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Emotional Intelligence as a Personality Trait That Predicts Consumption Behavior: The Role of Consumer Emotional Intelligence in Persuasive Communication

Hongmin Ahn 

Department of Advertising and Public Relations, Dongguk University-Seoul, Seoul 04620, Republic of Korea; hongmin.ahn@dongguk.edu

Abstract: While a significant number of studies have examined the effect of cognitive ability on social behaviors, researchers have devoted insufficient attention to emotional ability as a distinguishing individual characteristic that influences social behaviors. This study aims to address this critical gap by examining the specific role that consumer emotional intelligence (CEI) plays in the susceptibility to persuasive messages. Based on emotional intelligence and regulatory focus theories, an experiment was conducted to test CEI effect and its boundary conditions. The results demonstrate that people with high CEI are more likely to be persuaded by positive emotion-evoking ads than people with low CEI. Furthermore, the study found that this effect is more pronounced for promotion-focused (vs. prevention-focused) ad messages. These findings indicate that emotional intelligence is a meaningful individual trait to consider when predicting how people will respond to persuasive messages.

Keywords: emotional intelligence; regulatory focus; persuasive communication; advertising



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1. Introduction

Until recently, researchers believed emotions interrupted or interfered with decision-making rather than serving as critical informational sources for solving daily problems [1]. Historically rooted in the Stoicism of ancient Greece (approximately 300 B.C.), the view of emotions as too illogical to be a part of rational decisions has long prevailed in Western thought [2]. Recent advances in neurology and psychology, however, have provided substantial evidence that the emotional and cognitive systems in our brains are far more intertwined than originally assumed [3]. Furthermore, many have come to view emotions as important resources for making reasonable decisions—a view that has advanced a movement emphasizing the importance of emotions in our decision-making processes [4].

In line with this new perspective, this study proposes consumer emotional intelligence (CEI) as a useful construct for explaining individual differences in consumption behavior, particularly persuasive communication. CEI posits that individuals possess varying levels of “the ability to skillfully use emotional information to achieve desired consumer outcomes” [5] (p. 154). Developed from the concept of emotional intelligence (EI), CEI is a domain-specific EI that is specifically applicable within a consumption context [5].

While the concept of EI has frequently appeared in literature and has received considerable public attention over the past decades, the majority of EI literature has focused on anecdotal evidence without empirical findings. With few empirical studies in evidence, the question of the predictable ability and sustainable empirical validity of EI in our social behaviors arises [6]. As Joseph and Newman [7] argued, studies on EI have “a surprisingly lengthy and empirically disappointing record.” (p. 54). Therefore, the current study aims to address the critical gap in the literature by providing an empirical account of the role EI plays in persuasive communication.

To this end, this study has three specific aims. The first is to test the link between emotional ability and consumer behavior by exploring how CEI influences the comprehension of emotion-evoking messages in an ad. As one of the first studies to test the role of CEI in an ad, this study will determine the predictability of individual CEI with regard to the effectiveness of persuasive messages.

Second, although previous research has shed light on the effects of CEI, extant findings are somewhat conflicting. For example, one body of research suggests that CEI can lead to consumers controlling and disregarding feelings evoked by marketing stimuli, suggesting those with high CEI can be less susceptible to emotional appeals in ads [8–10]. By contrast, others have found that people with high CEI have the ability to accurately perceive and facilitate identified emotions, making them more open to persuasion from emotional ads (i.e., the spill-over effect of emotions triggered by stimuli) [11–13]. To understand these conflicting views, this study applies regulatory focus theory [14], which argues that the association between individuals' motivational orientations and emotional status has a significant influence on how they process emotional information [15,16]. By theorizing and demonstrating the dynamic effects of CEI and regulatory focus on susceptibility to ad messages, this study enhances our limited knowledge of CEI.

