THE DUALITY OF TRAITS AND GOALS: AN EXAMINATION OF THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN CONSUMER PERSONALITY AND REGULATORY FOCUS IN PREDICTING CONSUMER RESPONSES TO SOCIAL MEDIA ADS

By

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To my wonderful sister Sadia Musah, whose constant love and support contributed to my success
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This present study investigates the interactions between personality traits, regulatory focuses and product appeal on consumer responses to social media ads in terms of their evaluations of the ads and behavioral intentions. In particular, this current research assesses social media ads framed along regulatory goals and product appeals and examines the possible interplay of consumers’ personality traits, regulatory goals and product appeal. With a focus on the personality traits of extraversion and conscientiousness and grounded by the Regulatory Focus Theory, this study attempts to reveal whether consumers’ personality traits function to vary responses to social media ads framed along varying regulatory goals and product appeal. A 2 (personality traits: high vs. low) X 2 (regulatory focus; promotion-focus vs. prevention focus) X 2 (product appeal: hedonic vs. utilitarian) between subjects randomized experimental design was conducted to explore the persuasive effect of consumers’ personality traits on attitudes and behavioral intentions to social media ads. The findings indicated that extraversion and conscientiousness exert important influence on consumers’ attitudes and behavioral intentions to social media ads. Additionally, the results demonstrated that consumers who scored high on extraversion had more intention to engage in electronic word-of-mouth and purchase behavior.
when exposed to an ad with a prevention-focus message and utilitarian product appeal. This research also found significant interactions of self-congruity and personality traits in consumer attitudes and behavior, indicating the relevance of self-brand image to consumer behavior. The findings from this research highlight the important impact of personality traits on consumer behavior and contribute to extant literature on relevant theoretical effects of the factors explored in this research. The findings present important practical and theoretical implications for future research on personality traits and Regulatory focus theory in the development of personalized advertising on social media.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Since its introduction, social media has become one of the dominant communication media through which consumers learn, share and interact with information about brands that they consider, assess and buy (Hudson, Huang, Roth & Madden, 2015). The birth of social media, as we know it now, can be traced to the early 2000s when it began as a Web 2.0 innovation. Since its inception, social media has grown in its appeal and prevalence (Ngai, Moon, Lam, Chin & Tao, 2015) as evidenced by its usage, which is ranked as the top web activity (Karahanna, Xu & Zhang, 2015). Social media can be regarded as a type of online discourse where individuals have the opportunity to create, share and network content (Asur & Huberman, 2010). The growth of social media use has served as fodder for interest for both companies and researchers interested in understanding the benefits it provides (Ngai et al., 2015). Companies, in particular, frequently seek to expand their strategies to include social media in an attempt to capitalize on its perceived benefits (Hudson, Huang, Roth & Madden, 2015).

Social media has been defined in numerous ways (Ngai et al., 2015), although they are widely categorized in terms of Internet based applications that consist of user-generated content (Xiang & Gretzel, 2015). In popular press, the loose reference to social media often is used as an umbrella term to describe any type of user generated content (Johnson & Kaye, 2015). However, to technical and professional experts, social media are a “group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Social media consists of a broad gamut of online platforms that take diverse forms that include both mobile and web-based technologies, such as blogs, virtual communities, media sharing sites and social networking sites (Leung, 2013; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). For
the purpose of this discussion, the term ‘social media’ will refer to specific social media platforms that are further classified as social networking sites (Johnson & Kaye, 2015). Social networking sites are “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). The most popular examples include Twitter and Facebook.

Social media represent a key way that companies can communicate with their prospective and current consumers (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). In the nascent stages of the rise of social media, brands jumped on the bandwagon in an attempt to counteract the diminishing returns of traditional media (Fournier & Avery, 2011). Social media appeared to be a panacea for the cons of traditional media, which included declining and fragmented audiences, steady growth of traditional media prices as well as the consumer audience’s ability to skip ads (Fournier & Avery, 2011). Comparatively, social media represented a less expensive alternative that required a simple shift from traditional media spending to online media spending (Fournier & Avery, 2011). Social media marked a change from mass communication to an interactive digital mode of communication (Khang, Ki & Ye, 2012). Specifically, social media facilitates two-way interactions with prospective and current consumers (Hudson et al., 2015). These interactions also engender informational insights about consumers for companies, which then influence decisions about how companies present their messages to their consumers.

Brands’ initial foray into the social media realm did not receive general acceptance (Fournier & Avery, 2011). Consumers largely ignored the efforts of the brands that posted ads to Facebook and YouTube. The pushback from consumers originated from consumers’ view that
the Web was designed for individuals and their conversations, and not to serve as an avenue for brands to disseminate their marketing communications (Fournier & Avery, 2011). However, the growth of social media advertising can be attributed to companies’ attempts to establish meaningful relationships with their consumers (Wright, Khanfar, Harrington & Kizer, 2010). The utility of social media for companies appears manifold. Social media promotes dialogic communication with consumers where brands have the chance to listen and respond to their consumers. In addition, companies can gather comprehensive information about consumers’ preferences and lifestyles through social media, which in turn allow these companies to present messages that are targeted and personalized (Fournier & Avery, 2011). The 2015 Social Media Marketing Industry Report notes that 92% of marketers deem social media as imperative for their businesses (Stelzner, 2015). Though the concept of dialogic communication between brands and consumers has been around for decades prior to the emergence of the Internet (Wright et al., 2010), the advent of social media catapulted this newer form of conversational brand-consumer communication. For companies, the motivations for social media use include increasing their perceived trustworthiness in the marketplace, improving consumers’ brand attitude and solidifying consumers’ commitment (Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom, 2015). Research also suggests that a brand’s social media use have the advantages of influencing consumers’ brand loyalty, brand evaluations, and purchase intention (Beukeboom et al., 2015). Though the nature of social media inherently makes it an uncontrolled arena for conversations about companies (Djikmans et al., 2015), a majority of companies continue to include social media in their communication strategy (Beukeboom, Kerkhof & de Vries, 2015).

Perhaps illustrative of the beneficial effect of brands’ social media use is the Old Spice social media campaign. In 2010, Old Spice launched its new “Smell Like a Man” advertising
campaign (Ehrlich, 2010). In response to the dwindling sales of Old Spice, a consequence of competition within the body wash category for men, Old Spice unveiled the “Smell Like a Man” campaign which used a unique approach of having both men and women as its target audience. This was based on the discovery that more than half of body wash purchases were done by women (“Case Study: Old Spice Response Campaign,” n.d.). The success of the traditional media campaign led to the creation of a digital campaign. The use of social media platforms such as YouTube and Twitter were integrated into the campaign based on the popularity of the fictitious brand spokesperson. For instance, fans’ social comments from numerous social networking sites and other online communities acted as the starting point for video responses given by the “Old Spice Guy.”

Old Spice’s campaign garnered engagement from more than half of the Internet, obtaining clear favorable results from social media sites. In addition to gaining new followers on Twitter, Old Spice’s YouTube videos received thousands of views and positive comments. Specifically, Old Spice made over 180 videos, gained 5.9 million video views and about 22,500 comments in a couple of days (Schroeder, 2010). To date, the original ad has over 52 million views on YouTube and has been touted as one of the fastest growing online video campaign in history (Ehrlich, 2010).

The emergence of social media platforms has been associated with its dominance as a digital communication media through which consumers can interact, learn and share information about brands (Hudson et al., 2015). The rise in social media appears to have led to a democratization of corporate communication, meaning that, the communication power is no longer exclusive to companies but also is shared with individuals and communities that use social media. Companies no longer control the creation and dissemination of brand
communication, and consumers are no longer passive recipients of corporate communication. Rather, consumers are active participants in the creation of brand communication more and more (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011). Thus, social media empowers consumers.

Companies must carefully consider their participation in ongoing communication about its products and/or services (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silverstre, 2011). In the current era of social media, the traditional communication model---dominated by centrally-controlled mass communication outlets---has been usurped by a new communication model characterized by product and company information that comes from the market and spreads through both traditional and social media avenues (Chatzithomas, Boutsouki, Chatzithomas & Zotos, 2014). So, companies are challenged to regard social media as a “comprehensive communication strategy that places emphasis on consumer’s experience” (Chatzithomas et al. 2014, p. 3).

Concomitant with the growth of social media as the highest ranked web activity, social media serve a progressively significant function for companies (Karahanna et al. 2015). Social media continues to hold appeal for brands that wish to interact with their intended target audience (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Not only has social media permeated the lives of consumers, for brands, its role also has expanded to that of an advertising tool for brands (Chu & Kim, 2015). It has been suggested that consumers’ interactions about and with brands on social media are more influential to consumer behavior than more traditional forms of advertising and marketing (Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011). As Chu and Kim (2015) note, the numerous opportunities to engage consumers that social media provide to brands supports the need for further investigation on the underlying aspects that influence how consumers respond to social media ads. Brands are actively seeking better means for reaching their consumers through social media avenue. For example, recent industry news indicate that Facebook and IBM are working
to developing more personalized marketing campaigns, perhaps due to the competitive advantage they would gain if their platforms could facilitate advertising clients’ ability to increasingly fragmented audiences more efficiently (Finley, 2015). The result of greater personalization is that consumers are more likely to be exposed to brand messages that effectively influence their perceptions or attitudes about those brands with greater consistency.

The banner of social media encompasses the range of Internet-based and mobile applications that permit the creation, modification and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al. 2011; Zhang et al. 2015). For many businesses, social media is increasingly aligned with marketing or marketing communications (Mao & Zhang, 2015). The communication environment for consumers and advertisers has been redefined with the growth of the Internet and social media (Wang, Yu & Wei, 2012). For social media brands such as Facebook, the most popular social network in the world (Finley, 2015), understanding latent reasons that influence consumers’ responses to ads placed on social media platforms can inform message creation and placement for advertisers.

Industry reports suggest that worldwide, companies will spend an estimated $23.68 billion dollars in an effort to reach their consumers through paid advertising on social media in 2015, a 33.5% rise from 2014 spending. In the U.S and Canada alone, advertisers are expected to increase their paid spending by 31%, which is estimated to surpass $10 billion for the first time (eMarketer, 2015). The sheer number of dollars that advertisers spend on paid advertising delivered via social media points to the perceived value of social media to advertisers because of its unique ability to reach their consumers. Social media advertising appears to be a strategy that companies will continue to utilize even as social media evolves.
Yet, the intersection of social media’s explosion as a platform and advertising message effects on social media audiences is only the starting point to fully realizing the potential return of the format. Indeed, attention must also be paid to attributes of the audience the warrants further exploration if advertisers are to realize the best value of employing social media platforms for their advertising objectives. For the purpose of this research, reference to social media advertising will include online ads placed in social media that allow consumers to interact with the advertising messages in the form of comments, liking and/or sharing the ads (Logan, Bright & Gangadharbatla, 2012).

An obvious question that arises when considering the role that social media advertising plays in facilitating the brand-consumer relationship is “How do consumers respond to these messages on social media?” The upsurge of interactive digital media, including social media has propelled brand-consumer interaction from the traditional web model to the interactive Web 2.0 domain where consumers have active roles in brand-consumer communication (Hanna et al. 2011). With this in mind, the question examined in this study investigates the influence of individual traits on a consumer’s response to the branded social media messages.

The developing trend in advertisers’ interest for developing personalized advertising is a global one (Yu & Cobe, 2009). A number of studies spanning different countries give focus to the rise in personalized advertising (e.g. Bozios, Lekakos, Skoularidou & Chorianopoulos, 2001; Kazienko & Adamski, 2007; Yuan & Tsao, 2003). Otherwise defined as “an advertising strategy that is used to individually target consumers by matching messages to their personal information or preferences” (Maslowska, Smit & van den Putte, 2013, p. 487). In other words, this strategy involves the use of message developed through inclusion of information distinct to the recipient or based on the recipient’s preferences (Lee, Kim & Kim, 2015; Maslowska et al., 2013).
A plausible explanation for the increasing shift towards personalized advertising is associated with the increasing doubt in the power of conventional advertising methods, which target mass audiences, previously used to market diverse products (Yu & Cobe, 2009). The use of personalization continues to be of interest to marketers in their communication efforts (Vesanen, 2007).

Research suggests the benefits to companies for employing personalization in advertising communication (Aguirre, Mahr, Grewal, de Ruyter & Wetzels, 2015). Not only does personalization play a role in boosting consumer loyalty (Chellappa & Sin, 2005), but it also improves companies’ potential for building competitive advantages (Murthi & Sarkar, 2003) and improved consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Anasari & Mela 2003; Rust & Chung, 2006). Beyond these attributes, personalized communication in advertising has been found to improve message recall, to produce more positive assessments about message content and to generating more consumer purchases for corporate brands (Tam & Ho, 2006). These benefits taken together have been associated with increased advertising effectiveness (Tucker, 2014), and increased their profitability (Zhang & Wedel, 2009), two outcomes on which marketers measure brand success.

Research that assesses the role of personality traits in consumer behavior can be found within the consumer behavior literature. Similarly, the personality literature establishes the relationship between consumers’ personality and their potential response to advertising (e.g. Synder & DeBibim 1985; Thomas, 2014; Zhang, Sun, Liu & Knight, 2014). Prior studies demonstrate that personality traits have been shown to influence consumers’ attitude and attitude formation (Haugtvedt, Petty & Cacioppo, 1992; Jin & Villegas, 2007), ethical beliefs (Rallapalli, Vitell, Wiebe & BanSchaninger & Barnes, 1994), information acquisition (Schaninger & Sciglimpaglia, 1981), purchase intention (Synder & DeBono, 1985), product evaluation and
choice (Thomas, 2014) and brand favorability (Zhang et al., 2014). Jin and Villegas (2007) examined the influence of individual characteristics on how consumers process web advertising under high and low interactivity environments respectively. The results showed that personality variables, such as need for cognition and risk-taking propensity, for example, could influence consumers’ attitudes. Jin and Villegas (2007) suggested that consumers’ personality variables were the main factors in their decision-making behaviors. This and other empirical studies reinforce the idea that consumers’ personalities have some influence on their responses to ads.

The rise of ecommerce and social media marketing reinforce the urgency for advertisers to find value in using less conventional ways to reach their current and prospective consumers. This raises a question about how consumers respond to social media advertising messages that they encounter. Do personality traits attenuate consumers’ preferences for ads delivered via social media relative to their ad attitude and brand attitude when exposed to an ad? Specifically, do consumers’ personality traits determine their differential preferences for social media ads? Consumers’ individual traits not only might influence their responses to social media ads, but also might translate into specific online and offline behavior as well. The purpose of this study is to investigate the interaction between consumers’ personality traits and message regulatory focus have on consumers’ responses to social media advertising.

Messages designed to be persuasive can be altered according to various aspects of the individual based on his/her beliefs, values, lifestyle, demographics or cognitive lifestyle, among others (Hornikx & O’Keefe, 2009). In addition, messages based on personal information are considered as more self-relevant (Kalichman & Coley, 1995). Bright and Daugherty’s (2012) research examined customized online environments and how exposure to advertising in such online environments works. The findings suggest that the behavioral intent of those who perceive
their media environment as customized is greater than that of those who have none such perception, as demonstrated by the former’s likelihood of clicking on an ad for more information. In other consumer behavior literature, research suggests that personalization of information and promotions enable positive attitudes toward, as well as loyalty to products and services that are offered (Kalyanaraman & Sundar, 2006; Zhang & Wendel, 2009).

A comprehension of the appeal of personalization is relevant particularly because research into the psychological appeal of personalization is still the early stages (Sundar & Marathe, 2010). As Zhou, Ji and Jiao (2013) contend, the personalization of products, services and communication can have benefits such as generating consumer attention, retention and loyalty. It is particularly important to examine and understand how messages can be created with recognition of individual traits that could influence how these messages are received.

Chen, Haber, Kang, Hsieh and Mahmud (2015), note that the Big Five personality traits (i.e. extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness and neuroticism) have an influence on individuals’ different behaviors because each personality dimension has an accompanying distinct system of motivation. For instance, extraversion relates to rewards and social attention; agreeableness to communal goals and interpersonal harmony; openness relates to creativity and innovation; neuroticism relates to uncertainty and threats; and conscientiousness relates to achievement and efficiency (Hirsh, Kang & Bodenhausen, 2012). Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that underlying motivations based on an individual’s personality may play a role in their responses to advertisers’ marketing communication messages.

Prior research indicates that messages that are closely tied with an aspect of one’s self have the ability to be persuasive (Petty, Barden & Wheeler, 2002; Petty, Wheeler, & Bizer, 2000). There is also research that suggests that individuals have preferences for self-matching
objects and experiences, such that individuals like experiences that are closely tied to their sense of self compared to those that are not (Petty et al., 2002; Petty et al., 2000). Additional studies have found that consumers’ responses to ads can be influenced by their personalities. For example, Hirsh et al.’s (2012) study found that, people had more favorable responses to messages that matched their personality. In a study that examined factors that play a role in a college segment of Generation Y students, Wolburg and Pokrywczynski (2001) found that personality traits (e.g. extroversion/introversion) influenced the perceived value of advertising as an information source. Mowen, Harris and Bone’s (2004) study concluded that personality traits affect individuals’ fear responses to advertising appeals for driver safety behavior. Black, Organ and Morton’s (2010) study also gave substance to the idea that personality traits influence individual’s attitude towards the ads with sexual appeals. In particular, in Black et al.’s (2010) research which investigated the effect of extraversion, neuroticism and openness; the research concluded that that extraversion and openness directly influenced responses to ads in terms of ad attitude. Related research also suggests that personality traits influence consumer attitudes and loyalty (Matzler, Bidmon & Grabner-Kräuter, 2006).

Though literature suggests a relationship between personality traits and consumer responses to ads, little research has examined it in the context of social media advertising. The proliferation of media, as well as the cost of disseminating advertising messages to a mass audience, have affected the delivery and reception of such messages. Thus, advertisers are gradually shifting to alternative vehicles to reach their consumers such as social media (Logan et al., 2012). Logan et al. (2012) note social media advertising messages differ from other forms of online advertising messages because they permit consumers to have an active interaction with the advertising messages either by: 1) expressing of their “like” for a brand, 2) following the
brands on their social media platforms or 3) sharing the advertising messages. Platforms, such as that of Facebook, consumers can choose whether or not they wish to see more advertising messages from a particular brand.

**Significance of the Study:** Social media is now a mainstay in companies’ bundle of communication media (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). However, extant research on social media advertising is scarce (Knoll, 2015). Advertising messages may be developed for and relayed across diverse online media (Strutton, Taylor & Thompson, 2011). Social media such as Facebook and Twitter function as investments for advertisers who wish to create engagement for their consumers (Chu, Kamal & Kim, 2013). Given the continued growth and popularity of social media for both consumers and advertisers, there is value in an empirical investigation about how consumers respond to advertising messages on social media and the latent factors that could influence their responses to such media messages. Understanding consumer responses to social media advertising could provide further insight into consumers’ offline behavior as well. Not only has growth of newer communication technologies reduced the effectiveness of conventional advertising approaches, it also has enabled the delivery of numerous types of personalized advertising (Yu & Cube, 2009).

Do consumers’ personality traits determine their differential preferences for social media ads? Regulatory Focus Theory provides grounding for examining how consumers may respond to social media ads. This theory suggests that consumers have two diverse self-regulatory systems that facilitate achievement of goals (Werth & Foerster, 2007) and two specific paths (i.e. promotion or prevention focus) to pursue their goal achievement depending on the individual’s motivation. Regulatory focus theory presents a lens through which consumers’ individual personality traits can be interpreted (Kao, 2012). For advertisers who want to communicate in an
effective manner with their consumers via social media, identifying and understanding influences in consumer responses to media messages is imperative. This study seeks to contribute to the body of scholarship that exists in the consumer personality and behavior literature by providing insights into consumer behavior when examined through the lens of social media.

Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature for this research and gives focus to the literature, concepts and theoretical framework relevant to the comprehension of the underlying purpose of this research. It also reviews the literature on digital media and branding and the use of social media in advertising context. The role of personality traits in consumer responses is examined more closely in a review on the body of research that lends clarity to the influence of personality traits and tracing the history of the Big Five personality traits. The chapter then focuses on the perspective of hedonic and utilitarian consumer consumption and ends with a review of the theory that will define the framework for the examination of the study. Chapter 3 specifies the method, research design and procedure, measures, pretest and stimuli development and the sampling procedure applied to the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study and Chapter 5 will provide the discussion and conclusion of the study.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to present an in-depth discussion of literature pertinent to clarifying the meaning and relevance of the constructs utilized to examine the research question this study intends to address. Recall, the objective of the research is to investigate the role of individuals’ personality traits in influencing their responses to social media ads. Therefore the chapter will explore specific areas of literature to elucidate the research direction. These areas are 1) digital media and branding; 2) social media advertising; 3) personality traits and their influence on consumer behavior; and 4) the influence of needs-driven messages (e.g. hedonic needs versus utilitarian needs) on product category response in the social media context. First, the concepts of digital media and branding, and digital media and consumer behavior are discussed to serve as a preliminary introduction into the contextual relevance of this study. Next, literature on social media advertising is offered to substantiate the significance of social media advertising as the context for this study along with an overview of social network advertising and the platform choice for this study. Following is a discussion on the role of personality traits in consumer behavior, with particular emphasis given to the presentation of general research on the influence of personality traits. Then, the discussion will explicate the Big-Five personality framework and its significance to consumer responses. Further discussion is presented on the two personality traits that will be included as variables in this research (i.e. extraversion and conscientiousness).

The goal of the literature review also is to present relevant findings from the scholarship on consumer consumption, specifically as it relates to hedonic and utilitarian consumption as a basis for different consumer responses to social media ads based on product types. Prior research on personality traits and consumer consumption is discussed to highlight the significance of an
investigation into the role of personality traits in consumer consumption. Then, the role of self-concept is introduced as part of the discussion about the individual differences that could influence consumer responses. Regulatory Focus Theory, the theoretical framework that underpins this study is reviewed in terms of its basic concepts and assumptions. Then, research that highlights the relevance of the theoretical framework relative to the role of the theory in consumer consumption is explained. A summary of literature review presented at the end of the chapter segues into a recap of the research question and hypotheses for testing.

Digital Media and Branding

In today’s digital era, digital media is dominant globally (Wright, Khanfar, Harrington & Kizer, 2010). Generally, digital media refers to “any media that publish or diffuse information goods in digital formats” (Truong & Simmons, 2010, p. 239). The ascent of digital media in the field of advertising is notable with the concurrent increase in advertising spend on digital media (Truong & Simmons, 2010). Digital media and channels are gaining speed in its ubiquity (Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström & Freundt, 2014) and the growth of digital technologies coupled with consumers’ adoption of digital technologies has succeeded in pushing more brands to have a digital presence (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).

The pervasiveness of digital media has led to an unprecedented growth in the acquisition and sharing of information that shows no sign of waning. The progressive advancement of new media also has led to brands’ efforts to keep up and evolve with the digital era and the development of digitized communication features (Berman & Kesterson-Townes, 2012). For both business-to-consumer and business-to-business marketing, digital media formats have become a significant source of competitive advantage (Leeflang et al., 2014). The new ways that facilitate how consumers and brands interact redefine the most fundamental of relationships that develop between brands and consumers (Edelman, 2010). Consumers, businesses as well as
societal roles are also redefined with the influx of digital technologies. Digital media has had a significant impact on how advertisers reach today’s consumers (Smith, 2011). Current digital media allow advertisers to have access to platforms that recognize current consumers and that provide information about consumer behavior (Martin & Todorov, 2010). Digital media also permits advertisers to offer their consumers personalized relationships (Smith, 2011) in the sense that the bulk of available information on consumers facilitates the delivery of more relevant content to the consumer. Additionally, brands can seek out and engage consumers to express gratitude for their loyalty or address consumers concerns.

**Digital Media and Consumer Behavior**

It is undeniable that the rapid growth of technology in media and information delivery fields has and will continue to play a significant role in consumer behavior (Henry, 2001). The changes in consumer behavior applicable in this case include that of brand-consumer communication. These changes stem not only from the prevalence of digital technologies but also the consistency in the evolution of technology (e.g. internet developments, enhanced data capacity etc.). Consumer behavior is shaped by various factors, which include consumers, products, and computer networks, as well as marketers (Mohammadi, 2011; Goh, Heng & Lin, 2013; Sampad, 2009). Predictions about consumer power in the digital age were deeply intensified by the growth of Internet and later reignited by social media (Labrecque, Mathwick, Novak & Hofacker, 2013). For instance, features such as extensive connectivity, which characterize the social media sphere, have facilitated not only the creation of user-generated content but also the sharing of their voices globally (Labrecque et. al., 2013). In addition, the brand consumer communication dynamic, which predated the evolution of digital technologies that could enable consumers’ ability to interact electronically with brands, has shifted to reflect the changes that have occurred with digital technological advancement.
The 21st century digital evolution appears to have empowered consumers to use the assortment of digital media as a mouthpiece for their opinions, thereby connoting a shift away from the traditional one-way communication that existed between brands and consumers (Cova & Pace, 2006). A consumer-centered perspective has arguably become the dominant feature when it comes to brand-consumer communication today. Digitally connected consumers in the 21st century are endowed with the ability to make demands for personalized content on their own terms (Berman & Kesterson-Townes, 2012). The consistent evolution of digital technologies such as social media allow for “unprecedented levels of connectivity for individual customers and businesses worldwide that invest heavily in consumer-centricity” (Berman & Marshall, 2014, p. 9).

The affordances that the upsurge of digital technology and media offer companies means that companies have a plethora of options to choose from in determining how and where they allocate budgets to digital advertising in the effort to reach their target consumers. In the United States, according to industry forecasts, digital media ad revenue is expected to exceed television spending faster than projected (Tadena, 2015). In 2014, digital advertising spending rose to $49.5 billion in the United States, setting a new record (Sullivan, 2015). It is suggested that digital advertising’s imperative is to maintain consistent experience and communication with consumers across multiple avenues and touch points (Xu, 2014). Furthermore, there are several major digital advertising formats that advertisers can make use of to reach their consumers; opportunities for digital advertising include banners, social networks, pop-up ads, digital video, digital TV and other digital rich media, advergaming, mobile advertising, native advertising, and multi-channel advertising among others (Xu, 2014).
Companies must consider which of the numerous avenues available to use when allocating digital advertising spending. Messages that are designed for specific digital formats must be done in a way that complement, if not bolsters the effects of the selected media that companies decide is best for reaching their consumers. Advertisers must also recognize factors related to the ownership of multiple digital media that could influence how consumers respond to advertising messages they come across (Xu, 2014). Given the ample existing evidence of the import of digital media for both brands and consumers, the strategic use of digital media by brands can buttress their efforts in establishing and maintaining a visible social presence through which they can disseminate their brand related content. A useful approach that advertisers could keep in mind when determining how to develop messages that will resonate with consumers is the current trends in digital media and consumer behavior that can significantly influence how consumers attend to and process advertising messages that they view. This research focuses on the use of digital advertising in the form of social media ads generally and social network sites in particular.

**Social Media Advertising**

The advent and growth of social media was met with a concomitant acknowledgement and use of social media by advertisers. This is evident in the increasing media budgets that advertisers set for social media (Knoll, 2015). Social media affords its users an immediacy and directness that was previously nonexistent. Additionally, the emergence of social media has provided brands with an arsenal of means to engage their consumers and to foster a dialogic interaction (Shu-Chuan, Chen & Sung, 2015). The use of social media has significantly boosted consumer insights including consumers interact with the products or services they consume (Leeflang et al. 2014). As social media has redefined how brands communicate with their consumers, brands “increasingly are interested in establishing a social brand presence and
engaging with their fans, helping shape their customers’ experiences, and even leveraging their voices for greater marketing impact” (Lipsman, Mudd, Rich & Bruich, 2012, p. 41). Social media such as Facebook and Twitter are now often used as credible business tools (Royle & Laing, 2014).

As companies progressively leverage social media as plausible communication tools, Chu, Kamal and Kim (2013) suggest that an inference can be made about individuals’ attitudes towards social media advertising based on their beliefs about advertising on social media. Though the concept of social media advertising has not been explicitly stated (Chu & Kim, 2015), there is some insight into the concept of social media advertising. Specifically, social media advertising is “an online ad that incorporates user interactions that the consumer has agreed to display and be shared. The resulting ad displays these interactions along with the user's persona (picture and/or name) within the ad content” (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2009, p. 4). Therefore, social media ads are unique in terms of the opportunities that consumers have to engage with the ads they come across. Given consumer skepticism with most forms of advertising, social media presents avenues through which brands can instill trust in their consumers while reaching a widespread audience (Leeflang et al., 2014).

Social media can also assist in the promotion and dissemination of information about brands. Though social media use in marketing communications is in its nascent stages, research has been conducted to examine the use of social media (De Vries, Gensler & Leeflang, 2012; Knoll, 2015, Park, Rodgers & Stemmler, 2011; Spiller, Tuten & Carpenter, 2011; Vanden Bergh, Lee, Quilliam & Hove, 2011). Particularly, research on social media has looked at consumer attitudes towards social media advertising, consumer socialization, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), as well as brand impression, reach, and frequency (Chu & Kim, 2011; Taylor et al.,
Chu and Kim (2011) were interested in investigating the determinants of consumers’ likelihood of engaging in eWOM. With an understanding of the social and communal features of social networking sites, they examined the relationship between social relationship factors such as tie strength, homophily, trust, normative and informational interpersonal influence to eWOM. Their empirical investigation in which they developed and tested a conceptual model revealed that tie strength, trust and, normative and interpersonal influence had a positive relationship with the consumers’ general eWOM behavior. Chu and Kim (2011) also concluded that their study not only outlined the eWOM process in the context of social networking sites but also empirically provide evidence of social relationship factors as a significant part of eWOM behavior in the online realm of social networking sites.

In another study, armed with the uses and gratifications theory as a framework, Taylor et al. (2011) tried to provide evidence for the effectiveness of social networking sites as an advertising media. In their study, they developed and tested a model of various factors such as perceived informative and entertainment value of advertising content, peer influence, privacy concerns, and self-brand congruity, among others, on consumers’ attitudes towards social media advertising. As a result of their empirical investigations, conclusions derived from Taylor et al.’s (2011) study included that consumers were more likely to have positive responses to social media advertising particularly when the advertising presented content that had either entertainment, informational or social value highlighting the important of the relative utility of social networking advertising content.

In tandem with the prevalence of social media platforms has been the increase in social media ads (Chen et al., 2015). By 2016, an estimated 2.3 billion people around the world will be social network users, an increase from 1.4 billion in 2012 (eMarketer, 2013). Research suggests
that consumers prefer companies who engage with them on social media (Rydén, Ringberg & Wilke, 2015). Research suggests that compared to more traditional communication avenues, consumers find information delivered through social media to be more trustworthy (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). In particular, information presented through social media about brands and their products/services may be assessed in a better light in contrast to more traditional media. Or instance, industry research indicates that earned media, especially via recommendations of friends and family, is trusted more than other forms of advertising (Nielson, 2012). Social media has also shaped consumer behavior, particularly consumers’ decision-making processes as consumers not only have access to brand related information that determines their purchase intentions but have an avenue through which to voice their opinions (Wang et al., 2012). Hence, there is value in looking at the role of social media ads in consumer behavior from both a theoretical and practical perspective.

A more nuanced form of social media advertising that exists is that of social network advertising. Social network sites (SNSs), which fall under the umbrella of social media, are by definition, “Internet-based services that give individuals the ability to (a) create a public or semipublic profile, (b) share the profile with other users, and (c) view and track one’s own connections as well as those made by others” (Petrocchi et al., 2015, p. 157). SNSs are arguably the most prevalent and high profile type of social media (Chan-Olmsted, Cho & Lee, 2013). Examples of this further classification this type of social media include popular social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter among others (Johnson & Kaye, 2015). These SNSs facilitate its users creation and sharing of content and communication with their online friends (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2013). Specific to SNS is the focus on the creation and maintenance of social networks (Van Noort, Antheunis & van Reijmersdal, 2012).
Taylor, Lewin and Strutton (2011) define social network advertising as “a general term capturing all forms of advertising—whether explicit (e.g. banner advertising and commercial videos) or implicit (e.g. fan pages or firm–related “tweets”) – that are delivered through social network advertising” (p. 259-260). Alternatively, social network advertising can also be thought of as “ad formats that engage the social context of the user viewing the ads” (Jung et al., 2015, p. 2). One of the ways in which social network advertising differs from traditional media is that selection of the target audience is based on demographic (e.g. gender) or psychographics (e.g. life values) and integrates user interactions that consumers agree to display and share.

Additionally, social networking advertising can consist of the use of social network users’ data such as their names, groups, installed applications, network connections among others (Jung et al., 2015). In accordance with the popularity of social media, SNS advertising spending is on the rise (De Keyzer, Dens & De Pelsmacker, 2015; Van Noort et al., 2012). This is not surprising as SNSs are reported to be the most popular social media applications among consumers (Van Noort et al., 2012). SNS users, in addition to embracing advertising, are active promoters of such content (Jung, Shim, Jin & Khang, 2015). This is an important factor to consider given that social network advertising attempts to entice consumers through varied strategies (Jung et al., 2015).

As highlighted earlier, the advantages of utilizing social network advertising include it being a viable but less expensive option to traditional media avenues (Jung et al., 2015). Furthermore, advertisers are able to better target their audience based on user data that social networks provide. Consumers also tend to believe recommendations from family and friends of earned media via social networks (Jung et al., 2015). For instance, industry research by Nielson (2012) reported findings from a survey of over 28,000 consumers globally where 92% of these
consumers ranked earned media highest over other forms of advertising on trust suggesting the value that earned media can have in influencing consumers’ attitudes especially when friends and families of consumers serve as a conduit for such advertising messages.

Curiously, despite the tremendous growth of social media and by extension social networks sites, research is lacking with respect to the determinants of consumer responses to advertisements on these sites (De Keyzer et al., 2015; Tucker, 2014) particularly in terms of personality traits though research suggests that preference for social network site use is related to personality traits (Hughes, Rowe, Batey & Lee, 2012). Noteworthy is Chen et al.’s (2015) study which examined the use of personality traits obtained from social media texts in determining consumers’ responses to ad targeting based on the predicted personality traits and found that some personality traits influenced consumer responses. Research by Clark and Çallılı (2014) suggests that consumers’ response to social media ads may vary based on personality traits. Different media engenders different results with regard to marketing and communication efforts for consumers (Chen & Hsieh, 2012). Given the proliferation of different social media platforms, advertisers need to understand what platforms are most effective for their marketing efforts. A question that needs to be answered therefore has to do with which social media platforms may have an effect on the consumers’ attitudes and behavior towards ads personalized according to their personality traits. This research seeks to add to the scarce body of research that has focused on exploring the factors that influence consumer responses to advertisements on social media and SNS specifically.

**Facebook**

This research focuses on Facebook as the SNS of interest in exploring the overall research question this study seeks to answer. Additionally, this study is in response to Knoll’s (2015) remarks which suggested that future research should devote more attention to the
intended influences of advertising on consumers’ attitudes and behaviors by looking at specific instances of social media ads. In this case, the present study focuses on the social networking site, Facebook, and consumer responses to these ads.

The choice of Facebook as the social media platform to examine the influence of personality traits on social media ads is contingent on the standard and nature of Facebook as a social media platform. It is widely considered to be one of the most popular SNS. This is further evident in reports which suggest that in the United States, Facebook is credited with constituting 56.5% of all social media site visits (De Keyzer et al., 2015). Facebook has become a pervasive and consequential part of the lives of millions daily (Hall & Pennington, 2013). Facebook, in over a decade since its creation in 2004, has materialized as a powerful social marketing and advertising platform (Błachnio, Przepiórka & Rudnicka, 2013; Lipsman et al., 2012). As mentioned earlier, by 2016, an estimated 2.3 billion people around the world will be social network users (eMarketer, 2013). In particular, Facebook, on average in September 2015 had Daily active users (DAUs) totaling 1.01 billion people, along with 1.55 billion Monthly active users (MAUs) as of September 30, 2015 (Facebook Newsroom, 2016). Young consumers are a considerable bulk of these social media users. For instance, young adults account for 90% of individuals who use social media (Perrin, 2015). As such, these young consumers represent a segment that is an interest to both researchers and marketers in determining various psychological dimensions that underline their online consumer behavior. Facebook is the dominant social networking site within the social media market (Patterson, 2015).

The existing social media ecology allows individuals to employ social media as podiums for varied reasons based on specific digital architecture and/or functionality. Kietzmann et al. (2011) offer a framework to define social media by employing seven functional building blocks
namely: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. Identity deals with the degree to which individuals can share their identities in a social media realm. Conversations refer to the degree individuals communicate with others on social media. Sharing represents the extent to which content is shared, disseminated and consumed by individuals. Presence denotes the level to which individuals can determine if they have access to other users. Relationships signify the degree to which individuals on social media can have some form of association. Reputation refers to which individuals can recognize their own and others’ position in a social media environment. Lastly, groups refer to the degree to which individuals can create communities and mini-communities.

In their analysis, Kietzmann et al. (2011) noted that social media platforms tend to converge on at least three of the building blocks. In their illustration of the framework with LinkedIn, Foursquare, YouTube and Facebook, Kietzmann et al. (2011) contrasted Facebook’s functionality that centered on identity, conversations, reputation, relationships and presence against the others, demonstrating Facebook’s versatility in functionality. Social media platforms such as Facebook extend the degree to which individuals can disclose their identities in a social media environment (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Consequently, there may be variations in how individuals portray themselves on different social media platforms (Emanuel et al., 2014).

In particular, Facebook, unlike other social media platforms, enable individuals to set up profiles where they can create and maintain their online social identities. The functionality of Facebook is such that it allows its users to create visible profiles that, at the least, require the name, gender, date of birth, and email address of the user. In addition, Facebook users can post information about themselves that they wish to disclose either privately or publicly. Facebook permits its users to send messages (private and public) and communicate with instantaneous
messaging (Petrocchi et al., 2015). Błachnio et al. (2013) contend that based on the diversity of its applications, Facebook plays a multiplicity of roles. It is a method of communication, an entertainment platform and a popular tool in the promotions and marketing field. Facebook’s digital architecture presents users with varied alternatives that enhance their online self-presentation strategies. Again, the digital architecture of Facebook permits individuals to craft narratives that depict their personalities. Facebook’s functionality is premised on personal self-presentation compared to other social media platforms such as LinkedIn, which is geared towards a portrayal of one’s professional self (Van Dijck, 2013). Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012) in their review of the determinants of Facebook use proposed a two-prong model of Facebook in which they suggested that the need to belong and the need for self-presentation constitute the predominant social needs of Facebook use. Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012) further argue an association between personality traits such as extraversion and neuroticism and Facebook use relative to the need for self-presentation. In essence, these authors assert that Facebook can serve as an avenue through which personality traits can aid individuals in their identity construction and presentation.

