Emotional cues that work magic on customers

The influence of emotions on consumer decision making is much more nuanced and complex than many are aware.

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“Let’s not forget that the little emotions are the great captains of our lives and we obey them without realizing it.” Though Vincent Van Gogh never achieved fame for his marketing wisdom, this quote by him shows that he certainly grasped a central truth in the 19th century that appears to be eluding many business people today.

Marketers have long understood that emotions play an important role in consumer decision making: the impulse buy is a classic example.

Yet the explosion of new media, with their multiple new points and channels of engagement, seems to be blinding companies to some timeless truths. As more and more consumers are turning to Twitter and Facebook either to vent their rage or share their likes, businesses seem to think that their primary task now is to respond to this real-time barrage of constantly connected consumer information – forgetting that some things, like emotional fickleness, never change.

Emotions permeate our day-to-day lives, though they are often camouflaged by what appear

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on the surface to be quite reasonable choices, actions or circumstances. Just how and when emotions impact our decisions – from shopping preferences to investment decisions – continues to surprise and confound many managers.

The more we become aware of just how malleable consumer decision making can be, the more we can improve consumers' overall sense of well-being and satisfaction with the products and services we offer. Learning how to better understand our customers, and taking measures to provide them with a positive emotional state, can be a powerful way of gaining customer loyalty and promoting your brand.

In this article, we examine five key areas in which emotions affect the decision-making process, based on extensive research in the field of behavioral marketing. Highlighting these lessons will help managers tailor their own act to give better prompts and get the desired response from emotionally charged audiences.

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