

The effects of consumers' regulatory focus on the relationship between visiting intention and VMD benefits

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〈요 약〉

The purpose of our research was to understand the effect of consumers' regulatory focus (i.e., promotion focused vs. prevention focused) on their evaluation of clothing store's VMD and store visiting intention.

The results showed that the hedonic and utilitarian benefits of store VMD have significantly a positive impact on visiting intentions. In addition, the relationship between perceived hedonic benefits and store visiting intention was significantly different for PO and PE groups; hedonic benefits explained significantly more of the variance in store visiting intention for promotion-focused group than prevention-focused group. Conversely, utilitarian benefits explained significantly more of the variance in store visiting intention for PE than PO group. These results supported both hypotheses and showed that consumers with a promotion focus have stronger visiting intention toward the VMD with hedonic benefits compared with VMD with utilitarian benefits. Conversely, consumers with a prevention focus have stronger visiting intention toward the VMD with utilitarian benefits compared with VMD with hedonic benefits.

Key Words: regulatory focus, VMD benefits, visiting intention, utilitarian benefits, hedonic benefits.

I. Introduction

Understanding the effects of the atmosphere of a store on shoppers represents a long-standing issue for managers and researchers alike (Massara, 2003). As product quality and services are commoditised, store visual merchandising (VMD) plays an important role as a key differentia in delivering compelling shopping experiences to customers. Although extant studies provide useful insights for possible visual merchandising strategy, the findings didn't clearly explain that why different consumers behavior differently even when presented with the same store atmosphere. Also, they do not address the relative influential strength between VMD characteristics and decision-making (eg., store attitude or choice, product purchase) differs depending on the consumers' motivation or goal. The influence of store VMD on consumer behaviors, particularly relative to other marketing actions, is likely to depend on the consumer motivation or goal and the retail atmosphere.

To address this research gap, this paper proposes that regulatory focus have the moderating effect on the relationship between store's VMD benefits and store visiting intention. Generally, consumers would differ in the extent to which they attend to, understand, and evaluate any store environment stimuli. Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 2001) is one perspective for better understanding these differences. According to the regulatory focus theory, there are two different regulatory

foci in meeting individual's goal (Higgins, 2002); promotion-focused systems, which regulate ideals and nurturance needs, and prevention-focused systems, which regulate oughts and security needs (E. T. Higgins, 1998). Ideals refer to people's hopes, wishes, and aspirations, whereas oughts are their obligations, duties, and responsibilities (Higgins, 1987). For example, buying the luxurious brand clothing represents an ideal, but paying a monthly installment by the due date are oughts. Pursuing ideals or oughts encourages people to adopt different regulatory systems, which subsequently trigger different attitudes and thoughts about the same object (Aaker & Lee, 2001) and assign different weights to an importance of the same decision outcome (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Bettman & Sujan, 1987).

Prior findings show that promotion-focus people are related to hedonic value and prevention-focus people are related utilitarian value. In other words, promotion-oriented people have more favorable attitudes when presented with affective cues, such as the affective source and content, whereas prevention-oriented participants is more persuaded by cognitive ones (Chang & Lin, 2010). In information processing context, Pham and Avnet (2004) found that consumers with a promotion focus rely more on affective information, whereas cognitive information offers greater persuasion for those with a prevention focus. Chernev (2004) suggests that hedonic attributes help attain promotion goals, whereas functional attributes help attain prevention goals.

The preceding discussion suggests that to predict store visiting behavior accurately, we need to ascertain which option the functional-oriented VMD store or the hedonic-oriented VMD store associated with more intense visiting intention depending on consumers' regulatory focus. Promotion-focused consumers is preferred the hedonic-oriented VMD store to the functional-oriented VMD one and in turn have more visiting intention about the hedonic-oriented VMD store than the functional-oriented VMD one. Conversely, prevention-focused consumers is preferred the functional-oriented VMD store to the hedonic-oriented VMD one and in turn have more visiting intention about the functional-oriented VMD store than the hedonic-oriented VMD one. We suggest the following research questions; (a) for promotion-focused consumers, VMD hedonic benefits will have a stronger influence on visiting intention with the store than VMD utilitarian benefits, and (b) for prevention-focused consumers, VMD utilitarian benefits will have a stronger influence on visiting intention with the store than VMD hedonic benefits.