The extensive research linking personality traits to Facebook use denotes the popularity of Facebook versus other social media to individuals. These psychological determinants of Facebook use highlight that the architecture and functionality of Facebook may be more appealing compared to other forms of social media for certain personality traits. Undoubtedly, the very nature of Facebook may determine how these individuals assess ads on Facebook versus ads on other social media platforms. Facebook facilitates the creation and maintenance of relationships, identities, conversations, relationships and presence (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Extraverts and conscientious individuals may be predisposed to evaluate Facebook ads
differentially since other social media platforms may not have the same functionality that Facebook provides its users.

Błachnio, et al. (2013) in their recent exploration into the main trends in Facebook research found that personality and individual differences among users, the role of self-efficacy, as well as motivations for specific social network sites were among the most examined topics. The body of scholarly research has revealed, among others, individual behavior on social networks generally and Facebook in particular. Research shows that Facebook users tend to have more social capital (Burke, Marlow & Lentow, 2010) and that users’ Facebook profiles portray their actual personality and not ideal selves (Back et al., 2010).

There exists a stream of research that indicates the association between Facebook use and personality (e.g. Back et al., 2010; Gosling et al., 2011; Seidman, 2013; Winter et al., 2014). For instance, research shows the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and Facebook use (Seidman, 2013). There is evidence that individuals demonstrate their actual personality and not idealization of their selves on Facebook (Back et al., 2010). Research has also examined the link between Facebook status updates and personality traits (Winter et al., 2014). Frequency of Facebook use has also been linked to personality traits (Gosling et al., 2011). Furthermore, it has been established that Facebook motives can be predicted with personality with individuals who are more open more likely to desire to use Facebook for social purposes than those who are less open (Ross et al., 2009). Much of the research on social media has focused on examining the links between psychological traits and the use of social media. Existing research suggests that individual differences could play a significant role in steering online behavior (Brandtzæg, Lüders & Skjetne, 2010). Thus, this research examines how individual differences might factor into consumers response to Facebook ads.
Facebook ads can be categorized under Facebook newsfeed ads, Facebook mobile newsfeed ad and Facebook right-hand column advertisements (i.e. display type ads) (Mao & Zhang, 2015; Patterson, 2014). This categorization refers to the placement of the ads on Facebook. This research focuses on Facebook Newsfeed ads that appear in the newsfeed of Facebook users. A comprehension of the characteristics of Newsfeed ads will be enlightening in terms of understanding how Facebook users may respond to these types of ads. The Facebook newsfeed ad is most conspicuous of the ad placements that Facebook offers to advertisers (Patterson, 2014). This newsfeed ad naturally appears in a Facebook user’s feed in addition to content that they typically see from their online friends and people they follow. It’s distinguished by the disclaimer “sponsored,” which attempts to delineate the newsfeed ad from regular Facebook content. However, Facebook users can still comment and like the ad similar to other posts on Facebook (Patterson, 2014). As it’s the most prominent of the ad placement Facebook offers, the newsfeed ad may elicit more attention than the other types of ads. This research, thus, focuses on Facebook newsfeed ads in exploring individuals’ responses to social media ads.

In summary, Facebook serves an important backdrop for this study. Substantive evidence within the personality literature points to the relationship between personality traits and Facebook use. Additionally, Facebook’s position as one of the top social networking sites presents the platform as an important piece to consider when investigating consumer attitudinal and behavioral responses to brand communications via social networking sites.

**Role of Personality Traits in Consumer Responses**

One of the basic assumptions underlying this research study is that individual differences do indeed play a significant and sometimes overlooked role in determining consumers’ responses to advertising content. Specifically, this research posits that individual differences in the form of
personality traits can influence how consumers react in relation to their attitude and behavioral intention towards advertising messages they come across on their social media sites.

**Personality Traits and Consumer Responses**

Personality traits are “relatively enduring, automatic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that characterize individuals’ typical ways of responding to different situations” (Hudson & Roberts, 2014, p. 68). Hudson and Roberts (2014) note that personality traits are only one aspect of individuals’ personalities. Furthermore, motives, as another aspect of individuals’ personality, can also influence individuals’ attitudes and behaviors. Personality traits have received very little attention in marketing (Clark & Çallı, 2014; Myers, Sen & Alexandrov, 2010) though there is an apparent shift towards personalized media messages. Consumers, based on their preferences and their personality traits, might respond in variation towards advertising messages.

Academically as well as practically, there is significant value in understanding how social media users’ consumer behavior as well as how they interact with the forms of advertising they come across whichever social media platform they access (Clark & Çallı, 2014). Though having a grasp on how consumers respond to advertisements based on their personality traits may provide advertisers with an advantage in developing the right advertising message, the applicability of such insights has not translated into research on consumers’ personality traits (Clark & Çallı, 2014). This research seeks to fill the gap in literature by attempting to contribute insights into how consumers’ personality traits can influence their responses to social media ads.

Though scarce, there is extant research on personality traits and its influence on consumers’ responses to advertising though some of this research employed personality scales specific to the country/culture of research (Clark & Çallı, 2014). Prior work on personality traits and consumer responses to ads has investigated responses to ad appeals in advertising (e.g.
Research has established solid relationships between personality traits and consumers’ cognitive as well as emotional responses to advertisements and persuasive messages (Luchs & Mooradian, 2012; Hirsch, Kang & Bodenhausen, 2012; Moon, 2002). Mooradian’s (1996) study, which examined individuals’ personality on ad-evoked feelings and attitudes, found that extraversion and neuroticism were able to predict consumers’ emotional responses to the ads. Orth, Malkewitz and Bee’s (2010) research indicated that for individuals who were more neurotic and introverted, they experienced more mixed emotions and also had less favorable attitudes to ads.

Evidence from research on personality traits and advertising (e.g. Clark & Çalli, 2014; Hirsh et al., 2012; Mooradian, 1996; Orth et al., 2010) suggests that understanding the role consumers’ personality traits play in their responses to advertisements on social media may serve as an avenue through which advertisers can segment their consumers (Clark & Çalli, 2014). This research is predicated on the notion that personality traits, as enduring individual traits, are of high import in determining how consumers respond to advertisements on social media.

Though there has been a revitalization of research on consumer personality concomitant with the growth of personality psychology (Luchs & Mooradian, 2012; Matzler et al., 2006), there is still the need for research into consumer personality traits and its role in consumer behavior. Thus, the objective of this study is to examine how a consumer’s personality can influence his/her responses to social media ads. Specifically, this research focuses on the Big-Five personality framework in the examination of this objective with the hopes that significant insights can be gained through this investigation which will contribute to the understanding of the psychological processes that shape consumer responses to social media ads.
History of the Big-Five Personality Traits

The conceptualization of personality has been explored broadly and abstractly from diverse theoretical perspectives. Personality traits constitute one of the most often examined level of personality (John & Srivastay, 1999). Prior to the development of the taxonomy of the big five personality traits, researchers as well as practitioners were inundated with a high magnitude of personality scales that lacked structure and rationale (John & Srivastay, 1999).

The origin of the Big-Five personality traits can be traced to researchers Allport and Odbert’s (1936) lexical hypothesis, which postulated that the most significant individual differences are encoded in language (as cited in Borghans, Duckworth, Heckman & Ter Weel, 2008). Allport and Odbert, after scrutinizing English dictionaries, discovered 17,953 words that were personality describing. These words were later condensed into 4,504 personality describing adjectives (Borghans et al. 2008). Allport and Odbert’s work served as an initial template for personality lexicon and stimulated other researchers to explore the potential dimensions of personality traits (John & Srivastay, 1999).

Cattel’s (cited in John & Srivastay, 1999) seminal work attempted to provide a taxonomy of traits that would provide a “systematic framework for distinguishing, ordering, and naming individual differences in people’s behavior and experience” (John & Srivastay, 1999, p. 104). Subsequently, the discovery and elucidation of the Big Five dimensions is attributable to the work of several different researchers working independently and on different samples (Borghans et al., 2008; John & Srivastay, 1999). Specifically, researchers such as Fiske (1949) who developed simplified descriptions of factor structures derived from sources including self-ratings and peer ratings from Cattell’s prior work and Tupes and Christal (1969) who were involved in further clarifying the factors (as cited in John & Srivastay, 1999). The five superordinate dimensions that were often denoted as extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness.
emotional stability versus neuroticism and intellect or openness were what ultimately became known as the Big Five (John & Srivastay, 1999). As John and Srivastay (1999) assert, the Big Five framework “provides a descriptive taxonomy that organizes the myriad natural-language and scientific trait concepts into a single classificatory framework” (p. 124).

The label, the Big Five, was chosen to reflect an emphasis on the broad range of each of the five factors subsumed under the personality trait structure. In other words, each of the five dimensions represents a summary of a larger, more distinct set of personality characteristics (John & Srivastay, 1999). However, it remains as a widely acknowledged and accepted taxonomy of personality traits (Borghans et al., 2008; Hamby, Taylor, Snowden & Peterson, 2015).

While the Big Five is widely accepted by researchers (Borghans et al. 2008; Hamby et al., 2015), critics of this taxonomy contend that the Big Five taxonomy is atheoretical (Borghans et al., 2008; John & Srivastay, 1999). Specifically, the Big Five dimensions that have been generated as a result of tests and self-reports have not yet been expounded by a basic theory (Borghans et al., 2008). Other criticisms are associated with its broad nature. In terms of parsimony, other models with fewer factors have been proposed in examining personality traits (Borghans et al., 2008). For example, some researchers offer three factor models of personality traits (e.g. Eysenck, 1991). Despite some of the criticisms leveled against the Big Five, it is considered as recognizing some of the significant facets of personality (Hughes et al., 2012). This research aligns itself with the accepted views of the value of the Big Five personality traits as providing worthy insights into the nuances of individuals’ personality. Accordingly, following this section will be an overview of the facets of personality that the Big Five Personality Traits

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acknowledge to showcase the relevance of the consideration of personality traits in consumer responses to media messages.

**Big Five Personality Traits**

Personality is “unique and cross-situationally consistent and is usually described in terms of traits” (Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, p.91). Ajzen (2005) defines personality traits as “characteristics of an individual that exert pervasive influence on a broad range of trait-relevant responses” (p. 2). A personality trait is one of the ways through which consumer behavior can be explained (Picazo-Vela, Chou, Melcher & Pearson, 2010). Personality researchers, generally accept the Big-Five personality framework, as a means through which personality can be measured and defined (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Picazo-Vela et al., 2010). The widespread use of the Big-Five framework implies that to a large extent, individual differences in personality can be aligned along the five broad classifications of personality (Pinho, Loureiro & Kastenholz, 2012). The five factors are 1) extraversion, 2) agreeableness, 3) conscientiousness, 4) neuroticism and 5) openness to experience. For the purposes of this research consumers’ personalities in concept is discussed in terms of the Big-Five personality framework.

The Big Five personality framework consists of traits believed to encapsulate the full makeup of an individual’s personality (Tan & Yang, 2014). Previous studies have demonstrated the integrity as well as validity of this framework (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Tan & Yang, 2014). Applications of this framework are varied and establish its role in behavior such as leadership (Judge, Bono, Illies & Gerhardt, 2002), use of Internet applications (Tang & Yang, 2014) and student career choice (Bancali, 2006). Overall, the widespread application of the Big Five personality in different research contexts demonstrates its validity in suggesting different facets of individuals’ personality.
Each of the five traits inherent to the Big-Five personality framework has distinct characteristics. The Big Five personality framework models personality traits as dimensions and measures differences in individuals’ basic dispositions (Gerber, Huber, Doherty, D., Dowling & Panagopoulos, 2013). Extraversion is linked with “sociability, dominance, ambitiousness, and assertiveness” (Mehmetoglu, 2012, p. 96). The extraversion dimension relates to the degree to which an individual is friendly and outgoing (Balaji & Raghavan, 2009). Conscientiousness is defined in terms of an individual’s dependability, organization, self-discipline and persistence. Furthermore, this trait also consists of an individual being responsible, thoughtful and achievement oriented (Back, Schmukle & Egloff, 2006; Balaji & Raghavan, 2009).

Agreeableness as a trait refers to characteristics such as likeability and cooperation. An agreeable person is more likely to be trusting and cooperative. Other characteristics subsumed under agreeableness include altruism, courtesy and straightforwardness (Back et al., 2006).

Neuroticism is characterized as personal insecurity, depression as well as proneness to stress. For individuals who are exhibit neuroticism as a primary personality trait, they tend to be anxious and have insecurities. Openness to experience as a personality trait refers to the propensity to be unconventional, curious, imaginative and intelligent (Balaji & Raghavan, 2009).

The Big-Five personality traits have been employed in different research contexts. It has been used to examine consumer perception of service quality (e.g. Fan & Du, 2010). Matzler, Faullant, Renzl and Leiter’s (2005) research examined the Big Five personality traits in the context of customer satisfaction. Personality traits have also been examined in the context of its relationship to hedonic value and brand affect (Matzler, Bidmon & Grabner-Kräuter, 2006). Prior research has also provided evidence of the role of personality traits in moderating consumers’ web content consideration and choice (Ho, Davern & Tam, 2008). There is a dearth
Empirical research on the role of consumers’ personality traits relative to the Big-Five framework is limited in recent literature. Clark and Çallı’s (2014) study is among the few studies (e.g. Hirsh et al., 2012; Matzler et al., 2006) that offer important insights about the role of personality traits in consumer responses to advertisements. Clark and Çallı’s (2014) study provides an illustration of the assumption that the Big-Five personality traits may provide insights into consumer responses to advertisements. The research examined whether the Big-Five personality framework can be used to predict consumers’ responses to social media ads. The results from the study indicated that consumers responses may vary based on the consumers’ personality type.

Relevant to this research is two of the Big Five personality dimensions-extraversion and conscientiousness-as these dimensions appear to have interesting dynamics when considered with social media use. Additionally, there are equivocal results when it comes to the role of the Big-Five traits relative to consumer behavior within research. Thus, these two dimensions are discussed in more detail hereafter.

Extraversion

Extraversion is a prominent dimension of personality trait within the personality psychology (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen & Barrick, 1999). Extraversion is usually regarded as being sociable. However, it is suggested that extraversion encompasses a broader construct that includes other factors (Judge et al., 1999).

The hallmarks of extraversion include being socially oriented, dominant and ambitious as well as assertive (Judge et al., 1999). Extraversion is also distinguished by ambition and ascendance (Matzler et al., 2006). Extraversion is also linked to the experience of positive
emotions and the likelihood of having more close friends (Judge et al., 1999). In other words, extraversion represents a disposition to experience positive emotions (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010). Thus extraverts are characterized as individuals who are driven to seek enjoyment and stimulation (Wang & Yang, 2008). Extraversion is usually ascribed to the regulatory function that allows actions or behaviors that are reward and approach oriented (Bogg & Vo, 2014). Some researchers (e.g. Karl, Peluchette & Harland, 2007) argue that individuals who are high in extraversion are inclined positively towards hedonic value oriented behavior.

Within the consumer research literature, extraversion has been shown in a number of studies to influence consumer responses in a number of ways in the context of consumer behavior (e.g. Chang, 2006; Doss & Carstens, 2014; Matzler et al., 2006; Mooridian, 1996; Styśko-Kunkowska & Borecka, 2010; Wheeler, Petty & Bizer, 2005;). Extraversion influences consumer responses such as product and ad evaluations (Styśko-Kunkowska & Borecka, 2010). For instance, research suggests that extraversion indirectly influences brand affect leading to positive attitudes and purchase intention (Matzler et al., 2006). Extraversion has also been linked to consumers’ brand evangelism (Doss & Carstens, 2014) and accrued loyalty (Wan, Chen & Tsai, 2010).

A considerable amount of research has been conducted focusing on extraversion as a predictor of users’ behavior in social media (Winter et al., 2014). To illustrate, research on the influence of personality traits and social media use suggests that Facebook users are more likely to be extraverts (Ryan & Xenos, 2011). Correa, Hinsley and Zuniga’s (2010) research on the relationships between personality traits and social media use also revealed that extraversion was positively related to social media use with individuals more likely to be frequent users of social media. Furthermore, there is evidence, which indicates that extraverts typically have more...
Facebook friends and belong to more Facebook groups (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Ryan & Xenos, 2011). Extraverts are not only more frequent Facebook users; they also tend to have higher engagement with Facebook (Gosling et al., 2011).

While the empirical research highlighted above do provide some knowledge about the degree to which extraversion plays a role in individuals’ behavior on social media, these studies do not offer insights into how extraversion is reflected in consumers’ responses to specific advertising content they are exposed to on social media. Bearing in mind that there’s evidence to suggest that extraversion is positively associated with the number of social media friends as well as the frequency of social media use (Winter et al., 2014), this study examines extraversion with the notion of the significance that this personality trait may have in influencing individuals’ social media use and behavior.

**Conscientiousness**

Conscientiousness is one of the personality traits that will be explored in this research. As one of the Big-Five personality traits, conscientiousness is a construct that can provide an interesting perspective on how consumers may respond to ad messages they come across on social media. As will be highlighted, research suggests that conscientiousness and social media use have important implications that advertisers have to consider when developing messages for their consumers.

‘Superego strength’, ‘prudence’ and ‘control’ are among the plethora of ways that conscientiousness has been described (Mondak & Halperin, 2008). Conscientiousness refers to the aspect of personality trait that deals an individual’s propensity to be hardworking, lawful, responsible towards others, and to possess self-control (Roberts, Lejuez, Krueger, Richards & Hill, 2014). Related to conscientiousness are the three aspects of achievement orientation, dependability and orderliness. Specifically, the achievement orientation refers to characteristics
such as hard work and persistence. Dependability refers to being responsible and careful. Lastly, orderliness relates to planning and organization. Taken together, conscientiousness is associated to an individual’s desire for achievement, order and persistence as well as his/her level of self-control (Judge et al., 1999). Thus, conscientiousness can also be considered in terms of individual differences relative to achievement and organization (Shavar & Brennan, 1992).
Conscientious people tend to be reliable, self-disciplined, task-oriented and dutiful. (Mondpiak & Halperin, 2008; Picazo-Vela et al., 2010). Individuals who are high in conscientiousness are purposeful and strong-willed (Hoon & Tan, 2008; Picazo-Vela et al., 2010). It has been suggested that conscientious individuals may forego gratifying their own selves when engaging in shopping experiences (Mooradian & Olver, 1996). Furthermore, conscientious individuals are also cautious (Wang & Yang, 2008).

The disposition of individuals who are conscientious can reflect in their consumer behavior. Past research has linked conscientiousness to the utilitarian dimension of shopping where consumers are motivated to make rational and functional consumption choices (Chen & Lee, 2008; Guido, 2006; Guido, Peluso, Capestro & Miglietta, 2015). Supporting this idea is research, which demonstrated a negative relation between conscientiousness and excessive buying (Otero-López & Villardefrancos, 2013). Research also points to a positive relationship between conscientiousness and consumer and brand loyalty (Smith, 2012). Conscientiousness has also been shown to be related to motivations to find bargains and attention to learning about new products (Mooradian & Olver, 1996). Furthermore, conscientiousness can influence individuals by leading them to develop a passion for online shopping activities (Wang & Yang, 2008). Interestingly, research suggests that individuals who are low in conscientiousness are more willing share marketing messages to others (Chiu, Hsieh, Kao & Lee, 2007).
This sense of duty that is usual among highly conscientious people may influence a variety of their behaviors. In the context of this research, highly conscientious individuals may respond more favorable to products that emphasize appeals that match the sense of duty for highly conscientious individuals.

