

Too Disgusted to Remember: The Impact of Contextual Emotions on Advertising Recall

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Cite as:

Alves Cátia, Boksem Maarten, SMIDTS ALE (2025), Too Disgusted to Remember: The Impact of Contextual Emotions on Advertising Recall. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 54th, (125821)

Paper from the 54th Annual EMAC Conference, Madrid, Spain, May 25-30, 2025



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Disgust-inducing media content is becoming increasingly prevalent, with news and social media platforms covering war crimes, sexual scandals, and polarized hate speech. Despite its strong capacity to capture attention and engagement, the impact of this emotion on the recall of surrounding advertisements remains unknown. Across seven studies, both in the lab and in the field, we consistently found that disgust-inducing media contexts reduce recall of surrounding advertisements more than other emotional contexts. Our findings indicated that participants attempt to regulate disgust by trying to suppress their thoughts—a cognitively demanding strategy—which limits their cognitive capacity to encode subsequent advertisements, reducing their recall. We ruled out several alternative accounts of the impact of disgust on advertising recall (such as contextual arousal or context congruency).

Keywords: Memory, Emotion, Advertising

Track: Consumer Behavior