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BEYOND EMOTIONAL APPEAL: HOW BRAND ATTITUDE AND CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT SHAPE PURCHASE INTENTION

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of emotional appeal of the advertising on purchase intent of consumers with the mediation of the brand attitude and the moderation of the consumer involvement. A moderated mediation model was developed and tested based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Elaboration Likelihood Model, and Hierarchy of Effects Model. A structured questionnaire was used to gather cross-sectional data from 320 marketing professionals of Punjab, Pakistan, which were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (SmartPLS 4). Measurement model showed good reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. All five hypotheses were supported by the structural results. Emotional appeal had a significant positive effect on both brand attitude and purchase intention; brand attitude had a significant effect on purchase intention and mediated between emotional appeal and purchase intention, in part. Importantly, the role of emotional appeal on purchase intention was strongly seen in the low-involvement consumers and was statistically non-significant in the high-involvement consumers, suggesting a strong and negative moderation effect of consumer involvement. The present results provide an extension of the Elaboration Likelihood Model by showing that the persuasive impact of the peripheral cue emotional appeal is focused when involvement is low. The study provides brand managers with evidence-based advice for tuning emotional advertising at the audience level and adds to the scarce literature that exists on emotional advertising in the South Asian context.

Keywords: Emotional Appeal; Brand Attitude; Purchase Intention; Consumer Involvement; Elaboration Likelihood Model; Pakistan

1. Introduction.

In contemporary marketing, consumers' decisions are shaped not only by rational evaluations of products but also by the emotional experiences created through advertising. Brands increasingly employ emotionally charged communication to establish connections with audiences, shape brand evaluations, and influence purchasing behaviour. Emotional appeal in advertising, involving the deliberate use of emotions such as joy, nostalgia, warmth, humour, and inspiration to stimulate audience responses and engagement with a brand, has therefore become an important strategic instrument for marketers (Bhargavi, 2024; Vrtana & Krizanova, 2023). Understanding how such appeals translate into favourable brand evaluations and purchase-related outcomes is consequently important for both advertising theory and marketing practice.

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This study integrates three theoretical perspectives to explain the relationships among emotional appeal, brand attitude, purchase intention, and consumer involvement. The Hierarchy of Effects Model (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961) proposes that advertising effects progress through cognitive, affective, and conative stages, providing a basis for understanding how emotional appeals may ultimately influence purchase-related responses. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), as applied in contemporary research by Park et al. (2024), further suggests that consumers process persuasive messages through either a central route, involving careful evaluation of message quality, or a peripheral route, in which cues such as emotions influence persuasion. Consumer involvement is therefore particularly relevant because it may determine the extent to which emotional cues influence advertising responses. Finally, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) supports the relationship between brand attitude and purchase intention by identifying attitude as a proximal determinant of behavioural intention.

Accordingly, emotional appeal is conceptualised as the independent variable representing the emotional component of advertising stimuli (Bhargavi, 2024; Vrtana & Krizanova, 2023). Brand attitude serves as the mediating mechanism through which advertising-induced affect may develop into a more stable and purchase-relevant evaluation of the brand (Zhao et al., 2024; Manzoor et al., 2025), while purchase intention represents the extent to which consumers are willing to purchase a brand within a given time horizon (Alshohaib, 2024). Consumer involvement is treated as a moderator which can influence consumers' sensitivity to peripheral emotional information in processing ads (Park et al., 2024; Ugalde et al., 2024). The integrated framework thus takes a step beyond the study of the effect of emotional advertising on purchasing intention alone and focuses on the psychological mechanism that triggers the impact of emotional advertising and the degrees of variability in the effect depending on the context. The marketing study focuses on marketing professionals in Punjab, Pakistan from various industries like fast moving consumer goods, business-to-business and business-to-technology, e-commerce and digital businesses, marketing agencies etc. It is important because, marketing professionals are consumers and are constantly exposed to emotional marketing in daily life and marketers who have a professional understanding of advertising might be more likely to pay closer attention to the messages received. The relatively high degree of elaboration makes them an interesting context for investigating the ELM, and in this case, the potential for peripheral cues to sway audiences which might be more likely to critically evaluate persuasive messages.

A further and more theoretically significant gap concerns the direction of the involvement effect. Existing evidence is divided. Some research suggests that involvement strengthens advertising effects because highly involved individuals devote greater attention to advertising messages (Yang et al., 2022; Manzoor et al., 2025), whereas other evidence indicates that involvement may weaken persuasive effects because consumers are more likely to elaborate upon and discount peripheral cues (Geng & Chen, 2021). Consistent with the ELM, highly involved consumers may prioritise argument quality over affective cues such as emotional appeals when engaging in central-route processing (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). This unresolved contradiction has not been adequately addressed in the South Asian context. Its resolution is particularly relevant to managers because the direction of the involvement effect can determine whether emotional advertising should primarily target highly involved audiences or consumers less motivated to undertake extensive message elaboration.

Against this background, the present study develops and empirically tests an integrated model examining the direct effects of emotional appeal on brand attitude and purchase intention, the effect of brand attitude on purchase intention, the mediating role of brand attitude, and the moderating role of consumer involvement in the relationship between emotional appeal and purchase intention among marketing professionals in Punjab, Pakistan. Using quantitative partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM), the study seeks to clarify both the mechanism through which emotional advertising influences purchase intention and the boundary condition that determines the strength of this relationship.

