

Short Sparks or Slow Burns? Decoding Emotional Messaging and Duration Effects on Brand Recall

Matteo Montecchi

King's College London/King's College London

Maria Rita Micheli

IESEG, School of Management in Paris

Mario Campana

University of Bath

Hope Jensen Schau

University of California Irvine

Cite as:

Montecchi Matteo, Micheli Maria Rita, Campana Mario, Jensen Schau Hope (2026), Short Sparks or Slow Burns? Decoding Emotional Messaging and Duration Effects on Brand Recall. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 55th, (133798)

Paper from the 55th Annual EMAC Conference, Bath, United Kingdom, June 2-5, 2026



Short Sparks or Slow Burns? Decoding Emotional Messaging and Duration Effects on Brand Recall

Abstract

This paper investigates the joint influence of emotional appeals and advertisement length on brand recall. Leveraging a dataset of over 9,000 UK and US television ads, coded for Ekman's seven universal emotions plus neutrality, we test whether emotional appeals, operationalized as happiness relative to neutrality, are associated with brand recall across different ad lengths. Results show that such appeals are significantly associated with higher brand recall in short ads, but this association weakens as ad length increases, disappearing in the 60-second format. These findings highlight the contingent nature of emotional strategies in advertising, offering insights into optimizing ad creative planning.

Track: Advertising & Marketing Communications