

## **MESSAGE FRAMING AND INVOLVEMENT IN INFLUENCING ATTITUDES TOWARDS ORGANIC PRODUCTS**

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### *Abstract*

The research reveals the role of message framing and involvement in influencing attitudes towards organic products. The research data obtained through experimental techniques were attended by 180 students. The results showed that the effect of the negative message framing is more effective in subjects with a high level of involvement, while the influence of a positive message framing is more effective in subjects with low involvement.

Keywords: Organic product, Message framing, Involvement, Attitude

### *Abstrak*

Penelitian ini mengungkap peran pembingkai pesan dan keterlibatan dalam mempengaruhi sikap terhadap produk organik. Data penelitian diperoleh melalui teknik eksperimen yang diikuti oleh 180 mahasiswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengaruh pembingkai pesan negatif lebih efektif pada subjek dengan tingkat keterlibatan tinggi, sedangkan pengaruh pembingkai pesan positif lebih efektif pada subjek yang memiliki keterlibatan rendah.

Kata kunci: Produk organik, Pembingkai pesan, Keterlibatan, Sikap

JEL Classification: M31, M37

### **1. Research Background**

The awareness towards living environment and also the existence are important issues to be monitored. Steg and Vlek (2009) think that living environment quality are very depending on human behavioral pattern. Human behavior can cause a serious damage to the earth environment and also threatening human life and another species in the upcoming future (Lehman and Geller 2004). Modern processing practice of agricultural land uses synthetic chemical substances like pesticide, and fertilizer in long term is also one of the causes of environmental damages, which are land and air pollutions (Urena et al. 2008). Beside affecting the land and air, the use of pesticide and its residue to the food will take negative effect for health (for example, look in Fantke et al. 2012; Jeyaratnam 1990; www.beemagz.com 2012).

The increasing of life environment and food safety issues also increasing the public and media attention in organic product and food (Williamson 2007), and profitable for organic product marketing (Van Doorn and Verhoef 2011). Nevertheless, the low consumption of organic product compare to conventional product is one of the practical problems that faced by the marketers in organic products marketing area in Indonesia also in another countries in the world (for example, look at Aertsens et al. 2009; Sulaeman 2007; www.tribunenews.com 2012). The high price and organic product availability perceived as the biggest issue by the consumers in consuming the organic product (Aertsens et al. 2011; Lea and Worsley

2005). Padel and Foster (2005) think that the possibility of consumers to have the will to buy organic product will be higher if they realize the reasons behind the high price of the organic product. Because of that, the marketers need to do marketing communication to give education to the consumers as one of the efforts to increase the perception and positif attitude towards the organic product.

Using the Prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky 1979) and ELM theory (Petty and Cacioppo 1986), this research weaves the factors that can give explanation to the attitude towards the organic products. The explanatory factors are the message framing and involvement. Particularly, this research is focusing on: First, Testing the message framing to attitude influence towards the organic product. And Second, Testing the involvement in moderating the message framing to attitude role towards the organic product.

### **1.1. Attitude**

Ajzen (1988) defined attitude as the disposition to give good or bad response towards object, person, institution, or certain happening. Although the definition of attitude in attitude research history quite varyi (for example, look at Bohner and Dickel 2011: Olson and Zanna 1993), but most of the researcher agree that the main concept of the attitude is evaluation (Petty et al. 1997). In consumer behavioural context, attitude is a trend that someone learned in order to behave good or not good consistently in certain object (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2010; Assael 2004). Based on the research, attitude has some important characteristics, which are: (1) Attitude is concise evaluation froman object; (2) attitude is the result of learning; and (3) attitude relatively consistent with the behavior that reflected by someone.

Reffering to Wood (2000), changing of attitude can occurred by persuasive effort and social influence. Persuasive is the biggest topic in literature about attitude (Olson and Zanna, 1993). Persuasive can be defined as the forming or change of attitude through information processing as the form os response towards the message that related to attitude towards one object (Bohner et al. 2008 in Bohner and Dickel 2011). Persuasive strongly related to the active effort that done in order to change attitude (Solomon 2011). Message framing is one of the persuasive forms (Wood 2000), which is one of the free variables in this research.

