

# From Psychological Placebo to Consumption Resonance: A Study on the Construction Path and Practical Strategies of 'Relaxation' in Brand Marketing

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**Abstract:** With the rapid development and progress of the society, people's pace of life has become faster and faster, and in this case, relaxation has become a popular word, and it is also one of the ideal living, learning and working attitude pursued by young people today. In this regard, many brands use marketing techniques to create a relaxed image for their products to arouse consumers' attention and interest. The purpose of this paper is to explore the construction path of relaxation in brand marketing, and to analyse the role of relaxation as a psychological placebo in brand marketing. Finally, this paper extracts the three major parts of the relaxation marketing process, perception shaping, experience deepening and emotional resonance. In addition, this paper also analyses the role of relaxation as a placebo effect in Goyard's brand marketing, as well as contrasts and distinguishes it from the placebo effect in medicine.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In today's Acceleration Society, the pace of people's lives is forced to accelerate due to the development of technological innovations as well as the acceleration of social change. This social phenomenon brings enormous time pressure and psychological problems such as anxiety and depression to people's lives (Hartmut, 2014). With the advent of the post-pandemic era, psychological needs have become more emphasized globally, which is mainly reflected in the increased need for security, heightened concern for mental health, and the pursuit of work-life balance. This has made 'relaxation', a state of life sought by many, an important psychological demand to combat anxiety, as well as a desired 'utopia' for people in high-pressure environments. In addition, this psychosocial change also brings new challenges and opportunities to the luxury industry, especially brands need to make adaptive changes and progress in product development and marketing strategies.

From an academic perspective, Rania B. Mostafa, Tamara Kasamani (2020) published an article stating that consumer emotional experience has a significant impact on the creation and maintenance of brand

loyalty. As well as reviewing the literature from the perspective of consumer psychology and brand emotional value, it can be found that a lot of literature analyses in depth how consumer psychology carries out its role in brand marketing, with some studies pointing out that consumers' word-of-mouth communication intentions towards a brand are related to whether or not they are emotionally connected to the brand (Xie & Peng, 2014). In addition the concept of empathy marketing has been widely explored. For example, some studies have shown the pillar role of empathy as a capacity to understand others in marketing, as well as the inadequacy of the current state of the art in the marketing industry in this regard by reintroducing an empathetic marketing approach called empathy-based marketing (Carsten, 2021). However, a search of the literature on empathy reveals a dearth of studies, and there are no studies that specifically address the role of empathy in brand marketing and analyse and synthesise it in the context of consumer psychology.

In medicine, the placebo effect usually refers to patients' beliefs and expectations that a treatment will actually improve their health, even if the treatment itself is ineffective. Most of the current research on

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the placebo effect in marketing activities focuses on activating consumers' expectations through marketing behaviours to influence the actual experience of the product (Fabrizio, & Alessandro, 2022). For example, Baba Shiv, Ziv Carmon and Dan Ariely (2005) published a paper on the effect of price on consumer expectations, perceived quality and liking. However, there is still limited discussion on how 'relaxation' is constructed and practiced as a psychological placebo in brand marketing. Current research lacks a systematic theoretical framework to analyse the operational structure of 'relaxation' marketing. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap and systematically explore how brands construct 'relaxation' in their marketing strategies and realise the transformation from psychological placebo to consumer empathy.

## 2 GOYARD BRAND MARKETING ABOUT RELAXATION

### 2.1 Brand Concept

The history of Goyard can be traced back to 1792, its predecessor is Pierre-François Martin founded the Maison Martin, the shop for providing high-quality packaging products recognized by the French aristocracy and favored, and won the 'official supplier' honors of the Dutchess of Berry, and the second owner Francois Goyard. The shop was recognised and loved by the French nobility for the high quality of its packaging products and was honoured as the 'official supplier' of the then Duchess of Berry, before the second owner, Francois Goyard, changed the name of the shop in 1852 to Maison Goyard and it has remained until now (Magda & Matvei, 2024). Goyard's philosophy is one of understatement and luxury, with an emphasis on craftsmanship and handmade perfection. Goyard's brand tone differs from that of other luxury brands in that it does not pursue overexposure and mass marketing strategies, but rather attracts high-end consumers through scarcity, secrecy and exclusivity. Specifically, this secrecy is reflected in the fact that Goyard hardly advertises, does not invite celebrities to collaborate in endorsements, and seldom accepts media interviews; uniqueness refers to Goyard's exclusive signature Y pattern and the characteristic of artisanal handmade production; and scarcity is reflected in the fact that Goyard's products are usually released in limited quantities and only sold in a small number of offline directly-managed shops. Goyard's

