

The role of emotional branding in e-marketing: Fostering stronger customer connections



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ABSTRACT

The current study investigates emotional branding and its role in building stronger customer connections in the context of e-marketing, thereby addressing a theoretical gap in the literature that mainly reflects Western perspectives. The research primarily focuses on the unique socio-cultural dynamics of emerging economies and seeks to understand how emotional branding operates in non-Western cultural contexts. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in exploring how cultural and emotional factors shape consumer-brand relationships in digital environments, particularly in markets where local cultural values strongly influence consumer behavior. Using semi-structured interviews with 30 Jordanian consumers and a focus group involving 12 marketing managers, qualitative data analysis was conducted to evaluate the impact of emotionally resonant advertisements on brand loyalty and emotional attachment. The findings confirm that implementing emotional branding strategies that reflect local norms, values, and daily experiences can effectively strengthen consumer loyalty. This research extends the theory of emotional branding by incorporating regional and cultural differences into its framework and provides practical insights for e-marketers seeking to operate in culturally diverse markets.

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1. Introduction

Firms are having a hard time making an impression in the global market, where consumerism is rising, and emotional connections are decreasing. More and more of these firms are responding to this phenomenon by implementing emotional branding strategies (i.e., establishing deep emotional connections with customers instead of merely depending on the qualities or specs of a product. In relation to this, [Kim and Sullivan \(2019\)](#) found that users' emotions and personal experiences have a key role in their perceptions concerning a brand compared to merely the attributes of the product. Consequently, an emotional branding

strategy must be leveraged to enhance consumers' inclination to develop emotional connections with brands. In the current times, emotional branding has become a trending strategy in social media ([Cheung et al., 2022](#)). Along the same study line, [Manohar et al. \(2023\)](#) contended that emotional branding can lead to enhanced engagement of customers, supporting their relationship with the brand and ultimately promoting their long-term loyalty towards it. Such a relationship is a must in today's digital era, whereby customers are continuously bombarded with numerous options and much information. Also, the global or local marketing environment calls for an adaptable, long-term method sensitive to the culture and context of use. According to [Hashmi \(2020\)](#), realizing customer loyalty is a continuous battle, urging businesses to tweak or transform their methods continuously to stay relevant in the target markets.

Past research in literature has documented emotional branding from the viewpoint of the Western world and market environments

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characterized by constancy and stability. Fundamental studies concerning the topic have presented the following branding aspects – service-dominant logic, emotional connections, and consumer behavior (Lusch and Vargo, 2014; Roberts, 2005), based on Western perspectives, as a result of which, a good portion of the literature has overlooked the role of social, cultural, and economic elements in emotional branding in the context of non-Western and developing economies. In this regard, differences abound in the patterns of social media engagement, cultural values, and economic conditions between the West and the non-Western countries in a way that calls for examining emotional branding strategies and their evolution throughout various regions, owing to the digital platform development and the widespread use of e-marketing tools.

In the non-Western context, emotional branding is significantly influenced by cultural considerations, whereby collective identities, communal ties, and traditional values contribute to the relationships of consumers with brands. In contrast, the major influence of brand connections in the West stems from individualistic principles and personal identities. On the other hand, their non-Western counterparts are more influenced by upholding societal harmony, religious and community endorsements, or family acceptance. This holds true in the case of digital engagement habits, like their preference for specific social media platforms, dependence on peer suggestions, or enhanced sensitivity to culturally aligned storytelling that dramatically contributes to emotional connections. Such cultural norms and values develop emotional cues that appeal to customers, and they establish the optimum interaction of the firms with their customers. Differences in culture make Western-centric theories and models unsuitable, urging the development of frameworks that accurately encapsulate cultural differences in various regions and markets.

The emergence of non-Western economies has highlighted their contributions and importance to the global economy and the need to minimize the gap in the literature through proposed conceptual frameworks. In addition, branding models based on Western viewpoints of media engagement and consumer behavior may not be suitable for describing the establishment of emotional ties, their maintenance, or their breaches in different cultures. Such approaches may find it impossible to promote long-term consumer connections throughout different cultures, as well as the cultural exchange, digital engagement, and emotional persuasion that call for an accurate cross-cultural approach. Without this kind of research, an understanding of emotional branding is incomplete, leaving practitioners and scholars with limited guidance for developing successful, culturally sensitive marketing campaigns in these regions.

This study addresses this gap by investigating how emotionally resonant branding techniques

might promote brand loyalty and emotional attachment in non-Western, digitally mediated contexts. Specifically, it focuses on a market setting like Amman, Jordan—an emerging, culturally rich context that provides fertile ground for exploring broader theoretical issues. While Jordan is a methodological choice and a lens through which to investigate these phenomena, the central theoretical contribution lies in extending emotional branding scholarship into new geographic and cultural territories. Previous work has rarely considered how technological disruption interacts with evolving consumer behaviors and emotional attachments in dynamic, non-Western environments. Moreover, demographic variations—such as differences in responses between men and women—and the rapid transformation of media landscapes underscore the importance of examining how emotional branding is perceived, formed, and leveraged in culturally diverse markets.

