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Emotional Branding: A Comprehensive Literature Review.

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Abstract

Emotional branding (EB) has evolved from a practitioner-driven marketing (MKTG) philosophy mainly into a substantial stream of academic inquiry that examines how brands cultivate deep, affect-laden bonds with consumers that extend beyond functional attributes and rational appeals. This article offers a comprehensive review of the EB literature, synthesizing conceptual, theoretical, and empirical contributions published between 2005 and 2026. The review first traces the conceptual evolution of the construct, from Gobé's (2001) foundational manifesto to more recent operationalization grounded in brand attachment, brand love (BL), & brand resonance. Then, it examines the theoretical foundations that underpin this specific field, including brand relationship theory (BRT) (Fournier, 1998), attachment theory (AT), self-congruence theory (SCT), and consumer culture theory (CCT), before mapping the antecedents and outcomes of EB identified across qualitative, quantitative, and bibliometric studies. Drawing on evidence from diverse cultural and sectoral contexts, including Jordan, Indonesia, Italy, and the United States, the review demonstrates that EB consistently & positively predicts brand loyalty, brand attachment, customer satisfaction, & purchase share, while also carrying risks such as the emergence of doppelgänger brand imagery when emotional narratives are perceived as inauthentic. This review is concluded by identifying persistent gaps in the literature, particularly regarding cross-cultural generalizability, the measurement of EB as a multidimensional construct, and the paucity of longitudinal and experimental designs, and it proposes a research agenda to address these gaps.

Keywords: Emotional Branding, Brand Attachment, Brand Love, Brand Loyalty, Consumer.

Resume

Le Branding émotionnel a évolué d'une philosophie marketing dirigée par les spécialistes, à un courant de recherche académique qui examine comment les marques tissent des liens profonds avec certains consommateurs, allant au-delà des attributs fonctionnels et des appels rationnels. Cet article propose une revue complète de la littérature sur le Branding émotionnel, synthétisant les contributions conceptuelles, théoriques et empiriques publiées entre 2005 et 2026. La revue retrace d'abord l'évolution conceptuelle de cette notion, depuis le manifeste fondateur de Gobé (2001) jusqu'aux opérationnalisations plus récentes ancrées dans l'attachement à la marque et la résonance de la marque. Il examine ensuite les fondements théoriques qui sous-tendent le domaine, y compris la théorie de la relation de marque (Fournier, 1998), la théorie de l'attachement, la théorie de la congruence de soi et la théorie de la culture du consommateur, avant de cartographier les antécédents et les résultats du Branding émotionnel identifiés à travers des études qualitatives, quantitatives et bibliométriques. En s'appuyant sur des données provenant de contextes culturels et sectoriels divers, y compris la Jordanie, l'Indonésie, l'Italie et les États-Unis. Cette revue démontre que le Branding émotionnel prédit de manière cohérente et positive la fidélité à la marque, l'attachement à la marque et la satisfaction client tout en comportant des risques tels que l'émergence d'images de marque de type "doppelgänger" lorsque les récits émotionnels sont perçus comme inauthentiques. La revue conclut en identifiant des lacunes persistantes dans la littérature, notamment en celles liées à la généralisation interculturelle, la mesure du branding émotionnel en tant que notion multidimensionnelle, et la rareté des études expérimentales.

Mots clés : Branding Emotionnel, Attachement A La Marque, Fidélité A La Marque, Consommateur.

1. Introduction

The literature on brand management has increasingly emphasized and focused on the significance of developing strong, distinctive brands like a necessary strategy for competing in very highly competitive markets (Morrison and Crane, 2007; Akgün, Koňğlu, and İmamoğlu, 2013). For much of the 20th century, branding practice was dominated by a benefit-driven paradigm, in which managers strove to establish a clear, consistent, and distinctive functional position in the consumer's mind. Yet as markets became crowded and product attributes increasingly commoditized and easily imitated, scholars and practitioners alike began to argue that rational, benefit-based positioning could no longer sustain a durable competitive advantage (Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel, 2006). This recognition gave rise, in the late 90s, to EB: a consumer-centric, relational, and story-driven approach that seeks to forge deep and enduring affective bonds between customers and brands (Gobé, 2001; Roberts, 2004).

