

## **The Effects of Self-construal on Evaluating Attribute-focused Versus Context-focused Advertising Messages**

**Ohyoon Kwon<sup>†</sup>**

Department of Advertising & Public Relations at Keimyung University

This research experimentally examined what would happen if advertising messages were matched with the cognitive styles consistent with one's temporarily more accessible self-construal. Specifically, the study sought to know whether such a matching would produce the following effects: 1) enhance positive attitudes toward advertising messages, 2) generate positive attitude toward brands, and thus, 3) improve purchase intention for the advertised brands. The results of this present research show the interaction effects between self-construal and advertising framing. When individuals whose independent self-view was more temporarily activated, they viewed an attribute-focused advertising message more favorably, evaluated the advertised brand more positively, and were more likely to purchase the brand than they viewed an context-focused advertising message. In contrast, the reverse pattern was significantly supported for individuals whose interdependent self-view was more temporarily accessible.

*Key words* : Advertising, Self-construal, Cognitive Style, Priming, Framing

---

<sup>†</sup> corresponding author : Ohyoon Kwon, Assistant Professor, Department of Advertising & Public Relation at Keimyung University, ohyoon@kmu.ac.kr

## Introduction

Considerable research in the domain of cognitive psychology has identified two different ways of cognition (Choi, Koo, & Choi, 2007; Kühnen & Oyserman, 2002; Kühnen, Hannover & Shubert, 2001; Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001). These include analytic thinking and holistic thinking. The analytic thinking style rests on symbolic representational systems, and its computations focus on the object and the categories to which it belongs (Nisbett et al., 2001). By contrast, the holistic thinking style is associative, and its computations mostly rely on relationships between objects (Nisbett et al., 2001). With regard to the formation of the two types of cognitive styles, previous research presented that two distinctive types of self-views lead individuals to use different kinds of thinking styles (e.g., Kühnen et al., 2001; Kühnen & Oyserman, 2002; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Monga & John, 2007). That is, an individual with an interdependent self-view pays more attention to the context and relationships among elements in the context and tends to be a holistic thinker (Choi et al., 2007; Kühnen et al., 2001; Kühnen & Oyserman, 2002; Nisbett et al., 2001). By contrast, an individual with an independent self-view pays more attention to dispositions or attributes and is more likely to be an analytic thinker (Choi et al., 2007; Kühnen et al., 2001; Kühnen & Oyserman,

2002; Nisbett et al., 2001). What appears to be important is that these two different styles of cognition may influence how consumers process the information in advertisements framed in different ways.

An extensive body of research in persuasive communication has focused on the amount of cognition that an individual devotes to persuasive messages based on dual processing models (e.g., Chaiken 1980; Escalas & Luce, 2004; Petty, Cacioppo, & Schuman, 1983; Priester & Petty, 2003). The basic assumption of this stream of research is that the amount of cognition used varies depending on different factors (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986; Petty, Unnava, & Strathman, 1991). Several factors influencing the amount of cognition have been identified including personal relevance, need for cognition, external distraction, and general intelligence (Petty, Unnava, & Strathman, 1991). Such investigations have provided insights into mechanisms underlying persuasion and attitude formation (Petty, Cacioppo, Strathman, & Priester, 2005). In addition to the amount of cognition, it appears to be of great importance how different cognitive styles become salient and affect persuasion and attitude formation (Kühnen & Oyserman, 2002). Nevertheless, few scholars have paid to the effect of different cognition styles on persuasion and attitude formation.

The purpose of the current study is to explore how different types of self-views affect the persuasiveness of advertising messages as well

as the advertised brand. The central idea of the present study is that the matching of advertising messages with the cognitive style which is consistent with one's temporarily accessible self-view will generate more positive attitudes toward the advertisements and brands. Findings from this study shed further light on the impact that different types of self-concepts have on advertising message effectiveness by directly and systematically exploring the interaction between self-construal and cognitive style in shaping message framing effects within the product advertising framework.

## Literature Review

### Self-construal

Self-construal is defined as "the relationship between the self and other and, especially, the degree to which they see themselves as separated from others or as connected with others" (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 226). A large body of research on cross-cultural psychology has consistently suggested a clear distinction between an independent and interdependent self-view with an emphasis on cultures nurturing one or the other (e.g., Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The development of one's specific self construal is culturally encouraged, with one particular view becoming chronically accessible at the individual

level (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In particular, cultures that value independence tend to nurture the independent self-view, defined as a unique and autonomous individual. Cultures that value social obligations over personal desires tend to nurture the interdependent self-view, defined as intimately and fundamentally embedded within a larger social community (see Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In addition, an individual's independent and interdependent self-view can be momentarily accessible due to the malleability of self (Aaker, 1999; Belk, 1988; Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993). Building on such notion, a recent and growing body of research offers solid evidence that three types of phenomena can temporarily activate either one's independent or interdependent self-construal. These include reference tasks (Aaker & Williams, 1998), situational contexts (Briley, Morris, & Simonsom, 2000), and primes (Aaker, 1999; Aaker & Lee, 2001; Garder, Gabriel, & Lee, 1999).

