

# GOAL ORIENTATION AND COMPARATIVE VALENCE IN PERSUASION

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**ABSTRACT:** Using regulatory focus theory, this study investigates the interaction effects of goal orientation and comparative valence on persuasion. With three dependent variables—magnitude of difference in attitudes toward target and competitive brands, message diagnosticity, and purchase intentions—the authors use a 2 (goal orientation: promotion-focused, prevention-focused)  $\times$  3 (comparative valence: positive, moderately negative, extremely negative) between-subjects factorial design. The results show that when the comparative valence is positive, promotion-focused consumers experience stronger persuasion effects than do prevention-focused consumers. When the comparative valence is extremely negative, prevention-focused consumers experience stronger persuasion effects.

Because advertisers often want to enhance their audience's perception of the difference between their own brand and competitive brands, comparative advertising, an effective way to attain this goal, has emerged as an important research focus for both practitioners and academics. Recent research indicates that message features such as comparative valence (e.g., Jain 1993; Jain and Posavac 2004), gain versus loss framing (e.g., Shiv 2004; Shiv, Edell, and Payne 1997), maximal or minimal claims (e.g., Jain, Agrawal, and Maheswaran 2006), and single versus piecemeal comparison framing (e.g., Muthukrishnan, Warlop, and Alba 2001) influence the persuasive effects of comparative ads. In addition, the audiences' goals play important roles in determining the effects of persuasion attempts (Kim 2006).

Consumers make decisions on the basis of their goals (Bettman, Luce, and Payne 1998; Heath, Larrick, and Wu 1999; Higgins 2002), and various recent papers have focused on issues related to consumers' goal orientations (e.g., Aaker and Lee 2001; Chernev 2004a, 2004b; Jain, Agrawal, and Maheswaran 2006; Kim 2006; Louro, Pieters, and Zeelenberg 2005; Pham and Avnet 2004; Wang and Lee 2006; Zhou and Pham 2004), as well as the significance of regulatory focus messages (Bosmans and Baumgartner 2005; Chen, Ng, and Rao 2005; Hamilton and Biehal 2005; Lee and Aaker 2004; Wang and Lee 2006).

According to regulatory focus theory, as expounded by Higgins (1997), two types of goal orientations exist: promo-

tion-focused and prevention-focused. Promotion-focused consumers generally are primed by their nurturance needs, ideals, and gain-related situations, whereas prevention-focused consumers tend to be primed by their security needs, "oughts," and loss-related situations. These two goal orientations also result in different consequences, such that promotion-focused people are more likely to be sensitive to positive outcomes, whereas prevention-focused people tend to respond to negative outcomes (Aaker and Lee 2001; Higgins 1997; Kim 2006). In this sense, goal orientation influences product judgments (Chernev 2004a; Pham and Avnet 2004), investment behaviors (Zhou and Pham 2004), status quo biases in choice behaviors (Chernev 2004b), and repurchase intentions (Louro, Pieters, and Zeelenberg 2005). However, message features (e.g., comparative valence) may also influence the persuasive effects of a consumer's goal orientation.

Comparative valence refers to the extent of perceived derogation in comparative advertisements (Jain 1993; Jain and Posavac 2004). A positive comparative ad highlights the superiority of the target brand over the competitive brand, as in "They're good; we're excellent." In contrast, a negative comparative ad highlights the weakness of the competitive brand, as in "Brand X is not good, whereas our brand is good" (Jain and Posavac 2004). Prior research employs positive and negative comparative valences, and indicates that positive comparative ads result in higher believability, better brand attitudes, and fewer negative attributions than do negative comparative ads (Jain and Posavac 2004). However, extremely negative comparisons (e.g., fair versus poor) also appear in comparative advertisements. For example, some advertisements feature unknown or midrange brands highlighting the weaknesses of their competitors. In addition, some products must acknowledge their negative attributes (e.g., side effects of drugs, electromagnetic waves of mobile phones), and consumers may judge these products on the basis of an extremely negative message, such as the comparison between higher versus lower levels of electromagnetic waves.

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Therefore, promotion- and prevention-focused audiences have different sensitivities to positive and negative outcome messages, which clearly express their comparative valence. This study investigates the persuasion effects of both goal orientation and comparative valence using three kinds of comparative valence: positive, moderately negative, and extremely negative. Specifically, we postulate that goal-comparison compatibility evokes difference perceptions among an audience toward target and competitive brands, and therefore influences their perceptions of the advertisement's diagnosticity and purchase intention.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Higgins (1997) presents regulatory focus theory to distinguish between promotion-focused and prevention-focused consumers, who experience different anticipations and perceptions because of their goal orientations. Regulatory focus systems not only reflect chronic orientations, but can also be primed by specific situations (Higgins 2002). Three categories of anticipation may prime a regulatory focus system: nurturance versus security needs (e.g., Chernev 2004a; Friedman and Forster 2001), ideals versus oughts (e.g., Chernev 2004a, 2004b; Friedman and Forster 2001; Jain, Agrawal, and Maheswaran 2006; Pham and Avnet 2004; Wang and Lee 2006), and gain- versus loss-related situations (e.g., Jain, Agrawal, and Maheswaran 2006; Kim 2006; Louro, Pieters, and Zeelenberg 2005; Zhou and Pham 2004). Depending on the focus of the subject (i.e., prevention or promotion), regulatory focus systems also prompt distinct consequences, namely, sensitivity to the presence or absence of positive or negative outcomes (e.g., Aaker and Lee 2001; Chernev 2004b; Zhou and Pham 2004), approach or avoidance tendencies (e.g., Crowe and Higgins 1997), eagerness or vigilance mechanisms (e.g., Crowe and Higgins 1997; Friedman and Forster 2001), and relations to different emotional dimensions, such as cheerfulness/dejection or quiescence/agitation (e.g., Bosmans and Baumgartner 2005; Higgins 1987, 1997).

### The Influence of Goal Orientation and Comparative Valence on Persuasion

Consumers' goal orientations can influence a variety of their actions, including how they weigh product attributes in choice contexts (Chernev 2004a), their reliance on affective or substantial cues (Pham and Avnet 2004), their bias toward the status quo (Chernev 2004b), their investment decisions (Zhou and Pham 2004), the amount of information seeking they engage in (e.g., Safer 1998), message-framing effects (e.g., Aaker and Lee 2006; Jain, Agrawal, and Maheswaran 2006; Kim 2006; Wang and Lee 2006), and their repurchase intentions (Louro, Pieters, and Zeelenberg 2005). Similarly, in

the context of advertising, a consumer's goal orientation likely affects the persuasive effect the ad imposes on him or her.

Furthermore, researchers have begun to investigate how comparative valence (i.e., positive or negative) may influence persuasion. According to Jain and Posavac's (2004) definition, a positive comparative ad highlights the superiority of the target brand, whereas a negative comparative ad derogates the comparison brand. In general, a negative comparative ad results in more counterarguments, fewer support arguments, lower believability, and lower brand attitudes. Therefore, prior research considers positive comparative ads to be more effective than negative comparative ads for persuasion.

To extend this previous research, we use regulatory focus theory and prospect theory to demonstrate the interaction effects of goal orientation and comparative valences on persuasion. By building on prior research, this paper examines how goal-comparison compatibility influences audiences' attitudes (Study 1) and behavior intentions (Studies 2 and 3). Moreover, we investigate these effects from both situational (Studies 1 and 2) and chronic (Study 3) perspectives.

