

DECODE SCIENCE UPDATE 01/18

**ALL YOU NEED IS EMOTION.
REALLY?**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (1/2)

- There is a common sense that **communication which triggers an emotional response increases its effectiveness** because emotional response attracts attention and deepens processing of the communication.
- This leads to the ‘emotion is everything’ narrative in the marketing community. But **acting on this oversimplification carries the risk** of ending up creating an ad which people love, but which does not sell.
- Science clearly shows that there is a **gatekeeper that stands between an emotional ad and actual brand choice: motivation**. Motivation, not the emotional response while watching the ad, is what makes people do something – and motivation is very different from emotion.
- **Motivation – our desires, needs, goals and ‘jobs to be done’ – determines behavior and choice**. In fact, **actual behavior is *not* caused by emotion** – emotion is a feedback mechanism that tells us if the decision we made brought us closer to our desired state or outcomes.
- **Motivation to buy a product develops if the ad stages the product as an effective means to get a ‘job’ done**. A job can be functional and/or psychological or social. The desire to change our mood can also be a job that products help to accomplish.
- An **emotional response triggered by an ad can make the ad a more effective vehicle for the motivational message**, but the emotional response while watching the ad is only a response – it is not the message in itself.
- To **impact sales**, the ad needs to convey the **right motivational message (the WHAT) in an emotionally engaging way (the HOW)**. Successful ads deliver on both (see figure 1).
- In briefs, agencies are often asked to create an emotional ad. Whilst that is not wrong, if there is **no motivating message the impact on sales will be random.** →

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (2/2)

– In addition, the objective to evoke an emotional response does not guide implementation across touchpoints. What does emotionally engaging packaging look like? Which shapes and colours should be used? Which testimonial delivers the right message? And if every brand works to the brief of ‘emotion’, how can we create consistency across touchpoints and build a distinctive brand equity over time?

This Science Update provides a more sophisticated look at why emotionally engaging communication is more effective, and how to manage the second pillar of successful ads: motivation.