It is therefore important to pay attention to the influences of consumers' regulatory focus on a store choice and evaluation or a purchase decision during a shopping process. We argue that the store shopping intention can be clearly influenced by the match between consumers' regulatory focus and the type of the store VMD benefits (hedonic and utilitarian benefits). The aim of this study is to prove that it is sufficient if the store VMD benefits

match the consumers' regulatory focus to influence their store visiting intention.

II. Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

1. Visual merchandising

The key determining factor of retailers' success no longer depends on the price and quality of products. When the product itself has no difference, brand loyalty needs to be created by building the store's atmosphere and utilize VMD to produce added value to products. Visual merchandising strategy is regarded as a key instrument of a retailer's communication. VMD is an integral part of consumers surrounding during his or her shopping experience and therefore has an impact on consumers' store choice and evaluation behavior in retail settings. McGoldrick (1990) suggested that visual merchandising is the result of a conceptual approach to store design and merchandise display. VMD includes both visual and marketing functions of the store environment, including merchandise presentation, store design, mannequins, props and materials, lighting, graphics, and signage (Diamond & Diamond, 2007).

Previous research would be categorized as several areas. First study stream is research on developing the dimension of VMD. Sen et al. (2002) suggested five information types (promotion, store merchandise, store image, the latest, and product fit) in terms of the store

and product category information communicated by a store's windows related to consumers' shopping decisions. Focusing on merchandise and the appearance of the store, Hildebrandt (1988) asked customers to recall six images attributes influencing their actions. In term of the functional image of the store, Sirgy and Samli (1985) proposed seven store attributes composed of general store characteristics, physical characteristics, price, personnel, promotion, convenience, product and services.

Second research flow is focused on illustrating the relationships between retailer performance, including consumers' satisfaction, advertising effects, and sales and VMD or stores' atmosphere (e.g., display, merchandise, and environments). Store atmosphere can induce cognitive responses which in consequence may affect shopping behavior (Mazursky & Jacoby, 1986; Sirgy & Samli, 1985; Ward, Bitner, & Barnes, 1992). Baker et al.(1994) studied the relationship between store atmosphere and the perception of merchandise quality and between store atmosphere and the perception of service quality. Bitner (1992) proposes a conceptual framework explaining how the store atmosphere influences the approach-avoidance behavior depending on intervening variables such emotional response, cognitive response and physiological response.

Third area of research is on explaining the effects of each element consisting of VMD. McGoldrick (1998) considered store's window display and atmosphere environment space can influence consumer's feeling. Window display attracts consumers with price sensitivity if it

exhibits the special offer products; if it exhibits some dazzling products it can only attract the sight of passerby. Window displays are akin to advertising in helping create and maintain an overall image of the retailer in consumers' minds. Evans et al. (1996) suggest that an association exists between store layout and walking patterns of consumers and the layout could affect the duration of the consumers' experience in-store and the number of products they are exposed to. Finally, another research flow is related to the consumers' characteristics. Scarpi (2006) analyzed the relation between hedonic/utilitarian shopping behavior and a number of key variables such as store loyalty, perceived value, purchase frequency, money spent, price consciousness. Conceptually, Massara (2003) proposes shoppers who seek utilitarian value approach store selection and shopping from an efficiency standpoint. On the contrary, hedonic motives lead shoppers to allocate attention to surprising and stimulating events in the environment. Thus, being interrupted by something new and different might be a positive experience for a hedonic shopper and an irritation for a utilitarian shopper.

2. Visual merchandising and shopping value

The value the consumer can be provided during shopping process is classified into two types [Benefits or value that store during shopping process is offered to consumer is basically categorized with hedonic benefits and

utilitarian value]; hedonic value and utilitarian value. Utilitarian values refer to the functional, instrumental, and practical benefits and hedonic values refer to their aesthetic, experiential, and enjoyment-related benefits. In the context of clothing shopping, the product's price and promotion information is utilitarian benefits, whereas aesthetic appeal from exciting store atmosphere is hedonic benefits. Extant research supports the notion that shopping can provide both hedonic and utilitarian value (e.g., Babin & Darden, 1995; Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994). Hedonic shopping value reflects the value received from the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of the shopping experience, while utilitarian shopping value reflects the acquisition of products and/or information in an efficient manner and can be viewed as reflecting a more task-oriented, cognitive, and non-emotional outcome of shopping (Babin, et al., 1994; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

