AMNA KIRMANI and RUI (JULIET) ZHU*

This article proposes that compared with a promotion regulatory focus, a prevention focus increases sensitivity to the advertiser's manipulative intent. Specifically, when message cues make manipulative intent moderately salient, prevention-focused people are more likely to activate persuasion knowledge and give less favorable brand evaluations than promotion-focused people. When message cues make manipulative intent highly salient or when manipulative intent is not salient, brand evaluations do not differ across regulatory foci. In addition, externally priming suspicion of manipulative intent makes promotion-focused people react similarly to prevention-focused people, suggesting that regulatory focus affects vigilance against persuasion.

Vigilant Against Manipulation: The Effect of Regulatory Focus on the Use of Persuasion Knowledge

*Amna Kirmani is Professor of Marketing, Robert H. Smith School of Business, Uni;ersit of Mar land (e-mail: akirmani@rhsmith.umd.edu). Rui (Juliet) Zhu is Assistant Professor of Marketing, Sauder School of Business, Uni;ersit of British Columbia (e-mail juliet. hu@sauder.ubc. ca). The authors thank Jennifer Aaker, Hans Baumgartner, Joan Me ers-Le;-, Page Moreau, and participants of a marketing seminar at the Uni;ersit of Mar land for comments on a pre;ious ;ersion of the article. Jennifer Aaker ser;ed as guest associate editor for this article.

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In the ne t section, e describe research on persuasion kno ledge and regulator focus and de;elop h potheses about the effects of regulator focus on the use of persuasion kno ledge. We report three studies to test h potheses and process and conclude ith implications for further research.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Message Cues and Persuasion Knowledge

Persuasion kno ledge helps consumers identif hen someone is tr ing to persuade them and ho to respond to these persuasion attempts in a a that achie;es their o n goals (Friestad and Wright 1994). Persuasion kno ledge consists of ;arious beliefs, such as determining hich persuasion tactics marketers use; ho these tactics affect ps - chological mediators, such as getting attention, generating interest, or inducing emotion; hich tactics are effecti;e or appropriate in different situations; and hat the firms' goals and moti;es are. Acti;ation of persuasion kno ledge usuall entails suspicion about the marketer's ulterior moti;es, skepticism to ard ad;ertising claims, and perceptions of firms or marketing agents as deceptie or manipulati;e. Suspicion of firms' ulterior moti;es or manipulati;e intent leads to resistance to persuasion, resulting in less fa;orable brand or agent attitudes (Campbell 1995; Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Jain and Posa;ac 2004).

We propose that hen people process ad;ertisements, the tendenc to acti;ate persuasion kno ledge ma depend on t o factors: (1) the e tent to hich message cues make manipulati;e intent salient and (2) regulator focus. Message cues that increase the salience of the ad;ertiser's manipulati;e intent or ulterior moti;e are likel to acti;ate persuasion kno ledge (Campbell and Kirmani 2000). For e ample, ad;ertisements that use certain t pes of attention-getting tactics, such as dela ed sponsor identification, a borro ed interest appeal, or negati;e comparisons, increase perceptions of the firm's manipulati;e intent, thus resulting in less fa;orable brand e;aluations (Campbell 1995; Jain and Posa;ac 2004). Moreo;er, message cues that might be potentiall misleading or deceptie, such as disclosures (Johar and Simmons 2000) and incomplete comparisons (Barone et al. 1999), ma acti;ate persuasion kno ledge, at least among consumers ho recogni e them as persuasion tactics.

We propose that message cues are likel to ;ar in terms of the salience of manipulati;e intent. Some message cues (e.g., a biased source) make manipulati;e intent highl salient, hereas other cues (e.g., an independent source) make manipulati;e intent less salient. In bet een these t o e tremes are cues that ma make manipulati;e intent moderatel salient, referred to as ambiguous cues, because the ma ha;e multiple interpretations (Hoch 2002), one of hich is an inference of manipulati;e intent. For e ample, an incomplete comparison (e.g., Brand X is better than the leading brand) ma be interpreted as indicating Brand X's superiorit or ma raise suspicion about h the ad;ertiser did not specif the leading brand. For ambiguous cues, situational or indi;idual characteristics ma determine hether manipulati;e intent becomes more salient than another interpretation. We suggest that people's regulator focus affects ho the react to ambiguous message cues. We suggest that pre;ention-focused people are more likel than promotion-focused people to interpret ambiguous cues as reflecting manipulati;e intent.

Regulatory Focus and Persuasion Knowledge

According to regulator focus theor , people can attain their goals in t o a s, each in;ol;ing the use of an alternati;e regulator focus (Higgins 1987; Higgins et al. 1994). Promotion-focused people percei;e their goals as hopes and ideals. Thus, the are sensiti;e to the presence or absence of such positi;e outcomes and are inclined to approach matches to their goals. In contrast, pre;ention-focused people percei;e the same goals as duties and obligations. Thus, the are sensiti;e to the absence or presence of these negati;e outcomes and are inclined to a;oid mismatches to their goals. Promotion- and pre;ention-focused people ha;e been sho n to e hibit different ps chological states during the process of goal attainment (Cro e and Higgins 1997; Liberman et al. 1999). Whereas promotion-focused people are likel to pursue their goals ith eagerness, pre;ention-focused people are likel to pursue their goals ith ;igilance.

This fundamental difference in the use of approach ;ersus a;oidance strategies ma affect ;arious consumer beha;iors, such as information processing (Pham and Higgins 2005), h pothesis generation (Liberman et al. 2001), and memor (Higgins et al. 1994). For e ample, Pham and Higgins (2005) suggest that during information search, promotion-focused people's approach tendencies make them more likel to focus on positi;e signals about the a;ailable options during search. In contrast, pre;ention-focused people's a;oidance tendencies make them more likel to focus on negati;e signals. Because the use of persuasion kno ledge entails negati;e attributions about the ad;ertiser's manipulati;e intent, this suggests that promotion- and pre;ention-focused people acti;ate persuasion kno ledge differentl hen ;ie ing an ad;ertisement.

Specificall , e propose that because promotion-focused people attempt to approach matches to the desired end state, the are likel to focus on positi;e information and use approach strategies hen ;ie ing an ad;ertisement. Gi;en the goal of making a good decision about the product, the ma think in terms of ho the ad information can help them make a purchase decision. Promotion-focused people e;oke negati;e persuasion kno ledge onl hen presented ith cues that make manipulati;e intent highl salient. Thus, their brand e;aluations are likel to be more fa;orable hen message cues make manipulati;e intent less or moderatel salient than hen message cues make manipulati;e intent highl salient.

In contrast, because pre;ention-focused people attempt to a;oid mismatches to the desired end state, the are more likel to focus on negati;e information and use a;oidance strategies hen ;ie ing an ad;ertisement. In attempting to make a good decision, the ma think in terms of ho to a;oid being undul persuaded. Thus, the ma be ;igilant against manipulation, leading to acti;ation of negati;e persuasion kno ledge and greater skepticism about ad claims, e;en in the presence of ambiguous cues. This suggests that their brand e;aluations are likel to be more fa;orable hen message cues make manipulati;e intent less salient than hen message cues make manipulati;e intent moderatel or highl salient. This leads to the follo ing h potheses:

H_1: Compared ith a promotion focus, a pre;ention focus leads to less fa;orable brand e;aluations in the presence of ambiguous cues. Brand e;aluations are equall unfa;orable across le;els of regulator focus in the presence of cues that make manipulati;e intent highl salient and equall fa;orable in the presence of cues that make manipulati;e intent less salient.

