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Effects of Mood State on likeability and purchase intent

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Abstract

It is an accepted principle in the consumer behaviour and advertising fields, that consumers are motivated to achieve positive affective states and avoid negative ones. The study goes through the most relevant findings in order to explore how mood affects consumer behaviour in regard to communication content and context. An experimental design was employed to examine the effects mood states on evaluation, ad likeability and purchase intent of a "feel-good" product. The congruency model is adopted as framework for the study, in order to interpret those effects taking into account product type as well. It is expected that there is consistency between consumers' mood state and his tendency to process information according to that mood. Results show that congruency model can explain such relationship, even though incongruent values emerge from the results. Subjects in negative mood state tend to process positive information better. Implications for further experiments and advertising strategies are suggested.

Keywords: advertising, consumer mood, congruency effect, purchase intent

1. Introduction

It is very clear that mood affects behaviour. The question raised is how do they affect behaviour. But the word "mood" has a way too wide range of usages and meanings. It might be used to describe a phenomenological property of an individual's affective state (bad or good mood), or might also be used to describe a property of an inanimate object (the gallery has an interesting mood). For the purposes of this study, we will adopt the former approach and view moods as feeling states that are subjectively perceived by individuals. As such, moods are a subcategory of feeling states. Mood will refer to feeling states that are temporary. Such states are particular to specific situations (Peterson and Sauber 1983, cited by Gardner, 1985) and may be contrasted with those that are relatively stable and permanent. Mood may be distinguished from emotions, which, in contrast are usually more intense, easily identifiable and tied to a specific behavior (Isen 1984). We are almost always aware of our emotions and their effects, which may redirect attention to the source of the emotion and interrupt ongoing behavior. We may or may not be aware of our mood and its effects, which may influence cognitive processes, but rarely interrupt ongoing behavior (Isen 1984). Different types of positive moods (cheeriness, peacefulness, sexual warmth) and negative moods (anxiety, guilt, depression) can be readily identified.

In order to examine the role of mood states in consumer behaviour and suggest their implications to advertising, a framework is needed that connects mood state prior exposure, media content, mood state after exposure and information processing tendency.

2. Media context/content effects on mood

Advertising may affect consumer responses by inducing mood states from the context in which the communication appears. The moods created by the context in which ads appear may be quite strong and may affect the mood states induced by exposure to advertising messages (Gardner 1985). In turn, these mood states may affect behavior, evaluation, and recall with respect to advertised brands.

Positive moods induced by media contexts may affect behavioral responses to advertising strategies. The findings of Cunningham, Steinberg, and Grev (1980) indicated that either a positive mood induction or a negative mood induction such as guilt increased helping (Study 1). The findings of another indicated that the positive mood manipulation increased helping only when a request stressing the desirability of helping was made, while the guilt manipulation produced increases only when a request stressing an obligation to help was made (Study 2). The Cunningham et al. findings for the positive mood condition are consistent with findings suggest that subjects in a good mood may readily generate positive associations toward donating money when presented with a request that stresses the desirability of helping, but feel that they have enough personal power to resist the coercive appeal of a request stressing an obligation to help.

Media exposure may also induce mood states that may, in turn, affect beliefs about products. The mood states induced by viewing emotional films appeared to enhance subjects' assessments of a product that would lead in turn to the induced mood state (Axelrod, cited by Gardner 1985). Moods induced by exposure to commercials may enhance the learning of mood-congruent message arguments. Yuspeh found that the individual's recall of commercials was affected by the programs in which they were viewed. She found that different programs may not have the same influence on the effectiveness of the ads appearing within them (Yuspeh, 1979, cited by Starr and Lowe 1995)

The material preceding an advertisement may include such cognitive mood inducers as positive or negative statements or emotional mood inducers like scary or happy music. Laboratory studies involving simple verbal messages have found that statements in radio or newspaper reports can influence mood under forced exposure conditions. In some experiments, researchers have manipulated the affective content of presented information and have found that hearing good/bad news was associated with measures of positive/negative moods (Veitch and Grifitt, 1976).

Media contexts may alter moods for advertising exposure, but moods induced by brand advertisements play a critical role in brand likeability and purchase behavior, evaluation, and information recall. The positive feelings induced by commercials may enhance the likelihood that consumers will engage in purchase activities associated with positive outcomes (Gardner 1985). The effects of advertisement-induced negative moods may be more complex. Extremely depressing commercials may attract attention because of their relative rarity, or they may be ignored due to a perceptual defense (Sternthal and Craig 1974, cited by Belch and Belch, 1984). Advertisements that induce positive exposure moods may facilitate the learning, integration, and acquisition of favorable material and may enhance the evaluation of advertised brands. Such ads are also likely to be favorably evaluated. At times, a positive relationship between attitude toward

the advertisement and attitude toward the brand may be observed (Armstrong, 2010). Advertisements may be designed to produce the mood states associated with particular life situations or experiences. When such experiences occur, the caused moods may help the recalling of advertisements associated with these moods.

