

The Promotion Strategy of MANNER COFFEE in China

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, China has gradually moved from a large traditional tea culture to a country with a very high level of coffee consumption. MANNER COFFEE is an emerging coffee brand. After being created, it has been growing at an astonishing speed, even once compared to today's society's hottest coffee giants such as Starbucks & Luckin. This study explored how MANNER COFFEE company should do a promotion strategy to increase consumers' engagement in China. This paper investigated the relationship between the coffee market and consumer engagement by exploring two theories, Consumer Engagement and Marketing Mix Theory. This paper also adopted the SWOT analysis to analyze the strategy of MANNER COFFEE. The relationship between product, price, and promotion is the key to increasing consumer engagement to MANNER COFFEE. The study concluded that attracting consumers or increasing consumer engagement is achieved not only through the objective value of the brand or product itself but also by enhancing the brand's intrinsic value to move consumers' hearts and minds. Many new coffee brands like MANNER COFFEE, but not all of them are as popular as MANNER COFFEE and receive so many consumers' favor. So, there is still a lot to learn about MANNER COFFEE from other coffee brands. Many of MANNER COFFEE's operational ideas and strategies are worth remembering from coffee brands and today's beverage brands.

Keywords: *MANNER COFFEE, Manner Coffee, Consumer, Consumer Engagement, Marketing Mix Theory, SWOT, Product, Place, Placement, Price, Promotion, strategy.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Nowadays, the demand for coffee is growing by leaps and bounds. Whether it is the office workers in and out of the office building or still studying college students, it seems always to have a cup of coffee in their hands. People are familiar with coffee brands such as Starbucks, Luckin Coffee, Pacific Oceans, and Nescafé. Just in 2015, a brand called MANNER COFFEE came out of nowhere, and it grew pretty fast in a few years, taking four years to grow to more than 50 boutique coffee shops. This coffee brand is coming into the public eye, and more and more people are choosing to try this brand of coffee instead of Starbucks or Luckin Coffee. In the past years, looking back on the coffee market, many coffee brands like MANNER COFFEE popped up in China, but it didn't take long for them to sink like a stone. However, MANNER COFFEE did not close down like those stores but gradually gained the recognition of consumers. MANNER COFFEE is a chain of coffee shops

established in 2015 that offers users coffee, tea, bread, and desserts. The brand's main products are latte and espresso. MANNER COFFEE is not open for franchising. All of them are directly operated stores. Each of MANNER COFFEE's stores features a small size and few seats. Currently, the consumer base of coffee in China is expanding, and more people are drinking coffee. Some new coffee brands have emerged with their unique business models, gradually breaking the monopoly of established companies like Starbucks in the Chinese coffee market. Because of the rise of these brands, the entire Chinese coffee market is moving in a more diversified and youthful direction. Zhang, N. in 2014 mentioned in his paper "Coffee market in China: trends & consumer strategies. Coffee industry market research of a traditional tea-drinking country" that with China's rapid economic development, the coffee market is soaring, and more coffee companies are joining it [1]. However, Chinese people don't drink coffee out of necessity. Coffee is a trend rather than a habit in China, and people drink it to feel good. In developed first-tier cities like Shanghai, Beijing, and Guangzhou, coffee

culture attracts urban consumers who are open-minded, young, and affluent. As the standard of living of the Chinese people rises, coffee represents the young, emerging middle class and their growing purchasing power. Coffee becomes a symbol of a prosperous lifestyle. Ran Zhu in the University of Kentucky in 2018 published an article about the coffee market in China. It mentioned that China, known as the "tea-consuming country," has seen double-digit growth in coffee production and consumption [2]. Under certain conditions, this forecast is predicted to continue in this fast-growing market; Chinese coffee producers and retailers need to understand the preferences of the emerging Chinese coffee consumer. According to the above two scholars' research on the Chinese coffee market, to attract many consumers, you have to capture their preferences, not just limited to the coffee itself. At present, so many emerging coffee brands in China have risen so successfully precisely since they have made this point very well. MANNER COFFEE, one of the emerging coffee brands, has attracted an influx of consumers with its unique marketing approach that is different from Starbucks and Luckin.

1.2 Research Gap

There are many studies on coffee, but, as far as current evidence shows, no previous research has investigated the promotion strategy of MANNER COFFEE. There has been little previous evidence for what kind of approach MANNER COFFEE uses to make the brand continue to attract consumers. What people see, as consumers, is just its sales, as well as its popularity, have gradually increased, even comparable to Starbucks. But no one has looked into what supports MANNER COFFEE to achieve such high sales nowadays.

