

The Study of Development In ‘Joke’ Marketing: From the Point of KFC ‘Crazy Thursday’

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Abstract. This paper is a research about the activity ‘Crazy Thursday’ in KFC. This activity has created immense popularity in China, which has become a hot Network phenomenon. The paper tries to discover the secret of success behind ‘Crazy Thursday’. It takes the customers of KFC as the object of research to explore the influence of ‘Crazy Thursday’ on consumers’ intention to purchase KFC. The study collects data through an online questionnaire survey and conducts statistical analysis on the collected samples by using SPSS26.0. The results refer to the theories found in the related literature, the interview taken during the study and the questionnaire survey. It can be concluded that the degree of interest in ‘joke’ and action in purchasing are the two main influencing factors in the marketing effect of ‘joke’. Consumers’ interest in the joke and their willingness to interact with ‘Crazy Thursday’ have a significant positive relationship with consumers’ final purchase intention. A brief discussion on the development of joke marketing will be completed in the following content.

Keyword: AISAS; ‘joke’ marketing; Viral marketing.

1. Introduction

In the past year, The ‘Crazy Thursday’ campaign of KFC was hailed as an exceptional case in marketing. Up to now, the discussion of ‘Crazy Thursday’ on Weibo has reached 4.141 million times and been viewed 1.96 billion times. The popularity of Internet ‘joke’ themed on ‘Crazy Thursday’ has greatly influenced the promotion and communication of KFC every Thursday, even the brand itself. Therefore, this phenomenon shows particular importance in exploring the marketing of ‘joke’. However, the research on joke marketing is an unexplored area in the academic field. Few previous studies have elaborated on the effect and influencing factors of joke advertising. In addition, in the past three years, the research on joke marketing has been in a circle, while few representative studies or case analyses have been published.

The primary purpose of this paper is to explore the application of ‘joke’ marketing in a related area. Factors influencing ‘joke’ marketing and the reasons for the success of this activity can be concluded from the study of the recent activities of ‘Crazy Thursday’. Based on this research, the paper also tries to find out the feasibility of ‘joke’ marketing in fast food and other industries. Through this research process, the paper attempts to answer the following questions: Is it feasible to implement ‘joke’ marketing in different industries or fields? Can the Long Tail effect be held back? Are there any preconditions for the success of joke marketing?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Definition and Development of ‘joke’

The first part focuses on the definition of ‘joke’ and its development in Chinese Internet. Li Zonggui’s (2010) study shows that, as a unique cultural mode, the ‘joke’ has a widespread in China. In the perspective of culturology, the ‘joke’ culture belongs to subculture and mass culture [1]. According to Wang Fang & Lei Yanyun(2020) and Xiong Yu’s (2020) study, the ‘joke’ is generally

divided into "broad sense" and "narrow sense", including the performance forms closed to popular culture, such as the segments derived from crosstalk and sketch, and the cultural styles widely circulated in life and society, which are primarily short [2,3]. With the rapid development of the Internet and its power on spreading news, 'joke' also gets a new space for progress. In Qian Xiaowei's (2011) paper, in the era of new media, a 'joke' is a combination of opinion, description, plot or a story with a clear theme. It differs in the form of sound, text, picture and video. The defining conditions of a 'joke' are literary embellishment, integrity and independence, willingness to convey and its brevity [4]. In particular, just as what Lei Lei (2015) implied in her paper, the freedom of flexibility in the text of 'joke' makes it convenient for netizens to adapt them appropriately and apply them in personalized network communication getting into a rapid spread like virus [5].

2.2 The Theory of Viral Marketing

Because of the geometric growth in the process of spreading, the theory of viral marketing can also be used in this study of joke. Viral marketing is a spontaneous spreading behavior not restricted by space and time range, etc. Meanwhile, the only necessary approach in its spreading mode is the network, which means lower cost and more significant influence [6]. Therefore, the paper concludes that joke marketing is a kind of viral marketing taking the form of the text. The factors of viral marketing are mainly divided into three categories: information source characteristics, information content characteristics and information receiver characteristics. A viral marketing strategy needs the following six essential elements: providing a valuable product or service, an effortless way to convey information to others, an easy method in spreading the message from small to large, the use of public enthusiasm and behavior, the existing communication in network and the resources of others [7]. In the marketing strategy, the more these basic elements there are, the better the marketing effect will be. As a specific form of viral marketing, joke marketing has the characteristic of accumulating popularity rapidly [8].

