

# The role of advertising in consumer emotion management

Elyria Kemp

*University of New Orleans*

My Bui

*Loyola Marymount University*

Sindy Chapa

*Texas State University*

Consumer research has demonstrated that emotions play an important role in the decision-making process. Individuals may use consumption or purchasing as a way to manage their emotions. This research develops a model to help explain the process by which individuals engage in consumption to manage their emotions, and examines the efficacy of an advertisement for a hedonic product that uses affect-laden language to stimulate such a process. Results suggest that favourable emotional responses from an advertisement can lead to positive attitudes towards the advertisement, prefactual thinking in the form of hedonic rationalisations and greater behavioural intentions. Additionally, guilt from consuming and purchasing these hedonic products can be mitigated, which is also associated with greater behavioural intentions. Findings have implications for marketers and advertisers of hedonic products.

## Introduction

Consumer research has demonstrated that emotions play an important role in decision making (Garg *et al.* 2007) and marketers have long made attempts to target consumers' emotions. Advertisements with the intent of eliciting emotional responses from the consumer have become embedded in our culture – 'Nothin' Says Lovin' Like Somethin' in the Oven' (Pillsbury), 'For all you do, this Bud's for you' (Budweiser) and 'Celebrate the moments of your life' (General Foods International Coffee).

The consumer research literature has suggested that individuals might engage in certain consumption behaviours to manage emotions (Mick & Demoss 1990; Andrade 2005). For example, purchasing a product that offers some pleasurable benefit (e.g. jewellery, cars), or engaging in some moderately 'indulgent' behaviour (e.g. eating chocolate), may help individuals regulate certain negative affective states. Consumption of these products can help divert attention away from unwanted feelings and allow for refocusing on desired states (Kacen 1994).

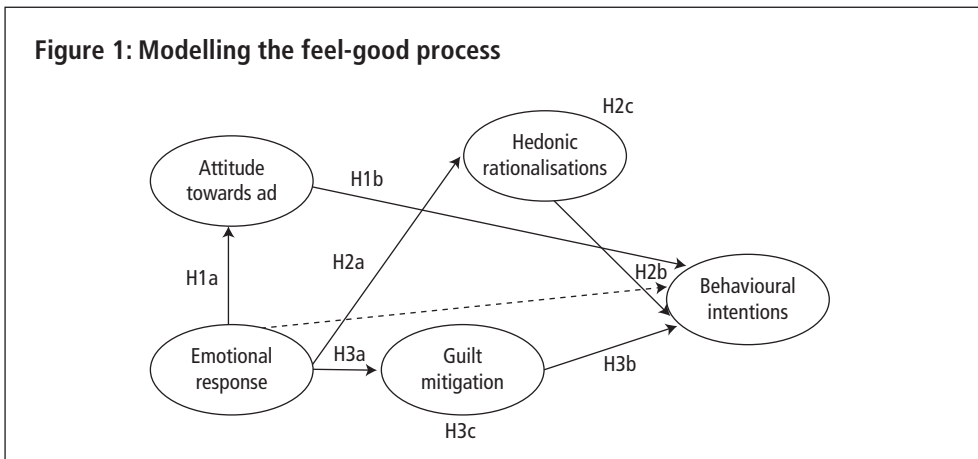
Research also suggests that feelings play an important role in the formation of attitudes and judgements about advertisements (Edell & Burke 1987; Lichtlé 2007; Dickson & Holmes 2008) and can be an important mediator in explaining the relationship between cognitive and behavioural reactions to advertising stimuli (Ambler & Burne 1999; Dens & DePelsmacker 2008; Bissell & Rask 2010). However, advertisements, particularly those for hedonic products, may also be effective at appealing to the pre-existing emotions of consumers and their emotion regulation propensities. Hedonic products are goods and services with subjective features that elicit pleasurable affective responses from the consumer (Hirschman & Holbrook 1982; Chaduri & Holbrook 2001). Marketers of hedonic products (e.g. indulgent foods, luxury items) may be able to appeal to the emotion regulation tendencies of consumers by strategically incorporating language in their marketing communications that target affective sensibilities.

