

Predictors of an Emotional Brand

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Abstract

This article explains the evolution of branding. It describes branding as a progressive concept and quotes many contemporary researches that have been done on the concept of Branding. It highlights the role of emotions in branding. Traditional branding concepts have been focusing on building brand awareness. But, the emotional dimension brings in a personalized relationship into the process. It mentions literature which serves as the basics of the emerging concept and application of Emotional Branding. It presents review of literature that throws light on a selective set of characteristics related to service industries. Myriad research has been done on service industries. Most of the research tries to analyse the customer evaluations on the quality of service delivered in the service industries. Service quality and service encounter are the important concepts of service marketing. It looks at the predictors namely Service Encounter Satisfaction and SERVPERF of Emotional Brands. This research initiative is an attempt to build a model which would facilitate the measurement of Service Encounter Satisfaction and SERVPERF in developing emotional brands. It has also attempted to bring out the importance and relevance of that the emotional brand for the modern manager. Also, in a limited empirical manner the relationships between Service Encounter Satisfaction and Emotional Brand, Service Performance and Emotional Brand have been established.

Keywords: Emotional Branding, Predictors, Service Encounter Satisfaction, SERVPERF, Relationships

1. What is a Brand?

After 1980s, companies started realizing the power of brands. Brand equity and brand assets have become important concepts of the day. Now, branding has become an indispensable aspect of any business. It has to be articulated in the strategic policies of companies in creating ‘differences’ and gain a competitive edge. “Brands are at the heart of the marketing business strategy” (Doyle 1998). A brand is the sum of tangible and intangible associations. Brands are associated with identification, guarantee, mark of integrity, reputation, trust, expectations, etc. The process of creating these associations is branding.

If managed properly, brands can create difference and relevance. According to Kotler et al (1999), “perhaps the most distinctive skill of professional marketers is their ability to create, maintain, protect, reinforce and enhance brands.” Companies have been building various branding strategies to stand on the competitive arena. Today, the marketing battle is a battle of brands. The only way to own markets is to own market dominant brands (Aaker 1991).

Branding is a progressive concept and contemporary researches have been done on the concept of Branding. Many authors have indicated that Brands have different point of views like:

Brand is a form of Identity and Legal Ownership

American Marketing Association (1960) has defined brand as “A name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors.”

Kapferer (1992) has defined a brand as “A brand is not a product. It is the product’s essence, its meaning and its direction and it defines its identity in time and space.”

Brand is a Strategic tool and Multidimensional Construct

Aaker (1996) has defined branding in the terms of Brand Personality as a strategic tool “can help brand strategists by enriching their understanding of people’s perceptions of and attitude toward the brand.”

De Chernatony and Riley (1998) have asserted, “A brand is a multidimensional construct whereby managers augment products or services with values and facilitates the process by which consumers confidently recognise and appreciate these values.”

Branding of Services is Different from Branding Products

O’Cass and Grace (2003) in their article on Service brand associations have asserted that for branded services word – of – mouth, services cape and employees were important dimensions.

Vallaster and de Chernatony (2005) have implied that employees of a service brand are ultimately responsible for delivering the brand promise of the service brand and they are the critically important constituent of the service brand.

Thus the dynamic characteristics of branding have been researched and different authors have enlightened on the various concepts of branding.

2. The Role of Emotions in Brands

Positioning is done in the minds of the customers. Consistent brand promises and performance create strong brands. These promises get rooted in the human minds of the consumers. Customers look out for brands which meet their aspirations, goals and dreams. They prefer to get involved with the brand based on emotions and faith. Emotional bases can create strong bonds between the customers and the brands.

Traditional branding concepts have been focusing on building brand awareness. But, the emotional dimension brings in a personalized relationship into the process. If a product communicates mechanically, it will remain only as a product. If the same communication involves the customer emotionally the product will become a brand. A brand has to create trust. This connects the customer intimately with the brand. Quality is essential for any brand. But when the brand becomes preferred, long-term relationship is established. Awareness alone cannot create successful brands. Brands have to be inspirational. Brand should not be just an identity. It should become a personality. A brand should create a feeling. A strong brand has to understand the needs and aspirations of the customers. A brand has to bring credibility and connect powerfully with people on personal and holistic levels. Brands must have social responsibility.

