

How different types of brand purpose ads effect consumer attitude towards the ads: The mediation effect of inspiration and downstream consequence on consumer behaviour.

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Abstract

How different types of brand purpose ads effect consumer attitude towards the ads: The mediation effect of inspiration and downstream consequence on consumer behaviour.

Aayushi Singla

According to advertising research, brand purpose advertisements can be classified into three types: those that use positive emotional appeals, negative emotional appeals, or a mix of both. While much of the earlier literature has primarily concentrated on either positive or negative appeals, the concept of mixed emotional appeals is a newer area of interest. This study is the first to further divide mixed brand purpose ads into two categories: *concrete mixed appeals* and *abstract mixed appeals*. The primary objective of this research is to explore how abstract and concrete mixed emotional appeals affect consumer attitudes toward advertisements. It also examines the mediating role of inspiration, the moderating role of self-construal, as well as the downstream consequence on behavioural intentions. Through two experimental studies, the findings reveal that abstract mixed appeals lead to more favourable consumer attitude towards the ad and this effect is mediated through inspiration. Furthermore, findings show that favourable attitude towards the ad leads to behavioural intentions.

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Dedication

To my beloved parents (Mama & Papa) and my little brother Dhruv. Your immense love and support made this possible. This work is dedicated to you.

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Introduction

With the rise in global social awareness among consumers, companies are increasingly expected to extend their role beyond generating profits and contribute meaningfully to societal well-being. Thus, brands today are putting themselves as pioneers of the road to a better tomorrow with their brand purpose, which is defined as a long-term core mission that fosters brand's meaningful engagement with the world (Narayanan and Das, 2022; Williams et al., 2022). For instance, Patagonia's core message centres on environmental conservation, encapsulated in its purpose: "Save our home planet." Brands that strive to drive social progress often communicate their missions through brand purpose advertising. To make these messages stand out and enhance their persuasive impact, advertisers frequently employ emotionally charged appeals that is intended to deeply resonate with audiences and provoke strong emotional responses (Panda & Mishra, 2013). Such emotional appeals are common in brand purpose campaigns. A well-known example is Nike's "Just Do It" campaign, which conveys powerful messages of motivation, courage, and determination without directly referencing the product or brand (Panda & Mishra, 2013).

According to advertising research, brand purpose advertisements can be classified into three types: those that use positive emotional appeals, negative emotional appeals, or a mix of both (Yousef et al., 2021). Positive appeals aim to evoke uplifting emotions such as joy, humor, or happiness, while negative appeals focus on triggering emotions like sadness, guilt, or shame. Mixed appeals, on the other hand, combine both emotional types to create a more complex emotional experience. While much of the earlier literature has primarily concentrated on either positive or negative appeals (Yousef et al., 2021), the concept of mixed emotional appeals is a newer area of interest. These mixed messages take viewers through both negative and positive emotional states (Yousef et al., 2021). Although research on mixed emotions is

still evolving, existing studies suggest that these emotional blends are linked to consumer reactions such as increased satisfaction, loyalty, and a sense of meaningful well-being (Quach et al., 2021). Carnevale et al. (2018) argue that while purely positive emotions like happiness may provide short-lived emotional boosts, the experience of mixed emotions is often more meaningful, given that the negative emotions provide perspective and allow stronger appreciation for the positive emotions. Therefore, mixed emotional appeals may be more rewarding and meaningful.

Building on Construal Level Theory (Trope & Liberman, 2010), this study is the first to further divide mixed brand purpose ads into two categories: *concrete mixed appeals* and *abstract mixed appeals*. I chose to use this classification – i.e., abstract versus concrete appeals, based on distinctions I observed in well-known brand purpose real ads. For instance, ads like Ikea’s “Climate action starts at home” and Dove’s “Turn your back” focus on specific, action-oriented messages, whereas campaigns such as Patagonia’s “What’s next” and Crayola’s “Stay creative” convey broader, emphasize abstract meanings and higher purpose behind the initiatives. The primary objective of this research is to explore how abstract and concrete mixed emotional appeals affect consumer attitudes toward advertisements.

I will also examine the mediating role of inspiration, the moderating role of self-construal, as well as the downstream consequence on behavioural intentions. This research is conducted through two experimental studies. The main findings reveal that abstract mixed appeals lead to more favourable consumer attitude towards the ad and this effect is mediated through inspiration. Furthermore, the findings show that favourable attitude towards the ad leads to behavioural intentions. This research offers both theoretical contributions and practical

implications for brand managers, marketers and communication teams, providing them with new insights on brand purpose advertisements and its effect on consumer outcomes.

Literature Review

1. Brand Purpose

Modern consumers increasingly perceive brands through a broader lens, valuing their contributions not only in terms of function or symbolism, but also regarding their social, ethical, and environmental responsibilities (Narayanan & Das, 2022). As global awareness around social issues grows, brands are expected to evolve from simply offering practical benefits or maximizing profits into organizations driven by a deeper purpose. A helpful analogy compares profit for a company to oxygen for a person: while oxygen is essential for survival, focusing solely on it or thinking that life is all about breathing, misses the bigger picture. Today's consumers, especially younger generations, seek meaning and value from the brands they support—something beyond mere existence or breathing. They want brands that stand for something larger and aim to make a tangible difference in society. In this context, *brand purpose* becomes a critical differentiator that strengthens a brand's relevance and competitive advantage by addressing broader societal concerns and having an impact on people's lives (Mirzaei et al., 2021; Fernandes et al., 2024; Kramer, 2017). As a result, many brands are redefining themselves as leaders of positive change, using their brand purpose to inspire progress, empower individuals, and enhance well-being. This purpose reflects a company's long-term ambition and serves as a foundation for its identity, values, and strategic direction. Importantly, brand purpose goes beyond simply supporting a cause—it's about the measurable and meaningful change the brand aspires to create in the world. For instance, Dove's mission to "redefine beauty and raise women's self-esteem" and Crayola's

goal to “help parents raise creatively-alive kids” illustrate how brands articulate their deeper purpose to resonate with consumers.

Brand purpose should not be confused with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). While CSR refers to a company's duties to society or how its actions align with perceived societal responsibilities (Williams et al., 2022; Fernandes et al., 2024), these efforts are generally short-term and not deeply embedded in the brand’s core identity. CSR activities typically operate on the periphery of a brand’s overall positioning and strategy, rather than forming an essential part of the brand’s identity, meaning, structure or strategy. Additionally, most CSR research focuses on how such initiatives benefit the firm itself (Williams et al., 2022), whereas studies on brand purpose highlight the positive impact on consumer well-being, when brands act in ways that are aligned with their stated purpose (Williams et al., 2022). Research shows that consumers are significantly more inclined—by a factor of four to six—to buy from, endorse, trust, and remain loyal to brands that stand for a strong, authentic purpose (Narayanan & Das, 2022). When a company operates with a clearly defined purpose, it builds stronger emotional connections with customers and creates a sense of relevance and trust. This sense of purpose also motivates internal and external stakeholders alike, making employees, customers, and partners feel like they are contributing to a meaningful cause. In the U.S., studies show that a majority of consumers are more likely to view brands positively (89%), trust them (86%), and stay loyal (83%) when those brands lead with purpose (Fernandes et al., 2024).

Given these dynamics, brand purpose has gained attention as a growing field of research. The Marketing Science Institute (MSI) has even identified it as a key research priority for 2022–2024 (MSI, 2023). Today, many businesses are shifting their focus from maximizing shareholder value to creating value for a wider set of stakeholders. This shift has increased

interest in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices, making it more important than ever for companies to understand how to effectively communicate the societal value they aim to deliver.

2. Emotional Appeals in Advertising: Negative, Positive, and Mixed

Emotion plays a crucial role in shaping the consumer experience (Panda & Mishra, 2013). In the context of marketing, advertisements are not only processed cognitively but also trigger significant emotional responses in audiences (Yousef et al., 2021; Panda & Mishra, 2013). Based on the emotional tone or *valence* they evoke, emotional appeals in advertising are generally grouped into three categories: positive, negative, and mixed (Yousef et al., 2021). Positive emotional appeals aim to generate uplifting feelings such as happiness, optimism, or joy, which are often linked to improved well-being. An example of a positive ad appeal is Starbucks' "It starts with you" dynamic and upbeat ad, which highlights the blissful and happy coffee moments people share at Starbucks. Negative appeals, on the other hand, arouse only negative emotions such as shame, sadness, guilt or anxiety (Song et al., 2022). An example of a negative appeal ad is DOVE's "Reverse Selfie" ad. This ad presents the issue of social media selfies drastically impacting young girls' confidence and trapping them in the artificial world of social media. Overall, this ad renders negative emotions like shame and worry over this social issue. Finally, a hybrid emotional appeal- the mixed appeal, has become trendy in practice. Mixed emotional appeals seek to induce both positive and negative emotions simultaneously or as an emotional journey either from negative to positive or from positive to negative (Yousef et al., 2021). For example, Budweiser's "Puppy Love" advertisement tells the heartwarming story of an adorable puppy who forms an unlikely friendship with a horse. While their bond is portrayed as a joyful and uplifting experience, the mood shifts when the puppy is adopted and driven away, evoking a sense of sadness. However, in a touching turn of events, the horse – along with his fellow horses, chases after

the car and reunites with the puppy. The ad takes viewers on an emotional journey, evoking both positive and negative emotions. Another example of an advertisement using a mixed appeal is Dove's "Real Beauty Sketches" commercial. In this 3-minute advertisement, the narrative first reveals women's harsh self-perceptions through unflattering sketches, prompting sadness. More positive emotions are later prompted as strangers' kinder descriptions produce more flattering portraits, highlighting the gap between self-image and how others see us, promoting self-acceptance and beauty confidence.