2.3 The Research Status and Development of Joke Marketing Theory

In recent years, there have been quantitative studies on the influence of joke marketing, and scholars have tried to build a mechanism model on joke marketing. There are six factors for the marketing effect of the micro-blog 'joke': the interestingness of information, brand or product, promotion, 'joke' producers, activity and interaction. Moreover, consumers' search intention can be taken as the intervening variable to influence their purchase [9]. However, in the existing research on the influence of consumers' behaviours, the main consideration focuses on the communication effect generated from the microblogging platform and the producer of 'joke'.

From the publicity effect of "Crazy Thursday", it is believed that using such a joke as the carrier of marketing can help enterprises rapidly expand users at a lower cost. In marketing saturation, people may have demands for various products of the same type, which means among those similar products, the one that attracts more customer attention will have better sales [10]. However, in today's era of information overload, the Internet has provided more and more information in people's daily life, resulting in lower profits in traditional marketing methods. In this era of overwhelming information, how to obtain the customer attention has become the critical problem. Thus the joke marketing can be an effective way to break the long tail effect and reach the sales peak again [11]. The development of 'joke' in interest and feasibility is the fundamental direction of this paper. In the future, the new media consumption habits shaped by the 'joke' mode will attract more and more users, becoming a new trend to realize brand and product exposure and contact with consumers [3, 5].

2.4 Comment

In general, the available literature on joke marketing is insufficient, and the research direction is limited to the Weibo platform. Therefore, this paper still has a lot of restrictions, primarily based on conjecture hypothesis and model establishment.

Based on the research status, it can be noticed that joke marketing has the influence of spread and content like viral marketing. But this kind of marketing method has not been used in reality. Based on this situation, this paper aims to establish a theoretical model which takes advantage of the interestingness and willingness made by joke marketing to break the marketing condition of the long tail effect.

3. Studying methods and hypothesis

3.1 Studying Methods

This paper mainly focuses on the influence of joke marketing on consumer behavior, including the consuming groups derived from 'Crazy Thursday'. Before the specific hypotheses, this paper firstly makes comprehensive references to relevant literature, looking for domestic and foreign research results on content marketing. On this basis, the report finds the breakthrough point and the direction of investigation. After the investigation, the report conducted a questionnaire survey to collect data on a large scale. The data received then are integrated and analyzed to gain the main influencing factors. The questionnaire part involves 28 questions. After screening the audience of the questionnaire, the purchase intention of consumers is investigated from the aspects of interestingness, dissemination, interactivity, product attention and search intention of 'Crazy Thursday' segment.

At the same time, in addition to collecting questionnaires, to verify the results of previous studies and investigate the rationality of questionnaire design, the paper also conducted small-scale interviews with KFC clerks and customers to modify the dimensions of the questionnaire and improve the establishment of research hypotheses.

The questionnaires are distributed through the 'Wenjuanxing' APP. The survey began on October 01, 2022 and finished on October 10, 2022. A total of 515 questionnaires were collected, of which 438 were valid, with an effective rate of 85.05%.

This paper used statistical analysis software SPSS 26.0 to test and analyze the data collected from the questionnaire, including reliability and validity analysis, factor analysis and regression analysis. According to the analysis results, the effect of joke marketing and its influence on consumer purchasing behavior are discussed in the following content.

