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The impact of Reverse Psychology Marketing on a brand

A Literature Review

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1. Introduction and motivation

During the last 50 years, the society has changed a lot while the traditional marketing is still being used as the gateway to customer's mind. Digitalization has introduced us to new products in a rapid phase like never before and tens of ads keep appearing behind each new mouse click. Still, most of the brands tend to target consumers with the traditional marketing, where more is always thought to be better. More information, more options and more ads. But because the amount of information we receive today is so much bigger than 50 years ago, companies need a different way to stand out and to get customers to buy their brands (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2016).

I have been highly interested in Reverse Psychology Marketing, because it is something completely different compared to what we usually see. It is the lack of information, the mystique and the self-awareness that differentiate it from the others. Events like Moottoripyörämessut, and brands like Taco Bell, BOPE and Marmite have all successfully used Reverse Psychology Marketing to gain sales and popularity. Later in this review I will revisit these brands because they do serve as primary examples on how different tactic of Reverse Psychology Marketing can be used today.

While an aphorism "less is more" has been widely used in design and architecture, the same cannot be said about its use in marketing. Even Google, who previously didn't advertise its search engine but relied on word-of-mouth, released short ads towards the end of 2016 which decreased Google's brand mystique due to redundancy of the commercials in minds of customers.

The aim of this literature review is to create a good summary on what is currently known about the Reverse Psychology Marketing and how its use affects the brand. The main focus falls on understanding how and when to use reverse psychology and which kind of brands should use it. Because the Reverse Psychology Marketing can be very uninformative, satirical or even pushy, some brands might harm their brand image with this strategy if used incorrectly. Marketers must however distinguish that having a polarized brand is necessary not a negative thing. On the contrary, the company can profit highly by creating discussable campaign not only among the fans, but also the haters (Wiles & Raithel, 2013).

This primary research question for this literature review is thus:

How to use reverse marketing in order to differentiate from the rest of the brands?

The secondary research question is:

Is ostensibly bad marketing good for your brand?

2. Reverse Psychology Marketing

2.1 Defining reverse psychology

Reverse psychology is a technique where the intent of the message, position or action is the opposite of what is stated or done (Macdonald et al., 2017). One's initial stated position, statement or action is done in order to make the receiver do the opposite, often profiting the requester or the society. In many situations people are psychologically willful to react to stimulus by contradicting it or ignoring it (Gergen et al., 1973). It is possible to understand

and establish what are these situations and how do reactions variate and reoccur (Gergen et al., 1973). That way the requester can anticipate the response of the subject. Despite the popularity of the term in our daily life, little research has been done on the subject of effectiveness of reverse psychology on decision making.

Authors of the article “Reverse psychology tactics in contemporary marketing” (2016), Sinha and Foscht, describe reverse psychology to involve methods that are used in a paradoxical way from the theoretical standpoint. The subject reacts in the way he or she is asked not to, thus appearing to be paradoxical. Reverse psychology features contrast and reactance, both of which are well known concepts in the psychological field (Brehm, 1966, 1989). Contrasting messages raises the subject’s interest and makes further investigation of the message relevant to the subject. Reactance on the other hand is a motivational reaction when individual’s behavioral freedom is restricted or threatened in some way (J. I. Sinha, 2016).

2.2 Defining Reverse Psychology Marketing

Reverse Psychology Marketing as a term does not have a broad amount of academic literature behind it, due to often non-unified meaning of alternative marketing strategies. There are however many terms which are very close if not the same as RPM (Reverse Psychology Marketing). The first term and also the most broadly used one is ostensible de-marketing. Kotler and Levy described it in 1971 to involve an appearance of trying to discourage and diminish demand as a device for actually increasing it. Still, it is missing many of the core features of the RPM, which will be described below, and thus does not have nor is it meant to have the same effect on financial performance and brand mystique. De-marketing as a whole is often used in battling supply shortages or in decreasing unhealthy habits like tobacco

smoking. In this literature review I however discuss only the ostensible de-marketing, because of its overlying with RPM tactics.

