Attitude Functions in Advertising: The Interactive Role of Products and Self-Monitoring

Sharon Shavitt

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Tina M. Lowrey

Rider College

Sang-Pil Han

Hanyang University

Attitude objects have been shown to play an important role in attitude functions, with attitudes toward some objects or products serving primarily a single function. These findings imply that products constrain the effects of other variables (e.g., personality differences) on attitude functions. Our experiments investigated whether differences in the functions of high and low self-monitors' product attitudes will emerge for some product categories but not for others. In Experiment 1, high and low self-monitors described their attitudes toward products previously identified as serving predominantly utilitarian, social identity, or multiple functions. Coding of attitude descriptions revealed that, for social identity products, high self-monitors explained their attitudes in more social terms and in less utilitarian terms than did low self-monitors. However, for utilitarian and for multiple function products, high and low self-monitors did not differ in their (strongly utilitarian) explanations of their attitudes. In Experiments 2 and 3, high and low self-monitors wrote advertisements for various products. When advertising multiple function products, high self-monitors preferred to use social arguments, whereas low self-monitors preferred to use utilitarian arguments. However, both high and low self-monitors preferred utilitarian arguments for advertising utilitarian products and social arguments for social identity products. The conditions under which self-monitoring had its greatest impact on attitude functions are discussed in terms of differences between the task of attitude description (Experiment 1) and persuasive message selection (Experiments 2 and 3).

Requests for reprints should be sent to Sharon Shavitt, Department of Advertising, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 119 Gregory Hall, Urbana, IL 61801.
In recent years there has been a growth of interest in the functions served by attitudes, and the identification of a variety of personality and situational variables affecting attitude functions (cf. Pratkanis, Breckler, & Greenwald, 1989). Experiments have also revealed that attitude objects play a particularly important role in attitude functions (Shavitt, 1990). The purposes that an object serves vary from object to object, or product to product, and substantially influence the functions of attitudes toward a given product. Moreover, some products are limited in the purposes that they serve, and attitudes toward such products are limited in the functions that they serve (Shavitt, 1989, 1990; see also Johar & Sirgy, 1991).

An important implication of these findings is that products may constrain the role of other variables (i.e., individual differences, situational variables) in influencing the functions of attitudes. For example, several experiments have suggested that high and low self-monitors (Snyder, 1974) differ in the functions that their product attitudes tend to serve (Snyder & DeBono, 1987, 1989). This article proposes that such differences are limited to products that afford high and low self-monitors the opportunity to focus on different functional goals. For other products, self-monitoring differences in attitude functions should not emerge. The results of three experiments are presented to support this position, underscoring the importance of product variables in attitude functions.

SELF-MONITORING AND ATTITUDE FUNCTIONS

High self-monitors (identified by their relatively high scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale, Snyder, 1974) are individuals who are concerned typically with projecting social images that allow them to meet the requirements of different social situations. On the other hand, low self-monitors are less concerned with social appropriateness and more concerned about being consistent with their internal feelings and preferences.

In the context of consumer products, low self-monitors are concerned with dimensions related to product quality, such as the taste of whiskey, the cleaning performance of shampoo, or the sound quality of audiocassettes. Thus, quality-based advertisements, ones that focus on the inherent qualities and benefits of the product, are particularly effective for low self-monitors. In contrast, high self-monitors are concerned with the self-presentational significance of products, such as the image associated with using or serving whiskey. Thus, image-based advertisements, ones that focus on the impressions created by using the product, tend to be especially effective for high self-monitors (DeBono & Packer, 1991; Snyder & DeBono, 1985, 1987).

These differences in the reactions of high and low self-monitors to image-based and quality-based appeals have been obtained repeatedly across a num-
ber of products and advertisements. The impressive consistency in these results suggests that self-monitoring is tapping a fundamental difference in the motives that individuals associate with products. That is, high and low self-monitors may differ in the psychological functions that their product attitudes tend to serve (Snyder & DeBono, 1987, 1989).

Functional theories propose that attitudes serve important psychological functions for individuals, and that attitudes can be classified according to the functions they meet (Katz, 1960; Kelman, 1958, 1961; Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956). Two functional categories in particular seem relevant to the motives that distinguish low versus high self-monitors' product attitudes: utilitarian and social identity functions.

Utilitarian attitudes function to maximize the rewards and minimize the punishments obtained from objects in one's environment, summarizing the outcomes intrinsically associated with objects and guiding behavior that obtains the benefits associated with the objects (Katz, 1960). For example, one's attitude toward sports cars might be based on the intrinsic rewards (e.g., superior handling) and punishments (e.g., high repair costs) obtained from such cars. These attitudes are likely to guide behaviors that maximize a car's rewards and minimize its punishments (e.g., performing extensive maintenance). Low self-monitors, who tend to be concerned with product quality and benefits, seem likely to have product attitudes that serve this utilitarian function.

Attitudes also function in the service of one's public image and self-expression. Smith et al. (1956) argued that attitudes mediate relationships with other people, helping to gain social acceptance. Attitudes also symbolize and express one's identity by fostering identification with reference groups. We refer to this social role of attitudes as the social identity function (see Shavitt, 1989, 1990, for discussions of this broad category of attitudinal motives and its relation to other categories). For instance, one's attitude toward sports cars may be based on a perception of others' attitudes toward them, and the extent to which the cars are linked to socially mediated rewards or punishments (e.g., social approval). High self-monitors, who tend to be concerned with their public image, seem likely to have product attitudes that serve this social identity function.

---

1The functions of high and low self-monitors' attitudes have been categorized differently by other investigators. Snyder and DeBono (1987, 1989) referred to the attitudes of low and high self-monitors as serving value-expressive and social adjustive functions, respectively. We have chosen to use different functional designations here because they capture the distinction between low and high self-monitors' product attitudes. Low self-monitors evidence concern about the quality and benefits associated with products (DeBono & Packer, 1991; Snyder & DeBono, 1985, 1987), which is perhaps most precisely categorized as reflecting a utilitarian function. High self-monitors evidence concern about the type of social image or identity expressed by products, which can be categorized as reflecting a social identity function.
PRODUCT CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTITUDE FUNCTIONS

Although individual differences in perceivers' goals may often be important, a product's perceived value for pursuing particular goals may largely be defined by its intrinsic characteristics and by societal or cultural definitions of the product. The goals that a product helps an individual to achieve vary from product to product, and substantially influence the functions of attitudes toward a given product (Shavitt, 1990).

