

A Study on the Relationship between Consumer Emotions and Purchasing Behavior of Fashion Brands-Taking Supreme as an Example

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Abstract: In the recent years, with the rapid development of fashion culture, the influence of emotions on consumer purchase behavior has been increasingly concerned. This paper focuses on the fashion brand Supreme, and explores the influence of different emotions (such as excitement, anxiety, guilt, envy, etc.) on impulse buying, herd buying, symbolic consumption and compensatory buying behaviors. The study adopts a qualitative method combining in-depth interviews and social media content analysis to construct a role model of “emotion-community identity/perceived scarcity-purchase behavior”. It is found that community identity and perceived scarcity play a moderating or mediating effect, and multi-dimensional emotions have a significant impact on multi-dimensional purchasing behaviors. This paper provides new perspectives and theoretical references for trendy brand marketing practice and emotion-behavior mechanism research.

Keywords: Consumer Emotions; Purchase Behavior; Fashion Brand; Community Identity; Qualitative Research

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Contemporary consumption has long since transcended the transaction of objects to become a process of emotional expression and identity construction. In this transformation, trend brands have constructed a highly symbolic and emotionally driven consumption mechanism through limited offerings, premium transactions and community operations. Taking Supreme as an example, consumers not only show behavioral differences in product selection, but also experience multiple emotional fluctuations such as excitement, anxiety, shame, and envy during the process of snatching, ordering, and

reselling, which constitute the psychological basis of their brand identity and even consumption motivation.

Emotions are an important psychological antecedent of irrational decision-making; Rook (1987) pointed out that emotions can override rational thinking and induce impulsive purchasing in an instant; Aljukhadar et al. (2017) argued that consumers in scarcity situations trigger both emotional and cognitive responses, and the decision path thus exhibits context-dependent and dual-driven characteristics [1]; and Richins (1997) provided a framework for the systematic measurement of emotions, which has pushed forward the empirical study of multidimensional emotions. Meanwhile, community identification and scarcity perception have also been shown to have significant behavior-inducing effects (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Lynn, 1991) [3,6]. In the Chinese context, Liu et al. (2020) found that live streaming arousal and pleasurable emotions have a positive effect on impulse purchases, while Lin Nan (2021) pointed out that negative emotions, such as anticipatory regret, may also motivate consumers' purchasing behavior [4].

However, most of the existing studies focus on digital contexts such as live broadcasting and e-commerce, and do not pay enough attention to the “limited quantity-community-cultural identity” trinity of the consumption field constructed by fashion culture brands, and there is a lack of theoretical integration of the linkage mechanism between multi-dimensional emotional states and multiple behavioral paths. There is also a lack of theoretical integration between multi-dimensional emotional states and multiple behavioral paths. In this context, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to explore the relationship between emotions and behaviors in the consumption of trendy brands, and to identify the key roles played by community affiliation and scarcity perception.

1.2 Synthesis of Research

Recently, academics have paid increasing attention to the role of emotions in consumer decision making, especially in the explanation of irrational purchasing behavior showing significant value. Rook (1987) pointed out that emotional high arousal states may override rational analysis and trigger unplanned purchases. Aljukhadar et al. (2017) showed that emotions and cognition drive decision-making in parallel in scarcity situations, and that emotions have a dynamic mechanism role in this process [1]. Richins (1997) starts from the operationalization perspective and lays the foundation for the empirical measurement of multidimensional emotions.

In terms of external motivators, community identity and scarcity perception are widely believed to amplify emotional impact, and Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) put forward the concept of "brand community", which suggests that consumers' sense of identity belonging enhances their emotional responses and behavioral tendencies. Lynn (1991) found that the perception of scarcity can trigger states such as anxiety and excitement, thus enhancing purchase motivation, while Schouten and McAlexander (1995) pointed out that symbolic consumption is often embedded in community culture [10]. Domestic scholars such as Liu et al. (2020), Lin Nan (2021), and Luo Lei (2023) have also verified the behavioral effects of emotion and identity in the context of live streaming interaction and community e-commerce [5].

