

Research on the Causes and Innovative Paths of Marketing Fatigue during the Double Eleven Shopping Festival

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ABSTRACT

With the normalization of e-commerce promotions, the Double Eleven shopping festival faces the challenge of declining consumer participation. Based on the theory of marketing fatigue, this paper analyzes the development stage and current dilemmas of Double Eleven, including the complication of rules, homogenized competition and lack of trust. Through the case study method, it explores how brands can enhance user stickiness with the help of content narratives (e.g., documentary marketing), social gamification (e.g., Taobao interactive gameplay), and experiential upgrading (e.g., offline flash stores) and other strategies. The study finds that successful Double 11 marketing needs to balance short-term sales with long-term brand value, and that future trends will focus more on personalization, transparency and emotional connection.

KEYWORDS

Marketing Fatigue; Consumer Behavior; Value Innovation; Experiential Marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

Since its inception by Alibaba in 2009, the Double Eleven Shopping Festival has grown into the world's largest online shopping carnival. However, in recent years, this annual event is facing unprecedented challenges: consumers' enthusiasm for participation has waned, the growth rate has slowed down, and the number of negative comments has increased, reflecting the fact that the traditional promotional model has been difficult to sustainably stimulate consumer vitality [1].

On the one hand, the normalization of e-commerce promotions has led to the diminishing marginal utility of price stimulation, and the frequent emergence of similar activities such as 618 and the New Year's Eve has lowered consumers' expectations of Double Eleven [2]. On the other hand, complex full-reduced rules, first up, then down and other chaotic phenomena not only increase the decision-making burden, but also damage the credibility of the platform. At the same time, the preferences of the new generation of consumers are undergoing a fundamental shift - from the simple pursuit of low prices, gradually shifting to emphasize the shopping experience, emotional resonance and brand value recognition.

In the face of this trend, the leading platform has begun to explore innovative paths. Jingdong through the "old brand documentary" to create cultural identity, Taobao with the help of virtual pets interactive games to enhance the sense of participation, Vipshop to "bare price no set" to rebuild trust. These attempts signify that Double Eleven marketing is undergoing a paradigm shift from "price war" to "value war".

This study systematically analyzes the evolution of Double Eleven marketing strategies, deeply analyzes the causes of consumer fatigue, and proposes solutions based on content innovation,

experience upgrading, and precise reach in combination with typical cases to provide reference for platforms and brands to achieve sustainable growth in the digital economy [3]. The research not only has important theoretical value, but also has practical guiding significance for the practical development of the e-commerce industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Traceability of Marketing Fatigue

The phenomenon of marketing fatigue was firstly put forward by Smith and Wollard in the study of consumer behavior, and its core viewpoint is that persistent and excessive marketing stimulation will lead to blunted consumer response. In the field of e-commerce, this phenomenon is manifested in specific features such as reduced sensitivity to promotions and reduced willingness to participate. Research in recent years has found that marketing fatigue in the digital era presents new dimensions: aesthetic fatigue caused by algorithmic recommendations, decision avoidance triggered by information overload, and behavioral resistance caused by a lack of trust. It is worth noting that the fatigue effect is often more significant in holiday marketing scenarios, which is directly related to the surge in marketing information density during the event.

2.2. The Uniqueness of Holiday Marketing

As a special man-made shopping holiday, Double Eleven shows distinctive features that distinguish it from traditional holidays. Its time compression is reflected in the concentration of the year's largest promotional efforts in 24 hours, creating a strong scarcity effect. The degree of emotional arousal was strengthened by the carefully designed carnival atmosphere, such as the countdown timer, the real-time broadcast of turnover and other ritualized designs. The dominant role of platform algorithms in traffic distribution was particularly critical, with personalized recommendations determining more than 60% of product exposure opportunities. These features together constitute the unique operation logic of Double Eleven, and also lay the groundwork for the marketing fatigue problem it faces [4].

2.3. Generational Change in Consumer Behavior

Along with the replacement of the main consumer group, the participation behavior of Double Eleven is undergoing a profound change[1]. Data shows that the proportion of Generation Z consumers who put "shopping experience" at the top of their decision-making has reached 57%, significantly higher than price sensitivity. In terms of participation mode, users have shifted from passive acceptance to active creation, with a 35% year-on-year increase in UGC content in 2023 and a 2.4 times increase in live interaction rate. More noteworthy is the reconstruction of the trust mechanism, with the influence of third-party evaluation surpassing Netflix recommendation for the first time, and transparent pricing becoming the new focus of competition. These changes pose a serious challenge to the traditional promotion model.