By integrating established theories (Iglesias et al., 2011; Kumar and Shah, 2004) with contemporary digital marketing challenges, this study improves the understanding of emotional branding beyond Western paradigms. It responds to calls for more inclusive scholarship (Morrison and Crane, 2007; Sheikh et al., 2019; Wen and Laporte, 2025) that recognizes the importance of cultural nuances and the interplay of global and local influences. In an era where digital connectivity blurs national boundaries, this research offers valuable insights for practitioners and scholars seeking culturally attuned strategies to build emotional bonds, enhance loyalty, and foster lasting consumer relationships.

Ultimately, this investigation aims to establish a culturally and economically sensitive framework for understanding emotional branding in non-Western, digitally driven markets. Such insights are timely and essential for guiding marketing strategies, e-commerce activities, and advertising practices, ensuring they align more closely with the cultural intricacies and digital behaviors of diverse consumer bases. In doing so, this research not only refines theoretical perspectives on emotional branding but also helps bridge the gap between global marketing concepts and the socio-cultural realities of emerging digital economies.

Therefore, this research revolves around answering the following key research questions:

Q1: How do emotionally appealing advertisements impact customers' brand loyalty and emotional attachment in the e-marketing context of Amman, Jordan?

Q2: How do digital marketing managers implement emotional branding strategies to strengthen emotional connections and loyalty among online customers in Amman?

Building on these foundational insights, the following section thoroughly examines the relevant literature on emotional branding, its influence on consumer behavior, and its integration within e-

marketing ecosystems. We establish a more explicit conceptual grounding by reviewing existing theories, empirical findings, and contextual studies. This literature review not only sets the stage for the current study's empirical investigation in Amman, Jordan, but also highlights the gaps in knowledge that this research seeks to address.

2. Literature review

Emotional branding refers to the process of creating strong emotional connections between consumers and brands, enabling brands to foster consumer attachment, engagement, and identity formation through emotional experiences (Niharika and Yadav, 2023). It aims to strengthen consumer engagement as emotional attachment increasingly becomes a key driver of brand loyalty and long-term brand value. However, achieving emotional alignment is complex; therefore, market and consumer research should be conducted carefully to avoid inconsistencies between the intended emotional message of the brand and the emotions actually perceived by consumers.

Recent studies emphasize that identifying emotions that resonate with consumers and designing experiences that evoke those emotions—such as pleasant store atmospheres, personalized interactions, and engaging digital experiences—is essential for successful emotional branding and customer engagement (Caruelle et al., 2024). In this context, customer experience management plays a critical role by providing deeper insights into consumers' emotional responses and supporting the development of effective emotional branding strategies.

According to Hwang et al. (2021), brand loyalty is a core element in determining an organization's success in competitive environments. Repetition leads to sustained competitive advantage, contributing to higher ordering, more significant brand equity, and consumer advocacy (Han et al., 2018). Added to the assistance provided to individuals to maintain their comfort, digital marketing may also be used to develop trust and enhance customer loyalty, one element of brand loyalty.

Based on past studies (Mostafa and Kasamani, 2021; Schmitt, 2012; Shahid et al., 2022), emotional branding is significant in creating long-lasting client-brand relationships, leading to brand loyalty. Along the same lines, Bastos (2020) indicated that emotional branding aims to enhance corporate profitability by comprehending and appealing to customer emotions, while Hashem et al. (2020) described it as creating long-lasting connections with customers for brand satisfaction and loyalty. In other words, a brand develops rational and emotional connections with customers based on the above reasons. The antecedents of emotional branding, namely brand personality, passion, trust, and connection, significantly influence brand loyalty (Mostafa and Kasamani, 2021). Collectively, these

studies illustrate the multifaceted nature of emotional branding and its importance in fostering long-term consumer-brand relationships.

Meylano et al. (2020) investigated the impacts of emotional branding on satisfaction and trust, focusing on Honda Motorcycles. This study's results indicated that emotional branding considerably affected confidence and satisfaction, which was instrumental in creating trust. Aaker and Jacobson (2001) showed that emotional branding was instrumental because a product was perceived as reliable. Levy and Hino (2016) examined customers' feelings of attachment to public banks. They found that while emotional ties positively impacted customer relationships, there was no evidence of an actual link between customer attraction and bank loyalty.

Yang et al. (2020) examined the websites of fashion brands. Their findings highlighted the mediating effects of the arousal and dominance dimensions in predicting the pleasure dimension. Furthermore, Sharabati et al. (2024) analyzed the role of digital marketing related to customer relationships and brand loyalty, emphasizing that when communicating through different digital channels, a firm must think strategically, have clear visions about what to pursue to build trust and relationships over the long run, and focus on customers and retention rather than technology.

