

SO, TELL ME HOW
YOU FEEL...

PUBLISHED IN PROFESSIONAL MARKETING MAGAZINE
JUL/SEP 2012

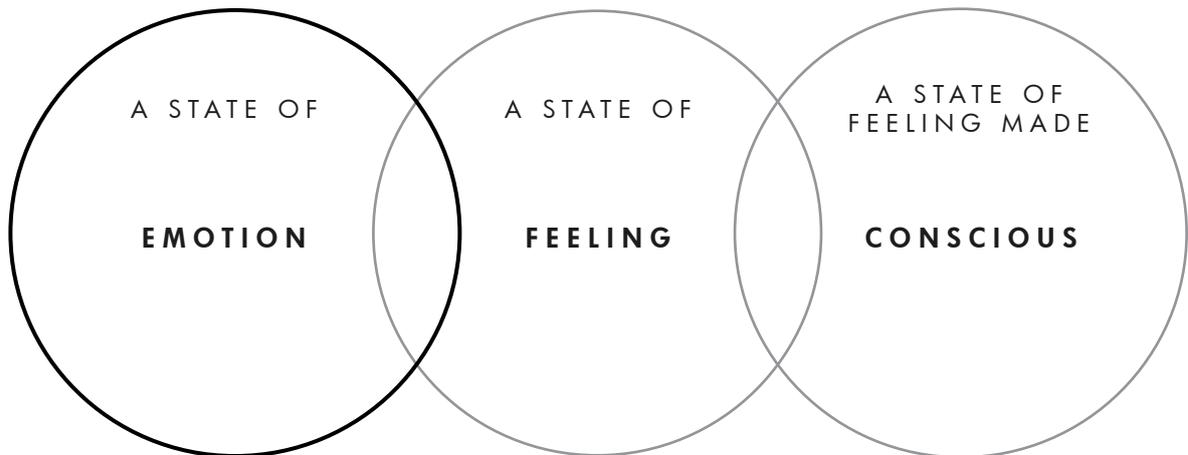
Emotion is not just the next marketing punch line; emotions are non-conscious behavioural detonators. Just as Coca-Cola seeks to attach happiness to its brand, marketers seek to emotionally tag goals and decisions so as to automate product choice.

SO, TELL ME HOW YOU FEEL...

No one precisely knows the consumer decision making sequence, however we do know it starts with an emotion relating to a need. For brand owners and the creative fraternity, this means attaching an emotion to your brand is one of the most important brand building communication activities a marketer can undertake.

NON-CONSCIOUS

CONSCIOUS



MEASURING EMOTIONS

The measurement of emotion has become like a costume party attracting sorcerers and psychics masquerading as purveyors of insight. Some have called themselves neuromarketers, others neuroscientists and others, focus group moderators. All of them claim to be able to measure emotion, but none can report with any certainty the discrete emotions driving consumption behaviour.

The most pervasive of those groups is the focus group moderators. At last count, there were more than 300 marketing research firms in Australia. More than 60% undertake qualitative research, and about 30% of the industry's total revenue is derived from qualitative research – most of which comes from focus groups.

The vast majority of moderators reside in the murky paradox of asking focus group participants to “say how you feel”. You wouldn't ask Lleyton Hewitt to tell you how he non-consciously applies the laws of geometry to instantly calculate the trajectory of the ball he is positioning himself to hit. It is almost as pointless to ask a focus group participant to say how they feel in response to an artificial stimulus, like a storyboard or animatic, in the doubly artificial environment of a focus group venue. (The futility of pre-testing communications in focus groups is a topic for another time.)

Emotions such as anger and anxiety, surprise and contentment are simply a collection of chemical and neural responses that occur beneath conscious awareness and act as behavioural detonators.

They are the body's physiological response to stimuli. A feeling is the raw emotion coloured in by memory and experience.

It is estimated that only 2% of emotions progress to become a conscious feeling. We can recall the times that emotions have become feelings made conscious: the death of a loved one, a nasty fright, a frustrating bank interaction. However, the average consumer's interaction with a brand does not cause an emotion to become conscious. Indeed, the more the moderator attempts to drill down to the emotion, the more the participant will post-rationalise cognitively.

Even if the participant is in touch with a feeling, that conscious feeling is private. Sharing feelings is subject to social and cultural desirability; not to mention matters relating to fading memories. Compounding this, when participants are aware of their feelings and are prepared to share them, they systematically understate their negative emotions. Let's face it, who wants to be seen as the dark or moody guy in the room?

If the objective of the focus group was to develop a hypothesis or provide direction, then okay. However, all too often the objective is to provide an understanding of the emotional response to a proposed or existing communication and, in that instance, we are left with little more than made-up 'insights' that the creative agency has to silently bear. It is little wonder the long-suffering creative agencies feel somewhat antagonistic towards the marketing research industry when its best effort is just someone's best guess.

