

The Marketing Power of Emotion

John O'Shaughnessy
Nicholas Jackson O'Shaughnessy

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Preface

We all acknowledge the pervasiveness of emotion in our lives, and shopping is no exception. What has been missing is a systematic exposition of the role played by emotion in consumer behavior. Where there have been books on the subject, the concept of emotion has been regarded as unproblematic, with no model proposed that explains how and in what ways emotion operates. This book aims to fill the gap. This is helped by the recent increased interest in the subject in psychology, neuroscience, and philosophy. In fact, it can be said that emotion is now a hot topic. The renaissance of interest in emotion has endured beyond the usual quarantine period for academic fads and fashions. In marketing, there is a large and growing body of academics who are anxious to move away from the view of the highly rational consumer that saturates the marketing literature and to formally concede that the calculating-machine model of the consumer is a myth.

In the *practice* of marketing (as opposed, in general, to academic texts on marketing) there seems to be a roughly equal

split between those who perceive consumers as mainly emotional and those whose perspective of the consumer is based on something approximating the rational choice model of the economist. Perhaps this distinction is commonly used in thinking about other peoples and nations. Plato and his fellow Athenians regarded Ionians as emotional, only concerned with the appearance of things. In contrast, the Athenians had an image of themselves as highly rational, which automatically proclaimed their superiority! There is a danger in treating consumers as purely rational, focused solely on technical and economic criteria, and so perceiving them as bundles of fixed wants that marketing sets out to identify, filter, map, and satisfy. The consumer's motivational capacities are made up not only of a set of wants and needs but also the capacity to imagine, a general yearning for novelty as well as stability, and a disposition to be moved by the emotional resonance of events. Consumers have an underlying appetite for an infinite number of products to meet latent wants. The purely rational model presupposes that consumers are not influenced by either the way products are presented or the emotional context of buying.

The argument of this book is that emotion is always a factor in decision-making and that rationality will always be invaded by emotional influences. This book is about the significance of emotion in marketing and consumer experience. It sees consumer experience as emotion-drenched; no experience is completely empty of emotion, and no pure rationality is ever at work. Emotion is never a semidetached adjunct to consumer processes.

There are two audiences for this book, the managerial and the academic, and we have sought an exposition that is intelligible and meaningful to both. For professionals in consumer marketing, this work offers something fresh in delineating the power of emotion in marketing, enabling practitioners to better interpret the perplexing surfaces of consumer behavior by understanding emotional influences. Academics in marketing are all too aware of the absence of any systematic account of the role played by emotion in consumer behavior, an absence partly accounted for by the neglect of emotion in the mainstream approach to consumer psychology, namely, the information-processing approach of cognitive psychology. This is not surprising, given an approach that is intent on exploiting the metaphor of the mind as a computer; to place emotion onto such a metaphor would always be an illicit graft.

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The Marketing Power of Emotion

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The Scope of Emotion in Marketing

Marketing's Interest in Emotion

Marketing folklore suggests that emotion can stimulate buying interest, guide choices, arouse buying intentions, and influence future buying decisions. All these popular beliefs about the power of emotion have received research support.¹ Thoughts about buying are not listless mental acts. They can be exciting and can involve strong likes and dislikes, anxieties, and aspirations. Just think about the emotional component of buying a new car. Emotions intensify wants and desires and intensify motivation. Even ethical behavior can be suppressed because of a failure to generate the emotion needed to motivate moral action.

Emotion is not an aberrant element when making buying decisions but a necessary condition if decisions are not to be continually postponed. The emotional is so paired with making trade-offs in decision-making that it is impossible to identify situations where deliberated decisions do not have an emotional dimension.² This is true even in the hard sciences. As

Horgan says: "It has become a truism by now that scientists are not mere knowledge acquisition machines; they are guided by emotion and intuition as well as by cold reason and calculation."³

Elster dramatically sums up the importance of emotions as follows:

Emotions matter because if we did not have them nothing else would matter.

Creatures without emotion would have no reason for living, nor, for that matter, for committing suicide. Emotions are the stuff of life. . . . Emotions are the most important bond or glue that links us to others. . . . Objectively, emotions matter because many forms of human behavior would be unintelligible if we did not see them through the prism of emotion.⁴

Elster points out that the spending of public funds on museums, opera houses, sports facilities, and so on must, in a final analysis, be justified in terms of the emotional experiences they provide to the general public.

Emotions enter into all decision-making when trade-offs are made. Some academics forget this and view the consumer as an emotion-free calculating machine. Such a view has obviously no place in situations where the consumer acts simply on his or her feelings, but it is an impoverished view in any case. Many who do freely acknowledge the ubiquity of emotion can write nonetheless as if emotion were absent when it comes to buying. Writers on marketing seem to divide into supporters of Pascal (1623–1662)—"The heart has reasons that reason does not know"—and Descartes (1596–1650), who used only the method of mathematics and non-contradiction to establish truth. In other words, it is common to find writers in marketing focusing exclusively either on the rational or the emotional, though when it comes to buying, neither can be ignored.