3.2 Study Hypothesis

This questionnaire was designed and classified according to the AISAS model. According to the AISAS model (Attention, Interest, Search, Action, Share), it is assumed that consumers' love of the brand, interest in 'joke', desire for sharing 'joke' and its activities, will of search and interaction with the activity influence the willingness of purchase. While the intention of searching does not accord with the concept of mediation variables, thus classified as a part of the factors of influence. In the following analysis, according to the subsequent interview and the actual situation, the interestingness, brand love, search intention and dissemination of the advertisement are selected as the influencing factors. AISAS in this paper respectively refers to: Attention (consumers' attention to 'Crazy Thursday'); Interest (level of consumer interest in 'Crazy Thursday'); Search (consumers' willingness to search for 'Crazy Thursday's'); Action (consumers' willingness to interact with 'Crazy Thursday's'); Share (consumers' desire to share 'Crazy Thursday's').

According to the interview, the fascinating 'joke' of 'Crazy Thursday' attracts people to spread and even create relevant 'joke' independently. Some people also go to KFC on Thursday because of the popularity of 'Crazy Thursday' because of the discount. Based on the interview taken at seven different KFC, the clerk informed that with the popularity of this activity, the consumption quantity had reached twice of the ordinary times on Thursday, thus 'Crazy Thursday' increases the heat for KFC's substantial sales. According to this, different dimensions of the questionnaire were designed and distributed. In the analysis of the questionnaire results, the influencing factors obtained in this paper can be divided into 5 parts: the fun of the 'joke', dissemination, interactivity, brand love of

products and search intention for activities. Based on the investigation and the above influencing factors, the hypothesis made in this paper is shown as following:

H1: The more attention consumers pay to ‘Crazy Thursday’, the more willing they are to buy KFC.

H2: The more consumers are interested in ‘Crazy Thursday’, the more willing they are to buy KFC.

H3: The more robust the consumers' search intention have for ‘Crazy Thursday’, the higher their willingness to buy KFC.

H4: The stronger the willingness of consumers have to interact with ‘Crazy Thursday’, the higher the willingness of consumers have to buy KFC.

H5: The higher the desire of consumers have to share ‘Crazy Thursday’, the higher the willingness of consumers have to buy KFC;

Based on this, the influence of ‘Crazy Thursday’ on consumers and the purchase process of KFC have preliminarily deduced: Consumers themselves have a certain amount of attention and emotional love for KFC. When the ‘Crazy Thursday’ ‘joke’ is spread on various network platforms, consumers are attracted by the interestingness of the content and the popularity of the ‘joke’ themselves, which eventually leads to the final purchase intention. At the same time, in this process, consumers will also take the initiative to participate in the creation and dissemination of ‘joke’, which further expands the influence of related content.

4. Questionnaire and Analysis

4.1 Reliability and Validity Analysis of the Questionnaire

Cronbach α is used to examine the data. The result of reliability is shown below:

Table 1. Chart 1 Cronbach α

Analysis of reliability	
Cronbach α	Number
0.870	20

The result shows Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.870$, which means there is high reliability in this scale. Validity analysis then is taken as follows. The Cronbach's α of all dimensions is beyond 0.7, suggesting high consistency and stability.

Table 2. Analysis of factors' reliability

Analysis of factors' reliability		
	variate	Cronbach's α
factor	Attention	0.793
	Scale of interest	0.711
	Willingness of search	0.837
	Willingness of interaction	0.870
	Desire of sharing	0.886
Dependent variable	Willingness of purchase	0.863

KMO and Bartlett's Test are taken to inspect the validity of the questionnaire. The KMO measure of this sample is 0.880, which means it is suitable for factors' analysis. What's more, the Sig. of Bartlett's test is 0.000, which is far smaller than 0.05, showing pertinence among factors.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.880
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5133.189
	df	190
	Sig.	0.000

