

## DO EMOTIONS SELL? OF COURSE THEY DO!

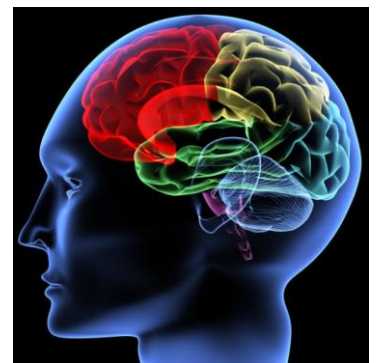
**We buy the sizzle, not the bacon. We buy the promise, not the perfume. We buy the lifestyle, not the house.**

The vast majority of people buy based on emotion, not logic. They decide to buy because “it feels right,” then use logic to justify the decision to themselves. Therefore, the better you are at making an emotional connection between the prospect and whatever you're selling, the easier you'll find it to close sales.

### Rational and Emotional Decision-Making Factors

Survey analysis at MEG incorporates many facets from the discipline of clinical psychology (i.e., how the mind works as it relates to the purchase and usage of specific products and services). Psychology provides the foundation for interpreting and acting on research findings. For example, we know that most purchase decisions have both a **rational and emotional component**. The rational component is usually either resource related (e.g., money or time) or a rationalization. The emotional component, which is often the dominant influence, is much harder to uncover. The buyer's decision-making process typically has four parts:

1. Do I want it? (an emotional reaction)
2. Can I afford it? (a rational resource decision)
3. Am I qualified to make a purchase decision? (a desire not to make a mistake or look foolish)
4. Can I justify it? (a need to rationalize)



**Most buyer behavior does not involve a conscious decision-making process.** Instead, mental habits and emotional reactions guide consumers. Because most buying behavior is based on emotion, rather than logic, marketing and positioning are essential.

## Six Emotions That Make Customers Buy

Customers make purchasing decisions because they have carefully considered a set of good information, right? **Wrong.** Customers make decisions at the gut level.

Buying decisions are nearly always the result of a change in the buyer's emotional state. While information may help change that emotional state, it's the emotion that's key, not the information.

Buying decisions stem from the interplay of six emotions:

1. **Greed.** "If I make a decision now, I'll be rewarded."
2. **Fear.** "If I don't make a decision now, I'm toast."
3. **Altruism.** "If I make a decision now, I'll help others."
4. **Envy.** "If I don't make a decision now, my competition will win."
5. **Pride.** "If I make a decision now, I'll look smart."
6. **Shame.** "If I don't make a decision now, I'll look stupid."



A successful sales approach either creates or augments one or more of these emotions. When enough of these emotions are present the change occurs within the buyer's emotional state and a purchase decision becomes inevitable.

## Understand Your Customers' Beliefs

However, changes in emotional state can only be accomplished when the marketing approach takes into account the customers' belief system. It is this belief system that determines how each emotion plays out. If you're going to create the emotions that drive decision-making, you need to know, not just the prospects' current emotional state, but also the beliefs that provide a foundation for their emotions.

**And that means research.** The more thoroughly you research your target market, the more likely you'll be to understand their current belief set and the better you'll marshal emotions to change that state.

## Three Emotions that Motivate People

Take a moment and recall a great sales experience whether you were the customer or the client. What made it great and what did you feel as you interacted with the person providing the product or service? More than likely, you felt the three emotions, universal to human experience that people need in order to feel motivated to do business with someone:

### 1. Trust

People feel they can depend on you — that you mean what you say and you'll do what you say.

### 2. Confidence

They feel you have the goods, the know-how, the competence, and expertise to meet their needs.

### 3. A Feeling of Empathy

They feel you have their interests at heart and that you'll take care of them throughout the transaction and beyond.

## Two Potential Approaches for Emotional Selling

There are two potential approaches for emotional selling; the positive approach and the negative one.

The **negative approach** is far more commonly used by salespeople. Essentially, it means presenting your product as a cure or prevention for the prospect's biggest pain. A **positive approach**, on the other hand, presents the product or service as something that will cause good things to happen in the future.



## Emotional versus Logical Selling

Psychologists have found that emotions sell. We buy for emotional reasons, falling back on logic only when we want to tell our friends about the purchase, feel better about it, or explain why the credit card took such a hit last month.

Yet most of marketing isn't emotional at all. Once we remove all the hype, we're left with pure benefits and features, as if a logical sales pitch is all that's needed to convince and convert our market. **Where's the drama? Where's the story? Where's the emotional hook that makes people want your product?** If we don't have these you don't get their business.

People are busy. They don't have the attention span. They don't have time to stick with a boring sales presentation. Details are tiresome. Besides, they hate being sold to. So without at least a touch of emotion, you're not likely to get people watching or reading ... and certainly not buying.

