USING EMOTIONS TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN SIMILAR PROTOTYPES

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ABSTRACT

In the marketplace, many products are perceived as having similar characteristics although one product is selected over the others. It is believed that the emotions elicited by two very similar products may not be the same and, therefore, one product has advantages over the other. A qualitative study was conducted to determine if the emotions evoked by two similar prototypes would result in distinct emotional experiences. Consumers were shown the prototypes in a focus group and were asked to share the emotions prompted by each prototype. The lists of emotions and frequencies were converted into Wordles™ in order to compare the prototypes. The findings indicate different emotional experiences for each of the prototypes. Understanding the emotional experience triggered by each prototype can help marketers/product developers choose the prototype that best fits the personality of the brand or concept.

BACKGROUND

Every day, humans experience a range of different emotions, which also vary by degrees of intensity. Common emotions include: anger, anxiety, fear, grief, joy, love, surprise, and trust. Emotions can be defined as: 1) “short term affective responses in response to particular stimuli which have reinforcing potential. The basic dimensions are positive and negative (valence)” (Gibson, 2006), 2) “brief intense physiological and mental reaction focused on a referent” (Clore et al, 1987), 3) “internal, not external and mental… not physical body states” (Ortony et at, 1987). “Emotions differ from moods, in that a mood is longer than an emotion and is not focused on a referent” (Ferrarini et al, 2010).

The average number of products carried in a supermarket more than tripled (15,000 to 50,000) from 1980 to 2002 (Nestle 2002). Based on historical internal data, it has been observed that many of the products in a similar category also have similar liking scores. Because many of the products do not differ based on liking scores, understanding the emotions elicited by these products may become a source of differentiation of one over another.

The present study investigates whether emotions evoked by two similar prototypes will result in distinct emotional experiences. We expect that each of the two prototypes will elicit differing emotions; that will potentially be unique to the slight nuances in formulation that may not be picked up by liking scores.

MATERIALS and METHODS

- Consumers of the product category were recruited to participate in qualitative group sessions
  - Consumers were selected based on articulation level and willingness to participate
  - Consumers were compensated for their time
- A total of 18 sessions were conducted
  - Two geographically representative locations for the category
  - Sessions were divided by age: Millenials, Gen X, and Boomers
- Consumers were given 2 products (monadically) in 5 oz. clear plastic cups with 3 digit codes. Products were not branded
  - Consumers were instructed to write down emotions experienced for each product individually
  - Group sharing occurred upon completion of individual evaluation for both products
- After all groups,
  - Emotions were extracted from the complete list of terms which included product attributes, emotions, sensations, and moods
  - Lists of emotions and their frequencies were compiled for each of the prototypes
  - Lists of emotions and frequencies were entered into Wordle™ to create a visual representation of the emotional experience

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RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Figure 1: Wordle from Prototype 1

Positive Emotions Elicited



Negative Emotions Elicited

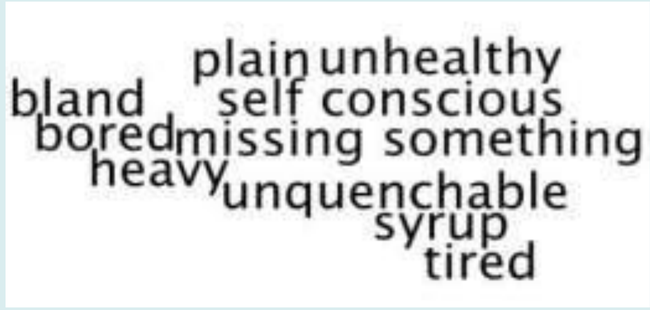

Figure 2: Wordle from Prototype 2

Positive Emotions Elicited



Negative Emotions Elicited



Example 1— Several positive emotions were experienced frequently for both prototypes. They included refreshed, refreshing, happy, and relaxed. Prototype 1 evoked passive emotions including satisfied, summertime, crisp, calm and content. Prototype 2 differed from prototype 1 in that it evoked active emotions including energized, bubbly, and tingly.

Example 2— A comparison of the negative emotions for both prototypes 1 and 2 also showed differences. Both prototypes elicited feelings of being bored, feeling heavy and missing something. Prototype 1 left consumers feeling unhealthy, self-conscious and tired. Prototype 2 left consumers feeling dry, fake, disappointed and confused.

CONCLUSION

Though these products may be perceived as comparable in taste, and may consequently have similar liking scores; they evoked different emotional experiences as shown in the figures above.

Therefore these emotional experiences may provide additional information and insight to consider, when making a decision on which prototype to move forward with. For example, when a team considers brand or communication about the product, it would be important to ensure the sensory attributes are conveying emotions that will fit the entire proposition. Product liking may not be the only measure to consider in helping with such a task. In summary, this tool can be useful as a way to differentiate between two similar prototypes within a product category.

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