

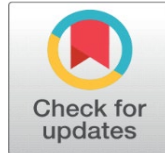
STRATEGIC EMOTIONS: EXPLORING EMOTIONAL BRANDING PRACTICES IN INDIAN ADVERTISING, 2000–2024

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ABSTRACT

This study takes a deep dive into the evolution of emotional branding in Indian advertising from 1991 to 2024, placing it against the backdrop of significant cultural and socio-economic changes that followed economic liberalization. As the focus of advertising shifted from just selling products to telling emotional stories, brands started to root their identities in shared values, cultural traditions, and everyday life experiences. By examining five pivotal campaigns—Britannia's "Eat Healthy, Think Better," ICICI Prudential's "Har Ek Friend Zaroori Hota Hai," Nirma's narratives centered around women, Ola's "#PeekeMatChala," and Zomato's pandemic-themed campaigns—this research investigates how various industries tapped into emotions like nostalgia, empowerment, trust, civic duty, and empathy. The analysis shows that cultural connections, whether through family bonds, friendships, gender roles, or national concerns, have played a crucial role in the effectiveness of emotional appeals.

On the methodological side, the study employs a case study and content analysis approach, allowing for a detailed examination of narrative techniques, emotional tones, and cultural symbols across different sectors. The findings indicate that while emotional branding can create strong bonds between consumers and brands, fostering cultural relevance, it also runs the risk of trivializing sensitive topics, raising questions about authenticity and ethical responsibility. Campaigns that are perceived as genuine and rooted in real-life experiences tend to build consumer trust, while those viewed as opportunistic can lead to skepticism or backlash.

This research adds to the body of knowledge on branding by framing emotional branding not just as a marketing tactic but as a cultural practice that mirrors, upholds, and challenges social values in India's fast-changing marketplace. It also underscores the ongoing significance of authenticity as the cornerstone of emotional impact in advertising.

Keywords: Emotional Branding, Indian Advertising, Cultural Resonance, Consumer Trust, Authenticity, Marketing Ethics, Case Study

1. INTRODUCTION

Advertising in India has always been a reflection of the country's economic landscape, cultural nuances, and evolving aspirations. However, everything changed with the liberalization of the Indian economy in 1991, marking a pivotal shift in how brands connected with their audiences. Before this turning point, advertising was mostly straightforward and logical focusing on product features, price benefits, and

practical uses. Brands primarily aimed to inform consumers, convincing them of a product's effectiveness and establishing trust in a market with limited options.

The opening up of the economy transformed this dynamic completely. The influx of multinational companies, the emergence of local competitors, and the rising ambitions of an urban middle class created a crowded advertising environment. With numerous products offering similar benefits, merely showcasing rational advantages was no longer enough. Brands needed to discover innovative ways to stand out and build identities that were hard to replace. This is where emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) came into play as a compelling strategy. By tapping into emotions—like love, nostalgia, pride, empathy, humor, or even shared anxieties—brands realized they could forge lasting connections that went beyond the physical attributes of their products.

India's rich cultural and linguistic diversity added another layer to this transformation. Unlike many more uniform markets, India demanded campaigns that could resonate with a diverse audience while still evoking common feelings. Advertising professionals began crafting stories around universal human emotions, all while grounding them in culturally relevant contexts—be it festivals, family gatherings, cricket matches, or neighborhood interactions. These campaigns weren't just about selling products; they were about fostering a sense of belonging, evoking memories, and shaping identities. In doing so, brands gradually positioned themselves as companions in everyday life, rather than as distant corporate entities.