Extant research on the relationships between personality traits and online activities indicate the role of personality traits particularly in social media use (Carpenter, 2012; Kuo & Tang, 2014; Leung 2013; Ross et al., 2009). For instance, it has been found that Facebook users are less conscientious (Ryan & Xenos, 2011). Gosling et al.’s (2011) also indicate that individuals who are low in conscientiousness spend more time on Facebook and on viewing pages. Prior research, as mentioned earlier suggests that individuals who are conscientious are more likely to forward marketing messages. Thus, this personality trait may influence consumer responses to messages beyond advertising effectiveness to other online consumer behaviors such as electronic word of mouth (eWOM), a generally important issue for researchers as well as marketers (Lee, Kim & Kim, 2012). eWOM is an important consideration for advertisers as it serves as the bridge between different consumers and a broader network consisting of an expanded network of immediate and the online public (Cheung, Luo, Sia & Chen, 2009).

Researchers have identified electronic word of mouth, or eWOM, as among the most important measures used to gauge companies’ progress in galvanizing positive relationships with customers. The consensus within literature is that word of mouth is vital and has a more pronounced effect on consumers than other forms of marketing communication (Daugherty and Hoffman 2014; Teng, Wei Khong, Wei Goh and Yee Loong Chong 2014). The age of social media presents consumers with unprecedented agency in when and how they choose to engage with brands and brand related information. With the influx of advertising messages on social
media, consumers’ willingness to engage in eWOM is an important factor that brands can and should encourage given the nature of social media to serve as an amplifier of consumer opinions. eWOM has the potential to activate consumers as brand agents as willing participants in the co-creation of brand messages and meanings as exhibited through social media advocacy behaviors (Kwon, Eunseon, Ratneshwar and Thorson 2017), such as “liking” brands on Facebook, leaving comments on brand pages and sharing postings from brand pages. This implies that consumers’ individual traits not only might influence their responses to social media ads, but also might translate into eWOM, a promotions opportunity that can be effective in reinforcing brand interest and purchase decisions. Thus, eWOM is an important consideration for advertisers as the bridge between different consumers and the broader, expanded network of immediate and the online prospects (Cheung, Luo, Sia and Chen 2009).

Given that consumers sometimes rely on eWOM to make purchase decisions, how individual differences might impact consumers’ eWOM behavior is an interesting line of inquiry that is warranted with the rise of social media advertising. Consumers prefer eWOM and tend to find it more persuasive than brand generated information (Lee, Rodgers & Kim, 2009). Consumers’ personality traits may influence their responses to social media ads beyond attitudinal response to other online consumer behaviors such as electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and purchase intention. Specifically, these differences may interplay with regulatory focus and product type to translate into behavioral intentions to participate in eWOM and purchase the product. Consumers’ propensity of engaging in eWOM, as argued herein, may be a function of the pairing of a specific type of regulatory focus message with ad appeal only when the type of personality trait is taken into account. Coupled with the stated above prior research on
the role of conscientiousness in consumer behavior, this research extends and posits the role conscientiousness in consumer response to social media ads, specifically, Facebook ads.

To summarize, an examination into the role of personality traits on consumers’ responses has to be placed within the context of the specific social media platform as there are personality dynamics that may influence consumers’ use of these platforms. In particular, as outlined above, extraversion and conscientiousness have been linked to Facebook use. It is therefore important to consider these personality traits and how they can interact with how consumers’ respond particularly to social media ads on Facebook. Furthermore, research suggests that Facebook profiles reflect the actual personality of its users and not self-idealized personalities (Back et al., 2010). These two personality traits may influence the way consumers’ process information differently since each personality trait is associated with its distinct features and motivations.

Another important aspect of the conversation on consumer responses to social media messages is the degree of influence that consumers’ individual needs play into their consumption of the products and media messages. In the next section, this research offers an overview of literature on consumer consumption of products and the dichotomization that has been given within literature to products based on needs that individuals associate with those products.

**Hedonic and Utilitarian Consumption**

There is general acceptance that products satisfy both hedonic and utilitarian needs, two key needs when it comes to consumption of products (Roy & Ng, 2012). Researchers differentiate between hedonic and utilitarian motivations (e.g. Geuens, De Pelsmacker & Faseur, 2011; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; O’curry & Strahilevitz, 2001). Hedonic consumption relates to when product purchases are done for “the sensation derived from the experience of using the products;” in contrast, utilitarian consumption at the other end of this need spectrum, refers to what consumers get from “the functions performed by the product” (Voss, Spangenberg &
Furthermore, whereas hedonic consumption is related more to pleasure and the emotional experience an individual gains from a product, utilitarian consumption is depicted by rational activities grounded in the instrumental attributes of the product to solve a particular problem (Guido, Amatulli & Peluso, 2014). Motivations behind utilitarian consumption are driven by functional needs (O’curry & Strahilevitz, 2001). Products that satisfy utilitarian needs, for example laundry detergent, are considered sometimes as necessities (Hartman, Shim, Barber & O'Brien, 2006; O’curry & Strahilevitz, 2001).

This study postulates that consumer responses to social media ads may vary based on the consumption domains of the products being advertised. Consumers engage in hedonic and/or utilitarian consumption motives in attempts to obtain maximum consumption value. As research has established that consumers centrally either have a hedonic or utilitarian motive, consumers may respond differently to products that stimulate hedonic consumption versus products that stimulate utilitarian consumption (Hartman et al., 2006). Research suggests that hedonically stimulating products (e.g. chocolate cake, designer clothes and luxury watches etc.) evoke emotional arousal and are assessed on features such as symbolic meaning and taste while utilitarian stimulating products (e.g. fruit salad, laundry detergent, microwaves and minivans etc.) do not elicit such arousal because they are assessed based on cognitive benefits (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000; Lim & Ang, 2008; O’curry & Strahilevitz, 2001). Hedonically stimulating product types are usually consumed for pleasure while utilitarian products are mostly deemed as essentials. Research on hedonic and utilitarian product consumption suggests that hedonically stimulating products elicit more favorable responses with consumers preferring hedonically stimulation products to products that stimulate utilitarian consumption (Lim & Ang, 2008).
Undoubtedly, social media ad messages may contain brand or product messages that are targeted towards encouraging hedonic or utilitarian consumption. For instance, one may come across a social media ad centered on a hedonically stimulating product such as designer clothing. Another may come across a social media ad promoting a laundry detergent brand or a car insurance service. Of special interest in this study is an investigation of how consumers respond to social media ads that promote products, which stimulate hedonic or utilitarian consumption with consumption specific appeal. Additionally, this study suggests that how these products are presented with regard to specific message characteristics may also play a role in consumer responses.

In many instances, products may either have a single primary function or several functions (Schlosser 1998; Shavitt 1989). To illustrate, a car can simultaneously evoke social identity concerns through the social status associated with the car and evoke performance concerns that can be represented through its safety features (Schlosser 1998). As such, other products can also be labeled as multipl-

e-functioned products by virtue of its ability to serve diverse functions. On the premise of the multiplicity of functions that a product can have, it is evident that for such products, the effectiveness of persuasive appeals is not universal (Schlosser 1998). As Schlosser (1998) contends, the motivational relevancy of the product appeal is imperative. Therefore “appeals that directly address the function served by the object are more persuasive than those addressing irrelevant functions” (Schlosser 1998, 346). Building on this supposition, this study posits that product appeals emphasized in advertisements that are address either the utilitarian appeal or hedonic appeal of a product may generate varying responses.

**The Role of Personality Traits in Hedonic and Utilitarian Consumption**

Research has attempted to determine the role of personality traits to consumers’ responses to different product types. An illustration is the study by Matzler et al. (2006) that
looked at the relationship between personality traits and hedonic value, brand affect as well as loyalty. Specifically the research examined the personality traits of extraversion and openness to experience. The results revealed that these personality traits were positively related to hedonic product value.

To date, however, extant research on the role of personality traits to consumers’ responses to products based on hedonic or utilitarian motivations is scarce. However, as Ang and Lim (2006) note, products with hedonic values permit consumers to convey their real or ideal self-image and therefore engender emotional arousal. Consumers who fall on the higher end of specific personality traits might be more inclined towards such products while eschewing others, which may be more utilitarian. Additionally, products with hedonic value are usually perceived as more exciting and sophisticated than utilitarian valued products and may thus appeal to different consumers based on their personality traits.

Investigations about the role of the Big Five personality traits have been conducted in relation to specific types of messages (Gerber et al., 2013). For instance, research suggests that individuals who are on the high end of extraversion, openness and neuroticism prefer messages that emphasize the hedonic advantages of a product or action (Chen & Lee, 2008; Matzler et al., 2006). On the other hand, individuals on the high end of agreeableness and conscientiousness traits respond more favorably to products or actions of utilitarian value (Chen & Lee, 2008). Research, thus, lends support to the possibility of consumers’ personality traits influencing their responses to social media messages promoting a product with either a hedonic or utilitarian value.

The Role of Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior

One piece of the conversation that must be added when talking about the importance of exploring individual differences in consumer responses to social media ads is what individuals
know or think about who they are. This is referred to as self-concept (Chang, 2012). Self-concept is a key construct that plays a significant role in consumer behavior (Lee & Lee, 2015; Sirgy, 1982; Chang, 2012). Self-concept, defined as “the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object” (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 7), to social psychologists constitute mental representations of things such as personality traits and future goals (Chang, 2012). Thus, self-concept can be viewed as an overall knowledge about who the consumer is as an individual. For instance, Markus (1999) defines self-concept as “cognitive generalizations about the self, derived from past experience, that organize and guide the processing of self-related information contained in the individual’s social experience” (p.124). Self-concept is believed to affect consumer product or brand selection (Xue, 2008). Theoretically and empirically, self-concept can be broken down further into actual self-concept and ideal self-concept. Generally, actual self is regarded as “an individual’s perception of how (s) he actually is” and that is contrasted by ideal self which is “that perception of how (s) he would like to be” (Ross, 1971, p.80).

Evidence exists to suggest that more congruency between a brand’s image with an individual’s self-concept leads to more brand favorability (Lee & Lee, 2015). Furthermore, research suggests that advertising messages that display product users that are consistent rather than inconsistent with a consumer’s self-concept engenders more favorable ad and brand attitudes (Chang, 2012). Though research in this area is still in its infancy, to date, research supports the notion that consistency between an individuals’ self-concept and the brand image in advertising generates better brand memory, brand preference, and purchase intention (Xue & Phelps, 2013).
As the foregoing chapter denotes, empirically, it’s been demonstrated that consumers' self-concept influence their behavior. Research also suggests that self-concept influences consumers’ consumption behavior (Choi & Rifon, 2012). More often than not, consumers behave in a manner that allows the maintenance and development of their self-concept (Choi & Rifon, 2012). In particular, as Choi and Rifon (2012) assert, “consumers construct, maintain, and enhance their self-concepts through the brands they purchase and consume (p. 641). Based on the self-concept literature as outlined here, this research posits the potential role of self-concept in consumer responses to social media ads. Individuals’ preference for specific brands that they are exposed to on social media may be based on the congruency they perceive to exist between the brands and their self-concepts. Thus, whether these individuals will exhibit more favorable responses to the varying product appeals (i.e. utilitarian or hedonic) that brands may position themselves with may be dependent on their self-concepts. This is in terms of how congruent they find the brand to their self-image. Brands can function as a way for individuals to affirm their knowledge and beliefs about themselves. For instance, consumers can use brands to express their personal identity (Choi & Rifon, 2012). The more brands align themselves with an image that consumers associate with who they are as individuals, the more likely that these consumers may be drawn to such brands. Thus, there is value in examining the potential significance of self-concept in determining consumer responses to social media ads.

**Theoretical Framework**

Regulatory Focus Theory, from here on RFT, will be used to ground the research exploration. RFT suggests that individuals have different motivational systems that oversee their determination to obtain their desired goals. Individuals’ choices are to “approach actual self-states that match the desired end-state or avoid self-states that mismatch the desired end-state” (Growe & Higgins 1997, p.117). RFT posits that individuals try to pursue pleasure and evade
pain in very distinct ways which are demonstrated through two different types of self-regulatory systems; one that is promotion focus and one that is prevention focus (Brockner, Higgins & Low, 2004). This theory is the most appropriate to use in examining consumer responses to social media ads taken from the perspective of the influence of consumers’ individual traits. It presents an additional consumer perspective that could explain how consumers’ responses to social media ads based on a particular type of consumer trait. This theory was offered as a way to aid the interpretation of individuals’ personality traits (Kao, 2012) and thus is an appropriate lens through which to view consumers’ personality traits and its influence on their responses to social media ads.

**Regulatory Focus Theory**

RFT (Higgins, 1997) is a theory that surfaced as a way of predicting the persuasiveness of an ad based on a characteristic of the viewer known as regulatory focus. Examining the function of regulatory foci and goals as an area of research has progressively gained importance in terms of determining the effectiveness of advertising campaigns (Micu & Chowdhury, 2010). Drawing from a key principle of the tendency for individuals to avoid pain and veer towards pleasure, this theory suggests that there are two modes of motivation and self-regulation that can be differentiated. In other words, according to this theory, there are two discrete goals that exist and arise out of diverse motivations or needs (Park & Morton, 2015; Werth & Foerster, 2007). These two modes are known as promotion focus and prevention focus (Higgins, 1997; Micu & Chowdhury, 2010). Individuals can either direct their attention towards the attainment of ideals and gains or the averting of losses (Werth & Foerster, 2007). When a person regulates, such regulation can be born out of either one of the two modes, namely the promotion and prevention foci. These two foci differ in terms of three elements: “(1) the underlying motives people are
trying to satisfy, (2) the nature of the goals or standards that they are trying to attain, and (3) the types of outcomes that are salient to people” (Brockner et al., 2004, p. 208).

Individuals with who have a need for promotion desire to maximize positive gains and minimize negative ones. According to the RFT, these individuals are promotion focused. Promotion goals can be thought of as associated with the attainment of positive outcomes, which include achievements and aspirations. In order to realize promotion goals, people employ promotion strategies that consist of working towards a goal to ensure the occurrence of positive gains as well as focusing on activities associated with ideals and hopes (Werth & Foerster, 2007). To summarize, promotion focus is associated with the pursuit of ideal goals or aspirations. People generally pursue goals that are consistent with their ideal state (Arnold & Reynolds, 2009). Research on self-regulatory focus outlines the means through which promotion and prevention goals may be achieved (Micu & Chowdhury, 2010). Individuals who are promotion oriented tend to see their goals as aspirations and ideals and thus are attuned to the whether such positive outcomes are available or not. Additionally, they are more likely to consider complements to their goals (Kirmani & Zhu, 2007).

On the other hand is the prevention focus mode of self-regulation. Prevention focus is associated with the pursuit of prevention goals. This focus allows individuals to evade losses and to seek or pursue security and protection from the negative outcomes (Adams, Faseur & Geuens, 2011; Micu & Chowdhury, 2010; Park & Morton, 2015). People have a need for protection and safety and a desire to shield themselves from unpleasant events. Such individuals place their attention on prevention strategies that should avert the occurrence of negative events. To elaborate further, these individuals concentrate on actions that are favorable to the achievement of their safety and responsibility needs (Werth & Foerster, 2007). Prevention goals relate to the
avoidance of negative results such as responsibilities and obligations that is based on their sense of duty (Brockner et al., 2004). Therefore, individuals who are prevention-oriented tend to focus on negative information and avoid outcomes that do not match with their goals.

Regulatory focus has been examined from the perspective of it being a perpetual individual difference or a focus induced by situations (i.e. dispositional or situational; Werth & Foerster, 2007). From the former perspective, regulatory focus has been proposed in a way that recognizes that individuals are predisposed to either be more promotion focused or prevention focused (Park & Morton, 2015). In other words, this perspective suggests that self-regulatory focus is a constant construct that can influence the evaluations of different messages. Though it’s important to note the significance of the perspective stated in Adams et al.’s (2011) study in which self-regulatory focus is seen as a “chronic trait, developed in socialization processes throughout the person's life, or a temporarily induced state” (p. 276-277), this study in particular takes the other perspective of regulatory focus. This study investigates regulatory focus as a situationally induced focus (e.g. Kim 2006; Lee & Aaker, 2001; Park & Morton, 2015). In particular, this study takes the view of examining regulatory focus goals which may be evoked by particular situations such as messages that are created to highlight either a promotion focus (i.e. emphasis on positive consequences) or prevention focus (i.e. emphasis on avoidance of negative consequences) (Park & Morton, 2015).

Consumers’ regulatory focus can influence their decision-making in diverse ways such as influencing their choices (Herzenstein, Posavac & Brakus, 2007). For instance, as individuals may be either promotion or prevention oriented, they regulate their behaviors to match their goals. Similarly, how individuals respond to ad messages could be influenced by the regulatory focus of the ad that will ultimately influence their online and offline consumer behavior. This is
an important consideration as it is suggested that how information in a message is presented may influence its persuasiveness (Yi & Baumgartner, 2009).

Micu and Chowdhury (2010) note some research which suggest that how persuasive a message is may be reliant on a characteristic of the message known as “message’s regulatory focus.” In other words, previous research suggests that advertising messages that present information in a way congruent with an individual’s regulatory focus, the individual are more likely to be persuaded and retain information from the advertising message. Experimentally, situations that are either prevention focus or promotion focus can be intentionally structured and thus manipulated (Werth & Foerster, 2007).

**Regulatory Focus and Consumer Responses**

Research on the effects of regulatory focus have centered on the role of message framing in the context of health-related advertising (e.g. Adams et al., 2011; Park & Morton, 2015; Sars & Anghelcev, 2015). Specifically, research has examined how the effects of an individual’s goals linked with regulatory focus are moderated by message framing when it comes to persuasion (Park & Morton, 2015). For instance, Aaker and Lee (2001) in their study found that messages wrapped in gain frames had more persuasive power with promotion focused messages while messages with loss appeals had more of a persuasive power with prevention focused messages.

Research by Cornelis, Adams and Cauberghe (2012) demonstrates the role of regulatory focus in the effectiveness of ads. In particular, for prevention-oriented individuals, rational ads were more effective while they found effects for promotion-oriented individuals when it came to emotional ads. Other research has examined regulatory focus and how it affects consumer behavior. Herzenstein et al.’s (2007) study which investigated consumers’ self-regulation and its role in their purchase likelihood of new products demonstrated that consumers who are more
promotion oriented have a higher probability of adopting new products than prevention oriented consumers. In Wang and Lee’s (2006) research which involved the participants choosing dimensions for toothpaste brands for comparative purposes, they found that participant who were promotion oriented were more inclined to select dimensions associated with positive outcomes while participants who were prevention oriented tended to choose dimensions that were associated with the evasion of negative outcomes. Previous research also seems to suggest that individuals that are promotion oriented emphasize a product’s desired features. On the other hand, prevention oriented individuals had the propensity to look for information that talked about the product’s limitations as well as features about the product that may or may not help them evade negative outcomes (Florack, Ineichen & Bieri, 2009).

As mentioned previously, research suggests that when a persuasive message is aligned with their goals, individuals will assign more effort to processing the message than when it is not (Nan, 2008). For instance, Pham and Avnet (2004) determined that promotion oriented individuals depend on affective consideration and prevention oriented individuals concentrate on information that relates to the crux of what is being assessed. Similarly, research by Avnet and Higgins (2006) demonstrates that when assessments were based on feelings rather than logic, promotion oriented individuals were more likely to pay for a product. In contrast, prevention oriented individuals were more likely to pay for a product when their assessments were made based on rationale rather than feelings.