Finally, this study attempts to employ ability-based measures of CEI in experiments. The ability-based measure uses a scoring system that objectively assesses the degree of response correctness based on experts' scores [8]. Most social studies largely rely on self-reported measures when assessing subjects' personality traits, given its cost-effectiveness [5]. However, self-reported measures are likely to yield social desirability bias, providing mixed results with overly positive self-presentation [17,18]. Thus, by employing the more restrictive measures of ability-based scales on CEI, this study attempts to overcome the limitations of self-reported measures and provide a more valid assessment of CEI.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Consumer Emotional Intelligence (CEI)

The belief that cognition is superior to emotion grew popular over centuries and manifested in the inmost social structures of philosophy, politics, religions, and knowledge [2]. However, recent scientific advances provide sufficient empirical evidence that another type of intelligence beyond cognitive capacity influences our ability to solve daily problems and successfully manage conflicts in social settings [19]. Defined as “the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking” [20] (p. 197), this new type of intelligence is referred to as emotional intelligence (EI); it encompasses “the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth” [20] (p. 197). Accordingly, EI includes four main areas: (1) perceiving emotions, (2) facilitating emotions, (3) understanding emotions, and (4) managing emotions [21]. At times, EI can be an even better predictor than the cognitive ability of our decision-making; indeed, some scholars found that the predictive ability of EI in one's healthy food choice is stronger than their knowledge of nutrition [5].

EI appears to be closely associated with several human behaviors. For example, a recent meta-analysis of EI showed it to be an important predictor of academic performance, stating that emotionally intelligent students tend to obtain higher grades and test scores [18]. The role of EI is also prominent in organizational science. Another large-scale meta-analysis on EI demonstrated a positive relationship between EI and work performance, particularly among jobs with a high emotional content [7]. In addition, EI has been shown to enhance life satisfaction, as it has positive effects on subjective well-being and health [10]. Accordingly, EI can be a powerful predictor of a wide range of social behaviors and performances.

Following the recent theoretical development of EI in social psychology, Kidwell, Hardesty, and Chiders [5] developed the concept of Consumer Emotional Intelligence (CEI) as a specific domain of EI. Kidwell and colleagues developed scales to measure CEI (the so-called “CEIS”) and successfully demonstrated their reliability and validity [5,21]. Unlike

general EI, which encompasses how a person perceives and manages overall emotions in any social setting, CEI provides a unique lens for measuring and evaluating consumers' individual differences in understanding, facilitating, and managing their emotions in a wide range of consumption-related activities. Prior studies of CEI have generated empirical evidence supporting this notion. For example, Kidwell et al. [8] demonstrated that consumers with high levels of CEI tend to make good food consumption choices, showing that CEI has stronger effects on quality decisions than cognitive ability. Hasford et al. [11] also demonstrated that EI influences consumers' donation behaviors, demonstrating that consumers with high EI give more weight to their emotions when making charitable efforts. Ahn et al. [22] showed that when encountering transgressions in consumer-brand relationships, consumers with high CEI tend to respond to transgressions more constructively than those with low CEI. These findings support the assumption that emotion is a "mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts" [23] (p. 184), highlighting the key role it plays in retrieving, decoding, and processing information during decision-making processes.

2.2. CEI and the Effectiveness of Persuasion

The theoretical foundations of CEI offer potentially valuable insight into the differences in individual responses to persuasive messages, particularly when messages evoke affective responses. First, CEI requires the ability to perceive emotions; emotionally intelligent consumers have a high level of ability to accurately identify emotions in external stimuli [21]. As Brackett et al. [24] suggested, people with high EI are better able to decode emotional cues in social settings than people with low EI. Mayer et al. also argued that people with high EI are good at identifying emotions in faces and voices [4]. Because emotionally intelligent consumers have the capacity to decode affective signals in external stimuli, they are more likely to identify with positive emotional cues in ads when faced with human models displaying positive feelings (e.g., happily smiling models). This, in turn, evokes positive emotions in them, leading them to evaluate the advertised subjects favorably [25]. This mechanism is known as an "emotion contagion", which occurs because affect influences not only judgmental processing but also responses to the object judged [25,26]. Therefore, the spill-over effect of emotions in ads (i.e., positive emotion depicted by a human model → positive attitudes toward the human model → positive attitudes toward the object advertised by the human model) would be pronounced among high CEI consumers (vs. low CEI consumers) because they are more capable of recognizing, processing, and decoding emotional cues in external stimuli [27].

