

The Pharmakon of out of stock leading to brand loyalty

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Abstract— We aim through this research to find a positive correlation of the scarcity of the product & the out-of-stock situation on one hand & from out of stock to reinforce brand loyalty.

Our research has demonstrate that the customers are more aware regarding the strategies being used by the marketers & develop a strong reactance, in the other way when the out of stock situation occurs accidently & without any will, it allow a sincere message toward the customers to predict that this is a normal situation when a brand is out of stock due to constraint demand or constraint supply & also due to forecasting errors, also we have seen through our research that customers are more attractive to the product when the company or brand advise & communicate clearly on the out of stock situation.

We have also added a new & recent concept attributed to the out-of-stock concept in an ethical & moral way, meaning that when the brand is engaged that clearly produces less sealable quantities bringing sustainability it's considered as a moral commitment & well perceived by the customers.

Keywords— Psychological reactance, Cognitive biases, out of stock, Scarcity, Brand Loyalty

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, we have had experience of an out-of-stock situation which will raise a lot of questions & frustration regarding the non-accomplishment of the purchase, this situation results through several reasons starting from the logistic part & the forecasting accuracy [1]!

In the first research we aim through this research to find a positive correlation of the scarcity of the product & the out-of-stock situation, these concepts are constituting one element with different views.

We started our research by asking ourselves several questions, what is the difference between these two concepts? The scarcity is one of the marketing strategies used to increase attractiveness of the product [2], it illuminates the quality perception, the emergency of the purchase & accelerates the decision of purchase but redirect the intention of action to the product by cognitive biases scare. The out of stock is a concept being used for operation purposes, all the companies' guidelines, even from operation perspectives, are focusing strongly on the way the stock is being managed.

The demand planning is a central element & act as a pivot to predict the future sales, constraint demand, distribution, increase stock cover, all these elements are tracked through a number of key performance indicators that shown to the top management the efficiency of the operations & the achievement of the setting

target to avoid losing any sales opportunities, from the supply issues to the storage capacities and finally the trade marketing mechanisms, drop size, repurchase rate, penetration ratio et other metrics [3]

The out of stock had from the past being centralized in the way it affects the availability of the product, leading to decrease in market share & a significant decrease in loyalty. Thus, the concept was seen from one eye! the companies even today can't believe that in some situations the out of stock will be beneficial! but how this way of thinking can change, I remember one time (Albert Mokheiber) said “*what is important from a learning perspective today, is to learn how to learn & learn to unlearn*” in this context it's fundamental to look through the optional added values of the out of stock situation.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT:

How does stock out, despite being recognized as negative impact, mutate into a pharmakon that leads to brand loyalty?

III. THEORETICAL CONCEPTS:

A. *Two faces for one coin! scarcity vs out of stock:*

Through & during our research, we have found that the two concepts are two faces to only one coin! Which means that only from utility & usage that these concepts are different!

Coming to the new & perceived literature, we analyze the effects of the scarcity, nowadays this concept is perceived in a way to reduce agency[4], therefore the customers see brands, e-commerce web sites that are using these methodologies to attract customers on their products are not necessarily sincere & compliant all the time ! this connotation was perceived by the customers on a deductive situation, when you announce that only 30 pieces in stock ! & finally, the semiotics do not reflect this situation, the customers will doubt the sincerity of the message & the information that is spread by the brand! Thus, in this way customers are more agile in the way they perceive attractiveness through the stores.[5]

Our research had demonstrated that the customers are more aware regarding the strategies used by the marketers & develop a strong reactance in the opposite way, in the other way when the out of stock situation occurs accidentally & without any will, it allow a sincere message toward the customers to predict that this is a normal situation when a brand has shortage due to constraint demand or constraint supply, due to forecasting errors & also we have seen through our research that customers are more attractive to the product when the company or brand advise & communicate clearly on the out of stock situation, even in product launch (Apple with Iphone 16, Sony (Playstation5) or the regular product.

B. *From clarity in communication to brand loyalty:*

The second section was concentrated on the brand loyalty, the literature being written, from the behaviorism theory where the loyalty was calculated by the number of purchase of the same brand, to the relationship theory where the confidence & attachment play a central role to define the loyalty, from this starting we have & toward the last two points advocated above, centralized our research on the unexpected out of stock

situation which orient the message to a human error & the ethical part to rely on the confidence, the attachment & also the way other perceive me through the message i deliver by purchasing this particular brand.

The scarcity marketing is today perceived in a controversial way, the usage of the scarcity without a real scarcity is nowadays detected by the consumer in some cases, which install a barrier to the brand loyalty, this practice was useful from the past, attracting consumer & simulating the fact that this brand is much qualitative so the consumer build his cognition from the perception message (Only one left !), today, this method is revoked or detected simultaneously by the consumer who see this kind of practice as a manipulation of his cognitive biases, thus it contribute to the unloyalty & brand switch by altering the consumer trust[6].

In the opposite, the out of stock, will take place in this competition by its natural way of behaving, the out of stock as a concept is the termination of the stock temporary or definitive without any human influence, the natural demand occurs & the consequences are the perception of the reduced availability without any will.

