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REVIEW ARTICLE

Emotional appeals in marketing: a systematic literature review and research agenda

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Abstract

This study presents a comprehensive synthesis of the literature on emotional appeals in marketing, conducted through a systematic review of 136 peer-reviewed articles retrieved from the Web of Science and Scopus. Using data mining and topic modelling techniques in R, the analysis uncovers 14 latent thematic clusters that reflect the evolving role of emotions across domains such as advertising, branding, consumer engagement, and digital media. Beyond mapping existing contributions, the study addresses conceptual fragmentation and terminological inconsistencies by proposing an integrative framework that connects emotional constructs across strategic and operational marketing contexts. A key outcome of this review is the development of a structured research agenda that identifies underexplored areas, such as collective emotional processing, real-time engagement on digital platforms, and emotional branding in emerging sectors, and offers direction for future theoretical and empirical work. Additionally, this paper offers a framework structured using the TCM (Theory–Characteristics–Methodology) model, which helps position the identified gaps and suggests actionable pathways for advancing research in the field. By consolidating scattered insights and systematising future research priorities, this study contributes as a roadmap for scholars seeking to deepen their understanding of how emotions influence the dynamics in the increasingly complex marketing environment.

Keywords Emotional appeals · Emotional marketing · Systematic literature review · Topic modelling · Consumer-brand relationships · Research agenda

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1 Introduction

Emotions are affective responses triggered by stimuli and shaped by individuals' appraisals of their environment, reflecting a form of cognitive readiness (Bagozzi et al., 1999). They involve both positive sensations and disruptive feelings (Lee et al., 2009). In marketing, interest in emotions has intensified as companies seek to build durable bonds between brands and consumers (Shahid et al., 2022). Emotional cues are known to capture attention, and consumer behaviour is often guided more by emotional states than by rational evaluation (Hudson et al., 2015). For instance, emotionally charged headline language can be subconsciously processed, attracting attention even when consumers are distracted (Nielsen et al., 2010).

Prior marketing literature identifies a wide range of emotional responding in market settings. Men, for instance, may exhibit heightened arousal when exposed to advertisements featuring attractive women (Van Den Bergh et al., 2008). Emotional cues can also shape product experiences, such as by enhancing perceived taste and increasing the appeal of fast food (Effertz et al., 2019). Similarly, luxury-associated coffee brands can evoke strong emotional engagement (Li et al., 2022). However, emotional reactions are not uniform, and consumer characteristics, including age, condition how individuals respond to stimuli (Williams & Drolet, 2005).

Despite extensive evidence supporting emotional appeals (Erevelles, 1998), their effects remain a subject of debate. Emotional messaging does not always generate positive outcomes and may instead cause resistance or alienation, resulting in brand avoidance (Rahimah et al., 2023). When executed effectively, however, emotional connections can strengthen long-term brand relationships. Emotionally connected consumers are more willing to forgive corporate transgressions, whereas weaker emotional ties are associated with more critical responses (Park & Nunes, 2025). At the same time, emotionally charged advertising has been linked to stronger engagement and memorability through the joint activation of affective and cognitive pathways, including heightened reward-related responses (Adalarasu et al., 2025).

Even with this growing body of research on emotional appeals in marketing, several gaps persist. First, the literature offers limited precision in classifying emotional appeals styles in business contexts. Many studies focus broadly on the distinction between positive versus negative emotions, which may not capture the full complexity of emotional dynamics. Second, while comparisons between emotional and rational appeals are well established, there remains a need for more granular classifications of emotional appeals styles and their specific effects (Aeron & Rahman, 2025; Sharma et al., 2023). Third, although emotional appeals have been extensively studied, a comprehensive synthesis of the marketing domains in which emotional appeals have been most prominent is still missing. To address these gaps, this paper offers a systematic review to clarifies how emotional appeals operate within marketing strategies and identifies where the literature is concentrated and where it remains fragmented.

Whereas prior reviews have examined specific contexts, such as the service industry (Arici et al., 2022) or sports sponsorship (Teal et al., 2020), this review adopts a broader scope. It offers a comprehensive analysis of emotional dynamics in marketing, encompassing both short-term tactical applications and long-term strategic per-

spectives. Unlike prior work that isolates individual emotions such as pride, shame, or anger (Aeron & Rahman, 2025; Arici et al., 2022) or focuses narrowly on feelings and moods (Kranzbühler et al., 2020), this study integrates these constructs into a broader theoretical and practical marketing framework (see Table 1). Methodologically, we complement conventional review procedures with data-mining techniques implemented in R software to enable systematic mapping and synthesis of academic contributions. Moreover, by focusing on articles published in journals indexed in Web of Science (WOS) and Scopus, we provide a rigorous evidence base that can inform both theory development and future empirical work.

This study aims to bridge key gaps in the literature by synthesising and systematising the leading research on emotional appeals in marketing. Specifically, it identifies core themes, evaluates conceptual progress, and proposes a structured roadmap for future investigation. Its contribution unfolds across five dimensions: (1) offering a holistic overview of existing literature, (2) employing data mining tools to extract deeper insights, (3) identifying emerging trends and novel directions, (4) highlighting critical research gaps and outlining a future agenda, and (5) developing an integrative framework that consolidates foundational concepts from prior studies. Grounded in the TCM framework (Theory, Characteristics, Methodology) (e.g., Aleem et al., 2024; Bilro & Loureiro, 2020), we organise future research opportunities across these three domains, offering a coherent map for advancing scholarship on emotional appeals in marketing.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. The next section outlines the materials and methods. This is followed by a descriptive analysis of the literature and a subsequent thematic analysis. The paper then presents the identified research gaps and outlines a future research agenda. Finally, the conclusions and implications are discussed.

2 Materials and methods

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) to examine the role of emotional appeals in marketing. A SLR enables a rigorous and transparent synthesis of prior academic research by following a predefined and replicable protocol. This methodology is well suited for integrating fragmented evidence across domains and for refining theoretical and methodological understanding (Christofi et al., 2017). By consolidating diverse contributions, the review provides a comprehensive understanding of how emotional strategies are deployed within marketing contexts.

This review aims to clarify how emotional appeals are conceptualised and operationalised in the marketing literature, while identifying gaps and emerging trends that can inform future research. To ensure rigour and relevance, we focus on peer reviewed journal articles indexed in Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus, consistent with established practice in recent reviews (Aleem et al., 2024). WoS and Scopus are widely used bibliographic databases with selective coverage and established editorial standards, supporting the identification of high-quality research (Clarivate, 2021). Consistent with prior review protocols, we also treated journal outlets as a proxy for quality when assessing the robustness and contribution of included studies (Bilro et

Table 1 Reviews of literature focusing on emotion in business contexts

Authors	Research Method	Area	Queries	Criteria	Databases	Final papers
(Kranzbühler et al., 2020)	Meta Analysis	Firm-customer interactions across various business sectors	The search included broad emotion-related terms such as "emotion*", "feeling*", "affect*", "mood*", as well as specific discrete emotions. Additionally, context-specific keywords such as "customer*", "consumer*", "service", "shopping", "retail", "store" were used to ensure relevance to firm-customer interactions.	1. Studies should be related to firm-customer encounters (either real-life experiences, recalled experiences, or experimental vignettes). 2. Articles should include attitudinal or behavioral reactions to firm interactions, such as satisfaction, purchase behavior, or word-of-mouth. 3. Only studies that manipulated or measured discrete emotions were considered.	EBSCO Business Source Premier, Web of Science, Google Scholar	112
(Arici et al., 2022)	Bibliometric Analysis	Service Industry	'anger', 'disgust', 'envy', 'jealousy', 'anxiety', 'fear', 'guilt', 'shame', 'relief', 'hope', 'sadness', 'depression', 'happiness', 'pride', 'love', 'gratitude', 'compassion'.	1. Clear applicability to the service sector. 2. Studies on "emotions" published in 17 journals specializing in service, tourism, and hospitality up until December 31, 2021.	Scopus	647
(Taqi et al., 2025)	Systematic Literature Review	Different areas	"Brand" + "Hate"	1. Articles published between 2009 and 2023 2. Only journal articles and conference papers were considered	Web of Science, Scopus, Emerald Insight, EBSCO, Science Direct, and Wiley	86

Table 1 (continued)

Authors	Research Method	Area	Queries	Criteria	Databases	Final papers
				3. Inclusion of studies from all countries and disciplines 4. Focus on articles explicitly discussing brand hate in the marketing and consumer behavior context		
(Teal et al., 2020)	Literature Review	Elite sports sponsorships	Three levels were applied including sponsorship (search terms: sponsorship, event marketing, cause-related marketing, advertising, marketing messages, social marketing); sport/health (search terms: sport, heath promotion, health campaign, public service announcement, health message, health communication, intention, health behavior); emotions (search terms: emotion, feel, affect, mood).	1. Studies published in peer-reviewed English journals since 2000 until Oct 2018 2. Focus on sport sponsorship, health communication, and emotions	PsychInfo, ScienceDirect, Web of Science, ProQuest, Sport Discus, Medline, Communication and Mass Media Complete, Emerald, and EBSCO	39
			For example (e.g. [sponsorship OR market*mess* OR leverage* OR sport brands]+[sport*OREvent*]+[emotion ORaffectORfeel*])	3. Inclusion of studies where emotion was an independent variable affecting behavioral intention or health-related actions 4. Exclusion of review papers, conference papers, and studies that did not analyze elite sports sponsorship		
(Aeron & Rahman, 2025)	Systematic Literature Review	Consumer behavior and marketing	Search Keywords: "emotion" OR "pride" OR "proud", OR "love" OR "shame" OR "fear*" OR "anger*" OR "angry*" OR "sad*" OR "happy*" OR "contentment*".	1. Articles published between 1981 and 2023 2. Focused on business, management, and accounting journals 3. Only English-language publications included	Scopus	453

Table 1 (continued)

Authors	Research Method	Area	Queries	Criteria	Databases	Final papers
				4. Journals ranked A or A* in the ABDC list and ranked 4*,4 and 3 based on AJG 5. Studies had to directly refer to emotional states and processes 6. Articles that only mentioned emotions superficially or in unrelated contexts were excluded		

al., 2023). We searched WoS and Scopus for all eligible articles published up to 27 March 2025, without imposing an initial cut-off date. Consequently, the search was constrained only by the timeline of the research process, allowing for the inclusion of all relevant literature regardless of publication date. The review followed a five-phase process comprising search strategy design, data collection, relevance screening, quality assessment, and synthesis.