PRODUCT DRIVEN NEUROMARKETING

Then there are the neuromarketers and neuroscientists. The presence of an emotion can be detected via physiological measures such as fMRI, EEG (SST), EMG and Galvanic Skin Response. Neuromarketing is the classic product driven service: largely, a medical device looking for new markets. While neuroscience does yield some useful scientifically-based insights such as long-term memory encoding, the science-based approaches simply do not address the main questions marketers wish to have answered:

- For my product category, what are the discrete emotions that drive purchase behaviour and their relative importance?
- Is my brand's communication effective at eliciting these discrete emotions?
- How much of these discrete emotions do each of the brands in my competitive set elicit?

In 2011, the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) conducted a study into the efficacy and contribution of neuroscience. Some 16 commercial sponsors and an independent panel tested the output of eight neuromarketing vendors.

Addressing the ability of neuromarketing to measure discrete emotions, the reviewers found: "Measuring 'attention' (and related reactions such as approach-avoidance and arousal) is less complex than measuring specific emotions and purchase intent. The experts' consensus is that reactions to one specific region of the brain cannot always be interpreted as indicative of one specific emotion."

Feelings, like memory, are distributed throughout the brain and linked together via a neural network of connections. No amount of medical imaging or any other neuromarketing device can identify with any certainty the nine primary emotions that drive consumption behaviour.

Nonetheless, a consensus appears to be building in marketing circles that it is only a matter of time before neuroscience develops the ability to accurately predict the behaviour of consumers in response to stimuli. This rests on the assumption that neuroscience-based techniques can unlock the discrete emotions that drive purchase behaviour and test communications against these drivers. However, the proposition that specific feelings are limited to one distinct part of the brain, and therefore identifiable via neural measurement, is not borne out of reality.

Recently, one of the main proponents of neuroscience in Australia was bemoaning the lack of awareness that marketers and the creative fraternity have of neuroscience. His solution was to call for more teaching of neuroscience techniques in marketing degrees. My response is to bemoan not marketers' absence of knowledge of techniques but, rather, the seemingly complete lack of understanding that the neuroscience community has of the questions marketers actually need addressed.

Putting aside the usual criticism of an absence of statistical rigour in neuroscience arising from a properly constructed sample, or the concern of where the science ends and the neuroscientist's mere opinion begins, the plain fact is that today neuroscience can indicate emotional processing. However, it cannot provide even an approximation of which discrete emotions are either present or explain brand choice.

MEASURING EMOTIONS

Presently, the best approach for identifying and measuring the impact of discrete emotions is the use of online, animated avatars known as Prophecy Feelings®. Beneath the animation is a metaphor-based scale. For example, for the emotion Anger, moving the mouse causes the animation to show the avatar changing from neutral to boiling with rage. Metaphors have been found to be a viewing lens into the nonconscious. The respondent's feelings are measured prior to being shown any stimulus, such as a television commercial, and then measured again after being exposed to the stimulus.

The animated scale effectively captures feelings without the need for the feeling to have been made conscious and, therefore, subjected to post-rationalisation.



FIGURE 1.

An example of the animated Prophecy Feelings® Scale. The scale measures the intensity of nine primary consumption-related emotions, using metaphors to minimise cognitive processing.

© Forethought Pty Ltd, 2010—2012

BEER MAKES US HAPPY

DDB NYC wanted to understand the relative importance of the nine primary consumption-related emotions driving choice of light beer among regular American light beer drinkers. Once the relative importance of the emotions was understood, DDB then wanted to identify the emotion inventory of the brand and how its communication was working at eliciting those emotions.

In the USA, among regular light beer drinkers, light beer purchase behaviour is made up of 71.1% rational and 28.9% emotion or feelings. The packaging designers, sensory researchers and brewers would all give a cheer that rational drivers matter so much; equally, the creative director, whose responsibility it is to both rationally and emotionally engage the consumer, would not be at all surprised that emotion is also important.

'Gary has been let go, but it's okay because he got a case of Bud Light as his severance package.'



'With a package that good, everyone wants to be let go.'



'It's a sure sign of a good time. Bud Light.'