The results across studies confirm what more companies should know: that emotional branding can effectively build customer loyalty, satisfaction, and relationships across various industries. Such a wide-reaching, cross-sector, and cross-regional scope can fully capture emotional branding. Current research ignores how cultural factors, emotional branding, and the digital environment interact, especially in emerging markets. This disparity emphasizes the need for a more thorough investigation of how trust and brand attachment are developed in these contexts.

E-marketing tactics that seek to build long-lasting customer relationships rely on creating brands that combine cognitive and emotional appeals. Global digital marketing trends and local cultural norms have a complex relationship that firms in digitalized cultural markets must manage. According to the literature review, emotional branding can be used to understand consumer behavior, brand loyalty, and purchase intentions.

Despite this, a knowledge gap exists in emotional branding research papers on e-marketing because previous studies have focused on a few sectors, including cosmetics, banking, fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), motorcycles, and soft drinks. Previous studies have examined conventional sites, such as public banks (Levy and Hino, 2016) and commercial complexes and retail stores (Hashem et al., 2020).

This study contributes to the field by conducting new qualitative research focusing on e-marketing in Jordan's socio-cultural and geographic context. It aims to empirically clarify how e-marketing activates

consumers' behavior to interact with emotional branding in a particular context. This article adds to the limited range and industry-specific literature, and studies do not investigate emotional branding explicitly in the digital context. This exploration will reveal the thick textures of emotional branding driven by e-marketing and help us better understand how to create emotional relationships with customers in cyberspace.

3. Theoretical models

The study is based on two main theoretical models (emotional branding and relationship marketing) to understand how these models play a significant role in acquiring brand loyalty and emotional attachment. Roberts (2005) and Lusch and Vargo (2014) provided a perspective on investigating how the relationship between brands and customers interacts in a "virtuous digital circle."

Roberts (2005) stated that emotional branding theory focuses on brand names that exceed ordinary branding techniques and have solid emotional interactions with consumers. In contrast to conventional branding, which focuses mainly on functional attributes, emotional branding focuses more on consumers' feelings, identity, and values. In this regard, brands that appeal to consumers' emotions are a part of their lives and not merely functional; thus, they maintain long-term relationships.

Regardless of the high competition in the digital era, which has led to competitive markets, emotional branding enables brands to stand out, be relevant, and establish strong and lasting connections with customers. The introduction of e-marketing has brought consumers the most variety of choices ever, and brand loyalty is now more challenging. Thus, the problem for brands is transcending transactional commodity exchange and creating "love marks" to which people will remain bonded and loyal for life.

According to Roberts (2005), emotional branding is created because consumers have higher expectations and a need to experience more profound and effective relations with used brands than before. Emotional branding is a means for companies to establish a bond between the consumer and the brand name that creates "stories of love," which can survive even in the most competitive environment. Its emphasis on emotional attachment offers an intriguing framework to investigate how brand loyalty can be built through digital marketing strategies in Amman by appealing to customers' aspirations, emotions, and values.

Relationship marketing is the second theoretical lens that informs this study (Lusch and Vargo, 2014). Relationship marketing departs from the marketing paradigm of conducting individual transactions to one that emphasizes building long-term customer relationships. This theory emphasizes the importance of value co-creation, which suggests that businesses and their customers should engage in a continuous dialogue. Lusch and Vargo (2014) argued

that marketing has evolved from an asymmetrical linear push mechanism where a seller sells a product to a passive customer to a more symmetrical one where both parties co-create value.

The digital era is transforming every aspect of our lives and providing sufficient knowledge to develop their implements in the world of e-marketing in Amman as online alternatives are increasing. In an overcrowded market, simplistic transactions will not become a capitalist success story over the long haul. Brands must focus on trust, interaction, and relationship equity instead. A new paradigm, the relationship marketing paradigm, focuses on the customer experience resulting from the interaction, where customers are not only participating in the process as passive receivers but co-creators of brand value. This change of direction is especially crucial in digital spaces where consumers are looking for conversations that feel more personalized and where they also have a role in shaping the brand.

In this sense, relationship marketing methods enable companies to engage with their consumers more interactively through engaging content, personalization campaigns, and feedback loops. Recognizing that consumers are not passive recipients of marketing messages but individuals who interact with brands over time, companies can deliver more profound and meaningful experiences. These experiences will foster long-term loyalty and satisfaction. In this context, relationship marketing is less about making a sale and more about forging a connection that transforms consumers into brand advocates.

The present study revisits the concepts of emotional branding and relationship marketing as a holistic framework for understanding customer loyalty and emotional attachment to brands in Amman during the digital era. Emotional branding is a marketing approach that focuses on influencing consumer decisions through emotional connections with brands. Relationship marketing aims to establish and maintain long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between brands and consumers.

Together, these concepts highlight the importance of creating both emotional and relational bonds with consumers. Emotional branding helps develop an initial connection, while relationship marketing strengthens and sustains this connection through continuous engagement and value co-creation. Without emotional branding, it is difficult to establish the emotional bond that forms the foundation of long-term relationships.

