


Chapter 7

Emotional Facets of Car Driving Experience and Purchase Decision Making: A Bibliometric Review

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ABSTRACT

The present chapter aims to map the extant literature on the consequential role of human emotions in car driving experience and purchase decision making. To this end, bibliometric analysis of 274 Scopus-indexed documents published between 1981-2023 shows that the United States share of the published documents is the highest among all the contributing countries. In addition, the journals Accident Analysis and Prevention and Transportation research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behavior, are two major publishers of the pertinent articles. Although few substantial contributions are noticeable from “marketing” related journals, one paper published in the Journal of Marketing has received the highest number of citations. The findings also reveal that virtually all the three components of emotion, i.e., experiential, physiological, and behavioral, though with different levels of strength, have been addressed by the existing literature. Still, lack of significant dedication by marketing scholars calls for further investigation.

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INTRODUCTION

The significance of studying emotions and their impacts on a plethora of human behaviors dates back to the ancient era of Aristotle (Maia & Hauber, 2020; Courtwright et al., 2020; Molewijk et al., 2011). As a result, different areas of science, including psychology, sociology, medicine, and more contemporary, transportation, product manufacture (e.g., cars), and of course consumer behavior have scrutinized the likely impacts of emotions ever since. The particular emphasis in the present study on emotions in the context of driving and car purchase decisions rises from three facets. First, the current trends in global warming and sustainability issues have “forced” governments together with car manufacturers to seek out alternative ways to gradually replace common internal combustion engine vehicles (ICEVs) with “more” sustainable means of transport such as electric vehicles (EVs). Since cars are major producers of pollutants almost all over the planet, studying those influential factors that can potentially affect “more responsible” and “greener” car purchase decisions and driving experience seem more crucial than ever before. In particular, research has shown that for some consumers it is not always easy to switch between common ICEVs and modern EVs since the element of “emotion” and “irrational” brain dominate their “rational” brain (Martin & Väistö, 2016). Second, according to the stimulus-organism-response model (S-O-R), sensorial variables such as color, light, and sound, which are present in the environment, i.e., car cabin in our case, can stimulate “emotions” in individuals which might eventually lead to further responses, e.g., purchase and driving behavior (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). And third and in line with the S-O-R model, Petit et al. (2019, p.42) posit that consumers’ behavior could be affected by “more emotional senses, namely touch/haptics and possibly even olfaction”. In the case of cars, for example seats and steering wheels can be two potential transmitters of haptic signals that could be processed as either a pleasant or unpleasant emotion which can in turn guide the consumer to make purchase decision of a car.

Prior to turning our attention to how emotions can affect driving experience and car purchase decision making process, it is necessary to first define what it is meant by emotions.

According to the definition by American Psychological Association (APA), emotion is

A complex reaction pattern, involving experiential, behavioral, and physiological elements, by which an individual attempts to deal with a personally significant matter or event. The specific quality of the emotion (e.g., fear, shame) is determined by the specific significance of the event. For example, if the significance involves threat, fear is likely to be generated; if the significance involves disapproval from another, shame is likely to be generated. Emotion typically involves feeling but differs from feeling in having an overt or implicit engagement with the world. (APA, n.d.)

Similarly, Mauss and Robinson (2009) highlight the consensus over the three components of emotion and state that

...there is no “gold standard” measure of emotional responding. Rather, experiential, physiological, and behavioural measures are all relevant to understanding emotion and cannot be assumed to be interchangeable. (Mauss & Robinson, 2009, p.209)

Although scholars over the years have proposed a variety of definitions, still all three elements are virtually refulgent in any accounts. For instance, Lindquist et al. (2012, p.122-123) have classified emotion under “locationist” and “psychological” accounts. While the former considers emotion as something

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