Advertisements, like media contexts, may include such cognitive mood inducers as positive or negative statements and such emotional inducers as scary or happy music. Subliminal stimuli on the other hand may influence mood states without conscious awareness (Moore 1988, cited by Gould 1992). The importance of advertising-induced feelings is highlighted by efforts to measure emotional reactions to advertisements. Schlinger (1979) has developed a measurement system to assess individuals' emotional reactions to advertisements. Batra and Holbrook, (1990) have developed a typology of affective responses to advertising. Wells et al. (1983) in their "A reaction profile for TV commercial have suggested that mood should play a more central role in the advertising for products associated with pleasurable usage experiences. These studies show that communication content or context can affect consumer responses by inducing mood states.

3. Mood effect on information processing

Researchers agree that mood is a motivator of behavior but there are some disagreements on whether mood is a pre-existing state or is a reaction to stimuli.

Hadjimarcou and Marks (1993) consider mood as a pre-existing state that is brought by the subject at the ad exposure moment. They believe that essential goal of people while in a negative mood is to use any means possible to elevate their mood." This mood management perspective is based on the premise that consumers in a negative mood will be motivated to process ad information in hopes of improving their current mood. Motivation will be reflected by higher evaluations of the advertised product, relative to those in a positive mood. Those in a positive mood will be less motivated to process the information, and their evaluations will be less strongly influenced by their mood. According to the authors, a "feel-good" (mood elevating) product is more favorable for subjects in a negative mood relative to those in a positive mood. This indicates deeper processing for subjects in a negative mood.

The research conducted by Kellaris and Mantel (1996) views mood as an affective reaction to an advertisement. They use time perception as an indicator of processing intensity. Their findings show that more intensive processing (i.e., longer) was associated with positive feeling state than with negative feeling state for female participants. This evidence supports the mood preservation hypotheses which predict that subjects in a positive mood will avoid processing in order to maintain their current, positive mood state (Isen 1989, cited in Kellaris and Mantel 1993). Isen has been cited for supporting the mood preservation hypothesis. In recent discussions she has stated that this is an incorrect attribution to her work. Positive moods may give rise to more creative and flexible processing of new, positively executed material (Isen and Reeve 2006). When presented with negative content material, consumers may ignore the information in order to avoid negative thinking, especially when in a positive mood (Isen and Reeve 2006). Although the latter statement is coherent with the mood preservation hypothesis, this is predicted only for negatively composed media. We cannot deduct that subjects in a positive mood will always avoid processing. It would be more consistent to say that they'll avoid processing if the effect related to that processing is negative.

Some studies show that people are motivated to prolong a positive mood and therefore, have little motivation to process additional information (Mackie and Worth, 1989, 1991 cited by

Gardner 1994). This research concludes that positive moods discourage processing of incoming information. This may either be due to the fact that refocusing attention risks loss of the positive mood state or that the complex memory structures associated with positive moods allow little capacity for additional processing (Mackie and Worth 1991, cited by Martin et al. 1993).

Other studies make the opposite conclusion; happy, positive moods are more likely to encourage processing of persuasive messages. When the mood evoked from stimuli processing is positive people are more likely to accept further processing of that stimuli. (Batra and Ray, 1986).

Further studies concentrate on negative stimuli and effects on mood. According to Zajonc (1980), when the affect associated with stimuli is negative, individuals are more likely to avoid further processing. Other psychologists find that negative mood motivates more extensive processing since people are compelled to terminate negative moods (Isen 1985). People inhibit the continuation of negative moods by engaging in mood elevating behaviors (Cialdini, Kenrick, and Baumann 1981).

There is a debate over the mood effects in the consumer behavior studies as well. Consumers tend to avoid situations created by negative moods (Batra and Stayman 1990, cited by Geuens and De Pelsmacker 1998). Many consumers increase their shopping (product search), purchasing, and consuming of products in order to terminate a negative mood (Churchill and Wertz 1985). Mood-improving products tend to be approached more often by consumers experiencing a negative mood and negative moods evoked during a consumption experience are likely to inhibit processing (Gardner 1992). In the consumer domain positive moods have been associated with more flexible and sustained information processing. Positive moods evoked by advertisements tend to lead to greater processing and persuasion (Edell and Burke 1987, cited by Yoo and MacInnis 2005). On the other hand due to mood-protection mechanisms, positive moods may inhibit processing (Rowe G. et al 2006).

The congruency theory can explain the results achieved by Isen and Shalcker (1982 cited by Hadjimarcou and Marks 1993). They conclude that subjects apt to process information in a positive mood state, rate stimuli as more empathically, than those in either a neutral or negative mood state.

Srull (1983) found an inconsistency effect on mood, in his study on the amount of positive and negative information recalled from negative and positive ads. Subjects in a negative mood recalled positive ad information far more easily, while subjects in a positive mood state recollected better negative ads. Kamins, Marks, and Skinner (1991) reported incongruence effects as well toward ad/information evaluation, cognitions and purchase intent.

4. The experiment

There's great empirical evidence that subjects processing information in a positive mood state, rate positive stimuli as more pleasant than those in a negative mood state (Isen and Shalcker 1982) and that there's a consistency between consumers' mood state and its tendency to process information according to that mood (Bower, Gilligan and Monteiro, 1981). An experiment was conducted in order to test those theories.

