

ECHOES *OF* INFLUENCE

Free Chapter





WELCOME

Welcome To Your Free Chapter!

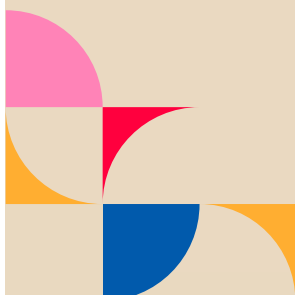
Welcome to your exclusive preview of Chapter 4 from "Echoes of Influence" by Mimi Kalinda. This chapter serves as an appetizer, offering a glimpse into the profound impact of human emotions on storytelling and decision-making, setting the stage for the transformative ideas awaiting you in the full book.

In this segment, we explore the intricate role of emotions in shaping our perceptions, behaviors, and narratives. You'll discover how emotional intelligence can not only improve personal and professional interactions but also deepen our ability to connect with audiences through enhanced narrative skills.

This chapter introduces key concepts such as the power of emotional intelligence, the influence of cognitive biases on decision-making, and the

balance between rationality and emotion. Drawn from my extensive experience, these insights are designed to bolster your storytelling and leadership effectiveness.

As you engage with this text, reflect on how emotions have influenced your own decision-making and storytelling. Think about instances where emotions prevailed over rational thought, and consider how understanding this interplay could refine your leadership and communication strategies.



Who Is Mimi Kalinda?

With 27 years of extensive experience in reputation management, communications, and business development across various international markets, I am deeply passionate about the transformative power of storytelling and its impact on society. My professional journey has been dedicated to enhancing understanding and driving innovation through strategic communication, with a special emphasis on elevating regional narratives and contributing to ongoing transformations around the world.

As you engage with this text, I encourage you to reflect on how emotions have influenced your decision-making and storytelling in the past. Think about instances where emotions may have overridden rational thought, and consider how a deeper understanding of this dynamic could refine your leadership and communication strategies.

By the end of this chapter, my goal is to spark your curiosity and inspire you to leverage your emotional intelligence to become a more empathetic, effective, and impactful storyteller and leader. I invite you on this exploration of the human psyche, hoping it will deepen your understanding of both yourself and others.

I am eager to hear your thoughts or insights after you delve into this chapter. Please feel free to reach out. I look forward to learning how this material resonates with you and influences your storytelling and decision-making. Happy reading!



CHAPTER IV

Humans Are Emotional

“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.”

— PHILIP PULLMAN

Language has been the most significant invention of the last few million years in human evolution. There is no math or science without language. Humankind would not have landed on the moon, cured polio, cultivated fields for agriculture, domesticated wolves, or left the caves without the advent of language. Language became so integral to the survival of our ancestors that it is credited as the prime catalyst of our evolution as a species. It's through communication that human beings made tools, hunted and gathered together, and created thriving societies. Ingrained in our survivability is the need for language. And with the invention of language came the invention of stories.

Human beings are the most intelligent animals on Earth. We have created marvels using only the power of our brains (and having opposable thumbs doesn't hurt either). When given the time and space to think, we can come up with ideas that are critical, rational, and enduring. However, we're all emotional beings; research on how the brain processes information has shown that we internalize communicated content better on an emotional level than on

a factual one, and because stories speak to our emotions, they capture our attention more effectively than facts.

It's no wonder then that we crave stories so much. As discussed earlier, information is raw data, while story is the culmination of data in a way that can engage an audience and provoke emotion. Knowing that humans are emotional beings forms an integral foundation for the way in which we craft stories. As much as our intelligence defines us, so too (and perhaps to an even stronger degree) do our emotions.

The invention of language was, at its core, an invention of love as much as survival. We needed language to keep ourselves and the people we loved safe; we needed stories to condense vital lessons in ways that were digestible, memorable, and easy to understand. Our emotions, unlike our rational, time-consuming thoughts, act almost instantaneously. Our logical brain is excellent at recognizing patterns and boiling down information into bite-sized morsels, in a process known as heuristics.

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Heuristics are the mental shortcuts that humans take every day. In many cases, these shortcuts are performed with the same thought as that of a leg-kick during a patellar reflex test, it happens on its own, outside of our control. Imagine you are walking in the park and there are children playing ball nearby. One of the children kicks the ball errantly, and it heads your way. You only catch sight of this out of the corner of your eye, but in the moment before the ball hits you, you duck and avoid the collision. This split-second decision to move was made with heuristics.

