

Emotion-Driven Marketing: An Analysis of Brand's Using Emotional Stimulation to Promote Consumption

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Abstract. Emotion-Driven Marketing (EDM) has emerged as a novel strategy in contemporary marketing, becoming a significant tool for brands to attract consumers and stimulate consumption. By employing emotional stimuli such as advertising content, color schemes, narratives, and storytelling, brands elicit consumers' emotional responses, thereby influencing their purchase decisions and brand loyalty. Through theoretical analysis, this paper explores the application of emotion regulation theory and emotional arousal models in brand marketing, and how EDM enhances consumers' purchase intention through mechanisms like emotional arousal and emotional resonance. Analysis of specific brand case studies (e.g., White Rabbit milk candy and Safeguard soap) demonstrates that EDM plays a crucial role in enhancing brand identity, increasing market competitiveness, and fostering long-term consumption behaviors. Furthermore, the paper identifies limitations of emotional marketing strategies, such as the potential oversimplification of brand image and the risk of consumer aversion due to over-reliance. Future research should further investigate the effects of EDM across diverse consumer segments.

Keywords: Emotion-Driven Marketing, Consumption, Brand.

1. Introduction

In today's competitive marketplace, the challenge for brands to differentiate themselves from numerous competitors is paramount for all marketers. Traditional rational marketing strategies often fail to meet evolving consumer emotional needs. EDM, as an innovative approach, has gained significant traction among brands. Research on EDM originated in the late 20th century. With advancements in emotion regulation theory and emotional arousal models, the impact of emotions on consumer behavior has become a focal point in academia. EDM primarily operates by activating consumers' emotions, subsequently influencing their consumption behavior and brand loyalty. Research indicates that emotional stimuli significantly enhance consumers' brand affection and loyalty. The skillful use of elements like color, music, and storylines in advertising can powerfully evoke consumer emotional responses. Emotional marketing, facilitated through various channels like advertisements, brand narratives, and product packaging, triggers consumer emotional reactions that shape purchase decisions [1].

For instance, Pop Mart's blind box design leverages surprise and anticipation to drive purchasing behavior among young consumers, effectively shaping the brand's positioning [2]. Coca-Cola's

advertisements employ vibrant colors and cheerful atmospheres to evoke feelings of joy and unity, thereby strengthening brand loyalty [3]. EDM not only elevates brand awareness but also establishes enduring relationships between consumers and brands through emotional resonance.

Recent research further underscores the profound impact of emotional responses on consumer brand attitude, purchase intention, and brand loyalty [4]. Positive emotions foster brand favorability and purchase intention, whereas negative emotions can lead to brand avoidance and reduced purchase intent. Consequently, EDM provides brands with a new avenue to forge unique market identities and enhance competitiveness.

These findings suggest that EDM facilitates emotional communication between brands and consumers and helps brands stand out in highly competitive markets. Particularly in an era increasingly focused on emotionalized marketing, EDM offers brands a novel path to establish deep emotional connections with consumers.

EDM influences consumer behavior, including purchase decisions and brand loyalty, by targeting emotions. Emotion regulation theory posits that the generation and regulation of emotions play a critical role in individual decision-making, while emotional arousal models emphasize the direct impact of emotional stimuli on consumer behavior [5,6]. EDM leverages these theoretical frameworks, enabling brands to precisely influence consumer decisions through emotional stimuli, thereby enhancing market share and brand loyalty [7].

2. Case studies

2.1. White Rabbit milk candy's cross-border marketing

White Rabbit milk candy, launched in 1959, is a childhood symbol for three generations of Chinese consumers. Its milky-white wrapper and creamy scent form an emotional anchor in collective memory. Against the backdrop of the rising Guochao economy (China-chic trend) (searches related to Guochao surged 210% year-on-year in 2023), the 80s/90s generation, now entering middle age and acting as the primary consumer force, exhibits a unique consumption psychology driven by nostalgic sentimentality towards childhood icons. iResearch data shows that consumers aged 35-45 are 47% more sensitive to nostalgic marketing compared to other age groups.

White Rabbit astutely identified this emotional gap. Moving beyond the traditional candy category framework, it initiated a cross-border marketing campaign centered on "Reconstructing Taste Memories" as an emotional activation experiment.

