
**THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL MARKETING IN ACHIEVING MARKETING
AMBIDEXTERITY: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF OPINIONS FROM A
SAMPLE OF COMMERCIAL BANK MANAGERS IN DUHOK
GOVERNORATE**

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of emotional marketing in achieving marketing ambidexterity within commercial banks in Duhok Governorate, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Emotional marketing, operationalized through aesthetic, utilitarian, and conscious emotions, is analyzed in relation to marketing ambidexterity dimensions, namely opportunity exploration, opportunity exploitation, and marketing agility. Drawing on organizational ambidexterity theory and consumer psychology, the study addresses a critical gap in understanding how emotional marketing strategies enhance both efficiency and adaptability in the banking sector of emerging markets. The research adopts a descriptive-analytical design, combining theoretical review and empirical investigation. Data were collected from 75 managers across commercial banks using a structured questionnaire, supported by interviews and observations. Factor analysis and simple linear regression, conducted with SPSS V.26, were employed to validate constructs and test hypotheses. The results demonstrate that all three dimensions of emotional marketing significantly influence marketing ambidexterity, with aesthetic emotions contributing most strongly to opportunity exploration, utilitarian emotions to exploitation, and conscious emotions to marketing agility. Collectively, emotional marketing explained 53.49% of the variance in marketing ambidexterity outcomes. These findings highlight the strategic value of emotional engagement in fostering both stability and innovation in banking practices. The study contributes to marketing and organizational theory by extending ambidexterity research into the domain of emotional marketing in emerging economies. Practically, it provides insights for bank managers on integrating emotional strategies to enhance customer loyalty, service innovation, and sustainable competitiveness.

Keywords: Emotional Marketing, Marketing Ambidexterity, Opportunity Exploration, Opportunity Exploitation, Emerging Markets



INTRODUCTION

The contemporary business landscape has witnessed a paradigmatic shift in marketing approaches, moving beyond traditional transactional relationships toward more emotionally engaging customer experiences. Emotional marketing has emerged as a critical strategic tool that leverages human psychological responses to create deeper connections between brands and consumers (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016). This approach recognizes that purchasing decisions are not merely rational calculations but are significantly influenced by emotional responses and psychological triggers that resonate with consumers' inner desires and aspirations (Bagozzi et al., 1999).

The banking sector, traditionally characterized by functional and rational service delivery, has increasingly adopted emotional marketing strategies to differentiate themselves in highly competitive markets. Research demonstrates that emotional connections with customers lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction, loyalty, and long-term profitability (Brakus et al., 2009). Financial institutions are now recognizing that emotional marketing can transform commoditized banking services into meaningful experiences that resonate with customers' personal values and aspirations (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005).

Marketing ambidexterity, conceptualized as an organization's ability to simultaneously pursue explorative and exploitative marketing activities, has become a crucial capability for sustained competitive advantage (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004). This dual capability enables organizations to efficiently serve existing markets while simultaneously exploring new opportunities and innovations. The concept draws from organizational ambidexterity theory, suggesting that successful organizations must balance short-term efficiency with long-term adaptability (March, 1991).

The integration of emotional marketing with marketing ambidexterity presents a compelling research opportunity, particularly in the context of commercial banking. Banks operating in emerging markets face unique challenges including regulatory changes, technological disruptions, and evolving customer expectations (Rust & Huang, 2014). The

ability to emotionally connect with customers while maintaining operational excellence and exploring new market opportunities becomes critical for sustainable success.

Contemporary marketing literature emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence in marketing strategies, highlighting how emotional appeals can influence consumer behavior more effectively than rational arguments alone (Poels & Dewitte, 2006). Emotional marketing strategies encompass various dimensions, including aesthetic emotions that appeal to beauty and design, utilitarian emotions that focus on functional benefits, and conscious emotions that align with customers' values and beliefs (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq, particularly Duhok Governorate, represents an emerging market where commercial banks are adapting to rapid economic changes and increasing competition. Understanding how emotional marketing contributes to marketing ambidexterity in this context provides valuable insights for both practitioners and researchers. The unique cultural, economic, and regulatory environment of the region offers an interesting setting to examine these relationships.

