

The Interaction of Endorser Attractiveness and Involvement in Persuasion Depends on the Goal That Guides Message Processing

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Previous research on the persuasive effects of ad cues, such as endorser attractiveness, has shown that these cues often serve as shortcuts to product evaluation when recipients are not motivated to process product information. In this article, the role of message cues was hypothesized to depend as much on the types of motives that guide message processing as on the degree of motivation. In an experiment, different goal-relevant attributes were made salient prior to viewing a target ad for a restaurant. The attractiveness of endorsers in the ad and the level of motivation to process the ad (involvement) were also manipulated. When the salient attributes were relevant to sensory gratification (e.g., taste and aroma), endorser attractiveness influenced evaluations of the restaurant under low but not high involvement. When the salient attributes were relevant to public image goals (e.g., creating a good social impression), endorser attractiveness influenced evaluations under high but not low involvement. Analysis of subjects' listed thoughts suggested that, when sensory attributes were salient, the persuasive impact of endorser attractiveness occurred via a relatively peripheral route. However, when image attributes were salient, the effect of endorser attractiveness occurred through a more central route, providing information that was processed elaborately when motivation to process was high.

What determines the role that cues in an advertisement will have in persuasion? Research on persuasive message processing suggests that the answer often depends on the amount of effort one devotes to processing the ad (Chaiken, 1980, 1987; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986). When ad recipients are not particularly motivated to process an ad, nonsubstantive features of the ad, such as the attractiveness of the endorser, often provide shortcuts or cues that allow recipients to evaluate the product without extensive cognitive effort. On the other hand, when ad recipients are highly motivated to process the ad, attitudes tend to be based on diligent consideration of the merits of the product as presented in the ad, rather than on the use of nonsubstantive cues. This pattern has been observed in a variety of studies (see Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, for a review), demonstrating that recipients' degree of motivation is a critical determinant of the way cues in a message are processed.

In this article, we argue that, in addition to the importance of a recipient's degree of motivation in processing an ad, it is critical to consider the types of motives that guide message processing. Recipients may have different goals in mind when evaluating a product. Cues that appear nonsubstantive with respect to one goal may be considered relevant for another goal, and thus they may be diligently processed when that goal is salient. In the experiment that follows, we hypothesized that differences in the goals that guide product evaluation may lead to important differences in the processing of message cues and, therefore, to differences in the persuasive impact of those cues.

Before discussing these hypotheses in detail, evidence for key models of persuasive message processing is reviewed. Then, different goals that may underlie persuasion and their implications for the processing of message cues such as endorser attractiveness¹ are discussed, and an experimental test of these implications is presented.

PROCESSING EFFORT AND ROUTES TO PERSUASION

According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986), attitude change in response to a message can take place along either of two distinct routes to persuasion. The *central route* is taken when (a) a persuasion situation fosters the motivation and ability to think about the focal topic, and (b) a message recipient carefully examines and elaborates

¹Physical attractiveness, likability, and celebrity are distinct dimensions of endorser attractiveness that may have different influences on persuasion (Kahle & Homer, 1985). However, we use *endorser attractiveness* broadly to refer to any characteristic that affects endorsers' physical or social attractiveness. In practice, physically attractive endorsers may be perceived to be more sociable, popular, and likable than less attractive endorsers (e.g., Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972; Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Goldman & Lewis, 1977).

product-relevant arguments presented in the message. In contrast, the *peripheral route* is taken when (a) conditions do not foster either the motivation or the ability to process the message in detail, and (b) a simple positive or negative cue in the persuasion context (e.g., an attractive spokesperson or the background scenery) elicits attitude change directly without scrutiny of message arguments. Such peripheral cues can be processed with minimal cognitive effort, allowing them to be used as heuristics for inferring the desirability of the product or focal issue. A similar distinction has also been advanced in the Heuristic/Systematic Processing Model (HSM; Chaiken, 1980, 1987; see also Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989).

Tests of these models' predictions have yielded consistent support across a variety of studies (see Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, for an extensive review). Some of these experiments manipulated the degree to which subjects were motivated to process a message by manipulating their level of *involvement*. Although involvement has been defined and manipulated in a number of ways (see Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984; Johnson & Eagly, 1989), in these studies it was typically operationalized as the degree to which the message topic had personal relevance and consequences for the recipient.

For example, Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann (1983) had subjects read a booklet of ads that included a target ad for a fictitious brand of disposable razors. Prior to reading the booklet, subjects were told either that, after the experiment, they would choose a gift from among several brands of razors, including the brand in the target ad (high involvement), or a gift from among several brands of toothpaste (low involvement). Thus, high-involvement subjects were led to anticipate an upcoming decision about the target brand (making the target ad personally relevant), whereas low-involvement subjects were not. Postmessage attitudes and purchase intentions showed that high-involvement subjects were less influenced than low-involvement subjects by the nature of the endorsers appearing in the razor ad (celebrity athletes vs. middle-aged average citizens). Also, the former subjects were more influenced than the latter by the cogency of the ad's claims about the merits of the brand.

TYPES OF MOTIVATION

Petty et al.'s (1983) experiment demonstrated that a recipient's degree of motivation (involvement) is a key determinant of the way a message is processed. In our experiment, we focused on the qualitatively different types of motives that can underlie message processing and examined the implications for the influence of message cues on attitudes.

Consideration of the goals that underlie message processing allows for a priori prediction of the role that cues may play in persuasion. Whether a cue is used as central or as peripheral information will depend on its relevance to

the message-processing goal. For instance, when one's goal is to judge the effectiveness of a beauty product, the physical attractiveness of its endorsers may be deemed relevant and can be expected to influence attitudes via a central route when ad recipients are highly involved in evaluating the product. Indeed, Petty and Cacioppo (1980) found that endorser attractiveness influenced attitudes toward shampoo under high involvement, apparently because the appearance of the endorsers provided direct evidence about the product's merits. Kahle and Homer (1985), using a social adaptation perspective, demonstrated this for disposable razors.

It is important to note that ELM allows for any persuasion variable, such as endorser attractiveness, to influence attitudes in different ways, including by serving as a persuasive argument (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). However, a focus on the goals served by message processing provides a basis for predicting *a priori* how endorser attractiveness will influence attitudes. Moreover, it generalizes Petty and Cacioppo's (1980) and Kahle and Homer's (1985) findings by tying them to broader issues concerning the role of goals in persuasion.

