The Power of Emotional Appeals in Advertising

The Influence of Concrete Versus Abstract Affect On Time-Dependent Decisions

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In this article, the authors explore the role of affective appeals in advertising on time-dependent decisions—that is, decisions for the short term versus the long term. They introduce the distinction between *abstract* and *concrete* affect and, in two experiments, show that concrete affective appeals drive behavioral intentions more strongly in the short-term perspective, whereas abstract affective appeals appear to drive behavioral intentions more strongly in the longer-term perspective. Their findings help extend our thinking on the role of emotional appeals in advertising as they also introduce a new distinction in such appeals: "concrete versus abstract affect." The authors provide examples and illustrations for concrete and abstract affect and discuss the implications of their finding.

INTRODUCTION

There is a school of thought that typically treats affect as more influential on important decisions and considers it at higher level than reason (Trope and Liberman, 2003). In this school of thought, a relationship between a brand and a consumer—established on an affective connection—often is treated as a strong relationship and the basis of long-term consumer loyalty (Heath, Brandt, and Nairn, 2006).

For instance, The Procter and Gamble Company (P&G) advertises Tide as a product that consumers can develop an emotional relationship with and hence induce better loyalty (Berner, 2006). As a detergent is just a detergent, how could P&G go about this? P&G's plan was to communicate that Tide takes care of the laundry—a very important household task for consumers who welcome extra time to focus on the rest of their lives. This positioning of laundry detergents by P&G is just an example of how marketers try to build long-term customer loyalty with their targets through an emotional—rather than a reason-based—relationship.

On the other hand, another school of thought compares the role of affect and reason in decision making. The affect that is compared to reason typically is characterized differently from the affect P&G taps into to build long-term loyalty with its products. This second characterization of affect comes in a very visceral form (Shiv and Fedorikhin, 1999). In numerous research papers examining the role of affect in decisions, affect often is described in a narrow sense, such as the initial liking of a target object (Zajonc, 1980) or hot, visceral experience impairing self-control (Metcalfe and Mischel, 1999). Obviously, the portrayal of affect in this matter is much different from the affect that P&G is trying to induce—a fuzzy, warm, affectionate feeling that grounds itself in the trust between a brand and its consumer.

In this article, the authors seek to answer the following question: given that P&G is attempting to build long-term loyalty of consumers with an affective appeal and the body of research (Zajonc, 1980; Metcalfe and Mischel, 1999; Shiv and Fedorikhin, 1999) that present findings on the conditions when and how affect precedes reason and is central in the decisions made *in the moment*, are they really talking about the same experience of affect?

One recent article argues and finds that emotional (analogous to "affective" in this article) appeals do not drive as much attention as reason-based,

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functional appeals (Heath, Nairn, and Bottomley, 2009). Is it that affective appeals do not drive as much attention as functional appeals? Or is it that different types of affective appeals would receive different levels of attention? Is it that all emotional appeals in advertising lead to long-term loyalty of the target? Or is it that some emotional appeals also may drive consumer behavior very strongly but mostly for short-term actions? The authors' theorizing and empirical work help shed light on these issues by bringing more meaning to affective experiences.

The article demonstrates that we can understand the role of affect in consumer decision making better when we distinguish between two types of affect: abstract and concrete affect. Furthermore, these two types of affect also predict whether affective relationships have a stronger influence on brand judgments when thought of in the short versus the long run.

The authors propose that the nature of an affective experience (or a claim) determines whether affect will be more influential for short- versus long-term decisions. Some affective states are experienced and represented very concretely; hence, they share similar properties to the short-term perspective of events (being very contextualized, subordinate, and linked to the details and specifics of the situation). The authors refer to this type of affect as "concrete affect."

Alternatively, some affective states are experienced, rather abstractly, and share similar properties to the long-term perspective of events (being de-contextualized, super-ordinate, and linked to the gist [versus details] of an event or a target object. The authors refer to this type of affect as "abstract affect." They propose that it is the difference in the *specificity* of the affective experiences (abstract versus concrete) that causes affect to be associated with different time periods. They therefore also suggest that some affective states evoke concrete associations, whereas others evoke abstract associations. The type of the association evoked generally depends on the affective specificity of the experience.

The article proposes that *concrete affect* is visceral. It could thus impair self-control and influence immediate decisions more than distant ones. On the other hand, the authors propose that a*bstract affect* as pallid and fuzzy (like feeling of warmth) and these qualities of abstract affect match the construal of events in the distant future (Trope and Liberman, 2000, 2003). Abstract affect therefore is likely to influence long- more than short-term decisions.

In the next section, the authors expand on the conceptual differences between the two types of affect. They then present our findings from two experiments and conclude with a discussion of the theoretical and managerial implications of these findings.

CONCRETE AND ABSTRACT AFFECT

Consider the 1999 delay-of-gratification theory of J. Metcalfe and W. Mischel, who in the pages of *Psychological Review* (Metcalfe and Mischel, 1999) distinguished between hot and cold systems. Specifically, they suggested that, when focusing on the concrete properties of a target object (*e.g.*, the tastiness and softness of marshmallows), self-control is impaired (causing participants in experiments to consume the marshmallows), because this focus brings out the affective properties of the target object. When focusing on the abstract (or cognitive) properties (*e.g.*, shape and color), however, participants are better able to exercise self-control (that is, they delay consuming the marshmallows). It is the *specificity* of the "affective" experience in Metcalfe and Mischel's conceptualization that drives the behavior. In this article, the authors propose and show that affect also can be abstract in nature and influence longer-term decisions as well.