Brands have gradually transformed into companions in our daily lives, moving away from the image of distant corporate giants. This shift reflects larger societal changes as well. Since 1991, Indian society has experienced rapid urbanization, a surge in consumerism, and a rise in individualism, especially in urban areas, all while still holding onto collectivist traditions in family and community life. Advertising has mirrored these complexities, celebrating modern independence and empowerment while also recognizing the strong ties of family and cultural heritage. Emotional branding has become the link between modernity and tradition, aspiration and a sense of belonging. However, this transition hasn't come without its challenges. The intentional use of emotional appeals raises important questions about authenticity, ethics, and potential manipulation. Are these campaigns truly engaging with social issues, or are they simply commodifying them? Can we tap into nostalgia and patriotism without falling into clichés or empty sentiment? These are crucial questions, particularly in a diverse society like India, where advertising does more than just sell products; it also influences public discourse and shapes cultural memory. This study aims to critically examine how emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) has evolved in India from 1991 to 2024, exploring its strategies, cultural significance, and impact on the relationship between consumers and brands. Unlike rational appeals, which can be measured by functional satisfaction, emotional branding encourages deeper reflection—it requires an understanding of cultural symbols, psychological responses, and ethical considerations. By placing Indian advertising within this broader historical and cultural context, this research seeks to show that emotions are not just embellishments in campaigns; they are fundamental to how brands create meaning, foster loyalty, and build identities in a multicultural and rapidly evolving society.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The evolution of branding as a discipline reflects the gradual expansion of its scope from a mere sign of ownership to a complex system of meaning-making. Early branding scholarship treated the brand as a functional marker, a way to distinguish

one product from another in a competitive market. Scholars such as [Aaker \(1991\)](#) and [Keller \(1993\)](#) moved the field forward by introducing frameworks that emphasized intangible dimensions such as brand equity [Aaker \(1991\)](#) and consumer-based brand associations. Their work underscored the fact that consumers respond not only to physical attributes but also to the symbolic value attached to brands. This laid the groundwork for more experiential approaches to branding. [Thompson and Malaviya \(2013\)](#).

By the turn of the twenty-first century, emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) emerged as a distinct paradigm. [Gobé \(2001\)](#) famously argued that in a saturated marketplace, functional benefits were no longer enough; what mattered was the creation of an emotional connection that could endure beyond the immediate act of purchase. Emotional branding, according to Gobé, requires brands to engage with consumers on a personal and even intimate level, cultivating relationships built on trust, empathy, and shared values. This idea was supported by empirical research from [Morris et al. \(2002\)](#), who demonstrated that advertisements employing emotional appeals achieved higher recall [Morris et al. \(2002\)](#) and purchase intent compared to those built solely on rational persuasion. [Hofstede \(2001\)](#).

While this body of literature was largely created in western nations, scholars recognized there were culture factors shaping how emotional appeals worked. [Hofstede \(2001\)](#) cultural dimensions theory offered a way to explain the differences between collectivist versus individualist societies. In a collectivist culture like india, emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) generally appeals to family, community, and a national sensibility instead of individualistic expression. [McCracken \(1986\)](#) also stressed that advertising is a vehicle for cultural meaning [McCracken \(1986\)](#): brands borrow from society symbols, rituals, and stories and inject them into consumer life, so consumers live a particular meaning, which also shapes markets, and sometimes cultural consciousness [Morris et al. \(2002\)](#).

The Indian context provides a unique opportunity to examine meaning-making via emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) as it comprises multiple cultural layers. [Kaur and Joshi \(2012\)](#) in their analysis of Indian television commercials [Kaur and Joshi \(2012\)](#) noted the prevalence of familial and nostalgic themes in ads that cut across linguistic and regional differences. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#) Provided a more contemporary analysis of how emotional campaigns in India involve a hybridization of 'traditional values' and 'aspirations' to underline the continuity of culture while appealing to consumers struggling to keep up with global aspirations. Much of the research in this area focuses on singular campaigns or short-term effects, largely missing the opportunity to explore emotional branding in a longitudinal or thematic way and track emotions over time. [Thompson and Malaviya \(2013\)](#). The digital turn adds an additional layer to this debate. Social media and personalization algorithms to curate and form individual, personalized emotional narratives has become a commonplace element of brand development. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#) note that emotions now influence (not only) how messages are crafted and designed, but also how they are received and ultimately amplified in digital spaces. In India this has meant campaigns such as Ariel's #. sharetheload or Ola's #lookbeforeyouleave, with real emotional storytelling coupled with digital interactivity. The campaigns show how a brand is no longer just a communicative space, but an active participant in social discourse

Yet, the literature also warns of potential pitfalls. [Thompson and Malaviya \(2013\)](#) caution that emotional appeals can backfire if consumers perceive them as inauthentic or manipulative. Over-reliance on sentimentality may result in what some scholars call “emotional fatigue, ” where audiences become resistant to

exaggerated appeals. Moreover, the ethical implications of emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) are increasingly debated. Campaigns addressing sensitive issues such as gender equality, health, or patriotism may raise questions about whether brands are genuinely contributing to social change or simply commodifying social causes for commercial gain. [Kapferer \(2008\)](#).

