The Impact of Emotionally Targeted Branding on Social Behavior

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This experiment aims to discover how the omnipresence of media in today's society influences a person's perception during social situations. Given that the processes of emotion and social perception share multiple neural structures, most notably the amygdala, it is hypothesized that emotion generated by media will result in a significant shift in social perception: that consuming media content with a negative emotional narrative will result in a negative social perception, while a positive emotional narrative would do the opposite. To investigate this hypothesis, each participant was presented with a neutral video of shapes compressing and expanding that encouraged a neutral emotional state before viewing one of four emotionally branded videos: one "happy" advertisement, one "sad" advertisement, one "happy" film clip, or one "sad" film clip. Participants in the control group were only shown the "neutral" video before progressing. All participants then had a conversation with an artificial intelligence app called CleverBot that was designed to mimic a real-life text-messaging conversation. After this social interaction, they were given a survey to assess their social perception. Participants' social perception scores were compared across media conditions in a series of Chi Square frequency tests. The mean social perception scores of participants was compared between each experimental condition and the control condition in a series of Anova tests. These analyses found that viewing the "happy" film clip led to higher social perception scores, suggesting that an emotionally branded "happy" clip may have had increased the positivity in participants' social perception.

Awards Won:
American Psychological Association: Certificate of Honorable Mention