

Chapter 11



MOOD MATCHING



What's the Trend?

As tracking technology becomes more sophisticated, media, advertising and immersive experiences like gaming or learning are increasingly tailored to match consumer moods.

If you have ever been challenged to decide on a paint color for a new room, you have likely learned all sorts of interesting facts about the psychology of color, like how red can raise your energy level, or yellow in a kitchen can stimulate the appetite and digestion.

What interior designers and psychologists have known for years is that colors in a room can have a dramatic impact on your mood. Yet the science behind this is inexact. Small changes in shades produce different responses in each of us. And moods can change in a moment.

Unfortunately, for many years approximation was the best anyone could do when it came to mood. Today, that is changing.

Moody Marketers

In early 2015, Apple quietly patented a technology that allowed them to collect a mixture of physical, behavioral, and contextual data in order to track a user's mood and emotional state. While contextual advertising is

already a hot topic, the idea that Apple might be able to use facial features or heart rate to target advertising is significant.

It isn't, however, all that new. Back in 2012, Microsoft filed a similar patent around its then-new Kinect facial-recognition technology, which was launched as part of the Xbox gaming platform. Clearly the promise of mood tracking for advertising has been around for many years. So what makes it different in 2015?

Adobe product marketing lead Kevin Lindsay wrote an underappreciated but insightful piece on the company's digital marketing blog about the coming evolution of how marketers use mobile data to track consumer moods and why it may be important, ultimately concluding that using it may be a "no-brainer." But it will only delight consumers if it is used ethically:

These omnipresent mood gauges will look at your interaction with your chosen platform and device—how hard are you hitting the touchscreen, how quickly are you moving between apps or content pieces, are you clicking fast or lingering, and, of course, the who/what/where/when of it all: what time of day is it, where are you, and where have you been? Compound that with things like social media status updates, music selection, and content consumption, and discerning a user's mood suddenly seems like a no-brainer.

This same challenge of inferring a user's mood from the information they provide is inspiring both Yahoo and Google to invest heavily in developing contextual search to read not only what you type into the search bar, but the latent emotion behind it that hints at what you *really* meant to search for.

In another example of this shift from early 2015, Yahoo announced that it was acquiring Aviate, a company that provides contextual app search and organization for mobile phones. When announcing the acquisition on stage at CES, Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer explained the value by describing how the app "suggests music apps in your car, fitness apps in the gym ... deliver[ing] the right experience to you at the right time, instead of you having to search for it."

Moody Matching describes this shift overall toward more brands collecting and using data on consumer emotions and moods to power the experiences and content that is offered back to consumers in real time online. The potential for this trend goes far beyond marketing.

Moody Media

In the December 2014 issue of the journal publication *Computers in Human Behavior*, a team of researchers from the School of Communication at Ohio State University published the results of a fascinating study of mood tracking and social media usage.

The study invited 168 college students who were randomly put into a good or bad mood by being asked a series of questions and then being told their performance was “terrible” or “excellent” to create the desired mood.

Afterwards, these students were asked to look at the profiles of eight students on a supposed new social networking site called SocialLink. The profiles had been created with public ratings of career success or attractiveness. When they reviewed which profiles students choose to explore further, they unsurprisingly learned that most tended to open the profiles of people rated as attractive or successful. More interesting was the fact that participants who were put into a bad mood before taking the test spent significantly more time also viewing the less desirable profiles.

When interviewed about the results, study co-author Silvia Knobloch-Westerwick concluded that “one of the great appeals of social network sites is that they allow people to manage their moods by choosing who they want to compare themselves to.”

This impact of mood on the type of media that people seek is an insight that more and more media channels are intentionally making use of—as they tailor stories and experiences not by categories of topics covered, but rather by the emotion that readers or watchers can expect to experience when seeing it.

Alongside hefty categories like politics and business, for example, the Huffington Post also has an entire section devoted to “Good News” and another helpfully called “GPS for the Soul.”

The growth of categories like these, coupled with the easy access to tools like RSS readers and apps that can pull in content and create personalized virtual magazines mean that anyone can create their own perfect compilation of media to consume online, to fit their mood at that exact moment.

Moody Experiences

What impact does your mood and emotion have on learning and performance in games and challenges?

The answer is quite a bit.

