

LET'S TALK ABOUT FEELINGS

Multimodal Strategies to Mitigate Eco-Anxiety and Empower the Next Generation

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BACKGROUND

- Eco-anxiety is used as an umbrella term for emotions related to environmental uncertainty or worry that inhibits personal action (Pihkala 2020)
- Youth are more at risk for eco-anxiety and other related mental health consequences
- Narratives in MEDIA and EDUCATION are too detached and fear based, fueling climate doomism (overwhelming apathy due to perceived futility of action)
- Communicators must learn to navigate multimodal platforms like Instagram and TikTok to better connect with youth audiences

OBJECTIVE

Assess communication and marketing strategies that nurture youth optimism, agency, and engagement



RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the **opportunities** and **obstacles** of using multimodal communication to foster optimism and combat eco-anxiety in the next generation?

METHODOLOGY

Internship

- Sustainability Ambassadors: a local non-profit whose mission is to *Rapidly Advance A Sustainable Future* through student, teacher, and community programs (See Figure 1)
- Impact Storytelling: I designed diverse content for grant-funded Water Systems campaigns (static posts, creative videos, poetry, and playlists) (See Figure 2)
- Goal: Develop a marketing strategy to bolster SA's online engagement

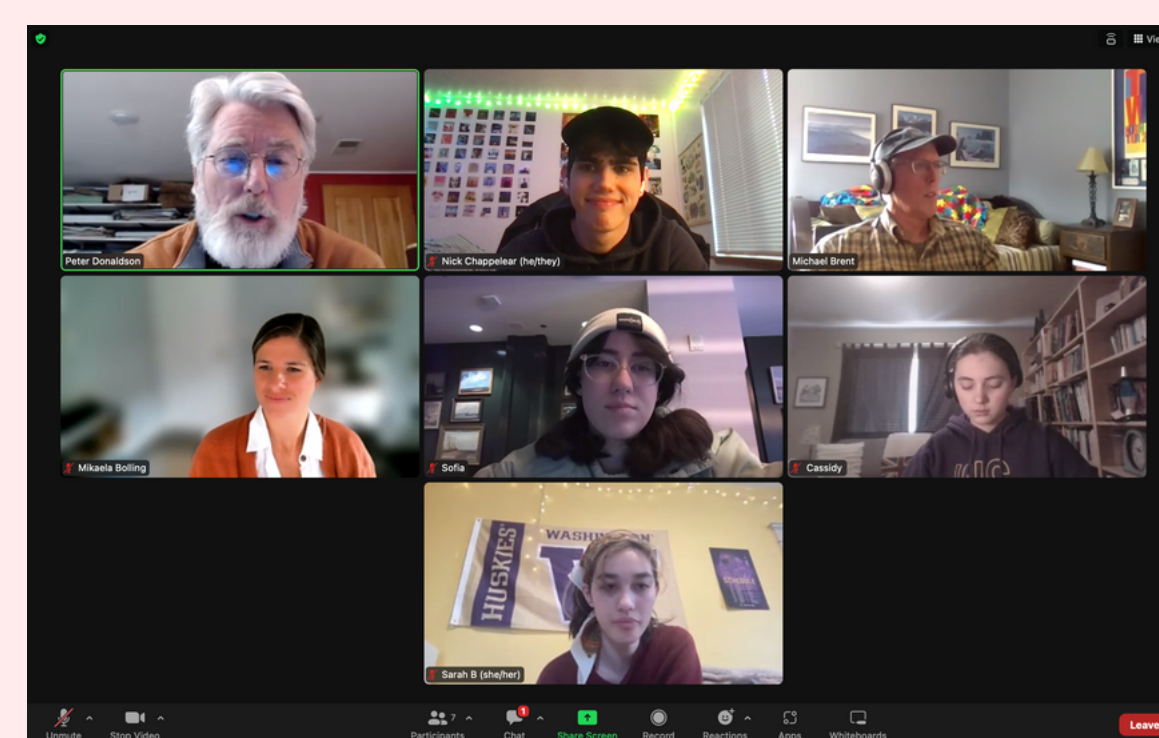
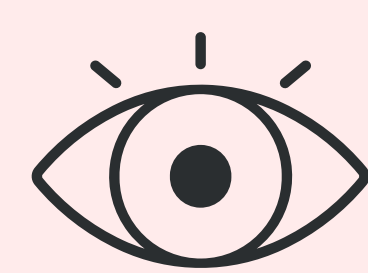


Figure 1: Zoom meeting with my site supervisor (Peter Donaldson), Cascade Water Alliances (Michael Brent), Brilliant Marketing cofounder (Mikaela Bolling), and fellow interns at Sustainability Ambassadors. Screenshot taken Feb 23, 2023 at 10:06am.

