

# A splash of thought

## SENSORY-EMOTIONAL PATTERNS

### Try this

One challenge with 'Affective Research' is that consumers very frequently look to provide rational answers and explanations for their actions and choices, hence masking their real motives. When next out choosing a café or place to eat, try to picture yourself half way through the meal. From the picture in your mind, what senses and associations are being triggered? What is your feeling and mood at this point? What are the memories you are recreating? So are you rationally buying a meal, or are you buying something else?

What is it that makes using a Dyson different from using a Hoover? What is the difference between Heineken and Carlsberg? When we make choices and decisions, many of the elements behind the decision are hidden—not just to the researcher, but often to the consumer as well. Whilst research techniques such as conjoint analysis are very good at understanding the hidden elements of rational decision making, many of our decisions are *affective* (emotional) in nature and are less easy to determine.

In fact there is much evidence that when we respond to a stimulus we feel first and think later. In sports like tennis if we had to actively think about each shot we wouldn't have time to react to the ball coming towards us. The same is true of

language. A beginner cognitively thinks about each word and so pronunciation is not fluent—a native speaker doesn't even think about it. It just flows.

In these cases, a stimulus triggers a cascade of patterns in our heads which we respond to with feelings and actions before thought gets in the way. This happens so quickly that we are often not consciously aware of how we do something.

However, understanding these patterns and emotional content can be the essence in understanding why we make choices, particularly where there is little apparent functional difference between products.

The way a stimulus triggers our senses (and there are more than just the 5 traditional senses in-



Feel the world

involved) affects how we feel and our perception of a product or a brand.

To understand what is really happening research has to get at more than cognitive post-rationalisation of our actions. In this way we can identify that in sensory-emotional terms, for many people a Dyson stirs the same feelings as they get from rewards associated with toys as children and is a completely different emotional product to the

### Did you know?

- Although we talk of five senses, we actually have more. There are many sub-senses that tell us about our place in the world and include a sense of location, time, mood and occasion among others

## SHOPPING FOR MOODS

On a dull dreary grey winter's afternoon have you ever just popped into your local travel agent just to look at some brochures to brighten your mood? Or perhaps you've treated yourself to few expensive chocolates to lift you after an argument? For many, many products, particularly cosmetics, sweets and drinks, the choice we make is not about the functional attributes of the product, but the

mood that the product promises to instill on consumption. In modern society we shop not particularly for things to consume because we need them, but for things to affect our how we feel—in other words we buy moods.

What is more interesting is that we predict and anticipate our moods all the time, particularly when shopping. A shopping basket will

contain particular breakfast cereal to pick us up in the morning, treats for the evening, and food that will reflect our mood needs during the week—sunny foods like salad in the summer or heavier 'comfort' foods for the winter. Understanding the moods we shop for and the mood journeys we look for during shopping and consumption gives vital clues to improving the way we market to consumers.

## MORE EFFECTIVE MARKETING



How do you optimize the marketing mix?

The rate of technological change has had dramatic effect on the range and choice of marketing and promotional options. Setting the marketing mix is no longer just about choosing where to place adverts—increasingly marketing managers jobs are optimizing their budget against a complex range of media, technology and analysis. Not only this, but a wide range of other departments now have a vested interest in who the customer is and what the customer thinks—from operations managing product or service quality, to IT managing customer facing technologies, to the finance department focusing on

customer lifetime value or other measures of customer profitability such as customer equity.

The effect is that as more people grab a piece of the customer, marketing budgets come under ever closer scrutiny. The question is no longer what advertising to do, but whether to spend money with the marketing department on promotions or with the IT department on technology for the call centre.

For the business, to optimize its resources it needs to be able to measure the impact of these financial decisions on the profitability of its end customers. For instance in

some companies if they can achieve the same market impact but with 10% less marketing spend, the impact can be literally millions on the profit line.

So increasingly the important marketing question is not how big a budget you have, but the return you make on that budget. If your competitor is achieving £6 of sales for each £1 of marketing spend and you are only achieving £5, shouldn't you know why this is happening? Do you actually know how your marketing will impact on customer choices before you spend the money, or is it all hit and hope?

## REWARDS NOT BENEFITS

**“People are very willing to pay much more for emotional rewards than for product benefits”**

One of the classic sales techniques when promoting products is to talk about benefits not features. So the benefit of a feature like acceleration on a motorbike might be that it helps you overtake more quickly and so more safely.

But, and lets be honest about this, the real reason why acceleration appeals has much more to do with the emotional reward from the feelings and sensations that come

from blipping the throttle—from the noise of the engine, to the pull on the arms, to the satisfaction of beating a car off the mark. The focus on rationalising features into benefits can get to the point that you have so many benefits that you forget one of the real reasons why people buy—the emotional reward.

To put this another way, you do not buy a Ferrari because its high top speed will get you from Frank-

furt to Cologne faster than other cars. You buy it for the emotional reward—the image of driving through Provence down to Monte Carlo, the admiring looks and the way it makes you feel.

Many people are very willing to pay much more for these types of emotional reward than for pure features and benefits. For instance Chanel and Dior offer customers much more than simply liquids to make you smell nice.

[dobney.com](http://dobney.com) is a market research and intelligence consultancy based in Bath.

Formed in 2000, we provide a full range of market information services both off and on-line, from focus groups and depth interviews to quantitative projects, pricing, trade-offs and desk research, web-applications and consultancy.

Our clients range from blue chip companies working on specific research projects, to smaller pre-IPO companies who value our wider business perspective and the quality of our insight

[dobney.com](http://dobney.com)

67 Minster Way  
Bath  
BA2 6RJ

Phone: 01225 335 085  
Email: [enquiries@dobney.com](mailto:enquiries@dobney.com)