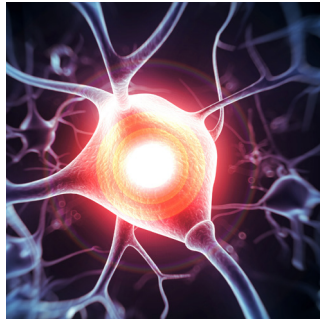




Intelligence Applied

Taking control of your emotions



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Emotion is fundamental to every decision that every consumer makes, and if brands want to build their irresistibility they must speak the language of emotion across all touchpoints.

Taking control of your emotions

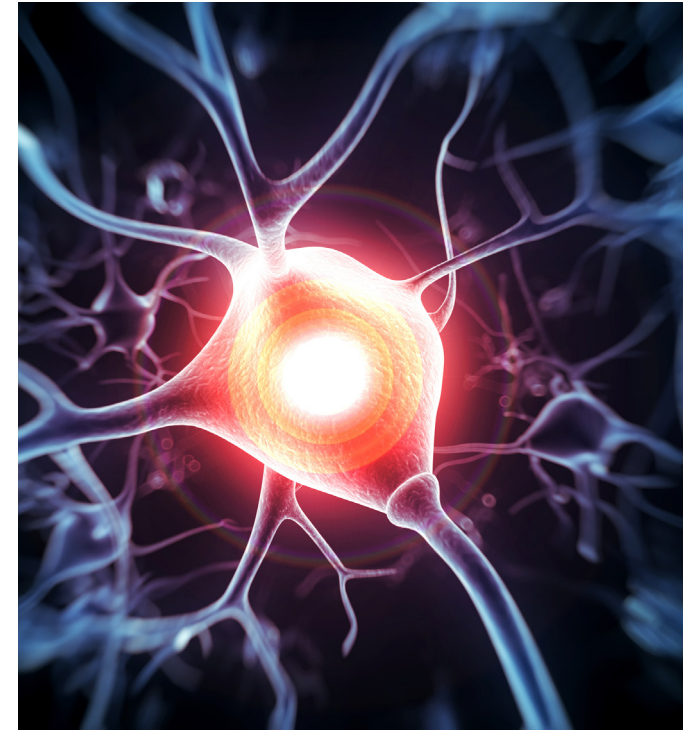


Roz Calder

Director of TNS's
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Emotion is what makes us human. But not in the way that many self-help gurus, romantic fiction writers and traditional advertising creatives might have you believe. Emotion isn't just our joy, sadness, fear, anger or surprise; it's not engaged only when we "feel emotional" or when we encounter something deliberately designed to make us that way. Instead, emotion is fundamental to how we operate. It enables our fast thinking and decision-making, exerts an unconscious influence over our choices and is always, always in play when it comes to how we respond to brands. If brands are to become irresistible, they need to understand the implications of this – and act on them.

Marketers are frequently told that emotion matters. If they've read their Daniel Kahnemann or Antonio Damasio, they'll have a sense of the complex nature of emotion and how it intersects with decision-making. But when it comes to managing emotion with a discipline that reflects its importance, far too many brands fall short. This is often because emotion itself remains stubbornly misunderstood.



Taking control of your emotions

Emotion is everywhere

In the past we thought of emotion as something distinct from functionality, and our emotional selves as diametrically opposed to our functional, rational ones. Neuroscience proves that this distinction is flawed. In reality, function and emotion are two sides of the same coin. Yet often marketers fall back on outdated perceptions when it comes to when and how they apply emotion to their activity.

Brands in categories like DIY, toothpaste or personal finance need to enlist emotion to differentiate themselves just as much as those in traditionally emotive categories like fashion and fragrance. This is because neither consumers nor brands can switch emotion on and off when dealing with one another; it's always a factor in the decisions that they take.

Likewise, the more functional touchpoints that a brand has with consumers can engender emotion

just as powerfully as more consciously emotive communications activity such as advertising. Brand logo, packaging, website, Facebook pages, service delivery and retail each have a role to play in an ongoing emotive conversation, and whether they are correctly aligned or not will play a big role in how consumers respond to your brand.

To manage emotion effectively, it's important to think beyond getting people to 'love' you, or experience 'brand joy'. Such popular metrics are outcomes of effective emotion management – but they can't help you to achieve it. Brands become irresistible by understanding the complex emotive needs that generate such reactions and aligning all of their characteristics to speak to them consistently. To do so, they need a means of communicating emotively that can work across all aspects of a consumer's experience.



Emotion lies at the heart of the consumer-brand relationship.