Emotional advertising has a strong impact on how consumers react to ads, often increasing engagement, emotional resonance, and improving attitudes toward the brand (Panda & Mishra, 2013). Meta-analytic findings have shown that emotional appeals tend to be more effective than rational ones in influencing consumer behavior (Hornik et al., 2016). As a result, there is growing scholarly interest in the persuasive power of emotion in advertising (Panda & Mishra, 2013).

In this research, I will examine the effects of two categories of brand purpose appeals, namely negative and mixed appeals. I chose to examine only these two appeals (i.e., omit the positive appeal) because, brand purpose campaigns typically address negative social issues and are thus narrated in a negative tone. But more recently brand purpose campaigns have included a hopeful, positive emotional narration to complement the negative narrative, thus producing a mixed appeal. I classify and define the mixed appeals into further two types: abstract and concrete mixed appeals.

3. Abstract vs. Concrete Appeals

Construal Level Theory (CLT), developed by Trope and Liberman (2012), explains how people process and interpret information in either an abstract or concrete manner (Wiesenfeld et al., 2017). Abstract thinking involves seeing the bigger picture without focusing on fine

details—like seeing the forest but not the individual trees. This style of thinking encourages a broad, future-oriented perspective that highlights deeper meanings, possibilities, ideals, and the *why* behind actions (Hess et al., 2018; Trope & Liberman, 2010; Wiesenfeld et al., 2017). Abstract construals use general mental representations that are often broader, inclusive and relate to values, overarching goals and moral decisions (Hess et al., 2018; Trope and Liberman, 2010). In contrast, concrete thinking focuses on specific, present-oriented information, paying attention to details and practicalities—the trees rather than the forest. It supports understanding of the immediate *how* of actions, emphasizing practical steps and execution (Wiesenfeld et al., 2017). Concrete construals rely on more detailed and contextual representations, often connected to short-term objectives and realistic considerations (Hess et al., 2018; Trope & Liberman, 2010). For instance, the act of “giving a presentation” can be viewed abstractly as “communicating with an audience,” or concretely as “showing slides and speaking.”

Similarly, the Action Identification Theory (Vallacher and Wegner, 1987) recognizes that any action can be cognitively represented in a hierarchical arrangement consisting of two levels: Lower level act identities convey the details or specifics of the action and so focus on “how” the action is done. Its more movement related (mechanics of the action) and is more oriented towards the real behaviour of performing the action (Vallacher and Wegner, 1987). Higher level act identities convey the larger meaning and significance of the action and focus on “why” the action is done. Its less movement related, more abstract and oriented towards social understandings and larger implications of the action (Vallacher and Wegner, 1987). For example: *Maintaining an eye contact* (focusing on how) is a low level act identity while *winning trust* (focusing on why) is a high level act identity.

Based on the above theories I have classified brand purpose mixed appeal ads into these two types:

Concrete mixed appeal represents brand purpose ads that focus on a negative social issue and offer recommendations for specific steps or details of a positive initiative that aims to provide hope and motivation. This type of appeal answers the question “how” the action or initiative should be performed (Vallacher and Wegner, 1987). It is action based and oriented towards the practical behaviour of performing an initiative (Wiesenfeld et al., 2017). An example of a concrete mixed appeal ad is IKEA’s “Climate action starts at Home” ad. The ad focuses on the social issue of environmental degradation, and it outlines specific steps individuals should take in their daily lives to reduce their carbon footprint, such as using low-flow shower pressure, and public transportation. It addresses the question *how* the sustainable living initiative should be implemented.

Abstract mixed appeal represents brand purpose ads that focus on a negative social issue and present the greater meaning or higher purpose of the positive initiative to be taken to address the issue. It answers the question “why” the action should be performed (Vallacher and Wegner, 1987). Such appeals are less movement defined, instead, they are more oriented towards the social understanding and moral significance of the initiative (Wiesenfeld et al., 2017). An example of an abstract mixed appeal ad is Crayola’s “Stay Creative” campaign. The ad focuses on the social issue of declining creative spark in children, and it shows the higher purpose and greater significance of the initiative of nurturing and nourishing creativity. It empowers us “to be who we are” and “find our light”. It answers the question *why* the nurturing creativity initiative should be performed. Another example of an abstract mixed appeal ad is Apple’s “Think Different” campaign. It focuses on the issue of lack of support for challenging the status quo. It presents the higher significance of the initiative of encouraging innovative thinking and people who think different – it *changes things & pushes*

the human race forward! It again answers the question *why* such initiative should be performed.

Action Identification Theory (Vallacher and Wegner, 1987) suggests that framing initiatives in an abstract or high-level manner, emphasizing higher-level act identities that focus attention on the broader meanings and social understandings of an action, is more appealing to consumers than using low-level act identities, which focus on how the action is performed. This is because people are generally more sensitive to the larger significance and social implications of their actions. This is because by knowing the larger meanings and purpose of one's actions, a new awareness is generated in minds of people about what one is doing, who one is and what benefits will their actions lead to (Vallacher and Wegner, 1987). This suggests that when consumers are exposed to both an abstract and concrete message depicting why versus how to address a social issue, a person is more likely to prefer the abstractly (versus concretely) framed message.

Also, abstract construal, thinking about the greater purpose, stimulates thoughts of *desirability* of an action versus concrete construal, thinking about the specific steps one needs to engage in, stimulates thoughts of *feasibility* of an action (Liberman and Trope, 1998; Wiesenfeld et al., 2017). Desirability refers to the appeal or value of the outcome itself, while feasibility relates to how easily or realistically that outcome can be reached (Liu, 2008). Past studies have found that options perceived as highly desirable are generally viewed more favourably than those seen as merely highly feasible, because the value of the end goal tends to carry more weight (Evangelidis et al., 2023). Consumers naturally lean toward choices that are high on desirability. While feasibility is considered, it usually has less influence over the final decision (Evangelidis et al., 2023). This aligns with earlier findings in consumer psychology research (Liberman & Trope, 1998), which suggest that desirability is a more central concern than feasibility. Furthermore, when people are faced with decisions that pit

desirability against feasibility, they tend to prioritize desirability—especially when their decision-making process is disrupted and later resumed (Liu, 2008). In such cases, they are more likely to opt for appealing but less practical choices, like high-quality items with higher costs or high-risk options with big rewards (Liu, 2008). Thus overall it can be said that people prefer things when desirability (vs. feasibility) concerns are highlighted. Therefore, abstract mixed appeals, reflecting *desirability* of the action, will gain more favourable attitude. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Brand purpose advertisements with abstract mixed appeal (vs. concrete mixed appeal) will lead to more favourable consumer attitude towards the ad.

4. Inspiration as a Mediator

Inspiration is made up of two key processes: being *inspired by* something and being *inspired to* take action (Thrash et al., 2014). The *inspired by* aspect involves a person feeling awakened or moved by the intrinsic value of a stimulus—such as a person, event, or scene)—which leads them to recognize new and better possibilities, capturing the essence of both emotional evocation and mental transcendence. Whereas being *inspired to* refers to the motivation to actualize the inspiring qualities exemplified in the evocative object through action (Thrash et al., 2014). These two aspects are conceptually distinct because it is possible to be deeply moved by something (*inspired by*) without necessarily feeling driven to act on it (*inspired to*). For instance, someone might admire the beauty of the Grand Canyon without feeling compelled to create art based on it (Thrash & Elliot, 2004). Focusing on the *inspired by* experience, Hart (1998) identifies four key elements that define the phenomenon of being *inspired by*: Connection – a sense of unity or oneness with a greater idea, nature, or the universe; Openness – a spontaneous receptivity often accompanied by feelings of wonder and relief; Clarity – a heightened sense of awareness; Energy – a surge of emotional or physical vitality. Overall, the *inspired by* phenomenon describes an experience where one gains a

larger perspective on one's life. When one is *inspired by*, one learns new insights, uplifting realizations, and a deeper understanding of the world and themselves (Hart, 1998). When one is inspired by, one comes to know of higher truths (Hart, 1998). Böttger et al. (2017) describe such moments as "lightbulb," "eureka," or "Aha!" moments—when individuals suddenly grasp a deeper truth or gain a transformative insight. When people are *inspired by* they experience transcendence towards a new state of mind, and experience broadening of mental horizons (Böttger et al., 2017).

