

The Odds of Winning: Emotional Engagement and the Academy Awards

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The concept of emotional engagement is pretty straightforward. Consumers have an “ideal” image of every product and service – including entertainment and experiential events – and particularly, movies. Ultimately, emotional engagement is the yardstick consumers use to measure brands and entertainment. But defining the category’s ideal gets very tricky for one particular reason.

To define a category ideal accurately, one needs below-the-radar psychological metrics because today’s consumer does not behave as they say; does not say what they really think; and does not think what they feel. So a 10-point scale just won’t do it anymore!

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Today, it’s all about emotional engagement, with the emphasis on “emotional.” Consumers talk to themselves before they talk to brands. They’re hot-wired to social networking, which supercharges expectations for the category being “shared.” The result? Massive gaps between what people really *want* and what brands/entertainment/experiential events *deliver*.

The ideal, of course, is not static. It changes according to how a consumer values the category change. Or, in the case of movies, the particular category the movie, actor, or director falls into. And because emotional values are the main drivers today, changes to the ideal – and how well something meets that ideal – are predictive of how consumers will behave. In the case of movies, it’s a matter of how the audience reacts to them, tweets about them, and shares them with friends and family.

Testing Oscar Nominees’ Emotional Engagement

This year's roster of Academy Award nominations were put to the emotional engagement test. Results below indicate the degree to which the nominees lived up to the audiences' ideals, translated into odds:

Best Picture

<i>La La Land</i>	1/6
<i>Moonlight</i>	6/1
<i>Hidden Figures</i>	10/1
<i>Manchester By The Sea</i>	16/1
<i>Fences</i>	50/1
<i>Hacksaw Ridge</i>	60/1
<i>Arrival</i>	80/1
<i>Lion</i>	80/1
<i>Hell or High Water</i>	100/1

Best Actor

Casey Affleck	4/9
Denzel Washington	3/2
Ryan Gosling	12/1
Andrew Garfield	30/1
Viggo Mortensen	100/1

Best Actress

Emma Stone	1/6
Natalie Portman	4/1
Ruth Negga	40/1
Meryl Streep	50/1

Supporting Actor

Mahershala Ali	1/10
Jeff Bridges	11/1
Michael Shannon	12/1
Lucas Hedges	15/1
Dev Patel	15/1

Supporting Actress

Viola Davis	1/25
Michelle Williams	9/1
Naomie Harris	15/1
Nicole Kidman	25/1
Octavia Spencer	50/1

Best Director

Damien Chazelle	1/10
Kenneth Lonergan	7/1
Barry Jenkins	8/1
Denis Villeneuve	50/1

What consumers expected is expressed as index numbers and is configured versus a category benchmark of 100. These assessments not only identify the ideal, but also allow us to measure the degree to which the nominees met consumer expectations for the path-to-purchase (or in this case, the path-to-picture) driver that defines the ideal.

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The research technique, a combination of psychological inquiry, and higher-order statistical analyses has a test/re-test reliability of 0.93, accounts for 96% of the variance in a category, and provides results generalizable at the 95% confidence level.

Please note the odds are for entertainment value and engagement diagnostics only. If you're looking to engage in some moneymaking outcomes, it's generally a bad idea to bet against emotional engagement in *any* category

because it's predictive of how people will behave in the marketplace.

Or in this case, the movie theatre.

Image: [Davidlohr Bueso](#)