When we make trade-offs in buying, such as car comfort for style, we are implicitly taking account of our *values* (whether aesthetic, hedonistic, moral, or economic). And behind these values lie emotions. When the blind Gloucester exclaims in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, "I see it feelingly," he is describing the experience of being blind but is also saying that his emotions have opened up and he has learned to be sensitive to others. It is our emotional experiences that most determine our system of values. These values reflect what we most seek to preserve or enhance, like freedom, justice, and survival, as well as less elevated concerns like preferring to be rich rather than poor, to be in control of life rather than feel at the mercy of events, to have high self-esteem rather than low self-esteem, and so on. Any gap between what we desire and actual reality has the potential for arousing our emotions. Thus people value having skill in

simple mathematics for survival and self-esteem, yet many have suffered emotionally over mathematics when young. One study of mathematics education comments on the consequence: "The extent to which the need to undertake even an apparently straightforward piece of mathematics could induce feelings of anxiety, helplessness, fear and even guilt in some of those interviewed was, perhaps, the most striking feature of the study."⁵ Negative emotions like this tie into values, and behind values are past emotional experiences that largely create the system of values in the first place.

The deepest concerns of the consumer arouse emotions, energize motivation, and act as guides to wants, and uphold values. Emotional arousal can arise from anything that deeply concerns us at the time. Thus no American could be other than emotionally aroused by the terrorist atrocity of September 11, 2001. This is because what happened concerned us deeply. And we can be moved by others showing concern for our concerns. Thus few would not be emotionally moved by this simple note attached to a bouquet outside the American Embassy in London: *To our best friends the Yanks. If you need help, just call.* The problem with ensuring ethics in marketing is that unethical conduct by someone may strike no emotional chord within that person because upholding ethical conduct is not part of the person's values. Thus it is seldom the case that managers do not know what constitutes the ethical thing to do. They simply lack the will to do it because of an absence of an emotional commitment: social outrage and the law are merely ways of reinforcing the will to be good. Without emotional commitments, there will be no strong evaluations—or firm ethical leadership. This is not to suggest that people may not act against their emotional commitments when it comes to ethics but that strong emotions constitute a high barrier to surmount. Emotions are the energizers of meaning. It is the emotions that signal the meaning or personal significance of things, whether these things are objects like a sports car, events like a holiday, or the actions, say, of doctors and waiters. To say something is meaningless implies that it is devoid of emotional significance for us.

Emotion is the adhesive that, when mixed with trust, equals loyalty. Trust means we can accept an unequal exchange on occasion because we "know" things will even out over the long term. We may accept the higher price, the delay in service, and so on because we trust the supplier will make amends in the longer term. When consumer trust in a brand is undermined, there is a corresponding loss in market power, as customers have less faith that the company will live up to expectations. Trust is even more unquestioning in the form of loyalty. Some trust is always necessary in any business transaction. However, the basis of that trust may be the legal system that enforces contracts and consumer "rights" and may have nothing to do with the buyer's trust in the supplier. Customer loyalty to a brand or a supplier demands more than this

minimum level of trust and, as noted, involves sentiment. And loyalty can start early, as, for example, it does to football teams and often continues regardless of whether the team is on top.

Emotion blinds us to evidence that challenges loyalties. Strong emotions typically explain why we cling to beliefs when faced with evidence to the contrary. Consumers may continue to buy some health product that scientific evidence has shown to be ineffective because faith, with its emotional overtones, can be more persuasive than the evidence of the laboratory. Emotional commitment to a position, a person, a cause, or a place is what we mean when we speak of an *idée fixe*, which is something that goes beyond intellectual conviction. Buying is tied to feelings as well as beliefs, and this explains why, even in buying a major product like an automobile, there may be little reflection or investigation of options. Much buying is rooted in strongly held feelings of likes and dislikes. We only make sense of buying if we recognize that buying engages people emotionally.

Emotion and Consumer Choice Criteria

We all have reasons for choosing one product rather than another, which implies that we have criteria against which we may compare options (we use the term *product* here to cover goods, services, and associated experiences). Choice criteria can be complex or a single criterion such as which brand has most immediate appeal. Emotion influences the weighting of choice criteria, and this points to the need to give emotional significance to the choice criteria that fit a firm's competitive position. Choice criteria can be grouped into six categories, and it is useful to sketch their emotion potential:⁶

1. Technical criteria. The *core* "technical" function of a product is the primary purpose for which the product is designed. Thus the core function of a watch is to measure time. The very concept of a watch is defined by core function. We use words in advertising like "state-of-the-art technology," "smooth performance," "fast results," "dependable," and so on to excite interest and evoke positive emotional feelings toward the brand.

