When Your Ads Can Hurt Your Brand:

Sadness and Consumers' Negative Response to Highly Energetic Positive Stimuli

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This research examines consumers' response to positive commercials when the level of energy in the commercial conflicts with the consumers' emotional state. The results of four studies, including a field experiment conducted on Hulu, show that sad consumers find it more difficult to watch positive commercials/media content that are highly energetic compared to positive commercials/media content that are less energetic. As a result, sad consumers are less likely to watch highly energetic positive commercials, have more negative evaluations of advertisers, and show less favorable behavior intentions after watching such commercials. This difficulty is due to highly energetic positive commercials/media content conflicting with sad consumers' desired state of inactivity. When this desire for inactivity is reduced, sad consumers no longer find highly energetic content difficult.

Keywords: Emotion, Activation, Advertising, Media, Conflict

There is a growing paradox within media: as the media content grows more negative the ads remain almost uniformly positive. News media focus on tragic events around the world, primetime television grows darker, and the Internet depicts increasingly graphic and desperate situations (Gardner 2008) that in turn seems to have fueled a darker genre of entertainment. Eleven out of the top 25 programs are negative (Schneider 2013) and this does not include sports programming where it is likely that at least part of the audience is experiencing negative emotions (Cornil and Chandon 2013; Zillmann et al. 1992). Further, the television show *CSI* (Crime Scene Investigation) is viewed in almost every country around the world (CBSNews 2010). By comparison, only about 10% of the top programs from 1990-1999 where negative (TV.com 2013). While not all programming is negative, the significant proportion that is may be undermining advertisers' efforts. Despite dramatic changes in programming content in the last couple of decades, the tactics of advertisers appear largely unchanged. They continue to spend hundreds of billions of dollars (eMarketer 2012) on ads that are largely upbeat and cheerful. Our recent analysis of two negative primetime television shows (e.g., *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*) found that a large majority of the commercials (80%) embedded in the shows were positive.[1]

The negative emotions engendered by media content are likely to affect consumers since emotions have been shown to influence judgment and decision-making (Adaval 2001; Cohen and Andrade 2004; Raghunathan and Pham 1999). However, it is less clear how consumers experiencing a negative emotion, such as sadness, will respond to positive marketing communications. One perspective argues that people want to feel good so they will seek ways to uplift themselves when they are feeling down (Zillmann 1988), suggesting that consumers experiencing negative emotions should respond favorably to positive marketing communications.

Nevertheless, there is evidence that people experiencing negative emotions often avoid activities that might improve their affective state (Erber, Wegner and Therriault 1996). For instance, people frequently choose to listen to sad songs instead of happy songs when they are sad (Cohen and Andrade 2004). Similarly, consumers often prefer negative salespeople over positive salespeople when they are experiencing sadness (Puccinelli 2006). Thus, a better understanding of how and why people experiencing negative emotions respond to positive marketing stimuli can help managers improve on the execution of their marketing strategies.

This research explores how the investment of marketers may be undermined by the emotions engendered by the media where their marketing communications appear. Thus, our research helps determine when and how marketing communications can be most successful and when they are likely to fail. If the media makes the consumer sad and the content of the communication is positive and energetic, as the vast majority of advertising is, the communication may not only be ineffective but may hurt the brand. Thus, we show the success or failure of marketing communications may depend on the consistency between the emotion of the viewer and the positive, energetic quality of the content. Specifically, we argue that because the experience of sadness is characterized by a preference for inactivity (Rucker and Petty 2004), sad consumers experience conflict when watching positive content that is highly energetic. Consequently, they find the experience of watching such content more difficult, making them more likely to avoid watching it compared to positive content that is less energetic. Additionally, we propose that the same conflict from watching highly energetic commercials will not be observed among consumers experiencing a neutral affective state or another negative emotion not characterized by deactivation (e.g., anger) because such states are not characterized by a preference for inactivity (see Figure 1). While highly energetic positive commercials may not be

inherently difficult to watch, we show that sad consumers find such commercials difficult because the characteristics of the commercial conflict with their emotional state.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Four studies were conducted to test this theory. In Study 1, we induced sadness or a neutral affective state using a video clip before having participants watch a positive commercial that was either high or low energy. We show that people experiencing sadness spend less time watching the high energy commercial compared to the low energy commercial. The tendency to avoid the high energy commercial was not observed for people in a neutral affective state. Study 2 demonstrates that people experiencing sadness have less favorable attitudes and behavioral intentions toward an advertiser after watching a positive high energy commercial by the advertiser compared to a positive low energy commercial by the advertiser. Studies 3a and 3b provides evidence that the difficulty viewing high energy content by those experiencing sadness is due to a preference for inactivity. Specifically, we show that the effect of sadness on the difficulty viewing high energy content is attenuated when people are primed with an action goal, that reduces people's preference for inactivity. Additionally, we demonstrate that the same aversion to high energy content is not observed when people are in a neutral affective state (Study 3a) or experience another negative emotion not characterized by deactivation (i.e., anger; Study 3b). Studies 3a and 3b suggest that the phenomenon generalizes to the broader media context. Finally, in Study 4, we conducted a field study on Hulu (hulu.com) to demonstrate that sad consumers perceive positive, high energy commercials to be more difficult to watch than low energy commercials.

This research makes several contributions. While previous research suggests that sad consumers may have an aversive reaction to positive stimuli, we show that sad consumers do not

have a negative response to all positive stimuli. Consumers' reaction to positive stimuli is contingent on how energetic the positive stimuli are perceived to be. The high energy positive ads when viewed within a sad program are difficult for the consumer to watch that in turn leads to less viewing time, lower brand attitude, and less favorable behavioral intention however this is not the case when people are viewing a less energetic positive ad in the same context. Additionally, we demonstrate that this effect primarily emerges when the negative emotion is characterized by a preference for inactivity (e.g., sadness) and can be attenuated when consumers are induced into a state of high activation that reduces their preference for inactivity. Our research also has important managerial implications since consumers are frequently exposed to positive marketing stimuli when they are experiencing negative emotions. For example, an additional analysis of network television that we conducted found that most (41%) of the airtime during primetime is taken up by programming that is likely to induce negative emotions; programming likely to elicit a neutral or positive emotions comprised 20 and 39 percent, respectively.[2] Although not all of the negative programming should evoke sadness, this finding still suggests that firms may be wasting significant portions of their advertising dollars by embedding highly energetic positive commercials within programming that may result in a negative consumer response.

Prior Research

Research on affect has long focused on the valence perspective, examining how judgment is influenced by the positive or negative valence of an affective state (Schwartz and Clore 1983).This work generally shows an affect congruence effect whereby positive affect leads to positive evaluative judgments and negative affect leads to negative evaluative judgments

(Wegener et al 1995). For instance, when people are in a positive affective state they believe positive events are more likely to occur (Wegener, Petty, and Klein 1994) and make more optimistic judgments than those in a negative affective state (Forgas and Moylan 1987).

More recently, research has concentrated on the motivational drivers of behavior resulting from being in a positive or negative state. Erber and colleagues (1996) argue that in anticipation of a social interaction people assume that a neutral affective state is optimal. Consequently, when people expect to interact with another person they attempt to neutralize their affective state by choosing affective incongruent stimuli (e.g., positive stimuli when they are in a negative affective state). Building off of this work, Cohen and Andrade (2004) show that preference for affect congruent versus affect incongruent stimuli is dependent on the task that must be performed. If a person must do well on an analytical task and they believe a negative state will enhance their performance, they will choose a negative alternative over a positive option. If a person must do well on a creative task and they believe a positive state will enhance their performance, they will choose a positive alternative over a negative option. Thus, people may not always try to improve their emotional state, particularly when being in a non-positive affective state is seen as more beneficial.

Evidence suggests, however, that people experiencing negative emotions may have an adverse reaction to positive stimuli. Puccinelli (2006) primed people to experience sadness before exposing them to salespeople whose facial expressions were designed to convey either a positive, neutral or negative affective state. She found that people experiencing sadness reported feeling worse after being exposed to a positive salesperson compared to people experiencing sadness that were exposed to a negative or neutral salesperson. Additionally, sad people exposed to the positive salesperson indicated a lower willingness to pay for the product compared to those

exposed to the negative or neutral salesperson. The implication of this research is that people experiencing sadness may have an aversive reaction to positive stimuli. However, it is unclear whether sad consumers have this reaction to all forms of positive stimuli or whether it is limited to certain types of positive stimuli. Additionally, it is uncertain whether this effect only occurs for sadness or whether other negative emotions may also lead people to have a negative response to positive stimuli. Given the frequency with which firms market their products using positive content, understanding these issues is important for managers.