CEI also includes an ability to facilitate thoughts involving the use of emotions in decision-making processes [5]. For example, Hasford et al. suggested that more emotionally capable people tend to incorporate emotions into reasoned judgments [11]. Emotionally intelligent people are more likely to attend to evoked emotions when making decisions because their ability to better perceive emotions leads them to rely on emotional information [11]. As such, Hasford et al.'s study showed that people with high EI (vs. people with low EI) were more sensitive to emotional information in charitable ads because they better facilitate emotional information as guidance or motivational inputs in charitable decisions [11].

Finally, CEI involves an ability to manage emotions by upregulating positive emotions and downregulating negative ones [2,18]. Notably, the literature on EI suggests the effect of EI becomes prominent when people experience positive emotions [18,27]. Moreover, studies on ads have suggested that when an ad evokes positive emotions, people are likely to use their feelings as inputs in evaluating content favorably [28]. Thus, it is expected that a more robust ability to manage emotions (i.e., high CEI) means people are likely to upregulate positive emotions, which will strengthen positive responses to ads. In sum, given the identification of relationships between CEI and behavioral outcomes in previous studies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. *People with high CEI have (a) more favorable attitudes toward the positive emotion-evoking ad and (b) higher purchase intentions regarding the advertised product than people with low CEI.*

2.3. The Moderating Effect of Regulatory Focus

To further examine the effect of CEI on individual susceptibility to persuasive messages and its boundary conditions, this study incorporates regulatory focus theory [14]. It is essential to provide evidence of boundary conditions when discussing the predictability of CEI in consumer behaviors because prior studies have shown some mixed results concerning the emotional ability to regulate emotions evoked by stimuli [8–11].

According to regulatory focus theory, the goal orientations of ad messages can be divided into two basic motivational orientations: (1) promotion-focused messages that highlight the positive consequences of using an advertised brand, and (2) prevention-focused messages emphasizing the negative outcomes that consumers may encounter if they do not use an advertised brand [29]. Prior research has found that promotion-focused messages lead people to make feelings-based decisions, whereas prevention-focused messages make people prefer judgments based on logical reasoning [15]. For example, Pham and Avnet [16] found that people primed with a promotion-focused stimulus (vs. a prevention-focused) responded more emotionally to a print ad because the ideal promotion focus end states that the ad showed prompted dependence on subjective emotional responses. On the contrary, this study found that prevention focus provoked risk-averse and hypervigilant thinking, triggering reliance on rational and logical reasoning rather than dependence on one's feelings; thus, the study suggested that prevention-focused participants were less likely to show affective responses to the ad [16]. It also showed that promotion-focused people gave emotional inputs greater weight when making judgments than prevention-focused people [16].

Studies have consistently indicated that promotion-focused persuasive claims (vs. prevention-focused claims) trigger more affective responses [15,30,31]. This is because people believe feelings are more relevant information when they are motivated to achieve goals (i.e., promotion focus) [32]. In this vein, prior works on regulatory focus suggested that promotion focus (vs. prevention focus) is more persuasive when the ad uses emotional appeal, particularly positive appeals such as pride [32,33]. For example, Coleman et al. demonstrated that promotion-oriented consumers made higher monetary donations for charitable ads than prevention-oriented consumers when they were exposed to a positive emotional appeal [33].

Taken together, this study argues that because promotion-focused encourage more affective responses from consumers, the effect of CEI on individual susceptibility to positive emotion-evoking ads will be stronger for promotion-focused messages than prevention-focused messages. If promotion-focused messages elicit positive emotions, then CEI facilitation will be more pronounced, given that the effect of CEI is powerful in positive emotion-evoking situations [18]. Accordingly, it is expected that the CEI effect identified in Hypothesis 1 will be stronger for promotion-focused ad messages. Given this theoretical underpinning, the following hypothesis is presented:

H2. *The effect of CEI on susceptibility to positive emotion-evoking ads is stronger for the promotion-focused ad message than for the prevention-focused ad message.*

3. Method

To test the hypotheses, this study employed a 2 (CEI: low vs. high) by 2 (regulatory-focused ad messages: promotion vs. prevention) between-subjects factorial design. The levels of CEI were measured using the Consumer Emotional Intelligence Scale (CEIS) [5], and ad messages were manipulated using the stimuli described below.

