The power of emotion: Brand communication in business-to-business markets

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Abstract

In increasingly competitive markets, branding is of growing interest to business-to-business (B2B) firms. Despite an increased interest in branding, and the predominance of branding in consumer markets, B2B branding has received scant attention from academics. In this paper it is argued that organisational buyers can be influenced by both rational and emotional brand values and that B2B brands can surmount functional capabilities to create an emotional connection with buyers. The development and communication of emotional brand values may enhance the potential for value creation and be a means of developing a sustainable differential advantage. For B2B brands to connect with organisational customers, emotional brand values need to be communicated effectively both within the organisation as well as externally through the industrial sales force. A model is proposed that shows how B2B brands should reflect a greater balance between functional and emotional values. There is a clear need for further research into the way in which brands are used, communicated and perceived in B2B markets.

INTRODUCTION

Branding is regarded as an important element of marketing strategy, and the benefits of investing in branding to develop a competitive advantage are well documented.[1] More recent branding literature has highlighted the importance of the psychological and emotional elements of brands. Brands based on intangible, emotive characteristics such as trust, reassurance, reputation, image and responsiveness are seen as more durable and less likely to suffer from competitive erosion.[2–4]

While there is much literature devoted to branding, there is a notable emphasis on consumer goods.[5,6] The paucity of research on business-to-business (B2B) branding may (erroneously) lead to the conclusion that branding is unimportant in B2B markets owing to the characteristics of organisational markets and the nature of organisational purchasing. Yet, recent US and UK research[7,8] confirms both the applicability and importance of branding in B2B markets. This attention from an industry perspective has not been matched by academic interest. In addition, the limited work

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on business branding has largely ignored the role of emotion and the extent to which organisational purchasers, like final consumers, may be influenced by emotional brand attributes.

This paper puts forward the argument that brands are clusters of functional and emotional values that promise a unique and welcome experience between a buyer and a seller, and that this holds true for both consumer and B2B brands. Emotional brand values may influence organisational decision making, and the need to pay attention to the way brand values are communicated both within the organisation and externally through the sales force is highlighted.

The purpose of this paper is to advance understanding into the way brands are used and communicated in industrial markets. Although various researchers have proposed explanatory models for aspects of B2B marketing,[9–11] a comprehensive framework for B2B brand communication is still lacking. The authors suggest that the existing theory on business branding does not recognise adequately the role or extent of emotional responses to B2B brands. Also, there is insufficient acknowledgement in current models of salesperson–customer interaction of the linkages between the brand values emphasised within the organisation and those communicated outside to organisational buyers. The model proposed advances both branding and organisational buying behaviour theory by presenting a framework that balances B2B brand values at both internal and external communication levels.

In particular, the model attempts to address three gaps identified in the literature where further research is warranted. First, the need for research on the role of emotion in industrial buying behaviour is highlighted. Despite the fact that emotional brand augmentation is seen as a key factor for brand success in consumer markets,[12] the extent to which the same wisdom is accepted or applied in B2B markets has remained largely unexplored. Secondly, despite a plethora of research on personal selling, there has been little investigation into the critical role that the industrial salesperson plays in communicating emotional brand values. The third gap concerns the linkages between internal and external brand communication in business markets. The importance of this linkage stems from an increased recognition that internal brand understanding and commitment have a positive impact on business performance.[13] While considerable attention has been paid to the external salesperson–customer interaction, less effort has been devoted to understanding the internal branding process, whereby internal brand values are developed and communicated within the organisation.

The paper opens by reviewing the literature on emotion and organisational decision making. Contemporary perspectives on consumer branding and the business branding research to date are examined as a basis for understanding how business brands are developed and communicated. In particular, the role of emotional brand values in both internal and external brand communication is considered. As a result of the literature review, a number of propositions are made on the incorporation and communication of emotional brand values in B2B marketing. These propositions are integrated into

a proposed model of B2B brand communication. As brand emphasis for many B2B brands tends to be at the corporate level, the model reflects this by focusing on the communication of brand value for corporate rather than individual product brands. The model delineates the linkages between internal and external brand communication and B2B brand information processing. In particular, it highlights the importance of balancing functional and emotional brand values for successful B2B brand-building.