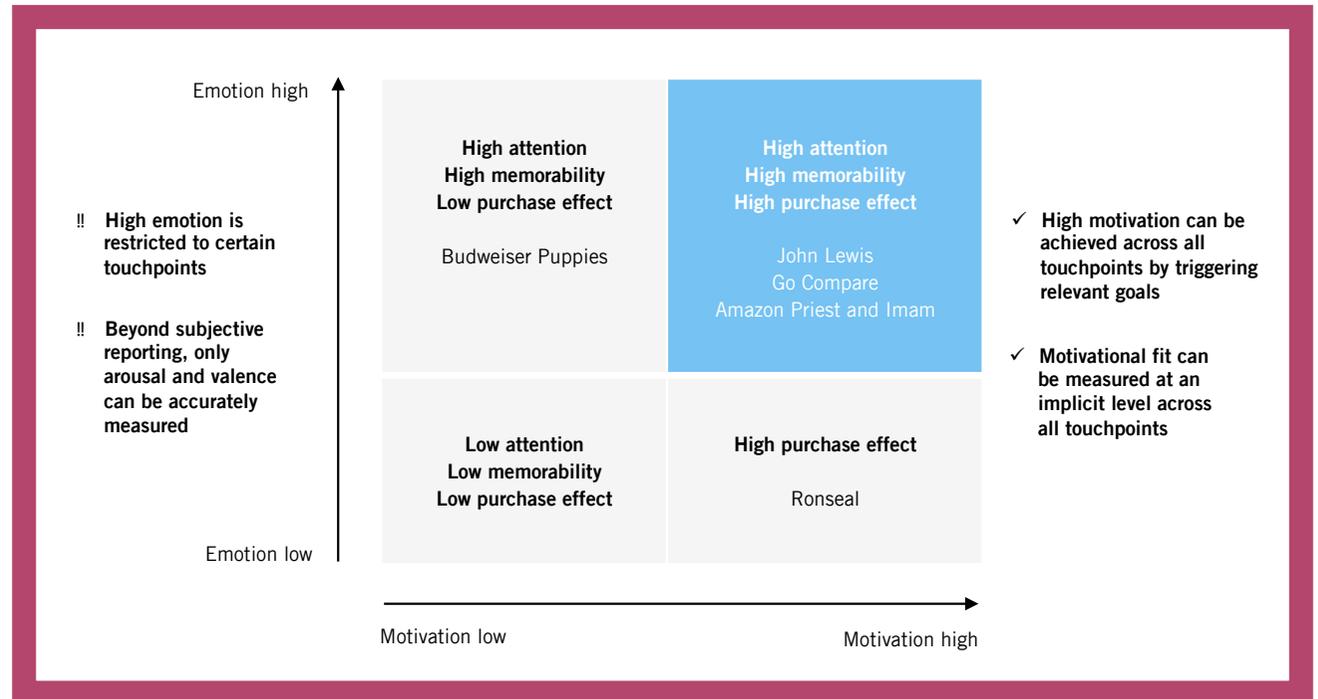


Figure 1: The two pillars of effective advertising: emotional response while watching the ad and motivation.

WELCOME TO THE DECODE SCIENCE UPDATE

“IF WE CAN’T MAKE PEOPLE CRY, WE HAVE LOST. IT’S ABOUT EMOTION”

Lorraine Twohill, SVP Global Marketing at Google.

Emotions have been the marketing hot topic in 2017, with increasing and exciting evidence that emotionally engaging communication correlates with positive impact on sales. This correlation is intuitively plausible and creatively liberating, which is why this notion is heavily embraced by marketing and agencies. Moreover, it has rapidly given rise to a whole range of new tools designed to help marketers measure the emotional impact of their communication through, for example, facial expression, biometrics or EEG.

As much as we may be excited by the correlation and be naturally inclined to believe in the ‘emotion is everything’ narrative, we also know many confounding cases where “they love the ad but it is just not selling...”. Take, for example, the much-lauded Budweiser Puppies ad which ran in the 2015 SuperBowl. According to Jorn Socquet, the US VP for Marketing at A-B InBev, while everybody loved the puppies

“they have zero impact on beer sales”.

Wherever there is something we want to believe, there is increasing risk of oversimplification and myth creation. How many times in the last year have you heard ‘95% of decisions are driven by emotion’ and that ‘System 1 is all about emotion’? Science tells a very different and much more helpful story. Rigorous scientific analysis provides a more precise understanding of emotions and of how exactly they relate to purchase decisions. This update will take a deeper look at the science of emotion, why emotional communication can help to sell and how emotions really relate to actual purchase decisions.

This level of precision is important because, if marketing is ultimately about shaping behavior in favour of our brands, the winners will be those who best understand the true dynamics of behavior and how to use this to brief for effective communications.

Happy reading!
The DECODE team

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED EMOTION? (1/2)



Most of us think we have a pretty good idea of what emotions are - it is 'good' to be 'in touch with your emotions' but bad to be 'too emotional'. Someone senior in the office 'lacks emotional intelligence' and, on a weak day, we 'let our emotions get the better of us'. A dramatic week might be an

'emotional rollercoaster'. In everyday life we use the term emotion to express many different things. But to use emotions effectively in marketing, we need a more precise understanding. So what actually is this thing called emotion from a scientific perspective?

