

The Effect of Benefit Appeals, Brand Types, and Construal Level on Ad-brand Congruency in Corporate Social Responsibility Messages -Aspirational vs. Accessible Brands-

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Abstract

Fashion brands seek guidelines for effective green advertising messages, considering benefit appeals, brand types, and construal level. However, few studies have explored their simultaneous interplay. Thus, the present study conducted an experiment with a 2X2X2 between-subjects design to investigate how brand type and construal level moderate the mediating role of ad-brand congruency between benefit appeals and purchase intention. A total of 245 Millennials and Generation Z participants completed an online survey, and the data were analyzed using SPSS. A significant three-way interaction was revealed. Low-construal-level messages with concrete content showed disparities between aspirational and accessible brands concerning other-benefit appeals: Accessible brands utilizing other-benefit appeals demonstrated higher ad-brand congruency, while aspirational brands had lower ad-brand congruency. Furthermore, within aspirational brands, self-benefit appeals resulted in higher ad-brand congruency than other-benefit appeals. Finally, a moderated mediating effect was discovered, indicating that brand types and construal level moderated the mediating effect of ad-brand congruency between benefit appeals and purchase intention. The mediating effect was prominent in the context of self-benefit appeals, aspirational brands, and low-construal-level messages. This study highlights the intricate dynamics of the three factors in green advertising, providing valuable insights for crafting more targeted green advertisements.

Key words: Green advertising, Benefit appeals, Aspirational brand, Accessible brand, Construal level theory

I. Introduction

Fashion brands have undertaken substantial initiatives to improve their sustainability practices, aiming to address previous criticisms of their significant contribution to global pollution as the second most polluting industry (Han et al., 2017; United Nations, 2019). Fashion companies are enhancing their sustainability strategies by implementing environmentally-friendly practices and emphasizing their commitment

to social and environmental responsibilities. Notably, Millennials and Generation Z consumers, known for their heightened awareness of and concern for sustainability-related issues, exhibit a strong inclination towards green considerations compared to other generations. Moreover, given their significant purchasing power and influence over the purchasing decisions of others, it is crucial to explore their attitudes toward the green image in order to develop effective green marketing strategies (Wang et al., 2018).

Amidst the escalating demand for sustainable products, an increasing number of fashion brands are pro-

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actively leveraging their advertising efforts to showcase corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives (Aoki et al., 2019). They are actively integrating pro-environmental CSR principles into their business models. However, this integration can lead to complexities as brands grapple with the potential conflict between their established values and the principles of sustainability, especially when communicating green CSR initiatives (Kang & Sung, 2022; Wong & Dhanesh, 2017). Consumer attitudes towards sustainability in the fashion industry have shown varying responses. While Achabou and Dekhili (2013) found negative consumer attitudes towards luxury fashion products using recycled materials, Kang and Sung (2022) indicated that sustainability messages in fashion brands can positively influence company evaluations. Consequently, it becomes crucial for fashion brands to strategically craft effective CSR messages that can elicit positive consumer responses.

In the realm of sustainability communication, crucial elements such as brand, message construction, imagery, and visual portrayal significantly influence the effectiveness of the message conveyed. For instance, the impact of sustainability communication varies depending on the brand types (Kong et al., 2021). Additionally, Jaeger and Weber (2020) highlighted the importance of benefit appeals and the construal level in effectively conveying sustainability messages. Youn and Cho (2022) explored the interplay between psychological distance and construal level in CSR advertisements, with a focus on controlling CSR content, including message and visuals.

Existing studies have investigated the relationships between benefit appeals and brand types, as well as benefit appeals and construal level. For example, Jaeger and Weber (2020) revealed the relationship between benefit appeals and construal level, demonstrating that other-benefit appeals with low construal level messages are more effective in CSR content. People are more accustomed to and exposed to environmental benefit arguments, and concrete messages are more likely to engender trust. Consequently, other-benefit appeals with low construal level messages increase

credibility in CSR content. Moreover, Wei and Jung (2022) highlighted the interactive effect between benefit appeals and brand types. They found that fast fashion brands using self-benefit appeals hindered green brand image and purchase intention compared to unknown brands. Adigüzel (2020) explored the relationship between benefit appeals and brand types. They discovered that mainstream brands with self-benefit appeals and luxury brands with other-benefit appeals increased consumer purchase intention. However, limited research has comprehensively examined the simultaneous influence of these three critical factors. Given their potential interplay in shaping message development and influencing consumer perceptions, delving into this complexity becomes crucial. Thus, this research aims to investigate the simultaneous interaction among benefit appeals, brand types, and construal level.

Ad-brand congruency pertains to the between a brand's message and the perceptions consumers have about the brand (Speed & Thompson, 2000). It reflects how well the advertising content aligns with the brand's identity, image, and values. When the advertising message is congruent with the brand, it enhances the overall effectiveness of the marketing efforts, leading to more favorable consumer responses.

Therefore, building upon on benefit appeals, brand types, and construal level, this research aims to explore the most effective green advertisement messages in eliciting positive consumer responses, specifically by considering their impact on ad-brand congruency and purchase intention. The main objective is to unveil the three-way interaction among benefit appeals, brand types, and construal level, shedding light on their combined influence on consumer perceptions. Moreover, the study intends to delve into the moderated moderated mediation effect by investigating how the impact of benefit appeals in CSR advertisements on young consumers' positive ad-brand congruency and purchase intention is contingent on brand types and construal level. In essence, this research seeks to enhance our comprehension of how the integration of benefit appeals, brand types, and construal level sha-

pes consumer responses to green advertising in the fashion industry. Through analyzing the interplay among these factors, this study makes valuable contributions to our understanding of the efficacy of green advertising strategies for fashion brands and their customization. Ultimately, this research holds the potential to guide fashion brands in devising more impactful green advertising campaigns that resonate with their target audience and foster positive consumer behaviors.

