It’s all in the Mindset:

Effects of Varying Psychological Distance in Nutrition-Focused Messages

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It’s all in the Mindset:
Effects of Varying Psychological Distance in Persuasive Messages

Abstract

The current research shows that the persuasive impact of messages can be maximized if their framing is matched to where target consumers are in their decision making process at the time they evaluate the message. Results from two experimental studies show that consumers who are in the predecisional phase of decision-making are more likely to be persuaded by messages framed using psychologically distant orientation (i.e., focusing on the future or targeting a distant other), whereas consumers who are in the postdecisional phase are more likely to be persuaded by messages using psychologically close orientation (i.e., focusing on the present or targeting a close other). Evidence of the process through which these effects occur is provided by showing that consumers in a pre-versus postdecisional mindset identify their actions in terms of the actions’ high-level versus low-level identities, respectively.

Keywords: temporal and social psychological distance, deliberative and implemental mindsets, action identification, framing effects, decision status, persuasion.
1 Introduction

Consumer products in the marketplace often use messages, claims, and appeals that vary in terms of the temporal or social distance at which they are presented. For instance, Kellogg’s advertises its Rice Krispies© line of cereals by using a temporally close orientation and emphasizing the present (Help support your child’s immunity now), but advertises its Special K© line of cereals by using a temporally distant orientation and emphasizing the future (Lose up to 6 pounds in two weeks). Kellogg’s has also used advertisements that focus on either the self (The best to you each morning) or others (More people like Kellogg’s most), when advertising its Corn Flakes© line. These differences in the framing of messages and product appeals refer to differences in the psychological distance – distant versus close – at which they are presented. Psychological distance is a multifaceted construct that includes different dimensions, such as temporal distance (when: now vs. later; near vs. distant future) and social distance (who: self vs. other; in-group vs. out-group; e.g., Kim, Zhang, and Li 2008; Trope, Liberman, and Wakslak 2007).

Given that persuasive messages and product appeals can be framed using either psychologically close (e.g., supports current health; good for oneself) or distant orientation (e.g., supports future health; good for consumers nationwide), it is important to understand which products consumers will be more likely to choose, and which campaigns will be more effective. The current research argues that the persuasive impact of messages or product appeals framed using psychologically close or distant orientation, depends on where consumers are in their decision making process at the time they evaluate the message or product.

Consumers’ goal-oriented behavior can be broadly divided into two phases: goal setting and goal striving (Bagozzi and Dholakia 1999). It can be further subdivided into specific action phases depending on where the individual is in the process of making a goal pursuit decision (Gollwitzer 1990). The progress toward a goal starts with a predecisional phase in which the pros and cons of pursuing a goal are deliberated. When a goal decision has been made, people move to the next,
postdecisional phase, in which steps are taken to plan the implementation of the chosen goal. The mindset theory of action phases (Gollwitzer 1990) has shown that the unique tasks associated with these pre- and postdecisional phases lead to the activation of different cognitive procedures, called *predecisional and postdecisional mindsets*, which affect how people interpret subsequently encountered information. More than two decades of research (for a recent review see Gollwitzer 2011) has extensively examined the distinct cognitive features of the pre- and postdecisional mindsets and has concluded that even though people in different mindsets do not exhibit different levels of goal commitment, motivation, or self-efficacy, they do tend to exhibit distinct cognitive functioning (e.g., cognitive tuning to goal decision-relevant vs. goal implementation-relevant information).

The current research presents two experiments in the domain of healthy nutrition (e.g., Burton, Andrews, and Netemeyer 2000), which examine which message orientation – psychologically close or distant – would be more persuasive for consumers in the two different decision status mindsets. This research suggests that in order to maximize the effectiveness of messages and product appeals, these should be framed at the appropriate psychological distance when targeting consumers who are at the pre- versus postdecisional phase of their decision-making process. Specifically, organizations targeting consumers who are in the predecisional phase (e.g., Weight Watchers® running ads persuading prospective, undecided members to join) should employ psychologically distant framing (e.g., emphasize issues related to the future or to consumers nationwide). On the other hand, organizations targeting consumers who are in the postdecisional phase (e.g., Weight Watchers® providing resources targeted at current, committed members) should employ psychologically close framing (e.g., emphasize issues related to the present or the self).