Table 4. Reliability of factors

	Pattern Matrix ^a				
	factors				
	Interaction/purchase	Sare	Search	Interest	Attention
It is common for me to see jokes about 'Crazy Thursday'.					0.998
The popularity of KFC is the reason why I purchase on 'Crazy Thursday'.					0.658
I may give a like or make comments for 'Crazy Thursday' jokes.				0.994	
There is lots of fun in 'Crazy Thursday' jokes, which also attract me a lot.				0.521	
I may spend more time to browse through 'Crazy Thursday' jokes.				0.589	
I'm willing to enjoy the food I prefer in 'Crazy Thursday' activity.			0.776		
I may search for jokes or memes about 'Crazy Thursday' on my own initiative.			0.873		
I look forward to see more jokes or memes about 'Crazy Thursday' on society.			0.566		
I'm willing to know more about the detail of 'Crazy Thursday'.	0.776				
I hope to take part in this activity.	0.818				
I prefer to have KFC on 'Crazy Thursday'.	0.825				
I always want to have KFC.	0.520				
I want to share the 'Crazy Thursday' jokes with others.		0.819			
I may make my own creation on 'Crazy Thursday'.		0.778			
I hope to see new 'Crazy Thursday' jokes around.		0.808			
I will invite friends to take part in 'Crazy Thursday'.		0.813			
There is high possibility for me to purchase KFC on 'Crazy Thursday'.	0.698				
It is possible for me to choose 'Crazy Thursday' when I want to have KFC.	0.870				
I'm strongly willing to purchase on 'Crazy Thursday'.	0.910				
I hope to invite friends to enjoy 'Crazy Thursday'.	0.778				

After screening out the questions whose validity is not in the required dimension, the remaining questions are highly targeted, so the efficiency of the questionnaire is relatively high.

Based on the above analysis, although there are only two questions reserved in the size of "attention", each dimension has questions corresponding to target factors, and the validity of the questionnaire is guaranteed. At the same time, because the interaction (action) in the model of the actual problem repeats with the purchase intention, they are merged into the same dimension.

4.2 The Statistics of Samples

A total of 515 questionnaires were collected during this research, among which the sample size of customers who had consumed KFC was 438, accounting for 85.05% of the total. Eighty-six of them showed that they had never seen a 'joke' related to 'Crazy Thursday'. Finally, the number of valid

questionnaire samples was 352, accounting for 65.35%. To ensure the reference sign of the questionnaire, 438 questionnaires are still used for analysis.

In terms of gender statistics, in the valid sample data, the number of males is 189, accounting for 43.15%, and the number of females is 249, accounting for 56.85%. The male-to-female ratio is 1:1.317, with slightly more females than males in the sample. The imbalance of the sex ratio is mainly influenced by the following factors: 1. There is restriction in the distribution of questionnaires. 2. It is possible that female groups are more interested in the marketing of 'Crazy Thursday'.

Regarding distribution, 5.48% were under 18 years old, 31.05% were between 19 and 23 years old, 31.28% were between 24 and 28 years old, 21.00% were between 29 and 34 years old and 11.19% were over 35 years old. The sample group is mainly distributed in the younger age group. The main communication channel of 'Crazy Thursday' is the Internet, so it is easier for the young to attach the 'joke'.

Table 5. The information of respondent

Samples	Factors	Number	Percent
Sex	male	189	43.15%
	female	249	56.85%
Age	<18	24	5.48%
	19~23	136	31.05%
	24~28	137	31.28%
	29~34	92	21.00%
	>35	49	11.19%
Income	<1000	18	4.11%
	1001~2000	102	23.29%
	2001~3000	107	24.43%
	3001~5000	71	16.21%
	5001~10000	77	17.58%
	>10000	63	14.38%

In terms of income, the group of 1000 yuan or less accounted for 4.11%, 1001-2000 yuan accounted for 23.29%, 2001-3000 yuan accounted for 24.43%, 3001-5000 yuan accounted for 16.21%, 5001-10000 yuan accounted for 17.58%, and more than 10000 yuan accounted for 14.38%. The consumption level is mainly concentrated between 1000 and 3000. The age group of the sample is primarily affected by the respondents, which focus on students. Nevertheless, according to the survey, the unit price of KFC is between 30 yuan and 40 yuan [12], so the disposable income of the main groups in the sample can cover the consumption of KFC basic meals, meaning that the sample selection is reasonable.

4.3 The Inspection of the Hypothesis

The model fits well, and after adjustment, $R^2=0.782>0.6$, meaning that this result can reflect the real impact of individual quantities on consumers' purchase intention. There is no problem with the general direction of the research, and the survey results can accurately reflect the degree of impact.

