

**THE COMPARISON AMONG THREE KINDS OF VISUAL PERSPECTIVES
OF
SERVICE EXPERIENCE VLOGS**

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has compared still images employing the actor’s perspective to those employing the observer’s perspective and found that the former increases service evaluations if the consumers are promotion-focused, whereas the latter increases service evaluations if the consumers are prevention-focused. The research compares three kinds of vlogs, *i.e.*, vlogs employing the actor’s perspective, vlogs employing the observer’s perspective without the actor’s face, and vlogs employing the observer’s perspective with the actor’s face. The results show that the highest service evaluations are induced by the actor’s perspective in case of promotion-focused consumers, whereas they are induced by the observer’s perspective without the actor’s face in case of prevention-focused consumers.

Keywords. Actor’s perspective; Observer’s perspective with/without the actor’s face; Regulatory focus theory; Source attractiveness model.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, more and more electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) is being posted and its impacts on consumer behavior are increasing with improved information and communication technologies. Recently eWOM is changing its form from text messages and still images to video messages on the Web, or vlogs. A lot of consumers are now creating vlogs regarding their service experiences in cafes, restaurants, hotels, and parks, and upload them to social media such as YouTube and TikTok. To increase their fan base and amplify the impacts of their vlogs, vloggers are willing to optimize the visual perspective of their vlogs, resulting that the service providers enjoy increasing numbers of their customers.

Regarding the issue, recent studies have indicated that advertisers can use either the actor's or the observer's visual perspective (Sutin & Robins, 2008) and that the perspective used in their ads affects consumers' evaluations of the advertised product (Zhang & Yang, 2015).

According to the prior studies, the actor's perspective refers to a visual perspective from the eyes of the consumer, while the observer's perspective refers to a visual perspective from the eyes of an observer watching the consumer.

Previous research has implied that the ads employing the actor's perspective activate consumers' internal evaluation thoughts, and in turn, increase service evaluations if the consumers are promotion-focused. In contrast, it is suggested that the ads in the observer's perspective activate consumers' external evaluation thoughts, and in turn, increase service evaluations if the consumers are prevention-focused.

However, previous research has investigated still images provided by firms as ads. No studies have treated video messages provided by consumers as vlogs. Also, prior studies have employed simple pairwise comparison between the actor's vs. the observer's perspectives. No studies have focused on the fact that there are two types of vlogs employing the observer's perspective—vlogs with/without the actor's face. Moreover, prior studies have employed only regulatory focus theory as a theoretical framework. No studies have employed source attractive model, which could be useful in comparing visual perspectives with the actor's face and without his or her face.

Thus, in this research, we employ both source attractiveness model and regulatory focus theory and explore the differences in internal/external evaluative thoughts and service evaluations among three types of vlogs, i.e., vlogs employing the actor's perspective (without the actor's face), vlogs employing the observer's perspective without the actor's face, and vlogs

employing the observer’s perspective with the actor’s face. In doing so, this research will make a great leap forward in research on the effects of visual perspectives of vlogs on consumers’ evaluations of services and will provide vloggers and service providers with deep insights into the practical issues of which perspective should be used in creating vlogs on their service experiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychological Research on Visual Perspectives

Prior studies have identified two kinds of visual perspectives, *i.e.*, the actor’s and the observer’s perspectives. For example, Sutin and Robins (2008) found that individuals who recall autobiographical memories from the actor’s perspective focus on their own psychological state or feelings, while individuals who recall autobiographical memories from the observer’s perspective focus on the objective information that they obtain by observing themselves. Valenti, Libby, and Eibach (2011) found that individuals who image an event from the actor’s perspective are more likely to think about the specific features of the event and, thus, are more immersed in the event than individuals who image the same event from the observer’s perspective. Hung and Mukhopadhyay (2012) found that individuals who have the observer’s perspective are more likely to care what other people think and thus regard external information as important than individuals who have the actor’s perspective.

Research on Visual Perspectives of Still Image Ads

Zhang and Yang (2015) compared still ads employing the actor’s perspective with those employing the observer’s perspective. First, they introduced a couple of notions, *i.e.*, internal evaluation thoughts—a way of thinking that evaluates the target based on their own past experiences or feelings—and external evaluation thoughts—a way of thinking that evaluates the target based on external information. They found that the actor’s (/observer’s) perspective generates internal (/external) evaluation thoughts. They then analyzed consumers’ evaluations of an advertised subject and found that promotion-focused (/prevention-focused) consumers evaluate the subject highly when exposed to still ads taken from the actor’s (/observer’s) perspective.

