

## EMOTIONAL BRANDING / MARKETING COMMUNICATION: A REVIEW OF DEFINITIONS

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**Abstract.** *The low number of studies on emotional branding / marketing communication and the lack of unanimously agreed definitions of this new trend in marketing show that it is still in its infancy. The study presents a linguistic analysis of the definitions of emotional branding / marketing communication based on both the verbs relating the “definiendum” (the phrase to be defined, i.e., emotional branding / marketing communication) with its “definiencia” (the nouns defining emotional branding / marketing communication), and the nouns defining the “definiendum”. The findings show that there are definitions close to formal ones, and definitions that move away from the true essence of emotional branding / marketing communication. The analysis shows that these definitions point to specific focuses, specific goals, and a specific means of achieving these goals. Given the comparative analysis on the definitions of emotional branding / marketing points to specific focuses and goals, correlated to particular modalities of achieving these targets. Emotional marketing focuses on customer emotions, while it relies on the development of a bond between the providers of the product or service and the users of the product / service, and should be used without repetitiveness. Emotional branding / marketing means the use of aspects pertaining to emotions.*

**Keywords:** *definition, emotional branding / marketing communication, linguistic analysis.*

### INTRODUCTION

The scientific study of emotions was spurred at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Darwin's (1897) interest in the expression of the emotions and has currently reached a level which exceeds all expectations. This pursuit also touches on interdisciplinary domains such as neuromarketing which applies the tools of neuroscience and psychology to the area of marketing and economics. Moreover, it also interacts with Artificial Intelligence and complex networks in computer systems, using analytical processes and quantitative algorithms to find better solutions to improve human life, while also collecting data in order to analyze not only consumer behaviours and preferences, but even their innermost emotions (MOUAMMINE & AZDIMOUS, 2019). The latter are among the most challenging issues we are confronting in the new AI realm, from an ethical point of view.

To understand the importance of emotions in marketing – and, therefore, the importance of emotional branding / marketing – one needs to review the famous laws of emotion (FRIJA, 1988) presented below, accompanied by illustrations of how emotion always involves action (EDER & ROTHERMUND, 2013) or behaviour (STRONGMAN, 2003). The definitions collected below rely on the English language Dictionary (<https://www.dictionary.com>):

- The law of apparent reality: “Emotions are elicited by events appraised as real”, which are prone to trigger the consumer's emotions, as these are dictated by the way he/she perceives the product or service);

- The law of care for consequence: “Every emotional impulse elicits a secondary impulse that tends to modify it.” (i.e., a consumer's emotions elicit other emotions dictated by the way he/she perceives the possible consequences of purchasing the product / service);

- The law of change: “Emotions are elicited [...] by actual or expected changes in favorable or unfavorable conditions.” (i.e., a consumer’s emotions are elicited by changes of the product or service);
- The law of closure: “Emotions tend to be closed to judgments of relativity of impact.” (i.e., a consumer’s emotions towards a product / service can be experienced with a degree of absolute confidence);
- The law of comparative feeling: “The intensity of emotion depends on the relationship between an event and some frame of reference.” (i.e., the intensity of a consumer’s emotions depends on the relation between a product / service and its vantage points);
- The law of concern: Emotions appear in reaction to things that are relevant to the individual. (i.e., the emotions of a consumer arise as a response to products / services important to him/her);
- The law of conservation of emotional momentum: “Emotional events retain their power to elicit emotions indefinitely.” (i.e., a product or service continues to elicit the consumer’s emotions for a longer while, unless counteraction is initiated);
- The law of habituation: “Continued pleasures wear off” (i.e., a product / service ceases to elicit the consumer’s emotions at a certain point in time);
- The law of hedonistic asymmetry: Pleasure tends to disappear when it is abundantly satisfied. (i.e., pleasure elicits a consumer’s emotions, but it also suppresses them in time);
- The law of situational meaning: “Emotions arise in response to meaning structures [...]” (i.e., a consumer’s emotions arise in response to a product or service whose features or qualities are meaningful to him/her/them);
- The law of the greatest gain: “Whenever a situation can be viewed in alternative ways, a tendency exists to view it in a way that maximizes emotional gain.” (e.g., a consumer always tends to maximize emotional gain about the product / service he/she intends to purchase);
- The law of the lightest load: “Whenever a situation can be viewed in alternative ways, a tendency exists to view it in a way that minimizes negative emotional load.” (e.g., a consumer always tends to minimize undesired emotional load about the product / service he/she intends to purchase).

