## Danuta Koschembahr-Łyskowska

Amrest Coffee sp. z o.o.

# Love mark – how emotions and feelings influence the perception of the brand

#### Abstract

In the twenty-first century, competition on the sales market is as high as never before. Advertising messages reach us through almost every communication channel – newspapers, TV, or of course the largest one – the Internet. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that the largest brands are looking for new, unprecedented ways to reach their customers' minds. Due to the fact that competition is increasing and thus the requirements of consumers are becoming higher, corporation owners often use unusual solutions for building not only advertising messages, but also for creating the vision of their brands.

One of such solutions, referred to in the following article, is the concept of the existence of so-called "Love Mark", or brands, whose marketing activities are based on building an emotional connection with their recipients. It is extremely important that the communication of the largest corporations very often responds not to the needs of consumers but to their deeply hidden desires. "The needs are relatively easy to satisfy. (…) Desires, on the other hand, are bottomless. The more awakened, the bigger they are and the more we are able to pay for their satisfaction. " The following article highlights a series of emotions that have a direct impact on the formation of deep feelings. On the other hand, feelings are responsible for adhering to specific brands and building specific relations between the company and its recipient. As it comes from researches, very often consumers under the influence of these feelings personify brands, giving them human character traits. It is a matter of fact that these emotional ties become even more real.

Using as an example brands such as Starbucks or Cola Cola, we can notice the differences that separate a traditional company from "Love Mark" and we are able to see how brands create their vision in the recipients' minds. All of the marketing activities depend on customers. The best marketers on the market know very well that "in 87% of purchases, emotions influence the cognitive and decision-making processes undertaken by consumers" and they use it in a skilful manner.

Keywords: marketing, company, brand, communication, personification.

## Love Mark, czyli rola emocji i uczuć w sposobie postrzegania marki

#### Streszczenie

W dobie XXI wieku, konkurencja na rynku sprzedażowym jest wysoka, jak nigdy dotąd. Przekazy reklamowe trafiają do nas przez każdy kanał komunikacji – prasę, TV czy oczywiście największy – Internet. Nie powinien więc dziwić fakt, że największe marki poszukują kolejnych, niespotykanych dotąd sposobów, aby trafić do świadomości swoich odbiorców. W związku z tym, że konkurencja jest coraz większa, a tym samym wymagania konsumentów stają się coraz

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wyższe, właściciele korporacji często stosują nietypowe rozwiązania na budowanie nie tylko przekazów reklamowych, lecz także w kreowaniu wizerunku swoich brandów.

Jednym z takich rozwiązań jest koncepcja istnienia tak zwanych "Love Mark", czyli marek, które swoje działania marketingowe opierają na budowaniu emocjonalnej więzi ze swoimi odbiorcami. Niezwykle istotnym jest fakt, że komunikacja największych koncernów bardzo często odpowiada nie na potrzeby konsumentów, a na ich głęboko ukryte pragnienia. "Potrzeby są stosunkowo łatwe do zaspokojenia. [...] Pragnienia natomiast są jak studnia bez dna. Im bardziej rozbudzone, tym większe są i tym więcej jesteśmy w stanie za ich zaspokojenie zapłacić". <sup>1</sup>

W tekście wyodrębniono emocje, które mają bezpośredni wpływ na powstawanie głębokich uczuć. Uczucia natomiast odpowiadają za przywiązanie się do konkretnych marek i budowanie specyficznych więzi pomiędzy firmą a jej odbiorcą. Jak wynika z badań, bardzo często konsumenci pod wypływem uczuć personifikują marki, nadając im ludzkie cechy charakteru. To natomiast sprawa, że wspomniane wiezi emocjonalne stają się jeszcze bardziej rzeczywiste.

Na przykładzie marek takich jak Starbucks czy Cola Cola możemy zauważyć różnice, jakie dzielą tradycyjną firmę od "Love Mark" oraz w jaki sposób duże marki kreują swój wizerunek w świadomości odbiorców. Wszelkie ich działania, już od podstaw zależą od uczuć. Najlepsi marketerzy na rynku bardzo dobrze wiedzą że "w 87% zakupów to emocje wpływają na procesy poznawcze i decyzyjne podejmowane przez konsumentów" i w umiejętny sposób to wykorzystują.