The second term, anti-marketing is a very little researched strategy, which has no unified meaning in the academic literature. Anti-marketing has two meanings in the academic literature, one of which is an alternative marketing strategy and the second one defines anti-consumption or an anti-advertising ideology (Brown, 2006). The first one, the alternative way of marketing, often shares many features of RPM such as product rarity and the reverse psychology itself (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2007). Anti-marketing is often very bold, ironic, humorous or satirical. Sinha and Foscht (2007) describe anti-marketing as a more honest and less pretentious way of marketing. There are other popular tactics for anti-marketing other than the self-aware or cheeky advertising. Many anti-marketing brands place their stores in inconvenient places or put up inconvenient opening hours, creating contrast between their brand and the typical, customer-friendly brand, thus effectively differentiating. The most popular example of anti-marketing, the tagline “Don’t buy this product”, shows that the reverse psychology is heavily present in the anti-marketing.

The third term is paradoxical marketing, which has been viewed as an alternative way of marketing strategy where a company can combine contradictory factors like globalization and localization together to create a win-win situations for both the company and its customers (Driscoll & Driscoll, 2008). Paradox itself is a phenomenon or a situation where two apparently opposite factors or tensions are true at the same time (Poole and Van de Ven, 1989). Some paradoxes are even known to be incorrect, but often promote critical thinking (Eliason, James L , 1996). For this literature review the most important part of the

paradoxical marketing is its use of ostensibly bad marketing to create good results, sale wise and/or brand wise. Brown, Mcdonagh, and Clifford (2013) use Bad is Good (BiG) branding as an primary example for the importance of this subject, and thus fitting well under the Reverse Psychology Marketing. The authors suggest, however, that the good examples of BiG branding are exception rather than the rule.

The Reverse Psychology Marketing itself consist of the same features of the three terms mentioned before, ostensible de-marketing, anti-marketing and paradoxical marketing. Since it would be valuable for this literature review to review the most updated information on the subject which is available, I intend to refer to RPM in this literature review to consist of these three terms. By doing so, it combines them together into a unified, clear meaning. Thus, in this literature review RPM is defined as follows:

- An action, a message or an ideology of the company, which uses reverse psychology in order to gain value
- Can appear to or reduce sales to gain brand mystique and brand value
- Can be ostensibly uninformative, lack service, choice, segmentation or availability

Practical examples for Reverse Psychology Marketing are choosing inconvenient locations, omitting useful product features, offering limited or restricted services, understocking inventory, reducing advertising intensity, or launching a product during the off season (Mikl, 2012).

One of the most recent and traditional RPM example is Moottoripyörämessut's campaign for their 2016 event. The popular motorcycle expo located in Pasila ran the campaign on their Facebook page and many printed, web and digital advertisements. The most noticeable one was the giant digital screen on shopping centre Kamppi. Their ads were distinguished by a red coloured warning. In one of the ads, model and actor, Viivi Pumpanen, vowed the viewer to turn around and not come to the event mentioned, MP-expo. She mentions that the event took her whole life away because it's just too much fun. The theme around this campaign is very close to the warnings news channels or papers give about dangerous subjects or places. The idea behind this is as traditional reverse psychology as it can be. By describing their own event as a negative and a dangerous one, they draw people into searching for more information about it and ultimately possibly even booking the tickets. However, these kinds of campaigns are pretty rare and RPM is usually used in other variations, such as secret shop or products, or uninformative advertisements.

Picture 1. A screenshot from MP-messut's Facebook page, showing the campaign intro. The red text translates to "WARNING!". (2017)

Just like with movies and music, brands and companies can divide and create opposite opinions within the customers. Both hate and love. For some brands, it's just good to be bad

if you find the right balance between both. In this literature review I view RPM as a gateway to achieve a polarizing brand without hurting your reputation, image or sales. However, a polarizing brand must not be viewed as a conclusive continuum to the Reverse Psychology Marketing, but as a possible outcome of it. Many companies have already ostensibly gained more brand haters by creating a polarized brand and managed to boost their sales while establishing a stronger relationship with their core customers (Wiles & Raithel, 2013). In the next subchapter, I will discuss how is polarizing brand is defined in the academic literature and what are the advantages of it. Understanding those is needed to fully grasp the value of the Reverse Psychology Marketing.

