

SCARCITY APPEAL AND NEED FOR UNIQUENESS: CURRENT RESEARCH REVIEW AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Advertisers attempt to impact purchasers through limited time offers by confining accessibility of items to a set number of clients, a constrained timeframe, or a particular section, subsequently making an impression of shortage. Such limited time intrigue of making an item or offer scarce is called as scarcity appeal. Writing recommends that individuals with high Need for uniqueness (NFU) lean toward scarce items, or possibly items which are draining quickly. Nonetheless, the connection between shortage of offers and the NFU has not been abundantly investigated.

The purpose of this study is to do a systematic review and meet the two objectives:

- *to summarize the extant literature in Scarcity Appeal and Need for Uniqueness and*
- *to identify a few areas for future research.*

The article focuses on theoretical foundations and frameworks which form the basis of scarcity appeal in the literature. Need for uniqueness borrows its foundation from different disciplines based on the research perspective. It identifies the motivational factors for consumer involvement in scarcity appeal and need for uniqueness creation and diffusion process and summarizes the findings of literature. It discusses the findings from literature review on importance and effects of scarcity appeal and need for uniqueness for marketing communications and marketing strategies. It gives noteworthy techniques to professionals and advertisers to propose how they can use shortage bid and requirement for uniqueness to improve execution, produce more deals and to speak with customers. At last, it examines the momentum status of research and proposes a couple of zones for future researchers.

KEYWORDS: *Scarcity Appeal, Need for Uniqueness, Consumers, Purchase Intentions.*

Introduction

In the advertising setting, a business advancement conspire that confines an idea to a set number of clients, a restricted amount of item, a constrained timespan, or a predefined section is alluded to as shortage advance. Extensively, shortage offer is separated into time shortage and amount shortage. Special plans that point of confinement the term of the offer are meant as time shortage advance. Amount shortage, then again, alludes to deals advancement plots that point of confinement the quantity of items under the special plan, for example, 'constrained version' offers (e.g., unique Anniversary offers in vehicles), offering rebate just on restricted amount of items, and offers legitimate till the stock is accessible.

Scarcity Appeal and Need for Uniqueness (NFU)

Scarcity can be characterized as deficiency of item supply or time of accessibility (Brock, 1968; Brannon and Brock, 2001). Past specialists (Eisend, 2008; Inman et al., 1997; Jung and Kellaris, 2004; Worchel et al., 1975) have commonly revealed finding that shortage positively affects apparent attractive quality of an item, or on item assessment. For example, Worchel et al. discovered that treats in scarce supply were evaluated as more alluring than treats in bounteous supply. Additionally, Verhallen (1982)

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and Verhallen and Robben (1994) demonstrated that when individuals see formula books as being less accessible, they show more prominent inclination for those formula books. Lynn (1989) likewise exhibited that when sketches are seen as scarce, individuals discover them more alluring than works of art they see as being promptly accessible.

Ongoing patterns propose that advertisers may every now and again confine the amount of item being offered in a given retail outlet or deals an area, paying little respect to real request, to make a misguided feeling of desperation. For instance, proclamations, for example, "Hurry, only few items left," or "Limited Quantities" need not be founded on real interest for the item, however could, rather, be conveyed discretionarily by advertisers to invigorate purchaser intrigue. Purchasers could translate shortage as a business strategy structured exclusively to drive deals.

Need for uniqueness is defined as a desire to be different relative to others (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). Previous research has shown that people high in need for uniqueness preferred rare, innovative, and unconventional objects and experiences (Lynn & Snyder, 2002; Workman & Caldwell, 2007). Concerning individuals' projection to others, compared to individuals low in need for uniqueness, individuals high in need for uniqueness provided lower estimates for the percentage of others whose behaviors would be similar to theirs (Kernis, 1984). On the other hand, Ames and Ivengar (2005) showed that need for uniqueness affected liking for unique things but did not directly affect individuals' estimations of the extent to which others would like the same things. It seems that the relationship between need for uniqueness and estimation of others may not be straightforward.

Theoretical Foundations and Frameworks

Consumers show a more positive attitude and behavior when a product or offer is scarce than when the product or offer is non-scarce. Theoretical explanations have been provided by psychologists on the reasons for this enhancement in attitude and behaviour due to scarcity appeal.

Uniqueness Theory

According to this theory, people are motivated to maintain a sense of being special as they define themselves on various important self-related dimensions relative to others (Snyder, 1992). People develop a need to be unique depending on their perceived similarity with their reference group. When they feel themselves to be too similar to their reference group, they develop a high need to be unique, whereas when they feel themselves to be too dissimilar, they develop a high need to be similar to the reference group (Snyder, 1992; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980).