H_2: Persuasion kno ledge mediates the effects of regulator focus and salience of manipulati;e intent on brand e;aluations.

Finall , as e mentioned pre;iousl , our predictions are based on differences in direction, rather than depth, of processing across regulator foci. We do not claim that ;igilance increases the amount of processing de;oted to the ad;ertisement; rather, pre;ention-focused people are more sensiti;e to manipulati;e intent. Moreo;er, although the notion that regulator focus entails differences in direction rather than depth of processing is similar to that of Pham and A;net (2004), our process is different from that of Pham and A;net, ho obser;ed that promotion-focused people are more likel to base judgments on their subjecti;e affecti;e reactions to the ad;ertisement, hereas pre;ention-focused people are more likel to base judgments on the substance of the message. In contrast, e claim that both pre;ention- and promotion-focused people e amine the message content, but their reactions to the content differ.

STUDY 1

The objecti;e of Stud 1 as to test H_1 and H_2. The stud emplo ed a 2 (regulator focus: promotion ;ersus pre;ention) × 3 (salience of manipulati;e intent: lo , moderate, or high) bet een-subjects design. Respondents ere 129 undergraduate students ho recei;ed course credit for participation and ho ere randoml assigned to treatments.

Manipulations

We manipulated regulator focus b priming ideals (promotion) or oughts (pre;ention). In the promotion-focus condition, respondents ere asked to think about their past hopes, aspirations, and dreams and to list t o of them. In addition, the ere asked to think about their current hopes, aspirations, and dreams and to list t o. In the pre;ention-focus condition, respondents thought about their past duties, obligations, and responsibilities and listed t o; the also thought about their current duties, obligations, and responsibilities and listed t o. This manipulation has been sho n to be effecti;e in other studies (e.g., Pham and A;net 2004).

Respondents sa a one-page print ad;ertisement for the target brand of digital cameras, called Calan. The ad;ertisement contained a headline, a picture of the camera, and three sets of claims in the cop (see Appendi A). We manipulated the salience of manipulati;e intent through the second claim, hich ;aried the source of a stud and the t pe of comparison. Specificall , the target claim reported results from a stud in hich consumers rated Calan as producing better qualit pictures than the leading brand.' We e pected that this incomplete comparison ould be more ambiguous than a comparison that specified the leading brands, such as Canon and Kodak. A bet een-subjects pretest on a different group of 57 respondents from the same population sho ed that the incomplete comparison claim as percei;ed as more ambiguous than the specific comparison claim ($M_{specific\ comparison} = 2.59$, $M_{ambigous\ comparison} = 3.50$; $F(1, 55) = 4.13$, $p < .05$; 1 = not at all ambiguous,' and 7 = e tremel ambiguous'). Thus, the incomplete comparison made manipulati;e intent moderatel salient because some people might be suspicious that the firm as intentionall omitting the name of a mediocre referent brand.

In addition, the stud as attributed to either an independent source (i.e., *Consumer Reports*) or a biased source (i.e., the Calan compan). When the source as biased, the ad;ertiser's manipulati;e intent as highl salient. The pretest also established that percei;ed manipulati;e intent as higher hen the source of a stud as biased than hen it as independent. Specificall , t o groups of respondents ere presented ith a claim regarding a stud b either an independent source or a biased source and ere asked to rate the e tent to hich it reflected an attempt to persuade b inappropriate, unfair, or manipulati;e means on a se;en-point scale (higher numbers indicated greater manipulati;eness). The claim as percei;ed as more manipulati;e hen the source as biased than hen it as independent ($M_{biased} = 5.33$, $M_{independent} = 4.30$; $F(1, 55) = 4.51$, $p < .04$).

Taking the stud source and the t pe of comparison together, e find that salience of manipulati;e intent as high hen the stud as done b a biased source (Calan) and the comparison as ambiguous (leading brand). Salience of manipulati;e intent as moderate hen the stud as done b an independent source (*Consumer Reports*) and the comparison as ambiguous (leading brand). Finall , salience of manipulati;e intent as lo hen the stud as done b an independent source (*Consumer Reports*) and the comparison as specific (leading brands, such as Canon and Kodak).

Measures

Brand attitude and perceived quality. We measured attitude to ard the brand (A_b) as an a;erage of three se;en-point items: unfa;orable/fa;orable,' dislike/like,' and unappealing/appealing' (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$). In addition, percei;ed qualit as measured relati;e to other digital cameras as an a;erage of fi;e se;en-point items: lo er/higher qualit ,' performance,' reliabilit ,' sharp pictures,' and st lishness' ($\alpha = .90$).

Persuasion knowledge. We measured acti;ation of persuasion kno ledge in t o a s. The first as respondents' assessment of the ad;ertisement's decepti;eness, hich as a measure of skepticism about the ad;ertisement. This measure as an a;erage of three se;en-point items that rated the ad;ertisement: unbelie;able/belie;able,' not truthful/truthful,' and decepti;e/nondecepti;e' ($\alpha = .83$). These items are re;erse coded, so higher numbers indicate greater decepti;eness.

The second measure of persuasion kno ledge as based on thought protocols. Respondents ere asked to record all the thoughts, feelings, or impressions the had about the product and/or ad;ertisement. We coded these thoughts for

persuasion kno ledge, including suspicion about the firm's moti;es or manipulati;e intent (e.g., I don't belie;e a stud done b the compan) and skepticism about ad claims (e.g., With hich leading brands are the comparing?). Intercoder reliabilit as .94.

Manipulation checks and confounds. Recall that our basic premise is that compared ith a promotion focus, a pre;ention focus increases ;igilance against persuasion. As a check to determine hether regulator focus affects suspicion about being persuaded, e asked respondents to indicate their suspicion. The question stated, Before I sa the ad, I suspected the ad;ertisement ould contain undue persuasion (1 = strongl disagree, and 7 = strongl agree). This measure follo ed all the other measures.

Finall , to ensure that regulator focus affects direction rather than depth of processing, e measured depth of processing in t o a s. First, because in;ol;ement can lead to greater depth of processing (e.g., Cacioppo, Pett , and Kao 1986), e measured self-reported in;ol;ement as a composite of three items on a se;en-point scale in response to the question, As ou e amined the ad, ho did ou feel? (in;ol;ed, interested, engaged ; α = .95). Second, e assessed the total number of rele;ant thoughts in the protocols. This reflects the e tent of message elaboration and, thus, depth of processing.

Results

Manipulation check. To test hether a pre;ention focus induced a higher suspicion le;el than a promotion focus before participants sa the ad;ertisement, e ran a 2 × 3 anal sis of ;ariance (ANOVA) on participants' reported suspicion of the ad;ertisement's containing undue persuasion. Onl a main effect of regulator focus emerged as significant ($F(1, 123) = 4.93$, $p < .03$); pre;ention-focused respondents reported higher suspicion le;els than promotion-focused respondents before the sa the ad;ertisement ($M_{promotion} = 4.22$, $M_{pre;ention} = 4.80$). This pro;ides support for the basic premise of differential suspicion.

Depth of processing. A 2 × 3 ANOVA re;ealed no significant main or interaction effects on either of the t o measures of depth of processing (all ps > .14). The le;el of self-reported in;ol;ement and total number of thoughts ere the same across conditions (for cell means, see Table 1). Thus, as e e pected, regulator focus did not affect depth of processing.

