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Emotions Make Your Narratives Fly: The Effect of Strength of Emotions on the Effectiveness of Narrative Advertising

By Marie Spies and Heribert Gierl*

In recent decades, a way to influence consumer decisions without providing arguments has gained attention: the use of emotional narratives in advertisements. Such narratives can be described by numerous abstract (e.g., realness of the plot) and concrete characteristics (e.g., length, happy or sad ending, degree of product integration in the story). We focus on an abstract characteristic that has gained no attention thus far: the emotionality of the narrative, i.e., the degree to which the narrative advertisement elicits emotions.

We start by providing examples from such advertisements in practice. Then, we provide an overview of theories considering the condition in which a priming stimulus (in our case, a narrative advertisement) triggers more or less intense emotions, which might influence the evaluation of a target stimulus (in our case, the promoted brand or the recommended behavior). Subsequently, we present findings from new studies on the relationship of the strength of emotions triggered by narratives to the evaluations of brands or recommended behavior. We manipulate the emotionality of

videos by using different background music while holding the visual elements constant. Our findings show that the strength of emotions has a positive impact on evaluations.

1. Introduction

1.1. Omnipresence of narratives in human life

The “homo narrans” is an essential part of human nature (Fisher 1984, p. 6; Lund et al. 2018, p. 279), or as expressed in the words of Joanne K. Rowling (2019): “There’s always room for a story that can transport people to another place.” People enjoy telling, viewing, reading, and listening to narratives. A narrative is defined as any description that includes events enacted by characters and that are connected causally and chronologically in a plot (Ochs and Capps 2009). The characters (i.e., humans or animals) have motives and strive for goals. According to van Lear et al. (2014, p. 798), “Stories always imply some essential elements that the storyteller must include in his or her production: (1) the plot, which frames the temporal sequence of the events; (2) the characters playing a role in the plot; (3) the climax, which results from the modulation of the dramatic intensity along the plot; and (4) the outcome, or the end state of the plot commonly derived from the characters’ resolution of a misfortunate event.” Although van Lear et al. (2014, p. 798) suggests that the terms narrative and story should be used to denote different things (“a narrative is derived from a process of attribution of meaning to and interpretation of a story,” i.e., a narrative is the receivers’ mental interpretation of the story), we follow most researchers and use these terms synonymously.

Researchers on human evolutionary history believe that cave paintings were intended to tell stories (Krippner 2010, p. 337). For hundreds of years, people have told stories. In ancient Greece, Homer narrated the events about and after the Trojan war, i.e., the Iliad and the Odyssey, and Sophocles told the tragedies of King Oedipus and Elektra. An unknown storyteller narrated the fate of Siegfried and the Nibelungen in the Middle Ages. Throughout the centuries, story tellers collected the Tales



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from the Arabian Nights. William Shakespeare entertained audiences with dramas such as *Romeo and Juliet*. The Brothers Grimm collected fairy tales. The stories contained in famous operas, e.g., Violetta's fate in Verdi's *La Traviata*, inspire people to identify with the characters. There are thousands of novels and hundreds of operas. Today, narratives are omnipresent in cinemas, television channels, and books. Parents read good night stories, e.g., fairy tales, when bringing children to bed. Some people even collect narratives, and private libraries contain many novels or video tapes. A society's culture manifests itself in the narratives its members like or dislike. Stories can also appear to represent reality and have real effects in the world. For instance, some viewers of "Jaws" (1975) by Steven Spielberg, a film including a white shark and featuring music by John Williams, became afraid of swimming in the ocean (Miall 2000, p. 378).

For adults, stories satisfy the human need for entertainment and stimulation and distract from everyday life. Listening to stories is a way to put oneself (i.e., escape) in another, often fictitious, world. Recipients put themselves in the role of the characters, and they become virtually part of the plot. Moreover, fiction can make people think, e.g., elicit additional thoughts (fantasies). In addition, narratives create suspense and provide the opportunity to experience positive and negative emotions. Fiction can make people laugh, be afraid, or even cry, and recipients know that even negative emotions do not have their origin in real facts but in the narrative itself. One can always return to real life. In summation, stories are among the things people strongly like.

1.2. People like both stories and storytellers

We surmise that liking narratives spills over to the likeability of the narrator. If people like the entertainment, stimulation, emotions, and fantasies created by narratives, they might also like the persons who enable these experiences. People may imagine favorable properties of Scheherazade (One thousand and one nights), Hans-Christian Andersen (Fairy tales), or Jesus (similes), but people can hardly imagine that evil persons tell good stories. There might be a "only good persons invent good narratives" heuristic.

The likeability of storytellers manifests itself in gratefulness, high respect, and special honors. For instance, the Brothers Grimm were depicted on the former 1000-Deutsche-Mark bank note, which was the most valuable bank note in Germany's history, released on October 27, 1992. The portrait of Dante Alighieri is shown on the 2-euro coin of Italy. Spain honors Miguel de Cervantes by depicting his portrait on the 50-cent coin. German universities use Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller as components of their names. In 1999, Astrid Lindgren was voted the most popular Swede of the century in a poll by the daily newspaper *Aftonbladet*. In addition, the Swedish Academy has annually awarded the

Nobel Prize for literature since 1901, with Rudyard Kipling (*The Jungle Book*) as one of the first laureates. Generally, story tellers are among the most famous persons in history (e.g., Homer and Shakespeare).

1.3. Purpose of narratives in advertising

It is therefore not surprising that some practitioners in advertising have wanted and still want to benefit from this mechanism. They tell stories in commercials that in many cases even have nothing to do with the promoted product. Obviously, they expect that they themselves, i.e., the company, the brand, and the products, are liked by doing so. They give something valuable to consumers (the benefits of narratives) and hope that in a reciprocal way they receive something valuable from the audience (higher likeability of the brand).

In this sense, narrative advertising might be a way to attract consumers who have a generally negative attitude toward advertising. Many consumers are skeptical regarding the value and truth of product-related advertisements (Obermiller et al. 2005, p. 7). This skepticism has numerous sources, such as education in school, media reports indicating that advertising is an evil thing in many categories (e.g., cigarettes, alcohol, sweets), "propaganda" from ideologies, such as National Socialism in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, one's own experiences from mispurchases due to advertising, boredom due to frequent repetition of the same videos, and forced exposure when attempting to view other YouTube videos. Teixeira et al. (2010, p. 783) report that "around 87 % of TV viewers skip past ads frequently." In contrast, the objective of narratives in advertising does not aim at persuading (creating beliefs about features and benefits of brands and products) but at enabling entertainment, emotions, stimulations, and fantasies. Consumers might judge argument-based messages in terms of being true or false, while narratives are more or less entertaining, stimulating, etc.

We assume that this type of advertising is associated with a lower tendency to avoid contact. Byun (2016, p.10) postulates that "advertising with emotional appeals is liked more and ultimately creates a more positive attitude towards a brand." Dafonte-Gómez (2014, p. 203) published a list containing the most frequently shared viral video ads between 2006 and 2013. Sharing a commercial with friends is an indicator that the sender likes that video. Among the 25 commercials in this list, there are narratives such as Evian's (2013) "Baby and me," Evian's (2009) "Roller babies," Budweiser's (2002) "9/11," Budweiser's (2013) "The Clydesdyles brotherhood," and Procter & Gamble's (2012) "Thank You Mom." Tellis et al. (2019, p. 12) found that the likelihood of sharing commercials with friends increases with their emotion-focused content. Previous research indicates that emotional narrative advertisements are more effective than argument-based ads for affecting brand attitudes (Coker et al. 2017, p. 77).

1.4. Research question

Narrative advertising is based on the idea that under certain conditions, consumers would watch commercials telling stories rather than commercials highlighting product benefits and features.

Among other characteristics, narrative commercials differ regarding the following: 1. the extent to which the promoted product is integrated into the story (Akpınar and Berger 2017, p. 324; Glaser and Reisinger 2022, p. 188); 2. the type of plot (e.g., love scenes, funny scenes, sentimental scenes in Christmas commercials, narratives that tell something about the sense of life; see Moin et al. 2020, p. 1); 3. the realness of the plot (some narratives reproduce reality or appear to be authentic, while others are obviously fiction; see Stern 1994); 4. story-ending valence (happy vs. negative ending; Hamby and Brinberg 2016, p. 498); 5. the length of the narrative video (short films vs. mini films lasting several minutes; Wu et al. 2020, p. 1322); 6. the valence and kind of the triggered emotions (e.g., positive vs. negative emotions; pleasantness and joy, surprise, fear); 7. the use of the ego-perspective or other-perspective (in analogy to first-person narrators and third-person narrators in written narratives, Banerjee and Greene 2012; Nan et al. 2017, p. 320); and 8. the strength of these emotions.

Because there is little knowledge about the effect of the strength of emotions, we investigate whether videos that elicit higher degrees of emotions result in a higher likeability of the brand. We ask the following:

RQ: Does the effectiveness of advertising (i.e., the attitude toward the promoted target) increase with the strength of emotions triggered by emotional ad videos?

In Section 2, we present some examples of narrative advertising that are likely to trigger emotions. In Section 3, we refer to theories of the effects of emotions. In Section 4, we present an empirical study in which we manipulate the strength of emotions by the background music of ad videos and investigate its effect on brand attitudes. In Section 5, we provide recommendations for advertising practice.

2. Examples of affect-eliciting narrative advertising

One of the most obvious properties of narrative advertisements is whether the product is or is not included in the plot of the narrative.

First, we provide some examples of emotional narratives in advertising that integrate the promoted product into the story. Wrigley (2015) was promoted by a love story titled “The Story of Sarah and Juan.” The narrative is about a person named Juan who draw events of his relationship with Sarah on chewing gum wrappers and Sarah becomes emotional when she sees the gallery of these

drawings while receiving Juan’s marriage proposal. In addition to the pleasant or bittersweet emotions elicited by the visual scenes that merge a love story with chewing gum wrappers, emotions are also likely to be triggered using Elvis Presley’s song “Can’t Help Falling in Love,” interpreted by the singer Haley Reinhart. For the “Sarah and Juan” video, a Facebook fan site was created; on October 21, 2015, www.billboard.com reported that this Facebook fan site earned “more than 78 million Facebook views within a week of its Oct. 8 digital release.” A similar integration of chewing gum paper with a plot was used in “Origami” by Wrigley’s Extra (2013). Vorwerk (2014) promoted its vacuum cleaner by the video titled “Love sucks.” The video reveals the sad story of the unrequited love of the vacuum cleaner for a toy robot. Sometimes, emotional music videos tell a story. Pepsi (2010) promoted its soft drink by “We will rock you,” a video that presents the pop artists Britney Spears, Beyoncé Knowles, Pink, and Enrico Iglesias re-enacting scenes from an ancient Roman circus and performing a piece of Queen’s music. The video integrates cans of the promoted drink into the story. In the “Absolut Greyhound” (2012) video promoting Absolut Vodka, a race among computer dogs is shown combined with music by Swedish House Mafia. The promoted product is occasionally shown in this video. There are even short movies, so-called mini films (Lehu 2007, p. 213; Chen 2015, p. 21), that aim to trigger emotion and integrate the plot with the promoted product. For instance, BMW produced a series of short, cinema-like films in 2001 and 2003 that lasted seven to thirteen minutes and promoted the BMW brand. Other versions of narratives humanize the products that play a role in narratives (e.g., the “I would do anything for love” commercial by M&M in 2013). In another video, “the milk” (girl) and “the chocolate” (boy) have many experiences and promote Ferrero’s Kinderriegel. The stories started by showing the girl and the boy in diapers and playing in the sandbox in the early 2000^s. Step by step, in the next videos, the girl and boy grow up and inform the audience about their experiences as a couple. Glaser and Reisinger (2022, p. 193) provide an overview of the different types of experiences used to link the product with the story.

Second, many emotional narratives in advertising do not reveal the presenter (i.e., the promoted brand) until – at the end of the video – the brand’s logo is inserted. These videos are denoted as mystery ads (Fazio et al. 1992, p. 1; Campbell 1995, p. 227; Baker et al. 2004, p. 77). To illustrate this advertising practice, we can refer to numerous videos, such as the following. In “Indian Spirit” (1994), a young woman and a young man experience in a dream how, freed from everyday stress, they obtain an idea of what happiness is through the magic of Indian culture. At the end of the film, the audience receives information that this video has been presented by C&A textiles. “You can shine” (Thailand version 2009) and “Live your Life” (Russian version 2010) tell modern versions of the fairy tale “The Ugly Duckling” by Christian

Anderson and use Johann Pachelbel's Canon as background music. The fact that this video promotes shampoo and the Pantene brand becomes obvious for the first time only after viewing the entire narrative. The audience recognizes at the end of the video that Pantene has "dedicated" this video to its viewers. The TC Bank of Taiwan is promoted by "Dream Rangers" (2011); the video shows how older men rediscover on a motorcycle tour the joy experienced previously in their early adulthood. One does not expect that the commercial promotes a bank. Another video "Emil" (father and son, 2013) reveals to the audience what the sense of life might be – at the end of the video, the viewer recognizes that s/he has viewed an ad promoting Hornbach (hardware store). In a series of videos, Budweiser (beer) presents animals showing affection for each other (e.g., "Puppy love," 2014). Evian (mineral water) has used a series of videos since 2009 that show funny babies or little children doing impossible things, such as performing inline skating, being spiderman, or rescuing a surferboarder. In some versions, e.g., in "Baby & Me" (2013) and "Spider Man Baby Dance" (2014), the adults appear as children, and only at the end of the videos, bottles of the mineral water and the brand name are displayed (as an exception, in Roller Baby videos, the babies skate across Evian bottles). Sometimes, sad stories are told. In "Heimkommen" (Coming home, 2015), the German retailer Edeka presented a story in which the children of an old man receive information about his supposed death – then, they return home at Christmas (otherwise, they would not have visited their father). Finally, the brand logo is inserted. "1914–2014" became famous even in Germany because news broadcasts on German public television showed scenes from the video. It promoted Sainsbury's supermarkets in the U.K. by showing bittersweet scenes of WW1 during Christmas 2014. Narratives can also be inspired by political controversies. In "Make love not walls" (2017), the dancer Sergei Polunin takes a position against the wall between the USA and Mexico; at the video's end, the audience receives the information that the video was presented by Diesel textiles. Narratives can even trigger fear in viewers (e.g., in a parody of the cinema movie "The Exorcist" promoting Dirt Devil vacuum cleaner in 2011).

Advertising practice has created and used many thousands of such narrative commercials. Therefore, it is interesting to test the effects of the characteristics of these videos, and we focus on the strength of emotions triggered by such videos and their effect on brand attitudes.

3. Overview of theories about the role of emotions when making evaluations

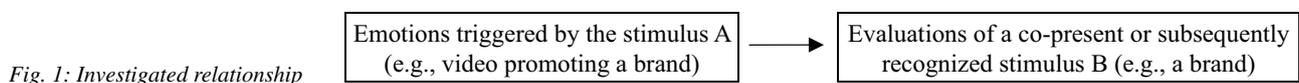
This section focuses on approaches explaining *why* emotions elicited by one stimulus (prime) are transferred or are otherwise relevant for the evaluation of a co-present or subsequently recognized stimulus (target) and *whether* the strength of these emotions matters (Fig. 1).

