RESEARCH ON THE INFLUENCE OF EXPERIENCE MARKETING ON MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF AUTOMOBILE 4S STORES: A CASE STUDY OF FAW-VOLKSWAGEN

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the relationship between experiential marketing and marketing performance through automobile 4S stores. On the basis of reviewing the existing research, the definition of experiential marketing, marketing performance and customer relationship management is determined, and the appropriate scale is selected and the questionnaire is designed. The overall survey was conducted in 4S stores of FAW-Volkswagen in Shanghai. Through sampling survey, 16 stores were selected, each store sent at least 25 questionnaires, and a total of 404 sample data were collected. After sorting out the data, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire were tested, and further descriptive statistical analysis, factor analysis and structural equation model test were carried out to verify the proposed research hypothesis and analyze the relationship between experiential marketing, customer relationship management and marketing performance. The results show that experiential marketing positively affects marketing performance, customer relationship management positively affects marketing performance, and experiential marketing positively affects customer relationship management. Through this study, we can empirically test the impact of experiential marketing strategy on customer relationship management and marketing performance, and also put forward suggestions on the experiential marketing strategy of FAW-Volkswagen automobile 4S stores and optimize the experiential marketing effect of automobile 4S stores combined with the research conclusions.

Keywords: Experience Marketing, Customer Relationship Management, Marketing Performance, Impact Study

Introduction

Automobile industry is an important part of China's economic industry, and automobile consumption occupies a large share in social retail consumption. In the past five years, affected by a variety of factors, China's auto sales have continued to decline and have recovered slightly. According to the data released by the China Automobile Dealers Association, new car sales in China in 2019 were 25.769 million, down 8.2% year-on-year; China's new car sales in 2020 will reach 25.311,000 units,

down 1.9% year-on-year. In 2021, China's automobile production and sales will complete 26.082 million and 26.275 million, respectively, with year-on-year increases of 3.4% and 3.8%, ending the downward trend. In 2022, China's automobile production and sales will be 27.021 million and 26.864 million, respectively, up 3.4% and 2.1% year-on-year. On the whole, China's automobile market is vast, and the frequency of use of automobiles as transportation tools in public life is increasing, and correspondingly, the competition in the field of automobile sales is also increasing.

In the early 1970s, China's automobile industry developed strongly, with a wide variety of automobile brands, until the early 21st century, China's total automobile production and sales far exceeded other countries and once became the world's largest production and sales country. With the entry of foreign brands, China's automobile production and sales began to increase sharply, and major brand automobile 4S stores mushroomed, and the competition in China's automobile market became fiercer. Since Shanghai GM and Guangzhou Honda took the lead in introducing the "4S shop" model in 1998, their rich profit returns have attracted various brand car manufacturers in China to follow suit, and the "4S" model has become a popular car sales model in the market for a time.

As early as the beginning of the 21st century, experience economy has quietly come to people's economic life, coupled with the rapid development of social economy, new marketing models are also stimulating people's consumption patterns, as Schmidt predicted in his book Experiential marketing, "experience marketing model is bound to break the traditional marketing model and replace." Faced with the continuous improvement of consumer demand, a new marketing model is urgently needed to change the status quo. At this time, the focus of consumer attention has shifted and even the form of consumption has undergone great changes. They no longer pay attention to the advantages of the appearance, price, function or service of the product, but pay more attention to the experience brought by the product and service and can participate in the whole process of experience. Experience marketing is obviously different from the traditional marketing model. It can build a bridge between 4S stores and consumers, and between consumers and consumers, so that consumers can truly feel the performance of products in an all-round way and strengthen the impression of potential consumers on products and brands through intuitive product display, and enhance consumer trust.

In this context, what role does the research experience marketing strategy play in the operation of 4S stores? How much does it matter? It is a practical problem worth paying attention to, which has guiding significance for exerting the effect of experience marketing and choosing the appropriate marketing strategy. Based on this, this study will design a questionnaire survey, take FAW-Volkswagen 4S stores as an example, and obtain data through the questionnaire survey to empirically study the extent to which the experiential marketing strategy adopted by automobile 4S stores has an impact on marketing performance.

Research Problem Statement:

The influence of experience marketing on the marketing performance of automobile 4S stores remains inadequately understood, particularly within the context of FAW-Volkswagen. Despite the growing emphasis on customer experience in marketing strategies, the specific impacts and effective implementation strategies of experiential marketing in enhancing sales, customer loyalty, and brand perception at FAW-Volkswagen's 4S stores require detailed investigation and empirical validation. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the key dimensions of experience marketing that contribute to marketing effectiveness in the automotive retail sector, focusing on FAW-Volkswagen as a case study.