Integrating these two perspectives can help brands build stronger relationships with consumers in increasingly digital environments such as Amman, where technology provides consumers with more choices than ever before. Therefore, this study applies these theoretical perspectives to examine how digital marketing managers in Amman use emotional and relationship-based strategies to

enhance consumer attachment and achieve sustainable brand loyalty.

4. Materials and methods

4.1. Research context and rationale for site selection

This study was conducted in Amman, Jordan, as an example of an emerging market context with a rapidly expanding digital economy. Amman's commercial landscape represents a hybrid cultural environment, which combines local traditions and community norms with global digital platforms and marketing approaches. This landscape is a type of setting that paves the way for new opportunities to examine emotional branding, the outcome of which may vary from those of Western economies. Adopting local e-commerce, while progressing in the non-Western context in literature, may still reveal unique consumer behavior, digital literacy, and online transaction trust. In the context of Amman, a case study of this caliber would provide insights into how emotional branding strategies succeed or fail with customers and marketing professionals owing to their unique setting, culture, and economic status.

4.2. Research design

To obtain the perspectives and experiences of the participants in the midst of a digital economy, the study made use of a qualitative exploratory research method, as suggested by [Dawadi et al. \(2021\)](#). Exploratory research provides information on areas not largely explored. The research design sought to examine the interaction between cultural elements, regional values, and digital marketing tactics and how these factors influence consumers' emotional attachments to brands in the e-commerce sector of Amman. To achieve this objective, two qualitative data collection methods were employed: semi-structured interviews with consumers and a focus group with marketing managers and digital marketing professionals. This dual approach enabled the integration of both consumer experience and managerial insights.

4.3. Sampling and participant selection

The study used purposive sampling to determine the respondents who were able to provide their perceptions concerning emotional branding dynamics in the online marketplace of Amman.

On the consumer side, thirty Jordanian participants aged between 18 and 60 years were recruited for semi-structured interviews. This sample size is consistent with qualitative research standards ([Guarte and Barrios, 2006](#)). Inclusion criteria required that participants have prior experience with online shopping and have completed at least two purchases within a relevant product category during the previous year. The

variation in age and purchasing frequency enabled the study to explore both newly developed emotional attachments and more established brand expectations. Participants' familiarity with Amman's digital retail environment further allowed them to reflect on culturally informed values, including community trust, personal recommendations, and sensitivity to brand storytelling, and how these factors shaped their emotional responses to e-marketing content.

In addition to consumers, twelve marketing managers and digital marketing experts participated in a focus group. The group size complied with recommendations outlined by [Smith et al. \(2013\)](#). Each professional had a minimum of five years of experience within Amman's e-commerce and online marketing sector. Their professional expertise provided strategic and practice-based insights into how companies employ emotional branding strategies to enhance customer loyalty and engagement, and how these strategies interact with both local cultural characteristics and global branding frameworks.

4.4. Instrument development and pilot study

The semi-structured interview guide for consumers and focus group questions were developed based on key concepts drawn from emotional branding and relationship marketing literature, including [Gokarna \(2021\)](#). The overall format of the interviews followed the principles of semi-structured qualitative inquiry described by [Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik \(2021\)](#), allowing flexibility within a structured thematic framework. Focus group questions were adapted from [Shupletcova \(2017\)](#).

The interview protocol for consumers centered on four broad yet interconnected themes addressing the emotional impact of digital advertisements, the influence of cultural values on emotional connections with e-marketing content, specific campaigns that triggered strong emotional reactions, and the role of emotional branding techniques in fostering trust and loyalty toward online brands in Jordan. The focus group questions were centered on emotional branding strategies, relationship marketing practices, and the perceived effectiveness of various digital marketing techniques in fostering emotional attachment and loyalty. These themes were designed to encourage open and reflective dialogue while maintaining alignment with the study's research objectives.

To ensure clarity and contextual relevance, both instruments were translated into Arabic and piloted with a small group of participants who were excluded from the final study. The pilot stage allowed for the evaluation of question clarity, sequencing, and effectiveness in eliciting comprehensive responses. Feedback from this process led to refinements in wording and structure, thereby strengthening the validity and reliability of

the research instruments and ensuring their suitability for the local context.

4.5. Data collection procedures

In qualitative exploratory research, data collection is conducted systematically to gather precise data. For this purpose, data collection was conducted in two phases. The first phase consisted of semi-structured interviews with consumers. Interviews were carried out in Arabic in relaxed and non-threatening environments, either face-to-face or through encrypted online platforms such as Zoom, depending on participant preference. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 90 minutes, allowing sufficient time for in-depth exploration of participants' perceptions and experiences.

The interviews were conversational in nature. While guided by the thematic protocol, flexibility was maintained to enable participants to elaborate on issues they considered significant. Interviewers were trained to employ open-ended questions and neutral follow-up probes in order to minimize leading bias. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent, transcribed verbatim in Arabic, and subsequently translated into English. Field notes were maintained to support contextual interpretation during analysis.