Taking control of your emotions

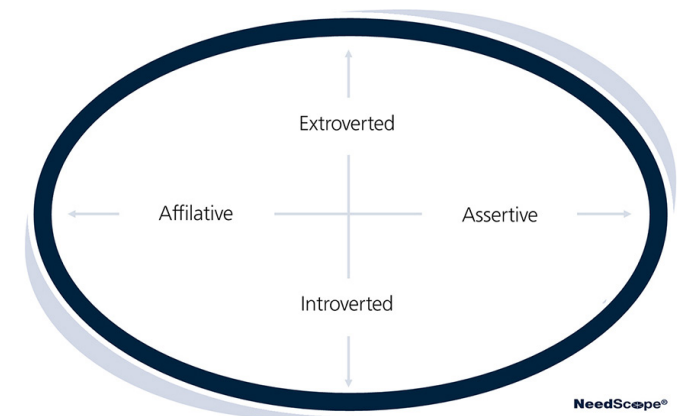
Symbolism: talking the language of emotion

It just so happens that the human brain is hard-wired to respond to an emotive language, a code that our fast brain is constantly interpreting even when we're unaware of our emotions being in play. That language is symbolism – and it is the vocabulary that brands must master if they are to become emotionally literate.

Symbolism communicates emotion far more powerfully than words or narrative. If your words say one thing but your symbols say something else, then it's really no contest which your consumer's brain will respond to. Good use of symbolism helps build a consistent brand, but only if you actively manage the different symbols your brand uses across every

touchpoint. If your financial services ad tells people that your brand is warm, human and approachable, but your bank branch is dominated by closed office doors and screens between tellers and customers, it's the symbolism of the latter that will win through.

To use symbolism effectively, brands first need to understand all of the symbolic channels through which they are sending messages, deliberately or not. These include the full range of human senses, but also colours, fonts, shapes, and the different environments where brands and consumers come together. A framework for decoding symbolism also brings consistency to your management of emotion.



The NeedScope model maps universal human emotions. This provides a framework to map brands and their symbolism.

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Taking control of your emotions

Colour-coding emotion

Colour is a powerful element of symbolic language, dominating our memory of brands through its use in elements such as logos, and exerting huge influence over our emotive responses. There is a reason, for example, why fast food brands consistently choose fun, playful, primary colours while banks choose serious, adult colours.

When a male fragrance brand chooses to present its product in a red and black branded box, it isn't just deciding on tones that go well together. These are strong, contrasting colours that communicate assertiveness and go so far as to signal the nature of the scent that people can expect to find inside. A white and silver box implies a feeling of order and refinement hinting at a scent that's more elegant and subtle; the natural hues of a green and brown box generate a mellow feeling of warmth and imply a scent with earthy, organic tones. Choice of colour at every touchpoint enables consumers to start experiencing a brand emotionally and sets expectations for the functional experience.



Different pack colours evoke different emotions and set up different product expectations.

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Aligning the senses

Our experience of brands and products enlists a broad range of senses beyond just our eyes and ears, and the information that these senses convey has profound symbolic meaning, whether we intended it to or not: the music playing when a consumer visits a website, the texture of the cardboard used to box a pair of running shoes, the flavour of mint used in a particular tube of toothpaste. Scent is obviously central to the purpose of fragrance brands, who craft it to deliver a very particular emotive message. However, similarly strong signals can also be conveyed less deliberately by the scent of anything from new car interiors to beverages.

Brand touchpoint	Elements that deliver emotion
Logo	Colour, font, case, shape, imagery
Packaging	Material, shape, size, graphics, back of pack info, quality cues
Website	Style, music, font, images, tone of voice, navigation, information
Facebook page	Images, tone of voice, subject matter
Retail/showroom	Size, entrance, signage, product layout, service, music, lighting
Print advertising	Photographic style, colours, talent, font, copy, tone of voice
TVC's	Production values, talent, mood, tone of voice, style of humour
Service delivery	Channel, personnel, tone, processes
Product	Shape, texture, taste, smell, design cues, colour, materials, ingredients