3.1. Scope of this overview

The field of research on the effects of emotions on evaluations is extremely broad. Thus, we limit the description to theories that might be helpful for explaining the effect of emotional narratives in advertising.

First, we do not contribute to the definitions and measurement of emotions, affect, momentary mood, and feelings (for classifications, see Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy 1984; Zajonc 1984; Poels and Dewitte 2019; for measurement issues, see Poels and Dewitte 2006). Such terms have been used for two millennia, e.g., in ancient Greece, and are almost always used interchangeably (France et al. 1994, p. 583). For a discussion of "subtle" differences, see Grable and Roszkowski (2008, p. 906), who state that emotions are (i.e., should be used to denote) specific feelings, such as anger, jealousy, fear, and envy, while moods are general states of mind, such as happiness and sadness (this semantic distinction is only a suggestion of these authors how to use these terms; researchers do not follow such suggestions). Holbrook and Hirschman (1982, p. 137) postulate that "the full gamut of relevant emotions includes such diverse feelings as love, hate, fear, joy, boredom, anxiety, pride, anger, disgust, sadness, sympathy, lust, ecstasy, greed, guilt, elation, shame, and awe." Today, based on results from neurosciences of Damasio (e.g., Bechera et al. 1994), one might prefer using the different terms to denote (a) neural activities in particular brain regions that when individuals become cognitively aware of them are labeled by individuals themselves (b) with terms, such as pleasure, surprise, sadness, anger, shame, or disgust. However, because the major part of literature explaining phenomena denoted as "affect transfer," "affective priming," "affect infusion," or "incidental emotions" (Gino and Schweitzer 2008; Lerner et al. 2015, p. 803) is rather old and has used the terms affect, emotions, and (momentary) mood interchangeably, we have chosen to use these terms interchangeably as well.

Second, we do not aim to provide explanations about why a particular stimulus (e.g., unexpectedly finding a coin in a telephone cell, listening to music, the seemingly random winning of a sum of money, or viewing a narrative in an advertising video) triggers emotions and whether there are intersections among affect and cogni-



tions evoked by the emotional stimulus (Zajonc 1984). *Third*, we do not want to summarize research on the fact that emotion-triggering advertising causes a transfer of emotions to the promoted brand. Generally, many researchers state that pleasant emotions triggered by an advertisement result in more favorable attitudes toward the ad (Yi 1990; Li 2019; Yang and Zhao 2020; Wen et al. 2022) and that attitude toward the ad is an antecedent or predictor of the attitude toward the brand (Lutz et al. 1983; MacKenzie et al. 1986; Geuens and De Pelsmacker 1998). Ad-evoked emotions are also described as the “gatekeeper” for the further processing of arguments contained in the advertisement (Poels and Dewitte 2006, p. 18).

Fourth, we do not consider the effects of multiple exposures to emotional advertisements. Research on this issue discusses conditioning effects (Kroeber-Riel et al. 1979; Kim et al. 1996; Kim et al. 1998; Strick and Volbeda 2018). The idea of conditioning emotions has its origins in the Little-Albert experiment conducted by Watson and Rayner (1920). Moreover, we refrain from including discussions about why the subliminal presentation of emotional stimuli might affect evaluations of subsequently presented objects (Murphy and Zajonc 1993). *Fifth*, we focus on conditions in which the target stimulus (e.g., the brand in the case of advertising) must be evaluated as positive or negative. We do not include theories and studies that focus on the recall of advertisements depending on the strength of triggered emotions (Dunlop et al. 2014; Biener et al. 2008). *Sixth*, we do not discuss variables that might moderate the effect of emotions triggered by the priming stimulus on the evaluations of the target stimulus, such as consumer age (Williams and Drolet 2005) or the need for emotions and self-perceptions of one’s emotionality as personality variables (Bachorowski and Braaten 1994; Flett et al. 1996; Larsen et al. 1996; Moore and Harris 1996; Geuens and Pelsmacker 1999). *Seventh*, we do not consider multiple sources of affect. For instance, in an advertising setting, the editorial context could trigger a positive or negative affect (France et al. 1994). Then, when viewing a commercial, these experiences could trigger a positive or negative affect as well. The interplay of these factors is examined

by Gorn et al. (2001). *Eighth*, we do not investigate whether positive or negative emotions are more advantageous in affecting brand evaluations (Eckler and Bolls 2011). Moreover, we do not discuss the effects of special types of emotions, e.g., fear vs. shame vs. disgust. *Ninth*, we do not investigate the effect of the TV program context, which could trigger a positive or negative affect, on evaluations of a subsequently presented advertisement (France et al. 1994; Aylesworth and Mackenzie 1998).

Overview of theories

There is no single theory explaining the relationship shown in *Fig. 1* (Geuens et al. 2011, p. 419). We describe a sample of theories in this section. Because the field of research on the transfer of affect, emotions, or momentary mood is rather broad, we cannot ensure that our list is complete. However, the most discussed approaches should be included in this overview (*Tab. 1*).

3.2. Schema theory

Schema theory has a long tradition in memory psychology and was developed more than 90 years ago (Bartlett 1932). It posits that a large part of human knowledge (i.e., memory content) consists of standardized ideas, so-called schemas. This suggests that semantic and sensory knowledge (e.g., words, sounds, or images) stored in memory is arranged in a hierarchical structure and associative networks.

Hierarchical structure of memory contents

Hierarchical structure means the following: when people develop mental categories (e.g., the category “birds”), they develop properties of categories (e.g., “birds have feathers”) only once and can transfer them to each element of the category; i.e. when viewing a robin, people conclude that this bird also has feathers. Relying on the hierarchical structure of knowledge, people can quickly assign new stimuli to a category (e.g., an unknown animal to the category of birds). This happens through a “feature matching process,” which only needs the assessment of a few easy-to-determine properties of the new stimulus (e.g., “I see feathers; it therefore must be a

Field of research	Theories
Memory-based theories	Section 3.2 Schema theory (hierarchical structure and associative networks of memory contents) Section 3.3 Cue-accessibility hypothesis and storage-bin model
Theories on heuristics	Section 3.4 Affect as information (“If I feel good, I like it” heuristic) Section 3.5 Feelings of plausibility (“If the valence of stimuli matches, I like it” heuristic) Section 3.6 Choice justification (“If I can solve a decision problem with a non-diagnostic criterion, I like it” heuristic)
Theories on affect regulation	Section 3.7 Desire to maintain positive emotions Section 3.8 Desire to reduce positive emotions Section 3.9 Desire to reduce negative emotions
Narrative-specific theories	Section 3.10 Narrative transportation

Tab. 1: Overview of theories on affect transfer

bird.”). Then, people can (a) transfer category knowledge (Quillian 1968; Freedman and Loftus 1971, p. 114) and (b) category evaluations to this element. For instance, if a person sees a car s/he is unfamiliar with but identifies it as a sports car at first glance only through the car’s silhouette (as a result of the feature-matching process), s/he can transfer general knowledge about cars and sport cars to this stimulus without determining the properties of this special sports car. S/he does not have to examine whether this special car has four wheels, a break, windscreen whippers, can drive fast, and costs a lot of money. This kind of assigning features to a stimulus is called category-based information processing (Pavelchak 1989). Moreover, it is assumed that mental categories have “affective tags” that serve for evaluations. For instance, Aggarwal and McGill (2007, p. 475) state the following: “When a new stimulus is seen as belonging to a particular schema, the affective tag associated with that schema is used to evaluate the stimulus.” If a person likes a particular brand (e.g., the Apple brand), a particular country (e.g., France), a particular type of food (e.g., French Fries or organic food), a particular species of animals (e.g., cats), s/he also likes an element assigned to such categories. In our example, this person also likes a new smartphone by Apple, a product from this country of origin (e.g., a fragrance from France), French Fries at the visited restaurant, a particular organic food (e.g., a product of the Demeter brand), and the cat of the neighbors. Liking the category (e.g., associating a category with the emotion of pleasure) spills over to liking an element of this category.

However, this kind of transfer of emotions cannot be used to explain the transfer of emotions due to narrative ads on the respective brands because brands (e.g., Evian mineral water) are not the subcategory of narratives promoting this brand (e.g., commercials promoting Evian).

Associative networks of memory contents

The idea of associative networks means that people store associations between memory contents. According to schema theory, associations are mainly generated through observations that stimuli (e.g., words, images, sounds) occur together (Quillian 1967; Collins and Quillian 1969; Collins and Loftus 1975). According to this theory, knowledge is composed of stored concepts and associations that relate these concepts to one another (Shiffrin and Schneider 1977; Anderson 1983; Bargh 1984; Baker 2003).

According to this approach, if one stimulus is brought to people’s attention, it activates the connotations associated with this stimulus in memory. For example, if a person thinks of a “car,” s/he may associate things, such as car breakdowns, “the feeling the wind in the hair when driving with side windows open,” or the place where the own car is currently parked, without being able to cognitively control the appearance of these thoughts. Moreover, the person associates affective tags with each con-

notation (e.g., “I hate car breakdowns,” “I enjoy feeling the wind in my hair”). Affective tags are also denoted as emotional nodes (Mitchell 1983, p. 217). Bower (1981, p. 135) states: “Activation of an emotion node also spreads activation throughout the memory structures to which it is connected.” The attitude model developed by Fishbein (1963) can be called the classical model that relies on this idea (Mitchell and Olson 1981, p. 328). It assumes that the evaluation (referred to as attitude, “A”) of a concept is determined by the degree to which connotations are associated with that concept (called the strength of beliefs, “B”) and the affective tags of the beliefs, which can be positive, neutral, or negative (called the affective aspects, “a”). Fishbein (1963, p. 233) states: “An individual holds many beliefs about any given object, i.e., many different characteristics, attributes, values, goals, and objects are positively or negatively associated with a given object.” These characteristics and other aspects represent the “i”s in Fishbein’s formula $A = \sum B_i \cdot a_i$. Fazio et al. (2000, p. 8) state that the associative strength (i.e., beliefs) “determines the attitude’s accessibility from memory.”

What happens if two concepts are co-present? Both concepts trigger connotations (memory contents, such as characteristics, goals, areas of application, and autobiographical memories). As a result, new connections between these two contents of memory can arise without the consumer being able to control this cognitively. This transfer of connotations from one stimulus to the other is justified by the information-integration theory. Anderson (1971, p. 173) postulates that people tend to integrate co-present stimuli into cognitive units: “Jointly perceived stimuli are evaluated simultaneously. Therefore, the beliefs about a stimulus become a part of the beliefs about the other stimulus and vice versa.” Because connotations are associated with affective tags, a mutual transfer of emotions is therefore likely to happen.

We can use this approach to explain the transfer of emotions triggered by a narrative in a commercial to the promoted brand. In this condition, two concepts (narrative, brand) are co-present. Imagine, the consumer views commercials promoting Evian mineral water that contain baby scenes. Such commercials show “roller babies,” a magic window that makes adults appear as children, scenes of a child in the role of spiderman, or a drowned surf boarder who awakes in his next life at a babies’ strand bar. Then, each single concept (narrative, Evian) evokes several connotations that may be merged when presented jointly. The connotations have positive, neutral, or negative affective tags. If connotations of the narrative are transferred to the brand, affective tags are transferred as well. Then, the more connotations with positive affective tags from the narrative are transferred to the brand (as information-integration theory suggests) and the more pleasant these tags are (as Fishbein’s model suggests), the more favorable the evaluation of the brand becomes. *Fig. 2* illustrates associative networks before and after the spillover of connotations; please note that

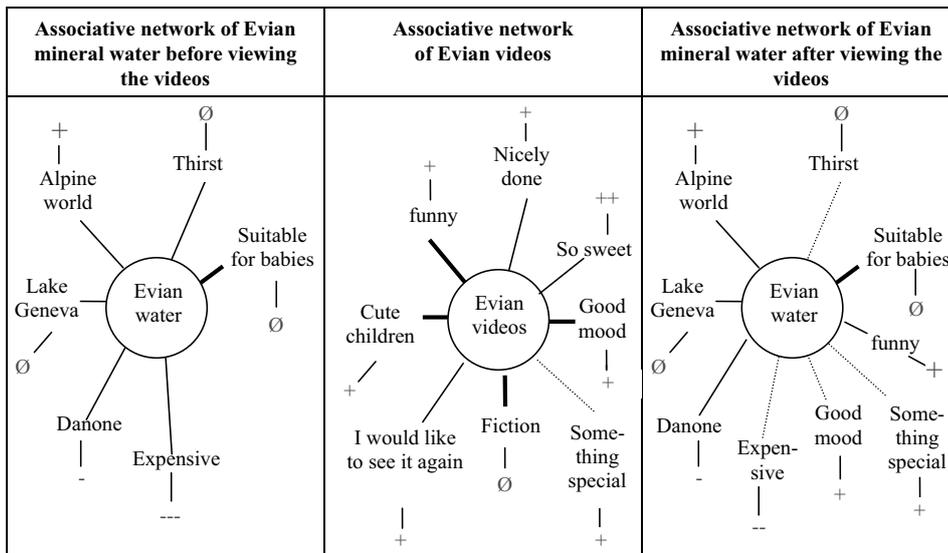


Fig. 2: An idealized example of how emotions are transferred in associative networks

we do not want to show semantic networks; the use of words instead of impressions such as pictures is only due to the simplicity of the presentation.

In summary, the idea behind associative-network models suggests that storytelling in emotional advertising creates new associations of knowledge and more affective tags with the brand. For emotional advertising, Mohanty et al. (2021, p. 35) state: “Emotional advertising is simple to comprehend, engages people’s interest, and cultivates strong brand memories. These memories remain in the back of a customer’s mind, and when they are faced with a purchasing decision, these memories motivate them to make a final decision.” In this way, emotions triggered by emotional narratives on videos and stored as components of the brand (a mental category) are likely to be remembered in purchase conditions (Mitchell 1983, p. 217; Young et al. 2019, p. 331).

3.3. Cue-accessibility hypothesis and storage-bin model

The approach presented in this section was designed as an alternative description of the organization of knowledge and emotions in human memory.

Cue accessibility

To the best of our knowledge, this approach was inspired by the findings of Isen et al. (1978, p. 5 f.). In one of their experiments, *first*, test participants had to play a war game video and were then labeled either as winners or losers. *Second*, they heard a list of words that consisted of positively, neutrally, and negatively valenced words. *Third*, they continued to play the war game and again were called winners or losers. *Fourth*, they had to repeat as many words from the previously presented list as possible. The authors found that persons who won twice (i.e., might experience positive emotions) recalled more positive words than the other groups. Persons who won only once (i.e., might be in a neutral emotional state) re-

called fewer positive words, and persons who did not win once (i.e., might be in a negative emotional state) recalled the fewest positive words.