INFLUENCE OF GOALS ON MESSAGE PROCESSING

Our general hypothesis was as follows: Goals play a fundamental role in determining how cues in a message will be processed. This is because goals determine the perceived relevance of cues. Thus, the same cue (e.g., endorser attractiveness) may be considered relevant when one goal is salient but irrelevant when another goal is salient. If a cue is seen as relevant to one's goal, it is likely to influence attitudes via a central route when there is sufficient motivation (and ability) to process diligently. If a cue appears irrelevant to one's goal, it is likely to be used only when involvement is low, as a peripheral cue.

This reasoning implies not only that endorser attractiveness can sometimes influence attitudes via a central route (as demonstrated by Kahle & Homer, 1985; and Petty & Cacioppo, 1980) but that it may be used centrally even when attractiveness provides no direct information about product merits. Thus, compelling support for this hypothesis will come from a context in which endorser attractiveness is not criterial for product evaluation (as it is for evaluating a beauty product)—a context that would allow the same cue to be relevant to one goal but irrelevant to another. In such a situation, when the cue is goal relevant, its use would require message recipients to draw inferences regarding what the cue implies about product characteristics. Under high involvement conditions, recipients should be motivated to do so.

A consideration of attitude functions (Katz, 1960; Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956) suggests goal conditions in which these predictions can be tested. For

example, *utilitarian* attitudes function to maximize the rewards and minimize the punishments associated with products, summarizing the outcomes intrinsically linked to the products and guiding behavior that seeks the benefits (Katz, 1960). Utilitarian attitudes are generally based on those product attributes that provide intrinsically satisfying or unsatisfying outcomes (Shavitt, 1989, 1990).

An attitude can also function in the service of self-expression. *Social identity* attitudes symbolize and express one's identity, and they help one to establish a public image and gain social approval. Social identity attitudes toward a product are generally based on perceptions of others' product attitudes and what they imply about the image of the product and user (Shavitt, 1989, 1990). See also Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis (1986) for a similar distinction between functional and prestige brand concepts.

These differences in the goals or functions served by attitudes should influence the way endorser information is processed. Consider the different goals that may be involved in evaluating a restaurant. For a utilitarian function (reflecting concern with the quality of the food, service, etc.), the attractiveness of endorsers in an ad may truly be considered peripheral or irrelevant to evaluation. In such a case, endorser characteristics should affect attitudes toward the restaurant as a peripheral cue when recipients are not highly motivated to process the ad. This is consistent with the findings of previous research (Petty et al., 1983). Thus, when exposed to the ad, a recipient may notice that "those good-looking people in the ad liked the restaurant" and use this as a simple cue that the restaurant itself is good.

However, if evaluating the restaurant serves a social identity function, one would be largely concerned with its image. In this case, the attractiveness and social status of endorsers appearing in a restaurant ad may be seen as relevant. Thus, when one is highly motivated to process the ad, endorser characteristics should influence attitudes via the central route, through inferences about their implications for the restaurant's image. For example, on encountering attractive endorsers in an ad, one may infer that "only the cool people hang out there, so this must be a trendy place." See Feldman and Lynch (1988; also Lynch, Marmorstein, & Weigold, 1988; Pham, 1992) for a related conceptual framework regarding the effects of goals on the diagnosticity and utilization of cues.

In our experiment, we investigated the role of functional goals in the persuasive effects of endorser attractiveness with a procedure that made different function-relevant attributes salient prior to viewing a target ad for a restaurant. For some subjects, attributes relevant to sensory gratification (e.g., hunger and thirst) were made salient to induce a utilitarian function for evaluating the restaurant. For other subjects, image attributes relevant to creating a good impression were made salient to induce a social identity function for evaluating the restaurant.

METHOD

Subjects and Design

A total of 148 male and female undergraduates at the University of Illinois participated in the experiment; the majority of them earned extra credit in an introductory advertising course. Twenty-three of the subjects were paid to participate and were recruited through fliers and ads in the student newspaper. Subjects were randomly assigned to each condition in a $3 \times 2 \times 2$ (Primed Attribute: Sensory, Image, or Control \times Involvement: High or Low \times Endorsers: Attractive or Less Attractive) factorial design. Subjects were seated in individual cubicles in a psychology laboratory.

Stimuli and Procedure

Two separate booklets were prepared for this experiment, as in Petty et al's (1983) experiment. The first booklet contained the advertisements (the target ad and nine filler ads), and the second contained the dependent measures. The first page of the ad booklet consisted of the priming task (described later), which was designed to heighten the salience of function-relevant attributes when evaluating the ads that followed it. Subjects were instructed to start by completing this first page. The second page stated that the study concerned the evaluation of ads that were scheduled to appear in various publications, and it informed subjects that they would read 10 ads—some of which were in rough form. The instructions also contained part of the involvement manipulation and information to heighten the effectiveness of the priming procedure (described later). The 10 ads followed the instructions. Each ad was introduced with a few sentences (e.g., "The ad on the next page is for a perfume being test marketed on the east coast"). The third ad in each booklet was the target ad for a fictitious restaurant (Brady's). Six of the other ads were real magazine ads (e.g., for Mont Blanc pens, Soft & Dri antiperspirant), and three were not (e.g., for Radiant toothpaste). These filler ads were the same for all subjects.

When subjects finished examining the ad booklet, it was removed, and subjects were given the dependent measure booklet to complete. Thereafter, they were debriefed, paid (if applicable), and dismissed.

Target ad. Two versions of the ad for Brady's restaurant were used that were identical except for the endorsers. Photographs of the endorsers were the only visuals presented in the ads. The ad copy, the same for all conditions, was designed to reflect both the sensory aspects of a restaurant ("From spicy BBQ Chicken and Ribs to Zesty Lasagna") and the image aspects ("So come meet your friends at Brady's tonight. Chances are, they're already there").

Independent Variables

Primed attribute. The function-relevant attribute that was salient at the time of exposure to the ads was manipulated by means of an initial questionnaire intended to prime either sensory or image attributes (Shavitt & Fazio, 1991).

The *sensory prime* was intended to make the sensory aspects of a restaurant (e.g., taste/aroma of foods and comfort) salient to subjects as they evaluated the Brady's ad. It involved rating 20 experiences (e.g., eating microwave popcorn, smelling fresh air, having sore muscles) regarding "how good or bad they make you feel." Each item was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from *makes me feel very bad* (1) to *makes me feel very good* (5). Subjects in the sensory prime condition were seated in specially equipped cubicles. To induce private self-awareness, desks in these cubicles were fitted with a small mirror in which subjects could see their faces when seated. This was expected to enhance the influence of the sensory rating task because subjects who are made privately self-aware tend to be more acutely aware of their inner feelings and experience them more intensely (e.g., Carver, Blaney, & Scheier, 1979; Fenigstein, 1979; Scheier & Carver, 1977). The mirror was labeled "Do not move—Save for Experiment 17." None of the subjects asked questions about the mirror.

