

Emotional Branding: A New Way to Connect to Customers

Nanda Ankita,

MIET,
Kot Bhalwal, Jammu, India.

ABSTRACT

The present study has been designed to examine the impact of different components of emotional branding on intention to purchase. There is a dearth of studies which have been done on emotional branding in the Indian context. With this background the present study has been planned in order to identify the impact of emotional branding and brand attitude on the consumer intention to purchase Dominos pizza. Data was collected from 105 youngsters in different colleges and universities of Jammu (India). Five independent variables, namely brand trust, brand lifestyle, brand relationship, brand personality and brand attitude were regressed with intention to purchase. The study being exploratory in nature is based on primary data collected from the students of various colleges and universities of Jammu region. Using convenient sampling method 105 students in graduate and post graduate levels were interviewed for the present study. The results have revealed that all the parameters to measure emotional branding (brand trust, brand lifestyle, brand relationship, brand personality) as well as brand attitude are positively correlated with intention to purchase. The study has also revealed that brand trust and brand lifestyle have the greatest impact on intention to purchase. Also, demographics do not seem to have a significant impact on intention to purchase Dominos Pizza.

Keywords: Emotional Branding, Trust, Lifestyle, Relationship, Personality, Brand Attitude.

INTRODUCTION:

In the present era we see so many brands coming in the market but only few are able to make their presence felt. Differentiating the brands in the market has become the focus of marketers to attract the attention of the consumers. Brand in simple terminology is a way to differentiate the offered product or service, from its competitors. These offerings can be functional, rational, or tangible which are related to performance of the brand's product; or can be symbolic, emotional or intangible, related to the representations of the brand (Kotler and Keller, 2006).

Adamson (2006) has also highlighted that brands are mental associations, and these associations can be words, images, emotions or combination of these evoked when a product, a service, an organization or even country is mentioned. Therefore, brand exists in the consumers' minds and is related with not only what it represents, but also the total experiences that it is associated with.

In the above context, the purpose of branding is creating differences, which involves creating mental structures (words, images or emotions) that helps the consumer organize their knowledge about product and services of a company and decisions (Kotler and Keller, 2006; Adamson,2006). These mental structures are created in order to convey the right messages about the company to the consumers. However, from a different perspective, Shroeder et al. (2006) has suggested that branding cannot be understood only a way of conveying messages; it is related to cultural process that is "performed in an interplay between art and business, production and consumption, images and stories, design and communication". Branding helps make purchasing decisions easier by creating trust and an emotional attachment to a product or company. With the help of a strong brand the customer can create a set of expectations about the products even if he is not aware about the details of product features. It also helps a company to separate the customers from the competition and protect its market share

while building brand awareness. Once the brand awareness is built, customers will automatically think of that specific brand as their first choice (Kotler, 1996).

But it is also a fact that not all brands in the marketplace do well. The main underlying reason for the failure of most of the brands is the lack of emotional connect which they are unable to make with the customers. Therefore, it is very important to use the right kind of emotions for creating partnership and communicating with the customers. This concept has gained momentum in today's scenario and is known as Emotional branding. According to Gobe (2001), Emotional branding provides the means and the methodology for connecting products to the consumer in an emotionally profound way. It focuses on the most compelling aspects of the human character: the desire to transcend material satisfaction, and emotional fulfilment". Further, he has stated that there are four essential pillars of the emotional branding process, which provide the outline of a successful emotional branding. These pillars are: Relationship which is about being deeply connected with and showing respect for your consumers as well as giving them the emotional experience that they desire; Sensorial experiences – is about reaching memorable emotional brand contact that will create brand preference and loyalty; Imagination – is about people and marketers role in making people's lives more fulfilling through beauty; Vision – is the essential element of a brand's long-term success.

