

Will This Trip Really Be Exciting? The Role of Incidental Emotions in Product Evaluation

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Two studies examine how different emotions of the same valence influence product evaluation when products make specific emotional claims. Vacation products with adventurous (serene) appeals were evaluated more favorably when participants felt excited (peaceful) rather than peaceful (excited). This emotion-congruency effect was not observed when participants were aware of the incidental nature of their feelings (study 1) and was mediated by the influence of feelings on participants' expectations that the product will deliver what it promises (study 2). The findings show that consumers differentiate between distinct positive emotions and use them as information in assessing a product's emotional claims.

As most readers know from personal experience, the world seems a better place when we are in a happy mood rather than a sad mood. Numerous experimental studies have confirmed this familiar experience and documented pervasive mood effects on evaluative judgment, including the evaluation of consumer products (Cohen, Pham, and Andrade 2008; Pham 2004; Schwarz and Clore 2007). However, positive and negative moods do not always result in mood-congruent judgments. For example, when we read a story that is supposed to make us feel sad and we feel happy nevertheless, we conclude that the story is a poorly written sad story—or else it would have made us feel appropriately sad (Martin et al. 1997). In this case, positive feelings give rise to a negative judgment because the story did not fulfill its intended role of making us feel sad. This observation has potentially important implications for consumer research and calls for a differentiation between products that

do versus do not make emotional claims. The current research addresses this possibility.

We first review the role of feelings in product evaluation and highlight likely differences in the underlying processes when products do versus do not make specific emotional claims. Consistent with the extant literature, we conclude that incidental feelings result in affect-congruent judgments when the product does not make specific emotional claims. When the product does make emotional claims, however, the impact of incidental feelings depends on whether the feeling matches the emotional product claim. In two studies, we show that discrete positive emotions of equivalent valence (excitement and peacefulness) have opposite effects on product evaluation depending on whether the emotion matches or does not match the product's emotional claim. In both studies, participants read an advertisement that promised either an *adventurous* or a *serene* vacation in Japan. Participants evaluated the adventurous vacation product more favorably when they felt excited rather than peaceful due to an earlier emotion induction; conversely, they evaluated the serene vacation product more favorably when they felt peaceful rather than excited (studies 1 and 2). As predicted by the feelings-as-information theory (Schwarz and Clore 1983), this effect was not obtained when participants attributed their current feelings to the emotion induction task, undermining its informational value for the judgment at hand (study 1). Apparently, participants consulted their current feelings to determine whether the advertised vacation product was likely to live up to its promises. Supporting this interpretation, they reported higher expectations that the product would deliver on its promises when their feelings matched rather than did not match the emotional product

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claim (study 2). These expectations fully mediated the observed differences in product evaluation.

FEELINGS AS INFORMATION IN PRODUCT EVALUATION: THE MODERATING ROLE OF EMOTIONAL PRODUCT CLAIMS

To date, consumer research into the role of feelings in product evaluation has predominantly focused on products that make no specific emotional claims (e.g., stereo speakers, a pair of jeans, concert tickets). In this case, consumers arrive at more positive evaluations when they are in a happy mood rather than in a sad mood (Gorn, Goldberg, and Basu 1993; Pham 1998, 2004, 2008; Schwarz and Clore 2007). According to the feelings-as-information theory, these affect-congruent judgments reflect that consumers use their current feelings as a source of information in evaluating target objects, essentially asking themselves, "How do I feel about this?" (Schwarz, forthcoming; Schwarz and Clore 1983). In doing so, they misread their incidental feelings as part of their response to the target of judgment, resulting in more positive evaluations when they felt good rather than bad. Such affect-congruent evaluations are not observed when people's attention is drawn to the incidental nature of their feelings, thus undermining the feeling's informational value for the judgment at hand (Schwarz and Clore 1983). However, products that are associated with specific emotional claims can change this general process in several related ways. Because marketers rarely make negative emotional claims for a product, our discussion proceeds on the assumption that a product's emotional claims are positive.

First, salient emotional claims can influence the perceived informational value of one's feelings (Pham 2008). On the one hand, feelings that match a product's emotional claims are particularly likely to be attributed to the product rather than to an unrelated source—after all, one is feeling what one is supposed to feel and no further explanation is needed. In this case, the information provided by one's feelings converges with information about relevant product attributes (Adaval 2001) and validates the product's emotional claim. On the other hand, feelings that do not match the product's emotional claim are unexpected and may give rise to attempts to identify an alternative source, even in the absence of explicit attribution manipulations. When an alternative source of one's feelings is identified, the feeling's informational value is undermined; when no alternative source is identified, the information provided by one's feelings diverges from information about relevant product attributes and invalidates the product's emotional claim. These considerations predict that consumers evaluate a product more favorably when their own feelings match rather than mismatch the product's emotional claims provided that the informational value of their feelings is not called into question.