Brand attitude and perceived quality. H_1 suggests an interaction bet een regulator focus and salience of manipulati;e intent on brand e;aluations. A 2 × 3 ANOVA re;ealed a significant interaction effect on both brand attitude ($F(2, 123) = 3.10$, $p < .05$) and percei;ed qualit ($F(2, 123) = 3.14$, $p < .05$). In addition, there as a main effect of salience of manipulati;e intent on both measures; specificall , there ere more fa;orable e;aluations as salience decreased (brand attitude: $M_{lo} = 4.32$, $M_{moderate} = 3.82$, $M_{high} = 3.05$; $F(2, 123) = 8.41$, $p < .001$; percei;ed qualit : $M_{lo} = 4.42$, $M_{moderate} = 4.12$, $M_{high} = 3.41$; $F(2, 123) = 9.64$, $p < .001$).

The interaction effect (see Figure 1) as consistent ith H_1. Pre;ention-focused respondents formed less fa;orable brand e;aluations than promotion-focused respondents hen salience of manipulati;e intent as moderate (brand attitude: $M_{promotion} = 4.41$, $M_{pre;ention} = 3.23$; $F(1, 123) = 7.04$, $p < .01$; percei;ed qualit : $M_{promotion} = 4.51$, $M_{pre;ention} = 3.72$; $F(1, 123) = 5.73$, $p < .02$). Ho e;er, their e;aluations ere equi;alent hen salience as lo (brand attitude: $M_{promotion} = 4.33$, $M_{pre;ention} = 4.30$; $F < 1$; percei;ed qualit : $M_{promotion} = 4.30$, $M_{pre;ention} = 4.53$; $F < 1$) and hen salience as high (brand attitude: $M_{promotion} = 2.89$, $M_{pre;ention} = 3.21$; $F < 1$; percei;ed qualit : $M_{promotion} = 3.30$, $M_{pre;ention} = 3.52$; $F < 1$).

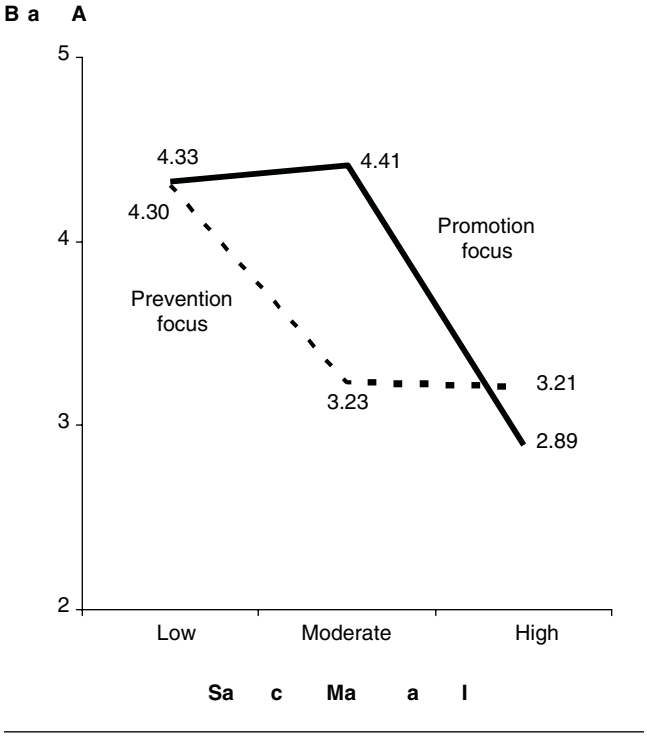
Contrasts ithin regulator focus re;ealed that promotion-focused respondents ga;e less fa;orable e;alua-

Table 1
STUDY 1: CELL MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS

	Low Salience of Manipulative Intent		*Moderate Salience of Manipulative Intent*		*High Salience of Manipulative Intent*	
	Promotion Focus	*Prevention Focus*	*Promotion Focus*	*Prevention Focus*	*Promotion Focus*	*Prevention Focus*
Brand attitude[a]	4.33 (1.64)	4.30 (1.83)	4.41 (1.79)	3.23 (1.12)	2.89 (1.04)	3.21 (.81)
Perci;ed qualit [a]	4.30 (1.43)	4.53 (1.06)	4.51 (1.22)	3.72 (.77)	3.30 (.96)	3.52 (.90)
Perci;ed ad decepti;eness[b]	3.25 (1.48)	2.97 (1.01)	3.16 (.98)	4.03 (1.38)	3.92 (.91)	3.98 (.89)
Total number of thoughts	4.33 (2.11)	4.22 (2.49)	3.83 (2.12)	4.70 (2.05)	5.00 (3.16)	3.43 (2.80)
Number of persuasion kno ledge thoughts	.33 (.58)	.17 (.39)	.17 (.39)	1.00 (1.62)	.90 (1.45)	.81 (1.12)
In;ol;ement[a]	2.75 (.98)	3.13 (1.46)	3.24 (1.19)	3.67 (1.83)	2.71 (1.35)	3.36 (1.66)
Cell si es	21	23	23	20	21	21

[a]Measured on a se;en-point scale; higher numbers indicate more positi;e scores.
[b]Measured on a se;en-point scale; higher numbers indicate greater decepti;eness.
Notes: Standard de;iations are in parentheses.

Figure 1
STUDY 1: REGULATORY FOCUS (PROMOTION VERSUS PREVENTION) INTERACTS WITH SALIENCE OF MANIPULATIVE INTENT (LOW VERSUS MODERATE VERSUS HIGH) TO AFFECT BRAND ATTITUDE



tions hen salience of manipulati e intent as high than hen it as moderate (brand attitude: F(1, 123) = 12.10, $p < .001$; perceived qualit : F(1, 123) = 13.66, $p < .001$) or lo (brand attitude: F(1, 123) = 10.49, $p < .01$; perceived qualit : F(1, 123) = 8.95, $p < .01$). The difference bet een moderate and lo salience as not significant (Fs < 1). In contrast, pre ention-focused respondents formed more fa orable brand e aluations hen salience of manipulati e intent as lo than hen it as high (brand attitude: F(1, 123) = 6.34, $p < .05$; perceived qualit : F(1, 123) = 9.48, $p < .01$) or moderate (brand attitude: F(1, 123) = 5.88, $p < .05$; perceived qualit : F(1, 123) = 5.99, $p < .05$). The difference bet een moderate and high salience conditions as not significant (Fs < 1). Thus, H_1 is supported.

Persuasion knowledge. H_2 predicted that persuasion kno ledge ould mediate these effects. Separate ANOVAs on perceived ad decepti eness and persuasion kno ledge thoughts (PK thoughts) re ealed a significant interaction effect (ad decepti eness: F(2, 123) = 3.00, $p < .05$; PK thoughts: F(2, 123) = 3.08, $p < .05$). As ith brand e aluations, pre ention-focused respondents ere more likel to acti ate persuasion kno ledge than promotion-focused respondents hen salience of manipulati e intent as moderate (ad decepti eness: $M_{promotion} = 3.16$, $M_{pre;ention} = 4.03$; F(1, 123) = 6.43, $p < .02$; PK thoughts: $M_{promotion} = .17$, $M_{pre;ention} = 1.00$; F(1, 123) = 6.89, $p < .01$). The ere equall likel to acti ate persuasion kno ledge hen salience as high (ad decepti eness: $M_{promotion} = 3.92$, $M_{pre;ention} = 3.98$; F < 1; PK thoughts: $M_{promotion} = .90$, $M_{pre;ention} = .81$; F < 1) and ere equall unlikel to acti ate persuasion kno ledge hen salience as lo (ad decepti eness: $M_{promotion} = 3.25$, $M_{pre;ention} = 2.97$; F < 1; PK thoughts: $M_{promotion} = .33$, $M_{pre;ention} = .17$; F < 1).