philosophy of understated luxury is unique in the global luxury market, which is why it is favoured by high-end consumers who seek exclusivity and exclusivity.

Goyard's brand philosophy is also reflected in its adherence to craftsmanship. The brand highlights the handmade nature of its products by telling the story of craftsmanship and demonstrating its opposition to the cookie-cutter assembly line. This insistence on high-end handmade craftsmanship not only gives the products a unique cultural value, but also allows Goyard to maintain a high-end brand image in the luxury market. In addition, Goyard provides artisan one-on-one service in after-sales service, which further strengthens consumers' brand loyalty.

### 2.2 Relaxation in Product Design

In product design, Goya pursues the concept of 'anti-fashion', which is mainly reflected in the brand's insistence on using its classic Y-shaped pattern--'Goyardine' as the main visual element of the bag body, which not only shows consumers the brand's exquisite hand-painted craftsmanship, but also serves as a visual symbol of the Goyard brand and a symbol of the brand's cultural history. Goyardine not only shows consumers the exquisite hand-painted craftsmanship of the brand, but also serves as a visual symbol of the Goyard brand as well as a symbol of the brand's cultural history. In addition, this act of defiance against fast fashion is also in line with the rebellious spirit of Gen Z, the main pursuer of relaxation.

Another important feature of Goya's bags in recent years has been their 'lightness'. Unlike many luxury brands that use heavy leather fabrics to create serious, formal bags, Goya has selected use light, waterproof coated materials with a slouchy fit to create a casual look. This design is in line with the modern consumer's need for comfort and practicality. So, Goyard's products are designed to meet the consumer's need for relaxation in the post-epidemic era.

Goyard's relaxation is not only reflected in the material and shape of its products, but also in the brand's understanding of consumers' lifestyles. Goyard's product design aims to provide consumers with a relaxed and casual lifestyle, so that they can show their spiritual abundance and self-compatibility through its

products, thus expressing their relaxed and easy-going attitude and way of life. Instead, they can express their relaxed and relaxed attitude and way of life through products that show their spiritual abundance and self-compassion, rather than through luxurious appearances that highlight their identity and status. This design concept makes Goya's products not only practical, but also have emotional value, which can create deep emotional resonance with consumers, thus completing empathetic marketing. At the same time, it is also in line with the consumer concept of Generation Z consumer group that focuses on product connotation and consumer experience (Ao, 2021).

### 2.3 Experiential Marketing

Goyard also has excellent performance in experience marketing, the most typical of which are Goyard's craftsman one-to-one service and customised service. One-on-one service means that the production of the product purchased by the consumer as ill as the subsequent after-sales work, such as product repair and maintenance, are all completed by a single craftsman. This Individualised Service and Personalised Service (ISPS) approach provides consumers with a unique, detailed and caring shopping experience, so it meets the consumer's needs for a high quality service experience and personalised products and provides consumers with an additional emotional experience.

In addition, Goyard uses Scarcity Marketing to amplify the positive shopping experience for consumers. Specifically, Goyard's products are usually sold in limited quantities, and Goyard does not have an online sales channel, selling its products only in a few offline boutiques. This sales method not only raises the difficulty of purchasing the products, but also ensures that consumers have enough participation in the purchasing process and enjoy the shop services, which ultimately achieves the purpose of increasing consumers' Post-Purchase Evaluation and satisfaction, i.e., purchasing rare and high-end products will bring consumers a sense of pleasure (Li, 2023).