In a different vein, others distinguish between hot and cold empathy gaps between predicting one's behavior versus actually behaving in response to visceral affective states such as hunger, arousal, and drowsiness (Loewenstein and Schkade, 1999). When experiencing hot empathy, and therefore under the influence of affective states, self-control is impaired. When "distanced" from visceral affective states (cold empathy), people predict that they have the ability to exercise self-control, though when faced with the decision they are unable to do so, indicating an inability to predict the effect of hot affect on behavior. In both of these conceptualizations, the concreteness, vividness, and visceral—or simply the very *specific*—nature of hot affective experiences require an immediate response, and hence affect influences the behavior in the very short term.

This article conceptualizes *concrete affect* as hot, vivid, and visceral, leading it to be defined very *specifically* and experienced with immediate certainty. Concrete affect therefore may require higher immediate attention on the part of the person experiencing it. The need for immediate attention fits well with documented effects, such as affect requiring immediate response and producing stimulus-controlled action (Metcalfe and Mischel, 1999) and automatic approach/avoidance behavior (Liberman, Trope, and Stephan, 2006). Hence, we suggest that the affect studied by Metcalfe and Mischel (1999) or by Loewenstein (1996) is concrete affect.

How do people experience concrete affect? Imagine the excitement before running a race or going shopping for one's first car; that "I-can't-wait" feeling before a weekend vacation at a tropical island; the perplexing surprise of seeing oneself on camera; the uncontained happiness

after winning a lottery; or the elation that chokes one into tears of happiness after getting "the diamond" with that long-expected proposal (Giggs, 2010). When the concrete nature of these affective states matches the concrete nature of the short-term perspective, events and target objects are evaluated more favorably, and stronger behavioral intentions are formed toward such events and target objects. That is, since the near-future is perceived concretely, concrete affect influences decisions in the temporally near time frame.

According to the authors' conceptualization, *abstract affect* is pallid and *non-specific*, like the high-level construal of an object or event or how advertisers and marketers portray loyalty-inducing emotions. Furthermore, it can be evoked by higher-level associations. For example, buying one's first home for his or her family can be one of the long-term wishes and goals of a consumer, and the hope induced by such a goal is likely to be an abstract affective state. Such a consumer might experience very warm, fuzzy feelings every time he or she is asked to imagine his or her future family house. Similarly, the gratitude that one feels toward random acts of kindness can be heart-warming and may drive longer-term loyalty socially (Giggs, 2010). Other such abstract affective states are countless, such as the feelings of consumer trust for brands with whom they have had a long-term healthy relationship; the feelings of comfort people might have at their most favorite store; the hope one holds for mother earth when buying environmentally sustainable products.

The authors suggest that the difference between an abstract affective state (*e.g.*, hope, trust, warmth, gratitude) and concrete affective state (*e.g.*, happiness, elation, excitement) is the *specificity* in the experience of affect. Abstract affective states are pallid like the higher-level construal of an object, are felt with uncertainty, and do not require as much attention as they are experienced as concrete emotional states. They therefore can transcend the present and drive long-term decision making and behavior.

The following additional example further clarifies the distinction between the conceptualization of concrete and abstract affect. One might feel very excited (a concrete affective state) toward a romantic partner and hence plan to go on a date with that person the next weekend (short-term decision). The concrete feeling of excitement can drive behavioral intentions for the short term. However, if one feels very affectionate (an abstract affective state) toward a romantic partner, then she or he might commit to spending several years—maybe even a lifetime—with that person (long-term decision). Affection is a warmer and less concrete affective state that also is much more pallid and experienced with less certainty than excitement. Such feelings of affection and sentimentality typically are associated more with the higher level goals in life, such as getting married, having kids, buying a house, and building a family, and can drive longer-term decisions.

The authors, therefore, suggest that while affection and sentimentality can describe the phenomenology of positive abstract affective states, excitement, desire, or arousal should describe the phenomenology of positive concrete affective states. In summary, they hypothesize that positive abstract affect (*e.g.*, hopefulness) versus positive concrete affect (*e.g.*, happiness) induces more favorable attitudes and drives behavior more strongly for the distant- versus near-future.

Two experiments tested this theorizing. In both experiments, they used ads for an environmentally friendly car as their stimuli to induce different kinds of affective experiences towards the same object:

- Experiment 1 explored the concrete versus abstract nature of positive affect and investigates how abstract (versus concrete) affect can influence behavior more under a long-term (versus a short-term) perspective.
- Experiment 2 contrasted both types of affect (abstract and concrete) with cognition and shows that, though concrete affect is less influential on longer-term decisions than cognition, abstract affect is more influential on longer-term decisions than cognition.

EXPERIMENT 1: HOW DOES CONCRETE VERSUS ABSTRACT AFFECT INFLUENCE DECISIONS FOR THE PRESENT VERSUS THE FUTURE?

The authors have proposed that positive concrete affect can be experienced through visceral feelings or feelings of desire and excitement that draw high attention, whereas positive abstract affect can be experienced through warmer feelings of affection and sentimentality that do not require as much attention for immediate decisions.

Experiment 1 builds the groundwork for these differences in the experience of abstract versus concrete affect while seeking support for the main hypothesis. More specifically, Experiment 1 shows that abstract affect is more influential on long-term decisions, whereas concrete affect is more influential on short-term decisions.