THE ROLE OF EMOTION IN ORGANISATIONAL DECISION MAKING

Organisational buying behaviour has prompted huge interest and discussion among academics and practitioners over the past 40 years, resulting in much literature on numerous aspects of organisational purchasing. Under-standing the organisational decision-making process has been of particular concern to marketers seeking to influence industrial procurement decisions through various marketing mix elements. At a fundamental level, understanding how organisations make purchases requires an insight into the *structure, process* and *content* of organisational buying behaviour.[14] 'Structure' refers to the composition of the buying centre in terms of membership, roles played and influence, while the 'process' element deals with the various stages of the purchase decision from problem identification to post-purchase evaluation. The 'content' aspect of organisational purchasing refers to the evaluative criteria used to make procurement decisions, generally des-cribed in terms of economic and non-economic criteria.[15]

The economic (or functional) factors include price, product specification, delivery, quality consistency, supplier reliability and customer service. Tradi-tionally, most emphasis has been placed on influencing functional considera-tions, as B2B buyers are generally assumed to be more knowledgable about the products they purchase and also more rational in their decision making than final consumers.[16] This focus on rationality has underpinned the long-held assumption that the organisational buyer 'is not an emo-tional or impulsive one; he is making a rational business decision.'[17] Undoub-tedly, many B2B firms deal with complex and protracted buying situa-tions characterised by group decision making and multiple buying influences. Consequently, the implications of such procurement environments may sup-port the contention that organisational purchasing tends to be more ra-tional than consumer purchasing. The notion of organisational purchasers as purely rational buyers has, how-ever, been increasingly questioned and challenged.[18–21]

Despite calls for a greater acknow-ledgment of the role of emotional, social and psychological influences on the behaviour of industrial buyers, relatively little research attention has focused on the non-economic (or emotional) criteria having an impact on organisational decision making.[22–25] These criteria include factors such as trust, prestige (the need for status), career security, friendship and social needs. This lack of attention to emotions has given rise to the assump-tions that 'managers make decisions in an emotional vacuum'[26] or that emo-tion is only a factor if the buyer lacks knowledge, motivation or interest.[27]

In an attempt to gain some balance in the 'rational vs emotional' debate, it is useful to consider insights gained from advances in the theory of consumers' buying behaviour. In particular, the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) offers a valuable perspective for understanding the way in which attitudes may be formed in business markets.[28–30]

Based on the assumption that attitude formation is dependent on the buyers' levels of involvement and cognitive processing, the ELM posits that buyers process information from marketing communications either 'centrally' or 'peripherally'. Highly involved and motivated buyers take the 'central' route with particular attention paid to the core elements of the promotional message, such as product quality, functions and price. Persuasion is achieved through strong, rational arguments. If a buyer is not strongly motivated or involved, it is suggested they process persuasive communications messages through a 'peripheral' route, with more attention paid to contextual information that taps their emotional drives such as visual imagery, the salesperson's appearance or the presentation of product information.

Attitudes formed via the central route are assumed to be stronger, less resistant to change and more predictive of future behaviour than attitudes resulting from peripheral route processing. This does not mean that marketers need only focus on centrally created attitudes, as research has indicated that peripherally formed attitudes could determine choice when brands are viewed as essentially similar or when the market lacks a leading brand.[31,32] Aaker and Jacobson,[33] in a study of brand relevance in technology markets,

acknowledge the undoubted importance of good products, but also highlight the importance of peripheral cues in forming brand attitudes.

Although the ELM is typically used to explain how consumers respond to advertising, it has been proposed as an explanatory framework for understanding the persuasion process between industrial buyers and sellers.[34] The existence of dual routes to attitude change is also central to Gilliland and Johnston's model of the effects of B2B marketing communications which focuses on evaluation of industrial advertising.[35] The acknowledgment that brand attitudes can be formed by both cognitive and affective means takes on an added dimension in organisational markets owing to the existence of buying centres and the varying levels of motivation and involvement of participants. For example, the brand attributes that appeal to a purchasing manager may be quite different to the values deemed important by a production manager or an engineer. Thus while some organisational buyers may be strongly influenced by functional brand values, the brand selection criteria of other buying centre members may be based on more emotional considerations. Clearly, the nature of the organisational buying centre implies that business brands may have to work on more than one level to accommodate the variability in the processing of brand information and in the brand responses of buying centre members.[36]

BRANDING IN B2B MARKETS

While branding is growing in importance on the B2B agenda, comments such as 'under-used',[37] 'neglected'[38]

and 'under-researched'[39] typically describe its status. With limited and mostly dated exceptions, much of understanding of B2B branding is based on anecdotal evidence and individual case histories.[40]