The study makes a theoretical contribution by applying the ELM to a relatively high EL population of professionals (who have high levels of elaboration) and by examining the competing predictions for consumer involvement as a boundary condition. It also brings together emotional appeal, brand attitude and purchase

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intention in a single explanatory model, offering a more complete understanding of the way emotional ads may be translated into purchase intentions. From a practical perspective, the results can help brand managers determine when emotional advertising is likely to enhance brand evaluations and purchase intentions and help them segment, allocate media, and develop their ads even better.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Foundation

Emotional appeal is a marketing strategy that uses emotional cues to elicit emotional reaction and reinforce consumers' relationships with brands. Emotional appeal is not just a stylistic element; it also plays a role in the evaluation of brands and consumer behavior (Bhargavi, 2024; Vrtana & Krizanova, 2023). Upon analysing 417 consumers, Vrtana and Krizanova (2023) determined that emotionally evocative advertising can create an emotional connection with brands and positively influence purchase decisions, though not without limitations and may not be always positive, depending on the age group analyzed. In a similar fashion, Le et al. (2024) latched on the ABC attitude model and placed emotional appeal in the affective dimension of attitude formation. Advertising that is emotionally resonant can also elicit physiologically measurable responses within the brain before consumers can cognitively evaluate the information, further supporting the notion that emotional appeal can occur at a pre-cognitive level.

Brand attitude is the overall evaluation of the brand by the consumers, including cognitive, affective and behavioral tendencies. The significance of its role is that it is a factor that can guide marketing stimuli to produce more stable brand evaluations and brand responses. Zhao et al. (2024) found that the mechanism of brand attitude between persuasive stimulus and purchase intention is also one of the key mechanisms linking the two, depending on the characteristics of the persuasive stimulus, through the study of online shopping customers. Purchase intention represents consumers' willingness or likelihood to purchase a brand in the future and is closely aligned with the behavioral-intention perspective of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Anum et al., 2025). Evidence from online retail indicates that emotional states such as pleasure and arousal can substantially influence repurchase intention (Alshohaib, 2024), while Junejo et al. (2022), studying 150 fast-food consumers in Pakistan, found that advertising appeal can influence purchase intention both directly and indirectly. Nevertheless, purchase intention should not be equated with actual behavior because situational constraints and competing motives may intervene.

Consumer involvement represents the degree of personal relevance, interest, and cognitive effort associated with a product, advertisement, or purchase decision. Within the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), highly involved consumers are more likely to engage in central-route processing and evaluate message arguments, whereas low-involvement consumers are more susceptible to peripheral cues, including emotional appeals (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Park et al. (2024) demonstrated the continuing relevance of involvement in determining persuasive mechanisms in the context of virtual influencers, while Thuy et al. (2024) examined involvement as a moderator of relationships involving persuasive sources, attitudes, and purchase intention. Similarly, Ugalde et al. (2024), using 1,922 responses from three cities in Ecuador, found that brand personality effects on brand attachment and loyalty were stronger for low-involvement products. Collectively, these studies establish consumer involvement as a theoretically relevant boundary condition for understanding when affective advertising cues are more or less persuasive.

2.2 Emotional Appeal and Brand Attitude

The relationship between emotional appeal and brand attitude can be explained through affective transfer, whereby favourable feelings generated by an advertisement are transferred to the advertised brand. This mechanism is consistent with the Hierarchy of Effects Model, which positions affective responses between cognitive processing and subsequent behavioral outcomes (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). Empirically, Le et al. (2024), using approximately 300 Vietnamese respondents and SmartPLS, found a direct and statistically significant relationship between emotional appeal and brand attitude. Similarly, Vrtana and Krizanova (2023) demonstrated through Dove advertising that emotionally salient messages can strengthen the consumer--brand connection.

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But all emotions are not seen as positive or consistent. Based on the above, Alshohaib (2024) revealed that the effects of advertisements can differ based on the advertisement characteristics, and Vrtana and Krizanova (2023) suggested that emotional appeal contents can have different impacts on individuals. The results obtained indicate that credibility, authenticity and individual characteristics can influence the efficacy of the emotional advertising. However, the current evidence is that emotional appeal and brand attitude are correlated in a positive way.

H1: Emotional appeal has a significant positive effect on brand attitude among marketing professionals in Punjab, Pakistan.

2.3 Emotional Appeal and Purchase Intention

Emotional appeal can also directly affect purchase intention through inducing affective responses that result in behavioural readiness as theorized by Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). Salient and personally relevant emotional cues might affect behavioural reactions via peripheral processing (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In support of this, Alshohaib (2024) reported that pleasure and arousal resulting from online advertisements significantly affected repurchase intention, and Bhargavi (2024) consolidated the findings from the various contexts of e-advertising and found that emotional appeals can aid brand recall and bolster brand relationships that lead to repurchase intentions.

However, emotional appeal is not always apparent. Le et al. (2024) found that the impact of emotional appeal on purchase intention can be reduced once the brand attitude is taken into account, indicating that there is a significant portion of its influence that works through attitudinal mechanisms. Other research in this vein from Yang et al. (2022), showed that advertising impact on behavioral intention differs depending on personal involvement. The results show that it is crucial to consider the direct and indirect effects together and to not consider emotional appeal as the sole factor that influences purchase intention. Accordingly:

H2: Emotional appeal has a significant positive effect on purchase intention among marketing professionals in Punjab, Pakistan.

2.4 Brand Attitude and Purchase Intention and the Mediating Role of Brand Attitude

The theory of Planned Behavior, which considers attitude as one of the most important factors that affect purchase intention, has a strong bearing on the relationship between brand attitude and purchase intention (Ajzen, 1991). There is supporting evidence from the real world. In a Chinese livestreaming e-commerce platform, the brand attitude had positive and significant effects on purchase intention, as reported by Zhao et al. (2024) through structural equation modelling. The same has been found in the Pakistani fast food system by Junejo et al. (2022) and in the Pakistani tea industry by Ali et al. (2024). While not all persuasive antecedents had a significant impact on attitude or intention in the study by Zhao et al. (2024) (such as professionalism), in general, the theoretical and empirical findings suggest that brand attitude can positively influence purchase intention. A good rating of the brand, therefore, is expected to boost the willingness to buy among marketing professionals in Punjab, Pakistan. This relationship sets the attitudinal ground for an analysis of brand attitude as a result of emotional advertising, as well as brand attitude as a channel by which the effect of advertising could be passed to the purchase intention.