Method

Participants and Design. One hundred and one undergraduates at a large northeastern university participated in this computer experiment for partial course credit. Experiment 1 used a 2 (Type of Affect: Concrete versus Abstract) × 2 (Time Perspective: Near future versus Distant future) between-subjects full-factorial design.

Stimulus. The experiment was presented as a "College Students' Purchase Intentions Survey" that was supposedly aimed at getting college students' responses to an ad for a new car (named "ABC Hybrid") that would be introduced in their area. The authors manipulated time perspective by instructing the participants that they were looking to buy a car "now" versus "in a year" (Trope and Liberman, 2000), After this, participants were asked to view an Internet ad for a new car with these instructions in mind. There were two versions of the Internet ad depending on the affect manipulation.

Based on prior research that showed that color is very effective in inducing specific emotions (Valdez and Mehrabian, 1994), the authors used color as one dimension for their affect manipulation. Specifically, while both orange and red induce positive emotions, red induces higher arousal than orange (Kaya and Epps, 2004; Valdez and Mehrabian, 1994). The authors therefore expected that using a red car would elicit concrete affect owing to its higher arousal value, while an orange car would elicit lower arousal and more affection.

To support the above postulates of color and affective states, a separate pretest was conducted with 20 undergraduate students from the same population. In the pretest, respondents were asked to rate 11 colors, including two shades of red (bright red and darker red), orange, and eight other filler colors (gray, plum, white, yellow, blue, teal, green, and black) on how much each color induced concrete versus abstract affect. Specifically, the students were presented the picture of ABC Hybrid in pale white and asked participants to imagine that the car was painted in each of these eleven colors and then indicate the extent the car induced (1) feelings of desire (measure of inducing concrete affect); (2) feelings of warmth (measure of inducing abstract affect); and (3) rational thoughts (as a control), on nine-point semantic-differential scales anchored at "1 = Not at all" and "9 = A lot."

According to the pretest results, the authors concluded that bright red induced higher feelings of desire (M = 5.4) than feelings of warmth (M = 4.6, $p < 0.05$) and rational thoughts (M = 3.0, $p < 0.01$), whereas orange induced higher feelings of warmth (M = 4.0) than feelings of desire (M = 3.0, $p < 0.05$) and rational thoughts (M = 2.0, $p < 0.01$). Bright red and orange were the only colors that evoked significantly different feelings of desire and warmth in the directions the authors had predicted, while inducing lower rational thoughts at the same time.

In the main experiment, below the image of the orange versus red car in the Internet ad, words (or phrases) from the following sequences were used to strengthen the manipulation of the message. Words/phrases were displayed on the computer screen, one at a time, for four seconds. The italicized phrases were part of the affect manipulation; the other phrases were common in both affect conditions:

- Positive abstract affect word-phrase sequence accompanying the orange car: "*awww, nice…,*" "*safe,*" "*a friend!,*" "yes, re-engineered!," "*family,*" "the new music system," "*the peacefulness of driving*."
- Positive concrete affect word-phrase sequence accompanying the red car: "*hmmm, exciting,*" "*fast,*" "*hot,*" "yes, re-engineered!," "*sexy,*" the new music system," "*the pleasures of driving.*"

(The authors ran a qualitative pretest (n = 72) to determine these phrases that constituted the affect manipulation. In this pretest, they presented the participants either with an orange or with a bright red version of ABC Hybrid and provided them with a detailed description of ABC Hybrid. After this, participants were asked how they would change this ad to induce desire, excitement, and stimulation—properties of concrete affect—versus affection, warmth, sentimentality: properties of abstract affect.)

Each of the concrete and abstract word-phrase sequences generated a 28-second stream (seven words/phrases × 4 seconds = 28 seconds) flowing without interruption. Each stream ended with a final screenshot that was displayed for eight seconds, in which a larger picture of ABC Hybrid was displayed with the tag line that read "Looking for a new car? ABC Motors offers the new Hybrid…."

Measures. After presenting the participants with the ad for this hybrid car, the authors administered the main dependent measures. Participants answered questions about their behavioral intentions: intention to "visit a dealer to check out ABC Hybrid," "gather more info about ABC Hybrid," and "visit a demo stand of ABC Hybrid at school" on nine-point semantic-differential scales anchored at "1 = Definitely will not," and "9 = Definitely will." Participants then responded to manipulation checks for affect (the extent the ad made them feel "desire," "excitement," "stimulation," affection," "sentimental," and "warm" on nine-point semantic-differential scales) and time perspective (the extent they were focusing on "1 = Now" versus "9 = A year from now," and "1 = The very near future" versus "9 = The very distant future" while watching the ad). They then responded to control measures such as subjective knowledge of cars (two items), attitude toward cars (two items), motivation in the experiment, experiment hypothesis guessing (open-end), and difficulty of task and background variables such as gender, age, and year at school. None of the control or background measures had any significant

effects and are not discussed any further. Finally, participants were debriefed and dismissed.

Results

Manipulation Check for Affect. The six items of induced feelings loaded on two factors. In the results reported in both experiments, all analyses pertaining to the overall model (*i.e.*, main effects and interactions) are reported as two-tailed tests. However, planned contrasts are reported as one-tailed tests, as they were hypothesized by the authors' conceptualization. There were two Eigen values with values greater than 1 (4.33, 1.10). As predicted, the rotated factor pattern revealed that feelings of affection, warmth and sentimentality loaded onto one factor (abstract affect), and feelings of desire, excitement and stimulation loaded onto another factor (concrete affect).