A substantial amount of prior research indicates that shopping value and store environment or atmosphere is predicted to positively influence repatronage intentions, stores entry, and perception of merchandise (Jones, Reynolds, & Arnold, 2006). Both hedonic and utilitarian shopping values are found to influence key retail outcomes such as satisfaction, repatronage intentions, repatronage anticipation, loyalty, and positive word of mouth (Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, & Voss, 2002; Jones, et al., 2006). Baker et al. (2002) explored the relationship between store atmosphere and the perception of merchandise

quality. Retail studies have shown linkages between hedonic and utilitarian value and satisfaction (Babin, et al., 1994; Babin, Lee, Kim, & Griffin, 2005). Therefore, given this evidence, we provide the following replication hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Both VMD utilitarian benefits and hedonic benefits will have a positive influence on visiting intention with the store.

3. Consumers' Regulatory focus

Specifically, promotion-focused people tend to be more sensitive to the presence and absence of positive outcomes (E. Tory Higgins, 1997) and thus focus more on these outcomes (Aaker & Lee, 2001), whereas prevention-focused persons are more sensitive to the presence and absence of negative outcomes and more likely to emphasize them.

Most studies distinguish people's regulatory focus into two types: promotion-focused systems, which regulate ideals and nurturance needs, and prevention-focused systems, which regulate oughts and security needs (E. T. Higgins, 1998). Ideals refer to people's hopes, wishes, and aspirations, whereas oughts are their obligations, duties, and responsibilities (E. T. Higgins, 1987). For example, buying the luxurious brand clothing represents an ideal, but paying a monthly installment by the due date are oughts. Pursuing ideals or oughts encourages people to adopt different regulatory systems, which subsequently trigger different

attitudes and thoughts about the same object (Aaker & Lee, 2001) and assign different weights to the importance of the same decision outcome (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Bettman & Sujan, 1987).

Higgins (1998)' regulatory focus theory (promotion and prevention focus) should be applied to predict consumer behavior in the context of shopping situation. Shoppers' promotion goals are those that a person aspires to meet, such as exciting shopping or enjoying shopping. Achievement of promotion goals significantly increases the probability of a pleasurable shopping experience. Conversely, shoppers' prevention goals are those that ought to be met, such as avoiding unsatisfactory purchase and being responsible. Fulfillment of prevention goals in the context of shopping eliminates or significantly reduces the probability of a worried or painful experience that result from a paucity of information needed to achieve shopping task.

4. Consumers' Regulatory focus and VMD

Generally, consumers choose store on the basis of their expectations of the shopping value to meet their goals. Prior research has implicitly assumed that consumers' favorable expectation on one important shopping value is conceptually equivalent to their positive expectation on any other equally important shopping value (Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2007). For example, a store that is twice as good as experienced on the utilitarian

shopping will produce the same intensity of positive response as one that is twice as good as experienced on the hedonic shopping. But, some researchers suggest that the hedonic values and utilitarian values, which are offered during shopping process, differ in their relationships with consumer response about outcome variables as such, attitude, satisfaction, and store visiting intention. They have focused primarily on assessing the relative weight that consumers attach to these two values. Utilitarian shopping value is likely to be more strongly related to repatronage intentions than hedonic shopping value (Jones, et al., 2006). Chitturi et al. (2007) documents that consumers attach greater importance to the hedonic dimension. Similarly, Kivetz and Simonson (2002) document that consumers attach greater weight to the utilitarian (versus hedonic) dimension.

However, none of these studies have an enough description why consumers have a preference priority about hedonic and utilitarian shopping values. Especially, there is no effort to explain how the hedonic values and utilitarian values differ in their relationships with consumers' response in terms of their motivation or goal. In another words, little studies have as their central focus the moderating effects of consumers' motivation goal on the relationship between shopping value and retail variables.

The regulatory focus theory, which explains a behavior difference of people whether they have a promotion or prevention focus, would be expected to fill this gap as a possible alternative in the area of shoppers' responses

with apparel store VMD.

