

Persuading ICT Consumers to Disconnect from Work: An Experimental Study on the Influence of Message Frame, Regulatory Focus, Ad Believability and Attitude toward the Ad on Message Effectiveness

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Abstract : Information and communication technologies (ICT) have become pervasive in all areas of modern life, both in work and leisure. Technological developments and particularly the ubiquity of smartphones have made it possible for ICT consumers to be constantly connected to work, fostering an always-on mentality and increasing the pressure to be accessible at all times. However, performing work tasks outside of working hours using ICT results in a lack of mental detachment and recovery from work. It is, therefore, necessary to develop effective behavioral interventions to increase risk awareness of a constant connection to the workplace in the employed population. Drawing on regulatory focus theory, this study aims to investigate the persuasiveness of tailoring messages to individuals' chronic regulatory focus in order to encourage ICT consumers to set boundaries by defining fixed times for professional accessibility outside of working hours in order to contribute to the well-being of ICT consumers with high ICT involvement in their work life. The experimental study examines the interaction effect between consumers' chronic regulatory focus (i.e. promotion focus versus prevention focus) and positive or negative message framing (i.e. gain frame versus loss frame) on consumers' intention to perform the advocated behavior. Based on the assumption that congruent messages create regulatory fit and increase message effectiveness, it is hypothesized that behavioral intention will be higher in the condition of regulatory fit compared to regulatory non-fit. It is further hypothesized that ad believability and attitude toward the ad will mediate the effect of regulatory fit on behavioral intention given that ad believability and ad attitude both determine consumer behavioral responses. Results confirm that the interaction between regulatory focus and message frame emerged as a predictor of behavioral intention such as that consumers' intentions to set boundaries by defining fixed times for professional accessibility outside of working hours increased as congruency with their regulatory focus increased. The loss-framed ad was more effective for consumers with a predominant prevention focus, while the gain-framed ad was more effective for consumers with a predominant promotion focus. Ad believability and attitude toward the ad both emerged as predictors of behavioral intention. Mediation analysis revealed that the direct effect of the interaction between regulatory focus and message frame on behavioral intention was no longer significant when including ad believability and ad attitude as mediators in the model, indicating full mediation. However, while the indirect effect through ad believability was significant, the indirect effect through attitude toward the ad was not significant. Hence, regulatory fit increased ad believability, which then increased behavioral intention. Ad believability appears to have a superior effect indicating that behavioral intention does not depend on attitude toward the ad, but it depends on whether or not the ad is perceived as believable. The study shows that the principle of regulatory fit holds true in the context of ICT consumption and responds to calls for more research on mediators of health message framing effects.

Keywords : always-on mentality, Information and communication technologies (ICT) consumption, message framing, regulatory focus

Conference Title : ICCMT 2017 : International Conference on Communication, Media and Technology

Conference Location : Barcelona, Spain

Conference Dates : August 17-18, 2017