Companies have started realising that customers can be emotionally connected with the brands. This application of emotions in branding has led to the concept of Emotional Branding, which has emerged in the late 1990s.

3. The Concept of Emotional Brand

Brand positioning is the heart of marketing. In reality it is the consumers who do the positioning. According to Smith (1999) “Marketers bring brands from the factory, but it is the customers who position the brands in their minds, not the marketers”. Customers want the brands to be associated closely with their passions and life-style. Focus on brand strategies based on consumer life-style, goals and dreams are essential in today’s scenario. This is possible through the application of “Emotional Branding” which emerged in the late 1990s. It is a new paradigm in brand management.

Travis (2000) 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) has asserted that branding strategies should be about mindshare and “*Emotions Share*” rather than market share. He also says that Branding is not about awareness only. Awareness is only part of the equation. He further adds, “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-These feelings 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.

4. Service Encounter: The Gateway to Emotional Branding

Myriad research has been done on service industries. Most of the research tries to analyse the customer evaluations on the quality of service delivered in the service industries. Service quality and service encounter are the important concepts of service marketing. These two concepts have been defined according to the following literature.

Delivering quality service means conforming to customer expectations on a consistent basis (Lewis and Booms 1983). In service industries customers spend more time and interact with the service provider directly.

According to Shostack (1985) “a period of time during which a consumer directly interacts with a service” is defined as Service Encounter. This definition includes all the aspects of the service firm, personnel, physical facilities and other tangible elements with which the consumer may interact.

According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985), “Service Quality is more difficult for the consumer to evaluate than goods quality; quality evaluations are not made solely on the outcome of the service; they also involve evaluations of the process of the service delivery.”

Perceived Service Quality is defined by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) as “the consumer’s judgment about a firm’s overall excellence or superiority.”

Quality relationship is essential in services marketing. Studer (2004) in his article on Health Care that “Creating a positive relationship takes three positive comments to balance every negative one.”

The above statement is agreed by Wen- Hung, Chiung-Ju and Yung- De (2006) in their research on Taiwan’s Information Services Industry. They have identified that “relationship quality has a positive influence on customer loyalty, regardless of relationship duration type.”

The importance of relationship in services is indicated by Jain and Jain (2006). They have identified trust, commitment, ethical practices, fulfillment of promises, mutual exchange, emotional bonding, personalisation, and customer orientation as the key elements in the relationship building process of any consumer-centric service firm.

Behaviour of the service provider can influence service evaluation by the customer. Ruoh- Nan and Lotz (2006) on their paper on Service Evaluations have said that, “actions of a service provider moderate the relationship between affective response to waiting and service evaluation experience.”

Jones (2007) has pointed out on the similar lines of the above article. According to him, “When a service provider fails to meet the expectations of customers during a so-called service encounter, the resultant disconfirmation can lead to a series of negative outcomes such as defection and negative word – of – mouth.

Pei (2008) has conceptualized service quality in terms of four attributes of service namely – personal, operational, physical and merchandise. Customer loyalty has been indicated by visiting frequency and amount spent per visit. The above review of literature throws light on a selective set of characteristics related to service industries.

5. Service Encounter Satisfaction

Generally Service Encounter is the service experienced from the customer point of view. Bitner, Booms, Bernard and Tetreault (1990) have categorised particular events and related behaviours of contact employees. Through research the authors have collected 700 incidents from customers of airlines, hotels and restaurants. The incidents were approximately half satisfactory and half dissatisfactory. They have identified three major groups of employee behaviours that account for satisfactory and dissatisfactory incidents as

1. Employee Response to Service Delivery System Failures
2. Employee Response to Customer Needs and Requests
3. Unprompted and Unsolicited Employee Actions

Within these three major groups they have further classified 12 categories of incidents. According to them, “the classification system that emerged from the data can be used by managers of the industries studied and may be applicable to other high-contact, transaction - based service industries as well. The classification system is abstract enough to generalize across several industries, but sufficiently detailed to suggest an overall management approach to improving customer satisfaction in service encounters.”

Also, the above categories have been tested for robustness and validity across different industries (Grenbler and Bitner 1992).