To explain such findings, Isen et al. (1978, p. 2) state “that a person in a good mood is more likely to retrieve positive than negative material from memory and that this improved access to positive material affects the decision-making process with regard to behavior.” In addition, they argue, “The mood may cue positive thoughts; these may provide access to still other positive material in memory and may contribute to the maintenance of the mood state.” Clark and Isen (1982, p. 82) postulate that “thoughts associated with or responsible for the positive feeling state serve to cue other positive material available in memory, thus making that material more accessible.” Clark and Isen (1982, p. 87) state, “Once the threshold for activation of positive material is reached, the accessibility of positive material in memory is increased (...). This increased accessibility of material related to a person’s current affective state may then affect his or her impression of the world and behavior.” This leads to the conclusion that “a target stimulus will be considered more favorably under positive than under negative moods” (Schwarz 1990, p. 528). Thus, the idea behind this approach is that positive emotions induced by a priming stimulus trigger the recall of “positive material (...) from memory” (Schwarz 1990, p. 528).

Clore et al. (2001, p. 123) suggest not focusing only on positive emotions and retrieved positive “material” from memory. They postulate that “activation spreading out from moods (is) expected to influence the retrieval of similarly valenced beliefs” (which was not supported for negatively valenced words in the experiment of Isen et al. 1978). Goldberg and Gorn (1987, p. 388) considered TV programs that make the audience happy or sad. For the TV program as the priming stimulus and a commercial embedded in the program, they state: “A positive mood created by the program would likely increase the

accessibility of positive material stored in memory. The opposite would be hypothesized when viewers would see the same commercial in a sad program.” Similar arguments are provided by Schwarz (1987).

How or why does affect provide access to other memory material? Why is positively valenced “material” from memory more accessible in the state of positive emotions and (probably) negative material mentally available in the state of negative emotions? We found two explanations in the literature: the assumption that positive affect is a mental category *per se* and the storage-bin model.

Affect as a mental category

Referring to Isen (1987), Gorn et al. (1993, p. 238) state that “just as the category ‘furniture’ serves to cue concepts such as ‘sofa’ or ‘chair,’ so too does the category ‘positive affect’ serve to cue material related to that positive affect.” Referring to Bower (1981), Kamins et al. (1991, p. 2) state that “each distinct mood, has a specific memory node in memory which collects together multiple aspects of the mood that are related (e.g., events during which that feeling state was aroused). Nodes storing moods can be activated by a variety of stimuli (e.g., TV program content) which causes a spread of activation to other connected memory nodes.” Hence, “positive affect” and “negative affect” are interpreted as hierarchically highly located mental categories that contain links to other subcategories with positive or negative memory content.

Storage bin model

Researchers discussing the cue-accessibility hypothesis also refer to the storage-bin model developed by Wyer and Srull (e.g., Wyer and Srull 1986, p. 323). This approach suggests that all knowledge about a certain issue is stored in mental content-specific storages. The authors use the term “storage bin” as an analogy for mental content-specific storages and develop a rather complex theory. First of all, we would like to note that this model has not been well developed and specified in the literature.

As one aspect in their approach, the authors consider the condition in which a priming stimulus has triggered emotions and subsequently a target stimulus has to be evaluated. Wyer and Srull (1986, p. 353) postulate the following: “If affective concepts and their features happen to be in the workspace at the time information in permanent storage is sought, they may serve as probe cues that affect the bin from which information is retrieved. In addition, because the workspace is searched first for information relevant to a processing objective before material is drawn from permanent storage, these concepts may often be used as information upon which to base judgments of a referent for which they have implications (e.g., judgments of one’s affective reactions to a person or object).”

The first part of this proposition can be transferred to our issue as follows. When consumers view an emotional

narrative video, elements of the plot and particular emotions are in the “workspace” (meaning in the human temporary storage with limited capacity). When consumers are asked to evaluate the brand and search for stored knowledge about the brand, the emotions are cues that direct to other “bins” of knowledge (i.e., elements of the long-term memory). Hence, positive (vs. negative) emotions in the workspace cause the retrieval of “bins” containing other knowledge that is also associated with these positive (vs. negative) emotions. Additional positive vs. negative knowledge stored in memory therefore becomes cognitively “available” while processing the target stimulus (Shen and Chen 2007, p. 76).

The second part of this postulation suggests that emotions evoked by the narrative might also be used as information about the promoted brand. This consideration leads to another theory that can be used to explain the transfer of emotions: affect as information.

3.4. Affect as information (“If I feel good, I like it” heuristic)

Lerner et al. (2015, p. 803) state that research on the affect-is-information mechanism has its origin in findings from an experiment conducted by Johnson and Tversky (1983). In this experiment, in the first step, test participants read newspaper stories (prime) to induce either a positive or negative momentary mood. For instance, to induce a negative mood, “the story described several unfortunate events which occurred to a young male who had just broken up with his girlfriend, was under stress at his job, and was further pressured by his family.” In the second step, the test participants estimated the frequency of various causes of death, such as lung cancer or leukemia (target). The authors found that participants in the bad-mood condition indicated higher estimates of these causes of death than participants in the good-mood condition. The influence of mood on judgments (i.e., these estimates) obviously did not depend on the similarity between the content of stories (prime) and the content of subsequent judgments about causes of death (target). The authors conclude the following: “The results give rise to the hypothesis that we tend to make judgments that are compatible with our current mood, even when the subject matter is unrelated to the cause of that mood.”

To explain such findings, Schwarz (1987) and Schwarz and Clore (1983) postulated that affective states that are elicited by a prime are unconsciously and mistakenly used as information about the target and therefore influence the evaluation of the target. They denoted this presumption as the affect-as-information model or synonymously as mood-as-information model (Schwarz and Clore 2003).

To provide additional evidence for this presumption, Schwarz and Clore (1983) assessed the effects of manipulations of momentary mood (prime) on judgments about one’s life satisfaction (target). In one of their experiments, in the *first* step, momentary mood was manipulat-

ed as follows: test participants had to write down a personal experience that had caused positive thoughts in them (positive-mood condition). Other participants had to write down an event that made them feel sad (negative-mood condition). In the *second* step, the test participants rated overall life satisfaction. In another experiment, test participants were *first* called either on a sunny spring day (positive-mood condition) or on a rainy spring day (negative-mood condition) and, *second*, indicated their overall life satisfaction. Schwarz et al. (1987) created mood conditions in the *first* step as follows: TV viewers living in Germany were contacted after the German soccer team won against Chile by a score of 4:1 during the soccer world championship 1982 (good-mood condition). The condition of less positive mood was created by calling German TV viewers after the match Germany vs. England resulted in a 0:0 score. In the *second* step, all participants indicated overall life satisfaction. These experiments found that life satisfaction was higher in the positive-mood condition than in the negative-mood condition.

This idea inspired numerous researchers to conduct many similar experiments and investigations. For instance, in line with the affect-as-information model, Hirshleifer and Shumway (2003) found that morning sunshine is strongly related to the daily stock market indices of 26 countries from 1982 to 1997. Edmans et al. (2007) report that stock market indices declined when a country's soccer team had lost in the World Cup.

Specifically, the authors consider that the complexity of the target and the presence vs. absence of information regarding the cause of the emotions triggered by the prime might influence the evaluations of the target.

Complexity of the target. Schwarz (1987, p. 155, translated) states: "People use their mood as a basis for judgment when it allows them to simplify an otherwise laborious judgment process. Affect due to the prime is used when the target is complex and the criteria for evaluations are ill-defined" (what might be valid for "life satisfaction," Keltner et al. 1995; Siemer and Reisenzein 1998).

Information to suppress the transfer of affect. Schwarz and Clore (1983) add the finding that when test participants received additional information that reminding one life event or weather will affect their mood, this state did not spill over to the evaluation of life satisfaction. The idea that affect-transfer is suppressed when people explicitly notice that their current mood due to a priming stimulus (e.g., remembering a life event, weather) has nothing to do with the target (e.g., overall life satisfaction) was also supported by an experiment by Gorn et al. (1993). In the *first* step, the test participant listened either to liked music or disliked music to induce positive or negative affect or did not listen to any music. In the *second* step, they had to rate the performance of a set of stereo speakers that played the liked or disliked music. When people were not made aware that only the music

was the source of their mood (because they listened to the music from the speakers), the speakers were evaluated more favorably when they played liked music than when they played disliked music. In contrast, when they were made aware that music influenced their mood in the first step (because they listened to music but did not see the speakers), music did not affect the evaluation of the speakers. For advertising, Lee (2010) found that when consumers received an explicit forewarning that marketers were using emotional advertising aimed to manipulate consumer attitudes toward brands (vs. not receiving such a "forewarning"), emotions triggered by ads did not affect (vs. affected) brand attitudes. This finding was replicated by Coleman and Williams 2013, p. 123), who found the following: "When persuasion knowledge is made accessible, individuals recognize that happy appeals also influence attempts and regulate those as well."

In summation, the affect-as-information model postulates that individuals generally believe or assume that emotions felt during the evaluation of a stimulus (target) are rooted in this stimulus itself; this belief is also denoted as the "aboutness principle" (Higgins 1998). Hence, "affect as information" means that a judgment about a target is based not only on properties of the stimulus itself but also on how one feels as part of the processing of this stimulus. The authors denote the latter presumption as the "If I feel good, I must like it" heuristic. This approach suggests that individuals consult their affective state by asking "How do I feel about it?" and transfer their affective state to co-present stimuli in a cognitively uncontrolled process.

Transferring these ideas to our issue, the affect-as-information mechanism suggests that when brand evaluations are a difficult task and when consumers *do not* develop thoughts about the true source of emotions, emotions resulting from the narrative video are similar to information about the target (i.e., the promoted brand). Consumers might develop such thoughts if they receive explicit forewarnings that ad-triggered emotions would affect their judgments (Lee 2010, p. 226). However, why should marketers aim to influence brand attitudes by issuing warnings that their advertisements are designed to generate such effects?

3.5. Feelings of plausibility ("If the valence of stimuli matches, I like it" heuristic)

In this section, an alternative heuristic process that might explain affect transfer is explained.

Based on the results from word-priming experiments, Klauer and Musch (2003, p. 25) expect the occurrence of an "affective-matching mechanism." In brief, we explain this kind of experiment that was invented by Fazio et al. (1986) and has been replicated and varied by many dozens of researchers (see meta-analysis by Klauer and Musch 2003). In the *first* step, the test persons view a word with a positive, neutral, or negative valence on the computer screen (e.g., "gift" as an example for a posi-

tively valanced word) – the prime. In the *second* step, after a break, they see another word (e.g., “appealing”) on the screen – the target. They must decide whether the target is “good” or “bad” by pressing one of two keys. Research found that all participants would evaluate a target word such as “appealing” as being good, but the time needed for the evaluations of the target was lower for “gift” than for “hell” as the prime. This research was also expanded to other kinds of primes, such as images of a kitten as positively valanced prime (Hermans et al. 1994, p. 519) and odors (Hermans et al. 1998, p. 604).

The affective-matching mechanism postulates the following sequence of mental processes: 1. People compare the target to the prime automatically and spontaneously for evaluative consistency. 2. Evaluative consistency (e.g., prime = sunshine, target = friendly) engenders a feeling of plausibility. Evaluative inconsistency (e.g., prime = sunshine, target = sick) causes a feeling of implausibility. 3. The feeling of plausibility (vs. implausibility) facilitates (vs. reduces) the ability for making affirmative responses and decisions. This approach suggests that when the prime and the target possess the same valance (i.e., are either negatively or positively evaluated objects), feelings of plausibility spill over to target evaluations (Musch and Klauer 1997).

In the condition of pleasant narratives and a subsequently presented brand name, this approach suggests for an a-priori favorably evaluated brand an additional positive effect through feelings of plausibility.

This can also be transferred to predict the effect of emotional narrative videos that link plot and product. For instance, in “Sarah and Juan,” people view a sequence of scenes, which are rather pleasant to see (romantic love of the couple – the prime), often in combination with the product (Juan repeatedly draws pictures of Sarah on wrappers of Wrigley’s Extra chewing gum – the target). In this way, the combination of the prime (romantic scene) and the target (Wrigley’s Extra) becomes plausible in terms that they match. It “feels right” that chewing gum and highly likeable scenes of romantic love co-exist. According to this approach, the appearance of feelings of plausibility is also one of the reasons why emotions elicited by the likeable scenes spill over to liking Wrigley’s Extra.

3.6. Choice justification (“If I can solve a decision problem with a non-diagnostic criterion, I like it” heuristic)

In many decision-making conditions, people face difficulties in making decisions based on the options’ features, benefits, and associated costs.

For instance, in the field of consumer products, one option might be evaluated as more attractive due to higher benefits, whereas another option might be cheaper. This situation reflects a condition in which a benefit-costs conflict exists, and people cannot simply resolve this

conflict because they do not know whether higher benefit or less expenditure should be more desirable. In this condition, consumers might refrain from deciding among the options based on the relevant (diagnostic) characteristics, such as benefits and price, and alternatively rely on irrelevant (non-diagnostic) information to find a way out of the conflict. Then, consumers can select one option, even if they know that relying on this non-diagnostic information is not justified substantively. In other cases, diagnostic information is complex. To evaluate smartphones, for example, price or fees and many technical features might be relevant. People are presumed to facilitate decision-making when relevant information is complex. In the situations described, people are likely to apply a “If I have difficulty evaluating or deciding with the help of diagnostic information, I use non-diagnostic information” and use one simple property for evaluations, i.e., apply a single-attribute-decision rule (Carpenter et al. 1994, p. 341; Meyvis and Janiszewski 2002, p. 619; Broniarczyk and Gershoff 2003, p. 162).

As a consequence, instead of relying on diagnostic information about product features, benefits, and price, consumers could rely on another valuable thing offered by the brand: entertainment through a narrative. Entertainment is not diagnostic of product quality. However, consumers might know that the company that uses entertaining narrative videos has spent a large amount of financial resources developing the plot and producing the video. Indeed, narrative commercials are rather expensive. For instance, there are reports that the production cost of “The Film” by Chanel (2004) was \$33 million and that the cost for the “Skytroop Show” by Carlton Draught (2008) was \$9 million. Consumers might recognize the effort spent stimulating and entertaining them. If consumers like such emotion-triggering narratives, they might develop thoughts about the fact that they received something valuable for free: entertainment due to the narrative. These thoughts might be contrasted to impressions that everyday commercials that simply highlight features and benefits of products are boring and dull. In a reciprocal way, they might judge the brand based on one criterion: are its videos entertaining?

For example, Huawei’s narrative commercial entitled “Umbrella (Make it possible),” which shows romantic love scenes of a young couple, does not inform the viewers about product features or price. Faced with the difficulty of deciding among many smartphones, using the emotional experience from this video can help to arrive at an easy decision. Cars can also be described by manifold properties – making decisions highly difficult. Volvo’s emotional narratives, namely, “Made by Sweden – Prologue” and “Made by Sweden – Epilog,” that show scenes of Zlatan Ibrahimovic’s carrier accompanied by background music by Hans Zimmer can simplify decision-making. Consumers can decide for the promoted Volvo V90 simply because this brand’s videos enable the experience of enjoyable emotions and other car brands do not enable such experiences.

In summation, emotion-triggering narratives in commercials promoting a special brand are likely to be appreciated by consumers, although they represent non-diagnostic information about the product's price and benefits. Thus, if diagnostic information does not provide at least one very clear reason why consumers should purchase the product of a particular brand, they can rely on the entertaining quality of narrative videos.