Second, specific emotional claims may shift the epistemic question from a general "How do I feel about this

product?" to a more specific "Is this product likely to live up to its claims?" Consumers may again consult their current feelings as a source of information. As already noted, Martin and colleagues (1997) observed that participants rated a happy story more favorably when they felt happy rather than sad but that they rated a sad story more favorably when they felt sad rather than happy. After all, how good is a sad story that makes a reader feel happy or a happy story that makes a reader feel sad? Accordingly, Martin et al. (1997) concluded that participants compared their own feelings to the expectations inherent in a happy or sad story to determine whether the story fulfilled its intended role of making them feel happy or sad. Their role fulfillment account again predicts that consumers will evaluate a product more favorably when their own feelings match rather than mismatch the product's emotional claim unless the feeling is not considered informative.

Finally, consumers' current feelings may increase the accessibility of related semantic concepts (Bower 1981; Wyer, Clore, and Isbell 1999). If so, verbal descriptions of emotional claims to which these concepts are applicable may be processed more fluently than verbal descriptions to which the concepts are inapplicable. The resulting difference in processing fluency would again facilitate more positive evaluations when the emotional product claims match rather than mismatch the recipient's feelings (Schwarz 2004). Note, however, that affect-congruent concept accessibility is itself independent of the source to which one's current feelings are attributed (Schwarz and Clore 2007), whereas this attribution figures prominently in the alternative accounts.

To date, the interplay of consumers' incidental feelings and emotional product claims has received limited attention, with two important exceptions. One exception is a study by Bosmans and Baumgartner (2005), who addressed the interplay between goals and feelings. Comparing the impact of cheerful and quiescent feelings, they found that cheerful feelings resulted in more positive evaluations when the advertisement made an achievement goal salient ("Increase your energy level by eating Ecap Eco Apples!"), whereas quiescent feelings resulted in more positive evaluations when the advertisement made a prevention goal salient ("Prevent fatigue by eating Ecap Eco Apples!"). Note that this work bears on the match between goals and feelings and does not vary the emotional claim of the product itself. A second exception is the previously discussed role fulfillment study by Martin and colleagues (1997), who showed that sad (happy) stories were evaluated more positively when readers were in a matching rather than mismatching mood. In their work, participants actually consumed the product (by reading the story) and evaluated its quality by drawing on their feelings during the consumption experience. Moreover, their feelings differed in valence (happy vs. sad); hence, any (mis)match in feelings also implied a (mis)match in valence. In contrast, the current research addresses how qualitatively different feelings of the same (positive) valence influence the evaluation of a product with which consumers do not yet have a direct consumption experience. The product is presented in advertisements that make specific emotional claims, and of interest is

whether the product is evaluated more favorably when the recipient's incidental feelings match rather than mismatch these emotional claims.

Drawing on the above reasoning, we assume that consumers who read an advertisement with specific emotional product claims are essentially asking themselves, "Would this product make me feel the way it promises?" In doing so, they are likely to misread preexisting incidental feelings as part of their reaction to the product. Hence, they may infer, for example, that a vacation described as serene and relaxing will indeed live up to its promises when they happen to feel serene and calm but not when they happen to feel excited and aroused. These differential assessments of the likelihood that the product will deliver on its promises will lend the product claims more credibility and appeal, thereby resulting in more positive evaluations. This rationale predicts more favorable product evaluations when incidental feelings match rather than mismatch emotional product claims.

H1: A product will be more positively evaluated when its emotional claims match versus mismatch an individual's incidental feelings.

This core prediction is tested in two experiments. If the predicted effect reflects the use of incidental feelings as information, it should be eliminated when participants' attention is drawn to the incidental nature of their feelings (Schwarz and Clore 1983). Thus:

H2a: Hypothesis 1 only applies when the incidental nature of the perceiver's feelings is not salient.

H2b: When the incidental nature of the perceiver's feelings is salient, their influence is eliminated.

These hypotheses are also tested in study 1. We further assume that the predicted interaction of incidental feelings and emotional product claims is due to differential assessments of the likelihood that the product will live up to its promises. Thus:

H3: Consumers perceive a higher likelihood that the product delivers on the claimed emotional benefits when their incidental feelings are congruent rather than incongruent with the emotional product claims.

H4: These expectancies mediate the influence of incidental feelings on product evaluation.

These hypotheses are tested in study 2.