However, they did not consider video messages, which are increasingly being posted by vloggers. Moreover, they conducted only simple pairwise comparisons between the actor’s and the observer’s perspectives. They did not compare three types of visual perspectives, *i.e.*, the actor’s perspective (without their face), the observer’s perspective with the actor’s face, and the observer’s perspective without the actor’s face, though they identified these two types of

the observer’s perspective in their experiments.

Regulatory Focus Theory vs. Source Attractiveness Model

As mentioned above, previous research has employed regulatory focus theory, which explains how consumers are motivated to behave differently depending on the degree of two regulatory focuses, promotion focus and prevention focus (Higgins, 1997). According to Pham and Avnet (2004) and Avnet and Higgins (2006), promotion-focused consumers are willing to take risks to obtain positive outcomes, and thus tend to make decisions based on their feelings and prior knowledge, not on external information. In contrast, prevention-focused consumers tend to be more cautious in order to avoid negative outcomes, and therefore make decisions based on external information rather than on their feelings and prior knowledge.

Regulatory focus theory can predict what kinds of consumers prefer images with the actor’s/observer’s visual perspectives. As suggested by previous research, promotion-focused consumers may prefer the actor’s perspective, whereas prevention-focused consumers may prefer the observer’s perspective. However, previous research has ignored that while the actor’s perspective messages inevitably exclude the actor’s face, the observer’s perspective messages do include/exclude the actor’s face. To predict whether consumers prefer images including the actor’s face, another model should be additionally employed.

McGuire (1985) developed the source attractiveness model, which describes that the attractiveness of the sender of the message affects the effectiveness of communication. In judging the actor’s attractiveness, consumers use physical attractiveness as an important cue (e.g., Baker and Churchill, 1977), and therefore consumers’ evaluations of products and services might be higher if the actor’s face appears in the ad rather than if his or her face does not appear.

HYPOTHESES

Internal and External Evaluation Thoughts

First, when a vlog employs the actor’s perspective, it is easy for consumers who browse the vlog to be immersed in the service experiences because they watch the services on the vlog as if they face them as a service recipient. They do not observe the service experience objectively. Therefore, they tend to generate internal evaluation thoughts rather than external evaluation thoughts. It may be pointed out that the fact that the actor’s face is not shown in the vlog disturbs internal evaluation thoughts. However, as implied in previous research, the impacts of the immersive feelings generated by the actor’s perspective would be stronger.

Second, when a vlog employs the observer’s perspective without the actor’s face, it is

difficult for consumers who browse the vlog to be immersed in the service experiences because they do not browse the vlog as if they face them as a service recipient. They observe the service experience objectively. Therefore, they tend to generate external evaluation thoughts rather than internal evaluation thoughts.

Finally, when a vlog employs the observer’s perspective with the actor’s face, as is the observer’s perspective without the actor’s face, it is difficult for consumers who browse the vlog to be immersed in the service experiences. However, the emotions expressed on the actor’s face encourage consumers to utilize their own emotions, and therefore internal evaluation thoughts are promoted, and external evaluation thoughts are disturbed. Thus,

H1a: Consumers’ internal evaluation thoughts are likely to be generated in the following order:

vlogs employing the actor’s perspective, vlogs employing the observer’s perspective with the actor’s face, and vlogs employing the observer’s perspective without the actor’s face.

H1b: Consumer’s external evaluation thoughts are likely to generate in the following order:

vlogs employing the observer’s perspective without the actor’s face, vlogs employing the observer’s perspective with the actor’s face, and vlogs employing the actor’s perspective.

Service Evaluations

As prior studies have implied, persuasive visual messages employing the actor’s (/observer’s) perspective may bring about a regulatory fit for promotion-focused (/prevention-focused) consumers and, in turn, would make them appreciate the products and services mentioned in the messages. However, prior studies have mixed up visual messages employing the observer’s perspective with the actor’s face and those employing the same perspective without the actor’s face.

First, compared to consumers who browse vlogs employing the actor’s perspective (without the actor’s face), consumers who browse vlogs employing the observer’s perspective without the actor’s face are more likely to generate external (/internal) evaluation thoughts, with which the prevention (/promotion) focus would be regulatorily fit. Thus, the former type of vlogs makes promotion-focused (prevention-focused) consumers’ evaluations higher (/lower) than the latter.

