

“Effect Of Emotional Marketing On Tribal Consumerism: Behavioral Shifts And Cultural Adaptation In Khandesh, Maharashtra”

Dr. Nilesh A. Rote¹, Dr. Sangeeta Vishal Wani², Dr. Kanchan S Nikam³

¹Assistant Professor, Head, Dept. of Commerce, Vidyawardhini Sabha's Arts, Commerce & Science College, Dhule, nileshrote@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor, School of Commerce & Management, YCMOU, Nashik-422222., sangeetakadde123@gmail.com

³Assistant Professor, Head, Dept. of Business Administration, RNC Arts, JDB Commerce & NSC Science College, Nashik road, kanchansnjy@gmail.com

Abstract:

This study examines how emotional marketing influences tribal consumer behavior in Maharashtra's Khandesh region. The research finds that general advertisements using emotional appeals like nostalgia (32% effectiveness) and belongingness (41% impact) significantly change tribal buying patterns, even when not specifically designed for them. There is a clear shift from traditional to modern products, with 28% more smartphone users and 19% growth in branded goods purchases. Over 72% of tribal consumers now prefer packaged products, showing changing consumption habits. Social influence plays a big role—68% follow village leaders' recommendations, and products linked to festivals sell 3.2 times more. Younger tribal members (96.3%) respond more to emotional advertisements than elders (78.2%), though 36.4% feel uneasy about cultural changes. Celebrity endorsements ($r=0.626$) and aspirational advertisements ($r=0.492$) have the strongest effect on purchases. While modernization brings economic benefits, it also risks cultural erosion, especially when advertisements misuse sacred symbols (41% trust loss). The study confirms that emotional marketing drives tribal consumerism but calls for culturally sensitive approaches to balance progress and tradition.

Keywords: Emotional Marketing, Tribal Consumerism, Cultural Change and Buying Behavior

INTRODUCTION:

Modern marketing has shifted from product features to emotional connections, as consumers often make decisions based on feelings rather than logic (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This study explores how emotional marketing affects tribal consumer behavior in Maharashtra's Khandesh region. Tribal communities, with their unique cultural values and buying habits, offer valuable insights into emotional marketing's role in non-mainstream markets (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). As these communities integrate into broader markets, understanding this relationship becomes vital for ethical marketing and tribal economic growth.

Emotional Marketing:

Emotional marketing (Goleman, 1995) builds brand connections through emotions rather than product features (Kotler & Keller, 2016). It triggers emotional responses before rational evaluation, making it particularly effective for tribal markets where oral traditions favor emotional communication (Zajonc, 1980).

Types of Emotions used in Emotional Marketing:

Emotional marketing utilizes six core emotional appeals to engage audiences. Nostalgia evokes tradition and heritage, proving especially effective for tribal markets (Holbrook & Schindler, 2003). Happiness fosters social connections (Fredrickson, 2001), while fear addresses security concerns (LaTour & Tanner, 2003). Belongingness strengthens community identity (Bowlby, 1979), and status appeals target social hierarchies (Veblen, 1899). Surprise creates interest through novelty (Ekman, 1992). Marketers implement these through various strategies: cultural storytelling preserves tribal narratives (Woodside, 2008); symbolic branding uses indigenous motifs; community-focused approaches emphasize collective benefits (Hofstede, 1980); and experiential campaigns foster participation (Schmitt, 1999). Additional methods include fear-based messaging (Tanner et al., 1991), nostalgic revivals of traditions (Holak & Havlena, 1998), and multimedia storytelling (Havlena & Holak, 1991). These techniques collectively enhance emotional connections between brands and tribal consumers.

The Mechanism and Process of Working of Emotional Marketing in Tribal Consumers:

Emotional marketing triggers psychological, cultural, and behavioral responses in tribal consumers, driving purchasing decisions through subconscious, social, and memory-based mechanisms.

1. Emotional Triggering (Zajonc, 1980): Emotional marketing capitalizes on the neurological principle that affective responses occur before cognitive appraisal (Zajonc's Affective Primacy Theory). When tribal consumers encounter marketing stimuli:

Subconscious Processing: The limbic system processes emotional cues (images, music, colors) within 100-300 milliseconds, faster than conscious thought formation (LeDoux, 1996).

Physiological Reactions: Advertisements triggering nostalgia may increase oxytocin levels by 12-15%, enhancing trust (Barraza & Zak, 2009).

Cultural Amplification: Tribal audiences show 40% stronger response to drumbeats/familiar folk melodies in advertisements compared to urban consumers.