3.1. Stimuli Development and Pre-Test

To develop experimental stimuli, a professional advertising artist initially created several visual illustrations evoking the positive affective consequences of eating a particular

cereal. Following pretesting of these illustrations ($n = 40$), 1 was chosen for the main study (i.e., a woman smiling while eating cereal) because it proved effective in eliciting a considerable level of positive emotional responses from respondents. Verbal messages were then created and added to the visual illustration to manipulate regulatory focus. The promotion-focused messages highlighted the positive consequences of eating a particular cereal (i.e., It enhances your heart health and tastes good. Why not eat it?), while the prevention-focused messages emphasized the preventive benefits of eating a cereal (i.e., It prevents heart disease and tastes good. Why not eat it?). Hence, the 2 ad stimuli displayed the same illustration with the same fictitious brand name and logo at the bottom; the only things distinguishing them were the regulatory-focused messages (prevention- vs. promotion-focused).

3.2. Measures

3.2.1. Independent Variable

CEI was measured using the CEIS developed by Kidwell et al. [5]. Designed to capture all four dimensions of CEI, this scale contains 5 perception items, 4 facilitating items, 5 understanding items, and four managing items. Unlike self-report measures, the CEIS is a scoring scale that captures the degree of correct responses. That is, like an IQ-type test, it gives participants scores based on the correctness of each answer. The correct answer for each question was confirmed by experts' scores [5]. This scoring method eliminates the shortcomings of self-report measures, which trigger socially desirable responses [4]. Several studies have shown that self-report scales assess emotional abilities inappropriately [17,18,24]. This study, therefore, used an ability-based measure followed by an expert scoring procedure to assess individual CEI scores.

3.2.2. Dependent Variables and Covariates

This study used eight 7-point bipolar adjective items adopted from Muehling et al. [34] to measure attitudes toward the ad ($\alpha = 0.91$). To measure purchase intentions, the study used three 7-point semantic differential items adopted from Burnkrant and Unnava [35] ($\alpha = 0.88$). To control the effects of potential extraneous variables, this study measured two more variables. First, product involvement was considered a covariate in the study because higher levels of product involvement are often associated with ad persuasiveness [36]. The product involvement scales were adopted from Laurent and Kapferer [36], with three items on a 7-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" ($\alpha = 0.84$). For the second covariate, participant concerns about developing heart disease were measured using three items on a 7-point Likert scale ($\alpha = 0.77$) because the study's stimuli specifically highlighted the issue of heart health. All items of dependent variables and covariates measured in the study are presented in Appendix A.

3.3. Participants and Data Collection

Participants were recruited from undergraduate classes in a large American university. Prior to the main experiment, participants were requested to answer CEIS questions. Following Kidwell et al. [5]'s study, this study normalized CEIS scores among participants by converting them into z-scores and dividing them into 2 groups (low vs. high) using the median-split method. A week later, the main experiment was conducted with those who were divided into two CEIS groups. Respondents in both high and low CEI groups were then randomly assigned to 2 different conditions of regulatory focus ads. A final sample of 156 respondents who answered both CEIS check questionnaires and the experiment questions was used for data analysis after eliminating respondents who participated in the pre-test of ad stimuli. The data collection period for the study was from January 2017 to February 2017. The sample consisted of 46.2% males ($n = 72$) and 53.8% females ($n = 84$). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 29 years, with a mean age of 20.22 ($SD = 1.93$). The racial/ethnic composition of the sample was 77.6% White, 14.7% African American, 1.3% Asian American, and 1.3% Hispanic.

4. Results

4.1. Manipulation Check

Manipulation check questions were adopted from a study by Lee and Aaker [37]. Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which the ad messages dealt with the promotional and preventive benefits of consuming the product advertised. The multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) results indicated that the stimuli had the intended impact. Promotion across conditions had a significant main effect ($F(1, 154) = 7.51, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.05$). Participants in the promotion condition more closely identified promotion-related messages than those in the prevention condition ($M = 4.40$ vs. $M = 3.68$). Likewise, prevention across conditions had a significant main effect ($F(1, 154) = 4.12, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.03$). Participants in the prevention condition more closely identified prevention-related messages than those in the promotion condition ($M = 4.80$ vs. $M = 4.36$).

