

# The Influence of Advertising on the Consumers' Purchasing Decision

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**Abstract.** The willingness of consumer to purchase is the premise of marketing and the basis for business survival. With the increase of the number of similar products and consumers' choices, companies must differentiate their own product in order for consumers to buy. Advertising is the only channel that makes a company stand out, which can produce a huge impact on consumers. From the consumer psychology, brand marketing and advertising communication, this article indicates that advertising has an impact on consumer purchasing decisions by taking "Think Different", the advertising which were launched by Apple in 1997, as an example.

**Keywords:** Consumer psychology, brand marketing, advertising communication.

## 1. Research Background

On September 25th, 2017, Interbrand, a global brand consulting company, released the "Top 100 Best Brands in the World" list, of which Apple as one of the 16 double-digit growth brands had been the top leader for five consecutive years. Compared with 2016, its brand value had increased by 3%, reaching \$184.154 billion. On August 1st, 2018, Apple announced its performance report in third quarter of the 2018 fiscal year (Q2), with revenue of \$53.265 billion, up 17% from \$45.408 billion in the same period last year, exceeding the expectations of Wall Street analysts; Net profit of this company was \$11.519 billion, an increase of 32% from \$8.717 billion in the same period last year. In addition to this, on the night of August 2nd, 2018, Apple's intraday market value exceeded \$1 trillion for the first time, and its stock price hit a record high of \$203.57, with a current increase of more than 1%. There is no doubt that Apple has always been the most competitive brand in the world. In the last 42 years since its establishment, this company has created many miracles and left many cases worth learning and exploring. Just like in 1997, Apple got itself out of going bankrupt by designing a advertising called "Think Different", which is undoubtedly an epic operational paradigm.

Advertising has always been the cohesion of the human spirit. It is everywhere. From the moment we open our eyes, it has imperceptibly entered our lives in various ways, affecting every purchase and consumption in our lives. At the same time, its influence is not to be estimated. A successful advertising are not only the moving ideas that can cater to the consumer psychology, but also the accurate analysis of the current market and the just-right marketing strategy. Therefore, this article intends to analyze Apple's "Think Different" print ads from two aspects of psychology and marketing, and explore how advertising affects consumers' decision-making.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Consumer Psychology

In 1898, America scholar E. S. Luis proposed the consumer mental model AIDA, namely four steps that "Attention (draw attention)—Interest (generate interest)—Desire (stimulate desire)—Action (promote action)", which show that the first thing for a product is to draw the attention of consumers firstly, then to guide them to generate interest, and to stimulate the corresponding desires, and finally to promote the corresponding actions. Later, some scholars made a supplement to this model, adding three new steps, that is, Memory (enhanced memory), Conviction (generate trust), Satisfaction (Satisfaction with product), etc., forming the AIDMA, AIDA and AIDAS modes respectively. [1] What the above mentioned is the consumer's psychological process of purchasing, while Marlow's

hierarchy of needs is an analysis of consumer psychology. In 1943, Maruss proposed in his book "A Theory of Human Motivation Psychological Review" that human needs are mainly divided into five categories, which are physiological needs, security needs, social needs, and esteem needs as well as self-realization needs from low to high.

Based on the above theory and various related literatures, what can be discovered is that people's appeals to advertising can be divided into two categories, rational appeals and emotional appeals. Rational appeals, as the name suggests, emphasize the effectiveness of products. Compared with similar products, whether your performance is more powerful and the practicality is more durable is the fundamental concern of consumers, while the emotional appeals are to arouse consumers' certain feelings and achieve the effect of empathy and persuasion, so that consumers want to satisfy their own emotional needs by purchasing.

## **2.2 Brand Marketing**

### **2.2.1 Brand Personality**

"Brand personality refers to that the brand has some characteristics similar to people personality. The choice of brand spokesperson is actually to give the brand a specific personality. Brand personality is the main difference between different brands. In addition to directly acting on the brand image, it also affects the brand image through the constraints of brand attitude, brand association and brand emotion. Building brand personality is to match the brand personality with that of the target consumer group or to give a charming personality to products. Brand personalization aims to establish a symbol, which tightly reflects the ideas and pursuits of the target consumer groups." [2] Therefore, the setting of brand personality needs to have certain uniqueness and symbolism for the brand. Only by doing so the brand can be competitive in the market and can be favored by consumers.

