

Emotional branding - The love affair between consumers and brands

 By [Joseph Neusu](#)

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I recently carried out a survey of newspaper advertisements, and I was shocked to learn that the majority are solely based on unsentimental logic and product specifications that do very little to tap into the power of consumers' emotions.

Upon reflection, I also realised that the marketing communication put out by a number of companies is dry and detached and thus incapable of producing the intended responses within the target audience.

This is a disturbing trend that goes against the tenets of the winning formula of emotional branding. According to a Wikipedia definition, "emotional branding is a term used within marketing communication that refers to the practice of building brands that appeal directly to a consumer's emotional state, needs and aspirations."



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A connection between consumers and brands

Basically, emotional branding is the practice of creating a love affair between consumers and a product, and it is based on the understanding that human actions are mostly driven by emotion and not by reason.

In other words, the heart is more influential than the head. The fate of Arsenal supporters demonstrates this. Even though their club has performed poorly for a team of its stature, the Gunners supporters still love their club to bits. Why didn't they jump ship and join better performing teams like Manchester City or Real Madrid for instance?

The fans can't do this because of the emotional attachment they have with the club that can be traced back to the glorious days of the Thierry Henry-led Invincibles who totally dominated the English Premier League. Again, it's a matter of emotions versus reason. (By the way I am a Gunner for life!!)

Emotional brand creates the "I am-with-brand-X-no-matter-what-happens!" mentality. Neurologist Donald Calne says that the "essential difference between emotion and reason is that emotion leads to action while reason leads to conclusions".

Marketers should therefore naturally aspire to create these strong emotive connections between consumers and their brands as it will lead to the anticipated business results.

Branding is about people

Emotional branding was first popularised by Marc Gobe in his book *Emotional Branding: The New Paradigm for Connecting Brands to People*, in which he points out the validity of building connections and relationships between consumers and brands. Branding is all about "people, emotions and relationships" and it is bound to achieve fractional success if it is treated differently.

Emotional branding includes emotional benefits (feeling), rational beliefs (economic, social) and interaction with consumers and is meant to foster long term consumer relationships.

It is of paramount importance for marketers to know that branding is not only about ubiquity, visibility and functions; it is about bonding emotionally with people in their daily life.

Advertisements and marketing communication should appeal to the emotions of the consumers to enable it to trigger the desired consumer behaviour like a purchase or brand loyalty.

Memorable campaigns

Forbes.com published an article titled "[The most unforgettable ads of 2013?](#)" in which the following claim is made - "Truly memorable ad campaigns create a visceral response - one of joy, wonder, shock, inspiration, motivation, compassion or surprise. If this is achieved, chances will break through and stay with you".

According to Marc, "consumers don't remember messages, they remember moments" and the late renowned Afro American author and poet, Maya Angelou, put it in a better way. "People may not remember exactly what you did, or what you said, but they will always remember how you made them feel".

In the advent of social media, the consumers are the ones actively seeking brands that fulfil their emotional needs, support their aspirations and allay their fears. Not only do they seek these active emotional connections, they also tend to share their emotional experiences with a brand on their online communities on Facebook, Twitter or Yookos.

This social sharing of emotional experiences is a desired sweet spot because brands with strong bonds with their customers reap the benefits of word of mouth marketing. Peer-to-peer recommendations that come via word of mouth marketing are powerful influencers of purchase behaviour as people trust and act upon their friends' recommendations more than their compliance with advertisements.

Storytelling

Nike have taken emotional branding to another level. The sportswear manufacturer uses the "emotional branding technique of archetypes in its advertising - more specifically the story of the Hero. It's an age old tale of a hero pitted against a great foe and after a great struggle, emerging triumphant."

Coca cola is another brand that effectively leverages emotional branding in its communication and advertisements. I remember an advert in which a cool looking dude enters a bus singing along to music from his walkman (remember those?) and sits behind a very sultry lady. They then lock eyes and laugh in a carefree way that stole the hearts of many young people who were their target audience. Coca Cola still remains the beverage for cool people of its emotive storytelling!

How does your brand fare? Let's talk about this and I can show you some interesting emotional branding strategies.

ABOUT JOSEPH NEUSU

Joseph Neusu is the founder and CEO of Sales Qualified Leads Inc, Africa's leading digital agency specialising in WhatsApp Business API marketing and conversational marketing in the Programmatic and DOOH spaces. Joseph is a top conference speaker, thought leader and trainer.

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