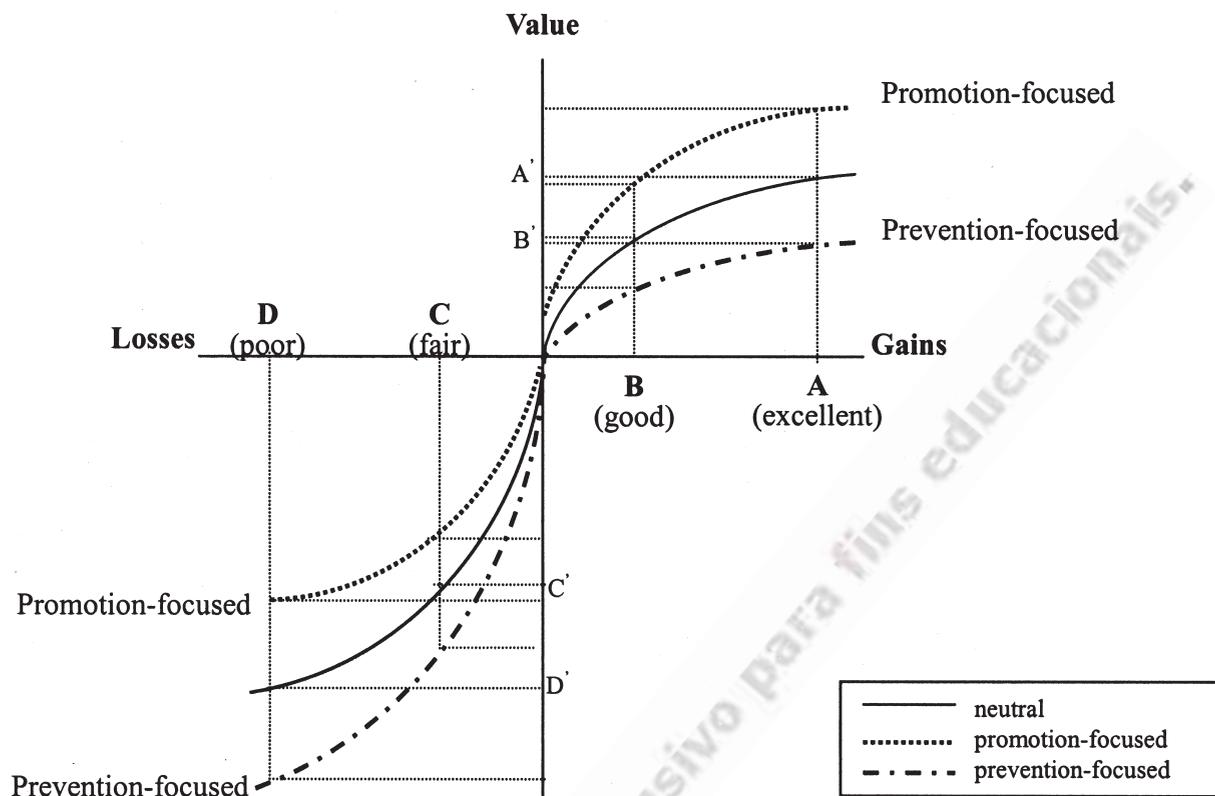
### Magnitude of Difference in Attitudes Toward Target and Competitive Brands

According to prospect theory, as expounded by Kahneman and Tversky (1979), prevention-focused persons, who are more sensitive to negative outcomes, overweigh losses relative to gains more than do promotion-focused people. We predict this exact pattern will appear in relation to ads that employ different comparative valences.

#### *Positive Comparison (Excellent Versus Good)*

Positive comparative advertisements provide gain-related messages, such as good, better, and excellent. When consumers view positive comparative advertisements, they judge the products on the basis of positive comparative messages, such as "Although Brand A is good, we are better." For consumers, their difference perceptions of the target brand and the competitive brand reflect the different degree of gain they might attain from the promoted brand. Therefore, when consumers are exposed to positive comparative advertisements, the curve of their value function is always concave, but the slope differs for promotion- versus prevention-focused consumers. In Figure 1, "A" represents the target brand, which is excellent, and "B" represents the competitive brand, which is good. Both promotion- and prevention-focused consumers therefore face a positive outcome message, but because of their greater sensitivity to the positive outcome, promotion-focused consumers are more likely to perceive the magnitude of the difference between the target brand and the competitive brand as greater. Thus:

FIGURE 1  
The Value Function: Goal Orientation and Comparative Valence



Note: The value function is based on Chernev (2004b, p. 558).

*H1a: When the comparative valence is positive (excellent versus good), promotion-focused consumers perceive the magnitude of the difference between the target brand and the competitive brand as greater than do prevention-focused consumers.*

*H1b: When the comparative valence is extremely negative (fair versus poor), prevention-focused consumers perceive the magnitude of the difference between the target brand and the competitive brand as greater than do promotion-focused consumers.*

#### *Extremely Negative Comparison (Fair Versus Poor)*

Extremely negative comparative advertisements (fair versus poor) provide negative outcome messages, because consumers can judge the products only on the basis of the extremely negative message. For consumers, their difference perceptions of the target brand and the competitive brand thus result from different degrees of loss they may suffer. When consumers are exposed to extremely negative comparative advertisements (fair versus poor), the curve of their value function is always convex, but the slope again differs between promotion- and prevention-focused consumers. In Figure 1, "C" represents the fair target brand, and "D" represents the poor competitive brand. In this case, all consumers face the same negative outcome message, but because of their greater sensitivity to such a negative outcome, prevention-focused consumers perceive the magnitude of the difference between the target brand and the competitive brand as greater. Thus:

#### *Moderately Negative Comparison (Good Versus Fair)*

Moderately negative comparative advertisements provide one positive and one negative outcome message, and thus emphasize both the advantages of the target brand and the defects of the competitive brand. Therefore, in Figure 1, "B" represents the target brand, and "C" represents the competitive brand. In this context, promotion-focused consumers likely consider the positive outcome associated with the target brand, whereas prevention-focused consumers probably examine the negative outcome the competitive brand might provide. For the reasons we mentioned previously, however, difference perceptions of the target brand and the competitive brand likely will not differ between promotion- and prevention-focused consumers. Thus:

*H1c: When the comparative valence is moderately negative (good versus fair), the perception of the difference between the target*

*brand and the competitive brand does not differ for promotion-focused consumers versus prevention-focused consumers.*

### Message Diagnosticity

As our preceding theorization demonstrates, positive comparative advertisements provide positive outcome information, which can help promotion-focused consumers discover their ideal products, whereas extremely negative comparative advertisements provide negative outcome information, which helps prevention-focused consumers avoid poor decisions. Therefore, we predict that promotion-focused consumers will perceive higher message diagnosticity than will prevention-focused consumers when the comparative valence is positive, whereas prevention-focused consumers will perceive higher diagnosticity when the comparative valence is extremely negative. Furthermore, when the comparative valence is moderately negative (good versus fair), promotion-focused consumers likely will weigh the benefits of the target brand, whereas prevention-focused consumers will likely weigh the deficiency of the competitive brand. Hence, for such advertisements, there should be no difference between the diagnosticity perceptions of promotion- and prevention-focused consumers.

*H2a: When comparative valence is positive (excellent versus good), promotion-focused consumers perceive higher diagnosticity than prevention-focused consumers.*

*H2b: When comparative valence is extremely negative (fair versus poor), prevention-focused consumers perceive higher diagnosticity than promotion-focused consumers.*

*H2c: When comparative valence is moderately negative (good versus fair), there is no difference between the diagnosticity perceptions of promotion-focused consumers and prevention-focused consumers.*

## PRETEST

Prior research shows that the effects of goal orientation on consumer preferences depend on attribute types. Specifically, in choice contexts, promotion-focused consumers place relatively more weight on hedonic attributes, whereas prevention-focused consumers tend to overweigh utilitarian attributes (Chernev 2004a). To rule out product type, attribute type, and attribute importance factors in our experiment, we conducted two pretests to determine which target product and attributes we should include in our experimental advertisement.

### Pretest 1: Target Product

With our first pretest, we identified an appropriate product based on one criterion: It offered both hedonic and utilitarian attributes to consumers. The questionnaire included 30 prod-

ucts, as well as definitions of utilitarian and hedonic utility (Chandon, Wansink, and Laurent 2000). Participants read the description in the questionnaire, and then checked the main utility they perceived for each product. The nominal scales included three utility types—(1) hedonic, (2) utilitarian, and (3) both—which indicates that the product offered participants both hedonic and utilitarian utilities, and participants could not recognize clearly which utility was more important. According to the 95 undergraduate students who participated in pretest 1, notebook computers had the highest proportion of moderate utilities. Most participants (81%) thought notebook computers offered both hedonic and utilitarian utilities, and they could not recognize clearly which utility was more important. Therefore, we made notebook computers the target product for our study.