Saunders and Watt,[41] in a study of the man–made fibre market in the UK, found that the large number of brands available only confused customers. They concluded that a branding policy alone was of limited value. Their study measured brand perceptions at the final consumer level, however, not at the organisational level. Sinclair and Seward[42] did not find much support for the use of branding in their study of North American wood products. More recent studies have found considerable evidence in support of B2B branding. Shipley and Howard's[43] analysis of industrial companies indicated widespread use of B2B branding and strong benefits in using brand names. These findings have been echoed in studies by other researchers.[44–46] Sweeney[47] reported that business brands played a crucial influencing role at four stages of the industrial buyer's decision process, namely: deciding on the tender list, shortlisting for negotiation, signing a purchase agreement and deciding on supply and support services. Mudambi[48] proposes a model of B2B branding which incorporates branding among the attributes considered important by organisational purchasers. Her research in the UK precision bearings market concluded that branding's role in B2B marketing was more important than had previously been acknowledged.

The benefits accruing from strong B2B brands are similar to those for consumer brands, that is: the opportunity for greater value creation, the ability to charge premium prices, loyalty through powerful customer–brand relationships and the ability to sustain differentiation in crowded markets. There is, however, a lack of consensus on the extent to which consumer branding techniques and concepts can be applied in business markets. Kim et al.[49] emphasise that the importance of brand equity in B2B markets may vary according to product type and purchase situation. Similarly, a specific implication of Mudambi's findings was that marketers need to recognise that customers' perceptions of the importance of branding differ and this should be reflected in the brand communication for different segments.[50]

Brand values in business markets

With so little research specifically on B2B branding, business-to-consumer (B2C) branding models act as a reference point for direction and guidance. The starting point for brand-building in both B2C and B2B markets involves identifying and defining the brand's core values. Values are important brand elements because they are understood to be key drivers of attitude and behaviour,[51,52] and contemporary definitions describe brands as clusters of functional and emotional values that enable a unique promise about an experience to be made.[53–55]

Changes in consumer markets — including increased competition, advances in technology and a proliferation of products in virtually all categories — have resulted in brand manufacturers moving away from a traditional concentration on functional brand attributes. Instead, more companies are recognising the value of

brand differentiation based on emotional characteristics (such as trust, pride, sentiment, peace of mind and security),[56–57] as these values are viewed as longer lasting and less likely to suffer competitive erosion. Bashe[58] calls the emotional connection 'the sales closer' and emphasises its importance in highly competitive buying environments.

Despite these advantages, the interest in emotional added value has mainly been confined to B2C markets, and most business brands are defined and communicated principally in terms of functional brand values such as product features and performance. This would appear to be a consequence of the 'rational buyer' argument whereby organisational purchasing is seen as an inherently objective and rational process, thus precluding the development of emotional values for B2B brands. Yet a number of studies have indicated that supplier selection may be strongly influenced by intangible factors such as reputation, image, ease of doing business and trust, rather than tangible factors such as price.[59–61]

In spite of differences between business and consumer markets, there are fundamental principles underlying brand development that are common to both sectors. At the most basic level, brands need to engender trust and credibility among customers. Strong B2C and B2B brands go further, however, by creating intellectual and emotional ties not just with customers but also with other stakeholders such as channel intermediaries and employees.[62] Obviously, building an emotional bond requires the use of some form of emotion, but it is not enough to take a product and add a layer of emotion. On the contrary, it is about recognising that functionality may be predominant in many B2B purchase decisions, but organisational buyers may still be influenced by emotional considerations. In many cases, an emotional stimulus may be the means through which marketers can gain attention for the presentation of other functional brand values. Therefore a holistic approach incorporating balanced emotional and functional brand values is required, rather than a strategy that excludes one set of brand values completely.[63] Adopting a more balanced approach to the definition and communication of brand value removes a business brand from the rational, undifferentiated and impersonal spaces which many B2B brands occupy.[64] From a marketer's perspective, brand value communication that considers the psychological concerns of B2B buyers can be an important means of differentiation in markets dominated by a focus on functionality.[65] Moreover, research has indicated that brands based on functional values only may be easily copied or subject to intense competitive pressure.[66]

EMOTIONAL BRAND VALUES IN B2B MARKETS

There is evidence from some markets that B2B marketers are recognising that the creation of an emotional connection with buyers can add a valuable dimension to their products or services. This move into 'the uncharted territory of emotions'[67] is a reaction by organisations to what Tom Peters calls the 'blight of sameness' — that is, overcrowded marketplaces with products offering the same levels of functionality. According to Brandt and Johnson:[68]

'The greatest opportunities for enduring brand success happen when you are able to orchestrate the range of experiences around your brand in a way that puts your brand more in a personal and emotional space. This happens only when the promise of a brand rises above the merely functional and tangible attributes or characteristics and incorporates some relevant feeling and emotion. Competitors can match functions and features but they just can't easily match the promise and delivery of a personal, emotional and special experience.'