Contrasts ithin regulator focus re ealed that for promotion-focused respondents, persuasion kno ledge as more likel to be used hen salience of manipulati e intent as high than hen it as moderate (ad decepti eness: F(1, 123) = 5.01, $p < .05$; PK thoughts: F(1, 123) = 5.53, $p < .02$) or lo (ad decepti eness: F(1, 123) = 3.67, $p < .06$; PK thoughts: F(1, 123) = 3.24, $p < .07$). The difference bet een moderate- and lo -salience conditions as not significant (Fs < 1). For pre ention-focused respondents, persuasion kno ledge as more likel to be used hen salience of manipulati e intent as high than hen it as lo (ad decepti eness: F(1, 123) = 8.87, $p < .01$; PK thoughts: F(1, 123) = 4.19, $p < .05$) or hen salience of manipulati e intent as moderate than hen it as lo (ad decepti eness: F(1, 123) = 9.41, $p < .01$; PK thoughts: F(1, 123) = 6.89, $p < .01$). The difference bet een the moderate- and high-salience conditions as not significant (Fs < 1). The protocols re ealed that pre ention-focused respondents ere skeptical about the comparison brand in the moderate-manipulati e-intent condition; for e ample, the questioned hat the leading brands ere.

To assess hether persuasion kno ledge mediated the treatment effects on brand attitude and perceived qualit , e conducted mediation anal ses (Baron and Kenn 1986). First, e e amined hether perceived ad decepti eness mediated the treatment effects on brand e aluations. The regulator focus × salience of manipulati e intent interaction as significant on brand e aluations (brand attitude: b = .23, $p < .02$; perceived qualit : b = .18, $p < .02$) and perceived ad decepti eness (b = .17, $p < .03$). Ho e er, the treatment effects on brand e aluations ere full mediated b perceived ad decepti eness (brand attitude: $b_{interaction} = .12$, $p = .17$; $b_{ad\ decepti;eness} = .66$, $p < .001$; Sobel: Z = 2.16, $p < .03$; perceived qualit : $b_{interaction} = .09$, $p = .16$; $b_{ad\ decepti;eness} = .53$, $p < .001$; Sobel: Z = 2.18, $p < .03$). Similarl , PK thoughts also mediated the treatment effects on brand e aluations. The interaction effect as significant on PK thoughts (b = .16, $p < .02$). Ho e er, the treatment effects on brand e aluations ere full mediated b PK thoughts (brand attitude: $b_{interaction} = .16$, $p = .08$; $b_{PK\ thoughts} = .34$, $p < .01$; Sobel: Z = 1.92, $p < .05$; perceived qualit : $b_{interaction} = .13$, $p = .08$; $b_{PK\ thoughts} = .31$, $p < .001$; Sobel: Z = 2.02, $p < .05$). Thus, as H_2 predicted, persuasion kno ledge mediated the treatment effects on brand e aluations.

Discussion

The results from Stud 1 pro ide support for the h potheses that regulator focus interacts ith message cues to affect brand e aluations and that acti ation of persuasion underlies these effects. In support of the basic premise that a pre ention focus makes people more i ilant against persuasion, pre ention-focused respondents indicated greater suspicion of undue persuasion than promotion-focused respondents before ad e posure. On seeing the ad ertisement, pre ention-focused respondents ere more suspicious about brand claims, perceived the ad er-

tisement as more deceptive, and evaluated the brand less favorable when presented with message cues that made manipulative intent highly or moderately salient. In contrast, promotion-focused respondents were suspicious and reacted unfavorably only when message cues made manipulative intent highly salient.

The differences across regulatory foci could not be attributed to depth of processing, given the same level of cognitive responses (i.e., the total number of relevant thoughts) and self-reported involvement level. These results are consistent with those of Pham and Avnet (2004), who find that the same manipulation of regulatory focus does not affect involvement, mood, or need for cognition. However, our process mechanism differs from theirs. Regression analysis revealed that, in our study, regulatory focus did not change respondents' reliance on substantive assessments versus subjective feelings in forming their attitudes. The regression analysis was similar to that which Pham and Avnet report (p. 508), and it showed no significant effects of regulatory focus on whether substantive assessments or subjective feelings affected brand attitude.

Study 1 provides some evidence that differences in sensitivity to manipulative intent underlie the responses of promotion- and prevention-focused people to ambiguous message cues. In Study 2, we expand on this finding by examining two process-related issues. First, we examine whether sensitivity to manipulative intent means that regulatory focus affects perceptions of the diagnosticity of manipulative intent, desirability of manipulative intent, or both. Our premise is that promotion- and prevention-focused people differ in terms of their perceptions of how diagnostic a cue is of manipulative intent and that these perceptions affect brand evaluations. However, it could be that the two foci also differ in terms of whether people believe that manipulative intent is desirable. In other words, prevention-focused people may find manipulative intent to be less appealing than do promotion-focused people. We directly measure desirability and diagnosticity to explore this issue.

Second, to confirm further that sensitivity to manipulative intent underlies the results, we increase the sensitivity of promotion-focused people to manipulative intent by externally priming suspicion. External priming suspicion should make promotion-focused people more vigilant about manipulative intent, leading them to respond similarly to prevention-focused people. Prior research has shown that external priming of suspicion can affect message processing. For example, Darke and Ritchie (2007) find that priming advertising deception may activate negative stereotypes about marketing, making people distrustful of advertising claims from the same or different source. Similarly, Campbell and Kirmani (2000) show that external priming suspicion of ulterior motives may lead to negative evaluations of salespeople.

Because the differential effects of regulatory focus occurred only in the ambiguous cue condition (i.e., when manipulative intent was moderately salient), we examine this condition more carefully. We propose that external priming suspicion of manipulative intent will activate promotion-focused respondents' persuasion knowledge. Therefore, compared with a no-suspicion priming condition, promotion-focused respondents primed with suspicion may be more vigilant about manipulative intent when they see an advertisement with an ambiguous cue. This could result in less favorable brand evaluations for promotion-focused respondents when suspicion is primed than when it is not primed. In contrast, priming suspicion should not affect the responses of prevention-focused respondents, because their persuasion knowledge is already activated when they encounter an advertisement. This leads to the third hypothesis, which pertains to the situation in which ad cues are ambiguous about manipulative intent.

H_3: When suspicion is not primed, a prevention focus leads to more negative brand evaluations than a promotion focus. When suspicion is primed, however, brand evaluations are equally negative under a promotion and prevention focus.

STUDY 2

The objective of Study 2 was to examine further the underlying process mechanism for the effects observed in Study 1. The study employed a 2 (regulatory focus: promotion versus prevention) × 2 (suspicion: externally primed versus not) between-subjects design. Respondents were 82 undergraduate students who received course credit for participation and who were randomly assigned to treatments.