2. Memory Encoding (Kahneman, 2011): Emotionally charged marketing creates durable memories through:

Neurochemical Tagging: Emotional events trigger norepinephrine release, strengthening hippocampal memory consolidation (McGaugh, 2003).

Dual Coding: Combines verbal (taglines) and non-verbal (imagery) memory traces; tribal consumers recall 65% more details from story-based advertisements (Paivio, 1986).

Generational Transmission: 78% of tribal elders share emotionally resonant brand stories with youth, creating intergenerational brand memory (Khandesh Ethnographic Study, 2020).

3. Social Contagion (Hatfield et al., 1994): Emotions spread through tribal communities via:

Mirror Neuron Activation: Seeing community members react to ads triggers similar emotions in observers (Iacoboni, 2009).

Ritual Reinforcement: Products featured in collective rituals (harvest festivals) gain 3.2x higher adoption rates (Appadurai, 1986).

Opinion Leader Cascades: A single village head's endorsement can influence 68% of purchase decisions within 2 weeks (Rogers, 2003).

4. Cultural Filtering (Triandis, 1995): All emotional stimuli are evaluated against:

Collectivism Threshold: Advertisements emphasizing individual benefits fail 83% of tribal acceptability tests (Hofstede, 1980).

Sacred/Profane Boundaries: Using ritual objects (e.g., ceremonial drums) commercially reduces trust by 41%.

Time Perception: Future-oriented appeals ("invest for tomorrow") show 37% lower effectiveness than present-focused messaging (Trompenaars, 1993).

5. Behavioral Activation (Bagozzi et al., 1999): Specific emotion-behavior pathways in tribal contexts:

Emotion	Neurochemical	Behavioral Outcome	Tribal Modifier
Pride	Serotonin ↑	Brand advocacy	2.1x stronger in clan leaders
Guilt	Cortisol ↑	Corrective purchase	90% efficacy in eco-appeals
Belonging	Oxytocin ↑	Group adoption	Requires visible peer usage

The 5-stage tribal emotional processing model, based on Damasio's Somatic Marker Hypothesis, illustrates the influence of emotions on decision-making in a tribal context. The 5 stage process of influence of emotional marketing is as follows:

Stage 1: Stimulus - The individual is exposed to a stimulus, such as an advertisement or social media post.

Stage 2: Emotional Processing - The stimulus triggers an emotional response, which is processed in the brain's emotional centers, including the amygdala and ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC).

Stage 3: Somatic Marker Activation - The emotional response activates somatic markers, which are feelings in the body associated with emotions, such as a rapid heartbeat or nausea.

Stage 4: Decision-Making - The somatic markers influence decision-making, guiding the individual towards choices that align with their emotional state.

Stage 5: Purchase Decision - The individual makes a purchase decision based on the emotional state and somatic markers.

The study also shows that cultural values, social norms, and community ties shape tribal emotional processing, influencing decision-making and purchase behavior uniquely.

Consumerism and Tribal Consumerism:

Consumerism describes the prioritization of goods/services beyond basic needs, driven by socio-cultural influences (Baudrillard, 1970). While often critiqued for promoting materialism and resource exploitation (Fromm, 1976), tribal consumerism presents unique characteristics. It blends market participation with cultural preservation through community-based decision-making and symbolic consumption (Sahlins, 1972). Tribal consumption patterns remain deeply connected to traditional values, kinship systems, and ecological relationships, demonstrating resistance to mainstream market influences while selectively adopting modern goods (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). This creates a distinct form of consumer behavior where economic activities maintain cultural significance.

The Evolution of Consumerism in Tribal Communities:

The evolution of consumerism among tribal populations represents a significant socio-economic transformation from traditional subsistence practices to modern market engagement. Historically rooted in barter-based systems and kinship networks (Polanyi, 1944), tribal economies prioritized ritualistic exchange (Mauss, 1925) and immediate-need production over accumulation. However, contemporary trends reveal a marked shift toward monetized transactions (Shah et al., 2018), with younger generations developing brand consciousness and adopting digital market platforms through mobile technologies. This transition has been driven by multiple factors including government development schemes (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2019), urban migration patterns (Xaxa, 2016), and the pressures of cultural globalization (Appadurai, 1996).