II. Literature Review

1. Benefit Appeals and Brand Types

1) *Benefit appeals*

In the realm of promoting sustainable products, marketers often employ two primary types of appeals: altruistic and egoistic claims. Green advertisements, with their emphasis on the superiority of sustainable products over non-sustainable alternatives, aim to cater to both types of motives (Jaeger & Weber, 2020). Altruistic claims center around the collective benefits for others or the environment, while egoistic claims prioritize self-centered advantages (Green & Pelozo, 2014). In fashion industry, other-benefit appeals are utilized to emphasize the positive impact on the environment and society, such as promoting the purchase of organic cotton clothing for its environmental benefits. Conversely, self-benefit appeals are employed to highlight the individual advantages of a product, such as purchasing organic cotton clothing to alleviate allergies and enhance personal comfort (Wei & Jung, 2022).

The effectiveness of other-benefit appeals compared to self-benefit appeals in promoting prosocial behavior is a subject of debate. Sustainable consumption, being inherently socially oriented, motivates consumers more through environmental benefits rather than self-centered advantages (Schorn et al., 2022). Additionally, Jaeger and Weber (2020) found that other-benefits, such as environmental appeals, are perceived as more trustworthy than self-benefits like health

benefits, likely due to their higher prevalence in green advertising. Consequently, some studies argue that other-benefit claims tend to evoke more positive behaviors and responses from consumers, given their familiarity with other-benefit advertisements, especially those emphasizing environmental benefits. On the contrary, alternative research proposes that self-benefit appeals can have a more significant impact on promoting sustainable purchasing behavior. This is because individuals often prioritize their own interests and are more persuaded by personal benefits (De Groot & Steg, 2008). For instance, Visser et al. (2015) supported the notion that a selfish argument, such as focusing on style, can be more effective than environmental claims like eco-friendly materials in advertisements. In such cases, an exclusive emphasis on the environment may even lead to a negative impact on purchase intention. Peattie and Belz (2010) further reinforced the idea that consumers tend to choose sustainable products when presented with self-oriented advantages, such as cost savings. Thus, self-benefits can also serve as an incentive for sustainable consumption (Yang et al., 2015). Hence, studying benefit appeals is critical for comprehending consumer behavior in sustainability contexts, as it illuminates the intricate and subtle dynamics resulting from the interplay between self-benefits and other-benefits in various situations.

2) *Brand types*

The democratization of the fashion market has resulted in the classification of fashion brands based on their level of psychological accessibility to the general public. Two distinct segments have emerged: aspirational fashion and accessible fashion (Okonkwo, 2016; Youn & Cho, 2022). Aspirational fashion brands comprise traditional luxury brands known for projecting aspirational and symbolic brand images in their marketing, including Prada, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Dolce and Gabbana, Chanel, and Armani (Park et al., 2020; Youn & Cho, 2022). In contrast, accessible brands have entered the luxury market by appealing to young consumers. These brands are characterized by their wider

accessibility and marketing strategies with broad appeal, exemplified by Tory Burch, Tommy Hilfiger, Polo Ralph Lauren, Michael Kors, Coach, and Calvin Klein (Miller & Mills, 2012; Youn & Cho, 2022).

Brands are perceived differently by consumers, and one of the crucial aspects that exemplifies this variation is psychological distance. Psychological distance refers to consumers' subjective perception of the distance between a brand and the mass market consumers, resulting in the classification of brands into distinct categories (Liberman & Trope, 2008; Park et al., 2020). Considering the differences in consumers' perceptions towards brand types is of paramount importance. Psychological distance can be related to the construal level theory, wherein brands are perceived as either psychologically close or far from consumers (Park et al., 2020; Youn & Cho, 2022). Additionally, brand types are intricately linked to benefit appeals, with the association being studied by Wei and Jung (2022). Understanding and acknowledging these interconnected factors play a pivotal role in comprehending consumers' attitudes and behaviors towards brands and their advertising strategies. Thus, psychological distance plays a crucial role in managing and advertising fashion brands. Aspirational brands maintain a greater psychological distance, while accessible brands have closer psychological proximity to consumers (Park et al., 2020).

In response to consumers' preference for sustainability, diverse fashion brands are integrating sustainability into their supply chain management processes. Aspirational brands like Armani, Chanel, and Gucci have showcased their commitment to sustainable marketing communication (Janseen et al., 2014). Likewise, accessible brands such as Tommy Hilfiger, Tory Burch, and Coach are actively disclosing their sustainable initiatives and engaging in new sustainable actions (Jestratijevic et al., 2020). However, when brands adopt green marketing messages, it is crucial for these messages to align with the brand's image and corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. If there is a disconnect between the marketing messages and the brand's identity, consumers may perceive the CSR initiatives

and the brand negatively (Wong & Dhanesh, 2017). Hence, marketing messages should be customized to suit the varying degrees of psychological distance associated with each brand. Given the differing consumer responses to sustainability depending on brand types, it becomes imperative to tailor marketing messages to suit the distinct levels of psychological distance associated with each brand.

3) The interaction effect of benefit appeals and brand types

The implementation of green advertisements prompts the consideration of how to effectively integrate benefit appeal messages across different brand types and explore potential interactions between them. Aspirational brands, renowned for their emphasis on luxury values, often encounter a CSR-luxury paradox due to the inherent conflict between hedonistic and opulent brand positioning and sustainability values, such as equality and moderation. This paradox creates a dilemma for luxury brands when it comes to green CSR communication. However, it is important to acknowledge that green advertising is not always detrimental to aspirational brands. In this context, self-benefit appeals that highlight consumer egoism or self-image are commonly utilized by luxury brands, as they align with the brand's values without conflicting with them (Kang & Sung, 2022). Conversely, accessible brands have greater flexibility in promoting sustainability and are more congruent with other-benefit appeals that highlight environmental concerns (Kong et al., 2021). According to congruity theory, individuals tend to favor consistency when they encounter new information, seeking alignment with their existing knowledge or past experiences (Mandler, 1982). Wei and Jung (2022) showed a significant interaction effect between benefit appeals and brand types and proposed that the alignment and congruency of benefit appeals and brand types can positively affect brand image and purchase intention. These findings highlight the importance of further research to thoroughly investigate the interplay between benefit appeals and brand types and their congruency, thus contributing to a comprehen-

sive understanding of the effectiveness of green advertisements.

