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**Article**

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## MARKETING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# This advert makes me cry: Disclosure of emotional response to advertisement on Facebook

Emmanuel Mogaji<sup>1\*</sup>

**Abstract:** As social media is transforming how consumers interact with brands and how brand-related content is consumed, this paper aims to investigate if and how Facebook users express their emotions towards advertisements of brand share on the site. Seven hundred and three comments about the Lloyds 250th Anniversary advertisement on Facebook were analysed as positive, negative or neutral attitude towards the advert. Facebook users found the advertisement emotionally appealing and voluntarily report their emotion of love, pride and in some cases anger. The presence of an iconic image like the black horse and the cover music was found to be emotionally appealing. The background music as well aroused positive emotions and engaging. This study introduces the possibility of analysing Facebook comments on brand content to understand consumers' emotional responses and attitudes to the brand. Managers can explore these opportunities to identify what consumers find interesting in advertisements and how best to develop their creative strategies. It also offers the opportunity to allocate resources better to engage consumers with creative advertisement. Unlike interviews or surveys, this is a pioneering study on measuring emotional responses to advertisement through users' self-report on social media.

**Subjects:** Marketing Communications; Marketing Research; Relationship Marketing

**Keywords:** emotional response; attitude; advertisement; Facebook; Lloyds; UK



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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emmanuel Mogaji is a researcher at the Business and Management Research Institute of University of Bedfordshire Business School. Emmanuel's primary areas of interest are ABCDE of Marketing Communications–Advertising | Branding | Communications | Digital | Ethics. He has published peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapter, and presented his works in a large number of national and international conferences. His PhD thesis explored emotional appeals in UK banks' print advertisement and the embedded meanings as perceived by the consumers. Prior to that, he was a marketing communication executive, responsible for creative designs and management of marketing campaigns, liaising and building relationships with a range of stakeholders.

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

How many times have we watched an advert on Facebook and been eager to make a comment about how much we liked it? Today, Facebook has become an integral part of our social life and companies are using this medium to reach out to us. This paper reports the analysis of Facebook users' comments on Lloyds Bank 250th Anniversary advertisement. The majority of Facebook users commented on how much they loved the advertisement. They could relate with the black horse; it brought back happy memories; the background music made some people cry, while the models caught the attention of others. The study indicated that as individuals, we can verbally report how we feel about an advertisement and the brand. In addition, the advertisers and brands can look through these comments and understand what is likely to appeal to consumers and assist in developing a more creative advertisement.

## 1. Introduction

Creativity is an important factor in advertising because it serves to break through clutter and leave a lasting impression in the minds of consumers (Lehnert, Till, & Carlson, 2013). Advertisers' creative strategies to draw attention to their messages include the deliberate use of emotion to reach out to a consumer's heart in the expectation that the consumer will form a positive attitude to the advertisement and so buy the product (Roozen, 2013).

Strategic use of creative features in advertisements has long been noted to elicit emotional responses from viewers (Cornelis, Adams, & Cauberghe, 2012; Heath, Nairn, & Bottomley, 2009). The use of emotion is acknowledged by marketing researchers and practitioners as a tactic to increase the effectiveness of the advertisement because it affects the consumers' judgement (Batra & Ray, 1986; Cotte & Ritchie, 2005). Emotional responses to advertisements, measured by constructs such as "ad likeability" and "affect attitude towards the ad", are strong mediators for recognition and recall of the advertisement (Du Plessis, 2005), and indirectly influence attitudes about brands (Bodur, Brinberg, & Coupey, 2000; Miniard & Barone, 1997).

Individuals cognitively appraise advertisements and express their emotions—this is considered integral to consuming advertising (Harris, 1994; Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012). Accordingly, this research study aimed to find out if consumers are able to express their emotional reactions to advertisements publicly on social media. Their comments were considered as verbal self-reports and qualitatively analysed to understand features responsible for their reactions.

Specifically, in the light of the global financial crisis and the negative attitude towards bank brands (Kottasz & Bennett, 2014), the study explores comments made on Facebook regarding one of UK's iconic financial services brand to understand if and how emotional responses towards the brand and in particular the advertisement are being reported. The UK's banking sector is considered as one of the largest financial hubs around the globe (Rehman, 2015), and it is dominated by a few very large banks, including the Lloyds Group, Barclays, the royal bank of Scotland and HSBC, which are often referred to as the big four. Standard chartered is one of the five biggest banks in the UK, but does not provide retail banking, instead offers private and investment services to high net worth UK clients, and clients with links in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

To achieve the aim of this study, Facebook users' comments regarding Lloyds Bank 250th anniversary were analysed. Now considered one of the biggest banks in the UK, it was originally founded in 1765, when John Taylor and Sampson Lloyd set up a private banking business in Birmingham. Today, with 22 million current account customers, Lloyds Banking Group Retail is the UK's largest provider. The Group is also the largest provider of "basic" or social bank accounts in the UK; and Lloyds Banking Group Retail is the UK's number one mortgage lender, providing mortgages to one in four new

**Table 1. UK banks on the Forbes' 2015 world's biggest public companies**

Rank	Company	Market value	Founded	Age as at 2015	Headquarters
#15	HSBC holdings	\$167.7 B	1865	150	London
#100	Lloyds banking group (Lloyds bank, Bank of Scotland and Halifax bank)	\$84.4 B	1765	250	London
#153	Standard chartered	\$39.8 B	1969	46	London
#404	Barclays	\$63.7 B	1690	325	London
#430	Royal bank of Scotland (subsidiaries includes NatWest and Ulster bank)	\$60.2 B	1727	288	Edinburgh

borrowers in the UK. The group is a leading provider of first-time buyer home finance (Lloyds Bank, 2016). According to Forbes' 2015 World's Biggest Public Companies (as illustrated in Table 1), Lloyds Banking Group is ranked 100th, indicating its reputation among the world's and UK's brands and compared to its competitors.