Sadness and Consumers' Reaction to Positive Stimuli

Contemporary research on affect has shifted from a valence-based approach to an emotion specificity account with greater emphasis on understanding differences between emotions of the same valence (Raghunathan and Pham 1999). Sadness is a negative emotion that has been shown to have distinct effects on behavior compared to other negative emotions (Berger and Milkman 2012; Keltner et al. 1993; Raghunathan et al. 2006). Although sadness differs from other negative emotions in many respects, one of the key ways is in terms of the level of activation that is associated with its experience (Smith and Ellsworth 1985). Some negative emotions, such as anger, are accompanied by a state of high arousal or activation, whereas others, such as sadness, are accompanied by a state of low arousal or deactivation (Barrett and Russell 1998). As a result, the experience of sadness signals that inactivity is desired and leads people to prefer events that do not require action (Rucker and Petty 2004). Consistent with this perspective, people experiencing sadness have been shown to prefer products and services whose names imply passivity to ones whose names imply activity. In contrast, people experiencing

anger, which is characterized by a preference for action, prefer products and services whose names imply activity to ones whose names imply passivity (Rucker and Petty 2004).

Although a majority of marketing content (e.g., commercials) may be positive and thus designed to elicit a positive emotional response, the content may differ in terms of the level of activation induced by its experience. Some positive marketing content will promote a state of deactivation, such as an ad depicting people relaxing on vacation at the beach (e.g., a Corona commercial), making the content consistent with the desired state of inactivity that characterizes sadness. However, other positive marketing content will induce a state of high activation, such as an ad depicting a party atmosphere (e.g., a Coors Light commercial). Such highly energetic, active content is in direct opposition to the preference for inactivity that characterizes sadness (Rucker and Petty 2004). Thus, highly energetic, positive content conflicts with the desired state of consumers experiencing sadness.

Conflict is inherently tough so when consumers experience conflict, they often find it difficult to handle (Labroo and Lee 2006; Luce 1998; Nagpal and Parthasarathy 2008). Thus, when consumers experience conflict with a desired state they often have an aversive reaction (Belei et al. 2012; Luce 1998; Ramanathan and Williams 2007). For instance, when consumers experience conflict between attributes associated with different desirable states, it can lead them to choose a status quo option as a way of overcoming the emotional difficulty associated with making tradeoffs (Luce 1998). Similarly, when people have the desire to consider many options, but are only presented with one option they find it aversive, which can make them more likely to avoid the option compared to when it is presented in a set of multiple alternatives (Mochon 2013). Finally, when people consider eating indulgent foods it activates the desire to be

indulgent. When the information on the food's packaging conflicts with this desire by promoting it as healthy, it can induce an aversive state resulting in reduced consumption (Belei et al. 2012).

Taken together, these findings suggest that because positive commercials that are high energy conflict with the desired state of inactivity that characterizes sadness, consumers experiencing sadness should find viewing such commercials difficult. Here difficulty refers to the unpleasant experience resulting from exposure to a stimulus that conflicts with one's current affective state (Luce 1998). As a result, sad consumers should have an aversive reaction to watching high energy positive commercials. We define sadness as an unpleasant affective state that is low in activation (Barrett and Russell 1998). Positivity refers to the degree to which the ad is pleasant and enjoyable, while energy refers to the intensity of a stimulus as defined by the level of activation characterizing the stimulus (Barrett and Russell 1998). We propose this negative reaction will have an adverse effect on how much time sad consumers spend watching such content. Aversive stimuli often result in an avoidance reaction (Andrade and Cohen 2007). As a result, people tend to avoid exposure to content they find aversive (Keller, Lipkus and Rimer 2003). For example, people tend to read in less depth and are less likely to accept health information that they find personally threatening (Kunda 1987). Thus, when consumers experiencing sadness are exposed to positive commercials that are high energy, they should be more likely to avoid watching them compared to positive commercials that are low energy. In other words, consumers should spend less time watching positive, high energy commercials if they are given the opportunity to disengage from the content compared to watching low energy commercials of the same level of positivity. Since neutral affect is not characterized by a state of deactivation, consumers should be less likely to experience conflict from viewing a positive, high energy commercial. Consequently, we do not expect people in a neutral state to spend less

time watching positive commercials that are high energy compared to ones that are low energy. A neutral state refers to an affective state that is neither pleasant nor unpleasant and is characterized by low activation. Thus, we specifically hypothesize:

H_{1a}: Consumers experiencing sadness will spend less time watching positive commercials that are high energy compared to positive commercials that are low energy.

H_{1b}: Consumers in a neutral state will not spend less time watching positive commercials that are high energy compared to positive commercials that are low energy.

Advertising and other marketing communications can have a significant influence on consumers' attitude toward the company or brand being advertised (MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belcher 1986). A number of studies have shown that when consumers have a negative response to ads, it can have a detrimental effect on their brand attitudes (Batra and Ray 1986; Derbaix 1995; Edell and Burke 1987; Maclnnis and Park 1991; Stayman and Aaker 1988). For instance, Edell and Burke (1987) show that the negative response elicited by an ad can have unique effects on attitudes towards the ad, attitudes towards the brand and beliefs about the brand's attributes. A consistent finding in these studies is that positive reactions can have a favorable influence on brand attitudes and that negative reactions generated by the ad can have a detrimental effect on brand attitude. Thus, if people in a sad emotional state find they have a more negative reaction to watching positive commercials that are high energy, they should have less favorable attitudes toward the advertiser after watching such commercials compared to positive commercials that are low energy. Since attitudes are a precursor to behavioral intentions (Ajzen and Fishbein 1975), the level of energy in a commercial may also influence the behavioral intentions of consumers experiencing sadness. As a result, we expect sad consumers to also have less favorable behavioral intentions toward the advertiser after viewing a positive commercial that is high energy compared to a positive commercial that is low energy. Attitude refers to the extent to

which an individual likes or dislikes a certain thing, while behavioral intention is an indication of an individual's readiness to perform a given behavior (Ajzen, 2002) and here is measured by willingness to visit the firm's website and recommend the brand.

Thus, following a sad program, we expect that when sad consumers watch a positive high energy commercial they will experience greater conflict and therefore find it more difficult to watch the commercial compared to a positive low energy commercial. This difficulty will lead them to have a more negative reaction toward the advertiser. As a result, we expect sad consumers to have more negative attitudes toward the advertiser and less favorable behavioral intentions toward the advertiser's product after watching a positive high energy commercial compared to a positive low energy commercial. This leads to our next hypotheses:

H_{2a}: Consumers experiencing sadness will have more negative attitudes and behavioral intentions toward advertisers after watching positive commercials that are high energy compared to positive commercials that are low energy.

H_{2b}: Consumers in a neutral state will not have more negative attitudes and behavioral intentions toward advertisers after watching positive commercials that are high energy compared to positive commercials that are low energy.

H_3: The decrease in attitudes and behavioral intentions after watching positive commercials that are high energy for consumers experiencing sadness will be mediated by how difficult it is to watch the commercial.

Study 1

Predicting when and why consumers tune advertising out is critical for advertisers. With the advent of personal recording devices, it has become even easier for consumers to skip commercials, which is clearly a concern for television advertisers. For instance, Replay TV, an early competitor to Tivo, featured commercial skipping as a core message of one of its advertising campaigns. It was able detect characteristics of commercials that were different from programming and simply skip over the ads. Before Replay TV could bring this into the

mainstream, it was sued by television networks and cable companies and the lawsuit is credited with sending the company into bankruptcy (Gardner 2012). The purpose of Study 1 was to test H_1 that exposing sad consumers to high energy commercials will influence how much time they spend watching the commercial (i.e., whether or not they would tune it out). We expected that people in a sad state would spend less time watching a positive commercial that is high energy compared to a positive commercial that is low energy (H_{1a}). We did not expect any difference in the time spent watching high versus low energy commercials when people were in a neutral affective state (H_{1b}).

Method

Design and Procedure. Ninety-four people (M_{Age} = 34; 46% male) from an online panel participated in the main study for a small stipend. The study adopted a 2 (emotion: negative or neutral) x 2 (energy: high or low) between-subjects design. The study was conducted using an online survey. Participants were instructed that the purpose of the study was to examine people's reactions to different videos and commercials. All participants were given the same instructions about being able to watch the video and listen to sound as in the previous study. Participants were then asked to watch one of two videos and told to watch the entire video because they would be asked questions about the video later on in the survey. In the sad condition, participants were shown a sad clip from the movie "The Champ," which depicts a young boy crying over the death of someone close to him. In the neutral affect condition, participants were shown a clip from a documentary on Albert Einstein. Each video lasted for approximately three and a half minutes and the submit button on the survey was disabled during that time to ensure participants could not continue to the next screen until the video was over.