4.2. Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypotheses, this study conducted a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) on the dependent variables. H1 predicted CEI would have a significant impact on (1) attitudes toward the ad and (2) purchase intentions regarding the advertised product. Consistent with this expectation, CEI had a significant main effect ($F(1, 150) = 6.57, p < 0.05, \eta_p^2 = 0.04$). Specifically, consumers with high levels of CEI displayed more positive attitudes toward the ad than low-CEI consumers ($M = 4.75$ vs. $M = 4.27$). A MANCOVA revealed that product involvement and concerns about developing heart disease as covariates had no significant impacts ($F_s < 1$).

CEI also had a significant main effect on purchase intentions ($F(1, 150) = 5.72, p < 0.05, \eta_p^2 = 0.04$). Participants with high CEI showed higher purchase intentions ($M = 4.12$) than those with low CEI ($M = 3.54$). The analysis revealed that product involvement as a covariate had no effect ($F < 1$), while concerns about developing heart disease had a significant effect ($F(1, 150) = 6.23, p < 0.05, \eta_p^2 = 0.04$). These results confirmed Hypothesis 1. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for attitudes toward the ad and purchase intentions by CEI and regulatory focus.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Attitudes Toward the Ad and Purchase Intentions by CEI and Regulatory Focus.

CEI	Regulatory Focus	Attitudes toward the Ad	Purchase Intentions	n
		Mean (s.d.)	Mean (s.d.)	
High	Promotion	5.10 (1.00)	4.68 (1.09)	38
	Prevention	4.40 (0.98)	3.56 (1.51)	38
	Total	4.75 (1.05)	4.12 (1.42)	76
Low	Promotion	3.93 (1.61)	3.37 (1.69)	39
	Prevention	4.59 (0.98)	3.71 (1.44)	41
	Total	4.27 (1.36)	3.54 (1.57)	80
Total	Promotion	4.51 (1.46)	4.01 (1.56)	77
	Prevention	4.50 (0.98)	3.64 (1.47)	79
	Total	4.50 (1.24)	3.82 (1.52)	156

H2 predicted that regulatory focus would have a moderating effect on the effects of CEI. Consistent with this prediction, the MANCOVA analysis revealed that CEI and regulatory focus had a significant interaction effect on attitudes toward the ad ($F(1, 150) = 12.06, p < 0.001, \eta_p^2 = 0.07$). Contrast tests showed that participants with high CEI had significantly more positive attitudes toward the ad when they were exposed to promotion- (vs. prevention-) focused messages ($M = 5.10$ vs. $M = 4.40, t = 3.08, p < 0.01, d = 0.60$) (see Figure 1a). Likewise, the analysis showed that CEI and regulatory focus had a significant interaction effect on purchase intentions ($F(1, 150) = 8.32, p < 0.01, \eta_p^2 = 0.05$). As shown in

Figure 1b, CEI had a stronger effect for promotion-focused messages than for prevention-focused messages. Subsequent contrast tests showed that participants with high CEI had significantly more positive purchase intentions when they were exposed to promotion- (vs. prevention-) focused messages ($M = 4.68$ vs. $M = 3.56$, $t = 3.35$, $p < 0.01$, $d = 0.77$). These findings fully confirm Hypothesis 2.

