

# No Motion without Emotion: Getting Started with Hard Facts on a Soft Topic

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## WHAT ARE EMOTIONS?

“Everyone knows what an emotion is, until asked to give a definition.” This quotation by the researchers Fehr and Russell illustrates the difficulty that science has in capturing “emotion”. To date, no standard definition of emotions exists. Common ground is a list of characteristics, according to which emotions are complex reactions to events that are relevant to a person’s subjective wellbeing. Emotions involve changes in physiology, behavior (including facial expression) and subjective experience. They may also depend on the conscious or unconscious appraisal of the triggering event and are associated with certain behavioral responses, partly formed by evolution. Last but not least they can be distinguished from other affective phenomena such as mood by their relatively fast onset, short duration and intensity. Three different traditions in the theory of emotions may be distinguished.

- > ***Emotions result from cognitive appraisal*** /// Appraisal theorists (like the researcher Lazarus) claim that emotions result from the comparison between a desirable or undesirable goal and the degree of goal attainment. Positive emotions such as happiness or joy are associated with the attainment of a goal; this usually leads to a decision to continue with the plan. By contrast, negative emotions such as frustration, anxiety or disappointment result from problems with ongoing plans and failure to achieve the desired goals. For example, marketing managers may feel

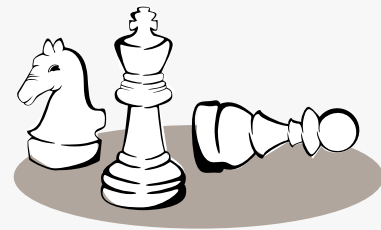
joy when their company is more profitable than expected; they may feel pride when they attribute the company's success to their own actions; or they may feel relief when sales of a brand are steady despite an economic downturn. Some emotions are easy to cope with, such as happiness after completing a major deal. Other emotions may need longer to work through, such as being turned down for a promotion at work. According to his theory, emotional experience requires the understanding that an event can have positive or negative consequences. Furthermore, people can anticipate and revive emotions by pure mental activity (called a "How do I feel about it?" heuristic), which in turn can lead to physical reactions.

> **Emotions are genetically preprogrammed** /// By contrast, biologically oriented theorists (like the researcher Zajonc) argue that emotions are genetically programmed. They can be triggered automatically and without higher cognitive processing by innate or learned stimuli, even before a person becomes conscious of these stimuli. With the help of modern brain-imaging technologies, neuroscientists have done impressive work in recent years shedding light on such automatic emotional processes and propose that genetically and neurochemically coded sub-cortical affect systems exist in the brain that can be characterized as our "natural" emotional action systems. When they are aroused directly – by local electrical or chemical stimulation, say – emotional reactions automatically occur. Thus, different emotional categories have their roots in distinct mechanisms in the brain and the body. Infants are born with this set of primary emotions that occur in response to specific stimuli.

## WHAT EXACTLY IS AN EMOTION?

### Appraisal theory

Leading appraisal theorists consider cognitive activity a necessary precondition for emotions. Emotions are derived from cognitive appraisals, reflecting whether the event is accompanied by the attainment of goals or not: If one of my meeples is kicked out (event), it gets more difficult to win (goal) and I get angry (emotion).



### Biological theory

Emotions occur automatically and unconsciously in sub-cortical areas of the brain, facilitating fast reactions without cognitive interpretation: Cuteness, for instance, always works.



### Constructivist perspective

A set of interacting brain regions are active during emotional experiences. We feel a bodily, often innate experience first, then we interpret what it might mean. Basic psychological operations of both an emotional and cognitive nature are involved.



> **Emotions are formed by an interplay of innate and cognitive processes** /// A constructivist perspective combines these two perspectives (this is also called the Lazarus-Zajonc-debate). Neurological studies present evidence that emotions can also result from mental anticipation and construction. The constructivist perspective helps explain how “everyday” emotions occur. It is argued that an interplay of cognitive and innate affective processes take place: First, we perceive bodily sensations, known as “core affects” (e.g., arousal, increase in heart rate); then, we try to find a meaning for these core affects by referring to prior experiences and mental representations of typical emotions such as joy or anger. For example, a manager feels uneasy when making a presentation about the company’s new marketing strategy. The manager may attribute this core affect either to fear, anger or illness according to prior experiences. This interpretation also depends on the focus of the manager’s attention and the context. For instance, if he sees someone in the audience yawn during the presentation, he may think that the audience member is bored, increasing the likelihood that he interprets the core affect as anger.