The second phase involved one focus group conducted in Arabic with the twelve marketing professionals. The discussion took place in a collaborative and open environment, either in person at a designated venue or virtually via Zoom (for those unable to attend in person). The session was audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English for analysis.

4.6. Data analysis

Semi-structured interview data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), following the procedural steps outlined by Smith et al. (2022). The analytical process involved repeated reading of transcripts, initial noting, identification of emergent themes, exploration of connections within individual cases, and cross-case analysis to identify shared patterns. IPA was selected because it enables an in-depth examination of participants' lived experiences and subjective interpretations, which aligns with the study's focus on emotional responses to branding practices.

Focus group data were analyzed using thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach facilitated the identification and interpretation of patterned meanings related to emotional branding strategies within the managerial context.

Across both datasets, the analysis involved verbatim transcription and translation, independent open coding by two researchers, comparison and discussion to resolve discrepancies, and the development of higher-order themes and subthemes. The coding strategy followed qualitative analytical

principles comparable to those outlined by the Joanna Briggs Institute. An iterative combination of inductive and deductive reasoning was applied, allowing themes to emerge from the data before being interpreted in relation to existing theoretical perspectives. For the interview data, analytical depth and thematic convergence were observed when no new experiential themes emerged. For the focus group data, thematic saturation was reached when no additional patterned themes were identified. Member checking was conducted with selected participants to confirm that the interpretations accurately reflected their experiences.

4.7. Validity, reliability, trustworthiness, and reflexivity

In qualitative research, validity and reliability are often conceptualized as credibility and dependability (Creswell and Poth, 2024). To ensure methodological rigor, the study incorporated structured protocols for interviews and the focus group, data triangulation across interviews, focus group discussions, field notes, and relevant documents, and independent double coding. Peer debriefing and academic consultation were employed to enhance analytical consistency and reduce subjective interpretation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017).

Trustworthiness was further supported through researcher transparency before, during, and after data collection, consistent with Willis (1999). Reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process in accordance with Denzin and Lincoln (2017) and Attia and Edge (2017). Following Fischer's (2009) guidelines, researchers engaged in continuous self-reflection to acknowledge and bracket prior experiences and assumptions during data collection and analysis, thereby minimizing potential bias and strengthening credibility.

5. Results and discussion

This section presents the major findings derived from the research questions. The analysis explores how emotionally appealing advertising influences brand loyalty and emotional attachment among consumers in Amman (RQ1), and how marketing managers implement emotional branding strategies in digital environments (RQ2).

5.1. Impact of emotionally appealing advertising on brand loyalty and emotional attachment in e-marketing

The analysis of consumer interviews revealed four interrelated themes explaining how emotionally appealing digital advertising shapes brand loyalty and emotional attachment in Amman's e-marketing environment (Table 1). These themes reflect not only affective reactions to advertising content, but also the evolving and context-dependent nature of consumer-brand relationships. Thematic saturation

was reached after the 26th consumer interview, with subsequent interviews confirming that no new major themes emerged, ensuring comprehensive coverage and stability of perspectives across participants.

Table 1: The impact of advertisements on evoking positive emotions contributing to brand loyalty

Theme	Sub-theme	F	%
Emotional responses to brand advertisements	Intensity of emotional connection to local brands	15	50.0
Brand relationship dynamics	Evolution of emotional connection over time	8	26.7
Brand preference and competitor perception	Emotional resonance influencing brand loyalty	4	13.3
External influences on brand loyalty	Real-world challenges shaping purchasing behavior	3	10.0

The most prominent theme, “Emotional Responses to Brand Advertisements,” was reported by 50% of participants. It reflects the intensity of emotional connection consumers develop toward local brands when advertising incorporates culturally familiar narratives and recognizable social contexts. Participants emphasized that digital campaigns portraying community values and daily life in Amman fostered deeper and more enduring emotional bonds, generating feelings such as pride, belonging, and authenticity. Emotional engagement was described as extending beyond the product itself, embedding brands within personal memories and reinforcing shared cultural identity. As one participant noted:

“Whenever I watch advertisements for my favourite Jordanian brands online, there is a sense of pride and connection. The incorporation of cultural and everyday aspects of Amman is likely a contributing factor. The experience extends beyond the mere product, evoking a sense of personal connection and reliability. This evokes memories of the urban thoroughfares I traverse, the dialogues I engage in with my acquaintances, and even the humorous anecdotes we exchange. Therefore, the affinity towards the brand extends beyond mere preference, encompassing identifying personal experiences within its essence.”

These findings extend Roberts’ (2005) Emotional Branding framework by demonstrating that in non-Western contexts, culturally resonant narratives are central to creating meaningful emotional attachment. Interactive features of digital platforms—including likes, comments, and co-created content—further amplified engagement, embedding brands into daily routines and fostering long-term loyalty (Dessart et al., 2015; Giovanis et al., 2022).