Procedure and Manipulations

The procedure was similar to that in Study 1, except that the suspicion prime occurred before the regulatory focus manipulation. The suspicion priming manipulation was in the form of an unrelated task in a separate booklet before the main study. Respondents were told that they would be evaluating a short newspaper article for its relevance to college students. Two articles were created (see Appendix B). In the suspicion-primed condition, the article was intended to make consumers vigilant about corporate fraud. Specifically, the article described a company whose chief executive officer (CEO) fabricated financial figures to show a profit. Subsequently, auditors review ed the company's financial statements and exposed the deception. Note that this article had nothing to do with advertising, reducing the likelihood that respondents would discern the relationship between the two studies and ensuring that the manipulation induced generalized suspicion rather than suspicion of advertising claims. A similar manipulation has been used in prior work (Darke and Argo 2005). In the suspicion-unprimed condition, the article described a new concept car at the design stage by Volkswagen.

To assess the equivalence of the two primes on dimensions unrelated to suspicion, respondents in this study evaluated the article on measures such as believable, interesting, informative, and meaningful (seven-point scales). These measures were combined to form an ad perception index ($\alpha = .72$). The ANOVA on this index revealed no significant differences across the two primes ($p > .16$). In addition, a separate pretest with 37 respondents from the same population assessed equivalence on other dimensions, such as mood and involvement. In a between-subjects design, respondents read either the suspicion prime (n = 18) or the no-suspicion prime (n = 19). They then filled out some measures, including the PANAS (positive and negative affect schedule) scale (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988), involvement, and suspicion. We analyzed responses to the

PANAS scale separatel for positi;e and negati;e mood; e created a positi;e (α = .88) and negati;e (α = .92) mood scale (fi;e-point scales) b a;eraging all positi;e items and all negati;e items, respecti;el . The ANOVA re;ealed that the primes did not differentiall affect negati;e ($M_{suspicion}$ = 1.51, $M_{no\ suspicion}$ = 1.26; $F(1, 35) = 1.97$, $p > .17$) or positi;e ($M_{suspicion}$ = 2.27, $M_{no\ suspicion}$ = 2.61; $F(1, 35) = 1.67$, $p > .20$) mood. Similarl , e measured task in;ol;ement pgat9(tTJto hichr39 Tne(;)14. spaperT*-0.0002 Tc0.0278 T685(all ne

Table 2
STUDY 2: CELL MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS

	Suspicion Not Primed		*Suspicion Primed*	
	Promotion Focus	*Prevention Focus*	*Promotion Focus*	*Prevention Focus*
Brand attitude[a]	3.55 (1.18)	2.03 (.81)	2.42 (.82)	2.46 (.92)
Perceived quality[a]	3.93 (1.07)	2.74 (.84)	2.57 (.78)	2.69 (.85)
Perceived ad deceptiveness[b]	3.43 (.97)	4.73 (1.29)	4.68 (1.30)	4.35 (1.28)
Number of persuasion knowledge thoughts	.30 (.47)	1.19 (1.08)	.90 (1.02)	.95 (1.07)
Diagnosticity of manipulative intent[a]	3.30 (1.56)	4.57 (1.17)	4.50 (1.28)	4.29 (1.62)
Desirability of manipulative intent[c]	5.20 (1.67)	4.71 (2.08)	5.00 (1.72)	4.76 (2.00)
Total number of thoughts	5.55 (2.09)	5.81 (1.60)	5.55 (2.11)	6.05 (2.11)
Involvement[a]	3.35 (1.61)	3.02 (.97)	2.90 (1.12)	3.25 (1.17)
Cell sizes	20	21	20	21

[a]Measured on a seven-point scale; higher numbers indicate more positive scores.
[b]Measured on a seven-point scale; higher numbers indicate greater deceptiveness.
[c]Measured on a seven-point scale; higher numbers indicate less desirability.
Notes: Standard deviations are in parentheses.

under a prevention than promotion focus (ad deceptiveness: $M_{promotion} = 3.43$, $M_{prevention} = 4.73$; $F(1, 78) = 11.64$, $p < .001$; PK thoughts: $M_{promotion} = .30$, $M_{prevention} = 1.19$; $F(1, 78) = 9.03$, $p < .01$). When suspicion was primed, however, persuasion knowledge was equivalent under the two foci (ad deceptiveness: $M_{promotion} = 4.68$, $M_{prevention} = 4.35$; $F < 1$; PK thoughts: $M_{promotion} = .90$, $M_{prevention} = .95$; $F < 1$).

Further tests revealed that persuasion knowledge mediated the treatment effects on brand attitude and perceived quality. We first examine perceived ad deceptiveness as a mediator. The regulatory focus × suspicion prime interaction was significant on brand evaluations (brand attitude: $b = 1.56$, $p < .001$; perceived quality: $b = 1.30$, $p < .001$) and perceived ad deceptiveness ($b = 1.63$, $p < .01$). However, ad deceptiveness mediated the interaction effect on brand evaluation (brand attitude: $b_{interaction} = .92$, $p < .02$; $b_{ad\ deceptiveness} = .40$, $p < .001$; Sobel: $Z = 2.62$, $p < .01$; perceived quality: $b_{interaction} = .69$, $p < .06$; $b_{ad\ deceptiveness} = .38$, $p < .001$; Sobel: $Z = 2.63$, $p < .01$). Similarly, PK thoughts marginally mediated the treatment effects on brand evaluations. The interaction effect was significant on PK thoughts ($b = .84$, $p < .05$), and PK thoughts marginally mediated the interaction effect on brand evaluation (brand attitude: $b_{interaction} = 1.25$, $p < .01$; $b_{PK\ thoughts} = .37$, $p < .001$; Sobel: $Z = 1.84$, $p < .08$; perceived quality: $b_{interaction} = 1.07$, $p < .01$; $b_{PK\ thoughts} = .28$, $p < .01$; Sobel: $Z = 1.62$, $p < .10$).

Diagnosticity versus desirability. To assess whether desirability or diagnosticity drove the treatment effects, we examined the results on the diagnosticity and desirability measures. A 2 × 2 ANOVA revealed a significant interaction effect on diagnosticity of manipulative intent ($F(1, 78) = 5.63$, $p < .02$). When suspicion was not primed, prevention-focused respondents considered the ad claim more diagnostic of manipulative intent than promotion-focused respondents ($M_{promotion} = 3.30$, $M_{prevention} = 4.57$; $F(1, 78) = 8.25$, $p < .01$). When suspicion was primed, however, there was no difference across the two foci in terms of diagnosticity ($M_{promotion} = 4.50$, $M_{prevention} = 4.29$; $F < 1$). Moreover, diagnosticity mediated the treatment effects on brand evaluations. Specifically, the regulatory focus × prime interaction was significant on the diagnosticity measure ($b = 1.49$, $p < .02$), and diagnosticity mediated the interaction effect on brand evaluation (brand attitude: $b_{interaction} = 1.06$, $p < .01$; $b_{diagnosticity} = .34$, $p < .001$; Sobel: $Z = 2.16$, $p < .05$; perceived quality: $b_{interaction} = .82$, $p < .03$; $b_{diagnosticity} = .33$, $p < .001$; Sobel: $Z = 2.17$, $p < .05$).

In contrast, there were no significant treatment effects on the desirability measure (all ps > .39), suggesting that promotion- and prevention-focused respondents had equivalent ratings of desirability ($M_{promotion} = 5.10$, $M_{prevention} = 4.74$; $F < 1$). Thus, the underlying mechanism appears to be based on differences in diagnosticity, rather than desirability, of manipulative intent.