After watching one of the movie clips, participants were shown a thirty second Mastercard commercial that was either high or low energy. The high energy commercial was a commercial featuring the Muppets. The low energy commercial featured an elephant. Participants were instructed that they could watch the commercial as long or as short a period as they wanted and the submit button was revealed the entire time. We measured how long they watched the commercial by recording how many seconds they remained on the screen after starting the commercial before moving to the next screen (Olney, Holbrook, and Batra, 1991).

Results

Pretest of emotion manipulation. We conducted a pretest on thirty-seven people from the same online panel as the main study to validate the videos used for the emotion induction. Participants were asked to watch one of two videos from the main study and told to watch the entire video. Afterwards, participants were asked to indicate how they were currently feeling (see Appendix for more details on all multi-item scales). As expected, participants watching the sad video reported feeling more sad than those who watched the neutral video ($M_{Sad} = 2.71$, $M_{Neutral} = 4.85$; $F(1, 35) = 22.55$, $p < .001$). Thus, the results support the efficacy of our emotion manipulation.

Pretest of commercials. We conducted a pretest on sixty-four people from the same online panel as the main study to ensure that the commercials used in the study were similar in terms of positivity, but different in terms of energy. Participants were randomly assigned to watch one of the two commercials from the main study. Afterwards, participants indicated how positive the commercial was designed to make people feel. Participants then indicated how energetic they perceived the commercial to be and their opinion of the commercial. The results showed that participants perceived the ads to be similar in terms of positivity ($M_{Low} = 6.14$,

M_{High} = 6.11; F(1, 62) = .03, NS) but different in terms of energy (M_{Low} = 4.71, M_{High} = 5.78; F(1, 62) = 18.10, $p < .05$). They also reported liking both of the commercials equally (M_{Low} = 5.88, M_{High} = 5.89; F(1, 62) = .01, NS).

Viewing time. Commercials are typically developed assuming the viewer will watch them in their entirety. However, consumers often turn away from the commercial before the advertiser's message and sometimes even before the advertiser's brand is featured. Knowing when and why consumers are leaving an ad early is of critical importance to understanding advertising effectiveness. In this study, we measured how long people watched each commercial and found that the type of programming preceding the commercial influenced how long the participant would watch the commercial. Participants spent about thirty-four seconds on average watching the commercials. Given that viewing times were not normally distributed, we corrected for this by eliminating two people whose response times were more than two standard deviations from the mean and then transformed the data using a natural log transformation. We tested our prediction using ANOVA with viewing time as the dependent variable and emotion and energy as the factors. The emotion by energy interaction was significant (F(1, 90) = 5.33, $p < .05$). As depicted in Figure 2, in the sad condition participants spent less time watching the high energy commercial compared to the low energy commercial (M_{High} = 3.39; M_{Low} = 3.70; F(1, 90) = 4.12, $p < .05$). Participants in the neutral condition showed no difference in viewing time between commercial conditions (M_{High} = 3.67; M_{Low} = 3.50; F(1, 90) = 1.45, NS). That is, when consumers watch *The Champ* they viewed the Elephant Mastercard commercial significantly longer than the Muppet Mastercard commercial. However, when consumers watched an Albert Einstein documentary it made no difference.[3]

Insert Figure 2 about here

Discussion

Study 1 demonstrates that programming content impacts consumers' willingness to watch specific types of commercials. In particular, when the program is sad, consumers are less willing to watch positive, high energy commercials. Given the increasing popularity of somber content (e.g., *Law and Order: SVU*) this can have real consequences for advertisers who frequently feature positive high energy commercials. Additionally, these results provide support for our theory by showing that people experiencing sadness spend less time watching positive, high energy commercials compared to positive, low energy commercials. The same effect was not observed when consumers were in a neutral affective state. This tendency to shy away from high energy content by sad consumers provides support for H_1. One limitation of our findings in this study is that our commercials not only differed in terms of energy, but also in terms of how funny, silly and frivolous the commercials were perceived to be.[4] Thus, it could be argued that people who feel sad find frivolous or funny commercials harder to watch. The next study rules this out as a possibility by having people watch commercials that did not differ in terms of how funny, silly or frivolous they were perceived to be. Another objective of the next study was to examine how the difficulty sad consumers experience from watching positive high energy commercials influences their attitudes and behavioral intentions towards an advertiser.

Study 2

Study 1 looked at how TV program content impacts how long consumers will watch an ad that follows and finds that if the programming is sad (i.e., *The Champ*) consumers will watch a positive, high energy commercial for a shorter duration. Assuming the consumer watches the

entire commercial, is it possible that this could have a negative effect on consumers' evaluation of the advertiser? Might advertisers invest in commercial production and primetime placement only to find the commercial can have a negative impact on consumer engagement with the brand? Study 2 moves beyond viewing time and considers how having sad consumers watch positive, high energy commercials influences their attitude and behavioral intention toward an advertised brand. We hypothesize that when programming is sad and the commercial that follows is positive and high energy, consumers will evaluate the advertiser negatively and show less favorable behavioral intentions towards the advertiser (H_{2a}). This same response should not be observed when consumers are in a neutral affective state (H_{2b}). Additionally, we expect that the negative response by sad consumers to the advertiser when they view a high energy (versus a low energy) commercial should be mediated by how difficult it was to watch the commercial (H_3).

Method

Pretest of emotion induction. We conducted a pretest on thirty-six people from the same online panel as the main study to validate the videos used for the emotion induction. Participants were asked to watch one of two videos and told to watch the entire video. The sad video was a video that showed a man discussing the moment when his mother passed away. The neutral video was a short promotional video about an upcoming PBS documentary. Afterwards, participants were asked to indicate how they were currently feeling. As expected, participants watching the sad video reported feeling worse than those who watched the neutral video (M_{Sad} = 2.71, $M_{Neutral}$ = 4.78; $F(1, 32) = 20.63$, $p < .001$). Thus, the results support the efficacy of our emotion induction.

Pretest of commercials. We conducted a pretest on seventy-two people from the same online panel as the main study to ensure that the commercials used in the study were similar in terms of positivity, but different in terms of energy. We also wanted to find commercials that did not differ in terms of how funny, silly or frivolous the commercials were perceived to be. We selected two commercials by the insurance company Geico. The high energy commercial was an ad for Geico featuring an energetic movie announcer. The low energy commercial was an ad for Geico starring Ed "Too Tall" Jones, a former NFL football player. Participants were randomly assigned to watch one of the two commercials. Afterwards, participants indicated how positive the commercial was, how energetic they perceived the commercial to be, and their opinion of the commercial on the same scales as the pretest in Study 1. The results showed that participants perceived the commercials to be similar in terms of positivity (M_{High} = 5.80, M_{Low} = 5.91; F(1, 70) = .29, NS) but different in terms of energy (M_{High} = 5.31, M_{Low} = 4.75; F(1, 70) = 5.21, $p <$ .05). Participants also reported liking the ads equally (M_{High} = 6.11, M_{Low} = 5.93; F(1, 70) = .61, NS).

Participants also indicated how funny, silly and frivolous they perceived the ads to be. They did not indicate any difference in terms of how funny (M_{High} = 5.80, M_{Low} = 5.91; F(1, 70) = .29, NS), silly (M_{High} = 5.58, M_{Low} = 5.83; F(1, 70) = .23, NS) and frivolous (M_{High} = 4.03, M_{Low} = 4.58; F(1, 70) = 2.24, NS) they perceived the commercials to be. Based on these results, we selected the announcer spot for the high energy commercial and the "Too Tall" Jones spot for the low energy commercial.

Design and procedure. Eighty people (M_{Age} = 34; 58% male) from an online panel participated in the main study for a small stipend. The study adopted a 2 (emotion: sad or neutral) x 2 (energy: high or low) between-subjects design. The study was conducted using an

online survey. Participants were instructed that the purpose of the study was to examine people's reactions to different videos and commercials. They were further instructed that it was very important that they have a high speed internet connection and the ability to listen to sound while watching the commercials. Before starting the study, they were then asked to indicate whether they could watch video content and listen to sound before continuing. Those who indicated that they did not have the ability to watch video and listen to sound were disqualified from the study. First, participants were asked to watch one of two videos from the pretest and told to watch the entire video because they would be asked questions about the video later on in the survey. Each video lasted for approximately three minutes and the submit button on the survey was disabled during that time to ensure participants could not continue to the next screen until the video was over.