### 1.1 Conceptualization and hypotheses

#### 1.1.1 Decision status mindsets

The mindset model of action phases (Gollwitzer 1990) suggests that the predecisional and the postdecision phase of the decision making process are two distinct, consecutive phases of goal pursuit
that differ in terms of the task that is to be solved by the individual. As discussed above, each phase’s unique task leads to the activation of different cognitive procedures, or mindsets, which once activated affect how people process subsequently encountered information. The predecisional phase induces a deliberative cognitive orientation, the predecisional mindset, which facilitates the task of choosing between possible action goals and the postdecisional phase induces an implemental cognitive orientation, the postdecisional mindset, which facilitates the task of implementing the chosen goal (e.g., Gollwitzer 1990; Gollwitzer, Heckhausen, and Steller 1990).

1.1.2 Psychological distance and levels of action identification

Depending on various individual and situational factors, consumers might mentally represent their actions using the actions’ higher or lower level identities (e.g., Trope and Liberman 2003; Vallacher and Wegner 1987). Higher level identities convey a more general understanding of the action and refer to its effects and implications. Lower level identities convey the details or specifics of the action and indicate how the action is done. Recent research has established a link between level of action identification and psychological distance, revealing that actions that are psychologically distant are mentally represented in terms of their high-level identities, whereas psychologically close actions are mentally represented in terms of their low-level identities (e.g., Bar-Anan, Liberman and Trope 2006; Trope and Liberman 2003; Trope et al. 2007).

1.1.3 Decision status mindsets, psychological distance, and persuasion

A significant body of research has documented that decision status mindsets create cognitive tuning towards different types of information (Gollwitzer 2011). While the predecisional mindset tunes a person’s information processing to information instrumental to choosing between goals, such as information on why a potential goal is desirable and whether it is feasible, the postdecisional mindset tunes it to information instrumental to when, where, and how a chosen goal can be implemented (Gollwitzer et al. 1990). As such, the cognitive tuning created by the predecisional mindset would attune consumers to the overall implications and “why” aspects of
actions, which represent the actions’ higher-level identities (e.g., Trope and Liberman 2003; Vallacher and Wegner 1987). On the other hand, the cognitive tuning created by the postdecisional mindset would attune consumers to the specific features and “how” aspects of actions, which represent the actions’ lower-level identities. Support for the link between decision status mindsets and the level of action identification also comes from recent research, which has speculated conceptually that the predecisional (postdecisional) mindset might fit better with the high (low) level aspects of actions (Freitas, Gollwitzer, and Trope 2004), and has shown empirically that consumers tend to have higher-level goals in the first stage of shopping, before they enter a store, but lower-level goals as their shopping progresses after they are already in the store (Lee and Ariely 2006).

Given that consumers are more willing to adopt a framed message when the frame fits with their mental states and representations, a fit between message orientation and decision status mindset is likely to lead to increased ease of processing, which should yield enhanced evaluations of the focal message and greater likelihood of persuasion (e.g., Kim, Rao, and Lee 2009; Lee and Aaker 2004). Hence, I expect that messages framed using psychologically distant orientation, which are mentally represented in terms of their high-level identities, will provide a better fit for consumers in a predecisional mindset who are attuned to the high-level identities of actions. Such a fit in turn should result in increased ease of processing and greater likelihood of persuasion. On the other hand, messages framed using psychologically close orientation, which are mentally represented at a low-level, will provide a better fit and will result in greater likelihood of persuasion for consumers in a postdecisional mindset, who are attuned to the low-level identities of actions.