The authors averaged each of the three items constituting these two factors to form an *abstract affect index* (average of feelings of affection, warmth and sentimentality, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.93$) and *concrete affect index* (average of feelings of desire, excitement and stimulation, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.95$). A 2 (Affect) × 2 (Time perspective) between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) produced the predicted main effect of affect on the *abstract affect index* ($F(1, 97) = 8.60$, $p < 0.01$). Participants reported feeling stronger abstract affect in the abstract affect condition ($M = 3.76$) than in the concrete affect condition ($M = 2.63$). Similarly, participants reported feeling stronger concrete affect in the concrete affect condition ($M = 3.15$) than in the abstract affect condition ($M = 2.88$), though this main effect of affect on *concrete affect index* was only directional ($F < 1$).

Manipulation Check for Time Perspective. The two items of measuring time perspective were significantly and positively correlated ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) and hence averaged to form a *time index*. A 2 × 2 between-subjects ANOVA on the *time index* revealed only the predicted main effect of time perspective ($F(1, 97) = 31.67$, $p < 0.01$), exemplifying a longer time perspective in the "in a year" condition ($M = 4.48$) than "now" condition ($M = 2.35$). This manipulation, therefore, worked as intended.

Behavioral Intentions. The three attitude items for behavioral intentions were averaged to form a *Behavioral Intentions Index* (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$). Figure 1 depicts the pattern of the means graphically, and Table 1 provides the summary statistics.

The authors ran a 2 (Affect) × 2 (Time perspective) between-subjects ANOVA on this index and obtained the predicted interaction ($F(1,93) = 3.76$, $p = 0.05$). No other effect was significant (ps > 0.33). Having viewed a concrete affective appeal, participants indicated significantly stronger behavioral intentions ($F(1, 93) = 4.10$, $p < 0.05$) when looking for a car "now" ($M = 5.32$) versus "in a year"

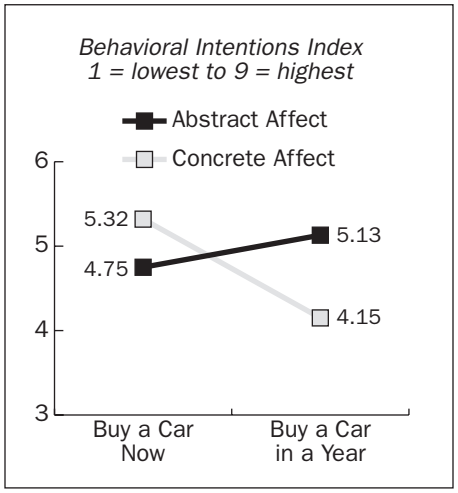

Figure 1 Experiment 1: Influence of Abstract Versus Concrete Affect on Behavioral Intentions

TABLE 1

Summary Statistics of Experiment 1

Mean (Standard Deviation)

	Abstract Affective Appeal		Concrete Affective Appeal	
	Buy a Car Now	Buy a Car in a Year	Buy a Car Now	Buy a Car in a Year
Behavioral Intentions Index (3 items; $\alpha = 0.80$; 1–9 scale with 9 reflecting higher intentions)	4.75 (1.88)	5.13 (2.20)	5.32* (1.67)	4.15 (1.88)
Abstract Affect Index (3 items; $\alpha = 0.93$; 1–9 scale with 9 reflecting more abstract affect)	3.76* (2.17)		2.63 (1.61)	
Concrete Affect Index (3 items; $\alpha = 0.95$; 1–9 scale with 9 reflecting more concrete affect)	2.88 (1.91)		3.15 (2.10)	
	Buy a Car Now		Buy a Car in a Year	
Time Index (2 items; $r = 0.68$; 1–9 scale with 9 reflecting longer term perspective)	2.35 (1.80)		4.48* (1.96)	

** Significant at 0.05; all comparisons are pair-wise.*

(M = 4.15). On the contrary, participants indicated directionally stronger, albeit non-significant, intentions for the car after an abstract affective appeal when the purchase was "in a year" (M = 5.13) versus "now" (M = 4.75; $F < 1$). No other effect was significant with the other measures.

Discussion

The results of Experiment 1 support the theory that affect can influence decisions in the short term as well as the long term, depending on the associations evoked in a consumer by the different types of affect. Experiment 1 demonstrated that a concrete affective appeal induced higher behavioral intentions in the shorter term versus the longer term. The results regarding the abstract affective appeal, while not significant, were directionally in support of the theory, inducing higher behavioral intentions in the longer term than in the shorter term.

The literature typically compares affect to cognition, concluding that affect influences decisions in the present whereas cognition (reason-based thinking) influences long-term decisions (Frederick, Loewenstein, and O'Donoghue, 2002; Liberman et al., 2006). Further, the literature notes that affect is discounted much more steeply than cognition (Loewenstein, 1996).

In Experiment 2, the authors investigated the role of affect in comparison to cognition and demonstrated that it is the specificity (concrete versus abstract) of the affective state that determines the intertemporal influence of affect. The work shows that affect can have more influence than cognition on long-term decisions when the affect evoked is abstract, and it can have more influence than cognition on short-term decisions, when concrete affect is evoked.