Stern[69] cites examples of high-tech companies such as SAS Software and Texas Instruments that are using branding to make an emotional connection with organisational buyers. Blankenhorn[70] reported on three high-tech companies — Seagate Technology, Sun Microsystems and 3Com — which had decided to launch major branding campaigns with a view to 'humanising their products and increasing brand awareness'. This was seen as a strategic decision to move away from a typical high-tech approach that was seen as more product-centric than customer-centric. Similarly, a 2002 advertising campaign for Canon Europe marked a significant departure for the organisation with a move away from marketing communications based on functionality and distribution towards communications designed to create emotional bonds with customers.[71]

The emotional brand values that appear to be most appropriate for B2B brands include factors such as trust, peace of mind and security. For many technology products, it is the trust inherent in the brand name that acts as a key differentiator and sales closer. A survey in the US business technology market found that emotional buying criteria (such as trust) ranked higher

than tangible criteria such as speed and memory.[72] Trust was also described as a key driver of perceived brand excellence in the recent Business Superbrands Awards.[73]

Many organisational buyers make business decisions involving significant expenditure, and the 'fear factor' can be a major influence on decision making. The risk associated with major purchases is not just confined to financial or organisational failure, but may also incorporate personal risk, a factor that may be of greater consequence than organisational risk in brand decisions.[74] Emotion is very much part of the equation as buyers may risk losing their jobs through flawed decision making. IBM recognised that B2B buyers were looking for peace of mind when making major procurement decisions, and utilised this insecurity in a very successful B2B advertisement which featured a pillow embroidered with 'IBM' and a headline that read: 'What most people want from a computer service company is a good night's sleep'. By making this emotional connection with buyers, IBM was able to emphasise the advantages of doing business with a market leader as a means of off-setting some of the uncertainties inherent in big-ticket purchases.[75]

These examples are testament to a limited but growing body of evidence on the significance of developing balanced functional and emotional brand values in business markets. This emerging appreciation of emotional brand augmentation has implications for the way in which marketers develop and communicate brand values in B2B markets. While some valuable insights have been provided by Gilliland and Johnston's research,[76]

their model concentrated on the medium of advertising and indeed the examples presented in this paper on the communication of emotional brand values have been drawn from industrial advertising campaigns. While advertising is part of the B2B communications mix, for many firms the salesperson is the most important means of communicating with customers, and therefore the following discussion concentrates on the salesperson as the main marketing tool through which brand values are conveyed to industrial buyers.

COMMUNICATING BRAND VALUES IN BUSINESS MARKETS

> 'To tap the potential of B2B brands, business marketers must understand and effectively communicate the value of their brands.'[77]

Communication is central to human behaviour, connecting individuals and creating relationships.[78] Typical media used to communicate B2B brand information include personal selling, advertising, trade shows, direct marketing and the internet. While most B2B firms use a mixture of communication vehicles, the characteristics of many industrial markets dictate that personal selling is the dominant medium of communication.[79]

Ultimately, for many B2B firms, the successful development of buyer–seller relationships may hinge on the salesperson's behaviour.[80,81] The dyadic nature of the sales encounter has direct implications for the way in which brand values are experienced by customers, with the skills and abilities of the sales staff playing a key role in brand communication.[82,83]

The ability of salespeople to adapt their sales strategies and messages to accommodate specific sales interactions has been recognised by both researchers and managers as an essential component in improving both customer satisfaction and salesperson performance.[84,85] Various studies have found that salespeople should consider adapting their selling approach to the buyer's decision-making processes[86,87] or the buyer's communication styles.[88,89]