In this research, I propose that abstract appeals would spark this type of inspiration. Specifically, abstract messages focus on the greater significance or higher purpose of an initiative, particularly in relation to social issues, highlighting the deeper “why” behind the initiatives (Vallacher and Wegner, 1987; Wiesenfeld et al., 2017). This, in turn, expands one's mental horizons and fosters awareness of greater truths. By understanding about the greater purpose of that initiative in life, one gains uplifting knowledge and a larger perspective leading to an “Aha!” moment. Thus, abstract appeals are likely to inspire individuals by connecting them to the deeper purpose of the focal initiative aimed at addressing the social cause. Whereas the concrete appeals which focus on the here and now, and upon the practical aspect of doing an action (Vallacher and Wegner, 1987; Wiesenfeld et al., 2017), is less likely to evoke such kind of evocation and transcendence comprising of inspired by.

My proposition is also corroborated by the construal level literature which relates abstract construal level to creativity and innovation (Wiesenfeld et al., 2017) and demonstrates that abstract processing enhances creativity (Polman and Emich, 2011). Specifically, abstract processing was manipulated on a social dimension – in particular whether people were generating creative ideas on their own behalf or that of a close other versus generating ideas

for distant others. Across very different types of creative tasks, they found that people were more creative on behalf of socially distant others. Novelty seems to require that people be able to conceptualize a reality that differs from their own in the here and now, suggesting that abstract construal may be more likely to lead to creative ideas (Wiesenfeld et al., 2017). An abstract mindset makes a person comfortable with creative ideas, therefore there is a fit between abstract construal level and novel ideas (Mueller et al., 2014). Abstract construal levels facilitate moving beyond the status quo and embrace new ideas or perspectives. In summary abstract construal level aid creativity, innovation, learning and change (Wiesenfeld et al., 2017). Thus abstract mixed appeals should spark novel and creative ideas and higher learning. As per Hart (1998), when people gain novel ideas and higher knowledge, it broadens their mental horizons and connects their minds to larger perspectives, therefore people get inspired by it. Thus, abstract appeals will lead to inspiration. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: The main effect of abstract mixed appeals (vs concrete mixed appeals) on favourable consumer attitude will be mediated by inspiration. Brand purpose ads with abstract mixed appeal (vs. concrete mixed appeal) will lead to greater inspiration, which in turn leads to favourable consumer attitude towards the ad.

5. Self-Construal as a Moderator:

Self-construal refers to how individuals perceive their relationship with others—whether they see themselves as distinct individuals or as interconnected with those around them (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This concept is generally divided into two types: independent and interdependent self-construals. People with an independent self-construal tend to see themselves as separate, self-reliant, and unique. Their actions are guided by their own beliefs, emotions, and personal objectives, rather than by external social influences (Markus &

Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). These individuals prioritize personal achievement and will maintain relationships only when they are beneficial; they are also more willing to end relationships that become burdensome or unproductive (Arai et al., 2023). In essence, the independent self is defined by its autonomy from social groups (Hsieh et al., 2021). In contrast, those with an interdependent self-construal define themselves through their relationships with others. Their decisions are shaped by a consideration of others' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and they strive for harmony and connectedness within their social environment (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). These individuals value strong social ties and often maintain relationships even if they do not directly serve their personal goals (Arai et al., 2023). Those with an interdependent self-construal base their attitudes and behaviours on the thoughts and actions of others in the relationship (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Such individuals often view themselves as part of a broader community, with a stronger focus on social responsibility. There is evidence in prior research that interdependent self-construal is associated with altruistic traits and enhanced helping behaviour (Seo and Scammon, 2014). In their research, Seo and Scammon (2014) solicited participant's help in a fictitious fund-raising campaign. They found that interdependent individuals were more likely to participate in a university-led fundraising campaign for local charities. Their findings showed that only interdependent (not independent) self-construal predicted a willingness to help, suggesting that interdependent individuals are more inclined to support social causes. Given this, individuals who strongly identify with an interdependent self-construal are expected to respond more positively to abstract mixed appeal brand purpose messages—those that emphasize shared societal goals and collective well-being. In contrast, people with an independent self-construal are more likely to prioritize personal benefits over collective outcomes and may not be as deeply moved by abstract messages centered on social impact. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: The main effect of abstract mixed appeals (vs concrete mixed appeals) on favourable consumer attitude will be moderated by self construal. Specifically, the effect will be more pronounced among interdependent (vs independent) individuals.

6. Behavioral Intentions as a Consequence of Consumer Attitudes

Attitudes reflect how individuals assess something as either positive or negative (Jhangiani & Tarry, 2022). These evaluations are typically composed of three elements: cognitive (beliefs or thoughts), affective (feelings), and behavioral (tendency to act) components, commonly referred to as the ABC model (Jhangiani & Tarry, 2022). Among these, the behavioral aspect is of particular interest to psychologists, marketers, advertisers, and policymakers—because our attitudes often translate into real-world actions. Given that the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of attitude usually align, our behavior is generally consistent with how we think and feel (Jhangiani & Tarry, 2022). For instance, if someone has more favorable thoughts and emotions toward waffles than French toast, they're more likely to choose waffles for breakfast. Similarly, if their perception of French toast improves—perhaps due to an effective advertisement—their likelihood of ordering it may also rise. This notion is grounded in the *principle of attitude consistency*, which holds that our attitudes tend to influence our behaviour (Jhangiani & Tarry, 2022). Supporting this, research syntheses such as meta-analyses have confirmed a strong and positive correlation between the different components of attitude. Moreover, self-reported attitudes have been found to be reliable predictors of subsequent behaviour (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Favourable consumer attitude towards abstract mixed appeal (vs. concrete mixed appeal) will lead to stronger behavioural intentions.

Conceptual Model

Based on the literature review, this research aims to investigate the impact of types of brand purpose ad appeals on consumers attitude towards the ad with its downstream consequence on behavioural intentions. Additionally, the research will investigate the mediating role of inspiration and the moderating role of self-construal (see Figure 1).

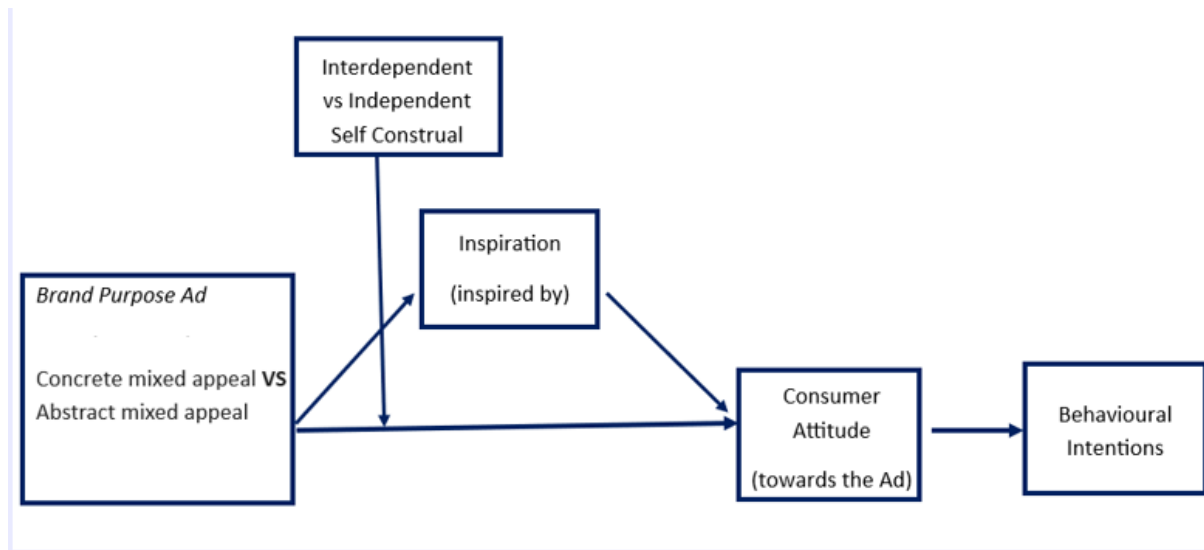


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

Overview of Studies

This research employed an experimental approach, comprising of one pretest and two main studies. The studies were conducted online using Qualtrics. Participants were recruited from CloudResearch via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk).