EXPERIMENT 2: HOW DOES AFFECT VERSUS REASON (COGNITION) INFLUENCE DECISIONS FOR THE PRESENT VERSUS THE FUTURE?

In this experiment, the authors investigate the time-dependent influence of the two types of affect (concrete and abstract) versus cognition. To make a full comparison of influence of different types of affect versus cognition in different time periods, they used a more complex design as explained further.

Method

Participants and Design. One hundred and fifty undergraduates at a large northeastern university participated in this paper-pencil experiment for partial course credit. A 2 (Goals: Concrete Affect versus Cognition) × 2 (Message Content: Abstract Affect versus Cognition) × 2 (Time Perspective: Near Future versus Distant Future) between-subjects full-factorial design was employed in this experiment.

Manipulations. As in Experiment 1, the authors used an ad for ABC Hybrid as our stimulus. The message content of the ad was used to manipulate abstract affect versus cognition. Specifically, they presented participants with the ad for this hybrid car that portrayed some neutral facts about the car and then listed three affect-based ("ABC Hybrid makes me feel peaceful and proud," "I feel very happy by using ABC Hybrid," and "I have done a thorough search of all the cars compatible with ABC Hybrid and ABC Hybrid was the one that made me feel least worried and most pleased in terms of the overall package"), and three reason-based testimonials ("I saved a lot of money with ABC Hybrid," "I think ABC Hybrid offers a very good deal in terms of overall package," and "I have done a thorough search of all the cars within ABC Hybrid's price range and ABC Hybrid offers the best deal in terms of overall package. I made the most logical decision by purchasing ABC Hybrid!"). The affect-based testimonials were aimed to induce abstract feelings of warmth and affection toward ABC Hybrid, whereas the reason-based testimonials were aimed to induce no feelings but simply a rational perspective.

The goals and time perspective manipulations were administered through instructions before the ad was presented. Affective goal instructions were designed to instigate more desire (and hence were more concrete) than warmth (and hence less abstract). An affective goal of having pleasure and enjoying oneself should create feelings of desire and approach/avoidance behavior (Liberman et al., 2006). Time perspective was manipulated as per Trope and Liberman (2000) through instructions. Participants were asked to imagine that they will buy a car tomorrow (Near Future condition) versus next year (Distant Future condition). After this, the authors manipulated either a concrete affective goal—

> *You are mainly concerned about feeling good about yourself. You try to make the decision that will make you feel best. You want to consider all the positive and negative feelings you will have by buying each one of the options you are considering*

—or a cognitive goal:

> *You are mainly concerned about getting a good deal on the car. You try to make the most rational decision. You want to consider all the benefits and costs provided by buying each one of the options you are considering.*

Measures. Experiment 2 concluded by asking participants to keep the foregoing information in mind in evaluating ABC Hybrid. After reading the ad, participants answered questions about their intentions

The affect-based testimonials were aimed to induce abstract feelings of warmth and affection toward ABC Hybrid, whereas the reason-based testimonials were aimed to induce no feelings but simply a rational perspective.

(intention to "purchase ABC Hybrid" and "gather more info about ABC Hybrid" on seven-point semantic-differential scales anchored at "1 = Definitely will not," and "7 = Definitely will." They then responded to manipulation checks for the extent the ad induced feelings versus reasons and the time period they were focusing on while reading the ad. After the manipulation checks, they answered some control measures such as the relative importance of the advertised attributes, subjective knowledge of cars (two items), overall attitudes toward cars (two items), motivation in the experiment, experiment hypothesis guessing (open-ended), difficulty of task, and background variables such as gender, age, and year at school. None of the control or background measures had any significant effect and are not discussed any further.

Pretest of the Stimuli. To ensure that the manipulations would work as intended, Experiment 2 ran a pretest of the stimuli with a different sample of participants from the same population (n = 107). In this pretest, the authors tested whether the goal instructions and the ad message induced the two different types of affect, as we intended. Therefore, four separate groups of participants rated each of the four texts (affective ad, cognitive ad, affective goal instructions, and cognitive goal instructions) on the extent of inducing "feelings of desire" and "feelings of warmth" on seven-point semantic-differential scales. As discussed before, the authors had assumed that concrete affect should induce stronger feelings of "desire" than "warmth" and abstract affect should induce stronger feelings of "warmth" than "desire." Hence, the affective goal (concrete affect manipulation) versus the affective ad message (abstract affect manipulation) should induce stronger desire (more concrete) and less warmth (less abstract).

In Experiment 2, the authors ran a 2 (Affect Type: Concrete versus Abstract) × (Material Type: Goals versus Ad Message Content) × 2 (Material Content: Affect versus Cognition) mixed-ANOVA where the first factor was within-subject, and the remaining two factors were between-subjects. This ANOVA produced a significant three-way interaction ($F(1,103) = 5.44$, $p < 0.05$). The authors analyzed this three-way interaction further to examine the simple interaction effects of affect type (concrete versus abstract) and material type (goals versus ad message content) at each level of material content (affect versus cognition). As predicted, the two constructs used to manipulate affect (goals versus ad message content) produced the targeted type of affect (concrete versus abstract, respectively) as indicated by a simple interaction effect of affect type × material type ($F(1,103) = 9.36$, $p < 0.01$). More specifically, the ad message (abstract affect manipulation) induced more warmth (M = 4.21) than the goals ($M = 3.68$, $F(1,103) = 4.10$, $p < 0.05$), whereas the goals (concrete affect manipulation) induced more desire (M = 4.36) than the ad massage ($M = 3.44$, $F(1,103) = 5.30$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, this pretest confirmed that the manipulations work as intended. These analyses also indicate that cognitive material induced more desire ($M = 3.31$) than warmth ($M = 2.54$, $F(1,103) = 10.75$, $p < 0.01$) across goals and ad message content.