According to Robinette and Brand (2001) human beings are emotional creatures who have deep-rooted need to connect with each other and the world around them. Our emotions serve a critically important role in our quest to survive, thrive, and realize our full potential. Emotions bring depth and meaning to life. They also bridge the gap between our innermost needs and drives us to act as well as to participate in the game of life. In addition, they also validate our decisions and empower us to feel good or bad about them. Without emotions, life is stripped of its meaning, its essence, its experiential value, and its rewards. Emotional branding is therefore about humanizing brands, in order to connect them to people. People want to buy and surround themselves with the type of brands that make them feel good about themselves (Gobé, 2001). Developing emotional associations for a brand is a powerful tool and can increase brand motivation, but at the same time marketing must also engage the consumers by creating curiosity and interest.

For a brand to be successful, an emotional bond must be developed between the consumer and the product. Emotion is basically a mental state derived from one's intuitive feelings, which arise from reasoning, knowledge and cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts. It may trigger actions depending on its nature and the reason for the person having emotion. Emotions arise on brand consumption and attitudes do not. Attitude is harder to change than emotion. Emotions play a dominant role on the influence of brand experience and brand loyalty, "marketing practitioners need to pay more attention to customers emotions than to customers brand cognition" (Ding & Tseng, 2015). Emotional brands have a significant impact when the consumer experiences a strong and lasting attachment to the brand comparable to a feeling of bonding, companionship or love. This is confirmed in the study by (Malar et. Al, 2015) that psychological bonding with brands lead to an increase in performance of the firms.

PREVIOUS STUDIES:

Emotional Branding:

Emotional branding is being utilized by competitive brands to build on their performance benefits to strike an emotional chord with the hearts of their customers. Branding of emotions is a vital strategy that focuses upon the consumer and not the product at the very forefront; it researches how brands can communicate with people in a more sensible and humanitarian manner and affect people deeply at the varying degree of the feelings and senses. When an emotional connect is made with the consumer, he feels empowered.

Today's customers want the brands to be associated closely with their passions and life-style. Therefore, it is essential that brand strategies be based on consumer life-style, goals and dreams. This is possible only through the application of "Emotional Branding" concept which has emerged in the late 1990s.

Travis (2000) in his study has said, "A brand is like a bridge between you and the customers. How your customers feel about your brand isn't a casual question. It is a crucial question. A brand is not a brand to you until it develops an emotional connection with you". Some brands create emotional connections with the customers, while others leave them cold.

Gobe (2001) in his study has asserted that branding strategies should be about mindshare and "Emotions Share" rather than market share. He has further emphasized that commitment to product or institution, the pride we feel upon receiving a wonderful gift of a brand we love, having a positive shopping experience in an inspiring environment where someone knows our name or brings an unexpected cup of coffee- are the feelings which are at the core of emotional branding." These feelings have the ability to create a bond with the brand which is similar to that in a human relationship or a friendship.

Marken (2003) in his book review has said that, “Emotional Branding will help you do a better job of ensuring customers feel good about your company....and its products. That’s where the branding begins. That’s where it ends.” Roberts (2004) has asserted that “Emotional Branding is a consumer centric, relational, story-driven approach to forging deep and enduring effective bonds between customers and brands.” The above literature serves as the basics of the emerging concept and application of Emotional Branding. In another study by Thomson et.al (2007) the need to connect emotionally has been emphasized.

The emotional connection is built through Trust, relationship, lifestyle and personality. More specifically we can say that emotional branding is about the relationship between a consumer and brand, about the trust for a certain brand, about the consumers lifestyle shaped by a brand, and personality of a brand. The present study has assumed that in the “emotional branding” system the four components namely relationship, trust, lifestyle and personality do not interfere with each other even though there may be a possibility .

Brand Trust:

According to (Moorman et. al., 1993, Kumar, 1996) Trust can be defined as desire to rely on a partnership. In another study Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) have defined the brand trust as “consumer’s willingness to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function”. In most of the studies Brand trust has been found to be a key variable in long-term relationships with customers, which in turn positively affects brand loyalty.