STUDY 1

The principal objective of this study is to assess whether a match versus a mismatch between individuals' incidental feelings and a product's emotional claims yields differential evaluations. Furthermore, the current study intends to test whether the observed effects are eliminated when participants' attention is drawn to the incidental nature of their feelings (Albarracín and Kumkale 2003; Schwarz and Clore

1983). We assume that awareness of the incidental nature of one's feelings discredits not only the valence information they provide but also their more specific informational value when consumers ask themselves whether the product will fulfill its role and deliver on its emotional claims. Hence, the current study will examine whether the predicted emotion-congruency effect will be eliminated when the incidental source of participants' feelings is salient, as predicted in hypotheses 2a and 2b. The study follows a 2 (feelings: excited vs. peaceful) \times 2 (product: adventurous vs. serene) \times 2 (awareness cue: present vs. not present) between-subjects design and measures participants' evaluations of a travel product that made distinctive emotional claims, namely, an exciting and adventurous vacation versus a serene and peaceful vacation.

Method

Participants and Procedures. One hundred and thirty-nine undergraduate students were randomly assigned to one of eight conditions. They were asked to evaluate an advertisement for a trip to Japan that contained several emotional claims regarding the trip.

The experimenter informed participants that they would be asked to complete a variety of unrelated tasks. Each section had a different heading and was typed in a font style and size different from the preceding sections in order to foster the participant's impression that each section pertained to a different study. Participants were first asked to put a set of 10 words in alphabetical order so as to remove any mood differences due to extraneous factors (Wegener, Petty, and Smith 1995). Next, participants completed a mood manipulation task modeled after Bless et al. (1996). They were asked to list three life events that were either *exciting* or *peaceful* and then to provide a detailed written description of one of these events. In the instructions, we described exciting events as those that excite people and make them feel pleasantly thrilled and stimulated; similarly, we described peaceful events as those that relax people and make them feel pleasantly serene and tranquil. After the participants reported their current feelings by responding to a set of emotion adjectives, they were asked to read and evaluate one of two advertisements for a trip to Japan. The latter task was presented as part of a purportedly separate study. Participants reported their attitudes toward the described trip by responding to two questions ("I would like to visit the advertised destination" and "Taking a trip to this country is a good decision") on 9-point scales, anchored by 1 (strongly disagree) and 9 (strongly agree); these responses served as the measure of product evaluation. The participants were then thanked and debriefed.

Stimuli. In order to create emotional claims that matched or mismatched feelings of excitement or peacefulness, we created two versions of an advertisement, described as having been developed by the Japan National Tourist Organization. For the adventurous product positioning, the headline read, "Visit Japan! Full of Adventurous Offerings." In this version, the trip to Japan was described as being full

of exciting, adventurous, and stimulating activities, such as anime/manga, electronics, and Japanese drumming (Taiko). The advertisement also included pictures that illustrated dynamic aspects of Japan. For the serene product positioning, the headline read, "Visit Japan! Full of Serene Offerings." In this case, the trip to Japan was featured as being full of peaceful, serene, and tranquil activities, such as hot springs, tea ceremonies, and Buddhism/Shintoism. In addition, the advertisement included pictures of hot spas, a traditional Japanese garden house, and tea ceremonies.

Additionally, we included a manipulation that alerted some participants to the likely impact of the life event description task. Adapting a procedure used in previous research (Sinclair, Mark, and Clore 1994), we alerted half of the participants that the unrelated life-event description task may have affected their current feelings (awareness cue) and asked them to make impartial judgments of the product featured in the advertisement; these instructions were not presented to the other half of the participants (no awareness cue). The awareness cue was presented after the presentation of the advertisement and prior to the assessment of the dependent measures.

Results

Manipulation Checks. To assess the effectiveness of the affect manipulation, we asked participants to indicate the extent to which they felt *active*, *excited*, and *enthusiastic* (to measure excitement), or *tranquil*, *peaceful*, and *serene* (to measure peacefulness), on 5-point scales anchored by not at all, a little, moderately, quite a bit, and extremely. Two participants who did not provide these ratings for the emotion measures were dropped from the analysis of the manipulation checks. The first three items were averaged to form an excitement index ($\alpha = .83$); the last three were averaged to form a peacefulness index ($\alpha = .74$). These two feelings indices were entered into a 2 (feelings: excited vs. peaceful) \times 2 (product: adventurous vs. serene) \times 2 (awareness cue: present vs. not present) \times 2 (feelings indices: excitement index and peacefulness index) mixed ANOVA, treating feelings as a within-subjects factor. Participants who elaborated on exciting life events reported a greater intensity of excitement than those who elaborated on peaceful events ($M_{\text{excited}} = 2.98$ vs. $M_{\text{peaceful}} = 2.24$; $F(1, 129) = 16.85$, $p < .01$), whereas participants who elaborated on peaceful events reported a greater intensity of peacefulness than those who elaborated on exciting events ($M_{\text{excited}} = 2.69$ vs. $M_{\text{peaceful}} = 3.28$; $F(1, 129) = 16.96$, $p < .01$). This pattern was reflected in a significant two-way interaction of induced feelings and feeling indices ($F(1, 129) = 39.60$, $p < .01$). No other effects were significant.