To call a watch "good" is first and foremost to claim efficacy in its core function. But products have other technical functions besides the core function. There can be ancillary-use functions and convenience-in-use functions. *Ancillary-use* functions are the permanent or optional technical features associated with the core function. An ancillary-use function of a detergent is to soften clothes and of a clock to speak the time. Advertisers use words like "extra features" and "enriched" to excite curiosity in ancillary-use functions. *Convenience-*

in-use functions are the additions, modifications, or packaging of a product that facilitate the performance of its core function, such as the toothpaste tube pump or power-steering on a car. Consumers seek a care-free, turnkey system where little or no learning is involved; anything less is emotionally frustrating. Advertisers promote such functions with words like “fast,” “easy access,” “easily adjustable,” “amazingly simple,” “easy to follow,” “user-friendly,” and “light as a feather” to resonate with the emotions. Typically, competition in a mature market is no longer on the basis of core-use function, since high performance in the core function is often taken for granted. Instead, competition is over other aspects of the offering, such as ancillary-use and convenience-in-use functions, price, distribution, and brand image. Any technical function can arouse emotion because any technical function can be of high concern to the consumer. There is the excitement of anticipating high performance in a computer and the pleasure arising when performance turns out to be even higher than expected—and disappointment if performance is below expectations.

2. *Economic/sacrifice criteria.* All buying is an approach/avoidance situation in that benefits are set against price paid and effort expended. The effort expended is the effort involved in finding and choosing the product *or* in using the product. Marder thus distinguishes *choice-effort* from *use-effort*.⁷ Use-effort is reduced by convenience-in-use features and choice-effort by better distribution. If choice-effort is broadened to include taking the hassle out of buying, like the frustration that comes from waiting at the cash desk, there is considerable scope for choice-effort reduction. Underhill shows how stores can and should make shopping a more pleasurable experience.⁸ As Underhill says, no one knows how much a shopper will buy until the shopping experience is made as pleasurable as possible. In other words, no one knows what people might want until the most persuasive case has been put forward.

Price is always a concern. This is not surprising. As Brittan says, “When you purchase any good, your enjoyment is reduced by the psychological cost of paying for it.”⁹ Consumers and marketers alike benefit if they explicitly seek pricing systems that let people enjoy things without having to think about paying for them and thereby dampen the enjoyment. The possibility of enjoying things immediately is facilitated by installment buying, which in fact could be said to have got the car industry into the mass market.¹⁰ This should not blind us to the fact that there are always those who will pay a high price for the same functional performance if it signals wealth, status, and power to all and sundry.

Emotionally *deal-sensitive* buyers switch among their favored set of brands, depending on current prices, in contrast to those who are *price-sensitive* in an absolute sense. The following factors influence the maximum price that can be obtained by the seller:

1. The centrality of the product for the function for which it is being bought
2. The uniqueness of the product to a particular seller
3. The social perceptions of the wisdom of paying the price being demanded
4. The perceived fairness of the price
5. The purchase location

These are all factors that have emotional resonance. In addition, contrary to the rules of rationality in economics, the framing of price is important—for example, a 3% charge for using a credit card versus a 3% discount for cash. Being charged 3% for using a credit card is a much more emotional issue.

We find it less emotional to spend in a foreign currency as we are less conscious of the sacrifice. Club Med exploits this finding by having its “guests” buy beads to use instead of cash. At least one Florida developer attracts prospects by offering them hotel accommodation at an extremely low cost—and then giving most of it back in “village dollars” that are accepted in all the stores around the development. In this way, those accepting the offer spend time savoring the lifestyle without any sense of its costing them.

Consumers become emotional about “hidden” charges, (e.g., in renting a car) with the “all-inclusive” price having the additional advantage that it reduces the number of payment decisions, which, in turn, reduces the emotional burden of payment. Prepaid cards, like domestic or mobile phone cards, are ways of reducing the emotional burden (what Brittan calls the “moral tax”) of payment and the anxiety of uncertainty about the final bill. Emotive words in advertising covering economic criteria include words like “fabulous bargain,” “pays for itself,” “no frills pricing,” “designer quality at affordable prices,” and so on. Advertising anticipates emotional reaction to a premium price by stressing enhanced benefits, as in “You won’t need to repair” a quality garment, car, or machine for years. This emphasis influences the inner dialogue consumers conduct when they want something emotionally that reason refuses to authorize.

3. *Legalistic criteria.* Buyers are often guided by what others demand or want; that is, buyers take account of criteria decreed by others. Such buyers can be said to take account of *legalistic* criteria. While some “legalistic” criteria are imposed by legal regulations (seat belts in cars), there are also the requirements of others whose wishes the consumer feels obliged to consider. In supermarket shopping for groceries, the tastes of various family members might, for example, be considered. The paradigm case of legalistic criteria is the husband shopping in the supermarket from a list written by his wife. On the list his wife has written: orange juice, lettuce, fish cakes, and so on, and the husband in his

purchases is governed by that list. Children, too, have quite an influence. One study by the J. Walter Thompson ad agency found that even children under 12 years of age played a decisive role in parental decisions, for example, on 31% of all vacation destinations, 30% of all car models, and 22% of all stereo brands.¹¹ While parents may be the ones who pay, children may be the key decision-makers.

Legalistic criteria can evoke emotion. Trying to buy something for someone else can be stressful (e.g., a wedding present), and any rules imposed from outside (even edicts on how much to spend) can give rise to frustration at not being completely in control. On the other hand, being successful at meeting the expectations of others—friends, for example—gives rise to a glow of accomplishment. All this is not to deny there can be a conflict of values in gift-giving between the desire to give what is desired and what would be more in tune with the giver's own values.

