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But how do you really feel? An approach to measuring consumer emotions

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Humans have two distinct decision-making processes. One is slow, descriptive and logical. The other is fast, based on experiences and analog in nature. The latter, of course, is our emotion system. In most cases, your emotion system has the stronger influence.

In very simple terms, emotion's analog system works by association and cover a broad range. Consider a few that are vitally important to marketing: mental arousal (excitement); affinity for novelty (curiosity, surprise); and nagging self-doubt (uncertainty, insecurity). These emotions are as important as any benefits that a marketer can promise. To understand the true potential of a product or marketing campaign, consumers' entire range of emotions must be understood.

With many products, consumers feel conflicting emotions. One conflict we often see is between hope and doubt. For example, consumers may feel hopeful and optimistic about the benefits of an OTC health care product and, at the same time, feel skepticism or uncertainty about whether it will really work as claimed. Another frequent example of conflicted emotions is pleasure and shame. Just imagine facing a thick slice of rich chocolate cake with a fudge center.

It's in the area of conflicted emotion that marketers have great opportunities to make a difference. Consumers with

conflicted feelings often do not take action - they can't decide or they procrastinate. By understanding the underlying emotional triggers and removing the elements associated with negative emotions, marketers can change the balance towards positive emotions and greatly activate purchase behavior.

Several key requirements

Understanding consumers' emotions is vital. However, researching emotion is not simple. Care must be taken to successfully gain a true read of consumers' feelings. To this end, we believe emotion research methodologies must meet several key requirements.

The most important is that a methodology must elicit and make consumers aware of their subconscious emotions. While a few emotions will never be experienced on a conscious level, most emotions are subconscious to the extent we simply don't pay conscious attention to them. We continuously feel emotions but for most, we don't consciously spend a few seconds to acknowledge them. Given an opportunity to pause and reflect, most emotions that we feel are easily recognized. A good methodology must allow consumers an opportunity to reflect, recognize their feelings and draw as much of the subconscious into the conscious.

The use of standard survey questions to detect emotions poses some challenges. One challenge is not to inadvertently trigger emotions that are not associated with the subject or stimulus being tested. Simply asking about an emotion can cause respondents to feel that emotion. Asking a respondent how strongly they feel unsure about a concept will cause the respondent to believe that they feel unsure. Through unintended priming, an emotion that may not be very important

can suddenly become important.

Another challenge is not to overlook any important emotions. There are literally thousands of descriptions of emotions in the English language, many of them subtly different. It is difficult to construct a set of questions that comprehensively covers a large number of potential emotions. Though it's important to keep questionnaires short in order to minimize respondent fatigue, doing so makes it that much easier to miss subtle-but-important distinctions.

A freewheeling conversation

At Communispace, we use a methodology called the Emotion Centric Explorer (EC Explorer) that is designed to use free association to enable respondents to reflect, recognize and describe their feelings without constraint or judgment. Like a freewheeling conversation with a psychotherapist, what respondents choose to talk about and how they talk about it can provide deep insight into their emotional state and underlying beliefs.

After a brief priming exercise in which we transition participants into a more reflective frame of mind, EC Explorer starts by showing respondents a stimulus (the test subject) and asks a simple question: How does it make you feel? Respondents will consciously and subconsciously conjure up mental images, memories, biases and innate references evoked by the stimulus. Each respondent provides six words that describe how they feel. What they provide are typically a mix of conscious and subconscious feelings that are most strongly associated with the test subject.

We then ask respondents to write a short sentence that describes what immediately comes to mind when they reflect on each of the feelings they had inputted, to illuminate the context, perceptions and beliefs associated with each feeling and - by extension - with the test subject. For example, we may find that the feeling of serenity is frequently associated with some comment about the product's scent. Or a feeling of pride is rooted in some notion of not being selfish and "doing the right thing." The free-association verbatims are valuable in connecting respondent emotions to tangible elements that can be addressed.

To analyze the unconstrained responses, we use a framework that categorizes emotions into 20 groups, each embodying up to several hundred unique emotions that have common characteristics or behavior tendencies. For example, the group of emotions called affection encompasses emotions associated with an individual's perceptions of how others perceive or behave towards them (e.g., feeling loved, appreciated, needed, wanted or cherished). Using a proprietary linguistic algorithm, respondents' feeling words can be automatically organized into this framework for analysis.

EC Explorer's Engagement Potential analysis quantifies respondents' reactions along four dimensions of emotional drivers and barriers which foreshadow consumers' future behavior. The dimensions are:

- Attention and interest. These are emotions that suggest whether consumers are aroused physically or mentally. For

example, on the positive side, feeling excited and curious, while on the negative side, feeling bored and indifferent.

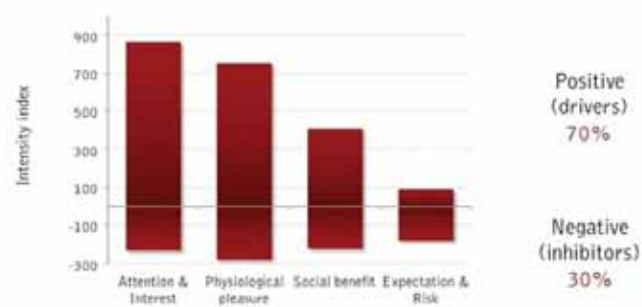
- Physiological pleasure. These are emotions that align with pleasures such as a feeling of peaceful, happy, safe and hedonically fulfilled. Examples on the negative side are emotional or physical pain such as feeling stressed, anxious, fearful or angry.
- Social benefits. These emotions relate to how a person feels about their social standing. On the positive side, feeling loved, nurturing or proud are examples. On the negative side, feeling shunned, embarrassed or guilty.
- Expectation and risk. These emotions are associated with a person's intuitive expectations. For example, feeling hopeful or optimistic, versus feeling doubt or despair.