To date, emotions and their effect on consumption have been examined in a number of contexts (O'Neill & Lambert 2001; Janssens & DePelsmacker 2005). However, limited research has examined the process by which individuals use consumption to *manage* emotions. The purpose of this research is (1) to develop a model that helps explain emotion regulation consumption decisions and (2) to examine the efficacy of an advertisement for a hedonic product that uses affect-laden language to stimulate such a process. The process of managing emotions through consumption will be referred to in this research as 'emotion regulation consumption'. Emotion regulation consumption entails consuming or purchasing a good or service for the purposes of alleviating, repairing or managing an emotion in the short term (Kemp & Kopp 2011).

This research contributes to existing literature by embarking on the development of a model that describes how the emotion regulation consumption process can be stimulated through advertisements. It suggests that advertisements can be useful at appealing to the emotion regulation propensities of individuals. This may include using language with affect-laden content (e.g. McDonald's 'You deserve a break today' and Hershey's 'There's a smile in every bar'). The use of this 'emotion regulation language' has special implications for marketers of characteristically hedonic products and can help in the planning and designing of effective marketing communication programmes for hedonic products.

This research examines the emotion regulation process in advertising by utilising a methodological approach that invokes both conceptual theory and a rigorous test of constructs using structural equation modelling. Specifically, a model is proposed (see Figure 1), suggesting that an individual's emotional response to an advertisement for a hedonic product will influence attitudes towards the advertisement and behavioural intentions towards the advertised product. It also posits that prefactual thinking (deliberations the individual engages in before carrying out an act) as well as efforts of perceived guilt reduction will be related to increased behavioural intentions.

The present research is organised as follows. First, the conceptual framework, grounded in emotion theory and the behavioural literatures, is discussed. Next, hypotheses developed from this existing literature and that form the basis of our proposed model are presented. The model is then tested using non-student adults in the United States as participants.



Implications of the findings relevant to marketers of characteristically hedonic products are then discussed.

## Conceptual framework and hypotheses development

### *Emotion regulation*

The psychology literature defines emotion regulation as the process of dampening, intensifying or simply maintaining an existing emotion (Gross *et al.* 2006). Research has demonstrated that the most commonly regulated affective states are negative ones (Lazarus 1991; Gross *et al.* 2006). Individuals experiencing negative emotions may make conscious efforts to 'down-regulate' negative affective states (Morris & Reilly 1987; Fredrickson & Levenson 1998; Fredrickson *et al.* 2000). Cialdini, Darby and Vincent (1973) developed the negative relief model, which proposed that individuals can relieve negative affective states by subjecting themselves to positive reinforcing states. Subsequently, individuals experiencing negative emotions may engage in various self-indulgent acts as therapy to down-regulate negative emotions (Morris & Reilly 1987; Mick & Demoss 1990).

Specifically related to emotion regulation, Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory proposes that positive emotions have the ability to 'undo' the effect of negative emotions (Fredrickson & Levenson 1998; Fredrickson *et al.* 2000). In a study conducted by Fredrickson *et al.* (2000), participants were exposed to an anxiety-inducing task. Following the task, they were shown one of four films that elicited the following emotions: contentment, amusement, sadness or neutrality. Those subjects in the positive emotion induction conditions (amusement and contentment) experienced a faster return to baseline cardiovascular reactivity than those participants shown films that elicited the negative emotion (sadness) and those in the control (neutrality) condition. These findings lend support to the 'undoing' hypothesis. Therefore, positive emotions may enable individuals to 'down-regulate' or 'undo' the effects of negative emotions.

Because hedonic products often invoke positive emotions from consumers, they may be used to 'undo' negative emotions. We propose that the process of the 'undoing effect' and emotion regulation consumption may also be stimulated through advertisements for hedonic products, and this is discussed next.

### *Emotional response*

Prior research has demonstrated that advertising has the ability to elicit emotional responses from the consumer (Shimp & Stuart 2004; Berthon *et al.* 2005; Faseur & Geuens 2006; Micu & Chowdhury 2010). Subsequently, emotion regulation propensities of individuals may be triggered by strategically incorporating language in marketing communications that target the emotions of consumers. The literature on language and cognition maintains that language can serve as an attribute and medium of experience (Lambert *et al.* 1968; Noriega & Blair 2008; Chang & Lee 2010) as well as influence thought and affective reactions from consumers (Luna & Peracchio 2002, 2005). An individual's emotional reaction elicited from an advertisement can influence attitude towards the advertisement itself. Attitude towards the advertisement can consequently influence behavioural intentions (Ajzen 1991). To this end, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1a:** There is a positive relationship between emotional response to the advertisement and attitude towards the advertisement.
- H1b:** There is a positive relationship between attitude towards the advertisement and behavioural intentions.