The most widely explored dimension of psychological distance has been temporal distance: actions occurring in the more distant (near) future are mentally represented in terms of their high-level (low-level) identities (e.g., Liberman and Trope 1998; Trope and Liberman 2003). In sum:

H1: Consumers in a predecisional mindset are more likely to be persuaded by a message focused on the future, whereas consumers in a postdecisional mindset are more likely to be persuaded by a message focused on the present.
Another dimension of psychological distance that has been explored in the literature is social distance: an action performed by a distant or dissimilar other is mentally represented in terms of its high-level identities, whereas an action performed by the self or a close other is mentally represented in terms of its low-level identities (Kim, Zhang, and Li 2008; Liviatan, Trope, and Liberman 2008). Based on this, I expect that:

H2: Consumers in a predecisional mindset are more likely to be persuaded by a message focused on a socially distant other, whereas consumers in a postdecisional mindset are more likely to be persuaded by a message focused on a socially close other.

My predictions are tested in two experiments, which employ different mindset manipulations, utilize different targets (product advertisement and a charity foundation description), and look at different outcomes of persuasion (product buying intentions and actual charity donations). Moreover, Experiment 2 directly tests whether consumers in a predecisional, as compared to postdecisional, mindset identify their actions at a higher level.

2 Experiment 1

Experiment 1 is designed to test H1. It examines whether decision status mindsets affect consumers’ decisions to donate money to two nutrition-focused charity foundations framed using a future-focused (i.e., psychologically distant) vs. present-focused (i.e., psychologically close) message orientation. I expect that participants in a predecisional (postdecisional) mindset will be more likely to donate money to a charity framed using a future (present) message orientation.

2.1 Design and procedure

Participants were 47 adults, who were recruited via e-mail to participate in an online study on “consumer decision making” in exchange for a charity donation of $5 in their name (72% women, 28% men; age range: 18–64 years). Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (pre- versus postdecisional mindset). They were first asked to participate in a study that purportedly examined consumers’ decision-making processes, which contained the mindset priming questionnaire. Next, participants were told that, as a reward for participating, the experimenters
would donate $5 in their name to two charity foundations, and were asked to choose how to allocate the money to the two foundations (hence all participants made equal overall donations of $5, but the donations distribution to the two foundations differed across participants). Donations were subsequently made according to participants’ allocations. One foundation’s description was framed using future-focused message orientation, and the other foundation’s description was framed using present-focused message orientation. After participants made their donation decisions, they were directed to the next screen, which contained manipulation checks, demographic measures (age, gender, and education), and measures of potential confounds (equivalence of the foundations’ descriptions, similarity of the foundations’ objectives, participants’ motivation, issue involvement, and familiarity with each foundation).  

2.1.1 Mindset manipulation

Pre- and postdecisional mindsets were primed in the two mindset conditions using Gollwitzer’s deliberative and implemental mindset priming procedures (see e.g., Gollwitzer and Kinney 1989). Predecisional mindset subjects were asked to choose an unresolved personal problem (e.g., should I switch my job?) and to deliberate on the consequences of pursuing or not pursuing it. They were asked to list positive and negative, short-term and long-term consequences and the likelihood that they might occur. Postdecisional mindset subjects were asked to plan the implementation of a chosen personal project that they intended to accomplish within the following 3 months (e.g., move from home). They were asked to list the five most critical implementational steps and to commit themselves to when, where, and how to execute these steps. As a manipulation check, both groups were administered a final questionnaire containing four questions from past literature ($\alpha = .85$; Gollwitzer and Kinney 1989).

2.1.2 Framing manipulation

1 In both studies, I tested for differences in potential confound variables across experimental conditions and no significant differences emerged (all $p’s > .10$). Confound variable testing results are available from the author.