Results

Manipulation Check for Affect versus Cognition. Experiment 2 asked the participants to evaluate the ad on four bipolar items (seven-point semantic-differential scales anchored at "the ad evoked thoughts"/"the ad evoked feelings"; "the ad was logical"/"the ad was emotional"; "the ad made me rational"/"the ad made me sentimental"; and "the ad was reason-based"/"the ad was feeling-based"). The authors averaged these items to form a Thinking-Feeling Index (Cronbach's α = 0.83, with a higher number reflecting more feelings than reasons), and used this as the dependent measure in a 2 (Goals) × 2 (Message Content) × 2 (Time Perspective) between-subjects ANOVA. As expected, this ANOVA yielded a higher feelings rating in affective message content condition ($M = 4.09$) than in cognitive message content condition ($M = 3.33$, $F(1,142) = 12.04$, $p < 0.01$). No other effect was significant ($p > 0.10$).

Manipulation Check for Time Perspective. Experiment 2 also asked participants "the time period they were focusing on while answering questions about ABC Hybrid" (on a seven-point semantic-differential scale anchored at "1 = tomorrow" and "7 = next year"). The authors ran a 2 × 2 × 2 between-subjects ANOVA on this measure. As predicted, participants indicated a longer time perspective in the "next year" condition ($M = 5.55$) than in the "tomorrow" condition ($M = 3.84$,

$F(1,141) = 31.67$, $p < 0.01$). No other effect was significant ($p > 0.10$).

Behavioral Intentions. The two items of behavioral intentions were averaged to form a *Behavioral Intentions Index* ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$). A 2 × 2 × 2 ANOVA on the *Behavioral Intentions Index* yielded results supporting our theory: while the three-way interaction was not significant ($F < 1$), the two-way interactions of message content × time perspective and goals × time perspective were significant in predicted directions. The two-way message content × time perspective interaction ($F(1,142) = 5.00$, $p < 0.05$) manifested itself with a stronger influence of affective ad message on behavioral intentions when the purchase was planned for next year ($M = 4.41$) rather than tomorrow ($M = 3.99$, $F(1,142) = 2.00$, $p < 0.10$), and a smaller influence of cognitive ad message when the purchase was planned for next year ($M = 4.25$) rather than tomorrow ($M = 4.76$, $F(1,142) = 3.07$, $p < 0.05$; see Figure 2, Panel A for the pattern of the means). This pattern indicates that abstract affect can be more influential on longer-term decisions than cognition.

The two-way goals × time perspective interaction was also significant ($F(1, 142) = 5.75$, $p < 0.05$), indicating a stronger influence of an affective goal on behavioral intentions when the purchase was planned for tomorrow ($M = 4.67$) rather than "in a year" ($M = 4.13$, $F(1,142) = 3.45$, $p < 0.05$) and a smaller influence of cognitive goals when the purchase was planned for "tomorrow" ($M = 4.11$) rather than "next year" ($M = 4.54$, $F(1,142) = 2.36$, $p < 0.10$; see Figure 2, Panel B for the pattern of the means). This pattern demonstrates that concrete affect can be more influential on shorter-term decisions than cognition (Table 2).

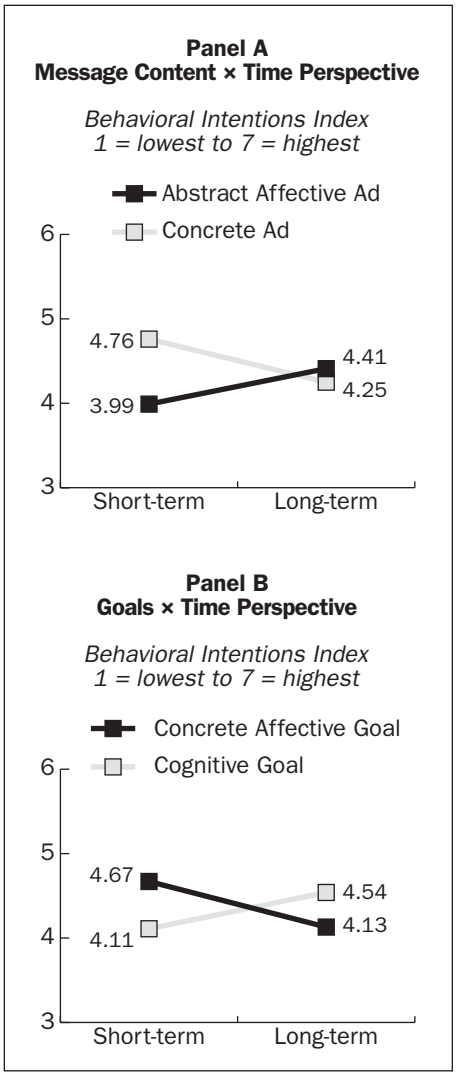

Figure 2 Experiment 2: Influence of Affect Versus Reason (Cognition) on Behavioral Intentions

TABLE 2

Summary Statistics of Experiment 2

Mean
(Standard Deviation)

