

MARKETING

## How brands can use emotion to build connections with consumers

April 9, 2018



*Brands such as Lincoln and Apple use emotion well in their advertising. Image credit: Lincoln*

By DANNY PARISI

NEW YORK Emotion is at the core of all decision-making, and for advertisers that means learning how to activate emotions in consumers to influence their purchases.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**  
Plus: Just released  
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

At Forrester's annual Consumer Marketing forum in New York on April 6, a principal analyst for Forrester talked about some of the ways that brands can use emotional appeals to help influence customers as well as the way emotion ties into decision-making. Emotion is a powerful tool and while people might associate emotional advertising with the heartstring-tugging ads of animals in need of shelter, the range of emotions marketers can employ go far beyond that.

"If most of our decision-making happens through a channel that is instinctive and emotional, the way we build the potency of our brand is to learn how to activate those emotional triggers," said Dipanjan Chatterjee, vice president and principal analyst at [Forrester](#).

### Emotional reactions

The core of Mr. Chatterjee's presentation was based on the work of Nobel Prize laureate Richard Thaler.

Mr. Thaler won the Nobel Prize in economics for his theory of predictable irrationality. In short, people often act in irrational manners, guided mainly by their emotions and instincts and not objective criteria.

While this may seem like common knowledge, Mr. Thaler's research was significant in that nearly all decisions are made this way, even if the person feels that they are being rational and considerate.

This translates well to marketing. Even when people think they may be immune to advertising, making only objective decisions based on evidence, they can still be swayed by the emotional appeal of campaigns.

*Lincoln's campaign is a great example of emotional advertising*

Creating a positive emotional connection with consumers will also help solidify a strong brand image.

"If you have a strong brand, you will drive preference for it and you will convert preference to purchase and purchase to evangelization," Mr. Chatterjee said. "That closes the loop when they go, and now you've created a wave that will raise awareness and profits.

"Brand energy is a simple concept," he said. "If you as a brand do the right things, provide the right experiences, your energy is going to rise.

"But if on the other hand, you provide negative experiences, your brand energy depletes."

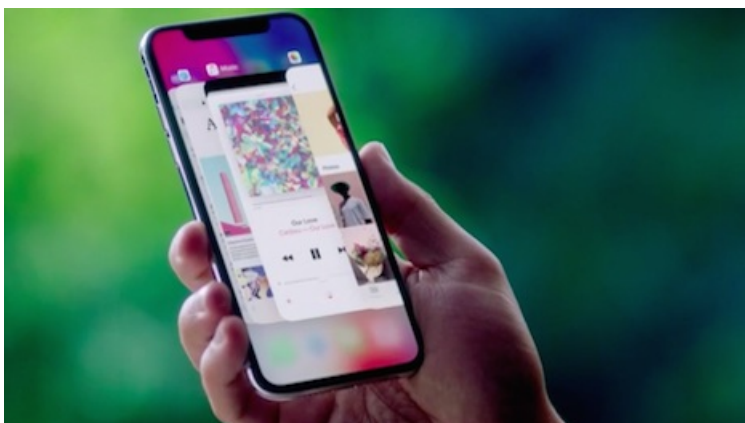
### Building a relationship

A number of luxury campaigns have embraced an emotional appeal as a central strategy for targeting customers.

For example, U.S. automaker Lincoln tapped an emotional bond while mirroring its capability to multitask and exude an opulent experience through its latest ambassador.

To celebrate the new design of its most prestigious vehicle, Lincoln worked with tennis player Serena Williams in a multifaceted digital campaign. Ms. Williams is a true loyal customer of the Lincoln navigator, and the automaker shared her personal story of how the car has supported her lifestyle while remaining a piece of luxury ([see story](#)).

Purchasing a luxury good requires an investment far beyond what most pay for similar products, but consumers do so because those brands have become a "passion" worthy of going out of their way to acquire.



*Apple is one of the pioneers in emotional advertising. Image credit: Apple*

Speaking at Ad:tech 2017 Nov. 1, a writer and director from Questus spoke about the ways that brands can behave irrationally to drive an emotional reaction from customers, which can lead to sales. In his talk, he spoke about the brand Yeti, which sells coolers at a far higher price point than competitors through the strength of its advertising and emotional connection to customers ([see story](#)).

For Mr. Chatterjee, there is one brand that stands out as being among the best in terms of using simple but powerful emotions to connect with consumers: Apple.

"What we've been talking about today is that to be a great brand, you have to look at things through the human lens," Mr. Chatterjee said.

"In the 1980s if you turned on a computer, you'd likely get a green screen and a blinking cursor," he said. "Only one computer, when you turned it on, smiled at you and said, 'Hello.'"