Guest editorial

Editorial on the role of emotions in B2B marketing

This special issue addresses the influence that affect and emotions have in organizational, or B2B, buying behavior. B2B buying has often been treated as a rational activity, even though humans are involved in the decision-making. However, human decision-making often includes a complex cadre of emotions and rationalizations. Contributions to this special issue explore how discrete emotions such as trust and empathy impact organizational decision-making as well as examine the role that affective orientation, emotional appraisals and emotional intelligence play in the B2B exchange process. Brand relationships and connections which foster emotional ties and advocacy are also investigated in this special issue.

Kumar, Goreczny and Maurer examine how a salesperson's preset goals, customer satisfaction levels and past performance affect the extent of goal achievement, as well as how job specific attitudes and emotions affect the relationship between preset goals and goal achievement. They found that attitudes and emotions regarding workplace conduciveness and workplace ethics and diversity, reduce the effect preset goals have on goal achievement. However, attitudes and emotions regarding workplace philosophy strengthens the effect preset goals have on goal achievement, whereas with disagreement, this relationship diminishes.

Kemp, Borders, Anaza and Johnston purport that organizational buyers may be driven not only by logic, testing and facts but also by emotions. Depth interviews were conducted with marketing decision makers for one of the most valuable brands in the world to elucidate how emotions affect decision-making. Their research shows that many organizational buyers possess a personal connection to B2B brands and that buyers with strong personal connections to B2B brands have higher rates of consideration, purchase and are less price sensitive. Findings illustrate that emotions are prevalent at all stages in the organizational decision-making process. As emotions are involved in the entire buying process, messaging and marketing actions which take into account individuals should remain a part of an organization's marketing communications strategy.

Anaza, Inyang and Saavedra explore salesperson empathy and the moderating impact of positive/negative affect on a salesperson's listening and adaptive selling behaviors. They also seek to identify whether and how empathy influences salesperson performance. Their results show that empathy and the moderating role of positive affect foster desirable sales behaviors (listening and adaptive selling behaviors) that subsequently enhance in-role (expected) and extra-role (discretionary) performance and final sales outcomes.

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Badrinarayanan, Vishag and Sierra used a vendor/frontline employee/customer triad framework to examine the underlying role of emotions in how frontline employees' evaluations of vendors and customers trigger and temper brand advocacy efforts. They found that frontline employees' relationship quality with the vendor and perceptions of vendors' product quality positively influence brand advocacy. Frontline employee training programs should emphasize the customer's role in the transaction to increase perceptions of shared responsibility, as a means to create a favorable emotional experience, and accentuate timing strategies on when to pursue heightened or diminished emotionally charged brand advocacy efforts.

Delpechitre, Duleep and Beeler imply that rather than focusing on financial and performance goals, managers also should focus on human resource practices that would develop employee emotional labor through emotional goals. Sales managers and mentors should invest time to foster routine activities where salespeople can share and reflect on emotional goals while being rewarded for understanding change in customer emotions, and regulate their own emotions accordingly. They suggest that salespeople with higher levels of emotional intelligence (EI) are able to perceive their customers' emotions and as more companies embrace EI and embed it into their corporate culture, a salesperson's EI affects the buyer–seller interaction and the behaviors of salespeople.

van Zeeland and Henseler integrate findings on the processing of vendor social cues, their impact on the professional buyer and behavioral responses from the disciplines of neuroscience, biology and psychology [specifically the Behavioral Inhibition System/Behavioral Activation System (BIS/BAS theory)]. Their findings indicate that social cues are likely to be of substantial value in the first encounter between buyer and seller, i.e. positively evaluated social cues create an approach-motivated behavioral intention, whereas negatively evaluated ones create avoidance. This process is probably predominantly mediated by trust and moderated by personality and contextual factors. Additionally, they suggest possibilities for managers to use neuroscientific techniques to assess and train sales agents.

Briggs, Kaira and Agnihotri provide insights into the role of salespeople's ability to appraise emotions (EA ability) and its effects on job-related outcomes in a transaction-oriented environment. Their findings indicate contrasting effects of EA ability on sales performance in the firm's sales transaction-oriented environment. On the one hand, EA ability improves salesperson's service toward customers, which then increases their sales performance. On the other hand, EA ability enhances emotional exhaustion, which detracts from sales performance.

Sales managers should consider the ability of new hires to appraise emotions when determining their fit with the job and the organization.

Xue, Lu and Shi investigate the direct influence of trust on partner opportunism and explore the moderating effects of guanxi in relationships on trust, cooperation and partner opportunism. They find that guanxi between managers significantly strengthens the negative relationship between cooperation and partner opportunism. By examining the trading partner's behavior from a more holistic perspective, they suggest that competence trust and goodwill trust play

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asymmetric roles in defending against opportunism. Their findings suggest that managers must be aware of the guanxi of the leaders they deal with, and establish organizational connections based on interpersonal relationships with their partners to diminish any element of opportunism. In addition, guanxi dampens the negative relationship between goodwill trust and opportunism.

Nowlin, Walker, Deeter-Schmelz and Haas suggest that new salespeople interpret information both emotionally and cognitively, which impacts the management of early career salespeople. Their findings indicate that affective orientation (emotion) increases salesperson performance when mediated through motivation to work, but only during the salesperson's initial stage of their career. These findings indicate that emotion can be an asset to new salespeople. However, the need for emotion (affective orientation) decreases with experience and no longer has a significant impact on performance after the initial stage.

Hutchins and Rodriguez explore how B2B firms can enhance their brand image through leveraging their behavioral assets and emotional intelligence (EI) through social media marketing. They recognize how soft skills such as EI are crucial elements in building relationships, strong brands, and in turn, increasing brand equity. They demonstrate how B2B firms can enhance their EI skills to connect with stakeholders in a way that is relevant and valuable, and can, in turn, add value to the firm.

Bettis-Outland and Guillory reveal how low levels of emotional intelligence (EI) can inhibit the acceptance of new information, leading to a reduction of learning by an organization. They extend the concept of organizational learning by incorporating emotional intelligence and trust as antecedents of organizational learning. They suggest the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion into thought, understand and reason with emotion and regulate emotion in the self (EI) and others casts doubt on the motives of newly acquired information in a firm. They propose that other factors can intervene after information is acquired, thereby affecting whether newly acquired information is fully incorporated into the organizational learning process.

Dadzie, Dadzie and Williams purport that various components of interpersonal trust (affective and cognitive) influence the duration of buyer–seller relationships in emerging markets that are dominated by small, fragmented sellers/suppliers. Sellers' duration intentions (intentions to remain with buyers or to switch) can be mitigated by formalizing policies that encourage emotional bonds between buyers and sellers, especially small-scale producers in highly vulnerable bargaining positions.

Youssef, Johnston, AbdelHamid, Dakrory and Seddick investigate the relationship between the customer's engagement and equity, and determine whether customer engagement could be positively enhanced by business-to-business (B2B) firms to maximize their customer equity, through examining the role of cognitive, emotional and behavioral engagement. The authors integrate philosophies from previous marketing studies of customer relationship management and customer engagement and equity into a B2B environment in a more customer-centric approach.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Professor Wesley J. Johnston, *JBIM* Editor, for granting us the opportunity to serve as co-editors of this special issue, the associate and assistant editors and the reviewers for their help in reviewing the manuscripts, as well as all the authors for their contributions to this issue. We hope that this special issue will provide impetus for further conversations and research on the role of emotions in organizational decision-making and purchase behavior.

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