### The View of Self and Thinking Styles

As noted earlier, a long history of cognitive psychology research has identified that two different types of cognitive styles including analytic thinking and holistic thinking (e.g., Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999; Nisbett et al., 2001; Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Nisbett and his colleagues define holistic thinking as "involving an orientation to the context or field as a whole, including attention to relationship

between a focal object and field, and a preference for explaining and predicting events on the basis of such relationship” (Nisbett et al., 2001, p. 293). On the other hand, analytic thinking is defined as “involving detachment of the object from its context, a tendency to focus on attributes of the object in order to assign it to categories, and a preference for using rules about the categories to explain and predict the object’s behavior” (Nisbett et al. 2001, p 293). Further, differences in the two different ways of cognition result in specifically distinctive traits in terms of attention, causality, perception of change, and contradiction (Choi et al., 2007).

Holistic thinkers tend to be oriented toward the relationship between objects and the fields to which those objects belong, whereas analytic thinkers tend to focus attention more on an object itself rather than on the field to which it belongs (Ji, Peng, & Nisbett, 2000; Masuda & Nisbett, 2001). Due to the different pattern of attention, individuals with a holistic thinking style focus more on the whole field than distinctive objects forming the field in an easier way while the reverse pattern is true for individuals with an analytic thinking style. Therefore, analytic thinkers find it easier to separate an object from the field in which it is embedded than holistic thinkers do. Following the same logic, in general, holistic thinkers are better at identifying the relations among objects in a background field (Ji et al., 2000). Such a difference in the patterns of thinking was found

to be true through eye movement (Chua, Boland, & Nisbett, 2005). With respect to causality, holistic thinkers tend to focus on the presence of complex causalities and interactions between an object and its surrounding situations, whereas analytic thinkers concentrate on the internal attributes of an object (Choi, Dalai, Kim-Prieto, & Park, 2003).

How do different types of self-views relate to the two distinctive styles of cognition? Kühnen, Hannover, and Shubert (2001) postulate that two different styles of cognition are by products of the procedures used during the acquisition of either the independent or interdependent self-view. The independent self-view is acquired by emphasizing self-descriptive traits across the various social contexts one comes across (Kühnen & Oyserman, 2002; Kühnen, Hannover & Shubert, 2001). On the other hand, activating an individual’s interdependent self-view requires him or her to relate the self to specific contexts in which relevant others are encountered (Kühnen & Oyserman, 2002; Kühnen, Hannover & Shubert, 2001). Thus, context relatedness is a key factor in determining the difference between the acquisition of independent and interdependent self-view. Given that contextual independence plays a pivotal role in defining the style of analytic thinking, one’s independent self-view coincides with his or her analytic thinking style (Kühnen & Oyserman, 2002; Kühnen, Hannover & Shubert, 2001). On the contrary, in that contextual dependence is the

salient trait of the style of holistic thinking, one's interdependent self-view is matched with his or her holistic thinking style (Kühnen & Oyserman, 2002; Kühnen, Hannover & Shubert, 2001). As a result, the independent self-construal and the interdependent self-construal result in different styles of thinking.

What appears to be of some importance, according to research on consumer behavior, is that priming one's independent or interdependent self-view exerts an influence on predicting consumer behaviors (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Monga & John, 2007, Ng & Houston, 2006). In particular, Aaker and Lee (2001) showed that persuasive appeals were more effective when these appeals were consistent with one's temporarily more accessible self-view. Monga and John (2007) found that brand extension was differently evaluated by individuals with different self-views. Ng and Houston (2006) discovered that the two different styles of cognition mostly activated by distinctive types of self construal affected consumers' perception of brand association. However, little attention has been given to how these two different thinking styles would affect the processing of information and attitude formation. The current research effort explores how the interaction between self-construal and thinking styles shapes message framing effects in the context of advertising.