EB is focused on a simple but powerful premise: brands that connect with consumers' feelings, values, memories, & aspirations generate loyalty that is far more resilient than loyalty built on price or performance alone (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005; Wardana, 2025). It is, in Gobé's (2002, p. xxi) words, the recognition that "consumers today not only want to be romanced by the brands they choose to bring into their lives, but they also absolutely want to establish a multifaceted and also an holistic relationship with that brand." This premise has been examined from a wide range of perspectives within the branding literature, including emotions in brand attitude formation (Yoo and MacInnis, 2005), emotions in business-to-business branding (Lynch and de Chernatony, 2004), emotional content in advertising (Heath, Brandt, and Nairn, 2006), emotions in service brands (Jawahar and Maheshwari, 2009), the role of emotions in brand attachment (Orth et al., 2010), and emotions in customer loyalty (DeWitt, Nguyen, and Marshall, 2008).

Despite this main substantial and growing body of evidence, the EB literature remains highly fragmented. Contributions are scattered across multiple and various disciplines, journals, and methodological traditions, ranging from conceptual essays and practitioner manifestos to rigorous partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) studies &, more recently, bibliometric mappings of the field's own scholarly output (Lama, 2026). Arundathi, Babu, and Krishnan (2023) note, that EB, has attracted comparatively few systematic contributions on definitions, antecedents, and conceptual frameworks, which remain difficult

to reconcile across studies. This fragmentation motivates the present review, which draws on 9 recent primary sources, spanning conceptual essays, qualitative interview-based studies, content-analytic research, bibliometric analysis, and quantitative survey research, to synthesize what is currently known about EB.

This article is structured as follows. EB is conceptualized in the next section, which also traces its conceptual development and sets it apart mainly from related notions like brand equity, brand image, and brand personality. The theoretical foundations that researchers have used to explain how and why EB functions are reviewed in the 3rd section. The antecedents & consequences of EB found in the empirical literature are mapped in the fourth part, which also includes a summary of important empirical research. The fifth section highlights gaps in the existing literature and suggests future study directions, while the last section provides closing thoughts.

2 Conceptualizing Eb

Emotion, etymologically rooted in the Latin emovere, meaning "to move out" or "to move away," implies an inherent tendency to act (Bunga, Obon, and Meylano, 2020). Applied to branding, this etymology is instructive: EB is fundamentally about movement, about brands that move consumers from indifference to attachment. Gobé (2005, p. 31, cited in Meylano, 2020) offers what remains the most widely cited definition, describing EB as "a channel through which people unconsciously relate to a company and its products in an emotionally impressive way." For Gobé, the emotional dimension of a brand concerns how it arouses consumer feelings, how it comes alive for people, and how it forms deep and ever long-lasting relationships. Morrison and Crane (2007) similarly define EB as the engagement of consumers in a deep, long-term, intimate emotional connection with the main brand that goes beyond benefit-based satisfaction & establishes a trust-based relationship supporting a holistic emotional experience.

Other scholars have approached the construct from complementary angles. Thomson, MacInnis, and Park (2005) frame EB through the lens of brand attachment, characterized by deep feelings of connection, affection, and passion that possess discriminant validity from related but distinct constructs such as brand attitude, brand satisfaction, and brand involvement. Fournier (1998), in her foundational work on consumer–brand relationships, does not use the term EB directly but provides the conceptual scaffolding on which the construct rests, arguing

that consumers experience brands as relationship partners characterized by love and passion, self-connection, commitment, trust, & intimacy. Roberts (2004) offers a more evocative, practitioner-oriented definition, describing EB mainly as "a consumer-centric, relational, story-driven approach to forging deep & enduring effective bonds between customers and brands" (cited in Arundathi, Babu, and Krishnan, 2023).