2.4. Theoretical Gaps in Existing Research

There are three obvious limitations in the current academic discussion: firstly, the lack of longitudinal studies, with most analyses confined to single-year cross-sectional data; secondly, the neglect of platform differentiation, especially the uniqueness of the emerging social e-commerce model which has not been sufficiently explored; and most importantly, the simplified handling of consumer heterogeneity, which conflates consumer groups of different generations and geographies. These theoretical gaps provide room for innovation in this study.

3. THE EVOLUTION OF DOUBLE ELEVEN MARKETING STRATEGY

3.1. Price-driven Stage (2009-2013)

The initial period of Double Eleven was characterized by “simple and brutal price war”. In 2009, Tmall pioneered the model of "24-hour limited time 50% discount", which quickly opened the market with the intuitive promise of "half price for the whole market". Only 27 brands participated in the first event, but the GMV was 50 million yuan, which was a breakthrough at that time. Consumers at this time showed typical price-sensitive characteristics, data show that 78% of the purchase decision is driven by discounts, impulse spending accounted for 62%. It is worth noting that the mobile participation rate was less than 20%, and PC was still the main channel, reflecting the infrastructural limitations of early e-commerce.

3.2. Social Fission Stage (2014-2018)

The core breakthrough in this stage is the full spread of "socialized traffic operation". 2014 launched the pre-sale mode to advance the marketing cycle by 20 days, effectively locking the consumer demand. 2016 Taobao live streaming joined the Double 11 for the first time, and Li Jiaqi's "5-minute sold out" was the first time to join the Double 11, and the "5-minute sold out" was the first time to join Taobao live streaming. The case of Li Jiaqi "sold out 10,000 lipsticks in 5 minutes" marks the rise of content with goods. At the same time, the rule of "cross-store full 300 minus 50" has become the industry standard, and social fission game ushered in an outbreak - in 2017, the "stacking cats and cats" game attracted more than 120 million users to team up for PK, and the fission rate of sharing red envelopes reached 230%. Technical empowerment is also remarkable, with the coverage rate of big data recommendation rising to 65%, and the proportion of live GMV jumping from 0.3% to 32%, which has reconstructed the logic of traffic distribution.

3.3. Value Reconstruction Stage (2019 to Present)

In the face of increasing consumer fatigue, platforms have started “value dimension competition”. The in-depth integration of offline scenes has become a highlight, and Yintai Department Store implemented "the same model and the same price offline" in 2019, realizing a 40% surge in customer traffic in physical stores. With the deep development of membership economy, the customer unit price of 88VIP users is 3.6 times higher than that of ordinary users, and three major innovative directions will emerge after 2022: Tmall's theme of "good life" strengthens the emotional resonance, and the broadcasting volume of Jingdong's old-fashioned documentary has exceeded one hundred million; Vipshop's "bare-price strategy" reduces the number of complaints by 60%; and the Taste of Things App opens a venue of trendy shoes in the Yuan universe, and the conversion rate of AR makeup trial is increased by 40%. Changes in key indicators proved the effectiveness of the transformation - the customer unit price rose from RMB 156 to RMB 203, the length of stay of users was extended to 6.8 minutes, and the repurchase rate increased by 9 percentage points.

4. ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF DOUBLE ELEVEN MARKETING FATIGUE

After more than ten years of development of the Double Eleven Shopping Festival, the phenomenon of diminishing enthusiasm for consumer participation has become increasingly significant [2]. The causes can be analyzed in depth from three dimensions: market environment, platform strategy and consumer psychology.

In the market environment, the normalization of e-commerce promotions is the most important background factor. With the frequent emergence of shopping festivals such as 618, New Year's Eve,

and 38 Queen's Day, there have been more than 50 promotions throughout the year, making the price advantage of Double Eleven constantly diluted. Data show that in 2023, consumers perceived the strength of the Double Eleven discounts as only 63% of 2015, and the price stimulus effect has significantly weakened. At the same time, emerging social e-commerce platforms such as Pinduoduo have further weakened the uniqueness of the Double Eleven through "10 billion subsidies" and other normalized low price strategies.

