

The Effects of the “Camping Plus” Model for Outdoor Brands’ Marketing

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Abstract. The camping industry has developed in a way, while most industries have declined since the epidemic broke. In this situation, outdoor companies need to apply marketing strategies to sell. The “Camping plus” model is one strategy that promotes customer satisfaction by adding additional value to the product. It can be explained as companies providing customers with various camping scenarios in their marketing. Against this background, the paper aims to search the effects of the “Camping plus” model for outdoor brands’ marketing with qualitative analysis. We invited 30 participants aged from 20 to 25 to have an interview to search the effects of the “Camping plus” model with ten questions. Nevertheless, our findings indicate that the “Camping plus” model is not always positive, so companies cannot apply this model optionally. Moreover, brands should comprehensively consider elements (i.e., the demographic of the customers, their understanding of the information the brands convey, and their attitudes to the model) to use the model effectively and efficiently.

Keywords: “Camping Plus” Model; Outdoor Brands; Marketing.

1. Introduction

Recently, the camping industry has shown an increasing tendency, being the fastest growing segment among the whole tourism compared with the decline of other features [1]. With the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, many places are facing a blockade situation. In that case, camping, as an outdoor recreation activity, is gradually moving from niche to mass, and camping-related products and industries are also rising rapidly.

Generally, camping is a developing industry in China, and more and more people are keen on it. Camping’s popularity has also accelerated in recent ten years. Pulliam and Nie described the development of the concept of “camping” in China as “faster than a high-speed bullet train” [2]. Besides, according to the Chinese travel app Hornet’s Nest, searches related to “camping” have risen by an average of nearly 50 percent [3]. Tourists welcome relatively sparse country parks and campsites. In this social context, the “Camping plus” model is gradually coming into the public eye, which is a way for businesses to add extra value to their customers. The model is related to shopping scenarios of camping, which can be generalized as “Camping plus sports”, “Camping plus socializing”, and “Camping plus study tour”, etc. In terms of marketing and promotion, the concept of camping diversification is integrated by many outdoor brands, like launching parent-child camping activities. Such a marketing strategy, which the camping model influences, can arouse consumer interest and thus stimulate purchasing power. Concerning the consumer experience, they can participate in more programs, have more memorable times, and develop family bonds. In recent years, since the “Camping plus” model has become a trend in camping ecology in China, outdoors brands are relevant to the model as the model has some impacts on brands’ marketing, which can be interpreted as a way to give customers more reasons to attend camping and buy outdoor facilities. In this case, more research about camping from the marketing perspective is of great importance.

Through searching and classification, the current academic focus is mainly on the impact of camping on personal development, families, and tourism. For example, research has shown that camping can positively affect children's interpersonal interaction, knowledge acquisition, mood, and self-perception [4]. Also, camping can promote family interaction and strengthen the bonds between family members [5]. Moreover, camping is becoming a mainstream tourism product, while specific campsite attributes have a decisive impact on the camping experience of consumers [6]. However, few researchers have investigated the influence of camping on the business and marketing sectors. Besides, prior academic work, which contributed to the camping industry's introduction and marketing, has little information about the relationship between "the Camping plus" model and the marketing strategy of outdoors outdoor brands.

This research aims to talk about the following issue. Firstly, it seeks to investigate how the "Camping plus" model directly influences the marketing strategy of outdoor brands to supplement the gap in the academic area. Secondly, it aims to inspire outdoor brands, which may help them pay more attention to applying marketing skills to gain market share and maintain higher profit margins. Moreover, the paper offers brands exact situations for customers to use the product of camping. In detail, this research gives Mobi Garden's application of the "Camping plus" model as an example for brands' marketing to determine the new model. In this situation, this research is meaningful for outdoors brands to clarify the "Camping plus" model and the importance of this model in O2O (online to offline).

2. Literature Review

Camping is a kind of activity that can positively affect children's interpersonal interaction, knowledge acquisition, mood, and self-perception [4]. Wellisch et al. claim that good camping experiences that generate positive memories and fun may improve emotional symptoms in children with cancer [7]. Also, another research shows that camping with peers with similar conditions can benefit children suffering from complex heart defects (CHD) [8].

The meaning of camping experience and how camping experience affected participants were investigated by questionnaire in 9 families. Jirásek et al. claim that the experience of family camping transcends daily life, providing a more natural way for individuals to develop and improve families' cooperative ability and the perseverance and physical endurance of family members [5]. Camping uniquely contributes to families and individuals and provides a way for an in-depth rest experience. This research can set an example for seeking meaningful and unique experiences with family members. Such camping programs can solve typical problems such as separation from nature, alienation from others, lack of family time, overweight children, and dependence on TV.