What REALLY drives people to do business with you? You might think it's your expertise, product knowledge, great service, or even competitive pricing. Sure, all these factors are important, but in today's crowded marketplace they are not enough to distinguish you from the others who offer the same products or services as you.

Regardless of what you're selling, whether its products, services or advice, people buy based on emotions. They decide to buy when they experience certain emotions about a product or service AND the organization offering it. Those who put this distinction into action consistently produce excellent results.

On the other hand, those who don't know how to evoke emotions in the selling process constantly struggle with inconsistent or mediocre sales. Your prospects may analyze the quality of your product, service, or price, but in the end, emotions are the dynamic that motivates them to decide whether to do business with you.

If you already have great products and services and you want to take your sales to their true potential, you must "sell the feeling." Most salespeople are aware that buyers are driven by emotions, **but very few know how to evoke the right emotions intentionally.**



## Inside the Consumer's Mind

Most people believe that the choices they make result from a rational analysis of available alternatives. In reality emotions greatly influence and, in many cases, even determine our decisions. In his book, Descartes Error, Antonio Damasio, Professor of Neuroscience at the University of Southern California, argues that **“emotion is a necessary ingredient to almost all decisions.”** When we are confronted with a decision, emotions from previous, related experiences affix values to the options we are considering.

These emotions create preferences which lead to decisions. Damasio's view is based on his studies of people whose connections between the “thinking” and “emotional” areas of the brain had been damaged. They were capable of rationally processing information about alternative choices; but were unable to make decisions because they lacked any sense of how they felt about the options.

### The influential role of emotion in consumer behavior is well documented:

- fMRI<sup>1</sup> neuro-imagery shows that when evaluating brands, consumers primarily use emotions (personal emotions and experiences) rather than information (brand attributes, features, and facts).
- Advertising research<sup>2</sup> reveals that emotional responses to an ad have a far greater influence on a consumer's reported intent to buy a product than does the ad's content – by a factor of 3-to-1 for television commercials and 2-to-1 for print ads.
- Research has concluded that the emotion of “likeability” is the measure most predictive of whether an advertisement will increase a brand's sales.
- Studies show that positive emotions toward a brand have far greater influence on consumer loyalty than trust and other judgments which are based on a brand's attributes.

**Emotions are the primary reason why buyers prefer brand name products.**<sup>3</sup> After all, many of the products we buy are available as generic and store brands with the same ingredients and at cheaper prices. Why do we decide to pay more for brand name products?

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<sup>1</sup> Functional magnetic resonance imaging or functional MRI (fMRI) is a functional neuroimaging procedure using MRI technology that measures brain activity by detecting associated changes in blood flow. This technique relies on the fact that cerebral blood flow and neuronal activation are coupled. When an area of the brain is in use, blood flow to that region also increases. (Wikipedia)

<sup>2</sup> Conducted by the Advertising Research Foundation.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

A nationally advertised brand has power in the marketplace because it creates an emotional connection to the consumer.<sup>4</sup> A brand is nothing more than a mental representation of a product in the consumer's mind. **If the representation consists only of the product's attributes, features, and other information, there are no emotional links to influence consumer preference and action and your product or service is only a COMMODITY.** The richer the emotional content of a brand's mental representation, the more likely the consumer will be a loyal user.



While emotion can be communicated effectively in a print ad or television commercial, there are other important components of a brand which have emotional dimensions. For example: rich and powerful mental representations of a brand include its personality. Research reveals that consumers perceive the same type of personality characteristics in brands as they do in other people. And just like with people, they are attracted to some personality types more than others – attractions which are emotion-based, not rational.

**Brand personality<sup>5</sup>** is communicated by marketers through packaging, visual imagery, and the types of words used to describe the brand. Another important foundation for a brand's emotions can be found in its "narrative" – the story that communicates "who" it is, what it means to the consumer, and why the consumer should care. This narrative is the basis for brand advertising and promotion.

For consumers, perhaps **the most important characteristic of emotions is that they push them toward action.** In response to an emotion, humans are compelled to do something. In a physical confrontation, fear forces us to choose between the "fight or flight" syndrome to insure our self-preservation. For example, in our daily social confrontations, insecurity may cause us to buy the latest iPhone to support our positive self-identity.

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<sup>4</sup> "A great brand raises the bar – it adds a greater sense of purpose to the experience, whether it's the challenge to do your best in sports and fitness, or the affirmation that the cup of coffee you're drinking really matters." – Howard Schultz (President, CEO, and Chairman of Starbucks)

<sup>5</sup> An expression of the fundamental core values and characteristics of a brand, described and experienced as human personality traits, e.g., friendly, intelligent, innovative etc. It is an expression of the relationship between the consumer and the brand.  
<http://www.esomar.org/index.php/glossary-b.html>



Over time, marketers have developed theories about why consumers buy. Most of these err by viewing the consumer through the lens of the product. Marketers start with the features and benefits of a product and conduct consumer research to find matching needs and motivations. More recently, Internet and digital media companies added a new layer of suppositions to explain and predict consumer behavior. Their approach views the consumer through the lens of digital technology.