In addition, Goyard's offline shops also focus on deepening the sense of experience; Goyard's shops are usually located in high-end shopping districts or luxury malls in first-tier cities. In addition, the interior design of the shops and the display of products continue Goyard's traditional low-key luxury style. Most of the shops use dark green, auburn, mahogany and brass as the main visual elements in the shop, and match with comfortable warm-coloured lighting to create a high-class experience environment full of 'old money style'. This style of décor provides a comfortable and sophisticated environment for the consumer to shop in and reinforces Goyard's image of understated luxury in the mind of the consumer.

Overall, the artisan one-on-one service, product scarcity marketing, and beautifully decorated shops are all designed to increase consumer satisfaction with the products they buy and the buying process, which helps Goyard build consumer loyalty to the brand.

### 2.4 Communication Strategy

In terms of communication strategy, Goyard rejects excessive and deliberate marketing, but mainly relies on 'Organic Influencer Advocacy and WOMM' to enhance brand awareness and influence. The 'Organic Influencer Advocacy and WOMM' means that Goyard naturally attracts consumers' attention by sharing celebrities' daily outfits and airport roadshow photos, rather than launching a large number of advertisements both online and offline. This unintentional approach to marketing is so closely aligned with the core of relaxation, i.e., relaxation and going with the flow, that it has subconsciously labelled the product and the brand as relaxation.

Goyard's communication strategy is also reflected in its clever use of social media. Although Goyard never advertises in any form and rarely gives interviews to the media, the brand has managed to attract the attention of a large number of young consumers through spontaneous sharing and user-generated content (UGC) by celebrities on social media platforms (e.g., Instagram and Facebook.) Goyard has

successfully captured the preferences of young consumers for advertising and maintained a high level of popularity among the young consumer segment. Consumer base and maintains a high level of awareness.

In addition, Goyard's offline boutiques, which are mainly located in international first-tier cities (e.g. Paris, New York, London, Tokyo, Beijing, etc.) and cultural and fashion centres, are also one of the ways for Goyard to spread its brand. These areas and cities have a high traffic flow in high-end shopping districts and are home to a large number of avant-garde, fashion-conscious people. At the same time, these people also pay more attention to brand connotation and consumer experience than others, which means that they are Goyard's potential customers. By carefully designing and arranging the storefront to catch the eyes of people passing by, and initially conveying the brand's design concept to bring a good impression to potential consumers.

### **2.5 Consumer Engagement and Cultural Identity**

Goyard through the brand history story and handmade craft heritage story, to attract consumers and gain consumer goodwill, and ultimately make consumers buy brand products, and in the sales process again through the products and services to consumers to convey the brand's cultural connotation and emotional value, and ultimately to achieve the results of the customer and the brand to establish a deep emotional connection. This emotional connection enables consumers to have a strong sense of goodwill and identification with the Goyard brand itself, and is conducive to the establishment and maintenance of consumer brand loyalty.

In addition, Goyard enhances consumer engagement through limited sales and customisation. In the customisation process, customers can choose the pattern they want to hand-paint in the pattern book provided in shops and ask artisans to create a one-of-a-kind product. This sense of participation and experience in consumption not only strengthens

consumers' brand identity, but also gives Goyard's products a higher emotional value.

## **3 ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the fashion industry, Goyard, as a brand with a long history, has a unique brand DNA but also faces a series of challenges. These challenges mainly focus on the balance of brand exclusivity and mainstream, the limitation of sales channels and the construction of brand value, which affects its further development.

In terms of the balance of brand exclusivity and mainstreaming, Goyard faces a dilemma. On the one hand, the brand has long maintained a low-profile, niche image, which gives it a certain degree of exclusivity. For example, Goyard rarely advertises or actively seeks media exposure, and the brand's history is little known, which limits its visibility in the mass market. Although this exclusivity can satisfy the needs of some customers who pursue uniqueness and low-key luxury, it hinders the spread of the brand among a wider consumer group. On the other hand, in the highly competitive fashion market, too much emphasis on exclusivity may lead to the gradual marginalisation of the brand, making it difficult to achieve greater market share and commercial value. However, over-exposure and pandering to the public's tastes by blindly pursuing the mainstream may undermine the brand's uniqueness and premium positioning.