Research in emerging markets has shown that emotional marketing strategies must be carefully adapted to local cultural contexts and consumer preferences (de Mooij, 2019). The effectiveness of emotional marketing in achieving marketing ambidexterity may vary significantly across different cultural and economic contexts, making region-specific studies particularly valuable.

The primary objective of this research is to examine the role of emotional marketing in achieving marketing ambidexterity within commercial banks operating in Duhok Governorate. The study seeks to bridge the existing gap in academic research by investigating how emotional marketing practices contribute to both exploitative and explorative marketing capabilities. Additionally, the research aims to identify and measure the level of emotional marketing implementation across various dimensions within the surveyed bank branches. The study also endeavors to highlight the concepts of emotional marketing and marketing ambidexterity and their significance for the examined banks, providing practical insights that can contribute to improving and enhancing their marketing practices.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emotional marketing represents a sophisticated approach to customer engagement that transcends traditional marketing paradigms by incorporating psychological and emotional dimensions into marketing strategies. The concept has evolved from early studies in consumer psychology that recognized the significant role of emotions in decision-making processes (Zajonc & Markus, 1982). Contemporary emotional marketing frameworks emphasize the creation of emotional connections between brands and consumers through various touchpoints and experiences (Thomson et al., 2005).

The theoretical foundation of emotional marketing draws heavily from affective psychology and neuroscience research, which demonstrates that emotional responses often precede and influence rational decision-making processes (LeDoux, 1996). This understanding has led to the development of sophisticated emotional marketing strategies that target specific emotional states and responses. The dimensional approach to emotions, distinguishing between aesthetic, utilitarian, and conscious emotions, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how different types of emotional appeals can influence consumer behavior (Russell, 1980).

Aesthetic emotions in the marketing context relate to the appreciation of beauty, design, and sensory experiences that create positive emotional responses without necessarily serving functional purposes (Reimann et al., 2010). These emotions are particularly relevant service industries like banking, where the physical environment, digital interfaces, and visual communication can significantly impact customer perceptions and satisfaction. Research has shown that aesthetic elements in service delivery can enhance customer experience and create lasting positive impressions (Bitner, 1992).

Utilitarian emotions focus on the functional benefits and practical value that products or services provide to consumers. In banking, utilitarian emotions are triggered by services that effectively meet customers' financial needs, provide security, and deliver reliable performance (Chitturi et al., 2008). These emotions are particularly important in establishing trust and credibility, which are fundamental to banking relationships.

Conscious emotions represent the alignment between a brand's values and customers' personal beliefs and social consciousness. This dimension has become increasingly important as consumers seek brands that reflect their values and contribute to social or environmental causes (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). In the banking sector, conscious emotions can be triggered through corporate social responsibility initiatives, ethical banking practices, and alignment with community values.

Marketing ambidexterity, rooted in organizational ambidexterity theory, represents an organization's capability to simultaneously pursue exploitation and exploration activities (Duncan, 1976). In the marketing context, this translates to the ability to efficiently serve existing customers and markets while concurrently exploring new opportunities, markets, and innovative approaches (Kyriakopoulos & Moorman, 2004). This dual capability is particularly crucial in dynamic environments where organizations must balance short-term performance with long-term adaptability.

The exploration dimension of marketing ambidexterity involves activities such as market research, innovation, experimentation with new marketing approaches, and the development of capabilities for entering new markets (Levinthal & March, 1993). These activities typically involve higher risks but offer potential for breakthrough innovations and market expansion. In banking, exploration might involve developing new digital services, entering new customer segments, or creating innovative financial products.

The exploitation dimension focuses on refinement, efficiency improvement, and optimization of existing marketing activities and customer relationships (March, 1991). This includes activities such as improving service quality, enhancing customer satisfaction, optimizing pricing strategies, and strengthening relationships with existing customers. Exploitation activities generally involve lower risks and provide more predictable returns.