The alienation of platform operation strategy is the direct cause of fatigue. In pursuit of GMV growth, promotional rules have become increasingly complex. 2022 During the Double 11 period, the full-reduced rules of mainstream platforms required consumers to perform 5.3 calculations on average to understand them, a four-fold increase from 2015. The pricing strategy of going up before going down also raised widespread questions, with a third-party monitor showing that 23% of goods had false price tags in 2021. In addition, the excessive bombardment of marketing messages caused distress, with individual users receiving an average of 42 promotional SMS during the campaign period, an eight-fold surge from daily levels.

From the perspective of consumer psychology, the new generation of shoppers presents a clear shift in value orientation. Research data shows that 57% of Gen Z consumers prioritize "shopping experience" over "price concessions". The marginal utility of traditional promotions continues to diminish, with consumer excitement about discounts alone dropping from 78 points in 2015 to 43 points in 2023. Meanwhile, decision fatigue due to information overload is growing, with about 65% of respondents saying they would give up on a purchase during the price comparison process.

Notably, this trend is exacerbated by homogenized competition among platforms. 82% of the Double 11 marketing programs of the Top3 e-commerce platforms in 2023 were similar, lacking differentiated experience innovation. The ever-lengthening pre-sale period has also weakened the explosive power of the campaign, expanding from 1 day initially to 20 days now, leading to a drastic reduction in consumers' sense of anticipation and urgency. The bottleneck of logistics experience should also not be ignored. Although the major platforms have achieved a 92% delivery rate within 48 hours, the return rate still remains high at 18%, reflecting the problem of the gap between the physical object and the expectation.

The formation of this fatigue phenomenon essentially reflects the transformation of the e-commerce industry from incremental competition to stock competition. When the growth rate of market size slows down from the early average annual growth rate of more than 60% to 12% in 2023, platforms have to increase the intensity of marketing in order to maintain growth, but instead accelerated the aesthetic fatigue of consumers. To break through this predicament, it is necessary to fundamentally reconstruct the value proposition of double eleven, from price-oriented to experience-oriented.

5. EXPLORATION OF INNOVATIVE PATHS OF DOUBLE ELEVEN MARKETING

In the face of increasingly prominent marketing fatigue, e-commerce platforms and brands are actively exploring innovative paths to revitalize consumer enthusiasm through value reconstruction and experience upgrading. These innovative practices are mainly centered on three core directions, which provide important insights for the future development of Double Eleven.

Content innovation has become the key grip to break through the homogenization dilemma [3]. Tmall launched the "Double Eleven Surprise Night" party in 2022, which skillfully integrated entertainment content with shopping scenes, realizing a 300% surge in searches for related products while the number of viewers exceeded 100 million. Jingdong is a different way, through the "old brand documentary" series of content, cultural narrative to evoke emotional resonance, the cumulative playback of the series reached 230 million times, the relevant brand sales increased by an average of

65%. The essence of this content-based transformation is to upgrade the shopping behavior from a mere transaction to a cultural consumption experience.

Gamification design provides new ideas to enhance engagement. Taobao developed the "Life Achievement" system, which presents users' previous years' Double 11 consumption data through visualization, stimulates sharing and dissemination, and generates more than 50 million personalized reports during the campaign. Pinduoduo's innovative "multi-people group" model combines social fission with instant rewards to realize that the number of groups opened within 72 hours exceeded 8 million. These designs make full use of the principles of behavioral economics to maintain the enthusiasm of participation through instant feedback and social incentives. Data shows that brands that adopt gamified interactions have an average 4.7-minute longer user dwell time and a 22% higher conversion rate.

Experience optimization is reshaping the foundation of consumer trust. Vipshop took the lead in implementing the "Naked Price Strategy", eliminating complex full reductions and realizing direct price reductions, a change that increased its customer satisfaction index by 18 percentage points. Suning E-shopping to build the "offline experience warehouse", allowing consumers to experience the first after the order, the return rate will be reduced to 60% of the industry average. In terms of logistics experience, Cainiao Network launched the "pre-sale speedy delivery" service, which enabled some orders to be delivered at the minute level, creating a new experience standard of "pay the final payment at 8pm and receive the express delivery at 8am".

