



ZOOM Session

Dual Process Intuitions

Consumers' Beliefs about Persuasion Processing Drive Morality of Marketing Communication



Z. Khon, Y.-J. Chen, S. G. B. Johnson, Y. Simonyan, H. Hang

SUMMARY

Not every form of marketing persuasion is considered manipulative. **How do consumers decide whether persuasion is morally acceptable or not?**

In three studies, we test the hypotheses that moral evaluation of persuasion depends on individuals' beliefs about information processing—*Dual Process Intuitions*. (i) **If people think persuasion is processed fast and without much effort (that is, by system 1), they will consider it more immoral than persuasion thought to be processed more slowly and with much effort (that is, by system 2).** This is because (ii) people will find system 1 processing more *automatic* than system 2 processing. Since system 2 persuasion will be seen as more morally acceptable, (iii) there will be a larger effect of system 2 persuasion on attitude change than that of system 1 (although both system 1 and system 2 persuasion can lead to a positive attitude change). (See conceptual framework on the right.)

STUDY	CONDITIONS	STIMULI	DEPENDENT VARIABLE
1		24 marketing tactics	Immorality
2		25 ads	Immorality/ Attitudes
3	2 (Product category framing: hedonic, utilitarian) × 2 (Advertising: celebrity endorsement, information)	Print advertising of a watch	Attitudes

For each tactic/ad, participants rated:

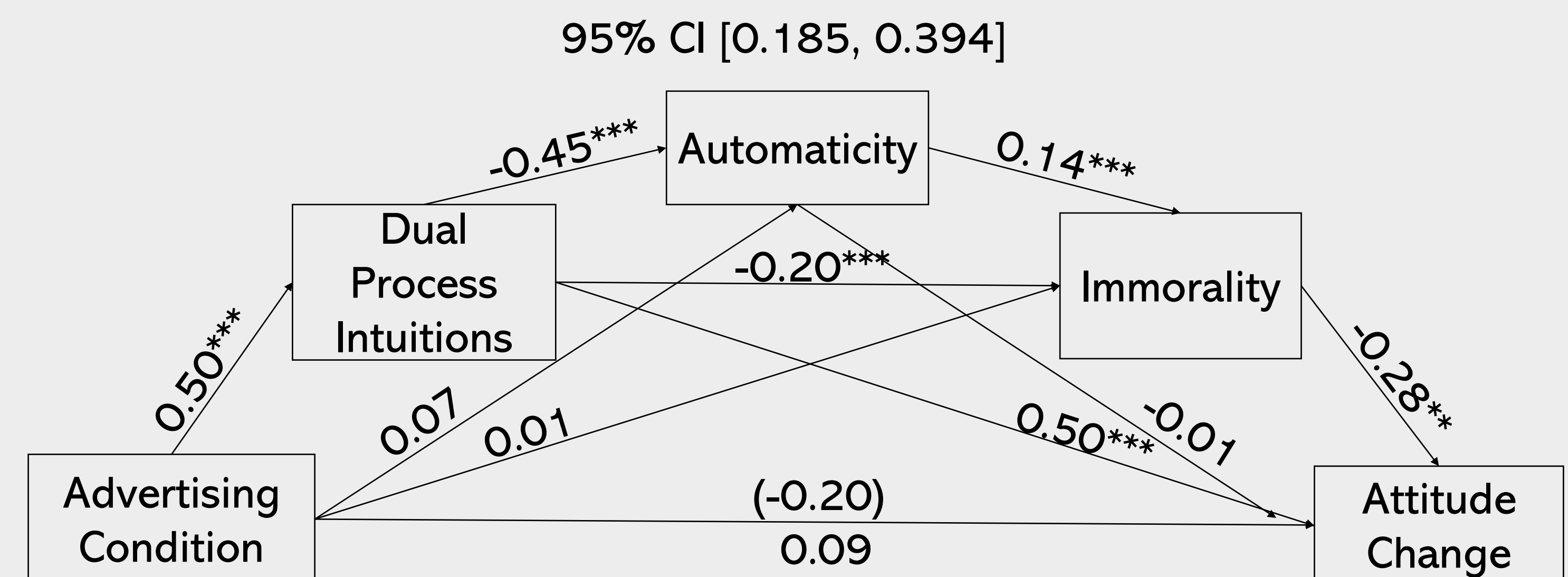
- *Dual Process Intuitions* – their agreement with the five statements describing how the tactic/ad was processed ($\alpha = .97$; “This ad relies on reason”), where lower values correspond to beliefs about system 1 processing and higher values correspond to beliefs about system 2 processing.
- *Immorality* ($\alpha = .98$; “I feel manipulated when I encounter this tactic/ad”) of each tactic/ad on 7-point scales.
- *Attitude change* on a scale from -5 (“Very negative”) to 5 (“Very positive”) (except study 1)

THE EFFECT OF DUAL PROCESS INTUITIONS ON

TACTIC/AD IMMORALITY				ATTITUDE CHANGE			
Study	b	SE	p	Study	b	SE	p
1	-0.41	0.04	<.001				
2	-0.31	0.05	<.001	2	0.45	0.09	<.001
3	-0.25	0.05	<.001	3	0.49	0.09	<.001

- Mediation analysis from study 3 shows that advertising based on information (vs. celebrity endorsement) has a more positive effect on attitude change because information-based advertising (vs. celebrity endorsement) is seen to rely on less automatic processing and, therefore, it is considered less immoral ($b = 0.29$, 95% CI [0.185, 0.394]).
- The effect of Dual Process Intuitions on immorality is not different between hedonic and utilitarian products ($p = .717$). This means that the results can be generalized across these product categories (hedonic and utilitarian).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK (STUDY 3)



NOTE.—Advertising condition was contrast-coded with -1 for celebrity endorsement
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Implications. These findings have both theoretical and practical implications, contributing to the literature on lay theories about persuasion, attitude change, and morality in marketing. Marketers (and potentially politicians) may find them useful to better tailor their persuasion messages, especially if their audiences usually reply to persuasion with reactance. In this case, it is important to give the audience the perception of deliberate choice, which can be done via system 2 persuasion, as our research suggests.