Special Session Summary  Ordering, Layering, and Mixing Emotions: the Impact on Advertising Response

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SESSION SUMMARY
Ordering, Layering, and Mixing Emotions: The Impact on Advertising Response
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Complex blends of mixed emotional experiences have been observed in a variety of consumer situations, from "once-in-a-lifetime" highly engaging events such as planning for one’s wedding (e.g., Otnes, Lowrey, and Shrum 1997) to more mundane, much less engaging events such as watching television commercials (Edell and Burke 1987). Consumers, it appears, often experience mixed emotions (e.g., Polivy 1981). Despite being commonplace, mixed emotions have, until recently, been largely overlooked in both psychology and consumer research. Instead, researchers have focused on identifying emotion antecedents (e.g., Ellsworth and Smith 1988), typologies (e.g., Richens 1997), or dimensions (e.g., Holbrook and Batra 1987). Or, they have attempted to understand one specific emotion (e.g., fear: Anand-Keller and Block 1995), a particular relationship between a single-valenced emotional reaction and decision-making (e.g., negative: Luce 1998; positive: Isen 1989), or the direction of influence between a generalized emotional state and cognition (Pham, Cohen, Pracejus, and Hughes 2001).

However, recent studies have begun to investigate mixed emotions, shedding initial light on ways in which consumers cope with and respond to such oppositional feeling states. For example, recent research has shown that while individuals can simultaneously feel happy and sad (Larsen, McGraw, and Cacioppo 2002), the degree to which they actually feel torn between these two emotions may vary across cultures or age cohorts (Williams and Aaker 2002). Nevertheless, many questions about mixed emotions and their role in consumer behavior remain unanswered. This session focused on the importance of order in mixed emotional appeals and how mixed appeals heighten the emotional response impacting behavioral outcomes.

Overview of Issues/Papers
The three papers presented, strived to understand how consumers respond to mixed emotions. In the first paper, the authors hypothesized that order and perceived relevance of ad-emotion affect will aid understanding of nearly all areas of consumer research, including research on satisfaction (e.g., Westbrook and Oliver 1991), advertising response (e.g., Batra and Ray 1986; Edell and Burke 1987), attitudes (e.g., Petty, Cacciopo, and Schumann 1983), memory (e.g., Isen 1989), and decision making and other behaviors such as compulsion, impulsive, complaining, risk-seeking, and variety-seeking (e.g., Luce 1998; O’Guinn and Faber 1989; Kahn and Isen 1993).

Contribution and Audience
Despite much progress, current understanding of how emotions influence consumer behavior is far from complete. This session built a richer understanding of emotion’s influence which will aid understanding of nearly all areas of consumer research, including research on satisfaction (e.g., Westbrook and Oliver 1991), advertising response (e.g., Batra and Ray 1986; Edell and Burke 1987), attitudes (e.g., Petty, Cacciopo, and Schumann 1983), memory (e.g., Isen 1989), and decision making and other behaviors such as compulsion, impulsive, complaining, risk-seeking, and variety-seeking (e.g., Luce 1998; O’Guinn and Faber 1989; Kahn and Isen 1993).

“Feeling Good, Feeling Bad ... Feeling Sad, Feeling Glad: Order and Perceived Relevance of Ad-Emotion Affect Processing of Neutral Information”
Aparna A. Labroo, University of Chicago
Suresh Ramanathan, University of Chicago
Sometime before Valentine’s Day, New York Life Insurance ran an ad that first evoked strong positive/loving feelings about ones partner followed by negative emotion relating to death. The ad then went on to present facts about their Life Insurance policies. This ad was in contrast to their earlier ad that had made consumers experience negative emotion (about death) before evoking loving feelings about the partner. The question this research addresses is whether the order in which emotions are evoked, perceived self-relevance of emotionality and the perceived appropriateness of the emotionality to the ad affect liking of the ad and of the product.