A research question is posed:

How does experiential marketing influence customer acquisition and retention at FAW-Volkswagen's 4S stores?

What are the key elements of experiential marketing that contribute to enhancing brand perception among customers of FAW-Volkswagen?

How does experiential marketing impact sales performance and profitability at FAW-Volkswagen's 4S stores?

What are the challenges and barriers faced by FAW-Volkswagen in implementing effective experiential marketing strategies at its 4S stores?

How do customer perceptions and experiences of experiential marketing initiatives at FAW-Volkswagen's 4S stores influence their loyalty and advocacy behaviors?

Research Objective (s)

Objective 1: To evaluate the respondents' overall cognition of experience marketing, marketing performance and customer relationship management. The respondents filled in the marketing questionnaire about the relationship between 4S store experience marketing and marketing performance. Likert scale was used in the questionnaire, which had five options: very not obvious, not obvious, average, obvious and very obvious. If there are too many "general" choices, it means that the respondents have unclear cognition of each concept, which will affect the reliability and validity analysis of the scale. According to the test analysis of the collected data, the cognitive status of the respondents on the four variables can be judged.

Objective 2: To evaluate the sensitivity of individual trait variables of respondents to experience marketing, marketing performance and customer relationship management. Through variance analysis of control variables, independent sample T test and one-way variance analysis were conducted on personal trait variables such as gender, age, education, working years and position level, so as to identify the sensitivity of each control variable to four dimensions of experience marketing, marketing performance and customer relationship management.

Objective 3: To examine the correlation between experience marketing, customer relationship

management and marketing performance. Through correlation analysis, the correlation between the three variables and the degree of correlation were tested. On this basis, the regression analysis was used to carry out in-depth discussion and clarify the mechanism of action between variables.

Objective 4: To examine the mediating effect of customer relationship management. Select an appropriate method to test the mediating effect of customer relationship management on experience marketing and marketing performance.

Literature Review

The influence of experience marketing strategy on marketing performance

As investors pay more attention to the rate of return on capital investment and industry competition intensifies, all the capital invested by enterprises has become the focus of attention in the operation process of enterprises. Therefore, it is inevitable for enterprises to evaluate their marketing performance in the operation and development process.

In the analysis of enterprise marketing strategy and performance, Wang and Liu (2012) drew a conclusion from the aspects of external environment, internal resources, marketing strategy, customer evaluation and marketing performance: the adoption of product strategy, environment strategy and service strategy has the most obvious and effective influence on enterprise marketing performance. Xue (2013) believed that only satisfying customers' demand for experience is the most effective measure to improve enterprise marketing performance. In the marketing process, enterprises only take experience as the center, and constantly provide customers with almost perfect consumption experience process as the goal to obtain better evaluation and feedback from consumers, so that consumers' experience feelings become the key to affect the marketing transaction. The research shows that experience marketing strategy has a significant positive impact on marketing performance. Taking IKEA as a sample, Geng and Wang (2014) built an experience marketing performance evaluation system from the four aspects of sensory, emotional, thinking and action in the strategy module of experience marketing. Practice proved that a sound experience marketing strategy could well enhance the marketing competitiveness of enterprises and continuously improve their marketing performance. Song and Liu (2018) studied the comprehensive effect evaluation system of building network experience and found that the effective implementation of experience marketing strategy can significantly transform brand marketing performance and suggested that enterprises increase the intensity and optimization strategy of network experience marketing.

The influence of experience marketing strategy on customer relationship management

The emergence and development of experience marketing is a new marketing-oriented model that is redefined and implemented by fully mobilizing consumers' senses, emotions, thinking, actions and relevance on the basis of breaking the traditional marketing. In its process, it advocates the

participation of consumers, two-way interaction between enterprises and consumers, and meets the needs of consumers. Finally get a complete and pleasant experience feeling process. The purpose of customer experience and participation is to attract consumers through individuation and differentiation. Lasalle and Britton (2003) pointed out that customer experience is a comprehensive evaluation of the merchant and its products, services and personnel when the customer contacts with the merchant, and such evaluation will directly determine whether the customer will continue to contact with the merchant. IBM believes that enterprises should improve product performance, strengthen customer service, and establish a long-term, stable and trusting relationship with consumers, so as to consolidate old customers and attract new customers. Experience marketing has always focused on the initiative of consumers and the interaction between enterprises and consumers, so as to maintain the two-way communication with consumers, improve consumers' experience and feelings, and better realize the transfer value of experience marketing. In addition to emphasizing the construction and implementation of experience, experience marketing strategy also lays great emphasis on the construction and maintenance of the relationship between enterprises and customers. Osterle and Muther (2007) believe that customer relationship management means that enterprises establish a good relationship with consumers through communication and regulation, pay attention to communication and contact with consumers, pay attention to the care of consumers, and effectively use the adjustment of marketing methods and means to improve corporate earnings. Huang (2008) built an e-commerce model, collected three-stage survey data, and verified it with longitudinal research methods. He believed that B&B could strengthen the relationship with customers through festival activities, resource advantages and niche product development, thus having a positive impact on marketing performance. To sum up, CRM has a direct and very positive impact on the marketing performance of enterprises in both financial and non-financial aspects.