### **1.2. Message Framing**

Prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979) is theoretic cornerstone that used to explain the effect or framing. Framing effect meaning is someone will respond differently to the information that framed differently (positive or negative), although the informations are exactly the same. Based on Tversky and Kahneman (1981), positive framing emphasize the benefits (profit) got if communicated message is done, meanwhile, negative framing emphasize the risk aspect (loss) that borne if the message communicated is not done.

Research about the effectiveness of framing influencing the change of attitude and attitude that has been done, but there is yet to be found a conclusive result about the form of effective framing affects on decision making (O'Keefe and Jensen, 2008; Cox and Cox, 2001; Donovan and Jalleh, 1999). Part of the research show the negative framing superior (for instance, Gamliel and Herstein, 2012; Davis 1995; Meyerowitz and Chaiken, 1987), meanwhile the other research show that positive framing is more superior (for instance, Levin and Gaeth, 1988; Van de Velde et al. 2010; Detweiler et al. 1999), in fact there is a research that show no effect whether positive or negative framing for decision making (for instance, Van Assema 2001; Fatmawati 2012). The result of the previous researchs that has not been conclusive

indicate that the research about message framing is still relevant to do based on theoretical point of view

Referring to Levin et al. (1998), message framing in this research included to purpose framing. Manipulation in purpose framing designed so that the individual that get manipulated for certain purpose that communicated. In purpose framing, negative framing commonly effective to influence the respond compare to positive influence (Levin et al. 1998). To put it simple, it can be explained that an individual tend to avoid risk (Risk averse), whereas someone will likely to choose one profit or small benefit rather than bigger profit with higher risk (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979). Meyerowitz and Chaiken (1987) stated the negativity bias in information processing, which is the information negative framed will has a stonger systematic effect in decision making process (Donovan and Jalleh, 1999). Tversky and Kahneman (1981) said that negativity bias phenomena with the term “losses loom larger than gains”.

**Hypothesis 1** : Negative message framing more effective than positive message framing in influencing attitude towards organic product.

### 1.3. Involvement

Involvement construct has been investigated and reported widely in marketing and consumer behavior literature (Bienstock and Stafford, 2006). One of the classic definitions that still referred in new literature (for example, Solomon 2011) proposed by Zaichkowsky (1985), which involvement defined as a relation or relevance that perceived owned by someone with certain object based on the need, value, and interest that attached to a person.

One of the common theories about attitude change that related with the persuasion process and involvement construct is elaboration likelihood model (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2013; 395). Based on the theory of ELM (Petty and Cacioppo, 1989), subject will process the message comprehensively in the main route (central route) in high involvement condition. Subject with high involvement level will give comprehensive attention and give a higher weight in processing the information that negative framed, so that it will give a strong influence in decision making process compare to message that positive framed (Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy, 1990). In low involvement condition learning process and attitude change happen through another route beside the main route (peripheral route), whereas the content of the persuasive message is not the main focus of the subject. Subject with low involvement condition is processing the information through the message serving context, so that positive signal in the message that positive framed will be more influencing in decision making process (Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy, 1990).

**Hypothesis 2** : Involvement moderates message framing influence towards organic product. In high involvement condition, negative message framing will be more effective rather than positive message framing. Nevertheless, in low involvement condition, a persuasive message will be more effective if delivered with positive framing rather than negative framing.

## 2. Research Methods

Basically this research describes about the explanatory causality connection through data collecting technique experimentally in dimensional time that is cross-sectional (Cooper and Schindler 2011; Neuman 2011). This research aims to check

the explanatory causality connection, meaning to say that this research designed to check or testing the causality between variables that become the main focus of the research. Based on the dimension or participant of the research, this research is cross-sectional, because the respondents or participants observed within certain time and measurement towards the variables done during the research.

### **2.1. Design and Participant**

Experiment category that used for this research is laboratory experiment (lab), whereas the experiment done within an artificial environment or set up by the researcher (Sekaran and Bougie 2010). The experimental implementation is using 2 factorial design (message framing; positive and negative) X 2 (involvement; high and low) between subject. Factorial design is the design that testing the main influence and some interactions (two or more) free variable in dependant variable simultaneously (Neuman 2011; Christensen 2007; Kerlinger and Lee 2000).