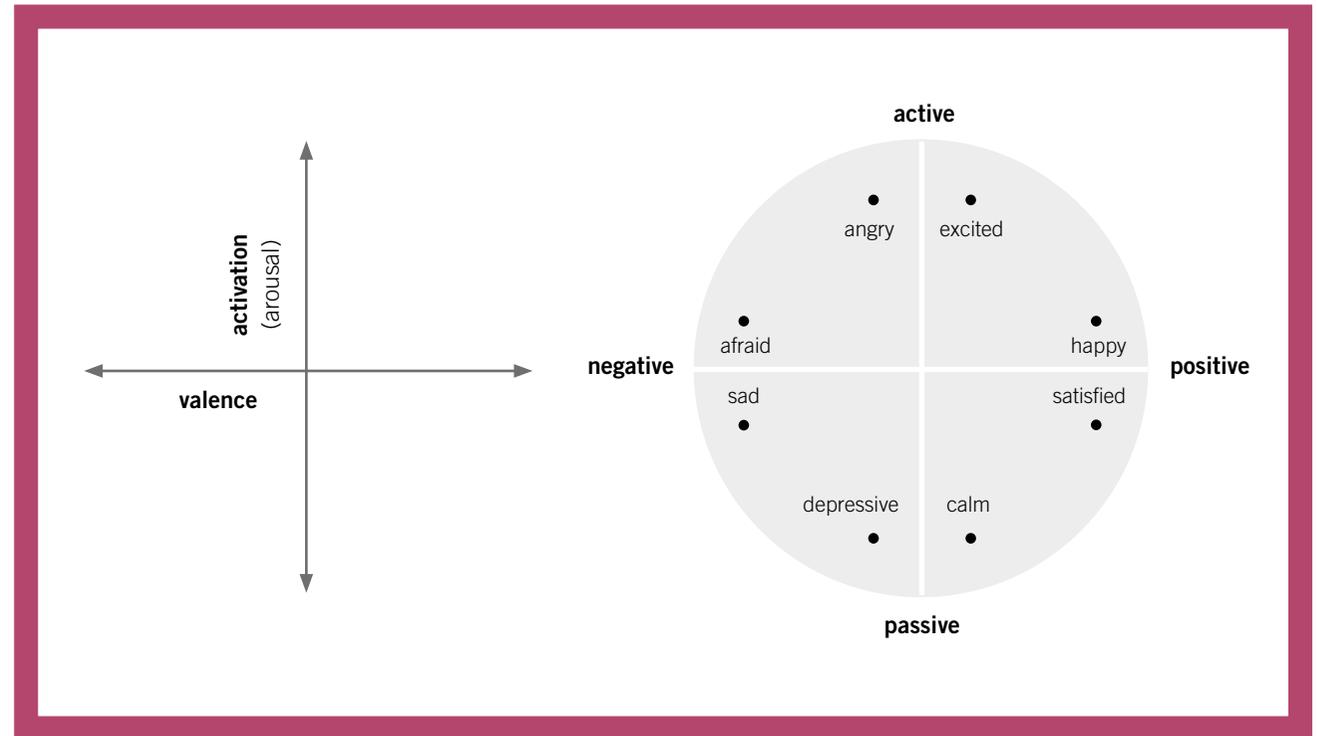
First and foremost, emotions are a physiological response to something we experience or anticipate. Our brain continuously tries to make predictions about the world around us in order to survive. This helps us to prepare our bodies to cope with the upcoming situation by releasing neurotransmitters, adapting heart-beat, regulating blood pressure and muscle tension accordingly. Hence, the way emotions are measured in science is to measure these physiological responses, for example heart rate, sweat and respiration. These affective physiological responses are automatic, fast and very basic to prepare us for fight or flight.

There are two physical dimensions to emotion:

- i) **arousal** – intensity of the body's physiological response
- ii) **valence** – evaluation of whether something is positive or negative →

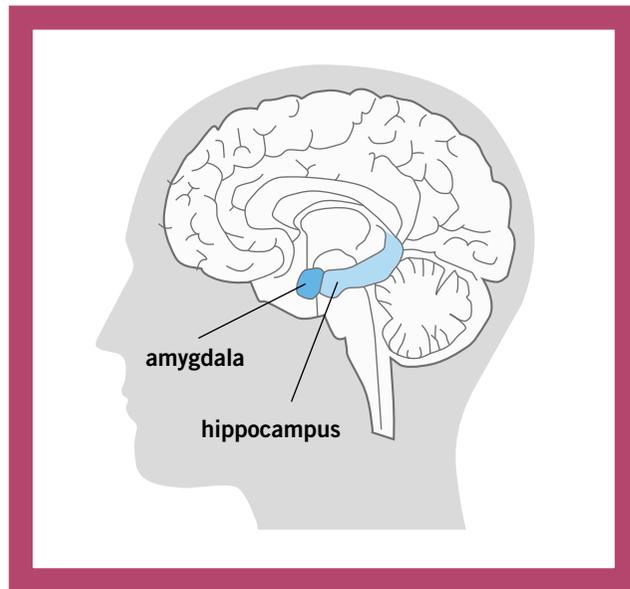
WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED EMOTION? (2/2)

We like to try and make sense of these physiological sensations and so we construct 'feelings' based on the emotional response. We attribute different feelings to the same emotional response based on the specific situation we are in, our experience, personality and our cultural background. The feelings are labels we attribute to the emotion experienced (Barrett, 2017). We may frame and describe these feelings as 'love', 'hate', 'jealousy', 'anger' or other descriptors, but the underlying emotion is driven by only the two dimensions of arousal and valence.



Basal affects occur along the dimensions of valence (good, bad) and arousal (active, passive).

SO HOW DOES EMOTION DRIVE COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS?



