



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

University of Wollongong
Research Online

Faculty of Business - Papers

Faculty of Business

2015

Unintended effects of planning in goal striving: substitution and amplification

Wing Yin Leona Tam

University of Wollongong, ltam@uow.edu.au

Jelena Spanjol

University of Illinois at Chicago

José Antonio Rosa

University of Wyoming

Publication Details

Tam, L., Spanjol, J. & Rosa, J. Antonio. (2015). Unintended effects of planning in goal striving: substitution and amplification. In B. Schmitt & L. Lee (Eds.), *The Psychology of the Asian Consumer* (pp. 33-39). United Kingdom: Routledge.

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library:
research-pubs@uow.edu.au

Unintended effects of planning in goal striving: substitution and amplification

Keywords

striving, substitution, goal, planning, effects, unintended, amplification

Disciplines

Business

Publication Details

Tam, L., Spanjol, J. & Rosa, J. Antonio. (2015). Unintended effects of planning in goal striving: substitution and amplification. In B. Schmitt & L. Lee (Eds.), *The Psychology of the Asian Consumer* (pp. 33-39). United Kingdom: Routledge.

**Unintended Effects of Planning in Goal Striving:
Substitution and Amplification**

LEONA TAM

JELENA SPANJOL

JOSÉ ANTONIO ROSA

MOTIVATION AND CONCEPTUALIZATION

When striving toward goals (e.g., lose five pounds, increase savings), people often run into problems with getting started, staying the course, or both. Even with strong goal intentions, initiating and persisting in goal striving is problematic (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Goal intentions are translated into goal striving behaviors via self-regulatory processes that mediate the intention-behavior relationship. Planning one's goal pursuit in an "if-then" format (e.g., if I eat lunch in the cafeteria, I will order a salad) conserves self-regulatory strength and resources (e.g., Martijn et al., 2008), enhances goal attainment (e.g., Gollwitzer & Sheeran, 2006), and is helpful in both initiating (Brandstätter, Lengfelder, & Gollwitzer, 2001; Chasteen, Park, & Schwarz, 2001) and persisting (Achtziger, Gollwitzer, & Sheeran, 2008; Bayer, Gollwitzer, & Achtziger, 2010) in goal striving behaviors.

Since planning enhances goal attainment via self-regulatory processes, these effects might differ when individuals are operating under self-regulatory systems that serve different needs (Higgins, 1997; 2002). While two friends might share the goal of being physically fit, for example, one might be oriented toward pursuing positive outcomes such as improved health (i.e., holds a promotion orientation), while the other might seek to avoid negative outcomes such as diabetes (i.e., holds a prevention focus). Regulatory fit theory (Higgins, 2000) extends the idea of people holding a dominant approach or avoidance orientation to encompass goal pursuit means. The theory argues that when adopted goal pursuit strategies (i.e., eager or vigilant) fit the individual's self-regulatory orientation (i.e., promotion or prevention), motivational strength and goal attainment increase (Spiegel, Grant-Pillow, & Higgins, 2004).

While regulatory fit effects are typically not examined separately for promotion and prevention fit conditions, recent studies suggest that important differences may exist. In studies

with Italian and Austrian taxpayers (Leder et al., 2010; Holler et al., 2008), prevention-focused participants reacted more strongly to prevention-framed (i.e., avoid) tax information than promotion-focused participants reacted to promotion-framed (i.e., approach) information. Similar results emerged in a study assessing fairness perceptions of a possible U.S. vehicle mileage tax (Krishen, Raschke, & Mejza, 2010).

Recent studies have also identified unintended negative consequences from planning on goal striving (Dalton & Spiller, 2012; Townsend & Liu, 2012). For example, when individuals plan goal pursuit under a concrete mind-set, planning can result in lower willingness to engage in out-of-plan goal-directed means (Belyavsky Bayuk, Janiszewski, & LeBoeuf, 2010). Concrete construal is the favored processing approach of individuals who adopt a prevention focus, as opposed to the holistic or abstract processing favored by individuals who adopt a promotion focus (Avnet & Higgins, 2003; Lee, Keller, & Sternthal, 2010; Zhu & Meyers-Levy, 2007). When information construal level fits with regulatory orientation (i.e., concrete with prevention; abstract with promotion), the sensitivity toward ought- or ideal-based self-regulation is magnified, making it likely that promotion and prevention fit conditions will interact with planning for goal striving (Belyavsky Bayuk et al., 2010). Two distinct effects from planning under different fit conditions are proposed: substitution and amplification.