In Sections 3.7, 3.8, and 3.9., we present affect-regulation theories predicting that emotions triggered by a priming stimulus cause attempts to maintain or reduce the extent of felt emotions. In line with Chen and Pham (2019, p. 114), we regard the terms “[mood/affect/emotion] [management/regulation/control]” to be synonyms. These authors define affect regulation “as the (individual's) conscious attempt to influence the nature of one's affective state through one's behavior or mental activities” (p. 115). In Section 3.7, we discuss the desire to maintain a positive affective state, and in Section 3.8, we summarize arguments concerning the desire to reduce positive emotions. Note that these two fields of research are not contradictory because research suggests that the need for emotions is a personality variable (Raman et al. 1995; Stewart and Koh 2017; Yang and Zhao 2020). Thus, for people with a strong need to experience emotions, the mood maintenance theory (Section 3.7) might be valid, whereas for people with a low need for emotions, the positive affect regulation theory (Section 3.8) is applicable. In Section 3.8, we consider the desire to reduce a negative affective state.

3.7. Desire to maintain positive emotions (mood-maintenance theory)

The (good-) mood-maintenance theory suggests that people want to maintain a positive momentary mood. Hence, positive affect triggered by a priming stimulus is transferred to the target stimulus. This mechanism was postulated by Isen and her colleagues in numerous publications (Isen et al. 1978; Isen and Simmonds 1978; Isen et al. 1982; Isen 1987; Isen and Geva 1987; Isen et al. 1988, p. 716; Isen 1993, p. 272). Many authors have adopted this view (Petty et al. 1993; Batra and Stephens 1994; Wegener and Petty 1994; Meloy 2000; Tiedens and Linton 2001; Handley et al. 2004, p. 111). For instance, Zillman and Bryant (1985, p. 158) state: “Individuals are motivated to perpetuate and increase the intensity of gratifying, pleasurable experiential states.”

There are various explanations for this proposition. *First*, Shapiro et al. (2002, p. 16) refer to Schwarz and Bless (1991) and argue that “a positive affective state, triggered by a benign environment (...) signals no need for detailed analysis of the environmental information.” Thus, one's affective state due to the prime replaces information about the target. *Second*, people in a positive affective state are presumed to be less motivated to process a subsequently presented target stimulus in detail because intense processing could reveal disadvantages of that target

that may interrupt their positive momentary mood. In other words, positive emotions triggered by a priming stimulus distract attention from the target stimulus (Wyer and Carston 1979, p. 11), and as a consequence, the individuals evaluate co-present or subsequently presented stimuli positively. This hypothesis is also discussed in the reduction-in-motivation theory (Breckler 1993). *Third*, if persons in a positive affective state *must* evaluate target-specific information, processing pieces of information with ambiguity are presumed to be biased: information is interpreted positively, i.e., in congruence with this state. For instance, a high product price is more interpreted in terms of high product quality than in terms of high expenditure. Hence, information interpretation is “colored” by the momentary mood (Forgas 1995, p. 39: coloring of information; Macaulay and Eich 2002, p. 68).

This presumption can be transferred to our issue as follows: viewers of narrative advertising that triggers positive affect are presumed to process the information about what brand has presented this narrative only superficially and transfer this affect to the brand to maintain positive momentary mood. In other words, products or brands that are promoted by narratives that elicit pleasant affect are presumed not to be evaluated skeptically (i.e., thoughts about product disadvantages are suppressed).

3.8. Desire to reduce positive emotions (positive affect regulation)

In Section 3.7, we discussed attempts to maintain a positive affective state. However, self-regulation theory suggests that individuals with a low need for emotions even regulate positive affect (Larsen and Prizmic 2004, p. 50). This validity of this idea is justified by the premise that people generally like to control and regulate any bodily and affective states. Vohs and Baumeister (2004, p. 2) posit that individuals aim to bring the self into line with preferred (thus, regular) standards. The authors argue that such processes “can be found deep in nature. For example, the body's homeostatic processes can be considered a form of self-regulation insofar as the human body performs various functions to maintain a constant temperature. If the body gets overheated or chilled, its inner processes seek to return it to its regular temperature.”

How do persons with a low need for emotions regulate positive affect? Sometimes, individuals have the option to approach stimuli that cause pleasant emotions. For instance, viewing a cute kitten might energize people to try to pet it – and stroking the kitten reduces positive affect. If an individual sees a tempting chocolate candy in the bowl on the table, s/he can grab it and put it in the mouth – and eating the chocolate candy reduces positive affect. In such conditions, emotions provide “energy” or “action readiness” to the human body to respond physically to a pleasant stimulus (James 1890; Berlyne 1967, p. 10) and “approaching” reduces the strength of positive affect. However, when stories which are told in an advertisement cause such emotions, people cannot physically

move toward that stimulus. For instance, people might wish and even imagine being part of a pleasant narrative (which will be later discussed as the mental state of narrative transportation) but will realize that these events are not real. Then, people have various options.

First, a process of re-appraisal of the emotion might happen. Lewinski et al. (2016, p. 4) state that for the “case of positive emotions provoked by enjoyable ads, we propose that amusing ads typically lead to an appraisal as ‘funny’ and attractive, related to an approach motivation. This appraisal and the ensuing action readiness might be regulated, working toward controlling one’s attitude with respect to the amusing stimuli, e.g., an ad. Assuming such self-regulation is feasible, emotion regulation is a tool that consumers could adapt for purposes of their own ‘defense’ against persuasive advertising.” Thus, the individuals interpret their positive affect as a marketers’ way to persuade them against their will (as the persuasion-knowledge model suggests; Friestad and Wright 1994). This “persuasion knowledge” likely suppresses positive emotions (i.e., they are interpreted as means of undesirable influences).

Second, a process of re-direction of emotions could happen. “Approaching” the promoted brand that presented the pleasant narrative is a symbolic way, i.e., one of the next best alternatives to approaching pleasant scenes shown in the narrative. This argument is adopted from other areas of research in which this mechanism is used for explaining affect transfers (e.g., in the research on the effect of feelings of nostalgia; Pascal et al. 2002). For instance, in Pantene shampoo promotional videos entitled “You can shine” and “Live your Life,” a young girl is shown who has many emotional experiences and ultimately fulfills her dreams when she becomes an admired dancer or violine player, respectively. Young female viewers of such narratives cannot physically take on the desirable role of this girl. Hence, one of the next best solutions is to like Pantene shampoo, which presented the story (i.e., the emotion is re-directed from the narrative to the brand as second-best alternative to deal with the emotion). By doing so, positive emotions triggered by the commercial might be reduced.

Third, if positive emotions triggered by a narrative in advertising are “too strong,” people are likely to engage in compensatory behavior. As an anecdote, we can report our own experiences from lectures. The commercial entitled “Origami” (2013) shows very emotional scenes of a girl growing up and exhibiting signs of affection with her father. It promotes Wrigley’s Extra chewing gum. When presenting this commercial, some female students suddenly left the room. Obviously, they were overstimulated and wanted to hide tears of emotion.

3.9. Desire to reduce negative emotions (mood-repair hypothesis)

When people experience negative affect due to advertisements, they are likely to escape this state (Russell and

Mehrabian 1978). With respect to emotional narratives, academic research and a look at advertising practice suggest considering different cases.

(1) Repairing a negative affective state by processing given arguments

First, we consider the case in which the advertisement consists of two parts. In the first part of such advertisements, a narrative elicits a negative affect by showing scenes that elicit states such as fear, shame, or anger. In the second part of such advertisements, arguments are provided about how to escape such negative states. For instance, in the commercial entitled “Totally awesome guns” (2006), a horror scene consisting of a man threatening a young female who is alone at home at night is shown that could make the audience susceptible receiving arguments about how this type of situation can be managed. At the end of the video, a retailer provides arguments in favor of its products. To provide a theoretical basis, we use the involvement construct used in classical advertising models.

In the research on advertising effectiveness 30 to 40 years ago, theories were developed that put the persuasiveness of the strength of arguments in favor of the product or the strength of facts in favor of another issue into the core of considerations. This stream of research started by postulating that *when* people are confronted with arguments, they face a decision conflict – either coming to the right and accurate evaluation due to intense argument processing or refraining from spending much cognitive effort for processing arguments, a conflict Chaiken (1980, p. 763) denoted as the consumer’s “economic concern” with respect to arguments. Proponents of the elaboration-likelihood model and the heuristic-systematic model *defined* involvement as the result of this decision: high involvement exists if coming to the right evaluation is more important than avoiding spending much cognitive effort, and low involvement exists when refraining to spend a high level of effort for argument processing is more important than arriving at the correct evaluations. Moreover, the researchers posit that additionally available, easy-to-process information spills over to evaluations of the target object independent of involvement as just defined and in parallel to arguments. Regarding the latter aspect, the advertising models only differed marginally. In the tradition of the heuristic-systematic model (HSM), heuristic cues (e.g., the use of an authority who provides the arguments) were considered, whereas in the elaboration-likelihood model (ELM), peripheral cues (e.g., a testimonial or a lovely picture) were regarded as easy-to-process stimuli. For our purpose, it is important that this research manipulated the source of involvement.

In the initial studies, the authors testing the HSM/ELM used felt targetedness (i.e., felt consequences for one’s life, Petty and Cacioppo 1986, p. 145) as the source of involvement. In numerous experiments, students had to

imagine that there is a discussion to revise examination regulations, received either more or less convincing arguments in favor of this proposal, and evaluated that proposal. One group of the test participants had to envision that they would be affected personally by the change (high felt targetedness), whereas the other group received information that the change might happen far in the future or at another university (low felt targetedness) (Petty et al. 1981; Petty and Cacioppo 1981; Petty and Cacioppo 1984). In other experiments, test participants received either more or less persuasive fact-based information (arguments) about a new product’s features and then indicated their attitude toward this product. One group of the test participants had to imagine that this product would be introduced in the domestic market and therefore be a purchase option for the test participants (high felt targetedness), while the other group received information that the product might be introduced in a foreign market (low felt targetedness) (Petty and Cacioppo 1981; Petty et al. 1983; Miniard et al. 1991; Maheswaran et al. 1992; Chaiken and Maheswaran 1994). This research found that the *strength* of arguments in favor of the change of examination regulations and the introduction of a new product into the market had only an effect in the high-felt-targetedness condition (strong arguments caused better evaluations than weak arguments). In the low-felt-targetedness condition, evaluations did not depend on the strength of arguments. Note that the classical HSM/ELM advertising models did not claim applicability to advertising practice because the low-felt-targetedness condition (used for representing the low-involvement condition) was just considered as a theoretical exercise. For instance, no company launching a new product only on the German market would refrain from targeting German consumers with advertising and instead target consumers living in New Zealand and telling the latter that the product is only commercially available in Germany.

Other researchers presumed that involvement as just defined could alternatively or better be manipulated by the valence of the recipient’s affective state (positive vs. negative) and thus did not use felt targetedness. They stated that in the conditions of positive affect, people want to maintain this state, and refraining from intense argument processing is a way to do so (as the mood-maintenance hypothesis predicts). In conditions of negative affect, people have the desire to attenuate this state, e.g., look for distracting material, and intense argument processing is a way to do so. The latter proposition is often denoted as the (bad-) mood-repair or negative-state-relief hypothesis (Kamins et al. 1991, p. 2). Lerner et al. (2015, p. 807) posit: “If emotions serve in an adaptive role by signaling when a situation demands additional attention, then negative mood should signal threat and thus increase vigilant, systematic processing.” Similarly, Shapiro et al. (2002, p. 16) postulate: “A negative mood signals that the environment is not benign and must be processed.” To provide empirical evidence to this presumption, Bless et al. (1990) induced either positive or nega-

tive mood in students in the *first* step by asking them to report an event in the past that had made them feel very happy or very sad. In the *second* step, based on either weak or strong arguments in favor of an increase in students’ university fees, test participants had to indicate their disagreement or agreement with this change. The authors reported that the strength of arguments in favor of increased fees had a stronger effect in the negative-mood condition than in the positive-mood condition. Bohner et al. (1993) used the same procedure to manipulate mood. Then, test participants had to read a text about the benefits of the fluoridation of tap water for the purpose of caries prophylaxis, and the text contained either weak or strong arguments in favor of water fluoridation. The authors showed that the *strength* of arguments had a stronger effect in the negative-mood condition. In summation, this research suggests that the valence of affect influences the propensity to process arguments. A negative affective state increases the propensity to respond more strongly to strong arguments than does a positive affective state (Fig. 3). To the best of our knowledge, there is no research to date about whether the *strength* of negative emotions increases involvement. However, this approach predicts that unpleasant narratives shown prior to arguments in a commercial increase the persuasiveness of these arguments (i.e., strong arguments lead to better evaluations of the target object than do weak arguments in the negative-affect condition).

(2) Repairing a negative affective state by actively thinking in the absence of arguments

Second, emotional stories triggering negative emotions can induce a state of protection motivation or another urge to act in recipients. For instance, to promote the installation of Vizer security cameras, a commercial entitled “Homeless blind truth” (2015) from Thailand tells the sad story of a person who falls under false suspicion; the use of the product would have protected this person from false suspicion. There are no feature-based arguments for why this camera should be installed; the audience notices at the end of the narrative that Vizer presented this video. Furthermore, many social marketing campaigns use narratives that trigger unpleasant affect without subsequently providing explicit arguments in support

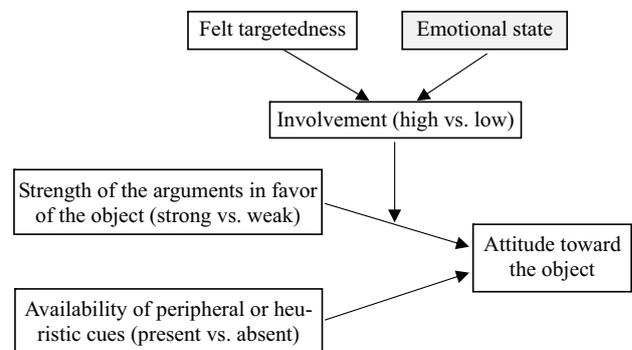


Fig. 3: Repair of negative emotions through more intense argument processing

of the recommended behavior (e.g., health-related campaigns, such as “Don’t smoke,” “Don’t drink too much alcohol,” “Beware of HIV,” and “Don’t consume drugs;” car-driving-related campaigns, such as “Drive carefully,” “Don’t make-up and drive,” and “Don’t text and drive;” anti-crime campaigns, such as “Don’t make and sell pirate copies;” and many variants of children-safety campaigns; see Moore and Harris 1996, p. 37).