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You were not required to stop, acknowledge the ball, map its trajectory, and decide whether the ball will hit you so that you can tell your muscles to contract for you to move lower to the ground. You simply *did*.

Heuristics exist, in its basest form, as a method of survival. Informed by the knowledge that the ball would most likely hit you if you didn't move, and that being hit with something hard hurts, you get out of the way.

This mental shortcut is the basis of all survival: avoid the things that can cause harm and seek out the things that cause pleasure. The need to survive is something all living things are programmed with, which is why we all take information and catalog it accordingly. By absorbing all this information and filtering it through heuristics, we can act quickly, decisively, and strategically. It is a useful skill, necessary for our survival, but it has its downfalls.

Let's imagine you are alone, walking home from work. You usually take a shortcut down a narrow alleyway, which gets you home five minutes faster than walking around the block, but tonight, someone else is in the alleyway. The stranger is wearing a hoodie, their face in shadow, and they're much bigger than you. You decide to walk around the block instead. What just happened? First, there was uncertainty. The other person is a *stranger*, a word that brings to mind phrases like "stranger danger." Add to this the fact that this stranger is larger than you. Bigger usually means stronger, a mark in their favor if this stranger has ill intentions towards you. And they're in an alleyway, the trademark setting in movies and television shows whenever someone is gugged or beaten. You were right to take a different way home.

Except, were you? In a split second your brain decided it was a threat to go down this alleyway, and it discarded rationality for fear. It ignored the fact that *you* are often the person going down this alleyway. You are normally a stranger to others, yet you never mean them any harm (I hope!). Your fear overlooked the fact that this is your normal route and the quickest way home. Your brain caused an inconvenience for you when it was meant to make your life easier. And yet, turning away is the choice most of us would make. The trade off is simple: five more minutes to walk home is worth it to avoid the risk of potential harm. The problem is that your brain didn't just make a split-second cost/reward analysis; it made a split-second decision about a *person*. In this case, heuristics

created a cognitive bias about the stranger in the alley and determined that they were up to no good based on quickly established, arbitrary details.

Because heuristics is so intimately tied to our survival instincts, it can cause cognitive biases. Sometimes these mental shortcuts can feel simple and worth it in the moment. After all, deciding not to turn down that alley, though likely irrational and attributive, didn't cause any harm to the stranger, and the extra five minutes didn't cause you any harm either. But it is important to question where these quick decisions come from.

Exposure to certain prejudices like racism, sexism, and classism can manifest into mental shortcuts and create oft-unintended reactions. While heuristics are necessary for life, we should question where they come from and unlearn these behaviors if needed.

Let's imagine a fictional man named John. John does not believe that he is sexist, but he grew up in a household that preached gender-based societal roles, and he hasn't taken the time to unlearn these ideas. The result is that he quickly leaps to the conclusion that his male coworkers work harder than his female colleagues, which causes a culture in the workplace where his female coworkers cannot advance—a belief system John should unlearn.

While heuristics can have varying outcomes, the root of many mental shortcuts is fear, and the potential threat of fear is stronger than rationality. This fear does not have to be dire—life or death, it can be as simple as the fear of being late to work or of missing out on a good opportunity. The heuristic of scarcity is used so ubiquitously to get people to buy things that it's become a beloved tool of marketers everywhere.

A 2023 e-commerce discounting and promotions report by 2 Visions found that “shoppers are approximately two times more likely to purchase a product with a 20 percent discount over a product at average cost. The likelihood increases dramatically to 99 percent when the discount being offered is 50 percent instead of 20 percent.”

While a sale is a nice boon to something that is purchased regularly or something you've had your eye on for a while, sales are used more often as

an incentive to get people to purchase items they may not have planned to buy. The fear of missing out on the sale, of the item being priced higher later, or even of it becoming unavailable, is a key motivator in getting consumers to purchase now.

This heuristic shortcut is so well understood by marketers that many retail outlets have adopted the practice of *fictitious pricing*; when the listed price of an item is seldom (or never) the price charged. A 2022 report by Consumers' Checkbook discovered "the stores are running those special [sales] to manipulate you into buying items right away while 'on sale' before prices go up. It dissuades you from shopping around for a better deal—after all, if something is being offered at a 60 percent discount, what's the point of comparing costs?"

