

A Customer Value Typology: Beyond the Functional - Emotional Dichotomy

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Abstract: The conceptual validity of the traditional functional - emotional distinction employed in the development of branding and communication strategies is questioned. It is argued that the distinction is schematically confusing to the extent that it is variously placed by many writers in the cognitive and affective phases of the consumer's psychological process. The paper argues that, while the "functional" is cognitive in so far as it is a "perceived value", the "emotional" relates to the extent to which the consumer is 'affected' by the 'value' perceived. The paper introduces the distinction of use value (value "for me") versus sign value (value "of me"), and states that marketers should attempt to produce the desired 'affect' by relating the focal use or sign value to personal end goals of the customer. The paper extends these twin value paradigms into five value domains: Functional, Experiential, Relational, Social and Psychological. It posits five corresponding consumer roles of the User, Experiencer, Member, Communicator and Actualizer, and importantly, lays bare five levels of branding predicated on the value domains and customer roles. They are Think, Sense, Relate, Project and Reflect consumer responses or branding modes. A greater understanding of customer value is key to the effective management of brands. The paper's central intent is to help achieve this end.