Discussion

Study 2 replicated the results from the ambiguous-claim condition of Study 1b showing that when suspicion was not externally primed, a promotion focus led to more favorable brand evaluations than a prevention focus. The study also shed light on the underlying process mechanism. When

generali ed suspicion as primed through an article about corporate accounting fraud, the t o regulator foci led to similar brand e;aluations. This suggests that hereas a pre-;ention focus naturall generates ;igilance, a promotion focus generates ;igilance onl hen suspicion is made e ternall salient. Again, persuasion kno ledge ratings and thoughts ere sho n to underlie these effects. Finall , differences in percei;ed diagnosticit , rather than desirabilit , of manipulati;e intent dro;e the results.

An issue raised b Stud 2 is hether the suspicion manipulation ma ha;e triggered a pre;ention focus. If this ere the case, the suspicion manipulation ould ha;e just been an alternati;e manipulation of regulator focus. Ho -e;er, this is unlikel , gi;en that the manipulation check on regulator focus re;ealed a successful manipulation that as unaffected b the suspicion prime. Ne;ertheless, in Stud 3, e e amine formall hether a pre;ention focus is indeed distinct from suspicion.

We e pect that hereas a pre;ention focus and suspicion ma lead to similar results on tasks that trigger suspicion (e.g., the processing of ambiguous ad claims), the are likel to ha;e different effects on other, nonsuspicious tasks because regulator focus entails aspects other than suspicion, such as the use of different strategies to achie;e goals and the preference for different product attributes. Pre;ention-focused people prefer to use a;oiding mismatch strategies to achie;e their goals, hereas promotion-focused people prefer to use approaching match strategies to attain their goals (Higgins 1997). Thus, pre;ention-focused people should prefer brands that offer pre;ention benefits, such as ca;it pre;ention or safet , hereas promotion-focused people should prefer brands that offer promotion benefits, such as teeth hitening or energ . In contrast, people primed ith suspicion are unlikel to e hibit differences in preference for product attributes; a suspicious person should be indifferent to hether a brand has promotion or pre;ention benefits. Therefore, e predict that respondents primed ith a pre;ention focus and those primed ith suspicion should respond similarl hen processing ambiguous ad claims. Ho e;er, the ma beha;e differentl hen responding to non-suspicion-related tasks.

STUDY 3

The objecti;e of Stud 3 as to assess hether a pre;ention focus and suspicion ha;e unique effects. The stud as a bet een-subjects design ith four conditions (promotion, pre;ention, suspicion, and no suspicion). Respondents ere 115 undergraduate students at a large eastern uni;ersit ho participated for e tra credit and ere randoml assigned to conditions.

Respondents participated in a stud that included se;eral tasks. The first task entailed recei;ing one of the four manipulations (promotion, pre;ention, suspicion, or no suspicion). Participants in the first group (promotion focus) ere asked to describe their hopes and ideals, as in Stud 1; those in the second group (pre;ention focus) ere asked to describe their duties and obligations, as in Stud 1; those in the third group (suspicion primed) ere asked to read and e;aluate the corporate fraud ne spaper article from Stud 2; and those in the fourth group (suspicion not primed) ere asked to read and e;aluate the Volks agen concept car article from Stud 2.

To maintain consistenc ith the pre;ious studies, respondents sa an ad;ertisement for Calan camera after completing the first task. The ad;ertisement as the same as that in Stud 2 (see Appendi A), ith the e ception that the critical ambiguous claim (Paragraph 2) as deleted. Thus, the ad;ertisement did not contain an mention of stud results. We did this intentionall to pro;ide a neutral ad;ertisement that all respondents ould see. Then, respondents ere asked to complete a purportedl different task about brand preferences (Zhou and Pham 2004). The read descriptions of three pairs of brands and reported their preferences on a scale that ranged from 1 (prefer Brand A) to 7 (prefer Brand B). In the first pair (grape juices), Brand A as rich in ;itamin C and iron, thus promoting high energ (promotion benefit), and Brand B as rich in anti-o idants, thus reducing the risk of cancer and heart disease (pre;ention benefit). In the second pair (toothpastes), Brand A as particularl good for ca;it pre;ention (pre;ention benefit), and Brand B as particularl good for tooth hitening (promotion benefit). In the third pair (snacks), Brand A as a rich and tast chocolate cake (promotion benefit), and Brand B as a health and fresh fruit salad (pre;ention benefit). We took the three sets of brand choices directl from the ork of Zhou and Pham (2004). We coded responses to the items so that higher ratings indicated greater pre;ention than promotion benefits, and then e a;eraged them to form a composite measure. We e pected that regulator focus, but not suspicion, ould affect these choices.

The second set of questions in;ol;ed e;aluating the manipulati;e intent of si ad claims. Respondents ere asked to indicate on a se;en-point scale hether each claim reflected an attempt to persuade b inappropriate, unfair, or manipulati;e means (1 = not at all manipulati;e, and 7 = e tremel manipulati;e). Three of the claims (the third, fifth, and si th claims) ere intended to be ambiguous ith respect to manipulati;e intent, and the other three claims ere intended to make manipulati;e intent less salient. The three ambiguous claims included the ambiguous claim from the prior studies (In a recent stud b *Consumer Reports*, consumers rated Calan as producing better qualit pictures than the leading brand), plus t o more claims (If ou bu the Calan camera in the ne t t o eeks, e'll send ou a free carr ing case, and Calan's better than the rest). We combined these claims to create an inde of ambiguous claims ($\alpha = .70$). We e pected differences across both regulator focus and suspicion priming for this inde . We e pected the other three claims to be lo in salience of manipulati;e intent (This camera gi;es ou 4 megapi el effecti;e resolution and 3× optical oom ; Precision metering s stems enable effortless shooting and pro;ide sharp results ; and The camera is st lish, light, and packed ith the latest in user-friendl technolog). We combined these claims to create an inde of unambiguous claims ($\alpha = .74$). We e pected no treatment effects on this inde .

Results

Brand preference. A one- a ANOVA on the brand preference task sho ed a significant main effect ($F(3, 111) = 2.69$, $p < .05$). Planned contrasts re;ealed that, as e e pected, regulator focus affected brand preference, but suspicion priming did not. Across the three pairs of brands, a promotion (pre;ention) focus led to greater preference for

the brand featuring promotion (prevention) benefits ($M_{promotion}$ = 4.20, $M_{prevention}$ = 5.07; t(111) = 2.63, p < .01). Moreover, there were no significant differences on brand preference between the suspicion and the nonsuspicion conditions ($M_{suspicion}$ = 4.64, $M_{no\ suspicion}$ = 4.37; t(111) = .86, p > .39). Thus, regulatory focus affected brand preference, but suspicion did not. Table 3 shows the cell means.

Claims. Factor analysis confirmed that the six claims fell into the anticipated two factors. Thus, we performed analyses on the two claim indexes. A one-way ANOVA on the ambiguous-claims index revealed a significant treatment effect (F(3, 111) = 3.20, p < .03). Planned contrasts revealed that both regulatory focus and suspicion priming affected perceived manipulative intent of the claims. Specifically, a prevention focus led to perceptions of the claims as more manipulative than a promotion focus ($M_{promotion}$ = 4.29, $M_{prevention}$ = 4.99; t(111) = 2.17, p < .05). In addition, the claims were perceived as more manipulative when suspicion was primed than when it was not primed ($M_{suspicion}$ = 4.80, $M_{no\ suspicion}$ = 4.16; t(111) = 2.04, p < .05). Thus, both suspicion priming and a prevention focus led to greater sensitivity to manipulative intent.