The research question of this article is how should MANNER COFFEE do a promotion strategy to increase consumers' engagement in China. It would be of particular interest to explore the marketing secret of the MANNER COFFEE from a single 2 square meter coffee window in the beginning to more than 50 boutique coffee shops at present. Under certain assumptions, this could be interpreted as meaning that, unlike traditional coffee companies that focus on improving the coffee itself, MANNER COFFEE is committed to increasing consumer engagement through strategies around cost performance and user-friendliness. This research paper will review consumer engagement and then analyze it qualitatively using SWOT analysis. After the final result, this paper will explain the contribution of this research and the direction of future study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Customer Engagement

Customer engagement is the emotional connection between a customer and a brand. Highly engaged customers buy more, promote more, and exhibit greater loyalty. The understanding of consumer engagement is various in different areas.

A large and growing body of literature has investigated what kind of factors can affect consumer engagement. Stephen and others in 2015 collected 4,284 Facebook posts from 9 brands over 18 months to analyze how various characteristics of a brand's social media content influence how different types of consumers interact with the brand on social media [3]. They conclude that persuasive content features reduce engagement in the social media environment [3]. Toor and others in 2017 mention that consumer engagement plays a partially mediating role in the impact of social network marketing on consumers' purchase intention [4]. Carsten Schultz, in 2017 came up with a study that studied differences between consumer engagement activities and industries. The results show that striking post characteristics produce different results. Content categories and post characteristics can strategically address different levels of consumer engagement [5]. Davis et al. in 2019 assessed how readability interacts with brand hedonism to influence consumer engagement with the brand due to little is known about how brand message characteristics affect consumer engagement.

Readability is less desirable for brands that are perceived as hedonistic. Conversely, easy-to-read tweets tend to lead to greater engagement [6]. Chen Lou in 2019 raised research on how influencer-generated ads and brand promotion ads affect consumer engagement, consumer sentiment, and comments on topics differently. The result shows that online celebrity promoted ads have significantly higher engagement among apparel brands on Instagram than branded promoted ads [7]. Dessart and others in 2019 present a study on how story content affects consumer engagement. The findings suggest that storyline, characters, and authenticity trigger consumer engagement by activating cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses with variable intensity and potency [8]. Labrecque et al. in 2020 mentioned the effect of pronoun choice (first-person singular, first-person plural, second-person, third-person singular, and third-person plural) on consumer engagement. The results show that using pronouns in brand classification leads to engagement differences [9].

Given all that has been mentioned so far, one may suppose that it is almost all about improving consumer engagement in social media. Those results can help marketers design content to maximize consumer engagement with their brands on the internet.

Unexpectedly, offline marketing strategy is never an influential factor in those promotion strategies mentioned above.

2.2 Marketing Mix Theory

Marketing Mix Theory is a marketing tool used to strengthen and reinforce a product's brand and help businesses and marketers sell the Product or service. Marketing Mix Theory consists of 4Ps: Product, Price, Promotion, and Place.

In 2011, Sinha et al. nicely pointed out how Product affects consumer engagement nowadays. In the early days, marketers focused on promoting tangible benefits, but now the focus is on promoting products that touch consumers' innermost feelings. The relationship between consumers and brands has evolved from a purely monetary transaction to an emotional one. The value of a product is determined not only by its objective value but also by the way consumers perceive that Product [10]. Gourevitch and others 2017 in their article "Who Uses a Price Transparency Tool? Implications for Increasing Consumer Engagement," raised that while price transparency tools have proliferated, consumer usage and awareness of these tools is low and will not sustain over time. So, the growth of devices does not significantly impact consumer engagement, and marketers still need better strategies to keep consumers engaged [11]. In 2011, Chaharsoughi and Yasory, those who strive to study the impact of promotions on consumer behavior, suggested that in addition to the profound influence of culture on the psychology of consumer behavior, adapting cultural values can improve marketing effectiveness [12]. Sigurdsson et al., in 2013, conducted an in-store experiment to investigate the effect of placement of the item (chips) on consumer purchase of chips. Placing chips on the middle shelf had the highest percentage of assets [13]. The results of their experiment confirmed the importance of item placement as a factor in consumer purchasing behavior [13].

In brief, above are the effects of each P on consumer engagement. According to the research and analysis of other scholars on Marketing Mix Theory and Consumer Engagement, attracting consumers or enhancing consumer engagement is not only through the objective value of the brand or the product itself, but also by touching consumers' hearts.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This article will use a qualitative SWOT method to analyse how MANNER COFFEE is used to attract consumers. SWOT is a method that can objectively and accurately diagnose a brand. S stands for "Strength"; W stands for "Weakness"; O stands for "Opportunity"; T

stands for "Threat." "Strength" and "weakness" are mainly used to analyse internal conditions. "Opportunity" and "threat" are used primarily to analyse external conditions. Through this analysis, this article can determine the factors worthy of development for MANNER COFFEE. At the same time, the factors that are unfavourable to MANNER COFFEE need to be avoided. This article can find out the problems, find out the solutions, and clarify the future development direction for MANNER COFFEE.

