



MARKETING FEATURE



The Connection Between Emotions and Brand Loyalty

[By Surajit Sen Sharma]

“Emotions matter because if we did not have them, nothing else would matter” (Elster 1999).

Emotions and rationality balance each other out in any purchasing decision, but the extent of their influence on the consumer varies with the circumstances. It is the responsibility of the marketer to ensure the transaction circumstances favor his or her brand or product, and the marketer cannot do that without learning about the emotional concerns of the targeted consumer. A marketer who sees the consumer only as an impulsive bundle of emotions is way off track, but a marketer who regards the consumer as an unemotional, calculating machine is also a failure.

Emotions in the Marketing Mix

A marketing mix that successfully plays the emotion card is the key to building brand loyalty. Marketers always seek a balance in the marketing mix that persuades the consumer to choose a particular product over others with the same, or greater, functional utility. Any good marketing mix uses a combination of value-oriented emotions and utility-oriented reasons to attract a consumer. But more often than not, catching a consumer's attention is not sufficient to make the sale or enhance brand equity.

The marketer cannot find a balanced marketing mix unless he or she can successfully identify and address the value concerns of the targeted consumer, which the consumer prizes more than products' basic functional utility. A superior marketing mix promises “satisfaction” to the consumer and suggests sentiments attached to ownership of the product that the consumer finds meaningful.

Emotions and Brand Loyalty

Loyalty is unquestioning trust. Any business transaction involves an element of trust, but that trust may be based on assurances implicit in the legal system and may have

nothing to do with the consumer's trust in the marketer. For example, one may buy a product from a completely unknown company simply based on price and utility while placing his or her trust not in the producer but in the state system that governs consumer commodities.

Consumer loyalty to a brand or a supplier requires something more than trust, and emotional sentiment is the component that, when added to trust, builds brand loyalty. This is why every marketer wants the consumer to accept a brand as part of a valued way of life and tries to fix that emotional sentiment in the consumer's memory.

A strong positive feeling toward a brand marks the emotional component of brand loyalty. However, brand loyalty does not simply mean habitually buying the same brand, since not all habitual buys are based on trust and sentiment. Brand loyalty includes a component of emotional sentiment that turns the loyal consumer into a social brand ambassador who proactively enhances brand equity by generating word-of-mouth recommendations.

Brand loyalty, once achieved, acts as an effective barrier against brand switching. Meaningful differences that build brand

loyalty are not confined to the product itself; other promotional aspects of the marketing mix, like distribution and brand image, play a vital role in creating brand loyalty.

Reason and Emotion in the Purchase Decision

In the modern marketplace, it is common for the consumer to be boggled by the array of similar products with similar features. To arrive at the purchase decision, then, the consumer has to make trade-offs. He or she has to decide between competing features of products that may have the same functional value. For example, when buying a car, one might have to make trade-offs regarding price, comfort, size, appearance, etc.

However, reason alone is insufficient to determine trade-offs between alternatives, and behind the values that we seek to enhance or maintain are past emotional experiences that shape our concerns. So emotions become crucial in purchase decisions.

Reasoning can tell consumers about a product's features, alternatives, and functionality, but without the involvement of emotion, consumers are unable to assign values to those features or alternatives. If consumers fail to bolster reason with



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emotion and fail to assign values to available functional alternatives, they will be unable to make up their minds about which products to buy. Without emotion, consumers suffer from decision paralysis. When values attached to a product are unclear, indecision is the rule.

Successful marketing attaches the values and concerns of the target consumer to the product in a manner that helps the consumer identify the brand with himself or herself or with the values of his or her social circle.

Reason compels the consumer to feel the need to buy a product; emotion determines which alternative is bought.

Work Cited:

Elster, Jon. *The Alchemies of the Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

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