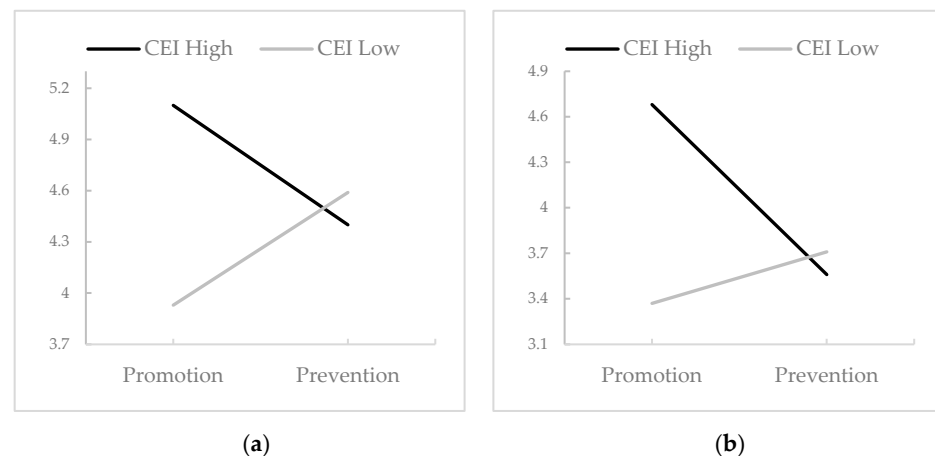


Figure 1. Interaction Effects by CEI and Regulatory Focus: (a) Attitudes toward the ad by CEI and Regulatory Focus; (b) Purchase Intentions by CEI and Regulatory Focus.

5. Discussion

Although emotional ability has received considerable media and public attention over the past decades, our knowledge of EI is still limited—presumably because it is a relatively new construct and an unknown area compared with other personality traits [18]. In this vein, this research makes several new theoretical contributions to the field. First, it demonstrates that individuals' emotional intelligence influences how they understand and evaluate persuasive messages, highlighting CEI as an individual trait that warrants consideration when predicting consumer responses to persuasive messages like those used in ads. While researchers have demonstrated the significance of EI in various applied psychological settings, including in the educational, occupational, and clinical domains, few studies have examined how the concept applies to consumer behaviors. However, emotions impact numerous important decisions that profoundly influence our actions as consumers. Thus, one of the major contributions of this study is that it provides empirical evidence that our emotional ability has a significant impact on how we use information in consumer contexts, showing the theoretical applicability of EI in consumption-related outcomes.

In addition, the result of the study suggests that consumers' adaptive emotional functioning relates to their experience of positive emotions, which in turn enables consumers to generate positive reactions. It is assumed that emotionally intelligent consumers can be aware of positive emotions in external stimuli and, therefore, capable of facilitating them in a way that can also promote positive emotions. This finding suggests that EI influences the affect transfer that occurs via ads (i.e., the spill-over effect of positive emotion on the persuasiveness of ads), supporting the emotional contagion literature.

The study also makes a theoretical contribution to regulatory focus literature, demonstrating associations between different self-regulatory approaches (i.e., promotion vs. prevention focus) and the degree to which messages trigger emotional vs. analytic responses. Its findings show that although people have a general awareness of the emotions evoked by persuasive messages, their abilities to respond empathetically vary, particularly based on the goal orientations of ad messages. The study shows that CEI impact becomes more salient when messages are promotion-focused (vs. prevention-focused). By demonstrating the dynamic effects of CEI and regulatory focus on susceptibility to advertising messages, it shows that regulatory focus is a meaningful boundary condition moderating the effects of CEI.

The fact that this study employed ability-based EI measures (vs. self-reported measures) represents another contribution that could help advance the methodological foundations of EI literature. Prior works on individual differences have relied predominantly on self-reported measures to capture participants' predispositional traits. However, this approach has often produced mixed results and has shown low validity in the measurement of individual traits because social desirability bias influences self-reported measures [38]. The ability-based measures used in this study thus produce a more pertinent and precise assessment of EI.

The dependent measures used in the study also support the argument made in an increasing number of studies about the balance between emotion and cognition. This study shows that consumers' cognitive responses to ads (e.g., cognitive assessments of ads through question-asking attitudes regarding ads and purchase intentions) were important dependent variables in showing the effects of CEI on ad effectiveness. This implies that EI encompasses not only precise perceptions of feelings but also accurate cognitive evaluations of stimuli [4].

Although this research mainly focused on ad persuasiveness, insights from the research could also be applied to the broader fields of consumer behaviors, such as sustainable consumption behaviors, including green product consumption or energy saving. The stream of research on EI suggests that EI enhances prosocial behaviors because prosociality is mainly driven by sympathy for others [39]. Thus, it would be worth studying whether sustainable behaviors, including consuming environment-friendly products or donating money to mitigate the environmental crisis, can be predicted by individual EI.