Effective communication in the sales encounter increases trust and commitment in business relationships.[90] Yet many models of customer-salesperson interaction have been criticised for not giving adequate attention to the communications aspects of the sales encounter.[91] The importance of successful communication was highlighted in Sheth's conceptual framework of buyer-seller interaction,[92] which suggested that a satisfactory sales outcome is dependent on the degree to which the parties involved are compatible regarding the style and content of their communication. His research identified five different types of utility in communication content (functional, socio-organisational, emotional, situational and curiosity) with the importance of each value varying according to factors such as the buyer's personal characteristics and role.[93] The concept of adaptive selling implies that the salesperson has a degree of freedom in terms of deciding how to respond to a buyer's individual needs or a particular buying situation. Despite considerable research on adaptive selling, the extent to which salespeople adapt their brand messages to accommodate the emotional utility that may be valued by industrial buyers remains largely unexplored. The im-

portance attached to the personal selling function in business markets means that there is a pervasive need to understand the brand communication process that takes place in the salesperson–customer dyad. A useful starting point for understanding this external communication process is an examination of the way in which brand values are first developed and communicated *within* B2B organisations.

THE ROLE OF INTERNAL BRAND COMMUNICATION

Traditionally, branding has been described in external terms with most emphasis focused on communicating brand values to stakeholders such as customers, shareholders and market intermediaries. B2B brands in particular have suffered from the belief that branding is a purely external activity.[94] Yet many organisations today are recognising that successful external brand communication is highly dependent on employees understanding and committing to brand values. Bergstrom *et al.*[95] describe three core elements of internal branding: effective brand communication to all employees, convincing employees of the brand's value and relevance, and linking every organisational position to the delivery of the brand essence. The benefit of attaining staff buy-in to the firm's values is exemplified by evidence from Hilti, a worldwide tool and industrial fastener company. Internal research conducted in a rolling survey indicated strong positive correlations between customers who were brand advocates, staff morale and profit.[96]

B2B brand values are developed and disseminated internally through three main channels: the organisation's cul-ture, internal communication media and, for industrial salespeople, sales force training.

Culture and internal branding

An organisation's brand values are derived in part from the organisation's culture, which has been defined as 'values, beliefs and norms shared by members of an organisation'.[97] Looking specifically at the culture that exists within an organisation's sales force, it has been suggested that a link may exist between culture and factors such as performance, motivation and communication.[98]

Internal brand communications

Internal brand communications include all verbal and written messages about the organisation and its brands. Jackson and Tax[99] identify a number of different vehicles that are used to communicate and reinforce values, including the use of symbols, rites and rituals, ceremonies, heroes, stories and jargon.

The need to communicate emotional as well as functional brand values is highlighted by Thomson *et al.*[100] as they emphasise the need for staff to 'internalise' emotional brand values to deliver the brand promise. The language and terminology used to express brand values has an impact on how values are received and adopted by employees.

According to Simmons:[101]

'Values are the driving characteristics that shape the behaviour of a brand and words are an aspect of behaviour. We need to use words that reflect the values of the brand. Companies must recognise that they send signals through the words that they use.'

Sales force training and internal branding

Investment in sales training has long been recognised as a necessity, with a considerable literature devoted to the skills and knowledge deemed necessary for effective personal selling.

The actual methods used to train sales staff differ from organisation to organisation, but most companies appear to use a combination of on–the-job training and learning accentuated by internal and external courses.[102] While there is little agreement on the most effective forms of training, the content of most sales training focuses on knowledge of the product, company and market as well as on sales negotiation techniques. Roman et al.[103] emphasise that greater investment in sales training alone will not necessarily lead to better sales performance. Rather, it is the training methods used and 'more importantly, the topics covered in the sales training implementation' that will have the most impact on sales performance. Humphreys and Williams,[104] in a study examining the relative importance of technical product attributes and buyer-seller interactions, commented on the need for sales training 'to increase the attention given to communication skills, focusing on understanding buyer communication styles, and how to flex personal styles in order to maximise communication effectiveness'. Desai and Majahan[105] emphasise the need for salespeople to receive special training in promoting the affective benefits of their products, as most sales training concentrates on the cognitive aspects of the offering. The Black & Decker Corporation is an example of one organisation that recognises the importance of training salespeople to communicate emotional brand values. Their sales training (which covers both B2C power tools as well as the company's DeWalt line for professionals) specifically incorporates training on affective responses to brand values, as they recognise that purchase decisions are often made based on the emotions surrounding the corporate brand.[106]