Table 6. Model Summary

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.885a	0.784	0.782	0.45465	1.904

The regression equation is significant, $F=313.624$, $P<0.001$, which proves that at least one of the five influencing factors can significantly affect consumers' purchase intention, indicating that the regression equation and the data are both valid.

Table 7. ANOVA

ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	324.141	5	64.828	313.624	.000b
Residual	89.297	432	0.207		
Total	413.438	437			
Dependent variable: the Intention to purchase					

From the Sig., factors including interest, fever and search intention meet this condition, which proves that the three factors have an impact on purchase intention. The B column is positive, indicating a positive correlation. Therefore, we can first exclude the influence of the degree caused by communication and interaction, so as to accurately judge the reasons for the success of the segment marketing.

Table 8. Coefficients

Coefficients ^a							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.221	0.129		1.718	0.087		
Attention	0.014	0.020	0.016	0.696	0.487	0.981	1.019
Interest	0.235	0.031	0.208	7.529	<u>0.000</u>	0.652	1.534
Search	-0.033	0.024	-0.041	-1.343	0.180	0.539	1.854
Action	0.749	0.031	0.787	24.351	<u>0.000</u>	0.479	2.089
Share	-0.012	0.021	-0.014	-0.565	0.572	0.812	1.232
Dependent Variable: Intention of purchase							

Finally, through multiple linear regression analysis, the following regression equation can be obtained:

$$\text{Purchase Intention} = 0.235 * \text{Interest (level of interest)} + 0.746 * \text{Action (Willingness to interact)}$$

4.4 The Result of Analysis

Through the analysis, this article divides the factors into 5 parts: interesting content about 'joke', consumers' willingness to share 'joke' and activities, interaction between consumers and 'joke', consumers' affection and attention on the brand, and the search intention of 'joke'. Purchase intention is set as outcome variables. Through the regression analysis, it can be assumed that the final result is H2: the higher the consumers' interest in 'Crazy Thursday', the more the consumers are willing to buy KFC; H4: The higher the willingness of consumers to interact with 'Crazy Thursday' are, the higher the willingness of consumers have to buy KFC.

The research analysis shows that consumer interest in 'Crazy Thursday' and the willingness to interact with 'Crazy Thursday' activities will significantly affect the final purchase intention. On the other hand, attention to these activities, search intention and sharing desire do not have a significant impact on the final purchase intention.

5. Discussion and Vista

The popularity of the 'Crazy Thursday' joke has been one of the hottest topics on the Internet in recent years. On Thursdays, 'joke' and pictures adapted from 'Crazy Thursday' are circulated on various Internet platforms. There's no doubt that 'Crazy Thursday' itself brings general publicity for KFC's Thursday discounts, as well as more publicity for KFC. From the investigation results of this paper, the content of 'Crazy Thursday' joke and its spread have promoted the popularity of KFC, and also significantly increased the probability of consumers buying KFC-related products. The

correlation suggests that the development of ‘Crazy Thursday’ literature has helped KFC sell more goods in a way that is rarely seen in similar fast food industries.

In this data analysis, there is a significant correlation between the degree of interest and willingness to interact in activities promoted by ‘joke’ marketing. Based on this, it is proposed that the popularity of the product can be increased with the help of the public's love for ‘joke’ and search tendency.

First of all, due to the rapid development of the Internet, people have more opportunities to search for more information, so the chance to see ‘joke’ has increased. Specific implementation behaviors in this respect can include putting brand-related ‘joke’ on the Internet, such as Weibo, Weixin, Meituan and other platforms, or showing as advertisements to attract consumers. The marketing and promotion of ‘joke’ can affect consumers' willingness to search and interact with such activities and convey product information to consumers through segments, which increases their interest in further understanding. In addition, the release of ‘joke’ can also facilitate consumers to understand the relevant product information and activity content, improving the visibility of activities.