The anniversary advertisement, titled *The Horse Story*, features their iconic black horse which represents endurance, partnership and service—dramatising the role that Lloyds Bank has played in its customers' and communities' lives throughout the years. The distinctive black horse is iconic with the Lloyds Brand and it has featured extensively in promotional and advertising campaigns, raising public awareness of the Lloyds Bank name around the world (Lloyds Bank, 2016). The advertisement can be considered both creative and emotionally appealing as it tells the story of the iconic horse being on the side of humans for many years and there are many scenes with which their targeted audience can appreciate and associate, coupled with the upbeat sound of the cover music. The advertisement has been shown on TV in the UK and shared on various social media sites which includes Facebook.

Facebook was chosen for this study because, as the biggest social media brand, activities performed on this website have been known to leave a wealth of concrete and observable data which makes it a topic worthy of study in its own right (Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, 2012). Facebook offers consumers opportunities to interact with brands and express their feelings towards brands. Moreover, the comments' feature on the YouTube link for this advertisement was disabled by the bank, meaning that viewers could not really engage on that platform; the duration of the video might have been a hindrance on Instagram, while the limitation of 140 characters on Twitter would not provide a considerable amount of information or insight into the emotional reactions of viewers, which further justified the selection of Facebook for the data collection.

Extending previous studies on attitudes towards advertisement construct and emotional appeals in advertisements, this paper explores comments made on Facebook as an insight into consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement as an iconic brand like Lloyds Bank, making further contributions into the attitudes towards advertisement construct and the conceptualisation of aroused emotions and emotional reactions to advertisement. In addition, the findings of this study will offer managers opportunities to achieve improved results in evaluating advertisements and to chart a new path in understanding consumer behaviour. The paper is structured as follows: the next section provides a literature review addressing the emotional appeals in advertisement and consumers' interaction with brands on Facebook, followed by the conceptual framework of the study and an overview of the research approach adopted in this study. The key results attained in this research are also provided, followed by a discussion of the main scholarly and managerial implications arising from this study.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Attitude emotional appeals in advertisements

The attitude to advertisement construct was originally presented by Lutz, MacKenzie, and Belch (1983). They presented four possible response sequences which may follow exposure to a persuasive communication—the advertisement and brand cognition, attitude towards the advertisement and the brand and the intention to purchase. This construct has since then seen a considerable large amount of empirical studies which have contributed significantly to the development of the construct (Batra & Ray, 1986; Cacioppo & Petty, 1989; MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986).

The attitude towards advertisements is considered an important mediator of advertising response (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). It is described as a predisposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion (Lutz, 1985).

As MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) acknowledge, the attitude towards advertisements is conditioned by some other variables which include the credibility and perception of the advertisement.

Ad credibility is defined as the extent to which consumers perceive claims made about the brand in the advert to be truthful and believable (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989, p. 51), while Ad perceptions are defined as the multidimensional array of consumer perceptions of the advertising stimulus, including the executional factors, but excluding perceptions of the advertised brand (MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989, p. 51). MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) further argued that the consumer's perception of the truthfulness and believability of the advertisements and the creative execution of the advertisements enhance their predisposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to the advertisement, attitude to the advertisement.

The emotional feelings towards the advertisement have also been introduced into the attitude to advertisement construct (Machleit & Wilson, 1988); previously, warm feelings had been acknowledged to have an effect on attitude to advertisement (Aaker, Stayman, & Hagerty, 1986). Batra and Ray (1986) also suggested that the emotional feelings towards an advertisement are closely related to the attitude to the brand, the advertisement and the intention to purchase.

Emotions have been known to mediate the way advertisements are processed (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012). They describe an affective response to advertising (Percy, 2003; Poels & Dewitte, 2006; Stewart, Morris, & Grover, 2007), and so advertisers make conscious creative decisions to arouse emotions through the use of images, text or background music (Mogaji, 2016). Panda, Panda, and Mishra (2013) identify emotions, feelings or drives as affective positioning presented in advertisements, which can be achieved by creating feelings of joy, fear, sadness and happiness, or a desire for happiness.

Percy (2003) suggests that understanding the role of emotion in communication is critical to advertising because emotion is an important mediator of how we process information. Percy further notes that emotional stimuli should be included in advertisements in order to create an underlying purchase or usage motivation. He suggests that emotional energy affects brand attitude. These stimuli can be in the form of the advertising colour (Lichtlé, 2007), image (Small & Verrochi, 2009) or positioning within the media context (Janssens & Pelsmacker, 2005). Emotions presented in an advertisement can draw attention to the message, make it memorable and promote the brand. They can also directly influence attitude to brands and advertisements (Zeitlin & Westwood, 1986).

Heath (2007) and Heath, Brandt, and Nairn (2006) discuss the role of emotional advertising in building brand relationships and attention, especially the creative choice of employing emotional content in advertisements, suggesting that they help influence brand favourability. Emotional appeal is deemed important in creating an effective advertisement (Mogaji, 2016). Kotler and Armstrong (2013) note that emotional appeal targets the consumer's psychological, social or symbolic needs, aiming to stir up feelings and bring into play an affection mechanism that will ultimately motivate the consumer to purchase the advertised product. The choice of advertising appeal is one of the most basic elements when deciding on an advertising strategy, and the selection of the right verbal and visual cues is critical to the success of advertisements (Turley & Kelley, 1997).

Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy (1984, p. 47) consider that emotional advertisements build "emotional, subjective impressions of intangible aspects of the product". Baines, Fill, and Page (2008) describe emotional advertisements as customer-oriented, based as they are on customers' feelings and emotions. Emotional appeals presented in advertisements are directed mainly to psychological aspects of consumers' needs and the feelings associated with the product (Bovee & Arens, 2000; Mishra, 2009). According to Franke, Huhmann, and Phelps (1999), emotional appeals attempt to stir up either negative or positive emotions, leading to purchase motivation. Brader (2006, p. 68) concludes that emotional appeal is "any communication that is intended to elicit an emotional response from some or all who receive it".

