

The Value-added Strategy of Emotional Narrative in the Marketing of Second-Hand Products

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Abstract: Emotional narrative, as a core tool connecting consumers' emotional needs with the value of goods, is reshaping the competitive logic of the second-hand product market. This article, from the perspectives of cognitive psychology and consumer behavior, systematically explores the value generation mechanism of emotional narrative in the marketing of second-hand products. Research indicates that emotional narrative effectively breaks through the cognitive barrier of the "defective feeling" of second-hand products by reconstructing the perception of product value, establishing emotional identification bonds, and activating social identification drivers, achieving a leap from functional value to emotional value. Under the dual trends of digitalization and sustainable development, emotional narrative has become a key strategy for increasing the value of the second-hand product market. Its potential for value creation is reflected in enhancing premium pricing power, strengthening user stickiness, and building a sustainable consumption ecosystem. The value-added strategy framework proposed in this article provides theoretical guidance and practical paths for second-hand product operators.

Keywords: Emotional Narrative; Second-Hand Product Marketing; Value-added; Emotional Identification; Social Identity

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Significance

The global second-hand product market is undergoing structural transformation. The cognitive barrier of the "defective feeling" of second-hand products has led to their payment premium being significantly lower than that of new products [1]. Traditional marketing strategies focus on price advantages and functional restoration, making it difficult to

break through consumers' negative associations with usage traces [2]. Against this backdrop, emotional narrative, by constructing a network of connections between product history and emotional memory, has become the core path to break through the value dilemma.

Emotional narrative not only enhances the premium pricing power of products but also builds a consumption ecosystem with stronger user stickiness through the establishment of emotional identification. Its potential for value creation is reflected in three aspects: First, it breaks through the cognitive limitations of physical wear and tear, transforming scratches into "time marks"; Second, meet consumers' emotional needs for sustainable consumption and form a differentiated competitive advantage; Third, build long-term consumer relationships through community-based operations to reduce customer acquisition costs [3]. This study aims to systematically analyze the value generation mechanism of emotional narratives and provide a strategic framework for the marketing of second-hand products.

1.2 Literature Review

Existing research explores the mechanism of emotional narrative from three dimensions. Cognitive psychology holds that emotional narrative can activate the limbic system of the brain [4], enabling consumers to generate value recognition before rational assessment. In the field of consumer behavior, Hermann [5] proposed the "emotional compensation effect", indicating that when the emotional value carried by a product exceeds its physical defects, consumers' willingness to pay significantly increases. In the field of marketing, Kietzmann [6] through a case study of the Xianyu platform, revealed the driving role of emotional empowerment in the construction of the user ecosystem. His "Buyer's Story" column increased the platform's transaction conversion rate by 40%.

Foreign research focuses on the neural

mechanisms and behavioral influences of emotional narrative. The page dwell time for second-hand goods with emotional stories has been extended by 2 times [7], and the purchase decision-making cycle has been shortened by 30%. Domestic research pays more attention to practical applications. For instance, Li Xiang et al. [8] proposed a three-dimensional model of "history - scene - community" for emotional narrative of second-hand products and verified its effectiveness on the Xianyu platform. However, existing research lacks systematic integration of value-added paths and has not fully explored strategic innovation under the trends of digitalization and sustainable development.

2. The Value Generation Mechanism of Emotional Narrative

2.1 Cognitive Reconstruction: Breaking Through the Cognitive Barrier of "Imperfection"

The core pain point of second-hand products lies in consumers' negative association with "traces of use". Emotional narrative transforms physical wear and tear into a testament to emotional accumulation by constructing the story-telling quality of product history. For instance, a second-hand camera redefined lens scratches as "time marks" by presenting family images and travel records taken by its original owner, which increased the product's premium rate by 30%. This cognitive reconstruction is based on the "emotional compensation effect" in psychology - when consumers perceive that the emotional value carried by a product exceeds its physical defects, they will actively adjust their value assessment standards.

Neuroscience research shows that emotional narrative can activate the emotional processing area of the limbic system in the brain, enabling consumers to develop a sense of value recognition before rational assessment. In the second-hand furniture market, the transaction prices of solid wood tables and chairs marked as "passed down for three generations" are 25% higher than those of similar products, confirming the weakening effect of emotional narrative on price sensitivity.

2.2 Emotional Identification: Building a Triangular Relationship among Users, Products and Brands

The core of emotional narrative lies in establishing a deep emotional connection between "user - product - brand". By exploring the emotional memory points in the product usage scenarios, such as the growth stories of the original owners of children's toys and the annotation traces in books, consumers can gain a sense of satisfaction from "emotional inheritance" during the purchasing process. This sense of satisfaction transcends functional requirements and forms a unique consumption experience.