## Hypothesis

As discussed earlier, two distinctive types of self-views encourage consumers to become one of the two types of thinkers and have a great influence on their consumption behaviors (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Monga & John, 2007, Ng & Houston, 2006). With respect to the processing of advertising messages, consumers whose independent self-construal is temporarily more accessible tend to be analytic thinkers and find it easier to distinguish analytic features or benefits of a product than to interpret context-related features of a product as a whole (Choi & Nisbett, 1998; Han & Shavitt, 1994). Therefore, it is more plausible for a consumer with an analytic thinking style to be persuaded by attribute-focused advertising messages highlighting functional features and uses. On the other hand, a consumer whose interdependent self-construal is temporarily more accessible tends to pay more attention to discovering context-related product information and benefits. For consumers with the style of holistic thinking, even if the product attribute information is important, it alone is far from enough to support their evaluation, judgment, and final purchasing decision. Instead, for them, it is more common to try to find the contextual features or benefits of a product at the aggregate level. Thus, it is more reasonable for a consumer with the holistic thinking style to be persuaded by context-focused advertising messages. Accordingly, the current study

hypothesizes that advertising messages matched with a consumer's thinking style is more likely to result in more favorable attitudes to messages. More specifically, for a consumer primed on an independent self-view, an attribute-focused advertising message is more likely to generate more positive attitudes toward the message rather than a context-focused advertising message. In contrast, for a consumer primed on an interdependent self-view, a context-focused advertising message tends to generate more positive attitudes toward the message than an attribute-focused advertising message does.

**Hypothesis 1:** Individuals primed on an independent (interdependent) self-view will exhibit more positive attitudes toward attribute-focused (context-focused) advertising messages than context-focused (attribute-framed) advertising messages.

A body of literature in the domain of advertising research posits the favorable attitudes toward advertising messages lead to positive attitudes toward advertised brands (e.g., MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986; Mitchell & Olson, 1981). Further, consumers exposed to the advertising appeal consistent with their temporarily more accessible self-view are more likely to have more positive attitudes toward the advertised brand (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Agrawal & Maheswaran, 2005). Other scholars posit that one's thinking style plays an important role in

evaluating brands (Monga & John, 2007; Ng & Houston, 2006). Drawing on prior research, advertising messages consistent with consumers' thinking styles are more likely to result in more favorable attitudes toward the messages and, thus, consumers will formulate more positive attitudes toward the advertised brands. As a result, the present study hypothesizes that when a consumer primed on an independent (interdependent) self-view is more likely to have more favorable attitudes toward the advertised brand while reading an attribute-focused (context-focused) advertising message. Thus,

**Hypothesis 2:** Individuals primed on an independent (interdependent) self-view tend to have more favorable attitudes toward the advertised brands when the individuals view attribute-focused (context-focused) advertising messages.

As noted earlier, a consumer exposed to the advertising message that is consistent with the consumer's self-construal, is more likely to formulate greater positive attitudes toward the advertised brand. One of the key points in consumer behavior research is that brand attitude is directly and positively associated with purchase intent (e.g., Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Mitchell & Olson, 1981). Following this logic, when a consumer primed on an independent (interdependent) self-view reads an attribute-focused (context-focused) advertising message, the

consumer is more likely to show strong intention of purchasing the advertised brand.

**Hypothesis 3:** Individuals primed on an independent (interdependent) self-view tend to have greater purchase intentions for the advertised brands when the individuals read attribution-focused (context-focused) advertising messages.

## Method

### Overview and Research Design

The current study experimentally assesses whether priming the independent versus interdependent self-construal can result in differences in the evaluations of advertising messages of a fictitious digital camera brand that convey attribute- vs. context-focused product information and benefits. Thus, a 2(self-construal prime: independent vs. interdependent) × 2(advertising message frame: attribute- vs. context-focused) between-subjects design was conducted in an online setting. A digital camera was chosen for the present study for the following two reasons: digital cameras are, 1) one of the most popular products among the target sample of this study: college students and, 2) are not gender-specific.

### Stimulus Development

Two types of advertising messages were created to convey either attribute-focused or context-focused product benefits. An attribute-focused advertising message was framed in terms of emphasizing functional features and benefits, whereas a context-focused advertising message was framed in terms of ensuring contextual benefits and uses. A fictitious brand name (i.e., the Vulu P120) was used to heighten experimental control (Boush & Loken, 1991; Keller & Aaker, 1992). In the attribute-focused message condition, the advertising message highlighted the Vulu P120's functional benefit (The Vulu P120 has invisible assistants) and emphasized specific functional features (e.g., captures large size images up to 13 x 19 inches, reduces blurred images and camera shakes). In contrast, in the context-focused message condition, the message drew attention to the Vulu P120's contextual benefit (Unforgettable moments with the Vulu P120) and placed more weights on contextual uses (e.g., impressive photos of friends and family you will be proud of, wonderful moments without blur and camera shakes).

Given that an individual's specific self-concept can be temporarily dominant by priming procedures, researchers found that an individual's independent or interdependent self-construal could be temporarily primed in addition to the individual's chronic independent or

interdependent self-construal (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Lee, Aaker & Garnder, 2000). In line with prior research, the present study primed and manipulated subjects' self-construal by showing the subjects either a series of pictures portraying an individual in different social situations or a series of pictures focusing on a family or a friend group in different social situations (Sung & Choi, 2011).