Ferrinandewi (2008, p. 142, cited in Bunga, Obon, and Meylano, 2020) adds a managerial dimension, noting that the emotional touch of branding can generate meaningful differentiation because contemporary consumers are actually, increasingly demanding a high degree of personal, emotional engagement from the brands they patronize. Consumers' emotional relationships with brands, in this view, are cultivated cumulatively through the time consumers spend interacting with the brand across touchpoints. Taken together, these definitions converge on several common elements: EB (a) transcends functional or benefit-based positioning, (b) operates largely at a subconscious or non-deliberative level, (c) is cultivated mainly through narrative, sensory, and experiential means, and (d) aims at durable, relationship-like bonds rather than transactional satisfaction. Table 1, below synthesizes the principal definitions identified across the reviewed literature.

Table 1. Principal Definitions of EB in the Reviewed Literature

Source	Definitional Focus	Core Definition
Gobé (2001, 2005)	Partitionner / experiential	A channel through which consumers unconsciously and emotionally connect with a company and its products, forming deep, long-lasting relationships.
Fournier (1998)	Relationship theory	Brands function as relationship partners characterized by love/passion, self-connection, commitment, trust, and intimacy.
Thomson, MacInnis, and Park (2005)	Brand attachment	A strong, emotion-laden bond of connection, affection, and passion that a consumer feels toward a specific brand.

Source	Definitional Focus	Core Definition
Morrison and Crane (2007)	Trust-based relationship	Engagement of consumers in a deep, long-term, intimate emotional connection that surpasses benefit-based satisfaction.
Roberts (2004)	Story-driven strategy	A consumer-centric, relational, story-driven approach to forging deep and enduring bonds between customers and brands.
Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel (2006)	Cultural / narrative	A consumer-centric, relational brand paradigm privileging stories that inspire consumer passion and cultural resonance.
Wardana (2025)	Managerial / affective	The practice of forming emotional bonds between brands and consumers by appealing to emotions, aspirations, and inner values.

Source: Compilation of definitions, Author

Scholars have also worked to distinguish EB from adjacent, and sometimes conflated, constructs. Brand image refers to consumers' cognitive & affective associations with a brand, whereas EB denotes a strategic orientation and a relational process through which such associations are deliberately cultivated (Arundathi, Babu, and Krishnan, 2023). Brand equity, in Keller's (2003a) formulation, culminates in "brand resonance," the highest level of consumer–brand attachment in the customer-based brand equity pyramid; EB can therefore be understood as one of the principal strategic pathways through which resonance-level equity is built. Baviera-Puig, Almomani, Al-Adamat, Al-Quran, and Al-Fawwaz (2026) further emphasize that EB, unlike brand image or also brand personality, is inherently dynamic and dialogic: it is mainly co-created through recurring, emotionally resonant exchanges between the brand and the consumer rather than being a static perceptual asset.

A further conceptual refinement concerns mainly the boundary between EB & emotional advertising. Scardigno and Mitolo (2025) show, through a large-scale content analysis of Italian television commercials, that EB operates at the level of long-term brand strategy, whereas emotionally appealing advertising executions are one of several tactical vehicles through which

that strategy is enacted. Their study of Christmas-themed versus (vs) ordinary commercials demonstrates that EB can be seasonally modulated: brands intensify emotionally resonant, ritual-laden storytelling during culturally significant periods such as Christmas, while relying as well on more functional or informative appeals during routine advertising windows. This specific distinction is conceptually important because it clarifies that EB is not synonymous with any single execution but rather a coherent important and strategic logic that governs how, when, and through which emotional levers a brand chooses to engage consumers.

3 Theoretical Foundations

The EB literature draws on a plurality of theoretical traditions, reflecting its essential interdisciplinary roots in consumer psychology, sociology, & cultural studies. Four theoretical streams recur most consistently across the reviewed sources: BRT, AT, SCT, & CCT.