The elusiveness of sales can make buyers abandon rationality and purchase items they don't need, purely for the benefit of getting a "good deal". The mental "high" of receiving a discount can help inform and reinforce the heuristic of scarcity. This combination of a dopamine rush and mental shortcuts can create further money-related problems.

The neuroscience behind gambling can be likened to any addictive substance. The practice of gambling activates the brain's reward center and releases dopamine, which makes people feel happy. However, unlike the persistent use of alcohol or illicit drugs, gambling has another layer, a heuristic layer, that can make it quite addictive.

While gambling, one can fall into what is known as the "gambler's fallacy," which is the belief that you are eventually "owed" a lucky streak. This fallacy works something like this: you flip a coin twenty times and record whether or not the coin lands heads or tails up. Before the experiment begins, you make an educated guess as to the pattern of the coin flips. Knowing there is a 50/50 chance for either outcome, you guess the results will be evenly split: ten for heads and ten for tails. But to your surprise, the first five flips all land on heads. For the sixth flip, you must guess what the next outcome will be. The rational choice would be to look at the data thus far and surmise that the coin is most likely to continue the pattern and land on heads. However, the human instinct, the heuristic shortcut, processes the odds at 50/50, and tells you that this flip is "owed" a tails. This feels both right and perfectly rational based on your

knowledge of the odds. However, it ignores the fact that while the odds of a coin landing heads- or tails-up is 50/50, that isn't a guarantee that one side ever has to land. Though statistically unlikely, it's perfectly rational that you could flip a coin twenty times and have it land on heads each time.

This reliance on statistics, while perceived as rational, can have dire effects on gambling. A dependence on the odds can cause someone to make irrational, poor decisions with their money. Also, many gamblers tend not to think of their winnings as their own money—at least not until payout—which can cause them to take riskier, larger bets with what they've won. And if someone has lost a larger amount of money, that can cause them to continue gambling in an effort to "chase their losses."

Though some would assume that dopamine is only released during gambling when one is winning, science has found that the feel-good chemical arises even when you lose. This can be because of the environment (the casino or gambling locale is pleasant in some way), because of social factors (the gambler is in good company), or even through the lens of entertainment (the gambling game may be fun to play, even when losing). These external factors are cultivated by gambling establishments, as they want their patrons to have a good time, even as they lose money. This tells us that humans are more likely to act on emotion than rationality. This reliance on emotion can even cause us to think rationally but still react emotionally, as with the gambler's fallacy.

And yet, even though these examples are based on science and statistics, there is still storytelling at work. Any heuristic shortcut, whether it's as simple as dodging the toy before it hits you or as insidious as prejudicial practices, has a story behind it. After all, why would any human believe and engage in a practice as unfounded and irrational as racism, for example, if there were no stories behind it, fueling the fallacy? And why would these stories exist without emotion as its basis? Why would stores engage in fictitious pricing if it wasn't proven that false information about a sale will make people want to buy more and thereby drive profits?

Understanding how humans rely on emotion is a key component of crafting any narrative. Often, our emotional reasoning will precede and overpower our rational reasoning. In the digital space, this is demonstrated well by the titles of

“click-bait” articles—those puff-pieces with the sole purpose of bringing you to a site you probably never would have visited previously. It’s the difference between seeing an article titled “10 Shocking Facts about Walruses,” and one titled “10 Facts about Walruses.” Do you care about walruses? Probably not. The second article likely wouldn’t get a click out of you. But the first article? Even if you don’t care about walruses, the promise of something *shocking* is enticing. That’s gossip, secrets, surprises, all things that humans love. It doesn’t matter that the two articles contain the same information; even the promise of something banally salacious is enough to get traffic to the site. *And*, by establishing ahead of time the condition that the information is *shocking*, the audience is more invested and more likely to stick around and judge for themselves the quality of this claim. This is also true of online videos with titles and captions like “wait until the end for a surprise,” or “you won’t believe what happens next.”

