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WORKING PAPER

Emotional advertising: Revisiting the Role of Product Category¹

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Emotional advertising: Revisiting the Role of Product Category

Abstract

In contrast to the Affect Infusion Model, popular advertising planning grids suggest that emotional advertising is effective for low involvement and hedonic products, but not for high involvement or utilitarian products. In two experiments, 400 and 392 consumers respectively evaluate a non-emotional and a product-congruent or product-incongruent emotional appeal promoting four different product types. In a third study, 909 respondents evaluate 323 existing TV commercials. The findings confirm expectations based on the Affect Infusion model and indicate that for none of the product types negative effects of emotional advertisements appear. However, emotional ads do work better for some than other product types. In addition to clearing out the moderating role of product type, this paper contributes to the literature by showing that previous poorer results of emotional ads for some products may be partly due to less positive attitudes towards the products themselves instead of to the inappropriateness of the appeal.

Keywords: ad effectiveness, emotional advertising, involvement, hedonic-utilitarian

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Introduction

Since the eighties, the use of emotional advertising has substantially increased, accompanied by an increased research interest in the role emotions play in attitude formation (e.g., Allen, Machleit, Kleine and Notani, 2005; Grimm, 2005; Laros and Steenkamp, 2005; Malhotra, 2005; Poncin, Pieters and Ambaye, 2006; Yoo and MacInnis, 2005). In contrast to current theories on ad processing, academics and advertising practitioners often assume that the effectiveness of emotional advertising appeals depends on the product category they promote. Several researchers believe, for example, that emotional ads evoke more positive responses for hedonic versus utilitarian products and for low versus high involvement products (e.g., Adaval, 2001; Batra and Stephens, 1994; Johar and Sirgy, 1991; Rossiter, Percy and Donovan, 1991).

Despite the fact that both academics and advertising professionals acknowledge that product category is an important variable for the choice of advertising strategy, most prior research largely ignores the moderating influence of product type or takes this influence into account only partially. The objective of this study is to contribute to the literature by examining (1) whether and (2) how product category moderates the processing of emotional and non-emotional advertising. To this end, three studies investigate the moderating effect of high and low involvement products on the one hand, and utilitarian and hedonic products on the other, on the responses to emotional and non-emotional advertising appeals.

Theoretical framework

The Role of Emotions in Ad Processing

In contrast with traditional cognitive theories which consider affect as either irrelevant or

as a source of disruption of normal thinking, current models increasingly recognize that cold thinking is the exception rather than the rule and, consequently, devote an important role to the interplay between affect and cognition (Forgas, 2008). An important integrative model in this respect is the Affect Infusion Model (Forgas, 1995). The Affect Infusion Model distinguishes two judgmental strategies in which affect can play an important role: (1) heuristic processing, and (2) substantive processing. Heuristic processing is most likely to occur when consumers are low involved and when little time or information is available. During heuristic processing affect can directly influence judgments as consumers use their feelings as information and as a shortcut to infer their evaluations to the target. Substantive processing in general takes place when consumers are highly involved and exert high effort to process the message. Also during substantive processing affect can exert an important influence, but here affect influences judgment indirectly by means of affect priming. The affect priming principle predicts that affect will influence judgments in an indirect way by selectively influencing attention, encoding, retrieval and interpretation processes (Forgas, 1995). By now, many researchers have found support for the assumption that emotions can play different roles (for a review, see Forgas, 2008).

Product Type: Moderator of emotional ad effectiveness?

Academics and advertising professionals can classify products on the basis of many characteristics. Several researchers distinguish between utilitarian and hedonic products/motivations (e.g., Bridges and Florsheim, 2008; Hirshman and Holbrook, 1982; Jones, Reynolds and Arnold, 2006; Overby and Lee, 2006). In combination with this dimension, also an involvement dimension is often used (cfr. the Rossiter-Percy Grid (Rossiter, Percy and Donovan,

1991), the FCB-grid (Vaughn, 1986), and the Affect-Reason-Involvement model (Buck, Anderson, Chaudhuri and Ray, 2005)). In view of the popularity of the latter grids, the discussion and studies in this paper focus on low versus high involvement products, and hedonic versus utilitarian products.

In contrast to the Affect Infusion Model, several academics and practitioners assume a moderating impact of product type on the responses to emotional and informational advertising appeals. Malhotra (2005), for example, believes that the relative effect of cognition versus affect varies across objects (e.g., perfumes vs. mutual funds). Rossiter et al. (1991) suggest that emotional advertising is important only for low involvement and/or transformational (hedonic) products. Regarding the utilitarian – hedonic product dimension, several researchers tend to agree. Johar and Sirgy (1991), for example, find that value-expressive appeals are most effective for value-expressive products and vice versa for utilitarian appeals. Spotts, Weinberger and Parsons (1997) show that advertisers use a humorous appeal least frequently for functional products and most often for low risk, expressive products. Youn (1998) observes that advertisers usually promote approach products in an emotional, image-oriented way, whereas for utilitarian products they more often use a rational, message-oriented appeal. Youn, Sun, Wells and Zhao (2001) find a positive and significant relationship between ad liking and ad recall for approach products only, and not for avoidance or utilitarian products. Also regarding the impact of involvement on the role of feelings in attitude formation some authors agree (Lautman and Percy, 1984; Batra and Stephens, 1994; Shiv and Fedorikhin, 1999), or partially agree (Miniard, Bhatla and Rose, 1990) with Rossiter et al. (1991).