H3: Brand attitude has a significant positive effect on purchase intention among marketing professionals in Punjab, Pakistan.

The mediating role of brand attitude follows the cognitive-affective-conative sequence proposed by the Hierarchy of Effects Model (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). Emotional advertising can generate affective responses that strengthen brand attitudes, which in turn influence purchase intention. Le et al. (2024) provided direct evidence of both direct and indirect effects of emotional aspects of social advertising on purchase intention through attitude. In digital commerce, Zhao et al. (2024) found that influencer attractiveness, credibility, and interactivity influenced purchase intention through brand attitude. Importantly, Junejo et al. (2022) found partial mediation between advertising appeal and purchase intention in the Pakistani fast-food industry, providing contextual evidence for the proposed mechanism.

The possibility of partial rather than full mediation is also theoretically consistent with the ELM because emotional cues may influence purchase intention through a peripheral route without necessarily

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requiring complete reconstruction of brand attitudes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Thus, the present study examines whether brand attitude transmits part of the effect of emotional appeal to purchase intention without assuming that the indirect pathway is exclusive.

H4: Brand attitude mediates the relationship between emotional appeal and purchase intention among marketing professionals in Punjab, Pakistan.

2.5 Moderating Role of Consumer Involvement

The ELM provides the primary theoretical foundation for understanding consumer involvement as a moderator of the emotional appeal--purchase intention relationship. High-involvement consumers are more likely to process advertising through the central route and evaluate argument quality, whereas low-involvement consumers are more likely to rely on peripheral cues such as emotional appeals (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). From this perspective, emotional appeal should exert a stronger influence on purchase intention among low-involvement consumers because emotional cues represent peripheral rather than substantive arguments.

However, empirical evidence provides competing explanations regarding the direction of this moderation. Geng and Chen (2021), using 272 Chinese social media users, found that product involvement negatively moderated relationships involving perceived usefulness, trust, and purchase intention. Consistent with a stronger affective effect under lower involvement, Ugalde et al. (2024) found stronger brand effects for low-involvement products. In contrast, Yang et al. (2022), based on 1,292 respondents, reported that personal involvement positively moderated the effects of advertised information expression and product type on purchase intention. Park et al. (2024) further demonstrated that involvement may operate through either cognitive or affective processing and may produce positive or negative effects depending on the persuasive attribute examined. Thuy et al. (2024) likewise did not establish a single directional effect of involvement.

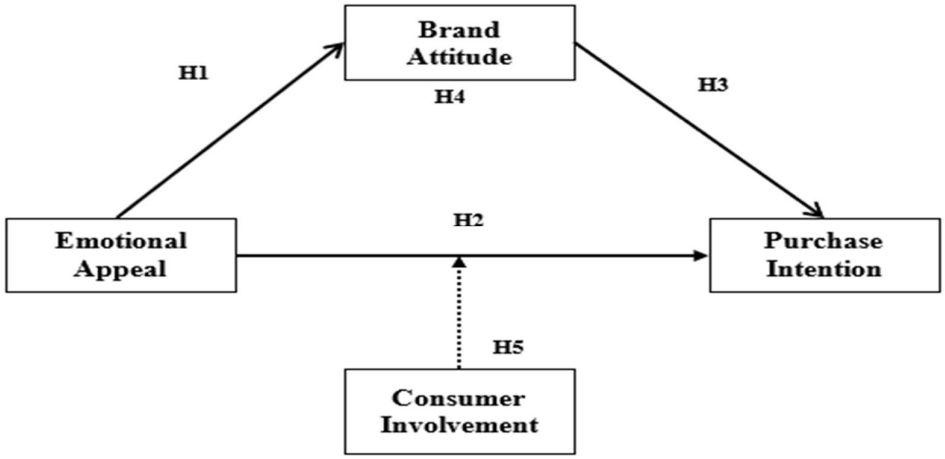
The theoretical prediction and empirical evidence therefore remain inconclusive. While the ELM suggests attenuation of peripheral emotional effects as involvement increases, empirical findings indicate that involvement may either strengthen or weaken advertising effects depending on the nature of the persuasive stimulus. This unresolved contradiction provides a strong basis for testing the moderating role of consumer involvement without imposing a predetermined direction.

H5: Consumer involvement moderates the relationship between emotional appeal and purchase intention among marketing professionals in Punjab, Pakistan.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Approach, Design, and Context

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The study adopted a quantitative approach within a positivist philosophical paradigm, as the research sought to empirically test theoretically derived relationships using objective measurement and statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A deductive, cross-sectional survey design was employed, with data collected from respondents at a single point in time. The research model was derived from the Hierarchy of Effects Model, Elaboration Likelihood Model, and Theory of Planned Behaviour and was used to examine five hypothesized relationships involving emotional appeal, brand attitude, consumer involvement, and purchase intention.

The target population comprised marketing professionals in Punjab, Pakistan, including specialists, managers, directors or department heads, and founders or owners working in fast-moving consumer goods, business-to-business and technology, e-commerce and digital businesses, and marketing agencies. The sampling technique employed was a non-probability convenience sampling technique as the questionnaire was sent electronically to the respondents via professional networks and social media, to enable access to respondents across organizations, sectors and geographical area. Respondents were asked if they had a marketing-related position and had professional experience of brand advertising. The minimum sample size was first determined based on the 10-times rule suggested in partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM; Hair et al., 2019). The minimum requirement was determined to be 210 responses for 21 measurement items and four constructs. The study received 320 usable responses, a quantity that was greater than this. Additionally, the sample was deemed adequate due to the post-hoc calculation of statistical power for the structural paths (all at or above 0.91 at 1% significance level). The final sample of 320 cases exceeded the required sample for the weakest structural path of 236 cases at 80% power, and with an alpha level of one percent.

