



## JCR MANUSCRIPT REVIEW HISTORY 003-2 (REVIEWS)

### Editor's Decision Letter

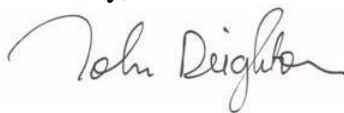
Thank you for submitting "Threats to Hope and Motivated Reasoning of Product Information" to JCR. Your manuscript was read by the same three reviewers and associate editor as before, and by me. The reviewers made arguments on the merits of the paper, and the associate editor evaluated the arguments, prioritized them, and made a recommendation. Their reports are attached to this letter. This letter gives you my decision and reasoning.

Congratulations on responding so well to the first round. I am pleased to conditionally accept this manuscript. The conditions are not trivial, and the paper will be sent to the associate editor and Reviewer C for their opinions, so please attend carefully to each of the reviews and the AE report.

Your presentation of study 3 is still causing difficulty for some of the reviewers. I think that it is a matter that can be handled by fixing the prose, so I don't see much difficulty there. Study 2 is more problematic. I am inclined to agree with Reviewer C that it could be omitted, but you deserve a chance to respond. Please think about it and if you want to retain the study draft a note to Reviewer C explaining why. The length to contribution ratio is about right, so please do not expand the length by more than half a page as you respond to Reviewer B.

You are on track to developing a nice paper. All the best in what I hope is the final round.

Sincerely,



John Deighton

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AE Comments for the author(s)

This paper is converging on publication. The reviewers are all more enthusiastic. I suggest that the authors carefully consider the reviewer's remaining concerns and try to incorporate the most germane in their final revision. I see no reason to micro-manage the process any more than that since this revision was clearly responsive to the first round of feedback. Congrats.

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Reviewer A

Comments for the author(s)

Overall I feel the authors did a nice job with the revision and I am now supportive of its publication. I only have a few comments, all of which center on exposition.

Page 1, paragraph 3. This paragraph from the fourth sentence on is really turgid--- particularly the 4<sup>th</sup> sentence. The problem is that there are several ideas here that you are trying to shoehorn into one short paragraph. As I understand it, what you are trying to do in the paragraph is

1. Lay out the basic hypothesis of the paper. Namely, that people go through life forming goals that they prefer to see as attainable. When they are exposed to cues that suggest that these goals may be unattainable, a range of negative emotions is triggered. The brain's method of righting the ship in such cases is to engage in selective information processing, focusing on cues that would restore beliefs that goals are attainable.
2. Relate this idea to another body of work that sounds somewhat similar—the idea that people grasp for straws (seek risk) when faced with prospects involving sure losses; and
3. Define your terms, such as what you mean by “hope”.

To my view it would be much cleaner if you took an extra sentence or two to develop these ideas more cleanly using less jargon-laden language, focusing on point (1) above. As I said in my last review I think point (2) is important as well, but it might be more appropriate to raise this linkage at the end—whether you could explain it a bit better. The point would be that the phenomenon reported in the paper is not dissimilar to findings of risk seeking in losses, which could also be driven by motivated reasoning; people hate the thought of losing, money for sure, so they selectively focus on the small chance they have to avoid the loss through a risk bet—forgetting that they may end up losing much more.

Minor preference in reporting results: This is probably an editor's call, but I would have preferred if you used “students” or “subjects” in reporting the results of the studies rather than “consumers”. The use of the term “consumers” makes it seem like you have drawn a general conclusion that could be applied to consumers in a broad range of settings rather than the limited tasks your experiments focused on.

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## Reviewer B

### Comments for the author(s)

I think the streamlined manuscript is much easier to read (although there are a few typos). The hypotheses are easier to follow which makes the statistical tests more straightforward. For the most part, the results are clean and provide strong support for the hypotheses. The mediational analyses added a lot. All in all, a nice job of revising the paper. I do, however, have some lingering comments and questions.

1. I still believe that a measure of self-efficacy would provide a more direct linkage to the hypothesized processes. Perhaps this is something for future research.
  2. The literature on cognitive dissonance and/or regret should perhaps be cited. While your subjects didn't actually make a decision, they may have anticipated what it would have felt like to not try the product.
  3. In Study 2 it might have been interesting to include conditions where the same subject received one product with a high confidence ad and one product with a low confidence ad.
  4. In providing ANOVA results, you should probably start by reporting significant interaction terms before providing separate tests for, say, high vs. low confidence conditions.
  5. Study 2, which included product relevance as a within-subject variable, was described as a way of showing that Study 1 results are not attributable to individual difference variables. I agree but probably not in the same way the authors do. I doubt that random assignment in Study 1 led to an imbalance in factors like intelligence and reasoning ability. However, different subjects use rating scales in different ways and this was controlled for in Study 2.
  6. More rationale needs to be provided in Study 3 for testing hypotheses about the weighting of negative information by low versus high confidence consumers. One could make the argument that those who are assumed to place the least weight on negative information would be least likely to access such information. The results are the opposite of this. Perhaps the low confidence consumers accessed more negative information because they hoped to eventually encounter positive information. This is quite a different interpretation. Incidentally, the all negative information condition might not be very realistic. I would have preferred a condition with mixed positive and negative information.
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Reviewer C

Comments for the author(s)

This version of the paper is a significant improvement over the previous version, mainly because the theoretical baggage that it carried earlier has been eliminated. By positioning it as a simple test of the actions hope-threatened consumers take when it comes to processing information about certain products, the paper has now become an interesting empirical demonstration of certain theoretical predictions.

There are a few changes that I would recommend. On p.7, the authors compare the amount of information searched by lower confidence vs. higher confidence consumers in support of their reasoning. I believe that a more appropriate comparison is between the two sources (biased vs. unbiased) within a confidence condition. It appears from the data that high confidence consumers searched for information from both sources equally, while low confidence consumers searched for more information from the biased source than the unbiased.

I would recommend that study two be dropped because the data are not consistent with the results of study 1, and most importantly, the basic hypotheses advanced in the study. For example, on p.13, the perceived effectiveness scores show that high confidence consumers rated the product *about the same* on its effectiveness ( $M=3.94$ ) as low confidence consumers ( $M=4.07$ ) when it was touted as one of the many products on the market. The pattern looks similar even for perceived credibility of arguments (3.53 and 3.60). These results are not consistent with what has been reported in study 1 and question the validity of the whole study.

The data reported in study three need some more explanation (p.18). The reduced confidence consumers in this study chose to examine MORE pieces of negative information than high confidence consumers (6.88 vs. 2.85). It is not clear why people whose hopes have already been threatened would *choose to examine* more and more negative pieces of information about a possible solution.

It is also not clear (from a theory perspective) how low confidence consumers, after being exposed to so much more negative information than high confidence consumers, still maintain more positive attitudes about the advertised product than their high confidence counterparts. The authors propose that this suggests less weight being placed on negative information; however, information valence was a between-subjects manipulation, which means that the negative information was the only information that low confidence subjects saw in that condition. Unless they completely disregarded all of the information that they saw (which is a very powerful effect, especially given the small differences in the confidence between low and high confidence conditions), this effect is difficult to explain. More explanation is needed here.