

# Psychologist explains emotional appeal is a crucial ingredient for a product's success

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Many new food products fail, but that might not be the case if manufacturers better understood the emotions behind consumer choices, says psychologist Herb Meiselman, an expert in the fields of sensory and consumer research.

Product developers need to think about how foods make people feel when they're creating new [products](#), according to Meiselman, a speaker at a July 19 symposium at IFT16: Where Science Feeds Innovation, hosted by the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT). "We have depended for too long on measuring consumers' liking and willingness to pay, but we need more in-depth measures to understand the consumer experience."

Customers often have an [emotional response](#) to the product itself, the packaging, the brand and even specific ingredients in the food, says David Thomson, chairman of MMR Research Worldwide. "To have any chance of success in today's highly competitive consumer packaged goods markets, it's essential that all these key aspects of a branded product create a holistic emotional experience. Otherwise it will simply fizzle out in the market through lack of emotional engagement, as most do."

Consumers' emotional experiences run the gamut from more obvious ones like "happy" to less obvious ones like "excited" or "guilty," Meiselman says. Many big companies are evaluating potential products by looking at 30 or more different emotions, which have to be selected

from the hundreds of emotions.

He says there are a number of different approaches that companies can use to analyze reactions to their products, including:

- Questionnaires that evaluate emotions. This is one of the simplest approaches.
- Facial expressions that are measured with special technology.
- Physiological measurements, such as heart rate.
- Behavioral measurements, especially nonverbal behaviors that reflect the person's feelings.
- Analysis of social media messages, which is called sentiment analysis.

"For example, we can give a person a product sample, and then immediately ask how they feel, or measure how their face reacts, or how their body reacts, such as measuring their heart rate," Meiselman says. Another promising approach is to analyze consumers' reactions on [social media](#) that sometimes include opinions of products and brands, he says. "We can evaluate the tone of the messages using special emotion lists and software."

Companies that have the resources may decide to use multiple measurements to test emotional reactions to their products, Meiselman says. "This is an enormous field. Some of the big companies are doing this right now. Others are waiting on the sidelines to see what happens."

Thomson says there's a lot of interest across companies and research agencies in capturing and measuring emotion, but it's essential that the methods used are grounded in good science. "Otherwise there's a danger of simply adding to the background noise rather than delivering new and useful product understanding."

Provided by Institute of Food Technologists

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