A separate 2 (feelings) \times 2 (product) \times 2 (awareness cue) ANOVA on the extent to which participants felt positive revealed no significant effects (all p 's $> .11$; all M 's > 3.15 on 5-point scales), suggesting that there was no significant difference in the overall positive valence of their feelings. Therefore, the affect manipulation was deemed successful at producing

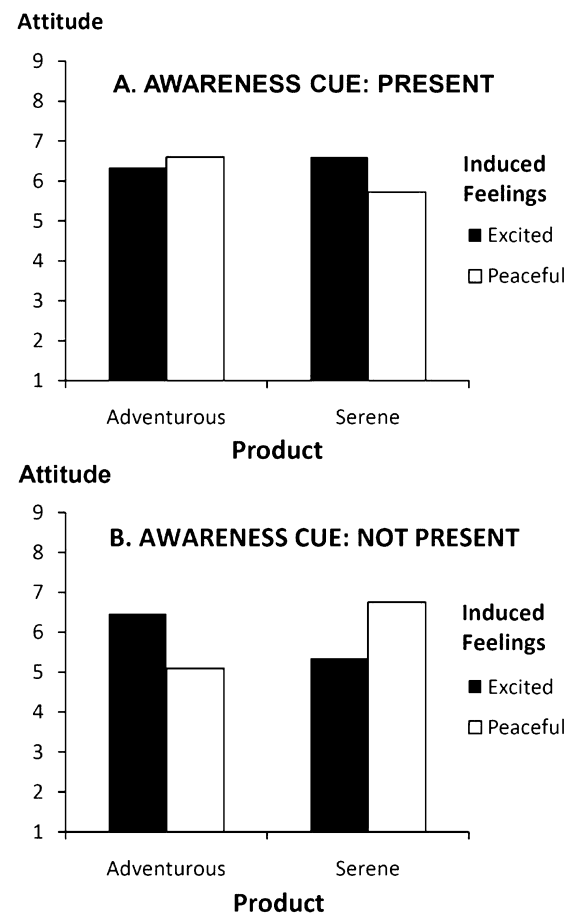
two groups of participants who experienced two discrete emotional states, controlling for positivity.

Attitudes. Our primary prediction was that a match versus mismatch between participants' incidental feelings and the emotional claims of the product would positively influence product evaluation but would only do so when participants were unaware of the true source of their feelings. As predicted, a 2 (feelings) \times 2 (product) \times 2 (awareness cue) ANOVA run on the evaluation index formed by the two attitude items ($\alpha = .91$) revealed the predicted three-way interaction ($F(1, 131) = 10.15$, $p < .01$). No other effects were significant. In the absence of an awareness cue, participants evaluated the product more favorably when their incidental feelings matched rather than mismatched the emotional product claims ($F(1, 131) = 8.97$, $p < .01$, for the simple interaction). In contrast, the influence of incidental feelings was eliminated when an awareness cue was present ($F(1, 131) = 1.99$, $p > .16$, for the simple interaction; see fig. 1).

Specifically, in the absence of an awareness cue, par-

FIGURE 1

ATTITUDES AS A FUNCTION OF INDUCED FEELINGS, PRODUCT, AND AWARENESS CUE (STUDY 1)



participants evaluated the adventurous product more favorably when they felt excited rather than peaceful ($M_{\text{excited}} = 6.46$ vs. $M_{\text{peaceful}} = 5.09$; $F(1, 131) = 4.45$, $p < .05$). Conversely, they evaluated the serene product more favorably when they felt peaceful rather than excited ($M_{\text{excited}} = 5.35$ vs. $M_{\text{peaceful}} = 6.75$; $F(1, 131) = 4.52$, $p < .05$). However, when an awareness cue was present, participants' feelings no longer affected their product evaluations for both the adventurous ($M_{\text{excited}} = 6.34$ vs. $M_{\text{peaceful}} = 6.60$; $F < 1$) and serene products ($M_{\text{excited}} = 6.60$ vs. $M_{\text{peaceful}} = 5.72$; $F(1, 131) = 2.02$, $p > .15$). Consistent with these findings, the decomposition of the significant three-way interaction by product shows significant simple interactions of induced feelings and an awareness cue for the adventurous ($F(1, 131) = 3.85$, $p = .05$) as well as the serene product ($F(1, 131) = 6.37$, $p < .05$).

Discussion

In sum, participants evaluated a product more favorably when their incidental feelings matched rather than mismatched the emotional claims associated with the product. This finding extends Martin et al.'s (1997) research from a situation in which participants could draw on their actual postconsumption feelings to evaluate a product (in their case, a story read) to a situation in which consumers assessed the quality of a product they had not yet directly experienced (in this case, an advertised vacation). Importantly, participants' diverging evaluations of an adventurous and serene vacation were obtained under conditions where their feelings of excitement and peacefulness were matched for valence, indicating that the effect is not driven by differential levels of positivity. This finding highlights that they attended to the specific match between the quality of their feelings and the emotional product claims rather than to the valence component of their feelings. Finally, no influence of incidental feelings was observed when participants correctly attributed their feelings to the preceding task. This discounting effect confirms that participants attended to their feelings as a source of information (Schwarz and Clore 1983) and extends the feelings-as-information logic to the use of one's feelings in evaluating a product's likely future role fulfillment.