Słowa kluczowe: marketing, firma, marka, komunikacja, personifikacja.

## Introduction

Emotions are an extremely important element of planning the brand's marketing strategy. Increasingly, consumers make specific purchasing decisions based on their subjective feelings. Customers who are emotionally connected with the brand are willing to recommend certain products or services to their relatives. Speaking of the marketing of the largest brands, it is more and more often named as the marketing of emotions. The strongest brands rely external communication on feelings – "there is enormous power in emotions" and all decision-making processes depend on them.

# Emotion as a component of human feelings

Both – feelings and emotions play an important part in the marketing of the largest brands. Despite the fact that both of these elements seem to be synonymous, in fact, they are two different types of sense. Emotions are called the psychical experiences

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 1}$ https://premium-consulting.pl/blog/jak-zaciagnac-pracy-emocje-w-marketingu/ (access date: 25th June 2018).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> M. Łodyga, *Jak zaciągnąć emocje do pracy w marketingu?*, https://www.heuristic.pl/blog/e-marketing/Emocje-a-podejmowanie-decyzji-zakupowych-e-konsumenta;171.html (access date: 25th June 2018).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> http://www.festiwal.wroc.pl/2014/?c=article&id=996 (access date: 10th June 2014).

that we may feel as a result of various stimuli $^4$ . Maria Jankowska captures emotions as experiences resulting from interaction with the external environment: "they determine what is beneficial to the individual, and what is threatening, what is indifferent and what is extremely important."

At the end of the 20th century, American psychologist Robert Plutchik, developed the so-called "Circle of Emotions", which includes eight inborn basic emotions: admiration, , horror, astonishment, suffering, disgust, rage, vigilance. These emotions are the base of all other experiences, also called secondary ones. According to the Plutchik's theory, basic emotions can merge into pairs — and moreover — experienced simultaneously, they can turn into another ones<sup>6</sup>. The possibilities of this kind of experiences that arise are unlimited, depending only on human mentality.

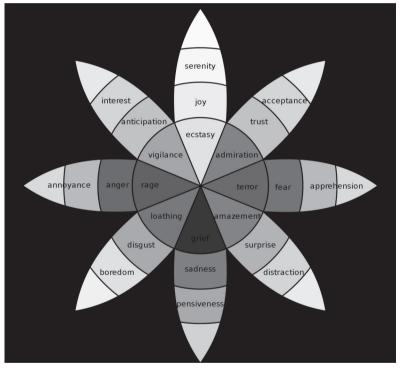


Figure 1. Emotion wheel of Robert Plutchik Source: http://www.historiasztuki.com.pl/ilustracje/film/Plutchik-wheel.jpg (access date: 10th June 2014).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> A. Kossak, *Emocje a uczucia*, http://www.annakossak.pl/index.php?option=com\_content&view=article&id=47:emocje-a-uczucia&catid=13:temat-na-czasie&Itemid=119 (access date: 10th June 2014).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> M. Jankowska, *Emocje, uczucia, pragnienia – jak je rozpoznawać i nad nimi panować*, http://rodzina.ipjp2.pl/index.php?option=com\_content&view=article&id=774:emocje-uczucia-pragnienia-jak-je-rozpoznawac-i-nad-nimi-panowac&catid=176&Itemid=329 (access date: 10th June 2014).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> R. Plutchik, Emotion: A Psychoevolutionary Synthesis, Harper and Row, New York 1980, p. 63.

Opposite to emotions, feelings can affect both: the physiology and the human psyche. Feelings are permanent – they are named as a band of various, **often repetitive** emotions. And just like emotions, feelings are also used in marketing activities of the largest brands. Companies most often use elements such as: fascination, surprise, excitement, joy, belonging, pride, sexual desire, gratitude, sentimentality and love<sup>7</sup> in their advertising strategy building process.

The theory that love plays a strong part in brand building process finds its confirmation in the existence of Love Marks – brands based on the feelings of their consumers. Undoubtedly, this is one of the most unique forms of business building. That it why marketers have assigned it a specific name relatively recently, despite the fact that this type of commerce has been used for decades.