Camping is becoming a mainstream tourism product. Choosing appropriate destinations for camping can have a decisive impact on the consumers' experience [6]. While the increasing popularity has negatively affected the environment, the Chinese authority has published a relevant policy called China's Tourism Travel Permit Policy, which is closely related to the increase in non-woodland campsites [9].

3. Method

This research used two methods: the case review, analysis of MOBI GARDEN, and an interview for the qualitative method. Case review and comment are chosen for collecting the theoretical data to state the possibility of the "Camping plus" model while the interview is to find customers' demands. The report selects MOBI GARDEN as an example because the brand has contributed to the "Camping plus" model in its marketing and its ways are reasonably basic in its situations. Therefore, MOBI GARDEN is chosen as a case for the report. The marketing of MOBI GARDEN contains many academic theories and models of business. The information would like to determine the application of these educational theories and models in MOBI GARDEN's marketing and clarify the significance

of the “Camping plus” model in outdoor brands’ marketing from the case study. In this situation, some secondary data probably reveal the rationality of the research question.

Through the study, we have a deeper understanding of the brand, which can be combined with the product itself, thereby increasing its value. We find that MOBI GARDEN has a long history. The brand’s official website shows us that MOBI GARDEN was established in 2003 and insists on camping professionalism, taking close to nature, exploring nature, and harmony between man and nature as their brand values (Data source: Mobi Garden Outdoor). Furthermore, this brand has a wide variety of goods, including outdoor equipment such as tents, sleeping bags, and outdoor clothing such as down jackets and hiking shoes, which can better meet the needs of different consumers. Moreover, expanding independent brand business is conducive to advancing brand design and marketing. According to the data of the 2021 financial report, although Mugaudi’s foundry business still accounted for 66.7% of the total revenue, the revenue of its own brand business reached 306 million yuan, an increase of 90 percent year on year (Data source: www.zhihu.com).

About the brand’s weakness, since most of the customers are young people, based on the brand’s traditional advertising, the MOBI GARDEN should strengthen its new media advertising. As for the opportunities, the camping industry has recently shown an increasing tendency due to the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic. Also, the “Camping plus” model allows businesses to add extra value to their customers. And campers can be differentiated based on camping time, age, destination, companion, and purpose. From the perspective of geographical location, it can be divided into mountains, forests, water, etc.; the content of camping activities can be divided into sports, enjoyment, and entertainment. Facing such a tendency and situation of camping diversification, the MOBI brand launches independent promotion strategies and products with different functions. Besides, MOBI GARDEN collaborates with other industries, including homestays and tourist attractions, which is an excellent way to raise the brand’s popularity. Regarding the threats, low utilization of camping equipment is a severe vital difficulty. To reduce the camping costs, especially for those novice campers, they will prefer to rent the camping equipment rather than buy it.

Moreover, camping is an increasingly popular activity, and there are more and more competitors in the industry. According to a report, worldwide consumption of camping equipment currently stands at a value of US \$ 16.4 billion and is estimated to reach US \$ 33.17 billion by the end of 2023. The global camping equipment market is projected to expand at a noteworthy CAGR of 7.3 percent between 2022 and 2032 (Data source: Fact. MR).

Moreover, to target our participants, the report chooses people who may be target customers of MOBI GARDEN and are willing to buy outdoor products. The interview results are more efficient in this situation as it finds probable customers. During the interview, these four participants were asked about their camping characteristics, their ways to know camping products, and ideal camping situations, and to select pictures that are more attractive or make them willing to buy the products shown. This report will deal with the recording of the interview by coding and consulting the commonalities between different interviewees.

4. Result

The development of MOBI GARDEN indicated the possibility of the “Camping plus” model, and the model perhaps affected customers in a way. We designed a questionnaire to study the “Camping plus” model and primarily chose Generation Z as our target population, born between 1995 and 2009. Among them, we mainly interviewed male and female customers aged 20 to 25 who were born seamlessly into the Internet Age and have been deeply influenced by and used to all kinds of technology. At the same time, they have unique consumption patterns and concepts and pursue perfect shopping experiences and seamless online and offline services. Also, they pay more attention to products’ spiritual experiences than any other customer group. They are known to be a large consumer group with colossal consumption potential. In such a background, Generation Z seems to be the largest audience of the “Camping plus” model. To determine the effects of the “Camping plus” model,

we collected 30 samples and divided them into 5 groups. After sorting out and preliminary analyzing the sample information, we found that the number of people who chose to buy outdoor products online was much greater than the number of people who decided to buy in physical stores. Also, the “Camping plus” model seems to have more impact on the purchase decisions of female customers. Moreover, our in-depth analysis has concluded the research into three parts: the difference in people’s understanding, attitudes, and the consensus of people’s attitudes towards the “Camping plus” model.