In this condition, receivers are expected to “invent” arguments. For instance, Green and Brock (2000, p. 702) argue that when persons “may experience strong emotions (... e.g.,) when transported into narratives with unhappy endings, individuals are likely to engage in (...) ‘actively thinking’ about what could have happened to change an outcome.” As a theoretical basis, we can refer to the protection-motivation model developed by Rogers (1975; 1983; for variants of this model, see Levis et al. 2007). Imagine that smokers view a “Don’t smoke” video. Telling a story that aims to keep smokers from smoking can elicit thoughts in the recipients about severe threats of smoking (e.g., lung cancer) or merely unpleasant consequences (e.g., disapproval among few friends). Moreover, thoughts might be triggered concerning the likelihood of whether individuals themselves would be subject to that threat/inconvenience if they did not stop smoking. Next, self-efficacy-related thoughts might be evoked about whether stopping smoking avoids a threat/inconvenience (e.g., reduces the one’s chance of lung cancer). Finally, thoughts might be caused about the costs incurred when stopping smoking (e.g., overcoming bodily difficulties due to terminating an addiction). Becheur et al. (2007) and Becheur and Valette-Florence (2014) used ads that issued a warning against alcohol misuse. The authors report that the intensity of triggered fear, guilt, and shame in these ads had a positive impact on the perceived severity of threat and personal susceptibility. In summation, we expect that the strength of negative emotions increases the propensity to follow the advice given in the advertisement via self-generated thoughts (Fig. 4).

(3) Repairing a negative affective state by ego-defense mechanisms

Third, to repair a bad mood, individuals can take mechanisms of ego-defense to cope with negative affect (Freud 1946; Paulhus et al. 1997; Lerner et al. 2015, p. 812). People might suppress negative emotions by decreasing attention to the emotion-triggering stimulus (e.g., looking away) or by conducting another cognitive activity

(e.g., counting from one to ten). For instance, viewing a spider might activate people to move away, and leaving the room reduces negative affect. This process is also denoted as distraction (Ochsner and Gross 2005, p. 244). Alternatively, people might re-interpret the cause of the emotions (e.g., thinking “It was just one test,” after receiving a bad grade at school). Moreover, negative affect could be reduced by actively seeking an additional stimulus that induces positive affect (e.g., going on a pleasant shopping tour after having had a bad experience). Zillman and Byrant (1985, p. 186) describe the consumption of entertainment as a process of self-managed therapeutic planning to reduce negative affect. In conditions of very negative emotions triggered by an emotional narrative in an advertisement, people might choose the option to remove themselves from the stimuli, i.e., switch off the video.

3.10. Narrative transportation

The theory of narrative transportation describes the mental state of being lost in a story, its antecedents (e.g., identifiable characters and an interpretable plot of a narrative), and its consequences (e.g., refraining from developing counterarguments). The approach is specific to narratives used as priming stimuli, and we therefore consider whether it contains specific ideas about why the strength of affect triggered by a narrative affects the evaluation of co-present or subsequently presented objects.

When people go on a journey, i.e., when they are transported physically by a train or a car, they move away from their place of residence and, probably personally changed, return to this place later. A similar process happens when people listen to, read, or view a narrative. When immersed in a story, i.e., when they are transported mentally, they distance themselves from reality, briefly lose the connection to their world of origin, and return to reality changed. Narratives are therefore viewed as vehicles to leave reality, enter virtual reality (i.e., experience “narrative” transportation), and come back later.

What is narrative transportation? To the best of our knowledge, Deighton et al. (1989, p. 335) were the first to describe the phenomenon of being lost in a story. Gerig (1993, p. 10 f.) defines narrative transportation as follows: “(1) Someone (‘the traveler’) is transported (2) by some means of transportation (3) as a result of performing certain actions. (4) The traveler goes some distance from his or her world of origin, (5) which makes some

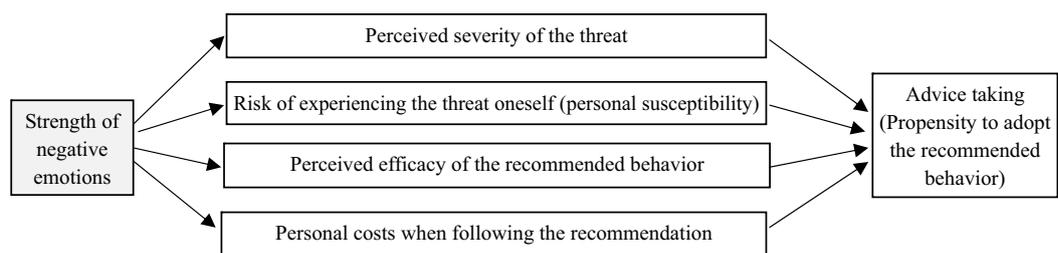


Fig. 4: Repair of negative emotions through self-generated thoughts

aspects of the world of origin inaccessible. (6). The traveler returns to the world of origin, somewhat changed by the journey.” People achieve the state of narrative transportation if they understand and interpret the story (Glaser and Reisinger 2022, p. 191). Cognitive resources are then occupied by developing empathy and identification with the protagonists who play roles in the narrative and the recipients vicariously adopt their perspectives. Cognitive resources are also spent developing additional mental imagery of what is happening (Laurence 2018; van Laer et al. 2014, p. 810). Recipients can be immersed in the virtual world to the extent that they are no longer aware of what is happening in the real world (Green and Brock 2000, p. 702; Slater and Rouner 2002, p. 185; Escalas 2004, p. 37; Chang 2009, p. 21; Bhatagar and Wan 2011, p. 40; Chen 2015, p. 22; Ma 2020, p. 889). Persons might also link the events in the narrative to their own actual or potential behaviors (Escalas 2004, p. 36); then, they develop autobiographic thoughts or additional fantasies. Some researchers suggest that people are not only cognitively and affectively involved but also physically involved in the narrative “when they experience the same motor and sensory reaction” as the protagonists of the narrative (Naranjo 2020; Sandford and Emmott 2012). The knowledge derived from narratives and stored in memory is rather stable over time (Appel and Richter 2007, p. 118). These scenes of narrative commercials can also easily be stored in memory. For instance, if adult persons viewed “Indian Spirit” by C&A (1994) approximately thirty years ago, they are likely to remember elements of the story, which is unlikely for argument-based advertisements viewed 30 years ago.

Cognitive resource occupied for processing the narrative. This approach suggests that people in the state of narrative transportation use their cognitive capacity for having or creating additional thoughts about the narrative. Krause and Rucker (2020, p. 216) argue that “(a) stories bias processing away from negative thoughts, or (b) stories draw attentional resources away from the processing of facts.” Gordon et al. (2018, p. 111) add the notion that there must be a fit between the plot of the story and the story receivers’ prior knowledge and personal experiences to “unpack and better understand the idea.”

Consequences for processing the brand promoted in a narrative video. For narrative advertising, previous research found that – because processing the plot of the narrative occupies available cognitive resources of the receivers – consumers are prevented from developing arguments in favor as well as counterarguments against promoted brands (Glaser and Reisinger 2022, p. 189; Redondo et al. 2018, p. 367), which improves evaluations of less favorable brands (Escalas 2004, p. 45). In other words, processing the plot of the narrative advertisements creates a state of ego-depleting (Baumeister et al. 1998, p. 1253), and people therefore refrain from thinking about the brand, i.e., their own past experiences with the brand, benefits, or prices. Yang and Kang (2021, p. 12) provide arguments in favor of the position that there

must also be a fit between the type of story and the product type.

Note that we do not aim to compare the non-emotional narrative format to non-narrative formats of advertisements and determine whether the narrative format induce states of narrative transportation (Adaval and Wyer 1998; Mattila 2000; Polyorat et al. 2007; Wentzel et al. 2010; Tseng and Huang 2016; Kim et al. 2017; Nan et al. 2017; Krakow et al. 2018; Laurence 2018; Krause and Rucker 2020). In contrast, we discuss the effects of the strength of the emotionality in narratives on evaluations of target objects.

Role of emotion. With respect to narrative transportation and emotions, many researchers presume that the extent of narrative transportation in response to print advertisements, commercials, or movie films is an antecedent of subsequently triggered strength of affect (Escalas 2004; Banerjee and Greene 2012; Hall and Zwarun 2012; Kim et al. 2017; Hall and Bracken 2011; van Laer et al. 2014, p. 804). Green and Brock (2000, p. 702) argue that when transported into narratives, persons “may experience strong emotions.” However, we discuss a different scenario. We are interested in the question of whether highly emotional narratives evoke a deeper process of mental processing (being more lost in the narrative) than less emotional narratives. Regarding this relationship, Nabi and Green (2015, p. 138) argue as follows: “While the individual is reading or viewing a narrative, the story’s emotional flow, or the series of emotional shifts throughout the piece, can provide the motivating force for continued attention. Further, this attention may help sustain narrative transportation and engagement during the course of a story.” This statement suggests that highly emotional narratives evoke more attention than less emotional narratives and that increased attention is the key mechanism by which the strength of emotions affects the depth of narrative transportation. For the example of musical soundtracks used to manipulate emotions elicited by a film, Strick et al. (2015, p. 62 f.) posit “that when music has a strong emotional impact on the viewer and is mentally integrated with the events in the film, it amplifies the emotional impact of the events on the viewer, leading to a stronger involvement with the narrative.” The same position is represented by Costabile and Terman (2013, p. 317), who state that “film music can enhance the emotionality of the film,” and therefore, the “film soundtrack (is expected to) enhance psychological transportation and thus increase narrative persuasion.”

For instance, in the Christmas commercial entitled “1914” and promoting Sainsbury’s supermarkets in the UK in 2014, viewers see emotional scenes showing British and German soldiers celebrating Christmas together on the war front in WW 1. It was obviously aimed to induce empathy and identification with the actors and due to the occupied cognitive resources of the viewers, the commercial was very unlikely to elicit any thoughts in favor of or against Sainsbury’s assortment. Thus, in this

condition of deep narrative transportation, consumers merely notice the brand. Because counterarguments are strongly suppressed, a-priori less favorable brands are evaluated better. For Sainsbury's "1914" commercial, the fact that the plot and the time of showing the commercial had commonality might have had a positive effect apart from narrative transportation.

In summary, the theory of narrative transportation predicts that the suppression of counterarguments increases with the emotionality of the narrative. Favorable brands are unlikely to evoke counterarguments. In contrast, less favorable brands and recommendations to conform to advice, such as "Don't drink and drive," can evoke counterarguments. For the latter condition, the theory of narrative transportation predicts a positive effect, i.e., a shift toward a neutral evaluation.

3.11. Development of hypotheses

As the presentation of theories on the effect of affect triggered by a priming stimulus on the evaluation of the target stimulus suggests, there are a plethora of mechanisms that could be used for explanation. How should we deal with that fact? How could testable hypotheses be developed?

Obviously, Forgas et al. (1984) and Forgas (1994, 1995, 1998a, 1998b, 2008) faced the same challenge thirty years ago. He proposed aggregating theories into four sets and ignoring some approaches. As he aimed to arrive at a generally valid model, he also refrained from considering narrative-specific theories (Section 3.6 and 3.10). In this way, he suggests focusing on (1) the memory-based processes relying on associative networks and the storage-bin model (Sections 3.2 and 3.3), (2) the process based on the affect-as-information heuristics (Section 3.4), (3) the "motivated processing" meaning mood repair models (Section 3.9), and (4) the process of coloring information (Section 3.7 with respect to argument processing). Forgas postulates that these processes can co-occur but that the relevancy of each process is contingent on many conditions, e.g., on target features (familiarity, typicality, and complexity), characteristics of the person (personal relevancy of the issue and motivational goals), and conditions of the situation in which the target is to be evaluated (need for accuracy, availability of criteria, and social desirability of the outcome). Forgas denotes the theory *under which conditions* each of these four types of processes is predominant as the affect-infusion model (AIM). Most likely due to its complexity, the AIM has rarely been used by other researchers (Grable and Roszkowski 2008; Eschleman 2012; Kühne et al. 2012; Zellweger and Dehlen 2012; Mao et al. 2018).

Moreover, for the relationship between the strength of affect due to the prime and evaluations of the target, it seems impossible to design and test an overall model that contains mediating variables from the different theories. For instance, the validity of memory-based approaches is usually tested by investigating the time people need to

confirm or reject an association between two concepts. We surmise that integrating different theories into one model for deriving hypotheses is far too complex.

Returning to the origin of the theories, we state that all of them indicate the spillover of affect triggered by a prime, on evaluations of the target, with some theory-specific restrictions. Under the presumption that multiple processes co-occur, we postulate the validity of the following:

H1: The evaluation of a target object (brand, advice) increases with increasing affect triggered by an affect-laden narrative advertisement.

Because the aspect of narrative transportation is specific to our issue, we additionally posit the following:

H2: The relationship suggested in H1 is mediated by narrative transportation.

Moreover, we test whether the protection-motivation model should be supplemented by the strength of emotions, as suggested in Fig. 4:

H3: For videos that issue a warning, the relationship suggested in H1 is mediated by the components of the protection-motivation model.

4. Study

4.1. Manipulating the strength of emotions in narrative advertisements

The object of this study is investigating the impact of the strength of emotions triggered by a narrative ad on the evaluations of the promoted product or the propensity to adopt the recommended behavior. We therefore need to manipulate the strength of emotions.

At first glance, it is obvious that creating different video plots (i.e., cutting out emotional scenes from a video to reduce emotionality) for this purpose is difficult because this kind of manipulation would also cause a variation of the length of the video. Alternatively, we could include an additional stimulus to manipulate emotions. For instance, we could expose test participants to a more or less good smelling scent to manipulate the strength of positive affect and to a more or less disgusting scent to manipulate the strength of negative affect while viewing an emotional video. For collecting a large sample of data, this technique is very costly. Therefore, we decided to manipulate the strength of the affect through background music (Fig. 5).

Music has a similar potential to trigger affect as narratives. For instance, Alpert and Alpert (1989, p. 487) postulate that music could make people feel happy as well as sad or sentimental. Craton and Lantos (2011) state that music conveys meaning in terms of feelings and moods, ranging from sheer horror or revulsion through excitement to an extremely gentle or romantic ambiance. Shen

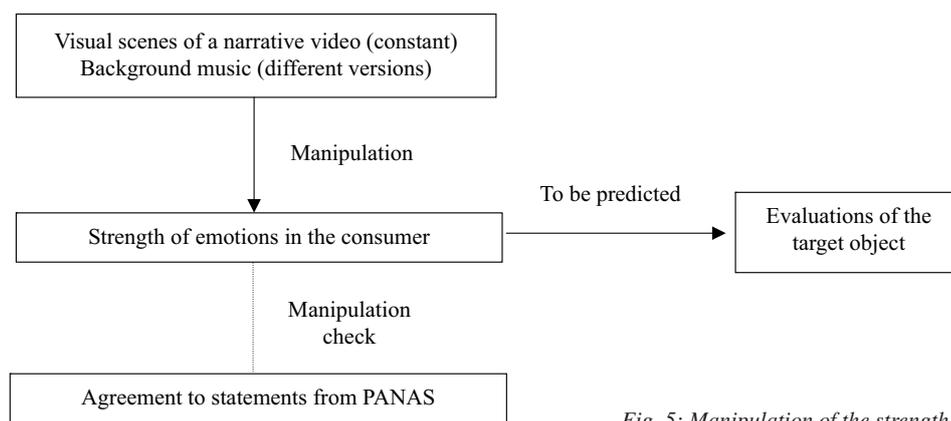


Fig. 5: Manipulation of the strength of emotions by background music

et al. (2018) report that different pieces of music elicit emotions such as happiness, sadness, or passion. North and Hargreaves (1997) add the notion that music can be more or less exiting. Thus, choosing music that elicits emotions likely amplifies or attenuates emotions triggered by the narrative video plot.