The highlighted differences in regulatory focus motivations indicate that these different motivations need to be considered in how they could determine consumer responses to media messages and their consumption needs. This is explored in more detail in the following section on the function of regulatory focus in consumers’ consumption of different product types.
The Role of Regulatory Focus in Hedonic and Utilitarian Consumption

There is general acceptance that products satisfy both hedonic and utilitarian needs, two key needs when it comes to consumption of products (Roy & Ng, 2012). While hedonic consumption relates to when product purchases are done for “the sensation derived from the experience of using the products,” utilitarian consumption, at the other end of this need spectrum, refers to what consumers get from “the functions performed by the product” (Voss et al., 2003, p. 310). Furthermore, whereas hedonic consumption is more related to pleasure and the emotional experience an individual gains, utilitarian consumption is depicted by rational activities grounded in the instrumental attributes of the product to solve a particular problem (Guido et al., 2014). This may be because utilitarian products are considered as necessities (Hartman et al., 2006).

As previously noted, consumers’ decision-making and behavior may be influenced by their personality trait as well as regulatory focus. When it comes to product purchase, it’s plausible to suggest that these two concepts could influence consumer behavior in relation to different product types. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) suggested that there are two broad product types. The first is products that are predominantly utilitarian (e.g. hair dryers, washing machines) which have “tangible, objective features that offer functional benefits, fulfill utilitarian needs and are meant to solve problems” (Micu & Chowdhury, 2010, p. 183). Second is hedonic products (e.g. jewelry, massages), which consists of “subjective, nontangible features that fulfill experiential needs, and whose consumption produces enjoyment and pleasure” (Micu & Chowdhury, 2010, p. 183).

Researchers suggest that for hedonic product consumption, individuals may have a transformational reason (i.e. promotion focus) for using the product; for example, they could be in pursuit of enjoyment or pleasure. Meanwhile utilitarian product consumption occurs as a result of an informational motive, with the goal of evading a specific problem (i.e. prevention focus).
(Micu & Chowdhury, 2010). In their study on the role of a message’s regulatory focus in advertisements for hedonic and utilitarian product types, Micu and Chowdury (2010) discovered that promotion-focus messages evoked more positive feelings and were more persuasive than prevention focus messages for hedonic products (e.g. chocolate). In contrast, prevention focus messages were generally more effective for utilitarian product types (e.g. vacuum cleaner) than promotion focus messages. Roy and Ng’s (2012) study looked at regulatory focus in relation to hedonic and utilitarian product type. Specifically, the researchers investigated the role of consumers’ regulatory goals on their focus on the hedonic benefits of products as opposed to utilitarian benefits. They found that promotion oriented consumers had more favorable attitudes toward a product when the product’s hedonic benefits were emphasized. On the other hand, prevention-oriented consumers’ attitudes toward the product were more favorable when the products utilitarian benefits were highlighted.

Investigation into the influence of regulatory focus in persuasion has established that how effective an appeal that highlights the achievement of prevention or promotion goals is differs based on the appeal approach (Jain et al. 2006). For example, Lee and Aaker (2004) concluded that for promotion-focus individuals found gain-framed appeals more persuasive while loss-framed appeals were more persuasive for prevention-focused individuals. This research suggests that the promotion focus strategy, which emphasizes the hedonic product appeal, may be associated with extraverts. Bearing in mind that extraverts are predisposed to positive emotions extraverts are more drawn towards fun, enjoyment and sensory appeals, it would be reasonable to believe that extraverts may be more sensitive towards the use of such appeals in messages. In the context of advertising messages, the use of hedonic product appeal combined with an emphasis on the attainment of promotion-focus goals is predicted to persuade consumers to have more
positive responses for those brands. On the other hand, prevention-focus strategy, which accentuates the averting of negative outcomes, would be more likely to be associated with utilitarian product appeals. Utilitarian product appeals typically emphasize the functionality or rational benefits of brand consumption. Therefore, it is plausible to suggest an association between prevention focus and utilitarian product appeal, as such appeals tend to focus on how to avoid negative outcomes. This message pairing might be more appealing to individuals who are more conscientious as they may be drawn towards such utilitarian products that emphasize the fulfillment of responsibility or duty. Consequently, when prevention focus is paired with a utilitarian product appeal, consumers might find such messages more persuasive.

Theoretically, personality traits and regulatory focus are research domains have been studied separately, but not collectively. As highlighted throughout this paper, research has focused on the role of personality traits in consumer responses to advertising. Other research has examined regulatory focus and its role in responses to ads. However, little research has examined the relationship between personality traits and regulatory focus on consumers’ responses in the context of social media advertising. A comprehension of personality is a relevant consideration in the execution of message strategies that are meant to be persuasive (Alkış & Temizel, 2015), particularly advertising messages. Previous research has indicated that personality traits can influence the persuasion (Alkış & Temizel, 2015; Halko & Kientz, 2010; Hirsch et al., 2012; Haptein, Markopoulos, de Ruyter & Aarts, 2015). The purpose of this study is to fill in the gap in literature that could benefit from knowledge on how these concepts can together play a role in consumer responses to advertising messages and consequently inform message development.

**Hypotheses**

Taken together, the preceding discussion provides the foundation for the propositions/assumptions made in this study. This study proposes that the personality traits (i.e.
extraversion and conscientiousness) will influence consumer responses to social media ads about products with either a hedonic or utilitarian value based on the kind of regulatory message focus used. Research indicates that personality can influence consumers’ responses to ads. Herzenstein et al. (2007) note that the interest in the application of self-regulatory to consumer behavior lies in its power to explain the rationale behind certain behavior. For instance, self-regulatory focus can explain the appeal of an ad (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Kirmani & Zhu, 2007; Pham & Avnet, 2004). Over time, the function of regulatory goals and foci in terms of advertising effectiveness has grown as an important research interest area for researchers (Kim, 2006). Recall that prior research show that extraverts are more likely to prefer products with hedonic value. Research also suggests that conscientiousness might be associated with utilitarian values. This study predicts that individuals who score high on extraversion will prefer social media ads about products with hedonic product appeal compared when the ad is promotion-focused compared to when it is prevention-focused. In contrast, individuals who score high on conscientiousness will prefer social media ads about products with utilitarian product when presented with a prevention-focused rather than promotion focused-message. This research also posits that individuals who are low on conscientiousness are more likely to engage in eWOM when they are exposed to social media ads as research suggests that these individuals are more likely to share marketing messages.

The review of previous literature suggests that there is value in examining how individuals’ personality traits contribute to their responses to advertising on social media particularly through the perspective that the regulatory focus theory offers. Theoretically, this research not only will add to literature on consumer behavior with the focus on individual traits, but also intends to provide more evidence as to the psychological appeal of personalization in
terms of individuals’ characteristics, which may be applicable in various consumer contexts. Implications from this research can be used to inform the development of messages across various disciplines. Drawing from evidence found in previous research highlighted throughout this research, the following hypotheses are proposed. Formally:

**H1**: Extraversion will have a positive influence on a) ad attitude, b) brand attitude and c) purchase intention towards social media ads.

**H2**: Conscientiousness will have a positive influence on a) ad attitude, b) brand attitude and c) purchase intention towards social media ads.

**H3a**: Promotion-focused ads will engender more positive attitudes and behavioral intentions for a hedonic product appeal in the ad message relative to a utilitarian product appeal ad.

**H3b**: Prevention-focused ads will engender more positive attitudes and behavioral intentions for a utilitarian product appeal ad in the ad message rather than a hedonic product appeal ad.

**H4**: Consumers who score high on extraversion (vs. low) are more likely to have more positive responses to hedonic product appeal ad when the message is promotion-focused than when the message is prevention-focused message.

**H5**: Consumers who score high on conscientiousness (vs. low) are more likely to have more positive responses and behavioral intentions towards a utilitarian product appeal in the ad message when the message is prevention-focused than when it is promotion-focused.

**H6**: Consumers who score low on conscientiousness are more likely to engage in eWOM than consumers who score high in conscientiousness.

**H7a**: Self-congruity will moderate the relationship between extraversion and consumer responses to social media ads.

**H7b**: Self-congruity will moderate the relationship between conscientiousness and consumer responses to social media ads.
CHAPTER 3
METHOD

Study Design
This study investigates the effect of consumers’ personality traits (i.e. extraversion and conscientiousness), message regulatory focus and product appeal on consumers’ responses to social media ads according to a between-subjects experimental design. This research applies a 2 (regulatory focus: promotion or prevention) x 2 (product appeal: hedonic value or utilitarian value) x 2 (personality traits: high or low) between-subjects design. Independent variables for this research are personality traits, regulatory focus and product appeal. The dependent variables measured are 1) ad attitude, 2) brand attitude and 3) purchase intention. The two personality traits examined—extraversion and conscientiousness— are measured and treated as independent variables in keeping with prior research (e.g. Courbalay, Deroche, Prigent, Chalabaev & Amorim, 2015; Huang, Mitchell & Rosenaum-Elliott, 2012; Mooradian, Matzler & Szykman, 2008). This study adopts a web-based survey experiment to examine the posited hypotheses. Specifically, this online survey will be delivered using Qualtrics, an online survey software.

Recruitment
Participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (Mturk). MTurk is considered a valuable, commendable as well as more diverse as a method of data collection (Buhrmester, Kwang & Gosling, 2011; Casler, Bickel & Hackett, 2013; Goodman, Cryder &Cheema, 2013). This assertion is based on current empirical evaluations that suggest that Mturk is a viable avenue for the conducting of online experiments (Chen, Kim & Lin, 2015). The underlying objective of this research is to examine the role of personality traits, regulatory focus and product appeal on responses to social media ads. Given that personality traits are universal, Amazon Turk served as a source through which a more representative sample could be gathered to investigate
the aim of this study. Amazon Mturk consists of samples that are demographically comparable to standard online panel samples, more diverse than the usual college student samples and deliver data that is of similar quality but much considerably cheaper (Buhrmester et al., 2011; Smith, Roster, Golden & Albaum, 2016). To address some of the limitations of Mturk such as lack of environmental control and potential of non-human workers (Crump, McDonnell & Gureckis, 2013), a few steps were taken for this research. Screener questions were used, the online instrument was not restricted to workers who had reached master levels on Mturk and attention checks were placed within the online instrument.

Mturk Participants accessed the survey link via their Mturk account that then lead to a Qualtrics online instrument. Recruitment criteria of participants include participants being active social media users and located in the U.S. Participants were compensated via their Mturk accounts with a dollar for their participation for a completed survey. The compensation was provided after participants submitted a code randomly generated through Qualtrics upon completion of the survey. Social media is arguably the most popular communication channel for college-aged Internet users (Chu, 2011; Ramo et al., 2015; Yang & Brown, 2015). As a consumer segment that may have the most exposure to social media ads, college-aged participants are the most relevant sample for the focus of this study. However, data collection was extended to participants beyond this age group for the purposes of gleaning insights from a wide range of participants. Thus, this study recruited participants who were social media users and aged between 18 and 65+. Research indicates that while Internet users aged 18 to 29 constitute a bulk of Facebook users (i.e. 87%), those aged 30-49 and 50-64 account for a substantive portion of Facebook users (i.e. 73% and 63% respectively) (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart & Madden, 2015).
Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental message conditions according to a between-subject design under each of the two personality traits (i.e. extraversion and conscientiousness) explored. The experiment took the form of an online design, which was distributed via Qualtrics. This research consists of a two-phase study design where personality traits are first assessed and then participants viewed an ad and answered questions related to the ad. The online experiment conducted comprised of questionnaire instrument consisting of the ad as well as the various measures for the measured independent and dependent variables adopted from psychology studies and literature on consumer behavior.

When participants accessed the survey link from their Mturk account, they were directed to the Qualtrics page where they saw the pre-screener questions. Questions asked whether they had active social media accounts, were regular consumers of yogurt and if they were lactose intolerant. After passing screener questions, participants were directed to the informed consent page that stated, among others, the purpose of the study, approximate time length of the study, compensation and their rights. Participants were assigned to one of four experimental message conditions based on combinations of the manipulated independent variables (i.e. regulatory focus and product appeal). In other words, participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental message conditions and viewed an ad appropriate to the assignment cell. Each experimental condition was made up of one ad stimulus and measures of the one independent and dependent variables. After the informed consent, participants completed pre-stimuli measures such as personality traits and chronic regulatory focus. Next, participants were provided with instructions for the experiment, which consisted of partial disclosure of the purpose of the study. Specifically, participants were informed that they were about to see a mock Facebook ad for a new Greek yogurt brand set to enter the US market in 2017. There were asked
to spend as much time as they needed reviewing the ad after which they could proceed to answering the subsequent questions. Participants in the promotion-focused hedonic appeal ad saw an ad grounded in the aspects related to each dimension of the variable manipulation. The ad stimuli varied according to the different combinations of the variables explored. Participants in each condition were asked to rate their opinions on 10 items that assessed their personality traits (Gosling, Rentfrow & Swann, 2003). Then, they were presented with the ad stimulus. The ad stimulus was designed to reflect a typical representation of a Facebook newsfeed ad. Each participant was presented with only one of the four versions of the ad. Two attention checks were placed within the measurement instrument to ensure that participants were actively involved in taking the survey.

As an overview, participants were first assessed on their personality traits. Then, they viewed an ad and completed the rest of the instrument that captured participant responses to scales that measured the dependent variables and covariates and that captured demographic information. Specifically, the participants gave responses about the ad they viewed in terms of their attitude and behavioral intention (i.e. brand attitude, ad attitude, purchase intention, eWOM), their self-perception (e.g. self-congruity) and covariate variables (e.g. product involvement, ad and brand familiarity). Participants’ demographic information such as age and gender was also collected. After completing the survey, participants were informed that the ad and brand were fictitious and designed for the study’s purpose.

Below is the total number of cells based on the two personality traits examined (i.e. extraversion and conscientiousness) in this research design.
Table 3-1. 2 X 2 X 2 factorial design

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<th>High Extraversion</th>
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<td>Hedonic</td>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
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<td>Promotion I</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prevention V</td>
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Table 3-2. 2 X 2 X 2 factorial design

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<tr>
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<th>High Conscientiousness</th>
<th>Low Conscientiousness</th>
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<td>Hedonic</td>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
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<td>Promotion I</td>
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<td>Prevention V</td>
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**Measurement Constructs**

**Measure of Independent Variable**

Participants’ personality traits were measured using the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), a 10-item scale that contains statements related to each of the five personality dimensions. Participants rated their agreement with each statement on a 7-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) (Gosling et al., 2003). Items include “I see myself as extraverted, enthusiastic,” “I see myself as anxious, easily upset,” and “I see myself as reserved, quiet.” The personality traits were split at the median to create two sub groups (high and low) to allow for ease of interpretation of interactions (Iacobucci et al., 2015).

**Measures of Dependent Variables**

Participants’ responses in the study were measured along several dimensions of interest.

**Attitudinal responses**

Attitudinal responses were measured. Advertising responses was assessed by measuring participants’ attitude toward the ad and brand respectively. Participants were asked their opinion on the ad they viewed. Attitude towards the ad was measured with a nine item, seven-point (1=”strongly disagree,” 7= “strongly agree”) semantic differential scale adopted from (Kalyanaraman & Ivory, 2009). Examples of items anchors are unappealing/appealing,
uninformative/informative and persuasive/unpersuasive. These items were averaged to form a single index. Participants’ attitude towards the brand was assessed using seven items measured on a seven-point (1=“strongly disagree,” 7= “strongly agree”) semantic differential scale adapted from (Li & Kalyanaraman, 2012). Item anchors include “appealing/unappealing, unattractive/attractive and low quality/high quality. These items were averaged to form a single index.

**Behavioral intentions**

Separate from attitudinal responses, this research examined consumers’ behavioral intentions. Behavioral intentions were denoted by participants’ intention to engage in eWOM and purchase intention. Participants rated their agreement to three items on a seven-point Likert scale. Items that measure participants’ eWOM intentions are adapted from Kim, Jang and Adler (2015). Items included “I would like to post about this ad on Facebook,” “I am likely to share this ad on Facebook,” and “This ad is worth sharing with others on Facebook. Items were averaged to create a single index. Participants also specified their purchase intention after exposure to the ad. Participants’ likelihood to purchase the product advertised was measured using four items measured on a seven-point scale (1=”strongly disagree,” 7= “strongly agree”) adapted from (Sundar & Kalyanaraman, 2004). Items are “I am likely to try the product featured in the ad,” “I am likely to buy the product featured in the ad,” “I am likely to seek more information about the product featured in the ad,” and “I am likely to recommend the product featured in the ad to others.” These items were averaged to form a single index.

**Self-perception measure**

Self-congruity was assessed to determine participants’ perceptions of themselves relative to the brand they view in the ad. Participants rated their opinions on items adapted from Roy and Rabbane (2015) to measure their self-concept relative to the brand. Four items were measured.
using a seven-point Likert scale (1=“strongly disagree,” 7= “strongly agree”). Items include “People who use this brand are like me,” “I can identify with people who prefer this brand,” “I am very much like the typical person who prefers to use this brand,” and “The image of the user of this brand is highly consistent with how I see myself.” The items were averaged to form a single index.

**Covariates**

A number of variables were measured to control for their effects on the results of the study. Regulatory focus can be theorized as a chronic predisposition in that individuals may be innately oriented toward either a promotion or prevention focus (Higgins, 1987). In this present study, regulatory focus was treated as a situational variable (i.e. the idea that promotion or prevention focus can be momentarily activated based on specific situations) and therefore manipulated in the ad stimuli. Nevertheless, evidence within literature suggests that consumers’ chronic regulatory focus can have significant effects on persuasiveness (e.g. Kim, 2006; Zhao & Pechmann, 2007). Therefore, it is plausible that chronic regulatory focus may have an impact on the dependent variables regardless of the successful manipulation of regulatory focus. Thus, to enable the validity of results, participants’ promotion focus and prevention focus were measured separately and used as covariates.

Involvement constitutes an important factor within advertising research. To account for consumers’ responses towards ads and their behavioral intentions, advertising researchers have concentrated on the notion of ad message involvement (Kim, Haley & Koo, 2009). Past research indicates that the level of involvement consumers have with an ad can influence attitudes and purchase intention (Andrews, Durvasula & Akhter, 1990; Batra & Ray, 1985; Kavadas, Prevel Katsanis & LeBel, 2007; Laczniah, Kempf, & Muehling, 1999; Park & Young 1986). Similarly, product involvement has been found to have an important impact on ad persuasiveness (Eisand,
It is widely accepted that ad involvement and product category involvement vary (Kim et al., 2009). Therefore, these two concepts were considered separately in this research. Whereas, ad message involvement has been hypothesized to be situational, product category involvement is found to be more persistent (Batra & Ray, 1985; Kim et al., 2009). The degree to which consumers are involved in the ad and product can affect their attitudes and behavioral intentions towards social media ads they come across. Consistent with prior research on the potential influence of ad and product involvement, this present research considered these factors as potential confounding ones and thus were measured.