According to Snyder (1992), individuals like to be reasonably unique in relation to different individuals from their reference gathering. To be decently not the same as the reference gathering, individuals act in various ways, for example, having one of kind items, utilizing scholarly contentions out in the open, and displaying that they have an interesting mate (Snyder and Fromkin, 1980). The view of individuals being excessively like or unique from a gathering influences their feelings and conduct.

Scarce information and products become helpful in making them moderately different from the reference group and, thus, help them manage their emotions and behaviour. This makes scarcity appeal, that is, a scarce product or information, effective.

Heuristic Cue Theory

Cialdini (1993) takes note of that individuals tend to relate things as indicated by their accessibility. In particular, scarce items are thought to be preferred in quality over non-scarce ones. In this manner, data of shortage fills in as a heuristic prompt for individuals to settle on the nature of the item (Verhallen & Robben, 1995).

Psychological Reactance Theory

Another Explanatory framework depends on crafted by Brehm (1966), which takes human reaction to decreasing individual control as the center clarification for the impact of shortage. As per Brehm (1966), when openings become less accessible, an individual loses opportunity. Since individuals will in general esteem opportunity, the loss of opportunity makes a craving to safeguard that set up opportunity. Expanding shortage meddles with earlier access to certain things and, along these lines, makes an obstacle for the opportunity of getting to them. Individuals will respond against this impedance by needing and attempting to have those things more than previously (Cialdini, 1993). In this manner, a craving to have items/administrations grows more when they are scarce than when they are non-scarce in light of the apparent loss of opportunity.

Need for Uniqueness

NFU is described as people's desire to be different as a result of their perception of similarity with others (Snyder, 1992). Snyder (1992) argues that the individual who finds she/he to be too similar to others develops a high NFU, whereas the individual who finds she/he to be too dissimilar develops a low NFU. There are two behavioural outcomes of a perceived NFU (Snyder, 1992): (a) the behaviour elicited because of a perceived high NFU is the trial of assimilation with the reference group where an individual adopts those behaviours which help her/him to identify with the reference group and (b) the behaviour elicited because of a perceived low NFU is the trial of differentiation from the reference group where an individual adopts that behaviour which helps her/him to differentiate from the reference group. To assimilate themselves, people seek symbols and anchors used by their reference group; to differentiate themselves, people seek symbols and anchors that are different from but acceptable to their reference group (Lynn & Harris, 1997; Ruvio, 2008; Snyder, 1992) From the counter-conformity perspective, NFU has been divided into three types based on the behavior manifested (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001; Tian & McKenzie, 2001). Another logical structure depends on crafted by Brehm (1966), which takes human reaction to decreasing individual control as the center clarification for the impact of shortage. As per Brehm (1966), when openings become less accessible, an individual loses opportunity. Since individuals will in general esteem opportunity, the loss of opportunity makes a craving to safeguard that set up opportunity. Expanding shortage meddles with earlier access to certain things and, along these lines, makes an obstacle for the opportunity of getting to them. Individuals will respond against this impedance by needing and attempting to have those things more than previously (Cialdini, 1993). In this manner, a craving to have items/administrations grows more when they are rare than when they are non-rare in light of the apparent loss of opportunity.

Tian *et al.* (2001) divided consumers' need for uniqueness into three types of consumer behavior:

- **Creative Choice Counter-Conformity:** It refers to consumer behavior that expresses uniqueness, which is also acceptable to others. Lynn and Harris (1997) suggested that it is the individual's ability to create and convey personal style through material products, thereby expressing self-image. Creative choice counter-conformity behavior involves some risk. However, such consumers are viewed as unique, and this encourages positive social evaluations for the consumer (Snyder and Fromkin, 1977; and Kron, 1983). Consumers buy those brands which confer on them some distinguishing features, such as prestige, unique attributes, etc. (Dee and Eun Young, 2007).
- **Unpopular Choice Counter-Conformity:** It refers to consumption of such products which deviate from social and group norms. The individuals risk social disapproval in order to establish their uniqueness from the group. This behavior results in an increased level of self-image and social image (Tian *et al.*, 2001). They argued that such individuals often possess strong characters and uniqueness seeking behaviors that enhance their self-image. Heckert (1989) also mentioned that a norm-breaking consumption behavior which is unpopular in present times, may gain social approval over a period of time, and the consumer may be marked as an innovator or fashion leader.
- **Avoidance of Similarity:** Avoidance of similarity refers to consumption of products that are not too popular and which also help in differentiating them from others. Simonson and Nowlis (2000) observed that consumers opt for various strategies such as shopping at exclusive boutiques, buying discontinued products and styles, or combining apparels in unusual ways. Dee and Eun Young (2007) also supported this idea and mentioned that consumers select these brands since they distinguish them from the others. Nwankwo *et al.* (2014) also maintained that consumers are primarily motivated to purchase luxury brands due to quality, uniqueness and exclusivity. They purchase luxury products to differentiate themselves from the group they belong to.