An individual's regulatory focus determines which aspects of a situation or thing are particularly important; in this way regulatory focus influences which values an individual deliberately seeks out or which benefits attract particular attention. Higgins (2000) explained that when an individual's focus and the information to be processed are compatible, described as 'regulatory fit,' an increase in processing capacity can be observed. It means that the more compatible a consumers' regulatory focus and the value or benefits to be sought are through shopping experience, the higher an increase in matching value can influence post-shopping consumers' behavior.

Prior research results show that promotion-focus people are related to hedonic value and prevention-focus people are related utilitarian value. In other words, promotion-oriented people have more favorable attitudes when presented with affective cues, such as the affective source and content, whereas prevention-oriented participants is more persuaded by cognitive ones (Chang & Lin, 2010). In information processing context, Pham and Avnet (2004) found that consumers with a promotion focus rely more on affective information, whereas cognitive information offers greater persuasion for those with a prevention focus. Chernev (2004) suggest that hedonic attributes help attain promotion goals, whereas functional attributes help attain prevention goals.

The preceding discussion suggests that to predict store visiting behavior accurately as

consumers' response results after shopping, we need to ascertain which option the functional-oriented VMD store or the hedonic-oriented VMD store is associated with more intense visiting intention depending on consumers' regulatory focus. Promotion-focused consumers is preferred the hedonic-oriented VMD store to the functional-oriented VMD one and in turn have more visiting intention about the hedonic-oriented VMD store than the functional-oriented VMD one. Conversely, prevention-focused consumers is preferred the functional-oriented VMD store to the hedonic-oriented VMD one and in turn have more visiting intention about the functional-oriented VMD store than the hedonic-oriented VMD one. Therefore, we provide the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: For promotion-focused consumers, VMD hedonic benefits will have a stronger influence on visiting intention with the store than will VMD utilitarian benefits.

Hypothesis 3: For prevention-focused consumers, VMD utilitarian benefits will have a stronger influence on visiting intention with the store than will VMD hedonic benefits.

III. Research design

1. Design and Task

We used a store's VMD benefits (hedonic

versus utilitarian) shopper's regulatory (promotion focus versus prevention focus). A total of 220 undergraduate students participated for a gift. The participants were randomly assigned to each group. Participants were given a booklet titled Consumer Shopping Behavior Questionnaire, with the following starting guides on the first page: adding sample characteristic

In this questionnaire, it is focused on finding how participants feel about a store VMD after its shopping in a casual wear store. In the following pages, it will be read about the questions that describes your needs, attributes of a store VMD, and subsequent visiting intention. Please read the guide carefully and respond to the questions that follow.

On the following page, participants are asked questions to measure their regulatory focus. And then next page, participants read information about the store included its VMD one choices. Each was respectively described as a combination of the three hedonic and three utilitarian attributes. Three of the attributes were primarily hedonic and added to the hedonic shopping benefits, and the other three attributes were primarily utilitarian and added to the utilitarian shopping benefits. We combined the three hedonic and three utilitarian attributes with a picture of the stores' VMD. We pretested the store' VMD pictures for their hedonic and utilitarian benefits. A collection of hedonic and utilitarian benefits pictures were rated by 10 graduated students on a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high) on the overall measure of hedonic and

utilitarian benefits. We picked five pictures that were highly rated for hedonic and utilitarian benefits to construct the stimuli. Each of the six attributes and the stores' VMD picture had two levels and associated shopping benefits (high vs low).

We show that the hedonic and utilitarian benefits of a store VMD differ in their ability to attract shoppers. We chose the products to ensure that participants would be familiar with their attributes and benefits and could imagine the store VMD in various shopping scenarios.

2. Measurement

The measurement of store VMD benefits is used the HED/UTI scale developed by (Voss, Spangenberg, & Grohmann, 2003). We selected three items to construct the hedonic dimension and another three to construct the utilitarian dimension of the store VMD benefits. After reviewing the Power point slides about store VMD including the picture, participants read shopping scenarios. They reported their level of evaluation on a total of 6 anchor measures of each category pictures: hedonic (fun, exciting, delightful) versus utilitarian (helpful, functional, practical). They rated benefits of store VMD with the following instructions: "Based on the overall experience of imaging my current store shopping, I feel ____" (seven-point scale anchored by 1 = "not at all" and 7 = "extremely").