Cacioppo and Petty (1989) note that the relevance of the message to the recipient determines whether the message in the advertisement is well received or not. As Meyers-Levy and Malaviya (1999, p. 59) suggest: “persuasion does not rest in an advertising message per se but rather depends on the particular mental processes that an ad recipient invokes”. This study is grounded on previous empirical studies regarding attitude to advertisements, highlighting the embed creative feature to appeal to consumers, though these studies have identified the close relationship between attitude to advertisement and attitude towards the brand, the emotional responses of customers towards the advertisements will be elicited through the content analysis of their Facebook comments and seek to understand how the consumers process the advertisement and verbally report it on social media.

## **2.2. Measuring emotional responses to advertisements**

As brands often come up with creative advertisements to appeal to the viewers’ emotions, it is important to know what emotions are being aroused. Poels and Dewitte (2006) identify some of these varieties of measures in their review of 20 years of emotion measurement in advertising. Their study notes that emotions have become an important research topic, and yet measuring emotions has proved challenging. They identify two ways of measuring emotional responses to advertisements: self-report measures and autonomic measures. Self-report measures focus on introspective reflections, while autonomic measures concentrate on non-continuous emotional reactions.

Self-reports allow consumers to voluntarily express their emotions towards the advertisements. They can either verbally report it or visually report it, for example, identifying how happy or sad they are with the advertisements. Verbal self-reports are the most common way to measure emotional responses to advertisement (Wiles & Cornwell, 1991). The method involves asking participants to report their feelings towards an advertisement using a checklist, set of rating scales or a verbal protocol that is easy for participants to understand.

Autonomic measures involve using equipment, in most cases in a laboratory setting, to identify emotional responses to advertisements. Desmet (2005) observes that it involves instruments that measure either the expressive or the physiological component of emotion. In addition, as a result of the rapid invasion of computers into our daily lives, computer science has become a player in the field of measuring emotions, as observed by Desmet (2005). This has also led to more technologically driven methods for measuring emotional responses, which can be classified as autonomic reactions. Autonomic reactions include facial expressions (e.g. smiling and/or frowning) and physiological reactions (e.g. sweating), which are manifestations of lower order emotional processes that are beyond the participants’ control (Poels & Dewitte, 2006).

Neuroscience provides insight into how the mind works, but it typically requires expensive, bulky equipment and lab-type settings that limit and influence the experience (Affectiva, 2013). This suggests why the self-report method is still the most common method in advertising research. It is user friendly and quick. However, self-reports suffer from cognitive bias because individuals can make a conscious effort to report wrongly or may not be fully aware or competent enough to fully express how they feel when exposed to an advertisement. In such cases, autonomic measurements are more reliable because they can measure emotional reactions in real time without bias and the reactions are beyond the participants’ control.

Micu and Plummer (2010) note that emotional responses are complex and should be measured against various measures. Based on this suggestion, this study aims to elicit customers’ emotional responses to advertisements through their Facebook comments. This is considered a form of verbal self-report because the consumers voluntarily express their emotional response. This is considered a common practice within an online context as many users are willing to engage (Lee, Im, & Taylor, 2008). From a research standpoint, self-disclosure on Facebook is different from asking customers for their opinions during a research or questionnaire interview and also different from the types of self-disclosures explored in previous researches (Chu, 2011; Lee et al., 2008).



### 2.3. Consumers interacting with brands on Facebook

Dimauro and Bulmer (2010) describe social media as a platform for discussing ideas, communicating experiences and exchanging knowledge. Social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook have changed the way individuals interact. They provide a central location for online social engagement and a strategic means for building and maintaining a strong brand presence online (Wallace, Wilson, & Miloch, 2011). Since it was founded in 2004, Facebook has become a popular networking tool. Kujath (2011) describes it as one of the many social media outlets enabling consumers to interact with brands as an extension of face-to-face interaction through an online media network.

The nature of public relations and how organisations engage their publics have changed a great deal in recent years, thanks to the Internet (McCorkindale, 2010). Like any other media source, social media has become an important communication platform for consumers to explicitly connect with brands, disclosing information about themselves (Chu, 2011). In addition, the ability to directly communicate with consumers alters perceptions about the given product (Kwak, Kim, & Zimmerman, 2010; Richelieu & Pons, 2006).

Social media is transforming how consumers interact with brands and how brand-related content is created, distributed and consumed (Tsai & Men, 2013). Brands interacting on the social media network have the opportunity to model public perceptions about their brands. Thus, the UK banks can use social media to connect with their customers and rebuild their reputation. In particular, because Facebook provides unique features to allow customers to get involved with the brands, user-generated content represents a platform for other identified fans to interact with the brand and each other.

Consumers' engagement on social media has been previously explored. Whiting and Williams (2013) analysed why people use social media, Duan and Dholakia (2015) explored the reshaping of Chinese consumer values in the social media era, while Sloan, Bodey, and Gyrð-Jones (2015) carried out a netnography study to understand knowledge sharing in online brand communities. Within the banking sector, Ozdora-Aksak and Atakan-Duman (2015) focus on Turkey's banking sector to understand how they construct and support organisational identities through corporate social responsibility activities.