Relationship between Quantity Scarcity Offer and Need for Uniqueness

From a psychological perspective, scarcity implies that only a few people will have access to an object. Quantity scarcity depends on how much of the object others have purchased (Aggarwal *et al.*, 2011); thus, it helps to infer a symbolic benefit (Jung & Kellaris, 2004). Therefore, the role of significant others in the group becomes important in case of quantity scarcity. As people with a high NFU esteem scarce items, they will be progressively worried about the assets of significant others. Since amount

scarcity is identified with the significant others (uniqueness hypothesis), it is normal that people with a high NFU will react all the more positively to amount shortage contrasted with people with a low NFU (Snyder, 1992; Snyder and Fromkin, 1980).

Different examinations recommend that limits may prompt negative observations, for example, low quality of the item/bargain (e.g., Darke and Chung, 2005). Conversely, quantity scarcity shows that not many individuals can have the offer and, along these lines, in a roundabout way proposes positive quality surmising (heuristic signal hypothesis) or representative advantage; in this manner, there is a blend of two unique qualities in the offer. With the expanding number of offers step by step (Laungani, 2014) in which one offer finishes and another starts, a scarcity appeal offer with a rebate may turn into a typical offer accessible whenever to anybody and consequently loses the uniqueness of the offer. Due to the relationship of amount shortage advance with a rebate which makes negative quality recognition, it is normal that the 'novel' factor of quantity scarcity offer may get weakened. It is conceivable that shoppers with a high NFU will put less an incentive on shortage offers in light of the fact that these offers are ending up normal; this is contrary to low NFU customers who are not worried about an item/offer getting to be normal. In this way, low NFU shoppers favor quantity scarcity request more than high NFU customers.

Learning for Marketers

The managers are likely to benefit most from scarcity appeals during seasons, stages of life cycle, brands, and stores associated with high expectations of scarcity. Further, many study states that managers should assess the level of persuasion knowledge among their consumers, and use scarcity appeals when targeting consumer segments with low persuasion knowledge. For example, past research suggests that women and younger consumers have relatively lower levels of persuasion knowledge (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998; Reijmersdal, Rozendaal, and Buijzen 2012) and hence scarcity appeals might be more effective for these consumers. Finally, managers would benefit from increasing cognitive load on consumers since this favors a positive effect of scarcity appeals on product evaluation. Managers can increase cognitive load by increasing the amount of information to be processed by consumers, using techniques such as increasing the number of words and numbers in the ad or encouraging consumers to search for additional product information with QR codes embedded in the ad.

In particular, the many examinations recommend that buy goal if there should be an occurrence of quantity scarcity isn't distinctive for high NFU shoppers and low NFU purchasers. Also, buy goal if there should be an occurrence of no-scarcity is higher for high NFU purchasers than low NFU buyers. This is a negating result on the grounds that the writing bolsters the contention that shortage offers are more exceptionally esteemed by high NFU purchasers than low NFU shoppers (Brock, 1968; Cheema and Kaikathi, 2010; Snyder, 1992). Therefore, in the context of scarcity appeal on an offer, purchase intention for high NFU consumers is higher than low NFU consumers only in the case of no-scarcity appeal.

The attitude towards a product for high NFU consumers is not different from that of the low NFU consumers, irrespective of the scarcity type. It may be argued that though scarcity has an impact on purchase intention for high NFU consumers and low NFU consumers, attitude towards a product is independent of the type of scarcity offers. Therefore, quantity scarcity appeal offers can influence purchase intention but not attitude towards a product. It is also helpful for managers to understand that scarcity appeal might help in achieving higher sales, but the final attitude towards the product is not dependent on scarcity appeal. Attitude towards a product might be influenced by other factors, such as actual usage, word of mouth, and product quality. Therefore, scarcity appeal (indicating uniqueness) should be backed up by relevant product and brand attributes.

Directions for Future Research

Future studies may explore the underlying values of low NFU consumers that impel/ enhance their behaviour towards scarcity appeal. Moreover, scarcity appeal has been studied in a situation in which a scarcity offer is combined with a discount. Future studies may focus on impact of scarcity appeal with different types of offers, such as free gifts or 'buy one, get one free' promotions. The results of scarcity appeal with different types of offers may be compared to understand if there is any difference in scarcity appeal when associated with different types of offers. Quantity scarcity is used here as a form of scarcity. Other types of scarcities, such as time scarcity, may be explored for the issues mentioned in this study. Future studies may also explore whether similar results are found if the hypotheses are tested for a different product category.

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