I Like to Move It Move It: Introducing Regulatory Fit From Body Movement

E. Tory Higgins, Columbia University, USA
Frank Mathmann, School of Marketing, Australian School of Business, University of New South Wales, Australia
Ko de Ruyter, Maastricht School of Business and Economics, The Netherlands
Mathew Chylinski, School of Marketing, Australian School of Business, University of New South Wales, Australia

In three experiments, we demonstrate how consumers’ physical movements (versus stasis) lead to regulatory fit and thereby increase product valuation for consumers with predominant locomotion (versus assessment) orientations. We start with monotonous body movements (Studies 1 and 2), and extend to consider movements unrelated to the product use (Study 3).

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/1016979/volumes/v42/NA-42

[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/.
I Like to Move it: Introducing Regulatory Fit From Body Movement

Frank Mathmann, University of New South Wales, Australia
Ko de Ruyter, Maastricht University, Netherlands
Mathew Chylinski, University of New South Wales, Australia
E. Tory Higgins, Columbia University, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Some people simply like to move. Yet, e-commerce has taken a great deal of body movement out of the purchase experience. In recognition of this, brick and mortar retailers increasingly re-build body movement into shopping: Retailers like Home Depot, Recreational Equipment Inc. and Target engage customers with body movement using in-store workshops, climbing walls or events such as Super Saturday. It remains virtually untested however if this is actually valuable to customers.

Value in movement might seem unsurprising, as movement can be enjoyable (i.e. in-store climbing wall) or facilitate products evaluation (i.e. trying new shoes). We propose that value enhancement from movement is more general, and that movement for some customers will not enhance value as much as stasis will. We focus on the fit between movement and consumer’s predominant regulatory mode orientation (PRM)—locomotion versus assessment—to explain why some consumers appreciate physical movement while others don’t.

Regulatory mode theory (Higgins, Kruglanski, & Pierro, 2003; Kruglanski et al., 2000) proposes the two independent functions of self-regulation known as locomotion and assessment. Locomotion is the aspect of self-regulation concerned with initiation and maintenance of progress from state to state while Assessment is concerned with critically comparison and evaluation (Kruglanski et al., 2000).

Environments that fit motivational orientations (i.e. locomotion and assessment) intensify experiences of value (Higgins, Idson, Freitas, Spiegel, & Molden, 2003). This implies that consumers who are predominant locomotors will value a product more when the way in which they purchase this product involves movement from one state to the next. For assessors though, critical evaluation to make the right choice is crucial.

The current study focuses on creating value-from-fit through presence or absence of body movement. Body movement can be defined as a change in the position of all or part of the body. We expect increased value for experiences that involve body movement (rather than stasis) when consumers have predominant locomotion orientations. Bodily movement, however, also demands cognitive resources (Lindenberger, Marsiske, & Baltes, 2000) that could otherwise be used for evaluation. This creates conflict with assessment. We hypothesize that stasis produces value enhancing fit for consumers with predominant assessment orientations.

Hypothesis: Purchase experiences that involve body movement will increase the valuation of products for predominant locomotors while purchase experiences that involve body stasis will increase the valuation of products for predominant assessors.

Study 1 tested whether monotonous movement increases value perceptions for locomotors, while stasis fits assessors. Subjects (N=36) were assigned to the Movement condition (going up and down a stepping stool 40 times) or the stasis condition (sitting still at a computer while looking at an image of the stepping stool). Walking time in the movement condition was equal to sitting time in the static condition. Value was measured by asking participants to indicate the value of the stepping stool (7-point scale from “< US $20” to “US $120 and higher”). We used the established locomotion and assessment scales (Kruglanski et al., 2000). Results confirmed the predicted 2-way interaction between PRM and stasis vs. movement (β = .77; p< .05). As predicted for predominant locomotors the movement condition led to higher perceived value for the stepping stool than the static condition while the opposite was true for predominant assessors.

Study 1 demonstrates locomotion-fit effects with body movements that involve product usage, and therefore provide relevant information for product evaluation. It could be argued that this effect only occurs when the movement is relevant. Study 2 tested this possibility by introducing movement that is relevant to the purchase process but not product evaluation. Subjects (N=128) choose chocolates either in the Movement condition chocolates while walking around a table (like a buffet) while in the Stasis condition sitting at a table (like in a café). As the dependent variable, participants made an offer for the chocolates using their participation money (Avnet & Higgins, 2003). Locomotion and assessment were measured as in study 1. Results confirmed the predicted 2-way interaction between PRM and stasis vs. movement (β = .79; p< .05). As predicted for predominant locomotors we found a non-significant trend in the predicted direction while for predominant assessors the static condition led to higher offers for the chocolates.

Discussion

Consumers’ body movements (compared to stasis) influence product valuations depending on PRM orientation. Movement (vs. stasis) increases value for locomotors and decreases value for assessors.

What psychological mechanisms may underlie this effect? One possibility builds on a recent finding that locomotors (vs. assessors) enjoy multitasking (Pierro, Giacomantonio, Pica, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2012). It could be argued that purchase experiences that involve movement require multitasking, as consumers need to evaluate and move at the same time. This would then create a fit effect for predominant locomotors. A follow up study (for space reasons not in this write up) however showed, neither preference for multitasking (Hecht & Allen, 2005; Pierro et al., 2012) nor the interaction effect of multitasking preferences with body movement reached significance while the movement X PRM interaction remained significant.

The practical relevance of this paper is underlined by studies showing that PRM orientations vary among countries (Higgins, Pierro, & Kruglanski, 2008), with Spain and Italy, for example, having high locomotion predominance, and Japan and South Korea having high assessment predominance. It would be interesting to replicate our results using online shopping in a predominant assessment country, versus brick and mortar stores where customers are encouraged to engage physically with products.

REFERENCES