Another aspect marketing companies rely on is our very human love of the promise of something for free. A classic sales example is buy-one get-one free (BOGO). BOGO is a great way to get people to buy—by playing on our love of receiving something for no cost—and to move more products. As we all know, it’s not actually buy-one get-one free. You can’t go up to the makeup counter, purchase the ten-dollar mini lipstick and receive the hundred-dollar skincare serum at no cost. You could do the opposite: purchase the expensive skincare and get the mini lipstick for free, but that doesn’t seem as good a deal.

A BOGO is actually just a fifty percent sale at best. Mathematically, fifty percent is the best option in a BOGO, and it only happens if you buy two items that are priced the same. With a BOGO, you will have to pay full price for the more expensive item you’ve chosen, so, like with the example above, you wouldn’t want to “waste” your free item on something that’s ten percent of what your full-priced item costs. But if it was your initial intention to purchase both the skincare product and the lipstick, what might happen is that you benefit from the special offer by getting two products of each. Now the company has made a \$110 profit, and you feel good about the items you got for free. This practice can be especially beneficial for companies that need to empty their stores of older or expiring products to make room for new inventory.

Certain companies may stipulate that you must purchase two items to receive the fifty percent discount in a BOGO, but others will allow you to get one item and the discount. But for the latter, why not just advertise that everything is fifty percent off? Companies tend not to do this for two reasons. One, that magic word *free* does a lot of heavy lifting. Everyone loves free. Receiving something for free makes one feel like we've received a gift, and who doesn't love presents? Plus, free gives the impression of saving money. And two, some of these same companies may not clarify that their BOGO is fifty percent off until you go up to the counter and nicely explain that you simply can't find a second item you'd like, which helps to, again, move more products by having you assume that the second item is a must-have for the discount.

"Free", also has a connotation of goodwill on the part of the giver (the company). Another way *"free"* is used in marketing is through charitable donations, which companies can adopt in their policies either through the donation of their products or funds.

Some companies adopt a buy-one, give-one approach to their products, wherein if you buy an item, they'll donate that same item to someone in need. This has been used with products like shoes, books, and eyeglasses. The buy-one give-one model works similarly to that of a sale; it is essentially BOGO but done for charitable purposes. This idea of buy-one, give-one works by playing on emotions. When people give to charity, they feel better about themselves. Giving makes people feel happier, no matter how large or small the sacrifice and a buy-one, give-one model has the triple effect of making people feel good about the new item they received that they'll get personal use of, making them feel like the purchase was justified because it did some good, while making the donation effortless on the part of the consumer.

This same logic applies when companies promise to match sales dollars to donation dollars. For example, a car company may promise that during the month of September, for each car they sell, they'll match profits dollar-for-dollar in donations to the local children's hospital. This helps drive sales during that month and is seen to be of benefit for the community. It also casts the car company in a favorable light, which builds reputation equity and can help influence future sales.

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Some companies, especially smaller brands that can't promise such large margins in donations, promise that a portion of all their sales go to charitable organizations. This model substitutes one-time large donations for smaller, but consistent, donations and has the same positive effects on consumers and the brand image of the company.

Charitable donations form a nexus of emotional connection between businesses and consumers. These donations help build reputation equity for the business but also help build that same equity for the customer. Companies that give to others as part of their business model are seen as being the better option compared to companies that don't donate. This can be a driving force in sales. When customers are presented with similar products at comparable prices, they are more likely to rely on the feel-good, happy emotion they get from giving, and choose the more charitable company. These companies are also more easily forgiven for mistakes they may make.

Likewise, customers who buy regularly from giving businesses are more likely to feel better about themselves and may even gain a reputation boost from their peers. Many businesses also use the power of *free items* for customers on their birthdays. Restaurants may give out free dessert; beauty stores may offer a free deluxe sample of makeup, skincare, or perfume; and some companies will even give out full-sized products to loyal customers.

Other businesses may offer charitable donations in the form of discounts. A common practice for businesses is to offer military, teacher, and student discounts to customers. This builds good equity within the community and helps garner consistent support, since a teacher would be more likely to buy their lunch at a place where they receive a 10% discount than one where they must pay full price. In the same vein, businesses may offer loyalty punch-cards or frequent customer perks. These work in the same way as a BOGO, but usually with a greater threshold (something like buying ten items and getting the eleventh free).