The objective of this research is to examine the interaction effect between benefit types and brand types, along with exploring the moderating role of brand types in the relationship between benefit appeals and ad-brand congruency, which will be discussed in the subsequent sections. We hypothesize that when self-benefit appeals are utilized, consumers are likely to respond more positively to aspirational brands, whereas other-benefit appeals are expected to elicit a more favorable consumer response towards accessible brands. Therefore, we hypothesize:

- H1. There is an interaction effect between benefit appeals and brand types on ad-brand congruency towards the CSR advertisement.

2. Construal Level

1) *Construal level*

In addition to selecting the appropriate benefit appeals, the design of green advertisements can also involve a strategic choice between a holistic and abstract framing strategy or a detailed and concrete framing strategy. These strategies are grounded in the Construal Level Theory (CLT), which posits that an individual's perception of a subject is influenced by their thinking style, and how information is processed affects their decisions and evaluations regarding a specific situation (Jaeger & Weber, 2020). The concept of psychological distance plays a pivotal role in this theory, representing a subjective perception of the perceived closeness or distance of something to the self, in terms of time and space (Liberman & Trope, 2008). Psychological distance can be experienced through four dimensions: spatial, temporal, social, and hypothetical. The spatial dimension relates to the perceived physical proximity or distance between a person and an object or event. The temporal dimension refers to whether something is happening in the present, past, or future. The social dimension considers the level of personal relevance or connection to oneself or others

involved. Finally, the hypothetical dimension pertains to the perceived likelihood or probability of something occurring (Liberman et al., 2007). The Construal Level Theory (CLT) posits that an individual's perception of a subject is intricately connected to their thinking style, wherein the level of information processing influences their evaluation and decision-making process. This concept of psychological distance, being a subjective perception, shapes how individuals perceive the proximity of a subject in relation to themselves and the present moment, thus determining whether it is perceived as emotionally close or distant. According to the theory, when dealing with psychologically closer objects, people tend to focus on low-level and detailed features, whereas psychologically distant objects are often associated with high-level and abstract characteristics (Liberman & Trope, 2008). Low-level construal entails more specific and concrete representations, while high-level construal involves forming coherent, superordinate, and abstract cognitive representations (Trope & Liberman, 2010).

According to various authors, sustainability is often perceived as a concept that is psychologically distant, triggering high-level construal processes in the brain (Carmi & Kimhi, 2015). In the context of sustainable consumption, messages crafted with high-level construal are widely considered more effective (Reczek et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2015). However, it is important to acknowledge that some scholars argue that low-level construal messages possess greater credibility when compared to abstract messages (Darley & Smith, 1993). Jaeger and Weber (2020) demonstrate that detailed messages can increase message credibility.

2) *Moderating role of construal level*

Building upon the previously discussed hypothesis regarding the interactive effect of benefit appeals and brand types, this section aims to delve into the boundary conditions of such interactions by incorporating construal level. To be specific, we propose that the interaction between benefit appeals and brand types can be further nuanced by the level of construal.

A study by Yang et al. (2015) reveals that other-be-

nefit claims in green advertisements are more effective with high-level construal. On the other hand, self-benefit appeals are more likely to be associated with low-level construal. The rationale behind this finding is that other-benefit appeals may create a greater sense of social distance, as other individuals are perceived as being further away from the oneself (Liberman et al., 2007). Yang et al. (2015) also found an interaction effect between benefit appeals and construal level. The research conducted by Jaeger and Weber (2020) further investigates the influence of benefit appeals and construal level messages framing on credibility. The study highlights that ensuring coherence between benefit appeals and construal level is pivotal in bolstering consumer credibility and purchase intention. These findings emphasize significance of the interplay between benefit appeals and construal level in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors, underscoring the importance of aligning these factors.

In addition to the impact of benefit appeals, brand types also play a significant role in influencing construal level. Particularly, the expected interaction pattern between benefit appeals and brand types may vary depending on construal level. Aspirational brands, characterized by greater psychological distance, are better suited for high construal level. Conversely, accessible brands, which foster closer psychological distance, align more effectively with low construal level (Youn & Cho, 2022). However, in the context of sustainability within the luxury fashion industry, consumers tend to favor and be more persuaded by concrete and detailed messages, as they facilitate easy understanding and comprehension, thus eliciting favorable consumer responses (Teona et al., 2020). Thus, this study seeks to explore a three-way interaction between benefit appeals, brand types, and construal level, considering the nuanced dynamics among these factors. Therefore, we assume:

- H2. The interaction effect of benefit appeals and brand types on ad-brand congruency is moderated by construal level.

3. Ad-brand Congruency

Ad-brand congruency refers to the alignment between a brand and the various associations that are activated in the minds of consumers (Speed & Thompson, 2000; Youn & Cho, 2022). Congruity theory posits that individuals seek consistency when encountering new information that aligns with their prior experiences or knowledge, commonly referred to as schemas (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955). As a result, when consumers encounter new CSR content, they compare it with their existing knowledge of the brand, and this interaction between the new information and their prior understanding can impact their perception of the brand's CSR efforts. The concept of ad-brand congruency is utilized in CSR research to ensure that a brand's CSR initiatives are harmonious with customers' perceptions of the brand (Halkias & Kokkinaki, 2014). Youn and Cho (2022) showed the alignment between the personal distance of a brand and the level of construal has a moderating effect on ad-brand congruency. Similarly, consumers form positive or negative associations depending on the match between benefit appeals (self vs. others) and construal level (low vs. high). Hence, this study suggests that the interplay among benefit appeals, brand types, and construal level can significantly impact consumers' evaluation of the congruency between a brand and the content of green advertisements.