The *image prime* was designed to make the social impression aspects of a restaurant salient to subjects. It involved rating 20 events (e.g., wearing a Rolex watch, losing your job, serving imported beer) regarding "how much you think they would make a good impression on others." Each item was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from *won't make a good impression at all* (1) to *will make a very good impression* (5).

The effectiveness of these procedures for priming sensory versus image attributes when processing advertisements had been assessed in a pretest. The pilot study subjects completed either the sensory-rating task (in front of a small mirror) or the image-rating task before reading and responding to a beverage ad that featured both sensory and image attributes. Cognitive responses measured immediately after the ad were substantially influenced by the priming procedures: Subjects in the sensory condition listed more thoughts about the sensory qualities of the beverage (taste, refreshment, etc.) than about the image of the product and the model in the ad, whereas the reverse was true for those in the image condition.

To further strengthen the priming manipulation in the main experiment, subjects were led to expect that later experimental tasks would again focus on the primed dimension. The instructions page following the priming task told subjects that, after they were finished with the ad booklet, they would be taken to another room where they would rate a different set of products. In the sensory prime condition, they expected to rate the feelings and sensations

associated with those products. In the image prime condition, they expected to participate in a discussion with other subjects regarding the brand images of those products. Thus, image prime subjects were led to anticipate public scrutiny of their judgments as part of the image goal induction.

Involvement. As in Petty et al. (1983), the involvement manipulation appeared in two places in the ad booklet. First, the instructions page told subjects they would receive a free gift at the end of the session. Subjects were either told they would be allowed to choose a \$1.00 gift certificate for one of several restaurants, including one for which they would soon read an ad (high involvement with Brady's ad), or that they would be allowed to choose from a number of brands of toothpaste, including one for which they would soon read an ad (low involvement with Brady's). A fictitious toothpaste ad was used as a filler ad. (At the end of the session, subjects selected a gift from a variety of product samples and restaurant certificates.) Second, the statement that introduced the Brady's ad was also varied. All subjects were told that Brady's was a restaurant chain located near a number of college campuses in California. However, high-involvement subjects were also told that Brady's would be opening on the University of Illinois campus within the year. Thus, high-involvement subjects were led to believe that they would be making a decision involving Brady's and that Brady's would be opening in their area in the near future. For low-involvement subjects, in contrast, the Brady's ad was not personally relevant because they did not anticipate making a decision about patronizing Brady's.

Endorser attractiveness. Photos of one man and one woman appeared as endorsers in each ad. They were presented as recent college graduates who testified that "Brady's was our favorite campus restaurant!" Both the physical attractiveness and the purported identities of these endorsers were varied (see Appendix). The ad featured either photos of individuals who were highly attractive (attractive endorser condition) or pictures of average-looking people (less attractive endorser condition). Each photo was accompanied by a name and a university affiliation. In the attractive endorser condition, the schools were University of California at Berkeley and University of California at Los Angeles. In the less attractive endorser conditions, the universities were fictitious schools in California (e.g., Oakland State University). During pretesting, the photos and identities used for the attractive endorsers were rated as significantly more attractive and likable than those of the less attractive endorsers.

Dependent Measures

As in Petty et al.'s (1983) experiment, the first part of the dependent measures booklet assessed subjects' memory for the product categories and brand names that appeared in the ads. Next, cognitive responses toward the target ad were

assessed. Subjects were asked to list their thoughts and feelings as they read the Brady's ad using a standard thought-listing form (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981) on which six boxes were printed. Thereafter, subjects rated each of their listed thoughts for how favorable it was toward Brady's on a 5-point scale ranging from *very unfavorable* (-2) to *very favorable* (2).

The elaborateness of each thought was later coded by judges on a 3-point scale, which was anchored as follows. A score of 1 was given to *message-originated thoughts*, which were essentially playbacks of some aspect of the ad, unelaborated by the subject (e.g., "they serve ribs and steak"). A score of 2 was given to *recipient-modified thoughts*, which included reactions to or inferences drawn from the message (e.g., "the food sounds good"). The highest elaboration score, a 3, was given to *recipient-originated thoughts*. The content of these thoughts was largely originated by the subject, rather than being directly traceable to the ad itself (e.g., "I could take my parents to this restaurant"). See Greenwald (1968) and Shavitt and Brock (1986) for description and validation of these coding categories. The coding was performed by two trained, independent judges who were blind to subjects' experimental condition. The two judges agreed on 74.6% of their ratings, and their ratings were correlated at .58. Disagreements were resolved by averaging the judges' ratings.

Thought content was also coded by judges into one of three major function-relevant categories. *Source thoughts* focused on the endorsers in the ad (e.g., "the woman in the ad was good-looking"). *Image thoughts* focused on the social image associated with the restaurant—thoughts that may have been prompted by the endorsers or by the ad copy (e.g., "only the cool people hang out there"). *Sensory thoughts* focused on food or other hedonic aspects (e.g., "the lasagna sounds really good"). The latter two categories were based on existing coding schemes for function-relevant attributes (Shavitt, 1990; Shavitt & Fazio, 1991). There were also categories for thoughts referring to price or location and for thoughts whose content was uncodable or unrelated to the ads, but these categories are irrelevant to the study and are not discussed further. Two trained judges, who were blind to subjects' experimental condition, performed the coding. Judges agreed on 76.7% of their classifications. Disagreements were resolved by a third judge.

Following the thought listing, subjects rated how likely they would be to visit Brady's the next time they were going out to a restaurant on a 4-point scale anchored as follows: *I definitely would not go there* (1), *I probably would not go there* (2), *I probably would go there* (3), and *I definitely would go there* (4). Next, subjects rated their overall impression of Brady's on three 9-point semantic differential scales anchored as follows *bad* (-4) to *good* (4), *undesirable* (-4) to *desirable* (4), and *unfavorable* (-4) to *favorable* (4). These scales were highly intercorrelated (average $r = 0.89$) and were, therefore, averaged to construct a measure of overall attitude toward Brady's.

Subjects then completed other measures, including a manipulation check for endorser attractiveness for which they rated how much they liked the

people pictured in the Brady's ad. To check on the involvement manipulation, subjects were asked to recall what type of gift they had been promised at the beginning of the session. Finally, they were asked to list any comments they had about the study. None of the subjects indicated any suspicion about the true nature of the experiment. Note that none of the comments connected the priming task to the rest of the experiment.

