

EMOTIONAL ENHANCEMENT OF PUBLIC PREFERENCES

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Abstract: Our work represents a daring step that joins two concepts from different areas, bounding them out, but capturing them also some converging aspects. It is the word "Nexus", taken from the French literature on social thought and the term "Lovemarks", now widespread in the Anglophone literature of marketing. We believe that the common element is the enhancement of the emotional-affective side about perceptual phenomenon.

Consequently, the work highlights the possibilities for exploiting the fact scientifically proven that emotional processes can significantly influence decisions and behavior of individuals, that emotions lead to action to a greater extend than reason.

Keywords: Nexus, emotional ties, intangible assets, preferences, Lovemark.

1. Rational versus affective aspects in social representations

French Literature in the field of social psychology, regarding social representations, makes a detailed classification of the relations between knowledge and affect (Wolter, 2010). The objects of individuals' representations include simultaneously cognitive and affective aspects. Cognitive-rational elements and the emotional ones are considered distinct components.

In the relations established between cognition and affect one or the other of these aspects may predominate.

	High level of knowledge	Low level of knowledge
High level of affection	Affective-cognitive object	<i>Affective non-cognitive object</i>
Low level of affection	Non-affective cognitive object	Non-affective and non-cognitive object

Fig.1. The level of affect and knowledge linked to the representations object – schematization (Source: Wolter, 2010, p.88)

Of the four quadrants of the diagram above, we are interested, for the subject of this paper, in affective non-cognitive object. It has a number of features such as the fact that it is not linked to the rational order; it is very stimulating; perceived as indisputable.

Such objects of social thinking showing a strong affective valence are called *nexus*, concept launched by M.L. Rouquette in 1988. This term refers to objects characterized by intense emotional elements and a low level of knowledge. The author believes that they are emotional knots pre-logically common to a large number of individuals. The affective appraisals are maximized at the expense of cognitive elements, evading reflection or reasoning, and adherence or rejection towards them are total (e.g. Nazi nexus).

The features of nexus are presented synthesized on six directions, based on Rouquette's texts interpretations by scholars such as R.P. Wolter (2010, pp.91-92):

1. Collective characteristics and shared by most members of the community
2. It mobilizes and cancels for the moment the intra / inter group differences
3. It is enabled in times of crisis and danger,

4. It represents an elaboration of the social imaginary, not of reality,
5. It is expressed by a unique term, irreplaceable,
6. Lack of measurement of affect is expressed through empathy and language vehemence.

What remains, however, a dilemma is that it is not known how some nexus disappear and what is considered a certainty is that a nexus conceals another (Lemieux, 2010).

The Nexus is much easier now self-sustaining, in a media society. So, the driver Ayrton Senna represents, in the public mind, his home country even more intense than its name - Brazil.

In literature, the term nexus is present with reference to social representations and as examples (Wolter, Lo Monaco, 2010) the most common nexus are: freedom, homeland, unity, equality, crazy, Nazi.

2. Fundamental aspects of brand

Starting from the marketing approach of “brand” concept we can notice the complex meanings assigned to it. In the narrow sense, “trademark is a distinctive sign which can be represented by words, letters, numbers, symbols, charts or diagrams, or a combination of these elements designed to give the identity of the goods, services or enterprises and provide competitive differentiation” (Florescu, Mâlcomete, Pop, 2003). Broadly, besides sensitive attributes and inherent operational functions, it is estimated that the brand has to embed certain fundamental components forming two dimensions: the image and reputation (Moisescu, 2012, p.30).

The ensemble of brand associations creates the *brand image* (Pruteanu, 2000, p.224), a set of representations that the public holds about a product / service / person / organization. Brand name is the core of social representation, recalling that the representation structure is composed of the core and the periphery. There is an association of the name with different attributes and connotations. A brand is more valuable as associations are more intense, favorable and unique in the public mind (Moisescu, 2012, p.58) and the association typology includes:

- Primary Associations: perceived quality, price, type of user, context, location, type of activity, awakening of feelings (affection, cheerfulness, safety, comfort, etc.), Personality (traditionalist, modern, happy, sober, etc.).
- Secondary Associations: with an organization / company, with a country or geographic region with a distribution channel, with other brands, celebrity endorsers, with events sponsored by national organizations.