In previous research, when music was varied in the context of advertising, music was often intended to be foreground music; i.e., the test participants focused on the music (Gorn 1982; Alpert et al. 2005). In this condition, pretests selecting the appropriate music could be conducted. Likeability of the foreground music, i.e., the fit of the music style with the target group's taste (Bozman et al. 1994) and the fit of the music to the product and the video plot (MacInnis and Park 1991; Hung 2000; Hou et al. 2019) are known as the major determinants of the effectiveness of foreground music in advertising settings.

However, when combining emotional narratives with music, the music will be background music, i.e., will be only noticed in a superficial way. Zoghaib (2019, p. 56) posits that "(a verbal message) in the foreground, even if neutral, makes music recede in the background. This could reduce the effects of music on consumer response." Thus, the likeability of background music seems to be less relevant, and pretests would result in biased findings.

Costabile and Terman (2013) manipulated the fit of background music to the visual scenes of a film and found that low-fit music resulted in lower narrative transportation than high-fit music. Strick et al. (2015) and Stewart and Koh (2017) report that the speed of background music in commercials can be an appropriate measure to influence narrative transportation.

Based on these ideas, we combined a large set of background music with each narrative video and expected that these combinations would result in considerable variation in the emotions triggered by the commercials. To check whether we manipulated the emotional state, we used agreement items from the "Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)" developed by Watson et al. (1988). Even if test participants do not recognize details of background music, they are expected to register *that*

there was any background music. Thus, music likely causes a superficial impression of fitting or not fitting the scenes shown in the video and the promoted target (brand, advice). The impression that the background music fits the visual plot and the target should therefore be constant across the background-music versions. We will consider only background music that does not vary regarding the fit to the plot and target. Moreover, participants should not know the music. If people know the piece of music, it gains attention and becomes foreground music. We will ask participants after viewing the videos whether they know the music and will remove test participants from the dataset who answer affirmatively.

4.2. Test stimuli

The scenes shown on the narrative videos

We use two videos that promote the purchase of products and aim to elicit positive emotions. The first integrates the promoted product into the plot, and the second is a mystery ad.

The first of the videos promotes the Adidas brand (sports shoes). It is entitled "Break Free" and has been created by students of a film academy. It shows scenes in which an old man living in a retirement home reminisces about times when he was younger and a successful runner. With his old Adidas shoes, he wants to go running again. Although the nurse aims to prevent this endeavor, he is assisted by other residents and finally is able to go for a run. The duration of the video is 1:39 min; it was created in 2016 and was viewed by approximately 16 m people on YouTube. Because this video has a happy ending, we presume that – after viewing it – predominantly positive emotions were induced in the test participants (what was confirmed by results of a thought-listing task).

The second video promotes the Bahlsen Leibniz brand (cookies). It is entitled "Immer für dich da" (Always there for you). The scenes start with showing a young boy at a bus stop waiting for the bus and being annoyed by male mates because he carries a doll, a pink tutu, and a toy ballerina in a suitcase. Then, the boy visits his sister in the hospital and gives her these things. The video ends with a scene in which the grown-up boy visits his sister

who obviously has become a professional dancer. The video was published in 2016, has a duration of 1:26 min, and obtained 55,000 views on YouTube. We surmise that – after having seen the video – predominantly positive emotions are evoked (what was confirmed by findings from a thought-listing task). The brand logo is shown at the end of the video.

Moreover, we used a video that aims to prevent people from engaging in harmful behavior and aims to elicit negative emotions. It was shown on TV and in cinemas in Austria and aimed to prevent car drivers from looking at their smartphone while driving. It was released by the “Land Oberösterreich – Eine Initiative von Ihrem Landesrat für Infrastruktur” (the publisher is an official institution in a part of Austria) and is entitled “Blicke können töten. Smartphone am Steuer” (One glance can kill). The story is as follows: A man and a woman meet in a bar; they exchange numbers and subsequently text each other and afterward spend days and weeks together. They become a couple. One day, the woman notices she is pregnant and sends the ultrasound picture of their unborn baby to her boyfriend’s smartphone. Although driving, the man looks at this message, causing a serious accident. The video has also been available on YouTube since 2019 and reached approximately 5,000 viewers. The duration is 0:56 min. It obviously aims to induce negative emotions.

The background music contained in the videos

None of these narrative videos featured foreground music like Pepsi’s “We will rock you.” The videos contain background music whose variation manipulates emotionality. We paid attention to the fact that the background music would fit the scenes shown in the videos; that is, when a “dramatic” event happened in the video, the music was also more “dramatic,” e.g., louder or more intense. Hence, we selected suitable passages of music from music tracks. Initially, we created 21 versions of the Adidas video, 18 versions of the Bahlsen Leibniz video, and nine versions of the “One glance can kill” video. The versions differ only with respect to the background music. None of the videos contains spoken language. All versions of the background music were instrumental music.

4.3. Procedure

Data collection took place between 2021 and 2022 in Germany. In total, 27 students assisted us in distributing links to the questionnaire on social platforms. The students located the link to the questionnaire on a social platform called Studydrive. This platform is used by thousands of students from many different universities in Germany and neighboring countries. To the best of our knowledge, Studydrive has not been used by (many) other researchers for data collection thus far and therefore can motivate many visitors to participate in surveys. At least, it allows for the collection of data from a very large sample of homogeneous persons (German-speaking stu-

dents) in a short time. We surmise that students belong to the target group of Adidas sports shoes, Bahlsen Leibniz cookies, and the “One glance can kill” campaign. To increase sample homogeneity, the links were included in subareas targeting students of management and economics. Each test participant watched one of 48 videos and then completed the online questionnaire. As we did not give the students assisting us in data collection information regarding when they should stop data collection (i.e., remove the link from the platform), we received different sample sizes of test participants watching the video versions. For each video, data were collected within one year.

4.4. Measures

For the “One glance can kill” video, a filter question asked whether the test participants drove a car; if they did not, they were excluded from the survey. After viewing one of the videos, the participants were asked to write down all thoughts and feelings evoked by the ad verbally. Then, the test persons were asked to provide data for the following response variables: (1) attitudes toward the brand (for the Adidas and Bahlsen video) or the propensity to take the advice (for the “One glance can kill” video); (2) intention to share the video with friends on social media; (3) positive affect (for the Adidas and Bahlsen videos) or negative affect (for the “One glance can kill” video); and (4) narrative transportation. (5) For the “One glance can kill” video, measures that indicate protection motivation were included.

As control variables, we subsequently assessed (6) fit of the music to the narrative’s scenes and message/brand, (7) product category involvement (for the Adidas and Bahlsen video) or prior concerns about the use of one’s mobile phone while driving (for the “One glance can kill” video), (8) self-perceptions of one’s emotionality (personality variable; e.g., Bachorowski and Braaten 1994; Flett et al. 1996; Larsen et al. 1996; Moore and Harris 1996; Geuens and Pelsmacker 1999), and (9) the need for emotions (personality variable; e.g., Yang and Zhao 2020). Next, (10) test participants indicated familiarity with the background music (yes/no-answer). Finally, (11) age, gender, and student status were assessed. The statements to which the test participants could agree or disagree are listed in *Tab. 2* and *Tab. 3*.

4.5. Sample

In total, 3,925 persons who provided completed data participated in this survey.

First, we decided to remove video versions from our sample of videos if participants stated a *comparatively* low or high fit of the music to the visual scenes or the promoted brand/issue. Low or high fit measures would indicate that details of the music had been noticed. Thus, we analyzed the “fit of music to message” variable (see measures, *Tab. 3*). We retained only the video versions in the sample of videos that *did not differ* significantly re-

Construct	Statements
Attitude toward the brand (Adidas, Bahlsen Leibniz)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The brand is very attractive. • The brand is very good. • The brand is very appealing. • The brand is very interesting. <p>$\alpha = .891$, source: Spears and Singh (2004)</p>
Advice taking (One glance can kill)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would stop before reading a message on my cell phone while driving. • In the future, I'll be more careful to put my cell phone aside while driving. • I try not to be distracted by messages or phone calls in the future. <p>$\alpha = .712$, sources: Tsai et al. (2016); Borawska et al. (2020, p. 9)</p>
Intention to share the video with friends on social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am interested in sharing this video with my friends. • This video is worth sharing with others. • I am willing to share this video on social media. <p>$\alpha = .881$, sources: Akpinar and Berger (2017, p. 323); Evens et al. (2017); Choi et al. (2018, p. 22)</p>
Strength of positive emotions (Adidas, Bahlsen Leibniz) – manipulation check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After watching the video, I felt very cheerful. • After watching the video, I felt very pleased. • After watching the video, I felt very happy. • After watching the video, I felt very delighted. • After watching the video, I felt very satisfied. • After watching the video, I felt very carefree. • After watching the video, I felt very enthusiastic. <p>$\alpha = .933$, sources: Edell and Burke (1987, p. 424); Watson et al. (1988, p. 1067); Watson and Clark (1994); Richins (1997, p. 144)</p>
Strength of negative emotions (One glance can kill) – manipulation check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After watching the video, I felt very sad. • After watching the video, I felt very depressed. • After watching the video, I felt very distressed. • After watching the video, I felt very unhappy. • After watching the video, I felt very nervous. • After watching the video, I felt very afraid. • After watching the video, I felt very irritable. • After watching the video, I felt very ashamed. • After watching the video, I felt very upset. • After watching the video, I felt very irritated. • After watching the video, I felt very annoyed. <p>$\alpha = .915$, sources: Edell and Burke (1987, p. 424); Watson et al. (1988, p. 1067); Watson and Clark (1994); Richins (1997, p. 144)</p>
Narrative transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While I was watching the video, activity going on in the room around me was on my mind. (recoded) • I could picture myself in the scene of the events in the video. • After finishing the video, I found it easy to put it out of my mind. (recoded) • I wanted to learn how the video ended. • While watching the film, I understood how the protagonist felt. • I found my mind wandering while watching the video. (recoded) • I was mentally involved in the narrative while watching it. • While watching the film, I forgot about my daily businesses. <p>$\alpha = .861$, sources: Costabile and Terman (2013); Escalas (2004); Green and Brock (2000, p. 704); Green and Brock (2002); Nan et al. (2017, p. 324)</p>
Perceived severity of threat (One glance can kill)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using cell phones while driving is very dangerous. • The number of accidents caused by mobile phone use is alarmingly high. • The video made me very aware of the topic. • There is an urgent need for action to ban cell phones while driving. <p>$\alpha = .807$, source: Tsai et al. (2016)</p>
Personal susceptibility of the threat (One glance can kill)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This warning is very relevant to my driving behavior. • This warning is very significant to my driving behavior. • This warning addresses an issue that is very important to me personally. • This warning was to have a very great effect on my driving behavior. <p>$\alpha = .821$, source: Albouy (2017, p. 11)</p>

Tab. 2: Measures used in the study – Part I

Construct	Statements
Self-efficacy (One glance can kill)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If I switch off my phone off completely while driving, I won't be tempted to look at my phone while driving.
Personal costs when following the advice (One glance can kill)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm afraid of missing out if I'm not always available online immediately. It takes a lot of energy to put my cell phone down while driving. I find it very difficult to wait to read a message when I receive it while driving. $\alpha = .837$, source: Yan et al. (2014)
Fit of music to the narrative and message/brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This music really suits this narrative. This music goes well with this brand (message). $R = .671$, sources: Galan (2009); Kellaris et al. (1993); MacInnis and Park (1991)
Product category involvement (Adidas, Bahlsen Leibniz)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I frequently use such products. I am very familiar with the advertised product category. I am very interested in such products. $\alpha = .826$, source: Zaichkowsky (1985, p. 350)
Prior concerns about "usage of the cell phone while driving" (One glance can kill)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before watching the video, I was sure: I drive so carefully that if I look at my smart phone while driving nothing will happen to me. Before watching the video: I slow down when looking at my smart phone while driving. $R = .490$, source: Bockarjova and Steg (2014)
Self-perceptions of one's emotionality (personality variable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My emotions tend to be more intense than those of most people. My friends might say I am emotional. When something good happens, I am usually much more jubilant than others. Sad movies deeply touch me. $\alpha = .844$, source: Larsen and Diener (1987, p. 34-36)
Need for (low) emotions (personality variable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiencing strong emotions is not something I enjoy very much. I would rather be in a situation where I experience little emotion than one which is sure to get me emotionally involved. I do not look forward to being in situations that others have found to be emotional. I look forward to situations that I know are less emotionally involving. I like to be unemotional in emotional situations. I prefer to ignore the emotional aspects of situations rather than getting involved in them. I feel relief rather than fulfilled after experiencing a situation that was very emotional. $\alpha = .844$, sources: Raman et al. (1995, p. 540); Stewart and Koh (2017, p. 564)
Familiarity with the music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did you recognize the music in the video? (yes/no)

Note: Except for the measure assessing familiarity with the music, the participants agreed or disagreed to the statements on a seven-point scale (1= totally disagree, 7 = totally agree).

Tab. 3: Measures used in the study – Part 2

garding this variable. By doing so, we reduced the number of versions of the Adidas videos from 21 to 15 and the number of Bahlsen Leibniz videos from 18 to 15. We surmise that the style, rhythm, and other elements were too extraordinary for the background music that we singled out. The sample size of test participants was reduced by 723 to 3,202 participants.

Second, we wanted to remove test participants from the sample who stated that they knew the background music. Familiarity with a piece of music used as background music might gain attention (i.e., it becomes foreground music) and then exert an additional effect through likeability. Thus, at the end of the questionnaire, we asked the test participants to remember the music and indicate whether they knew it. Forty-seven of the 3,202 persons stated they were familiar with the music. We did not consider these persons.

Thus, the final sample consists of 3,155 persons. A total of 1,535 (48.7 %) were male, 1,614 (51.2 %) were fe-

male, and six were non-binary. The average age was 27.38 years ($SD = 10.71$). For a student sample, this mean age is rather high. This can be explained by the fact that 2,253 (71.4 %) stated that they were students, and 902 (28.6 %) indicated that they were non-students. Cross-tabulation with age indicated that the latter sub-sample was marginally older; it probably consisted of persons who had finished studies some time ago but remained members on the Studydrive platform. Because we did not find remarkably different findings when we focused on actual students, we decided not to remove the non-students from the dataset.

Homogeneity checks of sub-samples. Regarding the self-perceptions of one's emotionality, the sub-samples do not differ significantly (Adidas: $F_{14;1434} = 1.410$; Bahlsen Leibniz: $F_{14;1176} = 1.585$; One glance can kill: $F_{8;506} = 1.024$, all $ps > .05$). With respect to the need for emotions, we did not find significant differences between the sub-samples (Adidas: $F_{14;1434} = 1.578$; Bahlsen Leibniz:

$F_{14;1176} = 1.217$; One glance can kill: $F_{8;506} = 1.711$, all $ps > .05$). Concerning product category involvement and – for the prevention video – prior concerns regarding the use of the smartphone while driving, the sub-samples were not significantly different (Adidas: $F_{14;1434} = 1.102$; Bahlsen Leibniz: $F_{14;1176} = .361$; One glance can kill: $F_{8;506} = 1.471$, all $ps > .05$). We did not find remarkable differences regarding gender, age, and student status across the background music versions per video.