DISCUSSION

For many years, the assumption that organisational decision making was inherently and predominantly rational largely precluded discussion about the role of emotional brand values influencing decision making. Advances in research into organisational buying behaviour have moved the debate on, and today there is greater general recognition of the dual routes to attitude formation in both consumer and B2B markets.[107] Organisational decision making may take place in a formal group context (the buying centre), but B2B purchasing is an amalgam of decisions made by individuals. These individuals make decisions that may be influenced by both affective and cognitive factors, albeit in an organisational setting.[108]

Drawing on the ELM, the authors argue that organisational buyers are influenced by both rational and emotional brand values. The extent to which emotion influences buying decisions will vary according to organisational factors such as product type and purchasing situation, and individual factors such as personal characteristics, the role and influence of the buying centre, and the buyer's level of involvement in the purchase decision.

The implications of this argument are significant for B2B brand communications strategies. The authors argue that salespeople need to adapt the components of a brand message to respond to the differing information-processing capabilities of the members of the buying centre. Brand communications that do not recognise the value attached to emotional brand elements by different buying centre participants may adversely undermine the sales process. More specifically this paper suggests:

— At a corporate level, B2B sales organisations need to recognise and incorporate the power of emotion into their brand identities and communicate emotional brand values internally.
— B2B firms should ensure their salespeople are trained to understand and communicate emotional brand values externally in response to the concerns and needs of the buying centre.

From this review, three propositions are put forward that lay the foundations for successfully building B2B brands:

— **Proposition 1**: Organisations offering successful B2B brands need to recognise that industrial purchasers are influenced by both functional and emotional brand attributes.

The persuasion process between industrial buyers and sellers is subject to the influence of both rational and emotional brand values. Following from Bacon and Butler's research,[109] the authors of the current paper hypothesise that the emotional component is present for all members of the buying centre, albeit in different degrees of intensity. Every member of the buying centre is influenced by emotional considerations, but the extent of that influence will vary according to their role, personal characteristics and level of involvement in the purchase decision.

— **Proposition 2**: For successful external brand communications, an organisation's internal and external brand communications should emphasise both functional and emotional brand values.

Internal branding is a relatively recent concept in marketing resulting from an increased interest in corporate brand identity and an acknowledgment of the crucial roles employees play in the conveyance of brand values.[110] Marketing literature indicates that successful internal brand communication is essential if an organisation wishes to create strong external brand relationships.[111,112] As buyer-seller relationships are built on emotional as well as rational brand values, internal and external communication of the corporate brand must represent both functional and emotional brand values for meaningful relationships to be developed.

— **Proposition 3**: Industrial salespeople should be trained to adapt their sales presentations and brand messages to accommodate the varying importance attached to different brand values by buying centre members.

There is a considerable body of literature suggesting that effective sales performance is linked to the salesperson's ability to adapt

presentations to different selling situations.[113] Schmitz[114] proposes that successful sales representatives adapt their sales strategies according to the information-processing routes taken by buyers. Research has indicated that motivation and involvement can vary within a buying centre, and therefore it is doubtful that all participants will attach the same levels of importance to particular brand values. It is essential, therefore, to acknowledge that individual buying centre members may process brand messages differently, and this should be reflected in sales strategies. This may involve 'segmenting' the buying centre so that the most appropriate brand communication is targeted at the varying emotional and functional needs of buyers in that centre.[115] As the amount of control over the content of the message delivered through the sales force depends on factors such as training, sales force management procedures and overall corporate objectives, there is a need for explicit management of internal and external B2B brand communications.

The linkages between the three propositions are illustrated in Figure 1. This model indicates the way that internal brand development and communication, augmented through effective external brand communication, enable a more balanced cluster of functional and emotional values to be presented, which positively influences brand choice. At each stage in this process questions are raised for marketers to help them formulate more effective brand strategies.

Arising from the model is the question of the salesperson's ability to correctly identify sales situations when the buyer's brand processing is likely to be more emotional than cognitive. The implication is that salespeople need to correctly interpret emotional cues from organisational buyers and adapt their selling approach accordingly. Recent research by Chaudhuri et al.[116] proposes an 'emotional triggers' research tool to provide managers with a typology of emotions upon which to base brand relationships. It is envisaged that future testing of the authors' model will provide further guidance for B2B marketers on matching emotive brand responses to appropriate brand communications strategies.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This paper attempts to draw attention to gaps in the knowledge of both branding theory and organisational buying behaviour theory, and to highlight the patent need for a much deeper understanding of how brands are perceived and used in B2B markets. This paper has highlighted a number of areas where the limited research is dated and lacking in empirical evidence, and it has advanced propositions to stimulate research into this important issue.