Punch-cards are slightly old-fashioned (though not entirely obsolete) and many businesses have adapted to the digital age by offering perk points for loyal customers. Most major retailers offer in-store credit cards now, where customers can purchase items on credit and later use their reward points for

future purchases with the store. Along with these credit cards—which typically offer a discount upon opening an account—many businesses have tiered loyalty points, disconnected from the use of credit. The idea of the tiered loyalty system is that the money a customer spends with the company (usually in the timeframe of a year) brackets them into a certain reward level. The more money a customer spends, the higher up the ladder they climb, and the more rewards they earn. Base-level customers, for example, may receive one point per dollar spent, while upper tiers earn a higher points-to-dollars ratio. The points can be converted into money taken off a future order. Businesses may give out bigger or more expensive birthday gifts to their higher-tiered clients.

The tiers themselves play on people’s emotions by “gamifying” their shopping. Customers may earn digital badges or messages of encouragement to keep reaching for the next level of the reward tier. The names of the tiers also help reinforce this behavior by making the higher tiers sound more appealing; why be silver when you could be gold? Why be gold when you could be *platinum*?

Companies may also heighten the relationship between higher-tiered customers and the business by making the tiers about being “best friends.” Customers may receive emails with casual messages like “Hey Bestie,” or “You got this VIP.” This personifies the company as a trusty friend, forging an emotional bond with the individual customer. And within the tiers themselves, higher-level customers are typically offered better discounts as a reward, reinforcing the behavior of purchasing from the company and playing off the emotional high of getting a good deal.

Many businesses adopt subscription-based models of business, which garner consistent, timely purchases from customers. Products like medication, wine, and even underwear can be purchased through subscriptions. Businesses will often incentivize customers to sign up for their subscription services by offering discounts, special birthday perks, or free items or upgrades. The subscription model helps businesses receive consistent revenue and makes customers’ lives easier by delivering everyday items regularly. Customers benefit from not having to repeatedly purchase the items they use most often, and they’re given a discount for doing so.

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Heuristics are a beloved tool of marketers everywhere, but not the only tool. Marketers know, above all, how to tell a good story. They know that people don't buy products; they buy better versions of themselves. This is why advertisers will use celebrities, actors, athletes, and models to endorse their products. This is why fast-food companies sponsor sporting events and twenty-year-old models advertise anti-aging face creams. Marketers sell to people a 'better' version of themselves.

Marketers don't just espouse an image of perfection, however. They draw on qualities that their target audience sees, or wants to see, within themselves. This is why adverts for certain cars or trucks will use words like "elegant," "rugged," or "dependable." Or why certain commercials break through the fourth wall - the media screen you are observing the advertisement on - entirely, addressing the audience directly by saying things like "You work hard enough, you don't need to worry about this thing too." The impulse to be a better, or the best, version of ourselves is tempting, as it draws on our emotions. If we are "better" we feel a sense of pride and accomplishment. We feel the happiness boost of social mobility. And, on the reverse end, we feel a sense of regret and remorse if we're not being "better". So even if you wouldn't consider yourself an "elegant" person, the idea of being so might be appealing to you since "elegance" brings to mind ideas of ease, stability and luxury. And elegant people drive elegant cars.

Knowing how to draw on emotions is a powerful component of storytelling. The goal is not to deceive the audience, but we can draw inspiration from these examples nonetheless. By setting an expectation early on in the story, by letting the audience know that they don't want to miss out, by keeping them entertained throughout, and by offering something of value, you can build a compelling narrative that will keep the audience glued to their seats.



THANK YOU

Thank You For Your Purchase!

Thank you for exploring Chapter 4 of "Echoes of Influence," where we have examined the profound impact of human emotions on storytelling and decision-making. This chapter was designed to inspire reflection on how emotions influence your narratives and choices, and to demonstrate how integrating emotional intelligence can transform your leadership and communication, fostering stronger, more empathetic connections.

I encourage you to continue reflecting on the questions raised and to actively incorporate these insights into your daily interactions. By understanding and leveraging the power of emotions, you will enhance your ability to inspire, influence, and lead more effectively, thereby enriching both your personal and professional relationships.

Thank you for your engagement with this chapter. I hope it has motivated you to further develop your skills in storytelling and leadership, using the insights gained to empower and uplift those around you. Here's to your journey toward becoming a more impactful storyteller and leader, characterized by authenticity and purpose.

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