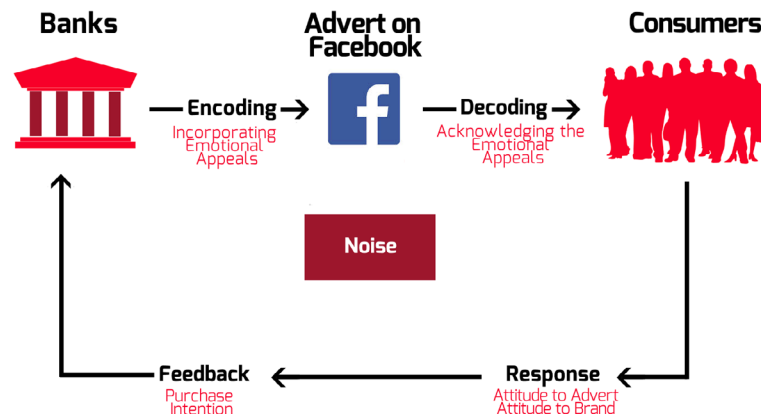
As Tsai and Men (2013) note, academic research struggles to keep pace with the rapid growth of SNSs. The possibility of customers' comments on social media providing insights into their perceptions and attitudes to advertisements has not been explored. This highlights a gap that this research hopes to fill. The study focuses on examining the possibility that self-reports from consumers (through their Facebook comments) can indicate their emotional responses and attitude to the advertisements. It draws attention to a social function that allows customers to interact with brands and for brands to have a better understanding of how their consumers engage with their advertisement and importantly too, attitude-toward-the-ad theory which suggests that a positive attitude to the advertisement in turn has a positive effect on purchase intention (PI) (Bruner & Kumar, 2000).

### 3. Conceptual framework

Advertising can be seen as a process whereby brands communicate marketing messages to consumers through various mass communication media. This is in line with communication being: "a process in which the participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding" (Rogers & Kincaid, 1981, p. 63). The senders and receivers are considered as participants in this process. Unlike one-way communication, where the sender disseminates information to audiences without regard for the response (Martinelli, 2006), Kotler's (1967), it is different in this sense as it allows for responses from the receiver and feedback to the sender.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework for the study, incorporating Kotler's communication model. It focuses on the interaction and relatedness between the sender and the receiver, in this case, Lloyds Banks (the sender) is broadcasting its anniversary advertisement (the message)

**Figure 1. The conceptual framework for the study.**



encoded with emotional appeals (the sound and images), these messages are communicated through Facebook (the channel) to the customers (the receivers) and they are expected to decode the advertisements in order to react and provide feedback.

Catherine Kehoe, the Managing Director for brands and marketing at Lloyds Bank, said:

We wanted to acknowledge our 250th anniversary with a campaign that dramatises the role Lloyds Bank has played in its customers' and communities' lives through the years. Our iconic symbol—the black horse—is the vehicle used to demonstrate quiet determination and trust, by your side through good times and bad.

In addition, Mat Goff, the Managing Director of Adam & Eve/DDB, said:

The black horse is one of the most enduring icons on the British high street. It represents the endurance, service and partnership that Lloyds has always provided its customers and is the perfect creative device for marking Lloyds' 250th anniversary.

All these indicate the creative efforts by the Lloyds brands in developing an advertisement that they hoped consumers would be able to interact with (especially the choice of the iconic black horse). Scott (1994) noted that in understanding the appropriateness of an image for an advertisement, advertisers need to acknowledge that consumers will interpret these advertisements based on their cultural background and experiences. The responses and feedback (attitude to the advertisement) will be analysed through their comments on this video. Understanding this attitude-toward-the-ad theory is irreplaceable as it provides insight into consumers' opinions and choices (Hadija, Barnes, & Hair, 2012) and using social media as a channel of distribution, it allows the brands to receive immediate feedback about their advertisements. This is unlike television or print advertisements, where the brands do not have access to consumers' immediate thoughts and perceptions.

As the increasing popularity of social media creates many opportunities for practitioners as well as academics (Ozdora-Aksak & Atakan-Duman, 2015), this research aims to contribute to the growing body of literature seeking to understand consumers' responses to advertisements, as well as providing insight into how brands can use social media to interact with their customers. The research will also try to illustrate how emotional responses can be verbally expressed through social media and how organisations can tap into these comments to shape their advertising strategies.

The research is significant because it aims to contribute theoretically to the understanding of consumers' attitudes to advertisements through social media. To achieve these aims, the study posed the following research questions:



- RQ1: Do consumers verbally report their emotional responses to advertisements on social media?
- RQ2: If they do, what feature(s) of the advertisement arouses the emotions?

#### 4. Methodology

The research methodology used for this study is content analysis. Berelson (1952, p. 18) and Krippendorff (1980, p. 21) offer two of the most widely accepted definitions of content analysis. While Berelson defines it as a technique for an objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication, for Krippendorff, it is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from the data to their context. Content analysis is an effective research method because it provides data that are empirical, systematic and objective (Chan & Cheng, 2012).

##### 4.1. Data collection

The data collection process involved viewing the comments (including clicking on “see more”) and replies on the Facebook video (available at <https://www.facebook.com/lloydsbank/videos/922001024533805/> and on YouTube—<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6eZ3WQCjhA>). These comments were printed out and a serial number was assigned to each comment and reply. In line with previous studies (Brebner, 2003; Haavisto & Sandberg, 2015), emotions reported in the comments were coded deductively in line with the widely employed typology (e.g. Eid & Diener, 2001; Laros & Steenkamp, 2005) of four positives (affection, contentment, happiness and pride) and four negatives (anger, fear, sadness and shame).

##### 4.2. Sampling

Unlike previous studies that have purposefully recruited Facebook participants, this study has only extracted comments from the advertisements and therefore does not have detailed information about the demography of the users who leave comments. However, the basic demography of UK Facebook users can provide insights into the participants leaving these comments on this particular Lloyds advert.

With 1.44 billion monthly active users (MAUs) as of 31 March 2015, Facebook is considered the market leader for social networking sites (Patterson, 2015), with 31 million users in the UK alone. The demographic is fairly gender stable with 49% men and 51% women and the biggest age demographic is 24–34-year olds who account for nearly 30% of traffic (White, 2015). Ofcom (2015) reported on the UK’s adult media use and attitudes found that more than 8 in 10 social media users in the UK considered their Facebook profile to be their main social media site and more than 8 in 10 with a social media profile on any site or app considered Facebook to be their main profile. The report also indicated that women are more likely to have a profile on Facebook (99% vs. 95%).