### Pretest 2: Target Attributes

Our second pretest served to identify four target attributes of notebook computers: two utilitarian and two hedonic. In addition, we needed attributes whose importance did not differ significantly. Participants therefore rated a list of 20 attributes on the basis of two questions for each attribute: (1) the main utility of the attribute, measured by a seven-point scale anchored by utilitarian/hedonic, and (2) the importance of the attributes, measured by a seven-point scale anchored by less important/very important. The 75 undergraduate students who participated in pretest 2 indicated that utilitarian attributes were weight ( $M_{\text{importance}} = 5.53$ ,  $M_{\text{utility}} = 3.13$ ) and a power management system ( $M_{\text{importance}} = 5.56$ ,  $M_{\text{utility}} = 2.13$ ), whereas the hedonic attributes were sound effects ( $M_{\text{importance}} = 5.36$ ,  $M_{\text{utility}} = 4.54$ ) and graphics ( $M_{\text{importance}} = 5.18$ ,  $M_{\text{utility}} = 3.54$ ). The importance levels of these four attributes were not significantly different.

## STUDY 1

This study tests the prediction that promotion-focused consumers experience greater persuasion effects than prevention-focused consumers in the positive comparison condition, whereas the reverse is true in the extremely negative comparison. In addition, we posit that persuasion effects will not differ for either group of consumers in the moderately negative condition.

### Participants and Design

Two hundred undergraduates were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 2 (goal orientation: promotion-focused, prevention-focused)  $\times$  3 (comparative valence: positive, moderately negative, extremely negative) between-subjects design. We eliminated 4 participants who did not complete

the manipulation tasks and 10 participants whose answers to the indirect and direct measures of difference perceptions were contradictory. Of the remaining 186 participants, 85 were men and 101 were women.

### Manipulation, Stimulus, and Procedure

#### *Goal Orientation*

We manipulated goal orientation by combining two frequently used procedures: Participants first completed a paper-and-pencil maze (Chernev 2004a; Friedman and Forster 2001) and then they reported their ideals and “oughts” (Chernev 2004a; Higgins et al. 1994; Pham and Avnet 2004). In the paper-and-pencil maze task, a cartoon mouse was trapped inside a maze. In the promotion-focused condition, participants guided the mouse through the maze to reach cheese outside the wall; in the prevention-focused condition, they guided the mouse through the maze to escape a snake. The purpose of this task was to prime participants’ goal orientation: The promotion cue (cheese) activated a procedural representation of moving toward a desired end state of nurturance, whereas the prevention cue (snake) activated a procedural representation of moving toward a desired end state of security.

Second, we asked participants to think about and write down either their ideals or oughts. In the promotion-focused condition, participants thought about their past ideals, hopes, and aspirations, and listed two of them. Next, they thought about their current ideals, hopes, and aspirations, and again listed two of them. In the prevention-focused condition, participants considered their past and current duties, responsibilities, and obligations, and listed two of each. This manipulation primes consumers’ promotion (i.e., ideals) and prevention (i.e., oughts) orientations.

Third, we included a new method to prime participants’ goal orientations to extend the priming to the task of reading an advertisement. Before reading the message in the ad, participants were told that their main consideration was either “choosing the ideal brand when you buy a notebook” or “avoiding making a wrong decision when you buy a notebook.” The former description was designed to prime their promotion focus, whereas the latter description was created to prime their prevention focus.

#### *Comparative Valence*

We use fictional brand names; Brand X represents the target brand, and Brand Y represents the competitive brand. The hypothetical advertisements cite evaluation scores for the target and competitive brands from *Consumer Reports*. The positive comparison features the headline “Why Brand X Is Better Than Brand Y” and describes the advantages of the target brand’s

attributes, without using any derogative words. In the negative comparison condition, the headline for the advertisement is “Why Brand X Is Good, But Brand Y Is Fair,” and the copy emphasizes both the advantages of the target brand and the disadvantages of the competitive brand. Finally, in the extremely negative comparison condition, the headline reads “Why Brand Y Is Poorer Than Brand X.” In addition, the copy emphasizes the disadvantages of the competitive brand and includes derogatory words such as “Brand Y notebooks just aren’t worth your money.” The stimuli design appears in the Appendix.

#### *Procedure*

We administered the experiment in two stages. Participants first completed the goal orientation priming tasks (i.e., paper-and-pencil maze task, reporting ideals/oughts) and considered the prompt—choosing the ideal brand (promotion-focused) or avoiding making a wrong decision (prevention-focused)—in their notebook purchase. Next, participants read the message in the ad and completed the questionnaire, which included the dependent variables, manipulation checks, and personal information questions.

### Independent Variables

#### *Goal Orientation*

This study uses a seven-point scale to verify the goal orientation manipulation, from “avoiding making a wrong decision” (1) to “choosing an ideal brand” (7). If promotion-focused participants have higher scores than prevention-focused participants, the manipulation is successful.

#### *Comparative Valence*

The operational definition of comparative valence is the extent of perceived derogation in the comparison. Therefore, we adapt a comparative valence measurement from prior research (Jain 1993; Jain and Posavac 2004) and use a seven-point scale with anchors: (1) the ad derogated/didn’t derogate one or more competitors, (2) the ad criticized/complimented one or more competitors, (3) the ad tried to damage/did not try to damage the reputation of one or more competitors, and (4) the ad put down/praised one or more competitors ( $\alpha = .902$ ).

### Dependent Variables

#### *Magnitude of Difference in Attitudes Toward Target and Competitive Brands*

Attitudes toward the target and competitive brands consist of both indirect and direct difference perceptions, which we combine to produce the total difference perception. For the

indirect difference perception, we measure brand attitudes on a seven-point scale with four anchor points: good/bad, favorable/unfavorable, like/dislike, and good quality/fair quality ( $\alpha_{\text{Brand X}} = .967$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{Brand Y}} = .975$ ) (Pham and Avnet 2004). The indirect difference perception for the target and competitive brands can therefore be calculated as ( $\text{Attitude}_x - \text{Attitude}_y$ ). For the direct difference perceptions, participants responded to the item "I perceive that the difference about Brand X superiority over Brand Y is . . ." on a seven-point scale anchored by "less different"/"more different." We average the responses to these two indexes into a single measure of difference perceptions ( $r = .916$ ,  $p = 0$ ) regarding the target and competitive brands.

### Diagnosticity

Our measures of message diagnosticity are adapted from Pham and Avnet (2004); we use a seven-point scale with four anchors: not informative/informative, not useful at all/very useful, helpless/helpful, and not relevant at all/very relevant ( $\alpha = .930$ ).

## Results

### Manipulation Checks

We used two kinds of manipulation checks. First, we found that the 92 promotion-focused participants revealed higher goal orientation scores than did the 94 prevention-focused participants ( $M_{\text{pro}} = 5.376$ ,  $M_{\text{pre}} = 2.260$ ,  $F = 241.247$ ,  $p = 0$ ,  $\omega^2 = .129$ ). That is, participants in the promotion-focused condition placed relatively greater emphasis on choosing the ideal brand than on avoiding a wrong decision when thinking about buying notebook computers. Moreover, the results of confounding checks show that the main effect of comparative valence ( $F = 2.094$ ,  $p = .126$ ,  $\omega^2 = .001$ ) and the interaction effect ( $F = .272$ ,  $p = .762$ ,  $\omega^2 = .001$ ) are insignificant.