The influence of customer relationship management on marketing performance

CRM is an activity in which enterprises integrate and use sales, marketing and customer service strategies to create consistency within the enterprise. On this basis, enterprises integrate processes and technologies and explore the real needs of customers. On the other hand, enterprises should continue to improve products and services in order to maintain customer relations and improve customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, the main objectives of CRM include increasing revenue, creating customer value, and establishing customer loyalty and satisfaction. If an enterprise engages in customer relationship marketing, it will lead to increased customer loyalty, increased use of branded products, and establishment of customer database to support marketing activities, increased market share, increased cross-selling opportunities, increased direct contact with consumers, and balanced power of channel members.

A high degree of implementation of the CRM process means that companies are able to tailor

their interactions to the customer's life cycle. It also means that they may be able to actively influence these phases (for example, by maturing or prolonging the relationship; Zeithamal, Rust, Lenon, 2001). The goal is to align the resources spent on customers with the revenue or profits derived from those customers (Mulhern, 1999). Firms will then be able to spend a disproportionate amount of their resources on customers who are highly profitable or deserving of such resources because of their "high potential". Furthermore, the company would reduce its investment in low - or no-profit customers, who might want to cut ties or re-establish a relationship with a focal firm.

The relationship with the customer is a valuable asset of the enterprise, not the customer itself. Based on the relationship between the firm and the customer, the future cash flow can be evaluated and the value of this relationship can be measured. Boulding (2005) points out that CRM is a business model through which an enterprise can understand and influence Customer behavior through full interaction with customers, and then enhance Customer Acquisition, Customer Retention, loyalty and interest rate. It can be seen from the above that the application of CRM to establish a long-term relationship with customers can cultivate customer loyalty, improve customer satisfaction, increase revenue and further improve enterprise performance.

Methodology

At present, Volkswagen has a total of 20,248 employees, more than 400 upstream suppliers and more than 600 downstream dealers, involving a total of 300,000 people. This paper mainly studies the operators of 4S stores, that is, the employees of FAW-Volkswagen dealers. In general, there is no clear number in this study. This paper selects Shanghai as the sampling area and investigates 23 FAW-Volkswagen 4S stores in 16 districts of Shanghai, and the number of people in each store is 50-100.

Considering the representativeness of the survey data and the possible communication difficulties of some stores, n is 16 in this paper, 23 visa numbers are mixed evenly and randomly selected. In the extraction process, if there are areas with the same visa numbers as the two already selected, they will be discarded and returned to be selected again. A maximum of two 4S stores in each area will be investigated. Under the premise of investigating each district as far as possible, managers and employees of some FAW-Volkswagen 4S stores were selected to issue questionnaires for investigation. The results of random sampling are shown in Table 3-6. According to the preliminary survey results, the number of employees in each 4S store ranges from 50 to 100. In this paper, the minimum number of employees surveyed in each 4S store is 25, the sample size is expected to be more than 400, and the data obtained after screening is about 400.

In order to ensure the quality and rationality of the designed questionnaire, it is necessary to conduct a pre-survey and conduct a small-scale test on the preliminary draft of the questionnaire. Through the analysis of the pre-survey results, effective information can be provided for the

modification of the item and the determination of the formal questionnaire. The pre-survey was distributed online and offline, first to the relevant operators of FAW-Volkswagen 4S stores who knew each other. A total of 16 copies were pre-investigated, and 13 copies were effectively recovered, with an effective rate of about 81.25%.

After the questionnaire was collected, according to the respondents' feedback when they completed the questionnaire, the questions and classification Settings of the questionnaire were understood, especially the expressions of professional terms in the questionnaire and the repetition of question Settings, etc. Under the suggestions of classmates and tutors and combined with the pre-investigation, the questionnaire was deleted and adjusted again to form the final questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of four parts: basic information, experience marketing strategy, customer relationship management and marketing performance.