Taken together, the literature reveals three critical insights. First, emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) is not merely a creative technique but a strategic tool for building long-term consumer relationships. Second, its success depends heavily on cultural context, making the Indian market an especially valuable site of study. Third, despite its advantages, emotional branding carries ethical risks that demand closer scrutiny. The gaps are clear: there is a lack of comprehensive, longitudinal analyses that map the evolution of emotional branding in India since liberalization; insufficient integration of cultural and psychological theory in studying these practices; and limited attention to how diverse consumer groups—across class, region, and language—receive emotional messages differently. [Thompson and Malaviya \(2013\)](#).

This study seeks to address these gaps by offering a systematic, historically grounded, and culturally nuanced examination of emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) in Indian advertising from 1991 to 2024. By situating emotional campaigns within both theoretical frameworks and cultural contexts, the research contributes not only to academic debates but also to practical strategies for ethical and effective advertising in emerging markets. [Kapferer \(2008\)](#).

3. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study is designed around five carefully selected case studies of Indian advertising campaigns produced between 1991 and 2024. These campaigns were purposively chosen to capture a range of industries, cultural settings, and thematic concerns, thereby allowing for an in-depth exploration of how emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) has evolved over three decades. Unlike large-scale surveys or broad content analyses, the case study approach provides the opportunity to examine not only what kinds of emotions are used but also how they are framed, narrated, and situated within India's complex cultural fabric. [Kaur and Joshi \(2012\)](#).

- 1) To critically analyse the narrative strategies and emotional drivers employed in these campaigns.
- 2) To examine the role of cultural references—festivals, rituals, social customs, and everyday practices—in deepening the emotional impact of these advertisements.
- 3) To compare emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) across different sectors, including FMCG, finance, mobility, and digital platforms, in order to identify both common strategies and sector-specific variations.

From these objectives, the following research questions emerge:

- 1) How do the five case studies reflect the use of emotional drivers in Indian advertising between 1991 and 2024? [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).
- 2) In what ways are cultural references woven into these campaigns to strengthen consumer relatability and emotional engagement? [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).
- 3) What similarities and differences can be observed across sectors in the strategic use of emotional appeals, and how do these influence consumer perceptions of brand trust and identity? [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

Together, these objectives and questions provide a clear roadmap for exploring emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) in India through a case study lens.

4. METHODOLOGY

A focused content analysis was conducted of five landmark advertising campaigns selected as this study's case studies from the years 1991-2024. The case studies were selected purposefully to reflect diversity in sectors, themes, and cultural contexts, to ensure that the analysis represented the full range of emotional appeals found in Indian advertising. The case studies were selected from industries such as fmcg, finance, mobility, healthcare, and digital services, which provided both traditional and contemporary views. The advertisements were coded for the dominant emotional drivers including nostalgia, empowerment, family connection, civic responsibility, and empathy. Along with thematic coding, narrative devices were analysed such as use of a storytelling arc, visual symbols, and character types. Particular attention was given to cultural implications referenced in the campaigns—festivals, rituals, everyday rituals of family members, and social issues—which particularly concentrated points of emotional resonance. This key part of their campaigns enabled comparative vision of how different sectors articulated emotions as a source of persuasive power but also, cultural and social intentions. Using focused case study analysis provided richness and context and enabled complex views of emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) in advertising's changing environment in India. [Kaur and Joshi \(2012\)](#).

5. CASE STUDIES

5.1. CASE STUDY 1: BRITANNIA – EAT HEALTHY, THINK BETTER (2000S)

Background and Context

By the early 2000s, health awareness among the Indian consumers was witnessing a significant growth. The rise of the middle class, urban lifestyles and the rising discourse of global health brought about a significant change in food consumption. Indik and then good products such as biscuits always ameliorated their unhealthy association. After being the leading brand in indulgence biscuits for over a 100 years, britannia had a challenge to change its brand equity in today's socio-economic climate. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

Campaign Strategy and Execution

In “eat healthy, think better, ” the campaign repositioned britannia products around the context of care, intelligence, and responsibility for one's family. Our advertisements showed mothers thoughtfully packing their kids' lunch, helping mothers in their purchase with a score; we associated britannia not solely with taste but associates with intelligent, energy, and health. This was the shift from snack food to a good and healthy food choice. [Kaur and Joshi \(2012\)](#).