Regarding the other fundamental dimension of brand - *notoriety*, we specify that the term “means a quantitative component of the image (some authors even consider a distinct feature of a brand, organization, individual), which is determined as a percentage of the members of a certain populations who know the brand, organization, product or person” (Florescu, Mâlcomete, Pop, 2003). Notoriety means to be known by a lot of people, to have fame (DEX, 1998 p.700). Something notorious is known by all, is remarkable. In the Anglophone literature this term is translated through *awareness* - consumer capacity to recall, to evoke or recognize a brand. In the specialty practice, measuring the reputation of a brand includes the following types / levels of hierarchy [<https://www.iqads.ro/dictionar/notorietate-a-marci>]:

- Spontaneous - the percentage of people citing the trademark spontaneously without any further indication of the reviewer;
- Top of mind - the percentage of people citing (spontaneously) the brand first, compared to other brands;
- Assisted - the percentage of people who recognize the brand from a list of several brands proposed by the reviewer;
- Qualified – the subjects have to indicate, in addition to the brand name, some additional elements: advertising message, slogan, logo, and the company's activity, brand positioning etc.

The fact that a trademark is notorious does not mean that the public likes it very much.

In marketing communications, taking as criterion the type of message broadcast, we can find rational and emotional advertising types (Smith, 2002, p.119). The first type of advertising emphasizes the objective characteristics of the promotion object, while advertising belonging to the second type is built around emotional and symbolic attraction elements.

We focus further on the emotional, affective side of brands and trademarks.

3. Brand and the perceptual elements

We resort to a well-known definition of brand offered by The Chartered Institute of Marketing UK: “The set of physical attributes of a product or service, together with the beliefs and expectations surrounding it - a unique combination which the name or logo of the product or service should evoke in the mind of the audience” (<http://www.cim.co.uk/Resources>).

3.1. *The distinction between mark and brand*

We note the frequent use of the terms *mark* and *brand* as similar. Although many definitions do not make a distinction between the content of these terms, they differ in terms of historical, conceptual, operational and methodological perspective, as proven by Yang, Sonmez and Li, who provide a comprehensive analysis of the similarities and differences between mark and brand (Yang et al, 2012). In fact, referring to the mark, the authors use the trademark term – a concept with legal connotations. However, the pointed out differences bring more clarification about the two terms.

Historical differences

In terms of temporality, trademarks usage is signaled from the ancient time, around the year 5000 BC, in the caves of Lascaux, while brands became known only with mass sales in 1870, when the products started to be prepackaged (Yang et al, p.315).

Conceptual differences

Mark and brand serve different *purposes*: exclusivity or legal ownership, respectively reputation. However, the mark is interpreted as the subject of intellectual property and brand as marketing subject. The stakeholders in the field of trademarks are: trade offices, lawyers, quality assurance agencies and owners. As regarding the brands the stakeholders are: consumers, competitors, employees and directors.

Infinite conditions for trademarks mean their re-renewal every 10 years, maintaining quality standards, internal and moral compliances, while conditionings regarding the brands are: quality, reputation, the market maintenance power.

Stakeholder perceptions are also different; those mark-related having an objective character, while those of brand-related having subjective character. Regarding the responsibilities of organizations, those mark-related are addressed to lawyers, as long as those brand-related are addressed to strategic and marketing managers.

Operational differences

Regarding trademarks, it is highlighted the intellectual property claim based on legal issues; brand portfolio managing in order to protect them; the quantifiable values in case of mergers or acquisitions. By contrast, regarding brands it is focused on consumers' views; the brand portfolio in the sense of marketisation; the compatibility and complementarity in the case of mergers or acquisitions.

Measurement differences

Measurement methods in the field of trademarks are quantitative and standardized, taking account of the cost, market and revenue approach. In contrast, measurement methods in the field of brands are less standardized, more conceptual, consumer oriented, focused on the evaluation of how healthy a brand is from consumers' perspective, the motivation to purchase a particular brand.

So a *trademark* includes formal, sensorial elements, designed to differentiate some unique markings. The *trademark* concept involves legal issues too.

A *brand* encompasses assessment, connotations, attitudes, complex components that form some basic dimensions: awareness, social image and loyalty, which are simultaneously indicators too (<http://trendelligent.ro/studii-de-marketing/studiu-forta-brand/>). The brand is a central landmark of a company / organization. There are crystallized impressions, beliefs, opinions, dispositions, attitudes around it.

