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## **The Power of 'Guilt': Integrating Emotional Metrics with your Market Research Tool-Kit**

**Guilt** can be incredibly potent as an emotion when used in marketing, advertising, branding and innovation. It is one of 57 emotions we use as branding research input and report on frequently as part of the integrated Emotional Metrics Market Research Took-Kit we have developed for many of our clients.

Recent studies of impulse buying have shown that many impulse buyers subsequently experienced feelings of anxiety and guilt (Rook, 1987), and that when asked about their mood following a recent impulse purchase, just as many respondents said they were anxious and guilty (24%) as said they were feeling pleasure and excitement.

Consumer guilt has been used effectively in advertising through 'guilt appeals' which attempt to arouse feelings of guilt (or fear of such feelings) and then offer a guilt-reducing solution. The process is managed from guilt to redemption with what has been termed 'the baby is sick, the baby is well' campaign approach. Here, initial communication objectives are to highlight the problem, be it male impotence, dangers and ill effects of smoking cigarettes, being overweight, skin problems, inadequate auto insurance, life disabilities via allergies, or lack of funds to pay the monthly mortgage—all under the heading of "the baby is sick" syndrome. Even in regards to the baby care category itself, lack of moisture, as one example, can be seen as guilt-provoking if mom sees herself as not having adequately addressed this, and baby oil is the solution. Subsequent campaigns then aim to reassure about the good baby oil's continued use has provided (i.e., 'the baby is well').

At the moment, there are insufficient data on the subject of the impact of guilt in use of advertising and marketing, but from a sense of trending patterns, it seems apparent that the global growth of emotion in advertising and marketing has been marked by guilt arousal, followed by reduction in feelings of guilt, anxiety and regret as a consequence of the frequency of post hoc rationalization and problem-solution implemented by the product use experience.

As an example, if we were to have moms evaluate the following baby care commercial ( <http://www.ispot.tv/ad/7wBi/johnsons-baby-lotion> ) using our validated 57 emotional word list, the following eight (8) emotions, among others, would likely be played back to the greatest extent:

1. guilt
2. joy
3. awe
4. caution
5. delight
6. friendliness
7. love
8. optimism

As such, these are eight (8) emotional expectations being promoted to moms who view and respond to this advertising, which suggests that the product use experience needs to (at a minimum) deliver, satisfy, alleviate and address these very emotional 'promises' and 'expectations'. Which means that when you test YOUR brand's customers' usage experiences, respondents need to indicate favorable ratings on those emotions tapped and set

forth by marketing and advertising, and that the brand user experience you provide your customers must also be seen as effective at alleviating any emotion of guilt (or any other negative emotions which may have been conveyed) among those core users who may have grown to feel inadequate in relation to 'the baby is well' paradigm.

This is but one example of how emotions can be integrated into your market research planning and implementation (e.g., your product testing), your innovations agenda and the direction you provide your R&D, advertising and marketing teams.

So, what are the emotional profiles of YOUR brands? Does your brand's positioning link to any degree with 'guilt' or any other negative emotion which can quickly become a sales inhibitor? What are the positive emotions that are the beacons of success for your brand(s)? There are 56 other emotions besides 'guilt' that we have measured when assessing any existing brand's positioning profile, and it's important to know how these prevalent emotions fit with your brands' profile and that of your strategic target segments, your core users, in order to fully understand and explain marketplace performance dynamics for your brand.

If you are interested in learning how we can help you integrate emotion into your market research programs and thereby optimize your organization's branding efforts, please feel free to contact me for a no-obligation consultation.

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### **Case histories: maximizing emotion-based pathways towards brand choice**

We've now completed well over 300 emotion branding projects over the past decade, by means of which we have been able to link a brand's emotional position to consumer brand choice, using supplemental perceptual mapping, key driver analysis and emotional need state segmentation - -and I wanted to share some generic case history findings and corollaries with you, hopefully in the event that you are currently or soon to be conducting emotion research projects which integrate emotion with other traditionally tangible, rational variables in your strategic tool-kits:

- In virtually all cases, (this may sound like a no-brainer) we've found that positive emotional feelings and perceptions relative to the brand in question are likelier than negative ones to drive positive purchase interest and positive overall liking of that brand.
- We've been able to develop segmentation models for several product and service categories that were emotion-based, and, we are consistently finding that customer segments containing positive emotions as part of their DNA segment profile are more strongly propensed than negative DNA segments to brands in general, and are likelier to be high indexed segments in terms of disproportionately high volume spending and consumption relative to other segments.
- Each brand and each segment tends to have its own unique emotion profile (DNA). Brands also tend to convey distinct emotional DNA profiles as do consumer segments.
- After every usage experience, a particular Brand DNA is conveyed. To the extent that that resultant brand DNA is congruent with the user's expectations and needs, there will be repeated usage and, eventually, loyalty and potential advocacy—to the extent that repeated brand usage consistently delivers the expected and required 'goods'.

- We have also found that when we combine key product attributes with emotions, we derive an even more potent set of brand and segment DNA profiles which become true beacons for optimizing brand positioning and selling efforts.

So, with these corollaries in mind, we strongly urge that you consider the addition of emotion to your research program, especially for segmentation, tracking, concept testing, basic market studies - and utilize your qualitative studies to address Emotional DNA in order to begin to understand how your brands are perceived and what your core users' experiences are all about in terms of emotion and sensation.

Feel free to contact me for a no-obligation consultation should you be interested in building in emotion for your next projects.

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