Consideration of Time Pressure in the Limited Time Edition Products

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Abstract: The time pressure felt by consumers in a limited time situation has long been of interest. However, there have been no discussions in the existing literature regarding time pressure in long-term time constraints, which run from a few days to a few weeks for limited time edition products. In this research, a web survey was conducted on how the perceived quality of limited edition products with time constraints changed with the strength of time constraints in limited edition products. Results showed that limited edition products with a time constraint of 1 week were assessed to be of higher quality than those that had a time constraint of 1 month, with consumers feeling stronger time pressure.

Keywords: limited time edition products, time pressure, consumer behavior, marketing

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Introduction

In reviewing extant research on time pressure, Suzuki (2004) defined a time constraint as a situation in which a time limit is set on consumers by companies, and others. In practical application, time constraints are imposed on products that are sold for a limited time. Products that are sold in this manner are called “limited edition products with time constraints.” Being sold domestically and internationally, limited edition products with time constraints include candies, digital cameras, sneakers, sports products, headphones, alcohol, and many others. However, there does not appear to be a great deal of research on limited edition products, let alone limited edition products with time constraints (Suzuki, 2017). In addition, extant research on time constraints and time pressure does not discuss time pressure for products such as limited edition products with long-term time constraints lasting from several days to several weeks (Mitomi, 2017). Hence, there is a need to study whether consumers feel time pressure in the case of limited edition products with long-term time constraints.

For this paper, a web survey was conducted to discover whether perceived quality of products is impacted by the strength of time constraints for limited edition products with time constraints and if so, whether consumers feel time pressure.

Influence of Limited Edition Products

The limited edition products with time constraints referred to in this paper are a form of limited edition product. Limited edition products are defined as “products sold in a state that makes them difficult to obtain because of companies limiting their availability to a
certain period, quantity, region, or channel” (Suzuki, 2008, p. 204). In addition, limited edition products with time constraints are defined as those with a limited sales period (Suzuki, 2008, p. 203).

Existing studies have discussed primarily the impact of limited edition products on consumers. For example, Nuoii, Nakazima, and Yoshikawa (2013) showed that products become more attractive if they have a “limited edition” label on them. Aggarwal and Vaidyanathan (2003) studied limited edition products with time constraints and found that 1) promotions for limited edition products with time constraints accelerate consumer purchases and that 2) a time limit increases consumers’ desire to purchase. Nonetheless, there is still little research on limited edition products, including limited edition products with time constraints (Suzuki, 2017).

**Prior Research on Time Pressure and Time Constraint**

In this section, we confirm existing research on time pressure and time constraints. Time constraints are defined as “the setting of a limit on time for consumers by a certain entity” (Suzuki, 2004, p. 67). Time pressure is defined as “the type of mental stress that occurs when consumers must make purchasing decisions within a limited time” (Suzuki, 2004, p. 67).

Some existing studies have been conducted on the impact of time pressure on consumer behavior. Ben Zur and Breznitz (1981) indicated that consumers focus on negative information when they feel strong time pressures. Nowlis (1995) noted that the chances of a consumer selecting a high-quality brand over a low-quality brand increases when the consumer feels time pressure. Dhar and Nowlis

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1 Customer limited products, which limit to whom products are sold, focus on customers rather than a product, and are different in nature from other limited edition products. Because of this, Suzuki (2008) does not include them in limited edition products.
Mitomi (1999) identified that consumers tend to make decisions on the basis of unique features in situations where they feel time pressure in comparison with situations where they feel no such pressure. They also showed that in such cases, uncompensated decisions become easier to make and that decisions to postpone accordingly decrease. Suri and Monroe (2003) identified the inverse U-shaped relationship between time pressure and perceived quality when information processing motivations and product prices are both low. In addition, they also identified the U-shaped relationship between time pressure and perceived quality in situations where information processing motivations are low and product prices are high. They also demonstrated the relationship that exists where regardless of price, the information processing motivation is high, the value of perceived quality increases to the extent that time pressure is strongly felt.

Existing research on time pressure and time constraints have shown that information process methods, selections, and assessments change when consumers feel time pressure compared to when they do not (e.g., Dhar & Nowlis, 1999). However, according to Mitomi (2017), existing studies on time pressure and time constraints for the most part only discuss the impact of time pressure within time constraints for times of less than a minute to several minutes, and there are no studies that discuss time pressure within time constraints for longer terms of several days to several weeks, such as are often found with limited edition products with time constraints and those with limited time sales.

Research

This review of the existing literature shows that there have been no discussions of time pressures felt by consumers for products with long-term time constraints of several days to several weeks, such as
those for limited edition products with time constraints. Thus, for this study, a survey used cans of beer, limited edition products to which Jang, Ko, Morris, and Chang (2015) referred and pertaining to which consumers have a high level of involvement and knowledge. A market research company was hired to select 344 consumers in Japan who were over the age of 20 and who had experience with drinking and purchasing beer. The consumers were randomly divided into two groups of 172 each, given the following presentation, and asked to make choices.