Participants were asked to watch one of the two Geico commercials from the pretest (i.e., high energy or low energy). After watching the commercials, participants indicated how difficult they found watching the commercial. They then indicated their attitude and behavioral intentions toward Geico (see Appendix for more details on all multi-item scales). Participants were then asked to briefly describe the commercial and the video they watched.

Results

Brand attitude and behavioral intentions. We tested H_2 using ANOVA with brand attitude as the dependent variable and emotion and energy as the factors. The emotion by energy interaction was significant for brand attitude ($F(1, 76) = 5.83$, $p < .05$; see Figure 3a). In support of H_{2a}, in the sad condition, participants had less favorable attitudes towards Geico after watching the high energy commercial compared to the low energy commercial ($M_{High} = 4.98$; $M_{Low} = 6.06$; $F(1, 76) = 9.96$, $p < .01$). In support of H_{2b}, there was no significant difference in

brand attitude after watching the commercials for participants in the neutral condition (M_{High} = 5.10; M_{Low} = 5.23; F(1, 76) = .12, NS).

We examined behavioral intentions using ANOVA with emotion and energy as the factors. The emotion by energy interaction was marginally significant (F(1, 76) = 3.07, $p < .10$; see Figure 3b). In support of H_{2a}, in the sad condition, participants had less favorable behavioral intentions towards Geico after watching the high energy commercial compared to the low energy commercial (M_{High} = 3.87; M_{Low} = 4.74; F(1, 76) = 3.09, $p < .10$). In support of H_{2b}, there was no significant difference in behavioral intention after watching the commercials for participants in the neutral condition (M_{High} = 4.46; M_{Low} = 4.06; F(1, 76) = .56, NS). These results are consistent with H_2.

Difficulty watching commercials. We examined difficulty experienced while watching the commercials using ANOVA with emotion and energy as the factors. The emotion by energy interaction was significant (F(1, 76) = 5.83, $p < .05$). As depicted in Figure 3c, in the sad condition, participants found it more difficult to watch the high energy commercial compared to the low energy commercial (M_{High} = 2.24; M_{Low} = 1.22; F(1, 76) = 9.44, $p < .01$). There was no significant difference in how difficult watching the commercials was for participants in the neutral condition (M_{High} = 1.48; M_{Low} = 1.63; F(1, 76) = .18, NS).

Insert Figure 3 about here

Mediation. We tested whether difficulty mediates the effect of energy on brand attitudes for sad consumers using conditional process modeling (Hayes 2012; model 8). Conditional indirect effects analyses revealed that difficulty mediated the effect of energy on brand attitude in the sad condition, but not in the neutral affect condition. Specifically, the energy by emotion

interaction on the mediator (difficulty) was significant ($p < .05$). Once the mediator (difficulty) was included in the analysis, the energy by emotion interaction on the dependent variable (brand attitudes) was not significant (NS). The direct effect of energy on brand attitude in the sad condition was positive with a confidence interval that included zero (direct effect = .05, 95% CI [-.61, .71]). The indirect effect of energy on brand attitude in the sad condition was negative with a confidence interval that did not include zero (indirect effect = -.39, 95% CI [-.77, -.13]). The direct effect of energy on difficulty in the neutral affect condition was positive and did not include zero (direct effect = .79, 95% CI [.13, 1.47]). The indirect effect of energy on difficulty in the neutral affect condition included zero (indirect effect = .06, 95% CI [-.18, .43]).

We also tested whether difficulty mediates the effect of energy on behavioral intentions. The results show that difficulty mediated the effect of energy on behavioral intentions in the sad condition, but not in the neutral affect condition. Specifically, the energy by emotion interaction on the mediator (difficulty) was significant ($p < .05$). Once the mediator (difficulty) was included in the analysis, the energy by emotion interaction on the dependent variable (behavioral intentions) was not significant (NS). The direct effect of energy on behavioral intentions in the sad condition was negative with a confidence interval that included zero (direct effect = -.39, 95% CI [-1.41, .63]). The indirect effect of energy on behavioral intentions in the sad condition was negative with a confidence interval that did not include zero (indirect effect = -.27, 95% CI [-.74, -.01]). The direct effect of energy on behavioral intentions in the neutral condition was positive with a confidence interval that included zero (direct effect = .57, 95% CI [-.47, 1.60]). The indirect effect of energy on behavioral intentions in the neutral affect condition included zero (indirect effect = .04, 95% CI [-.10, .33]). Thus, the results also support H_3. The less

favorable attitudes and behavioral intentions after watching positive, high energy commercials was mediated by how difficult it is to watch the commercial.

Discussion

Study 2 shows that when sad consumers watch a positive, high energy commercial, there can be negative consequences. If consumers are watching negative programming it will cause the investment in the commercial to backfire. Consumers will actually have a more negative attitude toward the brand and be less likely to buy the product. The results also provide additional support for our theory that consumers experiencing sadness find positive, high energy commercials more difficult to watch than less energetic, positive commercials. Importantly, the findings demonstrate that the difficulty experienced while watching high energy commercials can have a detrimental effect on attitudes and behavioral intentions toward the advertisers. This suggests that advertisers may be wasting a large portion of their advertising dollars on high energy content that does not just make their advertising ineffective, but can actually lead their advertising to have a negative effect on their brand. The purpose of the next study was to demonstrate the process underlying our findings.

Study 3a

In Study 3a, we wanted to show that this effect is not limited to television commercials, but would also emerge for other forms of positive content (e.g., media), while also demonstrating the process. We propose that the reason why consumers experiencing sadness find positive, high energy content difficult is because it conflicts with the state of deactivation and preference for inaction that characterizes sadness. If our theory is correct then reducing sad consumers' desire for inactivity should reduce their tendency to find positive, high energy content difficult.

Previous research demonstrates that priming an action goal motivates people to engage in tasks that require action (Albarracín et al. 2008; Laran 2010). For example, priming an action goal can make people more motivated to solve difficult puzzles compared to those not primed with an action goal (Albarracín et al. 2008). Thus, priming an action goal should attenuate the state of deactivation that accompanies the experience of sadness and reduce the difficulty sad consumers experience from listening to positive, high energy stimuli. Consequently, we primed or did not prime an action goal and examined how difficult participants perceived it to be to listen to positive, high energy media content. When no action goal was primed, we expected those experiencing sadness to find the high energy media to be more difficult to listen to than those in a neutral affective state. When an action goal was primed, we did not expect those experiencing sadness to find the content to be more difficult to listen to than those in a neutral affective state.

H_{4a}: When no action goal is primed, consumers experiencing sadness will find it more difficult to listen to positive, high energy media content than those in a neutral affective state.

H_{4b}: When an action goal is primed, consumers experiencing sadness will not find it more difficult to listen to positive, high energy media content than those in a neutral affective state.

Method

Design. One-hundred fifty-four people in an online panel participated in the study (M_{Age} = 36; 35% male). The study employed a 2 (emotion: sad or neutral) x 2 (action goal: primed or not primed) between subjects design. Participants were instructed that they would be participating in several unrelated tasks. The first task was an emotion induction that was adopted from previous research (Labroo and Patrick 2008). Approximately one half of the participants were told that the researchers were developing a questionnaire that would allow them to understand which life events make people sad and to write about a very sad day in their life (sad

condition). The remaining participants were instructed that the researchers were developing a questionnaire that would allow them to understand which life events are typical and to write about their typical day. All participants were told to write for five minutes.

Participants were then instructed that they would be listening to and evaluating a piece of music. Before listening to the music they were administered a word completion task ostensibly as a short test of their verbal abilities. In the action goal primed condition, participants completed 20 words of which 8 were action words (e.g., "go," "action" and "active") that were designed to prime an action goal (Albarracín et al. 2008; Laran 2010). In the action goal not primed condition, participants completed 20 neutral words (e.g., "college," "window" and "number"). After the short verbal task, participants were instructed that they would be listening to a song called "Laughs and Swings"(Cohen and Andrade 2004). We selected this passage based on a pretest indicating that people expected content with this title to be positive (M = 6.03) and energetic (M = 5.71). Participants then indicated how difficult they expected it to be to listen to the song. Difficulty was measured on the same scales as Study 2 (see Appendix for more details on multi-item scales). Finally, they completed a manipulation check of the emotion manipulation.