Brand relationship theory, most closely associated with Fournier (1998), provides the conceptual bedrock for EB research. Fournier's central contribution was to demonstrate empirically that consumers can and do form relationships with the main brands that are structurally analogous to interpersonal relationships, characterized by dimensions such as love and also passion, self-connection, interdependence, commitment, intimacy, & brand partner quality. Crucially, Fournier argued that these relational meanings are not simply generated through skillful MKTG but emerge organically when brands become integrated into consumers' life narratives and identity projects. Subsequent scholarship on brand communities, including studies of the Harley Owners Group and Apple Macintosh enthusiasts (McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig, 2002; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Muniz and Schau, 2005), has extended this relational logic to the collective level, showing how shared brand meanings can generate what Roberts (2004) terms "loyalty beyond reason."

AT, adapted from developmental psychology's account of the affectional bond between infant and caregiver, offers a second influential lens. Thomson, MacInnis, and Park (2005) were instrumental in importing this framework into branding research, conceptualising brand attachment as a bond of connection, affection, and passion that predicts behavioural loyalty, willingness to pay a price premium, and resistance to negative brand information. Grisaffe and Nguyen (2011) extend this framework by identifying the antecedents of emotional attachment to brands, namely sentimentality or emotional memory, socialisation within family and social

groups, traditional customer outcomes such as value and satisfaction, superior marketing-mix characteristics, and user-derived sensory and self- or socially oriented benefits. Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, and Nyffenegger (2011) contribute a self-congruence-based refinement of (AT), showing that both perceived actual and perceived ideal self-congruence positively influence emotional brand attachment, moderated by product involvement, self-esteem, and public self-consciousness. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) offer a related but distinct construct, BL, which they define as the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular brand; their findings, later corroborated by Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi (2012) and Albert and Merunka (2013), show that brands positioned in hedonic and symbolic product categories are especially likely to elicit BL.

Self-congruence theory, closely intertwined with AT, holds that consumers prefer and become attached to brands whose perceived personality or image is congruent with their own actual or ideal self-concept (Malär et al., 2011). This theoretical mechanism explains why EB narratives are most effective when they are tailored to reflect the identity, aspirations, and lived experience of a specific consumer segment rather than deployed as a generic, one-size-fits-all emotional appeal. Baviera-Puig et al. (2026) apply this logic explicitly to non-Western contexts, arguing that EB strategies imported wholesale from Western markets risk failing to achieve self-congruence, and therefore emotional resonance, among consumers whose cultural values, family structures, and daily experiences differ substantially from those assumed in the originating market.

Finally, CCT provides a critical counterweight to the largely functionalist logic of attachment and relationship theories. Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel (2006) draw on this tradition to argue that emotional-branding stories are cultural artefacts that circulate, and can be reappropriated, within the broader currents of popular culture. Their analysis of Starbucks demonstrates that the very tenets that make EB powerful, namely its reliance on evocative, aspirational storytelling, also render it vulnerable to what they term the doppelgänger brand image: a family of disparaging images and meanings about a brand that circulate through popular culture, parody, and culture-jamming, and that can undermine the perceived authenticity of the brand's emotional narrative. This theoretical contribution is significant because it complicates the largely celebratory tone of earlier EB scholarship, showing that the

strategy carries genuine reputational and relational risk when consumers perceive a gap between a brand's proclaimed values and its lived conduct.

4 Antecedents And Outcomes Of Eb

A recurring critique in the literature is that, notwithstanding the proliferation of conceptual work on EB, comparatively few essential studies have systematically mapped its antecedents and also consequences within an integrated framework (Akgün, Koçoğlu, and İmamoğlu, 2013; Arundathi, Babu, and Krishnan, 2023). The studies reviewed here nonetheless, converge on a reasonably coherent set of antecedent conditions. Jawahar and Maheshwari (2009) identify emotional attachment, that included affection, connection, & passion, as a principal antecedent of EB, showing that attachment positively influences the strength of the emotional bond a consumer forms with a brand. Grisaffe and Nguyen (2011) extend this list to include sentimentality and emotional memory, socialization, traditional customer outcomes such as satisfaction and perceived differentiation, superior marketing-mix characteristics, user-derived sensory & goal-related benefits. Orth, Limon, & Rose (2010) add a situational antecedent, showing that store-evoked pleasure and arousal, moderated by consumer personality, positively affect brand attachment.