Ad believability represents the degree to which consumers perceive an ad or message to be truthful (Grewal et al., 1997). The extent to which consumers find the content of an ad to be plausible may have an impact on their attitudinal and behavioral responses. Indeed, research does suggest that ad believability can influence consumer response towards advertising (Yagci, Biswas & Dutta, 2009; Obermiller, Spangenberg & MacLachlan, 2005). Perhaps, because of its proliferation, many consumers do not believe advertising claims particularly as some claims tend to be hard to substantiate (Obermiller et al., 2005). Consumers’ responses to these ads may vary based on the extent to which their assessment of the ads lead them to find the ads as credible. Empirical evidence points to the fact that perceptions of credibility significantly influence attitudes and behavioral intentions (e.g. Yang, Kim & Yoo, 2013; Zhang & Mao, 2008). For instance, empirical research suggests that perceptions of credibility of persuasive messages engender favorable cognitive responses and ad attitude (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Specifically, consumers who are exposed to either a material or an experiential message type may have stronger ad attitude based on how believable they find the ad. This is because their attitude towards the ad may be tied to their perceptions of ad believability. Consumers may have a more
positive attitudes and behavioral intentions if they find or regard the content of an ad to be believable. To account for the potential of confound of the implausibility of the claims made in the ad stimuli, ad believability was measured.

Product involvement was measured using ten seven-point semantic differential items (Zaichkowsky, 1985; 1994). Anchors for the items are “Matters to me/Doesn’t matter,” “Relevant/Irrelevant,” Unimportant/Important,” Essential/Non-essential,” “Wanted/Unwanted,” and “Useless/Useful.” Participants’ responses to the items were averaged to form a single index. Participants’ chronic regulatory focus was also measured (Higgins et al., 2001). To assess participants’ familiarity with the brand, one item (i.e. How familiar are you with the brand in the ad?) was used. Ad familiarity was similarly be measured using the item “How familiar are you with the ad you just saw?” Details of the all measurement construct and items are available in Table 3 below.

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<th>Table 3-3. Measurement instrument: Key Variable Measures</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Variable Type</strong></td>
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<td>Independent variable</td>
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<td>Brand attitude</td>
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<td>Purchase intention</td>
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<td>Dependent variable</td>
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<td>Self-congruity</td>
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<td>Product involvement</td>
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<td>Self-perception Covariate</td>
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<td>Promotion focus</td>
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<td>Prevention focus</td>
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<td>Ad involvement</td>
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<td>Ad believability</td>
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<td>Manipulation check</td>
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<td>Prevention focus scale</td>
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<td>Hedonic scale</td>
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<td>Utilitarian scale</td>
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Pretests

The varying stimuli and copy were pretested to determine the choice used for the study. Pretests were conducted to assess the saliency of product category for participants, regulatory focus and product appeal manipulations (please see Appendix). The final product, the regulatory focus (i.e. promotion or prevention) and product appeal manipulations selected for the study reflected the outcomes of the pretests. This research focuses on products that serve both hedonic and utilitarian functions for consumers (Chang, 2004; Dempsey & Mitchell, 2010). Manipulation checks were used to determine the success of manipulations.

Message Regulatory Focus Manipulation

Regulatory focus of the advertising messages was varied to reflect the two different goals that an individual might have. This research is patterned after previous studies in its manipulations of regulatory focus (e.g. Aaker & Lee, 2001; Micu & Chowdury, 2010; Park & Morton, 2015). Drawing from previous studies (Kao, 2012: Kim, 2006; Micu & Chowdury, 2010; Park & Morton, 2015), the ad messages were created to suggest the promotion-oriented focus and the prevention-oriented focus for the advertising message. The copy of the ad messages were manipulated in relation to each regulatory focus goal. So, the promotion-oriented focus message espoused the promotion benefits of the product, the prevention-focus oriented message conveyed the prevention benefits related to the product. The promotion copy read, “Greeyo greek yogurt is a simple low fat way to help promote digestion and strong bones. Achieve a strong immune system and attain a healthy weight.” The prevention copy read, “Greeyo greek yogurt is a simple low fat way to help prevent indigestion and weak bones. Avoid a weak immune system and prevent weight gain.” The promotion/prevention copy created was then pretested with a subsample of the target sample to ensure that the messages met the standards of validity for the research investigation. Participants were recruited from Mturk.
These participants viewed an ad which displayed either promotion or prevention copy against a generic yogurt image with a white background. Participants’ reported means for the promotion copy was (M=5.94, SD=0.89) on the promotion scale compared to (M=4.97, S=1.74) on the prevention scale. A one-way ANOVA determined that the probability of individuals viewing the copy as promotion focused was statistically significant, $F(80) = 10.47$, $p < .01$ in the promotion condition. Similarly, the mean score for the prevention copy (M=5.21, SD=1.76) on the prevention scale was statistically significant compared with the mean score for the promotion scale (M=3.48, SD=1.90), $F(80) = 10.47$, $p < .01$ in the prevention condition. The results suggest the successful manipulation of regulatory focus.

**Product and Message Appeal**

A pretest was conducted to identify the product choice for the main study (Micu & Chowdury, 2010). The choice of product was based on a pretest where yogurt (M=4.09) was rated higher on the product involvement scale than mobile phones (M=3.96) and sneakers (M=3.77) by participants (n=205). In many instances, products may either have a single primary function or several functions (Schlosser 1998; Shavitt 1989). On the premise of the multiplicity of functions that a product can have, it is evident that for such products, the effectiveness of persuasive appeals is not universal (Schlosser 1998). As Schlosser (1998) contends, the motivational relevancy of the product appeal is imperative. Therefore “appeals that directly address the function served by the object are more persuasive than those addressing irrelevant functions” (Schlosser 1998, 346). Building on this supposition, this study posits that product appeals emphasized in advertisements that are either hedonic or utilitarian can influence consumers’ perception and evaluation of the products.

This research is modeled after prior research in its approach of manipulations of product appeal (e.g. Chang & Liu, 2012; Huettl & Gierl, 2012; Klein & Melnyk, 2014; Roy & Ng, 2012;
Specifically, the headline of the ad was varied to express either hedonic value of using the product or utilitarian value of using the product. The hedonic headline read, “Happiness in every serving!” The utilitarian copy read, “Thousands of probiotics in every serving.” It was expected that participants would rate the hedonic product appeal as primarily hedonic compared to the utilitarian product appeal, which would be expected to be rated as primarily utilitarian.

Participants in this stage were recruited from Mturk. They were presented with an ad that displayed the headline copy against a plain white background with an image of a yogurt. Participants rated the copy using a scale adapted from previous research (Voss et al., 2003). A one-way ANOVA test revealed a main effect for product appeal, $F(1, 38) = 6.82, p < .01$ showing that participants’ ratings indicated higher means for the hedonic headline ($M=4.80, SD=1.53$) that were statistically different compared to the utilitarian headline ($M=3.55, S=1.50$) in the hedonic condition. Similarly, participants rated the utilitarian headline ($M=5.46, SD=1.29$) higher as indicated by the significantly different mean score compared to the hedonic headline in the ($M=4.01, SD=1.57$), $F(1, 38) = 10.18, p < .001$ in utilitarian condition. The results support the successful manipulation of product category appeal in the headline of the ad.

**Stimuli Development**

Stimuli used were specifically created for this research. Four different social media versions of ads were created (i.e. promotion hedonic, prevention hedonic, promotion utilitarian, prevention utilitarian). For the purposes of this research, the ads were designed to reflect a typical sponsored Facebook newsfeed ad. Ads highlighting regulatory promotion focus had a body copy that conveyed the benefits of the product and emphasized advancement while ads for the regulatory prevention had body copy that focused on the benefits of prevention of negative outcomes. The headline of the ad emphasized either the hedonic appeal or utilitarian appeal of
the product. The hedonic appeal showcased the hedonic value of using the product while the utilitarian appeal emphasized the utilitarian value of using the product. The ads were manipulated to suggest a sponsored post on Facebook. This research defines social media advertising as social media posts that may appear on consumers’ social media timelines as sponsored content. To control for prior experience and familiarity, a fictitious brand was used to represent the product. This is expected to reduce potential confounds that could arise in the experiment.

As stated earlier, each participant in each condition viewed an ad representative of a combination of the regulatory focus and product appeal dimensions. Participants in the promotion-focused/ hedonic product appeal condition viewed an ad that consisted of promotion-oriented focus body copy that read, “Greeyo greek yogurt is a simple low fat way to help promote digestion and strong bones. Achieve a strong immune system and attain a healthy weight.” The hedonic appeal headline read as “Happiness in every serving!” Participants in the promotion-focus/ utilitarian product appeal condition saw an ad that had the same promotion-oriented focus body copy. However, in this condition, participants saw a headline that read as “Thousands of probiotics in every serving” to reflect a utilitarian value. Participants in the prevention-focus conditions viewed an ad that highlighted the prevention-oriented focus of using the product with body copy that read, “Greeyo greek yogurt is a simple low fat way to help prevent indigestion and weak bones. Avoid a weak immune system and prevent weight gain.” Participants in these conditions similarly saw an ad, which emphasized the hedonic value of using the product – “Happiness in every serving” or the utilitarian value of using the product – “Thousands of probiotics in every serving.” All ad imagery were set up against a green background color with the yogurt placed in the middle of the ad. The product category headline
was placed above the yogurt and the regulatory focus copy placed towards the bottom of the ad. The ads were kept consistent in format as much as possible in format. Please see appendix A for the detailed stimuli.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

The experimental data obtained from this research were analyzed and are presented in this chapter. This chapter also presents a description of the participants, reliability tests, manipulation checks and hypotheses testing. IBM SPSS Statistics 22 software at a 95 percent confidence level was used to perform the statistical analyses required for the hypotheses testing stage. Specifically, multivariate and univariate analyses were conducted.

Description of Participants

A total of 700 participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk and compensated for their participation in the study. Among these participants, 55 participants who either failed to complete the questionnaire or failed the attention check were excluded from the analyzed sample. In total, 645 responses were used for data analysis. These participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions. Participants’ ages ranged from 18 years to 65+ years with 25-34 year olds accounting for 44.5% of the entire sample. Gender distribution of the sample consisted of 55.3% of females and 44.5% males for this study. Forty-one point nine percent of the participants had a college degree followed by 27.3% who had some college/vocational/technical school. The Racial/Ethnic distribution of the participants consisted of 53.2% White, 19.2% American Indian or Alaska Native, 11.2% Asian, 7.4 % Hispanic or Latino, 6.2% Black or African American and 2.6% Two or More Races. Table 4-1 below details the breakdown of participants.
Table 4-1. Description of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more Races</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Other PI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college/vocational/technical</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degree</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some graduate school</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have not completed high school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability Checks

A reliability check was performed for each variable measure with a multi-item scale. The reliability measures for the dependent variables were satisfactory. The two items used to measure extraversion and conscientiousness indicated acceptable reliability (r=.59; r=.50) respectively. A nine-item, seven-point bipolar scale used to measure advertising attitude (Kalyanaraman & Ivory, 2009) had acceptable reliability (Cronbach’s $a=95$). Brand attitude (Li & Kalyanaraman, 2012) measured with a seven-item, seven-point Likert-type scale had satisfactory reliability (Cronbach’s $a=.96$). The four-item, seven-point Likert-type scale measuring purchase intention (Sundar & Kalyanaraman, 2004) had acceptable reliability (Cronbach’s $a=.92$). Ad Believability (Cronbach’s $a=.93$), Ad Involvement (Cronbach’s $a=.89$), Electronic Word of Mouth (Kim, Jang & Adler, 2015) measured with a five-item, seven-point Likert-type scale had an acceptable
reliability (Cronbach’s α = .97). Self-Congruity measure with a four-item, seven-point Likert-type scale based on Roy and Rabbane (2015) had acceptable reliability (Cronbach’s α = .93). Ad Credibility (Kalyanaraman & Ivory, 2009) measured with a Cronbach’s α = .95). Product involvement, ten-item, seven-point Likert-type scale (Zaichkowsky, 1985; 1994) had acceptable reliability (Cronbach’s α = .91). Similarly, the three-item, seven-point Likert-type scale used to measure regulatory focus has acceptable reliability for promotion focus (Cronbach’s α = .87) and prevention focus (Cronbach’s α = .92) respectively. The five-item, seven-point Likert-type scale used to measure product type had an acceptable reliability for hedonic value (Cronbach’s α = .92) and utilitarian value (Cronbach’s α = .95) respectively. Participants’ chronic regulatory focus was measured using the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (Higgins et al., 2001). This eleven-item scale consisted of six items related to participants’ promotion focused history and five items which were related to participants’ prevention focused history. The reliability estimates for the promotion focus scale (Cronbach’s α = .80) and prevention focus scale (Cronbach’s α = .73) were acceptable. Details of scales used are provided in Table 4-2 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Type</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th># of items</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>$a$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent variable</td>
<td>Personality traits</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Gosling et al., 2003</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent variable</td>
<td>Ad attitude</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Kalyanaraman &amp; Ivory, 2009</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Li &amp; Kalyanaraman, 2012</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sundar &amp; Kalyanaraman, 2004</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eWOM</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kim, Jang &amp; Adler, 2015</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-perception</td>
<td>Self-congruity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Roy &amp; Rabbane , 2015</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covariate</td>
<td>Product involvement</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Zaichkowsky, 1985; 1994</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chronic regulatory</td>
<td></td>
<td>Higgins et al., 2001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>focus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promotion focus</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention focus</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulation</td>
<td>Promotion focus scale</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>check</td>
<td>Prevention focus scale</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hedonic scale</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Voss et al., 2003</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Utilitarian scale</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Voss et al., 2003</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Manipulation Checks**

A series of two-way ANOVAs were conducted to determine if the effects of a single independent variable were not moderated by other independent variables. For regulatory focus manipulation, no other main or interaction effects were found except that of regulatory focus, $F(1, 643) = 12.73, p < .001; F(1, 643) = 167.11, p < .001$. Similarly, no other main or interaction effects were found except for that of product appeal, $F(1, 643) = 3.26, p = .07; F(1, 643) = 13.56, p < .001$. Additionally, a series of one-way ANOVAs were performed to determine if the manipulations varied significantly for regulatory focus and product appeal. The results confirmed that there were significant manipulation effects. Participants in the promotion focus condition rated the ad as more promotion focus with the mean score ($M=5.34, SD=1.04$) significantly
different than prevention focus \( (M=4.99, \ SD=1.44), F (1, 642) = 12.40, \ p = .000 \). Participants in the prevention condition rated the ad as more prevention focus with the mean score \( (M=5.08, \ SD=1.46) \) significantly different than promotion focus \( (M=3.58, \ SD=1.48), F (1, 642) = 166.67, \ p = .000 \). Likewise, participants rated the ad with a utilitarian product appeal as more utilitarian \( (M=5.50, \ SD=1.18) \) with the mean score indicating it significantly different than hedonic \( (M=5.14, \ SD=1.25), F (1,643) = 13.65, \ p = .000 \). Participants rated the hedonic product appeal as more hedonic with the mean score \( (M=5.01) \) significantly different than utilitarian \( (M=4.83, \ SD=1.27), F (1, 643) = 3.33, \ p = .06 \). This indicated the success of both manipulations.

**Hypotheses Tests**

A series of three-way ANOVAs were used to examine the hypotheses to determine the main effects of personality traits, regulatory focus and product appeal and their interaction effects. Hypothesis 1 predicted that extraversion will have a positive influence on a) ad attitude, b) brand attitude and c) purchase intention towards social media ads. The results showed that extraversion did have a significant main effect on the dependent variables. Specifically, extraversion had significant main effects on ad attitude, \( F (1, 643) = 7.84, \ p < .05 \), brand attitude, \( F (1, 643) = 8.30, \ p < .05 \), purchase intention \( F (1, 643) = 8.42, \ p < .05 \) and eWOM \( F (1, 643) = 13.39, \ p < .001 \). In other words, participants who scored high on extraversion had significantly more positive mean responses on ad attitude \( (M_{\text{High Extraversion}} =5.29, \ SD=1.21 \) vs \( M_{\text{Low Extraversion}} =5.03 , \ SD = 1.12), \) brand attitude \( (M_{\text{High Extraversion}} =5.54, \ SD=1.19 \) vs \( M_{\text{Low Extraversion}} =5.27 , \ SD = 1.13), \) eWOM \( (M_{\text{High Extraversion}} =3.47, \ SD=1.76 \) vs \( M_{\text{Low Extraversion}} =2.98 , \ SD = 1.55) \) and higher means on purchase intention \( (M_{\text{High Extraversion}} =4.97, \ SD=1.35 \) vs \( M_{\text{Low Extraversion}} =4.64, \ SD = 1.38) \) compared to those who scored low on extraversion. That is, across the level of extraversion, higher degree of extraversion led to positive responses towards the ad. Thus H1 was supported. Means and standard deviations are summarized in Table 4-3.
Table 4.3: Means and standard deviations (extraversion)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>High Extraversion</th>
<th>Low Extraversion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ad attitude</td>
<td>5.29(1.21)</td>
<td>5.03(1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>5.54(1.19)</td>
<td>5.27(1.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>4.97(1.35)</td>
<td>4.64(1.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eWOM</td>
<td>3.47(1.76)</td>
<td>2.98(1.55)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second hypothesis predicted that conscientiousness will have a positive influence on
a) ad attitude, b) brand attitude c) purchase intention towards social media ads. The results
showed that conscientiousness did have a significant main effect on the dependent variables of
ad attitude, $F (1, 643) = 51.28, p < .000$, brand attitude, $F (1, 643) = 40, p < .000$, and purchase
intention $F (1, 643) = 27.12, p < .000$. In other words, participants who scored high on
conscientiousness had significantly more positive responses in terms of ad attitude ($M_{High Conscientiousness} =5.45, SD=1.11$ vs $M_{Low Conscientiousness} =4.82, SD = 1.12$), more positive brand
attitude ($M_{High Conscientiousness} =5.66, SD=1.11$ vs $M_{Low Conscientiousness} =5.10, SD = 1.14$), and more
positive attitude towards purchase intention ($M_{High Conscientiousness} =5.05, SD=1.39$ vs $M_{Low Conscientiousness} =4.50, SD = 1.32$) compared to those who scored low on conscientiousness. Thus
H2 was supported. Means and standard deviations for all dependent variables are summarized in
Table 4-4.

Table 4-4. Means and standard deviations (conscientiousness)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>High conscientiousness</th>
<th>Low conscientiousness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ad attitude</td>
<td>5.45(1.11)</td>
<td>4.82(1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>5.66(1.11)</td>
<td>5.10(1.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>5.05(1.39)</td>
<td>4.50(1.32)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first part of hypothesis three posited that promotion focused ads will engender more
positive attitudes and behavioral intentions for a hedonic product appeal ad rather than a
utilitarian product appeal ad. Second, hypothesis three posited that a prevention-focused ad
message will engender more positive attitudes and behavioral intentions for a utilitarian product
appeal rather than a hedonic product appeal. A 2 x 2 factorial MANCOVA revealed a 2-way interaction effect between regulatory focus and product appeal ($F (1, 643) = 4.11, p = .043$) such that participants in the promotion focus condition had significantly more positive attitude as indicated by the mean scores which showed that attitude the toward eWOM when exposed to a hedonic product appeal ($M_{hedonic}=3.22, SD=1.62$) was significantly different than when exposed to utilitarian product appeal ($M_{utilitarian}=3.00, SD=1.63$). However a similar pattern was found in that participants in the prevention focus condition had more positive attitude towards eWOM when exposed to a utilitarian product appeal ($M_{utilitarian}=3.32, SD=1.65$) than hedonic product appeal ($M_{hedonic}=3.11, SD=1.68$). In effect, the ad message was found more persuasive when the hedonic appeal was paired with promotion-focused message than prevention-focused message.