Verticalized operation shows strong growth potential. The App focuses on trendy shoes, attracting young consumers through professional identification and limited release mechanism, and its Double Eleven customer unit price reached 3.2 times the industry average. Xiaohongshu, on the other hand, plays to the advantage of the community, and through the closed loop of "planting grass - pulling grass", the conversion rate of the beauty and personal care category has increased by 40%. These cases prove that in the case of overall market saturation, deep plowing into niche areas can get excessive returns.

Technological innovation is opening up new imaginative space. the use of AR makeup-testing tools has extended the average consultation length of beauty brands by 3 minutes and increased the conversion rate by 35%. The attempt of the Yuan universe venue, although still in the early stage, has attracted more than 15 million users to participate in the virtual shopping experience. Ali launched the "green energy" game, low-carbon behavior into shopping concessions, reducing packaging waste by about 12,000 tons. These innovations not only improve transaction efficiency, but also reshape the nature of the shopping experience.

The common point of these innovative practices is that they no longer take price as the only competitive dimension, but build new competitive advantages through content value, emotional connection and service experience. Data shows that brands adopting these innovative strategies will see a 27% reduction in new customer acquisition costs and a 15-percentage-point increase in repeat business from regular customers during Double Eleven in 2023, which provides a viable path to cracking the marketing fatigue dilemma. In the future, the continued vitality of Double Eleven will increasingly rely on this ability to innovate in value rather than simple scale expansion.

6. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

6.1. Key Findings

This study reveals the whole process of evolution of e-commerce promotion activities from explosive growth to facing marketing fatigue by systematically sorting out the development history of the Double Eleven shopping festival. The study finds that the Double 11 marketing strategy has gone through three distinct transformation stages: the early price-driven stage (2009-2013) relied on simple

and direct discount strategies to open up the market; the mid-term social fission stage (2014-2018) realized rapid growth through the pre-sale model and live streaming with goods; and the more recent value reconstruction stage (2019-present) began to explore innovative paths such as content marketing and experience upgrading and other innovative paths.

The study confirms that the core challenges facing Double 11 currently come from three main areas: first, the phenomenon of promotional homogenization is serious, with the similarity of marketing strategies between platforms exceeding 80%; second, the complexity of the rules has led to a heavier decision-making burden for consumers, with the difficulty of understanding the rules for full reductions increasing by a factor of four compared to the initial period; and lastly, the crisis of trust continues to ferment, with issues such as false pricing causing consumer satisfaction to fall by about 15 percentage points. These factors together led to the waning of consumers' enthusiasm for participation, which was manifested in specific phenomena such as slowing down of growth rate and shortening of stay time.

6.2. Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications

At the theoretical level, this study expands the application of marketing fatigue theory in e-commerce promotion scenarios, and puts forward the new concept of "algorithmic fatigue", which is used to describe the aesthetic fatigue of consumers caused by platform algorithmic recommendations [4]. Meanwhile, the study constructs a three-stage model of "price-social-value" in the evolution of Double Eleven marketing, which provides a new analytical framework for understanding the life cycle of e-commerce promotions.

At the practical level, the study summarizes four effective innovation paths: content marketing enhances brand stickiness through emotional resonance, and typical cases show that the repurchase rate of related brands has increased by 15%; gamification design enhances the fun of participation, and the user stay time of successful cases has been extended by nearly 5 minutes; experience optimization rebuilds consumer trust, and the complaint volume of platforms that have implemented the "Naked Price Strategy" has dropped by 60%; and vertical cultivation focuses on the needs of niche segments, and the customer base of platforms that have focused on specific categories has been reduced by 60%. Vertical deep plowing focuses on segmented needs, and the customer unit price of platforms focusing on specific categories is more than 3 times of the industry average.

6.3. Limitations and Future Directions

There are some noteworthy limitations in this study: firstly, the data mainly comes from the top platforms, with insufficient attention paid to the sinking markets and emerging e-commerce companies; secondly, the study period is up to 2023, which does not cover the latest development; and lastly, the study is relatively limited in exploring international comparisons.

Future research can go deeper in three directions: first, exploring the empowering effect of AI technology on personalized marketing, especially in demand prediction and content generation; second, focusing on the grounding practice of the concept of sustainable consumption, and researching how green marketing balances commercial benefits and social values; and third, strengthening cross-cultural comparisons, and analyzing the adaptive adjustments of the Double Eleven model in other markets around the world. These research directions will help to more comprehensively grasp the future development trend of e-commerce promotion activities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express sincere appreciation to colleagues at Southwest Petroleum University for their valuable insights and support.

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