On the theoretical side, our findings highlight that positive feelings do not necessarily result in more positive evaluations. When a product makes specific emotional claims, the qualitative match between these claims and consumers' feelings is more important for product evaluation than the valence of feelings per se. Put otherwise, experiencing pleasant excitement is not a recommendation when one is promised serenity nor is experiencing pleasant serenity a recommendation when one is promised excitement. In contrast, a large number of earlier studies consistently showed that the valence of feelings drives evaluation in the absence of specific emotional product claims (Pham 2008; Schwarz 1990; Schwarz and Clore 2007). We return to this issue in the General Discussion at the end of the article.

STUDY 2

As noted, we assume that the observed effects reflect that consumers evaluate a product's emotional claims by consulting their apparent affective response to the product, essentially asking themselves something akin to, "Would I feel that way if I used this product?" (e.g., "Would I really feel excited [or peaceful] if I visited this place?"). In doing so, they misread their incidental feelings as part of their response to the product and infer that the product is more likely to deliver on its emotional promises when their feelings match the product's emotional claims. Study 2 provides a direct assessment of these likelihood estimates.

The assumption that feelings influence likelihood judgments is well supported by earlier research, and feelings have been shown to provide information about the benign or problematic status of one's current situation, with downstream effects on judgment and processing strategies (Schwarz 1990; Schwarz and Clore 2007; Slovic et al. 2002). For example, Johnson and Tversky (1983) observed that induced negative affect increases people's estimates of the frequency of risky and undesirable events. Similarly, DeSteno et al. (2000) observed that sadness inflates the perceived likelihood of future sad events (e.g., death of a loved one), whereas anger inflates the perceived likelihood of future annoying events (e.g., traffic jams). By the same token, consumers who imagine how they would feel if they used a product may find future experiences that are congruent with their current feelings to be more likely than experiences that are incongruent. This feelings-based estimation of the likelihood of future emotional experiences would result in the impression that the product is likely to deliver on its emotional claims when their current feelings match these claims but not when their current feelings mismatch these claims.

Study 2 tests this rationale. Specifically, we assess participants' expectations that the product will deliver on its emotional claims and test whether these expectations mediate the influence of matching and mismatching feelings observed in study 1.

Method

Participants and Procedures. Fifty-eight undergraduate students were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 2 (feelings: excited vs. peaceful) \times 2 (product: adventurous vs. serene) between-subjects design. The procedures were similar to those used in study 1, except for the introduction of two additional measures that assessed participants' expectations that the advertised trip would indeed be exciting or serene and their perceptions of how desirable they find these attributes of the trip. These measures were modeled after DeSteno et al. (2000).

To assess participants' expectations, we asked them to report how adventurous (in the adventurous-product condition) or serene (in the serene-product condition) they thought the trip would be. The questions read, "How likely is it that the trip to Japan presented in the adver-

tisement will be adventurous (serene)?" and "How probable is it that the trip to Japan presented in the advertisement will be adventurous (serene)?" Both questions were answered on 9-point scales, with higher values indicating a higher likelihood. Later, these two items were averaged to form an expectancy index ($\alpha = .92$). In addition, participants were asked to report the desirability of adventurous (in the adventurous-product condition) or serene (in the serene-product condition) trips in general. Specifically, they indicated, using 9-point scales, whether they consider adventurous (serene) trips in general as *good* or *bad* and as *attractive* or *unattractive*, with higher values indicating a more positive evaluation. The two items were averaged to form a value index ($\alpha = .94$).

Results

Manipulation Checks. Three of the participants did not provide ratings for the emotion measures and were dropped from the analysis of the manipulation checks. The feelings manipulation was again successful. A mixed ANOVA on the two feelings indices revealed a significant two-way interaction of induced feeling and feeling indices ($F(1, 51) = 8.31, p < .01$). No other effects were significant. As in study 1, the exciting emotions induction produced a greater intensity of excitement ($M_{\text{excited}} = 2.95$ vs. $M_{\text{peaceful}} = 2.35; F(1, 51) = 6.78, p < .05$), whereas the peaceful emotions induction produced a greater intensity of peacefulness ($M_{\text{excited}} = 3.22$ vs. $M_{\text{peaceful}} = 3.72; F(1, 51) = 3.94, p = .05$). Again, a separate analysis revealed that there was no significant difference in the extent to which participants felt positive (all F 's < 1 ; all M 's > 3.6 on 5-point scales), indicating that their distinct emotions were of comparable valence.