Participant in this research is University of Surabaya students in Surabaya. Students choice as the participant based on some logical reasons, such as; relevance research, ease of access, the cognitive ability which is relatively homogeny, are parts of the population that do the activities which is the focus of the research, and also easy for replication (Cozby and Bates 2012).

### **2.2. Operational Definition and Research Variables**

Operational definition of a variable is set of procedures used for measuring or manipulating the variable (Cozby and Bates 2012). Variables in this research are the message framing and involvement as free variable, meanwhile attitude and reservation price towards organic product are the dependant variables.

Message framing variable manipulated in the form of public service advertisement containing benefit (positive framing) or loss (negative framing) that will be gotten or borne by consumers by consuming the organic or non-organic product.

Involvement level is measured by measurement reference used by Donovan and Jalleh (1999). Involvement measured by question, "How high is your involvement level in health and life environment issues towards the product that you consume?" Participants answer the question in Likert scale form 1 (very low) until 5 (very high). Next, participant that answer in 4 or 5 scales will be classified as high involvement group; meanwhile participant with the answer of scale 1 until 3 will be included to low involvement group.

Attitudes toward organic products measured based Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy (1990), and Rucker and Petty (2006), using a four point scale with 7 indicators that show the statement: not useful/very useful, unpleasant/very pleasant, bad/good, negative/positive. The question posed to participants in the form of, "After reading the message on the organic product, for me, the idea of consuming organic products are ..."

### **2.3. Experimental Procedure**

Some stages that has to be done in this experimental research implementation: (1) do randomization of participant into two framing manipulation groups, positive and negative; (2) giving manipulation by giving printed advertisement according to the treatment condition that has been set up in the previous stage; (3) participant asked to fill the framing manipulation check statement; (4) participant filling the questionnaire that measure involvement level and their attitude towards organic product as the form of respond to the manipulation that has been given; (5) as the last stage, participant asked to give remark towards the price of certain organic product,

as an approach that used to measure reservation price, after an introductory scenario is given.

### 3. Result and Discussion

This experiment followed by 180 participants. Through the randomization process, participants that get positive or negative framing manipulations are equal, which is 90 people. From the result of involvement measurement, 73 participants include into high involvement group, meanwhile the rest 170 participants included to low involvement group. The size ratio between low involvement and high involvement group still less than 1,5, so that it is still considered as equal or close to identical (Hair et al. 2010).

#### 3.1. Manipulation Check

Manipulation check is done in order to make sure that the variable that manipulated in the experiment really influencing the participant like the researcher wanted (Cozby and Bates 2012; Neuman 2011). Manipulation check is done to message framing variable, which is manipulation variable in this research. Manipulation towards message framing is referring to White et al. (2011), and Tsai (2006) which consist of two parts of positive and negative message framing.

Manipulation considered being success if the participant shows a higher score in the score of positive framing benefit aspect higher than negative framing; meanwhile the score of loss aspect is higher than negative framing than positive framing. By using the variance analysis (F-Test) or by free sample t-test, participants perceive the message in positive framing manipulation more emphasize to positive information (beneficial aspect) more than negative framing ( $F_{1,178} = 3,638$ ,  $t_{178} = 1,907$ ,  $p < 0,1$ ; Rerata (Ms) = 5,62 and 5,21). Next, message in negative framing emphasize more in loss aspect rather than positive framing ( $F_{1,178} = 17,878$ ,  $t_{178} = -4,228$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ; Ms = 4,99 and 3,84).

#### 3.2. Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability check applied to attitude respond variable that the measurement consist of four indicators. Convergent validity testing is based on factor loading ( $\lambda$ ) done by using exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Factor loading value of each attitude construct indicator towards organic product higher than 0,5 ( $\lambda = 0,807$ , 0,673, 0,873, and 0,838). It means that every attitude indicator towards organic product can be stated as significant statistically and fulfill the convergent validity (Hair et al. 2010). Next, the reliability test result by using Cronbach's Alpha value for attitude towards organic product of 0,812. It is mean that the measurement of the instrument which is used in the research has the good internal consistency reliability (Hair et al. 2010).