Brand trust is a promise of brand with their customers to fulfill their expectations. It helps the customers to get emotionally connected to the brand. It can be described as the belief in a partner’s honesty and benevolence, trustworthiness, fulfillment of their promised obligations and integrity (Kumar, 1996; Hallen et. al., 1991; Andersson et. al., 1989, Doney et. al., 1997; Crosby et. al., 1997) .When partners influence each other, trust is created (Friman et. al., 2002) and it is considered as a part of developing an emotional relationship with others.

Brand Lifestyle:

Every individual has got a different lifestyle no matter they share a common social class, occupation and subculture. “Lifestyle is a person’s pattern of living as expressed in his or her activities, interests and opinions. Lifestyle captures something more than person’s social class or personality. It profiles a person’s all pattern of acting and interacting in the world.” (Kotler, 1996, p.278). People interests in goods are affected by their lifestyles and goods they buy express their lifestyles (Kotler, 1996).

Brand Relationship:

Shimp and Madden (1988) was the first in introducing the concept consumer brand relationship in their paper focusing consumer- object relationship using Sternberg (1986) “Triangular theory of love.” They have defined consumer brand relationship as how “Consumers form relations with consumption objects (products, brands, stores, etc.), which range from feelings of antipathy, to slight fondness, all the way up to what would, in person-person relations, amount to love” (Shimp and Madden, 1988). Emphasizing on long-term commitment Kumar (2006) in his study has defined Brand relationship as a way of knowing how people make long-term commitments to inanimate objects that they buy and use, as well as help make, sell, and distribute. In most recently Blackston and Lebar (2015) extended the Fournier (1998) definition of brand relationship by adding the dimension of organizational and internal culture aligned in terms of relationship principles.

Brand Personality:

Brand personality is a set of characteristic traits that people can associate with a brand in a similar manner to humans(Solomon,2013). For the same reason, consumers tend to directly associate the personality traits of the people involved with the brand with the actual brand personality, such as spokespersons, users or personnel. (Aaker 1997.) The advantage of brand personality is its charisma and ability to evoke emotions. As brand identities can be regarded as descriptive statements and recognition, a brand personality is able to bring the brand to life in a unique and special way. (Gobé 2009, xxxii.)

Blythe (2009) refers to brand personality as a mixture of all consumer perceptions and beliefs of the brand, but it goes deeper than brand image. The brand personality dimensions correlate partially with the “Big Five” human personality dimensions, which would support the idea of selfcongruence to a certain extent. However, the dimensions of Sophistication and Ruggedness are different to any of the “Big Five” dimensions, which suggests that some brands appeal to an aspirational side in consumers. (Aaker 1997.) Malär et al. (2011) in his study found that stronger emotional brand attachment can be achieved by targeting consumers’ actual self in terms of brand personality.

Brand Attitude:

The importance of brand attitude lies in the fact that it is the basis for consumer behavior. The brand attitude is the outcome of the beliefs about certain benefits that brand expects from consumers in form of support of that overall attitude (Percy, 2003). Various studies (Ajzen, 2001; Dennis et al., 2009; Leonidou et al., 2010 ;Jalilvand et al., 2012; Limbu et al., 2012;Shah, Aziz,Jaffari, Waris, Ejaz, Fatima, & Sherazi, 2012; Teng & Huihuang, 2007; Shwu-Lng & Chen-Lien, 2009, Liu et al. ,2012) have revealed that brand attitude has a positive impact on customer purchase intention.It was found that consumers develop a strong emotional attachment to brands linked to central attitude (Grewal et al., 2004). Likewise, in their conceptual model of econsumer behavior Dennis et al. (2009) concurred that positive attitudes towards the e-retailer positively influence e-consumer intention to purchase from the e-retailer.