2 Measurement items for all constructs measured throughout the paper are available from the author.
Participants were asked to examine the descriptions of the two nutrition-focused foundations to which they could donate and to decide what portion of the $5 to donate to each foundation (order of the foundations’ descriptions was counterbalanced, and no order effects emerged). The two foundations were the American Society for Nutrition (ASN) and the American Dietetic Association (ADA). The charity foundations were chosen so that they have similar objectives—the advancement of knowledge and practice in the areas of nutrition and dietetics. The ASN foundation description was framed using message orientation that focused on the future (e.g., emphasized that the foundation strives to enhance people’s lives in the future and improve quality of life tomorrow). On the other hand, the ADA foundation description was framed using message orientation that focused on the present (e.g., emphasized that the foundation strives to improve people’s present health and promote a healthy lifestyle today). Manipulation checks of the framing manipulations consisted of two 7-point semantic differential items regarding the extent to which each description focused on the present—future versus here and now—tomorrow, which were averaged to form a single index ($r_{\text{future foundation}} = .94, p < .001$; $r_{\text{present foundation}} = .93, p < .001$).

2.2 Results

2.2.1 Framing manipulation check

To check the effectiveness of the temporal distance framing manipulation, I confirmed that participants rated the ASN foundation description as focusing on the future/tomorrow ($M = 6.70$) and the ADA foundation description as focusing on the present/here and now ($M = 1.20$), $t(46) = 32.50, p < .001$. There were no differences across the two mindset conditions ($p$’s > .10).

2.2.2. Mindset manipulation check

To check the effectiveness of the mindset manipulations I ran a MANOVA with mindset condition as a class variable and the four manipulation check questions assessing participants’ decision status as dependent variables (Wilks’s lambda = .82, $F = 2.60, p < .05$). Results revealed that postdecisional mindset participants (as compared to predecisional mindset ones) scored
significantly higher on all four decision status questions \( (p’s < .05) \), confirming that the two mindsets were manipulated successfully.

### 2.2.3 Hypothesis testing

To test H1, I examined whether decision status mindsets would influence participants’ money donations to the two foundations described using future versus present orientation. I conducted an ANOVA on participants’ relative money allocations to the ASN (future) foundation, with mindset condition as the independent variable.\(^3\) Results revealed that mindset condition was a significant predictor of donation allocations \( F(1, 45) = 13.30, p < .001 \), providing support for H1.

Participants in a predecisional mindset donated almost twice the amount of money to the ASN foundation described using future message orientation \( (M = $3.30) \) compared with the ADA foundation described using present message orientation \( (M = $1.70) \). In contrast, when postdecisional mindset was primed, participants donated more than twice the amount of money to the ADA (present) foundation \( (M = $3.40) \) compared with the ASN (future) one \( (M = $1.60) \). The contrast comparing the difference in money allocation between the pre- and postdecisional groups was significant, \( F(1, 45) = 13.30, p < .001 \). These results provide evidence that the effects of decision status mindsets on the persuasiveness of messages framed using future versus present orientation is consequential, as it affects individuals’ actual donation choices (see Table 1).

Insert Table 1 about here

In the following experiment I replicate my results using a more natural decision status mindset manipulation and directly assess whether consumers in a pre- versus postdecisional mindset identify their actions at a higher versus lower level, respectively.

### 3 Experiment 2

Experiment 2 is designed to test H2. In this experiment I use a mindset procedure that allows

\(^3\) Since money allocations added up to $5, I only included the ASN money allocation in the ANOVA, since predicting allocations to one foundation perfectly predicts allocations to the other.
decision status mindsets to develop naturally as the consequence of manipulated decision environment. Participants were asked to evaluate one of two orange juice advertisements, targeted at either a socially close other (i.e., your family) or a socially distant other (i.e., families nationwide). I predicted that participants in a predecisional versus postdecisional mindset will be more persuaded by an advertisement focused on a socially distant versus close other, respectively. Moreover, I directly test whether consumers in a pre- versus postdecisional mindset identify actions in terms of their respectively high-level versus low-level identities, providing some evidence of the process through which my hypothesized effects occur.