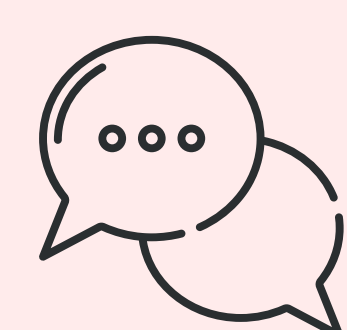


Figure 2: Four playlists I created for SA's "My Water Tower" campaign. Posted as Instagram carousels with corresponding Spotify playlists.

I collected evidence in the form of:



Anecdotal Observations



Interviews



Literature Review

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

RESULTS

Opportunities

- Conscious Marketing: (see Figure 3.) Avoids fear-based tactics and takes a value-centered approach
- Authentic Attraction: Audiences are more attracted to non-profits that have distinct values similar to their own
- Lead with Laughter: Humor can combat climate doomism by motivating youth to imagine better futures
- Multimodal Magic:
 - a. Videos that offer an immersive escape or quick laugh are most attractive to younger audiences
 - b. Using relevant hashtags, on-screen text, trending sounds, and music can improve engagement

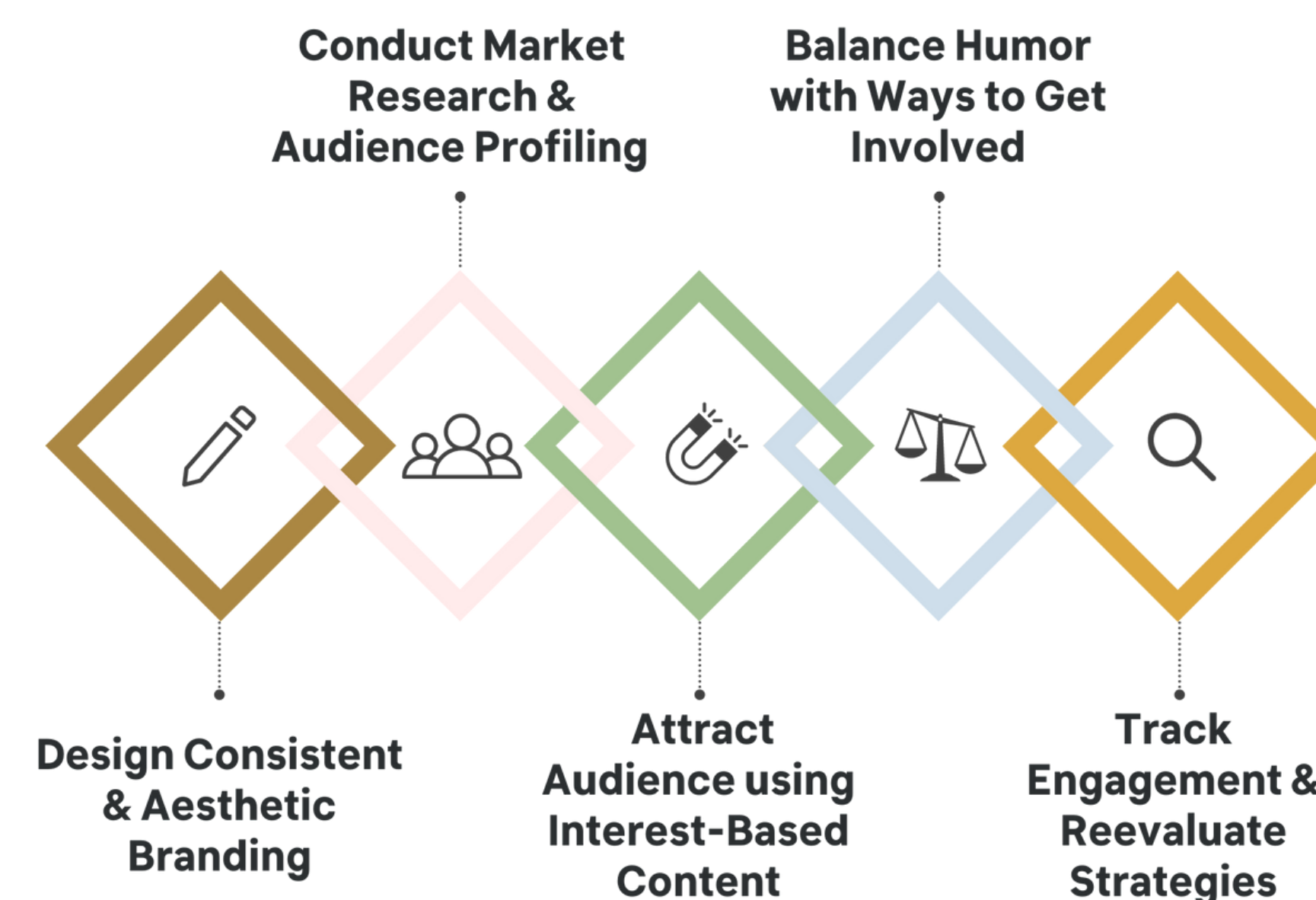


Figure 3: Five strategies for bettering nonprofit social media engagement based in conscious marketing techniques (Brilliant Marketing).