### **Prefactual thinking**

Individuals may engage in active evaluation of the consequences of their actions (Hoch 1985; Johnson & Sherman 1990). Gleicher *et al.* (1995) referred to such deliberations as prefactuals. Prefactual thinking occurs when individuals contemplate imaginary alternatives to events in terms of the ramifications these events may have in the future. Prefactuals occur before a decision is made. For example, an individual may think to him or herself, 'If I buy this sweater today and it goes on sale tomorrow, will I regret it?' Hence, people's behaviour may be dictated by what their thoughts imply for future outcomes.

Prefactual thinking may take on different forms. One type of prefactual thinking includes hedonic rationalisation (Moore & Bovell 2008). Hedonic rationalisations are thoughts that people use to justify conceding to a temptation or a consumption experience. If an individual were contemplating purchasing a sweater, he or she might think, 'I should purchase this sweater because I deserve it.' Prefactual thinking, in the form of hedonic rationalisations can be driven by consumers' emotional response to a stimulus, whether it be the product itself or an advertisement for a product of interest. We propose that, in addition to an individual's attitude towards the advertisement, prefactual thinking

can subsequently influence consumption and purchase behaviour for hedonic products. In accordance, we predict the following.

- H2a:** There is a positive relationship between emotional response to the advertisement and hedonic rationalisations.
- H2b:** There is a positive relationship between hedonic rationalisations and behavioural intentions.
- H2c:** Hedonic rationalisations will mediate the relationship between emotional response and behavioural intentions.

### *Guilt mitigation*

When a consumer purchases or consumes a product that does not abide by quality standards, or is not prescribed by moral, societal or ethical principles, guilt may be aroused (Lascu 1991). Such feelings, known as consumption guilt, occur when negative emotions manifest when consuming a good or service (Lascu 1991; Kivetz & Simonson 2002). For example, choosing indulgences over necessities may evoke guilt because these indulgent behaviours may be viewed as wasteful or superfluous (Thaler 1980). Lascu (1991) suggested that consumers often feel the guiltiest about the things that afford them the greatest pleasure.

Some marketing efforts have been attributed to helping to diminish consumer guilt by telling individuals that the guilt they experience due to overindulgence is not a cause for torment – that pleasure should take precedence over their conscience. Lascu (2002) proposed that one way to address possible feelings of guilt is to create a state of ‘guiltless hedonism’ in the consumer. This involves getting consumers to anticipate the enjoyment of a product instead of feeling guilty about consuming it. We propose that guilt mitigation, or the marketer’s efforts to make the consumer feel less guilty about consuming a hedonic product, will be driven by a consumer’s emotional response to an advertisement. Moreover, in addition to attitude towards the advertisement and hedonic rationalisations, an individual’s perception of guilt mitigation will subsequently impact behavioural intentions for a hedonic product. Thus, we predict the following.

- H3a:** There is a positive relationship between emotional response to the advertisement and perceived guilt mitigation.
- H3b:** There is a positive relationship between perceived guilt mitigation and behavioural intentions.
- H3c:** Perceived guilt mitigation will mediate the relationship between emotional response and behavioural intentions.

In summary, we propose that hedonic products can be used as a way to manage emotions. Specifically, individuals may use these products to ‘undo’ the effects of negative

emotions. Advertisements can help to initiate the emotion regulation consumption process. Using affect-laden language in such advertisements can ignite favourable emotional responses from the consumer, which lead to positive attitudes about the advertisement, prefactual thinking in the form of hedonic rationalisations and greater behavioural intentions. Additionally, guilt from consuming and purchasing these hedonic products can be mitigated, which is also associated with increased behavioural intentions (see Figure 1). These predictions are tested next.