Some products seem to serve primarily a single type of goal. For example, an air conditioner serves primarily utilitarian goals of obtaining comfort and relief from heat. It typically does not serve social identity goals of self-expression or image management. Thus, attitudes toward air conditioners are most likely to serve a utilitarian function, guiding the purchase and use of these products so as to maximize their rewards. In contrast, attitudes toward university flags or decals are most likely to serve primarily a social identity function because they are highly expressive of one's identity and can be used to obtain social acceptance, but there are few utilitarian benefits derived directly from such items. ²

It is important to note that many products serve multiple purposes (multiple function products). For example, sunglasses serve both the utilitarian purpose of providing protection from the sun as well as the social identity purpose of self-expression. Thus, sunglasses may elicit attitudes that serve either a utilitarian or a social identity function or both.

The distinction between utilitarian and social identity product categories is associated with differences in the persuasiveness of advertising appeals. In previous experiments (Shavitt, 1990), quality-based appeals were found to be more effective than image-based appeals for advertising utilitarian products (air conditioners, coffees), whereas the reverse was true for social identity products (greeting cards, perfumes). These experiments were conducted on undifferentiated samples, without reference to subjects' self-monitoring scores.

The demonstration that attitudes toward some products are limited in the functions they serve has implications for the impact of other variables on attitude functions and persuasion. Specifically, this implies that products will constrain the effects of other variables, including personality variables, on

²It should be noted that the purposes served by a product, and the functions served by attitudes toward it, are not predetermined or immutable. They can change as attributes of the product are modified or as societal definitions change over time. Also, because societal definitions contribute to the purposes a product can serve, those purposes may sometimes differ between populations. For example, low-income populations may not define air conditioners simply as utilitarian appliances, but as status symbols. Despite these limitations, it should be possible to identify products that are likely to be primarily associated with a single attitude function at a particular time and in an undifferentiated population.
attitude functions and the persuasiveness of appeals. Thus, the personality-based main effects that have repeatedly been demonstrated in functional research—most notably in the responses of high versus low self-monitors—should be limited to particular categories of products.

The extent to which high and low self-monitors differ in the functions of their product attitudes should depend on whether a product affords high and low self-monitors the opportunity to focus on different functional goals. When opportunities to pursue both utilitarian and social identity goals are present, the attitudes of high and low self-monitors should differ in their focus on image versus quality dimensions, with high self-monitors more likely to focus on image dimensions and low self-monitors more likely to focus on quality dimensions. However, when only one goal is salient (e.g., a utilitarian goal of evaluating an air conditioner), systematic differences in the product responses of high and low self-monitors should not be expected. It is likely that both high and low self-monitors would focus on the same product dimensions and that their attitudes toward the relevant products would serve the same function.

Rather than a main effect, this analysis implies an interaction between product categories and self-monitoring in which differences in the responses of high and low self-monitors, which have repeatedly been observed in previous research, emerge for some product categories but not for others. In effect, our research strategy sets out to reduce the generalizability of an existing finding as a strategy for advancing theoretical understanding (see Greenwald, Pratkanis, Leippe, & Baumgardner, 1986). If it is possible to show that well-established self-monitoring effects are not always obtained, and moreover to predict for which product categories the effects will not be obtained, then this strengthens our theoretical interpretations in two ways: (a) It lends further support to the importance of product variables in attitude functions, and (b) it supports the typology of product categories (presented in the following section) used to derive the predictions.

EXPERIMENT 1

Experiment 1 was conducted to investigate what kinds of considerations high and low self-monitors focus on when describing their attitudes toward different types of products. Specifically, do these considerations reflect a utilitarian or a social identity function? We collected high and low self-monitors' open-ended descriptions of their attitudes toward products expected to engage either utilitarian, social identity, or multiple attitude functions. These descriptions were then coded for content reflective of their functions (for open-ended approaches to measuring attitude functions, see Herek, 1987, and Shavitt, 1990).

We predicted that, consistent with previous findings (Shavitt, 1990), prod-
uct category would exert a strong effect on the types of considerations subjects list when describing their attitudes. Utilitarian products should predominantly elicit thoughts regarding product quality, and very few thoughts regarding product image. However, to the extent that products are likely to engage a social identity function, more product image thoughts and fewer quality thoughts should be listed.¹

In addition, we expected individual differences in self-monitoring to be associated with differences in the functional content of thoughts toward certain products but not toward others. For utilitarian products (products that have little self-presentational relevance), we expected both high and low self-monitors to list predominantly utilitarian thoughts. We expected utilitarian thoughts to be frequently listed by high and low self-monitors for the other products as well (see footnote 3), because all products have features relevant to quality (e.g., durability, workmanship). However, to the extent that products have implications for one's social identity, we expected to see differences in the responses of high versus low self-monitors. For such products as university flags or decals, high self-monitors may be more likely than low self-monitors to focus on their socially expressive nature, whereas low self-monitors may be more likely than high self-monitors to focus on their quality and related attributes (e.g., appearance, cost). We expected, therefore, that the strongest relationship between self-monitoring and the functional content of thoughts would be obtained for such social identity products.

Criteria for Selection of Products

Products were selected with the expectation that they predominantly would engage either a utilitarian function, a social identity function, or both. The criteria used to select these products were based on previous research (Shavitt, 1990) and are outlined next (see also Johar & Sirgy, 1991, for criteria addressing similar product distinctions). Although several of the products undoubtedly may engage more functions than those we have listed, it was expected that their predominant function or functions would be as classified here, particularly for the population from which the subjects were drawn (i.e., college students):

1. Products were expected to engage a utilitarian attitude function to the extent that they were intrinsically associated with rewards and punishments,

¹We did not necessarily expect the majority of thoughts toward such products to concern product image. Attributes related to quality can also be salient when listing thoughts toward social identity products, and attitude descriptions for such products often include many statements about quality (Shavitt & Fazio, 1991). However, we expected that social identity products would elicit more product image thoughts than would other products.
and with purchase and usage decisions that are typically based on those outcomes. For example, aspirin could be considered utilitarian because there are intrinsic rewards (e.g., pain relief) and punishments (e.g., upset stomach) associated with it as well as behaviors relevant to those outcomes. Based on these criteria, the utilitarian products chosen were: (a) air conditioners, (b) aspirin, (c) coffee, (d) cough syrup, (e) orange juice, and (f) toothpaste.

2. Products were expected to engage a social identity attitude function to the extent that they could be used to facilitate social relationships and obtain social approval. These included products that were commonly considered symbolic of one's identity, accomplishments, taste, or social classifications, and could communicate such information to others. Thus, they were expected to be linked to public behavior routines, in which the products were displayed, discussed, or presented to others. For example, a wedding ring is a social identity product because it conveys social classification information (i.e., marital status), symbolizes one's values (i.e., toward monogamy, etc.), communicates one's taste (i.e., through the style chosen), and is routinely displayed in public. Based on these criteria, the social identity products chosen were: (a) high school class ring, (b) gift wrap, (c) greeting cards, (d) portrait photographs, (e) university decals, and (f) a wedding ring.