3.2 Data Collection and Measurement

The methods used to collect and measure data. The primary data were gathered by a structured and self-administered online questionnaire with three sections. Study information, instructions and informed consent information were provided in Section A. In Section B, respondents' professional and organizational characteristics were examined, such as job position, organizational background and size, years of experience in marketing, and the use of digital marketing tools. The measurement items of the four latent constructs were located in Section C. The questionnaire was given in English, and the respondents were asked to answer it anonymously and voluntarily. The response rate was 320 (n = 320) and the incidence of missing data was zero for the 21 measurement items. All constructs were reflective and measured with multi-item scales based on previously validated literature. The emotional appeal was assessed using six items (EA1--EA6) adapted from Vrtana and Krizanova (2023) and Simón Sandoval and García-Madariaga (2024). The five items (BA1--BA5) adapted from Le et al. (2024) and Zhao et al. (2024) were used to assess brand attitude. The level of consumer involvement was evaluated with four items (CI1--CI4) adapted from Thuy et al. (2024) and Ugalde et al. (2024) and that of purchase intention was measured with six items (PI1--PI6) adapted from Alshohaib (2024) and Junejo et al. (2022). The resulting 21 items were rated on a seven point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The seven-point scale was chosen to offer some response variation and discrimination to allow for structural equation modelling while satisfying cognitive demands of respondents.

3.3 Data Analysis and Methodological Rigor

Data screening, respondent profiling, descriptive analysis, Cronbach's alpha, and the assessment of common method bias were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics, while the measurement and structural models were estimated using SmartPLS 4 (Ringle et al., 2024). PLS-SEM was selected because of its suitability for survey data that may depart from normality, its ability to accommodate models involving mediation and moderation, and its predictive orientation toward explaining variance in behavioral outcomes (Hair et al., 2019).

Following the two-stage procedure recommended by Hair et al. (2019), the measurement model was assessed for indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, while the structural model was evaluated in terms of collinearity, path relationships, explanatory power, and effect sizes. Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was used to assess significance, including the indirect effect for

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the mediation hypothesis and the latent interaction for the moderation hypothesis. Detailed measurement and structural model results are presented in the Results chapter to avoid duplication.

3.4 Common Method Bias

Because the study relied on a single self-report questionnaire, procedural and statistical remedies were applied to address potential common method bias following Podsakoff et al. (2003). Respondent anonymity was maintained, no right or wrong answers were indicated, and construct blocks were separated within the questionnaire. Statistically, Harman's single-factor test was conducted using all 21 measurement items in an un-rotated factor analysis constrained to one factor. The single factor accounted for 35.74% of the total variance, below the commonly applied 50% threshold, suggesting that common method bias was unlikely to pose a substantial threat to the findings. This conclusion was further supported by the structural model, where all inner-model variance inflation factor (VIF) values were below 1.27, substantially lower than the 3.3 threshold associated with method-induced collinearity.

4. Results and Interpretations

4.1 Respondent Profile

320 usable responses were received. The professional profile of the respondents is given in Table 1. About two-thirds of the sample consisted of managers and specialists, the rest being directors or heads of function, founders or owners, and others. The respondents fell into four main organizational categories, with well-represented business-to-business, technology, e-commerce and digital businesses, and marketing agencies, as well as fast-moving consumer goods organizations. Most of the respondents were in medium or large organizations, and held four or more years of marketing experience, suggesting a professionally experienced sample.

Table 1

Respondent Profile (n = 320)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	%
Current role	Manager	108	33.8
	Specialist	104	32.5
	Director / Head	56	17.5
	Founder / Owner	32	10.0
	Other	20	6.3
Organizational setting	B2B / SaaS / Technology	94	29.4
	E-commerce / Digital	85	26.6
	Marketing agency	72	22.5
	FMCG	43	13.4
	Other	26	8.1
Organization size	Fewer than 50 employees	61	19.1
	51--250 employees	100	31.3
	251--1,000 employees	113	35.3
	More than 1,000 employees	46	14.4
Years in marketing	Less than 1 year	17	5.3
	1--3 years	68	21.3
	4--6 years	90	28.1
	7--10 years	79	24.7
	More than 10 years	66	20.6
AI tool Frequency	Daily	152	47.5
	Weekly	119	37.2
	Occasionally	49	15.3

Note. Percentages are calculated on the full sample of 320 respondents and may not sum to exactly 100 owing to rounding.

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

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4.2.1 Indicator Reliability and Construct Reliability. The measurement model was first evaluated. The reliability of the indicators was assessed using the outer loading, which was considered reliable if the outer loading was above 0.708 (Hair et al., 2019). Each of the 21 indicators was over this threshold, with loadings between 0.750 (BA4) and 0.874 (BA3), as reported in Table 2. All loadings were significant at $p < 0.001$ with a two-tailed bootstrap test with 5000 subsamples. Thus, there was no need for any items to be deleted and the instrument remained intact.

Internal consistency reliability was measured by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (rho_a and rho_c). The range of all the coefficients was between 0.850 and 0.928, which is satisfactory, as a maximum of 0.95 is regarded as the limit of repeatability. All of the AVEs exceeded the criterion of 0.50, ranging from 0.643 in the emotional appeal to 0.688 in the case of consumer involvement. All item-level skewness and kurtosis values were within the range of + or - 1, suggesting approximate univariate normality.