The search was guided by three key expressions intended to capture various dimensions of emotional marketing: "emotional marketing", "emotional branding", and "emotional advertising". These terms reflect different strategic and temporal orientations within marketing, ranging from short-term advertising tactics to long-term brand relationship strategies. In both databases, the search query was designed to include the following terms with truncation: "emotion* marketing" OR "emotion* advertis*" OR "emotion* brand*". Only English-language articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals with full-text availability were considered eligible for inclusion. Additional inclusion criteria were applied to ensure disciplinary relevance, with a focus on publications indexed under business, management, psychology, or marketing-related fields.

The initial search returned 236 articles from Web of Science and 338 from Scopus, resulting in a combined dataset of 574 records. These were then imported into a master Excel file for organisation and validation. A case-by-case comparison of titles and metadata was conducted to identify and remove duplicate entries. This process eliminated 218 overlapping articles, reducing the dataset to 356 unique publications.

Each of these 356 articles underwent a detailed screening process. Titles and abstracts were manually reviewed to determine whether the articles explicitly addressed emotional appeals in consumer-focused marketing contexts. Studies focusing exclusively on organisational behaviour, general psychological constructs, or business-to-business interactions without a clear marketing application were excluded. This screening led to the removal of 107 articles, resulting in a pool of 249 studies eligible for full-text assessment.

The remaining articles were then evaluated in detail according to pre-established criteria, following guidance from Macpherson and Holt (2007), as outlined in Appendix 1. This evaluation involved reading the full text of each article and assessing its relevance, methodological soundness, and contribution to the field. Articles that did not meet the necessary standards or that fell outside the thematic scope of the review were excluded at this stage. This resulted in the removal of a further 113 papers, leaving a final sample of 136 studies. These were then organised and segmented for the subsequent phases of analysis, as detailed in Appendix 2.

Of the 136 included articles, a substantial majority (approximately 85%, or 116 papers) were published in journals listed in the Academic Journal Guide (AJG) 2024, with quality ratings ranging from 1 to 4* (see Appendix 3). This distribution reflects the academic credibility and relevance of the selected literature, which is primarily situated within the fields of business and marketing. The overall selection and review process is visually summarised in Fig. 1.

Following the selection process, the final set of papers was analysed using data mining techniques, conducted through R software. This enabled the identification of key themes, trends, and research patterns, which were subsequently structured into

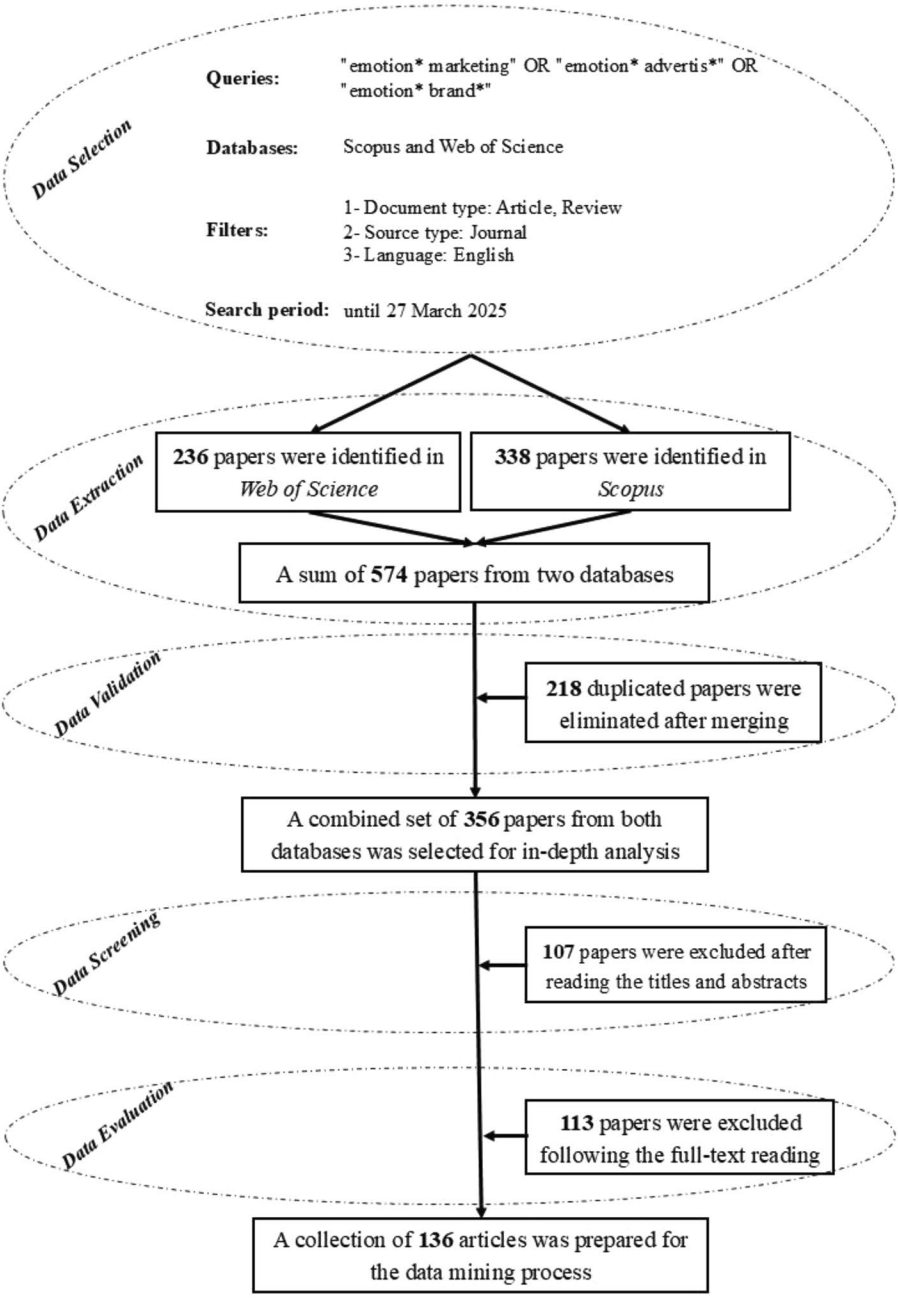


Fig. 1 Flow diagram of the systematic literature review paper selection process

an integrative analytical framework. The results of this analysis form the basis for the conceptual and theoretical contributions discussed in the following sections.

3 Descriptive analyses of literature

An examination of publication trends reveals that scholarly interest in emotional appeals in marketing began in 1995. Since then, the number of publications has varied, showing alternating periods of stagnation and renewed academic attention. An upward trajectory started in 2011, with a particularly sharp increase occurring in 2014, when the number of publications reached eight. The peak in publication output was observed in 2020, which recorded eighteen studies, followed by another high point in 2024, with sixteen publications. Although minor fluctuations persist, the general trend indicates a growing scholarly interest in this field. This is particularly evident over the past five years, during which the topic has attracted sustained academic attention. These trends are illustrated in Fig. 2.

In terms of publication outlets, four journals stand out for their consistent and significant contributions to the field. A citation network visualised using VOSviewer (Fig. 3) shows that the Journal of Product and Brand Management ($N=10$), European Journal of Marketing ($N=8$), Journal of Business Research ($N=7$), and Journal of Brand Management ($N=7$) collectively account for 23.5% of all included studies. Their prominence highlights their central role in shaping the academic dialogue on emotional appeals in marketing.

