

Beyond valence: a meta-analysis of discrete emotions in firm-customer encounters

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Abstract

Distinguishing only between consumers' positive and negative affect is a popular approach in both marketing research and practice, but such valence-based approaches sacrifice specificity and explanatory power. As emotions of the same valence can greatly differ with regard to their underlying appraisals, physiology, and coping strategies, they also differently affect consumer judgment and behavior. Our meta-analysis of 1,796 effect sizes ($N=57,523$) across 27 discrete emotions shows that analyzing discrete emotions clearly outperforms purely valence- or arousal-based approaches when studying firm-customer encounters. Specifically, we find that positive emotions show a consistently stronger impact on evaluations and behaviors than negative emotions and that the greatest impact stems from medium-arousal emotions like gratitude, love, and comfort. We also provide insights into which consumer and situational variables moderate the effects of such discrete emotions.

Keywords: *emotions; customer experience; firm-customer-encounter*

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