Previous research has provided empirical evidence supporting the positive influence of ad-brand congruency on customer responses towards a company's CSR activities. When consumers perceive a brand's CSR efforts as congruent with their pre-existing expectations and beliefs about the brand, it leads to a more positive evaluation and attitude towards the company. This congruency between the brand image and the advertisement also encourages consumers to make purchases (De Jong & van der Meer, 2017; Speed & Thompson, 2000; Youn & Cho, 2022). Conversely, when there is incongruence between the brand's CSR message and consumer expectations, it can result in negative responses and diminished credibility towards

the company's CSR efforts (Dahlén et al., 2005). Therefore, ad-brand congruency plays a crucial mediating role. Given the significance of ad-brand congruency in shaping consumer perceptions and attitudes, we propose that the impact of CSR messages on purchase intention can be mediated by ad-brand congruency. Specifically, when consumers perceive that the brand's CSR message aligns with their overall perceptions of the brand, it is more likely to positively influence their purchase intention. As a result, ad-brand congruency plays a pivotal role in enhancing the effectiveness of CSR messaging and increasing consumer purchase intention.

Kang and Sung (2022) and Kong et al. (2021) have demonstrated the interaction effect between benefit appeals and brand types: self-benefit appeals are associated with aspirational brands, while other-benefit appeals are linked to accessible brands. Furthermore, Yang et al. (2015) revealed the interaction effect between benefit appeals and construal level: other-benefit appeals are effective with high construal level, while self-benefit appeals perform better with low construal level. Jaeger and Weber (2020) also investigated the interaction effect between benefit appeals and construal level. Additionally, Youn and Cho (2022) explored the relationship between brand types and construal level, finding that aspirational brands are associated with high construal level, while accessible brands align with low construal level. These studies collectively underscore the criticality of congruency and alignment among these three factors. CSR mes-

sages that include benefit appeals, brand types, and construal level should align with people's pre-existing knowledge and experiences to achieve optimal effectiveness and resonance. We therefore hypothesize:

- H3. The mediation effect of ad-brand congruency on benefit appeals and purchase intention is moderated by brand types and construal level.

III. Research Method

1. Research Hypotheses and Research Model

This study aimed to examine the influence of green advertisements for fashion brands on consumer perception and purchase intention within an online environment. The primary focus was to uncover how the relationship between benefit appeals and purchase intention is mediated by ad-brand congruency, and how this mediation effect is moderated by brand types and construal level. The followings are research hypotheses and proposed conceptual model are presented in <Fig. 1>.

2. Stimulus Development and Pre-test

In pre-test 01, we identified two categories of fashion brands based on varying levels of personal distance: low and great. The aspirational luxury fashion brands included in the study were Prada, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Dolce and Gabbana, Chanel, and Armani.

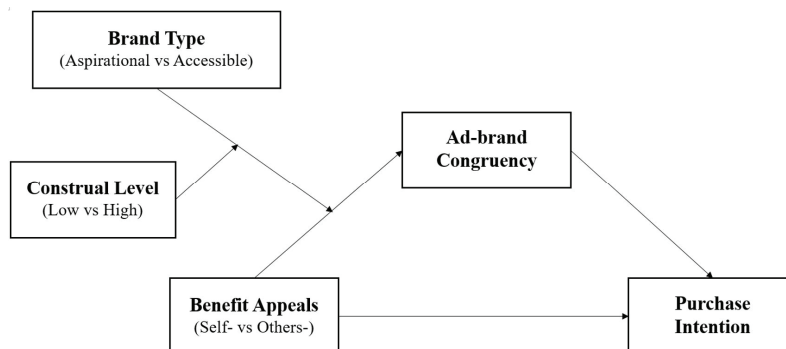


Fig. 1. Research model.

On the other hand, the accessible fashion brands comprised Tory Burch, Tommy Hilfiger, Polo Ralph Lauren, Michael Kors, Coach, and Calvin Klein (Arienti et al., 2019; Youn & Cho, 2022). In total, 16 brands were selected for the fashion brand pool. To assess personal distance, we used three 5-point semantic differential scales following the approach of Darke et al. (2016) and Youn & Cho (2022). We enlisted 51 respondents from the United States through Amazon MTurk for the data collection process. The personal distance of all 16 brands was measured, and it was found that Chanel had the highest personal distance, while Tommy Hilfiger had the lowest. A t-test was conducted to confirm the difference. Based on distinct characteristics and statistical analysis ($M_{PD \text{ towards Chanel}} = 3.60$, $M_{PD \text{ towards Tommy Hilfiger}} = 3.05$, $p < .05$), we selected two brands - Chanel (representing great personal distance) and Tommy Hilfiger (representing low personal distance) for further investigation.