The validity of these laws is confirmed by the developmental approach, which considers development as synonymous with progress towards more complex meanings and worldviews (ZINCK & NEWEN, 2008):

- Emotional phenomena vary across cultures;
- Emotional response complexity increases with age;
- Emotions are interculturally shared;
- Emotions vary in the same situation throughout individuals.

By applying these laws, brand designers create strong brands, which prove that the management team of a company have found ways to distinguish it from other brands, meet the needs the brand has set, identify what the brand is really good at, and, most significantly, what emotions the brand connects with ((SMITH & ZOOK, 2011).

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The material subjected to this study consisted in definitions of emotional branding (GOBÉ, 2001; ROSTOMYAN, 2014) or emotional marketing, a rather new concept in the field of marketing (CONSOLI, 2009, 2010; RYTEL, 2010; MAJUMDAR, 2012; BANERJEE, 2013; DESHWAL, 2015; ROSTOMYAN, 2014; KHUONG & TRAM, 2015; HASHEM, ALI & ALLAN, 2020;

ZHANG & LU, 2018; DAO, 2020; PEREIRA, 2022) provide in the few studies on emotional branding / marketing. Our interest in this topic was sparked by the novelty of this concept in the field of marketing and by the need for clear definitions. All the definitions below have been taken from Dictionary.com (<https://www.dictionary.com>).

The method employed to carry out the research and analysis is that of linguistic / semantic analysis (DRAGOESCU URLICA & STEFANOVIĆ, 2018; KAMBERI, DRAGOESCU URLICA, AMETI, 2020).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Over the last 13 years, there have been a few attempts to define emotional marketing. We may consider that the concept has been merely described rather than properly defined so far, as illustrated by our study of the literature available on the topic, which we have scrutinized in detail.

Thus, authors use a variety of explanatory features rather than defining modalities, such as:

- CONSOLI (2009, 2010): emotional marketing is “a strategy of Relational Marketing”;
- RYTEL (2010, 36-37) highlights a key motivating aspect of emotional marketing, which relies on building a relationship between companies or brands and consumers;
- MAJUMDAR (2012, 68): the emotional focus illustrates an important shift in marketing, which makes it a completely “new model”;
- BANERJEE (2013): it may also be seen as a new “paradigm” in marketing;
- ROSTOMYAN (2014, 120): emotional branding appeals directly to the consumers’ emotional aspects and innermost aspirations or needs;
- DESHWAL (2015, 262): emotional marketing is a form of what has been termed “Relational Marketing – focusing on creating relationships on a long-term;
- KHUONG & TRAM (2015, 524) quote Banerjee (2013, 23) and Rytel (2010, 36-37);
- HASHEM, ALI & ALLAN (2020, 1245): emotional marketing heavily relies on communication with consumers in order to foster meaningful relationships leading to their utmost satisfaction and, thus, gaining their loyalty;
- ZHANG & LU (2018): no definition;
- DAO (2020, 8): emotional marketing also relies on interacting with users and trying to persuade or influence them;
- PEREIRA (2022): it includes “tactics to [...] lure” consumers by appealing to them and evoking positive emotions.

In addition, emotional marketing has a number of positive effects on (KHUONG & TRAM, 2015):

- Consumers’ brand loyalty;
- Consumers’ brand recall (which positively affects consumers’ purchase decision);
- Consumers’ brand recognition (which positively affects consumers’ purchase decision);
- Consumers’ perception of product (which positively affects consumers’ purchase decision);
- Consumers’ product perceived quality (which positively affects consumers’ purchase decision).

Taking into consideration the variety of definitions collected above, a definition generally consists of three parts: the term (e.g., emotional marketing), a verb, and the part of speech to which it belongs (e.g., a noun).

A. The Verbs.

The first observation to make here is that the definitions above are not grammatical or lexical definitions *per se* and the verbs used to define *emotional marketing* (Table 1) are not always clarify meanings distinctly.

Table 1.

Verbs defining *emotional marketing*

Verb	Consoli (2009)	Consoli (2010)	Rytel (2010)	Majumdar (2012)	Banerjee (2013)	Deshwal (2015)	Rostomyan (2014)	Khuong & Tram (2015)	Hashem, Ali & Allan (2020)	Zhang & Lu (2018)	Dao (2020)	Pereira (2022)
<i>consists</i>											+	
<i>defines</i>					+							
<i>includes</i>												+
<i>is</i>	+			+		+						
<i>refers</i>							+					
<i>appears</i>									+			
<i>can be defined</i>					+			+				
<i>can be interpreted</i>		+	+					+				
-										+		

Thus, it follows that:

- The verbs “be”, “consist”, “define”, “include”, and “refer” are used in present tense simple, a tense used to refer to permanent events, actions, or conditions;
- The verbs “appear” and “look” suggest semblance rather than actual states or situations;
- The verb “can” followed by defined / interpreted, etc. suggests uncertainty because this structure does not equal is defined / interpreted – it is a mere possibility.