The pretest aimed to evaluate the validity of the stimuli that comprised of three ad appeals: negative appeal, concrete mixed appeal and abstract mixed appeal. The stimuli focused on the issue of degrading environmental quality. In the negative appeal condition, the message focused solely on the negative aspects of the issue. In the mixed appeal condition, the same

negative message was paired with a hopeful, positive component related to addressing the issue – framed either abstractly, emphasizing why it is important to address the issue, or concretely, recommending concrete actions to address the issue. Study 1 focused on examining the direct main effect of the ad appeals on consumer attitude towards the ad. It also examined the mediating effect of inspiration in the model. Study 2 tested the interaction effect of appeal type and participants' self construal on their attitude towards the ad. It also tested the downstream consequence of sustainable behavioral intentions.

Pretest

The pretest aimed to test the validity of the stimuli designed for this research, namely print advertisements focusing on the issue of degrading environmental quality. I designed three stimuli that differed in terms of emotional appeal. As a control condition, the first stimuli represented a negative appeal, and served as the benchmark to which the abstract and concrete mixed appeals will be compared. A negative, rather than positive, appeal was used as it is more reflective of the types of appeals commonly used in brand purpose campaigns that focus on social issues (e.g., discrimination, obesity). The negative stimuli was created to focus on the environmental issue and render solely negative emotions. It contained a slide showcasing two images of a deteriorating planet and featured the following message: "Life is being drained out of the planet. In the race of advancement, we forget the delicate balance of our ecosystem. The climate is collapsing, the oceans are overflowing, and our nature's clock is ticking down. The environment is degrading drastically. Earth's balance is tipping as the environment problems we face today are more dreadful than ever. The future of humanity is at stake." (see Appendix A)

The mixed appeal advertisements served to evoke a more balanced emotional experience by including a second part to the advertisement which provided a positive message highlighting

the potential for hope through human intervention. The concrete mixed appeal was inspired by the Ikea campaign *Climate Action Starts at Home* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qA4GQDUgQBc>), which focuses on “how” sustainable actions can be performed in everyday lives, and presents specific steps of the initiative. In the current study, the concrete ad contained two slides, the first was identical to that featured in the negative appeal stimuli described above, and a second, more positive slide presenting two specific steps that can be taken to address the issue of deteriorating environmental quality. This approach serves to counterbalance the evoked negative emotions with more positive ones. Specifically, the message on the second slide stated: “We need to change this...This is how you can be more sustainable, take these actions/strategies every day to practice sustainability: 1) Use low flow shower and tap- Refresh yourself with a low flow shower and wash your vegetables with low flow tap. Low flow showers help in reducing water wastage, in cutting down your carbon footprint and increase energy savings. 2) Food waste challenge- We often throw leftovers and purchase unnecessary groceries. Challenge yourself to set meal plan in advance which lead to thoughtful purchasing. It reduces food wastage that goes to landfills, reduces methane emissions and promotes sustainability.” (see Appendix A).

The abstract mixed appeal ad was inspired by Patagonia’s *Whats Next* ad (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eV_753wIUzo), which focuses on the “why” its important to take initiatives to saving our planet and presents their higher purpose. This stimuli also contained two slides, the one highlighting the negative issue of environmental degradation – as in the previously described stimuli, followed by a more positive slide featuring a message emphasizing the greater benefits of practicing sustainable behaviours to change things in the positive direction. Thus, it renders mixed emotions by focusing on answering the question “why” one should address the issue of environmental degradation, the message on the second green slide was: “We need to change this....Let sustainability lead our

path. This is why- These are the benefits of sustainability: Sustainability empowers our ecosystems to breathe, thrive and regenerate. It sets the foundation for a future where people and the planet can co-exist harmoniously. Sustainability enables us to leave behind a world where future generations can flourish. It secures them a planet that is not depleted rather full of possibilities. Sustainability benefits us by improving the quality of life and ecosystems. It changes our relationship with nature providing hope for a better future and rekindles our belief in small acts.....for even small when multiplied by millions of people has the power to transform the world” (see Appendix A).

Method

One hundred fifty participants were recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk) using the CloudResearch platform, and were compensated \$0.80 US for a 5 min survey. The MTurk is deemed effective at collecting quality data (Hauser and Schwarz, 2016). For the recruitment of the MTurk sample, only those residing in the United States and those with an MTurk approval rate of 80% or higher were recruited. These criteria were used to enhance the quality and reliability of the results. Identical criteria were used in the remaining studies. One participant failed the attention check, resulting in a valid sample of one hundred and forty nine participants ($M_{age} = 44.67$; $SD = 11.95$; 53% males).

At the beginning of the study, participants were asked to complete a consent form displayed on their screens; those who did not consent were directed to the survey's end page and thanked for their time. All participants consented and were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions (appeal type: negative appeal vs. concrete mixed appeal vs. abstract mixed appeal). In each condition, participants were shown the print ad described earlier and were asked to carefully read through and examine the ad. After reading the ad, participants were required to answer several questions on 7-point scales, pertaining to the manipulation of the

message's abstract versus concrete framing (adapted from Libby et al., 2009; Sobol and Giroux, 2023), as well as its negative versus positive emotional valence (adapted from Hong and Lee, 2010; Yousef et al., 2021).

To assess the appropriateness of message framing, two questions served to identify whether the participants viewed the ad as being framed in a concrete way ("Does the ad show HOW a person should address the issue of environmental degradation by recommending specific steps for practicing sustainability?" (1= No; 7= Yes), "Does the ad outline specific strategies and actions for promoting sustainability?" (1= No; 7= Yes)), and two questions served to assess whether participants viewed the ad as being more abstract ("Does the ad explain WHY a person should address the issue of environmental degradation? In other words, does it highlight the broader benefits of sustainability?" (1= No; 7= Yes), and "Does the ad describe the benefits of sustainability?" (1= No; 7 = Yes)). To assess the perceived emotional valence of the print ads, participants were asked to indicate whether the ad evoke positive emotions: positive feelings, happy, hopeful, enthusiastic ($\alpha = 0.938$), and negative feelings: negative feelings, sad, sorrowful and shameful ($\alpha = 0.869$) on 7-point scales (1 = not at all; 7 = a lot). Additionally, a few control variables were added, including perceptions of ad credibility (Greer, 2003; 5 items, $\alpha = 0.980$), ease of understanding (Mick, 1992; 2 items, $r = 0.840$, $p < 0.001$), ad likability and perceived ad aesthetic (2 items, $r = 0.843$, $p < 0.001$) to ensure that these variables did not confound the results. See Appendix B for detailed measures. To assess whether participants were paying attention while completing the survey, an attention check was included, instructing participants to select "strongly disagree" on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Any response other than "strongly disagree" suggested inattention and rendered the participant eligible for exclusion from the analysis. Finally, participants provided their demographic information, including age, gender and

English comprehension. They were also provided an opportunity to leave a comment for the researcher.

Results and Discussion

Variables	Negative Appeal	Concrete Appeal	Abstract Appeal
If the ad explains How the person shall address the issue	1.74 (c)	5.94 (a)	2.61 (b)
If the advertisement lists specific strategies or actions for promoting sustainability	1.76 (c)	6.08 (a)	2.49 (b)
If the ad explained <i>why</i> the issue should be addressed	4.22 (c)	5.28 (b)	6.00 (a)
If the ad describes benefits of sustainability	2.82 (c)	4.54 (b)	5.88 (a)
Participants experienced positive emotions	1.85 (c)	2.44 (b)	3.37 (a)
Participants experienced negative emotions	4.79 (a)	3.75 (b)	3.69 (b)
Control variable: ad credibility	4.71 (a)	4.74 (a)	5.40 (a)
Ad aesthetics	3.75 (b)	3.34 (b)	4.78 (a)

(a)(b)(c) Within a row, means without a common superscript differ ($p < 0.05$)