3. Finally, products were expected to engage both utilitarian and social identity functions to the extent that they provided both important utilitarian outcomes and methods of self-expression. For example, jeans could be considered a multiple function product because they are associated with important utilitarian outcomes (e.g., comfort, durability) as well as social image implications (e.g., conveying one's style, taste). Based on a combination of the preceding criteria, the multiple function products chosen were: (a) athletic shoes, (b) credit cards, (c) gourmet frozen foods, (d) jeans, (e) sunglasses, and (f) watches.

Method

Subjects. Subjects were 119 introductory advertising students at a large midwestern university. They received extra credit in a course for participating in our experiment. Two of these subjects' data were deleted from all analyses because they were international students who were relatively unfamiliar with some of the stimulus products used in the experiment. Portions of the data from 10 of the subjects were deleted due to errors in the counterbalancing of materials. Only their responses to products presented in the assigned order were retained.

Procedure. Subjects participated in groups of approximately 20. They were informed that the experiment concerned consumer attitudes and that all
of their responses would be anonymous. All subjects responded to questions regarding six randomly assigned products, two products in each function category. The order in which they responded to the three function categories was counterbalanced in a Latin-square design. Subjects responded to a set of three products (one from each function category) in the assigned order, and then to the remaining three.

Subjects began by reading instructions for describing their attitudes (thought-listing instructions):

You will be asked to describe your attitudes toward some items on special forms that contain boxes in which to write your description . . . Please list in the boxes what your feelings are about the item, and why you feel the way you do. That is, write down all of your thoughts and feelings that are relevant to your attitude, and try to describe the reasons for your feelings.

Subjects described their attitudes on standard thought-listing forms (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981) on which six boxes were printed. The assigned product was written at the top of each form. Subjects were given 3 min to list their thoughts toward each of the six products in turn.

Next, attitudes toward each product were assessed on a single 7-point scale ranging from very negative (1) to very positive (7). Finally, after some other measures, subjects completed the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974).

Results

Classification of thoughts. The thoughts that subjects listed in describing their attitudes were coded to assess the functions they reflected (for information about the reliability and validity of the coding scheme, see Shavitt, 1990). Two major categories of function-relevant themes were used to classify thoughts. The utilitarian category included references to product quality, thoughts about features or attributes of the product, and references to rewards or punishments associated with the product. Social identity thoughts included thoughts about the product's image, as well as references to others' attitudes toward the product, what the attitude symbolizes, and what the attitude communicates to others. (In addition, there were categories for thoughts conveying more than one function and for thoughts that contained no function-relevant content.

---

*In addition to this counterbalancing of function order, another counterbalancing factor was included: In order to ensure that, across subjects, products appeared equally often in the first set of three products presented to subjects as in the last three, products were randomly divided into two groups. Presentation of products was then counterbalanced such that, for half of the subjects, their first three assigned products came from Group 1, whereas for the other half, the first three products came from Group 2.*
Very few thoughts were classified into these categories, and they are not discussed further.) The Appendix contains a fuller description of the coding scheme.

Two judges independently coded the thoughts, agreeing on 81% of their classifications. The thoughts that elicited disagreements were approximately evenly distributed across the major thought categories, and independently coded by a third judge.

**Results of coding.** In order to be able to detect any relationships between self-monitoring and listed thoughts, even subtle ones, we chose to do analyses that contrasted more extreme groups of high and low self-monitors than those represented by a median split (see Tybout & Scott, 1983). Thus, those subjects whose scores fell near the midpoint of the self-monitoring distribution were not included in our analyses (for similar analysis strategies, see Snyder, 1974, and Snyder & Tanke, 1976). Only the data from subjects whose self-monitoring scores fell in either the highest or lowest thirds of the distribution are reported here. An alternative approach would have been to contrast the upper and lower quartiles of the distribution, but sample size constraints prevented this. Nevertheless, our approach was successful in identifying relatively extreme groups for analysis: The mean score on the Self-Monitoring Scale (possible values range from 0 to 25) was 17.2 for the highest third of the distribution, and 8.7 for the lowest third.

For these remaining 75 subjects, the number of utilitarian and social identity thoughts they listed were submitted to a five-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with self-monitoring and order of function categories as between-subjects variables, and thought type, product category, and replication (whether the product was the first or second product responded to in a given category) as within-subject variables.

As predicted, product category strongly influenced the types of thoughts subjects listed (see Table 1). Most of the thoughts listed for each product category were utilitarian thoughts (see footnote 3), and this main effect of thought type was significant, $F(1, 69) = 275.65, p < .0001$. However, the most utilitarian thoughts were listed for the utilitarian products, and the most social identity thoughts were listed for the social identity products. This inter-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Category</th>
<th>Utilitarian</th>
<th>Social Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social identity</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
action of Product Category × Thought Type was also significant, $F(2, 138) = 131.77$, $p < .0001$. Subjects' level of self-monitoring was not as strongly associated with the functional content of listed thoughts. Independent of product category, there appeared to be a slight trend toward high self-monitors listing more social identity thoughts ($M = 1.11$) than low self-monitors ($M = 0.96$) and fewer utilitarian thoughts ($M = 3.09$) than low self-monitors ($M = 3.36$), but this Self-Monitoring × Thought Type interaction was not significant, $F(1, 69) = 2.01$, ns.

However, individual differences in self-monitoring did predict attitude functions in certain cases. As Figure 1 shows, the relation between subjects' self-monitoring level and the functional content of their thoughts depended on the type of product to which they were responding. As expected, for utilitarian products subjects listed predominantly utilitarian thoughts regardless of their self-monitoring level. For multiple function products, there appeared to be a slight relation between self-monitoring and type of listed thoughts. This relation became much more pronounced for social identity products, with low self-monitors listing more utilitarian thoughts and fewer social identity thoughts than high self-monitors.

The three-way interaction among self-monitoring, product category, and thought type, which represents this effect, was not statistically significant, $F(2, 138) = 2.17$, ns. However, additional analyses suggest that the pattern should not be ignored. When the data for each product category were examined separately, a significant Self-Monitoring × Thought Type interaction emerged for social identity products, as expected, $F(1, 71) = 6.46$, $p < .05$. This interaction was not significant for utilitarian products, $F(1, 71) = 0.02$, ns, or for multiple function products, $F(1, 69) = 1.24$, ns. Thus, these data suggest that individual differences in self-monitoring predicted the functional content of thoughts for the social identity product category, but not for the other product categories. Moreover, analyses at the level of individual products yielded results consistent with these results for most of the products.