Importantly, the demography of the participants leaving comments can also be considered to be UK-based residents who have a bank account and most likely with Lloyds Bank, as the bank has over 30 million customers and is the UK’s leading provider of current accounts, savings, personal loans, credit cards and mortgages (Lloyds Bank, 2016); and the participants are more likely to be aware of the global financial crisis and government bailout.

##### 4.3. Coding procedure

In order to guarantee the objectivity and reliability of the results, two individuals, independent of each other, served as the coders. They coded all the comments for this study. They were not involved in the research and were not familiar with the design of the study or its purposes. As adopted by Mogaji (2015), a number of dimensions were used and, following the research questions described above, the different categories of the analysis were pre-tested. Each of the coders was offered eight hours of training, which began with an explanation of the content analysis method and the processes involved. They were offered the codebooks, and regular meetings were scheduled at which

**Table 2. Reliability coefficients for the coding categories**

Coding category		Krippendorff's alpha
Comments	Comment	0.998
	Reply	1.000
Whose comment	Lloyds bank	1.000
	Facebook users	0.997
Reported emotions	Positive emotions	0.981
	Negative emotions	0.942

the coding team reviewed each code and definition in the codebook to make sure they were being used consistently. This is the guideline recommended by Kolbe and Burnett (1991).

#### 4.4. Intercoder reliability

Valid coding relies greatly on data and instrument reliability (Krippendorff, 2013). The following steps were followed:

- (1) One hundred comments were randomly selected to test the intercoder reliability between the two coders.
- (2) The different categories of the analysis were pre-tested and each coder coded the advertisement.
- (3) The findings were compared.
- (4) An intercoder reliability check was assessed using both Cohen's Kappa and Krippendorff's alpha level of agreement presented in Table 2 (ranging from 0.993 to 1.00).

Neuendorf (2002), who reviews "rules of thumb" set out by several methodologists, concludes that "coefficients of 0.90 or greater would be acceptable to all, 0.80 or greater would be acceptable in most situations". After initial coding, the differences were discussed and collectively resolved with the author, and the adjusted scores were analysed.

## 5. Results

The main objective of this study was to identify if and how consumers verbally report their emotional reactions when exposed to emotionally appealing advertisements on social media. This section presents the study's results and findings. It also presents the Facebook comments to demonstrate the depth of the insights they can provide when applied to a specific advertisement. Comments and replies by Lloyds Bank and Facebook users were analysed both in terms of content and themes to identify patterns in these verbal reports. In all, 703 comments and replies about the Lloyds advertisement were coded over a three-week period (22 days), from when the advertisement was posted on Facebook on 8 September 2015 till 29 September 2015.

Table 3 illustrates the breakdown of the comments and replies that were content analysed. It was observed that Lloyds Bank did not make any comments, but instead replied to comments about the advertisement and the brand. A total of 703 comments and replies were extracted for analyses over

**Table 3. User cross-tabulation of comments and replies by the users**

	User		Total
	Lloyds bank	Facebook user	
Comment	0	501	501
Reply	105	97	202
Total	105	598	703

the three-week period. These consisted of 501 comments and 97 replies from Facebook users, including Lloyds Banks customers and non-customers, and 105 replies from Lloyds Bank. The comments and replies from Facebook users accounted for 85.6% ( $n = 598$ ) of the total sample and were considered for analysis. Emotional responses to the advertisement from Lloyds Bank's staff were considered neutral, and excluded from further analysis. To help protect the identities of the Facebook users, their relevant comments were cited by referring to their first-name and surname initials only.

### **5.1. RQ1. Self-report of emotions on social media?**

In analysing the comments, verbal expressions of emotion were observed. Of all the 598 comments and replies from Facebook users, 47.6% ( $n = 285$ ) were about the advertisement, while the remaining were comments about the brand (Lloyds Bank), as well as consumers seeking answers to questions and those using the platform to interact with the brand and other users. Though the study was set out to identify emotional responses to the advertisement, the attitude towards the Lloyds brand was conspicuously present, especially emotions of anger towards the brand. Even though the attitudes towards the advertisement were verbally reported, consumers still used the platform to express their attitude towards the iconic brand.

Have been extremely pleased with Lloyd's service so far! And LOVE the commercial. MB

Been banking with Lloyds for 19 years now ... Opened my first account when I was 17. Always been happy and LOVE this advert. It is my favourite advert on TV at the moment! AM

Oooh not liking these bad comments. Personally I have never had a problem with Lloyds, always been very helpful and I have even moved my kids accounts over to Lloyds from another bank so I'm hoping I now don't experience bad banking lol. As for the advert I can't watch it as it brings tears to my eyes (stupid I know) but then I could never watch black beauty as soon as the music came on I would cry lol TD

Oh dear some negative feedback for the company here but I absolutely love the advert. MA

Don't think this was the response the bank in question was expecting, so many bad experiences with this bank so many people have had, myself & wife included, that horse can gallop off for good in my opinion! FM

Great advert, awful bank. FW

I hate these stupid emotional bank adverts that keep popping up. They are trying to get people emotionally attached to an industry that has so much wealth and almost destroyed the country. GP

So bored of banks making mushy squishy teary sniffy lovee dovee shmulty ads when we all know it's just about the bottom line, cold hard cash, and screwing every customer for everything they are worth. Just tell us like it is. GM

You cant really take credit for the beauty and bravery of horses throughout the years ... nice ad though but not really relevant to your banking ... RE

Whats Iconic is the fact that you have a TV advert showing how great horses have been and then try and join that up to what you do for a living, in the hope that people will associate the goodness of a horse with your brand, why not do an advert showing how much you charge over the base rate, how much your directors get paid, and where the profit comes from (all those £25.00 charges) actually show what you do ? TL

Table 4 presents a breakdown of the 285 comments about the advertisement (verbal self-reports of emotions) from the analysed comments of Facebook users: 78.2% ( $n = 223$ ) reported a positive emotion, 11.6% (33) reported a negative emotion and 10.2% (29) were neutral. A statistically significant relationship was found between the comments and emotional response to the advertisement

**Table 4. User cross-tabulation of comments and replies with regard to attitudes to brand and advertisement**

	Attitude		Total
	About advert	About brand	
<i>Comment</i>	277	224	501
<i>Reply</i>	32	170	202
<i>Total</i>	309	394	703

(chi-square = 58.788, df = 1,  $p = .000$ ) and this further suggests that consumers can verbally report their emotional responses to advertisements on Facebook and, in particular, that this Lloyds Bank advertisement aroused positive emotions from the viewers.