Attitudes. A 2 (feelings) \times 2 (product) ANOVA on the product evaluation index ($\alpha = .88$) replicated the two-way interaction between induced feelings and product type ($F(1, 54) = 15.60, p < .01$) previously obtained in the no-awareness-cue conditions of study 1. No other effects were significant. As in study 1, the adventurous product was evaluated more positively under excitement than under peacefulness ($M_{\text{excited}} = 6.36$ vs. $M_{\text{peaceful}} = 4.82; F(1, 54) = 6.52, p < .05$), whereas the serene product was evaluated more positively under peacefulness than under excitement ($M_{\text{excited}} = 4.53$ vs. $M_{\text{peaceful}} = 6.30; F(1, 54) = 9.25, p < .01$).

Expectancy and Value Estimates. An ANOVA on the expectancy index revealed a main effect of product ($F(1, 54) = 11.33, p < .01$). Participants considered it more likely that the advertised serene trip to Japan would indeed be serene than that the advertised adventurous trip to Japan would indeed be adventurous ($M_{\text{adventurous}} = 4.08$ vs. $M_{\text{serene}} = 5.52$). More importantly, this main effect of product was qualified by a significant two-way interaction between feelings and product ($F(1, 54) = 11.18, p < .01$). As predicted, participants considered it more likely that the adventurous trip would indeed be adventurous when they experienced excitement

than when they experienced peacefulness at the time of judgment ($M_{\text{excited}} = 4.86$ vs. $M_{\text{peaceful}} = 3.32; F(1, 54) = 6.34, p < .05$); conversely, they considered it more likely that the serene trip would indeed be serene when they experienced peacefulness than when they experienced excitement at the time of judgment ($M_{\text{excited}} = 4.87$ vs. $M_{\text{peaceful}} = 6.17; F(1, 54) = 4.87, p < .05$).

In contrast, an ANOVA on the value index did not reveal any effects (all p 's > 0.14). Most importantly, participants' general liking of serene or adventurous trips was not influenced by the excitement or peacefulness they experienced.

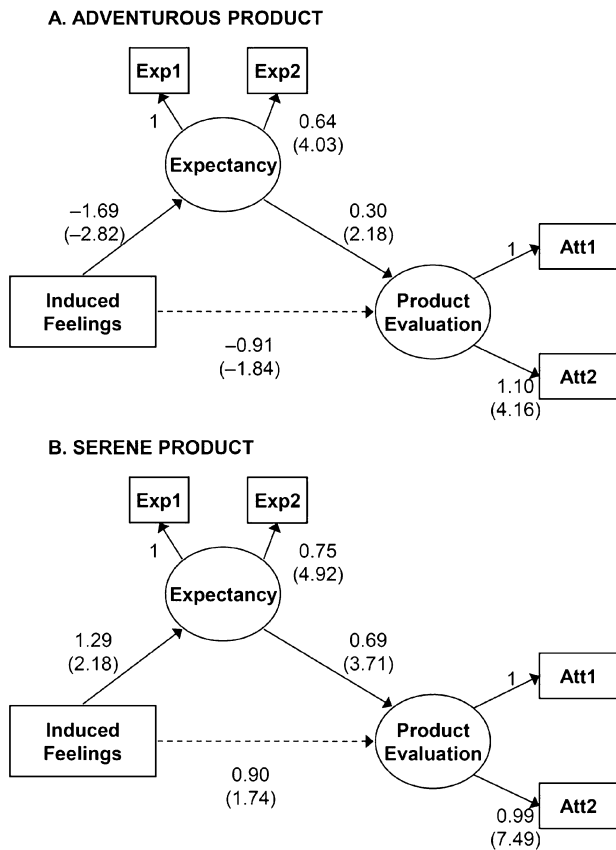
Mediational Analyses. As seen above, participants expected that the product was more likely to deliver on its claims and evaluated the product more favorably when the emotional product claims matched their incidental feelings. Next, we tested whether the observed influence on expectancy estimates mediates the influence of incidental feelings on product evaluation. To do so, we computed two structural equation models using LISREL. We decomposed these mediational analyses on the basis of product type (i.e., adventurous vs. serene) because participants may have had differential baselines for their attitudes toward the two different products. For the same reason, we had measured the expectancy (and value) estimates in the manner that the adjectives (adventurous and serene) used for the measures were identical within product conditions but varied across the product conditions. For both products, the direct path between feelings and product evaluations was not significant, whereas the indirect path via expectancy was significant (see fig. 2).

