

Performance Appeals, Environmental Knowledge, and Emotions for Green Advertising

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Significance. Due to high skepticism over environmental claims in advertising (Newell, Goldsmith, & Banzhal, 1998), strategic communication of the environmental performance of green products is important for advertisers, including fashion advertisers. Although advertisers have been using performance-focused appeals, they have received relatively little attention by researchers (Chang, 2016). The significance of this study is extending the knowledge on the effectiveness of performance-focused appeals for green product advertisements.

Application of literature. To communicate a product's pro-environmental qualities, advertisers often feature the positive impact on the environment after trying the advertised product, such as preservation of natural resources (after-use appeals). On the other hand, some advertisers feature polluted conditions to highlight the problem, emphasize the need for green products, and prompt imagination of the product's green performance (before-use appeals). Others contrast the two conditions—the polluted condition and the clean condition—to further accentuate the green performance of the advertised products (before-after appeals).

When performance appeals are used, consumers expect favorable performance outcomes from the advertised product. Expecting favorable outcomes can evoke positive emotions, such as happiness and hope (Chang, 2016). According to the feelings-as-information theory, people attend to their feelings as a source of information in making decisions (Schwarz, 2012), and we hypothesize that consumers' positive emotions would mediate the influence of performance appeals on purchase intentions.

In addition, we hypothesize that consumers' environmental knowledge would interact with the influence of performance appeals on emotions. Consumers who are knowledgeable about environmental issues and the meanings of environmental terms (e.g., environmental symbols on a product package) could be already more knowledgeable about the advertised performance of the green product; while consumers with low environmental knowledge could be influenced by green claims in the advertisement (Morris, Hastak, & Mazis, 1995). In this regard, we explored the interaction effect of environmental knowledge (high and low) and performance appeals

(before-use, after-use, and before-after appeals) on emotional states (anticipated happiness and hope), leading to consumers' purchase intention.

Methods. A total of 201 participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (performance appeals: before-use, after-use, before-after). The stimuli included a picture and headlines of a fictitious green fashion brand. The stimuli were manipulated using headlines containing “contaminated” for before-appeal, “clean” for after-appeal, and “contaminated but now clean” for before-after appeal. Environmental knowledge, anticipated happiness and hope, and purchase intentions were measured on seven-point scales. The measurement items were adapted from Mohr, Eroglu, and Ellen (1998) for environmental knowledge and Chang (2016) for anticipated happiness and hope, and purchase intentions.

Results. To check whether advertising image's performance appeals were manipulated appropriately, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The results showed that the difference in performance appeals ($F(2, 384) = 8.058, p < .001, M_{\text{before}} = 4.52, M_{\text{after}} = 5.02, M_{\text{before-after}} = 5.37$) on stimuli was significant, and it was verified that the manipulation was successful.

A 2 x 3 ANOVA was conducted with environmental knowledge, divided into two groups based on the mean value, and three performance appeals as independents and *anticipated happiness* as the dependent. The result showed that the interaction effect was significant ($F(2, 195) = 3.553, p < .05$), indicating that when individual's environmental knowledge was low, after-use ($M=3.26$) and before-after appeals ($M=3.46$) had a greater degree of anticipated happiness (vs. before-use appeal ($M=2.81$)); however, when individual's environmental knowledge was high, performance appeals did not influence anticipated happiness. In addition, another 2 x 3 ANOVA with the same independents revealed a significant two-way interaction on *anticipated hope* ($F(2, 195) = 4.860, p < .01$). When individual's environmental knowledge was low, after-use ($M=3.34$) and before-after appeals ($M=3.57$) showed greater anticipated hope (vs. before-use appeal ($M=2.94$)); however, when individual's environmental knowledge was high, performance appeals did not influence anticipated hope.

To test the effects of environmental knowledge and performance appeals on purchase intentions, mediated by anticipated happiness and hope, Hayes' (2013) PROCESS Model 7 with 1,000 bootstrap samples was used. The results revealed that for individual with low environmental knowledge, the effect of performance appeals on purchase intentions was mediated by anticipated happiness (Effect = .4377, 95% CI [0.1755, 0.7065]) and anticipated hope (Effect =

.3837, 95% CI [0.1331, 0.6627]), especially when appeals were after-use and before-after appeals, rather than before-use appeal.

Discussion. The results of this study indicated that when the green-message of fashion products used after-use and before-after appeals, the effect of the green-message can increase individuals' anticipated happiness and hope, leading to purchase intentions. This strategy of message-appeals especially works for the people with low environmental knowledge. These results contribute to the extension of knowledge on the effectiveness of performance-focused appeals for green product advertisements, and provide insights to attract individuals with low environmental knowledge.

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