The instrument contains twelve questions related to Service Encounter Satisfaction. Interval scale of 7 –point rating which ranges between *Dissatisfactory (1) to Satisfactory (7)* has been used to measure Service Encounter Satisfaction.

6. Service Quality

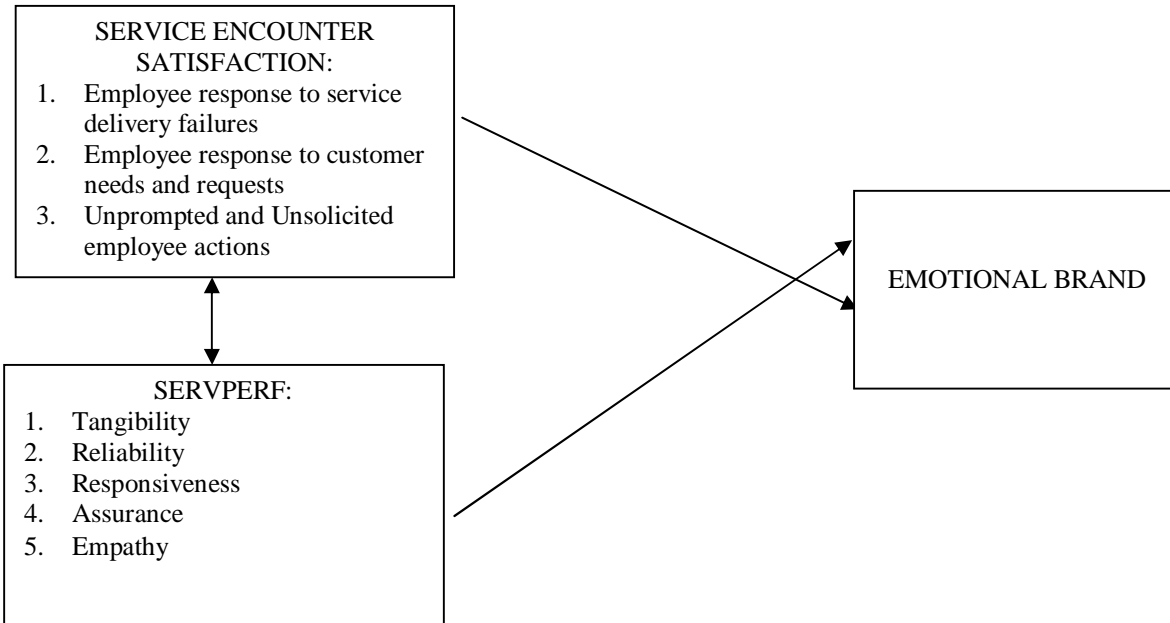
Service quality is generally measured by the most popular tool namely SERVQUAL developed by Parasuraman *et al* (1988). SERVQUAL constitutes 22 items under five factors viz. Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy. Here service quality is measured as difference between perception and expectations. Each dimension is given a specific weightage. The 22 items have to be measured twice, once for assessing perception and the next time for expectations, bringing the total number of items to 44.

Though the SERVQUAL instrument is used widely, Cronin and Taylor (1992&1994) have identified a performance based measure of service quality, SERVPERF. According to them the performance – based scale SERVPERF is efficient in comparison with the SERVQUAL scale; it reduces by half the number of items that must be measured (44 items to 22 items). Also, they suggest that the performance – based measures provide a more construct – valid explication of service quality because of content validity.

Although the debates on both SERVQUAL and SERVPERF are still going on, SERVPERF is used in this research and this is strongly supported by other recent research (Johns & Howard 1998, Angur, Natarajan & Jahera 1999; Fogarty, Catts& Forlin 2000; Thongsamak 2001; Lee & Hwan 2005; Carrilat, Jaramillo & Mulki 2007).

The Service Performance instrument includes twenty two questions to measure service quality. Interval scale of 7-point rating which ranges between *Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7)* has been used.

7. Emotional Brand Model



The proposed model encompasses Service Encounter Satisfaction and Service Quality as independent variables. It is clear from the definitions of Service Quality and Service Encounter Satisfaction that consumers generally evaluate any service based on these two factors. Theoretically it is understood that there is a close association between these two factors. The association between these two variables would be statistically tested in our research.