Firstly, remember emotional response evolved as a mechanism to prepare our body for fight or flight. If we are in a state of high arousal, our **attention span increases** and our senses are sharpened to be able to deeply process the object that triggers that arousal (known as 'orientation reaction'). **However,**

sometimes an ad evokes high arousal, but no one remembers the brand - how come? To leverage the potential of the arousal the **brand/product needs to be the agent that triggers the response**. If emotional response is not linked to the brand, the ad might be remembered but not the brand because it is not instrumental in activating the emotional response.

Secondly, due to its **deeper processing, emotionally engaging communication is more likely to be remembered**. To understand this positive impact on recall we need to look at the brain's geography. The hippocampus is a brain structure (named after its seahorse-like shape) that manages what we store and where we store it. This structure is positioned right beside the amygdala (named after its almond like shape) – our emotional centre. This shows the relationship between emotional response and memory formation: to survive, and to optimise future decisions and actions, it was especially important to store and remember those objects and situations that evoked a strong emotional response.

This is why we are more likely to store episodes (e.g. TVCs) and objects (e.g. brands) if they are delivered with high

arousal. So, if an ad is emotionally engaging we are more likely to store it. This contributes to the recall of the ad and also increases the mental availability of the brand (assuming the brand is correctly assigned to the ad).

Thirdly, **arousal is a key predictor of sharing creative communication**. The higher the arousal, the more likely people are to share. Hence, emotionally engaging ads are more likely to be shared and this can greatly increase reach. (Falk, E. et al. 2013).

What about valence? The **valence of our experiences with the brand – be it via usage or watching an ad – becomes part of the brand's associative network**. Therefore, a communication that evokes a positive emotional response is helpful in building a positive attitude towards the brand. The research cited above also shows that communication creating positive valence is more likely to be shared than negative.

Conclusion: Emotions drive ad effectiveness by increasing depth of processing, memory formation (recall etc.) and reach through sharing.

SO ALL I NEED IS TO BE SURE OF EMOTIONAL ADVERTISING, RIGHT?



Scene from the Budweiser Superbowl ad

The last section showed why emotionally engaging communication can be more effective. However, despite the fact that emotions can help communications to be effective, **the notion that ‘emotion is all that matters’ has significant limitations.**

Arousal and positive valence are fundamental but also very basic dimensions. They do not help to differentiate

our brands and products. Valence only provides a basal evaluation (good vs. bad) and hence only provides basal differentiation between brands. Which brand doesn’t want to be associated with positive emotion?! In any case, most products these days are of adequate quality to be considered generally ‘good’. Indeed, the German consumer organisation, Stiftung Warentest, give their quality seal of ‘good’ to 85% of products they test. As we all know, brand equity is the brand’s associative network in consumers’ brains and valence can be a part of this network but, in itself, it’s not sufficient to be distinctive or differentiating. Good versus bad does not go far enough in helping consumers to make decisions. So, emotion alone will not contribute to building a distinctive brand in the long run.

In addition, whilst **emotionality is relatively easy to achieve in broadcast media it does not lend itself so well to all brand touchpoints.** Packaging and product development, in particular, need a more precise brief than “make it positive and high arousal”. **Emotion as the key guiding principle does not provide clear guardrails for execution across touchpoints and, hence, emotion is not able to ensure a**

consistent brand experience across touchpoints. But what will the brand stand for, if there is no consistency across touchpoints and over time?! The focus on emotional responses can result in generic briefings like “make people love our brand” or “bring back love”. But what does that look like? **Emotionality does not provide sufficient guidelines for how to implement a coherent and consistent brand experience across touchpoints.**

Conclusion: emotional communication helps to increase effectiveness of an ad, but is limited in building a distinctive brand equity and does not provide sufficient guidance on how to create and implement the marketing mix.

NOW FOR THE GREATEST MYTH IN THE ARGUMENT FOR EMOTION (1/2)



Communication that evokes an emotional response helps us to process, remember and share the ad. So far, so good. But some emotional ads sell, others do not. And how does packaging or instore material influence choice when the emotional response looking at a product on-shelf is rather limited? The idea that consumers will experience the same emotional response in front of the shelf that they experienced while watching the ad is wishful thinking.

Whilst there may be exceptional occasions when we react in a heightened state of emotion, such as hooting a car horn in annoyance, the vast majority of the multitude of decisions we make on a daily basis – getting dressed, having a cup of coffee, feeding the cat, popping out for the newspaper are conducted at a routine level with very low associated arousal. In fact, emotions generally do not cause behavior! There is a link between emotion and behavior, but correlation must not be mixed up with causality.