Further research is needed on the nature of the communication in the salesperson–customer dyad and, in particular, on the extent to which emotional brand attributes are emphasised in sales presentations. As concepts of brand identity and internal branding are relatively recent ones, empirical research on the way in which emotional brand values are developed
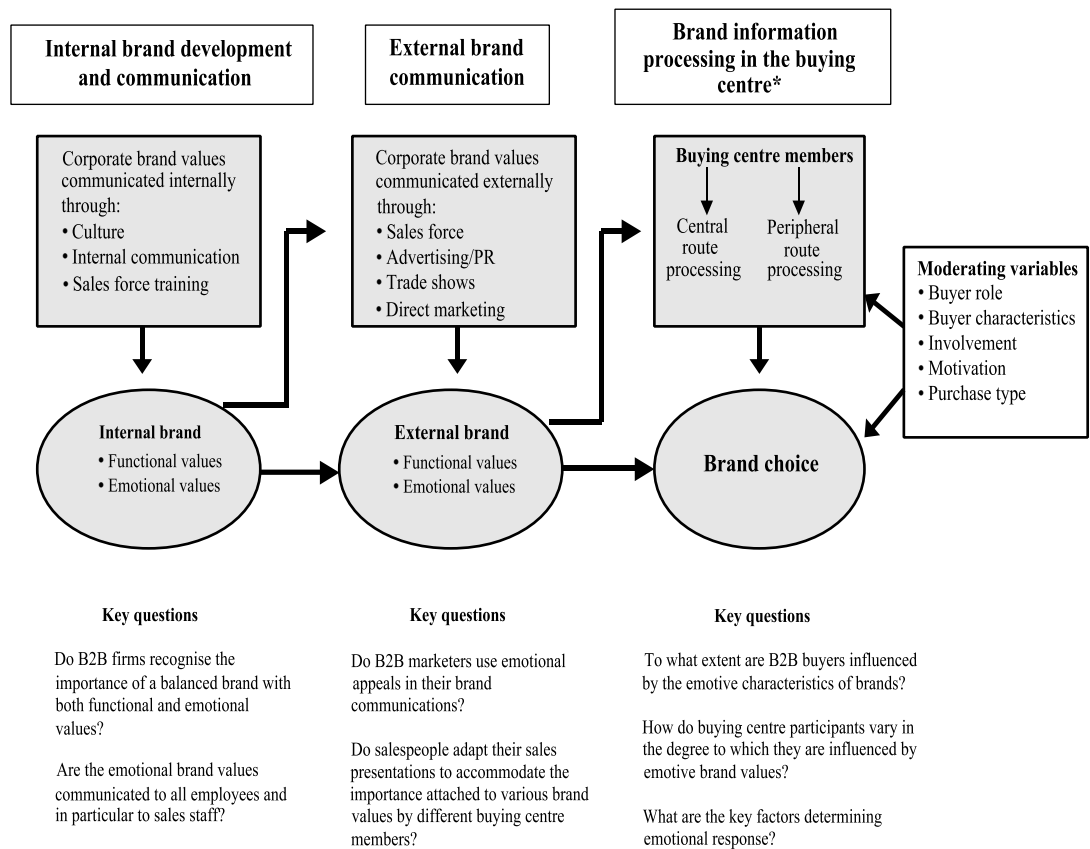
Figure 1 Building B2B brands with balanced functional and emotional values

*Adapted from: Petty and Cacioppo (1983);[118] Gilliland and Johnston (1997)[119]

and communicated internally will contribute substantially to an understanding of these processes.

The main purpose of this paper is to stress the potentially powerful role of emotional brand values in B2B marketing. Good branding practice is not about 'stirring rational people into a frenzy so that they make irrational decisions'.[117] Rather, it is concerned with understanding, communicating and delivering on the value proposition that is most important to stakeholders. This paper has put forward arguments showing that organisational purchasers are influenced by both emotional and rational brand values. An acknowledgment of this provides B2B sales organisations with the opportunity to incorporate the power of emotion into both their internal and external brand communications. A model has been postulated which should aid B2B marketers to incorporate emotional values into their brand strategies. By examining the way in which companies communicate and are influenced by intangible, emotional brand values, it is hoped that future research will make a significant contribution to advancing understanding about more effective B2B branding.

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