In Pre-test 02, we developed CSR content for fashion brands based on information obtained from the official websites and reports of selected brands (Chanel, 2021). The development process involved two main aspects. Firstly, we classified benefit appeals into self-benefits and other-benefits. Self-benefits were designed to highlight how consumers can personally benefit from using organic fibers, including allergy prevention and promoting a healthy body. Conversely, other-benefits focused on the use of environmentally friendly manufacturing technologies and how purchasing the product can contribute to protecting the entire environment (Wei & Jung, 2022). Secondly, we considered the construal level of the messages and photos. For low construal levels, we used detailed images, such as realistic photos, accompanied by specific messages related to CSR activities. In contrast, for high construal levels, we utilized simplified icons and short messages associated with CSR activities (Youn & Cho, 2022). Therefore, there were four stimuli: self-benefits with high construal level, self-benefits with low construal level, other-benefits with high construal level, and other-benefits with low-construal level. The resulting stimuli were crafted as follows: self-benefits with high construal level was written as “Care for fi-

ber: Made with organic cotton, harmless to your skin,” and other-benefits with high construal level was expressed as “Care for climate: Made with low-carbon technologies reducing greenhouse gas emissions.” Similarly, self-benefits with low construal level was formulated as “Care for fiber: Made with 100% certified organic cotton with GBS (Global Biodiversity Score®). Protect your body by choosing clothing made with natural materials. Say no to harmful chemicals against your skin,” and other-benefits with low construal level was written as “Care for climate: Made with low-carbon technologies, pursuing science-based greenhouse gas emissions reduction through Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi). Contribute to slowing climate change and preserving the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.”

To ensure the stimuli's effectiveness, participants were asked to evaluate benefit appeals and construal levels. The benefit appeals questions focused on discerning the perceived value of the appeal in terms of self-interest (benefiting oneself) or other-interest (benefiting others) (White & Peloza, 2009). Meanwhile, the construal level questions aimed to assess participants' overall impressions of the content based on three aspects: concreteness, imagery provocation, and vividness (Martin et al., 2009). All questions were rated on 5-point semantic differential scales. A total of 24 respondents participated in the study. The results demonstrated discriminative properties for self-benefit appeals and other-benefit appeals, as well as low and high construal levels ($M_{\text{self-benefit appeals}} = 3.14$, $M_{\text{other-benefit appeals}} = 3.74$, $p < .00$; $M_{\text{low construal level}} = 3.17$, $M_{\text{high construal level}} = 3.30$, $p < .05$). Consequently, the stimuli were refined, considering the significant differences in benefit appeals, brand types, and construal level, ensuring their appropriate design for the main study.

3. Measures

After participants viewed the brand post stimulus, a manipulation check was conducted by asking them to indicate whether the benefit appeals were focused on self-interest or other-interest, and whether the message was of low construal (detailed) or high construal

(abstract). The benefit appeals questions were assessed using one 5-point semantic differential scale (*own interest/other's interest*), while the construal level questions were evaluated using three 5-point semantic differential scales (*very concrete/very abstract*, *very imagery provoking/very difficult to imagine*, *very vivid/very dull*). These scales were adapted from previous studies by White and Peloza (2009) and Martin et al. (2009). Subsequently, participants completed attitudinal and behavioral measures related to the brand post, disclosed their green identity, and provided demographic information. All items were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale. Ad-brand congruency was measured using five five-point Likert scale questions, ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely). Purchase intention (adapted from Tih et al., 2016) was assessed using three five-point Likert scale questions, ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely). Green identity was measured using thirteen three five-point Likert scale questions, ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely). Additionally, an attention check item was included within the questionnaire items to identify and eliminate irrelevant or random responses.

4. Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis

The study focused on Millennials and Generation Z, the consumer groups who demonstrate a high level of awareness and interest in sustainability. Data collection was conducted through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). A total of 280 respondents completed the survey. However, after excluding respondents who did not qualify the attention check, the final sample consisted of 245 individuals for data analysis. These participants were randomly assigned to one of the eight conditions. After reading the definition of CSR advertisement, participants were presented with the CSR messages corresponding to their assigned condition. Subsequently, they completed a questionnaire comprising items related to the variables. Participants were consisted of 57.6% males and age ranging from 22 to 39 years ($M=29.8$ years, $SD=4.645$)

The study used 2 (benefit appeals: self- vs. other-) x 2 (brand types: aspirational vs. accessible) x 2 (con-

strual level: high vs. low) between-subjects experimental design in aspirational and accessible brand. Demographic analysis, reliability analysis, and ANCOVA were conducted using SPSS 27.0 software. To account for potential confounding effects, green identity was incorporated as a covariate in the model. Additionally, a moderated moderated mediation analysis was performed using SPSS Process Macro Model 11 to examine the conditional indirect effects. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was conducted, and confidence intervals were set at a 95% level (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

5. Manipulation Check

The results of the independent t-tests confirmed that both self-benefit and other-benefit appeals and low construal level and high construal level were perceived as intended by the participants. Specifically, the analysis indicated that the self-benefit appeal was significantly lower in degree compared to the other-benefit appeal ($M_{\text{self-benefit appeal}} (SD) = 3.150 (1.356)$, $M_{\text{other-benefit appeal}} (SD) = 3.700 (1.206)$, $p < .000$). Additionally, the results revealed that the group exposed to concrete information exhibited significantly lower levels of construal level compared to the group exposed to abstract information ($M_{\text{low construal level}} (SD) = 3.142 (1.117)$, $M_{\text{high construal level}} (SD) = 3.474 (1.026)$, $p < .01$). As both benefit appeals and construal level showed significant differences in participants' perceptions, it can be concluded that the experimental manipulation was successful.

6. Measurement reliability

The reliability of all measurement items was assessed through Cronbach's alpha in the prior hypothesis testing. All items demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha value above .700, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Specifically, the measurement items for construal level exhibited a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .784, ad-brand congruency showed a reliability coefficient of .785, green identity had a reliability coefficient of .872, and the purchase intention measurement items yielded a reliability coefficient of .752.

These results indicate a satisfactory level of measurement reliability for the study.

IV. Results

1. The interaction effect of benefit appeals and brand types

A two-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to investigate the interaction effect between benefit appeals and brand types, with green identity used as a covariate. The analysis revealed a statistically significant interaction effect ($F = 5.850$, $p = .016$) at a significance level of .05, providing support for H1 and confirming the presence of an inter-

action effect.