The citation network of authors, also generated through VOSviewer (Fig. 4), identifies several influential scholars who have significantly contributed to the development of this research area. Among the most frequently cited are Hoyer and Hudson, both of whom appear as central nodes within the network. The dense interconnec-

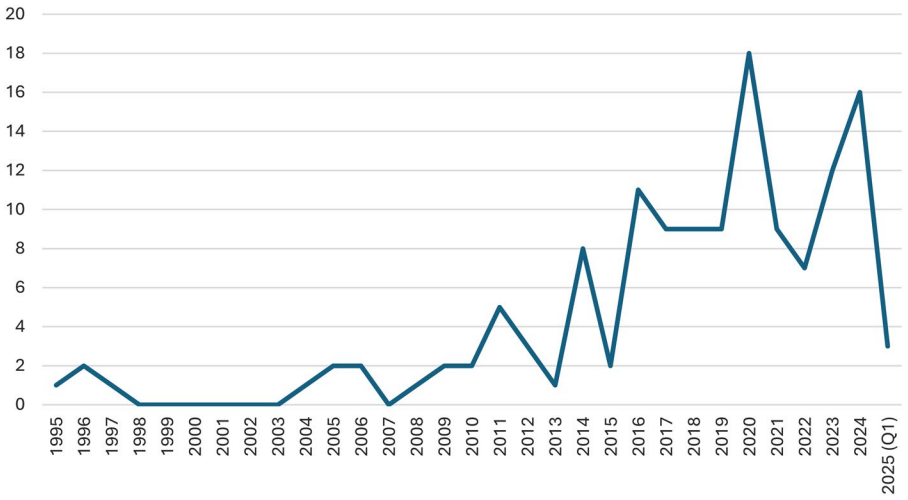


Fig. 2 Evolution of publication trends

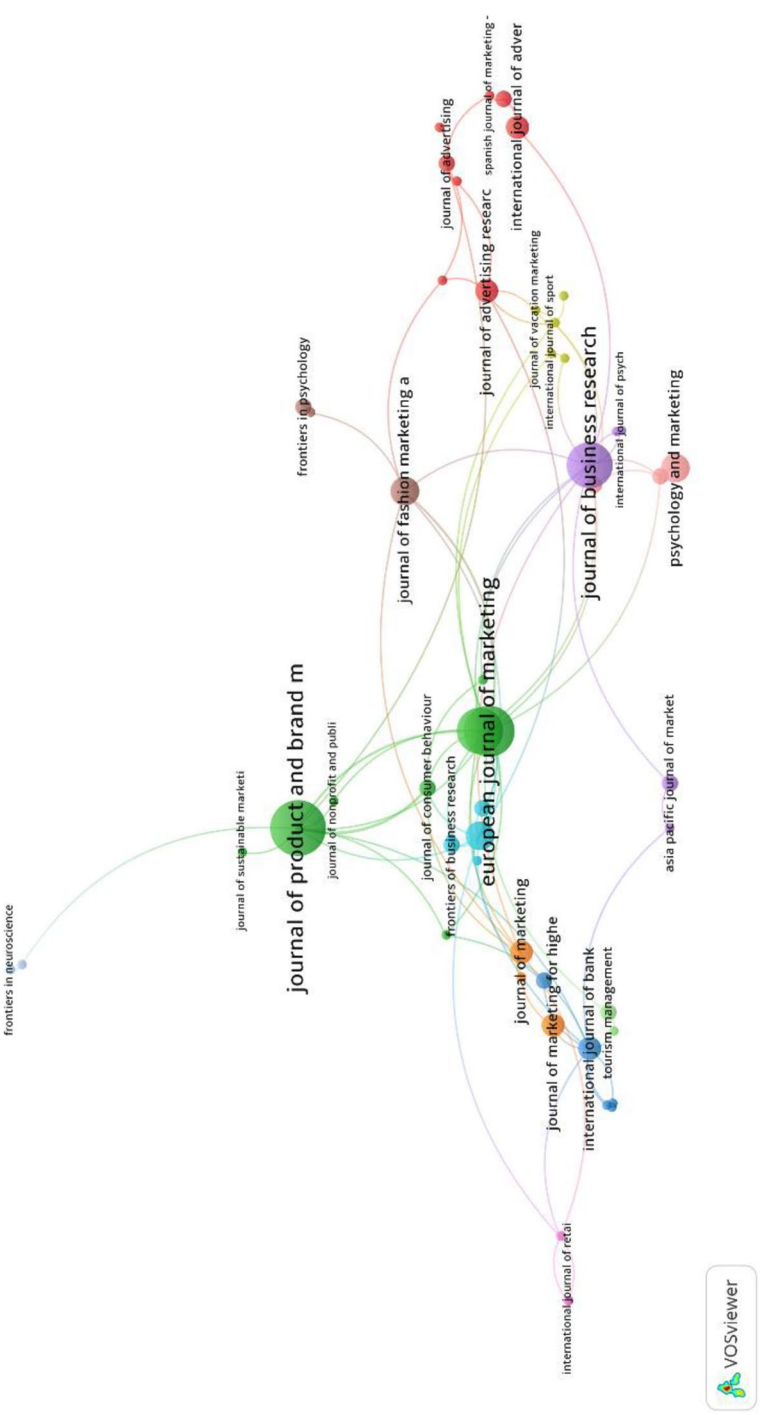


Fig. 3 Mapping citation networks based sources (sources not connected to others have been excluded)

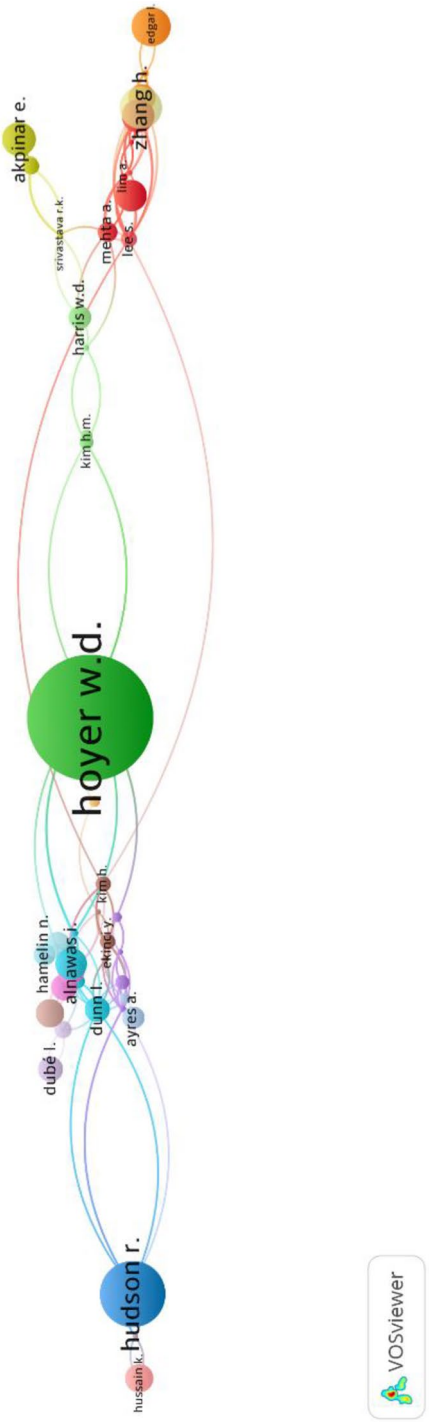


Fig. 4 Mapping citation networks and leading scholars (authors not connected to others have been excluded)

tions among these authors reflect a well-established pattern of academic collaboration and knowledge dissemination, reinforcing the intellectual structure of the field.

4 Thematic analyses of literature

4.1 Topic analysis procedure

To uncover the latent thematic structures within the 136 selected articles, a rigorous topic modelling procedure was employed. The full-text versions of all articles were systematically processed and transformed into analysable textual data using R software, following the guidance of established text-mining protocols (Breuer, 2017).

The initial phase of data preparation involved extracting the core content of each document and refining it for analysis and interpretation. This process included converting all text to lowercase, removing citations and bibliographic references, eliminating stop words, numbers, punctuation marks, and redundant white spaces (Aleem et al., 2024). Additionally, multi-word expressions that carried semantic significance were consolidated to preserve meaningful conceptual patterns. To further enhance coherence within the dataset, stemming techniques were applied to reduce words to their root forms, preventing different variants of the same term from being treated as distinct tokens (Wu et al., 2017).

Following this preprocessing stage, a document-term matrix was constructed to quantify the frequency of word occurrences across the corpus. Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), a widely used unsupervised learning algorithm, was then applied to the matrix to identify hidden thematic structures (Blei et al., 2003). As a probabilistic model, LDA clusters words into a predefined number of topics, referred to as K, by estimating the co-occurrence patterns of terms across documents. To address challenges posed by language ambiguity, such as synonymy and polysemy, dimensionality reduction techniques were also integrated into the analysis.

The optimal number of topic clusters was determined through an iterative evaluation of model fit, using log-likelihood estimation based on Gaussian Mixture Models (Bishop, 2006). A range of values, from K = 2 to K = 40, was tested, and the optimal solution was identified at K = 14, where a marked inflexion in the trend curve suggested the best balance between complexity and interpretability (Fig. 5).

A suite of R packages supported the text-mining workflow. The "tm" package provided the foundation for core text processing tasks (Feinerer et al., 2008), while "tidytext" structured the data into a tidy format suitable for analysis. The packages "dplyr" and "tidyr" facilitated efficient data manipulation (Grolemund & Wickham, 2017), "topicmodels" enabled the implementation of the LDA algorithm (Grün & Hornik, 2011), and "ggplot2" supported visual representation of the results (Wickham, 2016). Collectively, these tools contributed to a robust and replicable analytical pipeline. In addition, Gibbs sampling, a Monte Carlo-based iterative sampling method, was used within the LDA framework to estimate the distribution of topics across the corpus (Griffiths & Steyvers, 2004).