RESULTS

Manipulation Checks

As a check on the effectiveness of the involvement manipulation, subjects were asked to recall what type of gift they had been promised. All but one of the low-involvement subjects correctly recalled that they would select from several brands of toothpaste. In the high-involvement condition, all but two subjects correctly recalled that they would select from several gift certificates for local restaurants. Thus, subjects were aware of the focal product for the upcoming decision.² In addition, subjects' cognitive responses toward the Brady's ad were somewhat more elaborated in the high-involvement ($M = 1.89$) than in the low-involvement condition ($M = 1.76$), although this difference was not significant, $F(1, 83) = 0.91$, ns).

Subjects' ratings of the endorsers indicated that the endorser attractiveness manipulation was effective. As in the Petty et al. (1983) experiment, subjects rated how much they liked the people pictured in the target ad on an 11-point scale ranging from *did not like at all* (1) to *liked very much* (11). The attractive endorsers were liked significantly better ($M = 6.34$) than the less attractive endorsers ($M = 3.95$), $F(1, 83) = 27.53$, $p < .0001$. No other effects were significant.

Evaluative Measures

Three measures were used to assess subjects' evaluations of Brady's restaurant. Subjects rated how likely they would be to visit Brady's (behavioral intention measure) and reported their attitude toward the restaurant. In ad-

²The two subjects in the high-involvement condition who did not recall the gift certificate were deleted from all analyses. Data from eight other subjects were also deleted for reasons that undermined the experimental manipulations, the ability to comprehend instructions, or the anonymity of responses. Three of these subjects' responses on one or more of the evaluative measures were at least 3 standard deviations from the mean of the other subjects' responses in that condition.

dition to these structured measures, the favorability of subjects' listed thoughts toward the Brady's ad was assessed. A thought favorability index was created by averaging the self-rated favorability of each subject's thoughts (on the 5-point scale described previously in the Dependent Measures Section).

The means for each cell on the behavioral intention measure, attitude measure, and the thought favorability index are presented in Figure 1 (sensory salient condition) and Figure 2 (image salient condition). For each evaluative measure, as expected, the nature of the relation between involvement and endorser attractiveness depended on whether sensory or image attributes were made salient prior to ad exposure. When sensory attributes were salient, endorser attractiveness influenced restaurant evaluations under low involvement but not under high involvement. However, the reverse was true when image attributes were salient. Endorser attractiveness influenced evaluations under high involvement but not under low involvement. The absence of an endorser attractiveness effect in the image/high-involvement cell may seem surprising, in that one may have expected endorsers to influence persuasion via a peripheral route in any low-involvement context. We return to this issue in the Discussion section.

Responses on each of the evaluative measures were submitted to a three-way analysis of variance, with primed attribute (sensory vs. image), involvement (high vs. low), and endorser attractiveness (attractive vs. less attractive) as between-subjects variables. On the behavioral intention measure, this analysis yielded a significant main effect of endorser, $F(1, 83) = 11.32, p < .001$. Attractive endorsers elicited stronger intentions overall to visit Brady's ($M = 2.88$) than did less attractive endorsers ($M = 2.48$). A significant main effect of prime also emerged, $F(1, 83) = 4.25, p < .05$, reflecting greater intentions to visit Brady's when sensory attributes were salient ($M = 2.81$) than when image attributes were salient ($M = 2.58$). These main effects were qualified by the key Prime \times Involvement \times Endorser interaction, $F(1, 83) = 6.54, p < .05$, which indicates that the relation between involvement and endorser attractiveness in persuasion depended significantly on which attributes were salient at ad exposure. When sensory attributes were salient, endorser attractiveness influenced behavioral intentions under low involvement, $t(83) = 3.10, p < .005$, one-tailed, but not under high involvement, $t < 1$. This Involvement \times Endorser interaction was significant, $F(1, 83) = 3.07, p < .05$, one-tailed. When image attributes were salient, endorser attractiveness influenced attitudes under high involvement, $t(83) = 2.83, p < .005$, one-tailed, but not under low involvement, $t < 1$. This Involvement \times Endorser interaction was significant, $F(1, 83) = 3.48, p < .05$, one-tailed.

The same pattern emerged for the attitude measure. Attractive endorsers elicited more favorable attitudes ($M = 6.55$) than did less attractive endorsers

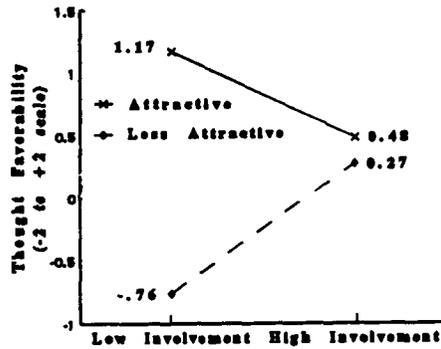
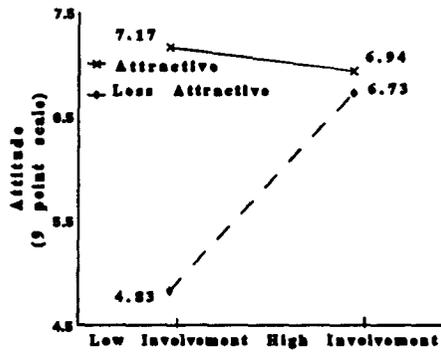
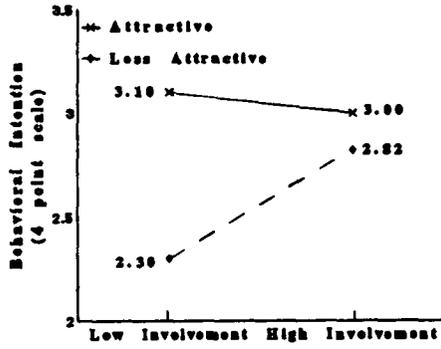


FIGURE 1 Means for behavioral intention, attitude, and thought favorability index as a function of primed attribute, involvement, and endorser attractiveness in the sensory salient condition.