Hypotheses

On the basis of the Affect Infusion Model, the results and claims concerning involvement as a moderator of the effectiveness of emotional ads are hard to explain. Indeed, under low involvement (heuristic processing), the Affect Infusion Model expects that emotional advertising can exert a positive impact on the basis of the mood-as-information principle, whereas under high involvement (substantive processing) the positive feelings evoked by the ad can influence ad processing positively by means of priming.

The Affect Infusion Model does not account for differences in emotional ad effectiveness for hedonic versus utilitarian products either. However, the findings of Pham (1998) can explain the belief that emotional ads work better for hedonic products. Pham (1998) states that feelings in ad appeals are effective only if these feelings are representative and relevant for the evaluation of the product. Assuming that consumers are more likely to perceive their feelings as relevant when they have hedonic versus utilitarian motives to buy the product, one can expect that emotional appeals are more effective to promote hedonic than utilitarian products. However, both hedonic and utilitarian products may possess benefits that are hedonic/emotional or utilitarian in nature (Lim and Ang, 2008). Even more, Lim and Ang (2008) find that consumers like utilitarian products more when the ad features hedonic rather than utilitarian benefit claims. Therefore, on the condition that a product-congruent emotion is used (i.e., an emotion that is both representative and relevant for the product), emotional advertising may be effective irrespective of the product. The foregoing leads to the following hypothesis:

H1. Emotional ads using product-congruent emotions lead to more positive ad and brand attitudes than non-emotional ads, irrespective of whether the product is utilitarian or hedonic, or a low or a high involvement product.

The story may be different for product-incongruent emotions though. Consumers are not likely to perceive feelings that are incongruent with a product as representative for this product. According to Meyers-Levy and Tybout (1997) and Meyers-Levy and Malaviya (1999), inappropriate contextual information only leads to a negative effect when the individual is sufficiently motivated to thoroughly process the message. Only in this case, consumers may realize that the information has influenced their views about the persuasive message inappropriately, and only then they partial out or overcorrect for the inappropriate information. The foregoing reasoning leads to the following hypotheses:

***H2a.** Emotional ads using incongruent emotions for low involvement products lead to more positive ad and brand attitudes than non-emotional ads, irrespective of whether the product is utilitarian or hedonic.*

***H2b.** Emotional ads using incongruent emotions for high involvement products lead to less positive ad and brand attitudes than non-emotional ads, irrespective of whether the product is utilitarian or hedonic.*

The Importance of Product Associations

Notwithstanding the foregoing hypotheses, the literature on product category effects shows that product category may indeed matter. The high correlation between ad likeability and brand attitude in case of low involvement and hedonic products suggests the usefulness of emotional approaches for those products. For high involvement and utilitarian products, on the other hand, researchers typically discourage the use of emotional appeals (Brown and Stayman, 1992; Rossiter et al, 1991; Shiv and Fedorikhin, 1999; Youn et al., 2001). An explanation for these controversial results may reside in the fact that none of the previous studies compares an emotional and a non-emotional ad promoting the same brand, but instead only compares emotional appeals promoting different products. Therefore, the question is: do certain ads for

certain products have less impact, not because of the advertising appeal, but because of the product itself? Several research results point in this direction. Biel and Bridgwater (1990), for example, report that consumers like food and beverage commercials more than ads for other products. Aaker and Bruzzone (1985) and De Pelsmacker and Van den Bergh (1998) find that consumers perceive some product categories as much more irritating than others, and Raghunathan and Irwin (2001) report that the pleasantness of the product category significantly influences consumers' evaluations. Also, Lim and Ang (2008) show that (Singaporean) consumers prefer hedonic to utilitarian products. These findings are in line with Keller (2008) who argues that consumers automatically transfer their product category associations to a new brand in this category. Therefore, the previously reported higher impact of emotional appeals for low involvement, hedonic products than for high involvement, utilitarian products can perhaps be explained by existing product category associations. Also, if product associations cause the differences in ad impact, the same differences should emerge for both emotional and non-emotional appeals. The foregoing findings lead to the following hypothesis:

***H3.** Irrespective of the advertising appeal (emotional versus non-emotional), ads for hedonic as compared to utilitarian products, and for low as compared to high involvement products lead to more positive attitudes.*

Study 1

This study uses a 2 (appeal: product-congruent emotional or non-emotional) x 2 (product: hedonic vs utilitarian) x 2 (product: high vs low involvement) between subjects design. Because the ads portray either a product-congruent emotion or no emotion, the design does not allow the testing of H2a and H2b, and the analyses pertain to H1 and H3 only. Most previous studies make use of either a sample of existing ads or a set of fictitious emotional ads picturing different

product types. None of these studies uses a set of an emotional and a non-emotional ad for the same brand and for brands of different product categories. Therefore, this study manipulates both ad appeal and product category. A warm (good feeling) appeal serves to elicit a product-congruent emotion.

Pretest

Twenty-two respondents (11 men and 11 women, ranging in age from 22 to 55 years and with different education levels) categorize 20 products according to the involvement and utilitarian-hedonic dimension. Because all respondents equivocally classify snacks, hand tissues, vacations, and insurances as respectively low involvement–hedonic, low involvement–utilitarian, high involvement–hedonic, and high involvement–utilitarian, these four products serve as the different product types in this study. The respondents also evaluate seven warm pictures from foreign magazines (1 = not warm; 4 = very warm). The picture with the highest scores on warmth (10 respondents rate the picture as moderately warm, 12 as very warm) features a small boy and girl wrapped in a large towel and serves as the basis for the emotional ads.