A one-way ANOVA on the index of unambiguous claims revealed no significant treatment effects (F < 1). As we expected, the claims were perceived as equally nonmanipulative under all four conditions ($M_{promotion}$ = 3.19, $M_{prevention}$ = 3.68; $M_{suspicion}$ = 3.76, $M_{no\ suspicion}$ = 3.49). Thus, consistent with our expectations, neither suspicion priming nor regulatory focus affected the evaluation of unambiguous claims.

Discussion

The results from this study offer important insights about the difference between a prevention focus and suspicion. They demonstrate that suspicion is just one aspect of a prevention regulatory focus. When presented with ambiguous ad claims, prevention-focused respondents perceived the claims as more manipulative than promotion-focused respondents, and those primed with suspicion perceived the claims as more manipulative than those not primed with suspicion. In terms of ambiguous claims, therefore, a prevention focus and suspicion priming led to the same results. However, a prevention focus was distinct from suspicion in other aspects, such as preferred product attributes. Specifically, in a brand preference task, whereas prevention-focused (promotion focused) respondents exhibited a preference for brands featuring prevention (promotion) benefits, suspicion-primed respondents were not expected nor found to differ from unprimed respondents. This indicates that though a prevention regulatory focus may lead to suspicion, suspicion does not necessarily lead to a prevention focus.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The objective of the article was to determine the conditions under which regulatory focus affected the activation and use of persuasion knowledge. The data supported our basic premise that a prevention focus leads to greater sensitivity to the advertiser's manipulative intent than a promotion focus. Study 1 demonstrated that compared with respondents with a promotion focus, prevention-focused respondents were more likely to activate persuasion knowledge and give less favorable brand evaluations when ad cues made manipulative intent moderately salient. In contrast, promotion-focused respondents activated persuasion knowledge only when message cues made manipulative intent highly salient. Study 2 replicated and extended these findings to show that the effects were due to differences in perceived diagnosticity, rather than desirability, of manipulative intent. Finally, Study 3 demonstrated that whereas a prevention focus may lead to suspicion, suspicion does not necessarily imply a prevention focus.

The results support the notion that regulatory focus affected the direction rather than the depth of processing (Pham and Avnet 2004). Message elaboration (i.e., involvement and total number of relevant thoughts) was equivalent across foci, suggesting the same depth of processing. However, prevention-focused respondents were more sensitive to being unduly manipulated than promotion-focused respondents, indicating differences in direction of processing. These findings have both theoretical and managerial implications.

Implications for Research and Practice

The article contributes to research on both persuasion knowledge and regulatory focus. A major contribution is to identify direction of processing, as indicated by regulatory focus, as an antecedent of persuasion knowledge activation. Prior research has suggested that cognitive capacity (depth

Table 3
STUDY 3: CELL MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS

	Promotion Focus	*Prevention Focus*	*Suspicion Primed*	*Suspicion Not Primed*
Brand preference[a]	4.20 (1.07)	5.07 (1.21)	4.64 (.94)	4.37 (1.60)
Perceived manipulative intent of ambiguous claims[b]	4.29 (1.47)	4.99 (1.14)	4.80 (.99)	4.16 (1.16)
Perceived manipulative intent of unambiguous claims[b]	3.19 (1.50)	3.68 (1.20)	3.76 (1.30)	3.49 (1.36)
Cell sizes	27	29	28	31

[a]Measured on a seven-point scale; higher numbers indicate preference for prevention-focused brand.
[b]Measured on a seven-point scale; higher numbers indicate greater perceived manipulative intent.
Notes: Standard deviations are in parentheses.

of processing) is required to activate persuasion knowledge (Campbell and Kirmani 2000) because inferences of ulterior motives involve higher-order inferential processing. Our results indicate that even when depth of processing is constant, a prevention focus is more likely to lead to the activation of persuasion knowledge than a promotion focus. The reason is that prevention-focused people, who want to avoid being unduly persuaded, are more sensitive to manipulative intent than promotion-focused people. This enriches our understanding of the antecedents of persuasion knowledge, adding regulatory focus to other antecedents, such as cognitive resources, accessibility of motives, and persuasion expertise (see Campbell and Kirmani 2007).

The notion that prevention-focused people may try to avoid being unduly persuaded by an advertisement suggests that a prevention focus could lead to greater use of sentry coping strategies (Kirmani and Campbell 2004). In a study of consumers' persuasion coping behaviors, Kirmani and Campbell (2004) describe two general approaches by consumer targets for dealing with interpersonal persuasion agents. Targets behaving as goal seekers attempted to use the persuasion agent to achieve their own purchase-related goals, whereas targets behaving as persuasion sentries attempted to achieve their purchase-related goals by guarding against unwanted persuasion. Sentry strategies, reflecting the desire to avoid being unduly persuaded, included forestalling, deception, assertive resistance, confrontation, punishment, withdrawal, preparation, and enlisting a companion. Our research suggests that sentry strategies may be more likely to be used in a prevention focus, whereas seeker strategies may be more likely to be used in a promotion focus. This would extend our findings beyond the advertising context to interpersonal persuasion. Further research might examine the link between regulatory focus and persuasion coping strategies.

Another contribution of this article is to demonstrate that general suspicion of companies can affect processing of advertising. Darke and Ritchie (2007) show that when people learn that they have been personally deceived by an advertisement, their distrust spills over to advertisements from other advertisers. We describe a much more general phenomenon. Our suspicion manipulation was different from theirs in two important ways: (1) People were not personally deceived by the suspicion-arousing stimulus, and (2) the suspicion-arousing stimulus was an article that mentioned corporate financial fraud and thus was unrelated to advertising. Our studies show that simply learning that a company's CEO lied about profitability can make people suspicious about ambiguous ad claims from a different company. This indicates that consumers may respond negatively to advertising or other persuasion attempts when corporate fraud is salient, as in a television news show that describes deceptive financial practices. From a managerial point of view, placing advertisements in movies or television shows that make corporate fraud salient (e.g., *The Smartest Guys in the Room* and *Dateline* or *60 Minutes* segments on the Enron fraud) might trigger suspicion of advertisements or even product placements in the movie or television show environment. It would be useful to examine the boundaries of this phenomenon. For example, we speculate that consumers may be suspicious of advertising claims when suspicion is triggered even in a nonbusiness context, such as a movie about political fraud (e.g., *Wag the Dog*).

The article also contributes to the regulatory focus literature. It identifies suspicious processing of marketing stimuli as a potential outcome of a prevention focus. This adds suspicion to other possible outcomes identified by prior research, such as sensitivity to gains and losses (Aaker and Lee 2001). More broadly, our research suggests that regulatory focus leads to differential activation of persuasion knowledge. Because prevention-focused people are more vigilant against manipulation than promotion-focused people, they are more likely to perceive ambiguous ad claims as diagnostic of manipulative intent and, consequently, to activate persuasion knowledge and form less favorable brand evaluations. Note that it is possible that manipulative intent is more accessible to prevention-focused people than to promotion-focused people, and this greater accessibility could lead to greater perceived diagnosticity. Further research could explore this relationship in detail.