Within the topic model, two probability measures were central to interpreting the results: the Gamma and Beta distributions. The Gamma score indicates the probability of a given topic appearing within a specific document, reflecting the degree

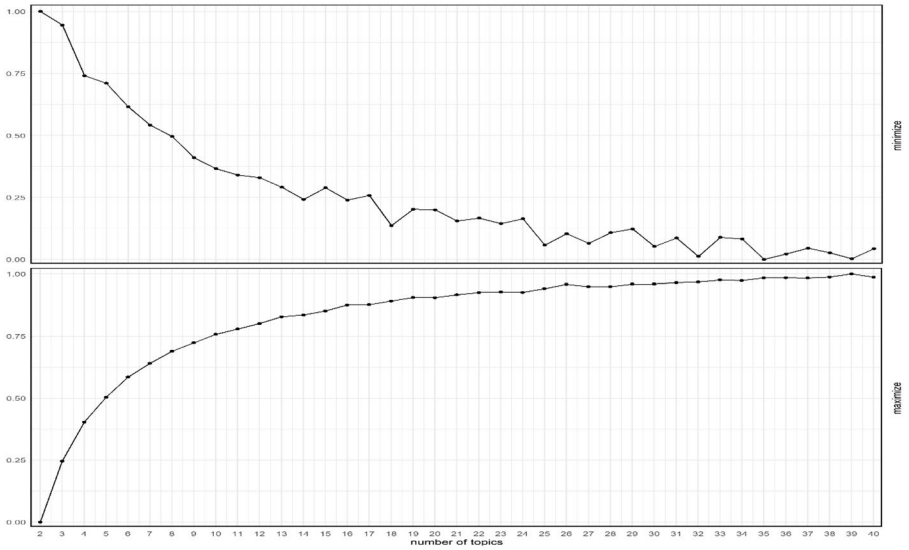


Fig. 5 Evaluation of K using log-likelihood and perplexity metrics after adjustments to the top (Griffiths & Steyvers, 2004) and bottom charts (Cao et al., 2009)

to which each document is associated with particular themes (higher frequencies of topic-related terms within a document result in stronger Gamma values). Conversely, the Beta score represents the probability of specific words belonging to each topic, identifying the most characteristic terms within each cluster. Together, these measures provide a detailed thematic map of the corpus, revealing how concepts are distributed, co-occur, and interrelate across the analysed literature (Blei et al., 2003).

At this stage, the identified articles undergo topic analysis to explore each thematic category systematically. The classification process is guided by the most frequently occurring terms and linguistic patterns shared among interconnected articles within each topic. Given the algorithm's nature, a single article can contribute to multiple underlying themes (Bilro et al., 2023), though most documents predominantly align with a primary suggested category. As a result, the articles selected to represent each topic are those with the strongest correlation to the key terms (see Appendices 4 and 5). Each topic is discussed and analysed in the following sections.

4.2 Topics discussion

This section synthesises fourteen recurrent topics, organised into five macro-themes, that structure contemporary research on emotional appeals in marketing. The analysis begins with macro-theme 1, individual-level affective and cognitive mechanisms, which encompass (T1) message processing, (T2) mood states, and (T3) consumer interpretation. It then considers macro-theme 2, relational and symbolic constructs, including (T4) brand relationships, (T5) self-identity, and (T6) symbolic consumption. The topic discussion further extends to macro-theme 3, brand level phenomena, covering (T7) brand identity, (T8) brand value, (T9) brand immersion, and (T10) con-

sumer experience. Macro-theme 4 captures socially embedded dynamics, including (T11) peer influence and (T12) social engagement. Finally, macro-theme 5 addresses emotionally disruptive processes and contextual moderators, encompassing (T13) emotional temperature and (T14) emotional disruption.

Macro-theme 1: Individual-level affective and cognitive mechanisms

4.2.1 Message processing

Message processing is conceptualised as a constructive interaction between message senders and receivers. On the receiver's side, it involves two main components: the selection of appropriate channels for allocating resources to the received content, and the manner in which allocated cognitive resources are utilised to interpret and engage with the information (Buijzen et al., 2010). In the field of advertising, the interplay between emotional and rational appeals plays a crucial role in shaping how consumers process persuasive messages. However, emotional appeals have been shown to exert a stronger impact than rational ones (Gong & Cummins, 2020). Whereas emotional appeals tap into consumers' feelings to stimulate desire and influence behaviour, rational appeals are rooted in cognitive persuasion, offering logical arguments to support decision-making processes (Young et al., 2019). Both strategies compete for resource allocation within the consumer's cognitive system, especially under limited attention spans, and may trigger different types of processing strategies, such as heuristic-systematic processing. Heuristic approaches rely on mental shortcuts and surface cues, while systematic processing involves deeper scrutiny of the message's content (Garaus & Wolfsteiner, 2023). The decision of which route a consumer adopts often depends on motivation, involvement, and available cognitive resources. Properly calibrated messaging ensures that neither route overwhelms the other, leading to optimised processing and improved persuasion outcomes.

4.2.2 Mood states

Mood states, broadly understood as temporary, pervasive emotional conditions, significantly affect consumer perception and decision-making (Gardner, 1985). In advertising and branding, mood states encompass a range of affective dimensions, including pleasure, satisfaction, arousal (Alshohaib, 2024; Lin, 2016), excitement (Hancock et al., 2024), and even fear (Dunn & Hoegg, 2014). This perspective is visible in multiple empirical contexts. For instance, arousal, pleasure and consequently satisfaction were identified as predictors of emotional responses to online shopping experiences, especially in the context of post-pandemic consumption (Alshohaib, 2024). Recent evidence suggests that high-arousal emotional appeals, particularly those that evoke intense excitement, can effectively foster positive attitudes, especially in the context of public services. Interestingly, the impact of such emotionally charged appeals has been found to surpass even that of love-based stimuli (Hancock et al., 2024). Conversely, fear, traditionally viewed as a negative valence emotion, has also emerged as a mood state with the potential to deepen brand attachment, especially when appropriately framed (Dunn & Hoegg, 2014). These studies collectively

demonstrate the significance of understanding mood states not only as emotional reactions but also as strategic tools in consumer-brand interactions.

4.2.3 Consumer interpretation

Consumer interpretation refers to the subjective process through which individuals respond to brand-related stimuli (Phillips, 1997). This interpretative mechanism is not merely cognitive but deeply emotional, shaping brand attitude. A favourable brand attitude often stems from how well the brand aligns with the consumer's emotional and psychological framework, particularly in terms of personal values and affective needs (Mitchell & Olson, 1981). A key factor influencing this interpretative process is emotional intelligence, which refers to a person's ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and express emotions in themselves and others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

High emotional intelligence enhances consumers' ability to accurately appraise marketing stimuli, modulate emotional responses, and develop deeper, more consistent brand relationships (Kidwell et al., 2008). Importantly, emotions such as happiness and boredom significantly influence consumer appraisal and interpretation. While happiness is associated with increased satisfaction and positive evaluations of brands (Bench & Lench, 2013), momentary feelings of boredom are typically identified as unpleasant emotional states marked by reduced mental stimulation and diminished physiological activation (Sung et al., 2020), which may even trigger brand-switching behaviours.

Macro-theme 2: Relational and symbolic constructs

4.2.4 Brand relationships

Brand relationship is defined as a co-created emotional bond that emerges through personal interactions between the consumer and the brand, an evolving process that nurtures mutual connection and strengthens the depth of their engagement over time (Garg et al., 2025).

Brand attachment is a crucial foundation for the development of brand love, a stronger emotional attachment characterised by passion, affection, and positive sentiment toward the brand (Batra et al., 2012). Consumers who experience brand love not only feel emotionally connected to the brand but are also willing to support it, further enhancing their attachment and fostering brand loyalty (Ghorbanzadeh, 2021). The role of brand satisfaction in sustaining a loyal relationship with the brand has been well-documented in consumer behaviour literature, with studies showing that satisfied customers are more likely to develop a sense of attachment, ultimately contributing to brand loyalty (Oliver, 1999). However, brand relationships are not always positive. Negative emotional reactions to a brand, recognised as brand hate (Bryson et al., 2013), may arise either during consumption or even in its absence. Brand hate is a phenomenon in which consumers experience a strong aversion toward a brand due to negative experiences or perceived brand failures (Taqi et al., 2025). The concept of brand hate shows the complexity of brand relationships, demonstrating that emotional responses are not always uniformly positive.

4.2.5 Self-identity

Self-identity reflects how individuals define and experience themselves across situations and over time, comprising both the actual self and the ideal self they aspire to become. From an emotional perspective, self-identity is central to consumption because brands often function as symbolic resources through which consumers regulate feelings of self-worth, pride, and belonging (Huber et al., 2018). When brand meanings align with consumers' self-concept, emotional resonance emerges, fostering self-congruence and strengthening affective responses toward the brand (Malär et al., 2011; Sirgy, 1982).