Results

Manipulation check. An ANOVA with emotion and action goal as the factors found a main effect of emotion such that participants in the sad condition reported feeling significantly worse than those in the neutral condition ($M_{Sadness}$ = 2.18; $M_{Neutral}$ = 4.24; F(1, 150) = 123.84, p < .001). The interaction was not significant (F(1, 150) = 1.47, NS).

Difficulty listening to music. We examined the effect of emotion on the difficulty experienced while listening to the music using ANOVA with emotion and action goal as the

factors. The emotion by action goal interaction was significant ($F(1, 150) = 12.13$, $p = .001$; see Figure 4a). As predicted by H_{4a}, participants who were not primed with an action goal found the music to be more difficult to listen to when they were sad compared to those in a neutral affective state ($M_{Sad} = 3.28$; $M_{Neutral} = 2.66$; $F(1, 150) = 10.26$, $p < .01$). Participants who were primed with an action goal found the music to be marginally less difficult to listen to when they were in a sad affective state compared to those in a neutral affective state ($M_{Sad} = 2.08$; $M_{Neutral} = 3.25$; $F(1, 150) = 2.96$, $p < .10$). Thus, the results are also consistent with H_{4b} since people experiencing a neutral affective state did not find the music more difficult to listen to.

Insert Figure 4 about here

Study 3b

In Study 3b, we wanted to replicate the findings of Study 3a while also providing additional support for our process by showing that the difficulty from exposure to positive, high energy content would not emerge when people experienced a different negative emotion that is not accompanied by a state of deactivation. To test this, we primed people with sadness or anger, which is a negative emotion characterized by a state of activation (Berger and Milkman 2012). If our theory is correct, we would expect people experiencing anger to not show the same difficulty when exposed to positive, high energy content when no action goal was primed. Thus, we expected those experiencing sadness to find it more difficult to read positive, high energy media content than those experiencing anger when no action goal was primed. Anger refers to an unpleasant affective state characterized by high activation (Russell and Feldman Barrett 1999). When an action goal was primed, we expected there to be no difference in how difficult sad participants and angry participants found reading the media content to be.

H_{5a}: When no action goal is primed, consumers experiencing sadness will find it more difficult to read to positive, high energy media content than those experiencing anger.

H_{5b}: When an action goal is primed, consumers experiencing sadness will not find it more difficult to read to positive, high energy media content than those experiencing anger.

Method

Design and procedure. One hundred seventy-eight people in an online panel participated in the study (M_{Age} = 36; 36% male). The study employed a 2 (emotion: sad or angry) x 2 (action goal: primed or not primed) between-subjects design. Participants were instructed that they would be participating in several unrelated tasks. The first task was the same emotion induction as in Study 3a. Participants were then instructed that they would be reading a book passage, but before reading the passage they were administered the same word completion task from Study 3a. After the short verbal task, participants were instructed that they would be reading a passage from a book called "Laughs and Swings." Participants then indicated how difficult they expected reading the passage to be on the same scales as Studies 2 and 3a.

Results

Pretest of emotion manipulation. We conducted a pretest on fifty-six people from the same online panel as the main study to validate our emotion manipulation. Consequently, participants wrote either about a sad day or an event that made them angry. They were then primed with an action goal or no action goal. Afterwards, they were asked to indicate the extent to which they were currently feeling sad and feeling angry. Since the responses to the different emotions measures were highly correlated (r = .56), we analyzed each measure using ANCOVA with the other emotion measure as a covariate. As expected, participants in the angry condition (M = 4.62) reported feeling angrier than those in the sad condition (M = 5.39, F(1, 53) = 6.03, *p*

< .05). Additionally, participants in the sad condition reported feeling sadder (M = 3.67) than those in the angry condition (M = 4.02, F(1, 53) = 3.64, $p < .10$).

Difficulty reading book passage. We excluded one person from our analysis for taking a long break (more than two minutes) between the manipulations and the difficulty measures. We tested our key predictions using ANOVA with difficulty as the dependent variable and emotion and action goal as the factors. The emotion by action goal interaction was significant (F(1, 172) = 4.24, $p < .05$; see Figure 4b). As predicted by H_{5a}, when no action goal was primed, sad participants found the book passage more difficult to read compared to those in the angry condition ($M_{Sad} = 2.56$; $M_{Angry} = 1.90$; F(1, 172) = 9.08, $p < .01$). As predicted by H_{5b}, when an action goal was primed, sad participants did not find the book passage more difficult to read compared to those in the angry condition ($M_{Sad} = 2.10$; $M_{Angry} = 2.07$; F(1, 172) = .01, NS).

Discussion

This study both demonstrates the boundary conditions of the phenomenon but also articulates the mechanism in greater detail. This study demonstrates that while these effects apply to sad programming, they do not generalize to all negative content –if the negative content elicits anger instead of sadness, the effect will be diminished. Thus, in assessing the implications of these findings and when they would most likely apply, it will be important to consider the likely effect of the programming on consumers. This in no way limits the importance of the focal finding on sadness. Programming often elicits a range of emotions. However, it would suggest that programs that chiefly elicit sadness, or even have the potential to elicit sadness, will show the strongest effect. The results also provide strong support for our theory and the process underlying our findings. Specifically, the results demonstrate that priming an action goal, which increases people's state of activation, attenuates the difficulty sad people experience from

listening to highly energetic stimuli. Additionally, the results also support our process by showing that the same effect does not emerge for individuals who are experiencing anger, a negative emotion that is characterized by a state of activation.

Study 4

The objective of Study 4 was to replicate our findings in a naturalistic setting. Given the popularity and strong growth in streamed content online, we conducted a field study on Hulu (www.hulu.com), which is a website that streams video content (movies and television shows) on-demand to users. A significant portion of the programming is offered to users for free with commercial interruptions making the viewing experience similar to watching television. More than half of US households can stream content (Magid 2013) and 11.5 million people currently watch content on Hulu, which is a 50% increase in viewership in less than a year. Total viewership for Hulu may be larger than the networks. The largest audience commanded by any of the networks in the primetime Thursday slot is 8.4 million at CBS (Ng 2013). Thus, Hulu may be beating out the networks especially in the advertiser coveted 18-49 demographic as they are the most likely to be using Hulu (*Nielsen* 2009). To test our theory, we had people watch a segment on Hulu that was designed to evoke sadness and then evaluate a commercial in terms of how difficult it was to watch, and how positive and energetic it was perceived to be. We expected that when the commercial was relatively more positive, people would find it harder to watch highly energetic commercials compared to ones that were less energetic. We did not have a specific prediction regarding commercials that were perceived to be more negative. Although it is possible the level of energy in the commercial may influence how difficult it was to watch these commercials, it is also possible that the level of energy would not influence how difficult it

was to watch these commercials since negative commercials should be more difficult to watch because they are negative.

H_6: When consumers are experiencing sadness they will find it more difficult to watch positive, high energy commercials than positive, low energy commercials.

Method

One hundred ninety-seven people (M_{Age} = 32; 50% Male) from an online panel participated in the field study. All responses were collected using an online survey. Participants were instructed that the purpose of the study was to examine people's reactions to commercials. They were further instructed that it was very important that they have a high-speed internet connection and the ability to listen to sound while watching the commercials. Before starting the study, they were then asked to indicate whether they could watch video and listen to sound before continuing. Those who indicated that they did not have the ability to watch video and listen to sound were disqualified from the study.

On the next screen of the survey, participants were given a link to a video on Hulu that was a documentary entitled *9/11: The Falling Man* about the 9/11 tragedy. They were instructed to cut and paste the link into a new web browser so that they could answer questions about their viewing experience in the online survey (open in their current browser). Since most videos on Hulu begin by having users watch a commercial, participants were asked to watch the initial commercial, pause the video and return to the online survey to answers some questions about the initial commercial. After watching the initial commercial, participants were asked to indicate how much they liked the commercial, the name of the brand in the commercial and their attitude toward the brand in the commercial. They were then asked to briefly describe the commercial.

After answering these initial questions, participants returned to the video. They were instructed to watch the first segment, which lasted about seven minutes, and the first commercial that appeared during the first commercial break (i.e., the target commercial). After watching the first segment and the target commercial, participants returned to the online survey to answer questions about the target commercial and the segment. The initial set of questions was about the target commercial. Participants indicated how difficult they found watching the commercial to be using the same scale as in Studies 2, 3a, and 3b (see Appendix for more details on all multi-item scales). Next, participants indicated how positive the commercial was designed to make people feel. Participants then indicated how energetic they perceived the commercial to be and their attitude toward the commercial. Afterwards, participants indicated the name of the advertiser and their attitude toward the advertiser. Finally, participants were asked to briefly describe the commercial that they just watched.

