

Will this trip be exciting? Consumers respond best to vacation ads that match current emotions

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Most of us won't respond to the call of adventure while soaking in a relaxing bath. According to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, we're more likely to book a weekend at a spa.

"Imagine you are sitting in a bathtub, listening to calm music with gentle candlelight. Add lavender aroma. Then as you flip through a magazine, you come across an advertisement from an amusement park, promising you an exciting place full of adventurous offerings. How appealing would you find the prospect of visiting this amusement park?" write authors Hakkyun Kim (University of Concordia, Canada), Kiwan Park (Seoul National University, Korea), and Norbert Schwarz (University of Michigan).

The authors found that people evaluate vacation products with adventurous appeals more favorably when they feel excited rather than peaceful, and vice versa. They found that processing advertising claims depends much on the consistency between the message and the consumer's mood.

The authors explain that people who see an advertisement that promises an exciting vacation ask themselves, "Would this vacation really make me feel that way?" They are more likely to think a vacation will really be exciting when they currently feel excited rather than peaceful. In other words, incidental emotions influence the perceived likelihood that the

product will deliver on its emotional promises: When the current emotions match the promises of the product, people infer that it may really make them feel that way; but when the current emotions mismatch the promises, the discrepancy between their current feelings and the promises suggests that the product may fail to deliver what it promises.

The researchers' results suggest that marketers can facilitate the impression that products will deliver on their promises by displaying them in contexts in which consumers' pre-existing feelings are likely to match the product's claims. "Exciting sports events are a better arena for advertising exciting vacations than for advertising serene vacations, not only because an exciting vacation may match the audience's general preferences, but also because an exciting vacation will match the audience's current feelings," the authors conclude.

More information: Hakkyun Kim, Kiwan Park, and Norbert Schwarz. "Will This Trip Really Be Exciting? The Role of Incidental Emotions in Product Evaluation." *Journal of Consumer Research*: April 2010

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