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## Emotional Marketing: Using Social Taboos, Embarrassment and Fear

Emotions drive human behavior as much or even more than rationality. And, marketers play on these human emotions in order to sell more of their product or get a price premium. Thus, consumers are targeted with many advertisements that evoke different emotions such as “happiness” (Coca Cola: “Open a Coke, open happiness”),<sup>1</sup> or “hope” (Tide’s Loads of Hope campaign; Barack Obama Hope poster).<sup>2,3</sup> These campaigns arouse positive emotions and make people feel good.

But, ads and marketing tactics in general can also be designed to evoke negative emotions. This case focuses on the use of certain negative emotions by marketers—specifically embarrassment, fear, and guilt—to increase the money spent by customers for their product.

Emotional marketing is defined by the case author as “marketing that taps into human emotions to boost sales and command higher prices.” Two different contexts of emotional marketing are presented in this case: one plays on embarrassment, and another makes use of fear and guilt.

### Context 1: Social Taboos and Embarrassment—Beyond

Beyond is a United Kingdom (U.K.) company offering funeral price comparisons. In July 2018, Beyond released an ad (see **Figure 1**) in London media. It also intended for the ad to appear in the London Underground (rapid transit), but Transport for London (TFL) rejected the ad, saying it would cause “serious and widespread offence.” Beyond claimed its edgy ad was an effort to start a national conversation about death and funeral costs.<sup>4</sup>

*(Author’s Note: This case includes discussion of social taboos and, as such, may upset the sensibilities of some students, although this is not the author’s intention. Please note, however, that the phenomenon of social taboos creating such sensibility is precisely the basis of higher prices and the learning value of this case.)*

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