At the level of communication strategy, Scardigno and Mitolo (2025) demonstrate mainly that narrative format constitutes a further antecedent: their content analysis of two hundred (200) Italian television commercials found that storytelling formats were significantly more prevalent in emotionally resonant, ritual-embedded advertising (such as Christmas commercials) than in ordinary advertising, which relied more heavily on product-in-action and testimonial formats. Baviera-Puig et al. (2026), working from 30 semi-structured interviews with Jordanian consumers & a focus group of twelve (12) MKTG managers, similarly identify managerial experience & cultural adaptation as antecedents: managers with longer tenure in a specific market, and campaigns explicitly tailored to local norms as well as daily experiences, were more successful in fostering emotional connection than campaigns transplanted directly from Western templates.

Table 2. Antecedents of EB Identified in the Reviewed Literature

Antecedent	Description	Representative Source(s)
Emotional attachment (affection, connection, passion)	Pre-existing affective bond that predisposes consumers to respond to main emotional appeals	Jawahar and Maheshwari (2009)
Sentimentality / emotional memory	Associations linking the brand to people, places, or life events	Grisaffe and Nguyen (2011)
Socialization	Influence of family and social groups on brand meaning	Grisaffe and Nguyen (2011)
Self-congruence (actual and ideal)	Alignment between brand image & consumer self-concept	Malär et al. (2011)
Store-evoked pleasure and arousal	Situational affective states generated at the point of purchase	Orth, Limon, and Rose (2010)
Narrative / storytelling format	Use of story-driven rather than informational advertising formats	Scardigno and Mitolo (2025)
Cultural adaptation and managerial tenure	Local market knowledge shaping campaign design and resonance	Baviera-Puig et al. (2026)
Hedonic and symbolic product category	Product categories more conducive to BL and attachment	Carroll and Ahuvia (2006)

Source: Compilation of theories, Author

On the consequences side, literature is somewhat more developed, in part because outcomes such as loyalty & purchase behavior are even more readily operationalized & measured than upstream antecedents. DeWitt, Nguyen, and Marshall (2008) show that trust and emotion mediate the relationship between perceived justice and customer loyalty, suggesting that EB can act as a facilitator of loyalty even in service-recovery contexts. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) find that BL is associated with both higher brand loyalty and increased positive word-of-mouth, a finding corroborated in Saeedi's (2025) essay-based synthesis of Apple, Coca-Cola, Nike, and Patagonia, which reports that emotionally engaged customers exhibit substantially higher retention & advocacy than customers whose relationship with the brand is purely functional. Thomson, MacInnis, and Park (2005) further show that brand attachment predicts repurchase

intention above and beyond brand attitude, brand satisfaction, and brand involvement, underscoring the incremental predictive value of the main emotional constructs.

The most granular evidence on the behavioral payoff of EB comes from Rossiter and Bellman's large-scale consumer survey, which measured five (5) discrete attachment-like emotions, namely Trust, Bonding, Resonance, Companionship, and Love, and related them to each brand's personal share-of-requirements (SOR%) across four product categories: gasoline, beer, laundry detergent, and instant coffee. Their findings, summarized in (Table 3), reveal a counter-intuitive but theoretically important pattern: Trust, while the most commonly attained emotion, was the weakest predictor of purchase share, whereas the comparatively rare emotions of Bonding and Love delivered disproportionately large increases in share-of-requirements. For laundry detergent, for example, brands eliciting Bonding achieved an SOR of 60%, nearly double the category average of 31%, while brands eliciting Love achieved 54%. Critically, a main composite Brand Emotional Attachment variable outperformed the traditional predictor of Brand Attitude overall (rp = .67 vs rp = .55), and was a significantly better predictor specifically for the 2 more utilitarian product categories, gasoline and laundry detergent, challenging the assumption that EB is primarily relevant to hedonic or symbolic products.