The questionnaire will be distributed from October 2022 to November 2022. Since the survey objects in this paper are quite clear, the data collection method is mainly offline. According to the results of random sampling, we will visit selected 4S stores of Shanghai FAW-Volkswagen, communicate with the managers, obtain cooperation, and distribute questionnaires. Finally, there were 417 valid questionnaires, 13 invalid questionnaires were excluded, and 404 valid questionnaires were obtained, with an effective rate of 96.88%.

Results

Correlation analysis reflects the degree of correlation between variables. In this study, Pearson correlation analysis was used to analyze the correlation between 5 dimensions of experience marketing and 3 dimensions of customer relationship management and marketing performance.

As can be seen from the table, the correlation coefficients between sensory strategy, emotional strategy, thinking strategy, action strategy and association strategy and marketing performance in experience marketing are 0.342, 0.432, 0.358, 0.337 and 0.412 respectively, indicating that the independent variable and dependent variable in this study are significantly correlated at the level of 0.01.

The sensory strategy, emotion strategy, thinking strategy, action strategy and association strategy in experience marketing are significantly correlated with the passive relationship, responsible relationship and active relationship of customer relationship management at the level of 0.01.

The correlation coefficients of passive relationship, responsible relationship, active relationship and marketing performance in customer relationship management are 0.356, 0.421 and 0.456, respectively, indicating that the independent variable and dependent variable in this study are significantly correlated at the level of 0.01.

Structural equation model testing consists of two stages, the first stage is the evaluation of mode

fit, and the second stage is the path analysis and hypothesis testing. Therefore, we first used AMOS24.0 statistical analysis software to analyze the fit of structural equation model, and used the maximum estimation method to calculate the fitting index value and the path coefficient estimate of the model. The fitting index values of the path structure equation model.

It can be seen from the table that in the fitting index value of the structural equation model, the ratio of the chi-square of the theoretical model to the degree of freedom ($\chi2$/df) is 1.33, which is less than the suggested value 3. The goodness-of-fit index GFI was 0.905, the adjusted goodness-of-fit index AGFI was 0.912, the benchmark fitting index NFI was 0.982, the comparative fitting index CFI was 0.974, and the approximate root-mean-square error RMSEA was 0.036. Although the fitting index of each index did not achieve the best fitting, however, they are basically close to the recommended values and within the acceptable range. It can be seen that the theoretical model fits well with the sample data, and the assumed theoretical model is acceptable.

In this study, AMOS 24.0 was used to test the hypothesis of the questionnaire data, and the relationship between various dimensions of experience marketing, customer relationship management and marketing performance was verified.

According to P<0.001 (***), the impact is very significant; P<0.01 (**), the impact is significant; P<0.05 (*), the impact is generally significant; P≥0.05, the impact is not significant. It can be concluded from the table that experience marketing has a very significant impact on marketing performance. The impact of experience marketing on customer relationship management is very significant; Customer relationship management has a significant impact on marketing performance. The influence of experience marketing strategies on experience marketing is very significant; each type of customer relationship management has a significant impact on customer relationship management. The hypothesis of this study is supported by data.

By using AMOS 24.0 software to conduct empirical research on the research hypothesis proposed in this study, the verification results of the relationship between experience marketing, customer relationship management and marketing performance are summarized.

Discussion

In recent years, experiential marketing has emerged as a pivotal strategy in the automotive retail industry, particularly within automobile 4S stores. This study focuses on the influence of experiential marketing on the marketing performance of FAW-Volkswagen 4S stores. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of how experiential marketing strategies can enhance customer engagement, satisfaction, and overall business performance.

Experiential marketing is fundamentally designed to create memorable and engaging experiences for customers. According to Lemon and Verhoef (2016), customer engagement is

significantly influenced by the quality of customer experiences. The interactive and immersive nature of experiential marketing fosters deeper customer connections, which can translate into increased brand loyalty and advocacy. For FAW-Volkswagen 4S stores, implementing experiential marketing strategies such as test drive events, virtual reality showrooms, and personalized customer interactions has shown to enhance customer engagement levels.

Brand perception is a critical determinant of consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. Research by Schmitt (2019) indicates that experiential marketing can significantly enhance brand perception by creating positive and memorable brand experiences. In the context of FAW-Volkswagen, experiential marketing initiatives have been successful in differentiating the brand from competitors. These initiatives not only highlight the unique features of Volkswagen vehicles but also reinforce the brand's commitment to providing superior customer experiences.