Advertising Stimuli

A professional designer created eight fictitious advertisements, varying in product (snack, hand tissues, holiday, and insurance) and appeal (warm, non-emotional). The headlines differ for each product, but are similar across the warm and the non-emotional conditions. By using children as the warm element, the ads show congruency between the evoked feeling and the product because the four product types relate in one way or another to children or to the evoked feeling of warmth. Indeed: snacks often target children, the softness of the hand tissues relates to the fragility and softness of children, a picture of children wrapped in a towel shows a link with vacations, and insurance companies often focus on family protection. The non-emotional ads

consist of text and a pack shot of the product or product logo. They do not feature other pictures to avoid the elicitation of emotions.

Respondents

Six hundred respondents receive an invitation to come to one of the major Belgian universities to participate in the experiment. Four hundred respondents completely filled out the questionnaire (51.5% males; 46.3% younger than 30, 24.4% aged between 30 and 44, and 29.3% aged between 45 and 55). The group is randomly split in four subgroups. Each group sees four ads (two test and two filler ads) in a random order. One of the test ads is emotional and the other is non-emotional, while they promote different product categories.

Measures

Manipulation control. Two items (“I think the ad is cozy” and “I think the ad sends out warmth”; 1 = I totally disagree, 7 = I totally agree) ($r = .60, p < .001$) measure the level of warmth the ads evoke. The respondents indeed perceive the warm ads ($M = 5.1, SD = 1.59$) as significantly warmer than the non-emotional ads ($M = 2.5, SD = 1.48$) ($t(791) = 23.56, p < .001$).

Attitudes. A 7-item, 7-point semantic differential measures A_{ad} (pleasant/unpleasant, likable/unlikable, unfavorable/favorable, persuasive/unpersuasive, informative/uninformative, believable/unbelievable, effective/ineffective) ($\text{Alpha} = .86$), whereas a 5-item, 7-point semantic differential measures A_b (favorable/unfavorable, nice/awful, unappealing/appealing, useful/useless, satisfactory/unsatisfactory) ($\text{Alpha} = .84$).

Results

A 2 (warm/non-emotional) x 2 (high/low involvement) x 2 (utilitarian/hedonic) MANOVA taking ad and brand attitude as dependent variables, tests H1 and H3. In general, the effect of ad appeal ($F(2,791) = 153.21, p < .001$), the effect of involvement ($F(2,791) = 4.15, p =$

.016) and all interaction effects are significant (appeal x involvement: $F(2,791) = 4.90, p = .008$; appeal x utilitarian/hedonic: $F(2,791) = 4.33, p = .013$; involvement x utilitarian: $F(2,791) = 6.22, p = .002$; appeal x involvement x utilitarian/hedonic: $F(2,791) = 4.43, p = .012$). Table 1 shows the univariate F-values and significance levels for both ad and brand attitude.

Table 1 here

Concerning the attitude towards the ad, the results support H1. Indeed, a significant main effect of ad appeal appears, but no significant interaction effects emerge between ad appeal and product category. Warm ads ($M = 4.3, SD = .06$) lead to a significantly more positive Aad than non-emotional ones ($M = 3.1, SD = .06$) and this finding holds for utilitarian and hedonic, and for low and high involvement products. As far as the attitude towards the brand is concerned, at first sight a different picture seems to emerge. The main effect of ad appeal on brand attitude is similar to the one found on ad attitude: Ab is more positive for warm ($M = 4.7, SD = .05$) than for non-emotional ads ($M = 4.0, SD = .05$). However, in contrast to the results for Aad, all interaction effects between ad appeal and product type are significant. A significant involvement x ad appeal interaction effect points to a more pronounced positive impact of an emotional ad for a low than for a high involvement product (Figure 1). Nevertheless, in line with H1 independent samples t-tests indicate that in both cases emotional ads significantly outperform non-emotional ads (Table 2). A similar significant ad appeal x utilitarian/hedonic interaction effect is found. Emotional ads significantly outperform non-emotional ads in the case of both utilitarian and hedonic products (Table 2), but unexpectedly the difference is larger for the utilitarian than for the hedonic products (Figure 1). Finally, a significant three way interaction effect (ad appeal x

involvement x utilitarian/hedonic) (Figure 2) shows that emotional ads lead to significantly more positive responses than non-emotional ads for all product types (Table 2), but the difference is most pronounced for the low involvement – utilitarian product. To conclude, both for Aad and Ab the results support H1. Indeed, irrespective of the product category, emotional ads induce significantly more positive attitudes than their non-emotional counterparts.

Table 2 and Figures 1 and 2 here

Concerning H3, a significant main effect of involvement on ad attitude indicates that ads for low ($M = 3.81, SD = .06$) as compared to high involvement products ($M = 3.58, SD = .06$) evoke a significantly more positive Aad. Further, a significant interaction effect between product involvement and the utilitarian-hedonic product dimension shows that the ad for the low involvement–utilitarian product elicits the most positive ad attitude ($M = 4.0, SD = .09$), followed by the hedonic products ($M = 3.6, SD = .10$ and $M = 3.7, SD = .09$ for low and high involvement products respectively) to end up with the high involvement – utilitarian product ($M = 3.5, SD = .10$) ($F(3,796) = 6.10, p < .001$). The size of the positive effect for the low involvement–utilitarian product is counterintuitive. Further, in line with H3, for Aad, no significant interaction effects between ad appeal and the product category dimensions occur. For brand attitude, the product category dimensions do not show main effects, but, as discussed above, two significant interaction effects with ad appeal emerge. As mentioned above and shown in Figure 1 the interaction effects do not indicate that emotional ads are not effective for either of the products, but point to the fact that ad appeals matters more for low than for high involvement products, and for utilitarian versus hedonic products. All in all, the results partially confirm

hypothesis 3. The results support H3 in the sense that the product itself leads to a different ad attitude. As predicted, low involvement products evoke higher ad likeability than high involvement products, but surprisingly Aad is most positive for the low involvement-utilitarian product. Furthermore, the two product dimensions do not have a significant main or interaction effect on brand attitude.