3.1 Design and procedure

One hundred and seventy-four respondents from a nationwide panel were paid to participate in an online questionnaire involving two independent surveys on “decision making” (57% women, 43% men; age range: 18–65 years). Participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions in a 2 (social distance framing: distant vs. close) × 2 (mindset: predecisional vs. postdecisional) between-subjects design.

Participants were told that they would be asked to complete two surveys. The first independent survey was designed to prime decision status mindsets under the guise of a study measuring “concentration potential.” Participants were informed that there were two different computer tasks designed for this purpose, one using “verbal stimuli, based on language and words” and the other using “conceptual stimuli, based on mental concepts and images.” They were told that they could demonstrate their true potential only if they picked the task that was “right” for them. Unbeknownst to the participants, the two “different” computer tasks were the same task. Participants were presented with the illusion of two tasks to create an experimental situation in which they had to make a goal decision (see Gollwitzer and Kinney 1989; Nenkov and Gollwitzer 2012). The “concentration task” was actually designed to measure the level at which participants identify their actions, using Vallacher and Wegner’s (1989) Behavior Identification Form (BIF).
The second, seemingly unrelated, questionnaire was presented as a study examining people’s product preferences. In this study participants had to evaluate a Simply Orange advertisement targeted at either a socially close (i.e., your family) or a socially distant (i.e., families nationwide) other. Next, I measured potential confounds (equivalence of the ad descriptions, participants’ preference for three popular orange juice brands, their frequency of orange juice consumption, their level of cognitive elaboration, motivation, and involvement with the presented materials) and demographic variables (age, gender, education, marital status, and household size).

3.1.1 Mindset manipulations

Participants in the predecisional mindset condition were told that the best decision about which “concentration task” to choose could be made only after they had tried each type of task. While trying out the tasks, participants were instructed to consider carefully whether it was the right task for them, but not to make up their minds until they had performed both. They were then given a choice of which task they wanted to try first. The task they subsequently performed was the same task performed in the postdecisional mindset condition. To ensure participants will continue deliberating over their decision while performing the task, they were reminded to ask themselves continually whether they felt that the task they were performing would most accurately demonstrate their concentration potential. When participants were finished, they were informed that they would not have to perform the other task nor make a final decision as to which task they wanted to perform.

Participants in the postdecisional mindset condition were asked to think about the activities they commonly engage in and asked whether they would feel more comfortable with verbal or conceptual tasks. They were urged to think deeply about this decision and to avoid impulsive choices, as they would not be able to reverse their decision. Once participants had made their decision and indicated their choice by clicking on one of the two options, they performed the appropriate task (which again, was the same task regardless of decision). In this way, participants in the postdecisional mindset condition performed the task for which they had made a decision.
3.1.2 Action identification measure

Next participants were given the “mental concentration task” and instructions on how to complete it. In both mindset conditions the task was the same and consisted of Vallacher and Wegner’s (1989) Behavior Identification Form (BIF), used to measure the level at which consumers identify their actions (high vs. low). The task presented 25 actions, each followed by two restatements, one corresponding to the action’s low-level identity and one to the action’s high-level identity. For example, participants could describe the behavior of typing a note on the computer as “pushing keys” (low level) or as “expressing thoughts” (high level). They were asked to select which of the two ways used to present the 25 actions best described how they think of each action.

3.1.3 Framing manipulation

Participants were shown one of two versions of an advertisement for Simply Orange juice (adapted from Labroo and Patrick 2008). One advertisement was framed using socially distant message orientation and focused on families nationwide, and the other advertisement was framed using socially close orientation and focused on participants’ own families (manipulation adapted from Aaker and Lee 2001). The advertisement in the distant (close) social distance condition read, “Simply Orange has been the favorite of families nationwide (your family’s favorite) for more than a decade” and stated that the product is sure to appeal to families across the country (your family). A manipulation check for the social distance manipulation asked participants to indicate, on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree), whether: 1) the advertisement focused on their own family or 2) did not focus on any one family in particular.

