance or decrease their extent of message processing and further alter the way that they evaluate the advertised brand.

5. Participants used the same scale to rate product users who were portrayed in ads as they did to rate themselves. To reduce participants' sensitivity to the scale, they were told that other than their responses to ads, the researcher would like to know about their values and personalities. To make the bogus statement seem credible, they were also asked to rate other self-related scales. The items from all of the three scales were combined together into a long scale.

6. The first factor, with an eigenvalue of 9.06, contained the following eight items: happy, cheerful, active, contented, energetic, satisfied, not relaxed, and not restless. The second factor, with an eigenvalue of 1.95, was composed of the following seven items: sad, dissatisfied, depressed, jittery, tense, nervous, and alert. The third factor, with an eigenvalue of 1.20, contained two items: calm and sluggish. Two items with split loadings were dropped from the analyses. They were tired and passive.

7. The items were "when you choose X, it is not a big deal if you make a mistake"; "it is really annoying to purchase an X that is not suitable"; "when I face a shelf of X, I always feel at a bit of a loss in making my choice"; "choosing X is rather complicated"; "you can tell a lot about a person by the X he or she chooses"; "the X that I buy gives a glimpse of the type of man/woman I am"; "it gives me pleasure to purchase X"; "buying X is like buying a gift for myself"; "I attach great importance to X"; and "one can say that X interests me a lot."

8. The first factor, with an eigenvalue of 5.39, contained the following nine items: happy, cheerful, satisfied, contented, active, energetic, not relaxed, not sad, and not tired. The second factor, with an eigenvalue of 3.58, was composed of the following five items: dissatisfied, jittery, tense, nervous, and alert. The third factor, with an

eigenvalue of 2.79, contained two items: calm and restful. Three items with split loadings were dropped from the analyses. They were sluggish, depressed, and passive.

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