It should be noted that the same analysis conducted on the entire sample with a median split of self-monitoring scores (median = 13) yielded findings that were almost identical to these. In that analysis, the Self-Monitoring × Product Category × Thought Type interaction was statistically significant, $F(2, 202) = 5.08$, $p < .01$, due to the larger sample size involved. In the subsequent experiments, to be described shortly, the results of analyses based on median splits were also similar to comparisons of the more extreme groups, but the significance levels of the self-monitoring effects were typically weaker.

The five-way ANOVA also revealed a significant main effect of product category, $F(2, 138) = 18.78$, $p < .0001$, which simply indicates that more thoughts were listed toward social identity products than other products. Also, there were significant interactions of Function Order × Replication, $F(2, 69) = 4.87$, $p < .05$; Self-Monitoring × Product Category × Function Order, $F(4, 138) = 2.72$, $p < .05$; Self-Monitoring × Replication × Thought Type, $F(1, 69) = 4.93$, $p < .05$; and Self-Monitoring × Replication × Thought Type × Product Category × Function Order, $F(4, 138) = 2.48$, $p < .05$. However, none of these effects were associated with interpretable patterns of means.
FIGURE 1  Mean Number of Utilitarian and Social Identity Thoughts Listed for Each Product Category.
Attitudes. Did any differences in high and low self-monitors' responses to these products result from differences in how much they liked the products? To explore this possibility, analyses were conducted to determine whether attitude favorability itself differed as a function of self-monitoring. A four-way ANOVA with self-monitoring and function order as between-subjects variables and product category and replication as within-subject variables was conducted on subjects' attitude ratings. This yielded only a main effect of product category, $F(2, 140) = 4.80, p < .01$, reflecting the fact that, on average, products in the multiple function category were liked slightly better ($M = 5.08$) than products in the utilitarian category ($M = 4.58$) or the social identity category ($M = 4.53$). High and low self-monitors did not differ in their evaluations of these product categories.

Discussion

Overall, these results supported our predictions about the role of product characteristics and individual differences in attitude functions. Consistent with previous research (Shavitt, 1990), product category strongly influenced the functional content of subjects' attitude descriptions. Attitudes toward utilitarian products were predominantly described in terms of thoughts regarding product quality. However, to the extent that products were likely to engage a social identity function, attitudes toward them were described more in terms of product image thoughts and less in terms of product quality thoughts.

Also as expected, high and low self-monitors' attitudes appeared to differ in their focus on image versus quality concerns only to the extent that the target product had implications for one's social identity. When describing their attitudes toward such products, high self-monitors were more likely to focus on product image, whereas low self-monitors were more likely to focus on product quality.

These differences in how high and low self-monitors responded to social identity products did not appear to be due to differences in how much they liked these products. High and low self-monitors held equally favorable attitudes toward the products. Only the basis for their attitudes appeared to differ, with high self-monitors reporting image-based thoughts and low self-monitors reporting quality-based thoughts underlying their attitudes.

It should be noted that, although products in the social identity category elicited more image thoughts than did the other products, all of the products elicited mostly thoughts about quality and other utilitarian features. This might seem to suggest that all of these products primarily engage a utilitarian function. However, we believe that the predominance of utilitarian thoughts was due to the nature of the thought-listing task itself (see footnote 3). The subjects were asked to list all of the thoughts relevant to their attitudes toward
each product. Because all products have features relevant to quality (e.g., quality of materials, durability, appearance), it is not surprising that subjects included several statements about these features when asked to give a complete list of thoughts related to their attitudes. Importantly, social identity products also elicited a substantial number of image-related thoughts within the list, particularly from high self-monitors.

On the other hand, if subjects had been asked to select the one thought that was most important to their attitudes toward each product, the pattern of responses might have been different. One might expect that utilitarian thoughts would have been listed less often and social identity thoughts would have been listed more often for the multiple function and social identity function products. Moreover, the products for which self-monitoring differences would emerge most strongly might not have been the social identity products: Both high and low self-monitors might have judged thoughts about image or social expressiveness to be most important to their attitudes toward greeting cards, university decals, or wedding rings. However, for multiple function items (e.g., sunglasses, watches), high and low self-monitors might have selected different types of thoughts as being most important to them. Thus, one could expect that, if subjects had been asked to choose the one thought that was most important to their attitude toward each product, the strongest differences between high and low self-monitors would have been obtained for multiple function products rather than social identity products.

The same may be true if asked to choose the most persuasive argument one could make for purchasing a particular product. Several experiments have shown that high and low self-monitors tend to differ in the types of ads they find persuasive (DeBono & Packer, 1991; Snyder & DeBono, 1985, 1987). Our analysis suggests that these effects might be strongest for products that can serve different functions for high versus low self-monitors—in this case, multiple function products. For these products, high and low self-monitors should differ in their preferences for image-based versus quality-based appeals. However, when judging the persuasiveness of appeals for products that primarily engage a single function (e.g., a university decal) both high and low self-monitors might prefer appeals that focus on how well the product fulfills that function.

This hypothesis was tested in two separate experiments using a unique methodology. Past research in this area has measured individuals’ attitudinal reactions to completed messages created by the investigators. In our experiments, subjects were asked to create their own advertisements. We then coded the functional content of these ads. In this manner, subjects were not restricted to considering any particular set of arguments. They could present in their own words whatever arguments that they felt would be most persuasive.
EXPERIMENT 2

As in the previous experiment, we predicted that product type would exert a strong influence on subjects' responses. Specifically, we expected that subjects would primarily use utilitarian (i.e., quality-based) arguments for advertising a utilitarian product, and use mostly social identity (i.e., image-based) arguments for advertising a social identity product. Moreover, we expected that self-monitoring differences in the use of image versus quality appeals would be observed when advertising a multiple function product, but not when advertising other products.

Three products were used in this experiment to represent the three function categories: The utilitarian product was an air conditioner, the multiple function product was a watch, and the social identity product was a university class ring.

Method

Subjects. Seventy introductory advertising students at a large midwestern university received extra credit in a course for participating in this experiment. Of these subjects, one international student's data were deleted because the subject was relatively unfamiliar with at least one product used in the experiment, and another two subjects' data were deleted for failure to follow instructions. This left 67 subjects in the sample.

Procedure. Subjects participated in groups of approximately 30. They were informed that this experiment concerned investigating what consumers thought was the best way to advertise particular products. Subjects were told that they would be asked to write brief advertisements for a few products. It was emphasized that everything they wrote would be anonymous.