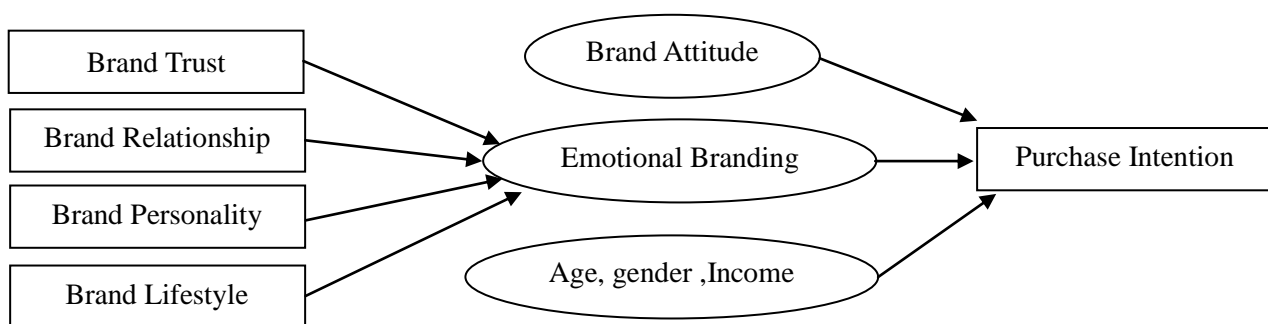
Purchase Intention:

Purchase intention can be considered as one of the main components of consumer cognitive behavior that can show how an individual intends to buy a certain brand or a specific product (Hosein, 2012). In another study by Spears and Singh (2004) they have defined purchase intention as consumer’s conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a product.

Usually purchasing intention is related with consumers’ behavior, perception and their attitude. Purchase behavior is an important key point for consumers during considering and evaluating of certain product (Keller, 2001). Ghosh (1990) in his study has stated that purchase intention is an effective tool use in predicting purchasing process. However, purchase intention might be altered by the influence of price, quality perception and value perception (Zeithaml, 1988) and Grewal et al (1998). In addition, consumers will be interrupted by internal impulse and external environment during purchasing process. Their behavior will be driven by the physiological motivation that stimulates their respond which bring them to the retail store to fulfill their need (Kim and Jin, 2001).

The above discussion on emotional branding, its various components, brand attitude has indicated mixed feelings concerning the outcomes of emotional branding though the major portion has inclined towards positively associated with Intention to purchase. Most of the studies conducted so far have studied emotional branding as a qualitative phenomenon. There are very few studies which have empirically investigated the impact of emotional branding on the intention to purchase. There is also a dearth of studies which have been done on emotional branding in the Indian context. With this background the present study has been planned in order to identify the impact of emotional branding and brand attitude on the consumer intention to purchase Dominos pizza considering its emotional campaign “Yeh Hai Rishton Ka Time”. It has also tried to investigate the effect of demographics on the consumers Intention to purchase Dominos pizza.

Therefore, the proposed theoretical model for the present study is given below.



DATA BASE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Sample Design:

The study being exploratory in nature is based on primary data collected from the students of various colleges and universities of Jammu region. Using convenient sampling method 105 students in graduate and post graduate levels were interviewed for the present study. However, responses having more than 3 standard deviations below or above the mean were categorized as outliers (Schaufeli et al. 2009) and accordingly responses of 20 students were identified as outliers for the analysis and thus removed.

Measures:

The Brand Attitude was measured using scale given by (Kaiser, 1958) which consisted of five statements (eg. This brand provides me a feeling of enjoyment, I have a good impression of this brand), brand trust by (Lau and

Lee, 1999) which is a 3 – Item inventory consisting of statements (I feel that I can trust this brand completely, I cannot rely on this brand, I feel secure when I use this brand because I know that it will never let me down) .For brand relationship a self developed 3-item inventory given by was used consisting of 3 statements (The relationship with the brand gives me security, The relationship with brand is driven by market trends, The relationship to this brand creates preference), brand lifestyle consisted of 5 statements (This brand suits my lifestyle, The brand matches my lifestyle preference etc.), brand personality (Aaker,1987) which is a 20 item inventory consisting of various personality traits(Domestic, Honest, Genuine, Cheering etc.) and purchase intention by (Esch.et.al ,2006).