## OVERVIEW: TYPES OF EMOTIONS

*Primary emotions are innate,  
fundamental concepts.*

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*Secondary emotions evolve during  
the course of socialization.*

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*Emotion schemas are derived mainly  
through cognitive appraisal.*

## TYPES OF EMOTIONS

- > **Primary/Basic Emotions** /// Darwin postulates the existence of a number of fundamental, innate emotions, based on his observations of emotional expressions in many different human societies and across different species. Many later scientists also argue for the existence of a set of primary or “basic emotions”. Although there is disagreement about their precise number, these primary emotions (also called “first order emotions”) usually include joy, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, and surprise. They are characterized by special qualities such as cross-cultural transferability, development in earliest childhood, and accompaniment by certain physiological, mimic, and behavioral reactions. Basic emotions are fundamental to human mentality and adaptive behavior.
- > **Secondary emotions** /// They include emotions such as admiration, pride, remorse, shame, and awe. Some biologically oriented theorists argue that these secondary emotions are the result of a blending of basic emotions. For instance, the secondary emotion “awe” is characterized as a mixture of surprise and fear.

From a social constructivist perspective, on the other hand, secondary emotions are defined as products of social construction through the attachment of social definitions, labels, and meanings to differentiated conditions of interaction and social organization. In other words, human beings experience autonomic reactions of one or more of the primary emotions, and through a socialization process and socializing agents they learn to differentiate these experiences and to develop new, specific emotional states. Thus guilt is a socialized response to arousal of the physiological conditions of fear. Children, for instance, do not feel any shame when they are born; they learn this emotion during their development from the reactions of their parents.

- > **Emotional schemes** /// The term “emotion schemes” is used to define emotions that are derived by an interplay of basic affects with perceptual and cognitive processes. Emotion schemes give experiences a meaning, or a value and a direction and thus, influence mind and behavior. Emotion schemes are often elicited by appraisal processes but also by images, memories, and thoughts, and various non-cognitive processes such as changes in neurotransmitters and periodic changes in hormone levels. This term also meshes with the constructivist perspective.

## MEASURING EMOTIONS

Because of their complex origins – discussed above – measuring emotions for the purpose of marketing and advertising effectiveness research is highly challenging.

One option is to try to capture emotions through *self-reporting* or *standardized verbal scales*. Appraisal theorists tend to concentrate on capturing the conscious emotional experience using verbal methods, such as thinking-aloud techniques or questionnaires. Indeed, self-reporting is the only way to access subjects' subjective experience of their emotions, and complex secondary emotions cannot be identified in any other way. Standardized questionnaires (e.g., the Consumption Emotion Set) are easy to use and cost-effective, both for collecting data and analyzing it. But verbal methods are often criticized for inducing rationalizations in respondents and preventing intuitive responses. Questions arise such as whether respondents really have sufficient insight into their emotions to be able to answer the questions truthfully. Does the interview situation induce cognitive filtering of emotional experiences, thereby increasing the tendency to give socially desirable answers? And what unconscious or automatic components of emotional reactions are missed by verbal measurement approaches?

Unlike purely verbal questionnaires, *picture-based approaches* (e.g., the GfK EMO Sensor) try to facilitate intuitive access to emotions that are difficult to verbalize, or which respondents are reluctant to talk about. They can also give fresh impetus to the interview, increasing the subject's interest, motivation and response rate. For basic emotions, picture scales have the additional advantage of cross-cultural applicability. Their ease and efficiency of application is comparable to verbal scales. However, selecting and validating pictures requires special care: If it is not clear that the picture is a metaphor, it may be misinterpreted. For example, a picture of a woman smiling while riding on a carousel may be associated with the situation "being in an amusement park" rather than with the

emotion "joy". The pictures themselves can also trigger emotions and change the emotional experience being measured. It is thus important to ensure that the picture only shows an emotion (e.g., a frightened woman) rather than inducing the emotion itself (e.g., a scary picture of a hairy spider).

Biologically oriented researchers often prefer *neuroscientific methods such as measuring heart rate, electrodermal reactions or regional brain responses*. Observational methods for capturing emotional facial expressions are also popular, such as the Facial Action Coding System: these methods are objective and can capture emotions as they occur. Special software for automatic facial expression is currently being developed, such as Automatic Facial Image Analysis (AFA) and the Shore System, used by the GfK (p. 52) and others. These new tools are very promising, however, not all emotions have a unique physiological or mimic pattern and it is almost impossible to identify secondary emotions unambiguously.

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No gold standard exists for capturing all aspects of emotions. Researchers should therefore take pragmatic criteria into account when choosing their measurement approach.

