

# Emotional-driven: The Function of Experiential Consumption in Improving Consumers' Purchase Intentions —— Take JELLYCAT as an Example

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**Abstract.** With the rise of a series of "emotional" economy, the traditional marketing model has been difficult to comply with the current mainstream trend of consumption, and the competition between brands has gradually turned to emotional competition and experience competition. Consumers no longer just pay attention to the basic performance of goods, but seek a brand that fits their emotions and values, and experiential emotional marketing has become one of the mainstream ways of the current marketing mode. Focusing on experiential marketing, this study mainly analyzes the impact of this marketing model on consumers' purchase intention and explores the path to build a close relationship between brands and consumers. The process tracking method of case study and documental analysis method are adopted to discuss. This study analyzes how experiential marketing makes an emotional connection with consumers driven by emotion, extracts the interaction between the two and the role of brands in the operation process, and affirms the positive influence of experiential marketing in enhancing the brand loyalty and consumer stickiness. However, there are still some problems in the experience design of online marketing. As well as the problem of how to apply the theory in different markets without detailed expansion, it is expected to be improved in future research.

**Keywords:** Experiential marketing, purchase intention, emotional marketing, and documental analysis method.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, with the changes of market environment and consumer behavior, brands have begun to attract consumers through experiential emotional marketing based on a series of theoretical models such as social identity theory, consumer five senses model, consumer behavior and psychology. Experience marketing was first proposed by American scholar Toffler in the 1970s. This concept breaks through for the first time that consumers are rational, and the theory holds that consumers are both rational and perceptual in the process of consumption [1]. This concept has developed so far, both its definition and theoretical system have been relatively perfect. Some scholars believe that experiential marketing is to introduce consumers into a given scene or setting through product storytelling and scenarioization, thereby triggering emotional resonance between brands and consumers [2]. Some scholars also believe that immersive experience is the key to enhance participation, and brands and consumers complete the transmission of emotional value through interactive activities [3]. There are also scholars who, from a psychological perspective, reveal the importance of consumer psychology in enhancing the brand loyalty and increasing purchase intentions in brand experiential marketing [1]. In summary, experiential emotional marketing is a brand-centered approach that uses products as a medium to trigger consumers' emotional resonance through specific scenarios or modes, transforming the consumption process into a comprehensive experience that is rich in emotions, sensory stimulation, thought provocation, and action participation, bringing consumers a sense of fulfillment at the spiritual level and gradually developing the brand loyalty from product experience. However, the existing literature is not systematic when studying the function of experiential marketing in improving consumers' purchase intention, and only discusses a certain link of experiential marketing, ignoring that experiential marketing is a complete process, and failing to consider the early and later factors that may have an impact on this link. Studying the link

between experiential consumption and consumer purchase intention is of practical significance at both theoretical and practical levels. On the theoretical level, this study is conducive to improving the model and framework of experiential marketing, linking experiential marketing model with consumer behavior, and exploring the internal mechanism. At the practical level, this research helps brands to better control the emotional needs of consumers, promote communication and interaction between brands and consumers, and thus optimize and upgrade the marketing strategies of their products. Therefore, it is of great significance to deeply study the function of experiential consumption in improving consumers' purchase intention. This paper uses the literature analysis method and the process tracing method in the case study to explore the connection between experiential consumption and consumer demand and consumer purchase intention. From the perspective of brand overview, marketing path restoration, case analysis, theoretical summary, content summary and future prospect, this paper takes the British plush toy brand JELLYCAT as an example to trace.

## **2. JELLYCAT Brand Overview**

JELLYCAT is a stuffed animal brand founded in 1999 by two brothers, William and Thomas, in London, England. Its products were initially positioned as soothing toys for babies. However, with the popularity of "companion economy" and "healing economy", the emotional needs of the new generation of young people are increasing, and JELLYCAT's extensive and creative plush toys perfectly meet this demand, and in recent years, Jellycat has developed into one of the most popular soft toy brands for young people. Its brand positioning has also changed to a British luxury gift brand for all ages.