Limitations in distribution channels are also a major obstacle to Goyard's growth. Currently, Goyard only sells directly through 35 shops worldwide, and does not have shop mail or online sales channels. This limited distribution greatly restricts the brand's market reach. Moreover, in today's digital age, consumers are gradually shifting their shopping habits to online, and while many brands are expanding their online sales channels to ensure smooth sales, Goyard has not been able to keep up with this trend. This not only made it difficult for potential consumers to purchase their products conveniently, but also deprived the brand of the opportunity to leverage the Internet for further branding and sales growth.

To address these issues, Goyard can adopt the following strategies. First, Goyard can increase its

brand exposure. For example, brand promotion through co-operation with art and cultural events not only maintains the brand's high-end image, but also attracts the attention of a wider range of consumers. At the same time, it also uses social media platforms for precision marketing, pushing content about the brand's unique craftsmanship and historical stories to potential consumers, so as to enhance brand awareness while avoiding over-commercialised publicity that could damage the brand's image.

In addition, Goyard should gradually expand its sales channels to address the limitations of its distribution channels. It can cautiously and gradually open online sales channels, such as setting up an official e-commerce platform or cooperating with famous luxury e-commerce companies, to improve the accessibility of the products under the premise of guaranteeing the brand's image. At the same time, Goyard should also consider opening new shops in more potential regions around the world to expand its market coverage, but be careful to maintain the luxury quality and service experience of the shops to match the brand's positioning.

Goyard should also further optimise the customer experience. This can be done by establishing a brand community, organising online and offline activities, facilitating communication and interaction with consumers, and enhancing the brand's social attributes, thus creating more value in the 'ACT' dimension (Irisawa, & Nagasawa, 2011).

Overall, if Goyard wants to achieve sustainable development in the highly competitive fashion market, it needs to face up to the current problems and make reasonable strategic adjustments to balance brand exclusivity and mainstreaming, break through the limitations of sales channels and optimise the customer experience, so as to enhance its brand value and market competitiveness.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the author have investigated and presented the background of Goyard's brand through an overview research method, as well as collated and analysed the brand's marketing behaviours related to relaxation, so that a set of frameworks about the mechanism of constructing

relaxation in branding can be extracted, which mainly consists of the three major parts, namely, perceptual shaping, experience deepening, and emotional resonance. First of all, in the stage of perception shaping, the brand needs to design products with attributes such as 'reflux', 'freedom of spontaneity' and 'comfort', as well as a unique brand story that matches the brand's tone. Then, in the experience deepening stage, the brand should optimise the product purchase process experience and use experience to enhance customer satisfaction, and also provide personalised customised service and high quality responsible after-sales service to further gain the trust and favour of customers, and ultimately achieve the goal of bringing customers a stress-free and anxiety-free full-process experience, so as to cultivate the confidence of the customers. The final goal is to bring customers a stress-free and anxiety-free full-process experience, so as to cultivate customers' brand loyalty. In the last stage, brands can use social media and cooperation with KOLs to further establish an emotional connection between consumers and the brand, as well as to show the brand's history and brand spirit, and ultimately achieve consumer resonance.

In addition, after in-depth research and analysis, relaxation has been found to act as a placebo in marketing in a way that is somewhat different from what is commonly defined as a placebo. Typically, in experiments and studies in the field of clinical medicine and pharmacology, the placebo effect refers to the fact that subjects are told that they are using an active drug with specific pharmacological properties, which results in a reduction of symptoms or a change in physiological parameters, when in fact they are using a placebo with no medicinal properties. In contrast, the 'relaxation' studied in this paper is a placebo that is sought and applied by the consumers themselves, rather than being applied and used by bystanders without their knowledge. And this placebo serves to bring mental comfort and satisfaction to consumers, helping to bring them closer to the distance between the real state and the ideal state. In detail, the goods with relaxation itself may not help the consumers to make their life easier in reality, but the consumers' identification with the goods and the psychological suggestion make the consumers get satisfaction.

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