Emotional attachment is particularly pronounced when brands resonate with consumers' ideal self, as aspirational alignment can intensify feelings of motivation and personal fulfilment, especially among individuals with low public self-consciousness (Malär et al., 2011). At the same time, the emotional relevance of self-congruence varies by context, with ideal and actual self-alignment shaping affective responses to hedonic and utilitarian brands in distinct ways (Huber et al., 2018). Importantly, misalignments between the actual and ideal self may generate negative affect, such as discomfort or frustration, prompting compensatory behaviours including compulsive consumption or outward brand denigration (Higgins, 1987; Japutra et al., 2018). Within this emotional dynamic, cause related marketing offers a mechanism through which brands can help consumers alleviate self-discrepancy by providing symbolic and moral meaning, thereby supporting positive emotional regulation and deeper emotional engagement (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004).

4.2.6 Symbolic consumption

Symbolic consumption refers to the use of goods and services as tools to express identity, signal social status, or affirm group membership. This form of consumption relies on the shared symbolic value that society attributes to certain products (Witt, 2010). Among the key psychological drivers of symbolic consumption is emotional brand attachment, which reflects the emotional bond between a consumer and a brand. Brands that evoke strong emotional connections often tap into consumer nostalgia, triggering memories of past experiences, which strengthens both brand attachment and symbolic value. Nostalgic branding strategies are particularly effective when targeting consumers seeking familiarity and emotional comfort in an ever-changing market landscape (Muehling et al., 2014).

Furthermore, the concept of brand coolness is essential in contemporary symbolic consumption, especially among younger demographics. Cool brands are perceived as innovative, authentic, and socially admired, which makes them highly desirable symbols for identity construction (Warren et al., 2019). The perception of coolness enhances conspicuous consumption, whereby consumers engage in visible consumption practices to showcase status and prestige. This behaviour is closely intertwined with materialism, where individuals place a high value on possessions as a means of achieving happiness and signalling success (Klabi, 2020).

Macro-theme 3: Brand level phenomena

4.2.7 Brand identity

Brand identity captures the set of associations companies seek to establish about what the brand stands for and aspires to be, including its purpose, values, and personality (Aaker, 1995). From an emotional appeals perspective, identity is consequential because it provides the affective meaning system through which consumers interpret brand cues and experience emotions such as warmth, pride, or reassurance during brand encounters. Although brand image reflects how consumers perceive the brand, brand identity is strategically articulated by the company and, when consistently expressed, shapes the emotional tone of brand communications and relationship vision (de Chernatony, 1999; Keller, 1993).

A key identity-related construct with direct emotional implications is brand authenticity, defined as the extent to which a brand is perceived as genuine and faithful to its supported values rather than purely commercially motivated (Napoli et al., 2014). Authenticity signals can strengthen consumers' affective trust and feelings of psychological safety, thereby supporting emotional attachment and relational continuity. Conversely, misalignment between projected identity and experienced brand encounters can elicit negative affective responses, such as disappointment, scepticism, or irritation, which may undermine equity and weaken relationship strength (Keller, 1993). Accordingly, effective brand management involves actively monitoring consumer perceptions and ensuring that identity cues are translated coherently across touchpoints, so that the brand's intended emotional meaning is reliably reinforced rather than contradicted (da Silveira et al., 2013).

4.2.8 Brand value

Brand Value refers to the overall financial, emotional, and social worth that a brand holds in the market, which is derived from its ability to create positive perceptions, foster loyalty, and engage consumers effectively. It encompasses not only the brand's reputation but also its capacity to differentiate itself in the competitive landscape (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020).

Emotional brand attachment plays a pivotal role in creating brand value, as it reflects the deep, affective connection that consumers develop with a brand. This attachment strengthens brand equity by enhancing consumer loyalty and advocacy (Thomson et al., 2005; Vivek et al., 2012). The concept of value co-creation is integral to brand value, as it involves consumers actively participating in shaping and enriching their experiences with the brand. By co-creating value, consumers feel more deeply engaged and emotionally connected to the brand, leading to higher levels of long-term brand satisfaction (Hussain et al., 2021). Brand trust is another key driver of brand value, with consumers relying on brands to fulfil promises and deliver consistent quality. Emotional branding, when leveraged effectively, fosters trust and deepens emotional attachments, which ultimately enhance brand value (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023). Brands that succeed in creating an emotional connection with consumers through trust-building experiences and authentic messaging are better able to co-create value with their audience (Hernandez-Fernandez & Lewis, 2019).

4.2.9 Brand immersion

Brand immersion refers to a deeply engaging experience where consumers are cognitively, emotionally, and behaviourally absorbed into a brand's environment. Unlike surface-level interactions, immersive experiences aim to saturate the consumer's perceptual field, often through multisensory or interactive brand stimuli (Romero et al., 2025; Schmitt, 1999).

Studies suggest that when consumers encounter emotionally salient or personally relevant brand cues, the likelihood of accurate recall significantly increases (Kaya et al., 2025).

Brand-integral stimuli, those seamlessly embedded in the storytelling or interactive flow, trigger stronger associative links in memory, compared to peripheral cues (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004). Thus, immersion acts as a gateway for more durable memory encoding and retrieval processes. At the core of this process lies consumer attention, a limited cognitive resource that immersive experiences help capture and sustain. Attention operates as a necessary precondition for both memory formation and attitudinal shifts (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004). Capturing and maintaining attention are prerequisites for message effectiveness. In a saturated landscape, brands must rely on emotionally or contextually salient stimuli to engage consumers (Teixeira et al., 2012).

4.2.10 Consumer experience

The consumer experience represents the totality of cognitive, emotional, sensory, and behavioural responses that arise during the entire interaction between a consumer and a brand (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Luo et al., 2024). It extends beyond mere product utility, encompassing all touchpoints, physical (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) or digital (Luo et al., 2024), where consumers form impressions and meanings. As markets become increasingly experience-driven, understanding and designing memorable brand encounters has become a central focus in marketing strategy. A brand's ability to engage the senses is crucial in shaping brand experience, particularly in environments where physical presence is limited. Sensory branding leverages cues such as sound, sight, colour, or even scent to trigger affective responses and more firmly imprint brand identity in memory (Lindstrom, 2005).

One powerful indicator of sensory impact is facial expression, which can be both observed in participants and symbolically used within advertisements to communicate emotions (Ekman & Friesen, 2003). In turn, these effects can significantly influence purchase intention, especially when consumers feel emotionally aligned with the sensory narrative being presented. Facial expressions act as powerful emotional signifiers, and with the advent of cutting-edge technologies, machines are now capable of decoding these non-verbal cues with remarkable precision and autonomy (Höfling & Alpers, 2023).

Macro-theme 4: Socially embedded dynamics

4.2.11 Peer influence

In the digital age, peer influence is often mediated through word-of-mouth (WOM) and user-generated content, where consumers share brand-related experiences with others (Ramirez et al., 2018). This informal form of communication serves as a powerful source of information, especially when traditional advertising is perceived as less trustworthy or overly commercialised. The cognitive valence of peer-shared messages, whether positive, neutral, or negative, determines how recipients process and internalise them. Unlike brand-driven narratives, peer messages often carry more emotional and experiential weight, as they are shaped by the personal tone of the sender. Furthermore, the generational divide plays a crucial role, as different age groups interpret and react to online content in distinct ways, such as younger generations (Correia et al., 2025; Ramirez et al., 2018). In other words, the quality of content created in the form of word of mouth has a greater impact than its volume. Additionally, messages that evoke stronger emotional responses tend to have a more significant influence on the audience's mind. This emphasises that emotional content, rather than just the amount of information shared, plays a key role in making the message more impactful and memorable (Gopinath et al., 2014).

4.2.12 Social engagement

Social engagement in media refers to the level of interaction, participation, and emotional connection users develop with brand-related content on social media platforms (Brodie et al., 2013). In today's media environment, social media operates not merely as a promotional tool but as a dialogical space where users co-create value through reactions, comments, shares, and emotional feedback. Insider content, which leverages cultural codes and emotionally salient cues, garners significantly more reactions and shares than generic promotional posts (Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2016). Furthermore, user reactions serve as real-time indicators of affective resonance. In emotionally driven domains such as sports or tourism, user comments and shares often mirror emotional investment. For instance, it is underlined that users interacting with sport-related branded posts exhibit strong affective engagement due to emotional attachment to teams or symbols (Ruihley & Pate, 2017). Finally, content strategies that acknowledge user-centred values are significantly more likely to cultivate sustained social engagement. Research suggests that content appealing to consumers' personal and emotional values enhances perceived relevance and increases the likelihood of repeated interaction (Pang et al., 2009).