	Abstract Affective Ad Content		Cognitive Ad Content	
	Buy a Car Tomorrow	**Buy a Car Next Year**	**Buy a Car Tomorrow**	**Buy a Car Next Year**
Behavioral Intentions Index (2 items; $r = 0.61$; 1–7 scale with 7 reflecting higher intentions)	3.99 (1.50)	4.41[b] (1.15)	4.76[a] (1.05)	4.25 (1.23)
	Concrete Affective Goal		**Cognitive Goal**	
	Buy a Car Tomorrow	**Buy a Car Next Year**	**Buy a Car Tomorrow**	**Buy a Car Next Year**
Behavioral Intentions Index (2 items; $r = 0.61$; 1–7 scale with 7 reflecting higher intentions)	4.67[a] (1.30)	4.13 (1.23)	4.11 (1.34)	4.54[b] (1.18)
	Affective Message		**Cognitive Message**	
Thinking-Feeling Index (4 items; $\alpha = 0.83$; 1–7 scale with 7 reflecting higher affective ratings)	4.09[a] (1.33)		3.33 (1.27)	
	Tomorrow		**Next Year**	
Time Perspective (1 item; 1–7 scale with 7 reflecting longer-term perspective)	3.84 (2.09)		5.55[a] (1.51)	

[a] Significant at 0.05; [b] directionally significant at 0.10; all comparisons are pair-wise.

Discussion

This experiment supports the authors' theorizing that the influence of affect on time-dependent decisions can be better explained when the concrete versus abstract nature of affect is taken into account. The authors find support for our prediction that abstract affect influences long-term decisions more than reason (cognition), whereas concrete affect influences short-term decisions more than reason. The authors attribute the time-dependent influence of different types of affect on behavioral intentions to the specificity of the affective appeals: relatively warm and fuzzy for abstract affect and very specifically desire-inducing for concrete affect.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

For nearly 25 years, there have been numerous contributions to the understanding of the role of affective versus reason-based appeals in advertising (Edell and Burke, 1987). This article capitalizes on the thinking that different affective experiences have different associations and hence may affect behavior differentially (Lerner and Keltner, 2000, 2001). In this context, the authors show how concrete versus abstract affective appeals influence short- versus long-term consumer decisions.

Through two experiments, the authors showed that the concrete versus the abstract nature of affect determines whether it will be more influential in short-term versus long-term decisions. Experiment 1 found that while concrete affect has more influence on behavioral intentions relating to the shorter term, abstract affect has more influence on behavioral intentions relating to the longer term. Experiment 2 contrasted the two types of affect (concrete versus abstract) to reason (cognition) and showed that affect should be more influential than reason on long-term behavior when it is abstract and more influential than reason on short-term behavior when it is concrete. The authors attributed this time-dependent influence to the associations induced by concrete versus abstract affect (*i.e.*, more concrete and specific feeling of desire versus less specific fuzzy feeling of warmth respectively).

One can imagine how the two experimental conditions are similar but sterilized versions of some car ads that one may encounter in different media outlets all around the year. For instance, imagine the car ads that are run before any three-day weekends, inviting people to visit a car dealer that particular weekend. These ads usually drive feelings of excitement (a concrete affective state) and perhaps a bit of surprise along with some rational thoughts. All elements of such ads, from the high-beat music and the loud voice of the announcer to the shots of a large variety of nice and shiny cars waiting for the consumers at the dealer's parking lot are all choreographed to drive people to those dealers for that next weekend (short-term perspective).

Alternatively, imagine a car ad that portrays a white, shiny luxury model that is chosen out of many that one particular manufacturer produces. In that almost cliché ad, that white sedan slaloms softly in the curves of the country road to the warm symphonic music portraying a family riding in the car and induces warmth, affection, and trust (abstract affective states) and invites consumers to bond with that manufacturer's brand and like it so much to build a long-term relationship with it (long-term perspective).

What this article demonstrates is the influence of concrete versus abstract affect on time-dependent decisions. Although the time-dependent influence of affect on decisions and the concrete versus abstract distinction for affect are unique contributions of the authors' original work, the otherwise general influence of affect on decisions is now a well-established concept (Schwarz and Clore, 1996; Heath, Brandt, and Nairn, 2006). There have been several empirical findings that advanced the theory of affect and specific emotions in the past few decades, including one that laid out other appraisal dimensions of specific emotions than mere valence (Smith and Ellsworth, 1985).

It is very important to match the right time perspective with the right affective appeal to drive consumer behavior.

The common theme of these research studies is that it is the specific meaning of affect or an emotional state that determines how it will be used in judgment and decision making rather than mere valence (Lerner and Keltner, 2000, 2001; Gilovich, Medvec, and Kahneman, 1998; Raghunathan and Pham, 1999; Tiedens and Linton, 2001). The authors advance this line of thinking by studying the *specificity* of affect and the resulting effects on time-dependent judgment and behavior. They suggest that this research adds to our knowledge of consumer decision making by bringing together two very relevant streams of consumer research: the interplay of feelings and reasons (Pham, 1998; Pham, Cohen, Pracejus, and Hughes, 2001) and time-dependent decision making (Malkoc, Zauberman, and Ulu, 2005).