Thus H2 was partially supported in relation to eWOM as shown in figure 4-1 below. Means and standard deviations are provided in Table 4-5 below. A summary of ANOVA results are provided in Table 4-6 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Promotion</th>
<th></th>
<th>Prevention</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hedonic</td>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>Hedonic</td>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad attitude</td>
<td>5.10(1.14)</td>
<td>5.09(1.19)</td>
<td>5.06(1.13)</td>
<td>5.23(1.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>5.38(1.11)</td>
<td>5.32(1.20)</td>
<td>5.31(1.15)</td>
<td>5.46(1.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchaseintention</td>
<td>4.80(1.24)</td>
<td>4.69(1.39)</td>
<td>4.74(1.48)</td>
<td>4.82(1.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eWOM</td>
<td>3.22(1.62)</td>
<td>3.00(1.63)*</td>
<td>3.10(1.68)</td>
<td>3.32(1.65)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * $p < .05$
Table 4-6. A summary of MANCOVA results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Regulatory focus main effect</th>
<th>Product appeal main effect</th>
<th>Regulatory focus x product appeal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ad attitude</td>
<td>F=2.26</td>
<td>F=0.89</td>
<td>F=1.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>F=2.49</td>
<td>F=.11</td>
<td>F=2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>F=3.33</td>
<td>F=.37</td>
<td>F=1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eWOM</td>
<td>F=.85</td>
<td>F=.06</td>
<td>F=4.11*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * $p<.05$

![Figure 4-1. Two-way interaction between regulatory focus and product appeal on eWOM](image)

The fourth hypothesis four proposed that consumers who score high on extraversion (vs. low) are more likely to have significantly more positive responses to hedonic product appeal ad when the message is promotion-focused compared to a prevention-focused message.

Extraversion was split at the median to create two subgroups: high-and low-group ($M_{high} \geq 4$ vs. $M_{low} \leq 4$). A 2 x 2 x 2 factorial MANCOVA revealed a 3-way interaction effect between extraversion, regulatory focus, and product appeal on eWOM ($F(1, 643) = 4.11, p < .05$) and purchase intention ($F(1, 643) = 4.40, p < .05$). Interestingly, the results of a simple main effects
demonstrated that those for those who scored high in extraversion, the mean value of the prevention-focused message ($M_{\text{prevention}} = 3.98, \ SD = 1.65$) was significantly greater than those of promotion-focused message ($M_{\text{promotion}} = 3.14, \ SD = 1.76$) for eWOM intention when the product appeal was utilitarian rather than hedonic Similarly, for those who scored high in extraversion, the mean values for prevention-focused message ($M_{\text{prevention}} = 5.33, \ SD = 1.07$) was significantly greater than promotion-focused message ($M_{\text{promotion}} = 4.81, \ SD = 1.47$) on intention to purchase when the product appeal was utilitarian rather than hedonic. That is, with regard to product appeal, prevention-focused messages as opposed to promotion-focused messages had more impact on consumer behavioral intentions towards the ad (Figures 4-2 and 4-3). However, H4 was not supported as results showed the opposite of the pattern predicted as show in figures 4-2 and 4-3 below. Means and standard deviations for dependent variables are presented in Table 4-7 and a summary of ANOVA results are presented in Table 4-8.

Table 4-7. Means and standard deviations (extraversion x regulatory focus x product appeal)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Promotion</th>
<th>Prevention</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hedonic</td>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>Hedonic</td>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Extraversion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad attitude</td>
<td>5.14(1.33)</td>
<td>5.20(1.26)</td>
<td>5.28(1.19)</td>
<td>5.51(1.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>5.44(1.27)</td>
<td>5.48(1.26)</td>
<td>5.47(1.20)</td>
<td>5.78(1.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchaseintention</td>
<td>4.93(1.26)</td>
<td>4.81(1.47)</td>
<td>4.79(1.52)</td>
<td>5.33(1.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eWOM</td>
<td>3.53(1.78)</td>
<td>3.14(1.76)</td>
<td>3.29(1.78)</td>
<td>3.98(1.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Extraversion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad attitude</td>
<td>5.08(1.05)</td>
<td>5.02(1.15)</td>
<td>4.94(1.08)</td>
<td>5.06(1.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>5.36(1.03)</td>
<td>5.22(1.16)</td>
<td>5.21(1.10)</td>
<td>5.28(1.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchaseintention</td>
<td>4.75(1.23)</td>
<td>4.61(1.34)</td>
<td>4.72(1.46)</td>
<td>4.50(1.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eWOM</td>
<td>3.07(1.53)</td>
<td>2.91(1.56)</td>
<td>3.02(1.57)</td>
<td>2.91(1.54)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4-8. A summary of MANCOVA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Extraversion main effect</th>
<th>Regulatory focus main effect</th>
<th>Extraversion x regulatory focus</th>
<th>Extraversion x regulatory focus x product appeal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ad attitude</td>
<td>F=.41</td>
<td>F=9.66</td>
<td>F=.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>F=.66</td>
<td>F=6.20</td>
<td>F=.19</td>
<td>F=.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>F=2.15</td>
<td>F=.2.54</td>
<td>F=.42</td>
<td>F=4.40*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eWOM</td>
<td>F=11.22</td>
<td>F=2.62</td>
<td>F=.50</td>
<td>F=4.62*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p < .05

Figure 4-2. Three-way interaction effect between extraversion, regulatory focus and product appeal on eWOM
The fifth hypothesis proposed a three-way interaction such that consumers who score high on conscientiousness (vs. low) are more likely to have more positive responses and behavioral intentions towards a utilitarian product appeal ad when the message is prevention-focused compared to a promotion-focused message. Conscientiousness was split at the median to create two subgroups: high-and low-group ($M_{\text{high}} \geq 5.5$ vs. $M_{\text{low}} \leq 5.5$) Results of a MANCOVA demonstrated that there were no significant interaction effects between conscientiousness, regulatory focus and product appeal on attitudes towards the ad, $F (1, 643)= .02, p > .1$, brand attitude, $F (1, 643)= .00, p > .1$, purchase intention, $F (1, 643)= .30, p > .1$ and eWOM, $F (1, 643)= .94, p > .1$. That is, conscientiousness did not significantly influence consumer responses to ads across both levels of regulatory focus and product appeal. Table 4-9 below depict the means and standard deviations.
Table 4-9. Means and standard deviations (conscientiousness, regulatory focus and product appeal)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Promotion</th>
<th></th>
<th>Prevention</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hedonic</td>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>Hedonic</td>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad attitude</td>
<td>5.36(1.16)</td>
<td>5.41(1.13)</td>
<td>5.42(1.04)</td>
<td>5.64(1.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>5.68(1.02)</td>
<td>5.62(1.14)</td>
<td>5.60(1.06)</td>
<td>5.77(1.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>5.00(1.28)</td>
<td>4.96(1.37)</td>
<td>5.00(1.15)</td>
<td>5.29(1.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eWOM</td>
<td>3.36(1.73)</td>
<td>3.08(1.73)</td>
<td>3.23(1.79)</td>
<td>3.65(1.84)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-9. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Promotion</th>
<th></th>
<th>Prevention</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hedonic</td>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>Hedonic</td>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad attitude</td>
<td>4.84(1.07)</td>
<td>4.80(1.18)</td>
<td>4.72(1.12)</td>
<td>4.91(1.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>5.09(1.12)</td>
<td>5.05(1.20)</td>
<td>5.03(1.16)</td>
<td>5.22(1.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>4.61(1.18)</td>
<td>4.44(1.37)</td>
<td>4.50(1.42)</td>
<td>4.46(1.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eWOM</td>
<td>3.07(1.50)</td>
<td>2.91(1.55)</td>
<td>2.97(1.56)</td>
<td>3.06(1.45)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sixth hypothesis predicted that consumers who score low on conscientiousness are more likely to engage in eWOM than consumers who score high in conscientiousness. A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of conscientiousness on eWOM, $F(1, 643) = 6.10, p = .01$. However, the results were in opposite of the predicted pattern. The mean values for eWOM were significantly greater for those who scored high in conscientiousness ($M_{High Conscientiousness} = 3.32, SD=1.77$) than those who scored low in conscientiousness ($M_{Low Conscientiousness} = 3.00, SD=1.51$). Thus H6 was not supported in the predicted direction. Consumers who scored high in conscientiousness had more intention to engage in eWOM.

The first part of the seventh hypothesis predicted that self-congruity will moderate the relationship between extraversion and consumer responses to social media ads. Results of a 2 x 2 MANOVA showed a 2-way interaction effect between self-congruity and extraversion $F(1,626) = 8.15, p=.004$ where those low in extraversion were more likely to engage in eWOM if they felt the brand was more congruent to their self than not ($M_{High Self-Congruity}=3.65, SD=1.54$ vs. $M_{Low Self-Congruity}=3.06, SD=1.45$).
Congruity = 2.36, SD = 1.23) while those high in extraversion were also more likely to engage in if they felt the brand was more congruent to their self than not ($M_{\text{High Self-Congruity}} = 4.29$, SD = 1.53 vs. $M_{\text{Low Self-Congruity}} = 2.31$, SD = 1.38). Thus H7a was supported.

The second part of the seventh hypothesis posited that self-congruity will moderate the relationship between conscientiousness and consumer responses to social media ads. Interestingly, a similar pattern was found through 2 x 2 MANOVA which showed a 2-way interaction effect between self-congruity and conscientiousness, $F(1,626) = 10.93$, $p = .001$ where those low in conscientiousness were more likely to engage in eWOM if they felt the brand was more congruent to their self than not ($M_{\text{High Self-Congruity}} = 3.69$, SD = 1.48 vs. $M_{\text{Low Self-Congruity}} = 2.44$, SD = 1.26) while those high in conscientiousness were also more likely to engage in if they felt the brand was more congruent to their self than not ($M_{\text{High Self-Congruity}} = 4.10$, SD = 1.62 vs. $M_{\text{Low Self-Congruity}} = 2.20$, SD = 1.30). Thus H7b was supported. Means and standard deviations are detailed below in Tables 4-9 and 4-10.

Table 4-10. Means and standard deviations (extraversion and self-congruity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Extraversion</th>
<th>Low Extraversion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Self-Congruity</td>
<td>Low Self-Congruity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad attitude</td>
<td>5.81(.82)</td>
<td>4.60(1.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>6.03(.78)</td>
<td>4.89(1.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>5.60(.92)</td>
<td>4.14(1.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eWOM</td>
<td>4.29(1.53)*</td>
<td>2.31(1.38)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

Table 4-11. Means and standard deviations (conscientiousness and self-congruity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Conscientiousness</th>
<th>Low Conscientiousness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Self-Congruity</td>
<td>Low Self-Congruity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad attitude</td>
<td>5.91(.75)</td>
<td>4.84(1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>6.09(.72)</td>
<td>5.10(1.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>5.65(.90)</td>
<td>4.24(1.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eWOM</td>
<td>4.10(1.62)**</td>
<td>2.20(1.30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < .001
Figure 4-4. Two way interaction between extraversion and self-congruity on eWOM

Figure 4-5. Two way interaction effect between conscientiousness and self-congruity on eWOM.
### Table 4-12. Results of Hypotheses Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Extraversion will have a positive influence on a) ad attitude, b) brand attitude and c) purchase intention towards social media ads.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Conscientiousness will have a positive influence on a) ad attitude, b) brand attitude and c) purchase intention towards social media ads.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3 (a)</td>
<td>Promotion-focused ads will engender more positive attitudes and behavioral intentions for a hedonic product appeal in the ad message relative to a utilitarian product appeal</td>
<td>Partial Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3 (b)</td>
<td>Prevention-focused ads will engender more positive attitudes and behavioral intentions for a utilitarian product appeal ad in the ad message rather than a hedonic product appeal ad.</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td>Consumers who score high on extraversion are more likely to have more positive responses to hedonic product appeal ad when the message is promotion-focused than when the message is prevention-focused message.</td>
<td>Partial Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5</td>
<td>Consumers who score high on conscientiousness are more likely to have more positive responses and behavioral intentions towards a utilitarian product appeal in the ad message when the message is prevention-focused than when it is promotion-focused.</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6</td>
<td>Consumers who score low on conscientiousness are more likely to engage in eWOM than consumers who score high in conscientiousness.</td>
<td>Supported (Opposite)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7 (a)</td>
<td>Self-congruity will moderate the relationship between extraversion and consumer responses to social media ads.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7 (b)</td>
<td>Self-congruity will moderate the relationship between conscientiousness and consumer responses to social media ads.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Summary and Implications

This chapter presents a discussion of the possible explanations for the results of this study. It further highlights the contributions, and theoretical and academic implications of this study. This current study delivers useful insights about the potential interplay of consumers’ personality traits and personalized messages. The objective of this study was to investigate the function of personality traits in the evaluation of persuasive advertising messages. Specifically, this study examined the interaction between consumers’ personality traits and two distinct message frames of regulatory focus (i.e. promotion and prevention focus) and product appeal (hedonic and utilitarian). The study postulated that interaction effects might exist in conjunction with personality traits (i.e. extraversion and conscientiousness). As predicted, the results revealed that extraversion and conscientiousness had positive effects on consumer responses where consumers who scored high in extraversion and conscientiousness demonstrated more favorable responses in terms of ad and brand attitude, purchase intention and eWOM. It was revealed that there was an interaction effect between regulatory focus and product appeal on eWOM. The study posited that consumers who scored high in extraversion would find the advertising more persuasive if the messages paired promotion focus with hedonic appeal versus prevention focus with utilitarian focus. On the other hand, it was suggested that those who scored high in conscientiousness are more likely to prefer messages that paired prevention focus with utilitarian appeal compared to messages that paired promotion focus with hedonic appeal. However, on the contrary, consumers who scored high in extraversion showed more favorable response to the messages that paired prevention focus with utilitarian appeal particularly in terms of eWOM as well as purchase intention.
Throughout this paper, the underlying assertion was for the need to examine the relationship between personality traits and social media advertising. As predicted, this present study found positive effects of both extraversion and conscientiousness on consumers’ attitudes and behavioral intentions toward social media ads. This study’s results substantiated and echoed previous research on the determination of the relevance of personality traits on consumers’ responses to advertising messages (e.g. Clark & Çallı, 2014; Hirsh et al., 2012; Jin & Villegas, 2007; Luchs & Mooradian, 2012). For instance, Souiden, Chtourou and Korai (2017), in a recent study examined the moderating role of personality traits on online advertising. Their investigation focused on the possible moderating roles of introversion and extraversion in attitudes towards online advertising. Souiden et al. (2017) found that extraversion played an important role where consumers who were more extroverted had a demonstrably stronger impact of their attitudes towards advertising on their attitudes towards online advertising. An aim of this study was to bring some clarity to the ambiguity regarding the role of personality traits in consumers’ responses to social media advertising. This study’s results signal the importance of devoting attention to the role of personality traits in consumer responses to advertising messages particularly when it comes to personalized messages on social media. A host of prior research indicates that advertising effectiveness is enhanced when consumers are exposed to personalized advertising (e.g. Anand & Shachar, 2009; Lamrecht & Tucker, 2013; Tucker, 2014). For instance, results from Tucker’s (2014) analysis of a randomized field experiment demonstrated that consumers were likely to click on personalized ads that incorporated the use of more personalized messages based on specific private information than ads that did not include personalized information. With the growing emphasis on the use of personalization particularly in social media, the results suggest that personality traits should be an important consideration.
when accounting for factors that could influence consumer responses to social media. In particular, given that extraversion and conscientiousness have been linked to social media use (Ross et al., 2009; Ryan & Xenos, 2011), the results of this study’s investigations where there were more favorable responses in terms of ad attitude, brand attitude, purchase intention and eWOM suggest that there is value in accounting for personality traits in the creation of advertising messages on social media.

This present study contributes to the body of literature on the impact of personality traits on consumer behavior with the results of the study pointing to the positive effects that personality traits have on consumer attitudes and behavior. Well accepted is the idea that consumer preferences should be taken into account when creating products and that personality traits could influence receptivity towards media messages (Moss, 2017). The scholarship on personality traits and online attitudes and behavior towards advertiser deserve further attention and this study makes modest contributions in that direction. Furthermore, the implications of this finding are rich for advertisers. The consistent growth of social media use has catapulted it into the ranks as a key advertising vehicle (Jung, 2017). Expectations are that social media users worldwide, in 2019, will be more than 2.27 billion (eMarketer, 2016). This vast number indicates the potential eyes that advertisers can attempt to reach with the advertising messages. However, given that social media advertising has become more popular, social media, similar to other media sources, have become saturated with advertising (Jung, 2017). Personalized advertising, where advertisers draw from various sources of consumer information (e.g. demographic or psychographic features) available via social media, as a strategy enables advertisers to stand out in an arena littered with advertising. Jung (2017) in an online survey, examined the effectiveness of social media advertising through the use of personalized advertising. The study revealed the
key role of perceived ad relevance in advertising effectiveness. Specifically, perceived relevance not only increased attention towards the ads but also decreased advertising avoidance.

The expected findings with regard to the persuasive nature of matching promotion-focused message to hedonic appeal and prevention focused-message to utilitarian product appeal was found to be true particularly on intentions to engage in eWOM. Regulatory fit is the idea of that compatibility between an individual’s regulatory focus and the strategy for the pursuit of goals produces more favorable consumer responses (Lee & Aaker, 2004; Motyka et al., 2014; Wang & Lee, 2006). Within literature is evidence that regulatory fit does unmistakably influence consumers’ evaluations as well as their behavioral intentions (see Motyka et al., 2014). Micu and Chowdury (2010) in their study sought to examine the combined effects of regulatory fit and product type on ad persuasion. They found that when a hedonic product was matched with promotion focus claims in contrast with prevention focus claims, the messages were found to be more persuasive and engendered better recall. On the other hand, when a utilitarian product was matched with a prevention focus claim, consumers found the messages more persuasive.

Consistent with this study’s propositions, consumers who viewed the ad that matched promotion focus message with a hedonic appeal expressed a more favorable behavioral intention to engage in eWOM while consumers who viewed the ad that matched a prevention focus message with a utilitarian appeal also were more inclined to engage in eWOM. Thus, this study supports and expands the literature on the notion of regulatory fit in terms of regulatory focus and product type compatibility relative to consumers’ behavioral intentions (Chernev, 2004; Micu & Chowdhury; Werth & Foerster, 2007).

The replication of the results of regulatory fit effects in this study is especially important when it comes to eWOM. Social media exemplifies an ideal avenue through which consumers
have agency to deliver and circulate brand-related information to the connections within their social network (Chu & Kim, 2011). The general consensus within literature is that word of mouth is vital and has a more pronounced effect on consumers than other forms of marketing communication (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2014; Teng, Wei Khong, Wei Goh & Yee Loong Chong, 2014). The age of social media presents consumers with unprecedented agency in when and how they choose to engage with brands and brand related information. With the influx of advertising messages on social media, consumers’ willingness to engage in eWOM is an important factor that brands can and should encourage given the nature of social media to serve as an amplifier of consumer opinions. Social media provides not only a “virality” but also permanence with regards to consumer communication about brands (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2014). This study therefore provides insights suggesting that messages that are framed to match the compatibility of regulatory focus messages (promotion focus or prevention focus) and product attributes (hedonic or utilitarian) can serve as an originator of consumers’ likelihood to engage in eWOM.

