

The Impact of Hunger Marketing on Triggering Consumers' Perception of Scarcity

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Abstract. Hunger marketing has become a widely used marketing strategy in contemporary business by creating artificial scarcity to stimulate consumer demand, but its deeper impact on consumer behaviour and market order still needs to be systematically explored. The essence of hunger marketing is the "scarcity effect" that stimulates the desire for possession and social comparison, which leads consumers to ignore the actual needs and values and fall into irrational competition. This thesis, through literature research and case studies, shows that hunger marketing significantly enhances consumers' perception of scarcity through limited supply and time-limited rushing, which in turn triggers a sense of urgency and impulse to buy, and is especially effective for commodities with strong social attributes. However, excessive use of hunger marketing may trigger psychological resistance among consumers, such as the feeling of being manipulated, which can reduce brand loyalty in the long run. Therefore, it is necessary to balance scarcity and fairness. This study deepens the understanding of the chain relationship between scarcity and consumer behaviour, such as the moderating role of consumer anxiety and social needs. At the practical level, it provides suggestions for companies to optimise their limited-edition strategies, such as transparency control.

Keywords: Hunger Marketing, Scarcity, Consumers.

1. Introduction

In today's highly competitive market environment, companies are constantly exploring and applying various marketing strategies to attract consumers' attention and stimulate purchasing behaviours, and hunger marketing is one of them that has attracted a lot of attention. Hunger marketing is one of the most popular marketing strategies. It is widely used in electronic products such as Apple, luxury goods such as Hermes, and FMCG products such as Starbucks limited edition cups. The strategy is to control the supply artificially. It creates scarcity with words such as limited edition, limited time rush, etc., and takes advantage of consumers' social demand psychology to stimulate consumers' possessive desire and prompt them to accelerate their decision-making [1, 2]. However, excessive use of hunger marketing may trigger consumers' psychological resistance and reduce brand trust [3]. Care should be taken to grasp the scarcity strategy boundary to avoid the trust collapse mechanism [4]. Studies have shown that scarcity cues stimulate neural mechanisms, trigger a sense of urgency and inhibit rational assessment [5]. Existing studies mostly focus on short-term behavioural effects,

and there is still a lack of systematic exploration of the cognitive mechanisms of scarcity perception as well as individual differences and strategy optimization [6]. Therefore, this study combines the literature research method and case study method, aiming to reveal the deep mechanism of hunger marketing influencing consumer decision-making, and provide a theoretical basis for enterprises to develop sustainable scarcity strategies. The importance of this study is to meet the demand for theoretical deepening, although hunger marketing is widely used, but how to match brand positioning with hunger marketing has not found the optimal method. Secondly the practice effect contradiction is not solved, the excessive use of hunger marketing by enterprises leads to consumer psychological resistance, and even triggers a brand trust crisis, such as millet early snapping controversy. "How to win the market, the key is to improve consumer satisfaction, quickly convert consumer satisfaction into consumer loyalty, need to determine the marketing strategy through quantitative research, such as the level of transparency, balancing short-term sales and long-term user loyalty [7]."

Once again, there is the challenge of adapting to face the new consumer environment. Social media has amplified the spreading power of scarcity signals, but it has also accelerated consumers' rationality awakening. Research needs to reveal the evolutionary law of consumers' perception of scarcity in digital marketing scenarios to provide strategic upgrades for enterprises. Finally, "in terms of governance, for the phenomena of hunger marketing derived from scalping and price speculation, market regulators should also make good use of the Internet to curb these chaotic phenomena [8]." This study amplifies the commercial potential while "making every effort to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of consumers as well as a healthy and good market order [9]." Hunger marketing, once improperly operated, is very likely to trigger consumer resentment, damage brand trust, and even disrupt the normal order of the market. For example, some merchants falsely advertise scarcity, which is discovered by consumers, resulting in serious damage to brand reputation. Therefore, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to explore how hunger marketing triggers consumers' perception of scarcity and its impact. On the one hand, it can help "better understand consumer behaviour and provide enterprises with ideas and methods to optimize their personalized marketing strategies", and on the other hand, it can provide practical guidance for enterprises to use hunger marketing scientifically and reasonably, which can help enterprises to effectively avoid potential risks and achieve sustainable development, while stimulating the consumers' desire to buy and enhancing brand competitiveness. Achieve sustainable development [10].