This is very counterintuitive, so let us have a deeper look at the science here. Renowned psychologist Professor Roy Baumeister and his team at Florida State University have evaluated more than 3,000 scientific papers dealing with the question of ‘do emotions determine behavior?’ <http://assets.csom.umn.edu/assets/128887.pdf> The result was astonishing and certainly challenges the prevailing view: **there is almost no indication in this vast body of scientific literature of a causal relationship between emotion and behavior except in extreme cases!** He states that “emotion is stimulated by actions and outcomes” and, in another paper, that “emotions [are] a feedback system whose influence on be-

havior is typically indirect [by] providing feedback and stimulating retrospective appraisal of actions [to] alter guidelines for future behavior”. Emotions are a result of our actions – not the other way around! They provide feedback on whether we are on the right track or not.

But how does that fit with the insight that most decisions are determined by System 1? Doesn’t the work of Kahneman prove that everything is about emotion? No! The notion that ‘System 1 = Emotion’ is an inappropriate oversimplification and misses the point. Take one example: driving a car. In our first driving lesson, we needed to think and control everything we did. It was exhausting and effortful and we were slow. We acted on System 2, because we had not yet developed intuition. Today, we drive without thinking. But do we drive based on emotion?! Hopefully not. Our decisions today are based on intuition. This is what System 1 is about: intuitive, automatic, effortless and fast decision-making based on associative processes. System 1 includes affective and cognitive aspects and tasks (Camerer et al 2005). Another myth is that Professor Gerald Zaltman stated that ‘95% of our decisions are based on emotion’. →

NOW FOR THE GREATEST MYTH IN THE ARGUMENT FOR EMOTION (2/2)

He actually stated that ‘95% of thinking takes place in our unconscious minds’ (Zaltman 2003). Mixing up intuitive, implicit, unconscious processes with emotion is just wrong.

‘You might also have heard about ‘Elliott’, the famous patient of Professor Antonio Damasio. This patient suffered from a trauma in the frontal lobe, damaging an area called the OFC (orbito-frontal cortex), and this damage made it impossible for him to make decisions. However, Elliott could still experience emotions but could no longer make decisions. As Damasio said, “The machinery for his decision making was so flawed that he could no longer be an effective social being.” (Damasio, 1994). Damasio’s main concept is ‘somatic markers’. He used skin conductance during a gambling task as a measurement of somatic markers – hence he measured arousal. According to Damasio, these somatic markers are hypothesized as positive or negative input signals to decision-making. Damasio’s hypothesis has been interpreted by many as meaning that emotion is the basis of all decision-making. However, Damasio himself later conceded, that “We caution against the idea that emo-

tion-based signals ‘decide’ for us, other than in extreme situations”. (Nature Neuroscience volume 5 no. 11 November 2002)

Conclusion: emotional communication helps to make communication more effective as a vehicle to ensure processing of the content of an ad, but the emotional response when watching the ad as such does not drive the purchase decision, because emotions generally do not cause decisions and choice.

Let’s now have a deeper look at what drives choice and what the role of emotions in decision-making really is.

IF EMOTIONS DON'T DRIVE OUR DECISIONS, WHAT DOES? (1/2)

Let's look at some more concrete findings on how consumers make purchase decisions. In an article in St. Gallen Review in 2018 researchers wanted to understand which brain systems correspond with actual sales. The following visuals were used in-store and sales were measured:



Visual A

Which visual triggered more sales? Applying the notion of emotion, we might choose the 'couple' (visual A). But, in fact, visual B triggered the highest sales in store. Why? Brain scans showed which brain regions corresponded with actual in-market sales.

The region that explained actual sales is the same part of the brain that was damaged in Damasio's patient Elliot making him unable to make decisions: the orbito-frontal cortex (OFC). Looking into this area and what it does shows us what actually drives brand choice. In a nutshell, this system assigns value to choices based on our current goals and needs, which is why the activation of this region determines choice, sales and willingness to pay. How does that work?

instead for a salad. In both cases the OFC will be the gatekeeper. The OFC assigned a goal value or reward value to the items on the menu based on their fit with your current goals. If your goal is to indulge yourself then you'll have the burger but, if you want to lose weight, the OFC will assign a higher goal value to salad as a choice.