Due to the fact that the need to have a specific product is concentrated in customers' mind and more and more often it is also connected with the emotional sphere, the owners of large corporations base all their actions on the material desires of consumers, but also on the spiritual ones. If a brand responds to higher needs of consumers and these are undoubtedly human emotions), it becomes a companion, sometimes even a customer's friend. In this way, a specific emotional bond is created between the customer and the company and this bond may become a very strong business tool. When customers often feel the same emotions associated with a product, they may quickly transform them into specific feelings. And then, these feelings are strong enough to dominate the perception of specific brands. Customers identify themselfs with specific companies, products or a brand image. However, above all, customers want to experience the feelings that they associate with their favourite brands.

On this base, Love Marks were created – brands that are said to have been "born out of love" of their consumers. Love Marks are an irrefutable proof that the role of emotions in a strong brand building process is fundamental and what is even more important – the brand's success is inextricably related to the feelings of its customers.

# Love Mark – how to make a brand being loved?

Speaking about love to iconic companies, first of all, we should specify what this feeling actually is. Aleksander Dobosz, says: "Love is a deep feeling of attachment to another person, more emotional than intellectual". This relation of the brand and the consumer, also called the "love pact", is devoid of rational thinking. It is based on a deep emotional bond and unlimited trust.

Kevin Roberts, the author of the book "Love Marks, the future beyond Brands", as the first writer, named these unique companies that use human feelings in building

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> http://www.heuristic.pl/blog/e-marketing/171.html (access date: 10th June 2014).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> A. Dobosz, *Pokochać markę z lojalności*, "Marketing w praktyce" 2007, nr 7, http://www.marketing.org.pl/index.php/go=2/act=2/aid=m4683c768c625c/ (access date: 10th June 2014).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem.* 

their own strong position on the market. Love Marks – that's how the originator called them – are brands that are admired and loved by people.

When we think about role models, we often mention personalities from the world of science, art or sport. However, for many consumers, role models can also be found in brands. Customers respect companies that meet all the their expectations — especially those that go beyond the framework of customer service. As fast as a brand becomes an authority for their clients, as quickly it becomes trustworthy. And this becomes the basis for the creation of the strongest of feelings — love. Kevin Roberts, who was analysing the process of creating Love Mark, has also created the so-called "A curve of love and respect.<sup>10</sup>" It clearly shows the relationship between love and respect that determines the transformation of the classic brand in Love Mark.

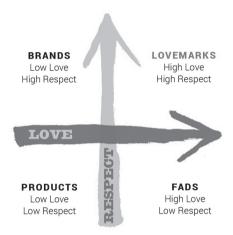


Figure 2. "Curve of love and respect" of Kevin Roberts Source: http://www.lovemarks.com/files/love-respect.jpg (access date: 10th May 2014).

On the above curve, we can distinguish elements which:

- are not loved or respected
- are respected but not loved
- are loved very much, but not respected (which would guarantee thestrong position on the market); these brands are also called "temporary fashion", they are strongly associated with current but quickly passing trends
- are "Love Marks", whose customers give both deep love and high respect<sup>11</sup>.

The management of the largest brands strive to transform their business into the Love Mark, that is why they are extremely committed to their companies. Leaders who are involved in their work are particularly appreciated by their consumers. Iconic brands urgently protect their reputation. Creating a stable, positive image is a difficult and extremely time-consuming process. On the other hand, the slightest oversight can

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 10}$  K. Roberts, Love Marks, the future beyond Brands, Powerhous books, New York 2004, p. 134.  $^{\rm 11}$  Ibidem.

result in the loss of reputation in the eyes of recipients. Consumers value honesty, that's why iconic companies are open for feedback. Customers identify with specific brands, which is why it is so important for brands to be trustworthy for their consumers.

Love Marks are constantly developing, constantly looking for innovative solutions. The highest quality is closely related to the continuous self-improvement of their products and services. Thinking about their customers, iconic companies create ever newer, better values. Love Marks should provide different types of models – both in terms of services, products, and in relation to the surrounding environment<sup>12</sup>.

Brands owe their high position on the market to the aforementioned reputation, trust of consumers and satisfying the individual needs of recipients. However, apart from the basic elements of building a brand, we can distinguish additional elements that will transform the classic brand into the Love Mark. Kevin Roberts has described three basic attributes that, combined with each other, will make the brand be perceived in a completely different way than usual.