Specifically, the accessible brand did not show a significant difference between self-benefit and other-benefit appeals. However, the aspirational brand exhibited a notable distinction between self-benefit and other-benefit appeals. In the aspirational brand and self-benefit condition, ad-brand congruency was considerably higher ($M = 3.888$, $SD = .092$) compared to the aspirational brand and other-benefit condition ($M = 3.610$, $SD = .610$) (Fig. 2). These findings align with previous research by Wei and Jung (2022), supporting the idea of alignment between aspirational brands and self-benefit appeals, as well as the presence of an interaction effect between benefit appeals and brand types. The detailed results are presented in <Table 1>.

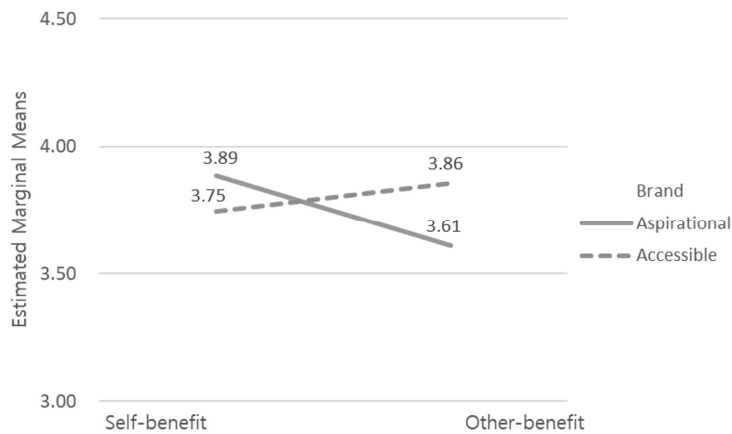


Fig. 2. Interaction between benefit appeals and brand types on ad-brand congruency.

Table 1. Two-way ANCOVA results: Ad-brand congruency as dependent variable

Predictor	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Partial η^2
Corrected model	36.139	4	9.035	23.387***	.280
Intercept	5.577	1	5.577	14.436***	.057
Green identity	33.665	1	33.665	87.142***	.266
Benefit appeals	.419	1	.419	1.084	.004
Brand types	.169	1	.169	.439	.002
Benefit appeals x Brand types	2.260	1	2.260	5.850*	.024
Estimated value	92.717	240	.386		
Total	3610.640	245			
Corrected total	128.856	244			

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

2. The moderating effect of construal level

A three-way ANCOVA was implemented to investigate the three-way interplay between benefit appeals and brand types, moderated by construal level. The covariate used was the same as in previous analyses. The results not only confirmed the presence of an interaction effect between benefit appeals and brand types ($F = 7.305, p = .007$), further supporting H1, but also revealed a statistically significant three-way interaction effect ($F = 5.781, p = .017$) at a significance level of .05, providing support for H2. These findings shed light on how the combination of benefit appeals and brand types influences ad-brand congruency, with construal level acting as a moderating factor. Detailed results can be found in <Table 2>.

When the green advertisement message was presented in an abstract manner, both aspirational and accessible brands showed similar patterns with no significant difference. However, a notable difference emerged when the green advertisement message was

presented in a detailed and concrete manner. Firstly, in terms of other-benefit appeals, there was a significant disparity between aspirational and accessible brands. Accessible brands employing other-benefit appeals demonstrated higher ad-brand congruency ($F = 3.938, SD = .519$), whereas aspirational brands employing other-benefit appeals displayed lower ad-brand congruency ($F = 3.276, SD = 1.248$). Secondly, a significant difference was observed between aspirational brands using self-benefit appeals ($F = 3.736, SD = .514$) and those using other-benefit appeals, with the former exhibiting higher ad-brand congruency compared to the latter (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4). These findings align with previous studies conducted by Yang et al. (2015) and Youn and Cho (2022), indicating the presence of an interaction effect among benefit appeals, brand types, and construal level.

3. Moderated moderated analysis

Finally, in order to investigate whether brand types

Table 2. Three-way ANCOVA results: Ad-brand congruency as dependent variable

Predictor	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	partial η^2
Corrected model	42.336	8	5.296	14.450***	.329
Intercept	5.412	1	5.412	14.767***	.059
Green identity	33.480	1	33.480	91.355***	.279
Benefit appeals	.731	1	.731	1.994	.008
Brand types	.310	1	.310	.847	.004
Construal level	1.559	1	1.559	4.253*	.018
Benefit appeals x Brand types	2.667	1	2.667	7.305**	.030
Benefit appeals x Construal level	.177	1	.177	.483	.002
Brand types x Construal level	2.193	1	2.193	5.984*	.025
Benefit appeals x Brand type x Construal level	2.119	1	2.119	5.781*	.024
Estimated value	86.491	236	.366		
Total	3610.640	245			
Corrected total	128.856	244			

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

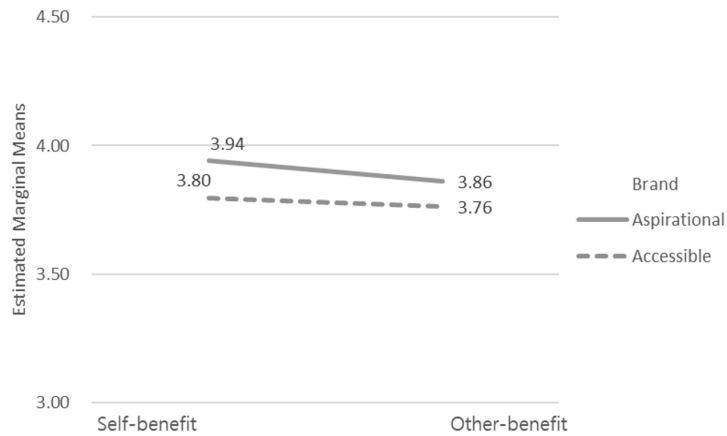


Fig. 3. Interaction between benefit appeals, brand types, and high construal level on ad-brand congruency.