2.3 Defining a polarizing brand

A polarizing brand has not always been looked at as something company would want to seek for. Marketing is however moving away from its traditional roots and many companies are no longer using the well-known 4P strategy anymore (Brown, Mcdonagh, & Ii, 2017). Polarizing brand means that when rating a brand, customers tend to pick the extremes of the rating scale. On the popular rating scale from 1 to 7, the ratings would be widely spread across the scale, making the brand polarizing (Wiles & Raithel, 2013). The authors also state that there is a second way to determine polarization. That is done by calculating the standard deviation of consumers' overall ratings. Higher standard deviations indicate greater

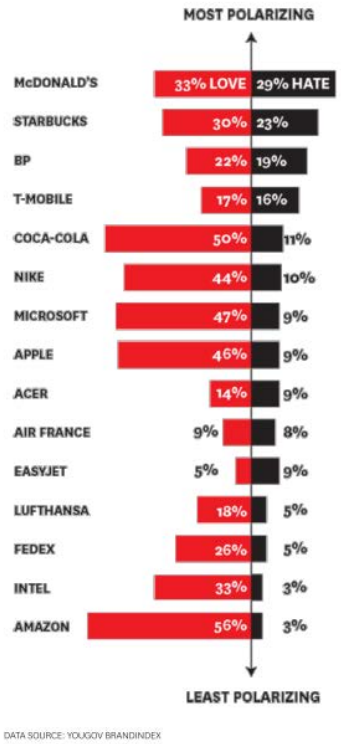


Figure 1. Brand polarization (Wiles & Raithel, 2013)

polarization (Wiles & Raithel, 2013). The results however appear to be the same no matter the determination way.

Having a polarized brand has become somehow mundane, since many of the most valuable brands appear to be quite polarizing (Figure 1). For example, according to YouGov BrandIndex, McDonald generates 29% of hate and is at the same time number 9 on the most valuable brand list made by Forbes.

There are as many reasons to hate brand as to love them and each brand has a unique customer base compared to others. The traditional way to dealing with brand hate is to appeal more to the consumers, by either changing their mind or changing company's products or services. This way you can turn the brand haters into more neutral customers who can be open for future purchases (Zarantonello et al., 2016). And this tactic makes sense, since negative word of mouth can greatly influence those who are currently neutral about the product (Wiles & Raithel, 2013).

However, academic literature shows that powerful bonds between brands and consumers are built on both positive and negative emotions (Fournier, 1998). Wiles and Raithel (2013) further push this idea by presenting the positive effects of having a polarized brand. Companies like Strongbow and Marmite have successfully increased the sales by increasing polarization of the brand in the eyes of the consumers. Polarizing brand thus doesn't exclude success, but rather could be seen as a conventional way to gain brand loyalty and increase sales.

Polarization of the brand can be caused by the product itself or by the actions of the company. For example, Marmite, the famous British condiment, has always been a polarizing product. Until the 1970's however, the brand positioned themselves as a healthy food for children, many schools even providing it for lunch. In 1980's Marmite repositioned itself to appear to the whole family, not just the children. Their most famous tagline during that time was "My Mate". In 1996, the brand was once again repositioned to appear with the tagline "Love it or hate it". This repositioning was followed by controversial commercials in which the featured characters were either disgusted by the taste or in love with it. Marmite has continued its success as a polarizing brand through the use of Reverse Psychology Marketing. Provoking campaigns like "End Marmite Neglect" which managed to get over 500 complaints to UK's Advertising Standards Authority. At the same time, it managed to increase Marmite sales by 14% and the same 14% was also the amount of positive WoM created during campaign's first eight weeks, according to YouGov BrandIndex.

Picture 2. Marmite's famous tagline, introduced in 1996.

Sometimes however, the product is not polarizing by itself. In some situations the brand could be polarized by marketers to differentiate the product from others (Wiles & Raithel, 2013). With the use of Reverse Psychology Marketing, this could be achieved by targeting

specific segments, which would increase brand's polarization. For example, trying to appeal stronger to your core audience will often drive away those who are newcomers to the brand, or do not feel a strong connection to the brand (Wiles & Raithel, 2013). Polarization could also be caused by a provocative or controversial campaign. Picking an unconventional shop location or making shopping more difficult will also create polarization within the customers (Mikl, 2012; Wiles & Raithel, 2013). With the use of RPM, marketers can effectively polarize their brand in order to gain more revenue.

Before thoroughly explaining the tactics of RPM, it is important to understand why this marketing strategy is as relevant as it is today. It has been created to distinguish from the avalanche of information consumers receive in today's world and to be able to peak interest of those who are no longer interested in traditional way of marketing.