Substitution Effect. Prevention-focused consumers are motivated by obligations and tend to see an adopted goal as minimal (i.e., what is minimally necessary to not fail; Pennington & Roese, 2003). When goals are construed as minimal standards, goal-directed behaviors are initiated more quickly (Freitas et al., 2002). In the absence of planning, prevention-fit individuals should take action toward a goal sooner than individuals in a non-fit state. When asked to

develop specific plans regarding when, where, and how goal striving will be enacted, however, prevention-fit individuals are expected to interpret the act of developing detailed plans as a first step in goal striving because of the concreteness with which they conceptualize plans. Planning, in other words, is seen by prevention-fit individuals as meeting a minimum standard for goal striving behavior, and they will substitute planning for actual goal striving action.

H1: Planning (vs. no planning) will delay goal striving initiation for individuals operating under prevention fit (vs. promotion fit and nonfit).

Amplification Effect. Promotion-focused consumers are motivated by hopes and tend to see an adopted goal as maximal (i.e., what is maximally possible to achieve and possibly surpass the goal; Pennington & Roese, 2003). Goals are more abstract and removed from immediate behavior for promotion-focused individuals than for prevention-focused ones, as they “occupy a mental space more temporally removed from the here-and-now” (Pennington & Roese, 2003, p. 564). In the absence of planning, promotion-fit consumers should take action toward a goal later than individuals in a non-fit or prevention fit state (Freitas et al., 2002). When asked to develop specific plans, however, promotion-fit individuals see the planning as launching the quest for their expansive goals (Belyavsky Bayuk et al., 2010), and as a result are expected to amplify goal-directed behaviors, such that planned goal-directed actions involve greater intensity over a compressed time period.

H2: Planning (vs. no planning) will amplify goal striving persistence in individuals operating under promotion fit (vs. prevention fit and nonfit).

METHODOLOGY AND MAJOR FINDINGS

Three studies are conducted to test the hypotheses. Two field studies in the personal finance management ($n = 172$) and healthy snacking ($n = 183$) contexts provide evidence for the hypothesized substitution (see Figures 1 and 3) and amplification (see Figures 2 and 4) taking place.

Although planning has been identified as an effective self-regulatory tool, our research shows that planning is not universally beneficial. Across the studies, the results suggest that planning can delay as well as amplify goal-directed behaviors, depending on the self-regulatory condition of the individual. More specifically, when operating under prevention fit, individuals perceive planning as a first step in goal pursuit initiation and delay the start of actual goal-directed actions as a result. In contrast, individuals operating under promotion fit amplify goal-directed behaviors, resulting in an intense burst of goal striving. In effect, planning how, when, and where to pursue goals can backfire by delaying behavioral goal pursuit initiation (under prevention fit) and amplify goal-directed actions (under promotion fit).

REFERENCES

- Achtziger, A., Gollwitzer, P. M., & Sheeran, P. (2008). Implementation intentions and shielding goal striving from unwanted thoughts and feelings. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 34*, 381-393.
- Armitage, C. J., & Conner, M. (2001). Efficacy of the theory of planned behaviour: A meta-analytic review. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 40*, 471-499.
- Avnet, T., & Higgins, E. T. (2003). Locomotion, assessment, and regulatory fit: Value transfer from “how” to “what.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 39*, 525-30.
- Avnet, T. (2006). How regulatory fit affects value in consumer choices and opinions. *Journal of Marketing Research, 43*, 1-10.
- Bayer, U. C., Gollwitzer, P. M., & Achtziger, A. (2010). Staying on track: Planned goal striving is protected from disruptive internal states. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 46*, 505-14.
- Belyavsky Bayuk, J., Janiszewski, C., & LeBoeuf, R. A. (2010). Letting good opportunities pass us by: Examining the role of mind-set during goal pursuit. *Journal of Consumer Research, 37*, 570-583.
- Brandstätter, V., Lengfelder, A., & Gollwitzer, P. M. (2001). Implementation intentions and efficient action initiation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 81*, 946-960.
- Chasteen, A. L., Park, E. C., & Schwarz, N. (2001). Implementation intentions and facilitation of prospective memory. *Psychological Science, 12*, 457-461.