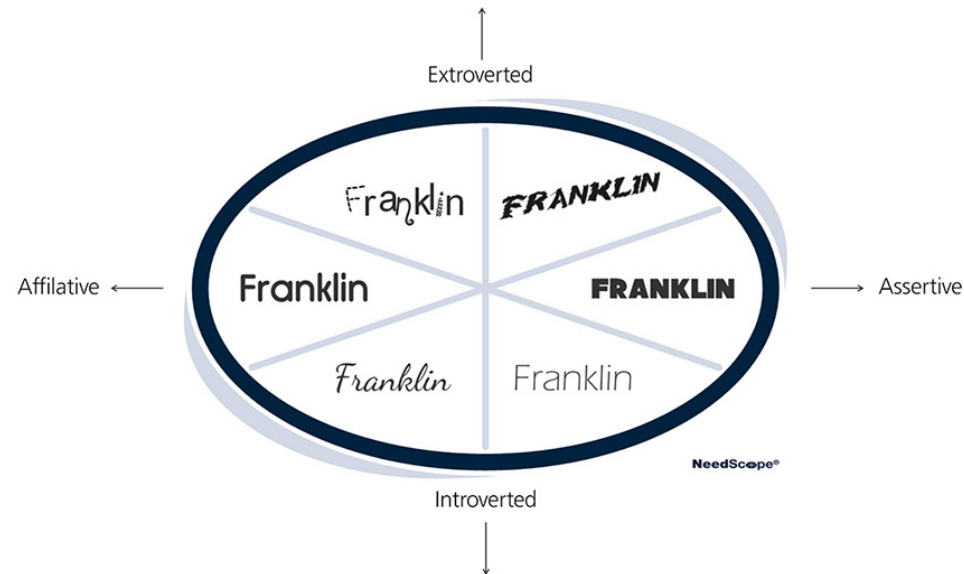
Every brand touchpoint is laden with cues that carry an emotive message, even those that seem functional. They all represent an opportunity to enhance the emotive positioning of a brand and as such all need to be carefully managed.

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Taking control of your emotions

Font of meaning

The typeface that brands use to communicate often conveys more meaning than the words it is used to spell out. Ford's handwritten logo says everything you need to know about the brand's heritage and identity, as does the rugged, faded yet assertively capitalised typeface used by Jack Daniels on its poster campaigns. A font with thinner letters and more space between them might signal refinement; one in lower case only could suggest informal accessibility – or a brand that is naturally at home in the digital world. Fonts follow fashions of course: hip and cutting edge one year, outdated another. Brands can follow convention for their category, or deliberately, boldly break with it – and this adds another layer to the symbolic meaning they convey.



The NeedScope model helps decode the emotion in everything, even something as simple as font which can send a strong emotive message.

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Getting into shape

Visual information has a huge influence on our emotional responses – and apparently functional elements of product design can have just as much influence as consciously branded ones. Let's take the example of a man walking into a bar and choosing which bottle of spirits he would like to buy a measure from. Even stripped of branding, the bottles tap different emotions. One bottle is tall, angular and relatively slim with a label set at an oblique angle; the other, shorter, rounded in shape and with a large oval label centred on the bottle.

The first bottle is essentially masculine: tall, assertive and confident with its angular label subtly suggesting the strength of a military uniform. The second is essentially feminine: warm, softer, welcoming and suggesting of relaxation and comfort. Each promises a different drinking experience and our drinker's choice will depend on his mood and needs at the time. Drinks manufacturers know that bottle shape doesn't just help them stand out on the shelf; it sends emotive messages as well. And they need a good, carefully considered reason for breaking with this symbolic signposting.

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Bottle shape sends strong emotive cues to the consumer and builds product expectations.

Taking control of your emotions

Tuning the environment

Whenever a brand invites a consumer into its space, it unleashes a broad range of symbolic signals that can either reinforce an emotive positioning or undermine it. From boutique shops to bank branches or digital environments such as websites and Facebook pages, the key to success lies not necessarily in creating the best possible environment in abstract terms – but in creating the environment that aligns best with the brand's emotive positioning. This will not always involve the latest style of web interface or the most pleasingly minimalist design aesthetic, but it will always involve delivering the experience and environment that reflects what the consumer is seeking, consciously or unconsciously, from the brand.

Why emotional stakes matter

Consistency matters in relationships, and the more emotional the relationship, the greater the damage that inconsistency can do. This is true of people's relationships with one another, and it's equally true of our relationship to brands. When our experience consistently engages the same emotions, we know where we stand and we are able to respond. When those emotional signals become confusing and contradictory, our confidence is undermined and we start to question the nature of our involvement. Anybody can make a one-off emotional appeal; but it takes planning and commitment to build a long-term relationship that both parties can rely on. That's what brands should seek to do for their consumers, by defining an emotive promise, and delivering consistently against it. Because emotion governs our decision-making processes, mastering it enables you to become an irresistible choice that people don't even have to think about – and that's very difficult for your rivals to compete with.



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TNS advises clients on specific growth strategies around new market entry, innovation, brand switching and customer strategies, based on long established expertise and market leading solutions. With a presence in over 80 countries, TNS has more conversations with the world's consumers than anyone else and understands individual human behaviours and attitudes across every cultural, economic and political region of the world.

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About the author



Roz Calder is founding director of NeedScope International, which is now part of TNS' Brand and Communication practice area. She is responsible for the development, marketing and global

application of NeedScope with a particular focus on brand activation. Throughout her career in market research Roz has worked with major global companies to help them build and manage powerful brands. She has spent the past 20 years developing and growing the company she co-founded in 1994, turning NeedScope into a leading global research system for brand management.

To find out more contact Roz at roz@needscope.com

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