Table 2

Composite Reliability, Convergent Validity, and Item Descriptive Statistics

Construct / Item	M	SD	Skew.	Kurt.	Outer Loading	α	ρA	ρC	AVE
Emotional Appeal						**0.889**	**0.893**	**0.915**	**0.643**
EA1	4.00	1.087	−0.065	0.030	0.828				
EA2	4.01	1.087	0.026	0.166	0.800				
EA3	4.00	1.100	0.057	0.065	0.818				
EA4	4.01	1.125	−0.079	−0.382	0.811				
EA5	4.00	1.094	−0.058	−0.146	0.783				
EA6	3.99	1.106	0.082	−0.167	0.770				
Brand Attitude						**0.878**	**0.887**	**0.911**	**0.673**
BA1	4.00	1.110	0.048	−0.357	0.852				
BA2	4.00	1.135	−0.136	−0.230	0.818				
BA3	4.00	1.106	0.196	−0.195	0.874				
BA4	3.98	1.138	0.069	0.005	0.750				
BA5	4.00	1.094	−0.072	−0.280	0.800				
Consumer Involvement						**0.850**	**0.866**	**0.898**	**0.688**
CI1	4.00	1.124	−0.059	0.181	0.836				
CI2	3.99	1.125	−0.001	0.047	0.861				
CI3	4.00	1.091	−0.204	−0.120	0.807				
CI4	4.01	1.065	−0.244	0.084	0.812				
Purchase Intention						**0.907**	**0.908**	**0.928**	**0.683**
PI1	4.00	1.089	0.161	−0.066	0.833				
PI2	3.98	1.118	0.166	0.344	0.822				
PI3	4.00	1.093	−0.095	0.000	0.792				
PI4	4.00	1.099	0.049	−0.052	0.840				
PI5	4.00	1.083	0.149	−0.263	0.827				
PI6	4.00	1.107	0.329	−0.160	0.844				

Note. n = 320. All outer loadings significant at $p < 0.001$ based on a two-tailed bootstrap with 5,000 subsamples. α = Cronbach's alpha; ρ_A = composite reliability (rho_a); ρ_C = composite reliability (rho_c); AVE = average variance extracted. Item means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis computed in SPSS on a seven-point scale.

4.2.2 Discriminant Validity. The heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations was used to assess the discriminant validity and is shown in Table 3. All of the ratios were significantly below the conservative ratio

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recommended by Henseler et al. (2015) of 0.85, with the largest ratio being 0.551 for brand attitude to purchase intention. Thus, all pairs of constructs were validated for discriminant.

Table 3

Discriminant Validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations

Construct	1	2	3	4
1. Emotional Appeal	---			
2. Brand Attitude	0.504	---		
3. Consumer Involvement	0.091	0.093	---	
4. Purchase Intention	0.541	0.551	0.247	---

Note. All heterotrait-monotrait values are below the 0.85 threshold, confirming discriminant validity.

The Fornell-Larcker criterion was also considered as an additional check. The square root of the average variance extracted is higher than the correlation between each construct with all other constructs of the model for all constructs (emotional appeal 0.802, brand attitude 0.820, consumer involvement 0.829, purchase intention 0.827) and thus gave convergent evidence of discriminant validity. The complete correlations are presented in Table A1, Appendix. Finally, a check on the model was conducted by using the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), with values of 0.048 for the saturated model and 0.049 for the estimated model, respectively, well below the threshold of 0.08 recommended by Henseler et al. (2015) that indicates an acceptable fit between the model and the observed data.

4.3 Structural Model Assessment

4.3.1 Collinearity. Path coefficients were determined after checking for collinearity. Variance inflation factors for the outer-models ranged from 1.753 to 2.560, and for the inner-models from 1.000 to 1.268, both of which are far less than the safe level of 3.0. The collinearity problem was thus not a problem for the estimation of the structural relationships.

4.3.2 Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Tests. Figure 2 presents the estimated structural model, and Table 4 reports the full results. All five hypothesised relationships were statistically significant.