B. The Nouns

Ten nouns define emotional marketing in the definitions collected and identified above (Table 2).

Table 2.

Noun	Nouns defining <i>emotional marketing</i>											
	Consoli (2009)	Consoli (2010)	Rytel (2010)	Majumdar (2012)	Banerjee (2013)	Rostomyan (2014)	Deshwal (2015)	Khuong & Tram (2015)	Hashem, Ali & Allan (2020)	Zhang & Lu (2018)	Dao (2020)	Pereira (2022)
<i>(emotional) advertising</i>												+
<i>approach / approaching</i>					+			+			+	
<i>influencing</i>											+	
<i>interacting</i>											+	
<i>means</i>								+				
<i>(marketing) model</i>				+								
<i>practice</i>						+						
<i>(marketing) shift</i>			+		+			+				
<i>strategy</i>	+						+					
<i>study</i>		+										
<i>tactics</i>												+
-										+		

Thus, it follows that: “advertising, “approaching”, “means”, “strategy”, and “tactics” seem to be closer to defining emotional marketing properly – as an act, method, mode of procedure, practice, or use of a stratagem.

The other definitions move away from emotional marketing since it is seen as either a change (a paradigm “shift”, a new “trend”), an investigation, a practice, or a representation – (marketing) “model”, “practice”, “study” or as “means of persuading” – “influencing and “interacting”.

From the analysis of the terminology employed by the authors discussed above, we may conclude that emotional branding / marketing focuses on:

- Affecting the consumption habits of the consumer (BANERJEE, 2013; KHUONG & TRAM, 2015);
- Approaching, interacting and influencing consumers / users (DAO, 2020);
- Arousing emotions in people (CONSOLI, 2010);
- Building brands and companies (ROSTOMYAN, 2014);
- Communicating with consumers / users (HASHEM, ALI & ALLAN, 2020);
- Creating emotional relationships between the company and the consumer (RYTEL, 2010; KHUONG & TRAM, 2015);

- Developing meaningful relationships with consumers / users (HASHEM, ALI & ALLAN, 2020);
- Evoking emotions in people (PEREIRA, 2022);
- Managing the emotional connection established between the consumers and the company (BANERJEE, 2013; KHUONG & TRAM, 2015);
- Retaining customers (CONSOLI, 2009; DESHWAL, 2015);

Also, emotional branding / marketing aims to:

- Appeal to customers' emotional states or desires (ROSTOMYAN, 2014);
- Foster long lasting relationships (CONSOLI, 2009; DESHWAL, 2015);
- Develop satisfaction and loyalty among consumers / users (HASHEM, ALI & ALLAN, 2020);
- Induce people to buy a particular product/service (CONSOLI, 2010);
- Lure people into buying various products or services (PEREIRA, 2022); deciding which products make a difference based on positive defects, as in comparative cases on how to maintain healthier teeth (OANCEA, BONTE, & AL. 2014).
- Motivate consumers' buying / consumption decisions and exchange (RYTEL, 2010);

Finally, we may conclude that the closest one may come to a definition is that emotional branding / marketing means the use of aspects pertaining to emotions (DAO, 2020).

### CONCLUSIONS

The bibliographic analysis and the discussions on emotional branding and marketing have led to the following conclusions. The novelty of emotional branding / marketing is still in its infancy, as proven by the lack of unanimously agreed upon definitions. To understand how the realities behind these terminologies operate, one needs to refer to the laws of emotion at work in the field. For this purpose, emotional branding / marketing has been defined with the help of a verb connecting it to nouns.

The findings indicate that there are definitions close to formal ones, on the one hand, as well as definitions that stray from the genuine essence of emotional branding / marketing communication. The analysis also indicates that these definitions point to specific goals, based on specific means of reaching them.

Thus, on the one hand, definitions closer to a formal definition contain verbs of actions, conditions, and events in the present tense simple; other definitions suggest rather semblance than being, or mere possibility.

On the other hand, definitions closer to a formal definition contain nouns such as act, method, mode of procedure, practice, or use of a stratagem, while the other ones move away from the true essence of emotional branding / marketing.

In conclusion, given the comparative analysis on the definitions of emotional branding / marketing points to specific focuses and goals, correlated to particular modalities of achieving these targets. Emotional marketing focuses on customer emotions, while it relies on the development of a bond between the providers of the product or service and the users of the product / service, and should be used without repetitiveness.

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