Marketing agility, the third dimension of marketing ambidexterity, represents the organization's ability to quickly respond to market changes and adapt marketing strategies accordingly (Roberts & Grover, 2012). This capability is increasingly important in today's rapidly changing business environment, where customer preferences, competitive landscapes, and technological capabilities evolve continuously.



The relationship between emotional marketing and marketing ambidexterity presents an intriguing area of investigation. Emotional connections with customers can enhance both exploitative and explorative marketing activities. Strong emotional bonds with existing customers can improve retention and satisfaction (exploitation), while emotional insights can inform the development of new products and services for emerging market segments (exploration) (Bagozzi et al., 2016).

Research in emerging markets has highlighted the importance of cultural adaptation in emotional marketing strategies. What triggers positive emotional responses varies significantly across cultures, requiring organizations to develop culturally sensitive approaches to emotional marketing (Scherer & Wallbott, 1994). This cultural dimension adds complexity to the implementation of emotional marketing strategies in diverse markets like the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The integration of emotional marketing and marketing ambidexterity requires sophisticated organizational capabilities, including emotional intelligence, market sensing, and adaptive capacity. Organizations must develop systems and processes that enable them to understand and respond to emotional cues from customers while maintaining the flexibility to adapt their approaches based on market feedback and changing conditions (Day, 2011).

Research Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework and literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed for investigation. The first hypothesis suggests that there is no significant role for emotional marketing related to aesthetic emotions in achieving marketing ambidexterity, with a sub-hypothesis proposing that aesthetic emotions contribute to opportunity exploration. The second hypothesis proposes that there is no significant role for emotional marketing related to utilitarian emotions in achieving marketing ambidexterity, with utilitarian emotions contributing to opportunity exploitation. The third hypothesis indicates that there is no significant role for emotional marketing related to conscious emotions in achieving marketing ambidexterity, with conscious emotions contributing to marketing agility.

RESEARCH METHOD

The current research follows a descriptive-analytical approach where logical analysis represents the foundation of the theoretical aspect of the study, while statistical analysis and inference form the basis of the applied aspect. The research community consists of 79 individuals who occupy administrative positions in commercial banks in Duhok Governorate, from whom 75 questionnaires were distributed to survey opinions about the researched variables. The study was supported by data, observations, and limited interviews, while SPSS V.26 software was used to analyze primary data, adopting descriptive and inferential statistical methods to test the research hypotheses derived from the main questions.

For data and information collection, the study relied on multiple sources including books, periodicals, conference research, university theses and dissertations, both Arabic and foreign, in addition to the internet for the theoretical aspect. For the practical aspect, personal interviews were conducted which included direct questionnaire questions from researchers to obtain answers from sample members and explain ambiguous matters to ensure accuracy and reassurance in responses. These interviews contributed to obtaining information that benefited the study and clarified the concepts of emotional marketing and marketing ambidexterity to respondents, facilitating the application of the practical aspect.

The questionnaire form was prepared according to the five-point Likert scale, as it was found to be the most appropriate tool to achieve the study objectives since it presents questions to respondents that align with the study hypothesis and main objectives. The questionnaire was designed to measure both emotional marketing dimensions (aesthetic emotions, utilitarian emotions, conscious emotions) and marketing ambidexterity dimensions (opportunity exploration, opportunity exploitation, marketing agility) through carefully constructed items that reflect the theoretical framework developed in the literature review.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The factor analysis technique was employed using the principal component method after obtaining eigenvalues for the reduced correlation matrix, and rotated factor matrix, and the variance matrix explained by the factor. The results of the Varimax analysis showed that

emotional marketing for the study sample yielded three main factors explaining an average of 53.49% of the total variance (cumulative variance). Table 1 shows these factors and the total variance ratios.