JELLYCAT has a strong brand name and a broad line of products, and its dolls have won a large and stable audience with most middle-class young people, plush toy lovers, parent-child families, and gift buyers thanks to their high-quality materials, unique design, and soft touch. In addition, the brand focuses on building a niche market, yet overreliance on a specific market or the consumer group can pose risks for the brand. But according to the current market background and economic trends, the demand for soothing toys continues to grow, especially in the Chinese market. Brands can further expand their market share by targeting consumers with precision marketing and advertising. But the plush toy market is highly competitive, and JELLYCAT also faces competitive pressure from other well-known brands (such as Disney, Mattel).

## **3. Analysis of the Experience of JELLYCAT's Marketing Strategy**

### **3.1. The Implementation Path of Experiential Consumption**

JELLYCAT attaches great importance to the visual communication of its products. In terms of design, the brand's products are closely related to the life of consumers, with distinctive color and unique design of fruit, vegetable and animal dolls, and each plush toy is equipped with its signature beanie eye smiley face, giving consumers a great visual impact and in-depth description of the brand image. In display and store design, JELLYCAT's products are best presented to consumers online and offline through carefully designed displays. Especially in offline physical stores, the store decoration is warm, and the staff wear specific work clothes to serve customers. Brands will set special display scenes in offline stores, such as placing fruit and vegetable dolls in vegetable baskets for sale, which not only improves the brand image, but also enhances consumers' purchase desire.

JELLYCAT focuses on stimulating consumers' auditory perception during brand communication. JELLYCAT uses sounds to interact with customers in offline experiences, such as when a brand packs a doll for a customer, and the staff simulate a waiter making and packing a burger, or simulating the process of moving dirt and spraying water, which increases the interaction with consumers. In addition, brands also release some interesting and warm videos or audio content on social media platforms, which are often accompanied by buoyant background music or warm voice-over, creating

a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere, further deepening consumers' impression of the brand and enhancing the connection between the brand and pleasant experience.

JELLYCAT's products are known for their tactile touch, with dolls made of high-quality materials such as animal fur that are soft and comfortable to the hand. Excellent product quality enables consumers to feel the intention and quality of the brand when they touch the product. This tactile pleasure is one of the key factors in promoting the brand loyalty and word of mouth. The brand also encourages consumers to participate in the process of product design, for example, by designing different shapes and accessories for dolls, which not only enhances consumers' emotional connection to the product, but also improves the participation and influence of the brand.

In terms of olfactory communication, brands will enhance their brand impression by using unique aromas in their packaging or store environment. The staff will use a relatively elegant specific perfume or aromatherapy in the store to enhance the customer's shopping experience, so that customers can feel a unique aroma associated with the brand during the shopping process. In addition, the brand has cooperated with the fragrance brand (BEAST) to open a co-branded limited flower shop offline, which can virtually deepen consumers' memory and identity of the brand through olfactory stimulation.

JELLYCAT's taste-related experiences are often represented through crossover marketing or co-branded marketing. The brand has worked with artisanal bloggers to create desserts featuring its products and opened a dessert pop-up shop in Paris. In July 2023, JELLYCAT launched a Bonny Bunny themed afternoon tea with the Waldorf Astoria. These marketing campaigns allow customers to experience the warmth and care of the JELLYCAT brand while enjoying their food, thus increasing brand awareness and providing consumers with a unique experience.

### 3.2. Effect Assessment of the Emotional Drive

The experiential marketing strategy has generated significant brand revenue and exposure for JELLYCAT since 2020.

In 2021, JELLYCAT sales on Tmall exceeded 100 million RMB, with a year-on-year growth of 47.1% [4]. In 2022, the annual revenue of the brand was 1.34 billion yuan, an increase of 72% year-on-year [5]. In the first half of 2023, according to Hamleys' official doll prices, JELLYCAT's popular products will increase in price by as much as 20%, and many daily products will increase in price by about 10% [4]. Out-of-print dolls are also difficult to find in the second-hand market, which has become a new type of "financial products". During Singles Day 2023, JELLYCAT sales surpassed Disney to become the No. 1 seller in the plush fabric category, with an average transaction price of 465 yuan. In May, its online site, JELLYCAT.com, reported revenue of 63 million renminbi, well ahead of its peers' median. According to statistics, in JELLYCAT's offline experience stores, customers spend an average of more than 30 minutes and purchase conversion rate is more than 60% [6]. This data shows that offline experience stores have a significant effect on increasing consumers' purchase intention.