For the “fit of the music to the narrative and message/brand,” we deliberately selected those background-music versions that were not associated with comparatively low or high fit; thus, we chose the videos with non-significant differences (Adidas: $F_{14;1434} = 1.453$; Bahlsen Leibniz: $F_{14;1176} = 1.242$; One glance can kill: $F_{8;506} = 1.3721$, all $ps > .05$).

4.6. Description of results

Tab. 4 and Tab. 5 denote the titles of the background music, strength of the triggered emotions, the results for the

response variables (brand attitude/advice taking, propensity to share the video, narrative transportation, indicators of protection motivation), and findings for the fit of the music to the message/brand. In these tables, we sorted the video versions according to the strength of emotions triggered by the videos.

4.7. Manipulation check: Did we manipulate the strength of emotions?

Adidas. For this video, the rank order with respect to positive emotions can be seen in the upper half of Tab. 4. The mean value of this variable ranges between $M_{Enya} = 2.97$ and $M_{Kevin Graham} = 4.76$. Admittedly, using all 15 pieces of background music for pairwise comparisons will not result in 105 significant pairwise differences because the video versions had not been pre-selected. Therefore, we must focus on a subset of the videos to test differences in the strength of emotions. We select the first, seventh, twelfth, and fifteenth commercial (see the

	Sample size	Strength of positive emotions	Brand attitude	Propensity to share	Narrative transportation	Fit of music to message
Adidas video and background music by						
Enya: River	153	2.97 (1.45)	4.22 (.78)	2.73 (1.53)	2.59 (1.23)	4.19 (.77)
Ólafur Arnalds: Only The Winds	39	3.01 (1.56)	4.66 (1.19)	2.78 (1.62)	2.56 (1.13)	4.32 (.84)
Piano Calm: Babylea	73	3.06 (1.47)	4.56 (1.44)	2.65 (1.70)	2.63 (1.22)	4.27 (.80)
E-Soundtrax: Documentary and Cinematic Atmosphere	75	3.33 (1.62)	4.77 (1.31)	2.80 (1.67)	2.75 (1.31)	4.28 (1.09)
Ennio Morricone: The Ecstasy of Gold	39	3.34 (1.60)	4.66 (1.47)	2.77 (1.76)	2.75 (1.25)	4.38 (1.27)
Tracy Chattaway: Nightsky	40	3.55 (1.25)	4.69 (.93)	3.13 (1.57)	3.08 (.96)	4.16 (.96)
Hans Zimmer: Time	213	3.58 (1.58)	4.74 (.96)	3.41 (1.84)	3.12 (.94)	4.27 (1.08)
Tyron Hunter X: Light Skin	62	3.65 (1.50)	5.06 (1.02)	3.11 (1.64)	3.07 (1.14)	4.66 (1.48)
Ludovico Einaudi: Divenire	41	3.69 (1.31)	4.91 (1.20)	3.18 (1.71)	3.18 (.73)	4.11 (1.25)
Bortex: Changing	214	3.72 (1.54)	5.14 (1.32)	3.34 (1.91)	3.32 (.80)	4.49 (1.39)
Clive Smith: Sill Life	63	3.77 (1.61)	4.95 (1.51)	3.74 (1.95)	3.19 (1.47)	4.24 (1.54)
E-Soundtrax: Tears in Moldova	75	3.97 (1.34)	5.08 (.99)	3.64 (1.41)	3.42 (.95)	4.29 (1.27)
Ludovico Einaudi: Nuvole Bianche	143	4.21 (1.22)	4.99 (1.01)	3.65 (1.43)	3.29 (1.29)	4.45 (1.06)
Hiroyuki Sawano: T-KT	68	4.21 (1.77)	5.25 (1.63)	4.23 (2.21)	3.33 (.86)	4.52 (1.50)
Kevin Graham: Until the End	151	4.76 (1.49)	5.67 (1.01)	4.60 (1.34)	3.84 (.42)	4.32 (.71)
Total	1,449					
Bahlsen Leibniz video and background music by						
Ludovico Einaudi: Giorni Dispari	70	3.42 (1.61)	3.73 (1.19)	3.12 (2.00)	2.74 (1.02)	4.25 (1.32)
Tracy Chattaway: Nightsky	70	3.52 (1.27)	3.90 (1.09)	3.32 (1.48)	3.52 (1.27)	4.40 (.82)
Relaxing Piano Music	70	3.70 (1.49)	4.27 (1.51)	3.28 (1.87)	3.67 (1.44)	3.80 (1.16)
Martin Herzberg: Lifeline	72	3.88 (1.40)	4.22 (1.16)	3.29 (1.56)	3.37 (1.58)	4.17 (1.13)
Instrumental Beat	73	4.03 (1.17)	4.20 (1.14)	3.11 (1.57)	3.68 (1.47)	4.08 (1.02)
Housebuilding Sound: Piano	70	4.05 (1.45)	4.59 (1.38)	3.49 (1.80)	3.78 (1.35)	4.36 (1.23)
Piano Music	73	4.12 (1.54)	4.49 (1.39)	3.53 (1.84)	4.22 (1.03)	4.00 (1.44)
Hans Zimmer: Where we are Going	73	4.30 (1.68)	4.67 (1.40)	3.38 (1.93)	4.48 (1.13)	3.88 (1.23)
Martin Todsharow: Wings	70	4.30 (1.50)	4.71 (1.46)	3.56 (1.53)	4.34 (1.13)	4.29 (1.55)
Hans Zimmer: Time	197	4.32 (1.15)	4.63 (1.42)	3.55 (1.73)	4.63 (1.13)	3.82 (1.39)
Hans Zimmer: One Day	63	4.34 (1.14)	4.68 (1.55)	3.83 (2.07)	4.40 (.90)	4.28 (1.46)
Ennio Morricone: Love Theme	72	4.34 (1.31)	4.75 (.93)	3.60 (1.73)	4.51 (1.08)	4.31 (1.22)
Ludovico Einaudi: Oltremare	72	4.41 (1.55)	4.73 (1.17)	3.70 (2.08)	4.60 (.98)	3.94 (1.49)
Ji Pyeong Kwon: Sad Romance	73	4.49 (1.37)	4.57 (.93)	3.57 (1.31)	4.58 (1.09)	4.07 (1.26)
Ennio Morricone: Infanzia e Maturità	73	4.63 (1.41)	4.94 (.98)	3.90 (1.49)	4.52 (.91)	4.05 (.85)
Total	1,191					

Notes: Scale ranges from 1 (low) to 7 (high). Data are mean values. Standard deviations in parentheses.

Tab. 4: Description of the effects of different background music for the promotion-oriented videos

“One glance can kill” video and background music by	Sample size	Strength of negative emotions	Advice taking	Propensity to share	Narrative transportation	Fit of music to message
Claude Debussy: Clair de Lune	88	3.88 (1.57)	4.17 (1.07)	3.82 (1.94)	4.24 (1.02)	4.85 (1.63)
Nights Amore, Arn Andersson: Farewell Life	93	4.41 (1.63)	4.59 (1.05)	3.80 (1.87)	4.65 (1.14)	5.00 (1.53)
Giovanni Puocci: Stay Alive	36	4.50 (1.63)	4.97 (1.71)	3.78 (1.13)	4.81 (1.19)	4.56 (1.43)
Eternal Eclipse: True Love’s Last Kiss	93	4.50 (1.71)	5.00 (1.30)	3.75 (2.05)	5.11 (1.30)	4.92 (1.47)
Prince Nem: Why should it be so Heavy	42	4.64 (1.71)	5.01 (1.35)	3.96 (1.92)	5.17 (1.26)	5.49 (1.35)
Kenji Kawai: Life before War	42	4.73 (1.55)	4.99 (1.40)	3.91 (1.44)	5.23 (1.36)	5.16 (1.17)
Instrumental Beat	37	4.78 (1.62)	5.21 (1.47)	3.70 (1.35)	4.94 (1.05)	5.04 (1.78)
Secession Studios & Greg Dombrowski: The Storm	42	4.81 (1.52)	5.22 (1.45)	3.86 (1.38)	4.92 (1.04)	5.05 (1.69)
Two Steps from Hell: Unleashed	42	4.97 (1.44)	5.44 (1.20)	3.77 (1.88)	5.37 (1.24)	4.85 (1.54)
		Perceived severity of threat	Personal susceptibility	Self-efficacy	Personal costs	
Claude Debussy: Clair de Lune	88	4.44 (.74)	3.49 (1.05)	1.84 (1.62)	3.08 (1.86)	
Nights Amore, Arn Andersson: Farewell Life	93	5.08 (.62)	4.20 (1.40)	2.00 (1.86)	3.04 (1.21)	
Giovanni Puocci: Stay Alive	36	5.11 (1.02)	4.14 (2.67)	1.89 (1.64)	2.69 (1.75)	
Eternal Eclipse: True Love’s Last Kiss	93	5.23 (.81)	4.37 (1.45)	1.82 (1.4&)	2.91 (1.70)	
Prince Nem: Why should it be so Heavy	42	5.28 (.80)	4.55 (1.23)	1.31 (.95)	3.37 (1.79)	
Kenji Kawai: Life before War	42	5.12 (.88)	4.58 (1.53)	1.40 (1.01)	3.27 (1.73)	
Instrumental Beat	37	5.39 (1.35)	4.48 (1.21)	2.16 (1.94)	2.94 (1.62)	
Secession Studios & Greg Dombrowski: The Storm	42	5.71 (1.17)	4.52 (1.14)	2.26 (1.86)	2.72 (1.73)	
Two Steps from Hell: Unleashed	42	6.06 (.81)	4.80 (1.18)	1.76 (1.57)	2.68 (1.44)	
Total	515					

Tab. 5: Description of the effects of different background music for the prevention-oriented video

rows in gray color in Tab. 4). In a pairwise comparison, these stimuli were associated with a significantly different strength of positive emotions ($M_{Zimmer} = 3.58$ vs. $M_{Enya} = 2.97$, $t_{364} = 3.743$, $p < .001$; $M_{E-Soundtrax} = 3.97$ vs. $M_{Zimmer} = 3.58$, $t_{286} = 1.937$, $p < .05$; and $M_{Graham} = 4.76$ vs. $M_{E-Soundtrax} = 3.97$, $t_{224} = 3.901$, $p < .001$, one-tailed tests).

Bahlsen Leibniz. For this video, data are contained in the lower part of Tab. 4. The strength of positive emotions ranged between $M_{Einaudi} = 3.42$ and $M_{Morricone} = 4.63$. We chose the first, fifth, tenth, and fifteenth version from the strength-of-positive-emotion ranking (see the rows in gray color). For these videos, we can report significant differences ($M_{Instrumental Beat} = 4.03$ vs. $M_{Einaudi Gioni Diospari} = 3.42$, $t_{141} = 2.586$, $p < .01$; $M_{Zimmer Time} = 4.32$ vs. $M_{Instrumental Beat} = 4.03$, $t_{268} = 1.867$, $p < .05$; and $M_{Morricone Infanzia} = 4.63$ vs. $M_{Zimmer Time} = 4.32$, $t_{268} = 1.813$, $p < .05$, one-tailed tests).

One glance can kill. For this video, the strength of negative emotions lies between $M_{Debussy} = 3.88$ to $M_{Two Steps} = 4.97$ depending on the background music. We compare the first, second, and ninth version with respect to the strength of negative emotions (see the rows in gray color in Tab. 5). These video versions differ significantly regarding the negative emotions ($M_{Nights Amore} = 4.41$ vs. $M_{Debussy} = 3.88$, $t_{179} = 2.230$, $p < .05$; $M_{Two Steps} = 4.97$ vs. $M_{Nights Amore} = 4.41$, $t_{133} = 1.917$, $p < .05$, one-tailed tests).

We conclude that our procedure created a variation in the strength of emotions while maintaining the visual elements of the video and perceptions of fit between the background music and the brand/message constant.

4.8. Test of Hypothesis 1: Do evaluations covary with the strength of emotions triggered by the commercial?

We presume that emotions are triggered immediately and without cognitive control by the stimulus material, while evaluations of the brand or the recommended advice are partly the result of cognitive processing, which is more effortful. Thus, we surmise that we can interpret the covariation of the strength of emotion due to the video and evaluations of the brand/advice in the sense that emotions affect evaluations and not vice versa. Admittedly, we cannot provide empirical evidence for this presumption. We compare evaluations for the video versions that turned out to differ significantly regarding the strength of emotions.

First, we use brand attitude and the propensity to follow the advice as dependent variables.

Adidas. Again, we choose the first, seventh, twelfth, and fifteenth commercial (see the rows with gray color in Tab. 4). In a pairwise comparison, these stimuli were associated with significantly different attitudes toward the brand ($M_{Zimmer} = 4.74$ vs. $M_{Enya} = 4.22$, $t_{364} = 5.503$, $p < .001$; $M_{E-Soundtrax} = 5.08$ vs. $M_{Zimmer} = 4.74$, $t_{286} = 2.625$, $p < .01$; and $M_{Graham} = 5.67$ vs. $M_{E-Soundtrax} = 5.08$, $t_{224} = 4.191$, $p < .001$, one-tailed tests).

Bahlsen Leibniz. We focus on the selection of the first, fifth, tenth, and fifteenth version from the strength-of-positive-emotion ranking. In pairwise comparisons, the attitude toward the brand is higher for videos with higher emotionality ($M_{Instrumental Beat} = 4.20$ vs. $M_{Einaudi Gioni Diospari} = 3.73$, $t_{141} = 2.414$, $p < .01$; $M_{Zimmer Time} = 4.63$ vs. $M_{Instrumental Beat} = 4.20$, $t_{268} = 3.235$, $p < .01$; and $M_{Morricone Infanzia} = 4.94$ vs. $M_{Zimmer Time} = 4.63$, $t_{268} = 1.699$, $p < .05$, one-tailed tests).

One glance can kill. We compare the first, second, and ninth version from the ranking. These videos differ significantly regarding the propensity to take the advice ($M_{\text{Nights Amore}} = 4.59$ vs. $M_{\text{Debussy}} = 4.17$, $t_{179} = 2.685$, $p < .01$; $M_{\text{Two Steps}} = 5.44$ vs. $M_{\text{Nights Amore}} = 4.59$, $t_{133} = 4.123$, $p < .001$, one-tailed tests).

In sum, the data indicate that videos eliciting a higher strength of emotion result in more favorable brand evaluations and a higher propensity to follow advice.

Second, we use propensity to share the video with friends on social platforms as the dependent variable. We presume that this variable is only a valid indicator for evaluations and conduct this analysis to provide additional validity to the results.