Second, Scheffé tests show that when participants are exposed to different types of comparative advertisements, they perceive different levels of derogation ( $F = 31.857$ ,  $p = 0$ ). Specifically, participants in the positive comparison condition perceived less derogation than did participants in the moderately negative comparison condition ( $M_{\text{positive}} = 3.073$ ,  $M_{\text{moderately negative}} = 2.408$ ,  $p = 0$ ), who perceived less derogation than did those in the extremely negative comparative condition ( $M_{\text{moderately negative}} = 2.408$ ,  $M_{\text{extremely negative}} = 1.770$ ,  $p = .001$ ). The difference between the positive and extremely negative conditions is also significant ( $M_{\text{positive}} = 3.073$ ,  $M_{\text{moderately negative}} = 1.770$ ,  $p = 0$ ). As for the confounding checks of comparative valence, we find a statistically significant main effect for comparative valence ( $F = 31.325$ ,  $p = 0$ ,  $\omega^2 = .040$ ), but the main effect of goal orientation ( $F = .112$ ,  $p = .739$ ,

$\omega^2 = .001$ ) and the interaction effect ( $F = .463$ ,  $p = .630$ ,  $\omega^2 = .001$ ) are insignificant. Therefore, our manipulations were successful.

### Hypothesis Testing

We used a  $2 \times 3$  ANOVA (analysis of variance) to assess the hypotheses.

#### *Magnitude of Difference in Attitudes Toward Target and Competitive Brands*

As we expected, the interaction effects of goal orientation and comparative valence on perceptions of target and competitive brands are significant,  $F(2, 180) = 14.05$ ,  $p = 0$ ,  $\omega^2 = .105$ . In support of H1a, when the comparative valence was positive, participants in the promotion-focused condition perceived a greater difference between the target brand and the competitive brand ( $M = 3.317$ ) than did participants in the prevention-focused condition,  $M = 1.738$ ;  $F(1, 180) = 28.92$ ,  $p = 0$ ,  $\omega^2 = .129$ . Consistent with H1b, when the comparative valence was extremely negative, participants in the prevention-focused condition perceived a greater magnitude of difference between the two brands ( $M = 2.660$ ) than did participants in the promotion-focused condition,  $M = 2.039$ ;  $F(1, 180) = 4.53$ ,  $p = .035$ ,  $\omega^2 = .163$ . Finally, in line with H1c, in the moderately negative comparative valence condition, we found no significant difference perceptions for promotion- versus prevention-focused participants,  $M_{\text{pro}} = 3.638$ ,  $M_{\text{pre}} = 3.313$ ,  $F(1, 180) = 1.16$ ,  $p = .232$ ,  $\omega^2 = .001$ . (See Figure 2A for these results.)

The main effect of comparative valence on difference perceptions is also significant ( $F = 16.444$ ,  $p = 0$ ,  $\omega^2 = .124$ ). The moderately negative comparative ad resulted in the greatest difference perception ( $M_{\text{positive}} = 2.502$ ,  $SD = 1.299$ ,  $n = 62$ ;  $M_{\text{moderately negative}} = 3.475$ ,  $SD = 1.220$ ,  $n = 60$ ;  $M_{\text{extremely negative}} = 2.350$ ,  $SD = 1.263$ ,  $n = 64$ ). According to the Scheffé test, which we used for post hoc mean comparisons, consumers exposed to a moderately negative comparative ad perceived the greatest magnitude of difference between the target and competitive brands, compared with those who viewed an excellent versus good ( $p = 0$ ) or fair versus poor ( $p = 0$ ) ad. In addition, we found no difference in the difference scores pertaining to positive and extremely negative comparative ads ( $p = .795$ ).

### Diagnosticity

With respect to message diagnosticity, we predicted an interaction effect between goal orientation and comparative valence, and as we expected, the interaction is significant,  $F(2, 180) = 6.87$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\omega^2 = .057$ . In support of H2a,

when the comparative valence was positive, participants in the promotion-focused condition perceived higher diagnosticity ( $M = 5.108$ ) than did those in the prevention-focused condition,  $M = 4.305$ ;  $F(1, 180) = 4.46, p = .036, \omega^2 = .018$ . Consistent with H2b, when the comparative valence was extremely negative, participants in the prevention-focused condition perceived higher diagnosticity ( $M = 4.313$ ) than participants in the promotion-focused condition,  $M = 3.242$ ;  $F(1, 180) = 8.80, p = .003, \omega^2 = .040$ . Finally, in support of H2c, in the moderately negative comparative valence condition, we found no significant difference for promotion-focused participants ( $M = 4.350$ ) versus prevention-focused participants,  $M = 4.192$ ;  $F(1, 180) = .18, p = .671, \omega^2 = .004$ . (See Figure 2B for these results.)

## Discussion

The results from this study demonstrate the interaction of goal orientation and comparative valence on difference perceptions of target and competitive brands and message diagnosticity. Although the results generally are consistent with our hypotheses, goal orientation might be manipulated more sufficiently. Therefore, although the manipulation stems from prior research, it falls short of providing a convincing case to advertisers. Accordingly, we conducted Study 2, in which we primed goal orientation with the ad message.

## STUDY 2

The procedure of Study 2 follows that of Study 1, with three modifications. First, we changed the goal orientation manipulations. Second, we slightly revised the phrasing in the comparative ad. Third, we added a new dependent variable (i.e., purchase intentions) to clarify the interaction effect of goal orientation and comparative valence on purchase intention.

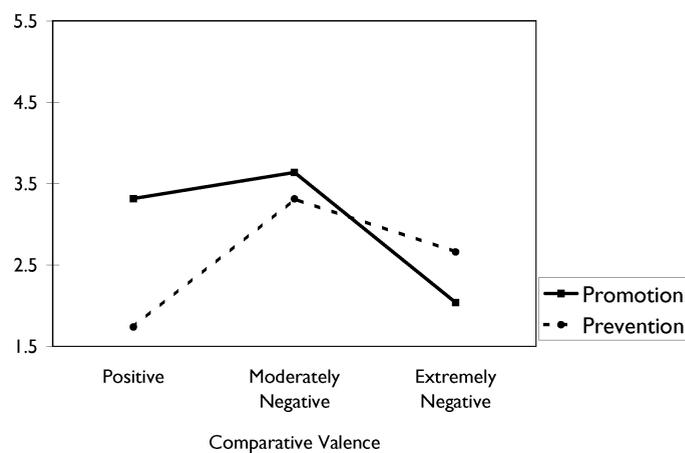
## Method

### Procedure

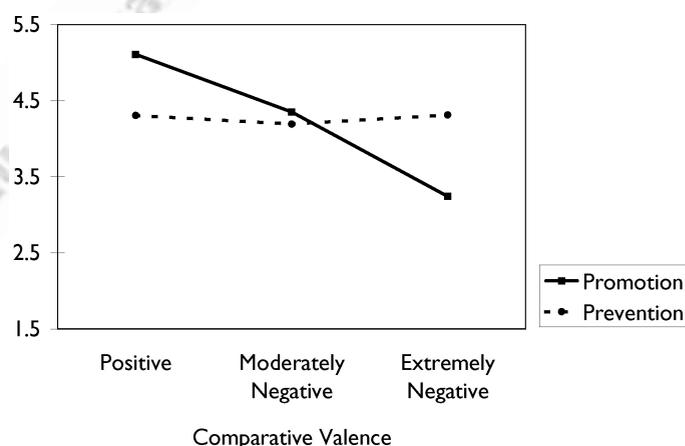
A total of 206 undergraduate students were randomly assigned to the cells of a  $2 \times 3$  between-subjects design. We eliminated 12 participants whose answers to the indirect and direct measures of difference perceptions were contradictory. Therefore, 194 participants were remaining. Participants read an advertisement about a Brand X notebook that included both goal orientation priming and a comparison between two brands. To manipulate participants' goal orientation, we used ad messages rather than the tasks in Study 1. Specifically, in the promotion-focused condition, the advertisement stated: "Knowledge determines charisma, and actions determine achievements!" and "X Brand notebooks will help you make

**FIGURE 2**  
Interaction Between Goal Orientation and Comparative Valence on Dependent Variables (Study 1)

**(A) Difference Perception of Brand Attitudes Between Two Brands**



**(B) Diagnosticity**



your dreams come true; pursue the speed!" In the prevention-focused condition, the advertisement read: "A weak, inefficient notebook may result in the failure of your presentation" and "It will make you lose professionalism and your most important opportunities!"