All subjects were then presented with the three target products in turn. The order in which they were presented was counterbalanced in a Latin-square design. Subjects began by reading instructions for writing an advertisement for a fictitious brand of the first product:

We would like you to write a very brief ad for Alpine Air Conditioners (a brand of central air conditioning systems). We assume that you are unfamiliar with Alpine air conditioners. For the purposes of writing your ad, however, you may make whatever assumptions you want about the brand and make any statements about it that seem reasonable to make. Imagine that you are writing an ad designed to sell this product. What would you want the ad to say?
The instructions emphasized that we were not concerned with spelling, grammar, or the creativity of the ad. Rather, we simply wanted to know what approach they considered to be the most persuasive. Subjects were instructed to start by writing a headline for the ad, followed by the copy. After writing the ad for the first product, subjects repeated the same procedure for each of the other two products.

It is important to note that in order to write these ads high and low self-monitors were not required to have insight into the factors that influence them. Subjects were not asked to articulate what types of influence strategies they find persuasive. Instead, the ad-writing task simply required subjects to be able to express what features or considerations they thought would be important in forming a judgment about a given product. Subjects were readily able to perform this task. They were given approximately 5 min to write each ad, which was sufficient time for most subjects to finish writing.

Next, subjects were presented with a series of product claims that could be used in writing ads for the products. For each product, subjects received a list of eight product claims from which they were asked to select the three they felt would be the most convincing to include in an ad for the product. Each list contained four utilitarian claims and four social identity claims, as determined by pretests. Importantly, each product claim was presented in the lists of claims for two of the three products. Thus, the inherent quality or persuasiveness of the claims was held constant across the products. For example:

1. “Alpine air conditioners offer superb engineering.”
   “The Avanti watch offers superb engineering.”
   “The Avanti watch. Instantly recognizable and always impressive.”

For each product, subjects were asked to check the three product claims they would want to use if they were writing an ad for the product.

Next, subjects rated their overall attitude toward each product on a 9-point scale ranging from very negative (1) to very positive (9), as well as their interest in owning (or replacing) the product ranging from I definitely do not want this product (1) to I definitely want this product (9). Finally, after responding to some other items, subjects filled out the 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale.

Results

Classification of advertising content. The headlines and copy that subjects wrote were coded for their functional content. The coding categories and instructions were very similar to those used in Experiment 1. Utilitarian argu-
ments included claims about the product’s quality, features, and rewards. Social identity arguments included claims about the product’s image, what it symbolizes or communicates to others, and how others feel about the product. In addition, there were categories for headlines or copy that appealed to more than one function and for those whose function could not be interpreted or coded confidently. (See Appendix for a more complete description of the coding scheme.)

Two judges independently coded the headlines, agreeing on 73% of their classifications. They also coded the dominant theme of the copy into one of the categories just described, agreeing on 80% of these classifications. For both headlines and copy, disagreements were coded independently by a third judge. In addition, the two judges coded the copy along a 7-point scale indicating the degree to which it focused on utilitarian versus social benefits. The scale ranged from completely social (1) to completely utilitarian (7). The average interjudge correlation for this coding was 0.70. In cases of disagreement between judges, either an average of their scores was used, or a third judge’s coding was employed (if the two judges had disagreed on the dominant theme of the copy).

**Results of coding.** As in Experiment 1, in order to be able to detect sensitively the relation between self-monitoring and appeal choice, we chose to do analyses that contrasted the highest and lowest thirds of the self-monitoring distribution (see footnote 5). Forty-six subjects were included in these analyses. The mean self-monitoring score for the highest third of the distribution was 18.1, and the mean for the lowest third was 8.9.

Many of the headlines (35% overall) could not be confidently coded into any function category because they consisted of only a catchy phrase (e.g., “Time Flies With Avanti”) or the brand name (e.g., “The Avanti Watch”). As predicted, for the codable headlines content differed strongly as a function of the product being advertised: For the air conditioner, all of the codable headlines written by both high and low self-monitors were utilitarian headlines. For the class ring, most of the codable headlines written by both high self-monitors (79%) and low self-monitors (83%) were social identity headlines. For the watch, there was a mixture of headline types, with fewer utilitarian than social identity and mixed function headlines. No clear pattern could be discerned as a function of self-monitoring because most high self-monitors’ watch headlines (67%) could not be coded into a function category.

Results for the coding of copy along the 7-point function scale are shown in Table 2. (Coding the copy into the discrete function categories just described yielded similar results.) As with the headlines, copy content differed as a function of the product being advertised, with the air conditioner eliciting the most utilitarian copy. An ANOVA with self-monitoring and product order as between-subjects variables and product as a within-subject variable indicated that this main effect of product was significant, $F(2, 70) = 52.86, p < .0001$. 
PRODUCTS AND SELF-MONITORING

TABLE 2
Mean for Coding of Copy on Function Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Self-Monitor(^a)</th>
<th>High Self-Monitor(^b)</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air conditioner</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td>6.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class ring</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)\(^n\) = 22. \(^b\)\(n = 24.

Note. The lowest and highest thirds of the self-monitoring distribution were determined by choosing the cutoff points nearest to 33% and 66% of the overall distribution, respectively. Thus, individuals with scores below 13 or above 15 are included in this analysis. Judges coded the copy along a 7-point scale ranging from completely social (1) to completely utilitarian (7) with a midpoint of 4 (i.e., equally social and utilitarian).

As expected, both high and low self-monitors wrote utilitarian copy for advertising the air conditioner. In contrast, for watch and class ring the degree of focus on utilitarian features appeared to differ for high versus low self-monitors. However, neither the Self-Monitoring \(\times\) Product interaction, \(F(2, 70) = .89, ns\), nor the planned comparisons of self-monitoring groups for each product \( (p's > .05) \) were significant. No other effects were significant.

Selection of product claims. For each product, subjects had been asked to select three out of a list of eight product claims (four utilitarian and four social identity) that they would wish to use in their ad (see Table 3). As expected, the types of claims chosen differed as a function of the product being advertised, \(F(2, 80) = 96.88, p < .0001\). The claims selected for the air conditioner were predominantly utilitarian claims, whereas those selected for the class ring were mostly social identity claims.

More social identity than utilitarian claims were also chosen for advertising the watch (the multiple function product), but self-monitoring appeared to moderate the extent to which this occurred. Overall, the Self-Monitoring \(\times\) Product interaction was not significant, \(F(2, 80) = .61, ns\), but planned comparisons suggested that this pattern should not be ignored. For watches, high self-monitors selected significantly more social identity claims \((M = 1.90)\) than utilitarian claims \((M = 1.10)\), whereas low self-monitors' selections of social identity claims \((M = 1.58)\) and utilitarian claims \((M = 1.42)\) did not differ significantly. Also as predicted, for the air conditioner and class ring, the types of claims chosen did not differ significantly as a function of level of self-monitoring (see Table 3).

