



The School of Hospitality, Tourism & Marketing is delighted to welcome Michael Edwardson to its academic staff. Michael is a Consumer Psychologist and Lecturer in Marketing and joins the School of HTM after ten years in Sydney at the School of Marketing at UNSW.

Michael has established an innovative research program on Consumer Emotions which he will be continuing at Victoria University. In 2003 he was co-author of the SOCAP Consumer Emotions study that researched the experiences of 4,000 Australian consumers. In August he will present at a symposium on Understanding Consumer Emotions, bringing together academics and industry at the University of Queensland Business School.

Degrees asked Michael to talk about some of the key findings from his research so far, as well as future research directions.

'In speaking with many marketing executives and customer service managers, it became apparent to me that there was a general dissatisfaction with the current orthodoxy of customer satisfaction measurement,' explained Michael. From his knowledge and experience he reasoned that there was an implicit realisation that these measurements did not provide practical insights.

Managers could not really understand how their customers feel about the service they receive. 'Importantly,' Michael went on, 'they couldn't tell whether these customers would remain loyal or would defect to competitors.'

Based on this feedback, Michael set out to understand how customers described their own experiences. A research study published in the Australian Journal of Market Research in 1998 shed some light on the issue.

Emotional Consumers

'I found that consumers are more likely to feel angry, frustrated, disappointed, happy, relaxed, excited or even bewildered, than they are to feel satisfied. It became clear that satisfaction is just one of over 200 emotional responses experienced by customers.'

It appears that, depending on different types of services, different combinations of emotions are more predictive of loyalty and defection than typical satisfaction measures. Feeling welcomed and relaxed was more important for hospitality, whilst feeling trust and 'in control' was important in financial services.

After further research, Michael has highlighted the differences between feelings of anger and disappointment, and the behaviours that are linked to these emotions.

'For instance, angry consumers have a sense of injustice and want retribution,' said Michael. In other words, they are going to complain! 'Disappointed customers, on the other hand, feel let down and simply

want to leave without any further contact,' he went on. 'Both are equally dissatisfied, but disappointment is more highly linked to defection.'

Michael has now developed a model of seven key emotion groups that enable companies to understand and manage their customer experiences. The results of this research, to be published in *Advances in Consumer Research*, examines the emotional expectations that customers have and how these expectations influence their actual experiences.

Michael's research will also cover the emotions that directly influence customers' self-esteem such as pride, respect, embarrassment and shame. As Michael says, the issue of consumer emotions is a developing area for research, both theoretically and practically. 'And I know we can all identify with this, for better or worse, every day as customers.'

For more information, contact Michael Edwardson ph: (03) 9919 4571, michael.edwardson@vu.edu.au

