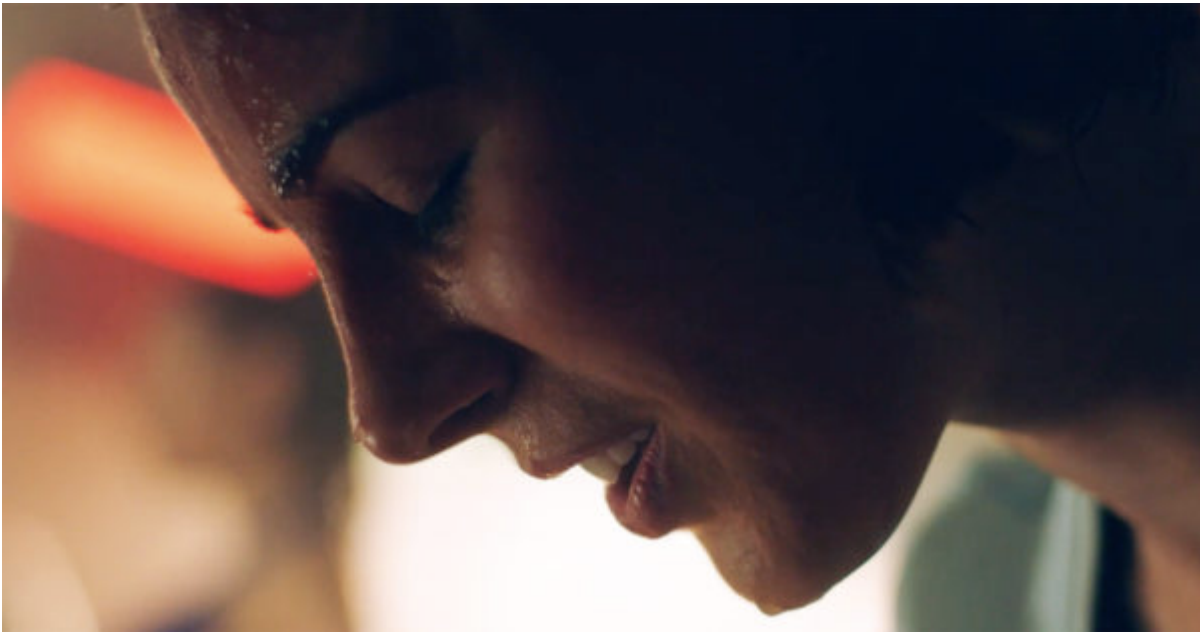


Fear, Then Calm Were Top-Performing Emotions in Social Ads for First Stretch of Lockdown



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16 hours ago
Key insights:

- Other reports have noticed similar phases in how people are adjusting to quarantine life.
- Many brands are still unsure of how to strike the right tonal balance around the pandemic.

Social media users cycled through various stages of acceptance as quarantine realities started to set in last month, or at least that seems to be one takeaway from a new VidMob report that tracks the performance of various creative elements in social ads throughout lockdown measures taken to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

The analytics firm first registered an abnormal spike in entertainment and gaming ads centered on fear, with war and

destruction being a common theme. Between mid-February and mid-March, ads determined to have this tone saw a 161% lift in view-through rate as compared to the average of other emotional tags the system uses. That was followed by a similarly sized jump in performance—148%—for ads deemed to have a calm tone through early April.

Fitness and prominent interior design— such as furniture, fireplaces and sofas—also proved to be popular visual elements at various points in the period analyzed, with 414% and 287% jumps respectively. More emotionally affecting ads also performed better on the whole than normally expected.

“The impetus for the study itself was that we were starting to see some really interesting trends that broke through kind of what we typically see,” said Stephanie Bohn, VidMob’s global chief brand officer. “It was kind of like building the plane while it’s flying because it was all happening in the moment.”

VidMob’s computer vision analysis encompassed 37,000 ads that ran on Facebook and Instagram between Jan. 13 and April 4. The data is divided loosely into three periods based on distinct shifts in the trends taking place: early COVID-19, outbreak and lockdown.

It’s not the first firm to notice big swings in creative tastes as marketers and consumers struggle to adjust to a new quarantine-constrained lifestyle. A previous report last month found that images of human contact in social media ads had already dropped off drastically as of late March. And with average commuting hours way down and more demand for escapism, the types of podcasts people are downloading are also changing in phases, another metrics firm found.

“I think brands are still feeling overwhelmed,” Bohn said. “What do you say? What is culturally on point? What is appropriate? When is humor acceptable? Brands are very

confused, naturally, on how to be part of the conversation and not feel sinister about it or weird or feel tone deaf. It's a very, very fine line."

While fear and angst aren't words one commonly associates with successful brand-building, Bohn said there is a way to work these themes into marketing while still being sensitive to the viewer's mental health and not coming off as fear-mongering.

"It's a sign of the times," she said. "I think brands shouldn't prey on our fears of course. They need to be true to their brand, and I think most brands want to be seen as a source of comfort and inspiration and hope and not be reenforcing negative feelings. But understanding what feels tonally relevant is really important for brands."

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