Figure 2

Structural Model Results

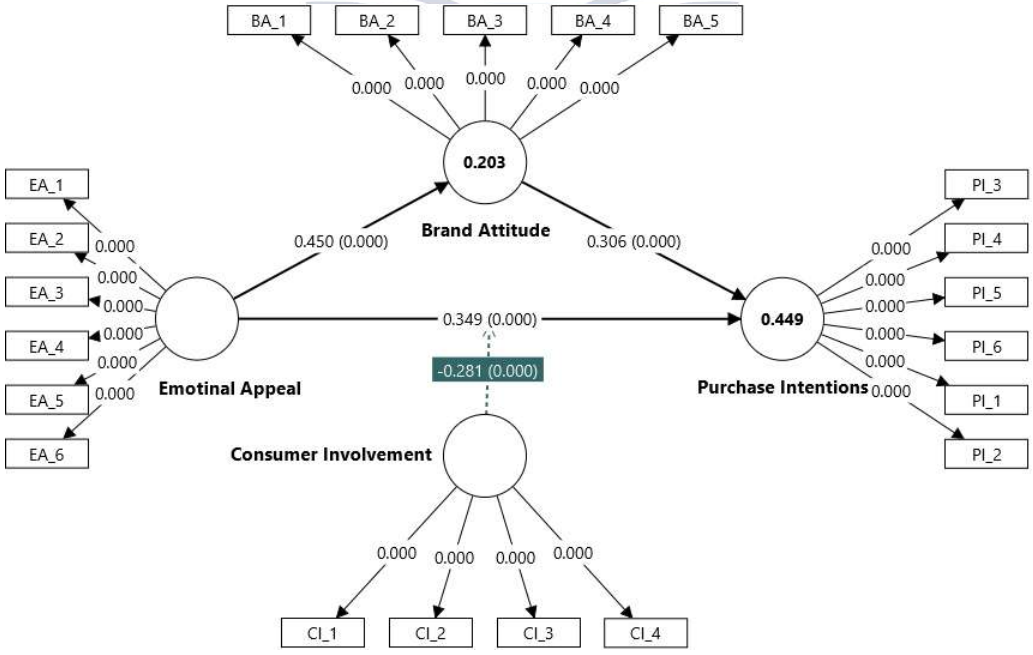

Table 4

Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

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Path	VIF	β	t	p	95% CI	f²	Decision
Direct effects							
H1: EA → BA	1.000	0.450	9.715	< 0.001	[0.350, 0.536]	0.254	Supported
H2: EA → PI	1.258	0.349	8.530	< 0.001	[0.264, 0.425]	0.175	Supported
H3: BA → PI	1.268	0.306	6.324	< 0.001	[0.210, 0.397]	0.134	Supported
CI → PI	1.019	−0.207	4.585	< 0.001	[−0.295, −0.118]	0.076	Significant
Indirect effect							
H4: EA → BA → PI	---	0.138	5.371	< 0.001	[0.091, 0.192]	---	Supported
Total effect EA → PI	---	0.487	13.500	< 0.001	[0.410, 0.552]	---	---
Moderating effect							
H5: CI × EA → PI	1.018	−0.281	7.491	< 0.001	[−0.354, −0.208]	0.146	Supported
Explained variance	**R²**	**Adj. R²**					
Brand Attitude	0.203	0.200					
Purchase Intention	0.449	0.442					

Note. n = 320. EA = emotional appeal; BA = brand attitude; CI = consumer involvement; PI = purchase intention. Confidence intervals are bias-corrected and accelerated, based on 5,000 bootstrap subsamples, two-tailed. f² values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 denote small, medium, and large effects respectively.

Emotional appeal had a positive effect and showed a medium-to-large size effect on brand attitude (β = 0.450, t = 9.715, p < 0.001), providing support for H1. Emotional appeal also had a direct and positive effect on purchase intention (β = 0.349, t = 8.530, p < 0.001), which is consistent with the support of H2. Therefore, the relationship between brand attitude and purchase intention is hypothesized to be positive, which was supported by the correlation between them (β = 0.306, t = 6.324, p < 0.001), thus supporting H3. The specific indirect effect of emotional appeal on purchase intention through brand attitude was positive and significant (β = 0.138; t = 5.371; p < 0.001) with a bootstrapped confidence interval that did not include zero, thus supporting H4. As the direct path from emotional appeal to purchase intention was still significant in the presence of the mediator, the result is complementary partial mediation which can be aligned to the findings reported by Junejo et al. (2022) in the context of Pakistan. Emotional appeal's overall impact on purchase intention was 0.487.

The effect of the interaction between consumer involvement and emotional appeal was significant and negative (β = −0.281, t = 7.491, p< 0.001), which confirms H5. Due to the fact that interaction effects in field survey data tend to be small, the effect size of the interaction (f² = 0.146) is close to the conventional definition of a medium effect size. Consumer involvement also had a significant direct negative effect on purchase intention (β = −0.207, t = 4.585, p < 0.001). The model accounted for 40.3% of the variance in brand attitude and 44.9% of the variance in purchase intention.

4.4 Moderation and Simple Slope Analysis

Due to the negative interaction term, simple slope analysis was performed to determine the moderation. The conditional effect of emotional appeal on purchase intention at three levels of consumer involvement are summarized in Table 5, with the slopes of these relationships shown graphically in Figure 3.

Table 5

Conditional Effects of Emotional Appeal on Purchase Intention at Levels of Consumer Involvement

Level of consumer involvement	β	t	p	95% CI
One SD below the mean (low involvement)	0.630	10.989	< 0.001	[0.517, 0.740]
At the mean	0.349	8.530	< 0.001	[0.264, 0.425]
One SD above the mean (high involvement)	0.068	1.261	0.207	[−0.030, 0.178]

Note. n = 320. Confidence intervals based on 5,000 bootstrap subsamples, two-tailed. The conditional effect at one standard deviation above the mean is not statistically significant.

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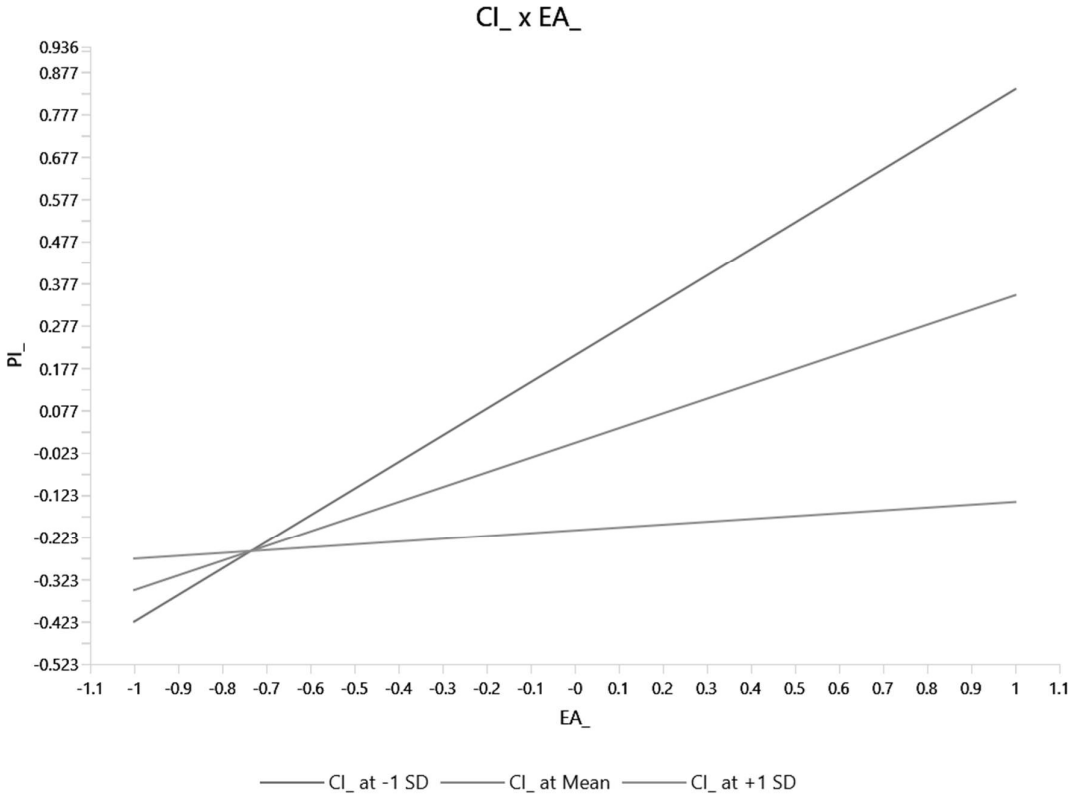
Figure 3