Behavior is driven by the **expected value of a choice**. In very general terms, this value is a **function of the experienced or expected discrepancy between the actual (current) state and the desired state. This discrepancy is what makes us do things, this is what motivates us** (from the Latin verb 'movere' meaning 'to move'). If you feel hungry, you will start searching for food. If you have just eaten, then the best food in town will not motivate you to eat because there is no discrepancy between your desired state and your actual state. In other words, there is no need. It is the discrepancy from our desired state (goals) that determines the value of choices. You might love doughnuts, but you may have gained weight over the years and this state increases the discrepancy with your desired goal state of self-esteem and feeling attractive. So you are motivated to go on →



Visual B

Imagine you are in a restaurant, you're hungry and you flip through the menu. You adore a good burger, so your emotional response to the burger on the menu is high and positive. However, the moment you decide, your emotional system shuts down and the OFC is activated. You could choose the burger but maybe you are on a diet and, although you have a strong emotional connection with the burger, you opt

IF EMOTIONS DON'T DRIVE OUR DECISIONS, WHAT DOES? (2/2)

a diet and hence the reward system will assign a lower value to the doughnut. Once you have lost weight, your goal of feeling attractive is achieved, and so your goal of losing weight is deactivated because there is no discrepancy anymore. At this point the doughnut gets a higher value again (unfortunately).

Motivation – unlike emotion – always has a target component, an outcome that we want to achieve. **Behavior in general, and consumer behavior in particular, is 'goal directed behavior' – we purchase brands and products to achieve the desired state, goals, needs or jobs to be done. Motivation actually determines what we purchase.** Because it assigns value based on how rewarding the brain expects this choice to be, this system is referred to as the reward system and it is the core of motivation. And this value expectation is based on the associations that we build with the choice over time. This explains why, in the Duplo example above, Visual B sold more. In this case the distinctive reward of the brand is 'sharing' which is communicated more strongly in visual B.



These motivating discrepancies between desired and actual state might be very basic (hunger), utilitarian (get from a to b), hedonistic (treat yourself with something sweet), social (get recognition) or we might want to change the mood we are in (pamper oneself with something warm). Regulating a mood state or feeling can of course motivate us to do something about it. People who feel lonely use warmer water, and take longer, when they shower (Bargh). People who are sad are more likely to help others. When we feel miserable we

may turn to food or buy unnecessary luxuries. In this case, the experienced discrepancy activates the goal to change this bad mood. Therefore, products that are instrumental in lifting our mood get a high goal value. But a note of caution: the motivation to change our mood must not be mixed up with the emotional response while watching an ad!

This differentiation is important because it forces us to distinguish between, on one hand, the emotional response evoked by an ad and, on the other, the message/value proposition of the brand as a means to reduce an expected or experienced discrepancy. Communication needs to dramatize that the brand is an effective means to close this gap, achieve the desired outcome, goal and job to be done – whether it be it on a functional, social or mood level.

Conclusion: Motivation is what makes us do things – not emotion. We choose the option with the highest goal value. The value is high if our product and brands are perceived to be an effective means to close the experienced or expected discrepancy between what we want to do, have, be or become – our goals – and our actual state.

SO WHERE DOES EMOTION FIT IN ACTUAL DECISION-MAKING?



Our current desires, needs, goals and jobs to be done drive our behavior and this is managed by the reward system in the brain. But, in order to learn and to guide future choices, we also need a feedback system that tells us if the choices we made were appropriate. This is where emotion fits in. Emotions are the **feedback mechanism** by which we gauge (via conscious ‘feeling’) the extent to which we are meeting our goals. So first we decide (or buy), then we experience an

emotion that tells us if this was a good decision or not. As we said earlier, our brains are in a constant state of prediction and these prediction errors (whether positive or negative) will result either in positive or negative affect.

When we achieve our desired goal we experience happiness, joy, positive surprise or calm whereas non-achievement causes us to experience anger, sadness and anxiety. In each case, the emotion is a **result** of, and **not a trigger** for, behavior. This was largely discovered through the extensive work of Carver & Scheier, world famous motivation psychologists, who identified that we experience emotions whenever the likelihood of achieving a goal changes. By way of example, when we are playing tennis with the goal of winning the match and we are about to lose an important point we feel emotions such as anger and resentment. When we turn it around and look set to win, we feel happy, proud and powerful. The intensity of the emotion depends on how important the goal is to us. If we really want to win the tennis game, we might get very angry when our partner misses a shot. If we don’t mind so much we will shrug our shoulders, smile and say “never mind” or “unlucky”.