2. Case studies

2.1. Iteration of Xiaomi's mobile phone snapping model

Xiaomi mobile phone early spike mode is a textbook hunger marketing. 2012 Xiaomi 2 debuted 50,000 units, regular seconds sold out, and artificial scarcity triggered a crazy spread. But after reaching its peak in 2015, the problem erupted when the red rice Note3 out of stock was scolded for "playing the monkey", and the negative label made the user turnover rate as high as 31%. 2018 Millet 9 released to implement the deposit pre-sale plus batch delivery mechanism, through the prepayment mechanism to achieve a double regulation. This model appeared to take place in a very interesting psychological mechanism shift, after the user paid the 99-yuan deposit, according to the sunk cost effect of behavioural economics, the probability of abandoning the purchase dropped from 35% to 8%. Hunger marketing in this period no longer controls the quantity but shifts to control the time. After 2021 the full pre-sale transition. After 2021, the transformation of all-expenses-paid pre-

sales appears to weaken the sense of hunger but actually shifts the scarcity to a new dimension. With "equity scarcity" instead of "inventory scarcity", the first gift charging treasure, extended warranty and other rights. This not only maintains brand premium but also solves the delivery of the crisis of trust. 2023 Double Eleven data show that the full pre-sale customer complaint rate is 73% lower than the rush mode, indicating that consumers are more appreciative of this improved version of hunger marketing. Xiaomi's iteration inspired the technology industry, in the present day when consumers are sick of hunger marketing evil set, must be hunger marketing evolution into transparent rules and consumers to build trust.

2.2. The hidden hunger strategy of Hermes' allocation system

Hermès is a classic example of how hunger marketing is pushed to the extreme and made implicit and systematic. Hermès' "matching system" usually means that customers need to buy a certain amount of non-popular goods, such as silk scarves, home furnishings, accessories, etc., in order to qualify for the purchase of popular bags. Hermès' "allotment system" is a "hidden hunger strategy" that hides and transfers the depth of hunger, not directly claiming that there is a shortage of stock, Hermès is to make the access to the popular bags extremely complex and uncertain. Hunger is not for the bag itself, but for the qualification to get it. This eligibility is based on ambiguous criteria, allowing hunger to be subtly transformed from a desire for a commodity to a desire for a privileged status. Hermès employs the multi-level stimulation and bundling of demand, with the allotment system forcing customers to pay attention to and purchase the entire range of Hermès products. In order to get a bag, customers need to prove their love for the entire brand. This not only clears out relatively slow-selling items, but more importantly, it effectively transforms the customer's strong desire for a single pop-up into demand for the entire brand's products. The dispensing system empowers sales consultants to sell products with great precision based on the customer's purchasing power, loyalty, and potential. When a consumer successfully dispenses to get the package, it is molded as a status symbol. It implies that the consumer has won the favour of the brand and the recognition of the circle. This psychological satisfaction far exceeds the use value of the commodity itself. The extremely high acquisition threshold itself becomes part of the value of the commodity. The allocation ratio even becomes the capital of bragging rights. The Hermès allocation system screens out top customers who are price-insensitive, brand-loyal, and in pursuit of identity rather than mere practicality. This maintains the brand's high-end image and pure customer circle. This allocation system maintains the brand's tone and long-term value. However, the success of this strategy, which relies heavily on the Hermès brand myth and is constantly balancing commercial interests with customer experience, has been extremely successful but challenging.

2.3. The "social currency" effect of the co-branded limited edition of Xi-Team

The limited release of Xi-Tea's co-branded models, such as the cooperation with the original God and Legend of Concubine Zhen Huan, is a classic case of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) in the food industry that bundles the attributes of "hunger marketing" and "social currency" in depth. Through short-term explosive scarcity and strong topic attributes, it accurately hits the social display and identity needs of young consumers. The core of hunger marketing in Xi-Tea's co-branding is to create artificial scarcity. Co-branded products are usually available for a few days only, with some popular cities and shops selling out in a few hours. Supporting peripherals are even scarcer, with peripherals such as co-branded cup sleeves, paper bags and badges often available on a first-come, first-served basis, and even more difficult to obtain than the drinks themselves. The brand also takes

advantage of consumers' fear of missing out by teasing the on-sale time in advance to create a sense of urgency. The real value of the Xi-Tea co-branded models goes far beyond the drink itself but rather becomes circulatable social capital. Brand co-branding is the equivalent of identity gilding, and holding limited packaging is the same as announcing to the outside world that consumers understand trends. The act of purchasing a co-branded item is a declaration of the consumer's own community identity. Consumers who are the first to grab a co-branded item will gain a sense of superiority and bragging rights, which directly translates scarcity into social status symbols. This strategy of Xi-Tea combines a cup of cost-controlled tea with a strong social attribute, making it a low-cost pass for young people to obtain a circle identity and express their self-labelling, while the brand reaps the rewards of spreading the word and boosting its performance.

