

Words in Motion: How Regulatory Mode Language Fuels Consumer Engagement in Online vs. Offline Channel Service Promotions

Frank Mathmann

Queensland University of Technology

Janina Garbas

ESCP Business School

Yuanyuan (Gina) Cui

Clemson University

Patrick van Esch

Coastal Carolina University

Daniel Wentzel

Chair of Marketing, RWTH Aachen University

Cite as:

Mathmann Frank, Garbas Janina, Cui Yuanyuan (Gina), van Esch Patrick, Wentzel Daniel (2025), Words in Motion: How Regulatory Mode Language Fuels Consumer Engagement in Online vs. Offline Channel Service Promotions. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 54th, (125914)

Paper from the 54th Annual EMAC Conference, Madrid, Spain, May 25-30, 2025



Words in Motion: How Regulatory Mode Language Fuels Consumer Engagement in Online vs. Offline Channel Service Promotions

The gap between online and offline consumption channels has become more evident for service firms in various industries. Although the core service (e.g., a movie) is the same, online and offline consumption channels are characterized through distinct features: While online channels (e.g., Netflix) allow for instant accessibility, offline channels (e.g., theatres) often require more planning and time commitment. We propose that a one-size-fits-all promotional strategy may not be ideal and that services in online (vs. offline) channels can benefit from distinct linguistic promotions. Building on regulatory mode theory, a field study of 2,575 Facebook posts and two lab studies show that locomotion-oriented language (movement towards a goal without any delays) increases engagement for online offerings, whereas assessment-oriented language (critical assessment before acting) increases engagement for offline offerings. The effects can be ascribed to an increased processing fluency.

Keywords: *communication strategy, channel promotions, consumer behavior*

Track: *Service Marketing & Service Innovation*