### Participants & Procedure

A total of 77 undergraduate students (mean age = 21.2 years, 63 female) participated in and completed the study. Approximately 49% of the participants were white, 11% were Asian-Americans, 8.5% were African-Americans, and 6.1% were Hispanic-Americans. As an incentive, all participants were given course credit.

The experimental study was administered online. Upon logging on to the study site, subjects were randomly assigned to one of the following four experimental conditions: 1) the independent self-construal priming with an attribute-focused advertising message condition, 2) the independent self-construal priming with a context-focused advertising message condition, 3) the interdependent self-construal priming with an attribute-focused advertising message condition, and 4) the interdependent self-construal prime with a context-focused advertising message condition.

The participants in the two independent self-construal priming conditions were then presented a series of 8 pictures portraying an individual in different social contexts. The participants in the two interdependent self-construal conditions were exposed to a different set of 8 pictures depicting a family or a friend group situations (Sung & Choi, 2011). After viewing the pictures, all participants were asked 4 questions. The questions helped evaluate if the two different types of situational prime were successful in activating the participants' independent or interdependent self-construal situations (Sung & Choi, 2011). After answering the questions, participants then read another set of instructions associated with the scenario of viewing advertisements.

Next, half of the independent and interdependent self-construal primed participants were asked to view an attribute-focused advertising message. Similarly, the other half of the independent and interdependent self-construal primed participants were asked to view a context-focused advertising message. All participants were subsequently asked to answer a series of questions for the assessment of the dependent variables and demographic information. After completing the session, the participants were thanked for their participation and dismissed.



## Independent Variables

*Self-construal.* Sung and Choi (2011) used a four-item, seven-point Likert scale to assess whether their subjects' one of the two self-views were successfully activated. The current research adopted the four-item scale. After viewing a set of pictorial images portraying an individual in different social contexts or depicting a family or a friend group. The participants in the experiment were asked, "(1) The pictures make me think about myself, (2) I would think about myself when faced with the situations depicted in the pictures, (3) the pictures would make me think about my family or friends, (4) I would think about my family or friends when faced with the situations depicted in the pictures." Their responses were based on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The first two items were averaged to form a Self Thought Index (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .71$ ), and the remaining two items were averaged to form an Others Thought Index (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .86$ ).

*Message Frame.* In order to ensure that both the attribute-focused advertising message and the context-focused advertising message were successfully manipulated through framing attribute-focused and context-focused benefits, participants in the experiment were asked, "(1) Overall, I think the advertisement focused on the contextual use of the Vulu P120, (2) overall, I think the advertisement depicted the Vulu P120's contextual benefits, (3) overall, I think

the advertisement focused on the functional use of the Vulu P120, (4) overall, I think the advertisement depicted the Vulu P120's functional features." The participants responded on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The first two items were averaged to form a Context-focused AD Index (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .74$ ), and the remaining two items were averaged to form an Attribute-focused AD Index (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .75$ ).

## Dependent Variables

Attitudes toward advertising messages were captured with a six-item, seven-point, semantic differential scale anchored by not effective/effective, not impactful/impactful, not persuasive/persuasive and not helpful/helpful, not credible/credible and not believable/believable, (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .82$ ) (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Sung & Choi, 2011). Participants' attitudes toward the Vulu P120 was assessed based on a seven-point, semantic differential scale anchored by bad/good, negative/positive, and unfavorable/favorable (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ) (Lee & Aaker, 2004). Participants' purchase intentions for the Vulu P120 were evaluated using a seven-point, semantic differential scale anchored by unlikely/likely and impossible/possible (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ) (Lee & Aaker, 2004).

## Results

### Manipulation Check

To assess the effectiveness of the manipulation of the two independent variables, a series of independent sample t-tests were conducted. In all cases, the manipulations were effective. First, the subjects in the independent self-construal condition provided significantly higher Self Thought Index scores than the subjects in the interdependent self-construal condition ( $M_{\text{independent}} = 4.72$  vs.  $M_{\text{interdependent}} = 3.99$ ,  $t(1, 75) = 2.78$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Subjects in the interdependent self-construal condition provided significantly greater Others Thought Index scores than subjects in the independent self-construal condition ( $M_{\text{interdependent}} = 5.33$  vs.  $M_{\text{independent}} = 4.14$ ,  $t(1, 75) = 3.81$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Second, subjects in the attribute-focused advertising message condition perceived the advertising message emphasizing functional features and uses was attribute-focused ( $M_{\text{attribute-focused}} = 5.42$  vs.  $M_{\text{context-focused}} = 4.78$ ,  $t(1, 75) = 2.35$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Subjects in the context-focused advertising

message condition perceived that the advertising message ensuring contextual benefits and uses was context-focused ( $M_{\text{context-focused}} = 5.19$  vs.  $M_{\text{attribute-focused}} = 4.57$ ,  $t(1, 75) = 2.73$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

### Hypotheses Testing

The proposed hypotheses were tested via 2 (self-construal prime: independent vs. interdependent)  $\times$  2 (advertising message frame: attribute- vs. context-focused) between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the three dependent variables.