#### 3.3. Assumption Testing

Variance similarity assumption testing is done to one way variance (Hypothesis 1) or two ways Variance analysis (Hypothesis 2) using the test procedural of Levene (Hair et al. 2010). Levene testing in Hypothesis 1 (statistic = 5,055,  $p = 0,026$ ) in Hypothesis 2 (statistic = 2,946,  $p = 0,034$ ) show the unfulfilled assumption of variance similarity in  $\alpha = 5\%$ . Nevertheless, the variance analysis that used in this research is the variance analysis with fixed factor, in which robust towards the variance similarity assumption in balance participant measurement or close to between treatment group (Hair et al. 2010; Neter et al. 1996). As explained before that participant measurement in this research relatively balances or close to balance,

so the impact of the unfulfilled variance similarity assumption does not cause bias in the next inferential process, so that the data can be analyzed further.

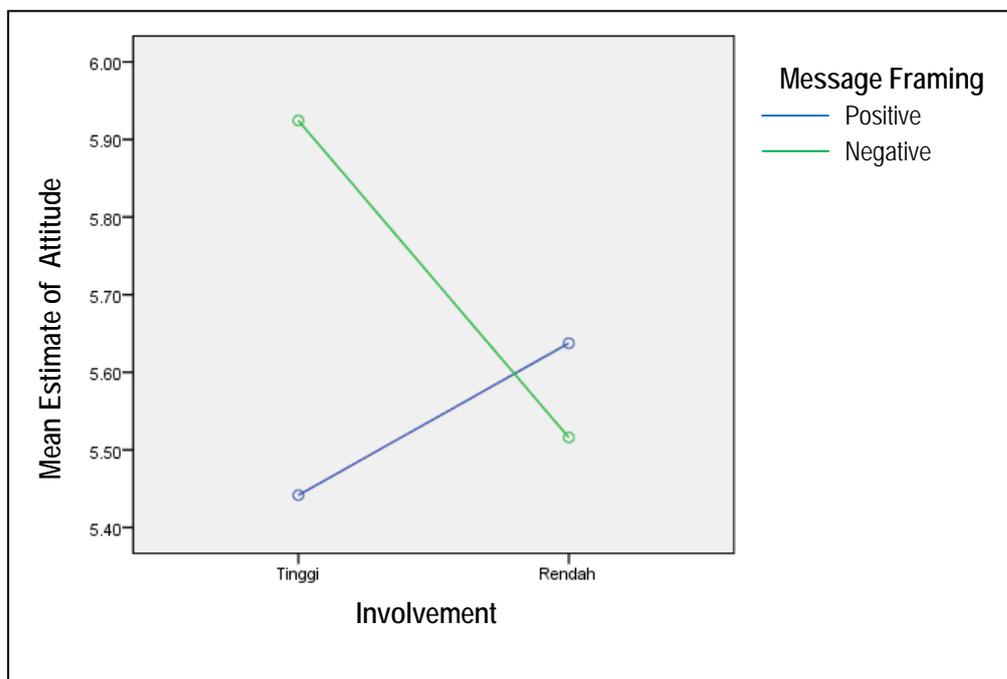
### 3.4. Hypothesis Testing

The first hypothesis testing with one way variance analysis ( $F_{1,178} = 0,792, p = 0,375$ ) shows that there is no effectiveness difference of message framing, whether positive ( $M_s = 5,57$ ) or negative ( $M_s = 5,71$ ) in influencing attitude towards organic product in level  $\alpha = 10\%$ . By that meaning, the first hypothesis is not empirically supported.

Two ways variance analysis result ( $F_{1,176} = 3,569, p = 0,061$ ) shows that the influence of interaction between message framing and attitude involvement are significant in level  $\alpha = 10\%$ . Referring to mean value in Table 1. Can be explained that in high involvemem condition, negative message framing is more effective in influencing the attitude rather than positive message framing. In the opposite, in low involvement condition, a persuasive message will be more effective if delivered by positive framing rather than negative framing. This interactional pattern also showed by interaction graphic in picture 1. Based on the result, can be conclude that the second hypothesis empirically supported.