Extending the literature that indicates that positive emotions provide the resources to cope with and process relevant negative information (Raghunathan and Trope 2002), this paper suggests that the experience of positive emotion prior to negative emotion facilitates coping with the negative emotion when the emotionality is perceived either as self-relevant or appropriate to the ad (by reducing the experience of negative affect). This enhances liking of the ad and of the product, and the data suggest that this occurs because of direct affect transfer and not due to elaboration about the ad information/product features.

This effect is replicated in two experiments. In experiment 1, we manipulate order of emotionality and appropriateness of use of mixed emotions. In addition, consistent with previous literature on ability to cope with duality of emotions (Williams and Aaker 2002), we also examine these effects on those from eastern and western cultures. Participants evaluated either an ad for National Motorists Association (NMA, against drunken driving, for which the use of mixed emotions pre-tested as relevant and appropriate) or for Watson Life Insurance (emotions rated as less relevant). Prior to evaluating the information in the ad (and the product), participants saw a picture of three teenage boys and read “That’s John, right...
there in the center. Look at him, such a live wire! So much Fun, Laughter, Friendship …” followed by “John crashed his car. One bad judgment, a life gone by, a grieving family, just memories left behind …” or read the same emotional information, but in reverse order. Results indicated that when positive emotion preceded negative emotion, participants from Eastern cultures indicated they liked NMA and its ad significantly more than they did Watson or its ad. No differences in liking were observed between NMA and Watson among participants of Eastern cultures when negative emotion preceded positive emotion. In contrast, participants from Western cultures were least favorable to Watson when negative emotions preceded positive ones. They were much more inclined to have a positive opinion of Watson and its advertising when positive emotions preceded negative ones.

This study suggests that even among participants who are better at dealing with emotional duality, namely, those from Eastern cultures, order of emotionality matters such that positive emotion experienced prior to negative emotion affects responses differently based on perceived appropriateness of the emotionality. Interestingly enough, we also find that those from Western cultures are adept at dealing with duality regardless of order of emotionality when the emotionality is perceived to be appropriate. For this group, order of emotions matters only when the use of such emotions is seen as less appropriate to the product category.

In our second study, we wished to examine whether manipulating perceived self-relevance of emotions could independently affect evaluations of a product (Watson Film) for which the use of mixed emotions was considered less relevant. Order of emotion was manipulated among participants by making them either read a passage in which the narrator described the wonderful times that he/she had with his/her grandfather and then how the grandfather passed away, or a passage that first described the death of the grandfather and then told participants about the earlier wonderful times. Self-relevance of emotion was manipulated by instructing participants to try and imagine the situation depicted in the ad or not. Results indicated that the ad was liked most when positive emotions preceded negative ones, and when the emotion was perceived as self-relevant. Interestingly, when positive emotion preceded negative, and when the emotion was perceived as non-relevant, participants were most likely to recall features about the ad/product and were also most likely to raise concerns about the marketer being unethical in using emotion as a method of persuasion. Furthermore, the interaction between order and relevance affected mismatch between experienced emotion and perceived ad emotion, which in turn influenced the number of thoughts about product/ lack of ethics, and then influenced ad liking. Relevant positive prior to negative emotion led to minimum mismatch between experienced and perceived emotionality but this did not lead to elaboration about the product, suggesting that people were focused on and succeeded in overcoming the negative emotion, because the ad was liked most under this condition. Irrelevant positive prior to negative emotion led to maximum mismatch between experienced and perceived emotionality and also increased thoughts about the product/tactics and lowered liking of the ad, suggesting that participants paid attention to the product/ad features, but also generated negative associations to the marketer. Relevance did not affect liking of the ad/number of product or ad thoughts/ethics thoughts (all low) when negative emotions preceded positive ones.

At a theoretical level, this paper adds to the coping literature (e.g., Fredrickson 2001; Raghunathan and Trope 2002) as well as to literature on consumers’ use of persuasion knowledge (e.g., Friestad and Wright 1994). It suggests that sequential manipulation of consumer emotions in western advertising leads to very different coping strategies among consumers depending on perceived self-relevance and appropriateness of the use of such mixtures of emotions. While using positive emotions prior to negative ones leads to more positive attitudes towards the ad and product regardless of perceptions of appropriateness of the use of such emotions, consumers may significantly derogate products that are inappropriately using mixed emotions if these emotions are not self-relevant at the time of exposure.