3. The mechanism by which hunger marketing triggers the perception of scarcity

3.1. Information control and uncertainty

The core of hunger marketing is to artificially amplify consumers' perception of product scarcity by deliberately controlling information and creating uncertainty, thereby stimulating a sense of urgency and desire to buy. The essence of this strategy is to deny consumers complete and certain information so that they are left in a fog and forced to make incorrect judgments based on limited and potentially misleading clues. Companies deliberately obscure supply and are not transparent about the actual availability and replenishment of products. Making it difficult for consumers to make accurate judgments. For example, Apple's new product reservation. Apple usually only opens the pre-order channel at the early stage of the new product release, not direct purchase. It does not announce the total amount of the first batch of shipments for the global market, nor does it clearly inform the specific arrival time and quantity of subsequent batches. Consumers often rush to buy new products blindly. This uncertainty amplifies the anxiety of having to wait a long time or even not being able to buy, prompting consumers to aggressively rush to buy at the first sign of open reservation. Some merchants capture the urgency of consumers' slow to buy, such as the time pressure of e-commerce platforms' "second kill" activities. This is the ultimate manifestation of the mentality of "no time to spare". Campaigns usually set a very short and precise countdown window, creating a tense atmosphere of thousands of people crossing a wooden bridge. In this highly designed environment with information and time pressure, consumers don't have enough time to compare prices and think things through. The passage of time and the ever-changing data of the rush to buy, constantly stimulate the consumer's desire to buy, forcing consumers to make impulsive purchasing decisions in a short period of time, the end of the countdown or the moment when the product inventory is displayed to be zero, it is the perception of scarcity pushed to the top, and for the next activity to lay the groundwork.

3.2. Social communication and the herd effect

The core of hunger marketing is to create artificial scarcity, and social communication and human herd mentality greatly amplify this scarcity signal. A very common stimulus of contemporary sunshine orders, when consumers successfully grab a limited number of goods, such as Hi-tea and popular IP co-branded drinks and peripherals, and then share the "unboxing", "clocking" and other behaviours on social media, to show that they have obtained the scarce resources of the social currency. When seeing a large number of sunshine lists, especially from their own attention of bloggers or friends around the card, consumers will have a strong desire to buy and behaviour,

further exacerbating the scarcity of the product. It makes snagging and sunbathing itself a trend to be imitated. Secondary market premiums such as the scalper market provide the most direct and powerful market validation of the scarcity of goods. Supreme co-branded T-shirts, for example, are known for their limited weekly release model, especially with other big brands or artists. The official channel usually sells out within minutes or even seconds. Immediately after, on the secondary market, these popular co-branded T-shirts are immediately listed for several times their original price. This is a common occurrence. Much contemporary discussion also often focuses on the insane prices on their secondary market, further reinforcing this perception of scarcity and brand aura, attracting even more people eager to be able to buy them when they next go on sale, even if it's just for the sake of reselling them at a profit. The sunbather stimulus and scalping market are not side effects of hunger marketing, but rather its ability to trigger and amplify consumer scarcity perceptions through social communication and the herd effect.

3.3. Self-identity and symbolic value

Hunger marketing creates scarcity, and at a deeper level, it succeeds in transforming scarce commodities into an identity symbol that satisfies the psychological needs of consumers to construct self-identity and seek a sense of belonging to a group. Scarcity perception here becomes the threshold for acquiring this identity and social capital. Scarcity perception drives people to pursue this need to be respected and valued. An example is the identity in sneaker culture, where limited releases are normalised. The ability to grab these limited-edition products is the key criterion that distinguishes ordinary consumers from premium sneakerheads. Owning a rare pair of sneakers with a story will become a status symbol. The difficulty of acquiring them becomes a badge of honour, and owning a limited edition is proof of the owner's passion and resources. It will gain community access and recognition and become a knock on the door to integrate into the shoe community. Brands continue to inject rich cultural significance and symbolic value into their limited-edition sneakers by means of co-branding, replicating classics, telling good design stories, and controlling on-sale quantities. Consumers are not only buying shoes, but also the identity symbols and sense of belonging to the community attached to them. Scarcity is the key to maintaining this symbolic value. Therefore, from the perspective of self-identity and symbolic value, the perception of scarcity triggered by hunger marketing is effective because it skilfully transforms the commodity into one that represents a specific identity and community belonging. The consumer's desire is a manifestation of a deep psychological need for recognition and status within a specific community. Scarcity is no longer a barrier, but a necessary element that gives value and meaning to identity labels and social capital.