Obstacles

- Digital Disconnect: youth go online to "tune out" and escape stress rather than engage with environmental content
- Doom Scrolling: social media can be a source of anxiety as well due to misinformation and depressing news

SIGNIFICANCE

Harness the dialectic opportunity of eco-anxiety (see Figure 4):

Online

- Nonprofits can create an engaging space to interact with the "wins" of environmentalism

Education

- Offer curriculum that empowers youth to explore these complex issues in a collaborative environment

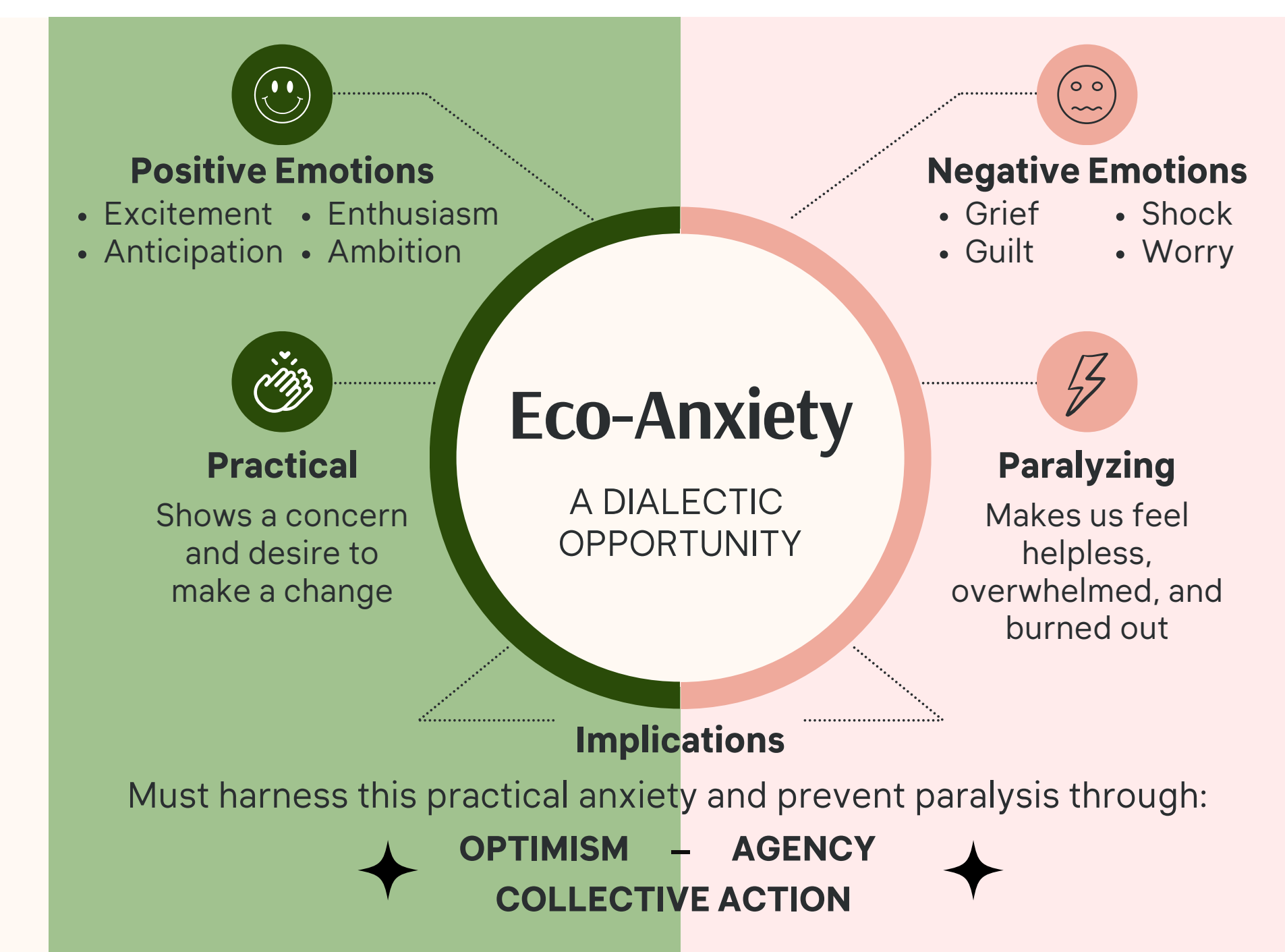


Figure 4: Eco-anxiety is a complex and dynamic experience that involves cycles of both positive and negative emotions. Adapted from Pihkala (2020).

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