JELLYCAT's success can be seen not only in its impressive marketing performance, but also in the brand's high exposure on social media platforms. In the first half of 2022, JELLYCAT's exposure on social media platforms has skyrocketed, a trend that has reached a new monthly peak in just over a year, with an explosion in the number of related notes. In addition, as of July 2024, the number of topic notes about JELLYCAT on Little Red Book reached approximately 1 million, more than half a million interactions, and 1.58 billion views. JELLYCAT is generally highly rated by customers, many of whom mention that the comfort of the experience makes them more likely to purchase in an offline store. JELLYCAT also has a strong community presence. On Douban, more than 60,000 members form the JELLYCAT Withdrawal Support Group, which was originally intended to help people buy less JELLYCAT, but in fact has become a popular platform for sharing and promoting JELLYCAT. These data demonstrate JELLYCAT has successfully established a differentiated image in the market and enhanced consumers' emotional connection through its unique brand philosophy and positioning as a premium gift brand. JELLYCAT has become a very popular brand among young people,

especially in the field of plush toys, whose products are widely recognized and loved, and experiential marketing strategies have contributed to this.

JELLYCAT is also based on an innovative marketing model driven by user data. JELLYCAT uses the Datatouch analytics tool to capture and deeply analyze user behavior data in real time, providing solid data support for brand decisions. In terms of product line adjustment and inventory management, JELLYCAT uses sales data to quickly identify market hot spots and potential demands by analyzing the sales performance of each product line, so as to flexibly adjust production strategies to ensure a high match between product supply and market demand. At the same time, the intelligent inventory management system based on the sales forecast and inventory turnover rate, effectively avoids the risk of inventory overstocking and stock shortage, improve the operational efficiency and capital turnover. In addition, the brand has conducted in-depth mining of user behavior data, for instance, focusing on basic website traffic (such as the significant increase in website traffic to 20 million in April), analyzing multidimensional information such as user stay time, browsing paths, and click preferences, so that the brand can accurately grasp user interests and needs, and then improve user experience by implementing personalized recommendation strategies and optimizing webpage layout. At the same time, the brand carries out content marketing and precision marketing activities to ensure that every message can accurately reach the target audience, enhancing brand stickiness and conversion rate. JELLYCAT takes user feedback very seriously. By collecting and analyzing users' online reviews, ratings and suggestions for existing products or services, brands can quickly gain insight into customers' true feelings and expectations, providing references for product iteration, service upgrading and marketing strategy adjustment. This user-centric approach ensures that JELLYCAT continues to meet and exceed customer expectations and strengthen its position in the market. In the field of social media, JELLYCAT analyzes social media interaction data, such as topic engagement, browsing exposure and user emotional tendencies, so that brands can accurately grasp market trends and opinion trends and adjust content strategies in a timely manner to ensure the effective dissemination of brand information and influence. At the same time, based on the data analysis results, JELLYCAT also actively invited the key opinion leaders who are consistent with the tone of the brand to cooperate with the product, using their influence and fan base to further expand the brand exposure, brand image and product awareness. This series of measures not only enriches the brand's marketing means, but also effectively promotes sales conversion and market share growth.

## **4. The Relationship between Emotionally Driven Experiential Consumption and Consumers' Purchase Intention**

### **4.1. Emotional Connection and Brand Loyalty**

JELLYCAT starts from the perspective of consumers, from attracting attention, stimulating interest, information search, buying, sharing and the whole process of accurate control of consumer demand. From the indirect satisfaction of physiological and safety needs, to the direct touch of emotional and belongingness needs, to the personalized expression of respect and self-realization needs, JELLYCAT builds emotional link with consumers from multiple aspects of product development, promotion, consumption and after-sales successfully meets the emotional needs of consumers at different levels, thus enhancing the emotional connection between the brand and the consumer.