Table 1: Results of Pretest

An one-way ANOVA test revealed statistically significant differences among the three conditions in participants' responses regarding whether the advertisement explains *how* a person should address the issue ($F(2, 146) = 94.722, p < 0.001$). Pairwise contrasts confirmed that individuals exposed to the concrete mixed appeal reported a stronger perception that the ad explained *how* the issue should be addressed ($M = 5.94, SD = 1.62$), relative to those who viewed the abstract mixed appeal ($M = 2.61, SD = 1.86, p < 0.001$) and

the negative appeal ($M = 1.74$, $SD = 1.29$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, an one-way ANOVA test revealed statistically significant differences among the three conditions in participants' responses regarding whether the advertisement lists specific strategies or actions for promoting sustainability ($F(2, 146) = 111.646$, $p < 0.001$). Pairwise contrasts confirmed that individuals exposed to the concrete mixed appeal reported a stronger perception that the ad lists specific strategies for promoting sustainability ($M = 6.08$, $SD = 1.42$), relative to those who viewed the abstract mixed appeal ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 1.81$, $p < 0.001$) and the negative appeal ($M = 1.76$, $SD = 1.36$, $p < 0.001$). Another one-way ANOVA test revealed statistically significant differences among the three conditions in participants' responses regarding whether the advertisement explains *why* a person should address the issue ($F(2, 146) = 11.317$, $p < 0.001$). Pairwise contrasts confirmed that individuals exposed to the abstract mixed appeal reported a stronger perception that the ad explained *why* the issue should be addressed ($M = 6.00$, $SD = 1.48$), relative to those who viewed the concrete mixed appeal ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.90$, $p = 0.058$) and the negative appeal ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 2.16$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, an one-way ANOVA test revealed statistically significant differences among the three conditions in participants' responses regarding whether the advertisement describes the benefits of sustainability ($F(2, 146) = 41.744$, $p < 0.001$). Pairwise contrasts confirmed that individuals exposed to the abstract mixed appeal reported a stronger perception that the ad describes the benefits of sustainable initiatives ($M = 5.88$, $SD = 1.21$) relative to those who viewed the concrete mixed appeal ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 1.96$, $p < 0.001$) and the negative appeal ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 1.73$, $p < 0.001$). These results confirm that the stimuli worked as intended and were accurately interpreted with respect to their message framing (abstract versus concrete).

For the manipulation check regarding the ad's emotional valence, an one-way ANOVA test revealed statistically significant differences among the three conditions in participants'

responses regarding whether they experienced positive emotions after viewing the ad ($F(2, 146) = 13.462, p < 0.001$). Pairwise contrasts confirmed that individuals exposed to the mixed appeal (abstract and concrete) reported a stronger experience of positive emotions ($M_{\text{concrete}} = 2.44, SD = 1.35; M_{\text{abstract}} = 3.37, SD = 1.70$) relative to those who viewed the negative appeal ($M = 1.85, SD = 1.30, ps < 0.05$), confirming that the mixed appeals correctly evoke stronger positive emotions compared to the negative appeal. Another one-way ANOVA test revealed statistically significant differences among the three conditions in participants' responses regarding whether they experienced negative emotions after viewing the ad ($F(2, 146) = 7.455, p < 0.001$). Pairwise contrasts confirmed that individuals exposed to the negative appeal reported a stronger experience of negative emotions ($M = 4.79, SD = 1.65$) relative to those who viewed the mixed appeals ($M_{\text{concrete}} = 3.75, SD = 1.53, M_{\text{abstract}} = 3.69, SD = 1.59, ps < 0.001$), confirming that the negative appeal correctly evokes higher negative emotions compared to the mixed appeals.

Control Variables

The one-way ANOVA shows that there is no significant main effect of ad appeal on perceived credibility ($M_{\text{negative}} = 4.71, SD = 1.67, M_{\text{concrete_mixed}} = 4.74, SD = 2.13, M_{\text{abstract_mixed}} = 5.40, SD = 1.52; F(2, 146) = 2.338, p = 0.100$).

An ANOVA test revealed a significant main effect of ad appeal on perceptions of ease of ad understanding ($F(2, 146) = 4.030, p = 0.020$). Pairwise contrasts uncovered that individuals exposed to the concrete mixed appeal reported a stronger perception that the ad was easy to understand ($M = 1.71, SD = 0.97$) relative to those who viewed the abstract mixed appeal ($M = 2.27, SD = 1.46, p = 0.030$) and the negative appeal ($M = 2.39, SD = 1.34, p = 0.009$). This can be justified by the fact that the concrete appeal contains simple steps that can be easily followed in everyday life and are easy to understand as compared to the abstract and negative

appeal which focus on higher end messages that are more difficult to process (Vallacher and Wegner, 1987).

An ANOVA test revealed a significant main effect of ad appeal on perceptions of ad aesthetics ($F(2, 146) = 9.279, p < 0.001$). Pairwise contrasts confirmed that individuals exposed to the abstract mixed appeal reported a stronger perception that the ad was aesthetically pleasing ($M = 4.78, SD = 1.69$), relative to those who viewed the concrete mixed appeal ($M = 3.34, SD = 1.82, p < 0.001$) and the negative appeal ($M = 3.75, SD = 1.62, p = 0.003$). This might represent a confound variable, as participants are likely to report a stronger preference for an ad that is more (versus less) aesthetically pleasing. Based on this result, the abstract mixed appeal stimuli was slightly revised in the main study. Specifically, the image accompanying the ad content was replaced with one that appeared more common and less artistic (see Appendix C).

STUDY 1

The primary objective of study 1 was to examine the main effect of ad appeal on ad attitude (H1). This study also tested the mediating role of inspiration (H2). Participants were randomly exposed to one of the three pre-tested print ads and asked to respond to a series of questions designed to assess the degree to which they were inspired by the ad and their attitude towards the ad.

Method

Participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk using the CloudResearch platform, and were compensated \$0.85 US for a 5 minute survey. Three hundred fifty two participants were recruited. Three participants failed the attention check, resulting in a valid sample of three hundred and forty nine participants ($M_{age} = 45.35, SD = 12.757$; 53.6% males).

At the outset of the study, participants were presented with a consent form on their screens. All respondents agreed to participate and were randomly placed into one of three experimental groups (appeal type: negative appeal vs. concrete mixed appeal vs. abstract mixed appeal). Each group was shown the corresponding print advertisement, previously described, and asked to thoroughly read and examine it. Following this, to access if participants were inspired by the ad, they were asked to rate from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree) the following four items (Thrash et al., 2010): “I experienced inspiration”, “Something in the ad inspired me”, “I was inspired to do something”, “I felt inspired” ($\alpha = 0.987$). To access their attitude and feelings towards the print ad (scales were adapted from Andrews et al., 2021 and Spears and Singh, 2004), participants were asked to describe their overall attitude towards the advertisement (1 = Unfavourable; 7 = favourable, 1 = Negative; 7 = Positive, 1 = Bad; 7 = Good) and overall feelings about the print ad (1 = Unappealing; 7 = Appealing, 1 = Bad; 7 = Good, 1 = Unpleasant; 7 = pleasant, 1 = Unfavourable; 7 = Favourable, 1 = Unlikable; 7 = Likable) ($\alpha = 0.983$). Following this, participants completed a series of questions using 7-point Likert scales designed to assess the ad’s framing—whether it was abstract or concrete—based on measures adapted from Libby et al. (2009) and Sobol and Giroux (2023). Participants were asked the same manipulation check questions as asked in the pre-test to validate the stimuli.

To rule out potential confounding effects, participants’ perceptions of the ad credibility (5 items, Greer, 2003; $\alpha = 0.973$) and ad aesthetics (2 items; $r = 0.860$, $p < 0.001$) were also assessed. The same attention check as in the pretest was embedded in the survey to ensure participants paid attention to the questions. At the end of the survey, participants were asked to provide demographic details such as age, gender and English language proficiency. They were also given a space to leave comments for the researcher.

Results and Discussion

Variables	Negative Appeal	Concrete Appeal	Abstract Appeal
If ad focuses on How the issue shall be addressed	1.70 (c)	6.18 (a)	3.12 (b)
If the ad lists specific actions for promoting sustainability	1.68 (c)	6.25 (a)	2.88 (b)
If the ad explains why the issue shall be addressed	4.01 (c)	5.50 (b)	5.91 (a)
Ad conveys benefits of sustainability	2.50 (c)	5.07 (b)	5.70 (a)
Ad credibility	4.86 (a)	5.04 (a)	5.25 (a)
Ad aesthetics	3.50 (b)	3.82 (b)	4.61 (a)
Main effect of ad appeals on attitude towards the ad	3.89 (c)	4.36 (b)	5.09 (a)
Inspired from the ad	3.48 (b)	3.77 (b)	4.42 (a)

(a)(b)(c) Within a row, means without a common superscript differ ($p < 0.05$)

Table 2: Results of Study 1

Manipulation Check: A one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences across the three conditions in the extent to which participants perceived the ad as focusing on “how” the issue should be addressed ($F(2, 346) = 250.232, p < 0.001$). Follow-up pairwise comparisons showed that participants in the concrete mixed appeal group believed more strongly that the ad provided guidance on how the issue should be addressed ($M = 6.18, SD = 1.03$) compared to those exposed to the abstract mixed appeal ($M = 3.12, SD = 2.03, p < 0.001$) and negative appeal ($M = 1.70, SD = 1.43, p < 0.001$). Similarly, significant differences were found regarding whether the ad listed concrete strategies for promoting sustainability ($F(2, 346) = 331.638, p < 0.001$). Participants in the concrete mixed appeal condition again rated this

highest ($M = 6.25$, $SD = 0.83$), compared to those in the abstract mixed appeal ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.86$, $p < 0.001$) and negative appeal groups ($M = 1.68$, $SD = 1.29$, $p < 0.001$).