Despite the preliminary results of the research, the current literature is still insufficient in three aspects: first, the dimensional division of emotions is relatively single, which makes it difficult to portray the intertwined state of emotions in reality; second, the focus on the types of behaviors is limited, ignoring the deeper mechanisms such as symbolic and compensatory; and third, it lacks the composite structure of "limited quantity-community-premium price" that fashion brands present. Third, there is a lack of attempts to incorporate the "limited quantity-community-premium" composite structure of trend brands into the overall analytical framework.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

This study aims to construct a theoretical model to explain the consumer behavior of fashion

brands, focusing on the mechanism of multidimensional emotions (e.g., excitement, anxiety, and guilt) on multiple types of purchasing behaviors, exploring the mediating and moderating roles of community identification and scarcity perception, and empirically testing Supreme as a representative brand.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on the core question of how consumers' emotions affect their purchasing behavior, and aims to reveal the influence of multidimensional emotional states (e.g., excitement, anxiety, and guilt) on herd, symbolic, and compensatory consumption behaviors, and then to explore the mediating and regulating mechanisms of community identity and scarcity perceptions. Compared with the existing research paradigm that focuses on impulsive purchasing and ignores the complexity of emotions and the diversity of consumer behaviors, this paper introduces a more realistic consumption scenario of fashion brands, and proposes to construct a theoretical model that covers emotion-driven, psychological mechanisms and behavioral responses, and conducts empirical analyses using Supreme as a representative. The study is expected to enrich the theoretical system of consumer behavior research, and at the same time provide more operational references for brands in the construction of emotional value and community operation strategies.

2. Research Methods

2.1 Research Theory

This study adopts a qualitative research method, aiming to construct a model of the influence mechanism of fashion brand consumers' emotions on purchasing behavior based on typical consumption situations and established theoretical results. The study takes SOR theory (Stimulus-Organism-Response) as the main line of analysis, emphasizing the process of external stimuli acting on consumer behavior through emotional arousal (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Richins, 1997) [2,8]. In the "limited edition-premium trading-community interaction" scenario of fashion brands, consumers are often faced with a strong sense of scarcity and social comparison, which triggers a variety of emotional responses, such as excitement, anxiety,

and guilt, and thus influences their behavioral choices.

In order to further identify how emotions synergize with community factors and product attributes, this study introduces community identity theory and scarcity perception theory as complementary mechanisms. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) suggest that brand communities are important platforms for consumers to build their identities and seek belonging, and that their emotional connections and interactive feedbacks enhance consumers' behavioral tendencies. Lynn (1991), on the other hand, reveals through experiments that the perception of scarcity can strengthen consumers' sense of urgency and arousal level, which can significantly enhance their desire and willingness to purchase.

In addition, in order to explain the behavioral path of symbolic consumption driven by emotions, this paper draws on Pallant et al. (2022) study, which points out that consumers tend to use brand prominence and ostentatious consumption to display their identity and social expression in high emotional arousal situations, and symbolic consumption thus becomes one of the key forms of emotional activation [7].

To sum up, this paper constructs the theoretical structure of "external stimulus-emotional response-behavioral outcome" and introduces the intermediary variables of community identity, scarcity perception and symbolic consumption behavior, in order to reveal the deep driving mechanism of consumers' multidimensional emotions on fashion brand purchasing behavior. In order to provide an analytical framework for theoretical construction and practical understanding.

2.2 Specific Research Programs

This study uses qualitative research methods, combining social media content analysis and in-depth interviews to construct a theoretical model of the mechanism of consumer sentiment toward fashion brands and its impact on purchasing behavior. The research focuses on consumers of the Supreme brand, with the following specific design:

First, social media content analysis is employed to uncover emotional expressions and behavioral tendencies within real-world consumption contexts. The study will select high-interaction user-generated content (UGC) from platforms such as Xiaohongshu, Zhihu, and Weibo related to topics like Supreme product limited releases,

secondary market premiums, and brand collaborations. This content will serve as the core sample for analysis, with a focus on identifying emotions such as excitement, anxiety, guilt, envy, and other multidimensional emotions, as well as behavioral tendencies such as impulse buying, herd behavior, symbolic consumption, and compensatory purchasing. This will help clarify the logical connections between emotions and purchasing behavior.

Second, the study will conduct 10–15 in-depth interviews with typical consumers who have recently purchased Supreme products or are active in related communities. The interviews will revolve around core questions such as: "What was your most recent experience purchasing Supreme like? What emotional reactions did you have during the process?" "Have you ever felt an impulse to purchase due to others snapping up items?" "Did you feel satisfaction, regret, or guilt after purchasing?" These questions aim to reveal the intrinsic relationship between emotional experiences, community influence, and behavioral outcomes. To ensure the representativeness of the sample, participants will be limited to individuals aged 18–35, with balanced gender distribution, residing in first-tier and new first-tier cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Changsha, who have at least one purchase experience of Supreme products or community participation records, and have maintained interest in the brand within the past year. They should possess brand awareness, emotional investment, and behavioral practice, capable of comprehensively reflecting the typical characteristics of Supreme consumers in the Chinese market, with good theoretical extensibility.