3.2. ***Brand perception and its connotations***

In the public mind, the brand of an organization is mainly a view, association of feelings. In fact, brands exist only at the level of the perceptions and characteristics that a consumer group projects on them. Perceptions represent brands reality. The brand is not just about a logo or a name representing the meaning of these symbols and feelings they cause, it is not part of the business. It is your business. (Travis, 2010, p.4). It is an intangible capital.

Brand is 'an entity that is loved so much that people are prepared to pay more for it than the material benefit obtained' (L. Young, cited by Hannington, 2004, p.9).

There are countries, locations, and people perceived as authentic brands. For example: UK is the symbol of royalty; Paris – the place of good taste; Ireland - land of green, etc. Certainly perceptual elements are closely related to specific elements of culture. Thus, we show selectively brands perceptions of Anglophone audience (cited by Hannington, 2004, p.10):

- Gucci - expensive and charming (glamorous);
- Versace - expensive and vulgar;
- Marks & Spencer - the middle way, non-adventurous but reliable;
- IBM - Solid, reliable and professional.

Some names, such as Coca Cola, Marilyn Monroe triggers mental clichés.



Fig.2. Brands and connotations

4. An alternative concept for brand - Lovemark

Brand can enhance affective elements, fact noticed by Kevin Roberts, who launched the concept of Lovemark (popular, loved mark) in 2004, with the idea to replace and update the concept of “brand”, given the new realities of the market and increased competition. Conceptual reassessment took place by highlighting the strong emotional bond between the public and certain brands.

RESPECT +	LOVE =	LOVEMARK
Performance	Mystery	Loyalty beyond reason
Confidence	Sensuality	Consumer perceptual property of trademark
Reputation	Intimacy	Employee attachment to the company and brand

Fig 3 Lovemark Concept

Source: O. Moiescu, *Marketingul mărcii*, p.35

The above scheme is based on two aspects: respect, as mostly rational element and love - emotional element. This love is transformed into a series of descriptors that are found in Fig. 4.

MYSTERY	SENSUALITY Sensory sensitivity	INTIMACY
Brand story	Visual	Devotion, loyalty
Harmonization of the past with the present and future	Auditory	Passion
Entering the dreams, the desires	Olfactory	Empathy
Myths and icons	Taste	
Potential inspirational	Touch	

Fig.4. Love descriptors for a brand

Synthesis and selection on Moiescu’s Brand marketing, pp.31-34

4.1. Nexus – Lovemark Boundaries

The objects of nexus type do not represent an individual emotion, but they are collective, shared by most members of a community (Lo Monaco, 2010, p.118). In contrast, adherence to a popular brand expresses individually, and the aggregate preferences of all consumers results in the Lovemark concept.

However, nexus have a cohesive character unifying temporarily a heterogeneous group of individuals. Also, we note that the low level of rationality specific to nexus would place it in another quadrant of an imaginary matrix compared to Lovemark term.

4.2. The common Nexus – Lovemark denominator

Our concern was not focused on what experts present as being the potential cohesive, mobilizing and unifying nexus effect, masking the differences inter and intra-groups (Lo Monaco, 2010, p.122). What we want to emphasize is the common aspect of both concepts and also the realities of social thought, namely strong emotional elements.

