

## **EMOTIONAL BRANDING: LEVERAGING EMOTIONS TO BUILD STRONGER CONNECTIONS WITH CONSUMERS**

Emotional branding is the process of building a brand image that can evoke a deep emotional connection, form a strong relation between the customer and the brand, as well as refer to intangible needs and share the values and priorities of the buyer. It's not just a product or service, it's a story that makes the customer feel like they're part of something bigger and create perfect images that build an attachment to the brand for a long lifetime.

Understanding the connection between emotions and brand image is the main role in emotional branding, because emotions shape our attitudes, preferences, and behaviors towards brands. Emotions help us learn when to pay attention to danger and when to know that we can trust another person or brand. They can be positive, so when we feel them, we are more likely to buy the product from a certain brand and recommend it to others. On the other hand, when we feel negative emotions, such as anger or disappointment, we are more likely to switch to a different brand or avoid it.

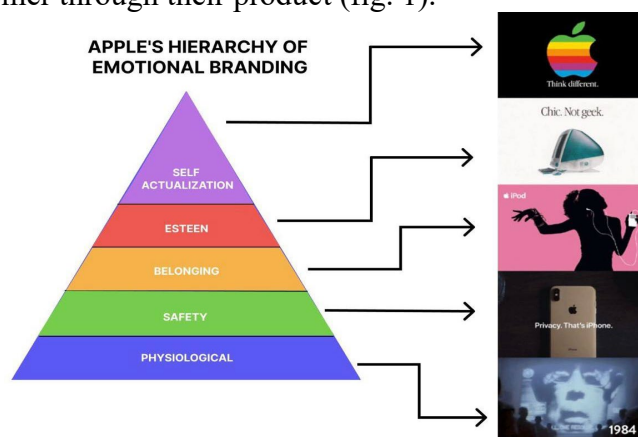
There are some psychological factors that can influence emotional branding such as social media proof, which means that people follow the actions or opinions of others, especially when they are uncertain. For example, when we see reviews, ratings from other customers or experts, we are more likely to trust the brand and remain loyal to it.

To psychological factors we can also include the effect of consistency. Consistency is the impulse to act in position with our previous choices, beliefs, and values. For example, when we see a brand identity, voice, message or style across different channels and platforms, we are more likely to recognize, remember and relate to a brand.

Among these psychological factors we should include the role of personalization, so it is the process of adapting your content to the definite needs, preferences, and interests of your audience. For example, when we receive personalized recommendations or messages from a brand, we more probably feel understood, valued, and loyal.

There are two main theories on which emotional branding is based. The first one is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It offers a classification of emotional motivations caused by biological and social needs.

In a nutshell, people first prioritize physiological safety, then they work their way up the pyramid to meet their emotional needs. The perfect example of using this theory is Apple as they meet every need of their customer through their product (fig. 1).



*Fig. 1. An example of implying Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in a brand*

The second is Marc Gobé's theory for building brands that perfectly fit today's emotionally charged social and economic climate. In order for a brand to build an authentic connection with the customers, not only the product and service should meet the standards, but also the brand should find a way to implement their product in everyday life of the consumer. Based on these two theories, emotional branding can be implemented through four major strategies: sensory branding, storytelling, cause branding, and empowerment.

Sensory marketing has become essential to triggering pleasure and excitement as the focus of marketing has shifted from the product to creating consumer experiences. The integration of sensory elements impacts consumers' attitudes, assessments, and actions regarding a specific brand. Studies have shown that sensory experiences can increase brand engagement by up to 70 % and drive a 30 % increase in sales.

Customers of today look for relationships with brands that have a long history. Strong narratives improve consumer experiences and have a greater impact on their feelings, opinions, and lifestyle than facts because they are easier to remember and more convincing. Research indicates that brands utilizing storytelling effectively can experience a 20 % increase in brand affinity and a 30 % increase in intent to purchase.

Addressing relevant social issues allows brands to build emotional bonds with customers. Moral emotions play a central role, as they are linked to customers' interests and desire to support a higher cause. The beliefs of the brand translate into consumer behavior. Because marketing will create following lines in the brain of a customer "Brand X contributing to the community and investing in the future."

Traditionally, marketers have capitalized on consumers' insecurities, convincing them that products or services can resolve their worries. However, empowerment as a marketing strategy helps consumers boost their self-efficacy and self-esteem, fostering a sense of confidence and loyalty towards the brand.

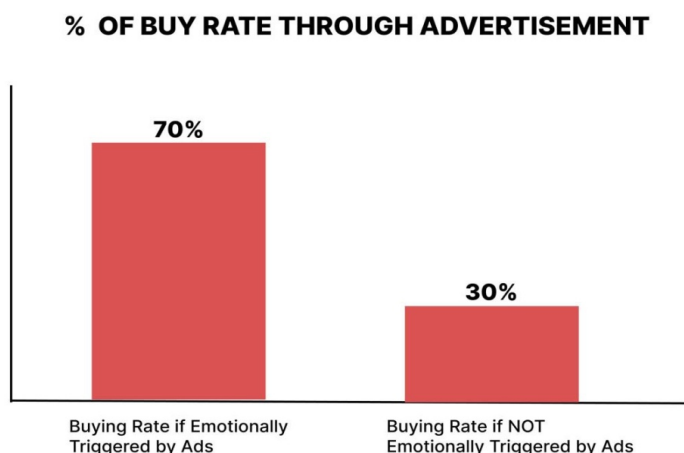
There are a lot of companies that have already successfully implemented emotional branding and here is an example of using sensory branding and empowering in a marketing strategy: Gold Apple is a company that implements sensory branding successfully. In traditional department stores, each brand is isolated at a separate service counter. This creates a high-pressure selling environment and makes experimenting with brands very difficult. Gold apple provides a low-pressure environment that encourages its customers to explore and experiment with its products. Customers can touch, smell, and apply any product when it is displayed openly. This low-pressure atmosphere helps customers feel welcomed which results in brand loyalty.

Key challenges in emotional branding are building authentic relationships with customers and staying consistent across customer interactions. In order to successfully navigate these challenges, it's important to avoid mistakes that businesses make:

The most common challenge in emotional branding is understanding the audience correctly. When a brand fully understands its audience, then it can translate the right message and values. Consistency in messaging and actions not only fosters trust but also ensures that the brand's emotional appeal remains genuine and resonates with its audience. Therefore, careful consideration and alignment with consumer values are essential elements of successful emotional branding. When the brand is aware of emotional triggers of its audience, the company can implement it in the advertisements and increase the sales (fig. 2).

The second mistake is the disconnection between the brand's message and the values of the company and its customers. This can lead to brand damage and decreased loyalty. To avoid this, brands should develop a unique tone of voice and a set of values and beliefs aligned with their audience.

Many global brands mistakenly assume that customers won't notice or quickly forget their mistakes. However, in the modern market, brand reputation is crucial, and people remember mistakes. When a company admits and apologizes for its mistakes, it often strengthens the connection with its customers, demonstrating sincerity and accountability.



*Fig. 2. Buying rates in emotional triggered ads*

Developing emotional branding reveals that the company should focus its attention on two main objectives: satisfying the needs and expectations and keeping customers connected by bringing value that resonates with their beliefs. The main steps to build a strong brand are to make interactions with the target audience positive and consistent across all channels, capturing the attention of clients, building customer loyalty, and integrating your brand into customers' lives.

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