The second set of questions was about the video segment. Participants were asked to indicate how sad the video segment made them feel with lower responses corresponding to greater sadness. The mean response was significantly below the midpoint ($M = 2.24$; $p < .001$), suggesting that the video clip was effective at making people feel sad. Participants were then asked to briefly describe the video clip.

Results

We removed twelve people from our analysis. One person was removed because her description of the target commercial indicated that she watched more than one commercial during the first commercial break. A second person was eliminated because her description of the video segment indicated that she did not watch the correct video. The remaining participants were removed for taking too long to watch the video segment before evaluating the first

commercial. Their time spent watching the video was at least two standard deviations away from the mean, which was approximately four minutes longer than it should have taken. This suggests that they may have failed to return to the survey to answer questions immediately after the target commercial as instructed.

We tested H_6 using regression analysis with perceptions of how positive the commercial was (positivity), how energetic the commercial was (energy), and their interaction as dependent variables. The dependent variable was how difficult people found it to watch the target commercial (difficulty). [5] Multicollinearity was not a problem (all VIF's were less than 2.0).

For our initial analysis, we regressed difficulty on mean-centered positivity, mean-centered energy and their interaction with attitude toward the advertiser and commercial as covariates (see Table 1). The positivity by energy interaction was significant ($\beta = .15$, $t(179) = 1.98$, $p < .05$). However, the effects of positivity ($t(179) = -.52$, NS) and energy ($t(179) = .1.08$, NS) on difficulty were not significant. To examine the effect of energy at high levels of positivity, we centered the variables at one standard deviation above the mean and reran the regression (Aiken and West 1991). In support of H_6, energy was a significant positive predictor of difficulty ($\beta = .21$, $t(179) = 1.94$, $p = .05$). Thus, when the commercial was positive, the more energetic the commercial was the harder participants found watching it to be. The effect of positivity on difficulty was not significant ($t(179) = .49$, NS).

Insert Table 1 about here

Discussion

The fourth study demonstrates in a naturalistic environment that people find positive, high energy commercials difficult to watch. A number of advertisers want positivity and energy to characterize their brand. However, if these advertisers are not vigilant about placement of their

ads with these characteristics, this investment could backfire. Consistent with H_6, the results show that people find it harder to watch positive, high energy commercials than positive commercials that are low energy. We also found that high energy commercials were not perceived to be more difficult to watch when the commercial was more negative. Thus, it seems the combination of positivity and high energy, that characterizes a great number of advertisers, has this negative effect. That is, our effect is specifically the result of positivity and high energy being combined and not simply a high energy effect.

General Discussion

This research shows that sad programming (e.g., *9/11: The Falling Man, The Champ*) can negatively impact the effectiveness of positive, high energy ads. Following a sad program consumers choose to watch less of a positive, high energy commercial (Study 1). We further demonstrate that people in a sad affective state find watching a positive, high energy commercial difficult which leads them to evaluate the advertiser more negatively and show less favorable behavioral intentions (Study 2). Additionally, we show that the effect of sadness on the difficulty associated with watching positive, high energy content can be mitigated when people are primed with an action goal (Study 3a). Further, we show that the difficulty associated with watching positive, high energy content does not emerge when the negative emotional state is accompanied by a state of high in activation (e.g., anger; Study 3b). Finally, looking at the effect within a naturalistic setting of streamed video content at Hulu, following a sad program consumers find watching positive, high energy commercials more difficult than positive commercials that are lower in energy (Study 4). Thus, in situations where we can anticipate consumers' emotional state, we can know which ads will be more effective. When consumers are watching serious

dramas, surfing self-help websites, reading news of a tragic accident, they are likely to be in a somber and possibly sad affective state and react negatively to positive, high energy advertising. Thus, situations in which consumers could be sad represent a real liability for advertisers. Managers would be well-advised to revise their advertising strategy for any placement in media that has the potential to induce sadness.

Theoretical Contributions

This research makes several theoretical contributions. Previous research finds that people will improve a negative affective state when there are clear benefits to doing so (Erber, Wegner, and Therriault 1996; Erber and Erber 2001; Cohen and Andrade 2004). For instance, when people anticipate social interaction and they believe that maintaining a neutral state is optimal, those in a negative affective state will select positive stimuli in an attempt to "neutralize" their affective state (Erber, Wegner and Therriault 1996). Our research builds on these findings by demonstrating that there is also a negative side to positive content when consumers are sad: conflict. The conflict between the state of deactivation during sadness and positive, high energy stimuli leads consumers to find watching such content difficult and results in an aversive reaction. Adding to work on conflict, this research shows that emotion can serve as the basis for conflict. Ours is the first research to demonstrate that people in a sad state actually find positive, high energy stimuli difficult. This work also demonstrates the important role of activation in consumer behavior. Our research extends work on emotional activation (Russell and Barrett 1998) to show that the activation level of negative emotions serves as an important motivational driver of consumer perception, judgment, and behavior.

Managerial Implications

This research offers a number of important implications for managers. As we noted at the outset, a significant proportion of media content is negative and appears to be growing more negative with time, yet the ads sponsoring this content remain positive and highly energetic. Our research shows that advertisers may be hurting their brand with ads placed in negative media content. If these ads are positive and upbeat, consumers appear to have more negative attitudes toward the brand, show less favorable behavioral intentions toward the brand, or may not even watch the ad.

The results demonstrate that emotion can exert a strong influence on consumers' media choices. Specifically, the studies show that sadness can lead people to avoid watching positive, high energy ads, as well as listening to and reading positive, high energy media content. As such these findings have substantial implications for a variety of media such as websites, movies, and television shows. As the content delivered through the various media channels grows increasingly negative as our research suggests, advertisers will need to be more strategic in designing their ads and choosing ad placement. This research suggests that firms will realize substantially greater success if they use low energy positive or neutral ads rather than the positive, high energy ones that continue to dominate. Alternatively, it suggests that managers may focus on selectively placing positive, high energy ads in programming unlikely to produce sadness in viewers (e.g., *Modern Family*).

Our second study demonstrates that people experiencing sadness find a positive commercial more difficult to watch than those in a neutral affective state. We also show that this difficulty may have a negative impact on brand attitude and behavioral intention. This has important implications for advertisers as it suggests that they must not only consider the context

in which their ad is displayed (i.e., what TV show consumers are watching), but also the positivity and energy level of the ad that is viewed. For instance, our findings suggest that watching a positive, high energy commercial (e.g., an energetic announcer for Geico) during a show that induces a negative affective state (e.g., *The Walking Dead*) may have a negative impact on brand attitude and loyalty. Much of the focus among advertisers is on maximizing reach within their target demographic. Our research finds that if they reach that target with the wrong ad it could be detrimental to their brand.

Future Research

While our investigation focuses on sadness, a question remains as to whether these findings would extend to other affective states (e.g., guilt). For instance, might someone experiencing guilt find virtuous options, which are inconsistent with guilt, difficult? This research also demonstrates that there is need for a more refined understanding of positive stimuli. Researchers use the term "positive stimulus" to refer to newspaper stories (Erber, Wegner and Therriault 1996), music (Cohen and Andrade 2004), videos (Wegener and Petty 1994), and chocolate bars (Tice, Bratslavsky, and Baumeister 2001). It is not surprising then that preference for positive stimuli can vary across studies. In this paper, we demonstrate that some positive stimuli seem to impose a greater difficulty than others. Specifically, those that are highly energetic appear to have different effects than less energetic stimuli. Thus, more research needs to be done to delineate the differences between positive stimuli. Further, it may be useful to explore how differences in intensity between temporary sadness and a deep depression affect how consumers respond to positive stimuli. Perhaps the cost associated with a positive, high energy stimulus during depression results in such difficulty that it leads to the persistent

avoidance of positive, high energy stimuli that contributes to the self-perpetuating nature of depression.

In sum, our results find there may be a real competitive opportunity for advertisers willing to consider the design of their ads in relation to their placement in media. This represents not only an opportunity to increase advertising effectiveness and sales revenues, but also a chance to enhance the experience of customers as customers interface with their brand.

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Footnotes

[1] Analysis conducted by the current authors involving two independent coders (alpha = .77) naïve to the hypotheses of the research.

[2] Program coding conducted by the current authors involving two independent coders (alpha = .99) naïve to the hypotheses of the research.

[3] Similar results were found in a separate study focused on highly and mildly positive ads. These studies used affect inducing movie clips as well as more traditional affect manipulations (i.e., word association) and pretested ads and newspaper headlines.