“Exploring Response Amplification: Polarizing Consumer Responses to Mixed Versus Pure Emotional Appeals”

Lorraine Lau-Gesk, UC Irvine
Thomas Kramer, Baruch

A visit to Disneyland often elicits more than pure happiness. Rather, consumers experience a wide range of mixed emotional experiences during their visit to the “Happiest” place on earth, from irritation and excitement while waiting in long lines before a popular ride, to fear and hope that Mickey Mouse will single them out and shake their hands as he parades down Main Street. While most marketers advocate the need to remove negative cues from a consumption experience, the current research offers evidence that challenges such a view. Instead of focusing on how to create experiences void of negative emotions, we argue that marketers should be more concerned about how to manage them effectively. Indeed, we explore conditions under which consumers may react more favorably to a mixed emotional experience composed of particular positive and negative emotions than to a purely positive emotional experience. At the same time, we demonstrate the dangers of mismanaging mixed emotional experiences by outlining conditions under which they might lead to less favorable consumer responses than even purely negative emotional experiences.

Recent consumer research shows that mixed emotional experiences often produce feelings of discomfort by individuals who have a lower (versus higher) tolerance for duality (Williams and Aaker 2002). Accordingly, much research shows how consumers try to avoid mixed emotional experiences (Nowlis, Dhar, and Kahn 2003) or employ coping strategies to help reduce the feelings of discomfort (McGraw and Levav 2003; Otnes, Shrum, and Lowry 1997). In particular, findings in psychology suggest that consumers who experience mixed emotions formulate polarized attitudes toward the mixed (vs. pure) emotion producing source to help reduce feelings of discomfort (Katz 1981). When primed with positive (vs. negative) aspects associated with a target object, attitudinal responses tend to be more (vs. less) favorable among individuals ambivalent versus non-ambivalent toward the target object (Hass, Katz, Rizzo, Bailey, and Eisenstadt, 1991). To illustrate, Bell and Esses (1997) found that participants who are ambivalent toward Natives and exposed to a positive or negative essay on Native land claims report more extreme attitudes than non-ambivalent participants.

Studies in neuroscience reveal that by evoking oppositely-valenced emotions, two independent systems in memory are activated: Positive emotions correspond to the approach system in memory; negative emotions correspond to the avoidance system in memory (Cacioppo, Bernston, and Petty 1997). Moreover, research indicates that the simultaneous activation of both these systems generates conflicting feelings, which in turn, leads to feelings of discomfort (Newby-Clark and Zanna 2002).

Given the link between oppositely-valenced experiences and the approach-avoidance systems in memory, we propose that frames that activate distinct self-regulatory systems may produce response amplification effects. In particular, Higgins (1997; see also Aaker and Lee 2001) demonstrates that individuals with a
chronic or situationally-induced promotion focus are motivated to approach desired, positive end states, whereas individuals with a chronic or situationally-induced prevention focus are more motivated to avoid undesired, negative end states. We therefore hypothesize, and find, that promotion- versus prevention-based frames can produce response amplification effects for mixed, as opposed to pure, emotional experiences.

Specifically, findings from experiment 1 reveal that promotion-based mixed emotional ads (i.e., happiness and sadness) are more favorably evaluated than purely positive emotional ads (i.e., happiness) whereas prevention-based mixed emotional ads are less favorably evaluated than purely negative emotional ads. Both findings support the hypothesized emotion amplification effects. A second experiment extends these findings and reveals a similar pattern of results with a unique pair of emotions. Hope and fear were reflected in the mixed emotional ads whereas only fear was evoked in the pure emotional ads.

“Layered Not Stirred: Negative Mixing for Emotional Intensity”
Kirsten Grasshoff, UPENN
Patti Williams, UPENN

The study of mixed emotions is receiving increasing attention in both psychology and consumer behavior. For example, Williams and Aaker (2000) demonstrate that ads may evoke a mixed emotional response that in turn impacts persuasion. However, this work so far has focused only on mixing positive and negative emotions together. It is possible, however, that consumers may often experience mixed emotions of the same valence, such as both fear and anger or both happiness and warmth.