As illustrated in Table 5, of those who reported a positive attitude towards the advertisement, 52.4% ( $n = 117$ ) said they loved it. Love was the highest emotion aroused towards the advertisement, followed by pride (50), happiness (28) and contempt (19). Nineteen positive emotions could not be classified among these four basic positive emotions. Almost half of the comments that reported a negative attitude towards the advertisement were angry about it: 23 (75.7%) comments. Three comments indicated they were saddened by the advertisement. Shame and fear as negative emotions were not identified from the comments. Five comments were unclassified.

As evidenced by the comments presented in Table 6, love was the predominantly reported emotional response to the advertisement; even though it is from a brand not well perceived, the advertisement was well received, moving viewers to tears and bringing back memories. Furthermore, even though the advertisement was well received with an overwhelming report of positive emotions, a negative attitude towards the advertisement was also reported.

## 5.2. RQ2: Feature(s) arousing the emotions

In as much as these emotional reactions were being publicly reported, three emerging channels of emotional reactions were observed. They were the black horse, the background music and the models. These creative features were found to have aroused emotional reactions from Facebook users, as evidenced by their comments and replies.

The black horse received a lot of attention with 72.3% of those who reported a positive emotion to the advertisement acknowledging the presence of the horse. The presence of such an iconic animal was also considered important in arousing emotions, both positive and negative, as presented in Table 7. The horse was associated with loving emotions, with comments highlighting the pride individuals had in their horses and also their past experiences with horses. The transfer of cultural meaning of the horse could also have contributed to the positive attitude of consumers towards the advertisement. However, the treatment of the horse in the advertisement also aroused some negative emotions. A number of viewers were angry at the treatment of the horse and found it disturbing.

**Table 5. Positive and negative attitudes to the advertisement**

Attitude	$n = 223$	%	Attitude	$n = 33$	%
Positive emotions			Negative emotions		
Love	117	52.4	Anger	25	75.7
Pride	50	22.4	Sadness	3	9.0
Happiness	28	12.5	Fear	–	–
Contempt	19	8.5	Shame	–	–
Unclassified	9	4.0	Unclassified	5	15.1

**Table 6. Attitude towards the advertisement**

Positive attitude to the advertisement	<p>I love this new advert, makes me cry every time I see it - simply beautiful. Thanks again x JD</p> <p>Just like to say...I absolutely love this advert. Made me very teary. My children tell me everytime it's on! LA</p> <p>As for the advert I can't watch it as it brings tears to my eyes (stupid I know) but then I could never watch black beauty as soon as the music came on I would cry lol TR</p> <p>On a positive note, thanks Lloyds bank for giving such a moving and wonderful advert. I love it, more adverts like this is please (smile emoticon) RA</p> <p>I'm not with Lloyds bank but I do like the advert. JO</p> <p>I personally love the black horse! And that is the symbolic image I will always remember Lloyds for. BN</p> <p>I absolutely adore this advert. It is by far the best Lloyds have ever had. The horses are breath-taking. SLC</p> <p>I love this advert! It has to be one of the best I have seen for a long time. Well done Lloyds bank!! SM</p> <p>Love this advert and my 2 year old stops what he is doing when the ad comes on. Keep it running!! Music, horse and story are fab!!!!. SW</p> <p>This advert made me cry when I first saw it! It's a great advert!. SK</p>
Negative attitude to the advertisement	<p>Not interested in this ad. Not even going to watch. Don't bank with you and I'm not interested in you. ED</p> <p>I hate this advert too many horses show evidence of pain in the mouth, the soldiers all have horses showing conflict, the dray horse reaction is worthy of a claim for animal cruelty. ...why not show a bitless horse like you used to? JM</p> <p>Horrible advert, suggesting that, because horses have been a friend to humanity for 250 years, a bank that uses a horse as their symbol must also be a friend. There for you in hard places, at tough times. Right. It's a bank, not a horse. It wants your money, to enrich its shareholders. The pomposity and self regard of this advert staggers me each time I see it. BL</p>

Secondly, the background music for the advertisement is *Wings*, by Birdy. This is considered to be the most emotionally appealing feature of the advertisement, with 67.7% of those who reported a positive attitude to the advertisement making reference to the song as the most appealing feature. Both Lloyds Bank and other Facebook users were able to engage with each other with regard to the song. It is also important to note that, unlike the changing locations and models, the song ran consistently through the entire advertisement. This consistency could be considered engaging and emotionally appealing (presented in Table 8 are the emotions aroused by the background music).

Thirdly, the models used for the advertisement were considered as one of the creative features arousing emotional reactions from Facebook users; even though many models were used for different scenes of the advertisements, individual viewers were able to identify the particular feature that triggers their emotions, an example is the disabled lady at the end of the advertisement riding a horse—some considered that very touching which further supports the work of Mogaji (2015), highlighting the need for reflecting diversity in advertisements. Presented in Table 9 are the emotions aroused by the models used in the advertisement, with only one negative emotion regarding the models being actually reported as at the time of data collection.

Building on the attitude to advertisement construct which ends with the intention to purchase, comments on this advertisement assessing Facebook users' likelihood to bank and/or continue to bank with the brand were also acknowledged, further suggesting that a positive attitude towards the advert can enhance the purchase intention, perhaps if there is no pre-existing brand knowledge, like the case of Lloyds Bank.