Our first hypothesis examines whether the interaction between the self-construal and advertising frame influences attitudes toward the advertising message. The results suggest that there was a significant interaction effect between self-construal and advertising frame ( $F(1, 73) = 11.87$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\omega^2 = .14$ ) frame while the main effects of both were not significant. Neither a main effect of self-construal ( $F(1, 78)$

Table 1. Dependent Measures as a Function of Self-construal and Ad Message Frame

	Independent Self-Construal		Interdependent Self-Construal	
	Analytic Frame	Holistic Frame	Analytic Frame	Holistic Frame
AD Attitudes ( $\alpha = .82$ )	4.74	4.10	3.84	4.59
Brand Attitudes ( $\alpha = .91$ )	5.25	4.02	4.35	4.93
Purchase Intentions ( $\alpha = .87$ )	4.63	3.02	3.32	4.26
N	19	19	20	19

= 1.03;  $p = .31$ ) nor that of advertising message frame was significant ( $F(1, 73) = .07$ ;  $p = .79$ ).

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed that participants in the interdependent self-construal condition exhibited more favorable attitudes toward the context-focused message than the attribute-focused message ( $M = 4.59$  vs.  $3.84$ ,  $F(1, 73) = 6.82$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\omega^2 = .09$ ). The reverse pattern for the participant in the independent self-construal condition was also significant ( $M = 4.74$  vs.  $4.10$ ,  $F(1, 73) = 5.10$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\omega^2 = .07$ ). Thus, the results support H1.

Our tests of H2 investigate whether the interaction between self-construal and advertising frame has impact on consumers' brand evaluation. As predicted, the results showed that there was a significant interaction effect ( $F(1, 73) = 18.21$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\omega^2 = .20$ ). Neither a main effect of self-construal ( $F(1, 78) = 2.39$ ;  $p = .13$ ) nor that of advertising message frame

was significant ( $F(1, 73) = .00$ ;  $p = .99$ ). Post-hoc pairwise comparisons indicated that for subjects in the independent self-construal condition, the attribute-focused advertising message significantly generated a greater level of positive brand attitude toward the Vulu P120 than the context-focused advertising message ( $M = 5.25$  vs.  $4.35$ ,  $F(1, 73) = 9.20$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\omega^2 = .11$ ). Furthermore, the reverse pattern for the subjects in the interdependent self-construal condition was significant ( $M = 4.93$  vs.  $4.02$ ,  $F(1, 73) = 9.02$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\omega^2 = .11$ ). Taken together, the results are strongly supporting H2.

The interaction effect between the independent variables on the Purchase Intention Index was examined. The results showed that there was a significant interaction effect ( $F(1, 73) = 18.40$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\omega^2 = .20$ ). However, neither a main effect of self-construal ( $F(1, 73) = 1.27$ ;  $p = .26$ ) nor that of advertising message frame was significant ( $F(1, 73) = .01$ ;  $p = .91$ ). Post-hoc pairwise comparisons showed that participants in