A similar pattern emerged when the data were examined nonparametrically. For the watch, two thirds of high self-monitors (67%) selected more

\(^1\)A significant interaction of Product \(\times\) Product Order also emerged, \(F(2, 80) = 2.81, p < .05\), but this was not associated with an interpretable pattern of means.
TABLE 3  
Mean Number of Utilitarian and Social Identity Product Claims  
Selected by Level of Self-Monitoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low Self-Monitor&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>High Self-Monitor&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Air conditioner</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>2.81*</td>
<td>2.55*</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social identity</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Watch</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.10*</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social identity</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class ring</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>1.15*</td>
<td>1.05*</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social identity</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Planned comparison indicated that the number of utilitarian claims selected by these subjects differed significantly from the number of social identity claims they selected for this product at \( p < .05 \), one-tailed.

Note. The lowest and highest thirds of the self-monitoring distribution were determined by choosing the cutoff points nearest to 33% and 66% of the overall distribution, respectively. Thus, individuals with scores below 13 or above 15 are included in this analysis. Subjects chose three claims out of a list of eight (four utilitarian, four social) to include in their ads.

Attitudes and interest. Analyses were conducted to determine whether subjects' attitudes toward, and their degree of interest in owning, each product differed as a function of self-monitoring. ANOVAs with self-monitoring as a between-subjects variable and product as a within-subject variable were conducted separately on the attitude and interest ratings. Consistent with the results of Experiment 1, the analysis of attitudes yielded only a main effect for product, \( F(2, 88) = 44.55, p < .0001 \), reflecting the fact that watches were liked better (\( M = 8.07 \)) than air conditioners (\( M = 6.33 \)) or class rings (\( M = 4.96 \)). High and low self-monitors did not differ in their evaluations of these products. Similarly, the analysis for interest yielded only a main effect for product, \( F(2, 88) = 66.32, p < .0001 \), reflecting greater interest in owning or replacing a watch (\( M = 8.63 \)) than an air conditioner (\( M = 7.11 \)) or a class ring (\( M = 4.24 \)). Again, high and low self-monitors did not differ in their level of interest in these products.
Discussion

Both the ads that subjects wrote and the product claims that they chose to use supported our predictions about the role of product characteristics in the types of appeals that subjects judged to be persuasive. Consistent with previous research (Shavitt, 1990), product type strongly influenced the functional content of subjects' ads. Subjects used mostly quality-based arguments when advertising the utilitarian product, and mostly image-based arguments when advertising the social identity product.

We had also predicted that differences between high and low self-monitors' ads would emerge only when advertising a multiple function product (a watch). Indeed, when selecting product claims for use in advertising the watch, high and low self-monitors appeared to differ in their focus on quality versus image arguments. High self-monitors preferred image arguments, whereas low self-monitors did not show a clear preference. As we predicted, when selecting product claims for advertising the other products differences as a function of self-monitoring did not emerge.

As in the previous experiment, high and low self-monitors were not found to differ in their liking of these products, nor in their interest in owning (or replacing) them. Thus, any differences in the ad arguments high and low self-monitors used apparently were not due to differences in their product evaluations.

Differences as a function of self-monitoring did not emerge reliably for the headlines and copy that subjects wrote themselves. This may be due in part to difficulties in classifying the headlines (recall that many of the watch headlines could not be coded). In the next experiment, measures were added to assist in coding the functional meaning of the headlines. It is also possible that subjects believed that they were expected to write ads that would be persuasive for the general population rather than for themselves personally. In response, subjects may have chosen to write ads that were prototypic of those to which they had been exposed for these products. If that were the case, one would not necessarily expect differences in self-monitoring to translate into differences in the types of ads subjects wrote. In the next experiment, the instructions were modified to emphasize that subjects should write ads that they themselves would find persuasive.

EXPERIMENT 3

A replication was conducted, refining the ad-writing instructions and measures, in order to clarify the relation among self-monitoring, product category, and the functional content of subjects' ads. As in Experiment 2, we predicted that subjects would write primarily quality-based arguments when advertising
a utilitarian product, and primarily image-based arguments when advertising a social identity product. Moreover, we expected that self-monitoring differences in the use of image versus quality appeals would emerge when advertising a multiple function product, but not when advertising other products.

To assess the generalizability of the Experiment 2 findings, a different set of products was used to represent the three function categories: The utilitarian product was aspirin, the multiple function product was sunglasses, and the social identity product was a university flag (such flags are popular items that students attach to their car or dormitory windows). Selection of these products was based on the results of Experiment 1.

Method

Subjects. Subjects were 62 students from the same introductory advertising class who had not participated in the previous experiments.

Procedure. The procedure was very similar to that of Experiment 2, with a few exceptions. The instructions to subjects emphasized that they should write ads designed to appeal to themselves personally, not ads designed to appeal to other consumers. This was emphasized to counteract a possible tendency to write prototypical advertisements. As in Experiment 2, subjects wrote their advertisements for each of the three products in turn. After writing all three ads, subjects were asked to reexamine each headline that they had written and respond to the question, "Do you think the headline was focusing more on the quality of the product or the image of the product?" They were also asked to write a brief explanation for each answer. This task was included to assist judges in coding the headlines.

Subjects in this experiment were not asked to select product claims for use in advertisements (as in Experiment 2). The products used in this experiment (aspirin, sunglasses, and university flags) differed from each other too greatly to allow us to generate valid claims that could be shared between them. Instead, after writing their ads, subjects proceeded to rate their attitudes toward each product. Finally, subjects completed the Self-Monitoring Scale.

Results

Classification of advertising content. Ads were coded in the same manner as in Experiment 2. However, when coding headlines judges were free to consult subjects' explanations for their headlines to help interpret them. Two judges independently coded the ads, agreeing on 79% of their headline classifications and 77% of their copy classifications. The judges also coded the copy along the 7-point functional scale, with an average interjudge correlation of 0.63. Coding disagreements were handled as in Experiment 2.
PRODUCTS AND SELF-MONITORING 357

TABLE 4
Percentage of Headlines in Function Categories by Level of Self-Monitoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low Self-Monitor(^a)</th>
<th>High Self-Monitor(^a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspirin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social identity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not codable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunglasses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social identity</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not codable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Flag</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social identity</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not codable</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The lowest and highest thirds of the self-monitoring distribution were determined by choosing the cutoff points nearest to 33% and 66% of the overall distribution, respectively. Thus, individuals with scores below 12 or above 14 are included in this analysis.

\(^a\)\(n = 20\).

