

ISSUE

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# engage

Big Thinking on Brand Engagement



# Getting *emotional*

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## Tim Love considers the intriguing relationship between products and people

Rance Crain (president of Crain Communications) recently asked me, "Can the product itself generate emotion, or must the emotion emanate from the people who use the product?"

Products do generate emotion. That emotion attracts interest. Developers of products design the products to generate an emotional response as well as deliver functional benefits.


This has increasing consequence in the post-digital marketing landscape that our industry operates in today, where access to products and messaging is growing exponentially. The ability to contextualize

a product for consumers, before and after trial, is imperative for our industry.

This reminds me of another question, posed by my elementary school teacher: "If a tree falls in the woods and nobody is there to hear it, does it make a sound?" The answer was "no"; if nobody is there to hear it, the falling tree makes no sound.

However, in today's world of seven billion people, where five billion are connected by mobile phone (50% of whom are already accessing the web without a laptop, desktop or land line), there's more chance that every last falling tree will be heard - and reverberate from one





person to another. Today, people are the first media.

Most successful products have emotion designed into them. The iPhone, iPod and iPad are excellent examples of products that exude emotion, both the emotion of the creators and the emotion of their users. I learned the importance of emotion in the automobile industry. Cars have emotion designed into them, though not always successfully.

### Most successful products have emotion designed into them

As the compatibility of communications devices worldwide increases, and the communications themselves become more widely understood across cultures, our ability to perceive the emotions behind a product or service is enhanced. The

emotional intent of a product will be more transparent. This is why it's so important to consider emotion as an equal strategic partner to functional performance benefits in product branding and design.

A growing body of neuroscientific research reveals that human interaction with products and their messaging involves significant emotional factors that impact how the brain processes product information. Much like the tree that falls in the woods, if nobody is interested in engaging with a product's message, the chances of achieving a valuable emotional connection are lessened. If a product listens well, its users will tell it how to continue to delight them – and stay emotionally and functionally relevant. ☺

*Tim Love is Chief Executive Officer of Omnicom's Asia Pacific India Middle East Africa region. [www.timlovesworld.com](http://www.timlovesworld.com)*