Brand owners elevate individual emotional stories to brand values through standardized narrative templates. A certain second-hand platform has launched a "Time Capsule" program, encouraging sellers to write product usage stories. After screening by the platform, these stories will be displayed simultaneously with the products. Data shows that the conversion rate of products with emotional stories has increased by 40%, and the repurchase rate of users has risen by 18%. This mechanism transforms individual emotions into brand assets, forming a differentiated competitive advantage.

2.3 Social Identity: Activating the Driving Force of Group Belonging

In the era of social media, emotional narratives build consumer communities based on emotional identification by stimulating users' sharing behavior. After purchasing second-hand products, consumers often share the product stories on social media platforms, forming a closed loop of "emotional consumption - social display - group identity". Data from a certain second-hand clothing platform shows that the dissemination efficiency of goods with story tags on social media is three times that of ordinary goods, and the cost of acquiring new users is reduced by 22% [9].

This social identity-driven mechanism has upgraded the consumption of second-hand products from an individual behavior to a group cultural practice. Young consumers express their recognition of sustainable lifestyles and gain a sense of community belonging by purchasing second-hand goods that carry specific emotions. The brand owner further strengthens this group identity and forms a self-growing marketing ecosystem by planning interactive activities such as "Story Relay" and "Memory Inheritance".

3. Value-Added Strategies for Emotional

Narratives

3.1 Narrative Dimension Expansion: From a Single Story to a Multi-Dimensional Emotional Network

The traditional narrative of second-hand products focuses on the product history, while the modern emotional narrative needs to build a multi-dimensional connection of "product - user - scene - society". For instance, second-hand electronic products can be extended to the career development stories of their original owners, and second-hand books can be associated with the ideological growth trajectories of readers. This multi-dimensional narrative makes the product a medium connecting individual memory with social culture, significantly enhancing value perception.

A certain second-hand musical instrument platform has launched a "Music Life" program, which requires sellers to provide background information such as their learning journey and performance experience. The platform matches users with similar experiences through algorithms to form communities based on musical emotions. This plan has increased the transaction rate of high-end second-hand Musical Instruments by 35% and tripled the average annual consumption of users.

3.2 Media Form Innovation: From Textual Description to Immersive Experience

Digital technology provides more diverse expression carriers for emotional narratives. AR technology can restore the usage scenarios of products, VR technology can simulate the living space of the original owner, and short video platforms support the presentation of dynamic stories. A certain second-hand home furnishing brand has utilized 3D modeling technology, allowing users to scan with their mobile phones to view the placement effect of furniture in the original owner's home. Combined with the original owner's decoration diary, this has increased the product's premium rate by 28%.

Voice narrative has become an emerging trend. By recording audio content such as the original owner's usage experiences and maintenance suggestions, consumers can achieve a more genuine emotional connection. Data shows that the number of inquiries about second-hand goods with voice stories has increased by 45%, and the decision-making cycle has shortened by 30%.

3.3 Deepening User Participation: From Passive Acceptance to Co-Creation of Narratives

Modern consumers are eager to gain the right to express themselves during the consumption process. Second-hand platforms encourage buyers to add product stories through the UGC (User Generated Content) model, forming a two-way narrative of "seller - buyer". The "Growth Imprint" feature launched by a certain second-hand mother and baby platform allows buyers to upload photos and videos of their children using second-hand toys, and interact with the parenting stories shared by the sellers. This co-creation model has doubled the time spent on product pages and increased user activity by 60%.

Brand owners can also deepen user participation through offline activities. For instance, a "Second-hand Story Exhibition" can be held, inviting both sellers and buyers to jointly decorate the exhibition area. Through physical displays and on-site storytelling, an immersive emotional experience can be created. Such activities increase brand favorability by 50% and triple social media exposure.

3.4 Ethical Framework Construction: From Business Narrative to Value Resonance

The sustainable development of emotional narratives needs to be based on an ethical framework. The narrative of second-hand products should avoid overly embellishing the traces of use and should truthfully present the condition and history of the products. The "Transparent Car History" feature launched by a certain second-hand car platform records the entire life cycle information of vehicles, including maintenance and accidents, through blockchain technology. Combined with the original owner's car usage stories, it has increased consumer trust by 70% and reduced the complaint rate by 40%.

Brand owners need to integrate emotional narrative with the concept of sustainable development. Emphasize the contribution of second-hand consumption to reducing resource waste and lowering carbon emissions, enabling consumers to gain a sense of moral superiority beyond emotional satisfaction. A certain second-hand fashion brand has achieved a resonance between environmental protection concepts and emotional values by calculating the

environmental benefits of each item and matching them with the original owner's dressing stories. As a result, the proportion of young users has increased to 65%.