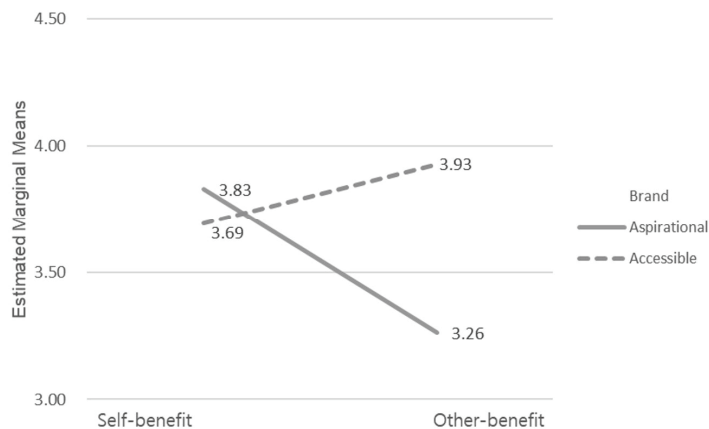


Fig. 4. Interaction between benefit appeals, brand types, and high construal level on ad-brand congruency.

and construal level act as moderators in the mediating effect of ad-brand congruency between benefit appeals and purchase intention, a moderated moderated analysis was conducted using the PROCESS Macro Model 11 (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). This analysis employed 95% biased-corrected bootstrap with 5,000 samples, and the same covariate used in previous analyses was included. The results, presented in <Table 3>, <Table 4>, and <Table 5>, revealed a significant effect for the moderated moderated mediation index ($b = .394$), with the 95% bootstrapping confidence interval (LLCI = .064, ULCL = .717) not including zero. This suggests the presence of a moderated moderated mediating effect, thus supporting H3.

Further examination of the data showed that the moderated moderated mediation effect was significant in the aspirational-concrete condition ($b = -.296$, 95% CI = $-.560, -.071$). This indicates that ad-brand congruency had the strongest explanatory power for purchase intention in the context of self-benefit appeal, aspirational brand, and concrete message. Additionally, since the direct effect of benefit appeals on purchase intention was not significant, this path demonstrates a full mediation effect. These results provide valuable insights into the complex interplay between benefit appeals, brand types, construal level, ad-brand congruency, and purchase intention in the context of green advertising.

Table 3. The moderated moderated mediation effect on ad-brand congruency

	Estimate	SE	t	LLCI	ULCI
Benefit appeals	1.833	1.280	1.431	-6.896	4.357
Brand types	-.149	.361	-.414	-.862	.563
Benefit appeals x Brand types	-.712	.494	-1.441	-1.686	.261
Construal level	-.123	.612	-.201	-1.329	1.082
Benefit appeals x Construal level	-2.007	.824	-2.433*	-3.631	-.382
Brand type x Construal level	.006	.231	.027	-.450	.462
Benefit appeals x Brand type x Construal level	.759	.315	2.404*	.137	1.380
Green identity	.679	.071	9.558***	.539	.819

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ **Table 4. The moderated moderated mediation effect on purchase intention**

	Estimate	SE	t	LLCI	ULCI
Benefit appeals	.076	.080	.953	-.081	.234
Ad-brand congruency	.520	.064	8.133	.394	.646
Green identity	.245	.085	2.883	.077	.413

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ **Table 5. The significance of the moderated moderated mediation effect on purchase intention**

	Index	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Construal level	.394	.166	.064	.717
	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
<i>Direct effect</i>				
High _(constructLevel)	.024	.103	-.152	.256
Low _(constructLevel)	.419	.419	.145	.736
<i>Indirect effect^a</i>				
Asp _(brand) High _(constructLevel)	-.041	.060	-.170	.071
Asp _(brand) High _(constructLevel)	-.296	.126	-.560	-.071
Acc _(brand) Low _(constructLevel)	-.017	.081	-.156	.165
Acc _(brand) Low _(constructLevel)	.123	.069	-.008	.270

^a Indirect effect: Benefit → Congruency → Purchase intention

V. Conclusions and Discussions

1. Conclusions

The effectiveness of self-benefit and other-benefit

appeals varied depending on whether the brand was aspirational or accessible, each reflecting its unique characteristics. Benefit appeals and brand types had interaction effect. For accessible brands, ad-brand congruency was slightly higher for other-benefit ap-

peals than for self-benefit appeals, but the difference between the two was not significant. Accessible brands often use other-benefit appeals, such as altruism and social impact, to position themselves as relatable and down-to-earth, creating a stronger connection and perceived accessibility with consumers. By adopting such appeals, accessible brands aim to foster closer and deeper relationships with their audience (Kardes et al., 2018; Miller & Mills, 2012). At the same time, accessible brands are also associated with functional and utilitarian values, directly benefiting and providing convenience to consumers themselves (Hur et al., 2014). This association with self-benefit attributes allows self-benefit appeals to align well with the brand image of accessible brands. Therefore, the congruency between accessible brands and self-benefit appeals is not significantly different from that with other-benefit appeals. In summary, the research findings suggest that both self- and other-benefit appeals are viable strategies for accessible brands to establish congruency with consumers. They can effectively use both types of appeals to connect with their target audience and convey their values, whether focused on benefiting others or themselves.