**Tabel 1.Descriptive Statistical Summary Message Framing Interaction and Involvement Influence towards Organic Product**

Response Variable	Independent Variable		Attitude Statistical Description		
	Peningkatan	Keterlibatan	Rerata	Standar Deviasi	Jumlah
Attitude towards Organic Product	Positive	High	5,44	1,135	30
		Low	5,64	1,195	60
Organic Product	Negative	High	5,92	0,771	43
		Low	5,52	0,977	47



**Figure 1. Involvement and Message Framing Interactional Graphyc**

### **3.5. Discussion**

The unsupported first hypothesis strongly connected to the role of moderate variable in the second hypothesis. The significant interaction between message framing with the involvement in the second hypothesis indicates that the persuasion effect in attitude towards organic product does not caused by only message framing, but also the effect or message framing in certain involvement condition from the receiver of the message. Tsai (2006) explained that it is very hard to acquire the significant main effect from message framing when there is a significant (interaction) role from moderate variable. In the other words, message framing cannot have their own role in producing persuasive effect, but very depending on the communication in certain condition from the message receiver (Shiv et al., 2004) the certain condition of message receiver referring to moderat variable such as: involvement, product knowledge, mindset, and careness towards certain issues. From series of experiments that implemented in order to show the limitation of framing effect, Kellaris et al. (1995) conclude that moderate variable role (the existence of interaction) will reduce the value (magnitude) of framing influence.

The main effect interpretation in factorial variance analysis is actually unnecessary when the interactional effect is significant, because the main effect is not constatnt but varies according to variable condition that interacts with the variable (Kerlinger and Lee, 2000; Neter et al. 1990). Kerlinger and Lee (2000) affirmed that the interpretation towards the main effect (though it is significant) in certain significant interactional condition can lead to a wrong conclusion. Previous research in terms of purpose framing and moderate role test commonly did not suggest hypothesis about the main effect from the variable which strongly considered will interact (for example, look at Newman et al. 2012; Okada and Mais, 2010; Martin and Marshall, 1999; dan Maheswaran and Meyes-Levy, 1990). The researcher suggest the first hypothesis in this research as the additional hypothesis, so that if the main hypothesis that suggest the existence of interaction (second hypothesis) does not supported, then the interpretation will return to the hypothesis about the main effect that has been prepared according to theoretical support based on review of literature, as it is been done by previous researcher, for instances Gamliel and Herstein (2012), also Donovan and Jalleh (1999).

The second hypothesis tested the involvement variable role as moderator to message framing influence towards organic product. The result of hypothesis testing as moderator or interaction between involvement and significant message framing is the attitude towards organic product. The full support of second hypothesis is suitable with the previous researcher result like Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy (1990), Rothman et al. (1993), Martin and Marshall (1999), Donovan and Jalleh (1999), Tsai (2006), and Okada and Mais (2010).

### **4. Conclusion**

The result of the research show that message framing cannot stand alone in producing persuasive effect, but very depending on the involvement condition from message receiver. Messag receiver with high involvement level will give comprehensive attention and give higher weight in processing the information that negatively framed, so that it will give a strong influence in the process of attitude determination towards organic product compare to message that positive framed, meanwhile in low involvement level, positive message framing is more effective in influencing the attitude towards organic product. This finding strengthening the

previous empirical researchers findings, and also show that the role of message framing in causing the persuasive effect depends on the existence of another variable, for instance involvement.

Message framing in the advertisement about organic product can be used as one form of marketing communication (Wood, 2000) to give the education to the consumers as one of the effort to increase the perception and positive attitude towards organic product. Based on this research, marketer suggested using negative message framing when consumers involvement to health and life environment issues is high. Nevertheless, for the consumer that have low involvement to those issues, marketer suggested to use positive framing and interesting advertisement packaging, using endorser like expert in medic (such as, doctor, nutrition expert), artist, or public figure to attract the attention. The effective marketing communication form hoped to be able to influencing more consumers to consume more organic product as one alternative to reduce life environment and health quality decreasing.

The limitation in this research is in the experiment participant. Experiment participant do not really have the experience of buying the organic product so that it is possible that there is bias in giving the respond towards the manipulation or measurement of the research variable. This thing is also become one of the factors that causes the low external validity of the research.

Experiment participant in this research hoped to actually have organic product buying experience so that the researcher can get more accurate and representative research variable measurement, so that it can increase the research external validity. Beside that, the next research also suggested to do the research replication for different product by differentiating the characteristic of the product, whether it is as functional or symbolic product in order to figure out whether it will be result replication or different result.

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