Intention to visiting the store: Participants then answered questions about shopping. These measures of visiting intention

of the store served as dependent variable across the treatment conditions. They rated visiting intention of store VMD with the following instructions: "Based on the overall experience of imaging my current store shopping, I'd like to visit _____"(seven-point scale anchored by 1 = "not at all" and 7 = "extremely").

Regulatory focus: Shoppers' regulatory focus that consists of two subscales designed to measure promotion and prevention focus was assessed using the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire developed by Higgins et al. (2001). Both subscales contain ten items and each item was rated on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). Example of promotion focus items is "I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life" (M= 4.23, SD = 1.12). Example of prevention focus items is "Not being careful enough has gotten me into trouble at times" (M = 3.65, SD = 1.20). The items were measured with higher scores indicating higher promotion or prevention focus, respectively. The scale's reliability showed the promotion (Cronbach's = .85) and prevention (Cronbach's = .78), respectively. Promotion and prevention focus showed correlation ($r = -0.13$, $p > .16$).

Finally, participants completed the section containing manipulation checks and demographic variables.

4. Stimuli Construction

The objective was to construct more

realistic stimuli while retaining the level of control that is needed to test the research problem. Two pretests were conducted to accomplish this objective. For Pretest 1, we made a comprehensive list of attributes based on interview information to be obtained from some managers of the most popular apparel store in the teenage-targeted market and literature review related to retailing store and VMD.

For practical reasons, the goal was to identify the top 5 most influential attributes that offer hedonic benefits and the top 5 most influential attributes that offer utilitarian benefits to construct the stimuli for the experiment. To accomplish this, we asked more than 100 participants to rate all the attributes in terms of importance and impact on the store choice.

On the basis of the Pretest 1 responses, we selected the top 6 most important attributes on store choice decision. To test our research objectives, we needed to construct stores' VMD stimuli that had a group of attributes that was primarily hedonic and another group that was primarily utilitarian in terms of the benefits offered. On the basis of the ratings, we selected 3 attributes to construct the hedonic shopping and another 3 to construct the utilitarian dimension of the stores' VMD benefits. We manipulated each attribute to create two levels.

We then combined these attributes with the pretested pictures of stores' VMD to create the stimuli. The rating of Shopping Guide Reports is quoted to offer the objective cues to

participants supporting the imagery of realistic shopping situation. One of the stores was highly described with exciting and fun (hedonic) with a medium Shopping Guide Reports rating of 3.0 out of 5 on functionality (utilitarian). The other was a highly functional (utilitarian) store with a medium Shopping Guide Reports Consumer Reports rating of 3.0 out of 5 on style and attractiveness (hedonics).

6. Manipulation Checks

VMD. Participants indicated the extent to which the shopping experience met their emotional expectations on the hedonic dimension (1 = better than expected, and 7 = worse than expected). We repeated the same question for the utilitarian dimension. We coded reversely the measures for data analysis. The t-tests showed that the manipulation was successful. In the case of superior hedonic store condition, participants feel greater intensity of hedonic response with a more hedonic VMD than with a more utilitarian VMD (6.32 versus 3.84; $t=3.34$, $p < .01$).

Conversely, In the case of superior utilitarian store condition, participants feel greater intensity of utilitarian response with a more utilitarian VMD than with a more hedonic VMD (5.97 versus 4.01; $t=2.53$, $p < .01$).

IV. Results and Discussion

On a seven-point scale, participants indicated the extent to which the shopping experience correspond with their responses on the hedonic and utilitarian dimension using HED/UT scale with 6 adjective pairs. The t-tests showed that the manipulation was successful.

The means for the two shopping experience conditions for the store with superior hedonic attributes were (1) fun = 5.53 versus 3.84, (2) exciting = 5.79 versus 4.11 (hedonic versus utilitarian), (3) delightful = 5.63 versus 3.64. Similarly, the means for the shopping experience conditions for the store with superior utilitarian attributes were (1) helpful = 3.44 versus 5.56, (2) functional = 4.11 versus 5.46, (3) practical = 4.16 versus 5.84.