2.4 The opposite of information overload

Traditional marketing teaches us that the more information about the brand the company provides - the better (Kotler et. al. 2005). Reverse Psychology Marketing however, challenges this idea and provides an alternative way for a brand to succeed. According to eMarketer's research done in 2015, millennials are not as influenced by traditional marketing and are able to filter out advertising and commercial messages, especially on social media. What previously could have caught public's attention doesn't work anymore. The author of the "Reverse psychology tactics in contemporary marketing", Sinha, explains: "The behaviorist stimulus-response-model (SR model) and the neobehaviorist stimulus-organism-response-model (SOR model) (Jacoby, 2002; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) provide the framework by which a stimulus, such as a print advertisement or a television commercial,

may trigger the expected customer response in terms of choice of a certain product or service." The authors further argues that while these models are still relevant and useful today, the interdependence between stimulus and response is challenged by the information overload a customer faces today (J. I. Sinha, 2016) Rising skepticism and suspicion towards the stimuli themselves mean that companies need to take into consideration new and more efficient marketing strategies (J. I. Sinha, 2016). The annual Global RepTrak 100 study by the Reputation Institute found that in 2014 just 15.4 per cent of UK consumers trust companies' advertisements. This is a clear sign that earning consumers' trust needs new and alternative strategies. Knowing this, RPM becomes an even more reasonable approach when planning company's marketing strategy.

2.5 The Pull of the Reverse Psychology Marketing

The pull marketing does not push the product on a customer, but instead holds that the customers will discover the product and come to it from their own volition (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2007) The same idea fuels Reverse Psychology Marketing. By making the customers search for more information and making the product less available, companies pull and do not push the customers to buy their product.

The conventional way of portraying your brand by showing only the good parts while exaggerating its value is not as effecting anymore. The contrast of the RPM strategy surprises customers with its unexpected advertising stimuli. They're told to react in the way that they were not expecting. If the brand is self-aware or self-critical, customers view it more positively, since they regard it to be more honest and authentic (I. Sinha and Foscht, 2007). A perfect example for such tactic would be BMW's 2007 campaign "Don't trust advertising".

Customers are keen on searching for more information as the tagline is paradoxical, since the tagline belongs to an advertisement. These kind of tactics involve greater cognitive processing than otherwise it would have gotten since the time spent on “consuming” the advertising is longer. (J. I. Sinha, 2016).

Paradoxical taglines or product information is not the only way to ensure brand remembrance. Widely used across the world, a tactic of uninformative advertising proves to be very effective for certain types of brands. Vague or missing information in the advertisements sounds like a disaster if we base our knowledge on the traditional marketing tactics. However, Abernethy and Butler (1992) found that 37,5% of US TV advertisements in 1991 had no product attribute cues and resorted fully on the customer will to find more information about the product or the brand. It seems that ostensibly leaving out valuable information is a common tactic. The reason behind this is often the limited resources for the company to provide the customers all the possible information (Mayzlin & Shin, 2011). If in 1991 companies backed out of trying to fully make all the good attributes visible, the fight for the spotlight is even tighter today.

Mayzlin and Shin (2011) state: “If the firm claims to be good on a few selected attributes, its advertising will be indistinguishable from the advertising of the firm that is only good at those attributes”. The authors also explain that if the company would decide to make no attribute claims at all in their advertisement, it would be indistinguishable from the advertising of the companies that are only good at those attributes (Mayzlin & Shin, 2011). This theory is looking at distinguishability including only the claimed attributes. Companies can additionally distinguish themselves in the minds of consumers with brand awareness or

the product price. The idea which the authors present is that companies are often unavailable to resolve customer's uncertainty about their product with only the advertisement. They propose that if the company is sure that the information the customer will find about them is positive, they can withdraw from advertising their product with positive attributes (Mayzlin & Shin, 2011). Customer's active search for the information can be both physical and verbal, combining internet search and asking his or her friends. On the contrary of course, if a customer has a high possibility to find negative information and thus disregard the purchase, it is not recommended for a company to use this RPM strategy.