**Table 7. Emotions aroused by the iconic black horse in the advertisement**

Positive emotions aroused by the horse	<p>This advert makes me cry everything I watch it as the horse reminds me so much of mine who I had to have put to sleep 2 years ago. JL</p> <p>I personally love the black horse! And that is the symbolic image I will always remember Lloyds for... I think the video is lovely. BC</p> <p>Love the advert I well up nearly every time though! I love horses and this is a very moving piece. LH</p> <p>This is literally the best advert on TV, I know all of us equestrians have shed a tear and given our own horses that extra cuddle after watching this! Amazing animals. Thank you x TW</p> <p>My 18 month old niece is obsessed with the horses. I've had to watch this advert so many times stood in front of the TV. She loves the horses and reaches out to them whenever it plays. LP</p> <p>No comment on the bank thing but this advert always makes me cry (because I'm an old softie horse owner) - and love the Friesians in this advert ... SB</p> <p>This advert always makes my girlfriend cry, she has a black Warmblood x Friesian and it reminds her of her. AD</p> <p>For my little boy who simply loves and respects horses and riding them, we adore your advert. AT</p>
Negative emotions aroused by the horse	<p>The advert makes me a little sad actually. The poor horses had no choice to go to war and those that survived were left abroad to die. SR</p> <p>And not one patted the horse, that I can see SM</p> <p>Poor horse sorry they should be free BW</p> <p>Don't like the fact you are using horses in your advertisement To me all it shows is how man has exploited horses through the years Horses are not ours to enslave or use as entertainment ML</p> <p>You can't really take credit for the beauty and bravery of horses throughout the years ...nice ad though but not really relevant to your banking RN</p> <p>Great ad except the milk float bit except where the horse was needlessly yanked in the mouth CD</p>

**Table 8. Emotions aroused by the background music**

Positive emotions aroused by the music	<p>I love the song u have used for this advert x DH</p> <p>Love the music that accompanies this ad. Does anyone know what it is? ST</p> <p>I really like the song that's goes with this advert. CD</p> <p>I love the advert. I can't help but sing along with it well done SH</p> <p>The music guiding through a series of event, the intensification of the music is also quite emotional and I liked it. PK</p> <p>The music fits perfectly with the video, It is quite soothing and makes one feel at ease, is that really through with banking? RE</p>
Negative emotions aroused by the music	<p>Please stop playing this advert. The song is now like nails down a blackboard to me and it's on every single bloody commercial break. Please, please, please stop SH</p> <p>Wrong choice of song, the lyrics says we watch the day go by and made me think of you, really angered by this song and thinking of how Lloyds has treated me. I had to switch to get a better deal elsewhere. VB</p>



**Table 9. Emotions aroused by the models used in the advertisement**

Positive emotions aroused by the models	<p>I love the way the woman smiles at her husband as they plough the field. Just one look shows so much love. AJ</p> <p>Did anyone notice the diversity of characters? The black Caribbean family, the disabled lady? It is important to allow everyone, Feels nice seeing this kind of advert on TV. JE</p> <p>I like the expression on that black bride whose father got a black horse for the wedding. I will like one for my special day. I love this advert, but may be not Lloyds. SR</p> <p>What left a strong mark on me was the last part of support given by the 'black horse' to the disabled woman, I could see inclusion and support but I think the idea is more focused on the bank. SP</p> <p>I like this ad...especially the disabled lady, kissing the horse n riding off...AR</p> <p>The disabled even showed her love to the horse by kissing him. Quite emotional I must say. DI</p> <p>That woman overcoming her disability, interesting, is that Lloyds' doing too? WW</p> <p>Disability is always a difficult issue to pull in advertisement but seems Lloyds was able pull it over perfectly with the lady riding on the horse. MM.</p>
Negative emotion aroused by the models	<p>I never liked war, lost my son in the war and seeing the war scene and the soldiers makes me cringe. BN</p>

Shall I swap my NatWest account to yours? I like your horse! I'm £1000 overdrawn at the moment? Please advise? RF

Absolutely love your advert. It captured me the first time I saw it. It's beautiful and certainly gets potential customers' attention. Well done! CL

I love the Black horse that the reason I'm client of Lloyds bank for long time. DT

Have been extremely pleased with Lloyd's service so far! And LOVE the commercial. MB

Been banking with Lloyds for 19 years now ... Opened my first account when I was 17. Always been happy and LOVE this advert. It's my favourite ad on tv at the moment! AB

## 6. Discussion

It has to be acknowledged that Lloyds Bank has created an emotionally appealing advertisement to celebrate its 250th anniversary and reach out to its customers. Incorporating the iconic black horse with upbeat music, the advertisement symbolically highlights how the bank has supported its consumers over the years. As evidenced by the comments left on the Facebook video, consumers by and large liked the advertisement. They liked the choice of the black horse and the cover music, justifying the creative effort of Adam & Eve/DDB.

The study highlights the possibilities Facebook offers to its users to interrelate with brands and publicly declare their emotional reactions. This is consistent with previous research which indicates that emotions are voluntarily social media and online forums, albeit both negative and positive emotions (Chu, 2011; Haavisto & Sandberg, 2015). This public declaration on social media should be of great concern for brands and advertisers because it transfers the power to shape brand images from the hands of advertisers to the words of consumers' online connections (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2009), providing further insights for academic researchers and brand managers.

This study contributes to further understand the concept of attitude to advertisements and discover the nature of the underlying determinants of attitude to advertisements, especially for iconic

brands like Lloyds Bank. As Holt (2004) noted, iconic brands are nurtured over decades. In the case of Lloyds Bank, this is over 250 years and it is this long heritage which helped make the brand relevant, though authenticity, credibility and trust have been known to provide leverage for such brands (Aaker, 1996). This has not been the case for Lloyds Bank, as the attitude towards the brand which is, in most cases, actually negative overshadows the attitude towards the advertisement which this study set out to explore.

