**Restoring Hope and Enhancing Self-Regulation**

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Individuals are faced with self-regulation issues on a continual basis and are often overcome with failures. When consumers are losing confidence in achieving their hoped-for goals, the need to restore hope and enhance self-regulation is enormous. Synthesizing research in the areas of hope and self-regulation, the present research explicates the role of self-efficacy in connecting hope with self-regulation and explores the effect of priming a promotion or prevention regulatory focus in this context. This paper provides three research propositions to guide efforts in studying consumers’ pursuits of self-regulating goals when hope is threatened.

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Bushman, B. J., & Phillips, C. M. (2001). If the television program bleeds, memory for the advertisement recedes. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 10*, 44-47


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The purpose of this research is to understand the relationship between hope and self-regulation. Specifically, the research question is: how are individuals able to keep on regulating themselves in situations where they are losing hope or having low confidence about
achieving their self-regulating goal? As an example, consider the situation where an individual sets a goal of losing weight and then devises a plan to achieve the goal by exercising regularly. However, a myriad of outside influences keeps the individual from exercising on regular basis. Consequently, this person becomes discouraged and starts to losing hope. Therefore, the inquiry is: how would this individual get back on track to adhere to the exercise plan again in order to reach the goal?

There are separate research lines in the marketing literature for the concepts of hope and self-regulation. MacInnis and de Mello (2005) define hope as “a positively valenced emotion evoked in response to an uncertain but possible goal-congruent outcome.” These authors suggest that hope interacts with such consumer variables as involvement and expectations, to affect outcome variables, including brand attitudes and satisfaction. On the other hand, the concept of self-regulation is defined in Hong and Lee (2008) as “the exercise of control over oneself to bring the self in line with a desirable outcome or goal.” The literature provides different theories to explain self-regulation, for example, self-regulatory resource availability (Vohs and Faber 2007), regulatory fit (Aaker and Lee 2006), and goal-directed behavioral intentions (Gollwitzer and Brandstatter 1997). The present research aims to synthesize these research areas and examine strategies to help consumers restore hope and enhance self-regulation.

MacInnis and de Mello (2005) indicate that “enhancement of hope may also increase a critical predictor of intentions to stop consumption: self-efficacy.” This research focuses on the role of self-efficacy in the relationship between hope and self-regulation, and proposes that a promotion (versus prevention) regulatory focus can more effectively enhance perceived self-efficacy and thus self-regulation when hope is threatened. Formally,

**Proposition 1:** When confidence about what one hopes for is threatened, priming respondents with a promotion (vs. prevention) regulatory focus would enhance their perception of self-efficacy.

**Proposition 2:** Self-efficacy is positively related to self-regulation.

**Proposition 3:** Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between regulatory focus and self-regulation.

The rationales for the above propositions are as follows. When people have low confidence about achieving their hoped-for goals, they may be engaged in motivating reasoning about products touted as problem solutions in order to restore their hope (de Mello, MacInnis, and Stewart 2007). The present research further suggests that in the context of self-regulation, people may also be engaged in the (biased) appraisal of self-efficacy as a way to restore hope. Given that low confidence in the hoped-for goal is likely associated with low perceived self-efficacy, a relevant issue is to boost the perception of self-efficacy. This research proposes that because a promotion focus is oriented toward ease of taking actions or the consideration of self efficacy (Keller 2006) making a promotion (vs. prevention) focus salient will help enhance or sensitize an awareness of self-efficacy. In addition, the idea of regulatory fit indicates the significance of pairing a promotion (prevention) focus with eagerness (vigilance) strategies in enhancing motivation and self-regulation (Hong and Lee 2008). In the current context, restoring hope is in line with pursuing eagerness strategies. Thus, a regulatory fit may be obtained when a promotion focus is primed in the context of restoring hope. Moreover, perceived self-efficacy has been found to positively influence self-regulation intentions (Bolton, Reed, Volpp, and Armstrong 2008; Milne, Sheeran, and Orbell 2000), which provides support to Proposition 2. This research additionally suggests that the mechanism through which a regulatory focus impacts self-regulation is by affecting self-efficacy (Proposition 3). Note that, even if the sense of self-efficacy is mildly inflated or distorted (i.e., confidence in one’s capabilities is overestimated), this bias is still deemed helpful in increasing the likelihood of accomplishing self-regulating goals (cf. Taylor and Brown 1994, p. 23).

In terms of methodology, in order to test the three propositions in this paper, it is recommended that a scenario similar to de Mello et al. (2007) be used, causing some respondents to lose hope in an endeavor (e.g., exercising). Then, respondents would be primed with a promotion (or a prevention) focus by writing about their hopes and aspirations (or duties and obligations), following the procedures in Freitas and Higgins (2002). Respondents would then rate themselves on self-efficacy using six semantic-differential scales (powerless-powerful, weak-strong, ineffectual-effectual, dependent-independent, reliant-self-reliant, undisciplined-disciplined) (Bolton et al. 2008). Finally, respondents’ persistence in continuing their endeavor would be measured.

In conclusion, individuals are faced with self-regulation issues on a continual basis and are often overcome with failures. When consumers are losing confidence in achieving their hoped-for goals (i.e., when hope is threatened), the need to restore hope and enhance self-regulation is enormous. This research explicates the role of self-efficacy in connecting hope with self-regulation and explores the effect of priming a promotion or prevention regulatory focus in this context. It is the intention of this terse conceptual paper to stimulate a stream of research to benefit consumers’ pursuits of self-regulating goals, particularly when hope is threatened.

**References**