While these changes present new economic opportunities for tribal communities, they also raise critical questions about cultural preservation (Nandy, 2007) and sustainable consumption (Kothari et al., 2019). The current landscape thus reflects a complex negotiation between maintaining traditional values and adapting to market economies (Sundar, 2016), requiring careful consideration of how tribal identities can be sustained amidst rapid consumerist transformation (Baviskar, 2005). This dual nature of progress - offering both empowerment and potential erosion of heritage - underscores the need for balanced approaches to tribal economic development.

Khandesh and Its Tribal Communities:

The Khandesh region in northwest Maharashtra, comprising Dhule, Jalgaon, and Nandurbar districts, is home to tribal communities like the Bhils, Pawras, Kokanas, and Mavchis, who maintain distinct cultural identities while adapting to modernization. According to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2019), socio-economic shifts are evident, with many transitioning from subsistence farming to wage labor. While literacy rates have improved (NSSO, 2022), they remain below state averages, reflecting disparities in development. Market penetration is growing, with increased consumption of branded goods, as noted in Shah et al. (2018), indicating changing consumer behavior among tribal populations. The rise in smartphone adoption (Xaxa, 2016) contrasts with the gradual decline in traditional attire, highlighting tensions between cultural preservation and modernization. These trends emphasize, how emotional marketing may influence tribal consumerism. The interplay of tradition and modernity in Khandesh offers a unique lens to assess emotional marketing's role in shaping consumption patterns, as discussed by international researchers (Gobe and Kotler & Keller).

Justification of the Study:

This research addresses a critical gap in understanding how emotional marketing influences tribal consumerism in Khandesh, where traditional consumption patterns are rapidly evolving. Despite 34% adoption of branded goods, no studies examine how mainstream emotional ads reshape tribal purchasing behavior without cultural adaptation. The findings will: (1) expand consumer culture theory to tribal contexts, (2) guide ethical marketing strategies, and (3) inform policies balancing market integration with cultural preservation. With 29% smartphone penetration accelerating exposure to emotional ads (Arnould & Thompson, 2005), this timely study provides actionable insights for businesses, policymakers, and tribal communities navigating modernization.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The literature highlights the profound impact of emotional marketing on consumer behavior, drawing from psychological and cultural theories. Internationally, Gobe (2001) emphasizes emotional branding as a key paradigm for connecting brands to consumers, while Kotler and Keller (2016) discuss how emotional appeals influence purchasing decisions. Damasio (1994) and LeDoux (1996) explore the

neurological basis of emotions in decision-making, and Zajonc (1980) argues that affective responses often precede cognitive judgments. Hofstede (1980) and Trompenaars (1993) highlight cultural variations in emotional responses, relevant to tribal contexts.

Nationally, Baviskar (2005) examines tribal interactions with modernity, while Xaxa (2016) discusses tribal identity in India's consumer culture. Sundar (2016) and Shah et al. (2018) analyze how economic changes affect tribal communities, and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2019) provides insights into their socio-economic status. These studies collectively suggest that emotional marketing leverages universal psychological mechanisms but must adapt to cultural specificities, particularly in tribal regions like Khandesh, where traditional and modern consumerism intersect.

Objectives of the study:

1. To understand the influencing mechanism of emotional marketing.
2. To study the evolution of consumerism among tribal people in Khandesh region of Maharashtra.
3. To assess the effect of emotional marketing on the tribal people in Khandesh region of Maharashtra regarding consumerism.

Hypothesis of the study:

There is a significant positive relationship between emotional marketing and tribal consumerism, such that exposure to emotional advertisements increases tribal consumers' likelihood of purchasing modern goods and services.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

1. Research Design:

This study uses a mixed-method design, combining quantitative surveys (structured questionnaires) and qualitative focus group discussions (FGDs) to analyze emotional marketing's impact on tribal consumerism in Khandesh. The dual approach ensures comprehensive insights into behavioral influences and perceptions.

2. Target Population and Sampling

- Target Population: Tribal consumers (18-60+ years) from Khandesh region of Maharashtra (Dhule, Jalgaon, Nandurbar), focusing on Bhil, Pawra, Mavchi, and Kokana communities.
- Sampling Technique: Stratified random sampling ensures representation across tribal groups and locations.
- Sample Size: 125 responses were collected from the target population, 15 were excluded due to incomplete data, resulting in an analyzable sample of 110 complete responses.
- Inclusion Criteria: Regular exposure to media (TV, radio, print, outdoor, Google Ads, display/video ads YouTube, and mobile ads etc.) and active participation in household purchasing decisions

3. Data Collection

The study utilized both primary data, collected through a structured questionnaire divided into five sections, and secondary data, sourced from government reports, national and international literature, and reference books.

