

Chapter 27

Self Regulation on Innovative Products Choice

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores how choice goals influence consumers' innovativeness in a product category domain. The intentions to adopt new products are guided by promotion and prevention self-regulation systems. Thus, two of the choice goals were classified as promotion goals—justifiability and choice confidence—and two were classified as prevention goals – anticipated regret and evaluation costs. Two groups emerged from the analysis: one named “most innovative” and another called “less innovative.” When comparing the groups, the results show that the “most innovative” cluster demonstrated higher choice confidence, higher justifiability and was more capable of avoiding a possible choice regret. The differences found in the group analysis highlight the need of understanding in further detail how consumers behave during the choice process of innovative products. Therefore, the Regulatory Focus Theory has been shown to be very important for understanding the choice process, especially for the innovation adoption.

INTRODUCTION

Consider two individuals. One is Peter, who is worried about avoiding negative consequences. Thus, when he uses his cell phone he is probably more concerned about losing any information,

such as his contacts, calls, e-mails and any other thing that may be important to him. On the other hand, John always approaches positive results in his daily life, and he uses his cell phone to try to achieve these positive results, such as be in contact with his friends, be able to check his e-mail wherever he is and register some good moments by using his cell phone to take pictures. Peter and

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John use their cell phones with the same goals (e.g. make calls, surf the internet, check e-mails, send messages to their contacts). However, they are very different in the way they try to achieve a goal. Peter is more concerned about avoiding negative consequences whereas John probably seeks to achieve positive ones.

One day, Peter and John decide to upgrade their equipments to a better one, with new attributes and services. In this situation, these consumers will be faced with a lot of options and alternatives that will make their choice more difficult. Their choice process will probably be very different as well. Peter will prefer attributes that fit his prevention-focused orientation and John will prefer attributes that fit his promotion-focused orientation. Peter and John might end up buying different cell phones or maybe one of them may abdicate upgrading, just because he could not find any option that fits his self-regulation orientation.

When people pursue a goal, they begin with some motivational orientation, some concerns or interests that direct the goal pursuit, and the self-regulation orientation is one of these concerns (Freitas & Higgins, 2002). The two scenarios above illustrate two distinct goals highlighted in regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997), which builds on the general hedonic notion that people approach pleasure and avoid pain. The theory distinguishes between two major categories of desired goals: those that relate to attaining positive outcomes such as advancement, achievement, and aspirations (termed promotion goals), and those that relate to avoiding negative outcomes, such as responsibilities, obligations and security (termed prevention goals). According to the regulatory focus theory, individuals with a promotion focus will regulate their behavior toward positive outcomes, and those with a prevention focus will regulate their behavior away from negative outcomes (Liberman et al., 2001).

There are some studies that have explored the choice process topic of research (Coupey, 1994; Dhar; Nowlis; Sherman, 1999; Chernev,

2006; Thompson; Hamilton; Rust, 2005) and specifically, some studies (Herzenstein; Posavac; Brakus, 2007; Alexander; Lynch Jr; Wang, 2008) emphasize that it is important to understand consumer's behavior that are more interested in trying new products and services. Bettman (Bettman, 1979; Bettman, Luce, & Payne, 1998) proposed that consumers usually have a set of goals which are pursued during most of the choice situations. Furthermore, studies of the choice process must consider the choice goals in order to understand the heuristic strategies that consumers use to decide which product to buy (e.g. Bettman; Johnson; Payne, 1991; 2000; Heitmann; Lehmann; Herrmann, 2007).

These goals may influence consumers in a different way, depending on the individual differences or on the characteristics of the choice context (Kahn, Luce, & Nowlis, 2006). Thus, the impact of the choice goals on the innovativeness process has not been studied yet. Therefore, it has become relevant to understand how choice goals influence consumers' innovativeness, and how this relationship applies to the organizational strategy. In order to achieve this goal, an extension of part of the model proposed by Heitmann, Lehmann and Herrmann (2007) is suggested in this study, relating the innovativeness in a product category domain to the choice goals. The choice goals are analyzed from the self-regulation perspective (Higgins, 1997). The self-regulation approach to studying the innovation and decision processes highlights the possibility of exploring how these two variables relate to each other in the consumer behavior context.

The importance of Heitmann, Lehmann and Herrmann (2007)'s study to understand the choice goals is that they have classified these goals according to the regulatory focus theory, which was proposed by Higgins (1997). Thus, there are goals that are pursued in order to avoid negative consequences of the choice, and goals that are pursued so as to achieve positive results of the choice process.

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