4. Integrative criteria. Integrative functions refer to the desire for social integration and integration with one's sense of identity. Integrative criteria involve the following considerations.

Social acceptance. How consumers think others might view them as a result of their possessions influences what is bought. Buying what is not socially endorsed by one's social milieu implies nonconformity, and any kind of nonconformity is associated with potential embarrassment that can undermine confidence. Of course, there are consumers who reject conformity or just "couldn't care a damn" what others think! This is their way of signaling individuality. Today's individualism is described as keeping away from the Joneses rather than keeping up with the Joneses, though this usually means rejecting the larger culture for some subculture. Consumers may no longer be conforming to societal norms, but their behavior is still conformative to their subculture. Elites and not just out-groups are involved in nonconformity, as the elite may want to signal hostility to the majority just as much as punks and other out-groups.¹² Those adopting deviant fashions or challenging the prevalent ethic follow the principle that power can come about either from sticking rigidly to the rules or by the creation of new rules.

Self-identity and possessions. It is now orthodoxy to argue that people take their self-identity from their possessions.¹³ Dittmar views possessions as *material* symbols of identity, as *expressive* symbols of identity, and as *reflections* of identity in terms of gender and social-material status. But it is a parochial view to equate self-identity with mere possessions. Self-identity comes with a life history.¹⁴ Many other factors enter into self-identity, such as personal history, socioeconomic status, religion, ethnicity, roles in life, job and so on. In fact, as Flanagan argues, the whole narrative of our lives and what concerns us enters

into self-identity.¹⁵ Self-identity is something more than the sum of our appetites. As Erving Goffman says, no one's self-identity is limited to a singular "core image," as people have many different sides to their personalities, revealed on different occasions.¹⁶ This is not to deny that consumers use goods as a way to express aspects of their *social* identity and to distinguish themselves from others "in a world in which traditional social bonds and class boundaries are weakening."¹⁷

Another half-truth is that self-identity is now more a matter of individual choice than social ascription. But self-identity is not developed in a vacuum: it is very much influenced by the way others view us in social interaction. There is a limit to the extent that consumers *can* express a completely distinct self-identity. There is the matter of time and financial resources while, as said earlier, someone who seemingly is nonconforming to societal norms may be conformative to the norms of his or her subcultural group. Subcultural social pressures are likely to produce a strong family resemblance in possessions among the members of the deviant subgroup.

Products bought as *symbolic* possessions link to the emotions. Flanagan suggests such products are

1. those that, like photographs, symbolize the *historical continuity* of self, family etc.
2. those that express artistic or intellectual *interests*, such as a book collection
3. those that signify wealth and symbolize *status*, such as a sailing boat¹⁸

And we would add

4. products that express a preferred social persona like being youthful, bohemian, establishment, or whatever.

Status, visibility, fashion, or standing within one's social milieu. Although people crave social acceptance, they also aim for status in their group's "pecking order," together with social recognition. It was Simmel who first stressed the opposition between the individual and the wider social group.¹⁹ Humans need other people for emotional, intellectual, and material sustenance but, at the same time, do not want to submerge their individuality and independence.²⁰ There is a constant tension provoked in trying to get the balance right that continues throughout life.

Consumers, in buying products, seek *status* and *visibility* to rise above the crowd. They do not want to be tokens of each other in their clothing or anything else. Status and social visibility are sources of power, a feeling of being

in control of the world around one. Status symbols enhance self-esteem, and anything that adds to self-esteem is emotionally satisfying. Any formal association with a celebrity or an institution of status is a source of such satisfaction and is highly valued, as university fund-raisers know. Emotive words here are “upscale”; “caters to the discriminating few”; “you’ll join the ranks of”; “exclusive,” and so on. A novelty that becomes widespread ceases to be a novelty, with the result that those seeking visibility and status supplant and replace the old novelty with a “genuine” new one.

Fashion. Fashion satisfies the desire for status and novelty even if it only does so by recycling old styles. Simmel points out that *fashion* enters into all aspects of our lives from clothes, to cars, to investing, to science and the selection of first names. Simmel views fashion as combining novelty of aesthetic charm with the play form of socializing. Consumers adopt fashions to fulfill attempts at image management—to signal social aspirations and identifications. Fashion in clothing helps one to camouflage imagined deficiencies and to savor the emotional fantasy of being like some famous person or part of some lifestyle. Fashion is fed by the insatiable demand for novelty in stylistic innovations. Campbell argues that fashion functions as a substitute for taste, in that fashion fulfills a social role originally played by standards of good taste and can be as socially binding as standards of taste once were.²¹

Fashion has expanded in scope more than ever with the demand for “difference” in social identity. As Gronow says, one characteristic of modern consumer society is that the extension and social influence of fashion has greatly increased.²² He acknowledges that consumer demands are determined no longer by an “economy of needs” but by an “economy of desire and dreams,” or the yearning for something new and unexperienced. Among the affluent of the world, who have everything they need or want in terms of clothing, housing and other durables, wants move to the desire for new and rare experiences, so a Christmas present can become the experience of driving a tank (as has happened in Britain). Gronow reminds us that all conscious experiences reach beyond themselves, with each thought reminding us of other thoughts. This “overflow” of thought leads to fantasies about the pleasures of buying, particularly buying things for personal adornment—and, he might have added, the pleasures of anticipating some experience.