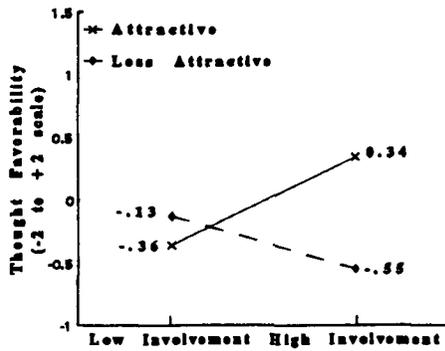
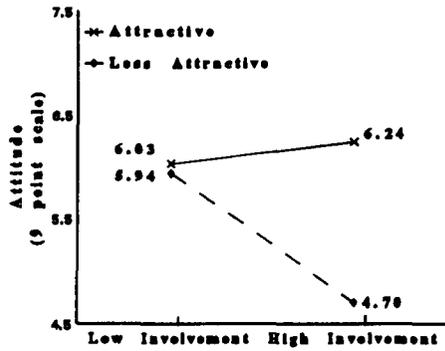
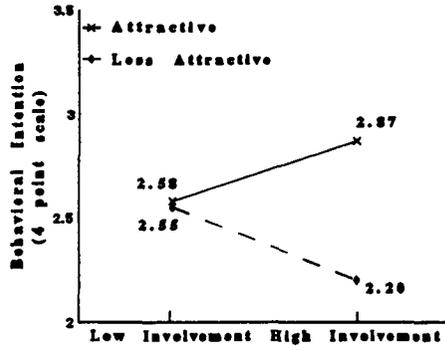


FIGURE 2. Means for behavioral intention, attitude, and thought favorability index as a function of primed attribute, involvement, and endorser attractiveness in the image salient condition.

($M = 5.58$), $F(1, 81) = 8.40$, $p < .01$. Attitudes were more favorable when sensory attributes were salient ($M = 6.44$) than when image attributes were salient ($M = 5.82$), $F(1, 81) = 3.90$, $p = .05$. Moreover, a significant Prime \times Involvement \times Endorser interaction emerged, $F(1, 81) = 6.82$, $p < .05$. When sensory attributes were salient, endorser attractiveness influenced attitudes under low involvement, $t(81) = 3.27$, $p < .005$, one-tailed, but not under high involvement, $t < 1$. This Involvement \times Endorser interaction was significant, $F(1, 81) = 4.61$, $p < .05$, one-tailed. When image attributes were salient, endorser attractiveness influenced attitudes under high involvement, $t(81) = 2.29$, $p < .05$, one-tailed, but not under low involvement, $t < 1$. However, this Involvement \times Endorser interaction was not statistically significant, $F(1, 81) = 2.35$, ns.

Similar results were also obtained on the thought favorability index. Attractive endorsers elicited more favorable listed thoughts ($M = 0.37$) than did less attractive endorsers ($M = -0.27$), $F(1, 83) = 11.69$, $p < .001$. Thoughts were more favorable when sensory attributes were salient ($M = 0.30$) than when image attributes were salient ($M = -0.13$), $F(1, 83) = 5.76$, $p < .05$. More important, these main effects were qualified by the significant Prime \times Involvement \times Endorser interaction, $F(1, 83) = 13.32$, $p < .0001$. When sensory attributes were salient, attractive endorsers influenced listed thought favorability when involvement was low, $t(83) = 4.70$, $p < .005$, one-tailed, but not when involvement was high, $t < 1$. This Involvement \times Endorser interaction was significant, $F(1, 83) = 9.37$, $p < .005$, one-tailed. When image attributes were salient, attractive endorsers elicited more favorable listed thoughts than less attractive endorsers when involvement was high, $t(83) = 2.36$, $p < .02$, one-tailed, but not when it was low, $t < 1$. The Involvement \times Endorser interaction was significant, $F(1, 83) = 4.32$, $p < .05$, one-tailed.

Cognitive Responses

To investigate the processes underlying these persuasion results, we examined the content of subjects' listed thoughts toward the Brady's ad. Analyses were conducted to determine how the manipulations affected the favorability of different types of thought content, the relation between listed thoughts and persuasion, and the degree of elaboration associated with each thought type. In particular, the analyses focused on the processes by which persuasion occurred in the sensory/low-involvement and image/high-involvement cells, where endorser attractiveness significantly affected evaluations.

Overall, 44% of subjects listed thoughts about the restaurant's image, 64% listed thoughts about the ad's sources (endorsers), and 69% listed sensory thoughts. Analyses involving these thought categories were conducted

TABLE 1
 Mean Thought Favorability as a Function of Primed Attribute,
 Involvement, and Endorser Attractiveness

<i>Endorser</i>	<i>Involvement</i>			
	<i>Sensory Salient Condition</i>		<i>Image Salient Condition</i>	
	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
Mean source thought favorability				
Attractive	0.33 (6)	-.08 (10)	-1.22 (9)	0.28 (8)
Less attractive	-1.42 (6)	-.50 (8)	-.95 (7)	-.88 (4)
Mean image thought favorability				
Attractive	1.36 (7)	1.27 (5)	.22 (6)	0.90 (7)
Less attractive	-.25 (4)	1.00 (5)	1.13 (4)	-.50 (2)
Mean sensory thought favorability				
Attractive	1.12 (8)	1.02 (7)	1.25 (6)	1.30 (10)
Less attractive	1.00 (4)	1.13 (8)	1.10 (5)	0.60 (5)

Note. Number of subjects providing data in a cell is listed in parentheses.

only on the data from subjects who provided thoughts in the categories.³ However, the significant number of “nonlisters” in each thought category raises concerns about the generalizability of the results emerging from these analyses.

To determine whether subjects who did not list thoughts in a given category were affected by the independent variables in the same way as other subjects, we compared the effects of prime, involvement, and endorser attractiveness on dependent measures of persuasion for listers and nonlisters. In virtually every comparison, the same pattern emerged for listers and nonlisters—that is, endorser attractiveness had a larger positive effect on persuasion in the sensory/low-involvement cell than the sensory/high-involvement cell, and a larger positive effect in the image/high-involvement cell than the

³Although it may seem appropriate to include all subjects' data in these analyses, particularly when attempting to explain persuasion patterns observed in the entire sample, we did not do so for two reasons. First, this would require assigning an arbitrary value (e.g., 0 or the cell mean) to represent the favorability and the elaborateness of the unlisted thoughts. This would have to be done for 31% to 56% of the sample, distorting the relations between the manipulated variables and listed thoughts. Second, our previous research has indicated that the extent to which thoughts in these categories are spontaneously listed does not necessarily reflect the salience of image versus sensory goals (Shavitt & Fazio, 1991; Shavitt, Lowrey, & Han, 1992). For example, thought-listing measures consistently underrepresent image thoughts relative to other thoughts under conditions in which image goals are demonstrably salient and markedly affect product judgments.

image/low-involvement cell. Therefore, the subset of subjects whose data were represented in our process analyses of listed thoughts were affected by the experimental manipulations in the same manner as the nonlisters. This suggests that the conclusions from the process analyses potentially hold for all subjects in a condition.