After priming their goal orientation, we asked participants to read the comparison message, which was similar to that of Study 1, but with some modifications. Namely, we deleted the awkwardly phrased sentences (i.e., "Why Brand X Is Good, But Brand Y Is Fair" and "It is the reason Brand Y notebooks are less worth choosing than Brand X"). Next, participants reported their responses to the dependent variables, which included the measures from Study 1 ( $\alpha_{\text{Brand X}} = .948$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{Brand Y}} = .963$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{diag}} = .921$ ), as well as several purchase intention questions. We adapted our purchase intention measures

from Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal (1991) and a seven-point scale with three anchors: "If I was going to buy a notebook, I would buy Brand X notebook," "I would consider buying Brand X notebook," and "I would recommend that my friends and relatives buy Brand X notebook" ( $\alpha = .931$ ).

## Results

### *Manipulation Checks*

To verify our manipulation of goal orientation among the 102 participants in the promotion-focused message condition and the 92 participants in the prevention-focused condition, we used a seven-point scale with three anchors: whether the messages in the ads emphasized avoiding failure (1) or pursuing success (7); avoiding missing an important opportunity (1) or making dreams come true (7); and avoiding making a wrong decision (1) or choosing an ideal brand (7) ( $\alpha = .743$ ). As we expected, promotion-focused messages received higher scores than prevention-focused messages ( $M_{\text{pro}} = 4.507$ ,  $M_{\text{pre}} = 2.897$ ,  $F = 82.374$ ,  $p = 0$ ,  $\omega^2 = .294$ ), and the confounding checks showed that both the main effect of comparative valence ( $F = .975$ ,  $p = .379$ ,  $\omega^2 = 0$ ) and the interaction effect ( $F = 1.278$ ,  $p = .281$ ,  $\omega^2 = .002$ ) are insignificant. With regard to the comparative valence manipulation, we used the measures from Study 1 ( $\alpha = .886$ ) to test the 59 participants in the positive comparison condition, 70 participants in the moderately negative condition, and 65 participants in the extremely negative condition. As we expected, the Scheffé tests show that comparative advertisements influence participants' derogation perceptions ( $F = 32.737$ ,  $p = 0$ ), such that participants in the positive comparison condition perceived less derogation than did those in the moderately negative comparison condition ( $M_{\text{positive}} = 3.021$ ,  $M_{\text{moderately negative}} = 2.136$ ,  $p = 0$ ), who perceived less derogation than those in the extremely negative comparative condition ( $M_{\text{moderately negative}} = 2.136$ ,  $M_{\text{extremely negative}} = 1.658$ ,  $p = .014$ ). The difference between the positive and extremely negative conditions is significant ( $M_{\text{positive}} = 3.021$ ,  $M_{\text{extremely negative}} = 1.658$ ,  $p = 0$ ). Finally, the confounding checks indicate a statistically significant main effect of comparative valence ( $F = 32.737$ ,  $p = 0$ ,  $\omega^2 = .246$ ), but the main effect of goal orientation ( $F = .915$ ,  $p = .340$ ,  $\omega^2 = 0$ ) and the interaction effect ( $F = .476$ ,  $p = .622$ ,  $\omega^2 = .004$ ) are insignificant. Therefore, our manipulations were successful.

### *Magnitude of Difference in Attitudes Toward Target and Competitive Brands*

The interaction effects of goal orientation and comparative valence on perceptions of target and competitive brands are significant,  $F(2, 188) = 7.11$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\omega^2 = .053$ . Consistent

with H1a, when the comparative valence was positive, promotion-focused priming messages induced participants to perceive a greater difference between the target brand and the competitive brand ( $M = 3.250$ ) than did prevention-focused priming messages,  $M = 2.364$ ;  $F(1, 188) = 6.34$ ,  $p = .013$ ,  $\omega^2 = .023$ . Consistent with H1b, when the comparative valence was extremely negative, prevention-focused messages prompted perceptions of a greater magnitude of difference between the two brands ( $M = 2.948$ ) than did promotion-focused priming messages,  $M = 2.298$ ;  $F(1, 188) = 5.43$ ,  $p = .021$ ,  $\omega^2 = .019$ . Finally, consistent with H1c, in the moderately negative comparative valence condition, we found no significant difference in the perceptions of promotion- versus prevention-focused participants,  $M_{\text{pro}} = 3.402$ ,  $M_{\text{pre}} = 3.803$ ,  $F(1, 188) = 3.06$ ,  $p = .082$ ,  $\omega^2 = .009$ . (See Figure 3A for these results.)

### *Diagnosticity*

As we predicted, the interaction effect between goal orientation and comparative valence is significant,  $F(2, 188) = 4.31$ ,  $p = .015$ ,  $\omega^2 = .033$ . In support of H2a, when the comparative valence was positive, participants in the promotion-focused condition perceived higher diagnosticity ( $M = 4.944$ ) than did those in the prevention-focused condition,  $M = 4.228$ ;  $F(1, 188) = 4.65$ ,  $p = .032$ ,  $\omega^2 = .018$ . Consistent with H2b, when the comparative valence was extremely negative, participants in the prevention-focused condition perceived higher diagnosticity ( $M = 4.677$ ) than participants in the promotion-focused condition,  $M = 3.801$ ;  $F(1, 188) = 5.71$ ,  $p = .018$ ,  $\omega^2 = .023$ . Finally, in support of H2c, in the moderately negative comparative valence condition, we found no significant difference for promotion-focused participants ( $M = 4.078$ ) versus prevention-focused participants,  $M = 4.184$ ;  $F(1, 188) = .05$ ,  $p = .830$ ,  $\omega^2 = .005$ . (See Figure 3B for these results.)

### *Purchase Intention*

We also tested the interaction effects on purchase intention and found that the interaction effect is not significant,  $F(2, 188) = .725$ ,  $p = .486$ ,  $\omega^2 = .002$ . In the positive comparison condition, the promotion-focused advertisement induced greater purchase intentions ( $M = 5.565$ ) than the prevention-focused message,  $M = 4.913$ ,  $F(1, 188) = 9.06$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\omega^2 = .028$ . When the comparative valence was extremely negative, however, the promotion- and prevention-focused messages did not reveal significantly different influences on purchase intentions,  $M_{\text{pro}} = 3.039$ ,  $M_{\text{pre}} = 2.978$ ,  $F(1, 188) = .03$ ,  $p = .862$ ,  $\omega^2 = .003$ . We also found no significant differences between the effects of promotion- versus prevention-focused messages in the moderately negative comparison condition,  $M_{\text{pro}} = 4.896$ ,  $M_{\text{pre}} = 4.596$ ,  $F(1, 188) = .48$ ,  $p = .491$ ,  $\omega^2 = .002$ . (See Figure 3C for these results.)

## Discussion

Research has examined different responses by promotion- and prevention-focused consumers as both situational differences induced by manipulation and chronic individual differences (Higgins 2002; Louro, Pieters, and Zeelenberg 2005; Pham and Avnet 2004). With Study 2, we offer evidence regarding the situational aspects. Specifically, we examine the interaction effects of goal orientation and comparative valence on difference perceptions of target and competitive brands, message diagnosticity, and purchase intentions. In addition, we use ad messages to prime participants' goal orientations, thereby providing greater robustness to our findings. Study 2 also includes purchase intentions as dependent variables.

The results show that when participants view positive comparison advertisements, those who have a promotion focus indicate higher purchase intentions than do prevention-focused participants, but the opposite pattern does not appear in the extremely negative condition. According to Chernev's (2004a) goal–attribute compatibility research, when consumers must choose among alternatives with unique bad but common good features, prevention-focused consumers prefer the no-choice option more than do promotion-focused consumers. In our study, the extremely negative comparison involves fair versus poor descriptors, so it may be that our participants considered neither brand good enough to purchase. This theory may therefore explain why we find interaction effects of goal orientation and comparative valence for the difference perceptions of target and competitive brands and for diagnosticity, but not for purchase intentions.