Table 3. Incidence of Attachment-Like Emotions and Their Relationship to Share-of-Requirements (Rossiter and Bellman)

Product Category	**Average SOR%**	**Emotion Most Associated with Above-Average SOR**	**SOR% for that Emotion**
Gasoline (men)	30%	Bonding / Companionship	~66%
Beer (men)	21%	Love	38%
Laundry detergent (women)	31%	Bonding	60%
Instant coffee (women)	37%	Bonding / Love	>50%

Source: Rossiter et al. (2012)

At the level of individual customer relationships, essentially, Wardana's (2025) PLS-SEM study of 250 Indonesian consumers offers the most methodologically rigorous test of the EB – satisfaction–loyalty chain identified in this review. As previously shown in Table 4, EB exerted

a strong, statistically significant positive effect on customer satisfaction (β = 0.62, t = 13.74, p < .001) & a smaller but still significant direct effect on customer loyalty (β = 0.25, t = 3.89, p < .001). Customer satisfaction, in turn, strongly predicted loyalty (β = 0.58, t = 12.45, p < .001), and the indirect effect of EB on loyalty through satisfaction was substantial (β = 0.36, t = 7.21, p < .001), indicating partial mediation consistent with the criteria proposed by Zhao, Lynch, and Chen (2010). The model explained 39 % of the variance in customer satisfaction and 56 % of the variance in customer loyalty, values that Chin (1998) characterizes as moderate to substantial for behavioral research. These main findings converge with Baviera-Puig et al.'s (2026) qualitative evidence from Jordan and Scardigno and Mitolo's (2025) content-analytic evidence from mainly Italy to suggest that the positive association between EB and loyalty-related outcomes generalizes across markedly different cultural, methodological, and product contexts.

Table 4. Summary of Key Empirical Studies on EB

Study	Context / Sample	Method	Key Finding
Rossiter and Bellman (2012)	Large-scale consumer survey; four product categories (gasoline, beer, detergent, coffee)	Quantitative survey; polychoric correlation	Emotional attachment (Bonding, Love) predicts share-of-requirements better than Brand Attitude overall, and especially for utilitarian products.
Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel (2006)	Starbucks; U.S. popular culture texts	Qualitative / cultural analysis	Emotional-branding narratives can generate a doppelgänger brand image that undermines perceived authenticity.
Baviera-Puig et al. (2026)	30 Jordanian consumers; 12 MKTG managers	Qualitative; semi-structured interviews and focus group	Culturally adapted EB strengthens loyalty and connection in non-Western e- MKTG contexts.
Scardigno and Mitolo (2025)	200 Italian television commercials (Christmas vs. ordinary)	Content analysis (chi-square tests)	Christmas advertising relies more on storytelling, symbolic goods, and conservation values than ordinary advertising.

Study	Context / Sample	Method	Key Finding
Wardana (2025)	250 Indonesian consumers	Quantitative; PLS-SEM	EB significantly predicts satisfaction and loyalty; satisfaction partially mediates the relationship.
Lama (2026)	211 Scopus-indexed articles, 2000–2025	Bibliometric analysis (Biblioshiny, VOS viewer)	Publications on EB grew at an annual rate of 10.07%, with 22 articles published in 2025 alone, confirming a rapidly expanding field.
Saeedi (2025)	Case studies of Apple, Coca-Cola, Nike, and Patagonia	Qualitative / applied essay	Different emotional levers (exclusivity, personalisation, shared values, community) are effective for different industry categories.

Source: Compilation of empirical studies, Author

A comparative investigation of the empirical research shows that EB has been investigated through different research objectives & methodological approaches. Although these studies share an interest in defining the emotional relationships between consumers and brands, they approach the phenomenon from different angles.

Regarding research objectives, Rossiter and Bellman (2012) focus mainly on the relationship between specific emotional bonds and consumers' purchasing behavior across 4 product categories. Wardana (2025), in the other hand, examines the link between EB, customer satisfaction & loyalty, highlighting the mediating role of satisfaction. While these studies primarily investigate consumer responses and behavioral outcomes, Baviera-Puig et al. (2026) uses a more contextual perspective by exploring how cultural adaptation and managerial experience influence emotional links and connections in the Jordanian market. Similarly, Scardigno and Mitolo (2025) shift attention towards brand communication by examining the role of storytelling and emotional appeals in Italian television advertising. Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel (2006), meanwhile, provide a critical perspective by investigating how

EB narratives may generate a real negative consumer perceptions when their most important messages are perceived as inauthentic.