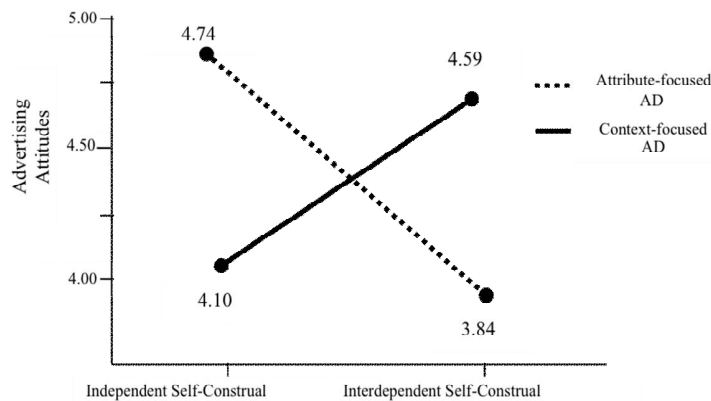


Figure 1. Interaction Effects on Ad Attitudes

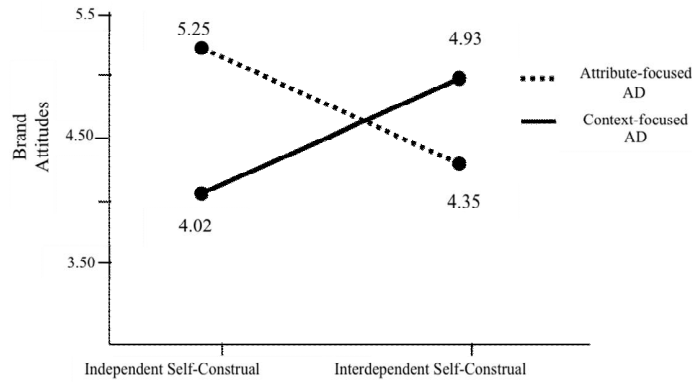


Figure 2. Interaction Effects on Brand Attitudes

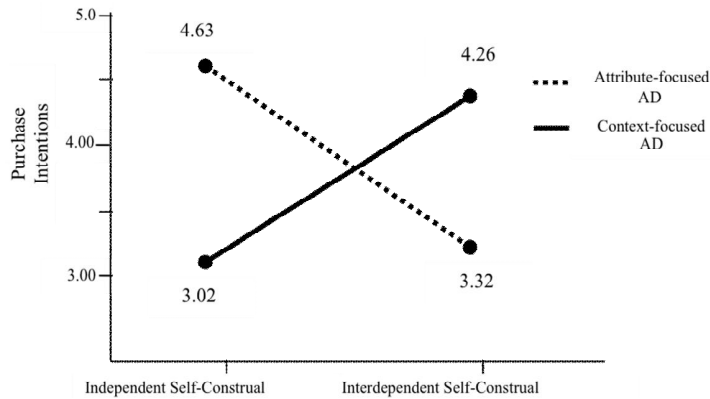


Figure 3. Interaction Effects on Purchase Intentions

the interdependent self-construal condition showed greater purchase intentions for the Vulu P120 when they viewed context-focused advertising message than the attribute-focused advertising message ( $M = 4.26$  vs.  $3.32$ ,  $F(1, 73) = 8.59$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\omega^2 = .11$ ). Further, the reverse pattern for the participant in the independent self-construal condition was also significant ( $M = 4.63$  vs.  $3.02$ ,  $F(1, 73) = 9.83$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\omega^2 = .12$ ). Thus, the results strongly support H3.

### Discussion and Implications

For decades, advertising researchers and practitioners have exerted huge efforts to understand how consumers assess advertising messages. With respect to the role of cognition in evaluating advertising messages, an extensive body of research has focused on and documented how the amount of cognition has a great influence on persuasion and attitude formation (e.g., Andrews & Shimp, 1990; Petty et al.,

1983; Priester & Petty, 2003). However, as discussed earlier, less attention has been given to the styles of thinking and their effects on assessing advertising messages. With respect to the different styles of thinking, a recent and growing body of research has shown that an individual's more accessible self-construal is an important factor in activating his or her analytic or holistic thinking style (Kühnen et al., 2001; Kühnen & Oyserman, 2002). Further, recent research has found that different thinking styles play an important role in predicting consumer behaviors (Monga & John, 2007; Ng & Houston, 2006).

The novelty of this current effort is its focus on different ways of thinking as a factor influencing the evaluation of advertising messages. Built on the notion that one's independent self-view tends to activate his or her mode of analytic thinking while one's interdependent self-view plays an important role in activating his or her mode of holistic thinking, the central idea of this research was that the matching of an advertising message with an individual's thinking style which is consistent with his or her self-view increases the likelihood of his or her more positive attitude toward advertising messages, more favorable attitude toward the advertised brands, and greater purchase intention for them. The results of this present research showed that for individuals with a temporarily more accessible independent self-construal, attribute-focused

advertising messages are more effective in terms of generating more positive brand attitudes whereas context-focused advertising messages not only lead individuals with a temporarily more accessible interdependent self-construal to have more favorable attitudes toward the message and advertised brands but also increase their intention to buy the brands.

This research contributes to the advertising and consumer psychology literature on several fronts. First, our findings provide clear evidence that the effect of cognitive styles on persuasion is moderated by self-construal. Thus, these research findings offer a new baseline for understanding of cognitive style effects alongside self-construal by examining the premise with the a product's advertising context. Effective message framing with an emphasis on consumers' styles of analytic or holistic thinking can obtain differential consumer responses to advertisements and increase their effectiveness. Second, our findings associated with activating one's accessible self-view provide further support for the theoretical development of a self-concept and its impact on related cognitive styles on the basis of a malleable self (Aaker, 1999; Kühnen et al., 2001). The social and cognitive psychology literature postulates that two different types of selves coexist within an individual and the activation of one of the two selves subsequently affects the styles of cognition (Aaker, 1999; Kühnen et al., 2001, Kühnen & Oyserman, 2002). The current research demonstrates that

these different types of self-views and cognitive styles within an individual can be temporarily more accessible even within a single culture due to different situational stimulations.