Furthermore, as suggested by Iacobucci, Saldanha, and Deng (2007), we constructed a comparative Sobel z -test to compare the size of the mediated versus direct effects. These tests indicate that the indirect paths via expectancies were significant for the serene product ($z = 1.92, p = .05$) and marginally significant for the adventurous product ($z = 1.74, p < .08$), whereas the direct paths were not significant for either product. Additionally, we calculated the ratio of the indirect to the total effects. The comparison indicated that the mediation accounted for 50% of the variance in the evaluation of the serene product and for 36% of the variance in the evaluation of the adventurous product. Taken together, these results confirm the mediational role of expectancy estimates for the influence of (mis)matched feelings on product evaluations.

Regarding the measures used for expectancy and attitudes, one may wonder whether the two measures are too closely related and insufficiently distal from each other. Hence, we tested discrimination as part of the LISREL analyses. We assessed discriminant validity first by conducting a correlation analysis between the two latent constructs. The phi interconstruct correlation parameters did not include 1.0 in their 95% confidence intervals. More formally, we performed a chi-square difference test comparing the unconstrained model to the constrained one with the interconstruct correlation equal to one, revealing that the difference was significant ($\Delta\chi^2(1) = 10.35, p < .01$ for the adventurous product; $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 16.40, p < .01$ for the serene product). These results indicate that the

FIGURE 2

MEDIATIONAL ANALYSES FOR EXPECTANCY ESTIMATES (STUDY 2)



NOTE.—Numbers in parentheses are *t*-values. Solid lines represent significant paths, and the dotted line represents a nonsignificant line at $p < .05$. Induced feelings are coded as 1 if peaceful and 0 if excited.

expectancy measures were empirically distinct from attitude measures, confirming discriminant validity.

Discussion

Replicating the findings of study 1, participants evaluated a vacation product more favorably when their incidental feelings matched the product’s emotional claims than when they did not. Going beyond these findings, participants also considered it more likely that the product would indeed deliver on its emotional claims when their incidental feelings matched the product claims than when they did not. Finally, these expectancies fully mediated the influence of incidental feelings on product evaluation.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Numerous studies have demonstrated that incidental feelings of a positive (negative) valence result in positive (negative) evaluations (Pham 2004, 2008; Schwarz 1990; Schwarz

and Clore 2007). In contrast, the current findings show that feelings of a positive valence can lead to positive as well as negative evaluations. The crucial difference between these two sets of observations is whether the target product is associated with specific emotional claims.

First, when the product does not make specific emotional claims, consumers are likely to draw on the valence information conveyed by their feelings, akin to asking themselves, “How do I feel about this product?” This gives rise to more positive evaluations when they feel good rather than bad unless the informational value of their feelings is called into question (Gorn et al. 1993; Schwarz and Clore 1983). This is the dominant finding of studies that have assessed the role of feelings in product evaluation, which typically did not specify emotional product claims (Pham 2008; Schwarz and Clore 2007).

Second, when the product does make specific emotional claims, consumers are likely to attend to the specific quality of their feelings to determine whether the product is indeed likely to make them feel the way it promises. Instead of asking themselves how they generally feel about the product, they are likely to ask a more specific question: “Will this product make me feel the way it promises?” In answering this question, the specific phenomenal quality of the feeling (rather than its global valence) looms large. Feeling pleasantly serene does not support a product’s claim of excitement nor does feeling pleasantly excited support a claim of serenity, even though excitement and serenity share a positive valence. Hence, consumers perceive a product as more likely to deliver what it promises when the phenomenal quality of their incidental feelings matches rather than mismatches the product’s emotional claims. These perceptions, in turn, result in more favorable evaluations under matching conditions. We hasten to add, however, that positive effects of matching feelings are likely to be limited to positive emotions. In the unlikely case that a product makes negative emotional claims, experiencing these emotions should result in a high perceived likelihood that the product delivers what it promises—yet this perception will rarely be associated with a desire to consume it.

A few caveats are worth noting. First, both of our studies relied on the same emotions, the same emotion induction procedures, and the same product descriptions. Future research may test the robustness of our findings by using a wider range of experimental manipulations. Second, our studies did not include a no-emotion-control condition. Such a baseline condition is more relevant when one’s theory predicts the elimination of an effect, which requires comparison to a baseline, than when it predicts the reversal of an effect, as observed in the reported cross-over interactions. Finally, our data are compatible with two closely related perspectives, which we address next.