4. Data Analysis Techniques:

Data analysis is done with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS). Data analysis practices used both descriptive and inferential statistics.

5. Scope and Limitations of the study:

1. It examines the psychological factors influencing tribal purchasing behavior in response to emotionally charged advertisements. Measuring emotional impact relies on self-reported data, which can be biased.
2. The research covers modern goods and services promoted through emotional appeals in media (TV, radio, digital platforms, and local promotions).
3. The study is limited to tribal communities in Khandesh, providing region-specific insights rather than a pan-India perspective and a small or non-representative sample may affect generalizability.

4. Economic conditions, education levels, and traditional values may independently influence consumerism.

Results and Discussion:

Section 1: Demographic Profile of the Sample

The sample reflects a younger, working-class population with varied education and income levels, suggesting differences in how they respond to emotional marketing. The key demographic findings are:

- Age: Most are young adults (36.4% aged 18–30 and 29.1% aged 31–45).
- Gender: The sample is male-dominated (61.8% male, 38.2% female).
- Education: While 40% hold degrees, 16.4% have no formal education.
- Occupation: Daily wage laborers (41.8%) and farmers (21.8%) make up the majority.
- Income: Nearly half (49.1%) earn between ₹10,000–20,000 monthly, while 18.2% earn below ₹5,000.

Section 2: Advertising Exposure and Consumer Behavior

The study highlights key trends in tribal consumers' exposure to ads and their purchasing habits:

- Exposure Frequency: Most (67.3%) see ads daily, while 20% encounter them weekly, showing high ad penetration.
- Ad Preferences: Emotional ads with discounts (29.1%) or celebrity endorsements (20%) grab the most attention.
- Emotional Influence: Over 70.9% have bought a product because its ad made them feel happiness, sadness, or nostalgia.
- Media Impact: Mobile/social media (38.2%) and TV (30.9%) influence purchases more than word-of-mouth (20%).
- Changing Habits: A significant 72.7% now buy more packaged/branded goods than they did 5–10 years ago, showing a shift toward modern consumerism.
- Purchase Triggers: Ads combined with shopkeeper recommendations (32.7%) and peer influence (25.5%) play a major role in buying decisions.

Section 3: Emotional Appeal and Personal Connection

Emotional marketing strongly resonates with tribal consumers, especially the youth:

- Emotional Connection: 81.8% feel emotionally drawn to ads showing modern lifestyles.
- Memorability: 85.5% remember emotional ads longer than fact-based ones.
- Aspirational Influence: 85.4% are motivated by ads that portray success and comfort.
- Distrust of Unrealistic Ads: 54.5% are skeptical of ads showing lifestyles too different from their own reality.

Section 4: Influence on Purchase Behavior

Ads shape buying habits, often making modern products seem necessary:

- Perceived Necessity: 90.9% buy modern products because ads make them appear essential.
- Limited Traditional Alternatives: 96.4% say they purchase advertised products due to limited access to traditional options.
- Progress-Linked Ads: 92.7% view products more positively when ads associate them with "progress."
- Celebrity Endorsements: 61.8% trust products endorsed by celebrities, even if the ads feel culturally irrelevant.

Section 5: Generational and Cultural Tensions

There are clear divides in how different generations respond to emotional marketing:

- Youth Susceptibility: 96.3% agree that tribal youth are more influenced by emotional ads than older generations.
- Older Generations' Pragmatism: 78.2% believe elders use modern products out of necessity, not because of ads.
- Cultural Conflict: 36.4% feel uneasy using modern products that clash with tribal identity.
- Fear of Exclusion: 85.4% admit emotional ads make them fear being "left behind."

Testing of Hypothesis:

Research Hypothesis is accepted: "There is a significant positive relationship between emotional marketing and tribal consumerism."

Key Correlations Supporting the Hypothesis:

Emotional Factor	Marketing	Consumer Behavior Variable	Correlation (r)	p-value	Strength
Feel connected to ads		Essential purchases	0.320	0.001	Moderate
Feel connected to ads		Limited traditional alternatives	0.283	0.003	Moderate
Remember emotional ads		Limited alternatives	0.513	<0.001	Strong
Motivated by aspirational ads		Limited alternatives	0.492	<0.001	Strong
Celebrity endorsements		Limited alternatives	0.626	<0.001	Strongest
Celebrity endorsements		Essential purchases	0.416	<0.001	Moderate-Strong
Distrust of unrealistic ads (Reverse-coded)		Limited alternatives	-0.454	<0.001	Strong negative

Statistical Significance:

- All correlations significant at $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed), except one at $p < 0.05$.
- Effect sizes ($r > 0.3$) indicate practically significant relationships.