A group of 45 participants were asked to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. The subjects were undergraduate students of the Economic and Social Sciences Faculty at the European University of Tirana. The first phase of the experiment, aimed to evaluate the students'

mood state before the experiment took place. They confirmed how they were feeling by choosing one of the following alternatives that described their mood the best: feel very sad, feel sad, neutral, feel happy, feel very happy.

After the participants filled the first part of the questionnaire, a short movie 10 minutes long, which inducted an elevated positive mood, was shown to the students. During the movie, a 90 seconds break took place, during which three FMCG advertisements were presented. One of the advertised products was a "feel-good" product (7Days-Bake Rolls) which was associated with positive usage experiences and "may be used to alleviate negative moods or to accentuate positive ones" (Gardner and Scott, 1990).

After the short movie, the subjects were asked to write a short description of the movie and their feelings and thoughts regarding the story. This was done to accentuate the story's impact on the subjects' mood states (Gardner, 1992). Then students were asked to fill the rest of the questionnaires. They were asked to rate their product Purchase Intent (PI) and their Advertisement Likeability (LA) level in a 10 point scale where 1 is the lowest value and 10 the highest one. Purchase Intent and Likeability were chosen as two of the most important advertising effectiveness measures. At the same time, Likeability is an emotional measure that can explain recall as well, (Du Plessis, 2005) and Purchase Intent, being a cognitive measure can explain information process (Ogilvy, 1983). In phase three of the experiment, the participants were asked to rate their post movie mood state using the same 5 level scale described in the first phase of the experiment.

Table 1.

Mood state	Mood state	
	Pre-Experimental	Post-Experimental
very sad	3	2
share	6.7%	4.4%
sad	14	12
share	31.1%	26.7%
neutral	18	19
share	40.0%	42.2%
happy	8	10
share	17.8%	22.2%
very happy	2	2
share	4.4%	4.4%
Total	45	45

Table 1. shows the participants feedback regarding their state mood before and after the exposure to the short movie.

Table 2.

Post experimental Mood State	Average of PI	Average of LA
happy	4.2	7.1
neutral	5.1	6.7
sad	8.1	8.6
very happy	3.0	5.5
very sad	7.5	9.5
Grand Total	5.7	7.4

Table 2. shows the average points of Purchase Intent (PI) and Advertisement Likeability (LA) for each mood state category after the subject exposure.

Table 3.

Subject category mood state	Pre experimental	Mood state Post experimental	Dif. in %
very happy	2	2	0.0%
happy	8	10	25.0%
neutral	18	19	5.6%
sad	14	12	-14.3%
very sad	3	2	-33.3%
total	45	45	

Table 3. summarizes the differences in percentage per each subject-mood category before and after the exposure of the subjects to the short movie that inducted elevated positive mood.

5. Results

Results of the Advertisement Likeability (LA) dimension, show that students who described their mood state as “Very sad”, were more likely to like the advertisements. The category shows 9.5 rate. The second highest rate is achieved by the “Sad” category, which shows a 8.6 rate on Advertisement Likeability. The “Very happy” category shows the lowest likeability rate, 5.5 points out of 10. The “Happy” category shows a rate of 7.1 out of 10, a good level of estimation but still lower than the average ratings on Advertisement Likeability from “Sad” and “Very sad” categories. Neutral category shows a rate of 6.7.

The “Sad” and “Very sad” category achieved the highest rate on the Purchase Intent (PI) dimension, respectively 8.1 and 7.5 out of 10. The “Neutral” subjects achieved a rate of 5.1 out of 10 on the Purchase Intent dimension. The last two show the lowest rate on Purchase Intent, “happy” by 4.2 out of 10 and “very happy” by 3.0 out of 10.

The results show a incongruent effect after a the exposure to a positive information. The subjects mood state improves almost in every category. The categories having the highest rate of meliorating are the “happy” category by 25%, the “very sad” and the “sad” category which reach a rate of 33.3% and 14.3%. The “neutral” category reached a rate of 5.6%.

6. Conclusion and Discussions

In contrast to the congruency theory (Isen and Shalcker, 1982), subjects in a negative mood state rated positive information higher than those in a positive mood. They were more likely to purchase the advertised product and had a higher likeability rate compared to subjects in a positive mood state. Higher rates of likeability implicate higher rates of recall (Du Plessis, 2005). Higher rates of Purchase Intent explain information processing (Ogilvy, 1983). The results are consistent with Srull (1983), Kamins et al. (1991) findings, even though they reach much higher rates. The mood management perspective by Gardner and Scott (1990) suggests that the essential goal of people in a negative mood is to use any possible mean to change their mood.

The study has its limitations. First, the 5 level-scale self evaluation system might not fully explain the subjects' mood state. An induced mood should be applied in further studies (Hadjimarcou and Marks, 1994). Mood state might be describe more thoroughly by rating a formulated question from the researcher. Peterson and Sauber's MSF (1983) might fullfil the experiment needs.

Eventhough a process' likeability underpins recalling it, unaided recall might explain information processing better than likeability. The study lacked the means to extent the experiment with a recall test.

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