Example 1: Ready-to-bake flan

In one project, we asked approximately 100 Communispace community members how the concept of ready-to-bake flan makes them feel and, through these emotions, illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of the concept.

For the ready-to-bake flan concept, the Engagement Potential provided some key insights (Figure 1).

Figure 1



- The concept evokes strong excitement and interest, projecting good potential to grab attention and be noticed in the marketplace.
- The major benefit is hedonic pleasure. The emotional reward comes from the pleasures of eating and less from the easy-to-make convenience aspects of the concept.
- There are moderate social benefits. Ready-to-bake made respondents feel good about themselves, primarily about enhancing their culinary abilities and feeling sophisticated. However, this concept is not strongly driven by social benefits.
- There are a moderate amount of negative expectations - mostly doubt about how it will taste.
- While the predominant emotions are positive, ready-to-bake flan evoked significant negative emotions. More prominent emotions include feeling physically uncomfortable (i.e., makes me feel ill) and guilt.

Analysis of the free-association verbatims further confirmed that expectation of taste is the most important driver of emotions. Respondents who intuitively envisioned the product to

taste great felt more joy, excitement and curiosity - emotions that will enhance trial. Respondents' intuitive expectations spanned a range of perceptions. The frequencies of verbatims across this range are shown in Figure 2. Clearly the 11 percent who are uncertain but neutral represent an opportunity to increase the appeal of the concept.

Figure 2



Analysis of emotions and free-association verbatims provided other insights:

- A sizable percent of respondents are not familiar with flan or have never tasted flan. These consumers will need more information to drive their expectations for taste.
- For respondents who are familiar with it, there is about an equal percentage of those who love it and those who hate it. This may suggest future product satisfaction levels.
- While this ready-to-bake flan concept is not driven by social factors, there are perceptions that flan is somewhat sophisticated. The tone of how this product is positioned should align with this perception.
- There were not strong associations of flan with Mexican or Latin American culture. The perception of ethnic food was not evoked and not an issue.
- Price is not a major factor in the purchase decision.

This ready-to-bake flan concept illustrates how understanding of emotions lead to deep insights on the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. While a typical purchase intent score can provide assessment of the market potential of a new product, consumers' underlying emotional responses illuminate their perceptions and beliefs that will drive whether they will really purchase or not purchase.

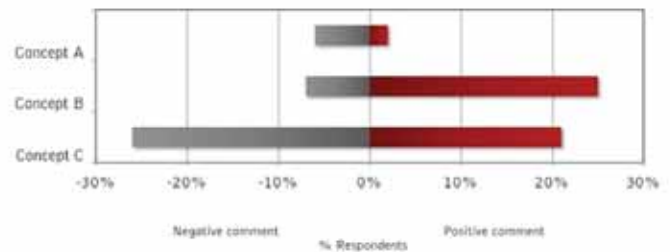
Example 2: Medical condition

EC Explorer's quantitative abilities also provide insight into differences between consumer segments. In another study, we looked at the emotions associated with a medical condition (disguised to protect confidential information). Figure 3 is an example of differences between men and women. Men clearly harbor fewer negative emotions about their condition and are less anxious/more accepting of their situation. These emotional differences illustrate the differences in underlying need and their potential to accept the new product concept that addresses this medical condition.

Example 3: Outdoor performance apparel

Free association illuminates what's truly important for con-

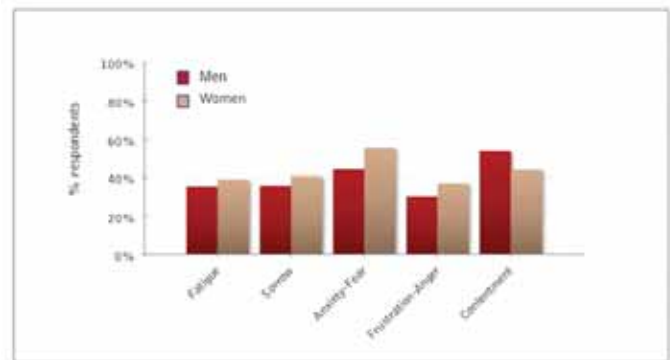
Figure 3



sumers. In a study of outdoor performance apparel, the importance of style can be uncovered without explicitly asking about it. The tested concepts/prototypes were heavy on the rational performance functions (i.e., warmth, moisture-wicking, flexibility, etc.), which results in a specific look and feel that consumers perceive as "style." How much of the appeal for a concept is driven by the functional benefits and how much is driven by the particular style conveyed by the prototype? Through free association on their emotions, we were able to determine how much of their appeal for a concept/prototype was driven by styling.

In Figure 4, it's clear style is not important for Concept A. In the free association verbatim, the frequency of comments about style is very low - there were very few associations of emotions with style. For Concept B, styling is more important and generated more frequent comments. The verbatim comments were also generally positive. Concept C is extremely polarizing and style is germane to respondents' emotional reaction.

Figure 4



Decisions and behavior

Emotions drive decisions and behavior. Understanding consumers' underlying emotional reaction to a product concept or marketing element is vital to understanding its true strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. The intimacy and continuity enabled by small, private insight communities can create a trusting and thoughtful environment in which consumers can reflect on their feelings and experiences. Uncovering consumers' conscious and subconscious emotional reactions and illuminating the perceptions and beliefs that there is a magical combination that enables researchers to uncover how consumers really feel. | Q