



## The Double-edge Sword of Limited Edition Fashion Marketing

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Introduction and Conceptual Development In cases where the supply of highly demanded products is limited, consumers may perceive the products as more popular, and consequently, have a more positive attitude toward such products and brands (Parker & Lehmann, 2011). This practice is widely used by marketers (Byun & Mann, 2011). Although the resulting competition among consumers may increase consumer perceptions of product popularity (Byun & Mann, 2011), consumers may also feel a greater sense of inequity regarding the acquisition of limited edition products (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Perceptions of inequity have been found to negatively impact attitude toward the brand (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Thus, a marketing strategy that utilizes limited edition fashion products can have not only positive (e.g., perceived popularity), but also negative (e.g., perceived inequity) impact on consumer behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Parker & Lehmann, 2011). Additionally, how consumers perceive competition of limited edition products is impacted by the metamotivational state (Jung, Hui, Min, & Martin, 2014). According to the Reverse theory (Smith & Apter, 1975), the metamotivational states (telic vs. paratelic) determine whether a person is goal-oriented and arousal avoiding (telic) or activity-oriented and arousal seeking (paratelic). The metamotivational states likely impact how one interprets arousal evoked by perceived competition and affect one's hedonic tone (e.g., high level of arousal as an anxiety or an excitement). The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the underlying psychological process by which limited edition marketing of fashion goods impacts consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions. Based on the Reverse theory and literature review, the following hypotheses were developed: H1. Perceived competition will increase (a) perceived popularity and (b) perceived inequity; H2. Perceived popularity will positively influence attitude toward the brand; H3. Perceived inequity will negatively influence attitude toward the brand; H4. Attitude toward the brand will influence behavioral intention; H5. The metamotivational states will moderate the relationship (a) between perceived competition and perceived popularity and (b) between perceived competition and perceived inequity.

Method An online experiment was conducted using Amazon Mechanical Turk. Fictitious scenarios reflecting two different levels of perceived competition (high and low) were carefully developed from pretest. Also, two different fashion products (sneakers and fast-fashion brand jackets designed by high-fashion designers) that are known to use limited-edition strategy frequently were used in the scenario. All scale items were adapted from existing studies with established reliabilities. The Participants were asked about their metamotivational states prior to the scenario. After reading one of the fictitious scenarios about limited editions, other dependent variables were measured followed by demographic questions. A total of 162 people participated in the survey, yielding 159 usable responses.

Results and Discussions The participants were predominantly White or European American (76.7%, n=122). The majority (61.6%) of the participants were 39 years old and below. Both men (n=84) and women (n=75) participated in the study. The reliabilities of all items were adequate ( $\alpha$ s=.70 - .90).

To test the hypotheses, t-test, simple regression and hierarchical regression analyses were conducted. The scenario resulted in different levels of perceived competition as intended ( $t=-8.5$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The first hypothesis was partially supported. While the perceived competition increased the perceived popularity ( $\beta=.710$ ,  $p<.05$ ), the perceived competition had no influence on the perceived inequity ( $\beta=.103$ ,  $p=.25$ ). As predicted, the perceived popularity positively influenced the attitude ( $\beta=.469$ ,  $p<.05$ ), while the perceived inequity negatively influenced the attitude ( $\beta=-.439$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The attitude positively influenced the behavioral intentions ( $\beta=.706$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Thus H2-H4 were supported. However, the moderating effects of the metamotivational states (hypothesis 5) were not supported ( $p=.64$  for perceived popularity and  $p=.29$  for perceived inequity). Overall the findings of this study suggest the positive impact of limited edition as a marketing tool on consumer responses. Consistent with prior research findings (Byun & Mann, 2011), perceived competition evoked by limited edition increased perceived popularity, which further positively impacted attitude toward limited edition fashion goods and behavioral intention. Interestingly, perceived competition did not result in perceived inequity. Additionally, the findings did not provide empirical support for the metamotivational states. One plausible explanation for these results may be related to the level of perceived competition. Perhaps perceived competition evoked by the scenarios in this study was not high enough to cause negative perception such as perceived inequity. Another reason may stem from a lack of realism embedded in scenario-based realism. Future research is needed to look into the metamotivational state of consumers in the context of limited edition marketing with broader populations. A field study with consumers immediately after they experienced limited edition of products is needed to increase external validity and offer additional insights into consumers' psychological processes in the context of limited edition fashion marketing.

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