

**IS FEELING BELIEVING? A STUDY ON EMOTIONAL APPEALS,  
PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE, AND INDIVIDUAL PERCEPTIONS OF CLIMATE**

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## **Introdução**

Despite the scientific consensus on climate change, public engagement remains limited. This gap between knowledge and action highlights the importance of emotional and perceptual factors, such as affective responses and psychological distance. Studies indicate that these elements directly influence how the problem is perceived and addressed. Understanding these relationships is essential for improving communication and mobilization strategies in response to the climate crisis.

## **Problema de Pesquisa e Objetivo**

The literature still lacks more detailed explanations about the affective processes operating between risk perception and belief in climate change (Wang et al., 2018; Fernández et al., 2025; Smith & Leiserowitz, 2014). Thus, the aim of this study is to identify the influence of positive and negative emotional appeals on individual perceptions of climate change and perceived risk level, also considering the moderating effect of psychological distance represented by different communication scenarios.

## **Fundamentação Teórica**

The theoretical framework is structured in two sections. The first discusses the effects of emotional appeals on individual climate and risk perception, based on the Feelings-as-Information Theory (FIT) (Schwarz et al., 1991). The second addresses psychological distance, with an emphasis on the spatial dimension, grounded in Construal Level Theory (CLT), highlighting its moderating role in the relationship between emotional appeals and perceptions of climate change (Chu & Yang, 2019; Liberman & Trope, 2008).

## **Metodologia**

The methodology involved five controlled experiments using real advertising materials as stimuli. The sample consisted of 70 respondents in Studies 1 and 2, and 578 valid responses in Studies 3, 4, and 5. Data analysis was conducted using paired t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and two-way ANOVA with independent samples.

## **Análise dos Resultados**

Study 1 confirmed the effectiveness of the experimental manipulation. Study 2 revealed significant differences between contexts of psychological proximity and distance. In Study 3, negative emotional appeals significantly increased climate risk perception and individual climate perception. In Study 4, psychological distance significantly moderated the impact of emotional appeals on individual climate perception and climate risk perception. Finally, Study 5 reinforces that psychological proximity amplifies emotional effects, especially negative ones.

## **Conclusão**

This study aimed to identify the influence of positive and negative emotional appeals on individual perceptions of climate change and perceived risk levels, also considering the moderating effect of psychological distance represented by different communication scenarios. The findings showed that the impact of emotional appeals is not uniform but is conditioned by the perceived proximity or abstraction of the climate issue.

## **Contribuição / Impacto**

It is concluded that the effectiveness of emotional appeals varies according to psychological proximity. By integrating emotion and psychological distance, the study reveals that proximal threats intensify climate perception, indicating that negative appeals are more effective when localized, overcoming the historical dissociation between cognition and affect.

## **Referências Bibliográficas**

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