Researchers have seen a connection for years, but 2015 will be the year where the intersection of technology and immersive experiences will finally allow for many new ways to take advantage of this fact. For example, Sony has been experimenting for years with game controllers for the PlayStation that can use things like skin response and sweaty palms to predict how frustrating or difficult a game might be. In theory, if the game became too difficult the controller might be able to adjust to your playing styles and mood to become easier in real time.

On the learning side, the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence has been researching how people can develop their emotional intelligence for years. One of the signature programs from the group is the RULER approach, an initiative to “provide evidence-based programming that helps school communities integrate the teaching of emotional intelligence into everyday practice.”

The newly launched Mood Meter app from the group—a 99 cent app that allows users to record their moods in any particular moment to help them recognize the impact of their own emotions on their daily lives—was named one of the “next big things” for New Yorkers to watch by *The Observer* in early 2015.

Why It Matters

All of this attention on the role of our emotions and mood on how we learn, play and consume media is leading to more innovation in how

these moods can be tracked and measured. As more brands learn how to tailor content and experiences by mood, the idea of Mood Matching will become as important an element of an overall experience as topics, demographics or any other measure in use today.

The implication for anyone creating content, producing marketing or trying to inspire some type of learning is clear: moods must be managed and tailored to in order to ensure your message and experience makes it through and delivers the value you hope it will.

Who Is Using This Trend?

Right now this trend is affecting industries as varied as media and publishers to big brand advertisers. Rather than being only valuable for a certain industry, though, this trend offers an underlying lesson that is likely to be useful for anyone faced with influencing anyone else to buy, sell or believe anything. Moods cannot be ignored and the better you get at tracking them and tailoring your message, the more likely it is you will be able to stand out.

How to Use This Trend

- ✓ **Focus on mood priming** – A big conclusion from the research around how moods affect the way we think and behave is that the mood a consumer has coming into an interaction will likely affect their perception dramatically. As a result, priming your customers by focusing on the mood they first acquire when interacting with you is critical. In the real world, this is yet another piece of evidence that first impressions matter. In the digital world, you can also lose customers right away by not welcoming them in the right way or having a bad initial user experience.
- ✓ **Build content for moods** – When people consume content based on their moods, it should affect how you create that content in the first place. What this means for any brand looking to use content marketing is that it's worth considering

not only the usefulness of the content, in terms of whether it answers a valuable question, but also whether it is tailored to the right mood. If a consumer is likely to be frantic when seeking the content, it needs to be calming. If a consumer is frustrated, then simplicity and humanity is key. Regardless, the point is content can be tailored by mood, and increasingly should be as well.

Chapter 26



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The 2016 Perspective

Last year a smart ring launched with the bold claim of being the “world’s smallest wearable to contain a biometric sensor.” The product is the Moodmetric smart ring, and it promises to measure the “emotional voltage” of the wearer and change color based on levels of stress or anxiety. It is just one of a growing number of innovative products that promise to bring our constantly changing moods to the surface and better use them to tailor experiences for us, or improve our interactions with others.

Apple made waves in October of 2015 when the company filed a patent application for a “smart ring.” At the same time both Moodmetric and a Finnish startup called Oulu (maker of the Oura smart ring) featured wearable devices at that renowned Scandinavian startup technology conference called Slush in front of over 15,000 international forward thinking attendees.

The promise of this mood measuring technology, according to Moodmetric COO Niina Venho, is “to [make] it possible for people to

analyse their emotional levels throughout the day and learn when they're the most stressed, what makes them calm down... by naming those feelings Moodmetric allows people to get to know themselves better."

This mission of amplifying emotional self-awareness is also driving new innovation designed to improve our emotional well-being at work. For example, Niko Niko is one of the most popular in a range of apps focused on workplace happiness of employees. With a simple swipe right or left, employees can share their level of satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) on all kinds of topics, from the level of supervision they are receiving to the quality of food in the cafeteria.

The data generated by these real time daily surveys is meant to allow instant mood checks among employees, and give managers the data to correct problems long before they may be voiced or reach a tipping point. As mood tracking devices and tools become more commonplace, this idea of how mood affects our behavior and the promise of being able to impact and improve that in real time will continue to direct attention to the trend of Mood Matching, through wearables as well as new tools to help us assess, share, understand and quantify our moods in every moment.

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