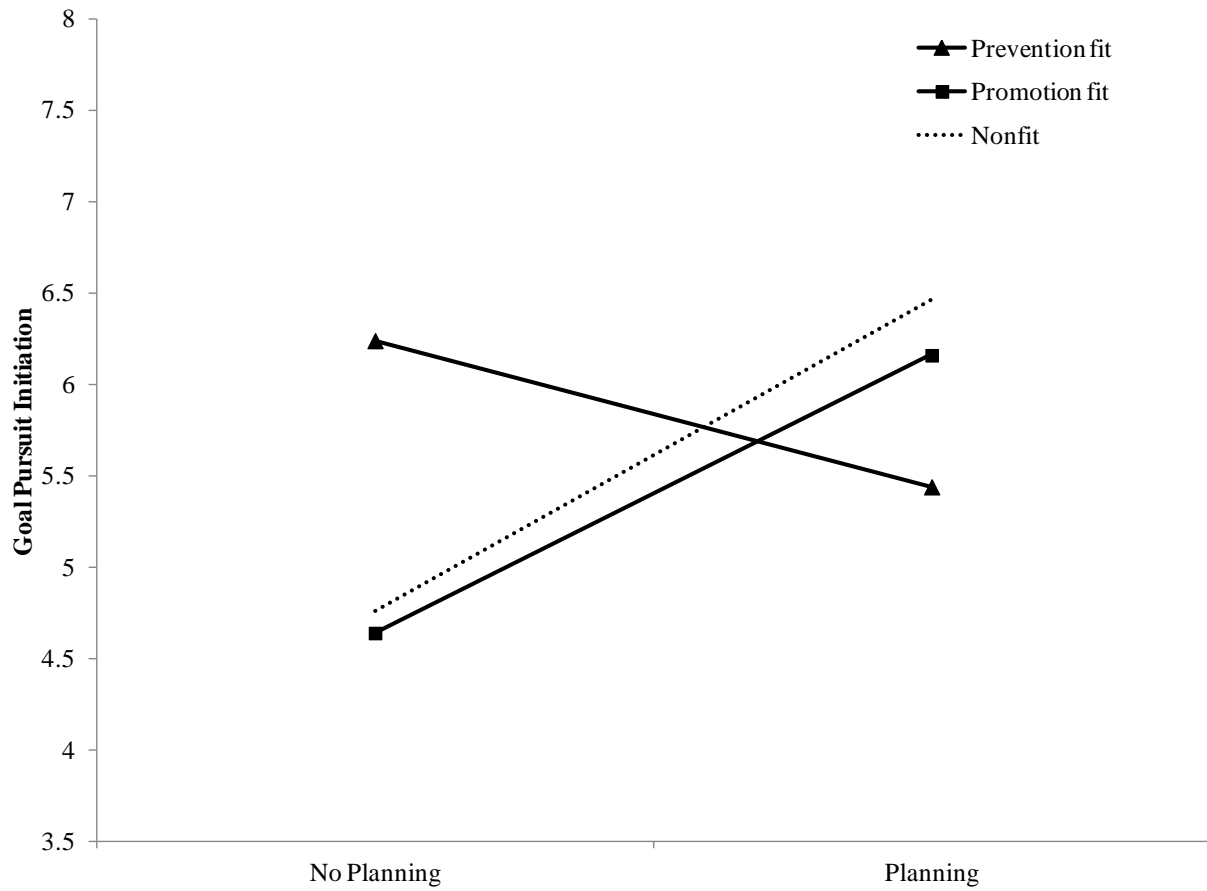
- Dalton, A. N., & Spiller, S. A. (2012). Too much of a good thing: The benefits of implementation intentions depend on the number of goals. *Journal of Consumer Research, 39*, 600-614.
- Freitas, A. L., Liberman, N., Salovey, P., & Higgins, E. T. (2002). When to begin? Regulatory focus and initiating goal pursuit. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28*, 121-130.
- Gollwitzer, P. M., & Sheeran, P. (2006). Implementation intentions and goal achievement: A meta-analysis of effects and processes. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 38*, 69-119.
- Higgins, E. T. (1997). Beyond pleasure and pain. *American Psychologist, 52*, 1280-1300.
- Higgins, E. T. (2000). Making a good decision: Value from fit. *American Psychologist, 55*, 1217-1230.
- Higgins, E. T. (2002). How self-regulation creates distinct values: The case of promotion and prevention decision making. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 12*, 177-191.
- Holler, M., Hölzl, E., Kirchler, E., Leder, S., & Mannetti, L. (2008). Framing of information on the use of public finances, regulatory fit of recipients and tax compliance. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 29*, 597-611.
- Krishen, A., Raschke, R., & Mejza, M. (2010). Guidelines for shaping perceptions of fairness of transportation infrastructure policies: The case of a vehicle mileage tax. *Transportation Journal, 49*, 24-38.
- Leder, S., Mannetti, L., Hölzl, E., & Kirchler, E. (2010) Regulatory fit effects on perceived fiscal exchange and tax compliance. *Journal of Socio-Economics, 39*, 271-277.

