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**OPINION**

# Emojis vs human faces

Over the last two, three years we have been faced with the Covid-19 pandemic, which has brought to the fore the importance of understanding facial expressions in our lives. Brands are made by people for people, and one can never discredit or neglect something as simple (but not always easy to achieve) as “humanizing” the brand.

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The consumer we are talking about today is increasingly “moved” by the sensations that the brand or product conveys to him, he is looking for something that he identifies with and that is an extension of his person (example: a mobile phone is an extension of us, it makes part of our life). And the truth is that a brand can only really connect with the consumer if it focuses on the issue of “humanization”; and how can you do it? Through the (relevant and appropriate) incorporation of human faces and emojis in the marketing/communication strategy.

First of all, it must be understood that there is no such thing as a perfect formula; the strategy will only work if we know how to analyze our product, the tone of voice, the target and if we choose the type of faces or emojis that best fit the communication message. Initially, emojis were seen only as a form of communication between people, as they allow expressing emotional attitudes as well as writing succinct messages.

However, the truth is that some brands began to look at the “dolls” in a different way, as a tool to get closer to the target: we have the example of McDonald’s, Toyota, Taco Bell’s, among others, which sought to innovate its way of communicating and differentiating itself from the competition. The studies carried out for the master’s thesis (Marketing Intelligence - at NOVA IMS) show that emojis have a very positive correlation with fundamental characteristics for brands and ads, such as brand fun, brand collness (irreverence | originality) and even memorability. In addition, emotions tend to be more intense and positive emotions such as excitement or enthusiasm are more felt.

Por outro lado, é importante não descurar que, com a presença de rosto humano, há um incremento positivo da familiaridade com a marca, os anúncios são mais críveis, também são vistos como mais prazerosos e eficazes. Para complementar os estudos experimentais, também foi desenvolvido um estudo laboratorial (software de eyetracking) com o objetivo de compreender o impacto da atenção visual através do uso de expressões faciais.

E nota-se, de facto, que os próprios emojis atraem mais atenção, mas podem distrair da mensagem de comunicação, enquanto os rostos humanos não são tão percetíveis em determinados produtos/anúncios, mas mantêm as pessoas focadas na mensagem.

Além disso, os resultados mostraram que a AOI (Área de Interesse) mais relevante foi a mensagem de comunicação, devido às informações essenciais para a tomada de decisão, ao contrário das expressões faciais, que, por possuírem menos “informações”, são mais rápidas de ler e até de entender. Isso significa que as marcas devem escolher emojis ou rostos humanos que sejam fáceis de entender e que se encaixem na mensagem.

Por último, a criação de uma nova teoria (Emoji Paradox) alerta as marcas para a questão de os emojis aumentarem a memorização dos anúncios, mas diminuïrem a sua credibilidade, pelo que as marcas com imagem institucional ou de luxo must apply them in a sensible and well-designed way.

Pedro Almeida, junior executive media planner at Carat

[briefing@briefing.pt](mailto:briefing@briefing.pt)

Opinion

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