As discussed earlier, consumers who browse vlogs employing the observer’s perspective with the actor’s face generate the moderate levels of both internal and external evaluation thoughts. Therefore, perceived levels of regulatory fit of the services mentioned in the vlog would be moderate between vlogs employing the actor’s perspective and those employing the observer’s perspective without the actor’s face. However, unlike the alternative types of vlogs, this type of vlogs attracts consumers because they include the actor’s face. Therefore, vlogs

employing the observer’s perspective with the actor’s face may be as high in promotion-focused consumers’ evaluations of the services as vlogs employing the actor’s perspective (without the actor’s face), and as high in prevention-focused consumer’s evaluations as vlogs employing the observer’s perspective without the actor’s face. Thus,

H2a: Promotion-focused consumers evaluate a service highly when the service is introduced in a vlog employing the actor’s perspective or the observer’s perspective with the actor’s face rather than the observer’s perspective without the actor’s face.

H2b: Prevention-focused consumers evaluate a service highly when the service is introduced in a vlog employing the observer’s perspective with/without the actor’s face rather than the actor’s perspective.

Method

To test the hypotheses mentioned above, a laboratory experiment was conducted with a 2 (regulatory focus: promotion vs. prevention) × 3 (visual perspective: actor’s perspective, observer’s perspective with/without the actor’s face) × 2 (order of questions: evaluation thoughts => service evaluation vs. service evaluation => evaluation thoughts) between-subject design. 373 university students volunteered their cooperation without compensation and were randomly classified into twelve groups.

First, we utilized a combination of scenario and description methods to manipulate subjects’ regulatory focus. Subjects in the promotion-focused groups were asked to read a scenario describing a person pursuing a hope and goal, and then asked to assume that they were that person and to describe the hopes and goals for the person. Subjects in the prevention-focused groups were asked to read a scenario describing a person with a strong sense of responsibility and obligation, and then asked to assume that they were that person and to describe the responsibilities and obligations for the person. A manipulation check was conducted in accordance with Pham and Avnet (2004).

Second, the subjects were asked to watch one of three types of a rental room vlog created for the experiments, in which a twenty-year-old male actor reported a rental room in terms of locations, atmospheres, and accommodations. All types of vlogs included the same numbers of promotion-focused and prevention-focused messages. Only visual perspectives were different: Vlogs employing the actor’s perspective were taken by the reporter himself, while vlogs employing the observer’s perspective were taken by a cameraman. The face of the reporter appeared only in one of two types of vlogs employing the observer’s perspective.

After watching the vlogs, all subjects were asked to describe their internal/external evaluation thoughts and score their evaluations of the rental room. Internal/external evaluation thoughts were measured using the free description method. Two coders classified the subjects’

evaluation thoughts into three types, *i.e.*, internal, external, and irrelevant and, based on the results, the authors calculated the ratio of the number of internal/external evaluation thoughts to the total number of thoughts, which was then used to calculate the arcsine transformed value for each subject. Consumer’s evaluations of the rental room were measured using three 7-point SD scales utilized by prior studies. Indices implied sufficient credibility and validity ($\alpha=0.919$, AVE=0.861, CR=0.949). Mean values of these three items were used for the analyses mentioned below.

Finally, we compared groups in which subjects were asked to answer questions in different orders and no order effects were found.

Results

As a result of multiple comparisons of evaluation thoughts among the actor’s perspective and the observer’s perspectives with/without the actor’s face, the mean value of internal evaluation thoughts in the group browsing vlogs employing the actor’s perspective ($M=0.91$) was higher than that in the group browsing vlogs employing the observer’s perspective with the actor’s face ($M=0.58$) ($p<0.01$), which was higher than that in the group browsing vlogs employing the observer’s perspective without the actor’s face ($M=0.37$) ($p<0.01$), suggesting that H1a was supported. Also, the mean value of external evaluation thoughts in the group browsing vlogs employing the observer’s perspective without the actor’s face ($M=0.72$) was higher than that in the group browsing vlogs employing the observer’s perspective with the actor’s face ($M=0.55$) ($p<0.01$), which was higher than that in the group browsing vlogs employing the actor’s perspective ($M=0.29$) ($p<0.01$), suggesting that H1b was supported.

As a result of comparisons of service evaluations among the actor’s perspective and the observer’s perspectives with/without the actor’s face, the mean values of service evaluations in the promotion-focused group browsing vlogs employing the actor’s perspective ($M=5.66$) and the promotion-focused group browsing vlogs employing the observer’s perspective with the actor’s face ($M=5.34$) were higher than that in the promotion-focused group browsing vlogs employing the observer’s perspective without the actor’s face ($M=4.87$) ($p<0.01$), and the differences between the preceding two among three groups were insignificant, suggesting that H2a was supported.

