

# Diamonds are No Longer Forever

## Putting Emotion to Work for your Brands

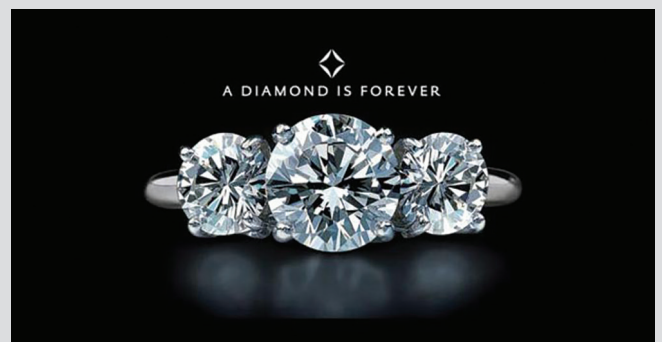
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**The Diamond Producers Association recently released a new set of ads. They reintroduce the idea of diamonds to the relationships and aspirations of Millennials. This is a group for whom “forever” is a meaningless concept along with tradition, eternity and commitment. Their focus is the journey, not the destination.**

The new theme is about honesty, authenticity and truth, separating the fake from the real. The campaign moves away from “A Diamond is Forever” which was used by De Beers from 1947, to the new, “Real is Rare. Real is a Diamond” theme. It is a thoroughly emotional campaign at every level and leverages storytelling in both traditional and digital media.

In some ways diamonds symbolise the dilemma of leading products and brands with regard to Millennials. Although very familiar with them, the proposition is that



younger generations have different motivations and brand relationships and campaigns must adapt accordingly.

So, how can brand campaigns today leverage the interplay of attention, memory and emotion to influence people’s choices?

## The Purpose of Advertising is to drive Brand Choice

We know that brands exist in people's minds as associative memory structures. These are networks of thoughts, feelings, images, associations, colours, sounds, symbols and memories. Branding acts as a heuristic, a shortcut enabling people to draw quickly on this large body of associations and knowledge to facilitate choice.

Brand communications play an important part in capturing attention to either reinforce or disrupt this mental network, as well as helping to create new ideas and memories or adding strength to those that already exist.

### USING “EMOTIONAL ADVERTISING” TO INFLUENCE BRAND CHOICE

The goal of using emotion in advertising is of course to drive brand choice, so we need to link it with what we know about attention and memory if we are to influence how people make choices.

“Emotional advertising” has become very fashionable, but why? Is it down to advertiser FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) or is there clear evidence, both in outcomes and underlying theory, that it works?

The idea is that “emotion”, expressed in the form of good storytelling, performs three key functions:

- “Emotion” can *capture attention* with novel, surprising or engaging ideas
- “Emotional” messages can be processed automatically, using lower levels of conscious attention so placing a lower cognitive load on our *processing and memory encoding faculties*
- “Emotional advertising” *creates emotional connections* that make a brand easier to retrieve at a moment of choice i.e. making it highly salient



#REALISRE:  
Wild and Kind

## HOW DOES EMOTION CAPTURE ATTENTION?

**The amount of information we are exposed to vastly exceeds our ability to process it.**

We can think of attention as the set of processes that enhance our perceptions and processing of some information over others. Like a spotlight, attention helps us focus on some stimuli in preference to others<sup>1</sup>. It works in two ways: by helping us to filter information “top-down” depending on things we are interested in or motivate us; and “bottom-up” based on the perceptual properties of the information itself, like movement or colour, novelty or surprise.

In capturing attention, emotional stimuli take priority over neutral stimuli – we notice an angry or happy face quicker than a neutral face.

Emotional content creates attention engagement at an automatic level initially: *sustained engagement* reflects both the impact of these initial emotional stimuli (attention salience) and relevance to an individual's

personal goals and motivations (memory salience). Linking the two together should produce enduring benefits to brand communications.

But context is key. If I am busy doing something on my phone or computer like banking or shopping, I am less likely to pay attention to emotional stimuli than if I am doing something that doesn't require so much cognitive effort. Alternatively, when watching TV, I may be in the ideal state to pay attention to emotional stimuli.

So, emotional content that is attention-grabbing and relevant can help an ad to achieve sustained engagement, but this can be reduced if other tasks are taking place at the same time.

There is also some evidence that attention to emotional stimuli reduces the resources available for cognitive processing<sup>2</sup>. In advertising this means that we may pay less attention to the branding, messages or persuasive elements of an ad if we are focused on the story.

## HOW DOES EMOTION INFLUENCE MEMORY?

Emotional arousal (response to an emotional stimulus) undoubtedly attracts some of our brain's resources to facilitate encoding into memory. Evidence has shown, however, that this arousal leads to selective effects on memory.

Emotional stimuli increase the likelihood of some components of an event being remembered. These are often related to how the event made people feel, rather than the actual details around the event<sup>3</sup>. As an example, supporters of a particular football team will remember a key match they won against a rival in a different way from those on the losing side. The victorious supporters, happy that their team won, remember the overall experience more than the details. Those on the losing side will most likely remember more of the specific detail and less of the overall feeling of the game.

This means the way we encode and subsequently retrieve memories of emotional events depends not only on the direction and intensity of arousal, but also on our interests and motivations going in.

## WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR “EMOTIONAL ADVERTISING”?

This brings us back to the idea of branding as a heuristic. Emotional stimuli can indeed attract more of our brain's resources to pay attention to, and aid the encoding of, advertising into memory. The challenge is to strike the right balance in the way memories are encoded and the way in which they are subsequently retrieved.

When we test advertising, we measure both active and passive aspects of attention and brand impact. By showing the advertisement in a distracted media environment we do not force highly focused attention. Separating measures of general attention and brand recognition also checks that a balance has been achieved. Facial coding enables us to assess exactly where emotionally intense moments, both positive and negative, optimise longer-term engagement and attention, increasing the likelihood of adding to that vital mental network.



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**#REALISRARE:**  
Runaways

## WHAT ABOUT THE DIAMONDS? #REALISRARE #REALISADIAMOND

Coming back to the new campaign by the Diamond Producers Association, it ticks many of the right boxes. It shows real people in real relationships. It includes subtle but consistent cues linking special moments to diamonds. It remains to be seen whether or not the new theme will become as iconic as the last, or if emotion alone can overcome the more general

trust and fashion issues facing the diamond industry.

For other brands the implications are clear. Capturing people's attention and making sure your emotional advertising is both encoded and retrieved as you would like requires more than a good story with moments of intensity.

## IN SUMMARY

**Emotion-based advertising can be highly effective but must work within a strong and consistent brand framework.**

- Brands need to have a range of distinctive iconography or assets that are consistent, engaging and understood so that they reinforce the stories and emotional stimuli in advertising.

- Ensure that emotion-based advertising links the brand through association with the cues – needs, functions, situations, sounds, sights or smells – that are most relevant in the key moments.

- Effective use of emotion means having stories that are relevant to people's motivations and goals, so that they associate the brand with the things that matter most to them.

### REFERENCES:

1. Greg Hajcak, Felicia Jackson et al., Emotion and Attention 2016
2. Schupp, Cuthbert, Bradley and Birmbauer. 1997
3. Phelps and Sharot, 2008