From a managerial perspective, this study provides invaluable insights into how advertisements should be embedded on the basis of media content. Prior research found that exposure to different types of media content has a distinctive impact on individuals' interpretation of advertising messages (Yi, 1990). In this current effort, subjects' specific self-views and thinking styles became temporarily activated through showing them pictorial images describing different social situations. The interaction between them in shaping message framing effects affected their message evaluation, attitude formation, and behavioral intention. Therefore, different types of media content might activate individuals' different self-views, and advertising effectiveness can vary across media content. For example, watching the ABC show *Extreme Makeover*, the show viewers' interdependent self-construal can be temporarily more accessible, and advertising messages consistent with their holistic thinking style might be more effective in terms of creating more positive brand attitudes and greater purchase intentions. On the other hand, while viewing the FOX show *American Idol* which mostly focuses on individual competition, the shows viewers' independent self-views might become dominant. Therefore, those watching the show might have

more positive responses to advertising messages emphasizing functional features or attributes of products rather than contextual uses and benefits. In this light, advertisers should take the congruent effects between media context and their advertisement into consideration for greater advertising effectiveness.

As with all research studies, this study has several limitations that need to be addressed. First, this study used a sample of college students, who may have more experience with digital cameras than the general population. In addition, the unbalanced gender ratio, with more than 76% of participants being female, needs to be considered as well. Gender differences in processing advertising messages across products could be carefully examined in future studies. A single digital camera brand was employed in the current study, which might limit the generalizability of the findings. Taken together, the convenience, student sample and the single type of product used in this study should be taken into consideration in interpreting the results of the study. A more representative sample and diverse product categories would help future research enhance external validity and substantiate this study's findings.

Future research with different product categories is needed to identify the degree of generalizability of the findings of this study. Future investigation should also consider different situations in priming individuals' self-concepts such as different types of sports events. Finally,

the interaction between different types of self-views and thinking styles in shaping advertising message framing effects need to be replicated in other cultural contexts and settings before any generalizations of the findings can be made.

### References

- Aaker, J. (1999). The malleable self: The role of self-expression in persuasion. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 36(1), 45-57.
- 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(1), 33-49.
- Aaker, J. L., & Williams, P. (1998). Empathy versus Pride: The Influence of Emotional Appeals across Cultures. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25(3), 241-261.
- Agrawal, N., & Maheswaran, D. (2005). The Effects of Self-construal and Commitment on Persuasion. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(4), 841-849.
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior. Engle-wood-Cliffs, NY: Prentice Hall.
- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the Extended Self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139-168. Retrieved from
- Boush, D. M., & Loken, B. (1991). A Process-Tracing Study of Brand Extension Evaluation. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 28(1), 16-28.
- Chaiken, S. (1980). Heuristic versus systematic information processing and the use of source versus message cues in persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 39(5), 752-766.
- Choi, I., Dalal, R., Kim-Prieto, C., & Park, H. (2003). Culture and judgement of causal relevance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(1), 46.
- Choi, I., Koo, M., & Jong An, C. (2007). Individual Differences in Analytic Versus Holistic Thinking. *Pers Soc Psychol Bull*, 33(5), 691-705.
- Choi, I., & Nisbett, R. E. (1998). Situational salience and cultural differences in the correspondence bias and actor-observer bias. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 9(2), 949-960.
- Choi, I., Nisbett, R. E., & Norenzayan, A. (1999). Causal attribution across cultures: variation and universality. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125(1), 47.
- Chua, H. F., Boland, J. E., & Nisbett, R. E. (2005). Cultural variation in eye movements during scene perception. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 102(35), 12629-12633.
- Escalas, J. E., & Luce, M. F. (2004). Understanding the effects of process-focused versus outcome-focused thought in response to advertising. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(2), 274-285.
- Fiske, A. P., Kitayama, S., Markus, H. R., & Nisbett, R. E. (1998). The cultural matrix of social psychology. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T.

- Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 915-981). San Francisco, CA: McGraw-Hill.
- Han, S.-p., & Shavitt, S. (1994). Persuasion and Culture: Advertising Appeals in Individualistic and Collectivistic Societies. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 30(4), 326-350.
- Ji, L.-J., Peng, K., & Nisbett, R. E. (2000). Culture, control, and perception of relationships in the environment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(5), 943.
- Keller, K. L., & Aaker, D. A. (1992). The Effects of Sequential Introduction of Brand Extensions. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 29(1), 35-60.
- Kleine, R. E., Kleine, S. S., & Kernan, J. B. (1993). Mundane Consumption and the Self: A Social-Identity Perspective. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 2(3), 209-235.
- Kühnen, U., Hannover, B., & Schubert, B. (2001). The semantic-procedural interface model of the self: The role of self-knowledge for context-dependent versus context-independent modes of thinking. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80(3), 397-409.
- Kühnen, U., & Oyserman, D. (2002). Thinking about the self influences thinking in general: cognitive consequences of salient self-concept. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 38(5), 492-499.
- Lee, A. Y., & Aaker, J. L. (2004). Bringing the Frame Into Focus: The Influence of Regulatory Fit on Processing Fluency and Persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86(2), 205-218.
- MacKenzie, S. B., Lutz, R. J., & Belch, G. E. (1986). The role of attitude toward the ad as a mediator of advertising effectiveness: A test of competing explanations. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 130-143.
- Markus, H., & Kunda, Z. (1986). Stability and malleability of the self-concept. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51(4), 858-866.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98(2), 224-253.
- Mitchell, A. A., & Olson, J. C. (1981). Are Product Attribute Beliefs the Only Mediator of Advertising Effects on Brand Attitude? *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(3), 318-332.
- Monga, Alokparna B., & John, D. R. (2007). Cultural Differences in Brand Extension Evaluation: The Influence of Analytic versus Holistic Thinking. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33(4), 529-536.
- Murphy, L., Mascardo, G., & Benckendorff, P. (2007). Exploring word-of-mouth influences on travel decisions: friends and relatives vs. other travellers. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 31(5), 517-527.
- Ng, S., & Houston, M. J. (2006). Exemplars or beliefs? The impact of self-view on the nature and relative influence of brand associations. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(4), 519-529.
- Nisbett, R. E., Peng, K., Choi, I., & Norenzayan, A. (2001). Culture and systems of thought: Holistic versus analytic cognition. *Psychological Review*, 108(2), 291-310.
- Peng, K., & Nisbett, R. E. (1999). Culture,



- dialectics, and reasoning about contradiction. *American Psychologist*, 54(9), 741-754.
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). *Communication and Persuasion: Central and Peripheral Routes to Attitude Change*. New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.
- Petty, R. E., Cacioppo, J. T., & Schumann, D. (1983). Central and Peripheral Routes to Advertising Effectiveness: The Moderating Role of Involvement. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 10(2), 135-146.
- Petty, R. E., Cacioppo, J. T., Strathman, A. J., & Priester, J. R. (2005). To think or not to think. In T. C. Brock & M. C. Green (Eds.), *Persuasion: Psychological insights and perspectives* (2nd ed., pp. 81-116): SAGE
- Petty, R. E., Unnava, R. H., & Strathman, A. J. (1991). Theories of attitude change. In T. S. Robertson & H. H. Kassarian (Eds.), *Handbook of consumer behavior* (pp. 241-280). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Priester, J. R., & Petty, R. E. (2003). The influence of spokesperson trustworthiness on message elaboration, attitude strength, and advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 13(4), 408-421.
- Sung, Y., & Choi, S. M. (2011). Increasing power and preventing pain: The moderating role of self-construal in advertising message framing. *Journal of Advertising*, 40(1), 71-85.
- Yi, Y. (1990). The Effects of Contextual Priming in Print Advertisements. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17(2), 215-222.
- 원 고 접 수 일 : 2016. 01. 29.  
수정원고접수일 : 2016. 05. 24.  
게 재 결 정 일 : 2016. 05. 30.

## 소비자의 자기해석이 기능 초점 또는 사용 환경 초점을 맞춘 광고 메시지의 해석에 미치는 영향

권 오 윤

계명대학교 사회과학대학 광고홍보 전공

본 연구는 소비자의 자기해석 방식과 연관된 인지 방식과 일치하게 제작된 광고 메시지가 어떠한 효과를 발생시킬 수 있는지 실험을 사용하여 조사하였다. 구체적으로 본 연구는 이러한 일치성이 광고 메시지와 브랜드에 대한 더 우호적인 태도에 영향을 미치는지 그리고 더 높은 구매의도를 유도하는지를 조사하고자 하였다. 본 연구의 결과는 자기해석과 광고메시지 프레임의 상호작용 효과가 발생함을 보여준다. 개인들의 독립적인 자기해석이 일시적으로 발현되었을 때, 그들은 사용상황에 초점을 맞춘 광고에 노출되었을 때보다 기능에 초점을 맞춘 광고에 노출되었을 때, 광고와 브랜드에 대해 더 우호적인 태도를 더 높은 구매의도 보였다. 반대로 상호의존적 자기해석이 일시적으로 발현되었을 때, 반대의 경향이 유의미하게 나타나는 것으로 조사되었다.

주요어 : 광고, 자기해석, 인지방식, 프레이밍, 프레임