

An Exploratory Study on Fear Based Marketing Practices

M. Pratham Varma¹, Md. Akhtar Unnesha², Dr. Madhusmita Choudhury³

Student, Centurion University, Vizianagaram, AP¹

Assistant Professor, Centurion University, Andhra Pradesh²

Abstract - Fear based marketing plays a crucial role in marketing. It affects the buying preferences of the consumer. It helps in the development of the brand in a long run. Brands use this to gain a sustainable competitive advantage amongst others. This creates an uncertainty in the minds of the consumers and they end up purchasing the products even if they are not necessary for them. Can be considered ethical if it raises the societal awareness in the correct manner. Although causes mishap but helps in the growth and development of businesses.

Keywords: advertisement strategy, customer's emotions, fear, peer endorsement, perception,

INTRODUCTION

The term "Fear based marketing" may sound new to many of us but has an enormous impact in our society since quite a few decades, directly or indirectly.

Factually, fear-based marketing is a strategy used by many brands. They use the consumers fears Choudhury, D., Mishra, B. B., & Mohanty, P. K; (2018) and insecurities to motivate them to purchase their products and expand their sales. They try to trigger our emotions and connect with the need of the product. If we talk about human psychology, everyone wants the experiences that bring pleasure to us and avoid experiences that bring us pain. "The most memorable brand is the once that make us feel something." (Matt Wodenka; 2020)

Most of the humans are controlled by two main factors – greed and fear. To gain a sustainable competitive advantage, after meeting the basic needs of a customer, (Choudhury, D., Mishra, B. B., & Mohanty, P. K.; 2019) many brands try to target the 'customer's emotions'. Out of all emotions, fear sells the most because it is a very powerful motivator. Nowadays most brands communicate the fear inexplicitly. In simple terms, they define it as 'more control' and 'less chaos' in life.

Frankly speaking, this strategy of marketing is being used since a lot of years to push the society into changing their perceptions and acquiring new consumer behaviours by abandoning their old beliefs and habits.

If we further dig deep into it, this is definitely a controversial marketing strategy used to maximize the business efficiency without a doubt. (Vi Mai, 2020)

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To know what types of fears exist in the market.
- To understand how brands use these fears on customers using examples

LITERATURE REVIEW

Maslow (1943) started from the assumption that the human behaviours induced in order to achieve certain needs, aiming self-achievement and cannot be explained by the simple relationship between stimulus-reaction or because of impulses and conflicts. Watson (1930) used of observation to study the human behaviour to reinforce his beliefs in a stimulus-reaction and reinforcement mechanism. Moraes (2008) underscore when related to motivation, behaviourists consider that impulse is the gear to initiate action.

Pavlov (1926) resulted in a conclusion that reflexes are an innate conduct, a reaction not preconditioned while behaviourism is when an individual is conditioned for external stimulus. Silva et al. (2016) points out that advertising has a broad and profound influence on consumers in various aspects such as cultural, social, personal, and psychological. According to Edell and Burke (1987) feelings ads has influenced consumers' reactions towards brands and their ads and are a great tool to predict advertising.

Cotte and Ritchie (2005), said when the use of positive approach in ads is emphasized, it would conduct a

consumer empathy with the product/service thus a purchase, while a negative approach leads to an incommensurable feeling, conducting consumers to acquire the solution that the advertiser offers. Soares (2017) argued that advertisements use of this concepts to condition consumer behaviour increasing a need and creating wishes. It transforms a simple need of hydration (primary necessity) to a wish of consume a determinate brand of fizzy drink (second necessity). Gade (1998) shows a controversy about how far advertising and other types of promotion can persuade consumers to buy products they do not need or want. Eadie and Stead (1998) gave an example of this issue. They state that antismoking ads are expected to use

Table - 1

Year of the study	Author name	Findings
1943	Maslow	Human behaviour based on stimulus and reaction.
1930	Watson	Reinforcement mechanism on stimulus and reaction.
2008	Moraes	Impulse is the gear to initiate actions.
1926	Pavlov	Difference between reflexes and behaviourism.
2016	Silva Et Al	Influence of advertising in customers.
1987	Edelland Burke	Effects of emotional advertising.
2005	Cotte & Ritchie	Reinforcement by empathy.
2017	Soares	Conditional advertising.
1998	Gade	Additional promotions.
1998	Eadie and Stead	Effects of fear-based advertising.
1996	Keller and Block	Damage caused by undesirable behaviour.

