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02 Building Brand Love

05 Where are you reading this right now?

07 Email Marketing Optimization - Part 2

Building Brand Love

Scientific insight into the brand-consumer relationship

If you're a marketing professional, you've undoubtedly heard, to some degree, industry conversation on the topic of "brand love."

While most marketers could take intuitive or even educated guesses about what exactly brand love is and how to achieve it, a deeper benefit comes from applying the rigors of scientific research methodology to reach a definition and direction.

Rajeev Batra, Aaron Ahuvia, and Richard P. Bagozzi tackled the challenge of defining the elements of brand love through foundational, scientific research and structural equations modeling, as well as clearly articulating the benefits of brand love. Furthermore, to the benefit of the overall marketing community, Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi have laid out concrete suggestions, summarized below, for marketing professionals to put this research into practice.

Most extant research about brand love has used the research about interpersonal love as a foundation for understanding brand love. But there are distinct differences between the consumer-producer relationship and that between people. Therefore, as the authors argue, foundational, exploratory research and a clearer definition of brand love are long overdue. To address this need, the authors conducted two in-depth, qualitative studies and a third quantitative measurement study.

One of the first points the authors make is that brand love is actually better described as the consumer-brand relationship. In most other research about the topic, the assumption is that brand love is an emotion rather than a relationship. From their qualitative studies, the authors witness how the subjects "invariably described a broad and long-term consumer-brand relationship, with multiple interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements, rather than a specific, single, transient love emotion." They also note how people will rarely intentionally choose to define their relationship with a brand as "love," which is common in interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the authors explain that they use the term "brand love" to actually refer to the "consumer-brand relationship."

From their qualitative studies (which consisted of multiple phone and in-person interviews with subjects), the authors built out a prototype of seven distinct elements to aid in understanding exactly what brand love looks like:

1. Passion-driven behaviors reflecting strong desires to use the brand, to invest resources into, and a history of having done so
2. Self-brand integration, including a brand's ability to express consumers' actual and desired identities, its ability to connect to life's deeper meanings and provide intrinsic rewards, and frequent thoughts about it
3. Positive emotional connection that is broader than just positive feelings, including a sense of positive attachment and having an intuitive feeling of "rightness"
4. Anticipated separation distress if the brand were to go away
5. Long-term relationship, which includes predicting extensive feature use and a long-term commitment to it
6. Positive attitude valence
7. Attitudes held with high certainty and confidence

The authors remark that high quality, a topic which came up often in subject interviews, is actually better considered an antecedent to brand love, because it's necessary for any affection toward a brand to be possible. On the other side of the equation lie the consequences of brand love. Those benefits (which came out of qualitative studies 1 and 2 and were further validated by a quantitative survey-data model in study 3) consist of brand loyalty, positive word of mouth, and resistance to negative information.

As a testament to the authors' desire for practicality, they outlined some tangible recommendations for marketing professionals in the field. Summarized here are Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi's practical suggestions for you as a marketer to start building a stronger brand relationship with your consumers.

Encourage personalization or accessories. When consumers invest time and effort into a product to make it their own, they will be more likely to continue using it.

Connect to your consumers with intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, value. By associating your brand with the deeper values of your consumers (e.g. environmental sustainability, global poverty alleviation), you can establish "self-brand integration," which leads to a strong brand love.

Leverage your authentic history to develop positive feelings and a sense of attachment. The authors noted from their research that "the brands that seemed to come from the heart of the producers had a much easier time finding a place in the heart of the consumers." Telling the story about the roots of the company or founders

can help establish a deeper sentiment between consumer and producer, one similar to the “old friend” feeling.

Convey value and expertise to build “anticipated separation distress.” By establishing your brand as a trusted authority or a unique source of information, consumers will desire to keep your brand in their life. The possibility of this value being removed causes them some sense of distress, leading them to want to continue their relationship with your brand.

Play the long game and make it engaging. The authors suggest that loyalty programs should emphasize intrinsic rather extrinsic value and “require frequent and ongoing, rather than one-shot and initial, updating and interaction.”

These suggestions can serve as a guide for you to begin incorporating strategic brand-building moves into your marketing. For more details about their research, be sure to read *Brand Love*, by Rajeev Batra, Aaron Ahuvia, and Richard P. Bagozzi. You can also check their website, brandlovecentral.com, for this paper and some of their subsequent work on measuring brand love validly and reliably. Furthermore, some of the authors’ work with companies has promoted further research into brand love, including how it can turn into negative emotions, which you can read about in the paper, *Brand Hate*.

In the words of another seasoned marketing-science professor, when it comes to the use of science in marketing, “The people who know how to use the research and techniques and science and models the right way will gain an advantage over the competitors.”

[Originally posted on StateofInnovation.com, which was discontinued by the company in September of 2017]

Where are you reading this right now?