[4] In Study 1 participants in the pretest also indicated how funny (1 = "Not funny" and 7 = "Funny"), silly (1 = "Not silly" and 7 = "Silly") and frivolous (1 = "Not frivolous" and 7 = "Frivolous") they perceived the commercials to be [funny (M_{Low} = 4.36, M_{High} = 5.35; F(1, 70) = 7.93, $p < .01$), silly (M_{Low} = 4.79, M_{High} = 5.71; F(1, 70) = 6.48, $p < .05$) and frivolous (M_{Low} = 3.33, M_{High} = 4.23; F(1, 70) = 4.68, $p < .05$)].

[5] Positivity and energy were significantly correlated (r = .63; $p < .001$), suggesting that highly positive commercials tended to also be high energy. We also included attitude towards the advertiser and attitude towards the commercial as covariates. Although it is possible that aversion could influence the evaluation of a specific commercial or advertiser, we felt these covariates were necessary to control for effects due to variation across advertisers and commercials. Attitude towards the advertiser was positively correlated with positivity (r = .23; $p < .01$) and energy (r = .20; $p < .01$), but negatively correlated with difficulty (r = -.21; $p < .01$). Attitude towards the commercial was positively correlated with positivity (r = .39; $p < .001$) and energy (r = .33; $p < .001$), but negatively correlated with difficulty (r = -.35; $p < .001$).

[6] Emotion was measured with a single item in Study 3a.

TABLE 1

STUDY 4: REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULTS

		Dependent variable: Difficulty	
	Independent Variables	Coefficient	t-value
	Intercept	3.96	8.37***
	Attitude towards Ad	-.31	-3.46**
	Attitude towards Brand	-.06	-.54
	Positivity	-.07	(-.52)
	Energy	-.14	(1.08)
H_6	Positivity x energy	.15	(1.98)*
Model F value (degrees of freedom = 5, 179)		6.52	
Adjusted R^2		.15	

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

FIGURE 1

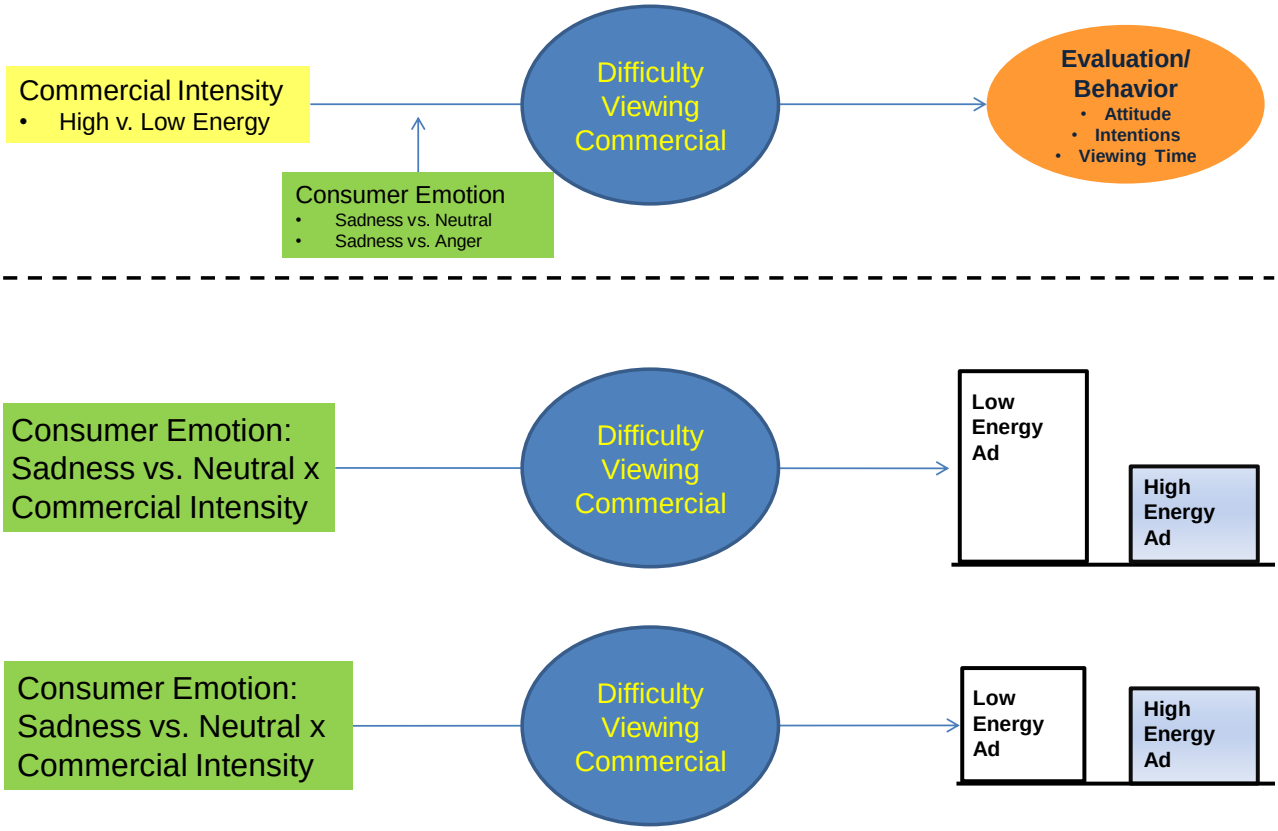

Commercial Intensity
• High v. Low Energy
Consumer Emotion
• Sadness vs. Neutral
• Sadness vs. Anger
Difficulty Viewing Commercial
Evaluation/ Behavior
• Attitude
• Intentions
• Viewing Time
Consumer Emotion: Sadness vs. Neutral x Commercial Intensity
Difficulty Viewing Commercial
Low Energy Ad
High Energy Ad
Consumer Emotion: Sadness vs. Neutral x Commercial Intensity
Difficulty Viewing Commercial
Low Energy Ad
High Energy Ad

FIGURE 2

STUDY 1: THE EFFECT OF COMMERCIAL INTENSITY AND EMOTION ON COMMERCIAL VIEWING TIME

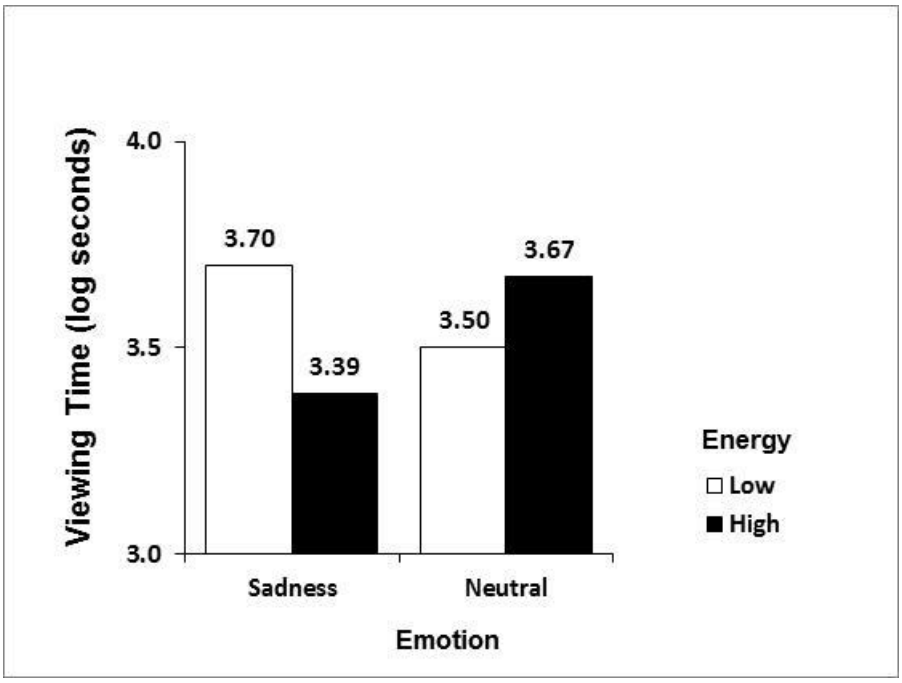
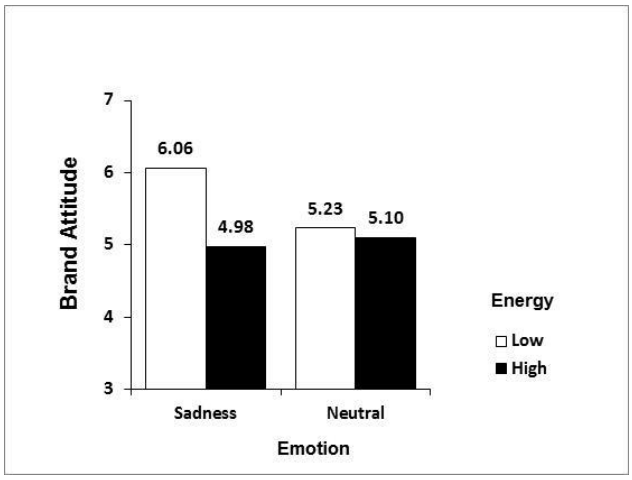
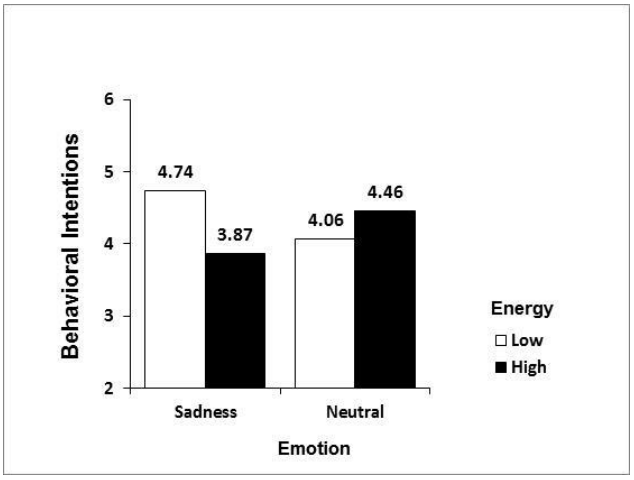