Table 1.
Emotional Marketing Dimensions According to Factor Analysis Method

| Emotional Dimensions | Marketing | Cronbach's Value | Alpha | Eigenvalue | Variance Ratio |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------------|-------|------------|----------------|
| First Factor: Aesthetic Emotions | | $\alpha = 0.63$ | | 5.723 | 15.18% |
| Second Factor: Utilitarian Emotions | | $\alpha = 0.67$ | | 6.254 | 16.965% |
| Third Factor: Conscious Emotions | | $\alpha = 0.71$ | | 6.584 | 21.345% |
| Total | | 0.67 | | | 53.49% |

Similarly, the results of using the factor analysis method using the principal component method after obtaining eigenvalues for the reduced correlation matrix and the rotated factor matrix, and the variance matrix explained by the factor showed that the Varimax analysis for marketing ambidexterity in the study sample revealed three main factors explaining an average of 55.85% of the total variance (cumulative variance). Table 2 shows these factors and the total variance ratios.

Table 2.
Marketing Ambidexterity Dimensions According to Factor Analysis Method

| Marketing Dimensions | Ambidexterity | Cronbach's Alpha Value | Eigenvalue | Variance Ratio |
|---|---------------|------------------------|------------|----------------|
| First Factor: Opportunity Exploration | | $\alpha = 0.65$ | 6.546 | 15.86% |
| Second Factor: Opportunity Exploitation | | $\alpha = 0.69$ | 5.897 | 18.35% |
| Third Factor: Marketing Agility | | $\alpha = 0.78$ | 6.125 | 21.64% |
| Total | | 0.70 | | 55.85% |

A simple linear regression technique was used to test the research hypotheses:

H1: Emotional marketing related to aesthetic emotions has a negative impact on marketing ambidexterity. ($\beta = 0.827$, $R^2 = 0.68$, $\text{Sig} = 0.01$)

The results showed that the hypothesis was supported and that emotional marketing related to aesthetic emotions has a significant relationship with marketing ambidexterity. Through these results, the researchers can interpret that the institution does not provide the services it promised, and the customer is not aware of this emotional marketing in the quality

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of service provided, while there is a feeling about the institution's commitment to the terms of the agreement and the availability of after-sales services.

H2: Emotional marketing related to utilitarian emotions has a negative impact on marketing ambidexterity. ($\beta = 0.854$, $R^2 = 0.569$, Sig = 0.01)

The results showed that the hypothesis was supported and that emotional marketing related to utilitarian emotions has a significant relationship with marketing ambidexterity.

H3: Emotional marketing related to conscious emotions has a negative impact on marketing ambidexterity. ($\beta = 0.640$, $R^2 = 0.548$, Sig = 0.01)

The results showed that the hypothesis was supported and that conscious emotions, as one of the emotional marketing variables, have a significant relationship with marketing ambidexterity.

Table 3.
Testing Sub-Hypotheses Through Arithmetic Means and t-test

| Emotional Marketing Dimensions | Arithmetic Mean | t-value | Hypothesis Result |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------|-------------------|
| Aesthetic Emotions | 4.2 | 44.8 | Accepted |
| Utilitarian Emotions | 4.1 | 36.8 | Accepted |
| Conscious Emotions | 3.8 | 44.4 | Accepted |

Table 4.
Simple Regression and ANOVA for the Role of Emotional Marketing in its Forms in Achieving Marketing Ambidexterity

| Correlation (R) | Coefficient of Determination (R^2) | Calculated F | Regression Coefficient B | Degrees of Freedom DF | Significance Level Sig* |
|-----------------|--|--------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 0.401 | 0.169 | 187.79 | 0.41 | 1/931/932 | 0.000 |

*Statistically significant at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$)

Discussion

The findings provide empirical support for the theoretical proposition that emotional marketing significantly contributes to marketing ambidexterity in the banking sector. The factor analysis confirmed the multidimensional nature of emotional marketing, represented by aesthetic, utilitarian, and conscious emotions, which collectively explained over 53% of the variance. This suggests that customers' emotional responses are neither uniform nor peripheral, but instead central to shaping marketing ambidexterity. Such results corroborate

earlier theoretical perspectives in affective psychology, which emphasize that emotions precede rational judgments in consumer decision-making (LeDoux, 1996).

