In two experiments we show that the motivation and manner with which a consumer makes a decision influences satisfaction. Specifically, individuals with a promotion focus experience greater levels of satisfaction, as a result of positive disconfirmation, than those individuals with a prevention focus. Also, individuals with a promotion focus experience greater dissatisfaction as a result of negative disconfirmation. These findings provide convergent evidence of the effects of regulatory focus on decision-making. More importantly, our findings show that the motivational dimensions of consumer decision-making influence satisfaction.

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/13967/eacr/vol8/E-08

[copyright notice]:
This work is copyrighted by The Association for Consumer Research. For permission to copy or use this work in whole or in part, please contact the Copyright Clearance Center at http://www.copyright.com/.
**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

The extant satisfaction literature offers little insight into the effects of motivation and consumer goals on satisfaction. Yet it should be obvious that motivations and goals are important antecedents to any purchase; we argue these antecedents also ultimately affect consumer satisfaction. The purpose of our research is to investigate the relationship between motivation and satisfaction. More specifically, this research investigates how consumer satisfaction with a product is affected by an individual’s regulatory focus.

Higgins (1997) distinguishes between two types of regulatory focus: promotion and prevention. The two types of regulatory focus result in fundamentally different goals toward a desired end state. Promotion is characterized by approach-oriented regulation, and the eager pursuit of goals of advancement, aspiration and accomplishment (what Higgins calls “maximal” goals). Prevention, on the other hand, is characterized by avoidance-oriented regulation, and the vigilant pursuit of goals of security, protection and responsibility (also called “minimal” goals). We argue that pleasure from a positive outcome is more intense under promotion than under prevention, based on the notion that the attainment of maximal goals should lead to higher levels of satisfaction than the attainment of minimal goals.

Regulatory focus theory also suggests that post-consumption evaluations of dissatisfaction and regret will be different under promotion versus prevention. Outcome-regret levels are expected to be different, depending on regulatory orientation, since promotion-focused individuals are more concerned with errors of omission and prevention-focused individuals are more concerned with errors of commission (Pham and Higgins 2005). Prevention should therefore lead to conservative evaluations in both positive and negative outcome situations in an effort to avoid errors of commission. Conservatism, in this case, should translate into lower evaluations of positive outcomes and higher evaluations of negative outcomes. Therefore, we posit that promotion-focused individuals will experience greater regret and dissatisfaction as a result of an undesirable outcome.

In two experiments we demonstrate that these differences in regulatory focus ultimately influence consumer satisfaction, and that post-consumption evaluations are different under promotion than under prevention. Both experiments use a priming manipulation of ideals and oughts developed in prior research to access the participant’s temporary promotion and prevention focus (Pham and Avnet 2004). Both experiments also employ the confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm commonly used in prior satisfaction research (Fournier and Mick 1999).

In experiment one, satisfaction with a common consumption good, coffee, was investigated using a 2 (disconfirmation: positive vs. negative) X 2 (goal orientation: ideals vs. oughts) between subjects design. The positive disconfirmation (PD) manipulation involved serving a hot cup of premium coffee. The negative disconfirmation (ND) manipulation involved serving very weak warm coffee to which baking soda had been added. Momentary accessibility of ideals versus oughts self-regulation goals were manipulated using a priming manipulation previously used by Pham and Avnet (2004). As hypothesized, the results showed a significant disconfirmation x goal interaction. More specifically, participants reported greater levels of satisfaction with good coffee under promotion than under prevention, and greater levels of dissatisfaction with bad coffee under promotion than under prevention.

Experiment two replicated the findings of the first experiment using a different product. In experiment two, participants reported their satisfaction with a camera by evaluating photos allegedly taken with the camera. Three key attributes were selected and manipulated: color, clarity, and sharpness. Each attribute varied on only two levels to operationalize performance, and hence disconfirmation. In the positive disconfirmation condition photo quality in all three photos was consistently good, whereas in the negative disconfirmation condition photo quality was consistently poor. The results from experiment two are consistent with the findings of our initial experiment, and provide more convincing evidence that motivation and goal orientation influence post-consumption evaluations of satisfaction. Participants reported higher product performance evaluations, were happier with the product, and more satisfied with a positive product experience under promotion than prevention. We also found that participants reported lower product performance, were less happy with the product, and less satisfied with a negative product experience under promotion than prevention.

The central tenets of regulatory focus theory suggest that individual decision makers assign different importance to the same decision, depending on their regulatory orientation or their means of goal pursuit. For the first time, the findings from our research demonstrate how this effect carries over into the domain of consumer satisfaction. We have presented evidence supporting the importance of motivation and goal orientation on post-consumption evaluations of products. We show that how a decision is made, and the motivation behind a purchase, ultimately influences consumer evaluations of performance and satisfaction. This research provides strong support for the need to integrate motivational dimensions of decision-making in future research investigating consumer satisfaction.

**References**