Macro-theme 5: Emotionally disruptive processes and contextual moderators

4.2.13 Emotional temperature

Emotional temperature is a dual-faceted emotional aspect that refers to the range of human interactions, from warmth to coldness. The degree of social closeness correlates with feelings of emotional warmth, whereas greater social distance is tied to emotional coldness. In fact, emotional temperature usually interacts meaningfully with physical temperature, conceptually experienced in proximity, where feelings

of love are associated with warmth, and discomfort is linked to coldness (Bruno et al., 2022). Emotional match between feelings of happiness and sadness (Kwon et al., 2022), alongside the assessment of environmental effects in advertising, holds significant importance. For instance, ambient temperature can influence the extent to which audiences are drawn to emotional stimuli (Bruno et al., 2017). A well-executed emotional match can enhance message effectiveness by aligning external stimuli with internal states. When this alignment supports the body's drive toward homeostasis, consumers may feel more comfortable and psychologically prepared to engage with a message or brand (Bruno et al., 2017). Understanding emotional temperature enables advertisers to craft more effective campaigns that align with emotional context.

4.2.14 Emotional disruption

Emotional disruption is defined as a sudden or sustained disturbance in affective equilibrium (Schachter et al., 1961). It emerges when individuals are confronted with emotionally charged, often contradictory, information such as fake news or alarming content (Roozenbeek & van der Linden, 2019). When these inputs provoke affect intensity, individuals may experience heightened emotional arousal, leading to impulsive responses and decreased cognitive control. Research has shown that affectively intense information, especially when false or misleading, can prompt emotional volatility, making people more vulnerable to belief distortion and misjudgement (Forgas, 2011).

In the context of high-risk situations, emotional disruption can override the prefrontal cortex's regulatory role, pushing individuals to make urgent decisions driven more by emotion than analysis. High affect intensity leads people to overestimate potential threats or consequences, intensifying the sense of urgency and reinforcing risk-averse or extreme behaviours (Loewenstein et al., 2001). Decision-making becomes compressed into a narrow emotional tunnel, where rapid judgments may bring temporary relief but long-term negative consequences. Individuals under emotionally unstable conditions are more susceptible to cognitive biases and heuristics, which further impair their ability to assess information credibility (Lerner et al., 2015). Managing emotional disruption requires more than just awareness; it also requires effective coping strategies. Scholars have proposed affect regulation frameworks and emotional inoculation strategies to reduce the psychological impact of fake news and risky framing (van der Linden et al., 2020).

5 Future research agenda

While substantial progress has been made in examining emotional appeals in marketing and their theoretical underpinnings, relevant gaps in the literature remain. Addressing these gaps holds significant potential to advance the field by enriching theoretical models, diversifying methodological approaches, and enhancing practical applications. Grounded in the TCM framework (Theory, Characteristics, Methodology) (e.g., Aleem et al., 2024; Bilro & Loureiro, 2020), this study organises future research opportunities across these three key domains. In doing so, it offers a

structured guide to navigating and addressing underexplored frontiers in the study of emotional appeals in marketing (see Table 2).

5.1 Future research directions - theory

As noted, the theoretical foundations of emotional appeals in marketing remain disperse, with attachment, appraisal, and congruence theories featuring most prominently in the literature. To advance theory development, this section outlines extending established theories, integrating multiple frameworks to capture the multi-faceted nature of emotional processes, incorporating theories that reflect contemporary digital and platform mediated consumption and identifying previously unexplored conceptual relationships.

One promising direction for theory development involves extending the application of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). TAM is one of the most widely used theoretical frameworks for understanding how users come to accept and use technology. TAM suggests that the higher the usefulness and simplicity of technology, the more likely individuals are to adopt and use it (Davis, 1989). Although the influence of this model on purchase intention has been confirmed with the inclusion of emotion factor in livestreaming environment (Zhou & Tong, 2022), it is recommended that the upgraded model, known as TAM 3 (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008), which offers more precise criteria, be explored in measuring emotions, particularly in technological contexts and beyond human relationships, given the continuous advancements in technology.

With the increasing dominance of technology in human lives, new dimensions of attachment theory can be explored. In fact, the introduction of novel attachment-related concepts in the digital realm is worth discussing. For instance, digital attachment, defined as the emotional relationships that a person develops with technological environments (Hasan, 2022), could present a new direction for studies focusing on the connection between humans in a digital platform (Zou et al., 2025), like social media, or even between humans and artificial intelligence (AI) in a fresh phase.

While previous studies have examined attachment theory (Dwivedi et al., 2019; Manohar et al., 2023; Mostafa & Kasamani, 2021), appraisal theory (Faseur & Geuens, 2012; Li et al., 2023), and congruence theory (Gilal et al., 2023; Schnebelen & Bruhn, 2018) individually or pairwise, a comprehensive integration of all three repeatedly tested across both product and service industries could provide a more holistic understanding. Such an approach would not only yield complementary insights but also significantly enhance the theoretical connectivity within this research domain.

Building on the intersection of cognitive and behavioural economics, appraisal theory, rooted in an individual's subjective evaluation of experiences based on personal criteria (Faseur & Geuens, 2012), can be effectively integrated with prospect theory as an economic behavioural topic, which explains consumer decision-making under risky situations (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). This fusion provides a more nuanced and manipulable framework for analysing the cognitive processes of consumers when exposed to emotional appeals, enabling a deeper understanding of their decision-making mechanisms.

Table 2 Future research agenda

Research scopes	Research topics	Research questions
Theory	*Expanding established theories*	RQ1: How can new structure of technology acceptance models (TAM), such as TAM3, provide a better explanation of the effectiveness of emotional elements?
		RQ2: How can attachment theory be redefined to encompass the concept of digitalization?
	Synthesizing multiple theoretical frameworks	RQ3: To what extent can appraisal theory illuminate specific aspects of behavioral economics, such as prospect theory, when emotional appeals are emphasized?
		RQ4: What new insights might result from synthesizing attachment theory, appraisal theory, and self-congruence theory?
		RQ5: Is there a conceptual linkage between social identity theory and the technology acceptance model 3?
	Adding theories and uncovering novel interconnections	RQ6: How can unexpected customer responses be predicted and managed through cognitive dissonance theory and psychological reactance theory?
		RQ7: How can embodiment theory, utilizing sensory and motor experiences, contribute to deepening theoretical knowledge?
		RQ8: Does the conceptual sequence of emotions, as explained by narrative transportation theory, reveal new dimensions regarding consumer reactions?
	Exploring new connections	RQ9: What are the main positive and negative emotional triggers, and how do they affect consumer responses?
		RQ10: Which emotional cues play a fundamental role in fostering deep brand attachment, and how do they drive this connection?
		RQ11: Does emotional brand attachment naturally translate into sustained customer relationships?
		RQ12: Is there a significant difference between human-generated and AI-generated emotional content in terms of impact and effectiveness?
Characteristics	*Sampling: Regional Scope*	RQ13: In which underexplored regional markets and areas (e.g., African nations or Eastern European countries) can emotionally appeals in marketing be investigated to evaluate their market-specific impact?
		RQ14: How do multi-country studies or intercontinental analyses generate comparative perspectives, both within culturally similar regions and across vastly different cultural landscapes?
	Sampling: Targeted Segmentation	RQ15: How does sampling based on generational categories (e.g., Alpha and Z), through a focused approach on a single generation or a comparative analysis across multiple generations (e.g., differences between Z and X in expectations and reactions), enhance our understanding of social media engagement and behavioral or emotional responses to marketing?
		RQ16: How does consumers segmentation based on income levels or personality traits influence responses to emotional attachment in marketing?

Table 2 (continued)

Research scopes	Research topics	Research questions
		RQ17: What outcomes can result from a strategically targeted sample, such as celebrity followers or loyal customers of a specific brand, when aligned with campaign objectives in both the short-term and long-term for emotional marketing strategies?
	Study Procedure	RQ18: How do different marketing techniques such as textual vs. visual content and static vs. dynamic formats affect emotional cue perception across diverse personality traits?
		RQ19: To what extent do findings from studies conducted on real brands in real-world settings align with outcomes observed for fictitious brands in controlled laboratory experiments?
		RQ20: Which emerging product or service industries present promising opportunities for future research?
		RQ21: How can advanced time-series analysis techniques improve our understanding of consumer behavior patterns in emotional attachment?
	Statistical Techniques	RQ22: What role can machine learning algorithms, like unsupervised learning, play in uncovering hidden patterns in emotional responses, which traditional methods might overlook?
	Innovative Emotional Data Collection	RQ23: What impact could integrate eye-tracking technology with virtual reality have on understanding emotional content in digital marketing?
		RQ24: How can wearable biometric devices, such as heart rate monitors or skin conductance sensors, provide real-time outputs and enhance the accuracy of data collection?
	Data Analysis	RQ25: How can advanced machine learning techniques, implemented through platforms like TensorFlow or PyTorch, transform statistical modeling into emotional marketing studies by capturing deeper, non-observable patterns in consumer behavior?
		RQ26: How can emotion recognition software like "EmotionAI" improve real-time analysis of consumer emotional engagement with advertising stimuli in future studies?
		RQ27: What benefits could the integration of Bayesian analysis using software like JAGS or Stan bring to understanding non-linear relationships and uncertainty?
		RQ28: How can emerging statistical software tools, such as JASP or STATA, offer enhanced flexibility and transparency in analyzing complex datasets?
Methodology	*Expanding Research Methods*	RQ29: How can employ phenomenological methods describe emotional cues for business goals?
		RQ30: In what ways can longitudinally research method be utilized to assess the long-term effects of advertising cues that evoke emotions?
		RQ31: How might action research be used to create iterative feedback loops for testing in real-world environments?
		RQ32: What methodological approaches are best suited for managing and interpreting large-scale data in the context of emotional marketing?