Personal integrity. Kagan rejects the notion of human action being mostly motivated by a desire for sensory pleasure but claims there is a universal motive to regard the self as possessing good qualities.²³ People are inhibited from actions that are likely to bring about guilt, embarrassment, or shame, contributing to what Kagan calls a motive for virtue. People have a sense of being moral agents. Adherence to ethics or moral norms is tied to self-respect, while the violation of social norms gives rise to the emotion of shame. A growing

number of consumers take account of the environment in their buying and choose manufacturers who exhibit social responsibility, such as those who are not exploiting child labor, polluting the environment, and so on. It also violates integrity to accept an unfair transaction, so consumers may ask what something is worth in some objective sense rather than just what it is worth to them. A consumer may forgo buying not because the utility of the product to her is less than the price to be paid but because she considers the price a “rip-off.” People will not willingly be cheated or seen as willing to be cheated. This seems to be part of our evolutionary inheritance.²⁴

5. Adaptive criteria. Adaptive criteria reflect the desire to minimize risk, reduce the anxiety of uncertainty or fear of regret.²⁵ Risks can entail potential (1) financial cost; (2) physical cost, since products can be harmful or dangerous; (3) social cost, in that significant others may not approve; (4) performance deficiency; or (5) hassle, as in, say, having to return the product; and so on. Many products cannot be completely evaluated prior to purchase. Inspection of the product may give some certainties (that the product has certain features) and may provide some idea about quality, but there are often uncertainties about effectiveness (e.g., equities). A significant purchase with a high risk attached to it (what marketers call a “high-involvement purchase”), arouses anxiety—fear of making a mistake or coming to regret the decision.

Consumers adopt several *heuristics* or rules of thumb for dealing with uncertainty. The easiest is simply to sidestep responsibility by trusting the *advice* of others. Consumers will often pay dearly for some expert to make the decision for them. This commonly happens with financial services and in matters of taste. Older adults are more limited in their information-processing capacity (easily becoming mentally overloaded) and are likely to collect and evaluate less information and so be more inclined to rely on “expert” advice.²⁶ Consumers, like people in general, are conditioned to some extent to accept the advice of people in authority, whether they are teachers, doctors, policemen, or those regarded as authorities on matters of taste or a line of products. In fact, the advice may come from someone who simply projects a relevant authority persona, as when Robert Young on TV recommends Sanka, a caffeine-free coffee, while wearing the white coat of the doctor he played in a TV series (*Marcus Welby, M.D.*).

Making the habitual buy or letting others decide releases time to come to grips with other problems and relieves the burden of decision. Other heuristics are to *imitate* others assumed to be “in the know”; seeking *guarantees*; buying on *reputation* or buying on *brand image*; *sampling*; *diversifying* to spread risks; or buying on the basis of just *liking*. Most of these heuristics or rules of thumb are perceived as indicators of the attributes sought, just as a buyer

might view price as an indicator of quality. Emotive ad terms here are “You can’t lose”; “We stand behind our claims”; “genuine”; “authentic”; “proven”; “pure”; “nothing artificial”; “We provide training and support services”; and so on. Where consumers are in a state of uncertainty over matters of taste and social appropriateness, an attractive and credible salesperson plays a vital role in establishing credibility. Think of what the salespeople do in a jewelery store.

6. Intrinsic criteria. The criterion that enters into most buying is intrinsic liking: how the product looks, feels, tastes, smells, and sounds. Pleasing the senses is usually crucial. Buying purely on the basis of liking means that the only objective is pleasure/enjoyment and nothing more. Anything that diminishes the prospect of the pleasure inhibits buying. Thus the new wave of “functional foods” add nutritional attributes (like cholesterol-lowering margarine and so on) and so provide consumers with additional reasons to buy. Nonetheless, consumers appear unwilling to trade off taste for nutrition. Intrinsic liking often rests on the images conjured up by emotive words, names, and labels. Emotive ad words that suggest intrinsic criteria are “enchanting,” “juicy,” “crisp,” “sizzling,” “gripping,” “refreshing,” “alluring,” “sparkling,” “elegant,” “relaxing,” and so on.

Csikszentmihalyi claims, contrary to current orthodoxy, that pleasure has a function beyond being indulged in purely for its own sake, as it can be a reflex response built into the genes for the preservation of the species.²⁷ He quotes the French anthropologist Roger Caillois on the pleasure of games:

- With competitive games, pleasure comes from meeting the challenge of an opponent.
- Games of chance give pleasure by creating an illusion of controlling the future.
- Games like riding the merry-go-round provide pleasure by transforming the way we perceive reality.
- Games involving pretense and fantasy create the feeling of being more than we actually are.