In contrast, the distinction between self-benefit and other-benefit appeals becomes notably pronounced for aspirational brands, resulting in a significant difference in ad-brand congruency. Ad-brand congruency was considerably higher for self-benefit appeals in aspirational brands compared to other-benefit appeals. This disparity arises from the inherent values associated with aspirational brands, such as egoism and luxury, which naturally align with self-benefit appeals (De Groot & Steg, 2008). These brands allure consumers with the promise of self-enhancement, indulgence, and the fulfillment of individualistic desires. However, the use of other-benefit appeals poses a challenge for aspirational brands due to the CSR paradox. Aspirational brands position themselves as exclusive, prestigious, and rare, which might conflict with the values associated with other-benefit appeals, such as altruism, empathy, and social responsibility (De Barnier et

al., 2012). The individualistic nature of aspirational brands may hinder the effective communication of other-benefit appeals, making them less congruent with the brand image. Consequently, self-benefit appeals, with their egoistic characteristics, become more aligned with the aspirational brand's identity and result in increased consumer purchase intention. Therefore, consistent with previous studies, this research reveals an interaction effect between benefit appeals and brand types, particularly in the context of aspirational brands with self-benefit appeals. The prestigious values associated with aspirational brands align closely with self-benefit appeals (De Groot & Steg, 2008; Kang & Sung, 2022; Kong et al., 2021).

Finally, the mediating effect of ad-brand congruency on purchase intention was most effective in the condition of self-benefit appeal, aspirational brand, and low construal level. Low construal level is closely associated with benefit appeals as consumers tend to interpret self-benefit appeals with a focused and detailed perspective, given their personal relevance (Yang et al., 2015). Despite aspirational brands typically creating greater psychological distance, which would make high construal level more congruent, it is essential to consider that in sustainability and green advertising, consumers prefer concrete and detailed messages. Such messages are easily understood, comprehended, and help consumers assess the message's realism (Teona et al., 2020). The relationship between benefit appeals, brand types, and construal level in green advertising situations highlights their mutual influence and the presence of an interaction effect. It underscores the significance of considering these three factors together to gain a comprehensive understanding of their combined impact. In addition to existing studies that have demonstrated the interaction effects between benefit appeals and brand types, brand types and construal level, and benefit appeals and construal level (Kang & Sung, 2022; Kong et al., 2021; Wei & Jung, 2022; Youn & Cho, 2022), this study extends the research by revealing a three-way interaction effect among benefit appeals, brand types, and construal level.

2. Implications

This study holds significant implications from both theoretical and managerial perspectives. Theoretical contributions include recognizing the intricate interplay of factors influencing consumer behavior in the fashion domain. By considering multiple variables, including moderators and mediators, the research models offer a more precise depiction of the complexities involved in fashion consumer behavior. This enhances the models' predictive power and theoretical robustness, providing valuable insights for researchers and marketers. Additionally, the study contributes to the existing literature by exploring the simultaneous influence of benefit appeals, brand types, and construal level, revealing a three-way interaction. This enriches our understanding of how these factors collectively shape consumer responses to green advertising, offering a comprehensive framework for sustainability and green marketing research.

From a managerial perspective, this study offers practical implications for guiding marketing strategies. One key insight is the importance of customizing marketing messages to maximize their impact. Fashion brands should meticulously tailor their benefit appeals, brand types, and construal level in green advertising messages to align with the preferences and values of their target consumers. By customizing the messaging strategy based on the specific characteristics of their brand and the desired perception in the market, brands can achieve higher ad-brand congruency. For instance, aspirational brands can focus on self-benefit appeals that resonate with their image of luxury and exclusivity, while accessible brands can emphasize other-benefit appeals to establish a reliable and socially responsible image. Additionally, considering the preference for concrete and detailed messages in the context of sustainability, fashion brands can use low construal level content to effectively communicate the green attributes of their products. This tailored approach enables brands to positively influence consumers' purchase intention, leading to in-

creased sales and reinforcing a stronger brand image. Customizing messaging strategies based on these factors can optimize the effectiveness of both aspirational and accessible brands.

Another significant managerial implication is the emphasis on brand positioning and differentiation. The study highlights the role of ad-brand congruency in influencing purchase intention, underscoring its significance in the context of benefit appeals, brand types, and construal level for both aspirational and accessible brands. In light of this, managers should focus on cultivating a robust brand identity and ensuring that brand messaging aligns harmoniously with the desired brand image. Additionally, they should judiciously consider the moderating influences of benefit appeals and construal level when strategically positioning their products. By adeptly understanding and leveraging these factors, brands can effectively cater to the preferences of consumers seeking aspirational or accessible experiences.

By understanding the significance of message customization and brand positioning, marketers can optimize their strategies to resonate with their target audiences and drive favorable outcomes in the competitive fashion industry. These findings contribute to a deeper comprehension of consumer decision-making processes and offer practical guidance for effective marketing practices.

3. Limitation and future studies

This study has certain limitations that warrant consideration, and it also opens avenues for future research. The focus on Millennials and Generation Z was chosen due to their heightened awareness of sustainability and proclivity towards eco-conscious purchases. However, to gain a comprehensive understanding, future studies could encompass a more diverse range of populations to explore potential differences among them. Additionally, the existing brand image and associations may have influenced the participants' responses. To mitigate this potential bias, fu-

ture research could utilize hypothetical or imaginary brands, avoiding pre-existing schemas and allowing for a more accurate assessment of participants' reactions to green advertising messages. Furthermore, cultural dimensions can play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior, making them a significant additional moderator. For instance, consumer independence, associated with individualism, could influence how consumers respond to benefit appeals. Those with high consumer independence might prioritize personal needs and goals over group interests, impacting their receptivity to self-benefit appeals. As such, future studies could incorporate cultural dimensions as essential moderators to unravel the complexities of consumer responses to green advertising across diverse cultural contexts.

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2. Ethics and consent

Not applicable

3. Availability of data and materials

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4. Conflicting interests

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6. Authors' contributions

YWM was mainly responsible for data collection and analysis along with writing the manuscript, and KHL reviewed the edition of manuscript. All of the authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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