Another one-way ANOVA demonstrated meaningful differences in how participants evaluated the ad's explanation of “why” the issue should be addressed ($F(2, 346) = 43.350$, $p < 0.001$). Those exposed to the abstract mixed appeal scored higher on this measure ($M = 5.91$, $SD = 1.23$) than those in the concrete mixed appeal ($M = 5.50$, $SD = 1.38$, $p = 0.057$) and negative appeal ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 2.14$, $p < 0.001$) groups. Finally, another one-way ANOVA showed significant variation in perceptions of whether the ad conveyed the benefits of sustainability ($F(2, 346) = 150.733$, $p < 0.001$). Participants in the abstract mixed appeal group rated this more positively ($M = 5.70$, $SD = 1.27$) than those in the concrete mixed appeal ($M = 5.07$, $SD = 1.56$, $p = 0.001$) and negative appeal ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.62$, $p < 0.001$) groups. These findings confirm that the manipulation of the ad content across the three conditions was successful.

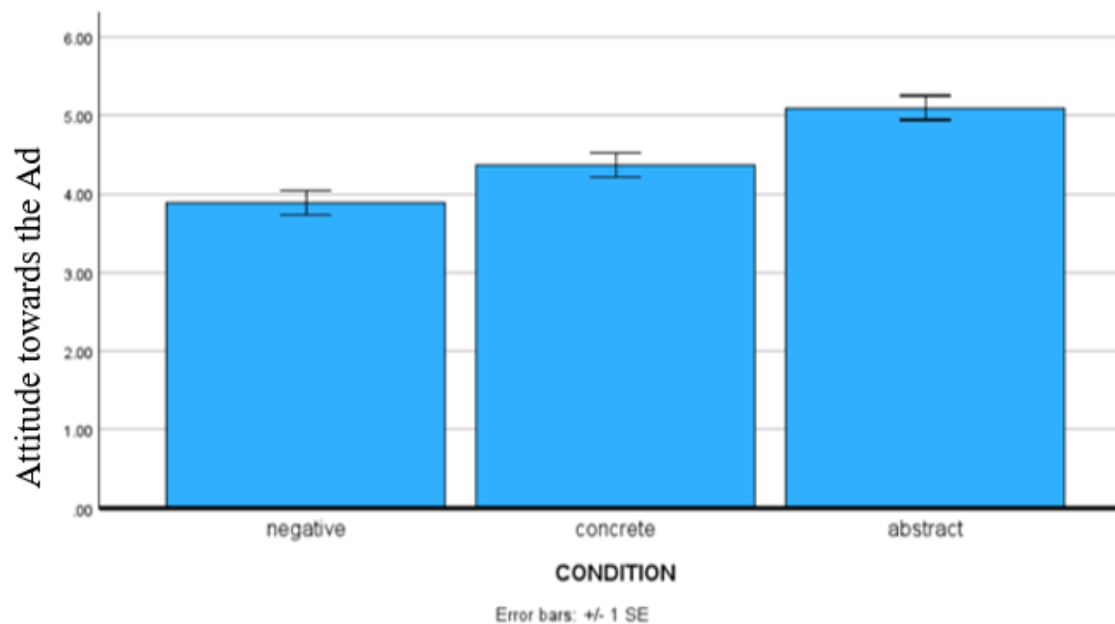
Perceptions of ad credibility and aesthetics: A one-way ANOVA shows that there is no significant main effect of ad appeal on perceived ad credibility ($F(2, 346) = 1.57$, $p = 0.209$). However, an one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of ad appeal on perceptions of ad aesthetics ($F(2, 346) = 11.977$, $p < 0.001$). As in the pretest, pairwise contrasts revealed that individuals exposed to the abstract mixed appeal perceived the ad as more aesthetically pleasing ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.66$), relative to those who viewed the concrete mixed appeal ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.83$, $p < 0.001$) and the negative appeal ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.84$, $p < 0.001$).

Therefore, this is a limitation of this study, and will be discuss in the General Discussion.

Direct Effect on Attitude: A one-way ANOVA confirmed the three ad appeals had a significant main effect on attitude towards the ad ($F(2, 346) = 15.217$, $p < 0.001$). Pairwise contrasts confirmed that individuals exposed to the abstract mixed appeal reported a more

favourable attitude toward the ad ($M = 5.09$, $SD = 1.59$) compared to those presented with the concrete mixed appeal ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 1.66$, $p = 0.001$) and the negative appeal ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.78$, $p < 0.001$). See figure 1 for depiction of results. These findings provide support for H1, confirming that abstract mixed appeals lead to more favourable attitudes than concrete mixed (and negative) appeals.

Figure 1: ANOVA results (Study 1)



Indirect Effect via Inspiration: A one-way ANOVA confirmed the three ad appeals had a significant main effect on inspiration ($F(2, 346) = 8.166$, $p < 0.001$). Pairwise contrasts confirmed that individuals exposed to the abstract mixed appeal reported being more inspired by the ad ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.83$) compared to those presented with the concrete mixed appeal ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.81$, $p = 0.007$) and the negative appeal ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.81$, $p < 0.001$).

To test whether inspiration mediated the effect between appeal type and attitude towards the ad, a mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Model 4 (5,000 bootstrap sample; Hayes, 2017). The independent variable was the type of ad appeal (Negative appeal, concrete

mixed appeal, abstract mixed appeal), with inspiration as the mediator, and attitude towards the ad as the dependent variable. Two dummy coded variables (X_1 and X_2) were created for the independent variable, where X_1 represents the comparison between the abstract mixed appeal and concrete mixed appeal (0 = abstract appeal; 1 = concrete appeal); and X_2 represents the comparison between abstract mixed appeal and negative appeal (0 = abstract appeal; 1 = negative appeal). The overall mediation index for the indirect effect of X_1 on attitude towards the ad with inspiration as mediator was significant ($\beta = -0.48$, $SE = 0.18$, $95\%CI = [-0.83, -0.13]$). Specifically, for the X_1 contrast, appeal type significantly impacted inspiration ($\beta = -0.64$, $SE = 0.23$, $95\%CI = [-1.11, -0.17]$), which in turn had a significant effect on attitude towards the ad ($\beta = 0.74$, $SE = 0.02$, $95\%CI = [0.69, 0.80]$). The residual effect of appeal type on attitude towards the ad became non-significant ($\beta = -0.24$, $SE = 0.13$, $95\%CI = [-0.50, 0.01]$), supporting a full mediation model. The overall mediation index for the indirect effect of appeal type of X_2 contrast on attitude towards the ad with inspiration as mediator was also significant ($\beta = -0.70$, $SE = 0.17$, $95\%CI = [-1.06, -0.35]$). Specifically, appeal type significantly impacted inspiration ($\beta = -0.94$, $SE = 0.23$, $95\%CI = [-1.40, -0.47]$), which in turn had a significant effect on attitude towards the ad ($\beta = 0.74$, $SE = 0.02$, $95\%CI = [0.69, 0.80]$). The residual effect of appeal type on attitude towards the ad was however significant ($\beta = -0.50$, $SE = 0.13$, $95\%CI = [-0.76, -0.24]$), supporting a partial mediation model. These findings support Hypothesis 2, indicating that inspiration mediates the effect of appeal type on ad attitude.

STUDY 2

The primary objective of study 2 was to examine the moderating role of self-construal (H3) and the downstream consequence of appeal type on behavioral intentions (H4). To test these hypotheses a 2 (appeal type: concrete vs. abstract) x 2 (self-construal: independent vs. interdependent) between-subject design was employed.

Method

Four hundred and three participants were recruited from Amazon's MTurk using Cloud Research platform, being compensated \$0.80 US for the completion of a 5-minute survey. 19 participants failed the attention check question ($N = 2$) or did not correctly respond to survey questions ($N = 17$). This resulted in the final valid sample of 384 participants ($M_{age} = 47.01$, $SD = 12.782$; 46.6% males). The study consisted of a 2 (self-construal: independent vs interdependent) x 2 (appeal type: abstract vs. concrete mixed appeal) between subject experimental design.

At the outset of the study, participants were shown a consent form. Those who did not give consent were directed to the final page of the survey and thanked for their participation. Participants who gave their consent were directed to complete two seemingly unrelated surveys. The first study included the self-construal manipulation, which consisted of asking participants to either reflect on what makes them different from their family and friends, and to summarize these reflections in 2-3 sentences (independent self-construal) or to reflect on what they have in common with their family and friends, and to summarize these thoughts in 2-3 sentences (interdependent self-construal). This manipulation was adapted from Chen (2009) and Trafimow et al. (1991).