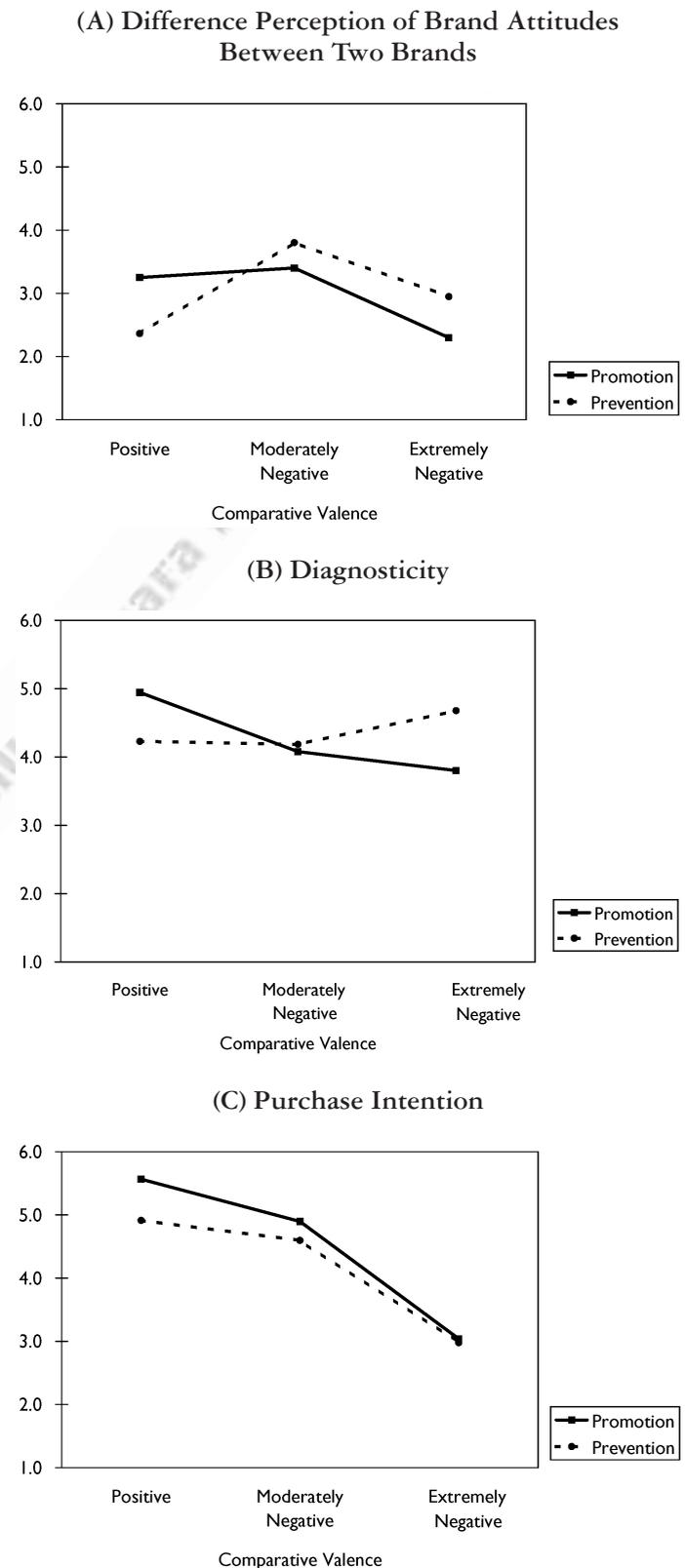
## STUDY 3

The first two studies investigate the situational influences of goal orientation; with Study 3, we determine whether the findings of Studies 1 and 2 generalize to chronic goal orientations. Therefore, we replicate Study 2, but extend it to situations in which the differences refer to chronic goal orientations.

## Method

A total of 162 undergraduate students participated in this experiment. We eliminated four participants whose answers to the indirect and direct measures of difference perceptions were contradictory. Therefore, 158 participants were remaining. We asked these participants to read a comparative advertisement, which was the same as that in Study 2, and evaluate the questionnaire. The questionnaire included the dependent variables from Study 2 ( $\alpha_{\text{Abrand X}} = .956$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{Abrand Y}} = .962$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{diag}} = .909$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{purchase intention}} = .925$ ), as well as manipulation check questions about the comparative valence and a version of the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (Lockwood, Jordan, and Kunda 2002).

FIGURE 3  
Interaction Between Goal Orientation and Comparative Valence on Dependent Variables (Study 2)



The Regulatory Focus Questionnaire consists of two subscales designed to measure promotion and prevention goals on scales of 1 (“not at all true of me”) to 9 (“very true of me”). Items related to the former subscale include, for example, “In general, I am focused on achieving positive outcomes in my life,” “I often think about the person I would ideally like to be in the future,” “I typically focus on the success I hope to achieve in the future,” “My major goal in school right now is to achieve my academic ambitions,” and “Overall, I am more oriented toward achieving success than preventing failure” ( $\alpha = .806$ ,  $M = 6.085$ ), whereas the latter includes such statements as “In general, I am focused on preventing negative events in my life,” “I often think about the person I am afraid I might become in the future,” “I frequently think about how I can prevent failures in my life,” and “I am more oriented toward preventing losses than I am toward achieving gains” ( $\alpha = .754$ ,  $M = 5.658$ ).

Similar to Lockwood, Jordan, and Kunda (2002), we classify participants as either promotion- or prevention-focused in two steps. First, we create a measure of each participant’s dominant regulatory focus by subtracting his or her scores on the prevention goal subscale from the scores on the promotion goal subscale (mean = .428). Higher scores reflect a relatively greater promotion than prevention focus. Second, we classify participants on the basis of a median split of the measure of dominant regulatory focus (median = .389,  $n_{\text{pro}} = 79$ ,  $n_{\text{pre}} = 79$ ).

## Results

### Manipulation Checks

The manipulation checks for comparative valence mirror those from Studies 1 and 2 ( $\alpha = .902$ ). As we expected, the main effect of comparative valence is significant,  $F(2, 155) = 17.453$ ,  $p = 0$ ,  $\omega^2 = .172$ , and the Scheffé test indicates significant differences among the three groups ( $M_{\text{positive}} = 1.884$ ,  $M_{\text{moderately negative}} = 2.422$ ,  $M_{\text{extremely negative}} = 2.948$ ;  $p_{\text{positive vs. moderately negative}} = .017$ ,  $p_{\text{moderately negative vs. extremely negative}} = .014$ ,  $p_{\text{positive vs. extremely negative}} = 0$ ). Therefore, the manipulation appeared to be successful.

### Magnitude of Difference in Attitudes Toward Target and Competitive Brands

The interaction effect of comparative valence and goal orientation on the magnitude of difference in attitudes toward the two brands is significant,  $F(2, 152) = 6.167$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\omega^2 = .053$ . Specifically, in the positive comparison condition, promotion-focused participants perceived greater differences between the brands than did prevention-focused participants,  $M_{\text{pro}} = 3.433$ ,  $n_{\text{pro}} = 30$ ,  $M_{\text{pre}} = 2.658$ ,  $n_{\text{pre}} = 23$ ,  $F(1, 152) = 5.82$ ,  $p = .017$ ,

$\omega^2 = .025$ . Moreover, in the extremely negative condition, prevention-focused participants perceived greater differences than promotion-focused participants,  $M_{\text{pro}} = 2.110$ ,  $n_{\text{pro}} = 25$ ,  $M_{\text{pre}} = 2.884$ ,  $n_{\text{pre}} = 29$ ,  $F(1, 152) = 4.80$ ,  $p = .030$ ,  $\omega^2 = .019$ . Promotion- and prevention-focused participants revealed no significant differences in the moderately negative condition,  $M_{\text{pro}} = 3.651$ ,  $n_{\text{pro}} = 24$ ,  $M_{\text{pre}} = 3.880$ ,  $n_{\text{pre}} = 27$ ,  $F(1, 152) = .92$ ,  $p = .340$ ,  $\omega^2 = 0$ . Therefore, H1a–c are supported; we depict these results in Figure 4A.