3.2 MANNER COFFEE



Figure 1. MANNER COFFEE [14]

MANNER COFFEE was founded by a coffee aficionado named Han Yulong. Figure 1 is the logo of MANNER COFFEE. At first, due to his passion for photography, Han ran a small photography-themed store in Nantong, Jiangsu Province in China, which became famous in the area. Not long after, he found that his love for coffee far exceeded that of photography, so he resolutely changed his photography store into a coffee house. But it didn't take long, as Nantong people didn't have any love for coffee, the cafe's business was deteriorating. But Han Yulong did not want to give up his passion for it. So he thought of Shanghai, where there are more coffee consumers.

The 2021 China Youth Coffee Lifestyle Trends Insight states, "Among coffee drinkers, over 60% of consumers consume 3 cups of coffee or more per week. In terms of cups per capita, first-tier metropolises like North, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen are already on par with mature coffee markets like Japan and the US." [15]. When Han Yulong came to Shanghai, he worked as a roaster for one year at Café del Volcán, a boutique café of pure German origin famous in his circle for its rich, full-bodied coffee with a long aftertaste. In addition to his work, Han Yulong investigated the entire Shanghai coffee market. After analyzing coffee as the whole market in Shanghai, Han Yulong finally rented a 2 square

meter store combined with his financial strength. This small window in Figure 2 is the original appearance of MANNER COFFEE. This is also where MANNER COFFEE originated from.



Figure 2. MANNER COFFEE [14]

Soon after opening, the average daily sales exceeded 100 cups. The coffee shop was small, but it contained a wide variety of items. As sales increased, MANNER COFFEE showed its potential to investors, closing three rounds of funding in five months, all from solid investors. This is very rare in the coffee industry and shows that MANNER COFFEE is highly recognized as a new coffee brand.

3.3 SWOT Analysis

3.3.1 Strength

MANNER COFFEE has excellent strength in its Product, Price, and Promotion. Compared to other brands of coffee, MANNER COFFEE is cheaper. Cost performance is what MANNER COFFEE is most famous for. Almost everyone thinks of MANNER COFFEE when they think of the superb cost performance. At MANNER COFFEE, a small latte costs only 15 RMB, and large size is 20 RMB. This price is about 50% cheaper than other coffee shops around Shanghai. For coffee beans, Manna Coffee has chosen coffee beans from Yunnan. These coffee beans are not expensive and are of good quality. This reduces the cost of coffee beans, which helps Manna Coffee a lot. Therefore, Manna Coffee has its price advantage. In addition to low prices, MANNER COFFEE has thought of many ways to benefit customers. For example, buying coffee with your cup can get a coupon for 5 RMB off. Buy coffee beans and bring a coupon for 18 RMB off. This is the famous MANNER COFFEE promotion. The coffee is cheap, but the quality of Manner Blend is not at all bad. It is essential to know that the blending ratio of the roaster when roasting beans is often the industry's top-secret and the flavor soul of the brand. Manner Blend currently uses the ratio determined by Han Yulong's adjustment, which uses four kinds of beans from Yegashafi, Guatemala, Mantnin, and Yunnan, all of which are Alibica species.

The roasting method that this ratio has adjusted highlights the sweetness more than the ordinary ones. At the same time, sparing the raw materials is also the key to product flavour enhancement. An entrepreneur who is familiar with Han Yulong said in a media interview, "The production of a cup of coffee on the market, the consumption of coffee powder 18 grams - 20 grams or so, Manner's approach is to upgrade to 25 grams [16] directly. The significant increase in strength will cause consumers to form a new perception of coffee, so much so that they will find the taste bland when drinking other brands' coffees. One of China's largest consumer guide sites, Dianping, a three-way review-based platform that reviews and shares information mainly on food and entertainment, has a comment "People who are used to drinking Manner will find other brands of coffee bland, including Starbucks. In the case of one of Manner's famous oatmeal lattes, the oatmeal milk does not affect the taste of the coffee as much as the regular milk, and even highlights the original flavour of the beans." [16]. So consumers generally think that MANNER COFFEE has a more mellow taste. A cup of aromatic coffee comes from the excellent quality of coffee beans, high-quality milk, and pure water. MANNER COFFEE's milk is made from milk that retails 24 RMB a box. The water is treated with a particular water purifier. Together, these quality raw materials contribute to the high quality of MANNER COFFEE.