In the second, presumably unrelated study, participants were randomly assigned to view one of the two print ads: concrete mixed appeal vs. abstract mixed appeal and asked to evaluate it. In Study 2, the negative control condition was omitted to streamline the study design. In Study 1, as anticipated, the negative appeal produced the lowest attitude scores, confirming its effectiveness as a benchmark. This validation reinforced our key finding that mixed-emotion appeals elicit significantly more favorable responses.

In each condition, participants were shown the ad and asked to thoroughly read and examine it. Participants reported their attitude toward the print ad using the same scale as in Study 1 ($\alpha = 0.986$). To report their sustainable behavioural intentions, participants rated from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree) the following items (adapted from Berger and Corbin, 1992 and Rex et al., 2015): “In the near future, I will go out of my way to seek out biodegradable products”, “In the near future, I will use a car pool or walk, bike, or take public transit in order to protect the environment”, “In the near future, I will consciously avoid styrofoam packaging”, “In the near future, I will keep garbage in separate piles of glass, plastic, paper, newspapers, and metal for recycling”, and from 1 (Not at all likely) to 7 (very likely) the following items: “In the near future, how likely are you to engage in sustainable behavior in the home?”, “In the near future, how likely are you to engage in sustainable behaviors away from home?”, “In the near future, when you are buying something or choosing between alternatives, how likely are you to choose products that are sustainable (i.e. environmentally-friendly), even if it costs more?” ($\alpha = 0.919$)

Participants were asked the same questions assessing the validity of the appeal type manipulation as asked in the pre-test. To validate the manipulation of self-construal, participants rated on a 2-item measure from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (a lot) whether “The task made me think about myself” and “The task made me think about others (e.g., friends, family)”.

The same measures as in the previous study were used to assess participants' perceptions of the ad's credibility (5 items, Greer, 2003; $\alpha = 0.973$) and the ad's visual aesthetic (2 items, $r = 0.860$, $p < 0.001$). At the conclusion of the survey, respondents provided demographic information including their age, gender and proficiency in English. They were also given the opportunity to share any comments or feedback with the researcher.

Results and Discussion

Variables	Concrete appeal	Abstract appeal	Independent condition	Interdependent condition
If ad focuses on How the issue shall be addressed	6.01(a)	2.90 (b)		
If the ad lists specific actions for promoting sustainability	6.15 (a)	2.88 (b)		
If the ad explains why the issue shall be addressed	5.72 (b)	5.98 (a)		
Ad conveys benefits of sustainability	5.04 (b)	5.92 (a)		
Task made think about themselves			5.54 (a)	4.65 (b)
Task made think about others			4.63 (b)	5.24 (a)
Ad credibility	4.97 (a)	5.29 (a)		
Ad aesthetics	3.85 (b)	4.46 (a)		

(a)(b)(c) Within a row, means without a common superscript differ ($p < 0.05$)

Table 3: Results of Study 2

Manipulation check – appeal type: An one-way ANOVA analysis showed significant differences between the two groups in how participants perceived the ad's explanation of *how* to address the issue ($F(1, 382) = 369.428, p < 0.001$). Those who viewed the concrete mixed appeal were more likely to believe that the ad provided clear guidance on how to take action ($M = 6.01, SD = 1.21$), compared to those exposed to the abstract mixed appeal ($M = 2.90, SD = 1.86$). Likewise, another one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference in perceptions of whether the ad outlined specific actions or strategies to promote sustainability

($F(1, 382) = 451.317, p < 0.001$). Participants in the concrete appeal group reported a stronger belief that the ad listed concrete strategies ($M = 6.15, SD = 1.03$) than those in the abstract appeal group ($M = 2.88, SD = 1.83$).

Additionally, the results indicated a statistically significant difference in participants' views on whether the ad explained *why* the issue should be addressed ($F(1, 382) = 4.295, p = 0.039$). Participants in the abstract appeal condition perceived the ad as focusing more on the *why* ($M = 5.98, SD = 1.19$) than those exposed to the concrete ad ($M = 5.72, SD = 1.35$). A similar pattern emerged regarding whether the ad conveyed the benefits of sustainability ($F(1, 382) = 38.060, p < 0.001$), with participants in the abstract condition reporting a stronger perception that the ad highlighted these benefits ($M = 5.92, SD = 1.19$) than those in the concrete condition ($M = 5.04, SD = 1.58$). These findings indicate that the manipulation of ad framing was effective.

An one-way ANOVA test revealed statistically significant difference among the two groups exposed to the manipulation of self-construal in their responses regarding whether the task made them think about themselves ($F(1, 382) = 30.432, p < 0.001$). Individuals exposed to the independent condition reported a stronger perception that the task made them think about themselves ($M = 5.54, SD = 1.57$) relative to those who were exposed to the interdependent condition of self-construal ($M = 4.65, SD = 1.56$). A second one-way ANOVA test revealed a significant difference among the two groups with respect to their responses of whether the task made them think about others ($F(1, 382) = 12.335, p < 0.001$). Individuals exposed to the interdependent condition of self-construal reported a stronger perception that the task made them think about others ($M = 5.24, SD = 1.54$) relative to those who were exposed to the independent condition of self-construal ($M = 4.63, SD = 1.85$). Thus, we infer that the manipulation of self-construal across the two conditions was successful.

Perceptions of ad credibility and aesthetics: An one-way ANOVA showed that there is no significant main effect of ad appeal on perceived credibility ($F(1, 382) = 3.59, p = 0.059$). However, a separate one-way ANOVA test revealed a statistically significant difference in participants' responses regarding whether the ad was aesthetically pleasing ($F(1, 382) = 10.706, p = 0.001$). Individuals exposed to the abstract mixed appeal reported a stronger perception that the ad was aesthetically pleasing ($M = 4.46, SD = 1.75$), relative to those who viewed the concrete mixed appeal ($M = 3.85, SD = 1.88$). Therefore, this is a limitation of this study and will be discussed in General Discussion section.

Main effects and Moderation analyses: A two-way ANOVA was conducted with appeal type and self-construal as the independent variables, and attitude as the dependent variable. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of ad appeal on attitude ($F(1,380) = 7.594, p = 0.006, \eta p^2 = 0.20$), a non-significant main effect of self-construal on attitude ($F(1,380) = 0.241, p = 0.624, \eta p^2 = 0.001$) and a non-significant interaction effect on attitude ($F(1,380) = 0.648, p = 0.421, \eta p^2 = 0.002$). Follow-up pairwise contrasts revealed that in the independent self construal condition, participants who were exposed to abstract appeal reported more favourable attitudes towards the ad ($M = 5.01, SD = 0.18$) compared to those who were exposed to concrete appeal ($M = 4.38, SD = 0.17; F(1,380) = 6.07, p = 0.014, \eta p^2 = 0.016$). In the interdependent self construal condition, participants in abstract vs concrete appeal condition did not report significantly different attitudes towards the ad ($M_{\text{abstract}} = 4.95, SD = 0.16$ vs. $M_{\text{concrete}} = 4.61, SD = 0.17; F(1,380) = 1.99, p = 0.159, \eta p^2 = 0.005$). Thus, the results did not fully support H3, that is there is no moderation effect of self construal on attitude towards the ad. Follow-up pairwise contrasts revealed that in the independent self construal condition, participants who were exposed to abstract appeal reported more favourable attitudes towards the ad compared to those who were exposed to concrete appeal. In the interdependent self construal condition, participants in abstract vs concrete appeal condition

did not report significantly different attitudes towards the ad. Thus, the effect between abstract and concrete is more apparent for independent (vs interdependent) minded participants. That's because, the abstract ad was not preferred by interdependent-minded people, but rather the concrete ad was significantly less preferred to the abstract ad by participant with independent construal.

Downstream consequence on behavioural intentions: To verify the downstream consequence on sustainable behavioural intentions, we conducted a mediation analyses using PROCESS (model 4, 5,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2017). Given that the moderation via self-construal was not significant, we collapsed the data across the two self-construal conditions. Ad appeal was included as the independent variable (0: concrete; 1: abstract), attitude as the mediator and behavioural intentions as the dependent variable. Results revealed a significant mediation ($\beta = 0.23$, $SE = 0.08$, 95% CI: 0.06, 0.40). Specifically, appeal type significantly impacted attitude towards the ad ($\beta = 0.48$, $SE = 0.17$, 95%CI = [0.13, 0.82]), which in turn had a significant effect on behavioural intentions ($\beta = 0.47$, $SE = 0.03$, 95%CI = [0.41, 0.54]). The residual effect of ad appeal on behavioural intentions became non-significant ($\beta = -0.01$, $SE = 0.10$, 95%CI = [-0.23, 0.19]), supporting a full mediation model. In other words, findings confirm that ad appeals lead to favourable attitude towards the ad that in turn leads to sustainable behavioural intentions as a downstream consequence.