The mean value of the actor’s attractiveness in the vlogs employing the observer’s perspective with the actor’s face perceived by the promotion-focused group (4.70) was higher than that in the vlogs employing the actor’s perspective (4.31) ($p<0.05$), implying that the higher level of the actor’s attractiveness in the vlogs appearing the actor’s face led to higher service evaluations. Also, the mean values of service evaluations in the prevention-focused group browsing vlogs employing the observer’s perspective without the actor’s face ($M=5.88$)

and the prevention-focused group browsing vlogs employing the observer's perspective with the actor's face ($M=5.58$) were higher than that in the prevention-focused group browsing vlogs employing the actor's perspective ($M=5.14$) ($p<0.05$), and the differences between the preceding two among three above-mentioned groups were insignificant, suggesting that H2b was supported.

Furthermore, the mean value of the actor's attractiveness in the vlogs employing the observer's perspective with the actor's face perceived by the prevention-focused group ($M=4.74$) was not significantly higher than that in the vlogs employing the observer's perspective without the actor's face ($M=4.53$) ($p>0.05$). However, the former tends to be higher than the latter, implying the higher level of the actor's attractiveness in the vlogs appearing his face led to higher service evaluations.

As an additional examination of the causal relationships in this research, a bootstrap test was conducted to analyze the mediation effects of internal/external evaluation thoughts on the relationship between regulatory focus and service evaluation. Results of the mediation analysis with 5000 resamples using the dataset from the actor's perspective group revealed that the indirect effect via internal evaluation thoughts was significant (CI: -0.10, 0.21, $p<0.05$). Also, the indirect effect via external evaluation thoughts was significant (CI: -0.06, 0.31, $p<0.05$). Similarly, a bootstrap test was conducted to analyze the mediation effects of the actor's attractiveness on the relationship between regulatory focus and service evaluation. Results of the mediation analysis with 5,000 resamples using the dataset from the group browsing the vlogs employing the observer's perspective with the actor's face revealed that the indirect effect via the actor's attractiveness was significant (CI: -0.01, 0.30, $p<0.05$).

Thus, it could be concluded that differences in regulatory focus did, indeed, lead to differences in service evaluation via differences in internal/external evaluation thoughts and the actor's attractiveness.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Contribution

The above-mentioned findings of this research make several theoretical contributions. First, prior research has focused only on still image advertising. The current research is the first comprehensive investigation of the effects of different perspectives on vlogs on service evaluations, and successfully suggested what type of visual perspective is effective in shooting vlogs.

Second, prior research has mixed up the observer's perspective with and without the actor's face and conducted simple pairwise comparisons with the actor's perspective. The current

research distinguished them and conducted a multiple comparison among three types of perspectives.

Third, prior research has employed only regulatory focus theory. The current research developed a new model based on regulatory focus theory as well as source attractiveness model and found that the actor's attractiveness is a key for the effectiveness of vlogs employing the observer's perspective with their faces, which determines what type of visual perspective should be selected when vloggers create their video messages.

Practical Implications

This research can provide rich implications in the following three respects for vloggers who wish to provide persuasive video messages to consumers. First, vloggers who are focusing on promotion-focused service experiences should take video messages by themselves and create vlogs employing the actor's visual perspective. Otherwise, vlogs employing the observer's perspective with the vloggers' faces appear are appropriate if the vloggers are attractive influencers.

Second, vloggers who are focusing on prevention-focused service experiences should avoid providing their vlogs employing their own perspective. Rather, they should have a cameraman take video messages and create vlogs employing the observer's perspective especially without the vloggers' own faces. Again, if the vloggers are sufficiently attractive, they can appear their faces on the vlogs.

Finally, vloggers should assume their own attractiveness. If they are highly attractive, the vloggers should employ the observer's perspective with their face. However, if they are not sufficiently attractive, the vloggers should employ the actor's or observer's perspectives without their face depending on the regulatory focus.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Limitations

This research has several limitations. Like prior studies, this research extracted findings from the results of analyses using a small-scale dataset collected with limited experimental services and collaborators. Moreover, we treated visual perspectives and regulatory focus as discrete variables and attractiveness as constant.

Future Research

In this research, we used a video message in which a vlogger looked straight into the camera and made some remarks on his service experiences. However, some other kinds of vlogs exist

in the real world. It would be interesting to explore the effects of vlogs in which a vlogger takes his or her eyes off camera and/or vlogs in which a vlogger keeps his or her mouth shut and narration has been added on.

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