FIGURE 3

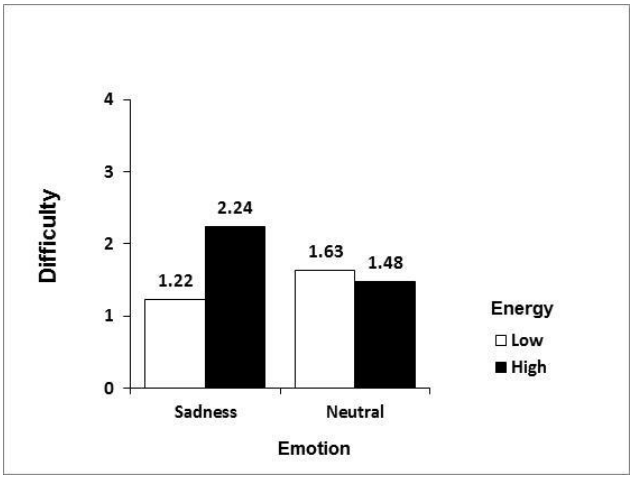
STUDY 2: THE EFFECT OF COMMERCIAL AND EMOTION ON BRAND ATTITUDE, BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS, AND DIFFICULTY



(a)



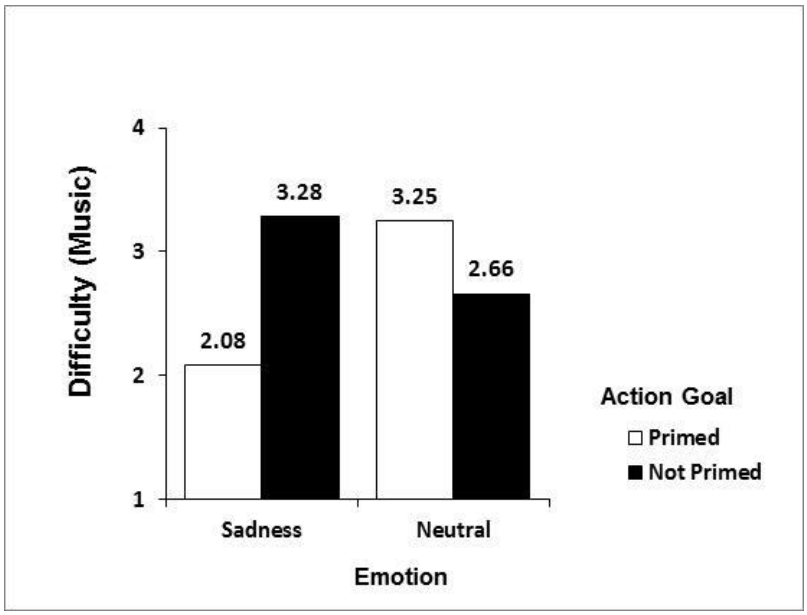
(b)



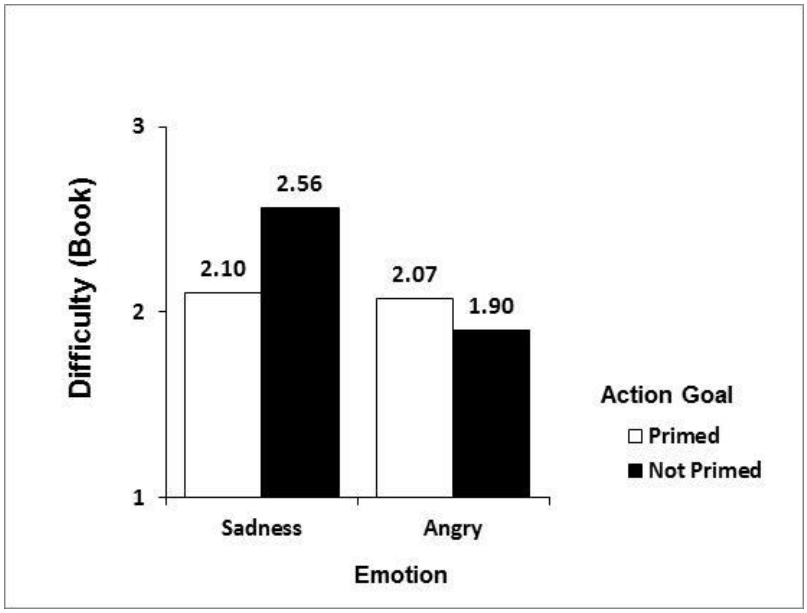
(c)

FIGURE 4

STUDY 3: THE EFFECT OF ACTION GOAL PRIMING AND EMOTION ON DIFFICULTY



(a)



(b)

Appendix: Measures

All items are anchored on seven-point scales. Representative papers that have used this scale or certain items in parentheses.

Sadness Measure: We used two items (Barrett and Russell 1998; Watson and Clark 1992). Correlations were .93 (Study 1 Pretest), .94 (Study 2 Pretest), .71(Study 3b Pretest), and .94 (Study 4).[6]

- Unhappy to Happy
- Sad to Joyful

Commercial Positivity: We used five items (Barrett and Russell 1998; Russell and Mehrabian 1977). Reliabilities were .85 (Study 1 Pretest), .90 (Study 2 Pretest), and .95 (Study 4).

- Unhappy to Happy
- Displeasure to Pleasure
- Feel bad to Feel good
- Sadness to Joy
- Negative to Positive

Commercial Energy: We used four items (Barrett and Russell 1998; Russell and Mehrabian 1977). Reliabilities were .86 (Study 1 Pretest), .81 (Study 3 Pretest), and .82 (Study 4).

- Not energetic to Energetic
- Dull to Exciting
- Not Animated to Animated
- Inactive to Active

Commercial Liking: We used two items (Chattopadhyay and Nedungadi 1992; Lau-Gesk and Meyers-Levy 2009). Correlations were .93 (Study 1), .90 (Study 2) and .93 (Study 4).

- Dislike to Like
- Not enjoy to Enjoy

Brand Attitude: We used three items (Park et al. 2010). Reliability was .93 (Study 2).

- Bad to Good
- Negative to Positive
- Dislike to Like

Perceived Difficulty: We used two items (Luce 1998). Correlations were .91 (Study 2), .72 (Study 3a), .71 (Study 3b), and .90 (Study 4).

- Watching the commercial was hard.
- Watching the commercial was difficult.

Behavioral Intention: We used two items. Correlation was .77 (Study 2). Representative paper that has used certain items in parentheses (Sela, Wheeler**,** and Sarial-Abi 2012).

- How likely would you be to recommend ___(firm name) to a friend?
- How likely would you be to visit ___com (firm name) to find out more information?

Attitude toward Advertiser: We used two items (Park et al. 2010). Correlation was .94 (Study 2).

- Bad to Good
- Negative to Positive

Anger Measure: We used two items (Barrett and Russell 1998; Watson and Clark 1992). Correlation was .87 (Study 3b Pretest).

- Angry to Not Angry
- Irritated to Not Irritated