Put simply, in the words of Professor Roy Baumeister, “Emotion serves as an inner mechanism to reward and punish behaviors”. If a behavior leads to negative emotion we can retrain ourselves and avoid this behavior in the future. For example, if we go to a restaurant and have a bad meal, we feel disappointment (or even shame if we are entertaining others) and hence we ‘learn’ to avoid that restaurant in the future. If a behavior leads to positive emotion we learn to repeat the behavior.

SO HOW DO I USE ALL OF THIS?

As we have seen, emotional communication is an effective vehicle, but it is not the message. To impact behavior we firstly need a message that increases the perceived goal value of our brand, a message that shows that the brand is instrumental in helping us achieve **our goals**. In short, a message that positions the brand as an effective means to a desired end: if you use this brand, you can accomplish the desired state and achieve the desired outcome. These outcomes can be functional, social or mood states and feelings. A shampoo can repair the hair (functional), can also make you admired (social) and you treat yourself (mood) with the shampoo because it has precious ingredients. The goal value will drive behavior and this message must be consistently landed across all touchpoints.

In order to increase the impact of communications, in appropriate media, the power of emotional response should be leveraged in order to optimise attention, recall and increase the likelihood of sharing. Let's look at some key points for how to do this. Firstly, to make sure we maximise the impact of our communication we need to get the WHAT and the HOW right:

Effectiveness Checklist

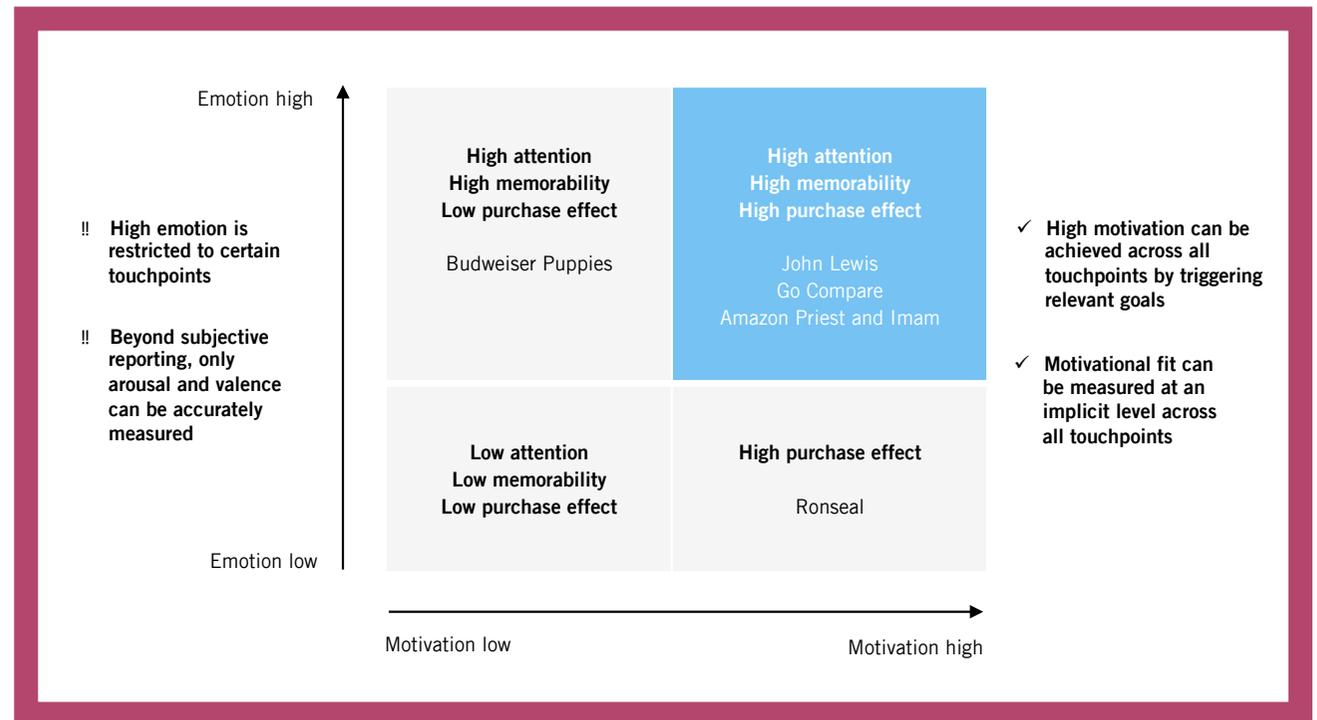
The WHAT <i>Motivation</i>	Achieved? ✓ ✗
Does the brief include a message that links the brand and relevant goals?	
Is this message distinctive to your brand?	
Does the communication stage the brand as a means to this end? (with this brand you can do/have/be/become...)?	