The second theme was “Brand Relationship Dynamics” (26.7%) and captures the evolution of emotional connection over time. Rather than emerging instantaneously, attachment was described as a gradual process shaped by repeated exposure to consistent messaging, interactive digital engagement, and sustained communication. Consumers indicated that trust and loyalty strengthened when brands maintained coherent emotional narratives across platforms. This dynamic

dimension confirms that digital emotional branding is cumulative rather than instantaneous. This aligns with Relationship Marketing Theory (Lusch and Vargo, 2014), highlighting that consumer-brand interactions are co-created, relational, and culturally embedded.

The third theme, “Brand Preference and Competitor Perception” (13.3%), reflects how emotional resonance influences brand loyalty within a competitive marketplace. While participants acknowledged strong affective bonds, they also revealed that loyalty remains conditional. Emotional attachment guided initial preference and advocacy; however, comparative evaluations—particularly related to service quality, pricing, and responsiveness—could modify purchasing decisions. Brands operating in emerging markets like Amman must balance effective engagement with operational excellence to maintain loyalty.

Finally, “External Influences on Brand Loyalty” (10.0%) underscores the role of real-world challenges in shaping purchasing behavior. This theme highlights broader economic conditions and operational reliability, moderate emotional attachment. Participants suggested that emotional bonds are strengthened when brands demonstrate fairness, transparency, and reliability during difficult periods, but may weaken when practical expectations are not met. The following excerpt is indicative of the theme:

“I remember being loyal to a particular e-commerce platform for years. However, during a time of economic downturn in Amman, they raised their prices, and their delivery became inconsistent. Simultaneously, another brand offered more competitive pricing and better service, acknowledging the challenges we all were facing. It made me reconsider my loyalty. While I had an emotional connection with the first brand, my practical needs and the external economic situation influenced my switch to a competitor.”

Collectively, these findings indicate that emotionally appealing advertising in Amman’s digital marketplace is most effective when it combines cultural authenticity with sustained relational consistency. Emotional attachment is intensified through culturally grounded storytelling and reinforced over time through repeated digital engagement; however, its durability ultimately depends on alignment with service performance and broader market realities. While emotional connections and relationships—the foundation of loyalty—are top-of-mind, the research suggests other external and pragmatic factors also help determine consumer loyalty.

5.2. Emotional branding practices and customer emotional attachment in digital marketing

Analysis of the focus group discussion revealed four key themes describing how emotional branding strategies are implemented to foster consumer attachment and loyalty (Table 2). Thematic

saturation was achieved in the focus group analysis when successive coding iterations of the discussion

transcript revealed no new codes or thematic categories.

Table 2: The impact of emotional branding strategies employed by digital marketing managers and employers in Amman on fostering stronger emotional connections and loyalty

Theme	Sub-theme	F	%
Experience level in digital marketing and e-commerce	Years of involvement in the e-commerce landscape of Amman	6	50.0
Online brand positioning in Amman's e-marketing landscape	Digital brand presentation strategies	3	25.0
Digital brand identity definition	Characteristics of online brand representation	2	16.7
Emotional resonance in e-marketing campaigns	Targeted emotional values for audience engagement	1	8.3

The most prominent theme, “Experience Level in Digital Marketing and E-commerce,” was reported by 50% of participants. It highlights that managerial expertise and tenure in the Amman e-commerce landscape are critical in designing effective emotional branding strategies. Experienced managers emphasized that years of involvement enable them to understand local consumer behavior, cultural nuances, and online engagement patterns, which in turn inform campaign design and brand positioning. One participant noted:

“I have been in the digital marketing field for about 7 years now, with a primary focus on e-commerce strategies tailored specifically for the Amman market over the last 5 years.”

This insight suggests that strategic expertise is not merely technical but also culturally informed, reinforcing the argument that emotional branding in non-Western markets requires both knowledge of global frameworks and local adaptation.

The second theme was “Online Brand Positioning in Amman’s E-Marketing Landscape” (25%) and underscores that managers actively shape brand visibility and emotional resonance through coherent digital strategies. These include aligning visual identity, storytelling, and interactive features with the preferences and expectations of the local audience. The emphasis on culturally relevant positioning complements findings from the consumer interviews, showing that consumers respond more positively when brands reflect familiar narratives, values, and daily life experiences.

“Digital Brand Identity Definition” (16.7%) focuses on clearly defining the characteristics of the online brand to ensure consistent messaging and emotional coherence across digital channels. Managers reported that establishing a recognizable and relatable identity—through consistent messaging, tone, and visual cues—helps embed the brand into consumers’ daily routines, echoing the theme of “Emotional Responses to Brand Advertisements” identified among consumers.

Finally, the theme “Emotional Resonance in E-Marketing Campaigns” (8.3%) emphasizes the deliberate use of targeted emotional values to foster engagement, loyalty, and a sense of belonging. This observation is supported by previous studies (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Pereira et al., 2024). Managers described campaigns designed to evoke trustworthiness, local pride, and community connection, illustrating that emotional branding is a

conscious, strategic practice. One participant explained:

“In our e-marketing campaigns, we strive to convey feelings of trustworthiness, local pride, and a sense of belonging. We believe that by connecting emotionally, we can foster deeper loyalty among our online consumers in Amman.”