Effects of endorser attractiveness on listed thoughts. Table 1 shows the mean favorability of thoughts in each thought category as a function of primed attribute, involvement, and endorser attractiveness. The data are only from those subjects who listed thoughts. Hence, cell sizes ranged from only 2 to 10. Nevertheless, the patterns suggest that attractiveness of the endorsers strongly influenced the favorability of both source thoughts and thoughts about the image of the restaurant in the sensory/low-involvement and image/high-involvement cells. Under these conditions, in which endorser attractiveness significantly influenced persuasion, attractive endorsers elicited favorable source and image thoughts, whereas less attractive endorsers elicited unfavorable source and image thoughts. This effect did not emerge in the other cells, in which endorser attractiveness did not influence persuasion. The Primed Attribute \times Involvement \times Endorser Attractiveness interaction, representing this pattern, was significant both for source thoughts, $F(1, 50) = 7.19, p < .05$, and image thoughts, $F(1, 32) = 7.31, p < .05$.⁴

As one would expect, the same pattern did not emerge for the favorability of sensory thoughts. Endorser attractiveness did not significantly influence the favorability of subjects' thoughts about the food or other sensory aspects of the restaurant. Overall, none of the main effects or interactions were significant, including the Primed Attribute \times Involvement \times Endorser Attractiveness interaction, $F < 1$.

Thus, when endorser attractiveness influenced persuasion, the manipulation strongly affected the favorability of thoughts about sources and image. Attractive endorsers elicited favorable source and image thoughts, whereas less attractive endorsers elicited unfavorable source and image thoughts. This effect did not emerge in the cells where endorser attractiveness had no effect on evaluations.

Correlations of thoughts and evaluations. Additional regression analyses using the cognitive response data suggested that the favorability of source and image thoughts predicted persuasion in the sensory/low-involvement and image/high-involvement cells (in which a strong influence of endorser attrac-

⁴For source thoughts, there was a significant main effect of involvement, $F(1, 50) = 4.63, p < .05$, reflecting greater favorability of source thoughts under high- than low-involvement conditions. There was also a significant main effect of endorser, $F(1, 50) = 6.09, p < .05$, reflecting greater favorability of source thoughts for attractive than for less attractive endorsers.

TABLE 2
Unstandardized Regression Coefficients From Simple Regression Analyses Conducted
Within Each Primed Attribute and Involvement Condition

Predictor	Involvement							
	Sensory Salient Condition				Image Salient Condition			
	Low		High		Low		High	
Source thought favorability								
Attitude	1.39**	(12)	.55	(17)	1.25**	(16)	1.32**	(11)
Behavioral intention	.34*	(12)	.12	(18)	.25	(16)	.34**	(12)
Image thought favorability								
Attitude	.80**	(11)	.20	(10)	.42	(10)	.81	(8)
Behavioral intention	.23**	(11)	.13	(10)	.10	(10)	.46**	(9)
Sensory thought favorability								
Attitude	.50	(12)	.60*	(14)	.51**	(11)	.65**	(14)
Behavioral intention	.28*	(12)	.17	(15)	.23	(11)	.13	(15)

* $p < .07$. ** $p < .05$.

tiveness was observed). Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown in Table 2. The table includes only subjects who listed thoughts in a given category; therefore, coefficients are based on samples ranging from 8 to 18.

As expected, the favorability of source thoughts reliably predicted attitudes and behavioral intentions in the image/high-involvement and sensory/low-involvement cells (the latter coefficient for behavioral intention was marginally significant at $p < .06$). The same was generally true for the predictions involving image thought favorability, although surprisingly the prediction of attitudes in the image/high-involvement cell was not reliable. In contrast, source and image thought favorability did not reliably predict persuasion in the other cells (sensory/high-involvement and image/low-involvement cells). The only significant coefficient among these cells was the prediction of attitudes by source thought favorability in the image/low-involvement cell. No clear pattern emerged in the regression coefficients for sensory thoughts. Although one may have expected the favorability of sensory thoughts to be more predictive of persuasion in the sensory/high-involvement cell than in the other cells, this was not true.

Elaborateness of thoughts. We hypothesized that, when sensory attributes were salient, endorser attractiveness would influence persuasion through a peripheral route. However, when image attributes were salient, endorser attractiveness would influence persuasion through a central route. That is, source and image information would be processed more extensively by image/high-involvement subjects than by sensory/low-involvement subjects, suggest-

ing that endorsers were influencing persuasion through more systematic and effortful processing.

Analyses of thought elaborateness were conducted to investigate the degree to which source, image, and sensory thoughts in each condition reflected extensive processing. Recall that cognitive responses were coded for their degree of elaboration on a 3-point scale anchored as follows: *message originated* (1), *recipient modified* (2), and *recipient originated* (3). As described earlier, this coding suggested that subjects in the high-involvement condition processed the ad somewhat more elaborately overall than did subjects in the low-involvement condition.

Figure 3 shows the mean elaborateness of source, image, and sensory thoughts as a function of primed attribute and involvement. Only subjects who listed thoughts in a given category are included (cell sizes ranged from 9 to 18). The patterns show that, for both source and image thoughts, the highest elaboration scores emerged in the image/high-involvement cell. For source thoughts, a planned contrast showed that the difference in elaboration between the image/high-involvement ($M = 2.19$) and sensory/low-involvement conditions ($M = 2.04$) was not significant, $t(54) = 1.00$, ns. For image thoughts, the difference between the image/high-involvement ($M = 2.22$) and sensory/low-involvement conditions ($M = 1.74$) was significant, $t(36) = 2.01$, $p = .05$. These patterns suggest that endorsers influenced persuasion through more extensive processing in the image/high-involvement cell than in the sensory/low-involvement cell.⁵

Sensory thoughts were most elaborated in the sensory/high-involvement condition ($M = 2.05$). Although thought elaboration in this cell did not differ significantly from the other cells, the pattern is consistent with what would be expected if subjects in the sensory/high-involvement condition were processing information about the food more extensively than other subjects when evaluating the restaurant. In contrast to source and image thought elaboration, there was no difference in the elaborateness of sensory thoughts in the sensory/low-involvement ($M = 1.83$) and image/high-involvement conditions ($M = 1.85$).

DISCUSSION

Our results suggest that, in predicting the persuasive impact of endorser attractiveness, it is important to consider the types of goals or functions that guide product evaluation. As expected, the effect of endorser attractiveness in this

⁵Note that the total number of thoughts subjects listed in each content category did not vary as a function of prime and involvement (see footnote 3), yet the elaborateness of these thoughts did. This suggests that, when using cognitive responses to identify what aspects of a message have been processed extensively, coding for content alone may not be sufficient. More sensitive indicators may include an assessment of elaboration or origin of thoughts, examining thought content and the elaborateness of that content as distinct dimensions (Shavitt & Brock, 1986).