Study 2

The emotional ads in the first study evoke product-congruent feelings. The second study makes use of product-incongruent erotic ads and tests H2a, H2b and, again, H3. The study entails a 2 (erotic versus non-emotional appeal) x 2 (high versus low involvement product) x 2 (hedonic versus utilitarian product) between subjects design. Erotic ads are chosen because many people are opposed to sexual content in media (e.g., DeYoung and Crane, 1992). Experiment 2 follows a similar procedure as in experiment 1.

Pretest

Twenty-two respondents (11 men and 11 women, ranging in age from 25 till 55 years) evaluate seven erotic pictures from foreign magazines (1 = not erotic, 4 = very erotic). The picture with the highest scores on eroticism (a man standing behind a woman, kissing her shoulder) (10 respondents rated this picture as very erotic, 8 as moderately erotic and 4 as mildly erotic) serves as the basis for the ads.

Advertising Stimuli

The same professional designer created eight fictitious advertisements, varying in product (snack, hand tissues, holiday, and insurance) and appeal (erotic, non-emotional). The non-emotional ads are the same as the ones from the first study.

Design and respondents

391 individuals agree to come to a major Belgian university and participate in the experiment (50.8% males; 45.4% younger than 30, 26.4% aged between 30 and 44, and 28.2% aged between 45 and 55). Similar to study 1, the group is randomly split in four subgroups. Each group evaluates an erotic and a non-emotional ad for different products in a random order.

Measures

Two items (“I think the ad is erotic” and “I think the ad is sensual”; 1 = I totally disagree, 7 = I totally agree) ($r = .64, p < .001$) measure perceived ad eroticism. The respondents evaluate the erotic ads ($M = 5.2, SD = 1.68$) as significantly more erotic than the non-emotional ads ($M = 1.7, SD = 1.24$) ($t(780) = 33.47, p < .001$). The items measuring attitude towards the ad (Alpha = .87) and brand attitude (Alpha = .82) are the same as in the first study.

Results

A 2 (erotic/non-emotional) x 2 (high/low involvement) x 2 (utilitarian/hedonic) MANOVA analyzes the impact on ad and brand attitude. The main effect of ad appeal ($F(2,773) = 65.07, p < .001$), involvement ($F(2,773) = 8.69, p < .001$) and the interaction effects (appeal x involvement: $F(2,773) = 11.60, p < .001$; involvement x utilitarian-hedonic: $F(2,773) = 4.61, p = .010$; and appeal x involvement x utilitarian/hedonic: $F(2,773) = 3.01, p = .005$) are significant.

Table 1 shows the univariate F-values and significance levels both for ad and brand attitude.

Concerning attitude towards the ad, a significant main effect of ad appeal emerges in the sense that Aad is significantly more positive for erotic ($M = 3.9, SD = .06$) than for non-emotional ads ($M = 3.0, SD = .06$). No significant moderating effect of product category on the responses to emotional and non-emotional ads appear meaning that neither for low involvement products nor for high involvement products respondents correct their ad attitude for the product-

incongruent emotion. Therefore, in the context of incongruent emotions, and with respect to the attitude towards the ad, the results support H2a, but not H2b.

Also for the attitude towards the brand a significant main effect is found with Ab being significantly more positive for erotic ($M = 4.6, SD = .06$) than for non-emotional ads ($M = 4.1, SD = .06$). However, in this case two interaction effects emerge. A significant ad appeal x involvement interaction points to a significantly more positive brand attitude as a consequence of viewing an erotic as compared to a non-emotional ad for low involvement products, but not for high involvement products. For high involvement products no significant difference between the two appeals emerges (Table 2 and Figure 3). Finally, a significant three way interaction effect (ad appeal x involvement x hedonic/utilitarian) shows that emotional ads have the most positive impact on Ab for low involvement products (Table 2). For high involvement products a product-incongruent emotional appeal scores only marginally better in case of a hedonic product ($p = .079$) while no difference emerges for the utilitarian product ($p = .837$) (Table 2 and Figure 4). As is the case for Aad, the results support H2a. However, in contrast to forming an attitude towards an ad, respondents seem to be more careful in forming a brand attitude, especially as far as high involvement products are concerned. Indeed, although no negative effects emerge, the product-incongruent emotional appeal is not capable of generating a significantly more positive brand response than a non-emotional appeal for high involvement products. Although these results do not fully support H2b, they do support the fact that product category (and especially product involvement) moderates the effectiveness of emotional appeals in case product-incongruent emotions are used.

Figures 3 and 4 here

Concerning H3, no main effect of product category emerges for Ab, whereas a significant main effect of involvement for Aad shows that consumers like ads for low ($M = 3.88, SD = .07$) as compared to high involvement products ($M = 2.99, SD = .07$) significantly more. The same significant interaction effect as in Study 1 between product involvement and the utilitarian-hedonic character of the product emerges revealing that the ad for the low involvement-utilitarian product elicits the most positive ad attitude ($M = 3.8, SD = .09$), followed by the hedonic products ($M = 3.4, SD = .10$ and $M = 3.3, SD = .10$ for low and high involvement products respectively) to end up with the high involvement – utilitarian product ($M = 3.2, SD = .10$) ($F(3,778) = 7.50, p < .001$). The results do not show a significant interaction effect between ad appeal and product category for Aad, but they do point to a significant interaction between ad appeal and involvement for Ab. As discussed above, the interaction effect does not show a cross-over effect though. Again the results lend only partial support for H3.