### Diagnosticity

The interaction effect on diagnosticity is again significant,  $F(2, 152) = 4.365$ ,  $p = .014$ ,  $\omega^2 = .040$ , such that among those participants exposed to the positive comparison advertisement, promotion-focused persons perceived higher diagnosticity ( $M = 5.142$ ) than did prevention-focused participants,  $M = 4.457$ ,  $F(1, 152) = 4.25$ ,  $p = .041$ ,  $\omega^2 = .019$ . In the extremely negative comparison condition, the reactions were reversed,  $M_{\text{pro}} = 3.680$ ,  $M_{\text{pre}} = 4.543$ ,  $F(1, 152) = 4.83$ ,  $p = .030$ ,  $\omega^2 = .023$ . In addition, there were no significant differences between promotion-focused participants and prevention-focused participants when they were shown the moderately negative ad,  $M_{\text{pro}} = 4.552$ ,  $M_{\text{pre}} = 4.620$ ,  $F(1, 152) = .04$ ,  $p = .834$ ,  $\omega^2 = .006$ . Therefore, the results support H2, as we show in Figure 4B.

### Purchase Intention

For purchase intentions, we find a significant interaction effect,  $F(2, 152) = 6$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\omega^2 = .051$ . Specifically, when they viewed positive comparison advertisements, promotion-focused participants indicated higher purchase intentions ( $M = 5.133$ ) than did prevention-focused participants,  $M = 4.029$ ,  $F(1, 152) = 8.39$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\omega^2 = .038$ . In contrast, when they saw extremely negative comparison advertisements, prevention-focused participants expressed higher purchase intentions ( $M = 3.920$ ) than promotion-focused participants,  $M = 3.093$ ,  $F(1, 152) = 3.11$ ,  $p = .080$ ,  $\omega^2 = .011$ . In addition, in the moderately negative condition, we again found no significant difference between promotion- and prevention-focused participants,  $M_{\text{pro}} = 4.986$ ,  $M_{\text{pre}} = 5.148$ ,  $F(1, 152) = .360$ ,  $p = .550$ ,  $\omega^2 = .003$ . (See Figure 4C for these results.)

## Discussion

The results from Study 3 suggest that the interaction effects of comparative valence and chronic goal orientation influence persuasion. Specifically, when they are exposed to positive comparative advertisements, chronic promotion-focused participants perceive greater differences between the target and competitive brands and better message diagnosticity, while

also indicating higher purchase intentions, than do chronic prevention-focused participants, whereas the extremely negative comparison condition has opposite effects on difference perceptions, message diagnosticity, and purchase intentions. Generally, these results are consistent with our first two studies and prior research, which indicates that goal orientation can influence both situational and chronic individual differences.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

In investigating the interaction effects of goal orientation and comparative valence on persuasion, we find that when consumers are exposed to different comparative valence advertisements, they demonstrate unique patterns in their difference perceptions of target and competitive brands, diagnosticity, and purchase intentions, depending on their goal orientations. These influences apply to both situational (Study 1 and 2) and chronic individual differences (Study 3).

### Advertising Implications

In turn, we offer several implications for advertising strategies. First, even if they do not know consumers' orientations initially, advertisers can prime goal orientations to influence the persuasiveness of their advertising. The following example, which is an Internet advertisement for Asus Notebooks ([www.asus.com/products4.aspx?11=5&12=75&13=0&model=1073&modelmenu=1/](http://www.asus.com/products4.aspx?11=5&12=75&13=0&model=1073&modelmenu=1/)), uses a message that is likely to prime consumers' promotion-focused goals:

Style with Mobility! The W6F Notebook Series is any frequent traveler's dream come true! With the sleek and lightweight design, you will not only travel light, but also travel in style!

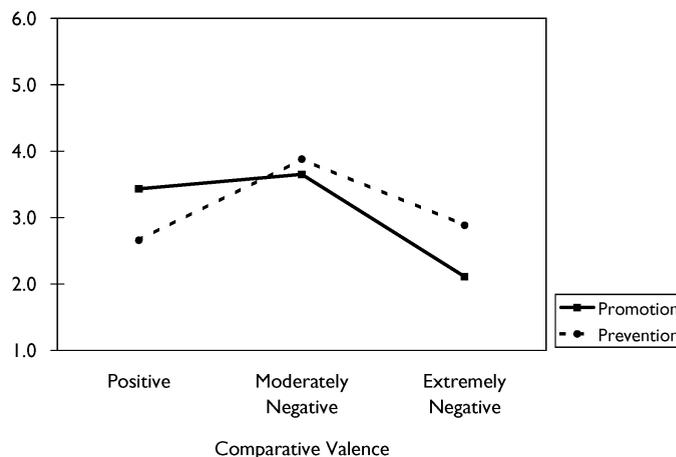
A different ad message ([www.asus.com/products4.aspx?11=5&12=24&13=284&model=24&modelmenu=1/](http://www.asus.com/products4.aspx?11=5&12=24&13=284&model=24&modelmenu=1/)) serves to prime consumers' prevention-focused goals:

Just imagine your notebook breaking down on a critical business trip that could break or make your career. You are now cut off from the masterpiece presentation you prepared after pulling all-nighters after all-nighters, but unfortunately, the backup files are locked up in your office desk. What a nightmare.

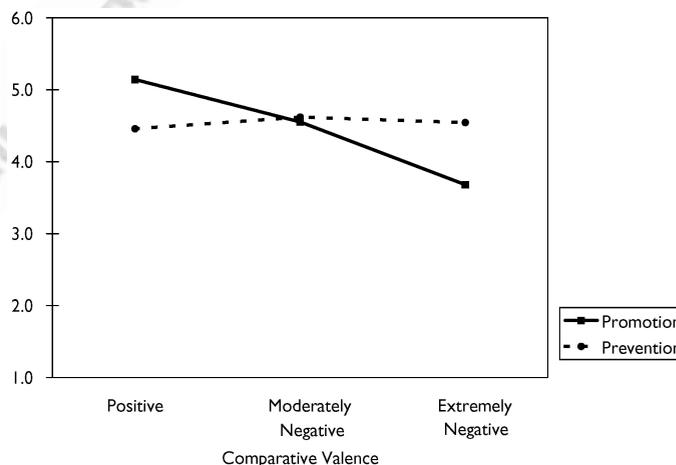
Second, our conclusions indicate that regulatory fit increases perceptions of superiority and message diagnosticity, as well as purchase intention. Therefore, advertisers should use comparative valence and prime their audiences' goal orientation to increase perceptions of the diagnosticity of ads. When advertisers emphasize their superiority or use positive outcome messages, they should also employ promotion-focused cues,

FIGURE 4  
Interaction Between Goal Orientation and Comparative Valence on Dependent Variables (Study 3)

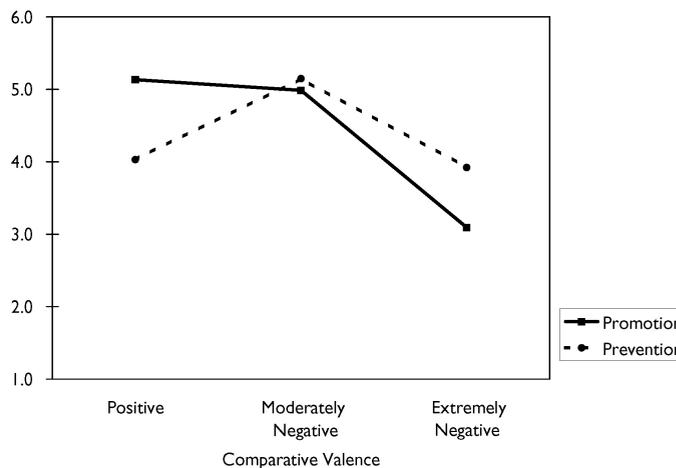
#### (A) Difference Perception of Brand Attitudes Between Two Brands



#### (B) Diagnosticity



#### (C) Purchase Intention



such as “Style with Mobility!” “Making Your Dreams Come True!” or “Choose Your Ideal Brand!” In contrast, if advertisers want to emphasize the weakness of a competitor, they should use prevention-focused cues in extremely negative comparative ads, such as “What a Nightmare!” or “Choosing the Right Brand for Your Family Is Your Responsibility!”