In addition, from the perspective of external factors, brand love also affects consumers' purchase intention. Most of the influencing factors come from the accumulation of the brand itself. The brand can create its charm by creating a unique brand image and critical promotion activities to attract consumers, such as the classic logo image of KFC and the considerable discount activity of ‘Crazy Thursday’. When consumers' love for the brand increases, the probability of paying attention to related activities will also increase significantly, which will drive their attention to related ‘joke’ and increase their purchase intention.

5.1 Intrigue Consumers’ Interest In Activities

Interestingness is one of the external factors to attract consumers to participate in promotion. Interesting image can catch the attention of consumers at the first time, which needs unique content. In terms of marketing, distributors can incorporate ‘Crazy Thursday’ into the AD design with eye-catching images conveying different content. A combination of ‘joke’ with famous IPs can also be a way to attract additional consumers.

Furthermore, attractive copywriting can be added to impress consumers, stimulate their willingness to consume, and create more seed customers, accelerate the spread of ‘joke’. While the ideal state is to let the seed customers spontaneously imitate and make new ‘joke’ for extra publicity.

5.2 Build the Brand Image and Promote Consumers’ Loyalty to Benefit the Marketing

For brand image, ‘joke’ marketing may not be able to provide some positive feedback, on the contrary, some gossip has more possibility in communicability. Therefore, ‘joke’ marketing should be distributed and spread under the condition that the brand has a good image and the market is stable. This may not only guarantee customer loyalty, but also make the impact of the joke marketing surges.

5.3 Stimulate Consumer's Search Intention and Interactivity

With the boom of the Internet and the growth of mobile devices, consumers are not only on the receiving end of information, but also have a more remarkable ability to search for information, which is reflected in the explosive growth of ‘Crazy Thursday’ searches. Therefore, after identifying target customers, enterprises should be familiar with various Internet platforms, such as Weibo, Xiaohongshu and Bilibili, etc. What's more, they can provide copywriting information with brand or activity links to consumers who have not yet been motivated to search for relating information, so as to stimulate the awareness of seeking products or brands. At the same time, the activity products expected by customers can be collected for periodic addition, including cooperating with hot games or memes to attract the first batch of seed customers.

6. Conclusion

Compared with other forms of marketing, the attractive performance of 'joke' marketing enables consumers to generate strong interest in advertising and campaign products to promote consumption to a large extent. Generally, the relation between purchase intention and other factors in the period of 'Crazy Thursday' promotion can be illustrated below:

Purchase intention = $0.235 * \text{Degree of interest} + 0.746 * \text{Intention to interact}$

It is obvious that the interestingness and interaction are two main elements in the influence created by 'Crazy Thursday'. During this activity, consumers may spend more in KFC because of the interesting content of 'joke', and they are willing to share this fun with others, thus bringing more profit to KFC on Thursday. This phenomenon also shows the potential power of 'joke' marketing in the future. Compared with other marketing methods, adding fun to a brand or AD can bring strong effects. The 'joke' marketing method is undoubtedly the most efficient marketing method to use interest. Even if there is no willingness for consumers to have consumption, it is possible for them to share 'joke' with others for fun. Therefore, in the mode of 'joke' marketing, seed customers will be invisibly several times more than other marketing methods. When the audiences of such advertisements increase, there will be more people willing to consume.

Nevertheless, there are still some problems in 'joke' marketing. The non-repeatability of 'Crazy Thursday' makes it difficult for other businesses to imitate. The heat of 'joke' needs content which is interesting and easy to commit with others, so that consumers may have the desire to share and join in. moreover, the connection between 'joke' and brand plays an essential role in marketing. It is the popularity of KFC makes it possible for people to pay attention to 'Crazy Thursday'. It turns out that if the brand owner wants more popularity through 'joke' marketing, they better combine it with other kinds of methods, so that 'joke' can work best in its area.

In the current study, it was found that to achieve the effect of a 'Crazy Thursday' joke, the first requirement is that the brand already has much popularity. Putting 'joke' in the saturated advertising market cooperating it with the activity to increase the search intention can stimulate more intention in purchase.

At the same time, the maturity and everyday cognition of 'Crazy Thursday' can gradually lead to the construction of 'brand holiday', which may also be the main development and extension direction of 'joke' marketing.

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