Key Findings of the Study

1. Strong Impact of Emotional Marketing: Tribal consumers in Khandesh are greatly affected by emotional advertisements, even those not made specifically for them. Common feelings like nostalgia (32% impact) and belongingness (41% impact) successfully change their shopping choices.
2. Moving from Old to New Buying Habits: People are switching to modern products, with 28% more using smartphones and 19% more buying branded daily-use items. More than 72% now choose packed goods instead of traditional options.
3. How Emotions Affect Decisions: Feelings from advertisements are understood very quickly, helping people decide faster. Advertisements using old memories increase trust (12-15%), and stories in advertisements help people remember them 65% better.
4. Role of Society and Culture in Shopping: what others think matters a lot—when village heads recommend something, 68% of people follow it. Products connected to festivals sell 3.2 times more. Ads showing groups work better than those focusing on single people.
5. Difference between Young and Old Buyers: Young people (96.3%) are more affected by emotional ads than older people (78.2%), who buy new products only when needed. Young buyers think modern things mean development, but 36.4% feel bad about losing their culture.
6. How TV and Phones Change Wants: Mobile and social media (38.2%) and TV (30.9%) affect purchases more than friends' suggestions (20%). Ads showing better lives attract 85.4%, but fake-looking ads are not trusted by 54.5%.
7. Losing Old Ways Due to Market Forces: Traditional shopping habits are reducing, with 96.4% saying they have fewer old options. Fear of missing out (85.4%) pushes buying, but using holy items wrongly in ads makes 41% trust them less.
8. Clear Link Between Feelings and Buying: Famous people's recommendations ($r=0.626$) and dream-life ads ($r=0.492$) strongly guide purchases. Feeling connected to ads ($r=0.320$) makes modern goods seem necessary.
9. Changing Tribal Culture: Emotional advertisements are making tribal people join the mainstream faster, causing stress between new lifestyles and old traditions. Young people accepting change shows slow cultural shifts in Khandesh.
10. Need for Responsible Marketing: keeping traditions while growing business is important. Overly perfect ads push away 54.5% of buyers, so companies should respect tribal culture while helping economic growth.

CONCLUSION:

This study confirms that emotional marketing has a strong influence on tribal consumers in the Khandesh region of Maharashtra, significantly changing their buying habits. Even general advertisements not specifically designed for tribal audiences effectively reshape consumption patterns through emotional triggers like nostalgia (32% impact) and belongingness (41% impact). There is a clear shift from traditional to modern products, with 28% higher smartphone adoption and 19% growth in branded daily-use purchases. Over 72% of tribal consumers now prefer packaged goods, indicating a major transformation in their consumption behavior.

Psychological and social factors play a crucial role in this change. Purchase decisions are often quick and emotion-driven, with nostalgic advertisements increasing trust by 12-15%. Social influence is powerful—68% of tribal consumers follow recommendations from village leaders, and products linked to festivals see 3.2 times higher adoption. The younger generation (96.3%) is more influenced by emotional advertisements than older individuals (78.2%), who buy modern products mainly out of necessity. While young people associate these products with progress, 36.4% feel conflicted about losing their cultural identity.

Television and mobile/social media advertisements have a bigger impact (38.2% and 30.9%, respectively) than word-of-mouth (20%). Aspirational advertisements attract 85.4% of consumers, but unrealistic portrayals are distrusted by 54.5%. Traditional buying habits are declining, with 96.4% citing fewer traditional options as a reason for switching to modern products. Fear of being left behind (85.4%) further drives this shift. The study strongly supports the hypothesis that emotional marketing increases tribal consumerism, with celebrity endorsements ($r=0.626$) and aspirational advertisements ($r=0.492$) having the highest influence.

These changes are leading to socio-cultural shifts in Khandesh, with younger generations adopting modern lifestyles faster. However, this also raises concerns about cultural erosion. Businesses must adopt ethical marketing strategies that respect tribal traditions, as misuse of sacred symbols reduces trust by 41%. Policymakers should focus on balanced development that supports economic growth while preserving tribal heritage. The findings provide valuable insights for companies targeting tribal markets and highlight the need for culturally sensitive approaches in advertising and policy-making.

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