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FIGURE 1:  
Example of a picture scale for measuring emotions

Envy



Boredom



Joy





## EMOTIONS IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND MARKETING

The power of emotions is evident in almost all areas of marketing and consumer behavior. Consumers often strive for “affect optimization”: At the end of the day, the balance must be positive. Thus products, advertisements and other people – everything that can make us happy – all have the potential to be highly successful. Hundreds of empirical studies exist demonstrating the importance of emotions in marketing and consumer behavior. Their findings include the following:

- > **Emotions may be the result of marketing policy** /// For instance, consumers may perceive happiness, surprise or curiosity on seeing advertising campaigns. Joy is important for experiential shopping and customer satisfaction. Often, consumers feel pride when they buy a luxury good or have had to save up to buy the item purchased. Anger is a typical negative emotion; it may be triggered when a consumer has to wait too long to speak to someone on a hotline. Likewise, boredom can explain a tendency to seek variety.
- > **Positive emotions have an impact on the perception of brands** /// competence, brand quality, brand attractiveness and sympathy. The article by Hemetsberger (p. 34) in this volume looks at the extremely positive emotional brand relationship of “brand devotion”, which involves making products sacred in order to fulfill a deeply rooted desire for spirituality. Fournier (p. 28), shows that negative emotions such as regret are involved in the termination of customer/brand relationships and can prohibit actual disengagement.
- > **Emotions influence decisions** /// For instance, perceived joy at the point of sale when seeing a beautiful product may be the reason for an impulse purchase. The perceived originality of a visual merchandising concept can evoke pleasure and in turn increase the amount of time or money consumers spend in the store.
- > **Emotions can also trigger behavior** /// People who are fascinated by advertising campaigns like to share their emotions with others. The Volkswagen commercial “The Force”, featuring a child dressed as Darth Vader, received more than 60 million hits on YouTube, making it probably one of the company’s most successful marketing campaigns ever. This shows the importance of the phenomenon of “sharing emotions”.
- > **Emotions shape relationships** /// in particular when affective states are enduring. A negative mood, for instance, can weaken the normally strong relationship between high involvement in fashion and appreciation of talking to a sales assistant. Emotions further shape cooperation between people: Trust facilitates cooperation whereas resentment leads to social exclusion. This is also true for interactions in social media.
- > **Emotions may favor learning and increase motivation** /// Many empirical studies test the impact of mood on cognitive information processing and memory during the learning phase. They show that consumers remember information more accurately when there is congruence between their moods while learning and while retrieving the information. Furthermore, positive emotions such as anticipated pride can increase consumers’ motivation to achieve their goals.
- > Anticipated emotions and trust in one’s **feelings can improve negotiations and predictions** about the future, as shown in the article by Pham (p. 22).
- > **Evoked emotions do not necessarily need to be all positive** /// Positive emotions make life worth living. However, if everything in life is positive, consumers may become bored. Commercial breaks are often overflowing with emotions of love, peace and harmony. In this context a commercial evoking mixed emotions – two conflicting emotions simultaneously – may be particularly effective. If the ad is “bittersweet”, or barefaced and courageous at the same time it may be more provocative and arousing than a purely positive campaign, leading to increased recall. However, the positive emotion must persist after a period of exposure in order for the advertising campaign to have a positive emotional conditioning effect on the brand (see Geuens et al. and their article on the relevance of ad evoked feelings on page 40).

## THE FUTURE OF EMOTION RESEARCH

*Mixed emotions* are an interesting field for future researchers and marketing executives. It is important to find out what conditions must be met for this strategy to be successful. This is also relevant for the interplay between program and commercial breaks. Some researchers recommend congruent media/commercial settings. An advertising campaign that picks up the same emotional atmosphere as the surrounding program is perceived a less intrusive than incongruent advertising campaigns, and are therefore expected to increase advertising effectiveness. But in other contexts congruency is less advantageous. For instance, when watching fear-arousing horror movies the relief given by a commercial break plays an important role. If the commercials evoke relief by distracting viewers with incongruent, fear-free stimuli and positive emotions, they might be more efficient.

Coping with ambiguous situations that evoke mixed feelings is also an interesting area for research; the article by Mortillari and Scherer (p. 16) in this volume presents some initial insights on this topic "coping with stress".

Other new fields are *emotions in social media and viral campaigns*. As discussed above "sharing emotions" is a relevant motive for consumers to upload funny commercials in YouTube or to vent one's anger in customer online reviews. Further research needs to investigate if emotions in online contexts work similarly as in more traditional media.

Further, there is a lot cooking in the field of *measurement of emotions*. New technologies such as functional magnetic resonance imaging or face readers allow new insights into the processing of emotions. Researchers will be able to observe whether specific stimuli automatically evoke distinct emotional reactions or detect conditions for successful emotional conditioning by combining a brand name with an emotional experience.

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