

Spectators as shoppers:

How emotion drives purchase decisions

An Ipsos House Research Study



To really understand people's behaviour and their true motivations, it is not enough to use only verbal research techniques. It is essential to also study the processes of conscious decision making, where rational thinking and behaviour conditioned by patterns and beliefs are at play. Through verbal research, we only have access to what people **say they do** and not necessarily what they **really do**. The latter is, in most cases, an unconscious process; **non-verbal**, automatic, based on memories and influenced by the context or scenario of the present experience.

It is evident to us that to gather powerful information about people's behaviour and to have a solid basis from which

to develop useful strategies; it is necessary to have a **total understanding** integrating **verbal** and **non-verbal** research. In response to this need, Ipsos has built Ipsos House, the Human Behaviour Research Centre.

To illustrate the work of Ipsos House and showcase the research potential of the facilities it offers, we will present an experiment based around football and food, which explores the fast-moving consumer packaged goods (FMCG) industry in Mexico. This aims to better understand the shopping and consumption behaviour of snacks and beverages when consumers are exposed to an intense emotional context.

Fans and FMCG: Feeling the tension

The period before the World Cup was an ideal time to explore the topic of emotionally driven purchasing due to the high interest generated, both for the public and for food and beverage companies. During the run-up to the event is when brands set out their communication and commercial plans. And if they are to develop successful strategies and increase sales, it is vital that companies have information about any triggers and barriers that come in to play for consumers of their products.

It is not a secret that emotions play a significant role in the purchase or consumption of any product. But, we wanted to know more:

- Do we know what these effects are on snacks and beverages products in particular?
- Is it possible that emotions influence the selection of brands, sizes or variety?
- Do people consume the products in the same way in emotional contexts of joy, frustration and disappointment?

To answer these questions, we designed an experiment at Ipsos House to find out how the emotions generated by happy and less happy experiences can affect what people buy. This was explored in the celebratory context of the World Cup, which has a tremendous emotional charge for a large part of the population

Imagine being in a bar with your friends watching the stars of your country's national team. What do you feel? What do you drink? What do you eat? Do you share it?

Now imagine a situation where your team loses in a tedious and tense environment. What do you feel? Do you eat the same things as if you were happy? What do you drink?

To discover the unknowns of emotionally-driven purchasing, it was necessary to find the most effective way of generating and measuring the emotions that would naturally be produced in each scenario and then to understand their impact on making purchases.

At Ipsos House, the imagined becomes reality. The bar and a dull, uncomfortable room were used to recreate spaces suited to the experience of winning or losing the football World Cup. In this way, stimuli and situations were designed to reflect both moods and provide contextual immersion for the participants.

Every emotion causes a physical response in the body. We have all felt our pulse speed up in a very emotionally charged situation. Who hasn't heard the expression

About Ipsos House

Ipsos House is a modular research facility with installations of different environments that reproduce common spaces in which people interact daily. This allows for contexts and scenarios to be recreated in the most realistic way possible. Ipsos House contains a bar, a doctor's office, a bank branch, a supermarket, a neighbourhood shop, and even a confessionary, where, without the need for a priest, participants can reveal their most secret thoughts. All these spaces are adaptable to the needs of research, considering the necessary psychographic characteristics.

The House is equipped with the latest technology in verbal and non-verbal techniques to bring the real context into a controlled environment. It has audio and video equipment in all areas, and neuroscience tools to record behaviour such as GSR (Galvanic Skin Response), Eye tracking, Facial Coding, EEG, and VR.

All these design features make the research space of Ipsos House an optimal arena for exploring - and ultimately better understanding - human behaviour.

Equipment	Description
EYE TRACKER	Precision measurement of the eyes and movements of the gaze.
FACIAL CODING	Emotion predictors use the observed facial expressions as input to calculate the likelihood of an emotion.
EEG	Records the electrical activity of the brain using electrodes placed on the scalp.
GSR (Galvanic Skin Response)	Measures emotional arousal through the electrical conductivity of our skin which subtly changes the activation of sweat glands in the skin.
Neuro Station and Stationary Mobile	Neuro labs with integrated biometric methodologies.
Virtual Reality	Virtual reality headsets with GSR measurement.

“My heart was going to burst!”? Our body’s reactions to stimuli are out of our control, and that’s also why we have the expression “Body Talk”.

In the case of the skin, when we perceive something that has a positive or negative emotional impact, it emits sweat at a scale that may be imperceptible to humans, but not to the GSR tool. We used this to monitor the guinea pigs of our experiment and detect the physiological effects of specific moments of greater emotional impact such as scoring or conceding goals, losing ball possession and seeing images of crowd celebrations.

The average GSR reading throughout the negative experience (26%) was significantly lower than the positive experience (32.5%). This evidence, along with feedback from participant observations and verbal feedback, allowed us to build a picture of the emotional states of the two groups before we analysed their behaviour as shoppers.



“**Emotions generated from a positive or negative scenario have a significant influence on shopping behaviour.**”

Evidence for emotionally-driven purchasing

After immersion in both contexts, people were sent to shop at the Ipsos House Supermarket, where they were observed. We found a clear difference between the subsequent behaviours of the two groups.

If you go to the store to buy something to eat and drink for you and your friends after the enjoyable experience of watching your team win an important game, what is your purchasing behaviour? Do you explore new options for drinks or snacks? Do you dare to adventure with new flavours or types? Are you looking for something special? Do you care if it is expensive or cheap?

Then, if you do the same but feeling frustrated and angry because your team lost, do you still want to buy drinks and snacks? If so, are your purchase decisions as adventurous? Do you make different choices around price?

Observing the ways in which people in different emotional states navigate the store, the length of time they take to choose a product, whether they browse various categories and the amount they purchase provides powerful information. This helps us to understand the influence of emotion upon the shopping process and therefore, on the sales figures of a brand or category, increase or decrease.

The results showed us that emotions generated from a positive or negative scenario have a significant influence on people’s shopping behaviour. An understanding of emotional triggers and their effects on purchasing equips us to develop robust and precise strategies. We can, for example, apply these findings to alter a particular purchasing setting and by influencing the environment, encourage the desired behaviour.

Gaining knowledge about nature of emotional purchasing offers huge potential for commercial success. These insights can improve the likelihood of meeting sales targets in any business or service.

How emotion drives
purchase decisions

Ipsos House is a research facility which uses the latest technologies in verbal and non-verbal techniques to answer business questions in a unique way. This first of its kind has been built in Mexico City.



Contact the Ipsos House team

Armando Mora, Global Account Director, Mexico:
Armando.Mora@ipsos.com

Maria Carolina Naranjo, Ipsos House Commercial
Lead: Mariac.Naranjo@ipsos.com