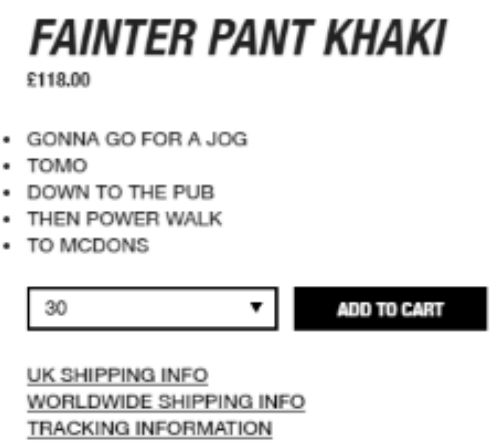
What comes to the correlation between quality and advertising, Bagwell and Overgaard (Look how little I'm advertising, 2006) remark that it will be negative in the introductory phase of a product's life cycle but once the product leaves the introductory phase, the correlation will often be less negative or possibly even positive. The advantages and disadvantages of the tactics of RPM will be discussed more specifically in the chapter 3.

2.6 Unconventional brands

Traditional marketing seeks to offer the right product, at the right price, at the right place and at the right time. It's very customer-oriented and is meant to meet customers' needs as much as possible while trying to be unique at the same time and differentiate itself from the competitors. The idea behind this is that a choice is an essential element of our free society and freedom overall (J. I. Sinha, 2016). Companies are trying to make their brands as customer friendly and positive as possible to achieve this idea. However, companies who use RPM to differentiate themselves from others, tend to put their ideology in front of what the customers want, often creating brand polarization. They ostensibly create shorter supply than

they could and offer strictly limited product line. The shops close on their own time, without permanent opening hours. Customers might also have to queue for hours to get inside the shop. It's not uncommon to even set a product limit on how much you can buy. It seems that some brands make it more difficult to acquire their products, as opposing to making it more easy and convenient. The product scarcity and unattainability furtherly boost brand mystique (J. I. Sinha, 2016). Clothing lines like Palace, Supreme and BAPE are the pioneers in this kind of Reverse Psychology Marketing. Palace's product descriptions are written by the founder while he is laying on the couch, watching Food Network on the TV, and have nothing to do with the product information like materials or sizes. The lack of information, like discussed in the previous subchapter, does not drive customers away. On the contrary, all three brands have managed to gain a cult following behind them despite their bold verbal use, inconvenient websites and uninformative product information.

Picture 3. Screenshot from Palace's Instagram page.



Picture 4. Palace's product information on a Fainter Pant Khaki.

Companies which create RPM brands understand that broader product lines do not guarantee higher revenue for the firm. Broader product lines can actually cannibalize the brand

mystique (Kotler & Wong & Saunders & Armstrong, 2005. I. Sinha & Foscht, 2007). When the same product is more easily available, getting one is much easier, thus devaluating one's value. In addition to this, research has shown that from the consumer's viewpoint, broader product selection can make choices more difficult, raising the probability that they may not end up selecting the optimal alternative at all. (Boatwright & Nunes, 2001; Broniarczyk, Hoyer, & McAlister, 1998, J. I. Sinha, 2016).

Traditionally companies have set up their stores and shelves to catch the attention of the customer and to peak their interest, in order to get them inside of the shop (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Flashy, glowing and colourful windows, big "we're open" signs and a smiling cashier is what we've used to. But companies using RPM are constantly trying to come up with a unique way to catch our eye, not only in the retail sector, but on the web too. While making their brands or shops more secretive, companies are relying on the principle of reactance. The idea is that some of the customers will be more eager to buy the brand if they view it as a "forbidden fruit", since no one likes to being put off Sinha, 2016). The outcome of a limited product line is not only more cost-effective production but it often benefits the customer by simplifying their decision making (J. I. Sinha, 2016). The reasoning behind this is why "Chef's choice" restaurants are highly popular globally. Customers are not able to make a choice but are willfully leaving it for a chef to make.

According to Tucker and Zhang (2011) consumers are eager to visit popular shops in an inconvenient location, because in their perception, a popular yet faraway shop must be excellent in quality to overcome its locational inconvenience. Consumers often make their purchase decisions based on others, and in this conceptional situation they attribute other's

troublesome action for purchase as a proof of high quality and value. The Reverse Psychology Marketing could be furtherly used to add an even higher contrast to the location. Dangerous or out-of-reach location add uniqueness but establishing a brand in such places is obviously more difficult than usually.

3. Consequences of Reverse Psychology Marketing

It is important to understand that the advantages and disadvantages of RPM are situational to the brand and the RPM tactics in use. It should be noted that in this chapter it is presumed that the brand's core offering is considered worth having and is valuable to consumer. This is done in order to heavily focus on the marketing rather than R&D or other pre-production phases of the product.

