

How our Senses and Emotions Affect our Buying Behaviour



Think we don't buy things when we're emotional? We do it all the time

Think of the last time you walked into a retail store; can you recall your emotions and feelings? Chances are that one of them would have been hope – but how long did that feeling last?

Because in general, we have high expectations and a low stress threshold when we're on a purchasing mission.

Our consumer needs must be met as seamlessly as possible, whilst at the same time we seek to enjoy the purchasing experience. Consider for a moment the regular grocery shop; it's what retailers refer to as a 'distress' or 'convenience' shop – for the most part, made as easy and convenient for us as possible.

However, whilst the navigation of the store might go relatively smoothly, the end of that particular journey is almost guaranteed to frustrate – arrival at the checkouts; we spend time evaluating the queues, skilfully selecting the one which is obviously quickest and almost invariably pick the wrong one. Typical.

Result? We leave the store feeling frustrated and a little irritable.

Head vs Heart

Most consumers today are in search of an [immersive experience](#). Along with buying products and services, we expect to buy enjoyable, memorable and wonderful experiences that stir our emotions by immersing our senses - allowing us to transform a tedious, ordinary in-store experience into a pleasurable, emotional journey.

When it comes to purchasing; from food to clothes to technology, our emotions and senses are continuously stimulated.

But what drives our purchase decision when we encounter sensory overload? We employ our logic, right? Wrong.

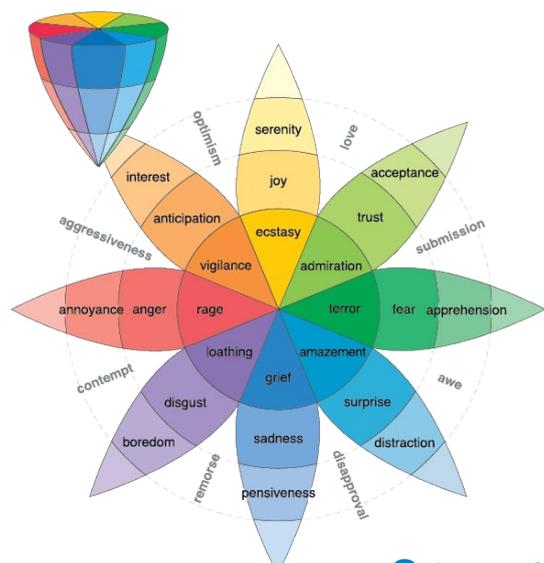
According to Antonio Damasio's latest findings in neuroscience, decision-making isn't logical, it's emotional.

[His research](#) discovered that it's difficult to make decisions if we lose the ability to feel emotions.

Most of the purchasing decisions we make are based on our emotional state. So, we may start with logic but then use emotion in the final choice.

The Power Couple – Emotion and Senses

Emotions affect what we do, want and buy. The '[wheel of emotions](#)' classification system suggests that there are 8 primary emotional dimensions: happiness vs. sadness, anger vs. fear, trust vs. disgust and surprise vs. anticipation.



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Humans are emotional beings, who also happen to experience the world through senses.

Our emotions and senses are very tightly intertwined and as such, senses play an integral role in our emotional processing, learning and interpretation. What we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch can influence how we feel.

At its most basic level, there is a good reason why brands often throw a coffee shop at their stores in order to drive footfall – it's not a random action.

How do you feel when you smell freshly brewed coffee? Or when you hear your favourite song?

[Mood mapping](#) shows that smells evoke emotions. Nice smells can make you relax, calm or energised, while bad odours make you feel uncomfortable or even stressed.

There is also evidence to suggest that there's a close relationship between taste and mood.

“Mood and emotion can affect the ‘sensory discriminatory aspects of tasting’ which is why people often stop eating following a relationship break-up or when they are grieving because food simply doesn't taste as good as in happier times”

Professor Charles Spence

Furthermore, moods are stimulated or relaxed on the basis of sensations of the skin. Rough texture is often positively valued for men, while smoothness is sought by women.

Some colours such as red are arousing, while others such as blue, are relaxing.

As consumers we often make decisions quickly and subconsciously. However, there are opportunities where it's possible to influence our perception of a brand through using the five sensory influencers at each stage of the decision-making process.

So, be sure to put your customers in a good mood when they enter your store if you want to drive sales.

“There is a human expectation of hope when we enter a store”

Bob Phibbs, The Retail Doctor

Be More Human-Centred

There is always an opportunity to create a wonderful customer experience by the interplay of the senses and forming an emotional attachment.

We often buy products not for what they do, but for what they mean. With so much information overload we use emotional filters and subconsciously assign meaning to products. Often that meaning reflects who we are, through the products we buy.

So, in the case of perhaps that expensive handbag or watch, our purchase decision can hold high personal significance – we are often making a lifestyle statement about the type of person we are, or want to be.

The human-centred approach is ultimately about making the experience a memorable and remarkable event.

If you're seeking loyal customers, turn the customer journey into an emotional journey that creates a positive experience; they'll love you for it and might just come back for more.



Lifestyle statements can come in all shapes and sizes

Green Room is a retail brand consultancy that designs the best in human experience: a blend of art and science, combining physical and digital to produce seamless multi-channel solutions that connect through the senses, fulfilling the emotional needs of the customer and the commercial needs of brands.

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