### **2.2.2 Brand Management**

Brand management is a process of establishing, maintaining and consolidating, effectively supervising and controlling the relationship between brands and consumers, and finally forming its own competitive advantage, making the behavior of companies more loyal to the core values and spirit of brand, so that the brand remains a sustainable competitiveness. Whether it is "hunger marketing" or the extension of subsequent brands, brand management requires a clear layout and arrangement.

### **2.2.3 Brand Sales**

Apple has always focused on capturing key customer bases and nurturing loyal customers to influence more directly a broader range of consumers through opinion leaders. The Wall Street Journal received a training manual for Apple retail store staff in 2007, which extended the scope of service of "APPLE" to five sections:

- A (Approach)— "Customers arrive at the store and greet decisively"
- P (Problem)— "Investigate needs and understand problems"
- P (Present)— "Quick response and provide solutions"
- L (Listen)— "Listen to questions and dispel concerns"
- E (End)— "Have a welcome and love words"

It can be seen that every concept of Apple is related to customers, closely following the needs of customers, not selling for sales. The main goal is to solve problems for customers. The user-oriented terminal communication makes Jobs regain control of Apple in 1997. In just 14 years, it created a miracle in the history of business operations. Apple's net profit fell from \$1 billion in 1996 to \$14 billion in 2010, with its market value reaching about \$360 billion.

## **2.3 Advertising Communication**

### **2.3.1 Communication of Ads Signs**

In the print ads "Think Different", the only thing with color people can find is the Apple's logo. As a condensed symbol, this logo is no longer a simple apple, but the apple that turns to Newton. The

true meaning behind this apple is thinking, subversion and distinction. These special meanings require that the logo of Apple is to be colorized, not just for catching people's eyes.

In addition to these hidden meanings, "Think Different" itself is also an advertising with educational function due to the using of classic characters as a model. In view of this, Apple has also made a poster for free to public schools across the United States, encouraging students to use these great people as a model for learning. Such a positive energy endorsement image makes Apple's communication channel wider and the speed of communication is correspondingly fast.

### **2.3.2 Communication of Ads Art Thinking**

The creative "Think Different" equipped with a powerful copywriting and video is also pinpoint, simple and profound for other advertisements that are too redundant to find the key. Besides, Apple also have a clear emotional positioning of the audience, that is, the emotional appeals route. Inspirational thinking without limited to one type is a self-demand concept that will not be outdated no matter in which era, thus making "Think Different" a moving advertisement.

### **2.3.3 Communication of Ads Materials**

When it came into people's eyes, "Think Different" print ads had been published in mainstream magazines in the United States for a time. They were also active in the streets of the United States in the form of posters. Hundreds of major outdoor billboards in Los Angeles and New York were even rented for placing these advertisements. Even now it is rare to see which technology company will do such a big deal. "This will be a battle, and we will create a classic." Lee Clow said at the time. Thanks for the remarkable achievements the good battle has made, for a while, there were black and white portraits of celebrities everywhere in the street or TV in United State, such as Einstein, Bob Dylan, Richard Branson, Muhammad Ali. Since then, the black-and-white images and colored logo are deeply rooted in people's hearts. To this day, the full set of "Think Different" posters that have been used for classroom hanging has sold for hundreds of dollars on some websites. Another thing should be noted is that the advertisement of "Think Different" has always been a repeated process of production and reproduction, processing and re-processing until the audience give their feedback. By doing so, it is to better test whether the communication achieves the goal and also to protect the communication operation. Day after day, their propaganda feedback has never slacked off, thus the demand for the public has been very sensitive and accurate.

## **3. Case Analysis**

"Think Different" (Fig.1) is an advertisement launched by Apple in 1997 as a response to its biggest competitor IBM "Think" at the time. As a successful attempt of transformation, this advertisement can be said to reverse Apple's shackles. "Think Different" shows the respect to the classic historical figures who are unconventional, bold and successful, including Einstein, Picasso, famous director Hitchcock, former South African President Nelson Mandela, the first female pilot Amelia Earhart and others. Leading figures who are well-known and deeply rooted in people's hearts in all fields have been chosen to the advertising.

Only based on that simple black-and-white photo, these figures have already showed their charming to the audience. The short and powerful slogan next to these photos in "Think Different" is pinpoint to tell audience its true meaning. Above the slogan is a colorized Apple logo. The contrast between black-and-white and color highlights Apple's novel concept ahead of time and the personality of the brand. Compared to other dazzling advertisements at the time, the whole work is simple, clear and unforgettable, which is truly to make "simplify" into people's hearts.