4. Challenges and Future Trends

4.1 Difficulties in Authenticity Verification

The key cornerstone for emotional narratives to play a value-added role lies in their authenticity. Consumers are willing to pay a premium for second-hand products with emotional stories because they believe these stories are real and closely related to the products. However, in the current second-hand product trading market, some sellers may exaggerate or even fabricate the stories of their products for the purpose of enhancing their appeal and selling prices. Once such dishonest behavior is detected by consumers, it will not only undermine the sales of individual products, but also cause a serious impact on the trust system of the entire second-hand product market, making consumers doubt emotional narratives and thereby reducing their willingness to purchase.

The emergence of blockchain technology provides a new approach to solving the problem of authenticity verification in emotional narratives. Blockchain has the characteristics of being immutable and traceable. It can record relevant information about product stories, such as the source of the story, time nodes, and related evidence, on the blockchain, forming an open, transparent, and unalterable traceability chain. Consumers can easily obtain the full process information of the product story by scanning the QR code on the product or other means, thereby verifying its authenticity. However, the application of blockchain technology still faces many challenges at present. On the one hand, the implementation of blockchain technology requires a relatively high investment in aspects such as technology research and development and system maintenance, which may be difficult for some smaller second-hand product operators to bear. On the other hand, some consumers have a relatively low level of understanding and acceptance of blockchain technology, and they are not familiar with its working principle and advantages. As a result, even if there is blockchain traceability information, it is difficult to gain their full trust. Therefore, in the future, it is necessary to establish an industry-level story authenticity certification system. Led by industry

associations or authoritative institutions, unified standards and norms should be formulated to certify and supervise the authenticity of emotional narratives in second-hand products. While encouraging narrative innovation, the principle of integrity should be adhered to to maintain the healthy development of the market.

4.2 Cultural Difference Adaptation

Against the backdrop of the accelerating process of globalization, the second-hand product market has gradually demonstrated the characteristics of being transnational and cross-cultural. Due to differences in cultural background, values, consumption habits and other aspects, consumers in different countries and regions have varying degrees of acceptance and preferences for emotional narratives of second-hand products. For instance, in Western markets, an individualistic culture prevails, and consumers are more inclined to hear narratives related to personal experiences and achievements, such as how a second-hand item accompanied its owner on an unforgettable adventure or helped them realize their personal dreams. In the Asian market, collective memory and family values are more prominent. Consumers are often more interested in narratives that can evoke collective emotions and reflect family inheritance, such as a second-hand piece of furniture carrying the memories of several generations of a family.

When brand owners carry out global marketing of second-hand products, they must fully consider these cultural differences. By forming localized teams, they can deeply understand the cultural characteristics and consumer demands of the target market and make targeted adjustments to the emotional narrative. Avoid conflicts between narrative content and the values of local consumers due to cultural misinterpretation, which could lead to the loss of product value. For instance, when an international second-hand luxury brand enters the Asian market, if it still follows the narrative approach of emphasizing personal achievements in Western markets, it may fail to resonate with Asian consumers. By having the localization team explore the family stories, cultural heritages and other elements behind the products and integrate them into the narrative, it can better meet the emotional needs of Asian consumers and enhance the market competitiveness of the products.

4.3 Technology-Driven Narrative Upgrade

With the continuous development of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and the metaverse, emotional narratives will also embrace new opportunities for upgrading. AI technology possesses powerful data analysis capabilities. By conducting in-depth analysis of users' emotional data, it can understand their interest preferences, emotional needs, and consumption habits, thereby generating customized narrative content. For instance, when users browse second-hand books, AI can generate personalized stories related to the books based on their historical reading records and emotional feedback, such as the original owner's reading insights and the significance of the books in specific contexts, to enhance the emotional connection between users and the products.

Metaverse technology has created a brand-new virtual space for emotional narrative. In the metaverse, consumers can experience the historical scenes and emotional memories carried by products as if they were there. For instance, when it comes to a second-hand antique, consumers can enter a simulated historical scene through virtual reality devices, witness with their own eyes how the antique was used and preserved over the past years, interact virtually with the original owner, and gain a deeper understanding of the story behind the product. This immersive experience will further blur the boundaries between material consumption and emotional consumption, enabling consumers to purchase second-hand products not only to obtain the use value of the items but also to experience the emotional value they contain, thus bringing brand-new development opportunities to the second-hand product market.

6. Conclusion

Emotional narrative has achieved a value leap from functional premium to emotional premium and from transactional relationship to ecological relationship by reconstructing the value cognition framework of second-hand products. Its potential for value-added is not only reflected in short-term sales growth, but also in the establishment of a sustainable consumer culture ecosystem. In the future, with technological iteration and the upgrading of consumption

concepts, emotional narrative will become a core competitive element in the second-hand product market. Business operators need to systematically plan from four aspects: narrative dimension, media form, user participation and ethical framework in order to occupy the high ground of value in the wave of circular economy.

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