

# Chapter 4

## Emotion Tracking: Possibilities for Measuring Emotional Consumer Experiences

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Previous literature has examined the significance of emotional consumer experiences increasingly pursued by consumers. However, the current knowledge of emotional responses in real-time and real-world consumption settings is still limited. Emotions have previously been measured with observation, self-report, and physiological methods. Digitalization and technological development have, however, advanced these methods as individuals now engage in various self-tracking practices. The chapter introduces emotion tracking as an additional means for measuring emotions. One application, the Emotion Tracker®, was tested by students (n=19) who tracked their emotions (n=617) related to various consumer experiences and reported their user experiences in research diaries. Emotion tracking facilitated real-time and real-world emotion measurement by partly combining the strengths and diminishing the weaknesses of traditional methods. The future of emotion measurement is likely to lie in the combination of subjective and objective self-tracking practices embedded in individuals' everyday lives.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The interest in self-tracking and self-measurement practices is on the rise. Digitalization and a wide range of new technologies, such as apps, digital media platforms, mobile and wearable digital devices, and smart objects, have enabled individuals to engage in detailed monitoring of various aspects of their lives—their bodies, minds, and emotions (e.g., Grénman, 2019; Lupton, 2014, 2016; Ruckenstein & Pantzar, 2017). Encouraged by the phenomenon of the quantified self (QS), a growing number of people worldwide are now embracing this “metric culture.” The QS movement refers to a cultural and social phenomenon of self-tracking using digital technology and a community of people collecting, recording, and sharing personal information and experiences (Lupton, 2014, 2017). The QS supports the notion that numerous self-tracking tools and applications, including fitness, food, and emotion trackers, offer an effective opportunity for individuals to understand their bodies, minds, and daily lives as a series of quantifications that can be examined and acted upon (e.g., Lupton, 2014, 2016; Ruckenstein & Pantzar, 2017).

The current chapter examines the potential of emotion tracking, as a form of self-tracking, in measuring emotional responses in various consumption settings. Here, the particular focus is on hedonic consumption (also referred to as experiential consumption or experiential purchase) and emotional consumer experiences, as they tend to evoke more emotional responses than utilitarian consumption and cultivate consumers’ well-being and happiness (e.g., Gilovich, Kumar, & Jampol, 2014; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Mogilner, Aaker, & Kamvar, 2011; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Emotions play an important role in shaping consumer experiences. Emotions have attracted the interest of marketing and consumer researchers for a long time (e.g., Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Richins, 1997), and a rich body of research investigates the role of emotions in various aspects of consumption. Whereas early research focused mainly on emotional responses to advertising (e.g., Edell & Burke, 1987), since then emotions have been addressed in a variety of discussions related to, for example, customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction (e.g., Petzer, De Meyer, Svari, & Svensson 2012), value and value co-creation (e.g., Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008), and more recently emerged topics relating emotions to consumer well-being and happiness (e.g., Gilovich et al., 2014; Mogilner et al., 2011) as well as neuromarketing (e.g., Lee, Brandes, Chamberlain, & Senior, 2017; Plassmann & Weber, 2015).

Research on emotions has evolved through three stages (Watson & Spence, 2007). The *categorical approach* conceptualizes emotions as discrete or “basic” emotions such as joy, interest, sadness, regret, and disappointment (e.g., Izard, 1977; Plutchik, 1980). The *dimensional approach*, in turn, describes qualities that feelings have, such as pleasure, arousal, and dominance (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In addition,

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