<TABLE 1> Shopping Experience Responses with Hedonic Versus Utilitarian Store

Experience Responses	Store with Superior Hedonic attributes: M(SD)	Store with Superior Utilitarian attributes: M(SD)	Estimate of Difference: t-Value
Fun	5.53(1.21)	3.84(1.12)	2.54*
Exciting	5.79(1.10)	4.11(1.00)	2.21*
Delightful	5.63(1.11)	3.64(1.16)	5.65**
Helpful	3.44(1.02)	5.53(0.98)	-4.01**
Functional	4.11(1.08)	5.60(1.01)	-2.22*
Practical	4.16(0.90)	5.53(1.07)	-2.18*

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

<TABLE 2> Regression of VMD benefits on visiting intentions

Sources	Coefficient	Standard deviation	t-value
Constant	1.741	0.407	4.28**
Hedonic benefits	0.274	0.093	2.959**
Utilitarian benefits	0.391	0.088	4.43**
R ²	0.29		
F-value	44.69 (p < 0.00)		

** p < .01

To test hypothesis 1, the regression analysis is conducted, with VMD benefits as independent variable and visiting intentions as dependent variable (Table 2). It is found that hedonic and utilitarian benefits of store VMD have significantly a positive impact on visiting intentions. Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Hypothesis 2 and 3 predicted that the relationship between the store VMD benefits and visiting intention is moderated by shoppers' regulatory focus. The sample was divided in two based upon participants' regulatory focus using the median split method. The regression analysis was run on each group which is classified with promotion-focused group [PO] and prevention-focused group [PE]. The results showed that for both promotion-focused and prevention-focused group VMD benefits empathic concern decreased the ability of sales volume incentives to motivate salespeople to be sales-oriented. The standardized

coefficient for hedonic benefits was =.441 (p < .001) for the promotion-focused sample and =.158 (p < .023) for the prevention-focused. The standardized coefficient for utilitarian benefits was =.224 (p < .001) for the promotion-focused sample and =.314 (p < .011) for the prevention-focused.

Research hypothesis test was composed of two parts. The first part, Chow's test¹⁾ was used to test the difference between the results of the regression for PO and for PE samples. The calculated F value for the test of the moderating effect of regulatory focus on the relationship between VMD benefits and visiting intention was 3.348, which is significant at the p < .01 level. This indicates that the regressions were significantly different between PO and PE samples. This finding supports regulatory focus as a moderator of the relationship between VMD benefits and visiting intention.

$$1) F = \frac{RSS_1 - (RSS_2 + RSS_3)}{df_1 - (df_2 + df_3)} \bigg/ \frac{(RSS_2 + RSS_3)}{df_2 + df_3}$$

RSS₁ = residual sum square of total sample

RSS₂ = residual sum square of promotion-focused sample

RSS₃ residual sum square of prevention-focused sample

df₁ = df of total sample

df₂ = df of promotion-focused sample

df₃ = df of prevention-focused sample

<TABLE 3> Chow's Test for The difference Between Promotion-focused and Prevention-focused Group

Total samples	Promotion-focused group	Prevention-focused group	F-value	p-value
165.4 (n=222,df ₁ =216)	77.4 (n=122,df ₂ =116)	68.2 (n=100,df ₃ =94)	4.73	0.05

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

The second part, Fisher's z-test was used to test the difference of the regression coefficients for PO and PE samples. Fisher's z-test results indicated that the relationship between hedonic benefits and visiting intention ($z = 2.22$, $p < .05$) was significantly different for promotion-focused [PO] and prevention-focused [PE]; hedonic benefits explain significantly more of the variance in visiting intention for promotion-focused

shoppers than prevention-focused ones. Conversely, the results showed that the relationship between hedonic benefits and visiting intention ($z = -3.21$, $p < .01$) was significantly different for promotion-focused [PO] and prevention-focused [PE]; utilitarian benefits explain significantly more of the variance in visiting intention for prevention-focused shoppers than promotion-focused ones.