Data analysis will be based on the SOR theory as the main framework, supplemented by community identity theory, scarcity perception theory, and symbolic consumption theory. Open coding and main axis coding methods will be used to systematically sort out the path relationship between emotional stimulation, psychological mechanisms, and behavioral responses, and then propose a consumer emotional behavior model applicable to fashion brands.

3. Findings

This study takes the fashion brand Supreme as an example, and through in-depth interviews and social media content analysis, initially constructs

a model of the role mechanism of consumer emotions in influencing purchasing behavior. It is found that emotion is not an isolated variable, but participates in the whole process of consumer decision-making by interacting with elements such as community identification and scarcity perception.

Specifically, multidimensional emotions such as excitement, anxiety, envy, and guilt are significantly associated with different types of purchase behaviors. For example, excitement is closely related to impulse buying and herd buying; whereas a certain emotional transfer path is shown between guilt and compensatory consumption. Meanwhile, community identity strengthens emotional expression and belonging motivation, and becomes an important psychological support for consumers in the face of limited edition and premium market; and the perception of scarcity further exacerbates emotional fluctuations, and enhances consumers' desire and willingness to act on "just-in-time acquisition".

In addition, the study reveals that the symbolic links between community culture, brand symbols and individual self-worth form an important basis for behavioral motivation. Consumers not only purchase goods, but also seek identity confirmation and emotional resonance in the process of consumption. Ultimately, this paper proposes a four-dimensional interaction model of "emotion-community-scarcity-behavior", which enriches the theoretical explanatory power of consumer behavior research in complex consumption situations, and provides practical guidance for optimizing the marketing strategies of fashion brands. It also provides practical guidance for the optimization of marketing strategies of trendy brands.

4. Discussion

4.1 Summary of Results

This study constructs a model of the role mechanism of consumer emotions influencing purchase behavior of fashion brands through in-depth interviews and social media content analysis. It is found that consumers will stimulate diversified emotional experiences when faced with situations such as limited sale of fashion brands, and these emotions influence their purchase motives and behavioral patterns, such as impulse purchase, herd purchase and

symbolic consumption through mediating variables such as community identity and scarcity perception.

4.2 Interpretation of Results

This study found that emotions, community identity and scarcity perception form an interaction mechanism in fashion brand consumption. High arousal emotions such as excitement and anxiety significantly drive impulsive and follower behaviors, supporting Rook's (1987) and Liu et al. (2020) conclusion that emotions drive purchases [9]. Community belonging enhances symbolic and compensatory consumption, consistent with Muniz and O'Guinn's (2001) community theory. Compared with Luo Lei's (2023) study, which focused on e-commerce scenarios, this study was conducted in the context of limited edition sale and community interaction, which expands the application boundaries and mechanistic understanding of consumer behavior research.

4.3 Research Limitations

Although this study adopts qualitative methods to excavate the deeper mechanisms, there are still limitations. First, the sample size is limited, and the respondents are mainly concentrated in specific age groups and brand preference groups, which may affect the broad applicability of the results; second, the study mainly relies on subjective expressions and textual data, and lacks the support of quantitative validation; and third, it fails to differentiate the mechanism differences among different types of fashion brands.

4.4 Practical Application

The results of this study will help brands more accurately grasp the mechanisms that trigger consumer emotions, thereby enabling them to formulate more targeted marketing strategies. For fashion brands such as Supreme, they can optimize the pace and methods of limited sales by strengthening community identity. On the one hand, brands can identify active users and key opinion leaders, and use the influence of the community to warm up the release of new products in stages, stimulating consumers' excitement and sense of urgency. On the other hand, by encouraging consumers to share their "snap-up experiences" and participation feelings, the symbolic meaning and community belonging of the brand can be strengthened, further

promoting the improvement of purchase intention and loyalty. The above strategies not only provide direction for brand marketing practices, but also provide theoretical support for fashion brands to build differentiated competitive advantages.

5. Conclusion

Taking the fashion brand Supreme as an example, this study explores how multidimensional emotions (e.g., excitement, anxiety), community identification, and scarcity perception work together to influence consumers' impulsive, herd, and symbolic purchasing behaviors. Through in-depth interviews and social media content analysis, a model of the influence mechanism of consumer behavior in the context of fashion brands was constructed. It is found that high arousal emotions and community belonging play a key role in multiple types of consumer behaviors. The study not only enriches the theoretical exploration of consumer emotion-driven mechanisms, but also provides practical references for fashion brands in the areas of limited release, community operation and emotional marketing.

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