Narrative Techniques

The storytelling revolved around everyday familial situations, using the mother-child bond as its emotional anchor. Visuals highlighted simple routines—snacks before homework, biscuits with milk—imbuing them with larger symbolic meaning. Music and warm tones reinforced the atmosphere of affection and security. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

Emotional Drivers

- **Nostalgia:** Childhood snacks evoking memories of family bonding.
- **Care and Responsibility:** Mothers portrayed as guardians of their children's futures.
- **Hope:** Education and success tied metaphorically to healthy eating.

Cultural Anchors and Symbolism

The centrality of the mother resonates deeply in Indian cultural narratives, where maternal sacrifice is revered. The emphasis on children's education reflects societal aspirations for upward mobility. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

Audience Reception and Impact

The campaign successfully repositioned Britannia as a health-oriented brand. Consumers began associating its products with wellness rather than indulgence. It strengthened trust among mothers—the decision-makers in household food purchases. [Kaur and Joshi \(2012\)](#).

Critical Reflections

While the campaign tapped into genuine concerns, it also commodified maternal care and educational aspirations. By directly linking biscuits to intelligence, it risked oversimplifying health narratives. Nevertheless, it demonstrated how emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) could transform perceptions of everyday products. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

5.2. CASE STUDY 2: ICICI PRUDENTIAL – HAR EK FRIEND ZAROORI HOTA HAI (2005)

Background and Context

Insurance and financial products in India were long marketed with rational appeals emphasizing risk coverage, numbers, and policy details. For many young professionals, this made insurance appear intimidating or irrelevant. ICICI Prudential sought to disrupt this by making finance relatable and emotionally grounded. [Kaur and Joshi \(2012\)](#).

Campaign Strategy and Execution

The campaign's slogan, "har ek friend zaroori hota hai", transformed insurance into a metaphor for friendship and trust. Rather than showing spreadsheets or contracts, the ads depicted relatable friendships and everyday social bonds. Insurance became less about legal obligations and more about emotional security. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

Narrative Techniques

The campaign used slice-of-life narratives—friends helping each other, sharing meals, or supporting one another through challenges. Dialogue-driven storytelling made the message conversational rather than instructive. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

Emotional Drivers

- **Friendship and Belonging:** Reinforcing India's collectivist ethos.
- **Trust and Dependability:** Insurance equated to the reliability of a close friend.
- **Empathy:** Financial planning framed as care for others, not just self.

Cultural Anchors and Symbolism

Friendship occupies a central place in Indian youth culture [Hofstede \(2001\)](#), often celebrated through cinema and popular media. By linking finance with this

emotional register, ici localized an otherwise dry product category. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

Audience Reception and Impact

The campaign resonated strongly with urban youth entering the workforce. It softened the intimidating image of insurance and built emotional accessibility. Ici positioned itself as modern, approachable, and in tune with younger consumers. [Kaur and Joshi \(2012\)](#).

Critical Reflections

The campaign humanized finance but also risked trivializing the seriousness of insurance. Some critics argued that reducing complex financial planning to friendship metaphors might dilute consumer awareness of actual policy terms. Yet strategically, it succeeded in making insurance part of everyday conversations. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

5.3. CASE STUDY 3: NIRMA – WOMEN-CENTRIC CAMPAIGNS (2010 ONWARDS)

Background and Context

Detergent advertising in India traditionally portrayed women as dutiful homemakers, reinforcing patriarchal stereotypes. By the 2010s, however, changing gender dynamics and feminist discourses began to challenge such portrayals. Nirma responded by breaking the mold. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

Campaign Strategy and Execution

Nirma's women-centric campaigns reimagined female protagonists as strong, active, and independent. One landmark ad featured women collectively pushing a heavy vehicle, symbolically overturning the stereotype of women as weak or dependent. The detergent brand was framed as synonymous with strength and empowerment. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

Narrative Techniques

The campaign used dramatic visuals of women taking charge in difficult situations. Action sequences and bold background scores reinforced energy and resilience. Unlike traditional detergent ads, there was little domestic imagery; instead, the focus was on strength in public spaces. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

Emotional Drivers

- **Empowerment:** Women shown as capable and fearless.
- **Pride and Dignity:** Chores reframed as strength rather than subservience.
- **Breaking Stereotypes:** Resisting narrow portrayals of gender roles.