3.1 Advantages

One of the main advantages of the Reverse Psychology Marketing is the rising brand mystique which can be gained through limiting production and advertising, a tactic which was introduced previously in this literature review. According to Sinha and Foscht (2016) a rising brand mystique indicates of higher profits but also vice versa. It is the brand mystique that raises consumer's attraction to the brand and it is what effectively differentiates the brand from others (Brown et al., 2017). Brand mystique can additionally turn a brand into a brand cult, with highly loyal customers. It's the brand mystique and exclusivity that makes people want to queue for hours or even days for products, was it a new Harry Potter book or the newest iPhone. Brand cults have high pulling power to many consumers as cult brands present the product or service trade to have a huge impact on consumer's and brand's

relationship (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2016). And since cult brands often have a very good reputation for quality and workmanship, they help the consumer to earn social acceptance, making the brand-consumer relationship even more valuable (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2016).

Since brand mystique brings huge value to the customer who can target to earn social acceptance and differentiate from others through the brand, it adds even more value to the relationship to the brand and thus makes brand mystique a significant factor for brand's success. According to Sinha and Foscht (2007) the biggest threat to company's brand mystique is over-exposure, especially if the product is a luxury or a fashion item. Most of the brand value would be lost to the core users if the brand suddenly became more available or too visible. Sinha and Foscht (2016) state that the over-exposure in this case can be over-aggressive push marketing, over-extension, too many ads or sale promotions and too many strategic corrections. The consumers would be turned off if the brand would get too visible, too eager to make profits or associate with the "wrong" kind of customers (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2016). Thus, the Reverse Psychology Marketing not only can help the brand to gain brand mystique and a loyal customer base, but it helps to retain the value of the brand.

Amongst aforementioned advantages, RPM tactics tend to increase loyalty amongst customers due to them not being as deal-prone. Companies who attract customers with "dollar off" deals have troubles retaining the customers, since when the price promotions are not offered, customers think that the companies are exacting more than their due margins, and flock to purchasing store brands and rival's brands instead (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2016).

Companies can also have huge benefits from the less expensive marketing campaigns, since RPM tactics are much more cheaper than traditional marketing since they often do not require celebrity endorsements or television airtime. (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2007). According to Sinha and Foscht's theoretical figure presented below, traditional marketing costs more and shows saturation effect as it becomes less and less effective, while marketing costs keep rising. Reverse Psychology Marketing on the other hand is more effective, while remaining less costly than traditional marketing.

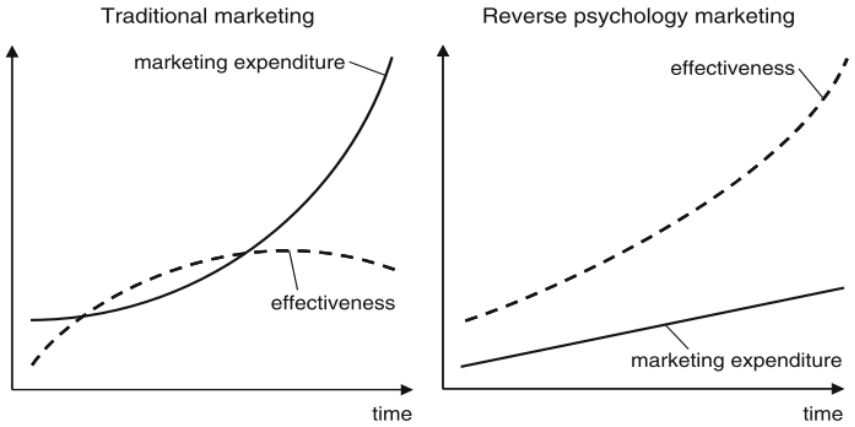


Figure 2. Comparison of expenditure and effectiveness time (I. Sinha &Foscht, 2016)

The reason why "less" works for the mentioned instances is that it invokes a perception of scarcity, that things are limited or in short supply, which usually connotes desirability in the minds of buyers. That which is difficult to obtain, must be worth having (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2016). This utilizes the beforementioned theory of reactance (Clee & Wicklund, 1980) and consumers may react to the frustration with even greater interest and desire. Nintendo has used this tactic for multiple console releases, both Nintendo Wii and the most recent one, Nintendo Switch (Eaves, 2008). A product with a time-limit or availability limit can also lead to a sales increase, as consumers anticipate a future price rise or an out-of-stock situation (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2016). In these cases scarcity of the product can create a symbolic benefit

as well, as consumers who are able to acquire the product of limited availability gain a higher social status (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2016). Those items which are viewed as status symbols, the desire to possess them increases and the product can end up becoming even more popular (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2016).