4. The double-edged effect of hunger marketing

4.1. Short-term gains

The short-term benefits of hunger marketing can be rapid. In the short term, the hunger marketing strategy, if used properly, can bring very substantial direct benefits, mainly in terms of increased brand reputation, increased premium capacity, and customer acquisition efficiency. Artificially created scarcity. The use of keywords such as "limited edition", "buy it now" and "sold out" are naturally powerful. Combined with social media, this kind of scarcity information can quickly ferment, triggering widespread discussion, speculation and even controversy. For example, Zhong Xuegao has used the fact that it has raised the brand's popularity and conversation to gain short-term

gains. Zhong Xuegao's 66 RMB ice cream was the talk of the town for a while. 66 RMB ice cream became the talk of the town, triggering all sorts of discussions, and brand awareness skyrocketed in a very short period of time. Despite the huge controversy, the pricing of \$66 itself was a bold attempt at premium pricing. For consumers who successfully purchased and recognised its value, the purchase itself strengthened the brand's perception of premium pricing power, which can raise consumers' psychological expectations of the entire brand's price range in the future, laying the foundation for the subsequent pricing of medium- and high-end products. Low-cost customer acquisition and traffic explosion will also get short-term, such as Ruixing "soy latte" sold out on the first day. The strategy used was to co-brand the "soy latte" with Moutai, emphasising the use of Moutai's expensive wine and suggesting that supply was limited. It created a nationwide rush on the first day. Hunger marketing is indeed effective in the short term and can quickly raise brand awareness and premium prices. While the short-term gains from hunger marketing can be substantial, it can be costly when used incorrectly. It is important to balance short-term gains with long-term gains, so that scarcity really serves to enhance brand value, rather than consume the brand's credibility.

4.2. Long-term risks

Hunger marketing, as a short-term strategy to stimulate consumption by creating artificial scarcity, has long-term risks that may have far-reaching negative impacts on brand value and. The core of hunger marketing is to stimulate consumers' sense of urgency by creating artificial scarcity, but when brands over-rely on this strategy, consumers' trust may gradually be overdrawn, ultimately leading to brand credibility damage. After the short-term heat of certain Netflix milk tea brands subsidies, consumers are very strongly offended by their marketing tactics leading to a significant drop in repurchase rates. Hunger marketing will lead to resource mismatches, this marketing strategy will give rise to scalping, scalping will take advantage of the technical advantages of a large number of buyout products, and then sell at a high price, resulting in a mismatch of market resources, damage to the brand, consumers and the long-term healthy development of the market. For example, the market price of Maotai wine has long been higher than the official price of more than 1,000-yuan, ordinary consumers is difficult to buy at the original price, so that the real consumer experience feels the loss. When scalpers dominate the market price, the brand official has lost its significance, which in the long run will lead to brand profit damage, and long-term value is damaged. Hunger marketing improper use will lead to consumer aesthetic fatigue, excessive use of consumer freshness, consumers will gradually become numb, and even produce resentment, brand heat will fall sharply. Some of the net red milk tea shops are through the limited edition to create a topic, and then consumers found that, although every time is limited edition but every time people can buy, consumers have aesthetic fatigue, interest in the brand plummeted, part of the shop was forced to close. Therefore, brand marketing rhetoric to be compliant, domestic cosmetic brands to regular products packaged as artisanal limited, in violation of Article 8 of the Anti-Unfair Competition Law was fined.

5. Conclusion

This paper uses the literature research method and case study method to elaborate the marketing strategy of hunger marketing, and systematically analyses the influence mechanism of hunger marketing, which is specifically manifested in the use of consumers' scarcity perception, triggering their deepest desire for scarce goods, and creating a sense of urgency with the help of limited supply,

limited time rush and other means, which makes the consumers accelerate their purchasing decisions under the psychological drive of the fear of missing out on the purchasing opportunity. Purchase decision. At the same time, the short-term benefits and long-term risks of hunger marketing are further elaborate. In the short term, hunger marketing can increase product sales and enhance product awareness; in the long term, if it is overused or improperly used as a strategy, it may lead to an overdraft of consumers' trust, mismatch of market resources, aesthetic fatigue, and undermine the healthy development of the market. In the future, with the changes in the market environment and the diversification of consumer demand, the research direction of hunger marketing can focus on how to accurately locate the target group in the digital context and deeply analyse consumer behaviour and psychology. In addition, there are differences in consumers' perception of scarcity in different cultures, so it is worth exploring how to effectively use hunger marketing in different cultures to help enterprises expand the international market. Based on the above research, the following suggestions are provided for enterprises to implement hunger marketing strategy. Firstly, product and market demand should be fully considered to ensure that hunger marketing matches the product positioning and avoid blindly following the trend. Secondly, in the implementation process, we should strictly control the degree, to avoid excessive hunger to trigger consumer boredom. Once again, we need to attach great importance to the improvement of product quality and service level, which is the fundamental basis of the enterprise based on the market; finally, pay attention to communication with consumers, timely understanding of consumer demand, and constantly optimise the marketing strategy, in order to achieve the sustainable and healthy development of the enterprise.

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