Finally, the demographic information was collected at the end of the study. The data so collected was summarized and analysed using SPSS. Exploratory factor Analysis was used for dimension reduction. Further, regression analysis was used to study the impact of brand attitude, emotional branding. The impact of demographics(age, gender , income) on consumer purchase intention was analysed using independent t-test and ANOVA.Each inventory is measured on a five-point scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The internal consistencies of each scale measuring brand trust, brand relationship, brand lifestyle, brand personality and brand attitude are proved to be satisfactory and Cronbach’s α reliability coefficient values is higher than the minimum acceptable level (Price, 1972; Ibrahim and Marri, 2008; Burke et al. 2006). The cronbach’ α , value of brand trust, brand relationship, brand lifestyle, brand personality and brand attitude in the present study is 0.82, 0.74, 0.78, 0.86, 0.72 respectively. With the satisfactory result from Cronbach’s α , composite index may be computed for each component.

METHODOLOGY:

As the objective of the study is to identify the impact of brand attitude, emotional branding and its components on intention to purchase Dominos pizza, the regression analysis is considered as an appropriate tool. However, before applying the regression analysis the data was checked to identify its compliance with various assumptions associated with it. The collinearity indices in all the cases reveals the values of Variance Inflation factor (VIF) is less than 10 and of tolerance value above 0, which lie between the limit range and signifies the absence of problem of multicollinearity (Hair et al. 2008). Further the correlation matrix also point out the presence of low correlation between the independent variables (less than 0.5 in most of the cases) (refer Annexure I) which further confirm that regression may be used for the analysis. The independent variables used in the study are brand attitude, brand trust, brand relationship, brand lifestyle, brand personality and the dependent variable is intention to purchase.

The demographic profile of the focal group divulge that the sample is predominantly of females (62 per cent) falling in the age group of 18-21 years (31 per cent).The average annual family income was 5-10 lakhs(43 percent).

RESULTS:

Brand Attitude and Purchase Intention:

The objective has been statistically analyzed (Please refer table 1a and 1b) which shows brand attitude has a significant impact on the intention to purchase Dominos Pizza. F ratio is significant at 1 per cent level of significance and the adjusted R-square 0.307 indicates that the variation in purchase intention to the tune of 30.7 % is caused due to Brand Attitude. The Beta coefficient ($\beta= 0.554$) indicates a positive correlation between the two.(Table 1b)

Table 1 a: Regression Analysis: Brand Attitude and Purchase Intention

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .554 ^a | .307 | .300 | .633 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), BA

Table 1b: Regression Coefficients: Brand Attitude and Purchase Intention

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 2.233 | .247 | | 9.053 | .000 |
| | BA | .410 | .061 | .554 | 6.753 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: PI

Emotional Branding and Purchase Intention:

Analysis of the relationship between emotional branding and brand purchase intention has been analyzed as the second objective of the study. The results (table 2a and 2b) the adjusted R square value of 0.668 specifies that the variation in intention to purchase Dominos pizza to the tune of 66.8% is caused by emotional branding. Hence, it means that people have a good emotional connect with the brand. Further, the brand trust ($\beta=0.521$; $p=0.000$) has the greatest impact on the intention to purchase followed by Brand Lifestyle ($\beta=0.276$; $p=0.000$). The other components of emotional branding like brand relationship and brand personality do not have a significant impact.