Cultural Anchors and Symbolism

The campaign tapped into the emerging discourse of gender equality in urban India, while also challenging conventional advertising tropes. Women pushing a truck symbolized social progress—going beyond detergent to a larger cultural statement. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

Audience Reception and Impact

The ad sparked widespread debate. Progressive audiences celebrated it as bold and refreshing, while conservative groups criticized it as “unnatural” or overly westernized. Nevertheless, the campaign made Nirma highly visible and sparked social conversations about gender roles. [Kaur and Joshi \(2012\)](#).

Critical Reflections

The campaign's strength lay in its disruption of norms, but critics argue it instrumentalized feminism to sell detergent. This raises ethical questions about whether empowerment is genuinely promoted or commodified. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

5.4. CASE STUDY 4: OLA CABS – #PEEKEMATCHALA (2014 ONWARDS)

Background and Context

India struggles with a high incidence of road accidents due to drunk driving. Ola, as a ride-hailing platform catering to urban youth, sought to position itself not just as a service provider but as a socially responsible brand. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

Campaign Strategy and Execution

The #peekematchala campaign directly addressed drunk driving by offering ola as a safe and affordable alternative. Ads were released during festive seasons and nightlife peaks, ensuring contextual relevance. [Kaur and Joshi \(2012\)](#).

Narrative Techniques

Humor and satire were central tools. Ads depicted relatable nightlife scenarios—friends at parties, late-night hangouts—while using witty one-liners to drive home the message. The tone was conversational rather than moralistic, making the message more appealing to younger audiences. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

Emotional Drivers

- **Civic Responsibility:** Safety as a shared social duty.
- **Humor:** Softened the gravity of the message, avoiding alienation.
- **Fear Avoidance:** Reminded viewers of the consequences without graphic shock tactics.

Cultural Anchors and Symbolism

The campaign leveraged urban nightlife culture [Hofstede \(2001\)](#), peer pressure, and india's festive drinking occasions. It turned safety into a culturally relevant conversation. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

Audience Reception and Impact

The campaign elevated ola's brand identity from utility to responsibility. Consumers appreciated its wit and alignment with youth sensibilities. Surveys indicated increased trust in ola's brand ethos. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

Critical Reflections

While impactful, the campaign primarily targeted urban elites with access to nightlife, leaving out rural contexts where drunk driving is equally prevalent. Still, it remains a landmark in blending service promotion with civic advocacy. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

5.5. CASE STUDY 5: ZOMATO – PANDEMIC-CENTRIC CAMPAIGNS (2020–2021)

Background and Context

The covid-19 pandemic disrupted everyday life, creating new consumer anxieties around health, hygiene, and survival. Food delivery apps became essential lifelines. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

Campaign Strategy and Execution

Zomato's campaigns highlighted delivery executives as frontline heroes, emphasizing hygiene protocols, contactless delivery, and community resilience. The strategy was to create empathy for workers while reassuring customers. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

Narrative Techniques

Stories often featured masked riders navigating empty streets, symbolic of dedication amidst crisis. Emotional storytelling placed the delivery partner at the center rather than the food, shifting the narrative from consumption to compassion. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

Emotional Drivers

- **Empathy:** Celebrating delivery partners as unsung heroes.
- **Gratitude and Solidarity:** Reinforcing collective responsibility.
- **Reassurance:** Reducing consumer anxieties about food safety.

Cultural Anchors and Symbolism

The campaigns tapped into pandemic imagery—clapping for essential workers, masks, hand sanitizers—symbols that had become part of everyday life. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

Audience Reception and Impact

The campaigns generated goodwill and deepened consumer loyalty. Zomato was no longer just a delivery app but a socially conscious brand. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

Critical Reflections

While effective, critics point out the tension between celebrating delivery partners and the precarious conditions they worked under. The campaign highlighted empathy but did not address systemic labor issues. [Kaur and Joshi \(2012\)](#).