Location, location, location! That's the saying in real estate – but it also applies to email marketing.

Where are your customers when they read your emails? Are they sitting at their desk on a computer? Are they sipping coffee in the local coffee shop and browsing on their iPad? On the train commuting to work, getting a head start on emails on their phone?

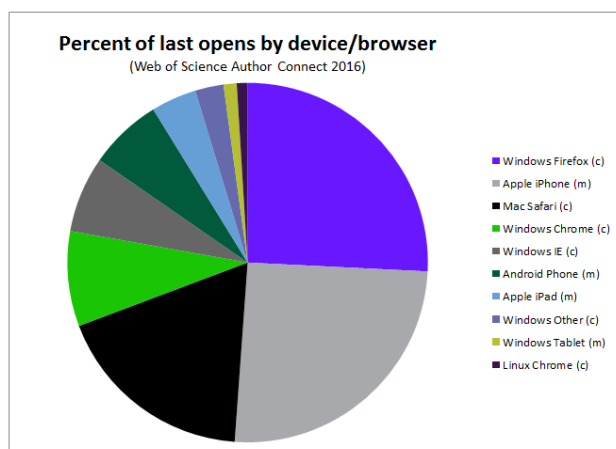
While you may not know *exactly* where your customers are when they view your emails, you can (and should) know how they are accessing your content. With the rise of smartphone use, more emails are being read on mobile devices than desktop or webmail: In December 2016, mobile market share was at 54%, while desktop dropped to 16% and webmail was at 30%.¹

If you're not thinking about mobile optimization and responsive design, here are two more industry statistics that should make you start:

51% of consumers have unsubscribed from a brand's promotional emails because their emails or website didn't display or work well on their smartphone

43% of consumers have marked promotional emails from a brand as spam because the emails didn't display or work well on their smartphone.¹

When we look across the Web of Science Author Connect database, we also see a similar trend of high mobile use – 54% of all email opens occur on mobile. And even more telling is that 39% of all opens are “multichannel opens,” which means the same email was opened on a mobile device and on desktop. Furthermore, we see the Apple iPhone running neck and neck with the Firefox browser on Windows computers as the top devices used for the *last email open* – meaning the recipient may have viewed the email on multiple devices (such as a cell phone and in webmail), but it's the last device that gets counted.



Now – what does this mean for you? With such a large variety in the types of devices and browsers being used to access email, your content needs to look good on all of them, otherwise you risk the relationship with your audience. The best way to make sure your content renders correctly is utilizing a responsive design email template and testing them on lots of devices. We are witnessing this trend as more and more clients request help from our team for their email creative in order to get more engagement with audiences in their campaigns.

Are you feeling limited by your own resources to develop a mobile-friendly email? You don't have to do it alone! Reach out to the Web of Science Author Connect team today to get started.

[1] *2017 State of Email Report*. Litmus. Available at: https://litmus.com/lp/state-of-email-2017?utm_campaign=2017report&utm_source=emrblog&utm_medium=blog

[Read the original post online at <https://clarivate.com/blog/where-are-you-reading-this-right-now/>]

Email marketing optimization – Part 2

In case you missed it, check out Part 1 of email marketing optimization about mobile trends – [Where are you reading this right now?](#)

Mobile use up / Click rates down

According to a recent report from Experian in Q3 2016¹, click rates in emails are down in all industries. And the percentage of clicks occurring on mobile devices is up. In the analysis, Experian found a strong negative correlation between these two trends – meaning that the more mobile devices are used to view emails, the lower click rates we'll see.

If you are trying to reach and engage your audience, you'll need to keep up with the trends by optimizing your emails for viewing across multiple devices.

The good news is that emails with responsive design result in a 15% increase (over non-responsive emails) in unique clicks for mobile users. And not only that, but responsively designed emails get more clicks (unique and total) across all devices – desktop, mobile, and tablet.²

Your bag of tricks

You'll also want to have a few other tricks up your sleeve to increase engagement with your audience.

Have you considered optimizing your send times based on the contact's past engagement behavior?

Or launching a dynamic campaign that delivers highly specific content to sub-segments of your total audience?

Through Web of Science Author Connect, we have seen clients achieve (on average) a 6% increase in click rates in emails sent with optimized send. For dynamic campaigns, it's a drastic 28% increase in clicks.

It all comes down to focusing on your audience – what do they want to see, how do they want to see it, and when do they want to see it? If you can hone in on these three questions, you'll see better metrics in your campaigns and build better relationships with your audience. And that's what it's all about.

Interested to learn how you can better engage with your audiences in your email campaigns? [Get in touch with the Web of Science Author Connect team.](#)

[1] *Q3 2016 Email Benchmark Report*. Experian. Available here.

[2] *2017 State of Email Report*. Litmus. Available here.

[Read the original post online at <https://clarivate.com/blog/email-marketing-optimization-part-2/>]