The article's findings not only contribute to the literature on time-dependent effects of affect and cognition but highlight important findings for successful marketing strategies and advertising. Like P&G, advertisers frequently use affective appeals. The authors suggest that it is very

important to match the right time perspective with the right affective appeal to drive consumer behavior. It is not always the best strategy to highlight rational thinking and reasons to influence consumers to overcome temptations and make virtuous decisions. An affective appeal also can be used to overcome temptations of the present but only if that affective appeal is an abstract one and matched with a longer-term perspective.

To return to the P&G example on use of affect to build loyalty for products, the authors ask the additional question, "How should P&G formulate and communicate its new branding strategy for Tide to 'emotionally tie' its customers?" The authors' findings show that affect can be influential on both short-term and long-term decisions. On the one hand, inducing affective states such as excitement can help P&G create a spike in their short-term market for Tide. If their product lives up to expectations, this short-term market may likely convert to a long-term one based on product experience. It might be rather challenging, however, to expect consumers to build an exciting relationship with a laundry detergent. On the other hand, P&G also has the ability to build a long-term emotional rapport for Tide with its customers by inducing feelings of affection and warmth with its brand experience—a strategy that it has been using.

The persuasive power of concrete versus abstract affect on time-dependent decisions can inform and predict many other advertising challenges of our day.

The authors suggest three ways in which the distinction of concrete versus abstract affect may help marketers and advertisers make better use of feelings for consumer persuasion:

- Concrete and abstract affect may have their favorite contexts and channels. For instance, location-based messaging might work better with concrete affect because by nature such messaging calls to "specific and immediate" action, and specificity and immediacy are prime attributes of concrete affect. By similar token, Direct TV, promotional e-mails, sales force messaging, and similar appeals that ask for "immediate" or "near-term" action can be better contexts for concrete affective appeals. Abstract affect, however, also can have its own set of contexts and channels. Abstract affective appeals might work better for retirement products or for college savings, because these products may naturally put consumers into longer-term perspective. Similarly, persuasive appeals for loyalty programs might benefit from the right dose of abstract affect because by default such programs ask for long-term behavioral connection.

- Generalizing from the foregoing thought, concrete affective appeals can be more influential at the last mile of the consumer journey (or bottom of the purchasing funnel). Since concrete affect is more influential in driving action in the now (short-term perspective), marketers can use concrete affective appeals at the last mile in addition and next to more well-known last-mile tactics such as sampling, promotional coupons, and shelf-space. How about some exciting digital displays at the supermarket aisles to influence consumers at the last mile? Similarly, abstract affective appeals may drive behavior more strongly in the beginning of the consumer's journey (at the top of the purchasing funnel) when purchase is still not so close in time; hence, consumers may be naturally in an abstract mindset about their future purchase. How about some affectionate, warmth-inducing video banners when consumers are still at home (and not shopping on an online retailing site) and hence distanced from the purchase temporally?

- Marketers can anchor on naturally occurring consumer emotions to influence their immediate versus long-term actions. Imagine an expecting mother who has just downloaded an iPhone app that tracks the last month of her pregnancy. Let us assume that this app asks the mom to log the big "kicks" of the baby with the date, time, and nature of the experience and uses these data to predict the date of delivery and generates a pregnancy log as a digital scrap-book for the baby and mom. The marketer of the app can anchor on the natural emotional swings of pregnancy and time-dependent nature of such emotions to increase the compliance rate in logging about each experience into this app. By anchoring on the excitement of such kicks and inducing a short-term perspective (instructing the mom to imagine her child's first day at home from the hospital), the marketer can improve mom's compliance on logging those experiences, Alternatively, by anchoring on the motherly affection that settles after those kicks and inducing a long-term perspective (instructing the mom to imagine her child's first birthday), the marketer can be equally successful in driving mom's compliance on logging those experiences.

There are many practical implications of the current study. The findings also open up some future research avenues to ground the theory of concrete versus abstract affect. For example, it is important to identify factors that affect whether and how concrete and abstract affects grow or decline in value over time. Since people do not have to respond to an abstract affective state immediately, we suggest that such an

Negative affective states, however, also can be categorized as concrete and abstract and, therefore, can influence inter-temporal decisions.

affective state might grow in value across time.

If people feel hopeful (an abstract affective state) in response to an experience, they might value that feeling of hopefulness higher the longer they experience it and, consequently, such feelings may even snowball. On the contrary, if people have a visceral feeling of happiness (a concrete affective state) in response to an experience, the sooner the response behavior, the higher would be the valuation of that experience (Loewenstein, 1996).

This topic has not been directly investigated by researchers, but there are emerging findings in the literature that support this conceptualization. For instance, some studies show that relationships with sincere brands deepen over time, whereas relationships with exciting brands decline over time (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel, 2004). Sincerity can be considered an abstract affective state with long-term associations, and excitement can be considered a concrete affective state with short-term associations.

Furthermore, this article examined only positive affective states and their influence on time-dependent decisions. Negative affective states, however, also can be categorized as concrete and abstract and, therefore, can influence inter-temporal decisions. For instance, one can describe anger or disgust as concrete emotional states, because they are both visceral, experienced vividly and with certainty (Tiedens and Linton, 2001) and hence should influence the short-term decisions (Tiedens and Linton). Anxiety or fear, however, are less certain emotional states that are experienced more pallidly with the sense of lost control (anxiety) and being unsure about one's environment (fear). Hence, an anxiety appeal or fear appeal might be more influential on longer-term decisions than an anger or disgust appeal. Future research should explore the experience of such negative affective states and unveil the suggested inter-temporal influences. JAR

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