<TABLE 4> Regression of VMD benefits on visiting intentions

Sources	Promotion-focused group (n=122)	Prevention-focused group(n=100)	z-test
Hedonic benefits	0.441** (.094) ^a	0.168** (.032)	2.22**
Utilitarian benefits	0.124** (.023)	0.511** (.069)	3.21**
R ²	0.57	0.49	-
F-value	45.57	43.48	-

** p < .01 ^a:S.D

V. Conclusion

As product quality and services are commoditized, store visual merchandising (VMD) plays an important role as a key differentiator in delivering compelling shopping experiences to customers. Although prior VMD studies provide useful insights for possible visual merchandising strategies, the findings

do not clearly explain why different consumers behave differently even when presented with the same store atmosphere. Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997; Higgins, 2001) provides an insight for better understanding of consumers' different responses to same store atmospheres. Thus, the purpose of our research was to understand the effect of consumers' regulatory focus (i.e., promotion

focused vs. prevention focused) on their evaluation of clothing store's VMD and store visiting intention.

The results showed that the hedonic benefits were positive influences for both the promotion-focused[PO] group and the prevention-focused[PE] group. In addition, the utilitarian benefits were positive impacts for both the promotion-focused group and the prevention-focused group. Chow's test was used to test the difference between the results of the regression for PO and PE groups. The calculated F value was significant at the $p < .01$ level. This indicates that the regressions were significantly different between PO and PE groups. In addition, Fisher's z -test results indicated that the relationship between perceived hedonic benefits and store visiting intention was significantly different for PO and PE groups; hedonic benefits explained significantly more of the variance in store visiting intention for promotion-focused group than prevention-focused group. Conversely, utilitarian benefits explained significantly more of the variance in store visiting intention for PE than PO group. These results supported both hypotheses and showed that consumers with a promotion focus have stronger visiting intention toward the VMD with hedonic benefits compared with VMD with utilitarian benefits. Conversely, consumers with a prevention focus have stronger visiting intention toward the VMD with utilitarian benefits compared with VMD with hedonic benefits. That is, the relationship between the store VMD benefits and store visiting intention

was moderated by consumers' regulatory focus.

Our findings have important implications for both visual merchandisers and retailers. We argue that consumers' store visiting intention can be influenced by the match between their regulatory focus (promotion focused vs. prevention focused) and the type of the store VMD benefits (hedonic benefits vs. utilitarian benefits). In making decisions about which visual merchandising strategy to build, management may need to consider which VMD benefits to focus on, particularly if these benefits conflict with each other in terms of the specific components of visual merchandising to be performed. For example, a store's VMD benefits can be best conveyed to consumers with a promotion focus through its exciting, innovative, sensory window displays and store designs (hedonic benefits).

In order to the generalizability of the findings on consumer's regulatory focus on store VMD evaluation, the occurrence of cultural differences needs to be taken into account (due to relating to the regulatory focus formation depending on socialization). For instance, we should be considerate that in Eastern cultures, a predominantly interdependent propensity exists, they are placed on value on benefits about the presence or absence of potential losses (prevention-focused). Whereas, an independent culture exists in Western cultures, and then benefits or information about the presence or absence of potential gains (promotion-focused) are seen as more significant (Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000).

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초 록

VMD혜택이 방문의도에 미치는 영향에 있어 소비자의 조절초점 역할 연구

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상품 품질의 격차가 줄어들면서 소비자의 쇼핑경험을 결정하는데 점포 VMD가 핵심 차별요소가 되고 있다. 기존 점포 VMD연구가 점포관리자에게 많은 전략적 통찰력을 제공하고 있지만 같은 점포환경에서도 소비자마다 쇼핑경험이 다르게 나타나는 원인에 대한 해답을 제공하지 못하고 있다. 본 연구는 기존 연구의 갭을 해소하여 소비자 조절초점 이론을 적용하여 쇼핑환경과 소비행동간 관계를 규명하는데 초점을 맞추고 있다.

실증연구결과, 향상초점 성향의 소비자는 VMD의 실용적 혜택보다는 쾌락적 혜택이 점포방문의도에 더 많은 영향을 미치는 것으로 나타났다. 이에 반해 예방초점 소비자는 VMD의 쾌락적 혜택보다는 실용적 혜택이 점포방문의도에 더 민감하게 반응하는 것으로 조사되었다. 본 연구결과는 점포관리자의 VMD 전략이나 포지셔닝 전략을 수립하는데 실무적 시사점을 제공한다.

핵심주제어: 조절초점, VMD혜택, 방문의도, 쾌락적 혜택, 실용적 혜택

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