IV. METHODOLOGY:

Our research adopts a descriptive & analytical approach based on quantitative data collected from an online questionnaire, it's divided on three sections, from the elementary data from the respondents, age, gender, socio professional situation, the second session is declined for perception & evaluation of the out of stock situation & future behaviors of consumers & the third section is dedicated for Likert metrics, combining the out of stock situation with the brand loyalty concepts (attitude, attachment & congruence)

V. EMPIRICAL RESULTS:

A. Brand Attachment

Through this research we have conducted an online questionnaire for data collection, we reached 223 respondents as sample size, confidence level of 95%, P value of 0,5 (unspecified population), Margin error (ME 6,56%).

To enrich our research different scales were used to extrapolate the situation of out of stock to the brand loyalty & thus by projecting the emotional aspect of the attachment scale to the out-of-stock situation & the brand congruence.

The Likert scale from 1 to 5 has resumed the following results:

Question	T value	P value	Mean	Standard deviation
When you distinguish a product out of stock what is your view toward the brand	6,232	0,000	3,6861	1,64403

From a statistical perspective, the T value is significantly superior to the reference value (T=6,232), Mean is set at 3,6861 which means that even in the stock out situation the consumer has affection toward the brand, $P > 0,001$ & SD (1,64403) which is statistically significant, thus the respondents stay affective toward the brand & this is not altering their perception negatively, in opposite, the fact that the brand is having trouble in supplying the market demand it reinforce the perception of the good quality & the increasing demand, which reinforce the loyalty by confirming the faith that the consumers are having regarding their brand.

The question was declined in five sub questions to test the affection, the attachment, joy & happiness, comfort & attraction.

All the sub questions had significant statistical results, in another was the consumer, when their brand is out of stock in some conditions can be a real advantage of brand perception. Thus, the out of stock can play a real role in changing & reinforcing positive correlations toward brand loyalty [7]

This scale innumerate how the consumers perceive the out of stock, the mindset is different from the marketers that are close to the management target set in small temporal way, the first view is dedicated to the non-achievement of the target set by the top management, but the effect of such occurrence is not measured by the marketers, which is mandatory to balance between target achievement in very limited timing & the building in the long term perspective.

B. Brand congruence:

The second scale examines the brand congruence which is a direct link to the first scale (attachment), the image of the self & the wanted image by belonging to a brand.

N° Question	Affirmation	Mean	Standard deviation	T value	P value	Interpretation
1	It's a product that matter to me	3,78	1,493	7,760	<0,001	Strong personal attachment
2	It's a product to which I give particular importance	3,80	1,467	8,124	<0,001	Affective & symbolic importance
3	i particularly enjoy talking about this product	3,69	1,423	7,246	<0,001	moderate social experience
4	We can say that this product is interesting for me	4,14	1,428	11,911	<0,001	Strong interest & cognitive engagement
5	I can feel I'm particularly attractive to this product	3,85	1,502	8,426	<0,001	Strong emotional attraction
6	Just learning about the product is a pleasure	3,52	1,547	5,063	<0,001	A moderate but authentic cognitive satisfaction

The overall scales results demonstrate strong statistical results for personal attachment & self-image but moderate impact from a social view, thus the out of stock is perceived personally as it conveys & reassures the faith of the consumer toward the brand & reinforces his perception by the behaviors of others that make the brand out of stock by purchasing the product [8].

VI. CONCLUSION

The research reveals a real game change, from the intuitive perception of the out of stock usually seen as negative & decreasing the brand loyalty to scarcity used as a marketing strategy to maximize sales & attractiveness of the product & thus lead to brand loyalty.

How can two same concepts from hermeneutics being perceived as so divergent! This questioning was very strange, from one hand the out of stock is constituting a threat & the scarcity an opportunity of brand attraction & loyalty?

This is why through a deep analysis we found that the concept of out of stock is now emerging to new definition, when the signify change its connotation from negative to positive depending on several aspects, the scarcity marketing is nowadays a source of different ethical controversial when this technique is used in its own without a real situational events ! this is typically a source of confusion that why marketers are using the scarcity without any real scarcity ?

In this way, we advocate the fact that the out of stock in a normal way is acceptable, because it reflects the natural event of having an out-of-stock situation & not acting in superficial way in communicating the out-of-stock situation.

Thus, the out of stock is normal & natural & it reinforces the idea of having extra demand on the market, proven quality or acting in a sustainable way to reduce the CO2 emissions & protect the environment.

The consumers, being more agile & aware of the marketers' techniques, provide sufficient elements for the consumer that this is only a way to attract their perception & redirect the way of consumption! This provocation of the cognitive biases reduces the agency of the consumers that develop a psychological reactance in the opposite way, instead of activating the reactance in their advantage to attract by the fear of missing out, the reactance operates in the opposite direction when the consumers are aware of this manipulation & will be more resistance to these mechanisms. In the other way the out of stock is nuanced by space semiotics & no influencing message is there to accelerate purchase.

From this perspective, the out of stock is becoming more natural, no manipulation occurs & it's the own perception of the consumer that identifies the real scarcity of a product.

To conclude, we can say that the scarcity is nowadays perceived as a manipulation method used by the marketing professionals to attract consumers by claiming the scarcity of the product, in the opposite the out of stock becoming more naturel will create the real meaning of the perceived quality! the out of stock also reinforces the brand loyalty by reaffirming the choice of the consumer toward time brand.

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