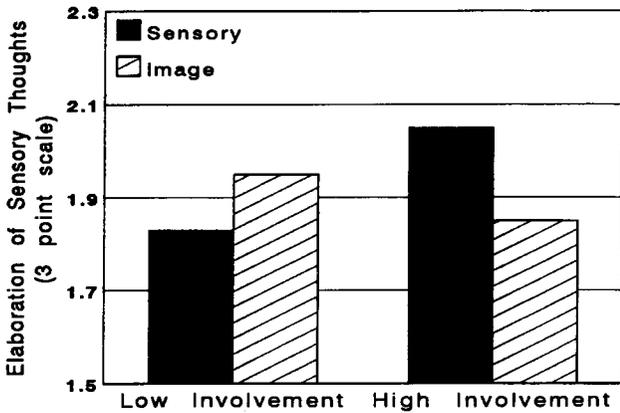
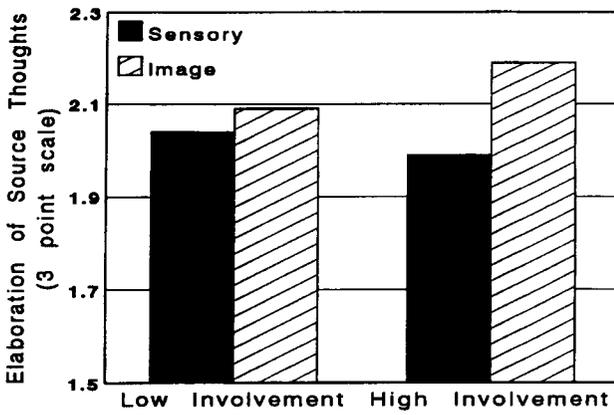
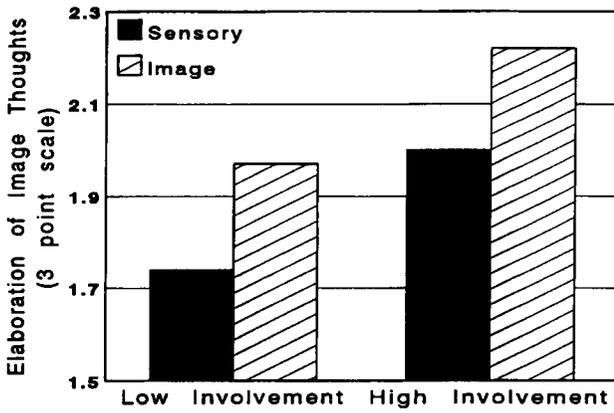


FIGURE 3 Mean elaborateness of image, source, and sensory thoughts as a function of primed attribute and involvement.

experiment depended on which function-relevant attributes were made salient prior to ad exposure. When sensory attributes were made salient, endorser attractiveness influenced subjects' evaluations of the restaurant under the low-involvement condition but not under the high-involvement condition. However, the reverse was true when image attributes were made salient. Endorser attractiveness influenced evaluations under the high-involvement condition but not under the low-involvement condition. These findings were obtained across attitude, purchase intention, and thought favorability measures.

This pattern suggests that the goal-relevant attributes that guided product evaluation influenced how the message cue of endorser attractiveness was processed. When sensory attributes were salient, endorser attractiveness appeared to serve as a peripheral cue, influencing evaluations only when recipients were not motivated to process diligently. However, when image attributes were salient, endorser attractiveness appeared to influence attitudes via a more central route, eliciting elaborated processing when subjects were motivated to process the ad.

Direct evidence relevant to message processing was provided by detailed analysis of subjects' listed thoughts. The thoughts were coded for valence (favorability) as well as semantic content (source, image, and sensory content) and elaborateness. A combined examination of the semantic coding and the thought favorability data indicated that thinking about the endorsers and image of the restaurant appeared to underlie the effect of endorser attractiveness in both of the conditions in which endorsers influenced persuasion (sensory/low involvement and image/high involvement). Coding for elaboration allowed for assessment of the degree to which source, image, and sensory thoughts reflected extensive processing. Although some findings were not statistically significant, the patterns emerging from analyses of these thought dimensions were generally consistent with our processing hypotheses and suggested that different processes operated in the image/high-involvement and sensory/low-involvement cells. Image and source thoughts reflected relatively extensive processing in the high-involvement condition when image concerns were salient. Sensory thoughts appeared to reflect relatively extensive processing in the high-involvement condition when sensory concerns were salient.

Importance of Goals in Persuasive Message Processing

Overall, the results obtained here support our general hypothesis that goals determine the role of message cues in persuasion. Previous research has already demonstrated that endorser attractiveness can influence attitudes via a central route when advertising a beauty product (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Petty & Cacioppo, 1980). However, our results suggest a more fundamental point: When goal salience is manipulated, the same cue (endorser attractiveness) can be considered relevant in one condition but irrelevant in another, altering its

effect on persuasion. The demonstration involved a product unrelated to one's physical appearance (a restaurant) so that the relevance of endorser attractiveness could vary. When this cue was goal relevant, its use involved drawing inferences regarding its implications for product characteristics. Under the high-involvement condition, recipients were apparently motivated to do so.

That the same material appearing in an ad (i.e., the photographs and identities of endorsers) could serve as a peripheral cue in one context and as relevant information in another underscores the importance of considering the functions or goals that guide product evaluation. Many other message elements (e.g., the music and physical setting in an ad) may also provide a rich source of both peripheral cues and relevant product information. Although such "cosmetic" message elements are often studied in terms of their affective or peripheral effects on product evaluation, they also serve as rhetorical devices that communicate relevant information about brand characteristics and brand identity (e.g., Schumann, Petty, & Clemons, 1990; Scott, 1990; Solomon & Englis, 1993).

The advantage of a goal-oriented approach is that it allows for a priori prediction of the role that such variables play in persuasion. When the goal that underlies message processing is addressed by the endorser, the setting of the ad, or other message elements, these elements may elicit extensive processing when involvement is high and thus influence attitudes via a central route. However, when such message elements are not relevant to the goal, they may influence attitudes by serving as peripheral cues when involvement is low. In combination with the variables highlighted by the ELM or HSM, a consideration of the goals that guide product evaluation can enhance prediction of the persuasiveness of appeals.

Processes in the Image/Low-Involvement Cell

In the image/low-involvement cell, endorser attractiveness did not influence evaluations. One may have expected, however, that endorser attractiveness would be used as a peripheral cue to evaluate the restaurant in any low-involvement context. Why was this not the case? One possibility is that level of involvement itself was influenced by the goal priming manipulation. The salience of sensory aspects may have increased involvement in the restaurant ad more than did the salience of image concerns. That is, endorsers may not have influenced image/low-involvement subjects because subjects' involvement was too low to notice them, whereas endorsers were noticed by sensory/low-involvement subjects and used as a cue to evaluate the restaurant.