(1) First, consumers were shown images\(^2\) of the fictional brand Beer A (Figure 1).

(2) Next, an image was shown of a can/bottle of Beer A with two labels affixed: “Using Quality Malt” and either “1-Week Limited Time Only” or “1-Month Limited Time Only.” At that time, Group 1 was shown an image of a can of Beer B, a limited time edition product with a 1-week time constraint (Figure 2), and Group 2 was shown an image of a can of Beer C, a limited time edition product with a 1-month time constraint (Figure 3).

(3) Consumers were then asked to assess the quality of Beer B and Beer C in comparison with Beer A.

\(^2\) Images of the beers were purchased from PIXTA.
Consumers were asked to answer questions regarding whether they felt time pressure. For perceived quality, the wording of three questionnaire items used by Suri and Monroe (2003) was modified. We measured it with eight scales and analyzed it by summing up the total of the three questionnaire items. With regard to time pressure, the wording of the questionnaire items used by Ando (2007) was modified for use in this survey. Details regarding each of the questionnaire items can be found in the Appendix.

**Results**

Table 1 summarizes the assessments of limited time edition products, as well as the time pressure felt by subjects in Group 1, with the 1-week limited time, and Group 2, with the 1-month limited time.

First, differences in the perceived quality of the products were confirmed via differences in the strength of the time constraint of the limited edition products. The average perceived quality of limited
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Table 1. Perceptual quality and time pressure in 1-week limited and 1-month limited

|                                | 1-week limited time | 1-month limited time |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Perceived quality              | 15.41               | 14.41                |
| Time pressure                  | 2.44                | 2.28                 |

dition products with time constraints in Group 1, with the 1-week time limit, was 15.41 \((n = 172, \text{SD} = 4.75)\), and the average perceived quality of limited edition products with time constraints in Group 2, with the 1-month time limit, was 14.41 \((n = 172, \text{SD} = 4.69)\). Group 1 showed a significantly higher assessment of quality \((t = 1.96, df = 342.2, p = 0.052)\). On the basis of these results, it would seem that strong (i.e., short) time constraints set for limited edition products with time constraints are perceived to be of higher quality.

Next, we confirmed differences in time pressure rather than comparing the feeling that one gets when making a purchase decision regarding a premium product with the feeling elicited by a product that is available for a limited time. The average time pressure felt by Group 1 was 2.44 \((n = 172, \text{SD} = 0.87)\), while the average time pressure felt by Group 2 was 2.28 \((n = 172, \text{SD} = 0.77)\). Group 1, with a shorter, 1-week, time limit, showed significantly greater time pressure \((t = 1.76, df = 337.2, p = 0.07)\). Accordingly, even with long-term time constraints such as those found in limited edition products with time constraints, consumers feel stronger time pressure with a stronger (shorter) time constraint.

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Discussion

As noted by Mitomi (2017), existing research has studied time pressure felt by consumers with time constraints in the range of several seconds to several minutes, and thus, no attention has been paid to the impact of time pressure on consumers when time constraints are longer—from several days to several weeks. Through the results of this paper, it was found that consumers assess quality to be higher as time constraints become stronger, even with long-term time constraints, which is just as found in existing studies. It is possible that this is due to the feeling of premium-ness that comes with a limited edition product with time constraints, where the difficulty in obtaining a product makes it more attractive (Suzuki, 2008) although the results of this paper’s survey showed that consumers feel stronger time pressure. In limited edition products with time constraints, however, it is a fact that “time pressure” and “difficulty in obtaining a product” are both perceived by the consumer. It will be critical to identify the relationship between the two, using some means of measurement in the future.

Moreover, it will be essential to consider consumer characteristics. For example, Ichikohji and Katsumata (2014) showed that there is a difference in the relationship between innovation activities by a consumer and consumer behavior, depending on the level of involvement in music. In addition, Akiike and Katsumata (2016) indicated that consumers with a high level of product knowledge regarding mobile phones use mobile phones in light of their own behavior, thereby leveraging their insight into product features. Moreover, Suzuki (2008) noted the impact of consumers’ desire for novelty on the purchase of limited edition products with time constraints. There is very likely an influence of consumer characteristics, including involvement, knowledge, and
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desire, regarding assessments of quality and time pressure.

Appendix

Measuring Perceived Quality

Using Suri and Monroe (2003) as a reference, an 8-point scale was used for the following statements to measure perceived quality: “I felt that Beer B (Beer C) was of a better quality than Beer A”; “I felt that Beer B (Beer C) could be trusted more than Beer A”; “I felt that Beer B (Beer C) tasted more as desired than Beer A.”

Measuring Time Pressure

In response to the question “Did the assessment of Beer B (Beer C) need to be done quickly?,” a four-point scale was used per Ando (2007): “It needed to be done quickly,” “It needed to be done somewhat quickly,” “It didn’t need to be done somewhat quickly,” and “It didn’t need to be done quickly.”

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