



## Emotions Cue Sales: Coke V. Pepsi



Remember the last time you came home from the mall will some purchase that fell under the “seemed like a good idea at the time” category? It appears our subconscious plays a much larger role than was ever imagined when it comes to buying decisions.

As many of you in the sales industry should already know, almost always price is not the stumbling block in most transactions. It can be argued that it is the emotional side of the equation that really comes into play when transactions take place. In particular when these transactions are large purchases requiring substantial risk. Recent studies show that it is emotional triggers such as greed, guilt, hope, urgency, love and the risk of rejection (ouch) that are far more powerful than logic or rational.

Truth is that most people really like to belong and or fit in. Our culture has beckoned, no, compelled or driven us to be part of the “cool” set. (Remember platform shoes?) In fact it is this compelling desire to belong that drives many of our buying decisions. Let me demonstrate; In a recent neuroeconomics study carried out at Baylor University’s Human Neuro-imaging Lab, Professor Read Montague involved subjects in the ultimate Pepsi Challenge. Montague wired his subjects to instruments that would measure brainwaves (what’s really going on in the brain) and then gave them the Pepsi Challenge.

Now as you’ve all witnessed in the blindfold test, it has been Pepsi that most soda (pop) drinkers prefer taste-wise. We’ve seen it over and over, time and again that when it comes to taste Pepsi appears to have it hands down over Coke. But here is where branding becomes most relevant. Coke has done such an emotionally powerful job of marketing and branding that most consumers want to be seen as Coke drinkers (cause its “cool” and we want to fit in) rather than the much publicized “Pepsi Generation”.

I know you diehard Diet Pepsi or regular Pepsi drinkers may wish to argue the theory but without doubt Coke has cornered the soda market globally. Why? Because emotionally it becomes important to our sense of whom we are to see ourselves as Coke drinkers. (We teach the world to sing in harmony.) It is the very reason why some folks choose Mercedes or BMW over North American cars. They wish to be seen as having good taste, being cool or affluent; belonging to an exclusive club or group. It is the emotional drive of self perception, our fear of rejection and how we will be perceived by others. Whoa, emotion.

Gerald Zaltman, a researcher at Harvard University, has revealed that 95% of consumer decision making is done subconsciously at some emotional level. The process begins in the rational prefrontal cortex (the new brain), but is often powerfully over-ridden by an area called the interior insula (the old brain) that responds to strong emotional stimuli (nearly always overwhelming the rational part of the brain).

These guys could analyze a ham sandwich and tell you what the pig ate for breakfast.

Now you’d assume that when the stakes are high as in major capital improvement decisions, most companies would circumvent the emotional aspect with logic and rational would take over. Not true friend.

The emerging research tells us that the bigger the risk, the more emotions play a role in the decision. Remember emotions like, greed, pride, hope, desire are very powerful buying triggers. As sales professionals then, your mission (should you decide to accept it) is to find the red-hot triggers that will ignite these neuro-subconscious responses and tip the buyer toward the sale. Oh, by the way; your product or service had better have some perceived value as well.