The methodological diversity of these studies deserves attention as well. Quantitative approaches, mainly consumer surveys and partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM), provide evidence of relationships between emotional attachment, satisfaction, loyalty, and purchasing behavior. Qualitative interviews and focus groups offer a deeper understanding of consumers' experiences and the importance of cultural adaptation, while content analysis makes it more possible to examine how emotional narratives are communicated through advertising. However, these methodological differences also limit direct comparisons. For example, the consumer-level relationships observed by Wardana (2025) cannot be explained in exactly the same way as the communication patterns observed by Scardigno and Mitolo (2025), as the studies examine various levels of analysis.

Several methodological limitations should also be taken into consideration on this studies. The quantitative evidence presented by Wardana (2025) relies on a cross-sectional survey of a total of 250 Indonesian consumers, which provides useful statistical evidence but does not establish how emotional relationships develop over time. The qualitative research conducted by Baviera-Puig et al. (2026), based on 30 consumer interviews and a focus group involving 12 marketing managers mainly, provides contextual insights, although its findings cannot automatically be generalized to other cultural settings. Similarly, Scardigno and Mitolo's (2025) analysis of 200 Italian television commercials offers valuable evidence related to emotional communication during different advertising periods, but it does not directly measure the resulting emotional responses among consumers. These differences requires further research combining multiple and diverse methods, larger samples, and longitudinal or experimental designs.

The bibliometric evidence assembled by Lama (2026) provides a complementary, field-level perspective on these firm & consumer-level findings. Analyzing 211 Scopus-indexed articles published mainly between 2000 and 2025 across the business, management, and accounting subject areas, the study documents an annual growth rate in publications of 10.07%, an average of 46.47 citations per document, and a marked acceleration in output from 2017 onward, culminating in 22 articles published in the year 2025. This trajectory corroborates the qualitative impression, evident throughout the sources reviewed here, that EB has moved from a marginal, practitioner-coined notion in the early 2000s to an established & increasingly rigorous stream

of academic MKTG research, particularly in relation to its downstream consequences for brand loyalty & emotional value.

The applied literature offers a final, illustrative layer of evidence regarding mainly how these antecedents & outcomes manifest in specific brand contexts. Saeedi's (2025) synthesis of Apple, Coca-Cola, Nike, & Patagonia demonstrates that the specific emotional lever driving loyalty varies systematically by industry and brand positioning: Apple cultivates BL through design-driven aspiration & identity signaling, reporting that more than 90% of its customers own multiple Apple devices; Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" campaign leveraged personalization to generate a reported two percent increase in global sales during its 1st year; Nike is associated with achievement & empowerment-oriented storytelling; and Patagonia builds loyalty through values congruence & social responsibility mainly rather than personalization or even exclusivity. Table 5 below, summarizes these illustrative cases alongside the emotional mechanism each brand is reported to privilege.

Table 5. Illustrative EB Mechanisms in Selected Global Brands (Saeedi, 2025)

Brand	**Dominant Emotional Lever**	**Reported Outcome**
Apple	Aspiration, identity signalling, BL	Over 90% of customers own multiple Apple devices; strong price-premium tolerance
Coca-Cola	Personalization, nostalgia, togetherness	Reported 2% global sales increase during mainly the first year of the "Share a Coke" campaign
Nike	Achievement, empowerment, aspiration	Strong brand advocacy and community-driven engagement
Patagonia	Shared values, social and environmental responsibility	Loyalty grounded in belief alignment rather than price or exclusivity

Source: Saeedi, 2025

5 Research Gaps, Limitations And Future Research Directions

Several gaps emerge from this review. First, the field continues to suffer from definitional and measurement inconsistency. As Arundathi, Babu, and Krishnan (2023) observe, EB is variously operationalized as an antecedent (a strategic input), a mediating psychological state (attachment or love), and an outcome (loyalty or resonance) across different studies, which complicates cross-study comparison and meta-analytic synthesis. Future research would benefit from a rigorously validated multidimensional measurement scale for EB as a distinct strategic construct, analogous to the well-established scales already available for brand attachment (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005) and BL (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006).