- Lee, A. Y., Keller, P. A., & Sternthal, B. (2010). Value from regulatory construal fit: The persuasive impact of fit between consumer goals and message concreteness. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *36*, 735-747.
- Martijn, C., Alberts, H. Sheeran, P., Peters, G. Y., Mikolajczak, J., & de Vries, N. K. (2008). Blocked goals, persistent action: Implementation intentions engender tenacious goal striving. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *44*, 1137-1143.
- Pennington, G. L., & Roese, N. J. (2003). Regulatory focus and temporal distance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *39*, 563-76.
- Spiegel, S., Grant-Pillow, H., & Higgins, E. T. (2004). How regulatory fit enhances motivational strength during goal pursuit. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *34*, 39-54.
- Townsend, C., & Liu, W. (2012). Is planning good for you? The differential impact of planning on self-regulation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *39*, 688-703.
- Zhu, R., Meyers-Levy, J. (2007). Exploring the cognitive mechanism that underlies regulatory focus effects. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *34*, 89-96.

Figure 1

Study 1: Planning, regulatory fit, and intended initiation

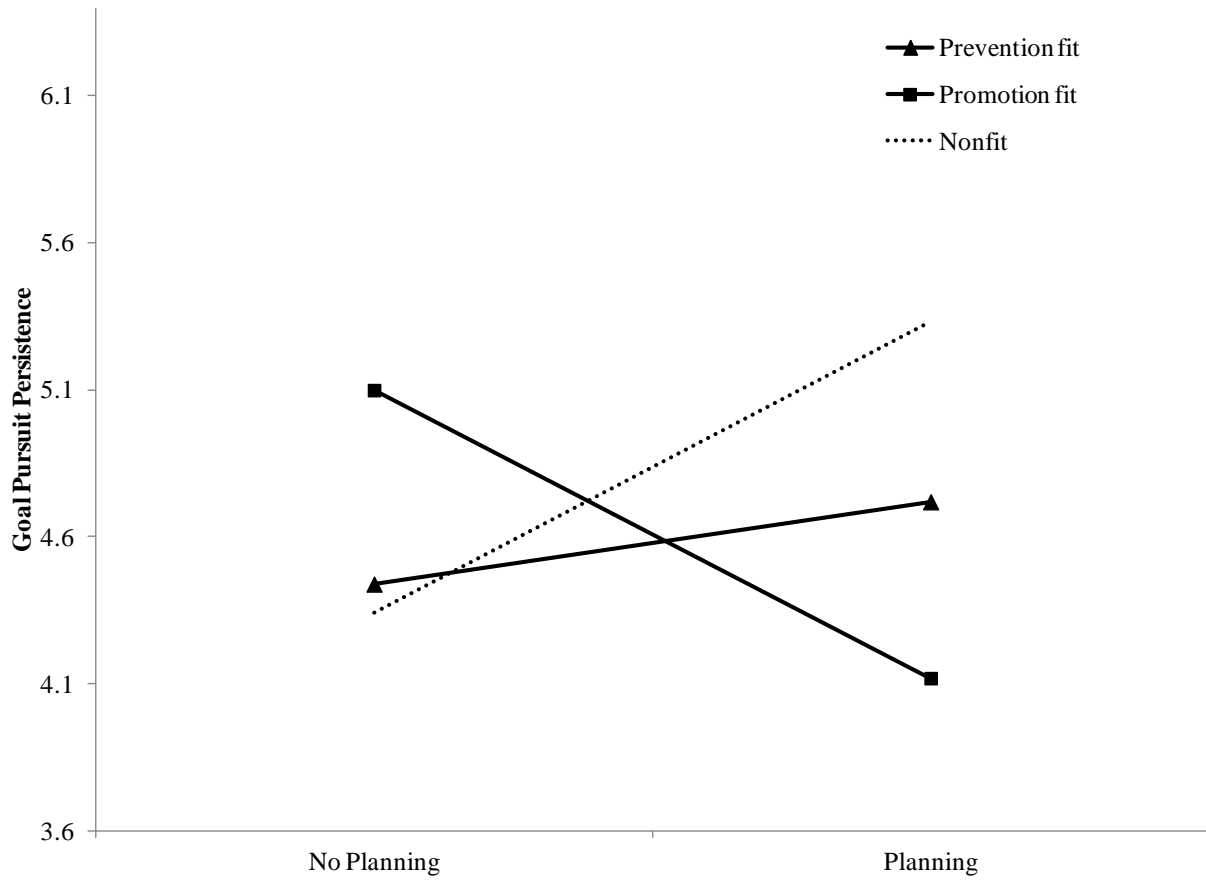
in personal finance goal pursuit



Notes: Goal pursuit initiation is measured as the number of weeks until intended goal-directed behavior. Higher initiation scores denote a faster intended start of goal-directed behaviors.

Figure 2

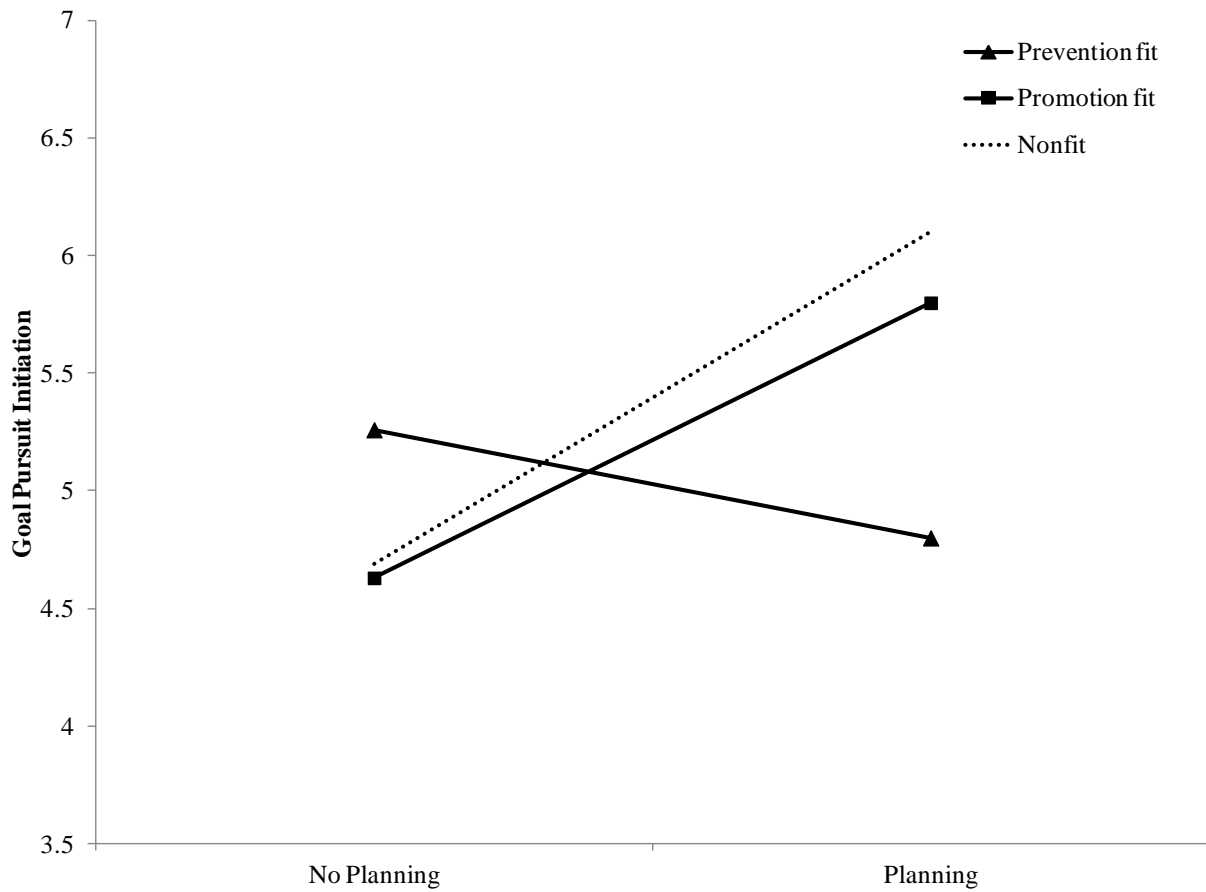
Study 1: Planning, regulatory fit, and intended persistence
in personal finance goal pursuit



Notes: Goal pursuit persistence is measured on a scale of 1-7, with lower scores denoting lower intention to continue with goal-pursuit behaviors.