Balancher & Farquhar (1994) propose than even though it is not always the case, occasional stockout is able to reduce price competition. Since most customers are polygamous in their relationship with brands, broad lines of brands and products will result in polygamous shopping (Kotler & Wong & Saunders & Armstrong, 2005. I. Sinha & Foscht, 2016). Weak relationship with a brand will make it easy to switch from one brand to another. The advantage of the Reverse Psychology Marketing is that by having a narrower line of brands or products, there is less choice for customers and less polygamous shopping amongst the customers (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2016).

Another advantage of the Reverse Psychology Marketing is that it can signal high product quality. By taking into account the fact that consumers may choose to search more actively for additional information after seeing RPM advertising, a high-quality firm may strategically withhold information on product attributes in its advertising message, and therefore, advertising content can signal product quality (Mayzlin & Shin, 2011). Continuing Mayzlin's and Shin's statements, Mikl (2012) writes: "Demarketing lowers expected sales ex ante but improves product quality image ex post, as consumers attribute good sales to superior quality and lackluster sales to insufficient marketing".

Companies like Strongbow and Marmite have successfully increased the sales by increasing

polarization of the brand in the eyes of the consumers and their campaigns show signs of word-of-mouth increase and sale boost (Wiles & Raithel, 2013). These brand examples are however exception rather than the rule and thus understanding the challenges and disadvantages is a major key for implementing RPM successfully (Brown et al., 2017).

3.2 Challenges

Using RPM tactics is not something that would suit each and every brand. The key is to understand whether or not the Reverse Psychology Marketing can be used by your company and if it can, which tactics to use. One of the main challenges for this strategy currently remains to be its experimental manner. It is much harder to implement a strategy not set on traditional theoretical ideas and thus many companies might be understandably too afraid to use RPM.

The second challenge which companies may face using RPM is complete uncertainty of how the consumers will react to their products. According to Mikl (2012) the second wave of consumers decide whether to buy a product based on their observation of first-period marketing efforts, first-period sales, as well as their own inspection decisions. The first period in this case is the first wave of the customers, the early adopters of the product. In the case where the first wave consumer did not buy the product, the second wave consumers could have two interpretations of the observations; either the marketing was lack lusting, causing the first wave consumer not to notice the product, or the product was simply not worth having.

It is important to understand that having a polarized brand doesn't always come with satisfactory results. Abercrombie & Fitch has been a very polarized brand, mainly because of their Public Relations scandals, caused by their CEO's remarks. That however hasn't been helping their sales which have been going down for the recent years (Wahba, 2016). A brand can indeed be too negative and drive too many customers away, endangering its profitability. Harbaugh (2011), the author of "Prospect Theory or Skill Signaling? "furtherly questions the use of RPM by expressing that self-handicapping your company or a brand makes losing the market battle more frequent. Omitting features from the product or service may also leave room for rivals to exploit (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2016).

Previously proposed occasional stockouts may lead to costly emergency shipments or production, customer dissatisfaction or lost sales. Brands like Palace and Nintendo are aware of this but are so confident in their brand that these disadvantages have not yet been a problem for neither of the brands. However, this could be a huge challenge for the Reverse Psychology Marketing newcomers, who are used to fully satisfying customers. It can be suggested that to smoothen ostensible the transition from on-demand inventory to ostensibly stocking out, one can use just-in-time (JIT) logistics system (Kotler & Wong & Saunders & Armstrong, 2005).

4. Conclusion and discussion

4.1 Conclusion

Reverse Psychology Marketing presents a promising new approach to differentiating a brand in the world of information overload. The use of RPM tactics can convey a sense of mystery

in some situations, exclusivity in others (J. I. Sinha, 2016. Brown, McDonagh & Clifford , 2013). “Less is more” creates anticipation in the consumers. Overall it raises consumer’s interest with something new and different, in a way that traditional marketing cannot achieve. It is possible that some companies may regard RPM to be a gimmick, but the truth is that it not only symbolizes an attempt to overcome consumption fatique and traditional tactics of push marketing, but it has indeed been a key factor for a success (J. I. Sinha, 2016). It is worth guessing that brands like Palace and Marmite wouldn’t be as successful as they are today, without the Reverse Psychology Marketing.