Second, the geographic and cultural scope of this empirical literature remains heavily skewed toward Western markets & more recently, a small number of emerging-market studies conducted in relative isolation from one another. Baviera-Puig et al. (2026) explicitly identify this as a theoretical gap, noting that most existing frameworks reflect Western socio-cultural assumptions that may not transfer cleanly to markets where collectivist values, religiosity, or distinct family structures mainly shape consumer–brand relationships differently. Comparative, multi-country studies that directly test the boundary conditions of EB theory across cultural clusters represent a clear priority for future research, & would be relevant to marketers operating mainly in North African and Middle Eastern markets, where such evidence remains scarce.

Third, the methodological base of the field remains heavily cross-sectional. Wardana's (2025) PLS-SEM study, while rigorous, captures EB, satisfaction, and loyalty at a single point in time, precluding causal inference regarding the direction and durability of the relationships modelled. Longitudinal and experimental designs are needed to establish whether EB causally strengthens loyalty over a period of time, and how quickly emotionally cultivated attachment decays in the absence of continued brand investment. Relatedly, Rossiter & Bellman note that further research is needed to verify the specific role that advertising, as opposed to product experience or word-of-mouth, plays in creating attachment-like emotions in the first instance.

Fourth, Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel's (2006) work on the doppelgänger brand image opens a line of inquiry that remains comparatively underdeveloped: the dark side, or unintended consequences, of EB. Few of the studies reviewed here systematically examine the conditions

under which emotionally driven brand narratives backfire, generate consumer cynicism, or become vulnerable to reputational contagion through social media and culture-jamming. Given the accelerating speed and visibility of consumer-generated brand critique in digital environments, future research should examine how EB strategies can be designed, or repaired, to withstand authenticity challenges.

Finally, the bibliometric evidence assembled by Lama (2026) itself points to a main structural gap: despite the rapid growth in publication volume, single-authored contributions to the field are effectively absent, and international co-authorship remains below one-quarter of published output, suggesting that theoretical perspectives may still be classified within relatively insular national or regional research communities. Greater international collaboration, & explicit dialogue between the qualitative, cultural-studies-oriented stream of EB research and the quantitative, structural-equation-modelling stream, would likely accelerate theoretical consolidation in this main field.

Conclusion

This review has traced mainly the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical development of EB from its origins as a practitioner-coined corrective to benefit-driven MKTG (Gobé, 2001) to its current status as an increasingly rigorous and rapidly growing field of academic inquiry (Lama, 2026). The construct consistently indicates relational approach across definitional traditions, whereby brands aim to surpass functional positioning and develop solid, lasting, and strongly emotional relationships with customers. The current reviewed theoretical underpinnings, which include CCT, BRT, AT, and SCT, all support the claim that EB functions concurrently at the level of individual psychology and broader cultural meaning-making, which explains both its significant strategic power and its vulnerability to authenticity-related risk.

The empirical evidence synthesized in this paper, drawn from qualitative interviews in Jordan, large-scale consumer surveys in the US, content analysis of Italian television advertising, structural equation modelling in Indonesia, and a comprehensive bibliometric mapping of the global literature, consistently supports the proposition that EB positively influences BL, brand attachment, customer satisfaction, and purchase share, while also confirming that the specific emotional levers that work best vary by product category, culture, as well as brand positioning. At the same time, the review highlights that EB is not without risk: narratives perceived as inauthentic can generate a doppelgänger brand image that undermines the very relationship the strategy seeks to build. This review suggests a research agenda that focuses on construct clarity, cross-cultural validation, longitudinal & experimental designs, and a closer examination of the circumstances in which EB fails to succeed. For practitioners, it emphasizes that EB is effective when it is culturally anchored, consistently communicated across various channels, & supported by a genuine, verifiable alignment between the brand's professed values and its actual behavior.

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