This strategy could be applied particularly to political advertising, especially when it contains negative attributions. Prior research on negative comparison advertisements pertaining to political issues (e.g., Meirick 2002; Pinkleton, Um, and Austin 2002) shows that audiences respond to negative comparative political advertising on the basis of their cognitive biases. Our findings further suggest that political advertisers should use prevention-focused cues to prime voters’ needs for security and a sense of responsibility and obligation when they broadcast extremely negative political comparative advertising, possibly by mentioning public security, insurance policies, or peace claims (e.g., Lyndon Johnson’s infamous “Daisy” ad). In contrast, if they are pushing a positive comparative political ad, advertisers should use promotion-focused cues, such as the dreams of an ideal version of the city, state, or country, to prime voters’ ideals and dreams (e.g., Ronald Reagan’s “Morning in America” campaign).

### Research Implications

Because comparative valence is a very important issue for advertising strategies, we use regulatory focus theory and investigate the interaction effects of goal orientation and comparative valence. We extend the claims of regulatory focus theory and confirm that promotion-focused consumers are more sensitive to positive outcomes, whereas prevention-focused consumers are more sensitive to negative outcomes.

In addition, whereas Chernev (2004b) notes that the slope of a utility function likely varies as a function of both the reference point domain (gain versus loss) and consumers’ goal orientation, no research has offered empirical support of the concept that the gain–loss pattern may be reversed for promotion-focused consumers. In response to this research gap, we prove this proposition with our finding that when audiences are exposed to positive comparative ads (i.e., a gain-related message), promotion-focused consumers perceive greater differences between the target brand and the competitive brand, whereas when they are exposed to extremely negative comparative ads (i.e., a loss-related message), prevention-focused consumers perceive greater differences.

As an important side note, we acknowledge Aaker and Lee’s (2006) literature review, in which they suggest there are two different approaches to regulatory fit: one that is process-based and another that is outcome-based. We clearly employ an outcome-based approach, which we recognize as a potential limitation of our study. Further research should therefore con-

tinue to investigate how audiences process comparative messages, possibly through cognitive response measurements.

In addition, some covariates and other factors might be considered in further research. First, involvement may influence persuasion effects. Although ideals and oughts do not trigger involvement (Pham and Avnet 2004), involvement itself may have a different influence on positive and negative framing (Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy 1990; Wang and Lee 2006). Further research should consider involvement as a moderator and measure cognitive responses to better understand how consumers process information.

Second, prior research shows that activating a regulatory focus does not influence consumers’ moods (e.g., Crowe and Higgins 1997; Pham and Avnet 2004), but we think that chronic affectivity (i.e., optimism versus pessimism) may influence the persuasion effect we find in this study. Therefore, considering mood as a covariate would make our results more precise.

Third, the comparative valence in our study only pertains to overall performance (i.e., a single-comparison ad), because we rule out the impact of attribute factors by making them consistent. Attribute performances may not always be consistent, however—some might be excellent, others good, and some poor. Additional research should therefore extend these issues to examine different attribute performance levels. Moreover, in a piecemeal ad, the target brand is compared to one competitor on a particular attribute, a different competitor on a second attribute, another competitor on a third attribute, and so on (Muthukrishnan, Warlop, and Alba 2001). Further research could investigate regulatory fit effects in piecemeal ads. The levels as well as the types of attribute may be important; different attribute types may influence the effects of goal orientation and comparative valence on persuasion, including positive versus negative or hedonic versus utilitarian attributes.

Fourth, this research manipulates comparative valence using a comparative table and derogatory or nonderogatory words (see Jain and Posavac 2004), but this approach might not ensure external validity. Additional research should investigate real advertisements and apply the framework proposed herein. Similarly, the brand names we use (i.e., Brands X and Y) are too simple to ensure external validity, so further research should use invented or foreign brand names.

Finally, our research demonstrates the role of goal orientation–priming messages. Some researchers also extend regulatory focus concepts to message framing and distinguish between promotion- and prevention-related messages (Aaker and Lee 2001; Bosmans and Baumgartner 2005; Chen, Ng, and Rao 2005; Florack and Scarabis 2006; Hamilton and Biehal 2005; Kim 2006; Lee and Aaker 2004; Wang and Lee 2006). Message types may influence brand attitudes (Aaker and Lee 2001; Bosmans and Baumgartner 2005; Lee and Aaker 2004), choices (Hamilton and Biehal 2005), impatience (Chen, Ng,

and Rao 2005), information search behavior (Wang and Lee 2006), decision-making processes (Wang and Lee 2006), and even smoking intentions (Kim 2006). Thus, they clearly offer a new and interesting direction for advertising research. In the context of our work, researchers could examine the effects of message framing on persuasion using the theoretical background of regulatory focus and comparative valence.

In summary, our study confirms the interaction effects of goal orientation and comparative valence on persuasion, including differences in perceptions of target and competitive brands, diagnosticity, and purchase intentions. Our findings thus offer many implications for both advertisers and academics.

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APPENDIX

Stimuli Design

Positively Comparative Ad

*Why Brand X Is Better Than Brand Y*

*Consumer Reports* is a well-known and high-credibility consumer magazine. We excerpt some information about notebook computer comparisons from *Consumer Reports*.

*Consumer Reports*, 2005

Note: ● Poor ● Fair ● Good ● Excellent

Brand	Overall Score				Attributes Rating			
	0	50	100		Power management systems	Sound effects	Weight	Graphics
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent				
X					●	●	●	●
Y					●	●	●	●

As mentioned above, it's not that Brand Y notebooks are bad, but Brand X gives you your money's worth. Brand X notebooks provide excellent power management systems, sound effects, and graphics, and lighter weights. This is why more and more people trust Brand X.

It is the reason Brand X is worth choosing.

Moderately Negative Comparative Ad

*Why Brand X Is Good, But Brand Y Is Fair*

*Consumer Reports* is a well-known and high-credibility consumer magazine. We excerpt some information about notebook computer comparisons from *Consumer Reports*.

*Consumer Reports*, 2005

Note: ● Poor ● Fair ● Good ● Excellent

Brand	Overall Score				Attributes Rating			
	0	50	100		Power management systems	Sound effects	Weight	Graphics
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent				
X					●	●	●	●
Y					●	●	●	●

As mentioned above, Brand Y notebooks just aren't worth your money. Brand X notebooks provide good power management systems, sound effects, and graphics, and lighter weights, but Brand Y notebooks are only fair. This is why more and more people trust Brand X.

It is the reason Brand X is worth choosing, but Brand Y is not.

### Extremely Negative Comparative Ad

*Why Brand Y Is Poorer Than Brand X*

*Consumer Reports* is a well-known and high-credibility consumer magazine. We excerpt some information about notebook computer comparisons from *Consumer Reports*.

*Consumer Reports*, 2005

Note: ● Poor ● Fair ● Good ● Excellent

Brand	Overall Score				Attributes Rating			
	0	50	100		Power management systems	Sound effects	Weight	Graphics
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent				
X					●	●	●	●
Y					●	●	●	●

### Extremely Negative Comparative Ad

*Why Brand Y Is Poorer Than Brand X*

*Consumer Reports* is a well-known and high-credibility consumer magazine. We excerpt some information about notebook computer comparisons from *Consumer Reports*.

*Consumer Reports*, 2005

As mentioned above, Brand Y notebooks just aren't worth your money. They provide poorer power management systems, sound effects, and graphics, and heavier weights, than Brand X. This is why more and more people trust Brand X.

It is the reason Brand Y notebooks are less worth choosing than Brand X.

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