## Research design and methods

### *Sample and measures*

The proposed model in this study was tested using 554 members of an internet research panel in the United States that ranged in age from 18 to 71 ( $M_{age} = 47$ ); 72% of the respondents were female and 28% were male; 80% of the participants were white/Caucasian, 12% were African American, 3% were Latino American, 3% were Asian American and 2% listed themselves as 'Other'.

Multi-item scales were used to operationalise all constructs. Attitude towards the advertisement was measured using four items. Respondents were asked on a 7-point Likert scale whether they felt the advertisement was 'important', 'good', 'strong' and 'interesting'. Additionally, emotional response was measured using four items on a 7-point Likert scale. Participants indicated whether they felt the ad was 'warm', 'joyous', 'moved' or 'touched' them. Hedonic rationalisations were operationalised using items adapted from Moore and Bovell (2008): 'Yielding to this temptation once, won't hurt me', 'I deserve a break sometimes to enjoy life' and 'This [ice cream] is so [delicious], I'll just enjoy it.' Further, guilt mitigation was measured using two items: 'The ad makes me feel good about purchasing the ice cream' and 'This ad makes me feel like purchasing the ice cream will be good for me.' Finally, behavioural intentions were measured using a semantic differential scale. Respondents indicated whether the likelihood that they would purchase the ice cream was 'unlikely/likely', 'non-existent/existent', 'improbable/probable', 'impossible/possible' or 'uncertain/certain'. All items for hedonic rationalisations, guilt mitigation and behavioural intentions were measured on 7-point scales.

### **Pilot tests**

A food item was chosen as the target product for this research because of food's general appeal. As a preliminary test to ascertain what food items might be perceived as 'hedonic', 168 non-student adults (69% female) were asked to list what food items they felt were indulgent, as well as what foods they might consume to make themselves feel better. Ice cream was listed among the top five items. Other food items included cake, fried chicken, potato chips and chocolate.

Next, using ice cream as the target product, two print advertisements were tested for their ability to appeal to participants' affective sensibilities. One advertisement was titled

'Add a Little Love' and the other was titled 'Only the Best'. Forty-one undergraduate students from a university in the southern part of the United States were randomly assigned to view only one of the advertisements. They were asked if the advertisement suggested that 'the ice cream would make them feel better,' and if the advertisement suggested that 'the ice cream would make them feel good'. These items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, and then summed and averaged. Results indicated that there were significant differences between the two advertisements,  $t(39) = 2.51, p < 0.01$ . With higher means indicating more favourable responses, participants felt that the advertisement entitled, 'Add A Little Love' possessed stronger affective regulation content ( $M = 4.42$  and  $M = 3.38$ ).

### **Procedure for the main study**

At the beginning of the survey, participants were presented with the following scenario:

Imagine that you have just had a bad day! At work you found out that you did not get the promotion you had hoped for and, to make matters worse, on the way home, you were stuck in traffic for two hours. Because the traffic was literally at a stand-still, you were able to stare at a billboard with an ad on it like the one below. Before going home, you have to go to the grocery store to pick up a few items.

After the scenario, participants were given instructions to read an advertisement that followed. It was a print advertisement for the same product, ice cream, tested in the pilot assessment.

The advertisement was for a fictitious brand of ice cream called Dairy Farm Ice Cream (see Appendix). It featured a bowl of Dairy Farm Ice Cream and was titled, 'Add A Little Love'. At the bottom of the advertisement, the following message appeared: 'The ultimate taste test is yours. Pick up one of Dairy Farm's delicious flavors and give it a try.' After reading the scenario and viewing the advertisement, participants were instructed to answer the questions that followed, which were the constructs of interest previously discussed.

### **Results**

The data were subjected to structural equation analysis in AMOS 17.0 using the maximum likelihood estimation method. This analysis, an extension of the general linear model, is a more powerful alternative to multiple regression (Byrne 2001). As recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a two-step procedure was used to first assess the model for construct and discriminant validity and then to test hypotheses in the structural model.