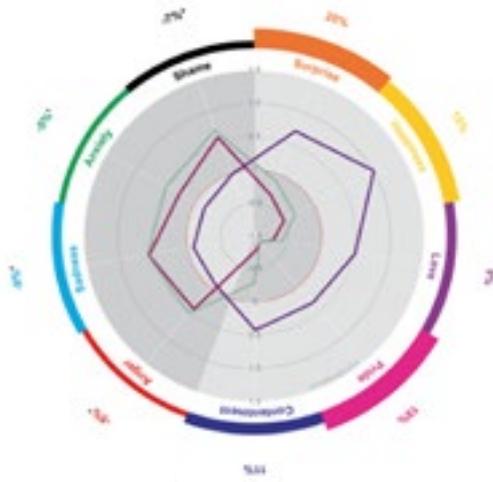
Exhibit 1 reveals the importance of just the emotions (excluding the rational) and the performance of the brands. For example, the emotion Happiness accounts for 15% of consumption behaviour.

The three brands being measured in eliciting the emotions are Bud Light, Coors Light and Miller Lite. The purple line eliciting the highest performance on the three key emotions— Surprise, Happiness and Pride—is Bud Light. From this, we can conclude that the Bud Light brand has the strongest performance in eliciting the most important emotions.

The question then becomes, how strongly is the creative performing in linking and extending the emotion with the brand? DDB produced the ‘Bud Light—Severance Package’ TVC for the Super Bowl.

Exhibit 2 shows the performance of the brand and the performance of the TVC for regular light beer drinkers split by male and female regular light beer drinkers. The commercial was stronger in eliciting positive emotion for males and significantly reduced Contentment for females. Perhaps the reduction in Contentment is not unexpected since, in essence, the communication was about receiving a severance package at the tail end of the global financial crisis; although interestingly, emotionally it affected men less.

It is worth noting that once again in 2012, more than 60% of American women tuned in to watch the Super Bowl, and they did so mainly to watch the ads. The strong performance of the creative for men suggests the spot should be aired with a media buy focused on a male audience.

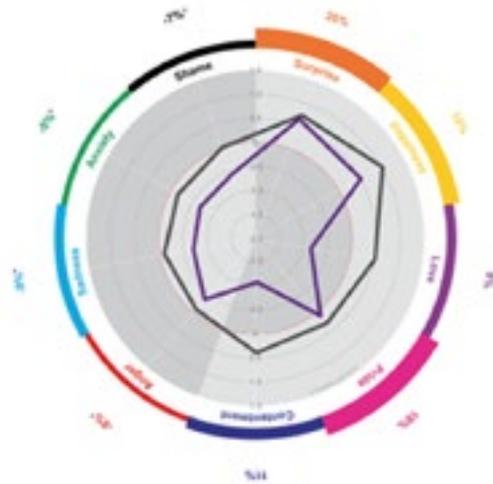


OVERALL

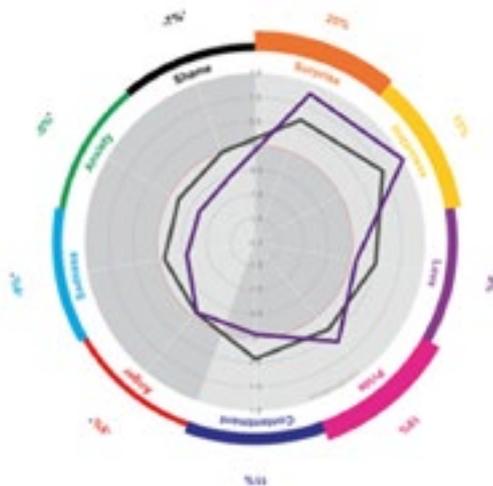
- Bud Light
- Coors Light
- Miller Light
- * Non-significant drivers

EXHIBIT 1.

Light Beer Brands



FEMALE



MALE

- Bud Light TVC
- Bud Light Brand
- * Non-significant drivers

EXHIBIT 2.

Light Beer Drinkers TVC vs. Brand

REASONS TO BELIEVE

Whilst undeniably emotion is the behavioural catalyst, just as a sparkplug ignites the fuel in the engine, the engine only operates in the presence of an array of other components. The emerging danger in the marketing communication debate is to overstate the importance of emotion over cognition.

Recall, light beer purchase behaviour among regular light beer drinkers was 71.1% rational. In contemporary consumer behaviour theory, it has become fashionable to undermine the importance of rational or cognitive attributes, and to criticise the marketing research techniques (such as recall and awareness) used for measuring the performance of the agency in imparting the cognitive message.

The relative importance of emotion over rational drivers varies by category, brand and segment. Emotion plays a main role for a family choosing a new holiday destination, whereas the decision to top-up a prepaid mobile phone credit is largely rational. Marketing communication needs to be crafted based on this insight.



Asia Pacific

Level 5
550 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
AUSTRALIA
+61 3 9614 3000

North America

Level 5
400 Madison Avenue
New York NY 10017
USA
+1 929 239 3080



forethought®

FORETHOUGHT.COM.AU



@FORETHOUGHTRESEARCH



@FORETHOUGHTRESEARCH



@FORETHOUGHTRESEARCH