From a managerial point of view, this suggests that using ad headlines that might trigger a prevention focus (e.g., a headline for CIT Group stating, "Help you avoid hazards") might also make readers more suspicious of ambiguous ad claims. Consequently, consumers may be more vigilant or skeptical when processing the advertisement, particularly if the advertisement contains information about test results or negative comparisons. In other words, although a prevention focus may be useful for certain types of effects (e.g., encouraging processing of detailed or unique information; Zhu and Meyers-Levy 2007), it may backfire if the advertisement contains ambiguous claims. Advertisers must be cautious in inducing a prevention focus in the presence of copy that might be interpreted negatively.

Furthermore, the results from Study 2 suggest that external priming can activate suspicion among promotion-focused people and therefore can cause them to behave similarly to prevention-focused people. Further research might examine whether it is possible to suppress the suspicion of prevention-focused people when the process advertisements with ambiguous claims so that they might behave similarly to promotion-focused people. For example, if prevention-focused people are highly suspicious, it may be possible to design advertisements to reduce the suspicion by including reassuring information. Indeed, we speculate that first presenting an ambiguous claim and then qualifying that claim in a reassuring way may be a particularly successful ad strategy for prevention-focused people.

Limitations

As with any lab study, caution must be exercised before generalizing these results to situations beyond those studied. In all our studies, regulatory focus was primed before respondents were presented with the target advertisement, which might not be feasible or realistic in the marketplace. Thus, it would be worthwhile to explore whether regulatory focus induced through ad exposure, such as message framing, has similar effects to those observed here.

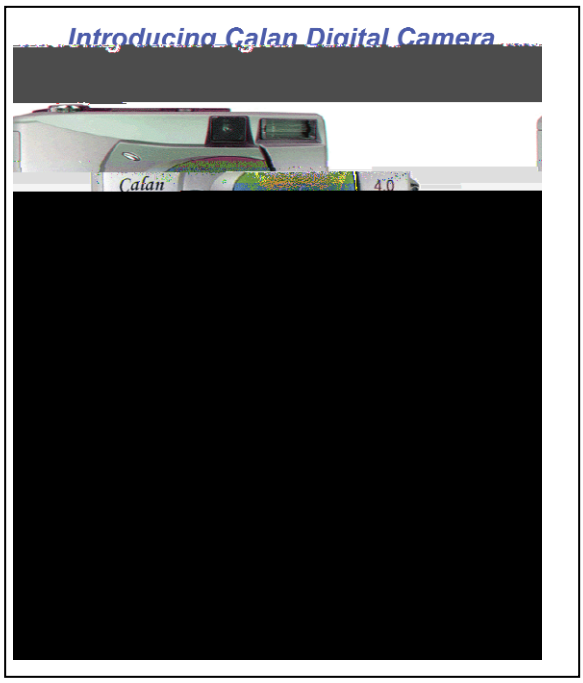
Finally, the article does not examine the conceptual issue of what constitutes an ambiguous ad claim. We defined ambiguous claims as those with moderately salient manipulative intent and used a pretest to identify the target ambiguous claim. Prior literature has suggested that ad claims differ in terms of consumer skepticism (Ford, Smith, and Swasy 1990). Subjective claims generate greater skepticism

than objecti;e claims,03nd e perience claims generate greater skepticism than search claims. This suggests that ambiguoF60claims are likel to be some hat subjecti;e 3nd not immediatel ;erifiable. Further research might more s stematicall e amine hich claims ma make manipulati;e intent moderatel accessible.

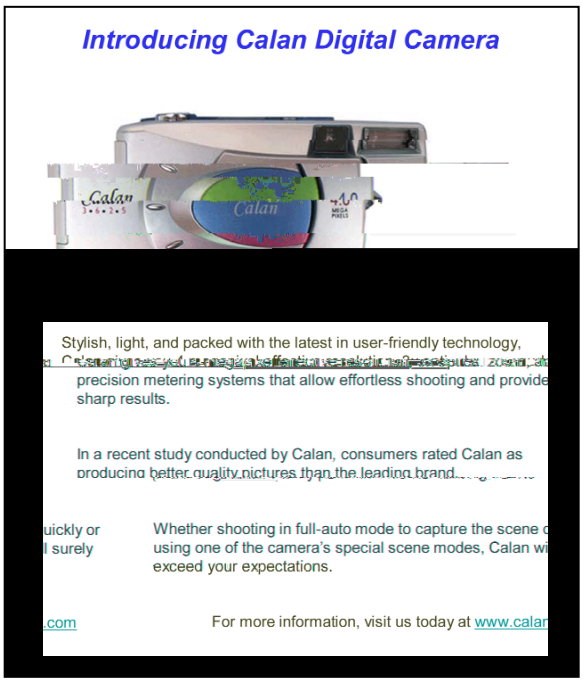
Appendix A

ADVERTISEMENTS FOR STUDY 1

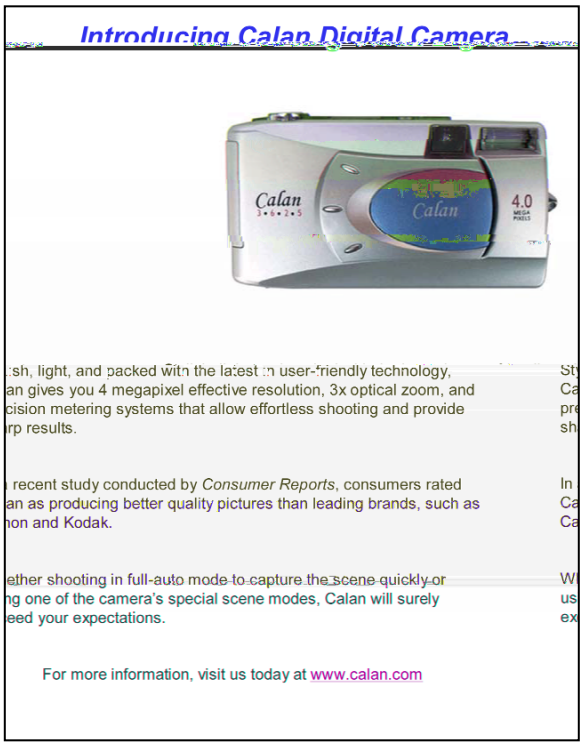
A: Moderate Salience of Manipulative Intent



B: High Salience of Manipulative Intent



C: Low Salience of Manipulative Intent



APPENDIX B: STUDY 2 PRIMES

Suspicion Primed

Company Found Fabricating Financial Data

A recent ne s article about Mintos, Inc., a producer of semi-conductor products used in the information technolog industr , reported that the compan as a success stor . In the article, the CEO of the compan as quoted as sa ing, Mintos, Inc. has been e tremel profitable ith profits increasing b $20 million o;er the last t o quarters.' Accounting auditors ha;e since then re;ie ed the financial statements of Mintos Inc. and found that the financial figures ere fabricated. In fact, the compan 's profits ere actuall *down* b appro imatel $37 million o;er the entire ear. Compan e ecuti;es ha;e declined to comment.

Suspicion Not Primed

VW Crossover Concept Combines Sports Car Design with SUV Elements

Volks agen has re;ealed its latest design stud , the Concept A, a crosso;er bet een a sports car and a compact SUV. The concept combines a sleek coupe-st le silhouette ith the raised stance of an SUV. Designed to respond to customer demand, the concept is po ered b a 150 hp T incharger, ith a si gear transmission and an all- heel dri;e s stem. As one compan e ecuti;e put it, We're at the forefront of crosso;er technolog . This concept is likel to find its a into production soon ... design changes ill certainl happen in response to consumer testing.'

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