

InstinctiveCHOICE

Incorporating Customer Emotion into Product and Service Design

Businesses in all sectors are finding that they are on a level playing field with competitors. The growing numbers of on-line stores and review websites have given the consumer new ways to compare and contrast product and service features before making a decision. In the face of all this customer choice, companies have become adept at using 'voice of the customer' data to ensure that they are competitive in terms of cost, quality, delivery and functionality. These cannot be ignored; a product or service which does not meet the customers' baseline expectations in these areas is almost guaranteed to fail. However, even with all of the functional and quality features present, a company may still not achieve its desired or predicted market share.

When multiple products or services with similar functional and quality features are available customers are unable to make a decision based on logic alone. Under these circumstances research has shown that purchasing decisions depend largely on instinct and emotion i.e. the consumer simply picks the product or service that 'appeals' to them the most.

The good news is that a product/service can be designed so that it automatically appeals to the customer on the instinctive psychological level.

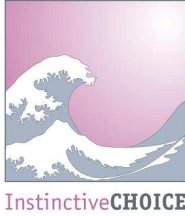
Why 'design in' instinctive emotional appeal?

New functional features can be copied and quality can be matched, however instinctive emotional appeal is much harder to replicate (sometimes impossible) and once established it is extremely difficult to supplant in the minds of consumers.

The *Instinctive Choice Modelling™* tool based on the Kansei Engineering methodology can be used to achieve this product differentiation on an instinctive level. Kansei Engineering originated in Japan; there is no direct translation for 'Kansei' into English however the creator of the methodology describes Kansei as "the consumer's psychological feeling" towards a product. Kansei Engineering maps individual features of a product, service or brand to customers' subjective responses. This information can be used to create a new design which deliberately induces a chosen set of positive instinctive responses.



Product and service design features and their potential Kansei effects: for example, what features combine to make a product Stylish, Masculine or Inspirational?



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The technique has been used by a number of large manufacturing organisations to significantly increase market share. For example, Mazda used Kansei Engineering to design all sensory elements, including the sound, of the MX5 sports car and achieved sales in excess of 750,000 cars (earning the MX5 a place in the Guinness Book of Records as the most successful two-seater sports car of all time). Sony achieved a market share of 24% (an increase of 21%) by using Kansei Engineering to innovate the design of the camcorder. The concept of linking consumer instinctive emotional response to product attributes is well established in Japan where the technique is frequently and successfully applied to product, packaging, interior and web design.

Kansei Engineering is based upon the analysis of product semantics, in this case, the subjective words and phrases used to describe a product or service. Kansei words are generally adjectives (stylish, elegant, exciting etc.) but may also be verbs and nouns. Hundreds of words may be associated with a single product or service and statistical methods are used to reduce these to a representative set. The aim of the methodology is to map these Kansei words back to specific and changeable elements within the product or service.

Semantic Universe

Independent, Simple, Light-Hearted, Enjoyable, Boring, Relaxed, Healthy, Happy, Amusing, Stressful, Elegant, Exciting, Inspiring, Frustrating, Intelligent, Secure, Thoughtless, Lasting, Serious, Irritating, Traditional, Strong, Comforting, Responsible, Trustworthy, Mature, Optimistic, Dependable, Irresponsible, Young, Modern, Personal, Smart, Accessible

Collection of customer data is a key component of Kansei Engineering; consumers from a selected market segment evaluate a set of product or service designs to decide how much a design evokes each Kansei word, for example, how exciting is design A on a scale of 1 – 7. Multivariate statistical techniques are used to analyse the resulting customer data and investigate the relationships between the Kansei words and design elements. The analysis provides valuable insight with direct consequences to the design process, for example, analysis will reveal;

- How respondents have subconsciously grouped and interpreted the Kansei words, whether conflicts exist between words, e.g. will an increase in 'modernity' be coupled with a decrease in feeling of 'trust'
- Which design elements are most influential in how the product or service is perceived
- Which design element 'levels' combine to ensure that the product or service evokes each of the desired positive emotions
- Which design element combinations provoke negative emotions and should be avoided
- How will changing a design element from one 'level' to another effect perception of the product on key emotions
- How significant a factor is brand identity for the target market

A Customer Centric Product or Service

Kansei Engineering brings the voice of the customer directly into the front end of the design process. The technique uses sound statistical techniques in the analysis to provide valuable insight that can guide the design process. Through careful application of this methodology, products and services can be designed that appeal on a subjective, instinctive level to the consumer.