Table 1. Attributes of the brand according to Kevin Roberts' theory

Mystery	moving in the realm of dreams, fulfilling the hidden consumers' needs and desires	
Sensuality	marketing activities based on five human senses	
Intimacy	arousing somebody's passion and involvement	

Source: A. Dobosz, *Pokochać markę z lojalności*, *Marketing w praktyce* nr 7, 2007, http://www.marketing.org.pl/index.php/go=2/act=2/aid=m4683c768c625c/ (access date: 10th June 2014).

The basic change that takes place when the brand becomes loved by the customers is the deepening of the bond between the brand and consumers. Up to now - based solely on the exchange of information - this bond has ransformed into a relationship based on feelings. Love has become the main factor affecting all processes occurring in the relationship between Love Mark and the consumer.

As time passes, the recognizability of the name, or the logo of a brand is getting bigger. Products and services are becoming popular and even desired by the masses of customers. In the case of Love Marks, it is not about a time – bound popularity, it is about the unconditional love that consumers feel for their favourite products.

Brands, although targeted at specific groups of users, can be described as generally available. The difference that arises in the case of brands endowed with a deep feeling is the personal character of the brand, the individuality that the consumer feels. This is the result of attributes such as the mystery and intimacy that Kevin Roberts mentioned in his analysis<sup>13</sup>.

The guarantee of a high quality, which is the main part of the brand's existence, is transformed into feelings accompanying the impact on the senses. This is related to another attribute distinguished by the author, which is sensuality. With the deepening of the aforementioned "love pact", customers unwittingly cease to pay so much attention

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

to check the quality of a product, because they know from the previous experience that it must be reliable. The senses, which are stimulated at every contact with a given service or product, start to play a more important role. Moreover, these feelings motivate consumers to take advantage of the brand's goods again.

Iconic companies are symbols of the highest quality — customers are sure that a given company will fully meet their needs. When a relationship with consumers turns into a relationship based on love, the brand becomes the most desired in its industry. The professionalism and passion of Love Marks are particularly appreciated by their clients. That is why the largest brands, which are deeply loved, always occupy the first place in the customer's imagination, thus eliminating the competition.

BRAND	LOVEMARK
Information	Relationship
Recognized by Consumers	Loved by people
Generic	Personal
Presents a Narrative	Creates a Love story
The promise of quality	The touch of sensuality
Symbolic	Iconic
Defined	Infused
Statement	Story
Defined Attributes	Wrapped in Mystery
Values	Spirit
Professional	Passionately Creative
Advertising Agency	Ideas company

Figure 3. Differences between Brand and Love Mark Source: K. Roberts, *Love Marks, the future beyond Brands*, Powerhous books, New York 2004, p. 152.

Love Marks are unusual creatures in today's market. Despite the comprehensive development of marketing, the vision of customers who love their favorite brands seems to be unrealistic. Feelings, so far only attributed to people, become available also for goods and services. Undoubtedly, it shows the huge success of the biggest brands. However, they owe it to a well-thought-out image and a broadly understood consequence in their actions.

Brands carefully determine their customers profile to be able to named and, above all, to fully meet their needs. The creators of Love Marks are fully aware of the potential of consumers. They perfectly understand that the success of the brand does not depend on the activities of advertising agencies. Customers are the most important – they create and shape their brands. Therefore, one of the basic factors of building Love Marks is a consistent communication, which will create a coherent story and brand image environment. The processes of creating the Love Mark and all elements involved in its

construction are connected with the creation of a love story, i.e. establishing a "love pact" between the brand and the consumer.

Emotions that are associated with brands are often so strong that they induce customers to give human characteristics to their favourite companies. Consumers do not see only products or services in brands. Moreover, they also do not see individual emotions. Cult brands become creations that can be personified. Customers are able to determine Love Mark personality and even — assign a lifestyle into them.

# Personification of the brand – how feelings affect the perception of customers

Strong brands are not created by people who manage them but by customers. They create and disseminate the image of the brand, support its development. It is also known that clients are often strongly associated with corporations, they respect and trust them.