The HOW <i>emotionally engaging</i>	Achieved? ✓ ✗
Does the communication evoke an emotional response?	
Does the brand/product play an instrumental role in the ad?	
Does the brand play an instrumental role in evoking the emotion in a credible way?	
Does it leverage the brand's iconic assets to ensure correct brand assignment?	

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM LANDING THIS?

There are many tools around that measure emotion. It is important to remember that these are measuring 'affect' evoked by the communication (the HOW), but they do not capture whether the message (the WHAT) is motivating and, hence, if it will ultimately drive behavior.

Best practice example: Every year the John Lewis Christmas ad is eagerly awaited by a broad public, way beyond the marketing community, and is used as further evidence of the power of emotional advertising. What makes their advertising succeed is that both the message of the ad and the driver of the emotion are fundamentally and credibly rooted in unique truths of the John Lewis brand – their dedication to understanding their customers' needs and lives, and their ability to deliver a product range that perfectly meets these needs. Let's look at the 2017 ad using the checklist on the following page.



The two pillars of effective advertising: emotional response while watching the ad and motivation.

THE WHAT – MOTIVATION

The WHAT <i>Motivation</i>	Comment	Achieved? ✓ ✕
Does the brief include a message that links the brand and relevant goals?	Ad links to the certainty that John Lewis provides of finding exactly the right gift for Christmas that will make your loved ones happy	✓
Is this message distinctive to your brand?	The message leverages the quality and breadth of the John Lewis range	✓
Does the communication stage the brand as a means to this end? (with this brand you can do/have/be/become...)?	The communication leverages JL's expert understanding of its customers' needs	✓

The HOW <i>emotionally engaging</i>	Comment	Achieved? ✓ ✕
Does the communication evoke an emotional response?	Yes, raises arousal with positive valence and is widely talked about	✓
Does the brand/product play an instrumental role in the ad?	Yes, the brand resolves the narrative tension of the exhaustion caused by the boy's nocturnal friendship with Moz the monster	✓
Does the brand play an instrumental role in evoking the emotion in a credible way?	Yes, Moz is a JL creation (available in store) and all the interaction between the boy, Moz and his parents involves JL products	✓
Does it leverage the brand's iconic assets to ensure correct brand assignment?	JL Xmas ad has become an iconic asset (through tone and narrative style). Distinctive font and logo appear at the end	✓

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John Lewis 2017 Christmas TVC
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jw1Y-zhQURU>

Budweiser Puppies 2015 Superbowl TVC
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otCxSnu_HXA

FURTHER READING

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Padoa-Schioppa, C. & Conan, K.E. (2017); *Orbitro-frontal Cortex: a neural circuit for economic decisions;* *Neuron;* 96; November 15

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING TALKS

Phil Barden

APG Planning Skills Diploma course

How Decision Science makes Planning more effective.
London, 09 May 2017

Phil Barden

Commercial Management course

Why We Buy. Ashridge Management College, 02 June 2017

REFERENCES (2/2)

Phil Barden

Northwestern University: MSc course in Marketing
Decision Science in action. London, 13 September 2017

**Adjunct Professor Dr Martin Scarabis,
Kathryn Purchase**

Webinar
Psychological Pricing Inspiration. 14 September 2017

Phil Barden

Shopper Marketing
How we buy. Amsterdam, 4 October 2017

Kathryn Purchase, UK

Shopper Brain Conference
The “Now What” of the Shopper Brain. Actionable science for real world impact.
Amsterdam, 5 October 2017

Phil Barden

Growth Summit
Why we say something and do another – and what to do about it. London, 05 October 2017

Phil Barden

Shopper Marketing
Boosting effectiveness via Decision Science. Copenhagen, 8 November 2017

Johannes Schneider

Trends in Healthcare
Gut feeling in the head – increasing the effectiveness of healthcare comms via Brand Code Management. Frankfurt, 9 November 2017

Phil Barden

APG Planning Skills Diploma course
How Decision Science makes Planning more effective.
London, 30 November 2017

Dr Christian Scheier

Talk in Plakadiva Hamburg, 16 May 2018

Phil Barden

Commercial Management course
Why We Buy. Ashridge Management College, June 2018

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