

# VIROLOGY

WORKBOOK



CHAPTER 4

EMOTIONS PART II



## EMOTIONS PART II

One thing you have to be careful of when using emotions in marketing content is creating negative associations with the brand. You don't want people to start associating your brand with the wrong sorts of emotions, particularly the negative ones.

Some brands can get away with it. Maybe you want your target customers to feel empathy or a sense of injustice when they think about your brand. But most brands want positive associations when people think of their brand, and that means positive emotions.

Before we share a joke we estimate whether the other person will like the joke, feel joy, and laugh. If we expect the emotion from the other person will be positive, then we'll share it. If we think the emotion the other person will feel will be negative, or ambivalent, then likely we won't share it. When that person feels good because we shared something that made them feel good, that person feels grateful. When someone feels grateful it makes us feel good. An estimation of how someone might react when sharing emotional content is a powerful driver of decisions to share.

Therefore, when incorporating emotions in marketing content, emotive videos and so on, you want to be careful about expected reactions from sharing. Generally, people prefer to share content that has happy emotions, or at least ends on a happy note, since people care about the emotions they make other people feel. Do they really want to share something that terrifies or makes other people sad?

Emotions activate motives to share information, but you must take into account impression management: How people want to be perceived by others.

# Transmitting Emotions

Have you ever walked into a room of people who are laughing and begun to feel more cheerful? Or had someone smile at you, and it made you feel good? Emotions are contagious—almost subconsciously our emotions can be affected by other people's emotions around us.

Incorporating emotions into marketing content is half the story. We need to make sure that the emotions are sufficiently transferred from the movie to the viewer.

One way to ensure the efficient transfer of emotions is to use something called emotional contagion. Emotional contagion is where the emotional state of someone is affected by the emotional state of others.

The way emotions are transmitted is through facial expressions. The best way to do that in a video ad is to transfer the emotions through facial expressions.

According to research in this area, people can detect seven main emotions from facial expressions, including: anger, disgust, sadness, fear, happiness, surprise, and contempt.

Interestingly, people make the same face for each of these emotions, regardless of where they're from. Even people who have been blind since birth make the same expressions. It seems facial expressions are biologically hard-wired into us.

Most emotions of interest for marketers have an associated facial expression. People have an impressive ability to recognise emotions from facial expressions, and emotions transferred between people from facial expressions are highly contagious.

The best way to transfer emotions from the story using facial expressions is to show short (1-2 second) scenes of people's facial expressions in the ad reacting to events in the story. Timing is important to reinforce the intended emotion in the story—display the facial expression immediately after the emotion is cued in the movie, and before the scene is changed or new spike of emotion begins.

Unless you're using a technique like an impromptu prank to make the facial expressions genuine, it's important you use actors that are well trained on how to mimic the desired facial expressions for each intended emotion in the story.

## EMOTIONS

## A DRAMATIC SURPRISE ON A QUIET SQUARE

[A dramatic surprise on a quiet square](#) is a video advertisement for the Belgium TV channel TNT. It's a superviral with over 4 million shares. The movie transmits emotions using facial expressions including surprise, happiness, disgust, and fear, all by using the facial expressions of people in the square who are observing the drama. The ad illustrates how it's possible to transfer a wide variety of emotions, by using facial expressions.

The movie features a large red button placed in the middle of a quiet city square, with a large sign over the button that says "Push to Add Drama". Passers-by stare at the button, but no-one has the courage to push it. Finally a man on his bicycle stops, gathers courage, and pushes the button. Immediately a siren goes off, and a dramatic scene ensues. The entire sequence involves a series of related stunts revolving around the evacuation of an injured man to hospital. Each scene is punchy and short. It is all staged in under two minutes.

Between each mini scene, an expression of a passer-by is flashed.

The injured man falls out of the back of

an ambulance, and the camera shifts to an expression of disbelief from a passer-by watching. Then a man on his bicycle crashes into the door of the ambulance that results in an ensuing fight with the ambulance officer. Again more expressions including grimacing and smiles. A black car of bad guys screeches to a halt and begins a gun fight, and a woman rides past on a motorcycle wearing lingerie. The camera shifts to an old woman and her expression of disgust and disbelief. And so on.

Without the facial expressions, the movie wouldn't be able to transmit the emotions.

Never leave it up to the audience to guess how they should feel. Show them how they should feel by using the reactions of 'validators' in the audience—a third party that is a proxy for the viewer.

