

# Effects of product attribute vs. value-oriented brand positioning on consumers' attitudes and behavior: Implications for unestablished brands

## Abstract

Goal hierarchies and the means-end theory explain how consumers choose products that ultimately help them achieve their end goals. Understanding the different goal levels of consumers is important to design a well thought brand positioning strategy. On top of this, marketers also need to consider the level of abstractness with which they want to position their brand.

This paper reports the results of an experiment conducted to test the effects of different goal triggering primes and more or less abstract positioning strategies on consumers' brand attitudes and their willingness to pay.

The study used a 2x3 between-subjects online experimental design. The results provide partial evidence for an effect on willingness to pay when subjects received a low-level prime question and then saw a product attribute based (=very specific) advertisement, as well when they received a high-level prime question and then saw a moderately abstract advertisement. This partly confirms the hypothesis that a manipulation of the goal prime, together with a congruent positioning strategy can influence consumers behavior.

Although only a part of the hypotheses could be confirmed the experiment adds to existing research and suggests for future research to further recreate these results and test for external validity.

## Hypotheses

Given that no prior brand knowledge exists I present the following hypotheses:

- **H1a:** By making lower-level goals salient, a product-attribute-oriented (PA) advertisement will improve the attitude toward the brand more than a value-oriented (V) advertisement.
- **H1b:** By making higher-level goals salient, a V advertisement will improve the attitude toward the brand more than a PA advertisement.
- **H1c:** By making either higher or lower-level goals salient, a Mixed advertisement will improve the attitude towards the brand more than in a PA or V condition.

## Method

261 participants were part of the online study. Subjects were randomly assigned to (1) the goal prime condition where they either were asked to think about **what** (low prime) makes them buy wine or **why** (high prime) they drink wine and then (2) read a positioning statement that was either product-attribute-, value-based, or mixed (product-attributes-to-values). Subjects were then asked to fill out a 7-point Likert scale to evaluate their brand attitude and to share their WTP (in %, compared to their current WTP for wines)

## Results

Figure 3: Mean rating of brand attitude for each condition

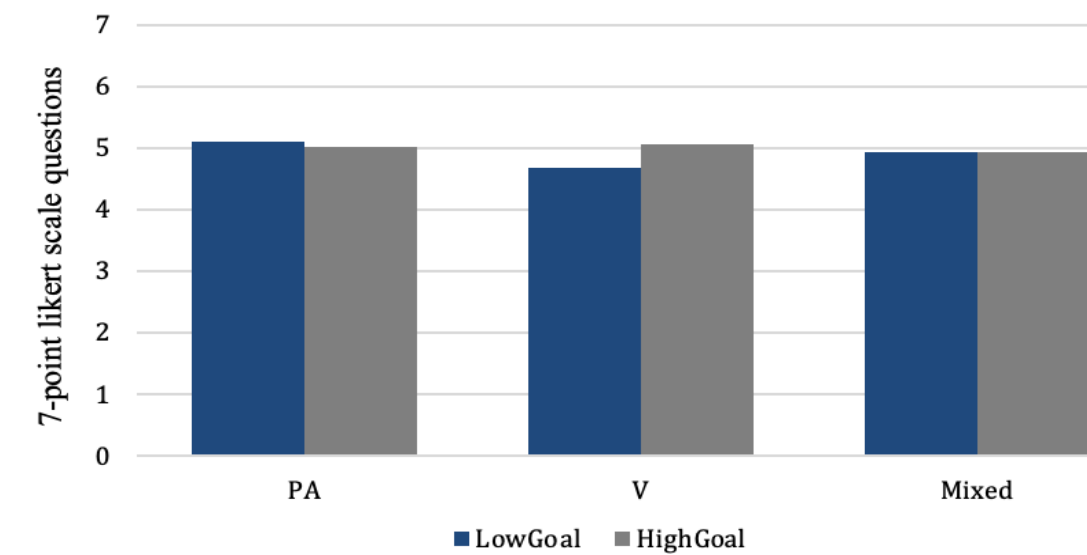
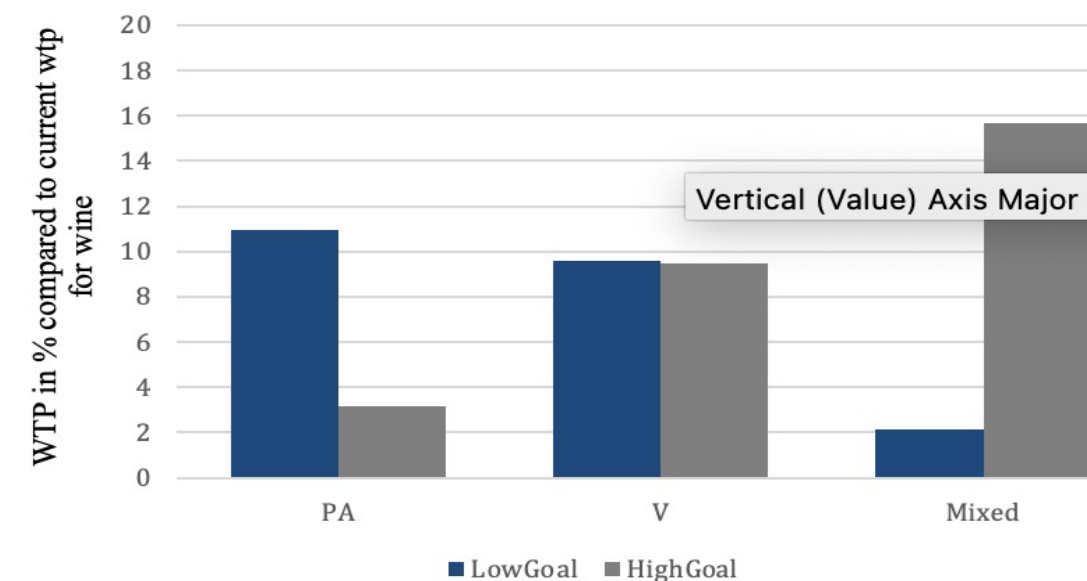


Figure 4: Mean rating of WTP (in%) for each condition



The results of the experiments presented in this paper only partly confirmed a significant effect between the two goal levels and the three positioning strategies. A significant effect between the low goal prime and product attribute-based condition and the high goal prime and mixed advertisement condition on willingness to pay was found and thus partly confirms H1a and H1c.

These findings show that the prior manipulation of the goal prime, together with a congruent positioning strategy can influence consumers' willingness to pay and future research should recreate these findings to check for external validity. No significant effects were found for the other conditions tested on willingness to pay, and neither of the six conditions proved to have a significant effect on brand attitude. However, there are multiple factors that might have caused the results to not be significant, such as the sample size, confounds, missing variables, or experimental design.

This paper, along with past research shows the importance of focusing more research on consumer goal structures to better understand the behavior of consumers and how to act on it accordingly.

## Main References

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