"Maybe they are crazy people in the eyes of others, but they are the genius in our eyes. Only those who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world can really change the world." This is the last sentence in the copywriting of "Think Different", which are also followed and confirmed by Apple. Like many unruly giants, Apple hit the most beautiful glimpse of history in the late 1990s.



Fig.1 “think different”

In the 1970s, the product concept Apple took is the emotional appeals route, with the hope to build a warm brand personality. At that time, it was necessary to turn people from the concept of “computer is a giant” to “everyone can have a computer.” Given this, after the 1980s, Apple took a more rational appeals route to performance. At this time, Apple was almost crushed by IBM in terms of rational appeals and performance due to the birth of IBM PC. Especially in 1985, IBM's personal computer turnover accounts for almost 80% of the market at that time. Until the end of the 1990s, the suppressed Apple launched “think different” as its Jedi counterattack, capturing the audience's psychological desire to success and distinctiveness through the satisfaction of most consumers' emotional appeals. Apple was a unique company in the single rigid electronic product market at that time, which greatly satisfied consumers' understanding of emotions, memory conviction, willingness and values.

“The needs of modern consumers rise from quantity satisfaction and quality satisfaction to emotional satisfaction. What human performance is doing is to emphasize the psychological value of possessing the goods, that is, the symbolic value other than the practical value of the goods, such as glory, status satisfaction desire.” [4] The process of consumers' purchase can be divided into six steps, that is, know-understand-like-prefer-convince-buy. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, the highest level of demand is the realization of self-worth. Therefore, “Think Different” seized the four key steps, that is, understand-like-prefer-convince, thus meeting the spiritual needs of consumers to the greatest extent and achieving unprecedented success.

“Think Different” has won the favor of a large number of consumers because of the satisfaction of its emotional appeals. It also officially established the image of Apple's minimalist quality brand, giving the Apple brand a unique personality. As the times continue to advance and technology continues to develop, consumers are likely to get tired of the similar things, however, Apple's innovation at this time will undoubtedly bring new weather and personality to Apple, clearing the “Think Different” brand concept other than the “rebellious” in the 1948.

With the return of Jobs and the success of “Think Different”, in such a new environment, Apple needs to re-establish credibility and support, thus Jobs manages Apple with concentration as its main goal to make bold decisions, focusing strategies on its limited products line. At the same time, “Hunger marketing” were carried out to limit the number of products in each product line, reducing Apple's product line from 15 to 4 in one go.

Such a management mechanism has enabled Apple to move to the cutting edge. While the quality is steadily improving, the demand for supply due to “hunger marketing” has invisibly increased the profit and price of the product, and also brought a mystery to consumers, making more people want to know or buy Apple. “At present, there are various definitions of ‘hunger marketing’ in the field of marketing. Considered all definitions comprehensively, the so-called “hunger marketing” refers to the intention of companies to reduce product output so as to create a phenomenon of supply shortage by regulating supply and demand, then maintaining a higher price and profit for the purpose of protecting the corporate brand image and increasing the added value of the goods.” [5]



Therefore, the reason why “Think Different” affects consumers' purchasing decisions is mainly the cleverness of marketing methods and the control of the audience's psychology.

#### **4. Conclusion**

“This has always been a secret to me -- focus and simplicity. Simplicity is harder than complexity. You have to work hard to make hard thing simple. But it's all worth it at the end, because once you do, you can create a miracle.” - On May 28, 1998, Jobs said in an interview with BusinessWeek.

Perhaps many people now know that Apple's market price is very high, but not everyone knows that when it is only 90 days left to declare bankruptcy, it is the “Think Different” advertisement that saved Apple. Since then, the brilliance and achievements of Apple were obtained under the guidance of “concentration” and “simplicity” concept.

Therefore, advertising has a non-negligible effect on the purchasing decision of consumers. In addition to the necessary ideas, companies should pay attention to the psychological needs of consumers, research their own audience and then formulate corresponding marketing plans to create their own brand personality and image.

With the death of Steve Jobs in 2011, Apple is now led by Cook. Nowadays, Apple advertising is more about incorporating product features into the scene, such as Apple's smart speaker HomePod. Apple has built a quadrant space that can be flexibly changed and an alternative world that be accompanied by music and the dance of the protagonist to change and stretch. As we can see that Apple still maintains its creativity and liveliness.

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