## EMOTIONS

## Using Music

Bob Marley once famously said:  
“One good thing about music. When it hits you, you feel no pain.”

The “hit” Bob Marley is referring to is an intense emotional response to music. Music can have a powerful effect on people, conjuring up strong emotions, and memories laden with emotions.

Have you ever heard a song on the radio that you haven’t heard in a long time, and it transported you back in time, put a smile on your face, and sent you into a nostalgic daydream? Likely the song conjured up some strong memories of sometime in the past, which fueled the emotional reaction you have.

Music can be used as a way to activate emotions, by activating memories in the past that have significance to the listener.

Memories that are tied to important events in the past usually have strong emotions attached to them. The problem is, everyone has different memories, so it’s difficult to invoke the same emotion from the same memory. There is however one way around this—activating memories from people’s youth.

Most people over a certain age long to be young again, and for most people memories of their youth hold special significance. It’s a powerful thing for marketers to tap into these memories since the resulting emotions are not only strong; they’re also pleasant emotions. The best way to get at these memories is to use music.

Music is relatively easy to conjure up nostalgic memories because the impression music has on most people tends to wane in about their late twenties to mid-thirties. Most people as they get older will at some point stop listening to new music and start listening to music from a certain period in their lives. Generally, this period is when they were in their late twenties to mid-thirties. After this age, people will tend to fix on a certain period of music.

Nostalgic songs don’t activate specific memories, but rather the memories that are evoked are more general in nature. Someone in their 40s listening to Nirvana’s *Smells like Teen Spirit* might be reminded of college dorms, parties, and late-night studying, rather than a specific moment when they heard the song. This makes nostalgic music ideal for conjuring up emotions, since everyone shares general memories of their youth, even though specific memories differ.

# Action Plan

## EMOTIONS PART II

### TUTORIAL

There are three ways to transfer emotions from the video to the viewer:

#### 1. EMOTIONAL CONTAGION

Most emotions of interest for marketers have an associated facial expression. People have an impressive ability to recognise emotions from facial expressions, and emotions transferred between people from facial expressions are highly contagious. The best way to transfer emotions from a story using facial expressions is to show short (1-2 second) scenes of people's facial expressions in the ad reacting to events in the story. Timing is important to reinforce the intended emotion in the story—display the facial expression immediately after the emotion is cued in the movie, and before the scene is changed or new spike of emotion begins. Because there are many facial expressions, and the nuances of each can be subtle, it's important you use actors that well trained on how to mimic the desired facial expressions for each intended emotion in the story. Another way is to use unsuspecting people in an impromptu prank like storyline, to make the facial expressions genuine.

#### 2. MUSIC

Music creates emotions through its structure. Fundamental music structure includes tempo, pitch, scale, and rhythm. More advanced compositional structure includes melodic appoggiaturas, harmonies which change suddenly, and rhythmic syncopation.

It's important that the structure of the music chosen for your video ad is matched to the intended emotions in the story of the movie. Sometimes, a song might be a perfect choice because of its lyrics, but the structure doesn't match the intended

emotions of the storyline. In this situation consider restructuring the song as required, using a different singer to reproduce and sing a matched version.

Another issue to be careful about is “memory tracing”. When a song can be heard from multiple other sources, such as a currently popular song, multiple memory traces overlaying each other can dilute or even eliminate the enjoyment of the song, significantly lowering the effectiveness of an emotional transfer.

### 3. SELF-EVOKED EMOTIONS

Another powerful way to transfer emotions is to generate an emotional response through memories. Some memories have more emotion attached to them than others, but because everyone has different memories it’s difficult to reliably access only emotions with strong emotions. The way around this issue is to target nostalgic memories tied to people’s youth. These are easier to access in a wider range of people because they’re usually quite general (e.g., when people wore grunge clothing) rather than being tied to a specific occasion (e.g., the time I was at my friend’s party).

One way to access nostalgic memories is by using music, since people tend to fix on music from their late 20s to early 30s. As an added benefit to transferring emotions using this technique, self-evoked emotions are also more likely to change people’s behaviour since they challenge people to re-examine their beliefs. For this reason, self-evoked emotions are the best choice for public service advertisements.

## TASK

Watch the Italian superviral [‘Slap Her’](#).

Notice how the movie uses facial expressions and music to transmit emotions (it also uses memory if you think about it).

Think carefully how your brand could use a theme that is deeply relevant to your target customer, and craft a storyline using facial expressions and music (Tip: Try to use emotions of opposite valence as learned in Chapter 3).



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