Results of coding. As in the previous experiments, analyses contrasting the lowest and highest thirds of the self-monitoring distribution were conducted. Forty subjects were included in these analyses. The mean self-monitoring score for the highest third of the distribution was 17.2 and the mean for the lowest third was 8.7.

Results of the headline classifications are shown in Table 4. Because of the availability of subjects' explanations for their headlines, the functional meaning of most headlines could readily be coded. Overall, the findings were consistent with those of Experiment 2. As predicted, the functional content of headlines differed strongly for different products. For the aspirin, virtually all of the headlines written by both high and low self-monitors focused on utilitarian features. For the university flag, virtually all of the headlines written by high and low self-monitors focused on social identity. For the sunglasses (i.e., multiple function product), as expected, there was a mixture of headline types that appeared to vary as a function of self-monitoring. Forty percent of low self-monitors wrote utilitarian headlines compared to only 25% of high self-monitors, whereas 45% of high self-monitors wrote social identity headlines compared to 35% of low self-monitors. However, this 2 × 2 (Self-Monitoring

\(^a\)Subjects' own codings of their headlines yielded a pattern consistent with the judges' coding.
Table 5
Mean for Coding of Copy on Function Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low Self-Monitor</th>
<th>High Self-Monitor</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspirin</td>
<td>6.61</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>6.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunglasses b</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Flag</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The lowest and highest thirds of the self-monitoring distribution were determined by choosing the cutoff points nearest to 33% and 66% of the overall distribution, respectively. Thus, individuals with scores below 12 or above 14 are included in this analysis. Judges coded the copy along a 7-point scale ranging from completely social (1) to completely utilitarian (7) with a midpoint of 4 (i.e., equally social and utilitarian).

*an = 20. Planned comparisons indicated a significant difference between low and high self-monitors for this product at p < .05, one-tailed.

× Headline Type) pattern was not statistically significant, χ²(1,N = 29) = .34, ns.

Results for the coding of copy are shown in Table 5 (coding the copy into discrete functional categories yielded similar results). As with the headlines, copy content differed as a function of the product being advertised. An ANOVA with self-monitoring and product order as between-subjects variables and product as a within-subject variable indicated that this main effect of product was significant, F(2, 58) = 102.43, p < .0001. As expected, both high and low self-monitors wrote utilitarian copy for advertising the aspirin, whereas they wrote social identity copy for advertising the university flag. In contrast, for the sunglasses the type of copy written by high versus low self-monitors differed. Paralleling the headline results, high self-monitors wrote more social identity copy and low self-monitors wrote more utilitarian copy. Although the Self-Monitoring × Product interaction was not significant, F(2, 58) = 1.52, ns, planned comparisons indicated that high and low self-monitors differed significantly in the copy they wrote for sunglasses, but not for the other products (see Table 5). A significant Product × Product Order interaction also emerged, F(4, 58) = 2.55, p < .05, but this data pattern was not conceptually meaningful.

Attitudes and interest. As in Experiment 2, ANOVA with self-monitoring as a between-subjects variable and product as a within-subject variable were conducted separately on subjects' attitude and interest ratings for the products. The analysis of attitudes yielded only a main effect for product, F(2,
76) = 22.75, *p < .0001*, reflecting the fact that sunglasses were liked better (*M* = 7.45) than aspirin (*M* = 5.98) or a university flag (*M* = 5.08). There was also a slight but nonsignificant tendency, *F*(1, 38) = 1.53, *ns*, for high self-monitors to give higher attitude ratings (*M* = 6.38) than low self-monitors (*M* = 5.95), and this tendency emerged for all of the products. Similarly, the analysis for interest ratings yielded a main effect for product, *F*(2, 76) = 40.73, *p < .0001*, reflecting greater interest in owning or replacing sunglasses (*M* = 7.70) than aspirin (*M* = 6.53) or a university flag (*M* = 4.10). Also, high self-monitors reported greater interest (*M* = 6.55) than low self-monitors (*M* = 5.67) in owning or replacing the products, and this was true for all of the products. This main effect of self-monitoring was significant, *F*(1, 38) = 5.35, *p < .05*. No other effects were significant.

Discussion

As in Experiment 2, product type strongly influenced the types of ads subjects judged to be persuasive. Both for headlines and copy, subjects wrote primarily quality-based arguments when advertising the utilitarian product, and primarily image-based arguments when advertising the social identity product.

Also as predicted, differences between high and low self-monitors' ads emerged when advertising a multiple function product (i.e., sunglasses). For sunglasses, which could be viewed in terms of both utilitarian and social identity goals, high self-monitors wrote ads that tended to focus on image-based arguments, whereas low self-monitors wrote ads that tended to focus on quality-based arguments. Although these differences between high and low self-monitors were not strong, they were consistent across both the headlines and the copy that subjects wrote for this product. However, for the other products, differences between high and low self-monitors did not emerge consistently in the headlines and copy they wrote.

The fact that subjects were explicitly instructed to write ads designed to appeal to themselves increases confidence in our interpretation of these results in terms of the persuasiveness of appeals. That is, subjects' ads apparently reflected differences in what they personally would find to be persuasive arguments for purchasing a given product, rather than differences in what they felt would convince others, or differences in the ads that they had previously seen for the products. Furthermore, our interpretation of subjects' headlines was guided by subjects' own explanations of the functional meaning of what they had written.

In this experiment, high self-monitors gave more favorable attitude and interest ratings to all of the products. Although it is not clear why high self-monitors would express more favorable evaluations of aspirin, sunglasses, and university flags than would low self-monitors, it is unlikely that this could account for the pattern we observed in the types of ads they wrote. The
attitudinal differences did not correspond with functional differences in the persuasiveness of appeals.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Overall, these experiments underscore the importance of product characteristics in attitude functions. As predicted, product category strongly influenced the functional content of subjects' attitude descriptions as well as the functional content of the ads they wrote.

Moreover, the results suggest that product categories constrained the effect of self-monitoring on attitude functions. As expected, differences in the functional content of high and low self-monitors' responses were limited to certain products. In the first experiment, coding of attitude descriptions revealed that, for products that predominantly serve a social identity function, high self-monitors described their attitudes in more social terms and less utilitarian terms than did low self-monitors. However, for predominantly utilitarian and multiple function products, high and low self-monitors did not differ in their descriptions of their attitudes, which tended to be strongly utilitarian.

In Experiments 2 and 3, when designing advertisements for multiple function products, high self-monitors tended to use social identity arguments to a greater extent and utilitarian arguments to a lesser extent than did low self-monitors. Although these effects were not strong, they were consistent across both the headlines and the copy that subjects wrote for advertising sunglasses and the claims that they selected for advertising watches.