#### *Measurement model*

The measurement model exhibited adequate fit  $\chi^2 (653.68), df(160), p$ -value (0.00), CFI (0.96), IFI (0.96), TLI (0.95) and RMSEA (0.07). To test for convergent validity, factor

loadings, along with the average variance extracted, were calculated for each latent variable. Standardised factor loadings exceeded the 0.6 threshold as recommended by Hair *et al.* (2006). Additionally, as seen in Table 1, the average variance extracted for each construct exceeded the recommended rule of thumb of 0.5 (Hair *et al.* 2006), which is an indication that the variance captured by the construct is greater than the variance due to measurement error.

In order to assess discriminant validity, the Fornell–Larcker test (1981) was performed. Discriminant validity is demonstrated when the average variance extracted for a construct is greater than the squared correlations between that construct and other constructs in the model. As demonstrated in Table 1, the average variances extracted between each construct is greater than the squared multiple correlations for each construct pairing. Reliabilities (represented by composite rho) were also assessed for each construct to ensure that each exhibited internal consistency (see Table 1). All measures exemplified acceptable reliability by exceeding the recommended 0.7 threshold (Nunnally & Bernstein 1994). The results from the structural model follow.

**Table 1: Average variance extracted (in bold) and squared correlations**

|                             | Attitude<br>towards ad | Emotional<br>reaction | Intentions  | Hedonic<br>rationalisations | Guilt<br>mitigation | Composite<br>rho |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Attitude towards ad         | <b>0.82</b>            |                       |             |                             |                     | 0.96             |
| Emotional response          | 0.50                   | <b>0.78</b>           |             |                             |                     | 0.93             |
| Intentions                  | 0.64                   | 0.51                  | <b>0.84</b> |                             |                     | 0.96             |
| Hedonic<br>rationalisations | 0.49                   | 0.40                  | 0.54        | <b>0.60</b>                 |                     | 0.81             |
| Guilt mitigation            | 0.64                   | 0.68                  | 0.49        | 0.58                        | <b>0.73</b>         | 0.84             |

### *Structural model*

The structural model and hypotheses were evaluated after attaining a validated measurement model. The model exhibited good fit:  $\chi^2$  (903.34),  $df$  (164),  $p$ -value (0.000), CFI (0.94), IFI (0.94), TLI (0.92) and RMSEA (0.07). Hypotheses 1a through 3c proposed both direct and mediated effects between latent variables and the primary dependent variables of interest.

H1a and H1b specify direct effects. The results of these direct effects are presented in Table 2. H1a predicted that emotional response to the advertisement would be positively related to attitude towards the advertisement. As seen in Table 2, H1a is supported ( $\beta = 0.76$ ; S.E. = 0.04;  $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that the more favourable the emotional response to the advertisement, the more favourable the attitude towards the advertisement. Moreover, H1b proposed that attitude towards the advertisement would be positively related to increased behavioural intentions. This hypothesis is also validated ( $\beta = 0.42$ ; S.E. = 0.05;  $p < 0.01$ ).



**Table 2: Test of hypotheses**

| Hypotheses  |                          |                            | Unstandardised coefficient | Standardised coefficient | Standard error | Critical ratio | <i>p</i> -value |
|-------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| <b>H1a:</b> | Emotional response       | → Attitude towards ad      | 0.82                       | 0.76                     | 0.04           | 19.06          | <i>p</i> < 0.01 |
| <b>H1b:</b> | Attitude towards ad      | → Behavioural intentions   | 0.51                       | 0.42                     | 0.05           | 10.84          | <i>p</i> < 0.01 |
| <b>H2a:</b> | Emotional response       | → Hedonic rationalisations | 0.57                       | 0.70                     | 0.05           | 12.82          | <i>p</i> < 0.01 |
| <b>H2b:</b> | Hedonic rationalisations | → Behavioural intention    | 0.29                       | 0.18                     | 0.06           | 4.47           | <i>p</i> < 0.01 |
| <b>H2c:</b> | Emotional response       | → Behavioural intentions   | 0.004                      | 0.003                    | 0.12           | 0.04           | <i>p</i> > 0.05 |
| <b>H3a:</b> | Emotional response       | → Guilt mitigation         | 0.90                       | 0.88                     | 0.04           | 22.75          | <i>p</i> < 0.01 |
| <b>H3b:</b> | Guilt mitigation         | → Behavioural intention    | 0.49                       | 0.38                     | 0.06           | 8.37           | <i>p</i> < 0.01 |
| <b>H3c:</b> | Emotional response       | → Behavioural intentions   | 0.004                      | 0.003                    | 0.12           | 0.04           | <i>p</i> < 0.01 |