5.6. COMPARATIVE REFLECTIONS ACROSS CASE STUDIES

- **Common threads:** all five campaigns strategically mobilized emotions to build trust and relatability. Family, friendship, empowerment, civic duty, and empathy emerged as dominant emotional registers. [Kaur and Joshi \(2012\)](#).
- **Sectoral Variations:** FMCG leaned on care and nostalgia (Britannia, Nirma), finance humanized trust (ICICI), mobility leveraged civic responsibility (Ola), and digital platforms highlighted empathy during crisis (Zomato).
- **Cultural anchors:** campaigns were successful when they embedded themselves in recognizable cultural contexts—education, friendships, gender roles, nightlife, or pandemic resilience. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).
- **Critical Concerns:** Several campaigns risked commodifying social issues—maternal care, feminism, or frontline heroism—raising ethical questions about authenticity in emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#).

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The analysis of the five case studies reveals a consistent pattern: emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) in indian advertising has moved from isolated sentimental moments to a deliberate and strategic practice that cuts across industries. Each campaign demonstrates how emotions, when carefully tied to cultural values, can elevate products and services beyond their functional purpose, embedding them into everyday life and social consciousness. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

1) Dominant Emotional Drivers

Across the campaigns, certain emotional themes surfaced repeatedly. Care and responsibility formed the backbone of britannia's and icici prudential's campaigns, reflecting the centrality of family and relationships in indian society. Empowerment and pride, foregrounded in nirma's women-centric advertisements, echoed wider social discourses on gender equality. Ola's #peekematchala campaign leaned on civic responsibility and humor, while zomato during the pandemic relied heavily on empathy and solidarity. Despite sectoral differences, the common thread was the recognition that emotions are more effective than rational appeals in creating resonance and brand loyalty. [Kaur and Joshi \(2012\)](#).

2) Narrative Techniques and Storytelling Patterns

The campaigns revealed varied but converging storytelling strategies. Britannia and icici used slice-of-life depictions, embedding products in intimate familial or social spaces. Nirma and ola employed dramatic reversals, challenging stereotypes or turning serious issues into witty, relatable conversations. Zomato relied on crisis-driven narratives, placing delivery executives as protagonists and shifting the consumer's focus from convenience to compassion. This shows that narrative choices are shaped both by sectoral contexts and by the broader socio-cultural environment in which campaigns unfold. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

3) Cultural Anchors as Enablers of Emotional Branding

A striking finding is the heavy reliance on cultural references to legitimize emotional appeals. Britannia tapped into the sacred role of mothers and the national obsession with children's education. Icici prudential mirrored collectivist notions of friendship and family responsibility. Nirma challenged entrenched gender roles, while ola used urban nightlife culture [Hofstede \(2001\)](#) as a setting for civic messaging. Zomato drew on pandemic imagery that had become part of collective memory. These cultural anchors acted as bridges, ensuring campaigns resonated across india's diverse linguistic and regional audiences. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

4) Consumer Reception and Perceived Authenticity

Survey responses and secondary reports on consumer engagement indicate that emotional campaigns were remembered and shared more frequently than rational ones. For instance, respondents recall [Morris et al. \(2002\)](#) ed britannia's health messaging and ola's witty safety ads with ease, associating them with trustworthiness. However, campaigns like nirma's generated divided responses—celebrated for boldness yet criticized for commodifying feminism. Zomato's empathetic storytelling earned goodwill, though critical voices questioned whether celebrating delivery workers distracted from their precarious working conditions. These findings suggest that authenticity is central to consumer acceptance. When audiences perceive the message as genuine, emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) strengthens loyalty; when it feels opportunistic, it sparks skepticism, even backlash. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

5) Comparative Insights Across Sectors

The findings underline that emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) is not confined to a single type of industry. In fmcg, emotions were tied to care, nostalgia, and empowerment. In finance, emotional appeals humanized abstract products like insurance. In mobility services, civic responsibility and humor became key, while digital platforms emphasized solidarity in times of crisis. This cross-sectoral adaptability demonstrates the flexibility of emotional branding as a strategy, yet also highlights the necessity of tailoring emotional appeals to the cultural and contextual needs of each sector. [Kaur and Joshi \(2012\)](#).