The co-branded perfume directly targeted the neurological mechanism of "olfactory memory recall." Its top notes incorporated the caramelized aroma of milk candy, middle notes blended vanilla scents, and base notes finished with a subtle milky fragrance, triggering users' childhood scene associations through scent molecules. The packaging replicated the classic blue, white, and red color scheme, embossed the candy wrapper texture onto the bottle, and even recreated the twisted cord detail on the cap. This "multi-sensory integration" in product design transformed the perfume from a functional item into a "wearable memory vessel." This nostalgic campaign rapidly became a phenomenon: the co-branded perfume sold out within 3 seconds of its Tmall flagship store launch, with three subsequent restocks still failing to meet demand; the Heytea co-branded milk tea sold over 500,000 cups in a single day, driving a 300% increase in store traffic.

The milk tea collaboration adopted a "taste replication + scenario upgrade" strategy. Heytea's "White Rabbit Bubble Milk Tea" replicated the candy's sweetness using a fresh milk base. The cup sleeve was designed as an oversized version of the candy wrapper, requiring consumers to "unwrap" it to drink, recreating the childhood ritual of unwrapping the candy. Offline pop-up stores featured

"Childhood Corner Shop" settings, blending retro tin toys, vintage posters, and White Rabbit elements to construct immersive nostalgic spaces.

2.2. Safeguard's emotional marketing strategy

Amidst heightened public health awareness, consumers exhibit high sensitivity towards "invisible threats." iResearch's 2024 survey indicates that 82% of Chinese families prioritize "disinfection and sterilization" as their primary daily cleaning need, with health anxiety among post-90s parents increasing by 37% compared to five years ago. Safeguard adeptly identified the contemporary emotional pain point of "germophobia": increased exposure in urban public spaces, solidified hygiene habits post-pandemic, and overprotective parenting psychology collectively form the social foundation for fear-based marketing. The brand adopted "visualizing bacterial threats" as its core strategy, transforming abstract health risks into concrete consumption motivations, establishing a "sterilization = Safeguard" reflex in the handwashing category. Safeguard's advertisements master the art of "defamiliarizing familiar scenes" to instill fear. Classic ads juxtapose warm scenes, like a mother preparing dinner, with sudden microscopic cutaways: swarming bacteria colonies on a chopping board, pathogen clusters on a faucet handle, and a "bacterial film" covering a child's toy. This "everyday scene + scientific perspective" montage technique converts high-contact zones like kitchens, bathrooms, and kindergartens into "bacterial breeding grounds." Data indicates such ads increase consumers' perceived risk of everyday environments by 61%. More crucially, the ads deliberately amplify exposure scenarios involving vulnerable groups (children, the elderly), reinforcing the emotional responsibility of the "protector" role. For example, animations depicting bacteria invading a child's body after finger-biting precisely target parental protective instincts.

Safeguard's ad logic consistently follows the "threat-solution" golden loop: after amplifying the bacterial threat, it immediately presents the product solution – foam engulfing bacterial colonies, pathogens rapidly dying under microscopic view, backed by the technical claim "DermaProtect Technology, inhibits bacteria for 12 hours." This compact "problem-answer" structure aligns with the coping appraisal mechanism in Protection Motivation Theory, where perceived solution effectiveness and feasibility convert fear into purchase behavior [8]. The brand further reduces consumer decision uncertainty through authoritative endorsements like "doctor recommended" and "laboratory certified."

3. Strategic pathways of emotion-driven marketing

When consumers experience positive emotions, brand identification significantly increases. This demonstrates that EDM effectively alters consumer brand attitudes by shaping emotions. For instance, Pop Mart's blind box design generates curiosity and excitement, greatly enhancing consumers' brand identification and affinity.

Emotional stimuli can substantially elevate consumers' purchase intention. Specifically, the arousal of positive emotions markedly boosts purchase desire. Consumers report that "the pleasure and surprise elicited by the ad generated a strong urge to buy." Conversely, negative emotions can lead to decreased purchase intent. For example, Coca-Cola's advertisements, stimulating positive emotions, enhance purchase intention, while ads evoking more negative emotions are less effective in this regard [9].

EDM also fosters strong brand loyalty. Through emotional resonance and stimuli, brands can forge enduring emotional connections with consumers. Research indicates that EDM is particularly effective among younger consumer segments, who demonstrate heightened sensitivity to emotional

stimuli [7]. Therefore, designing campaigns with emotional appeal can not only boost short-term purchasing power but also enhance long-term brand loyalty.