**However, they misinterpret data about the activity of online users as being a valid insight into the consumer's decision-making process.** Consumers do not have a Pavlovian response to products and to their marketing programs. Nor do the fundamentals of consumer behavior change to accommodate the latest innovation in digital technology.

An understanding of consumer purchase behavior must be based on knowledge of human emotion and include the paramount influence that emotions have on decision-making. It all starts in the brain.

Emotions really lead us to buy certain brands for two important reasons:

1. We perceive them as being better for us.
2. They make a statement about us.

Almost everything we choose makes a statement about us, our homes, the kind of furniture we select, our friends, our clothes, even the charity we support. People give to a charity from the heart and not from the head. But we are largely motivated by what makes us feel good, especially when it comes to our purchasing decisions.

To that end, many major corporations have begun to take special interest in how understanding the human brain can help them better understand consumers. Enter a nascent but fast-growing field called **neuromarketing**, which uses brain-tracking tools to determine why we prefer some products over others.

“People are fairly good at expressing what they want, what they like, or even how much they will pay for an item,” says Uma R. Karmarkar, Harvard Business School who sports Ph.D.’s in both marketing and neuroscience. “But they aren’t very good at accessing where that value comes from, or how and when it is influenced by factors like store displays or brands. Neuroscience can help us understand those hidden elements of the decision process.”



According to neuroscience research, **our brains are hardwired in a certain way**. The middle part of our brain is known as the limbic system, which controls basic intuitive functions such as fear, anger, love and hunger. This is where we make quick, instinctive decisions that are intended to keep us alive. Surrounding the mid-brain is our cerebral cortex, which in evolutionary terms is much newer. This is where we assign intelligence and logic to our emotional responses. The two parts of our brain work together, but in very specific sequence. Scientists have determined that, just like our prehistoric ancestors, we form an emotional response to what we see or hear before we begin to apply context and judgment. We rely on our mood, emotions and senses.

For marketers, it is important to understand how the emotional and logical functions of the brain ultimately guide purchase decisions. If marketers can't make an emotional connection with consumers first, it becomes nearly impossible to make a logical connection later.

### **Essentially, emotion is the gatekeeper to information.**

Most people don't like to acknowledge the role of emotion in purchase decisions. We tend to value decisions that are made after examining all the facts, eliminating all the possibilities and arriving at an indisputable conclusion. That may make us feel more comfortable, but in truth, we are still very much guided by our emotions.

Using neuroscience puts marketers at an extreme advantage, because now they have the ability to use all of our emotional senses. Typically, we think we buy simply for joy or pleasure. But in actuality, the biggest emotion that marketers utilize is fear. **FEAR** is the most accessible and important emotion we have as a means of survival. Marketers do this by claiming that problems will be encountered if you do not buy their products. **GUILT** is another huge emotion that marketers play on — you may feel guilty for not being home with your kids very often, but you do the best you can by filling that void of absence with toys or electronics. **PRIDE** is another big one because it gives everyone the mindset that they “deserve” the best.

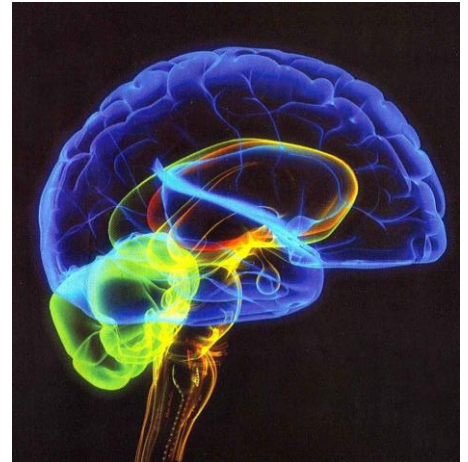




Over the last decade, several of the findings of various science disciplines – particularly Behavioral Economics — have discovered some key things.

1. Decision-making is largely an irrational act.
2. People are shockingly bad at predicting their own behavior.
3. Emotions play a key role in decision-making.

These findings led researchers to begin questioning and testing how people made decisions. One startling and particularly relevant discovery was that **even when people wanted to be honest in predicting their behavior they were often wrong**, thus shedding doubt on the efficacy of a number of market research interviewing techniques.



Much of this comes down to what Behavioral Economist Dan Ariely refers to as our “cognitive limitations.” We humans are much less rational than we like to believe, and even when marketers and businesses “get” that the way to reach people is to hook their emotions, their own cognitive limitations can get in the way of nailing down the most effective strategy.