Source: Author's Analysis

Fortunately, there are a few strategies that can be used in marketing without having negative effects. This approach can be used without giving potential customers cause to feel bad about themselves or your business. The key is to strike a delicate balance between neutral emotion and overt fearmongering. Here's how to attract more attention without putting yourself in danger.

Fear of missing out

FOMO marketing refers to messaging those appeals to consumers' desire to latch on to every opportunity before it slips through their fingers. Many people would rather make an impulse purchase than regret failing to act later.

It is a very common practice used by most of the online shopping platforms. Platforms like Amazon, Flipkart, Myntra etc. became very successful after using this strategy of marketing. Technically, this strategy leverages the customer's time sensitive desire and

visuals of black lungs, when it does not happen their initial reaction is to reject the advertisement. Fourthly, a long-term use of fear appeal ad could damage reputation of advertiser and its image becomes related with the negative and threatening. Fear appeals seem to increase persuasion at some point but lessen in others. Keller and Block (1996) say the reason is that weak fear plea could be ineffective if it fails to deliver a clear and elaborated message of damage caused by the undesirable behaviour; whereas a strong fear plea may fail if it present too much formulation of those consequences, preventing audience from seeing the main point offered in the ad.

market to them in order to make high sales. This marketing strategy centers around urgency, specific time limit, social proof and highlights the feeling of a missed opportunity. It is meant to trigger people to take action quickly or they might miss the chance to capitalize on a massive deal happening right in front of them. (Joran, 2021)

Fear of future

The main focus in this strategy is to perceive the future better than the past. LIC (Life insurance company of India) is the master of this strategy. The company uses catchy taglines like 'no worries, no fear when LIC is here'. Also Sanskrit transcription 'Yogakshemam Vahamyaham' which translates to - 'Your welfare is our responsibility'. If we observe their advertisement strategy, they clearly portray something bad happening to a person and gives us a glance that we could avoid the situation if we buy their policy. This creates an uncertainty in the people's minds and they

end up buying the policy. Indirectly they use fear to remove the 'fear'.

Fear of dependency

This is a very well-known strategy used in many sectors of the marketing industry. It is mostly used in the MLM (Multi-level marketing) sector. The main target of this are people aged between 16 to 25. Firstly, they emotionally target the people about how they are dependent on their parents and bring out points stating how they can be financially independent at such a small age and motivate them to spread their business. It is unethical because it forms a chain marketing system and only the person on the top of the chain earns the most of it. The rest of people working at lower levels are paid peanuts in comparison to the top one. Most people enter this sector in hope of earning some money and end up losing all of it.

Fear of environmental safety

This triggers the emotional factors of the consumers regarding the safety towards the environment. It can be considered ethical if it works in the favour of the environment. A particular brand-named Mama Earth

uses this strategy to stand out from the other brands while taking care of the environment. It raises awareness and educates the society about the importance of forests and green environment. They guarantee their customers that for every product they buy from their brand, they would plant a sapling contributing to the environment and for proof they would send the plant species and geographical location of the particular plant in the customer's mail. This is a good practice which benefits the brand, the customers and the environment.

Peer pressure

Peer pressure influencing is what often compels is to copy, comply and try to impress the people around us. In turn affecting what brands we buy, wear and use. In simple terms peer influence is when the behaviour of other in our environment affects our own behaviour. Nowadays technology has taken peer endorsements to another level with likes, follows, shares, retweets and a variety of other endorsements in the social media. (Colin Frinkle, 2018) (Shah Mohammed, 2017)

Table – 2

Year of the study	Author name	Findings
2021	Joran	FOMO analysis.
2018	Colin Frinkle	Effects of peer pressure influencing.
2017	Shah Mohammed	Fear appeal in advertising.

Source: Author's Analysis

A review of 14 studies i.e Pavlov (1926), Watson (1930), Maslow (1943), Edelland Burke (1987), Keller and Block (1996), Gade (1998), Eadie and Stead (1998), Cotte and Ritchie (2005), Moraes (2008), Silva et al. (2016), Soares (2017), Shah Mohammed (2017), Colin Frinkle (2018), Joran (2021) which examined the efficiency of fear-based messaging in lowering substance abuse produced mixed findings. The results of using fear tactics to increase the likelihood that people will seek help for problems with substance abuse were favourable, according to these researchers.

CONCLUSION

Although it triggers our fears, but this strategy of marketing can be consider ethical if it raises the society awareness correctly. This is enough evidence from research and practical applications to indicate that fear

should no longer be eliminated from consideration as a marketing and advertising appeal.

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