During the stage of attracting attention and stimulating interest, JELLYCAT products attract the attention of consumers through its unique product design. With its safe and reliable material and soft and comfortable touch, Jellycat provides consumers with a sense of security and comfort, and indirectly meets the physiological and safety needs of consumers. The brand can control the market direction in time, focus on economic hot spot, and introduce new products. For example, the recently launched sports product series is with the help of the east wind of the Paris Olympic Games, so as to attract many sports fans and achieve the purpose of broadening the audience and brand communication. In addition, brands use social media marketing to sustain consumer attention [7].

Through a clear brand positioning, JELLYCAT emphasizes its role as a medium for emotional expression by telling the stories behind toys and the creative inspiration of designers. JELLYCAT also encourages consumers to treat dolls as partners in life, conveys the emotional value and warmth of the brand to consumers, and builds emotional connections with consumers to provide consumers with the needs of emotion and belonging.

During the search and purchase stage, brands take advantage of the data analysis tools of social media and e-commerce platforms on the social platforms, to learn about consumers' search habits and preferences, to optimize product information web pages, to provide convenience for consumers to obtain more information about products, and to help consumers make smarter purchase decisions. In addition, the brand also provides customers with a clear, and convenient purchase process and a safe, and fast payment method. At the same time, the brand carries out preferential activities from time to time, and promote consumers to complete the purchase through and other methods to enhance their purchase intention. JELLYCAT also provides quality after-sales service, establishes loyal customer clubs or membership programs, and enhances the humanistic care of the brand. These measures not only help improve the purchasing experience of consumers, can also increase their trust and loyalty to the brand and enhance customer retention.

JELLYCAT encourages customers to share their shopping experience by offering Jellycat rewards and, which makes it easier to share. After consumers use and are satisfied with the product, will take the initiative to share their shopping experience through social media and other channels [7]. JELLYCAT encourages customers to create Jellycat designs for the dolls, accessories and by creating content for the brand on social media. This marketing model recognizes the creativity and uniqueness of consumers, satisfies their demands for respect and self-realization, and enhances their emotional connection with the brand. It not only meets the social needs of consumers, but also attracts more potential consumers, expands the influence and market share of the brand, and exerts a profound impact on the reputation and image of the brand, which greatly enhances brand loyalty.

#### **4.2. The Long-term Effect of the Interaction between Experiential Consumption and Purchase Intention in Brand Management**

The interaction between emotion-driven experiential consumption and consumers' purchase intention is multi-dimensional and multi-level. First of all, in the emotional triggering stage, the brand should accurately target the emotional requirement of consumers through differentiated products or services to stimulate the emotional resonance of consumers. In the stage of emotional deepening and memory, the brand should provide consumers with positive emotional experience, and use dynamic marketing methods to continuously provide consumers with renewed experience, deepen consumers' memory, and strengthen consumers' recognition of the brand. During the solidification and molding stage of purchase intention, the brand guarantees to always provide consumers with high-quality products and services, ensure the pleasure of customer consumption experience, timely listen to consumer feedback and constantly repair products and services, so that consumers form a specific purchase intention.

Giving play to the interaction between emotionally driven experiential consumption and consumers' purchase intention has long-term effects on brands, which can help brands broaden audience groups, seize market share, enhance brand loyalty and consumer stickiness, establish brand image and reputation, and enhance the added value and premium ability of products or services. As for how the brand makes use of experiential consumption and empowers consumers' purchase intention with emotion in different market environments, corresponding adjustments should be made according to the specific situation of the target market. The brand needs to adjust its brand strategy and promotion methods by considering the current scale and expected growth rate of the sub-market, potential competitors, market feasibility and compatibility and other factors to better adapt to market demand.

## **5. An Integrated Model of Emotional Drive and Experiential Consumption**

### **5.1. Emotionally Driven Elements of Success**

The key to the success of emotion-driven experiential consumption lies in precisely controlling consumers' emotional needs, cultivating differentiated innovation ability, paying attention to customer engagement and long-term maintenance and interaction of customer relationship.