Adidas. We use the commercials located at the first (= lowest), seventh, twelfth, and fifteenth (= highest) position regarding the strength of positive emotions and compare them with respect to the propensity to share them with friends. Pairwise comparisons show partly significant differences ($M_{\text{Zimmer}} = 3.41$ vs. $M_{\text{Enya}} = 2.73$, $t_{364} = 3.768$, $p < .001$; $M_{\text{E-Soundtrax}} = 3.64$ vs. $M_{\text{Zimmer}} = 3.41$, $t_{286} = .982$, *n.s.*; and $M_{\text{Graham}} = 4.60$ vs. $M_{\text{E-Soundtrax}} = 3.64$, $t_{224} = 4.944$, $p < .001$, one-tailed tests).

Bahlsen Leibniz. We apply the same procedure to the video versions of this brand ($M_{\text{Instrumental Beat}} = 3.11$ vs. $M_{\text{Einaudi Gioni Diospari}} = 3.12$, $t_{141} = -.047$, *n.s.*; $M_{\text{Zimmer Time}} = 3.55$ vs. $M_{\text{Instrumental Beat}} = 3.11$, $t_{268} = 1.929$, $p < .05$; and $M_{\text{Morricone Infantia}} = 3.90$ vs. $M_{\text{Zimmer Time}} = 3.55$, $t_{268} = 1.522$, *n.s.*, one-tailed tests). Data only partly provide evidence that the strength of positive emotions improves the intensity to share the video.

One glance can kill. Analogously, we compare the first, second, and ninth version. These videos do not differ significantly regarding the propensity of advice taking ($M_{\text{Nights Amore}} = 3.80$ vs. $M_{\text{Debussy}} = 3.82$, $t_{179} = -.067$, *n.s.*; $M_{\text{Two Steps}} = 3.77$ vs. $M_{\text{Nights Amore}} = 3.80$, $t_{133} = -.084$, *n.s.*, one-tailed tests). Increasing the strength of negative emotion does not affect the willingness to share the video.

Taking these findings together, we find that the propensity to share the video increases with the strength of positive emotions (Adidas video, partly Bahlsen Leibniz video) but does not increase with the strength of negative emotions (One glance can kill).

In summary, H1 is fully supported for brand attitude and propensity to share the video. For the willingness to share the video with friends on social platforms, similar results were found.

4.9. Test of Hypothesis 2: Does the strength of emotions triggered by the video affect evaluations through narrative transportation?

To test this proposition, we first examine the covariation of strength emotions and narrative transportation.

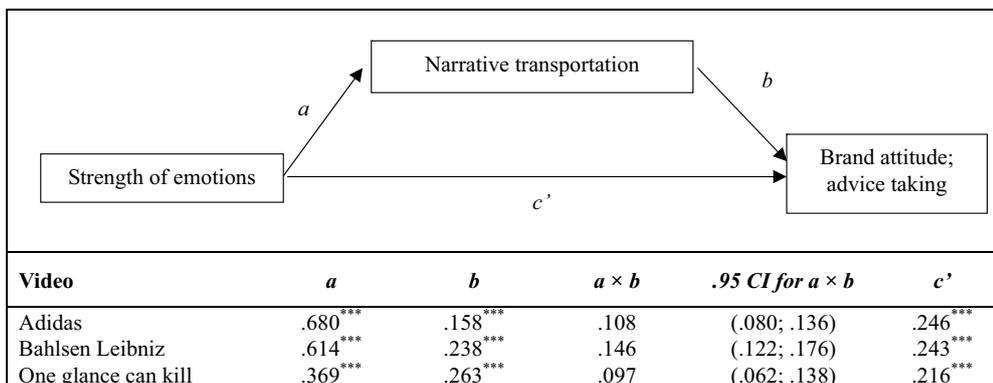
Adidas. Pairwise comparisons of the selected videos indicate a significant increase in narrative transportation with increasing strength of positive emotions ($M_{\text{Zimmer}} = 3.12$ vs. $M_{\text{Enya}} = 2.59$, $t_{364} = 4.470$, $p < .001$; $M_{\text{E-Soundtrax}} = 3.42$ vs. $M_{\text{Zimmer}} = 3.12$, $t_{286} = 2.374$, $p < .01$; $M_{\text{Graham}} = 3.84$ vs. $M_{\text{E-Soundtrax}} = 3.42$, $t_{224} = 4.549$, $p < .001$, one-tailed tests).

Bahlsen Leibniz. The same relationship can be observed for narrative transportation in the second video except for the last pairwise comparison ($M_{\text{Instrumental Beat}} = 3.68$ vs. $M_{\text{Einaudi Gioni Diospari}} = 2.74$, $t_{141} = 4.458$, $p < .001$; $M_{\text{Zimmer Time}} = 4.63$ vs. $M_{\text{Instrumental Beat}} = 3.68$, $t_{268} = 5.001$, $p < .001$; and $M_{\text{Morricone Infantia}} = 4.52$ vs. $M_{\text{Zimmer Time}} = 4.63$, $t_{268} = -.793$, *n.s.*, one-tailed tests). Data only partly provide evidence that the strength of positive emotions deepens narrative transportation.

One glance can kill. Analogously, we compare the first, second, and ninth video version. These video versions differ significantly regarding narrative transportation ($M_{\text{Nights Amore}} = 4.65$ vs. $M_{\text{Debussy}} = 4.24$, $t_{179} = 2.541$, $p < .01$; $M_{\text{Two Steps}} = 5.37$ vs. $M_{\text{Nights Amore}} = 4.65$, $t_{133} = 3.310$, $p < .001$, one-tailed tests).

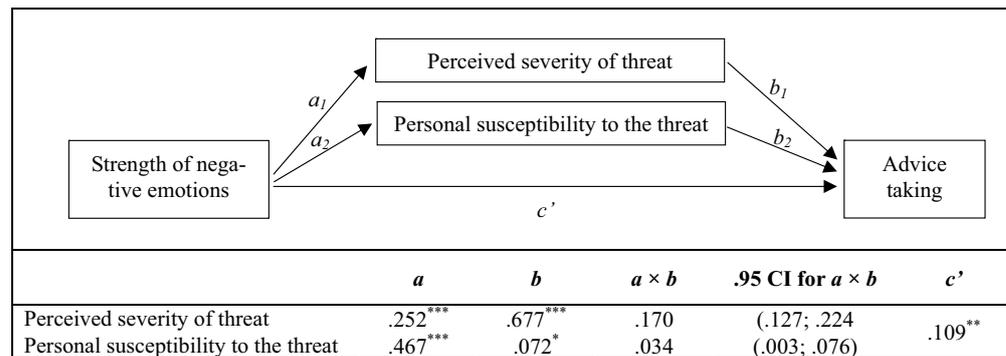
Thus, the data indicate increasing narrative transportation with increasing positive and negative emotions.

Second, we conducted mediation analysis. We apply Model 4 of Hayes (2012) to test the mediating effect of narrative transportation on the relationship between the strength of emotions and brand attitude (advice taking). The mediation model and the results are summarized in Fig. 6. The results provide evidence for this mediating effect of narrative transportation because the confidence interval of $a \times b$ does not cover the value zero; i.e., they provide support for H2.



Note: *** $p < .001$ (one-tailed test).

Fig. 6: Test of the mediating role of narrative transportation



Notes: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$ (one-tailed test).

Fig. 7: Test of the mediating role of components of protection motivation

4.10. Test of Hypothesis 3: Does the strength of negative emotions triggered by a prevention-oriented video affect willingness to follow advice through thoughts about protection motivation?

We focus on the “One glance can kill” video to test this hypothesis.

First, we consider whether the video version increases components of protection motivation. Again, we compare the first, second, and ninth version with respect to the strength of negative affect. These data indicate that the perceived severity of threat increases with the strength of negative emotions ($M_{\text{Nights Amore}} = 5.08$ vs. $M_{\text{Debussy}} = 4.44$, $t_{179} = 6.277$, $p < .001$; $M_{\text{Two Steps}} = 6.06$ vs. $M_{\text{Nights Amore}} = 5.08$, $t_{133} = 7.697$, $p < .001$, one-tailed tests). Moreover, personal susceptibility of the threat also increases with the strength of negative emotions ($M_{\text{Nights Amore}} = 4.20$ vs. $M_{\text{Debussy}} = 3.49$, $t_{179} = 3.821$, $p < .001$; $M_{\text{Two Steps}} = 4.80$ vs. $M_{\text{Nights Amore}} = 4.20$, $t_{133} = 2.615$, $p < .01$, one-tailed tests). Perceptions of self-efficacy and perceptions of personal costs when following advice were not affected by the strength of negative emotions. Our findings replicate the results of Becheur et al. (2007) and Becheur and Valette-Florence (2014) described in Section 3.9.

Second, we conducted mediation analysis. We refrain from including perceptions of self-efficacy and personal costs in this statistical model because we found no effect of the strength of negative affect on these two protection-motivation components. The findings of the mediation analysis provide support for the presumption that personal severity of threat and personal susceptibility to threat mediate the relationship between the strength of negative emotion and willingness to follow advice (Fig. 7). For these variables, H3 is supported.

4.11. Limitation

First, in the surveys, we asked the test participants to view the test stimuli on a computer laptop but not on their smartphones. The speakers included in smartphones might have low quality. However, we could not control whether the test participants viewed the videos with good speakers. Second, we did not assign each test participant randomly to a video version. Instead, blocks of a few test participants were built and randomly assigned to video

versions. This procedure limits the applicability of statistical tests. Third, we used only one prevention-oriented video (One glance can kill). It would be interesting to know if the finding is generalizable. Fourth, we used only background music to manipulate the strength of emotions. In future research, other measures might be used (e.g., exposing the video to test participants who strongly focus on the video vs. showing the video in an environment that attracts attention to other co-present stimuli such as people entering and leaving the room in which the experiment takes place).

5. Implications

We stated that advertising practice often uses narrative videos to promote brands and recommended special behaviors (see Section 2). We argued that these narratives can be described or classified with the help of various criteria, such as an overt brand/mystery ad, a good/bad ending, and the positive/negative valence of triggered emotions. We stated that the strength of the emotions triggered by narrative advertisements has not been considered thus far and that our research focuses on this aspect.

We must admit that we were not able to create highly emotional ad versions through different background music. On the seven-point scale, the strength of positive emotions ranged between 2.97 and 4.76 (Adidas video) and between 3.42 and 4.63 (Bahlsen Leibniz video). The strength of negative emotions ranged between 3.88 and 4.97 (One glance can kill). For this moderate range of emotionality, we can answer our research question, namely, “Does the effectiveness of advertising (i.e., the attitude toward the promoted target) increase with the strength of emotions triggered by emotional ad videos?”, in the affirmative. Theories (Section 3) and our empirical findings (Section 4) suggest that advertisers are well advised to trigger a rather high level of emotions when narrative advertising is used. For the moderate range of emotionality, brand attitudes and the propensity to agree to the given advice increase with increasing emotionality. A similar result was found for the willingness to share the video with friends.

Previous research suggests the relevance of various mental processes that depend on the strength of emotions

(Section 3.2 to 3.10). We did not test all these theories and whether some processes are predominant. We created mediation models containing narrative transportation and components of the protection-motivation model and found that these variables were statistically significant mediating variables. In the Bahlsen Leibniz video, the brand could only be noticed at the end of the video, while the narrative must have produced narrative transportation prior to the information about the brand. Thus, we surmise that we tested narrative transportation as a causal antecedent of brand evaluations.

If marketers use emotional narrative advertising, they are recommended to assess the level of emotionality by scales such as PANAS. If emotionality is low, measures should be taken to increase emotionality. Emotionality can be amplified by the plot (visual components) and the background music (acoustic component).

There might be an optimum level of emotionality that is outside the range that we have considered in our study (for an inverted shaped u-curve of the effect of fear, see Wundt 1874; Ray and Wilkie 1970; Borawska et al. 2020). Meant as an anecdote, we can refer to a video that we initially had also considered as a test stimulus for our experiments. This educational video from Australia entitled “Wild stay in school” (2014) tells the sad fate of young girls and boys who were skipping school and therefore could not comprehend signs that warned against entering a certain part of the beach; the plot of the drama is best described if we refer to its similarity with the bad ending of Wilhelm Busch’s Max and Moritz. A pretest of this video in a lecture – although an adequate forewarning was issued – indicated that students did not expect such extreme emotional and bodily responses and revealed an aversion toward such social campaigns.

The inverted u-shaped curve means that a very high prime emotionality reduces the target’s evaluation. Also, a big “difference” between the prime and the target could cause a detrimental effect of emotionality. In principle, large differences are likely to trigger a contrast effect. Imagine a person who is 1.75 m tall among many other people with a height of 2 m; this person seems small. Imagine the same person who is 1.75 m tall among many other people with a height of 1.50 m; this person looks big. This type of phenomenon (in particular, the generation of a comparison level and its modification) is considered in the adaptation level theory by Helson (1964). Here, it is important to conclude that people use the prime or context as a level of comparison to judge the target. This principle can be applied to our issue. Imagine consumers viewing “Indian Spirit.” This narrative induces a high level of comparison – and finally recognizing that C&A is being promoted is likely to prompt disappointment in relation to this level and even brand devaluation. Measured against the high level of emotionality of the narrative, the evaluation of the brand could fall.

Admittedly, research on the effectiveness of emotions elicited in narratives in commercials on brand attitudes

may be beyond societal relevance. For instance, society does not truly benefit from the knowledge about whether John Lewis has attracted more customers by “Buster, the Boxer” (2016) or by “Edgar, the Dragon” (2019). However, narratives are also sometimes told by politicians, leaders of religions, etc., subsequently causing worldwide crises. For instance, political leaders have told or tell narratives, e.g., the story about the legitimacy of the Greater German Reich decades ago or Greater Russia at present. Citizens might have liked or may like the narratives (e.g., stories about where the idea of such nations originates, what happened in history centuries ago, who were prominent characters in its fictitious or real history, and what these characters have done). Even if citizens know for sure that living in such nations would not improve their personal life satisfaction and seriously harm or even destroy outgroups and suspect that parts of the stories are fiction, emotions from such narratives emerge and are likely to spill over to supporting the political leaders or parties – not because citizens like their political program, but because they are stimulated or entertained by the associated narrative (Krause and Rucker 2020, p. 216). We recommend that opponents not only discuss arguments in a myriad of ways in low-emotional talk shows but also respond with another and more emotional narrative. Our investigation therefore has also relevance for such issues.

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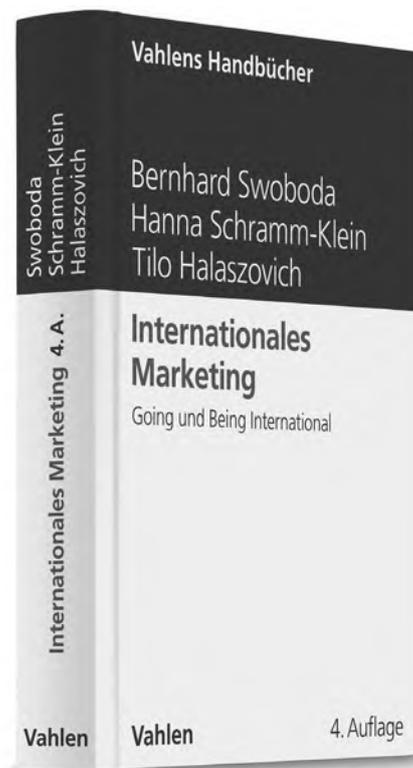
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