The running theme for this study, in terms of result, is the significance of the interplay of personality traits, regulatory focus, and product appeal on consumers’ intention to engage in electronic word of mouth and purchase intention. Interestingly, the results of this study were not in the predicted pattern of the proposed effects of personality traits (i.e. extraversion), regulatory focus and product appeal. Consumers who scored high in extraversion had more favorable responses towards eWOM and purchase intention when the ad consisted of a prevention focus message and utilitarian product appeal. An alternative explanation for this result can be found in the idea of schematic ad incongruity. Schemata-the cognitive structures that represent particular information about different stimuli-lead to the creation of expectations as individuals tend to be
more attuned to information related to their schematic knowledge (Dimofte, Forehand & Deshpandé, 2003). Research suggests that more attention is given to information that matches one’s own self-schema (Dimofte et al., 2003). However, schema incongruity has been linked to engendering surprise (Meyer, Niepel, Rudolph, and Schutzwohl, 1991) and influencing overall attention (see Dimofte et al., 2003) as information that is not congruent to schema has the possibility of evoking consumer interest and persuasiveness (Yoon, 2013). Following the underlying premise of schematic ad incongruity which suggests that ads that are incongruent with schema can elicit more cognitive processing since more effort may be undertaken to process such information (Jurca & Madlberger, 2015), this study asserts that the unexpected results may be explained by, what is termed here as personality-message incongruency. This present study suggests that information that is incongruent to personality related schema might lead to the perception of novelty, which subsequently leads to the intention to engage in eWOM. Prior research suggests that information processing style varies based on personality traits (Humphreys & Revelle, 1984; Pacini & Epstein, 1999; Sojka & Giese, 2001). Because extraverts may be predisposed to process information that is consistent with their schema (Rusting, 1998), the incongruency with the ad information may have produced more attention leading to their behavioral intention. It is plausible that when exposed to schema incongruent information, extraverts are perhaps more likely to be drawn to such advertising and therefore may be more willing to engage in eWOM. Not only was this result found for likelihood of engaging in eWOM, the result extended towards purchase intention. As one of the most important determinants of consumer loyalty, consumers’ behavioral intention of purchase is an important finding. The practice of personalized advertising must account for personality traits given the results of this present study. Armed with the knowledge of the effects of personality-message
incongruency for consumers who are extraverts, companies can remain informed and develop messages that aim to trigger this inconsistency between trait and message in an effort to influence consumer behavior both online and offline.

The rise of personalized advertising as a business tool (Liu & Mattila, 2017) denotes the need for companies to gain more knowledge for utilizing personalization strategies. This study supplies some insights, which adds to existing knowledge about personalization strategies. While it has been found that consumers are more receptive towards and prefer messages that are relevant to an aspect of their individual self (Kim & Hang, 2014), there remains a need to examine conditions under which preferences for personalized advertising may be more effective. This study echoes Liu and Mattila’s (2017) proposal for personalization that accounts for consumers’ psychological motivations. The findings of this study speak to the significant nature of individuals’ psychological motivations in terms of the effect of personality traits on consumer responses to social media ads. Past research mostly has overlooked the role of personality traits in consumer responses to social media ads (Knoll, 2015). Thus, this research sheds light on the under examined function of personality traits and how personality traits can be considered as part of personalized advertising strategies for advertisers.

Additionally, the role of self-congruity as a moderator was found to be relevant in this study. Consumer psychology and marketing literature indicate that self-concept is an important factor in consumer behavior. Consumers who find their self-concept to be consistent with a brand’s image are more likely to have positive attitudes towards the brand (Lee & Lee, 2015). Brands can serve as a form of expression of personal identity for the consumer (Choi & Rifon, 2012). In this study, consumers who had scored high in both extraversion and conscientiousness were more likely to engage in eWOM if they highly considered the brand’s image to be
congruent with their own self-image. An interpretation of this finding suggests support for the assertion of the importance of consumers’ self-concept in their behavior, particularly online consumer behavior, as this study demonstrates.

Cautious interpretations are made about the findings of this study to reflect the need for further research into the phenomenon of the growth of social media use and personalized advertising.

**Limitations and Future Research**

This study contains and acknowledges some limitations, which suggest other research avenues in the examination of personality traits, regulatory focus and product appeals. Specifically, as with many experimental studies, this research employed the use of an online experimental design, constituting an artificial environment, which could not be controlled by the researcher. Furthermore, as with experimental studies, methodological issues such as external validity and generalizability, also add to the limitations of this study.

While efforts were made to increase the generalizability of this study through the use of Amazon Mechanical Turk as an online recruitment tool, the generalizability of this research is still in question. The online nature of this experimental study implies the limited control over environmental conditions and participants’ participation, which may influence the generalizations of this study.

This study focused on two personality traits (i.e. extraversion and conscientiousness). These two personality traits were measured with two items from previous research. Given that personality traits can cover a broad spectrum, future research may use other measures that may potentially capture the breadth of these two personality traits. Furthermore, the other three personality traits (i.e. agreeableness, openness to experience and neuroticism) present a wealth of research opportunities. Specifically, these other personality traits should be examined to
determine the influence of all five dimensions of the Big Five personality traits and its effect on consumer responses. Further research could investigate whether the patterns revealed in this study will be replicated across the other three personality traits. Extending research into the other personality traits would contribute to existing knowledge of the role of personality traits in consumer behavior by presenting a more holistic picture of the influence of personality traits.

Another limitation was the use of visual stimuli created to mimic a Facebook newsfeed ad. Contrary to how these stimuli were presented to participants, typical Facebook newsfeed ads do not appear in a vacuum. Participants were asked to spend as much time as they needed to review the ad after which they answered subsequent questions. In reality, participants, perhaps, rarely pay significant attention to social media ads. Thus, the artificial nature of the ad may limit the generalizations of the findings of this study. Future studies should explore the effectiveness of actual embedded ads on consumers’ Facebook newsfeeds. This will inherently present a more natural environment through which findings can be more generalizable. While this study employed a simple and straightforward ad design, determining the effectiveness of actual ads may serve to increase understanding of how consumers respond to social media ads. Future research might explore the effects of ad context and content to determine the role of other variables such as advertising clutter and competition on responses to social media ads. Besides, the continuous debut of newer advertising formats, particularly on social media (Belanche, Flavián & Pérez-Rueda, 2017), call for future studies which focus on different advertising formats within social media such as pre-roll video ads.

The choice of the use of a fictitious brand (Greeyo Greek Yogurt) also reduces the generalizability of the findings of this study since consumers often do have some information about an advertised brand (Belanche et al., 2017). Replications of this study through the
incorporation of different brands and different advertising formats can extend its generalizability. The findings of this study may also be triggered by factors external to the individual. Future studies might focus on other brands and advertising formats within the social media realm in an effort to increase the external validity of the study. For instance, exploring other contextual elements of advertising such as valence, design feature and claim can add to existing literature on the effects of these different elements in the persuasion process.

The present study considers the role of personality traits, regulatory focus and product appeal on consumer responses to social media ads. While regulatory fit was offered as an explanation for the results found, underlying mechanisms for the possible effects were not tested. The underlying mechanisms could be investigated further through a multi-dimensional approach to gauge the “how” these effects occur. More specifically, further attempts should be made to piece apart the latent mechanisms that can account for the insights revealed in this study. More rigorous investigations should be conducted to unearth these underlying mechanisms. For instance, as previously mentioned, personality traits might influence consumers’ information processing styles (Humphreys & Revelle, 1984; Pacini & Epstein, 1999; Sojka & Giese, 2001). It stands to reason that these differences in processing styles might evoke different reactions to persuasive messages. Distinguishing between underlying mechanisms might provide further insights and warrant future research on personality-matched information processing.

This research was also restrained by the focus on the Big Five personality Traits. The focus for this study centered on two (i.e. extraversion and conscientiousness) of the five generally recognized Big Five personality traits. On the whole, personality traits can encompass more than the Big Five personality traits. Future studies may be conducted to determine how other personality traits may factor into consumers responses to social media given the
intersection of regulatory focus and product category. Individual differences such as the need for affect and need for cognition, among others, might serve as boundary conditions for the effects found. Thus, examining a variety of individual factors can enhance current knowledge on the effects of regulatory focus and product appeal discovered in this study. Furthermore, the Big-Five personality traits were treated as a measured independent variable. Future research can explore the Big Five from a different angle through the manipulation of personality traits in the message content (e.g. Hirsh et al., 2012).

Another limitation of this study was the use of one product in the study. Broadly speaking, products are consumed either for hedonic or utilitarian needs (Lim et al., 2008). Though the product category was manipulated through the headline to portray either a hedonic or utilitarian appeal, an argument can be made regarding the notion that a product can be consumed primarily for hedonic or utilitarian purposes. Thus, to remove any potential that using one product had a confounding effect, other product categories can be examined from various perspectives to provide a richer comprehension of the link between regulatory focus and product category (Micu & Chowdhury, 2010; Lim et al., 2008).

Conclusion

Facebook is dominant as it continues to be the largest social network in most major world markets (eMarketer, 2016). Facebook, similar to various other social media platforms, is a rich data mine of consumer information that can be used to create more personalized advertising (Liu & Mattila, 2017). An investigation into the development of personalized advertising based on varying strategies is critical to the understanding of consumer attitude and behavior. The discoveries from this research assert the role of personality traits in conjunction with regulatory focus and product appeal on consumer responses to social media ads. This study sought to contribute to current literature on the role of personality traits in consumer behavior. In addition,
the nexus between consumers’ psychological motivations and message appeal was determined to be influential in consumer responses to social media ads. This study attempted to extend the literature on regulatory focus theory into the online world by examining the compatibility of regulatory focus and product appeal in social media ads. This study predicted that matching regulatory focus with product appeal (i.e. promotion focus with hedonic appeal and prevention focus with utilitarian appeal) would engender more positive responses with regard to ad and brand attitude, purchase intention and eWOM. The expected pattern was seen in terms of eWOM suggesting that regulatory fit can influence consumers’ behavioral intentions to engage in eWOM.

In reverse to the expected direction, personality traits, particularly extraversion did influence consumers’ likelihood to purchase the product and to engage in eWOM. Those who scored high in extraversion were more likely to engage in eWOM when exposed to social media ads that paired prevention focus with utilitarian product appeal rather than ads that paired promotion focus with hedonic product appeal. This was explained through the notion of trait-schema incongruity where extraverts, upon exposure to schema incongruent advertising, have a higher probability of sharing the social media ad. Overall, this research does provide some insights into the combined effects of psychological traits and message factors. Consequently, this study can spur on further research attention to other contributing factors that can account for the effects found in this study.
APPENDIX A
EXPERIMENTAL STIMULI

Promotion focus + hedonic product appeal
Promotion focus + utilitarian product appeal
Prevention focus + hedonic product appeal

The all new Greeyo

Happiness in every serving!

Greeyo greek yogurt is a simple low fat way to help prevent indigestion and weak bones. Avoid a weak immune system and prevent weight gain.

The all new Greeyo
WWW.GREEYO.COM

230 Comments 417 Shares
Prevention focus + utilitarian product appeal
APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

Screener Questions

Are you lactose intolerant? (Lactose intolerance means that your body cannot easily digest lactose, a type of natural sugar found in milk and dairy products)
- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Are you a regular consumer of yogurt or Greek yogurt?
- Yes
- No

Do you have an active social media account?
- Yes (If yes, move to informed consent)
- No (If no, skip to end of survey)

Pre-manipulation questions

Which of the following social media account do you use? Please select as many as you have active accounts>
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Snapchat
- YouTube
- Reddit
- Pinterest
- Tumblr
- Vine
- Pinterest
- Google Plus
- Other (Please Specify)

How many hours do you on average use social media each day?
- Less than an hour
- 1 to 2 hours
- More than 2 to 3 hours
- More than 3 to 4 hours
- More than 4 to 5 hours
- More than 5 hours

Which means do you use to access your social media account most frequently?
Below are a set of statements about specific events that may or may not apply to you. For each statement, you are asked to indicate the extent to which the event may or may not have occurred in your life. Please indicate your answer to each question by clicking the appropriate number that best represents your opinion. How often would you say that...

Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often
1. Compared to most people, you are typically unable to get what you want out of life.
2. Growing up, you "crossed the line" by doing things that your parents would not tolerate.
3. You often have you accomplished things that got you motivated to work even harder.
4. You got on your parents' nerves often when you were growing up.
5. You often did obeyed rules and regulations that were established by your parents.
6. Growing up, you acted in ways that your parents thought were objectionable.
7. You often do well at different things you try.
8. Not being careful enough has gotten me into trouble at times.
9. When it comes to achieving things that are important to me, I find that I don't perform as well as I ideally would like to do.
10. I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life.
11. I have found very few hobbies or activities in my life that capture my interest or motivate me to put effort in them.

Definitely false, Probably false, Neither true nor false, Probably true, Definitely true
9. When it comes to achieving things that are important to me, I find that I don't perform as well as I ideally would like to do.
10. I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life.
11. I have found very few hobbies or activities in my life that capture my interest or motivate me to put effort in them.

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you personally. For these few statements, please consider who you are and how you will describe yourself. Please indicate the level to which you agree or disagree with each statement based on how you see yourself. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other. Please read each statement carefully, then click the circle that best expresses your feeling about the statements

Strongly disagree, Disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat agree, Agree, Strongly agree
1. I see myself as extraverted, enthusiastic.
2. I see myself as critical, quarrelsome.
3. I see myself as dependable, self-disciplined.
4. I see myself as anxious, easily upset.
5. I see myself as open to new experiences, complex.
6. I see myself as reserved, quiet.
7. I see myself as sympathetic, warm.
8. I see myself as disorganized, careless
9. I see myself as calm, emotionally stable
10. I see myself as conventional, uncreative

Below are a series of scales that are anchored by adjectives on each end. Please provide your opinions about yogurt by using the scale below. Please read both ends of the scale carefully before choosing the option that best expresses your opinion about yogurt. I think yogurt is....

Important/unimportant
Boring/interesting
Relevant/irrelevant
Exciting/unexciting
Means noting/means a lot to me
Appealing/unappealing
Fascinating/mundane
Worthless/valuable
Involving/uninvolving
Not needed/needed

Post-manipulation questions

The next few pages contain a series of scales that have opposite description words at each end. Use each scale to give feedback about the ad you just saw. You can use the back arrow to see the ad again if you choose. Please remember there are no right or wrong answers; only your honest opinion.

"In my opinion, the headline for the ad I viewed is..."
Not Fun: Fun
Dull: Exciting
Unpleasant: Pleasant
Unenjoyable: Enjoyable

Unhelpful: Helpful
Not functional: Functional
Not useful: Useful
Not Beneficial: Beneficial

Based on the ad you saw, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to the following statements about the copy message used in the ad to describe the Greek yogurt product. For each statement choose the option that best represents your opinion.

Strongly disagree, Disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat agree, Agree, Strongly agree

1. This ad message emphasizes the achievement of positive outcomes from eating the yogurt.
2. This ad message stresses ideas about how to increase positive results from eating the yogurt.
3. This ad message kept my thoughts on gaining positive benefits from eating the yogurt.
4. This ad message emphasizes the prevention of negative outcomes through eating the yogurt.
5. This ad message stresses ideas about how to avoid negative outcomes through eating the yogurt.
6. This ad message kept my thoughts on preventing negative results through eating the yogurt.

In this section, we are interested in your overall evaluation of the ad based on a 1 to 7 scale. In this section, please provide an overall evaluation of the advertisement using the scale below. Please read both ends of the scale carefully before making your choice.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Appealing/Unappealing
Informative/uninformative
Unexciting/Exciting
Boring/Interesting
Good/Bad
Pleasant/Unpleasant
Unattractive/Attractive
Favorable/Unfavorable
Likeable/Dislikeable
Persuasive/Unpersuasive

What is the color of the sky? Even though the correct answer is "Blue", please choose "Red" for this question.

- White
- Blue
- Black
- Red

In this section, we are interested in your overall evaluation of the brand based on a 1 to 7 scale. In this section, please provide an overall evaluation of the brand using the scale below.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Appealing/Unappealing
Good/Bad
Unpleasant/Pleasant
Unattractive/Attractive
Favorable/Unfavorable
Likeable/Dislikeable

This section consists of a set of adjectives to help you tell us what you think of the ad you just saw using the scale below. Please read both ends of the scale carefully before choosing the option that best corresponds to your opinion.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Unbelievable: Believable
Not convincing: Convincing
Unreasonable: Reasonable
Not authentic: Authentic

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Please read each statement carefully, then click the option that best expresses your feeling about the statements.

Strongly disagree, Disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat agree, Agree, Strongly agree

1. I would like to post about this ad on Facebook.
2. This ad is worth sharing with others on Facebook.
3. I am likely to share this ad on Facebook.
4. I will recommend this ad to others on Facebook.
5. I am interested in sharing this ad with my Facebook friends.

Below are a few statements to help you provide an overall evaluation of the Greeyo Greek yogurt brand based on the scale below. Please read the statements before choosing the option that best corresponds to your opinion.

Strongly disagree, Disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat agree, Agree, Strongly agree

People who use this brand are like me
I can identify with people who prefer this brand
I am very much like the typical person who prefers to use this brand
The image of the user of this brand is highly consistent with how I see myself

What is the color of the sky? Even though the correct answer is "Blue", please choose "Red" for this question.
- White
- Blue
- Black
- Red

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Please read each statement carefully, then choose the option that best expresses your feeling about the statements.

Strongly disagree, Disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat agree, Agree, Strongly agree

1. I found the information presented in the ad to be accurate.
2. I found the information presented in the ad to be believable.
3. I found the information presented in the ad to be fair.
4. I found the information presented in the ad to be reliable.
5. I found the information presented in the ad to be credible.
6. I found the information presented in the ad to be trustworthy.

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale from strongly
disagree to strongly agree. Please read each statement carefully, then click the option that best
expresses your feeling about the statements.

Strongly disagree, Disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat agree,
Agree, Strongly agree

I am likely to try the product featured in the ad
I am likely to buy the product featured in the ad
I am likely to seek more information about the product featured in the ad
I am likely to recommend the product featured in the ad to others

How familiar are you with the Greeyo Greek yogurt brand in the ad you just viewed?
• Not familiar at all
• Slightly familiar
• Moderately familiar
• Very familiar
• Extremely familiar

How familiar are you with the ad you just viewed?
• Not familiar at all
• Slightly familiar
• Moderately familiar
• Very familiar
• Extremely familiar

Please tell us a little about yourself
(1) What is your age? (in years)
• 18 - 24
• 25 - 34
• 35 - 44
• 45 - 54
• 55 - 64
• 65+
(2) Please indicate your gender:
- Male
- Female
- Other

(3) Please indicate your highest level of education:
- Have not completed high school
- High school graduate
- Some college/vocational school/technical school
- College graduate
- Some graduate school
- Graduate degree
- Other ____________________

(4) What is your race/ethnicity?
- White (not Hispanic or Latino)
- Black or African American (not Hispanic or Latino)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (not Hispanic or Latino)
- Asian (not Hispanic or Latino)
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (not Hispanic or Latino)
- Two or More Races (not Hispanic or Latino)
- Hispanic or Latino (A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central America, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race)

Thanks for participating in this survey. Notice: This survey is for scientific purposes only. The ad and brand described in this study is purely fictional and for research purposes only.
LIST OF REFERENCES


Martin, K., & Todorov, I. (2010). How will digital platforms be harnessed in 2010, and how will they change the way people interact with brands?. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 10*(2), 61-66.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Naa Amponsah Dodoo, born in Accra, Ghana, received her undergraduate degree from University of Ghana, where she graduated with a double major in sociology and information studies in May 2009. Following her graduation, she worked as a research assistant in the Ministry of Information for a year. After, she moved to the United States where she earned a Master of Arts in advertising and public relations at Marquette University in 2013. During her four years in the Ph.D. program at the University of Florida, she worked as a research assistant under a SNAP-ED grant and taught advertising courses such as advertising research, advertising strategy and international advertising. She graduated with her doctorate in mass communications in summer 2017.