Reverse Psychology Marketing is a way for both consumers and the company to achieve or offer something authentic. The key success factor for RPM is the craving encompassing both the buyer and seller to experience a sense of authenticity in their shopping contact (J. I. Sinha, 2016). Authenticity has become the ultimate goal that all marketers seek to achieve and embrace in every aspect of their business, from product development, to advertising and publicity, to post-sales communication (J. I. Sinha, 2016). An authentic company appears less interested in sales and profits, but more focused on advancing its own craft or a related ideology(I. Sinha & Foscht, 2007).

While traditional marketing tries to find consumer’s wants and fill them, Reverse Psychology Marketing pays less attention to what the mass consumer want but what the company think is right for itself or for their core customers (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2007). While this may sounds heretical, the truth is that a number of companies are doing just that, achieving massive success while completely ignoring many of the step stones of traditional marketing (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2007). Branding concepts are not set in stone and academic ideas about branding

evolve, mutate, and change through time (Blackett, 2003; Kates & Goh, 2003; Simòes & Dibb, 2001).

By using RPM, companies are able to send refreshingly different messages, contrary to the loud and attention seeking claims of push marketing (I. Sinha & Foscht, 2007). If the core offering of the brand is worth having, Reverse Psychology Marketing can help companies to increase sales and brand mystique. In some situations it is possible to use RPM in creating a cult brand or a polarizing brand, both of which can be incredibly valuable in the hands of a good marketer.

4.2 Implications for literature and theory

It is very likely that RPM will be more frequently used in the near future, since companies are starting to grasp the idea behind it (J. I. Sinha. 2016). Each company needs to carefully review their core features, offering and messages to see which RPM tactic they can possibly use. Those brand who are already polarized, RPM marketing is often a very feasible option, because it either strengthens the core message or by the use of self-aware advertising gains loyalty of the customers (Wiles & Raithel, 2013). Understanding brand's true meaning is a major key to the success of the Reverse Psychology Marketing (J. I. Sinha. 2016). The consumer is always ready for an honest and frank brand (J. I. Sinha. 2016).

Using RPM doesn't mean that all your aspects of the company must rely on reverse psychology. Sometimes it is possible to use Reverse Psychology Marketing for a one-time campaign, just like Taco Bell did during the release of their app. Shutting down all their social media accounts for days created a massive boost of WoM which boosted their app to

the top downloads.

This thesis provided the most precise and up to date information on the Reverse Psychology Marketing, reducing the gap of very little information on the subject. Combining anti-marketing, paradoxical marketing and ostensible de-marketing helps to understand these alternative marketing strategies as one and combines the found advantages of all three into one.

4.3 Limitations

One of the main limitations in this literature review is that the effect of uninformative advertising was measured with a monopoly company model. Only the minority of the companies can be counted as such and thus the evidence for a more realistic market is missing.

This thesis does not consider that the product or service would be not valuable for the consumer or not worth having or experiencing. Using the Reverse Psychology Marketing in such case needs further investigation in order to provide academic literature based information.

4.4 Future research suggestions

As mentioned before, traditional marketing techniques are struggling to gain millennials' attention. Due to possibilities to filter out advertisements and to passive or active avoidance of the physical campaigns, alternative marketing strategies are needed in order to get a better opportunity for contact especially for this demographic. Researching and improving alternative ways of marketing is thus very important and more relevant than ever.

Beforementioned brand examples show that Reverse Psychology Marketing is successful in other generations too.

As Reverse Psychology Marketing picks up steam among the new generation of marketing strategies amongst guerilla marketing, there are huge research possibilities to furtherly improve RPM. First of all, there is currently no empiric evidence on how does the increase of brand mystique affect your sales, even though there are many cases which show obvious signs of a positive effect. There also needs to be more in-depth research on how polarizing a brand can affect its performance. The success of the previously mentioned polarized brands like McDonalds must not blind the reader to think that there are no negative effects of the polarization. Further research about polarizing brands is highly important.

Also despite the popularity of the term in our daily life, little research has been done on the subject of effectiveness of reverse psychology on decision making. Understanding the advantages or disadvantages of this would be highly valuable to this alternative marketing strategy.

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