Dependent Variable

After viewing the Simply Orange juice advertisement, behavioral intentions were assessed by asking participants to indicate how likely they were to buy the orange juice on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not likely to buy; 7 = very likely to buy).

3.2 Results
3.2.1 Framing manipulation check

To confirm the effectiveness of the social distance framing manipulation I ran two separate ANOVAs on the two social distance manipulation check questions with the social distance framing and mindset factors and their interaction as independent variables. Participants in the socially close framing condition indicated significantly stronger agreement with the statement that the advertisement focused on their own family \((M = 4.20)\) compared with those in the distant framing condition \((M = 3.70)\), \(t(172) = 1.97, p < .05\), whereas participants in the distant framing condition indicated stronger agreement with the statement that the advertisement did not focus on any one family in particular \((M = 5.00)\) compared with participants in the close framing condition \((M = 4.40)\), \(t(172) = 1.98, p < .05\). No main effects of mindset and no interactions emerged in the two ANOVAs \((p’s > .10)\).

3.2.2 Level of action identification

Next, I examined whether mindset condition affected participants’ action identification levels. For this purpose, I coded participants’ responses to the BIF according to which level of identification was chosen to describe each of the 25 presented actions. Each high-level choice was coded as 1, and each low-level choice was coded as 0. Scores were summed for each participant, resulting in a 0 to 25 level of identification scores, with higher scores indicating higher level of identification \((M = 15.21, SD = 5.42)\). I then ran an ANOVA on participants’ BIF scores with mindset as the independent variable and as expected, obtained a main effect of mindset condition, \(F(1, 172) = 6.82, p < .01\), with participants who completed the BIF in a predecisional mindset scoring significantly higher on this identification level measure \((M = 16.40)\) than those who completed it in a postdecisional mindset \((M = 14.10)\), \(t(172) = 2.10, p < .01\). Next, I tested whether participants’ level of action identification, as measured by the BIF, mediates the effects of decision status mindset on behavioral intentions. I examined mediation in each of the two goal framing conditions, using the bootstrapped estimation of conditional indirect effects (Preacher and Hayes 2004; Zhao, Lynch, and Chen 2010). The estimated 95% confidence interval around the indirect effect of mindset on
behavioral intentions does not contain zero for either the distant (-.3127 to -.0072), or close social framing condition (.0040 to .2363), supporting mediation. These findings provide evidence that consumers in a predecisional, as compared to those in a postdecisional mindset, are more likely to identify their actions in terms of their high- versus low-level identities, which drives their preference for messages framed using psychologically distant versus close orientation, respectively.

3.2.3 Hypothesis test

Next, to test H2 I examined the effects of framing and mindset on participants’ behavioral intentions (i.e., likelihood to buy the advertised juice). For this purpose I ran an ANOVA on behavioral intentions with social distance framing manipulation, decision status mindset, and their interaction as independent variables, $F(3, 170) = 4.10, p < .01$. Results did not reveal significant main effects of mindset, $F(1, 172) = .69, p < .50$ or social distance, $F(1, 172) = 1.19, p < .30$, but revealed a significant interaction between the two factors, $F(1, 172) = 10.42, p < .01$.

Subsequent analysis of the group means revealed that, as expected, participants who were in a predecisional mindset were significantly more likely to buy the advertised juice in the socially distant ($M = 5.10$) than in the socially close framing condition ($M = 4.30$), $t(172) = 1.97, p < .05$. On the other hand, participants who were in a postdecisional mindset were significantly more likely to buy the advertised juice in the socially close ($M = 5.30$) than in socially distant framing condition ($M = 4.20$), $t(172) = 3.03, p < .01$ (see Figure 1). These results provide support for H2.

Using a different mindset and psychological distance framing manipulations and a different dependent variable, this experiment provides converging evidence for my contention that consumers in a predecisional versus postdecisional mindset are more likely to be persuaded by messages presented using psychologically distant versus close message orientation, respectively.