The campaign of Coca-Cola Company "together at the table", carried out in 2014, confirms the transformation of brand-related emotions into its personification. By using marketing activities, the brand managers created their product as a companion to everyday life and a family member. The advertisements refer to the atmosphere accompanying family meetings at the table and encourages people to eat together. The message of the campaign is based on highlighting the joy of being together. Customers associated with the Coca-Cola Company in accordance with the assumption of the brand's marketing activities, treat the brand's products as the companions of everyday life, as an inseparable element of celebrating common moments with the loved ones.

Brands are becoming closer to their consumers, playing the role of their best friends or family members. They share with them all positive emotions, such as joy or excitement. Consumers attribute a particular value system, personality, and sometimes even a soul to their favorite brands<sup>15</sup>. It became common that feelings were coded under the names of certain brands, and now even personal profiles may be coded under the brands' images<sup>16</sup>. The way in which a given brand is personified, what feelings are attributed to it, is closely related to the emotions that a given brand evokes. Frequent experience of identical impressions leads to the formation of feelings. Feelings that are so strong that the relationship between the brand and the customer is transformed into a relationship based on trust, respect, loyalty and often love.

<sup>14</sup> http://www.cocacola.com.pl/615.html (access date: 11th February 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

 $<sup>^{16}\,</sup>$  K. Piasny,  $Wizerunek\ marek\ herbat.$   $Profile\ osobowe\ marek\ herbat,$  http://cd-magazine.uni. wroc.pl/artykul/profile\_osobowe\_marek\_herbat/ (access date: 10th June 2014).

## Impact of feelings on consumer decisions

Seemingly, it might seem that man, making all sorts of life decisions, is guided by rational thinking, based on analytical thinking. As research proves, this is not the rule. In fact, emotions determine us to make specific decisions. Neurologist Donald Calne differentiates reason and emotions, claiming that "emotions lead to action, whereas reason only reaches conclusions"<sup>17</sup>. Therefore, emotions are a motivating factor. Despite the fact that reason and our feelings complement each other, in the situation of decision-making conflict, in most cases, emotions prevail. Therefore it may be concluded that emotions constitute both: the beginning and the end of the decision-making process<sup>18</sup>. According to Maurice Levy, director of the Paris branch of Publicis Group: "the vast majority of the population consumes and buys according to the mind and heart or, if we prefer, emotions. They are looking for rational reasons: what does the product do? Why is this a better choice? And make an emotional decision: I like it, I prefer it, I feel good about it.19" According to research, up to 87% of cases of consumer decisions play a major role with emotions<sup>20</sup>. Subjective feelings have the greatest impact on customers, and brand managers know how to use this fact. In order to get customers to their products, they offer services that benefit from positive impressions.

The impact of emotions on consumer decisions is evidenced by one of the most known experiments in the world of marketing, analyzing known brands and their popular substitutes. Two of the largest competitors on the market – Pepsi and Coca-Cola. Although the taste of both beverages is almost identical, and the price is similar, then Cola is said to be tastier, more often talked about, and thus, it is more often chosen by consumers. This is mainly due to the efficient marketing campaign of the brand and the much higher position of Coca-Cola in the minds of the customers<sup>21</sup>.

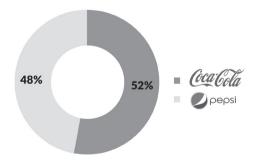


Figure 4. Percentage juxtaposition of the publications about Pepsi and Coca Cola Source: http://www.informacjepr.pl/system/files/imagecache/artykul\_page/coca-cola\_vs.\_pepsi\_roz-klad\_procentowy.jpg (access date: 10th June 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> K. Kocjan, *Wpływ emocji na decyzje konsumenckie*, http://www.egospodarka.pl/57699,Wplyw-emocji-na-decyzje-konsumenckie,2,20,2.html (access date: 10th June 2014).

It is interesting that after the experiment, participants who had their drinks in unlabeled cups, thought Pepsi was tastier. This study became the basis for the 2014 creation of an advertising campaign of the Pepsi brand "The challenge of taste". Through its advertisements, the brand has proved that it is their drink that suits the clients' tastes and the popularity of the Coca — Cola is only a tradition — connected result. Pepsi, on the other hand, has been created as a brand addressed to young, energetic customers focused on innovation and new experiences.