Study 3

The results of study 1 and study 2 only partially support H3. However, both studies include only four products and the selection of the products may have driven the results. Moreover, both studies used fictitious ads for fictitious brands resulting in neither prior brand knowledge nor prior brand experience. The objective of study 3 is to test the hypotheses in a more realistic way by using existing emotional and non-emotional TV commercials for well-known products. Furthermore, the results should give a clearer idea whether the average emotional ad advertisers use in practice, is effective irrespective of the product category the ad is promoting.

Procedure

As part of a larger study, the researchers solicit respondents by means of a TV commercial on the Belgian TV channel VT4. 3681 individuals volunteer to participate in the study. One thousand individuals receive an invitation to come to a conference room in groups of 20 to 30 persons. In total 909 respondents show up and participate in the study (47.3% males; 35% younger than 25, 24.8% aged between 25 and 34, 22.4% aged between 35 and 44, and 17.8% aged between 45 and 55).

Stimuli

The advertisements for study 3 consist of the 543 TV commercials of 20 seconds and over which VT4 aired during one and the same year. Each group of respondents evaluates a subset of 25 to 30 commercials. Every ad is shown in two groups (in a different order), resulting in 40 to 60 evaluations for each ad.

Measures

Questionnaire. Because respondents have to evaluate a range of 25 to 30 commercials, the questionnaire consists of only two questions for each commercial. First of all, respondents indicate to what extent they like the commercial (1 = do not like at all, 10 = like a lot). Afterwards, they score their brand attitude by means of the question “how would you describe your opinion of the brand: 1 = very negative, 7 = very positive).

Content analysis. A jury of 6 marketing academics and marketing researchers content analyzed the full set of commercials. They score the product category (low versus high involvement, and utilitarian versus hedonic) for each commercial, as well as the degree to which the commercial intends to evoke emotions (6 point scale). Concerning the product category, the jury members fully agree for 323 of the 543 commercials. Further analyses pertain to these 323

ads only. Several food products such as butter and yoghurt are excluded because the jury thought these products could be hedonic for some but utilitarian for other consumers. This procedure results in 94 ads for low involvement-hedonic products (e.g., confectionary, food and beverages), 50 ads in the category of low involvement–utilitarian products (e.g., home care and pharmaceutical products), 96 ads for high involvement–hedonic products (e.g., luxury cars, apparel, products/services for leisure time), and 83 ads for products belonging to the high involvement–utilitarian category (ads for banks, insurance companies, credit card companies, etc.). All ads with a mean score lower than 3 on 6 on emotional content, are classified as non-emotional, the other ads as emotional. Of the 94 ads promoting low involvement-hedonic products 78 or 83.0% are emotional. In the category of low involvement–utilitarian products 11 of the 50 ads (22.0%) are emotional. For the high involvement–hedonic products the number of emotional ads is 48 (50%), whereas the proportion of emotional ads in the high involvement–utilitarian category is 71.4% (60 of 83 ads). Because the majority of the ads picture relevant emotions, making a distinction between relevant and irrelevant emotions is useless.

Results

The units of analysis for this study are the TV commercials, meaning that a single observation represents responses of 40 to 60 persons. A 2 (high/low involvement) x 2 (utilitarian-hedonic) x 2 (emotional/non-emotional) MANOVA shows slightly different results than in study 1 and study 2. Concerning ad appeal, a significant main effect for ad likeability shows that also for existing brands emotional ads ($M_{Ad} = 6.2$, $SD = .13$) are more appreciated than non-emotional ads ($M_{Ad} = 5.5$, $SD = .13$). For brand attitude no significant main effect, but interaction effects emerge (see Table 2). A significant interaction effect between involvement and ad appeal shows that emotional ads lead to a significantly more positive Ab for high

involvement products, whereas emotional and non-emotional ads score equally well for low involvement products. A second interaction effect (utilitarian-hedonic x ad appeal) indicates that emotional ads lead to a better ad and brand attitude for hedonic products, but lead to a similar M_{ad} as non-emotional ads for utilitarian products (Figure 5). To conclude, none of the interaction effects point to the conclusion that emotional ads are not suited for one or more product categories. On the contrary, for none of the products non-emotional appeals significantly outperform emotional ones. As a consequence, the general rule for the processing of existing emotional ads promoting existing brands seems to be that either positive or no effects take place, rather than negative effects. Because most of the emotional ads featured relevant emotions, the latter results serve as a further confirmation of H1.

Figure 5 here

With respect to H3, not only general significant main effects of ad appeal ($F(1,272) = 14.35, p < .001$) and involvement ($F(1,27) = 15.41, p < .001$) emerge, but also of the utilitarian/hedonic dimension ($F(1,272) = 27.18, p < .001$). Concerning interaction effects, only the involvement x utilitarian-hedonic interaction reaches significance at the .05 level ($F(1,272) = 24.48, p < .001$).