General Discussion

My research explores the impact of brand purpose advertisements (negative appeal vs mixed appeal: abstract and concrete) on consumer's attitude towards the ad. I also explore the mediating role of inspiration, the moderating role of self-construal, and the downstream consequences on behavioural intentions. Overall, two studies show that abstract mixed appeals lead to more favourable consumer attitude towards the ad than concrete mixed

appeals and negative appeal (control condition). The research findings reveal that inspiration mediates this effect. That is, abstract (vs concrete) mixed appeals inspire people to a greater extent which leads to more favourable attitude towards the ad. In turn, these positive attitudes are shown to significantly enhance behavioural intentions. Finally, the study reveals that self-construal does not moderate the effect of ad appeal on consumer attitude.

Theoretical Contributions and Managerial Implications

The previous literature on brand purpose talks about the key elements of brand purpose and explains the numerous brand and consumer benefits that emerge from brand purpose, for example enhanced support, trust, loyalty and purchase from the brand and benefits to consumer's own eudaimonic well-being by gaining purpose in life, meaning and significance from a brand's purpose (Williams et al., 2022; Narayanan and Das, 2022). While the previous advertisement literature mainly examined the effect of either negative or positive appeals in brand purpose ads (Yousef et al., 2021), this research delves deeper into mixed appeals – i.e., appeals which evoke both negative and positive emotions and take the viewer on a journey from one to the other emotion. Furthermore, this research offers a novel contribution by examining and categorizing different types of brand purpose advertisements, and by identifying the nuanced effects of framing brand purpose in abstract versus concrete terms.

Previous literature on brand purpose talks about the significance of brand purpose for consumer's eudaimonic well-being and suggests that consumers might feel other praising emotions like inspiration from a brand's purposeful pursuit (Williams et al., 2022). Prior research shows that there is a link between brand purpose and inspiration (Chang, 2020; Morrison and Humlen, 2015). This present research contributes to the previous literature by showing that not all brand purpose ads inspire to the same degree. It's the abstract mixed appeal brand purpose ads that inspire to a greater extent than concrete mixed appeal ads.

As brands today are expected to be purposeful entities that bring a difference in lives of people and have a positive impact, it becomes important and needed for brand managers and marketers to understand the types of brand purpose advertisements and its effects on consumer attitudes. Given that abstract mixed appeals lead to more favourable attitudes, brand managers, and communication teams should present brand purpose ads that showcases the higher purpose or greater significance of the positive initiative to be taken, and answers the question why the action should be performed. The mediating role of inspiration suggests that marketers should optimize the inspirational qualities of the advertisement to gather more favourable consumer attitudes. By using the right type of purpose ad, more valuable societal or environmental changes can be expected at large by the effect on behavioural intentions.

Study Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

This study has several limitations that can offer future research opportunities. In the experimental design, the stimuli print ads, might not fully capture the complexity of watching digital ads. Prior research shows that print ads are viewed at for longer duration than digital ads (Venkatraman et al., 2021). Print ads are associated with increased engagement during exposure, given the longer processing times for print ads than digital ads (Venkatraman et al., 2021). Future research could explore whether my results (main effect of abstract mixed appeal on attitude towards the ad and the mediating role of inspiration in the model) replicates in digital ads as well.

This study focused on inspiration as a mediator for the main effect. Previous literature suggests that a brand's purposeful pursuit might lead to other praising emotions beyond happiness like moral elevation, gratitude and admiration for the brand other than inspiration from the brand (Williams et al., 2022). Thus, future research could explore and examine such

other potential mediators in the present model like admiration and moral elevation from the brand purpose advertisements.

In this research one of the main limitations is that the abstract mixed appeal was perceived to be more aesthetically appealing than the concrete and negative appeals, even after we changed the picture in the abstract mixed appeal stimuli in study 2 to make it less aesthetically appealing. This suggests an alternative sequential mediation pathway, wherein abstract appeals - due to their association with enhanced creativity (Wiesenfeld et al., 2017), are perceived as more aesthetically pleasing, which in turn leads to greater inspiration (Thrash and Elliot, 2003) and ultimately results in more favourable consumer attitude. Future researchers should further explore the role of perceived ad aesthetic in evoking consumer inspiration within the context of purpose branding.

In this research the moderation effect of self-construal came out to be non significant. Both the abstract and concrete versions of the ad focused on environmental issues, which are inherently collective in nature. Protecting the planet is often implicitly associated with a shared responsibility, emphasizing community, future generations, and interconnectedness. As such, the ad content may have implicitly triggered interdependent thoughts across all participants, regardless of their assigned self-construal condition. This unintended priming could have diluted the effects of the subsequent self-construal manipulation, resulting in a lack of observed moderation. Future research should carefully craft and pretest their stimuli to avoid such confounding effects. Alternatively, future research could measure self-construal rather than manipulate it, as chronic, trait-level self-construal is likely more resistant to priming effects than a transient, situational state.

Also, beyond self-construal, other factors which influence the relationship between types of brand purpose ads and consumer attitude towards the ad, can be investigated and studied in future research. Such as temporal orientation of a person: Future oriented individuals are more likely to be influenced by and react to environmental issues than present-oriented consumers given that many environmental issues have long-term outcomes (Tangari & Smith, 2012). Another potential moderator that can be studied is relevance of cause. We know that people are only inspired by (or have favourable attitude towards) a cause if they find the cause important or personally relevant (Lee & Rim, 2017). Examining the effects of these individual differences may provide deeper insight into how people respond to various framings of purpose-driven advertisements.

Finally, the focus of our study was directed toward an abstract societal concern – namely, environmental degradation, a broad and overarching issue. There existed a conceptual congruence between the abstract nature of the mixed-appeal advertisement and the expansive social issue addressed. This alignment might have at least partially contributed to the observed outcome, wherein abstract mixed-appeal messages elicited the most favorable consumer attitudes toward the advertisement (Kim et al., 2015; Zdravkovic et al., 2010). Future research should investigate whether this pattern persists when attention is redirected to more concrete, short-term social issues, such as water conservation, and whether, in those contexts, consumers exhibit more positive responses to concrete mixed-appeal advertisements.

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Appendix A

Life is being drained of our planet. In the race of advancement we forgot the delicate balance of our ecosystem. The climate is collapsing, the oceans are overflowing and **our nature's clock is ticking down.**

The environment is degrading drastically! Earth's balance is tipping as **the environment problems we face today are more dreadful than ever.** The future of humanity is at stake.



We need to change this..... This is how you can be more sustainable, take these actions/strategies every day to practice sustainability:

- 1) **Use low flow shower and tap:** Refresh yourself with a low flow shower and wash your vegetables with low flow taps. Low flow showers help in reducing water wastage, in cutting down your carbon footprint and increase energy savings.
- 2) **Food waste challenge:** We often throw leftovers and purchase unnecessary groceries. Challenge yourself to set meal plans in advance which lead to thoughtful purchasing. It reduces food wastage that goes to landfills, reduces methane emissions and promotes sustainability.



We need to change this.....let sustainability lead our path. This is why- These are the **benefits** of Sustainability:

Sustainability empowers our ecosystems to breathe, thrive and regenerate. It sets the foundation for a future where people and the planet can coexist harmoniously.

Sustainability enables us to leave behind a world where future generations can flourish. It secures them a planet that is not depleted, rather full of possibilities.

Sustainability **benefits us by improving the quality of life** and ecosystems. It changes our relationship with nature, **providing hope for a better future** and rekindles our belief in small acts....for even small when multiplied by millions of people, has the power to transform the world!



Appendix B

Scale for measuring ad credibility: What do you think about the ad you saw (Greer, 2003)

1= Not believable; 7= believable

1= Not convincing; 7= convincing

1= Not credible; 7= credible

1= dishonest; 7= honest

1= Untrustworthy; 7= Trustworthy

Scale for measuring ad ease of understanding:

What do you think about the ad you saw (Mick, 1992)

1 = The ad is easy to comprehend; 7= the ad is difficult to comprehend

1= The ad is understandable; 7= the ad is confusing

Scale for measuring ad aesthetics

To what extent did you like the picture in the ad (1= Not at all; 7 = A lot)

How aesthetically appealing was the ad to you (1= Not at all; 7= A lot)

Appendix C

We need to change this.....let sustainability lead our path. This is why- These are the **benefits** of Sustainability:

Sustainability empowers our ecosystems to breathe, thrive and regenerate. It sets the foundation for a future where people and the planet can coexist harmoniously.

Sustainability enables us to leave behind a world where future generations can flourish. It secures them a planet that is not depleted, rather full of possibilities.

Sustainability **benefits us by improving the quality of life** and ecosystems. It changes our relationship with nature, **providing hope for a better future** and rekindles our belief in small acts....for even small when multiplied by millions of people, has the power to transform the world!