Simple Slope Plot of the Moderating Effect of Consumer Involvement



Note. EA = emotional appeal; BA = brand attitude; CI = consumer involvement; PI = purchase intention.

The trend is clear. The emotional appeal (β = 0.630, t = 10.989, p < 0.001) had a strong effect on the purchase intention of consumers one standard deviation below the mean. Moderate (β = 0.349) at mean involvement. In those with values one standard deviation above the mean, the effect was small and not significantly different from zero (β = 0.068, t = 1.261, p = 0.207) and the confidence interval included the range of zero. So at high levels, consumer involvement not only reduces the persuasive power of emotional appeal, it eliminates it completely.

4.5 Model Fit and Predictive Capacity

In line with the two-stage evaluation procedure, all approximate fit indices reported by SmartPLS were analyzed in order to investigate the overall fit and quality of the model. Table 6 summarizes these values. The saturated model had a standardised root mean square residual of 0.048, and the estimated model obtained a value of 0.049, which are both well below the threshold of 0.08 generally considered acceptable (Henseler et al., 2015). This resulted in a normed fit index of 0.917 for the estimated model and a low discrepancy measure (d_ULS and d_G), suggesting a good reproduction of the observed covariance structure by the hypothesised model. Fit indices are interpreted with more caution in the context of partial least squares modelling than in the context of covariance-based structural equation modelling (SEM; Hair et al., 2019), but the convergence of these indicators shows that the estimated model is adequate. The path estimates are significant, collinearity is not a problem, and the model fits well with the acceptable fit, the coefficient of determination shows that 44.9 percent of the variance in purchase intention is explained by the model's antecedents.

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Table 6
Model Fit Summary

Fit criterion	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.048	0.049
d_ULS	0.534	0.549
d_G	0.170	0.165
Chi-square	317.433	306.819
NFI	0.915	0.917

Note. SRMR = standardised root mean square residual; NFI = normed fit index. SRMR values below 0.08 indicate acceptable approximate fit.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which emotional appeals in advertisements were translated into purchase intention, whether brand attitude would mediate this effect, and whether consumer involvement would moderate this effect. The pattern of results is consistent with the five hypotheses, and with the theory.

The results of the current study also further support the affective transfer logic and the empirical study of Le et al. (2024) that emotional components in ads are strong predictors of attitudinal response, since emotional appeal was found to positively influence brand attitude. Support for H2 and H3 indicates that emotional appeal has two pathways of influence to purchase intention: one affective and one attitudinal. These two factors suggest that the direct effect is partially mediated, but not completely. This mirrors the findings of Junejo et al. (2022) for the Pakistani fast-food environment, where partial mediation, not full, was reported; and it is theoretically plausible: The Elaboration Likelihood Model suggests that peripheral cues could have an impact on the readiness to act without the need to form a considered attitude evaluation, and a direct path is what the model predicts.

The most significant discovery has to do with H5. The emotional appeal to purchase intention relationship was negatively and significantly influenced by consumer involvement. As demonstrated in the simple slope analysis, emotional appeal is an influential purchase intention determinant for low-involvement respondents, and a moderately influential purchase intention determinant for respondents who have a mean level of involvement. Emotional appeal is not statistically significantly influential for purchase intention among high-involvement respondents. This is a textbook example of how Petty and Cacioppo (1986) refer to the peripheral route. Low motivated elaborators use affective cues, high motivated elaborators attend to the substantive aspects of the message and ignore affective framing.

This finding resolves the conundrum of directionality that was found in literature chapter. This is consistent with Geng and Chen (2021), who found a negative moderation effect of product involvement on the influence of persuasive cues on purchase intention, and with Ugalde et al. (2024), who reported stronger affect-based influence of brand on purchase intention in low-involvement product categories. This does not agree to the findings of Yang et al. (2022) who found positive moderation. The divergence is theoretically explainable and not contradictory: Yang et al. looked at the match between information expression and product type, one of the quality attributes of a message that is processed centrally; and central-route cues should become more influential as involvement increases. Emotional appeal is a peripheral cue, however, in contrast to the above. These two findings are then consistent with a single account in which the direction of the involvement moderation is a function of the central vs. peripheral processing of the persuasive stimulus. The present study is a substantive contribution in this regard.

It is worth briefly commenting on the significant direct negative impact of consumer involvement on the purchase intention. The higher the involvement, the more time is spent on deliberation, the more ideas are considered regarding possible alternatives, and the riskier is the perceived risk of the purchase is, the more likely it is to delay or prevent a buyer's statement of an intention to purchase. This is in line with the deliberative approach of central-route processing.