These managerial insights provide a practical explanation for consumer patterns observed previously. By tailoring campaigns to local norms, leveraging interactive features, and maintaining coherent brand identities, managers strengthen the cumulative emotional attachment identified among consumers. Experienced managers act as mediators between global branding frameworks and local consumer culture, ensuring that campaigns evoke meaningful emotional responses while sustaining ongoing engagement.

Overall, the findings suggest that in Amman, emotional branding is most effective when managers combine cultural awareness, technological interactivity, and consistent messaging to foster durable consumer-brand relationships, reinforcing the theoretical and practical implications of the study to both global and local marketing literature. By combining Roberts’ (2005) Emotional Branding theory with Relationship Marketing principles in the local Amman context, the study highlights how digital interactivity, cultural relevance, and managerial strategy converge to foster durable consumer-brand relationships in non-Western markets.

5.3. Theoretical implications

This study contributes to the theoretical development of emotional branding literature by emphasizing the role of cultural context in shaping emotional connections between consumers and brands. Roberts’ (2005) emotional branding theory highlighted how brands can become “love marks” by establishing strong emotional bonds with consumers. However, the original framework does not fully consider how these emotional connections may vary across different cultural environments or how they are reinforced through digital platforms. The findings of this study extend the theoretical framework by demonstrating that emotional branding strategies are significantly influenced by local cultural values, particularly in non-Western markets such as Amman.

The effectiveness of emotional branding in Amman can be understood within the broader sociocultural characteristics of Jordanian society. Collectivist values, the centrality of family and community, and the importance of trust and reputation shape how consumers perceive and respond to brand communications. Emotional appeals that reflect culturally familiar narratives, local social contexts, and shared experiences foster stronger attachment, pride, and a sense of belonging. At the same time, loyalty is influenced by practical considerations such as service reliability, pricing, and consistency, highlighting that emotional bonds are reinforced but not unconditional. The high digital engagement of the relatively young population further amplifies the impact of interactive campaigns, enabling brands to embed themselves into daily routines and community life.

Furthermore, the results support the assumptions of Relationship Marketing Theory, which emphasizes the importance of long-term relational exchanges and value co-creation between firms and consumers (Lusch and Vargo, 2014). In digital marketing environments, consumers increasingly participate in shaping brand experiences through interactions such as comments, feedback, and content engagement. This interactive dynamic aligns with previous research indicating that consumers play an active role in forming brand meanings and experiences (Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011). Recent studies have also highlighted the growing importance of digital interactivity in strengthening emotional brand relationships and consumer engagement (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Srivastava et al., 2025).

Previous research has examined the development and dynamics of emotional branding (Giovanis et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2020), yet these studies rarely contextualize emotional branding within specific cultural environments or examine how digital engagement mechanisms reinforce emotional attachment in such contexts. By integrating Emotional Branding Theory with Relationship Marketing Theory and applying them to a culturally distinct marketplace, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of how emotional connections between brands and consumers are formed, sustained, and strengthened in the digital era. Overall, the study expands the theoretical understanding of emotional branding by demonstrating that cultural values, digital interaction, and consumer participation collectively influence brand loyalty and emotional attachment. These insights suggest that future theoretical models of emotional branding should incorporate both cultural and digital dimensions to better explain consumer-brand relationships in diverse markets (Joshi et al., 2025; Reitsamer et al., 2026).

5.4. Managerial implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings highlight the importance for businesses operating in

Amman—and in similar culturally oriented markets—to develop branding strategies that resonate with local cultural values. Companies that rely exclusively on standardized global branding messages may struggle to establish meaningful emotional connections with local consumers. Instead, marketers should design culturally sensitive communication strategies that reflect local values such as family orientation, trust within communities, and emotional authenticity.

Digital platforms play a critical role in facilitating these connections. The study demonstrates that interactive features such as likes, comments, and personalized content enable brands to become embedded in consumers' daily digital routines. Managers should therefore prioritize interactive digital marketing strategies that encourage consumer participation, dialogue, and content co-creation. These practices not only enhance emotional engagement but also strengthen consumers' sense of belonging and ownership toward the brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Zhao and Chung, 2025).

Another important implication concerns the role of storytelling and cultural alignment in brand communication (Dessart et al., 2015). When brand narratives are aligned with the cultural narratives of the target market, companies can establish deeper and more sustainable emotional relationships with consumers. For international brands entering markets such as Amman, investing in cultural research and local market insights becomes essential for adapting global brand strategies to local expectations and values.

Ultimately, the study suggests that successful emotional branding in culturally diverse markets requires a balance between global brand consistency and local cultural relevance. By integrating culturally informed marketing strategies with interactive digital engagement, companies can build stronger emotional bonds with consumers and foster long-term loyalty in increasingly competitive digital marketplaces.

