

Want brand loyalty? Scare your customers

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Consumers will cling to a product like Coke for comfort if watching a scary movie on their own, a new study from UBC's Sauder School of Business shows. This finding contradicts industry norms which see significantly fewer product placements in horror films compared to other genres.

"People cope with fear by bonding with other people. When watching a scary movie they look at each other and say 'Oh my god!' and their connection is enhanced," says newly graduated Sauder PhD student Lea Dunn. "But, in the absence of friends, our study shows consumers will create heightened emotional attachment with a [brand](#) that happens to be on hand."

In her forthcoming *Journal of Consumer Research* paper, Dunn demonstrates that consumers who experience fear while watching a film feel a greater affiliation with a present brand than those who watch films which evoke happiness, sadness or excitement.

A further study reveals that fear stimulates people to report greater brand attachment, even if they are limited to just seeing the product. Finally it was shown that enhanced feelings toward the brand were only generated if it was experienced at the same time as fear. If the product is presented afterward, no bond is created.

"Marketers are afraid of fear. Their worries about negative associations outweigh their desire to tap into the massive market commanded by [fear](#)-based entertainment such as [horror films](#) or video games," says Dunn.

"But our study shows advertisers should consider offering up their brands as something to cling to in the dark when the knives come out and the blood starts to splatter."

More information: Dunn's study *The Impact of Fear on Emotional Brand Attachment* will be published in the June edition of *Journal of Consumer Research* and was co-authored by Sauder School of Business Assistant Professor JoeAndrea Hoegg.

Provided by University of British Columbia

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