The ultimate goal of any marketing strategy is to drive sales and profitability. Recent studies, such as those by Homburg, Jozić, and Kuehnl (2017), suggest that experiential marketing can lead to substantial improvements in sales performance. By engaging customers in meaningful experiences, FAW-Volkswagen 4S stores can effectively influence purchasing decisions and boost sales. Furthermore, the increased customer satisfaction and loyalty resulting from these experiences contribute to repeat business and long-term profitability.

Despite its benefits, implementing experiential marketing strategies is not without challenges. One significant barrier is the high cost associated with creating and maintaining immersive experiences. As highlighted by Tynan, McKechnie, and Hartley (2018), resource allocation and cost management are critical concerns for businesses adopting experiential marketing. Additionally, ensuring consistent quality across different 4S stores can be challenging, particularly in maintaining the high standards required for effective experiential marketing.

Customer perceptions of experiential marketing initiatives play a crucial role in determining their effectiveness. According to research by Grewal, Roggeveen, Sisodia, and Nordfält (2017), positive customer perceptions of marketing experiences are directly linked to increased customer loyalty. FAW-Volkswagen 4S stores have observed that customers who participate in experiential marketing events are more likely to develop a strong emotional connection with the brand. This emotional connection fosters loyalty and encourages word-of-mouth referrals, further enhancing the brand's market position.

The integration of technology in experiential marketing has revolutionized the way brands interact with customers. Virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and artificial intelligence (AI) are increasingly being used to create immersive and personalized experiences. Research by Pantano and Timmermans (2018) demonstrates that these technologies can significantly enhance the effectiveness of experiential marketing by providing customers with unique and engaging experiences. FAW-Volkswagen has leveraged these technologies to offer virtual test drives and interactive product

demonstrations, thereby enhancing customer engagement and satisfaction.

Measuring the effectiveness of experiential marketing initiatives is essential to justify the investment and refine strategies. As discussed by Lemon and Verhoef (2016), key performance indicators (KPIs) such as customer satisfaction scores, net promoter scores (NPS), and sales data are crucial in evaluating the success of experiential marketing campaigns. FAW-Volkswagen 4S stores have implemented various metrics to track the impact of their experiential marketing efforts, ensuring continuous improvement and alignment with business objectives.

The future of experiential marketing in the automotive industry looks promising, with advancements in technology and changing consumer preferences driving innovation. As suggested by Schmitt (2019), future experiential marketing strategies will likely focus on creating hyper-personalized experiences that cater to individual customer needs and preferences. For FAW-Volkswagen, this could involve leveraging data analytics to tailor marketing experiences and further enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty.

In conclusion, the influence of experiential marketing on the marketing performance of FAW-Volkswagen 4S stores is substantial. By creating memorable and engaging experiences, FAW-Volkswagen can enhance customer engagement, improve brand perception, drive sales performance, and foster customer loyalty. However, the challenges associated with implementing experiential marketing, such as high costs and maintaining consistency, must be addressed to fully realize its potential. As technology continues to evolve, the opportunities for innovative and effective experiential marketing strategies will expand, offering significant benefits for the automotive retail industry.

Conclusions

The implementation of experience marketing strategies in automobile 4S stores has a positive impact on marketing performance According to the research results of this paper, the five dimensions of experience marketing strategy, namely sensory strategy, emotional strategy, thinking strategy, action strategy and association strategy, all have a significant impact on the marketing performance of auto 4S stores. According to the five dimensions of the research hypothesis, it is found that in this era of consumer demand-oriented experience economy, auto 4S stores combine the characteristics of their own products to carry out "packaging" combination, and at the same time, re-analysis and integration of experience marketing strategies can more effectively impress the inner needs of consumers and bring more benefits to auto 4S stores.

The implementation of experience marketing strategies in automobile 4S stores has a positive impact on customer relationship management. From the perspective of the five dimensions of experience marketing strategy, no matter it is the experience of product function, the perceptual experience of service, or the emotional experience of psychological respect, as long as the 4S store can

provide consumers with more rich experience, it can better improve the interaction of consumers and ensure the establishment of good communication and trust between consumers and 4S stores. Finally, the experience resonates with the personal feelings, and brings good results for the positive communication and customer relationship management of automobile 4S stores.

In order to prove that the research conclusions of this study have good generalization and have reference significance for the development of automobile 4S stores, cross-region and cross-sample measurement should be carried out. Automobile 4S stores in each region have their own characteristics and product standards. The operators of automobile 4S stores should carry out marketing integration based on the actual situation of local culture, resources, customer groups, etc. In the future research, cross-regional inspection research on automobile 4S stores of different grades, scales and operation modes can be considered.

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