3.3.2 Weakness

MANNER COFFEE got its weakness in placement. Founder Han Yulong said he only wanted to create a pure coffee shop, and he felt that many customers who go to coffee shops are not drinking coffee, which loses the meaning of coffee itself. That's why the stores in MANNER COFFEE do not provide seats. Also, MANNER COFFEE does not offer a delivery service. This is a significant weakness for MANNER COFFEE on the online side. Although Han Yulong only wants to be a pure coffee shop, almost everyone shops online or places orders on their cell phones in this era of high-tech development. It is impossible that everyone will wait for a long time to buy a relatively inexpensive cup of coffee, so this is an apparent weakness of MANNER COFFEE. MANNER COFFEE may miss many customers because of the business's lack of delivery service.

3.3.3 Opportunity

Although MANNER COFFEE's weakness is its placement, it is also an opportunity. Generally speaking, the location of a restaurant must consider the flow of customers, but for a cafe, a business full of literature is different. At present, many literary young people in society especially like to find those hidden in the alleys of the store, the deeper it is hidden, the more desire to see it, whenever there is a discovery will also have a sense of

achievement, cannot wait to share with friends or posted on social media for more people to see. This is the way to get more traffic to MANNER COFFEE in the future. As more and more information related to MANNER COFFEE is posted on social media, more and more interactions will happen online. This will bring more consumer engagement to the offline store because many online celebrities will come because of the buzz. At that time, MANNER COFFEE's target group is office workers and more young people. In addition, more importantly, Manner Coffee can try to improve its product packaging. At present, the outer packaging style of Manner Coffee is relatively simple. Since Manna Coffee cannot go international in a short time, maybe they can try to add Chinese elements to the packaging design, such as designing unique packaging during traditional Chinese holidays. Few other coffee brands have done so far, so this could quickly help Manna Coffee stand out in the Chinese coffee market.

3.3.4 Threaten

There are many threats from other coffee brands. MANNER COFFEE does not have an online and offline delivery system like other big coffee brands. Take Luckin as an example. Luckin coffee gives out many coupons to consumers, which is quite attractive. In another way, most MANNER COFFEE stores are basically in Shanghai, which means that MANNER COFFEE's consumers are limited to Shanghai consumers. Luckin Coffee has more than 4,000 stores in China, while Starbucks has thousands of coffee shops worldwide. MANNER COFFEE cannot be compared with these two familiar coffee brands.

Also, MANNER COFFEE does not have an online app and offline delivery service, significantly limiting MANNER COFFEE. Nowadays, people prefer to use their cell phones to operate everything. Coffee companies like Starbucks and Luckin have their sophisticated online apps or offline delivery systems, and MANNER COFFEE seems to be lagging behind other coffee brands in this regard. This will cause MANNER COFFEE to lose a lot of consumer engagement because many people may give up when they pick up their cell phones. After all, MANNER COFFEE does not have online activities or delivery services. In addition, since MANNER COFFEE is not a sizeable dine-in cafe, it does not spend a lot of energy and money on setting up the cafe environment. Yet some niche coffee brands have set up their restaurants in such a way that they blend the environment with the local culture. This will bring a significant threat to MANNER COFFEE.

4. RESULT&DISCUSSION

The result is that MANNER COFFEE is very advantageous in the product, price, and promotion, but

their place is his weakness. MANNER COFFEE can get more opportunities through its products. For example, change the product packaging to increase chances and meet more consumers. The threat comes from many domestic niche brands as they gradually blend the domestic environment and culture with the atmosphere of the coffee shop that did it.

The analysis results are similar to the effects of previous expert studies on consumer engagement and Marketing Mix Theory. Consumer engagement plays a crucial mediating role in the impact of social network marketing on consumer purchase intention. This is in line with Toor et al. in 2017, who mentioned that consumer engagement plays a partially mediating role in the impact of social network marketing on consumer purchase intention [4]. Highly engaged customers will buy more and thus promote more. However, it seems to be less consistent with the study presented by Chen Lou in 2019 on how influencer-generated and brand-promoted ads differentially affect consumer engagement, consumer sentiment, and topic comments. Chen Lou's results showed that online celebrities promoted ads with significantly higher engagement among apparel brands on Instagram than brand-promoted ads [7]. This is probably what makes MANNER COFFEE different from other brands of coffee. Other brands of coffee focus more on promoting the brand, but MANNER COFFEE focuses more on enhancing the inner part of the product by improving the product itself. In the early days, marketers focused on promoting the tangible benefits of their products, but now the focus is on promoting products that touch consumers' inner feelings. This is consistent with the article by Sinha et al. in 2011, which noted how development influences consumer engagement today [10] and the related report by Chaharsoughi and Yasory in the same year [12]. Sinha et al. argue that the value of a product is determined not only by its objective value but also by the way consumers perceive it. The relationship between consumers and brands has evolved from a purely monetary transaction to an emotional one. Chaharsoughi and Yasory argue that in addition to the profound influence of culture on the psychology of consumer behavior, adapting cultural values can improve marketing effectiveness, and this is precisely what MANNER COFFEE does. Customer engagement is the emotional connection between the customer and the brand. Attracting consumers or enhancing consumer engagement is achieved not only through the objective value of the brand or product itself but also by touching the hearts of consumers.