However, in both of these experiments high and low self-monitors did not differ in their choice of arguments for advertising other products. Both high and low self-monitors chose to use mostly utilitarian arguments for advertising utilitarian products, and mostly social identity arguments for advertising social identity products.

Previous experiments have shown that high and low self-monitors differ in their focus on utilitarian versus social identity considerations when making product judgments (DeBono & Packer, 1991; Snyder & DeBono, 1985, 1987). Our results provide some clarification of the role of self-monitoring in the functions served by product attitudes. These findings suggest that high and low self-monitors differ in the way they evaluate certain products, rather than in their concern with utilitarian versus social identity features across products. That is, self-monitoring seems to come into play when a product affords high and low self-monitors the opportunity to focus on different functional goals, leading people to focus selectively on one type of goal versus another.

Far from diminishing the importance of self-monitoring in attitude functions, we view these results as underscoring it. The pattern of effects we observed is entirely consistent with the self-monitoring construct. One would
not expect high and low self-monitors to respond differently in all contexts. In our experiments, differences as a function of self-monitoring emerged only under conditions that activated the different goals of the high and low self-monitor. The fact that it was possible, under specified conditions, to eliminate well-established effects associated with self-monitoring strengthens theoretical interpretation of its role in attitude functions (see Greenwald et al., 1986).

These findings also provide support for the validity of the product category distinctions we have proposed. Consistent with previous research on the functions that tend to be associated with particular products (Shavitt, 1990), product type strongly influenced both the functional content of subjects' attitude descriptions and the ads that they wrote. Importantly, we were able to predict whether a product would predominantly engage either a utilitarian function, a social identity function, or both, using the criteria described earlier. Moreover, we were able to predict the products for which self-monitoring effects would be obtained. Subjects' responses validated these predictions in most cases.

However, the type of responses being made also needs to be considered. In these experiments, the nature of the interaction between product category and level of self-monitoring depended on whether subjects made descriptive judgments (i.e., thought listing) or persuasiveness judgments (i.e., ad writing). When describing their attitudes toward products, self-monitoring differences translated into the strongest differences in the types of thoughts listed toward products in the social identity category. However, when designing advertisements for products, high and low self-monitors' ads differed most strongly for products in the multiple function category.

Apparently, when listing thoughts about products, attributes related to product quality tend to be naturally salient. Perhaps because all products have such attributes (e.g., durability, comfort), even social identity products elicited many thoughts about quality and other utilitarian features (see footnote 3). The attitude descriptions of high and low self-monitors then, differed to the extent that the products had high self-presentational value, and thus were also likely to elicit a substantial number of image-related thoughts (from persons concerned with social image). However, persuasiveness judgments appear to have been based on different criteria—that is, on the thoughts or arguments deemed most relevant for evaluating the product. For social identity products, arguments judged to be the most persuasive were those that addressed directly the predominant function of the item (i.e., image-based arguments). However, for multiple function products, high and low self-monitors made different judgments about which arguments were most relevant for evaluating the item. Further research is needed to determine how differences between judgment tasks used to assess attitude functions (e.g., descriptive judgments vs. persuasiveness judgments) influence the nature of the interaction that is obtained between product category and self-monitoring.
Directions for Future Research

Our results suggest that products constrain the role of self-monitoring in influencing the functions of attitudes and the persuasiveness of appeals. Similar predictions might be made for the effects of other factors on attitude functions. For example, features of the situation in which products or product messages are encountered may elicit particular motives with respect to product attitudes. However, the effects of such factors on attitude functions should emerge only for product categories that afford the opportunity to pursue the corresponding situational goals.

For example, situations that involve expressing one's attitude toward a product in public or in the presence of reference group members may induce or heighten social identity motives for products that carry implications for one's social image. However, such situations are unlikely to induce a social identity function for attitudes toward a primarily utilitarian product, such as aspirin (see Shavitt, 1989, for additional discussion). Further research is needed regarding the interaction of product categories and situational factors in influencing the functions of attitudes.

Finally, it should be noted that our analysis of the role of products in influencing attitude functions has focused on product categories rather than on individual brands within a category. In general, we maintain that brands within a product category tend to engage the same functions as the category itself. Thus, different brands of air conditioners or aspirin are likely to engage primarily a utilitarian function, whereas different brands of a class ring or school flag are likely to engage primarily a social identity function.

However, brand positioning strategies often seek to associate a brand with functional attributes distinct from those associated with the product category itself. In some cases, this may be a successful positioning strategy (e.g., the most durable brand of school flags, or the highly sophisticated brand of coffee). Indeed, in some cases, the functions or goals underlying a decision to purchase a product may be different from the functions underlying selection of a particular brand.

For example, one generally decides to buy a school flag in order to convey one's identity or sentiments to others. Ads that focus on the social identity benefits of the flags are probably the most persuasive type of appeal for eliciting a decision to purchase this product.

However, once that decision is reached, one's choice of a particular brand of flag may be based not on how well it conveys information about one's identity—all brands are probably perceived to do this equally well—but on the superiority of its utilitarian attributes (i.e., quality, cost, durability, etc.). In such cases, where there is perceived parity among brands in terms of how well they meet their primary function, other functions may serve as an effective positioning platform. The relation between the functions engaged by a product
category and those engaged by brands within the category is an important topic for future research.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was supported by the James Webb Young Fund, Department of Advertising, University of Illinois.

We thank Becky Blaker, Young C. Kim, Carol Tillman, and Michelle Zasi for their assistance in data collection and coding. We are also grateful to the University of Illinois Social Cognition Group for insightful comments and suggestions regarding this research, and to Thom Srull for valuable editorial guidance.

REFERENCES


APPENDIX

Examples of Listed Thoughts and Advertising Content in Each Function Category

1. **Utilitarian:** Focus on features of product, reference to past experiences with product that involve rewards or punishments.
   - Thoughts: "Sometimes it's too sour." (orange juice)
     - "Most of them are over-priced." (greeting cards)
   - Ads: "The most efficient brand you can buy." (air conditioner)
     - "Brielle sunglasses are quality products—they're durable and offer full UV protection."

2. **Social identity:** Focus on social characteristics of people who use the product, or what the product communicates to others.
   - Thoughts: "Girls that wear a guy's for loyalty are ridiculous." (high school class rings)
     - "You can tell a lot about a person from their jeans."
   - Ads: "Our stylish designs will fit any lifestyle." (watch)
     - "Don't be left out after college when everyone has one but you." (university class rings)

3. **Mixed:** Utilitarian and social identity content.
   - Thoughts: "I think of them as a sort of "yuppie" food, and they're expensive." (gourmet frozen foods)
   - Ads: "Show your loyalty with your school—we have the best prices and new designs." (university flags)