Looking at ad likeability and brand attitude separately (see Table 1), ads promoting hedonic ($M_{ad} = 6.38, SD = .13; M_{Ab} = 4.74, SD = .07$) as compared to utilitarian products ($M_{ad} = 5.36, SD = .13; M_{Ab} = 4.52, SD = .07$) lead to a significantly higher ad likeability and brand attitude. A significant main effect of involvement appears, but only for brand attitude (low involvement: $M_{Ab} = 4.86, SD = .07$; high involvement: $M_{Ab} = 4.40, SD = .07$). A significant involvement x utilitarian-hedonic interaction effect shows that the utilitarian-hedonic character

of the product only matters for low involvement products. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 6 and Table 2, respondents like ads for low involvement-hedonic products the most and hold the most positive brand attitudes towards these products, whereas especially ad likeability scores low in case of low involvement utilitarian products (low involvement - hedonic: $M_{ad} = 6.9$, $M_{Ab} = 5.2$; high involvement – hedonic: $M_{ad} = 5.9$, $M_{Ab} = 4.3$; high-involvement – utilitarian: $M_{ad} = 5.8$, $M_{Ab} = 4.5$; low involvement – utilitarian: $M_{ad} = 4.9$, $M_{Ab} = 4.6$). Further, although interaction effects between ad appeal and the product category dimensions do emerge, they do not reflect a cross-over effect (see discussion above). These results support H3 suggesting that consumers perceive hedonic as compared to utilitarian, and low as compared to high involvement products more positively and as a consequence experience more positive communication effects of ads promoting these products. However, the utilitarian-hedonic character mainly matters for the low involvement products. The results also suggest that the unexpected positive results for the low involvement-utilitarian product in study 1 and 2 might have been due to the specificity of the product chosen.

Figure 6 here

General discussion

The first study uses a product-congruent emotional and a non-emotional appeal, whereas the second study deals with a product-incongruent emotional and a non-emotional appeal. The results show that, in general, emotional ads outperform non-emotional ones in terms of the attitude towards the ad and the brand. Although this finding was expected for the product-congruent emotional appeal (H1) and for the product-incongruent emotional appeal as far as low involvement products are concerned (H2a), a negative effect of the product-incongruent

emotional ad was expected for the two high involvement products (H2b). Because respondents usually consider feelings (like eroticism) that are incongruent with a product as inappropriate to form a judgment for that product (Pham, 1998), they were expected to partial out and even overcorrect for the effect of the emotional information, but only for the high involvement products (Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1997). This negative effect does not emerge. However, for the high involvement/hedonic product the difference between the emotional and the non-emotional appeal is only marginally significant, and for the high involvement/utilitarian product the difference is insignificant. Thus, although overcorrection does not take place, respondents do exert some effort to partial out the effect of the irrelevant erotic feeling. Although Study 3 is not fit to test H2a and H2b, the results of this study with existing TV ads further indicate that positive effects of emotional ads seem to be more the rule than the exception.

The results of the three studies are in line with the assumptions of the Affect Infusion Model and contradict the suggestions of the FCB- and Rossiter-Percy grid that for high involvement and utilitarian products emotional ads would not be appropriate. However, at the same time the results indicate that emotional ads do work better for some than other product types. An explanation for why many practitioners and researchers believe emotional appeals are not suited for high involvement and utilitarian products may reside in the less positive associations consumers hold with the latter products. Only comparing an emotional ad across products does indeed lead to the conclusion that emotional ads do not score well for high involvement and utilitarian products. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 assumes that hedonic as compared to utilitarian products, and low as compared to high involvement products lead to more positive communication effects, both for emotional and non-emotional ads. The results of study 1 and study 2 only partially support this hypothesis. However, in these studies only one product for

each cell of the Rossiter-Percy grid was investigated. To overcome this limitation, study 3 includes over 300 existing TV commercials. In this case the expected differences between low and high involvement, and utilitarian and hedonic products do emerge. A limitation of study 1 and study 2 is that respondents evaluate fictitious ads for fictitious brands. Moreover, the non-emotional ads in these studies are perhaps unrealistically bland (only a pack shot with text, no pictures). Although these limitations may confound the results of the first two studies, study 3 included all ads that were on air during a full year. The results of study 3 are similar to the ones of study 1 and 2 suggesting that an emotional appeal harms none of the products, but that the same appeal works better for some than for other products because the products themselves evoke different associations.

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Table 1.

MANOVA results: Main and interaction effects of product and advertisement type (F-values)

Source	Dependent variable	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
Appeal	Ad attitude	194.92***	91.26***	23.89***
	Brand attitude	85.20***	39.83***	.18
Involvement	Ad attitude	6.87**	16.10***	.35
	Brand attitude	.90	1.24	26.25***
Utilitarian-Hedonic	Ad attitude	3.12	1.78	53.04***
	Brand attitude	.04	.60	6.00*
Appeal x Involvement	Ad attitude	.28	2.86	2.57
	Brand attitude	9.76**	20.27***	5.02*
Appeal x Utilitarian-Hedonic	Ad attitude	1.07	1.10	.04
	Brand attitude	8.08**	.03	4.10*
Involvement x Utilitarian-Hedonic	Ad attitude	12.39***	8.40**	48.02***
	Brand attitude	.33	.79	18.34***
Appeal x Involvement x Utilitarian-Hedonic	Ad attitude	.47	.68	.90
	Brand attitude	8.70**	5.31**	.52

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 2.