Buying on the basis of intrinsic liking does not necessarily mean being driven by a desire for instant gratification. Consumers may postpone instant gratification in order to savor future possibilities of getting what they really want, as in saving for that expensive dress. Intrinsic liking is molded through education. Thus we may look at a work of art without any pleasurable response until told about its associations, who made it, and the criteria by which it should be judged. This is why the perfect counterfeit is not the same as the real thing. Knowing it is the real thing makes all the difference. This is the reason people

continue to buy diamonds even though the naked eye cannot distinguish diamonds from zircons.

Consumers are more likely to buy if they like the smell, as smell connects directly with the emotional centers of the brain and immediately influences feelings and emotional memories. Examples in marketing are:²⁸

- School books that smell of chocolates
- The smell of freshly mown grass in car ventilation systems
- The smell of lavender in dentists' offices
- The aroma of toast and fresh coffee exuding from an alarm clock
- Travel brochures smelling of suntan lotion
- Cigars that smell of herbaceous borders
- Airplane toilets that spray Chanel No. 5

There are organizations, like International Flavors & Fragrances in New Jersey, who will design and manufacture the smells and tastes of potato chips, grilled hamburger, pet food, toothpaste, or just about any designer fragrance. It is a big business.

The sense of touch is also important. As Sheldon and Arens said in the 1930s, "Every day the average person makes hundreds of judgments in which the sense of touch casts the deciding vote. Acceptance of a towel, hairbrush, underwear, stockings, hinge on how things feel in their hands. . . . Designs should be executed with an appeal to the tactile senses."²⁹

Intrinsic criteria include the *curiosity* appeal, as acting to satisfy curiosity can be an end in itself, just as we might seek to know things for the sake of knowing. Curiosity is the tendency to seek novel or complex stimuli. In either case, seeking to satisfy curiosity can be exciting—and sometimes dangerous! A stimulus is novel if it is new or different. Consumers have an appetite for novelty since the familiar, while reassuring, can be a bore. Novelty, though, can be too novel and complexity too complex in terms of the consumer's level of experience, education, and willingness to persist in trying to comprehend. There is an optimal level of novelty and complexity for each individual at which point curiosity and the accompanying emotion is at a maximum. With the advent of the microchip, the provision of more features in, say, watches, has become irresistible, since little is added to cost and seemingly more in immediate appeal. Yet few of these additional features may be used, and they may simply add to complexity, hindering operation.

Gronow (1997) argues that consumers grow tired of continuous change and fall back on the "tried and true," in order to feel "at home" and to counteract "alien social forces" that demand constant change. This is true of those with "old money" who are seen wearing old and unfashionable clothes. But

then, they can afford to buck the trend. Gronow argues, like many other fashion commentators, that fashion is a thoroughly aesthetic phenomenon even if some fashion creations are ugly. The opposite of fashion is a uniform, and modern affluent societies reject uniformity, unless it is imposed as in the army or is part of a shared expression of solidarity.

Aesthetic appreciation has emotional overtones. In fact, art has been defined as *the* expression of emotion, though it is more correct to say that art expresses an emotional quality. The aesthetic is all-pervasive in our lives, in products we buy like cars, clothes, furniture, and in the presentation of food, as well as in paintings, music, cinema, the countryside, birdsong, and so on. Human appreciation of the aesthetic influences all the choices consumers make in daily life in designing their environments and choosing what to buy. Fisher claims that *wonder* is the essential emotion of the aesthetic experience.³⁰ Fisher describes this emotion as the hospitality of the mind or soul to newness; the mind feels rejuvenated. "Wonder" has some of the attributes of "novelty," the key factor in drawing attention to any new product.

Consumers seek to turn their everyday lives into an aesthetic enterprise when trying to achieve a coherent style in what they wear and what they buy for the home. The coordinating principle for much durable goods purchasing is aesthetic liking. What typically gives purchases a coherence and links them together into a unitary whole is that they appeal to us aesthetically. Like all intrinsic liking, aesthetic pleasure is an end in itself. Aesthetic judgments are based on a feeling of pleasure, and perceptions of beauty may account for the unity in all aesthetic experience.

Underhill (1999) claims that almost all unplanned buying is the result of touching, hearing, smelling, or tasting something on the premises of the store, which, he argues, is why merchandising in the store is so important and why the internet, catalogs, and home shopping on TV will complement but never seriously challenge real live stores. He points out that sales in stores like the Gap are enhanced by the company's policy of fostering intimate contact between shopper and goods.

In marketing, Holbrook has been the most prolific scholar and researcher in aesthetics (for a list of his major articles on aesthetics, see the references).³¹ In contrast to the six categories of choice criteria discussed earlier, Holbrook talks of eight types of consumer value.³² The term "value" is used to mean that quality or property of an offering that makes it useful, desired, or esteemed. This is *value in the singular*, to be distinguished (as he makes clear) from *values* in the sense used in this book, that is, the central ideals around which goals become integrated. (Another sense of *value*, the one used by economists, refers to the net worth of a thing as determined by what price it will bring in the market.) Holbrook's eight types of consumer value are transparently tied to the

emotions. This is not surprising, since Holbrook views products in terms of their capacity to create need- or want-satisfying *experiences*. On this basis, anticipated experiences are the primary influence in buying. If experiences are key, it is because few experiences can be said to be emotionally neutral. Holbrook's focus is on consumer values *sought*, not on choice criteria per se. Listing his eight values shows how his view of consumer value can be tied to our discussion of choice criteria and emotion. Holbrook's eight values are as follows; in parentheses we show how they can be tied to the six choice criteria already discussed:

1. *Efficiency*. As measured by the ratio of input to output and convenience, the consumer has an emotional investment in minimizing the input for any specific output and maximizing convenience. (Economic/sacrifice choice criteria plus technical performance choice criteria in the convenience-in-use function)
2. *Play*. This is tied to intrinsic pleasure. (Intrinsic choice criteria)
3. *Excellence*. This is tied to optimal performance in quality, the desire for which has an emotional dimension. (Technical performance choice criteria in the core use-function)
4. *Aesthetics*. *Aesthetic reaction* refers to an appreciation of consumption experience. It is tied to intrinsic pleasure with the pleasure of beauty being its main manifestation. (Intrinsic choice criteria)
5. *Status*. Success and impression management are tied to status, but what the consumer is essentially buying is a set of symbols to construct a certain persona tied to success. (Integrative choice criteria covering status and visibility)
6. *Ethics*. This covers the desire for virtue, justice, and morality. (Integrative choice criteria covering integrity)
7. *Esteem*. Holbrook views esteem as the counterpart to status in that esteem "tends to result from a somewhat passive ownership of *possessions* appreciated as a means to building one's *reputation* with others." (Integrative choice criteria covering self-esteem)
8. *Spirituality*. The reactive side of spirituality is faith (sacred experience) while the active side is works (good deeds). (Intrinsic choice criteria)

What our discussion of choice criteria and Holbrook's eight types of consumer value mean is that explanations of buying lack explanatory depth if the emotions are ignored. If we focus simply on the rational and not also on how people feel, we cannot hope for other than impoverished theories of buying behavior. The exclusive focus on the objectively rational brings with it the danger of our having a "trained incapacity" to recognize the pervasiveness of emo-

tional phenomena. We are sensitive to what we are taught to see and, as a consequence, may lack sensitivity to emotional phenomena in buying. However, there is increasing recognition of the importance of emotion among marketing managers. There are techniques like the *benefit probe*, where respondents are asked to cite two *functional* benefits of each *product* benefit and two *emotional* benefits for each functional benefit. Thus in a benefit probe of a mouthwash the respondent might relate the functional benefit of breath cleaning with the emotional benefits of eliminating worry, fostering confidence, and being less anxious and more relaxed. Another technique tries to “measure” the consumer’s *emotional* bonds with a brand. Emotional feelings are first listed and then weighted for relative importance for the product. The brands are next assessed for their perceived delivery of each of the emotions, and a final overall score for each brand is calculated. Current brands are then rated against the emotional ideal to judge if there is an emotional gap to be filled. If beer is linked to camaraderie and friendliness, the associated emotions need to be generated by advertising. While tangible, rational benefits are vulnerable to being copied, emotional bonds are more difficult to break.

Services: Customization and Personalized Execution

Anything that is of acute concern to us can give rise to an emotional reaction, so it can be exciting, say, to find a product that is unique to a certain manufacturer and central for the function we have in mind. Nonetheless, interactions with others are the most common source of positive and negative emotions. We are social animals, and our earliest memories tend to be memories of interactions with other people. Not surprisingly, then, dealing with service providers can be emotional.

Pure service industries are distinguished by the need to *customize* the offering and to *personalize* the carrying-out of the service. Consumers have a need to feel engaged with the service provider. An exemplar of customization and personalized execution is a hairdresser. Hotels, legal services, travel services, realtors, educational services, financial services, advertising, and restaurants must first identify the customer’s requirements to determine what service is appropriate. Customization, of course, has its limits, because of costs but also because customization of the details uses up too much consumer energy. As an article on Dell in *The Economist* says, “Consumers want to customize PCs, but within limits: faster or slower processors, more or less memory, but not their own colour or trim. Such a limited customization encourages a build-to-order model.”³³

Once the service need is identified, how it is carried out becomes paramount. If, as is typical, service people are interacting with the customer, there

is a need for courtesy, warmth, and a general sense of caring. Personalizing a service or interaction with the customer is not simply a matter of pointing out its importance to all those dealing with customers. It is also a matter of training: a matter of knowing how, not just what. Personalizing lies in the tactics adopted. Thus giving a \$10-off coupon for fragrances selling for over \$29 to women entering a store was considered more personalized and resulted in more sales than when fragrances at the counter were similarly labeled. In general, the extent of customization achieved will be the performance on which the service provider will be judged, but if customization among rival service providers is generally high, the extent to which the service is *personalized in execution* is what most enhances goodwill and loyalty.

All communications carry an emotional tone, and all interactions with service providers have the potential for being an irritant. Being at ease with someone is feeling relaxed and emotionally in tune with that person. Barlow and Maul point out that staff need to remind themselves when faced with an emotional outburst that something of importance has happened as far as this customer is concerned and accept, as their responsibility, the management of emotions in service exchanges.³⁴ They point to the need to teach staff to recognize the importance of emotions behind customer behavior.