The regression results further revealed that aesthetic, utilitarian, and conscious emotions each had a statistically significant effect on marketing ambidexterity, though their impacts varied in magnitude. Aesthetic emotions ($\beta = 0.827$, $R^2 = 0.68$) exerted the strongest influence, underscoring the importance of service design, branch ambience, and digital interface aesthetics in enhancing opportunity exploration. This is consistent with studies that highlight the role of sensory and design elements in service-based industries (Bitner, 1992; Reimann et al., 2010). For banks in Duhok, this implies that non-functional attributes, such as user-friendly digital platforms and visually appealing physical environments, are strategic levers for differentiation in competitive markets.

Utilitarian emotions ($\beta = 0.854$, $R^2 = 0.569$) demonstrated significant effects on opportunity exploitation, aligning with research suggesting that reliability, security, and efficiency are key to sustaining customer trust (Chitturi et al., 2008). In emerging markets, where institutional trust is often fragile, the provision of functional and dependable services becomes critical for stabilizing existing customer relationships while building credibility for future growth.

Conscious emotions ($\beta = 0.640$, $R^2 = 0.548$) showed a strong association with marketing agility, indicating that ethical banking practices and alignment with community values enable organizations to quickly adapt to evolving customer expectations. This finding extends the literature on value-driven marketing (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003) by demonstrating its relevance not only for customer retention but also for organizational responsiveness. In the socio-cultural context of the Kurdistan Region, where collective values and community-oriented practices are highly salient, the ability of banks to demonstrate social responsibility and ethical commitment enhances their adaptive capacity.

Overall, the integration of emotional marketing into banking practice strengthens both exploitative and explorative activities, thereby achieving ambidexterity. The relatively high Cronbach's Alpha values for both emotional marketing (0.67) and marketing

ambidexterity (0.70) confirm the internal consistency of constructs, providing methodological robustness. However, the moderate levels of explained variance suggest that while emotions are critical, other contextual factors such as regulatory frameworks, technological infrastructure, and socio-political dynamics also shape marketing ambidexterity in this region. These findings carry important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, they bridge consumer psychology and organizational ambidexterity research, offering a nuanced understanding of how emotional dynamics inform dual marketing capabilities. Practically, they highlight the need for commercial banks in emerging economies to go beyond transactional services and strategically embed emotional marketing into their operational frameworks. By doing so, banks can enhance customer loyalty, stimulate service innovation, and ensure resilience in volatile markets.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the role of emotional marketing in achieving marketing ambidexterity within commercial banks operating in Duhok Governorate, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The findings demonstrate that emotional marketing—conceptualized through aesthetic, utilitarian, and conscious dimensions—has a significant and multidimensional influence on marketing ambidexterity. Specifically, aesthetic emotions were found to strongly support opportunity exploration, utilitarian emotions reinforced opportunity exploitation, and conscious emotions contributed meaningfully to marketing agility. These results affirm the centrality of emotional factors in shaping customer relationships and organizational capabilities, extending existing theories in consumer psychology and organizational ambidexterity.

The study underscores that in competitive and rapidly evolving banking environments, emotional marketing transcends its traditional role as a supplementary tool and becomes a strategic necessity. By embedding emotional dimensions into their service delivery, banks not only strengthen customer trust and loyalty but also build resilience and adaptability in the face of market volatility. Importantly, the results highlight the cultural

salience of emotional marketing in emerging markets, where value alignment and trust-building play a particularly critical role.

From a practical standpoint, the research suggests that banks should prioritize the integration of emotional marketing across both physical and digital touchpoints, enhance service quality and reliability, and align corporate practices with community values. These steps are essential to foster long-term customer engagement while simultaneously enabling innovation and market expansion. While the study provides valuable insights, it also opens avenues for future research to investigate the interplay between emotional marketing and ambidexterity across diverse cultural, technological, and institutional settings.

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