4 General discussion

The current research shows that the persuasiveness of message framing using
psychologically distant versus close message orientation depends on consumers’ decision status mindsets at the time they evaluate the message. Findings from two experimental studies, consistently show that consumers in a predecisional mindset (i.e., consumers still deliberating on an unresolved decision), are more likely to be persuaded by messages with psychologically distant orientation, which emphasize the future or target a distant other, whereas those in a postdecisional mindset (i.e., consumers implementing a decision already made), are more likely to be persuaded by messages with psychologically near orientation, which emphasize the present or target a close other. In Experiment 1, I observed this pattern of results by using a temporal distance framing manipulation and assessing actual charity donations. In Experiment 2, I explored the effects of social distance framing on people’s behavioral intentions by employing a different action phase mindset manipulation.

This paper makes several important theoretical contributions. First, it contributes to research on the mindset theory of action phases by shedding light on one previously unexplored distinct cognitive feature of pre- and postdecisional mindsets – the differential level of action identification they are associated with. This is the first study to provide direct experimental evidence that the predecisional mindset is associated with high-level action identification, whereas the postdecisional mindset is associated with low-level identification, adding to prior work that has provided initial insight into this association (Freitas, Gollwitzer, and Trope 2004; Lee and Ariely 2006). Second, this paper extends recent research on the effects of psychological distance (Kim, Zhang, and Li 2008; Trope, Liberman, and Wakslak 2007) by examining the effects of framing messages using distant versus close psychological distance on subsequent intentions and decisions, and proposing an important factor that moderates the persuasiveness of such messages—decision status mindsets. Third, it contributes to past literature on framing effects (Tversky and Kahneman 1986). For example, past research has extensively examined the effect of positive versus negative framing (e.g., Block and Keller 1995; Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy 1990). The current research proposes another framing approach, which could be implemented to optimize the presentation of messages and product appeals
– varying their psychological distance orientation.

Findings from this paper have important implications for creating targeted persuasive messages in environments that are interactive or customizable (e.g., online advertising; direct marketing; dynamic retargeting, where the content of advertising appeals is tailored to reflect consumers’ previous browsing behavior on a website). In such environments, consumers can be directed to tailored information based on key questions that might indicate where they are in relation to making a decision, tapping into their decision status mindsets. The online advertising industry (e.g., Google’s Adwords service), already gathers a wealth of information about the consumer, which should facilitate decision status segmentation.

In addition to its important contributions and implications, this research has surfaced some issues that merit further research. I provided some initial insight into the mechanism underlying my observed effects by showing that consumers in a predecisional, as compared to postdecisional, mindset identify their actions at a higher versus lower level, which drives their preference for messages framed using distant or close orientation. Future research should conduct further examination into the underlying mechanism by providing direct evidence that the observed effects are due to the fit between message orientation and decision status mindset and the ensuing ease of processing.

Another important question is whether there are any boundary conditions that might make the uncovered effects stronger or weaker for some consumers or in some situations. For example, the intensity of predecisional mindsets (i.e., amount of deliberation people engage in in the predecision stage of decision making) could vary depending on the importance of the goal decision at hand or on the consumer’s personal characteristics (e.g., individual proclivity to engage in predecision outcome elaboration; Nenkov, Inman and Hulland 2008). As such, the effectiveness of psychologically distant framing could be even more pronounced for important decisions or for consumers with a higher proclivity to engage in predecision outcome elaboration. Future research could explore this possibility.
References


### Table 1

**Experiment 1: Summary of Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Predecisional Mindset</th>
<th>Postdecisional Mindset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future Temporal Framing</td>
<td>$3.30^a$</td>
<td>$1.70^b$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Temporal Framing</td>
<td>$1.60^b$</td>
<td>$3.40^a$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means with different superscripts are significantly different from each other at $p < .05$. 
Figure 1

Experiment 2: Social Distance and Behavioral Intentions

Note. Means with different superscripts are significantly different from each other at $p < .05$. 