Theoretical Implications

As discussed in the introduction, two related perspectives are compatible with our findings. Both are consistent with the feelings-as-information theory and assume that recipients of an advertisement that presents emotional product claims consult their current feelings to evaluate the validity

of the claims. However, they differ in subtle ways in the specific aspects on which the feelings are brought to bear, with one perspective focusing on the evaluation of message arguments and the other focusing on evaluations of the product. From a message-evaluation perspective, feelings that match the emotional claims of a message are particularly likely to be attributed to the message and validate the message's emotional claim. This assumption is consistent with the observation that declarative information that is consistent with the valence of one's current feelings receives more weight (Adaval 2001); it is also compatible with Pham's (2008) discussion of variables that influence the perceived informational value of one's feelings beyond their attribution to an incidental source. This line of argument traces recipients' assessment of the likelihood that a product will deliver on its promises to their evaluation of the validity of the message. An alternative perspective assumes that recipients imagine the act of consumption and ask themselves, "Would this product make me feel the way it promises?" This perspective is consistent with the role fulfillment account advanced by Martin and colleagues (1997) and has the advantage that it can account for postconsumption judgments, based on actual product experience, as well preconsumption judgments, based on advertising claims. Recall that Martin and colleagues (1997) observed that happy readers evaluated a sad story more negatively than sad readers did, presumably because the story failed to fulfill its role of making the reader feel sad. Note that Martin et al.'s participants did not evaluate emotional claims about a sad story they had not read; instead, they had the full "consumption" experience. In contrast, participants in the current study evaluated a vacation that was merely described to them. In both cases, participants' evaluations were more favorable when their incidental feelings matched the emotional experience promised by the product than when they did not. We therefore consider the role fulfillment perspective (Martin et al. 1997) to be more parsimonious because it can account for the role of incidental feelings in postconsumption as well as preconsumption product evaluations. Future research may fruitfully address under which conditions each of these (not mutually exclusive) pathways is more likely to hold.

We further noted in the introduction that incidental feelings, and the methods with which they are induced, may increase the accessibility of related semantic concepts (Bower 1981). This, in turn, may facilitate fluent processing of subsequent emotion-congruent messages, resulting in more favorable evaluations for that reason (Schwarz 2004). Importantly, the accessibility of the primed concepts is not reduced when participants (correctly) attribute their feelings to the emotion induction task. Hence, this account predicts an effect of the emotion induction on processing fluency that is independent of the awareness cues introduced in study 1. In contrast to this prediction, the emotion induction only influenced participants' judgments in the absence of awareness cues, indicating that the reported findings are not a function of fluent processing due to an increased accessibility of affect-congruent concepts.

In addition to bearing on emotional product claims, our research contributes more generally to a growing body of findings that go beyond the focus on valence that characterized early research on the interplay of feeling and thinking, which mostly relied on the induction of global positive and negative moods. Whereas global moods primarily provide valence information, distinct emotions inform the person that the appraisal pattern underlying the emotion has been met (Schwarz and Clore 2007). Anger, for example, is a response to a loss or lack of reward that is attributed to the causal action of another agent; when no agent attribution is made, a loss gives rise to sadness. Hence, different emotions of the same valence differ in the specific information they provide, which gives rise to different effects on subsequent judgments (Bodenhausen, Sheppard, and Kramer 1994; Han, Lerner, and Keltner 2007; Keltner, Ellsworth, and Edwards 1993; Lerner and Keltner 2000; Raghunathan and Pham 1999; Raghunathan, Pham, and Corfman 2006). To date, the evidence for differential effects of different emotions of the same valence pertains predominantly to negative emotions (all of the cited studies), which are more distinct and differentiated than positive emotions (Ortony, Clore, and Collins 1988). It is therefore worth noting that Bosmans and Baumgartner (2005), as well as the current studies, provide consistent evidence for differential effects of specific positive emotions. Comparing the impact of cheerful and quiescent feelings, Bosmans and Baumgartner (2005) found that cheerful feelings resulted in more positive evaluations when an achievement goal was salient ("Increase your energy level by eating Ecap Eco Apples!"), whereas quiescent feelings resulted in more positive evaluations when a prevention goal was salient ("Prevent fatigue by eating Ecap Eco Apples!"). Complementing their work on the match between goals and positive feelings of similar valence, our studies show that consumers also differentiate between positive feelings of equated valence when they evaluate emotional product claims. In combination, these findings indicate that differential effects of distinct emotions of the same valence are not limited to negative emotions. Future research may fruitfully draw on the appraisal patterns underlying distinct positive emotions to arrive at differentiated predictions of their specific impact.

Applied Implications

As March (1978) noted, most decisions are based on hedonic predictions—will it be good for me to do this? The current research suggests that products making emotional claims may focus consumers' hedonic predictions on the experiences brought to mind by the product claims—will the product make me feel the way it promises? Marketers can facilitate the impression that the product will deliver on its promises by displaying it in contexts in which consumers' preexisting feelings are likely to match the product's claims. Hence, exciting sports events are a better arena for advertising exciting rather than serene vacations, not only because an exciting vacation may match the audience's general preference but also because the exciting vacation will match the

audience's current feelings. Similarly, advertisements that induce emotions matching the product's claims through the appropriate verbal tone, music, and visuals may facilitate the impression that the product will deliver. In either case, however, such strategies will be futile when consumers become aware that their feelings may be incidental and may not be elicited by the product itself.

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