H2a predicted that emotional response to the advertisement would be positively related to hedonic rationalisations. H2a is confirmed ( $\beta = 0.70$ ; S.E. = 0.05;  $p < 0.01$ ) revealing that more favourable emotional response to the advertisement is related to increased hedonic rationalisation. Further, H2b predicted that hedonic rationalisations would be positively related to behavioural intentions. The results support the H2b prediction ( $\beta = 0.18$ ; S.E. = 0.06;  $p < 0.01$ ), which indicates that more favourable emotional response to the advertisement is associated with increased behavioural intentions. Also, H2c proposed that hedonic rationalisations would mediate the relationship between emotional response and behavioural intentions. Following Baron and Kenny's (1986) procedure for testing mediation, the existence of a mediating effect is present when (1) emotional response is significantly related to hedonic rationalisations, (2) hedonic rationalisations are significantly related to behavioural intentions, and (3) the relationship between emotional response and behavioural intentions is not significant ( $\beta = 0.003$ ; S.E. = 0.12;  $p > 0.05$ ). Based on the results, full mediation is present. Further, the Sobel test statistic confirms the mediating effect ( $z = 4.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Thus, H2c is supported.

H3a–H3c specify both direct and mediating effects. H3a predicted that emotional response to the advertisement would be positively related to perceptions of guilt mitigation. Results corroborate this prediction ( $\beta = 0.88$ ; S.E. = 0.04;  $p < 0.01$ ). This shows that more favourable emotional responses to the advertisement are linked to higher perceptions of guilt mitigation. Correspondingly, H3b proposed that guilt mitigation would be positively related to behavioural intentions, and results confirm this prediction ( $\beta = 0.49$ ;

S.E. = 0.06;  $p < 0.01$ ). H3c predicted that guilt mitigation would mediate the relationship between emotional response to the advertisement and behavioural intentions. Because the relationship between emotional response and behavioural intentions is not significant ( $\beta = 0.003$ ; S.E. = 0.12;  $p > 0.05$ ), the mediating effect is supported. The significance of the indirect path was further corroborated by the Sobel test statistic ( $z = 7.6$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Hence, H3c is confirmed.

## Discussion

Advertising has the ability to evoke emotional responses from consumers and can be effective at appealing to consumers' emotion regulation propensities. In this research, a model was developed to help explain the underlying mechanisms that constitute the emotion regulation consumption process and how it can be stimulated through advertising. Results from this research suggest that the use of affect-laden language in an advertisement may evoke positive emotional responses from participants. Positive emotional responses from the advertisement were significantly related to more favourable attitudes towards the advertisement. In turn, more favourable evaluations of the advertisement were related to increased behavioural intentions. However, emotional responses to advertisements can elicit such a 'liking' for the product (Lavidge & Steiner 1961) that individuals invoke hedonic rationalisations, where they justify succumbing to a temptation. In addition to a consumer's attitude towards the advertisement, hedonic rationalisations can lead to the intent to consume or purchase hedonic products.

Consuming or purchasing hedonic products may induce guilt from consumers, since hedonic products are not always perceived as necessities. Results from this research demonstrate that advertisements can help to mitigate consumer guilt, and guilt mitigation along with hedonic rationalisations and a consumer's attitude towards the advertisement can also incite intent to consume and purchase.

Employing insight gleaned from this research can assist marketers in developing effective marketing communications for hedonic products. First, using affect-laden language in advertisements that appeal to the sensibilities of consumers can possibly elicit positive emotional responses and rationalisations in favour of consuming and purchasing hedonic products. Additionally, advertisers can help abate some of the guilt individuals may have about purchasing or consuming hedonic products by intimating that the consumer is 'entitled to the indulgence'.

Further, marketing practitioners might consider the effect pre-existing or context-induced emotions have on consumers' evaluations of their products. For example, consumers experiencing certain negative emotions may be more inclined to purchase products of a hedonic nature. This might have implications for media selection decisions because some marketers have avoided advertising products during programmes with negative content (Aylesworth & MacKenzie 1998). Further, consumers' pre-existing emotions may affect their shopping behaviour. Understanding these dynamics can help marketing managers in using emotion-eliciting point-of-purchase materials in the retailing and merchandising environments.