5. CONCLUSION

This article investigates how MANNER COFFEE company should promote to increase consumer engagement in China by studying Consumer Engagement and Marketing Mix Theory. In addition to

organizing the Consumer Engagement and Marketing Mix Theory, this article uses SWOT analysis for MANNER COFFEE. The relationship mentioned above between product, price, and promotion is the key to attracting customers to MANNER COFFEE. This relationship between them is the main reason for increased consumer engagement. Finally, this paper concludes that brands need to connect with consumers by improving the product to increase consumer engagement. The previous hypothesis is not entirely correct through the strategy about the cost performance and the friendly approach to consumers.

After seeing Manner Coffee make so much progress, some people will attribute Manner Coffee's achievement to Han Yulong's luck, but what the public doesn't know is that Han Yulong had been a coffee training instructor for several years before he founded Manner and roasted beans himself. Popular reviews include *Café del Volcán*, a cafe near Xiangyang South Road in Shanghai for eight years, where Han Yulong was a roaster for a year. He also has his bean baking factory in Songjiang, Shanghai. Not only does he have a vision, but he also has outstanding talent and strengths of his own. Jacky, the founder of an independent cafe in Suzhou, mentioned that he had met Han Yulong in person at coffee culture festivals in Shanghai, Suzhou, and Hangzhou, and that "he has never lost his skills in his hands and has his views on bean varieties, roasting and extraction methods. Also, Han Yulong has done an excellent job of cost control, which is an important reason why a small store model like MANNER COFFEE can develop quickly. As mentioned before, the first MANNER COFFEE store is located in Shanghai on Nanyang Road. 2 square meters, the rent cost is down a lot. The stickers on the coffee paper cups are self-adhesive because the custom design is too expensive. Although the single-cup gross profit is about 50 cents, the store also sells coffee beans, plus the wholesale bean business in Han Yulong's roastery in Songjiang and the profit from the resale of coffee machines, there will not be a big problem to maintain. Secondly, cheap pricing will directly pull up the cup volume; thin profit can also quickly return to capital. A single cup is priced at 15 RMB, an amicable price for a cosmopolitan city like Shanghai. The operation mode like MANNER COFFEE is operated by other brands in the individual beverage industry. In addition to some image stores with brand recognition, most stores of MANNER COFFEE are between 10m²-20m², which is much smaller than the standard stores of Starbucks that are often hundreds of square meters. 2018 or so, Xi tea sites are mostly urban core business districts, and with the big fashion brands as neighbors to create a brand effect. Beijing Sanlitun Black Gold Store, Shenzhen Wanxiangtiandi Store, and Chengdu IFS Store are examples. However, in 2020, Hei Tea GO stores with a single storage area of 20m² are proliferating and are used in conjunction with intelligent pick-up counters, saving

many labor costs. In Shanghai, Xi Cha GO to stores is now close to one-third. If the volume of investment in a single store is small, then spending the same amount of money, more stores can naturally be started at the same time. This is why within a year after receiving financing, MANNER COFFEE has come out of Shanghai, and the number of stores nationwide quickly exceeded 50.

But there are still limitations, and the limit here is that MANNER COFFEE has only been open for a few years, so there is not enough time for people to analyze whether MANNER COFFEE will be better in the future in the long run. So future studies will have to wait and see if there will be more reports on MANNER COFFEE. When more messages about MANNER COFFEE appear, the conclusion will become more convincing. Also, about MANNER COFFEE, many people will question why they don't do takeaway in the current era of rapid internet development. If MANNER COFFEE does delivery, then naturally, they have to add delivery fees, labor costs, packaging costs, and a series of other expenses, which adds a heavy burden to the already low-profit coffee. So MANNER COFFEE simply does not do takeaway, save this series of costs. But if MANNER COFFEE can solve this problem, it can bring additional income, for it must be immeasurable.

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