A significant amount of recent work has demonstrated that different negative emotions have substantially different implications on judgment and choice, based on differences in underlying appraisal tendencies associated with the discrete emotions (Smith and Ellsworth 1985). For example, Lerner and Keltner (2000) showed that fearful people make pessimistic choices while angry people make optimistic choices. Similarly, Raghunathan and Pham (1999) found differences in risk seeking between sad and fearful participants. Thus, not all negative emotions are the same in terms of motivational or behavioral outcomes.

Research on differences between negative emotions suggests that one of the key dimensions on which they differ is whether or not they make people feel responsible and capable of favorably changing the situation. For example, part of the reason why fearful people flee a situation is because they neither feel responsible nor able to mitigate the danger. Angry people stay and fight because they feel capable of thwarting the threat. This example exemplifies a key distinction among negative emotions: some make people feel out of control and incapable of managing the situation themselves while other emotions make people feel capable and responsible.

In this research, we studied the impact of negative mixed emotional appeals, focusing on emotions that differ in their underlying dimensions of responsibility and control. We assumed that consumers resist feeling negatively and feeling out of control and thus are resistant to negative appeals and low control emotional appeals, making it, for example, extremely difficult to induce an emotion like fear through a short advertisement. However, we hypothesized that peoples’ resistance to feeling out of control will override their resistance to negative emotions thereby enabling mixed emotional ads to more readily and intensely evoke negative emotion. That is people will accept the high control negative emotion as a way to resist the low control negative emotion.

Furthermore, we hypothesized that this increased emotional intensity will enhance compliance with the ad. The negative emotion evoked by the ad must be intense enough that people feel the need to mitigate it through action (Levenson, 1999). We compared responses to pure emotional appeals featuring either fear (low control) or regret (high control) or appeals that mix fear and regret.

In addition, in the mixed appeals we vary which emotion is evoked first, thus manipulating the sense of control consumers feel upon completion of the ad.

We tested our hypothesis in three studies on 300 undergraduate business students in two contexts (Spring Break packages and GMAT preparation courses). This enabled us to compare both the impact of mixed ads to single emotion ads within negative valence and if the preference for control can help override resistance to feeling negatively.

In the first two studies we found strong support for our primary hypothesis as participants in the fear to regret mixed condition experience strong emotional intensity, for both emotions while participants in the single emotion condition experience little or no emotion at all. This is all the more surprising as participants in the mixed scenario saw only half of the fear manipulation from the straight fear ad and half of the regret manipulation from the straight regret ad, but nonetheless reported significantly more of each emotion. Unexpectedly, the regret to fear ad was nearly as effective as the fear to regret ad at evoking emotion.

In addition, as hypothesized, we found differences in likelihood to comply with the different emotional appeals. In the GMAT study significantly more students in the high intensity mixed emotion conditions intended to use an almost completely unknown preparation course, Veritas, over its two very well known competitors, Kaplan and Princeton Review.

As we did not find an impact of order, the third study tested more specifically the impact of ads that move towards control vs. ads that simply mix low control emotions. Thus we tested mixed low control emotion ads (fear and sadness) to mixed high control emotion ads (fear and anger) and mixed high and low control emotion ads (sadness and regret). Again we found strong support for our primary hypothesis as participants in the sad to regret mixed condition experience strong emotional intensity, for both emotions while participants in the single emotion conditions and the mixed low control condition experienced little or no emotion at all. The increased emotional intensity in the mixed control condition, (sadness and regret), resulted in increased intentions to comply with the ad.

In summary, though our mixed control appeals may feature only half the single emotion manipulations, they result in increased emotional intensity relative to the pure emotional appeals and the mixed low control appeals. Our research thus far indicates that this is a result of consumers’ preferences to feel in control over their preference to feel positive. We also find that increased emotional intensity in the mixed emotion conditions translates to increased intentions to comply with the ad. This research contributes to existing literature on mixed emotions by focusing on specific emotions within a single valence, and demonstrating how these mixed appeals facilitate emotion induction.