Table 2 (continued)

Research scopes	Research topics	Research questions
		RQ33: How can simulation-based approaches help refine consumer segmentation in emotional marketing?

The outcomes of marketing strategies, particularly those employing emotional appeals, do not always align with predetermined expectations and may, in some instances, lead to unintended counterproductive effects (Poels & Dewitte, 2006). In such cases, the significance of contrasting theoretical frameworks, namely cognitive dissonance theory and psychological reactance theory, becomes increasingly evident. According to cognitive dissonance theory, individuals who encounter content misaligned with their preexisting beliefs experience psychological discomfort and a sense of cognitive inconsistency (Festinger, 1957). Likewise, psychological reactance theory posits that perceived restrictions on one's freedom of choice can elicit oppositional responses (Brehm & Brehm, 2013), thereby undermining persuasive intent. These theoretical perspectives provide critical insights into the potential drawbacks of emotional advertising, highlighting the need for a more nuanced approach to consumer engagement.

By embracing innovative theoretical perspectives, approaches such as narrative transportation theory, which emphasises the immersive and emotionally engaging nature of narrative-driven contents in information processing (Ried et al., 2025) and embodiment theory, which demonstrates the deep interconnection between sensory and tactile experiences and consumers' emotional and cognitive responses (Gallese & Lakoff, 2005), can unveil hidden dimensions of consumer attitudes in the business landscape. These frameworks offer a more effective lens for decision-making processes.

To uncover new connections, qualitative studies using the grounded theory approach are necessary to identify emotional triggers (Talebzadeh et al., 2024) and categorise them into positive and negative stimuli. This enables a more detailed classification of triggers and facilitates more conceptual comparisons, for example, between human-generated and AI-generated content (Kirk & Givi, 2025). Consequently, the effects of positive and negative emotional signals can be assessed more comprehensively.

Another important consideration is the examination of moderators and additional mediators in the pathway leading to emotional brand attachment (Sudbury-Riley & Edgar, 2016). Accordingly, brand-related attributes such as brand familiarity (Sudbury-Riley & Edgar, 2016) and brand trust (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2021) may function as potential mediators. Likewise, consumer-related attributes, including personality traits (Faseur & Geuens, 2012), emotional dissonance, emotional contagion, and word-of-mouth, also hold potential for examination in moderating roles. It is suggested that using different types of media, such as billboards (Nielsen et al., 2010), TV and newspapers (Baumgartner & Laghi, 2012), and even going beyond physical types (Long Yi, 2011), like social media (Ahmadi et al., 2023; Garaus & Wolfsteiner, 2023), be examined more thoroughly. However, immersive spaces like AR and VR may also influence the intensity of consumer responses to environmental stimuli (Liu

& Lei, 2025; Yang et al., 2020). Similarly, sensory stimulation across all five senses might produce distinct reactions (Tsujimoto et al., 2024).

Finally, although emotional brand attachment has been linked to brand love in some studies (Choi et al., 2024; Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2020), it remains open to further exploration. It is essential to not only investigate this connection in greater depth but also examine its impact on brand advocacy and the sustained relationship between consumers and brands.

5.2 Future research directions - characteristics

Given the substantial geographical diversity observed in previous studies, future research could benefit from expanding sample sizes (Mehmood et al., 2022; Wu & Chen, 2024; Zhang et al., 2014) to focus on regions that remain underexplored (Correia et al., 2025; Fernandes & Moreira, 2019) in terms of emotional responses and behavioural evaluations such as Africa and Eastern Europe. These areas present unique opportunities for uncovering cross-cultural variations in emotional engagement. Moreover, considering the strong emphasis on cultural studies (Hudson et al., 2015; Leung et al., 2014; Rathnayake, 2021), comparative analyses among countries with similar cultural backgrounds could offer intriguing insights into shared emotional patterns and consumer behaviours.

From a target population perspective, prior research has predominantly focused on students (Alvarado-Karste & Guzmán, 2020; Huang, 1997; Lee & Davis Burns, 2014; Sharif & Sidi Lemine, 2024) and general consumers (Joo & Kim, 2021; Kim, 2019), with some generational studies particularly on Generation Y (Kurtoğlu et al., 2022; Rathnayake, 2021). However, intergenerational studies, especially those examining Generations Z and Alpha, could provide a foundational understanding of how younger generations interact with emotional appeals. Another promising direction for sample selection involves studying fans of celebrities or teams (Kucharska et al., 2020) and brand supporters (Chang, 2020). Examining the impact of fan-based bias on emotional and brand attachment could reveal critical insights into how strong affiliations influence consumer decision-making. From the study procedure perspective, different marketing strategies, including the use of textual versus visual content, as well as static versus dynamic formats, may influence how consumers perceive emotional cues. The impact of these techniques can vary depending on the individual's personality traits (Schmitt, 2012).

The generalizability of scientific findings to real-world settings has always been a subject of debate. Given that some studies have focused on fictitious brands within laboratory environments (Bruno et al., 2017; Ghasemi Siani et al., 2021; Long Yi, 2011), it is recommended that future research should consider the use of real brands (Alvarado-Karste & Guzmán, 2020) in authentic, real-world contexts (Madadi et al., 2024; Megías et al., 2011) to better assess the applicability of the results beyond controlled settings. Emerging industries, particularly those driven by technology and sustainability, present significant opportunities for future research into consumer behaviour and emotional engagement. Sectors like electric vehicles (Domarchi et al., 2024), sustainable fashion (Haines & Lee, 2022), and personalised healthcare (Zhou

et al., 2023) are rapidly evolving, with consumers' emotional connections to these products and services growing increasingly important.

From a statistical techniques' perspective, machine learning algorithms, particularly those involving unsupervised learning, can uncover hidden patterns in emotional responses that traditional analytical methods may overlook. Unsupervised learning techniques, such as clustering or dimensionality reduction, enable researchers to analyse vast datasets without predefined labels, revealing complex, nonlinear relationships within the data (Dura & Wosiak, 2022), which can lead to the discovery of new emotional clusters. While there is a notable diversity in data collection methods used in past studies, it is recommended that future research adopt advanced techniques such as eye-tracking technology combined with virtual reality (Liu et al., 2024) and biometric devices (e.g., heart rate monitors or skin conductance sensors) (De Keyser et al., 2021) to assess rapid emotional responses. These cutting-edge tools could offer a more accurate and nuanced understanding of how consumers respond to emotional stimuli in real-time.

The integration of advanced machine learning techniques, implemented through platforms such as TensorFlow (Hribar et al., 2022) or PyTorch (Nie et al., 2025), holds significant potential to transform statistical modelling. These methods can uncover hidden, non-observable patterns in consumer behaviour, enabling researchers to explore deeper and more intricate aspects of emotional engagement. Similarly, emotion recognition tools like EmotionAI could revolutionise real-time analysis (Rhue, 2024) of consumer emotional responses to advertising stimuli, offering insights that go beyond traditional methods. Additionally, the adoption of Bayesian analysis through software such as JAGS or Stan offers considerable advantages in handling nonlinear relationships and uncertainty in complex datasets (Plummer, 2023). This approach could enhance the accuracy of emotional marketing studies by providing a more robust framework for handling complex data structures. Lastly, the use of emerging statistical software tools, such as JASP or STATA, offers greater flexibility and transparency in analysing complex datasets, thereby improving the overall reliability and interpretability of findings.

5.3 Future research directions - methodology

Recent advancements in research methodologies have expanded the scope of emotional marketing studies. The phenomenological approach offers deep insights into consumer emotional signals by capturing subjective experiences, providing businesses with a nuanced understanding of affective responses. Meanwhile, as stated in previous research, longitudinal studies can enhance the clarity of findings and improve the generalizability of results by evaluating consumer responses to emotional stimulation over time (He et al., 2016; Hudson et al., 2015; Vahdat et al., 2020) and allow researchers to assess the enduring effects of emotionally charged advertising cues over time, revealing patterns of sustained influence on consumer behavior. Additionally, action research fosters iterative feedback loops, enabling real-world testing and continuous refinement of marketing strategies based on consumer interactions (Basu et al., 2023).

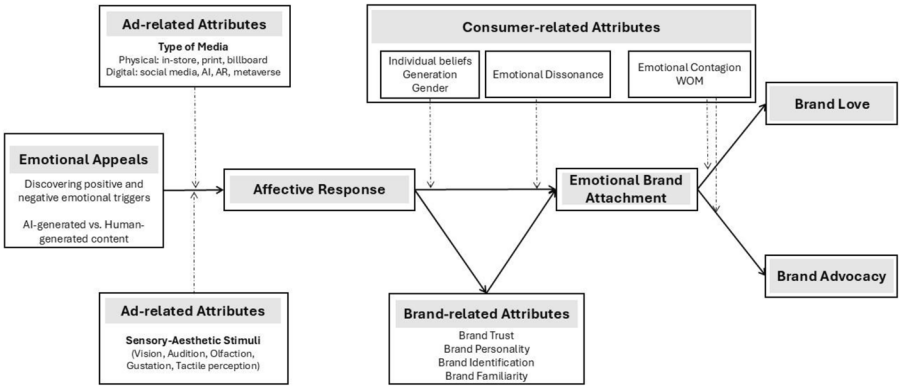


Fig. 6 Conceptual framework for future research

Given the increasing complexity of emotional marketing data, selecting robust analytical frameworks is crucial for managing and interpreting large-scale datasets, ensuring that output remains actionable and relevant in market environments. Therefore, the implementation of big data analytics should be given precedence in upcoming research endeavours (Wang et al., 2025). Simulation-driven methodologies continue to offer a valuable framework for forecasting business strategy outcomes. By enabling researchers and industry professionals to explore hypothetical scenarios and assess potential consumer reactions (Monauni, 2017), these models contribute to the optimisation of strategic decision-making for real-world implementation.