Even though MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) suggested that the consumers' affective reaction towards the brand is expected, the study could not prove that attitude towards advertisement had a significant effect on attitude towards the brand. Instead, it was found that the negative attitude towards the brand is still been reported, despite their positive attitude towards the advertisement, suggesting the possibilities that a disliked brand can still develop an emotionally appealing advertisement, but might not necessarily improve the attitude towards the brand itself. In the case of Lloyds Bank, the credibility of the advertisement was doubted, but the creative features (the black horse, the music and the models) enhanced the perceptions and emotional appeals of the advertisement. The prior brand attitude towards the Lloyds Bank brand was also found to affect the attitude towards the advertisement.

Prospective advertisers can explore these opportunities to identify what consumers find interesting in advertisements and how best to develop their creative strategies. Brands will be able to explore what features of their advertisements work the best (and the worst) for their target consumers and continue to use (or not use) the elements in future advertisements. This is consistent with research by Burton, McAlister, and Hoyer (2015), which emphasises the importance of advertisers having a better understanding of how their consumers respond to advertisements. Such knowledge should ensure a balance between delivered messages and the informational and entertainment needs of their target audience.

This study corroborates a study by Haavisto and Sandberg (2015), which indicates that a variety of consumer emotions are expressed on social media. As well, it adds credibility to the suggestion that the categorisation of basic consumer emotions proposed by Laros and Steenkamp (2005) works seemingly well on social media interaction between customers and brands. The findings, however, do not support previous studies, indicating that negative emotions dominate online consumer discussions (Angelis, Bonezzi, Peluso, Rucker, & Costabile, 2012; Haavisto & Sandberg, 2015; Lee & Cude, 2012). It was found that consumers were actually positive in this case. The platform and subject of discussion could have caused the variation.

## 7. Conclusion

This study has analysed Facebook comments on the Lloyds 250th anniversary video to understand how consumers verbally report their emotional responses and attitudes to the advertisement. As previous studies have used interviews, surveys and other instruments to elicit consumers' responses to advertisements, analysing Facebook comments as a form of verbal self-report is considered a unique and different approach because the participants are not under any influence or in any laboratory setting to report their feelings, but voluntarily do so on social media.

The study has significant theoretical and marketing practice implications for academics, advertisers, brand managers and social media marketing practitioners. Corroborating the attitude to advertisements theory by Bruner and Kumar (2000), the consumers were emotionally attracted to the advertisement and more likely to enhance their intention to bank with the brand. The study also introduces the possibility of analysing Facebook comments on brand content to understand consumers' emotional responses and attitudes to the brand. Though Poels and Dewitte (2006) have provided a number of tools to measure emotional responses, it is believed that this proposed technique allows researchers and practitioners to have a greater insight into consumers' attitudes to their advertisements, to capture the public display of attitude to the brand and advertisement and to provide

managers with important insights that can guide the development and execution of their advertising campaigns.

This study also provides managers with the opportunity to allocate their resources better to achieve greater results in evaluating advertisements, and to guarantee greater recall effects and greater consumer engagement with creative advertisements. As brands need to understand how effective their advertisements are, this study provides insight into the possibilities of eliciting this information from social media comments. The brands can get insights into how well the advertisement is being received without even spending much on market research or street intercepts to ask viewers. In addition, advertising agencies can also use this medium to justify their creative decisions and strategies. Based on these analyses, advertisers can understand what the consumers want in advertisements and how to appeal strategically to their emotions.

As noted by Lehnert et al. (2013), creative advertisements are more effective, but not much is known about the mechanisms through which creativity influences consumer responses. Findings from this study provide marketing managers with the opportunity to better assess the value of using creativity in advertising. A deeper knowledge of how creativity influences consumer responses to advertising can potentially enhance the effectiveness of advertising campaigns.

#### **8. Limitation and future research**

The fact that this study is based on a real-life advertisement and real-life responses from social media network users can be considered as one of its strengths. In line with a previous study by Mortimer (2008), it does not suffer from various issues relating to experimental studies. Nonetheless, several limitations must be addressed.

Unlike other data gathering methods, the demography of the participants cannot be ascertained, as the data mining process does not involve extracting personal details from Facebook users leaving those comments. Additionally, privacy settings may not allow the demography to be extracted. Nevertheless, the qualitative data extracted can be considered valid as it was from real Facebook users who are interested in engaging with the brand.

The study confined itself to the analysis of one video from one bank in the UK. Although a comparatively large sample of comments were analysed, the results might not be generalisable. Nonetheless, the findings in this study shed light on how verbal reports of emotional responses can identify consumers' attitudes to the brand and advertisement. Further research should try to analyse comments from another Lloyds Bank, advertisements and social media networks as this may provide a different pattern.

The complexity of emotions itself and the difficulty in developing measures of emotional response to advertisements have been acknowledged (Morris, 1995). Although this study aims at expanding existing knowledge within this area, it has mainly relied on the operationalisation of basic consumer emotions, as verbally reported through the Facebook comments. More research is needed to explore social media to gain insight into consumers' attitude to advertisements. As Haavisto and Sandberg (2015) note, our understanding of emotional responses towards brand content on social media, as an insight into consumer behaviour, remains largely unexplored.

Facebook recently launched "reactions", a form of smiley that allows users to respond more precisely to content and expands the human emotional spectrum on Facebook. The new "reactions" are: Love, haha, yay, wow, sad and angry (Newton, 2015; Parkinson, 2015). These could be used in future research to elicit a clearer understanding of consumers' attitudes towards advertisements. As

Heine (2015) reports, brand managers and agency executives appear to be in favour of the smiley because the number of “likes”, “wows” and “angrys” will show how users really feel about the brand-end content and allow for instant meaningful communication.

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