This paper will test the association between Service Encounter Satisfaction and Service Quality, Service Encounter Satisfaction and Emotional Brand, and Service Quality and Emotional Brand. Service Encounter Satisfaction is measured using the classification and grouping developed by Bitner, Booms, Bernard and Tetreault (1990). Service Quality includes 22-items based on SERVPERF (Cronin and Taylor 1992). The evaluation of Emotional Brand is done based on the metric developed by Sirgy, Johar, Samli and Clairborne (1991).

8. Testing the Model

The following steps have been taken to test the reliability and applicability of this model. A pilot study was conducted. The sample size was 64 and the survey was done within Chennai city (a metropolitan city). The questionnaires were framed to test the model and in respect to the Banking Industry. The test results are discussed below.

8.1. Reliability Assessment

The reliability of the measures used was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient.

Service Encounter Satisfaction**Reliability Statistics**

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|------------------|------------|
| .871 | 12 |

Item-Total Statistics

| | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Unavailable service | 52.28 | 110.332 | .611 | .858 |
| Unreasonably slow service | 52.45 | 108.728 | .615 | .857 |
| Other core service failures | 52.66 | 109.150 | .564 | .861 |
| Special needs of customers | 52.11 | 111.210 | .551 | .862 |
| Customer preferences | 52.13 | 115.571 | .470 | .866 |
| Admitted customer error | 52.42 | 111.899 | .615 | .858 |
| Potentially disruptive others | 53.17 | 110.113 | .596 | .859 |
| Attention paid to the customer | 52.41 | 110.436 | .578 | .860 |
| Out of ordinary employee behavior | 52.47 | 109.936 | .614 | .858 |
| Employee behaviours in the context of cultural norms | 52.63 | 111.730 | .594 | .859 |
| Performance under adverse circumstances | 52.70 | 116.783 | .380 | .872 |
| Over all banking experience | 52.67 | 110.478 | .522 | .864 |

Servperf**Reliability Statistics**

| | |
|------------------|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
| .928 | 22 |

Item-Total Statistics

| | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Physical facilities | 101.75 | 387.238 | .369 | .929 |
| Printed and Visual materials | 101.47 | 381.491 | .498 | .926 |
| Staff are dressed properly | 101.30 | 383.768 | .445 | .927 |
| Up-to-date equipments | 101.42 | 381.232 | .511 | .926 |
| Fulfilling Promises On Time | 101.73 | 363.468 | .719 | .922 |
| Exact specification of client followed | 101.61 | 376.496 | .605 | .924 |
| Reports are free of error | 101.67 | 365.653 | .697 | .922 |
| Services performed right the first time | 101.72 | 375.824 | .621 | .924 |
| All employees provide the same level of service | 102.00 | 374.984 | .632 | .924 |
| Staff tell exactly when services will be performed | 101.98 | 376.714 | .560 | .925 |
| Staff provide prompt service | 101.66 | 373.182 | .645 | .923 |
| Staff are always willing to help customers | 101.67 | 368.795 | .676 | .923 |
| Staff are not acting busy or replying rudely | 101.78 | 376.078 | .545 | .925 |
| Staff are trustworthy | 101.67 | 373.176 | .623 | .924 |
| Safe to have transactions | 101.22 | 379.666 | .550 | .925 |
| Staff are consistently polite or courteous | 101.72 | 375.158 | .628 | .924 |
| Staff have knowledge to answer the customer's questions | 101.69 | 375.171 | .590 | .924 |
| Bank gives individual attention to customers | 101.80 | 371.117 | .664 | .923 |
| Bank has convenient operating hours to all the customers | 101.66 | 372.959 | .684 | .923 |
| Staff can explain clearly the various options available to a particular query | 102.11 | 376.956 | .562 | .925 |
| Staff give personal attention to customers | 101.88 | 372.746 | .704 | .922 |
| Bank has the best interests of the customers | 101.33 | 397.621 | .288 | .929 |

Emotional Brand**Reliability Statistics**

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|------------------|------------|
| .838 | 6 |

Item-Total Statistics

| | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
|-----------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Loyalty | 25.52 | 24.762 | .498 | .832 |
| Ideal | 25.91 | 20.563 | .652 | .804 |
| Recommend | 25.30 | 23.577 | .636 | .809 |
| Opinions | 25.55 | 20.474 | .728 | .786 |
| Switch | 26.02 | 22.555 | .542 | .826 |
| Prefer | 25.55 | 22.283 | .649 | .804 |

The above Alpha coefficients indicate high internal consistency within each scale.