As it is demonstrated by the experiment in which two competing brands were compared: Coca-Cola and Pepsi, the emotions accompanying the products have a direct impact on the purchasing decisions made by consumers. The Cola-Cola Company brand managers refer to many years of tradition, and the products of this brand are associated with love, friendship and family atmosphere. Pepsi, in its assumptions, refers to the emotions associated with fun and carefree, which is why this brand is so well received, especially by young consumers.

Another brand which, due to the unique marketing strategy, can be considered as Love Mark, is a coffee concern — Starbucks. Creating stores as so-called "third place" (a place where customers can spend time between work and home), Starbucks has achieved the perfect situation in building an emotional bond with his guests — became an inseparable part of the customers' life. Such close relations between brands and selected consumers mean that the brand takes on an exclusive form that stands out from the competition. With increasing popularity, Starbucks has become a social group in which an increasing number of customers want to participate. Such a need of the recipient is strongly associated with achieving only symbolic benefits — belonging to an elite group increases the recipients' self-esteem, provides positive emotions.

Corporations sell to their clients not only material elements, but also related emotions. This phenomenon of building relationships between the brand and the consumer is more and more common in business. It is a kind of investment in the future, because the recipient who likes the brand can quickly become its loyal customer. Consumers often attach themselves to trusted brands. As a result, a stable relationship is formed between them and the brand, which is the main factor in a decision making process<sup>22</sup>.

Arkadiusz Dobosz in the authorial article "Love the brand with loyalty", distinguishes the so-called phenomenon of "Ladder of benefits", which, based on different kinds of feelings, leads to the strongest: love for the brand. Companies give their consumers a promise, a guarantee of meeting their needs while maintaining the highest quality.

# $need \rightarrow action \rightarrow reward$

**Figure 5.** The scheme of the "benefit ladder" Source: A. Dobosz, *Pokochać markę z lojalności*, 'Marketing w praktyce' nr 7, 2007, http://www.marketing.org.pl/index.php/go=2/act=2/aid=m4683c768c625c/ (access date: 10th June, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

Consumers' needs in different age categories, social classes or gender are different. Therefore, brand managers define their customers to be able to precisely verify their needs. On the other hand, customers take action – that is purchasing decisions – choose a specific brand that suits their individual needs. As a result, according to the scheme of the benefits ladder, it leads to the receipt of a reward – product or service – with which emotions are associated. The customers give into a vision of obtaining symbolic benefits related to the using of products of a given brand. The need for a reward is so deeply rooted in consumers' minds that they always return to the brand that fulfills their desires. As a consequence, the whole process will lead to an even stronger tightening of the bond between the brand and the customer<sup>23</sup>.

The undoubted role of emotions in the process of making purchase decisions is confirmed by the study, in which the group of respondents had seen some of the best-known brands of beverages. Of all those listed, the respondents had to decide wich product – in their opinion – would be the best, the most profitable choice. As it turned out, almost all participants indicated the brands that in the previous interview had been described as their favorite. The respondents chose only the beverages they preferred, regardless of the competitive prices of the other products. The most important is the fact that during the observation the participants' brains were also subjected. As the analysis showed, choosing a favorite brand meant that the part of the brain responsible for making rational decisions was excluded<sup>24</sup>.

#### Conclusion

Marketers are well aware of how emotions can affect customers, which is why they are increasingly using this factor when designing advertising messages. All content that is communicated by the brand strongly enrolls in the consumer's memory. Thank to this, there is a big possibility that during the next decision process the consumer will identify the brand. More importantly, with a more frequent contact between the customer and the brand, an emotional bond will be even stronger. "Today you have to make the client feel better in relation to the brand and if something can protect the product from simple copying, it will be the hardest to copy the emotional bond".<sup>25</sup>

It has become natural for people to pursue their desires throughout their lives. Consumers are individuals guided by desire for specific products or services. That is why marketers create messages that motivate consumers to own a given product or service. At the same time, they communicate that a given product not only satisfies their specific needs but above all, it guarantees only positive emotions<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem

http://www.heuristic.pl/blog/e-marketing/171.html (access date: 10th June, 2014).

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Consumers and their trusted brands associate strong relationships based on emotions. Therefore, the feeling that plays the most important role in marketing is love. Thanks to their loyal customers, Love Marks are conquering not only domestic markets but also foreign ones. They develop dynamically, invariably stay on the first place on the market, regardless of the passing time.

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