EDM provides brands with novel pathways to stand out in intense competition. By mobilizing consumer emotions, brands can rapidly increase market share and drive sales growth. Emotional marketing proves especially impactful among young consumers. Studies also reveal that EDM enhances brand competitiveness, helping to shape unique market identities and consumer bases [10].

4. Challenges of emotion-driven marketing

While EDM can enhance brand loyalty and competitiveness, over-reliance on emotional stimuli risks oversimplifying the brand image. Moreover, brand designing EDM strategies must avoid emotional marketing excesses, ensuring alignment with core brand values. Additionally, consumer emotional responses are highly individualized, necessitating precise targeting based on the emotional characteristics of the consumer segment.

Despite its significant benefits for brand loyalty and purchase intention, EDM application faces limitations. Firstly, focusing on consumer emotional needs and fluctuations requires balance; excessive reliance on emotional stimuli can lead to a monolithic brand image, failing to satisfy the diverse needs of different consumer groups. If brands overuse emotional stimuli, consumers may experience emotional fatigue or even develop brand aversion. Therefore, brands need to maintain equilibrium in their emotional marketing strategies, preventing saturation that could harm long-term brand development.

Secondly, the effectiveness of EDM varies considerably due to individual differences in emotional responses. Each consumer's emotional reaction is unique, and susceptibility to arousal and regulation is influenced by cultural background, age, gender, and other factors [8]. For example, younger consumers may be more receptive to emotional marketing, while older consumers might exhibit different or more polarized reactions. Consequently, brands must thoroughly understand the emotional profiles of their target consumer segments to formulate precise EDM campaigns.

5. Conclusion

EDM offers valuable insights into academic research and provides practical experience and strategies for brand marketing. EDM enables brands to better establish emotional connections with consumers, thereby improving market performance. Firstly, emotional marketing allows brands to rapidly capture consumer attention and prompt purchase decisions in the short term. By creating emotional resonance, brands foster consumer emotional dependence, leading to increased purchase intention and brand loyalty.

Secondly, EDM plays a vital role in enhancing brand awareness and market competitiveness. Through meticulously designed advertising content and emotionally charged communication strategies, brands can promote effective consumer recognition, differentiating themselves in fiercely competitive markets. Specifically, the successful cases of Pop Mart and Coca-Cola demonstrate that brands, by arousing consumer emotional resonance, can not only boost short-term sales but also build long-term brand loyalty, thereby securing market share.

Furthermore, EDM assists brands in precise market positioning. By understanding the emotional characteristics of different consumer segments, brands can develop more personalized and customized emotional marketing strategies. For example, brands targeting younger consumers can employ more creative and entertaining emotional stimuli, while campaigns for middle-aged and

elderly consumers might leverage nostalgic or heartwarming elements. Such targeted EDM maximizes marketing effectiveness and market share.

Finally, EDM is not merely a short-term promotional tactic; it constitutes a long-term brand-building strategy. Through emotional marketing, brands establish stable emotional bonds in consumers' minds, increasing brand stickiness and securing a vital position in long-term purchase decisions. Brands must emphasize continuity and consistency in EDM, avoiding misuse and overuse to preserve brand image depth and versatility.

In summary, EDM creates opportunities for short-term sales growth while laying a solid foundation for long-term brand development through consumer emotional bonds and brand loyalty. Brands should leverage this strategy to build profound consumer relationships and achieve sustainable competitive advantages.

Future research should further investigate the application effectiveness of EDM across diverse cultural contexts. For instance, consumers in East Asian cultures may exhibit different emotional responses compared to their Western counterparts. Brands could design culturally tailored EDM strategies that align with local consumer emotional needs. Additionally, emerging technologies like VR and AR offer expansive new frontiers for EDM. These technologies can facilitate more immersive emotional arousal, allowing brands to forge stronger emotional connections with consumers.

Moreover, subsequent case studies should delve deeper into the application of EDM within different market segments. Particular focus should be on attracting consumers across varied age groups, genders, and social strata. Brands can employ more customized emotional stimuli to further elevate the effectiveness of EDM. For example, brands targeting young consumers can utilize more creative and entertaining emotional marketing tactics, while those targeting middle-aged and elderly consumers can leverage warm and nostalgic elements to elicit emotional responses and achieve marketing objectives.

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