Brands need to accurately control the emotional needs of consumers. Brands need to have keen market insight and can use big data analysis and other means according to the market background to understand, identify and position the changes in consumer demand [8].

Brands should pay attention to the cultivation of differentiated innovation ability. Brands should combine their own characteristics to develop differentiated marketing strategies in line with brand tone and positioning. Brands should tell brand stories to consumers, convey brand values, build a deep and solid emotional connection with consumers, gain their trust and recognition, and enhance brand loyalty [8].

Brands should focus on the customer engagement. Brands can use product design, scene layout, advertising activities to create immersive consumption experience for customers, enhance consumers' sense of participation, affirm and give play to consumers' creativity, achieve a two-way relationship between brands and consumers, and enable consumers to gain a sense of belonging, pleasure and self-worth in the experience [8].

Brands need to focus on the long-term maintenance and interaction of customer relationships. After the initial emotional connection between the brand and consumers is established, the brand can win over and maintain the customer base through new product push, limited activities and other ways, and establish loyalty club or membership plan to collect customer opinions and provide continuous humanistic care for customers, so as to form a stable customer base, enhance fan stickiness and establish brand reputation [8].

### **5.2. Emotionally Driven Marketing Challenges and Coping Strategies**

JELLYCAT, as a world-renowned plush toy brand, faces potential challenges such as cultural differences in the market and consumers' personalized needs. First of all, consumers in different countries and regions may have different aesthetic preferences for plush toys, and some design elements or colors may have different symbolic meanings in different cultures may result in some styles being popular in some markets, but not so popular in others, may even cause misunderstanding or negative reactions if not handled properly. In addition, the fashion trend and consumer preference change rapidly, their demand for plush toys is increasingly diversified, no longer meets the traditional design and function, brands need to constantly launch new products to meet the personalized needs of consumers.

In view of the above problems, this study puts forward the following strategies. First of all, in the pre-product development stage, the brand should conduct full market research on the target market, to understand the preferences and taboos of local consumers, and conduct cultural sensitivity training for the design and marketing team in advance, to avoid the use of cultural symbols or elements that may cause misunderstanding in the product design process. Secondly, in the process of product research and development, the production mode of small-batch and multi-batch can be adopted, to quickly respond to market changes and consumer demand and conform to economic direction, with continuous investment in R&D and innovation. To launch novel and unique localized products, and the product design should be adjusted according to the cultural characteristics and aesthetic preferences of different markets, for example, regional limited models. In order to counter the adaptive bias of consumers, ensuring that products are close to the needs of local consumers is significant. In addition, JELLYCAT should pay attention to environmental protection and sustainable development in packaging materials, so that its products can meet the needs of consumers for green consumption and to enhance the brand image.

## 6. Conclusion

From the perspectives of consumers and brands, this research makes up for the single perspective of existing research. By restoring and analyzing the whole process of marketing strategy of the JELLYCAT stuffed toy brand, this research deeply studies how experiential marketing is driven by emotion to build emotional connection with consumers. This paper summarizes and refines the interaction between experiential marketing and consumers' purchase intention as well as its role in brand operation, with rich entry points and high integrity. In addition, this paper also confirms the positive influence of experiential marketing in promoting brand loyalty and consumer loyalty, and draws lessons from the successful experience of JELLYCAT, a British stuffed toy brand with outstanding market performance in recent years and famous for experiential marketing, to help enterprises develop or improve experiential marketing strategies suitable for their own operating models. However, in the case recovery and analysis section of this paper, the research on experiential marketing mainly focuses on offline entity activities of brands, while online marketing experience involves less content. In the section of theoretical summary and extraction, due to space reasons, there is no detailed expansion of how to apply the theory in different markets. Future studies may focus on strengthening the research on brand online marketing experience, to fully understand the application of experiential marketing, explore the application of theories in different markets for detailed expansion, to enrich and improve relevant theoretical systems and research directions.

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