The results of this study also have managerial implications. It was found that promotion-focused ad messages more effectively appeal to high CEI consumers. This implies that marketers or advertising practitioners should emphasize desirable end states in marketing stimuli such as ideals, hopes, and aspirations to trigger positive affective responses, particularly among consumers with high CEI. In practice, measuring the EI of consumers would be difficult because collecting and analyzing large amounts of consumer data can be time-consuming. Companies could resolve this issue by assessing it with the relatively simplified domain-specific measure of the CEIS. Given that ability-based EI measures are already successfully adopted in many disciplines, including education fields (e.g., medical schools) [18] and workplaces [38], it would be worth adopting CEIS in broader marketing fields.

Alternately, companies could also plan and execute educational programs among loyal consumers in a manner that increases their CEI. Unlike with IQ, people can be trained to increase their EQ over time [40]. This indicates that companies could help consumers develop their emotional intelligence via emotion-evoking ad campaigns. For example, cause-related marketing materials (e.g., fund-raising brochures) with sufficient emotional cues and information or public health ads with desirable end-state pictures would be helpful in developing emotional abilities among consumers.

Given that there is increasing evidence that EI can be trained [9], training salespersons' or service providers' emotional abilities would be another alternative way to increase CEI among consumers. Positive emotions can be transferred from service providers to consumers, resulting in synergy effects between both parties [13,41]. Thus, developing sales professionals' EI would be a viable alternative option to boost consumers' ability to use positive emotions in consumption contexts.

6. Limitations and Future Study Direction

Despite the importance of this research topic for those interested in CEI, this study's limitations warrant consideration when interpreting and applying its results. First, future studies need to consider a cultural-driven factor associated with CEI to expand the results of this study [42]. Recently, Gökçen et al. [43] found that British participants scored higher on overall EI than Hong Kong participants, showing potential cross-cultural variation in EI

trait scores. Thus, additional studies of the effects of cultural norms on EI would be worth studying to consider any variance driven by cultural backgrounds.

Second, although the sample used in the study was relatively diverse in terms of gender and ethnicity, it was collected from a student population. Future studies should use a cross-sectional sampling method to compose a more diverse sample to increase external and construct validity in consumer research. Mayer et al. [4] argued that EI is an age-related construct; the EI of working adults is generally higher than that of adolescents. Thus, future cross-sectional studies with different age groups would be interesting to examine whether CEI differs by age and how potential differences impact individual evaluations of emotion-evoking content.

Third, the fact that this study tested one product type (i.e., cereal) is also a limitation. Studies on CEI have focused on the consumption of food because consuming food is strongly associated with recognizing, processing, and managing emotions [9]. However, CEI can be utilized when purchasing and consuming a wide range of product categories. Interestingly, a recent study suggested that CEI influenced impulsive buying [44]. Thus, testing other product categories that promote emotional and impulsive buying, such as beauty products, jewelry, clothing, and apparel, sheds additional light on the emotional abilities of consumers and how these abilities affect message persuasiveness.

Finally, while EI is an enduring personality trait that is less likely to be affected by temporal contexts, it would be worth studying whether one's EI persists regardless of situational factors. A recent study showed that the relationship between EI and academic performance was not affected by the COVID-19 pandemic [45]. The results support the notion that EI is an enduring trait that is not situationally evoked or altered. Future studies testing if the EI effect changes after other intense, stressful events could extend our knowledge of EI.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. Variables Used in The Study.

Variables	Items Measured
Attitudes toward the Ad	Overall, how do you feel about the advertisement?
	Unfavorable/favorable
	Negative/positive
	Bad/good
	Not persuasive/persuasive
	Not believable/believable
	Not effective/effective
Purchase Intentions	Not helpful/helpful
	Not impactful/impactful
	How likely would you purchase the product?
	Unlikely/likely
	Improbable/probable
	Impossible/possible

Table A1. Cont.

Variables	Items Measured
Product Involvement	Choosing a cereal brand is an important decision for me. I choose a cereal brand very carefully. The cereal brand I buy matters to me a lot.
Concerns about Developing Heart Disease	To what extent do you believe that you are at risk for heart disease? Not at all likely/very likely What is the likelihood that you might someday get heart disease? Not at all likely/very likely How concerned are you about getting heart disease? Not at all concerned/very concerned

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