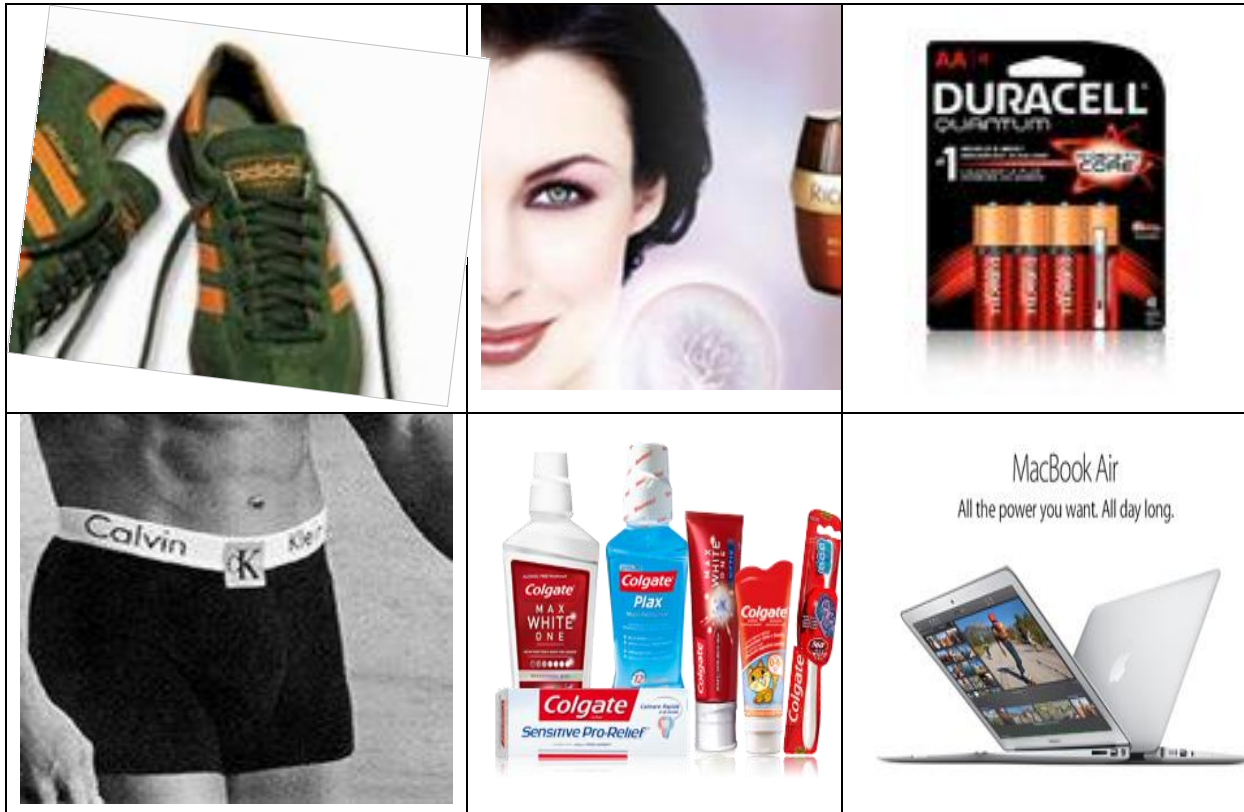
	RATIONALITY
High level	<i>LOVEMARK</i>
	AFFECTIVITY
Low level	High level
Low level	<i>NEXUS</i>

Fig. 5. Positioning Nexus / Lovemark concepts on rationality-emotionality matrix

Own schematization

Marketing treaties devoted separate chapters to brand policies developed to attract and retain customers, to cultivate their loyalty. There is a term - “developing a brand awareness” (Pop, 2011, p.278), and international known works in the field of company and brand reputation (Travis, 2000; Hannington, 2004) reveal the emotional side involved in the customers preferences.

There is a classification of popular brands ([www.lovemarks.com / index](http://www.lovemarks.com/index)) and as examples we have selected of various kinds some well known brands.



Some Romanian brands have managed to earn a place in the latest ranking of popular brands - Latest Lovemarks.



A successful Romanian brand is Dacia Duster.



4. Conclusion and practical implications

As a conclusion we notice a point of convergence between literature and the social representations of marketing. To promote social image of organizations or in cultivating loyalty to a product / service, the specialists could join their forces to exploit the fact scientifically, proven that emotional processes can significantly influence decisions and behavior of individuals, that emotions lead to action to a greater extent than reason.

We will point out some relevant ideas:

- There is a dialectical relationship between social representation and affection.
- The image of an organization or brand exists in the public mind primarily as association.
- Emotion is not obsolete, even if science is based predominantly on rational elements.
- “Brand” is a concept of great complexity and it is not identified for connoisseurs with that of “trademark”.
- The brand is a set of information, perceptions and associations that are forming in the minds of the target audience, conveying certain messages and emotional conditions.
- Lovemark is the rethinking of brand idea based on public respect and love.
- Lovemark and nexus have in common the emphasis on the emotional side.
- Emotional highlight can be exploited successfully in marketing or reputation management, as well as in the image strategy of any organization.

Our idea is that of vicinity of the two types of approaches found in the literature regarding the social thinking and marketing for an interdisciplinary vision on creating and strengthening the emotional ties between the brand / subject of social representation and public.

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