Table 2a: Regression: Emotional Intelligence and Purchase Intention

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .825 ^a | .681 | .668 | .436 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), BL, BP, BR, BT

Table 2b: Regression Coefficients: Emotional Intelligence and Purchase Intention

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | |
|-------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | .051 | .346 | | .148 | .883 |
| | BT | .490 | .084 | .521 | 5.858 | .000 |
| | BP | .103 | .104 | .076 | .988 | .325 |
| | BR | .065 | .071 | .077 | .926 | .357 |
| | BL | .362 | .097 | .276 | 3.722 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: PI

Demographics and Intention to Purchase:

As far as demographics are concerned it is important to know the role of age group, gender and income in enhancing sales. So, it becomes imperative to analyze its impact on the intention to purchase. The effect of gender was analyzed using independent t test and the results have revealed that there is no significant impact of gender on the intention to purchase. Further, the impact of age group and income group have been studied using ANOVA and the results again have revealed that there is no significant impact of income and age groups.

DISCUSSIONS:

Dominos is one of the power brands in the market that is known for its attractive marketing campaigns that have been catching the interests of the global economy. All of these campaigns are a subset of one marketing strategy called Emotional Branding. Emotional branding, the technique that is developed by Dominos aims to build a lasting relationship with the customer. The present study has put light on the fact that brand attitude is positively correlated to intention to purchase and has a significant impact on it. Attitude toward the brand and purchase intentions are two pivotal and popular constructs that have been studied mainly in the advertising field. However, the present study has taken up the case of food industry. The results have further revealed that emotional branding is an important component that affects the intention to purchase which clearly states the need for a strong emotional connect with the customers for enhancement of sales. The study has brought out the fact that among the four important components of emotional branding viz. brand trust, brand personality, brand lifestyle and brand relationship only brand trust and brand lifestyle are significant. Emotional values are what differentiate brands from commodities. There is substantial amount of evidence in the literature regarding the tipping importance of emotions in building strong connections between consumers and brands through penetrating into their own values(Erson and kalik,2010;Malar et. al 2011; Jawahar and Maheswari, 2009; Thompson et al., 2006).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS:

The practical significance of study is to give policy prescriptions to both the organization in general so that long term benefits can be derived with realization of the positive association between emotional branding and intention to purchase. In this direction the organizations can improve upon their emotional branding aspect. The new explanatory model is most important for those brands that would like to be able to meet and fulfil

peoples needs. It can be used for earning trust for the brand, creating a relationship with customers, adapting brand to their daily lives, and hopefully people will identify themselves with that brand. Organizations of all types can benefit from emotional branding. The more people associate a product or service with a positive emotion, the more willing they will be to rely on it. We hope that this explanatory model will provide some guidance on how emotional branding can be applied in real life and how brands can gain competitive advantages by using this instrument.

FUTURE RESEARCH:

To make it possible to generalize, it would be interesting to conduct this study on a larger scale, with more respondents to then be able to generalize. Also, the respondents for this study were only from Jammu region. Therefore, it would be interesting to expand it to a larger geographical area.

The present study has been conducted on a global brand i.e Dominos .This study could also be conducted on regular brands, and it would be interesting to find out the level of consumer loyalty in the luxury market compared to the regular market. Would price be an issue for regular consumers? Will the consumer loyalty be the same for regular brands. Also, a study on how emotional branding affects different cultures can be taken up in future.

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Annexure I

| | | Correlations | | | | | |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | | BA | BR | BT | BL | BP | PI |
| BA | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .418** | .601** | .419** | .479** | .554** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 |
| BR | Pearson Correlation | .418** | 1 | .668** | .601** | .570** | .635** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 |
| BT | Pearson Correlation | .601** | .668** | 1 | .578** | .658** | .783** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 |
| BL | Pearson Correlation | .419** | .601** | .578** | 1 | .400** | .654** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 |
| BP | Pearson Correlation | .479** | .570** | .658** | .400** | 1 | .574** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | | .000 |
| | N | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 |
| PI | Pearson Correlation | .554** | .635** | .783** | .654** | .574** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | |
| | N | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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