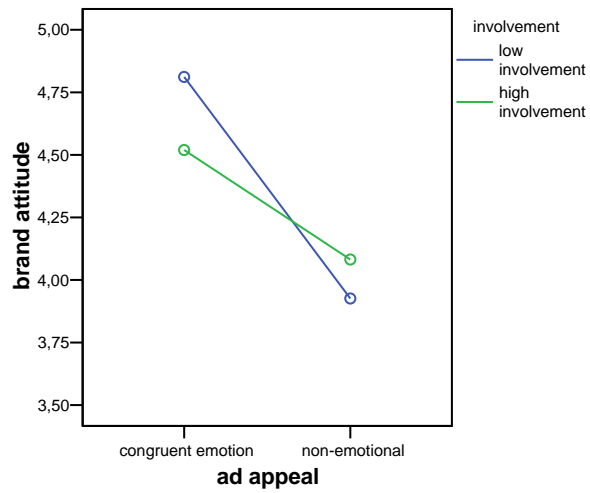
Impact of advertisement type on brand attitude

Product category	Study 1			Study 2			Study 3		
	Brand attitude		t-value	Brand attitude		t-value	Brand attitude		t-value
	Emo	Non-		Emo	Non-		Emo	Non-	
	emo		emo		emo				
Low involvement	4.8	3.9	8.81***	4.7	3.8	7.53***	5.0	4.8	1.40
High involvement	4.5	4.1	4.21***	4.4	4.3	1.34	4.5	4.2	3.40***
Utilitarian	4.8	3.9	9.72***	4.5	4.0	5.05***	4.5	4.6	-1.02
Hedonic	4.6	4.1	4.01***	4.6	4.1	3.97***	4.8	4.3	5.01***
Low involvement-utilitarian	5.0	3.7	10.77***	4.7	3.7	6.92***	4.4	4.8	-1.53
Low involvement-hedonic	4.6	4.2	3.03**	4.7	4.00	3.90***	5.2	5.1	.41
High involvement-utilitarian	4.5	4.1	3.48**	4.3	4.4	1.77	4.5	4.4	.82
High involvement-hedonic	4.5	4.1	2.65**	4.5	4.2	-.21	4.5	4.1	3.4***

Note: emo = emotional ads, non-emo = non-emotional ads; *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$

Figure 1. Two-way interaction effects of product type and emotional appeal on Ab – Study 1

a) Appeal x Involvement



b) Appeal x Utilitarian-hedonic

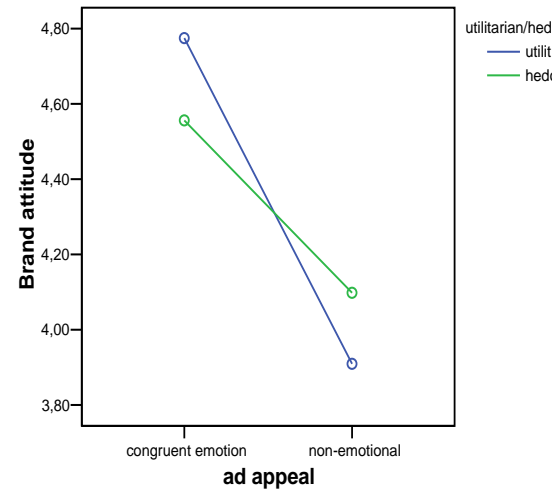


Figure 2. Three-way interaction effect of product type and emotional appeal on Ab – Study 1

Appeal x involvement x utilitarian/hedonic interaction on Ab

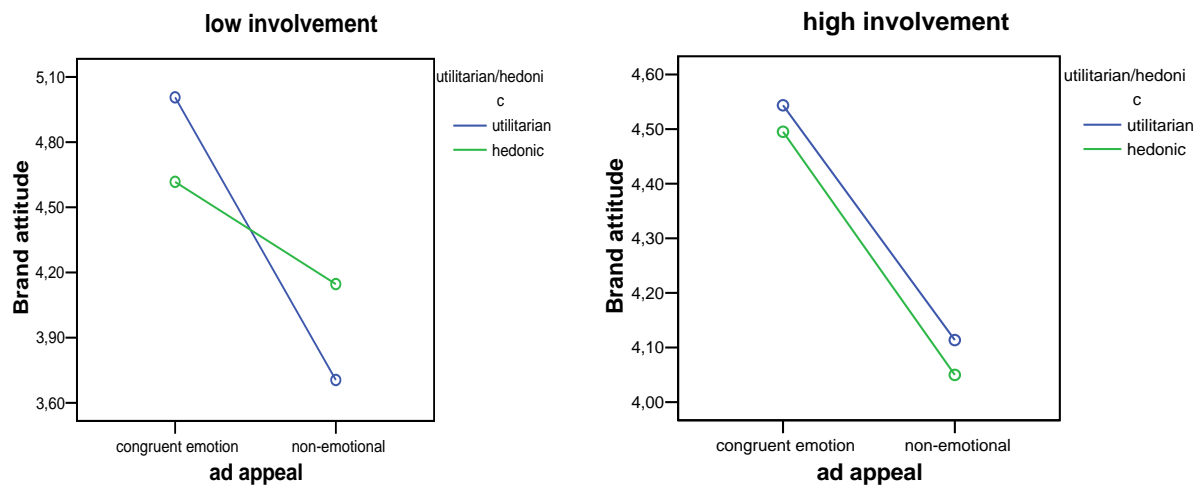


Figure 3. Two-way interaction effects of product type and emotional appeal on Ab – Study 2