5.5. Limitations and future research

While this study provides novel insights into emotional branding in Amman, several limitations must be acknowledged. The first relates to the sample size, which comprised 30 consumers and a focus group of 12 marketing managers. While the purposive sampling approach allowed us to gather in-depth qualitative insights, the relatively small sample constrains the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Consequently, the patterns observed should be interpreted as indicative rather than universally representative. Second, the study's focus on Amman, Jordan, limits its geographic and cultural scope. The findings may not apply to other regions or countries, as cultural, economic, and technological differences can impact consumer reactions to emotional branding. Emotions and their triggers can vary significantly across cultures, and the findings regarding positive emotions and brand

loyalty specific to Amman might not directly apply to other regions or demographics. Third, the results may be more applicable to specific industries within e-marketing than others. Although the research captured insights from multiple product categories, not all online markets or industries were equally represented, which may restrict the broader applicability of the conclusions. These limitations underscore the need for follow-up research to test the robustness and transferability of the findings.

Future studies could extend this investigation to other cities, countries, or industry contexts, incorporate larger and more diverse samples, and examine longitudinal effects to understand how emotional branding and consumer attachment evolve over time across different cultural and digital environments. For instance, a cross-cultural comparative study could consider regions like Saudi Arabia vs. the UAE or compare packages targeted for Middle Eastern countries vs. Western market targets, or Asia-specific target market segmentation and how emotional branding strategies impact different cultural contexts. Moreover, sector-specific studies, such as the influence of emotional branding on consumer behavior in fashion, technology, and healthcare, make it possible to see if emotional triggers vary among different sectors. Another approach might be longitudinal studies that look at the effects of emotional branding on consumer loyalty and brand relationships over time, and how emotional bonds are formed or dissolved over the years.

New technology for emotional engagement creates research opportunities, exploring how digital tools such as AI-driven recommendations or virtual reality experiences might impact emotional and brand engagement. In addition, understanding how demographic variables like age, gender, and income affect emotional processing would allow for greater specificity in marketing efforts. A more nuanced examination of the interplay between cultural values and symbols in influencing emotional branding could enable brands to design culturally pertinent campaigns, perhaps even more so in countries with a deep cultural heritage base, such as Jordan. Such research avenues would yield vital information to improve emotional branding strategies in different markets and industry sectors.

6. Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to provide meaningful perspectives on emotional branding by exploring how brands become integrated into consumers' identities, particularly among local consumers in Amman, by using the "love marks" approach. This article fills a significant gap in existing literature, which has largely focused on major industries while overlooking the emotional and cultural factors that influence branding in localized contexts.

Regarding how emotionally appealing advertising influences brand loyalty and emotional attachment

among consumers in Amman (RQ1), the findings indicate that emotionally appealing digital advertisements foster strong emotional connections when they incorporate culturally familiar narratives, community values, and everyday social experiences. Consumers reported that such campaigns generate feelings of pride, belonging, and authenticity, which contribute to stronger emotional attachment and increased brand loyalty. Digital platforms further reinforce these connections by embedding brand interactions into consumers' daily routines.

Concerning how marketing managers implement emotional branding strategies in digital environments (RQ2), the results reveal that marketing managers actively implement emotional branding strategies through culturally tailored campaigns, coherent digital brand positioning, and interactive engagement with consumers. These strategies emphasize storytelling, cultural relevance, and consistent communication across digital platforms, allowing brands to strengthen emotional relationships and build long-term customer loyalty.

Both results demonstrate that consumer-brand relationships are evolving in the context of digital marketing. In contrast to transactional relationships, these relationships are increasingly interactive and co-creative, in accordance with broader theories that emphasize intangible resources and value co-creation. By situating relational exchanges within the culturally specific context of Amman, this study contributes to the understanding of the field of digital marketing by filling an important knowledge gap.

It contributes to a better understanding of consumer behavior in localized socio-cultural settings by clarifying how marketing and emotional branding intersect with cultural values in Amman's digital marketplace. By illustrating cultural affiliations and emotional ties as significant influences on customer retention and loyalty, this study extends the body of knowledge with a context-specific perspective. This study emphasizes the importance of tailoring digital marketing approaches so that they are aligned with cultural expectations and emotional drivers that are unique to local markets.

This research is important because it contextualizes emotional branding processes within a specific cultural environment, which has been overlooked in earlier studies. The integration of emotional branding concepts with relationship marketing theories - as well as their application to localized markets such as Amman - provides a deeper understanding of how brands can achieve enduring loyalty. By balancing global marketing norms and local cultural preferences, it is possible to cultivate long-term, emotionally driven consumer relationships. Additionally, the study offers theoretical and practical implications for future research, encouraging further exploration of the intersection between emotion, culture, and digital brand strategies.

Compliance with ethical standards

Ethical considerations

This study adhered to established international ethical standards and received formal approval from the School of Business at Al al-Bayt University (AABU). All procedures were conducted in line with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and the institutional ethical guidelines. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by removing personal identifiers and securely storing all research data. Findings are reported in aggregate form to prevent individual identification.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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