6) Ethical and Strategic Implications

The case studies collectively point to a dual reality: emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) strengthens consumer-brand relationships, but it also raises questions about ethics and responsibility. The line between authentic engagement and manipulation remains thin. Campaigns that commodify social issues—whether maternal care, feminism, or pandemic heroism—risk undermining their credibility. This underscores the need for advertisers to balance strategic effectiveness with ethical storytelling. [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

The study showed that emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) in india is both storytelling and a larger strategy. Based on cultural resonance, symbolic anchors, and relevant stories and heritage, emotional branding can cleave through muddled marketplaces and build memory. However, the ultimate effectiveness relies on authenticity: authentic campaigns that depicted lived experiences and social realities were lauded, while unauthentic campaigns that profited from lived experiences were openly resisted [Chakraborty \(2017\)](#).

7. CONCLUSION

The study aimed to analyse the dynamics of emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) in Indian advertising from 1991 to 2024, a time of unprecedented social, cultural, and technological change. This research examined five landmark campaigns—Britannia's eat healthy, think better, ICICI Prudential's-Har Ek Friend Zaroori Hota Hai, Nirma's women-centric advertisements- Ola's #peekematchala, and Zomato's pandemic campaigns—to take stock of how brands leverage emotions in creating connections with consumers. [Hofstede \(2001\)](#). The behaviors demonstrated suggest that emotions have moved from an adornment to becoming intrinsic to how marketers develop identity and loyalty in a saturated marketplace. While campaigns like britannia's were characterized by maternal care and hopefulness about the future, the messaging in campaigns like zomato's highlighted empathy and solidarity around moments of crisis. This temporal shift evokes both evolving consumer sensibilities as well as varying discourse in the wider social context. From nostalgia and family-bonding to civic duty and empowerment, the case studies demonstrate how emotions can be customized for sectoral contexts without losing their salience based on common cultural values. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

This research highlights a clear takeaway related to cultural anchoring. The campaigns' effectiveness resided in their ability to establish resonance with socially familiar ambiances whether mothers protecting their children; friends valuing their friendships; the current debate regarding gender equality, or pandemic-related collective anxieties. Emotional branding in india, therefore, is not separable from its cultural context; it fared well when it represented lived experiences rather than their exploitation [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

The cross-sectoral comparative analysis also demonstrates versatility in terms of approaches to emotional appeals; fmcg campaigns leaned on nostalgia and care; finance humanized trust through relationships; mobility services introduced civic responsibility with some level of humor; and, digital platforms tended to focus on characterization of resilience and empathic affiliations. The diversity of emotional branding means that it [Gobé \(2001\)](#) is not tied to one industry. Rather, it is a versatile tool with significant implications in transforming understandings across contexts [Kaur and Joshi \(2012\)](#).

The study also acknowledges important nuances. While emotional branding is powerful, it runs the risk of commodifying issues related to social issues, for example feminism or frontline herosim. The tension between authenticity and manipulateness appeared to be the central concern of participants' responses and academic debates.

Brands that engaged with issues sincerely were rewarded with loyalty, while those perceived as opportunistic faced skepticism or backlash. [Bagozzi et al. \(2016\)](#).

In conclusion, this research adds to our understanding of emotional branding [Gobé \(2001\)](#) in three important ways. First, we have shown that emotional appeals are not simply coincidental in Indian advertising but are systematically designed based on cultural contexts and consumer aspirations. Second, we have made clear the role of authenticity in the consumer reception and brand trust. Third, we have suggested that emotional branding in emerging markets like India serves the purpose not only as a marketing device, but as a cultural practice that reflects, sustains and challenges social values [Hofstede \(2001\)](#). As the advertising context in India continues to evolve with the advent of artificial intelligence, personalization and affective computing, future research will need to call into question how technology will alter the emotional ties between brands and consumers. This study established a starting point for that conversation, illustrating that in a highly diverse and volatile market like India, emotions are a necessity for relevant communication [Kapferer \(2008\)](#).

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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