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5.2 Theoretical Implications

The study has three theoretical contributions. Firstly, it displays an integrated test of the Hierarchy of Effects Model, the Elaboration Likelihood Model and the Theory of Planned Behaviour in a single structural model, allowing for the three stages -- affective, attitudinal and conative -- to be tested as theorized and showing that it is not strictly serial, as there is also a direct affective route to intention.

Second, it aims to explain and provide a context for a cue-type account, one that has garnered little support in the involvement literature: involvement strengthens the effect of centrally processed message factors and weakens the effect of peripherally processed affective factors. This is a pro-poor reconciliation of results that have been seen as just inconsistent before.

Third, the study extends the E.L.M. to a professional population. Marketing professionals make up a high scrutiny audience who are trained in the recognition of persuasive techniques. This emotional appeal also was found to have a significant impact on the lower-involvement members of this population and became completely insignificant when the involvement level was high, showing that it is not only the professional expertise that is important, but also the relevance of the situation. Affective persuasion is not something that is protected against by expertise, it is something that is only protected against by involvement.

5.3 Practical Implications

The main takeaway for brand managers is that emotional advertising is not a 'one-size-fits-all' tool. Higher rates of return are seen among low involvement audience segments. When the purchase decision is routine, low-risk or habit, it is expected that emotional creative, should move purchase intent by a significant amount and budget spent on it will most likely be productive. When the audience is very engaged, the evidence suggests that a purely emotional approach is not enough to influence decision to purchase, and campaign investment should focus on content that is argument-based, substantiates the product and its performance, compares the merits, and reduces risk.

The second implication relates to the attitude of the brand. Since a large portion of emotional impact on purchase intention can be mediated by the brand attitude, attitudinal metrics should not be considered soft or intermediate metrics. Brand attitude is a working transmission mechanism and is a significant predictor of intention.

The third being segmentation. The direction and intensity of the emotional appeal effect is dependent on the involvement, therefore, involvement should be considered as a segmentation variable in the media planning process, rather than a descriptive 'after-thought'. In practical terms, it entails targeting the creative strategy to different product segments and to different buying situations within each product segment, within the same brand family.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

There are a few restrictions to note. First, the study was of a cross-sectional design and the relationships found were associational and do not imply temporal precedence. Future research might use a time-lagged or experimental design, to further improve the causal inference.

Second, all data were self-reported using one instrument. While Harman's single factor test and the collinearity diagnostics suggested that the common method bias may not be significant, future studies might use behavioural or objective outcomes instead of stated intention measures.

Thirdly, non-probability convenience sampling was employed, which restricted generalisability to the sampled population. Additionally, the sample included marketing professionals, a challenging yet atypical population. Replication with general consumer samples would determine if the involvement mechanism is present with the same magnitude outside a professional audience, and comparisons between populations would provide information.

Fourth, the model accounted for 20.3 percent of the variance in brand attitude, suggesting that emotional appeal is among the multiple factors. Future studies could add further factors including brand recognition, perceived credibility of the ad and the message's authenticity as suggested by Vrtana and Krizanova (2023), and Alshohaib (2024).

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Lastly, out-of-sample prediction using the PLS predict procedure and formal tests of non-linear specification were not analysed here. Future research should include both of these as they are theoretically possible for the relationship between emotional appeal and purchase intention to be diminishing in return at higher levels of emotional appeal.

5.5 Conclusion

This study formulated and validated an integrated model connecting emotional appeal with purchase intention with the mediation of brand attitude and the moderation of the consumer involvement, based on the data collected from marketing professionals (n=320) in Punjab province of Pakistan. The five hypotheses were all confirmed. Emotional appeal influenced brand attitude strongly and purchase intention, and brand attitude itself mediated the relationship, while the involvement of the consumers had a significant negative moderating impact, eliminating the influence of emotional appeal on purchase intention among highly involved customers. The major finding of the study was that the direction of the involvement moderation is dependent upon whether the persuasive stimulus is a central or peripheral cue, thus resolving the seemingly contradictory literature on this topic. The message for practice is that if there is little involvement, emotional advertising pays off, but if there is high involvement, substantive argument must pay off.

Author Contributions

All authors participated in ideation, development, and writing the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data Availability

The datasets generated during and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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Appendix

Table A1

Latent Variable Correlations and Summary Statistics

Construct	1	2	3	4
1. Emotional Appeal	—			
2. Brand Attitude	0.450***	—		
3. Consumer Involvement	−0.057	−0.080	—	
4. Purchase Intention	0.493***	0.497***	−0.221***	—
Mean	4.002	3.994	4.002	3.997
Standard deviation	0.882	0.915	0.915	0.908
Square root of AVE	0.802	0.820	0.829	0.827

Note. n = 320. ***p < 0.001 (two-tailed). Correlations among emotional appeal and consumer involvement (p = 0.303) and between brand attitude and consumer involvement (p = 0.113) were not statistically significant. Means and standard deviations were computed in SPSS from construct composite scores on a seven-point scale. The square root of the average variance extracted exceeds all corresponding inter-construct correlations, satisfying the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Table A2

Outer Model Collinearity Statistics (Variance Inflation Factors)

Item	VIF	Item	VIF	Item	VIF	Item	VIF
EA1	2.189	BA1	2.320	CI1	1.923	PI1	2.343
EA2	1.967	BA2	1.961	CI2	1.956	PI2	2.218
EA3	2.082	BA3	2.560	CI3	1.807	PI3	1.983
EA4	2.025	BA4	1.753	CI4	1.947	PI4	2.370
EA5	1.935	BA5	1.883			PI5	2.238
EA6	1.881					PI6	2.388

Note. All variance inflation factors are below the conservative threshold of 3.0, indicating that collinearity is not a concern.