8.2. Regression Analysis

Using Regression Analysis the following relationships have been tested here.

8.2.1. It is proposed that Service Encounter Satisfaction would be associated with Emotional Brand**Correlations**

| | | Service Encounter Satisfaction | Emotional Brand |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Service Encounter Satisfaction | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .601** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 64 | 64 |
| Emotional Brand | Pearson Correlation | .601** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 64 | 64 |

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

Model Summary^b

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .601 ^a | .361 | .350 | .75027 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Service Encounter Satisfaction

b. Dependent Variable: Emotional Brand

ANOVA^a

| Model | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 19.697 | 1 | 19.697 | 34.991 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 34.900 | 62 | .563 | | |
| | Total | 54.597 | 63 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Emotional Brand

b. Predictors: (Constant), Service Encounter Satisfaction

Coefficients^a

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|-------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 2.346 | .480 | | 4.892 | .000 |
| | Service Encounter Satisfaction | .587 | .099 | .601 | 5.915 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Emotional Brand

The R square value for equation (2) is 0.361. Service Encounter Satisfaction is accounted for 36.1 percent variance in Emotional Brand. It indicates a large effect size of 0.361 and the Standardized Beta Coefficient is 0.601 which accounts for the deviations on the dependent variable. This proves a strong association between the variables. The regression equation is

Emotional Brand = 1.665 + 0.714 x Service Encounter Satisfaction

Thus it is proved that Service Encounter Satisfaction and Emotional Brand are associated with each other.

8.2.2. It is proposed that SERVPERF would be associated with Emotional Brand

Correlations

| | | Servperf | EmotionalBrand |
|----------------|---------------------|----------|----------------|
| Servperf | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .700** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 64 | 64 |
| EmotionalBrand | Pearson Correlation | .700** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 64 | 64 |

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

Model Summary^b

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .700 ^a | .491 | .482 | .66978 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Servperf

b. Dependent Variable: EmotionalBrand

ANOVA^a

| Model | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 26.784 | 1 | 26.784 | 59.705 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 27.813 | 62 | .449 | | |
| | Total | 54.597 | 63 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: EmotionalBrand

b. Predictors: (Constant), Servperf

Coefficients^a

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 1.665 | .456 | | 3.653 | .001 |
| | Servperf | .714 | .092 | .700 | 7.727 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: EmotionalBrand

The R square value for equation (2) is 0.491. SERVPERF is accounted for 49.1 percent variance in Emotional Brand. It indicates a large effect size of 0.491 and the Standardized Beta Coefficient is 0.700 which accounts for the deviations on the dependent variable. This proves a strong association between the variables. The regression equation is

Emotional Brand = 1.665 + 0.714 x SERVPERF

Thus it is proved that SERVPERF and Emotional Brand are associated with each other.

9. Limitations

- Nationalized and Non-nationalized banks have not been analyzed separately because the services offered by both the sectors are similar and the quality of service provided by them is indistinguishable.
- The samples were drawn only in Chennai city. Had the samples been drawn across rural and other urban regions, the predictions could be clearer.

10. Managerial Implications

An understanding of how an Emotional Brand is created will immensely help a brand manager in better managing service encounter experiences and quality of service provided.

It is seen that the five dimensions of Service Performance has the potential to create a strong emotional brand. Now the manager has five specific operative initiatives that he or she may take up.

Service Encounter Satisfaction has revealed three dimensions that could be a pointer to the manager on deciding how the manager can improve the actual experience of service encounters.

11. Conclusion

Thus the article has meticulously traced the development of the concept called emotional brand. It has also attempted to bring out the importance and relevance of the emotional brand for the modern manager. Also, in a limited empirical manner the relationships between Service Encounter Satisfaction and Emotional Brand, Service Performance and Emotional Brand have been established.

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