In this context, the proposed conceptual framework for future research is presented in Fig. 6.

The proposed framework offers a structured and integrative perspective to guide future research in a field still characterised by conceptual dispersion and fragmented empirical approaches. By explicitly linking ad-related attributes, consumer characteristics, and brand-level dimensions through the mediating roles of affective response and emotional brand attachment, the framework clarifies the mechanisms through which emotional appeals translate into outcomes such as brand love and advocacy.

It encourages scholars to move beyond isolated examinations of emotions towards a more systemic understanding that captures interactions across individual, contextual, and technological factors, including the increasing role of AI-generated content and digital environments. Furthermore, by incorporating moderating influences such as emotional contagion, WOM dynamics, and individual differences, the framework enables the investigation of collective and real-time emotional processes that remain underexplored in prior literature. Overall, the proposed conceptual framework consolidates existing knowledge while outlining avenues for theoretical and methodological advancement, providing a foundation for more coherent, multi-level, and context-sensitive research in emotional marketing.

6 Conclusions and implications

6.1 Theoretical implications

This study advances theoretical understanding in emotional marketing by offering several contributions that address conceptual and methodological limitations in the existing literature. In doing so, the review responds directly to prior calls for more granular classifications of emotional styles and their effects (Aeron & Rahman, 2025; Sharma et al., 2023) and provides a systematic foundation for theorising emotions as appraised, situated, and strategically mobilised marketing phenomena (Bagozzi et al., 1999).

First, the study develops a more holistic theoretical model that unifies emotional advertising and emotional branding, two subfields that have often been examined separately. Rather than treating emotional appeals as isolated executional tactics, the model links message processing mechanisms to downstream outcomes. In particular, it aligns work on how emotional and rational cues shape attention and processing routes (Buijzen et al., 2010; Garaus & Wolfsteiner, 2023) with evidence that mood states such as pleasure, arousal, excitement, and fear condition consumer receptivity and evaluation (Gardner, 1985; Hancock et al., 2024). This integration helps explain how emotional stimuli become embedded in the consumer experience across touchpoints (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) and, over time, contribute to brand relationships, including attachment, love, and also negative relational states (Batra et al., 2012; Taqi et al., 2025). In doing so, the study provides a more comprehensive conceptual foundation for examining emotions as both short-term persuasive triggers and long-term relational assets.

Second, this paper introduces an innovative methodological approach to theory-building by applying advanced data mining and topic modelling techniques to the emotional marketing literature. This approach enables the identification of latent structures and thematic relationships that are difficult to detect through narrative synthesis alone. Importantly, the method also provides an empirical basis for responding to recent calls for more granular classifications of emotional styles and their specific effects (Aeron & Rahman, 2025; Sharma et al., 2023), by revealing how emotional constructs cluster across substantive domains, such as consumer experience, brand immersion, symbolic consumption, and social engagement (Brodie et al., 2013). In this sense, the study contributes a theory-informed analytical method that can be replicated in other marketing research areas where conceptual dispersion is prevalent.

Third, the paper contributes to theory by challenging the prevailing individual-centric perspective found in much of the literature and by specifying when emotional responses should be conceptualised as socially situated and temporally synchronised. The topic structure shows that emotional influence is frequently mediated through peer communication and platform interactions, where emotionally resonant word of mouth and user engagement shape persuasion and diffusion (Ramirez et al., 2018). By emphasising that emotional reactions unfold not only within individuals but also across collective experiences in interactive digital environments, this research extends the principles of Technology Acceptance Model 3 (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008) to affective and socially mediated contexts. This extension complements the litera-

ture on attention and immersion by theorising emotional engagement as a function of both cognitive resource allocation and socially reinforced affective cues (Teixeira et al., 2012; Schmitt, 1999).

Fourth, this study addresses a critical conceptual ambiguity in the literature: the tendency to label broad affective categories, such as happiness, fear, or pleasure, without clarifying their underlying triggers, appraisal mechanisms, or boundary conditions. Through topic modelling, the study reveals that some constructs are used as surface descriptors rather than theoretically specified affective processes, which weakens accumulation and comparison across studies. Accordingly, we call for greater theoretical precision by distinguishing between emotional labels and affective mechanisms, and by grounding emotional effects in interpretation and appraisal processes, including the role of emotional intelligence in shaping how consumers perceive, regulate, and respond to marketing stimuli (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Kidwell et al., 2008; Phillips, 1997; Mitchell & Olson, 1981). This refinement is further supported by the prominence of themes such as emotional disruption, which highlights how affect intensity and information conditions can alter judgment and increase susceptibility to heuristics (Loewenstein et al., 2001; Lerner et al., 2015; Roozenbeek & van der Linden, 2019).

6.2 Managerial implications

This study provides valuable managerial insights by highlighting the strategic role of emotional cues in fostering meaningful and enduring relationships between brands and consumers. As demonstrated in prior research, emotional dimensions can shape consumer attitudes and influence behavioural intentions across a wide range of products and services (Geuens et al., 2011; Lee & Davis Burns, 2014). Building on this foundation, the current study highlights the importance of brand managers adopting a more deliberate, evidence-based approach to integrating emotional triggers into their marketing strategies. Doing so can not only enhance campaign effectiveness but also strengthen brand equity and long-term profitability.

A key contribution of this study lies in challenging the assumption that emotional appeals consistently yield positive results. While much of the existing literature has focused on favourable or negative consumer responses (e.g., Kurtoğlu et al., 2022; Leung et al., 2014), the possibility of neutral or non-reactive outcomes has received limited attention. This finding serves as a cautionary note for practitioners: emotional marketing carries reputational and financial risks if not carefully designed and tested. It is therefore essential that managers invest in robust pretesting mechanisms (such as A/B testing or neuromarketing tools) before deploying emotionally charged content across large-scale campaigns.

Another novel implication concerns the evolving role of digital platforms as a fertile ground for emotional engagement. Social media provides real-time, high-volume interaction that can be leveraged to create emotionally resonant brand experiences. Similarly, immersive technologies (including augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and the metaverse) offer new opportunities for simulating emotionally engaging encounters. These platforms enable brands to foster deeper psychological engagement by provid-

ing consumers with multisensory, experiential interactions that transcend traditional advertising.

This study also identifies specific sectors, such as mobile technology, fashion, tourism, financial services, and aviation, as especially conducive to emotion-driven marketing. These industries are characterised by high consumer involvement and competitive intensity, which makes emotional differentiation a valuable strategic asset. However, a key managerial insight emerging from this review is the need to extend emotional branding strategies to less explored or emerging sectors. For example, contrasting contexts such as sustainable versus unsustainable consumption (Kaur et al., 2023), public versus private service provision (Larsson & Müller, 2019), and SMEs versus large corporations may also benefit from emotional positioning to drive consumer loyalty and identity alignment.

By revealing both the opportunities and risks of emotional engagement in marketing, this study provides brand managers with a deeper understanding of how emotional strategies can be more effectively designed, targeted, and implemented across diverse contexts. These findings encourage practitioners to move beyond simplistic emotional appeals and towards a more nuanced, data-driven, and context-sensitive approach to emotional branding.

6.3 Limitations

Despite the rigorous methodological approach adopted in this review, certain limitations should be acknowledged. One key constraint lies in the exclusive reliance on two major academic databases (Scopus and Web of Science). While both are globally recognised for their extensive and peer-reviewed coverage, the omission of additional repositories may introduce a degree of coverage bias. As a result, relevant studies published in non-indexed or emerging journals may have been inadvertently excluded. To address this concern, the review deliberately prioritised quality papers published in well-established journals indexed in the WOS and Scopus databases to ensure the inclusion of influential and theoretically robust contributions.

A further limitation concerns the specificity of the search terminology. The search strategy focused on key terms such as emotional marketing, emotional branding, and emotional advertising, selected to align with the study's research objectives. While this targeted approach enhanced the relevance and conceptual precision of the included literature, it also introduced potential lexical bias. Studies employing alternative but related expressions (such as affective marketing, emotion-driven communication, affective branding, or sensory-emotional integration) may not have been captured within the search results, despite the use of Boolean logic and wildcard operators to broaden coverage.

Although these limitations are inherent to the scope and focus of the review, they do not detract from the validity of the insights generated. Instead, they highlight important opportunities for future reviews to expand keyword strategies and database selection, thereby capturing a broader spectrum of relevant literature.

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Declarations

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