Our data argue against the possibility that the goal priming manipulation affected involvement level. First, subjects' thoughts toward the Brady's ad yielded no evidence that the ad was processed with greater elaboration in the sensory ($M = 1.80$) versus the image prime condition ($M = 1.86$). Moreover,

identical manipulations of attribute salience and involvement in a separate experiment we conducted also showed no effects of sensory versus image priming on relevant task performance measures or on self-reports of involvement and interest level in the task. Thus, our data suggest that level of involvement was constant across the two goal-priming conditions.

Why, then, did endorser attractiveness influence evaluations in the sensory/low-involvement condition but not in the image/low-involvement condition? Do the ELM and HSM models predict that subjects in both low-involvement conditions would use endorsers as peripheral cues in forming their attitudes? In resolving this issue, note that the ELM and the HSM were developed to apply to persuasion settings in which the recipient's primary goal is to form valid, accurate attitudes. This appears applicable to the sensory goal condition—which made salient those attributes most relevant to valid restaurant attitudes, such as food quality. However, Chaiken et al. (1989) stated that, “as presently formulated . . . the HSM is not necessarily applicable to influence settings in which people are more concerned with establishing or maintaining relationships with social influence agents” (pp. 214–215) than with maximizing the validity of their attitudes. Although the distinction between central and peripheral (systematic and heuristic) processing is still relevant to this type of image goal setting, the models do not specify which cues or heuristics would be used when people are primarily concerned with the impressions created by their attitudes.

One possibility, suggested by Chaiken et al. (1989), is that “impression-motivated heuristic processing involves the use of simple rules to guide one's selection of a socially acceptable attitudinal position (e.g., ‘moderate positions minimize disagreement’)” (p. 236). This implies that subjects in our image/low-involvement condition may have chosen to report a relatively moderate and defensible judgment of the restaurant to avoid social disapproval (anticipation of group discussion was part of the image goal induction and, under low involvement, the restaurant itself would have no personal relevance). Note that reporting a moderate attitude position would not require reference to the endorsers or any other feature in the ad. However, in the image/high-involvement condition, the restaurant would be personally relevant, and evaluation would proceed based on a systematic consideration of information relevant to the restaurant's image (e.g., endorser attractiveness). Although speculative, this account of the image/low-involvement condition results is consistent with past findings in contexts in which people anticipated public scrutiny of their views (e.g., Cialdini, Levy, Herman, Kozlowski, & Petty, 1976; see also Johnson & Eagly, 1989, for a review).

Future Directions

In this study, our hypotheses centered on the effects of goals on the perceived relevance of cues and the consequent persuasive effects of those cues. However, if relevance were the sole determinant of cue utilization, the endorser attrac-

tiveness cue would have influenced attitudes in the image/low-involvement condition because of its relevance to the image goal. One may develop an extended conceptualization in which cues influence attitudes via a two-step process. Step 1 involves attending to salient cues. Step 2 involves making judgments about the relevance of these cues and, if judged relevant, processing a cue elaborately in order to draw inferences for product evaluation.

These steps may be tied to the level of involvement. If involvement is low, processing will perhaps proceed through Step 1 but no further. At Step 1, the salience of a cue will be a key factor that influences whether a cue is attended to and utilized. The goals underlying product evaluation may influence what type of information is salient and, thus, what gets noticed. Because involvement is low, salient cues may be used as a shortcut to evaluating the product if the cues are sufficiently easy to process.

For instance, in the sensory/low-involvement condition of our study, all advertising information (including information about the food) may have been salient because subjects were probably seeking to form valid product judgments. However, they were not motivated to expend much cognitive effort to do so. Thus, in this condition, endorser attractiveness may have been utilized as a peripheral cue presumably because this visual information was easier to process than other ad information. On the other hand, in the image/low-involvement condition, information in the ad was perhaps less salient than the simple heuristic, "moderate positions minimize disagreement" (as just suggested). Thus, subjects may have evaluated the restaurant based on this shortcut rather than on ad information.

Step 2 in the processing of salient cues may be reached only in the high-involvement condition because this is when people are sufficiently motivated to process cues effortfully. This is likely the point at which relevance has its impact on cue utilization. Our data suggest that the goals underlying product evaluation will determine the perceived relevance of a cue. Only those cues perceived to be relevant will elicit the necessary effort to draw appropriate inferences from the cue for product evaluation. The implications of cues judged irrelevant may have little or no impact on evaluations. (See Dick, Chakravarti, & Biehal, 1990, for similar reasoning about the role of salience and relevance in memory-based inference processes.)

For instance, in the sensory/high-involvement condition of our study, salient information about the endorsers may have had little impact because of its irrelevance to the goal. Rather, there was some evidence that salient information about food quality was processed elaborately (even though it was more difficult to process than the endorser cues) and used in evaluating the restaurant. In contrast, in the image/high-involvement condition, salient information about the endorsers was likely deemed relevant and was processed extensively, whereas salient information about the food was apparently ignored.

Future research should examine systematically the role of each of these

factors in cue utilization and the influence of goals at each step in the process. According to the conceptualization proposed here, the salience of a given cue should matter regardless of recipients' level of involvement. However, the ease with which a cue can be processed should matter much more in low- than high-involvement conditions. And the perceived relevance of a cue should matter only in the high-involvement condition.

Moreover, the goals that drive product evaluation should have an important effect regardless of involvement by influencing salience (i.e., which cues are attended to) at Step 1 and perceived relevance (i.e., which cues are processed extensively) at Step 2. Future research on these relations will establish more fully how goals influence the processing of message cues.

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APPENDIX

Target Advertisements for Brady's Restaurant

BRADY'S: COME SEE WHY WE'RE SO POPULAR!



Phyllis Kramer
Oakland State University,
Class of '89

*"Brady's was our
favorite campus
restaurant!"*



Dave Gibbons
Anaheim College,
Class of '86

- *Brady's offers a wide variety of tempting dishes, all reasonably priced -- with the student budget in mind!
- *At Brady's you'll enjoy a relaxed, casual atmosphere. And food that's a cut above the campus dining routine. It's the perfect place to get together with your friends, or have a cozy dinner with someone special.
- *From spicy BBQ Chicken and Ribs to Zesty Lasagna. From juicy Char-Grilled Steaks to All-You-Can-Eat Shrimp. Plus a delicious menu of salads and deli sandwiches for those who like to eat light. We also offer a large selection of imported and domestic beers.
- *So come meet your friends at Brady's tonight. Chances are, they're already there!

VISIT BRADY'S TONIGHT!