## Limitations and future research

There were some inherent limitations to this research. First, the product used in this research may have constrained subjects with regard to their emotion regulation management. Products purchased or consumed by individuals to regulate their emotions may be very unique to that individual, and varied. The target product in this research (ice cream) was used because of its appeal to both genders. Additional research might explore emotion regulation propensities for other hedonic products, some of which may be more gender and age specific.

Additionally, this study was correlational in nature and causal inferences could not be assessed. Future studies might establish a causal link between advertisements for hedonic products that include emotion regulation language to further examine the role of advertisements in the emotion regulation consumption process. Specifically, claims with varying levels of affect-laden content and emotion regulation language might be compared and their relative effects estimated. Further, by enlisting experimental techniques, actual behaviour could be assessed.

Additional research might also explore the role specific and discrete emotions have on consumption and purchase behaviour. For example, negative emotions (e.g. sadness, anger and anxiety) might be induced in consumers before exposing them to an advertisement to evaluate consumption and purchase behaviour. Moreover, positive emotions (e.g. amusement, contentment and pride) might be examined. Individuals may be inclined to engage in emotion regulation management to maintain the feelings engendered by specific positive emotions. Also, this research did not assess emotional intensity or arousal. Future investigations might examine the effect that emotional arousal has on consumption and whether the intensity of an emotion might impact consumer decision making and purchase behaviour.

Although marketers may make proactive efforts to promote hedonic products, future research could also explore how these efforts might be tempered with ethical considerations. For example, individuals may engage in impulsive and excessive purchasing of hedonic products to regulate affect. More than half of Americans struggle to control excessive spending, and credit cards have become lifestyle facilitators for many, whose use may be spurred by a need to self-medicate and gratify (Bernthal *et al.* 2005). Future research might examine how affect-laden advertisements for hedonic products affect consumer purchase and spending levels for these products. For example, are consumers willing to pay more for a hedonic product that is promoted using messages that appeal to their emotion regulation propensities? Additionally, examining consumers' reactions and attitudes to such promotions during economic downturns might provide interesting insight.

Finally, careful attention might be given in promotions not to promote excessive consumption of some hedonic products and consumption activities (e.g. unhealthy foods, alcohol, gambling and tobacco) that could be detrimental to an individual's health and well-being. Such repetitive consumption activities can develop into compulsive and addictive behaviours (Hoch & Loewenstein 1991; Hirschman 1992). Many of these addictions

and compulsive behaviours start because of the positive reinforcement received by individuals after immediately engaging in such behaviours. As a result, copious emotionally based promotional appeals that mitigate consumption guilt may contribute to eventual efforts to counter-market (unsell) and demarket (reduce demand) certain products if consumer well-being is threatened (e.g. tobacco). Hence, caution and ethical concerns must be taken into account with the marketing of some hedonic products. Future studies that involve affect-laden advertisements for hedonic products might examine the effect that messages that encourage 'responsible behaviour' have on consumption levels.

Due to copious and salient aspects of the role of emotions in the decision-making process, a comprehensive understanding of the emotion regulation consumption process and the role of advertising in this phenomenon is merited. Understanding these psychological processes can have practical applications for how marketers promote characteristically hedonic products.

## Appendix: Advertisement for the hedonic product



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### **About the authors**

Elyria Kemp (PhD, University of Arkansas) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Marketing and Logistics in the College of Business Administration at the University of New Orleans. Her research focuses on emotion regulation, consumer welfare and hedonic consumption.

My Bui (PhD, University of Arkansas) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Marketing and Business Law at Loyola Marymount University. Her research focuses on consumer emotions, retail advertising and consumer health and welfare issues.

Sindy Chapa (PhD from the University of Texas Pan American) is an Assistant Professor and Associate Director of the Center for the Study of Latino Media and Markets at the School of Journalism and Mass Communications at Texas State University-San Marcos.

Address correspondence to: Elyria Kemp. Email: [elyria.kemp@gmail.com](mailto:elyria.kemp@gmail.com)

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