Figure 3

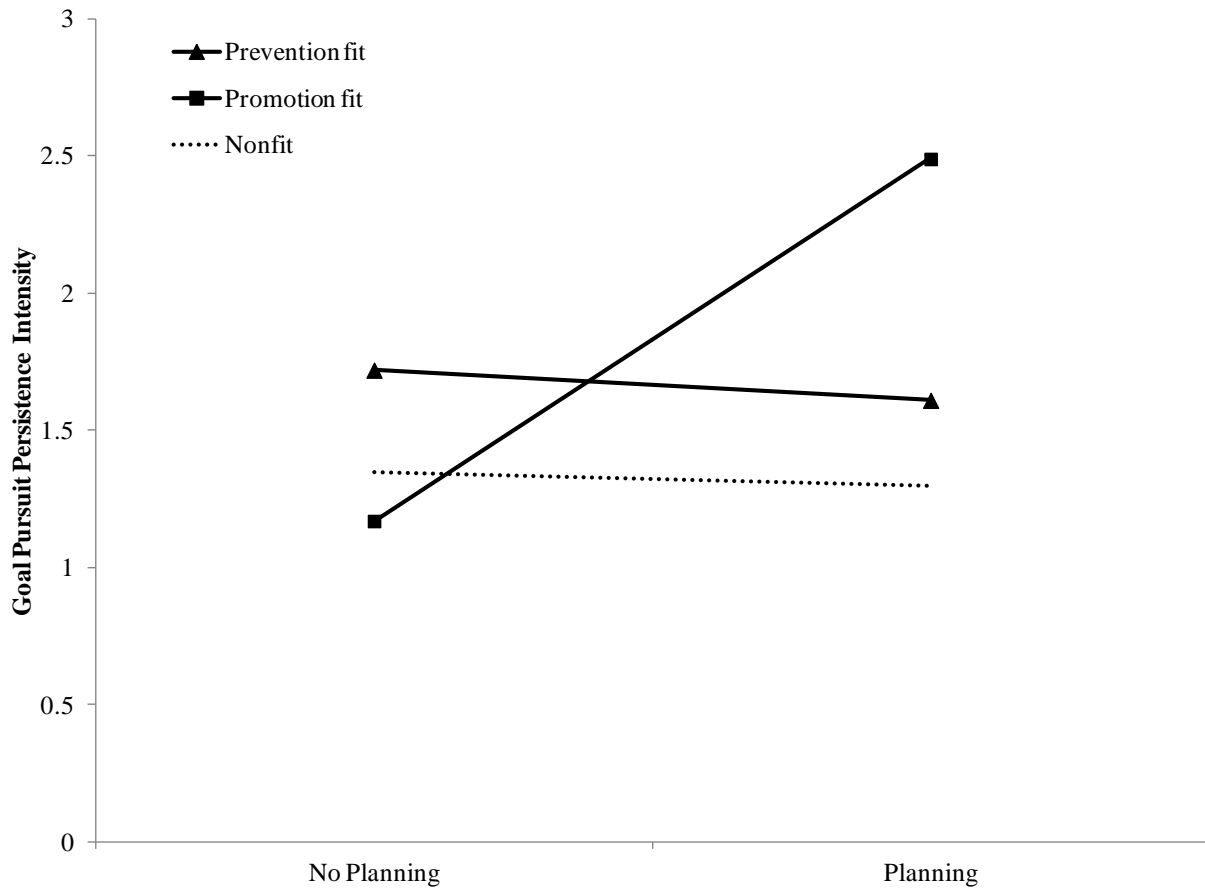
Study 2: Planning, regulatory fit, and initiation
in healthy snacking goal pursuit



Notes: Goal pursuit initiation is measured as the number of days until the first day of healthier snacking. Higher initiation scores denote a faster start of goal pursuit.

Figure 4

Study 2: Planning, regulatory fit, and persistence intensity
in healthy snacking goal pursuit



Notes: Intensity of goal pursuit persistence is measured as the number of healthy snacks consumed on the first day of healthy snacking.