If service providers are to be emotionally in tune with customers they need to avoid communicating in the following ways:

- A *peremptory way*, whether verbal, in writing, or in nonverbal communication, is perceived as showing a lack of respect, which is likely to arouse anger in the person addressed. Consumers, like people in general, have a strong need for ego gratification and an emotional need to be seen as having status and power and being given respect.
- A *condescending way* implies that the person being addressed is less able and of lesser merit, which is a blow to self-worth. Consumers, like people in general, have a strong emotional need for reassurance about personal worth. No interaction with customers should in any way undermine that sense of personal worth.
- An *obsequious way* suggests that one is being ingratiating for a sale or approval, which inhibits an honest and open exchange of opinions and can be frustrating.

Not just the emotional style of a communication but also the following behaviors can be emotionally frustrating:

- *Discursiveness* in communicating: “long-windedness” frustrates the audience’s desire for the communicator to come to the point.

- *Ambiguity*: if what is being communicated can have several very different meanings or can be taken in more than one way, it can be frustrating, since few of us want to acknowledge ambiguity of meaning if the context suggests we should know which meaning is right.
- *Vagueness*: that is, what is being communicated is not detailed enough to be operational for the purposes the audience has in mind.

British Airways' new rules for passengers assert that the company can bar passengers from boarding its aircraft if they are threatening, abusive, insulting, or disorderly in some way (*Financial Times*, July 3, 2001, p.14). The rule, as given, is much too vague and ambiguous to be operational for the purpose; too much is left to discretion and subjective impression. There is a need to explicate the relevant behavior through "thick" description and videos illustrating the banned behavior. But, more important, is this the right approach, since it focuses attention on classifying behavior instead of teaching staff how to manage passengers who are in an emotional state? After all, except for drunks, who can indeed be a serious problem, passengers only get emotional about matters that really concern them, such as service providers not living up to expectations that were built up by promises that were made. People are only disappointed to the extent that their expectations are let down, and empty promises often lie behind disappointment. Emotions are particularly aroused when passengers are "kept in the dark" about reasons for flight delays or whatever, since this is to treat passengers with disdain. What British Airways may be doing is reinforcing tendencies in their staff to make the *attribution error* and the *self-serving error*. These errors relate to *attribution theory*, which reminds us that people attribute causes to explain another's behavior. The *attribution error* is failure to understand the influence of external causes on the actions of others—in this case actions (or lack of actions) by the service provider—but instead to attribute bad behavior purely to the personality of the individual passenger. The *self-serving error* is to attribute all personal success in doing one's job to one's own efforts but attribute any failures in doing one's job to causes that have nothing to do with one, like awkward customers. British Airways' new policy is likely to be popular with staff, as it gives them a greater sense of power and control in their job, but it is not giving priority to the right issues and may only serve to corrode service to their customers.

A useful aid in thinking about emotion and services are the categories developed by Ortony, Clore, and Collins, who point out that emotions relate to:

1. The outcome of events
2. People/actions
3. The attributes of things³⁵

All emotions arise from a negative or positive reaction to one of these, that is, a positive or negative reaction to events, to people/actions, or to attributes of things that concern us. Ortony, Clore, and Collins argue that we appraise *events* by reference to our *goals*; appraise *actions* relative to our *standards*; and appraise the attributes of *objects* relative to our *attitudes*. In each case, marketing's attention should focus on the customer's likely reaction if the firm aims to develop good customer relationships. We return to the Ortony, Clore, and Collins categories in the next chapter.

With any service it is not just a matter of getting what is sought, since it is recognized that the process itself is part of the gratification. As a consequence, we often talk about the "goodness" of the overall service, as if we can break down the consumption experience into parts, assign each part a measure of value, and then add up the score. But a good start may not compensate for poor service at the end, since later events alter the emotional significance of what happened early on. The final significance of a service incident is not determined by its impact at the time. The "halo effect" can operate, in that something about the service that is outstandingly good can cast a halo over the dismal parts. On the other hand, service that diminishes the self-esteem or sense of self-worth of the buyer is guaranteed to be remembered, and every opportunity will be taken to get even.

But What Is Emotion?

The Family Resemblance in Emotions

When we speak of humans having "emotions" it means that humans have certain dispositional tendencies that, when activated, give rise to emotional experience. Thus people have a dispositional tendency for the emotion of "excitement," but the emotional experience of excitement has to be aroused if it is to be meaningful in people's lives. Hence there are emotions as (1) latent dispositions to have certain types of experience and emotions as (2) the experiences themselves that affect people's behavior. Emotions as dispositional tendencies are part of a person's makeup, while emotions as experiences are apt to be short-lived. In this book we are not concerned so much with emotions as dispositions; we focus on emotions as experiences.

"Emotion," as an experience, is used to cover a variety of mental states and bodily processes that arise from highly positive or negative appraisals of some real or imagined event, action, or attribute. The word *emotion* is a contraction of two words, *exit* and *motion*; the ancient Greeks believed that an emotion is the soul coming temporarily out of the body! An echo of this idea continues. There is the belief that emotional displays contain the core truth