Appeal x Involvement interaction on Ab

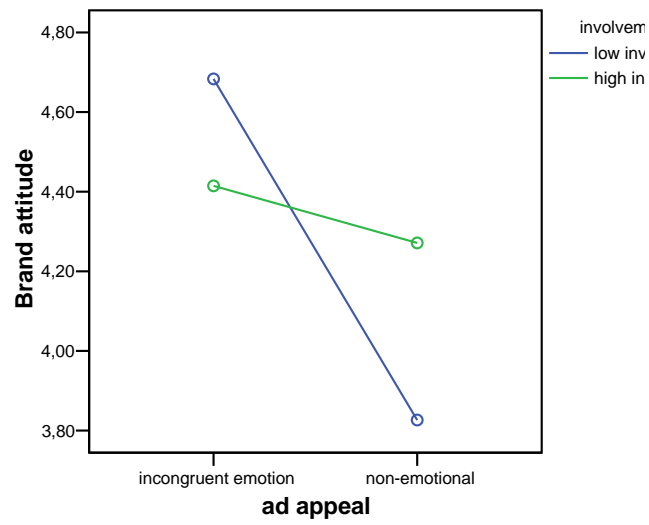


Figure 4. Three-way interaction effect of product type and emotional appeal on Ab – Study 2

Appeal x involvement x utilitarian/hedonic interaction on Ab

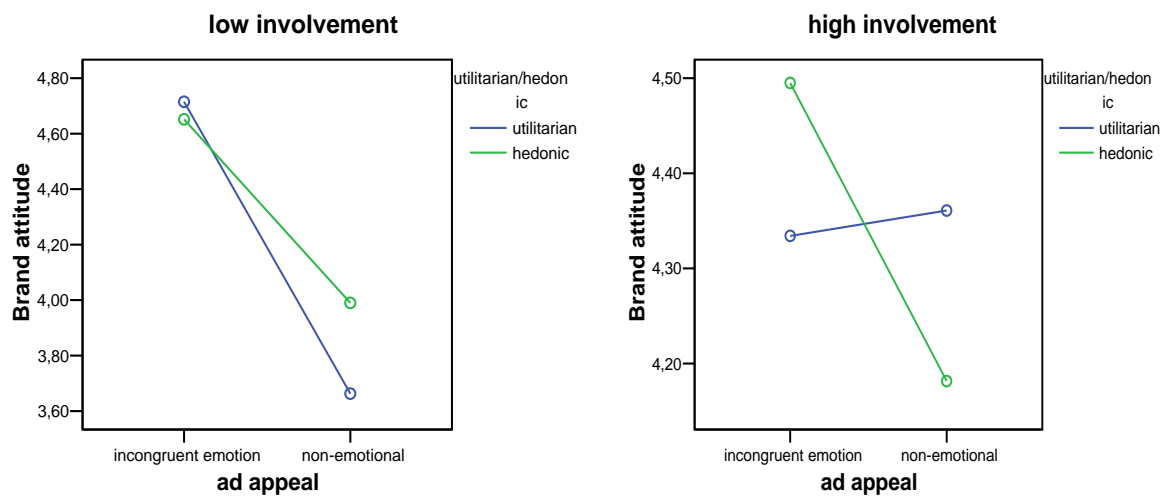
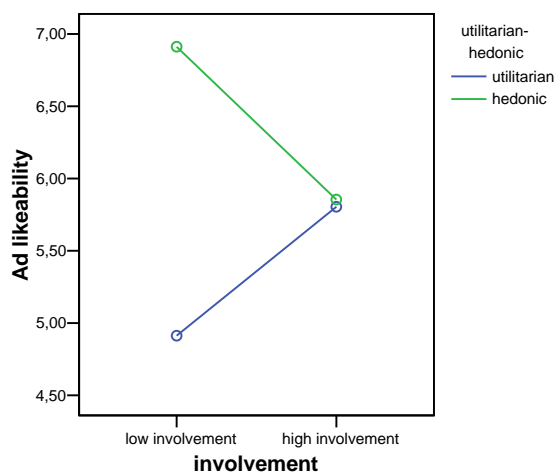


Figure 5. Two-way interaction effect of Involvement x Utilitarian-Hedonic - Study 3

a) Ad likeability



b) Brand attitude

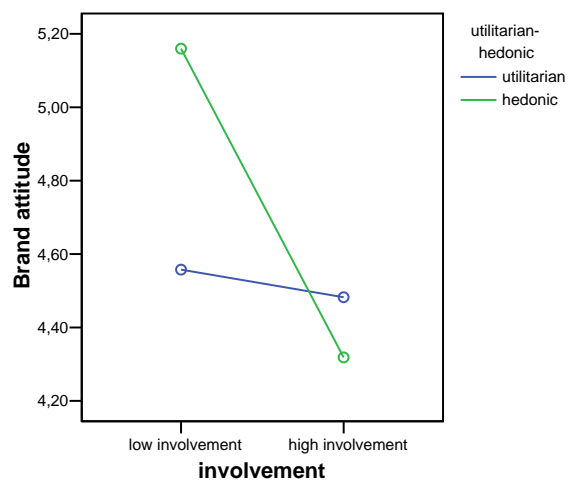
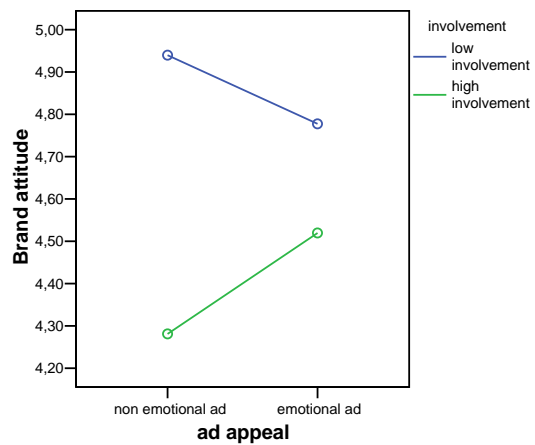


Figure 6. Two-way interaction effects of product type and emotional appeal on Ab – Study 3

a) Appeal x Involvement



b) Appeal x Utilitarian-hedonic