4.1 The difference in customers’ understanding of “Camping plus” model posts

Interviewees needed to encode after they got information from the posts. They did not get equal details because of their different understandings. For example, interviewee six and interviewee 21 both mentioned the atmosphere. However, they chose other pictures in the virtual decision-making. Interviewee 6 thought the image of friends sitting together delivered atmosphere to her, while interviewee 21 stated the silent platform expressed atmosphere.

Besides, some pictures may give different people various information. For picture B in question 9, interviewee ten reflected that the product presentation was clear, while interviewee 18 got the price information. Interviewee 18 thought the product in picture B was cheaper than in picture A. Besides, interviewee 25 said she had no idea about picture B. Similarly, for picture A in question 8, both interviewee 9, interviewee 17, and interviewee 23 found the light in this picture was bright. In contrast, interviewee 7 and interviewee 14 got the information on facilities in this picture. Moreover, interviewee 5 found both light and equipment in the image, as he stated:

“A book, a cup of tea, lying on the seat, and spending your time here.”

These people have different encodings of the same picture and got diverse information. Some participants got information about identical objects, while others may obtain information about the weather in the background. Nevertheless, these answers showed that people could not get all of the information in a short time. In this situation, they may have different focuses and format subjective attitudes. The next part will state the instance as below.

4.2 The difference in customers’ attitudes towards “Camping plus” model posts

Participants had different attitudes towards the “Camping plus” model posts after the progress of encoding. We found two sub-themes that could explain their various perspectives: customers’ characters in the consumption progress and customers’ demands in awareness and decision.

The variety of customers focuses on the posts. Our participants focused on different elements of the posts. For example, interviewee 1 stated her reasons for selecting picture A in question 7:

“I am more attracted by picture A for the question because picture A has described a social scene for me to use this tent. Meanwhile, picture B of question 7 does not touch me because the post’s image is dull. I think my purpose in buying a tent for camping is not only for living but also for getting special experience from the progress.”

This instance determines that interviewee 1 cares about the information related to the usage of products under the posts. This interviewee is more likely to be attracted by the position which gives explicit scenes to use the product, and these scenes may become reasons for the one to buy the products. Similarly, interviewee two also chose the same answer for the question:

“I prefer picture A because it seems cozier and reminds me of communicating with my friends or family. I want to buy the product of picture A because this image shows me more detail in the tent rather than only giving me an appearance of the tent.”

However, interviewee 3 had different opinions about the question as she said picture A is like regular parties she usually joins in daily life. Hence, she preferred picture B for question 7 and would buy it because picture B hinted at her sense of nobleness. These examples mean people may choose different answers as the information they focus on varies.

The variety between customers’ awareness and decisions. From the interview, we found that customers might not buy the product which belonged to the picture appealing to them. As interviewee 1 said:

“For question 6, I am more likely to be touched by picture B because I have children, and the situation this picture shows has met my taste, which is camping with children and pets. However, I will buy the product shown in picture A as I can see the detail.”

Interviewee 1’s answers reveal that attraction is not equal to reasons pushing customers to buy the product. The interviewee also had a similar deviation for question 8:

“Picture B is more attractive for me as it is neat and gives me an idea that I can have camping activities in the city, but I will pay for the product in picture A as it shows me the product more clearly and in more detail.”

The answers show that interviewees may be targeted by pictures containing exact camping situations. However, they may care more about the product’s elements when making purchase decisions.

4.3 The standard view of customers’ attitudes towards “Camping plus” model posts

These interviewees have different ages, characteristics, livelihoods, etc. However, most think the pictures that meet their ideal camping situations are more attractive. In our interview, some of our participants’ ideal situations are related to specific locations, while others may care about activities and people accompanying them during camping.

Interviewee 1 said she would be attracted by picture A of question 10 because the picture meets her willingness to camp. She expressed from the preliminary questions that she would like to camp on the grassland and have barbecues. Meanwhile, interviewee two also stated his similar opinions:

“Picture A of question 10 is more charming for me as I would like to find a platform where my children can play games. However, I think I will buy the product shown in the other picture as it is more professional for presenting the product’s information.”

Interviewees seem to be targeted by posts that meet their ideal situations, although the products they would purchase were not the same.

Moreover, customers’ ideal camping situations may not only be related to single scenic elements but contain an element like family, friends, etc. These people are possibly targeted by pictures that have their ideal details. For example, our interviewee, 24, whose ideal camping situation is accompanied by family or friends, as he expressed in question 7:

“I think picture A is more attractive for the question as many people are gathering for the party. I want to have similar experiences as I feel friends are more likely to develop relationships on the outside.”

These sentences present that this interviewee chose picture A as attractive, mainly because of the elements this picture contains. In this case, the interviewee’s ideal camping situations are not exact locations but related to other factors.

5. Discussion

In the report, we asked participants born in 1995-2009 to evaluate the effects of the “Camping plus” model for outdoor brands’ marketing. Our research aims to determine the results of the “Camping plus” model for outdoor brands to give these brands some suggestions for using this model. In the demographic part of the interview, our findings showed that our target customers bought outdoor products online more frequently than in the physical stores because Generation Z was born with the development of the internet and most of them were familiar with computer skills. Besides, this model was more attractive to the females as they cared about appearance more than the male. In the picture choice part, we found that participants may get a similar view from pictures using the “Camping plus” model and image because they have different understandings of the concept of the same description. Not only that, customers had different attitudes to the “Camping plus” model: some customers liked it because these posts provided various usages of products. In contrast, others did not, as they thought such posts were abstract and gave them less information about the detail of the products.

Moreover, although customers were targeted by the posts which contained the “Camping plus” model, they might pay for the product presented by other posts. Therefore, brands need to clarify that awareness is not equal to action in the AIDA model. Moreover, the interview indicates that situations that meet customers’ ideal camping situations may be more attractive, which may be excused by selective perception, which means people are more likely to choose to receive information that interests them because of their limited attention [10].

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, these findings indicate that outdoor brands may use this model in digital marketing and care more about the female group’s demand when using this model. Nevertheless, brands could not randomly use the “Camping plus” model in their advertising as customers may not get the points that brands want to convey because of their subjective understanding. The model sometimes confuses customers with information about the product. Moreover, brands can study customers’ psychologies to find customers’ ideal camping, and their various focuses are based on the different segmentation for the optional solutions of the “Camping plus” model.

Our research, however, may not represent all generation Z as we contain 30 members for the qualitative analysis. Besides, we cannot observe the emotion of our participants as our interview was held online because of the epidemic. This situation did not benefit the report’s insight into participants’ real psychology from their facial appearance. Future research can be conducted on a larger sample of consumers to determine the relationship between the type of consumers and the camping scene from the consumer psychology perspective.

However, although paying much effort into designing the research to be as rigorous as possible, there are still some limitations. In the study, we find little information on the “Camping plus” model from a marketing perspective. To fill as many gaps as possible in this field, this research mainly discusses the relationship between the “Camping plus” model and outdoor brand marketing strategy, focusing on interviewing 30 generation Z consumers on the views of advertising based on the “Camping plus” model. The findings suggest that consumers’ differences in terms of demographic, understanding of information, and attitudes toward the “Camping plus” model are not superficial like or dislikes. The advertisements based on the “Camping plus” model have advantages and disadvantages. It may be able to attract consumers to a certain extent, but the lack of product details in the advertising may disappoint some customers. Therefore, to be able to properly incorporate the “Camping plus” model in the advertisement in the proper context, outdoor brands may need to learn as much as possible about the psychology and needs of consumers to make the most of the advantages of the “Camping plus” model for marketing, and skillfully make up for the shortcomings of this model.

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Appendix - Interview Guide

1. Basic information

- (1) Do you usually like camping?
- (2) Who do you usually go camping with?
- (3) What kind of products do you usually buy for camping?
- (4) What are your sources of channels to acquire these products?
- (5) If you were to imagine a camping scene, what would it look like?

2. Result relevance information

- (6) Which picture are you more attracted to? Why? Which picture do you prefer to buy the product in? Why?



Picture A (Left) and Picture B (Right) for Question (6)

- (7) Which picture are you more attracted to? Why? Which picture do you prefer to buy the product in? Why?



Picture A (Left) and Picture B (Right) for Question (7)

(8) Which picture are you more attracted to? Why? Which picture do you prefer to buy the product in? Why?



Picture A (Left) and Picture B (Right) for Question (8)

(9) Which picture are you more attracted to? Why? Which picture do you prefer to buy the product in? Why?



Picture A (Left) and Picture B (Right) for Question (9)

(10) Which picture are you more attracted to? Why? Which picture do you prefer to buy the product in? Why?



Picture A (Left) and Picture B (Right) for Question (10)