

Research on Scene Interaction Design of Dramaturgical Theory in Emotional Brand: Taking Jellycat as an Example

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Abstract:

This study explores the application logic of Dramaturgical Theory in scenario interaction design for emotional brands, providing theoretical and practical support for optimizing scenario interactions and deepening consumers' emotional connections. This paper takes the five core elements of Dramaturgical Theory as the analytical framework, and conducts targeted research combined with the practices of Jellycat in objective and virtual scenarios. Five design strategies are distilled: precise role positioning, refined performance details, clear frontstage-backstage boundaries, consistent troupe collaboration, and coherent impression management. These strategies form actionable paths for optimizing scenario interaction. Dramaturgical Theory offers a systematic perspective for the scenario interaction design of emotional brands, and the deep integration of its core elements with scenario interaction can effectively enhance the stickiness of brand experience and emotional value.

Keywords:

Dramaturgy, Emotional Brand, Scene Interaction Design, Impression Management, Brand Experience

1. Introduction

Driven by the dual forces of the experience economy and consumption upgrades, people endow products with symbolic identities, using consumption to express their aspirations and shape a public self-image [1]. The ability to deliver unique emotional value has become a core competitive differentiator for brands, and scenario interaction further serves as the bridge connecting brands with consumers' emotional experiences. Dramaturgy views all social interactions as staged performances. Its theoretical framework—encompassing roles, performances, frontstage/backstage dynamics, troupe collaboration, and impression management—offers a unique lens for analyzing the scenario interactions of emotional brands. Existing research on scenario interaction primarily focuses on the interface design of intelligent software, with insufficient integration with brand experience design. Based on the framework of Dramaturgical Theory, this paper explores the optimization paths in line with the

characteristics and needs of emotional brands' scenario interaction design, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for enhancing consumer experience and promoting the sustainable development of brands.

2. Emotional Brands from a Dramaturgical Perspective

Dramaturgy was first proposed by Erving Goffman in his work [2], which conceptualizes social interaction as a contextualized performance process. It emphasizes how individuals or organizations consciously orchestrate roles, symbols, spaces and media to conduct self-presentation and impression management in specific frontstage contexts. In the consumption process, consumers' brand emotions play a crucial role. As the foundation for consumers' direct contact with a brand, brand experience is a core source of consumers' brand emotions, which subtly stimulates purchasing behavior [3]. An emotional brand, built on the basis of meeting material interests, focuses on satisfying consumers' emotional needs as its core. It leverages the emotional elements of products to trigger conditioned responses in target consumers, and induce positive and affirmative emotional experiences [4]. The core of emotional branding does not rely solely on the functional characteristics or external appearance of products. Instead, it elevates the brand into an emotional symbol by forging deep emotional resonance with consumers, thereby establishing a stable and enduring emotional bond. As a classical theory of sociology and communication, Dramaturgical Theory provides a distinctive perspective and methodological approach for the design of emotional brands.

2.1. Brand Persona serves as Emotional Expression of a Brand's Unique Personality

The construction process of brand persona shares high similarities with the self-presentation of individuals in social interactions described in Dramaturgical Theory. Individuals may conceal their true selves and adopt specific personas to meet social expectations. Similarly, brands will adjust their character traits and value positions to satisfy the diverse emotional needs of target audiences in the ever-changing market environment. Brand persona not only embodies the core brand philosophy, but also serves as a bridge for building deep emotional resonance with consumers.

Shaping a brand persona cannot be achieved through isolated communication tactics alone; it requires long-term accumulation through product experiences and service scenarios. Take Apple Inc. as an example: its "innovation pioneer" persona extends far beyond one-way advertising messages, and permeates every aspect of its product design, aesthetic experience and full-link retail services. Apple presents itself not merely as a technology provider, but as a cultural advocate championing free innovation and minimalist lifestyles. It is precisely this consistent role presentation across diverse scenarios that fosters a robust emotional bond between the brand and consumers. This bond elevates the brand's significance beyond mere functional utility, and transforms it into a symbolic vessel for emotions and culture.

2.2. Performance as Form of Brand Interaction

In the consumption process, the quality of service interaction includes not only the communication between consumers and staff, but also the interaction between consumers and products/spaces. Enhancing this quality not only significantly improves customer satisfaction, but also shapes consumers' brand perception and emotional attitudes towards the brand, and ultimately their behavioral intentions [5].

The core medium of brand performance is the whole-process interaction with consumers, covering multiple practical dimensions such as marketing campaign planning, advertising communication and social operation. In this dynamic and continuous performance process, brands do not rely solely on one-way communication to convey their identity and positioning. Instead, they use more perceptible and accessible forms of expression to build deep emotional connections with consumers, thereby narrowing the psychological distance between the brand and consumers. Through nuanced and contextualized emotional performance, consumers can not only understand and identify with the cultural core of the brand, but also gradually form relatively stable emotional associations through repeated interactive experiences. This kind of emotional brand performance can not only trigger immediate emotional resonance, but also strengthen experiential memory through sustained interaction, ensuring that the brand image maintains high recognition in consumers' perception.

2.3. Frontstage and Backstage Operations Form the Operational Foundation of a Brand

The frontstage comprises elements directly facing consumers, such as brand philosophy, narrative threads, product packaging and store spaces. It is mainly responsible for presenting the external image of the brand, and serves as the carrier of emotional expression in brand communication. In contrast, the backstage refers to the internal production, management, R&D and other operational links that are invisible to consumers. These hidden processes profoundly affect the long-term stability and credibility of the brand image. In addition to daily operation and management, the backstage is also reflected in the brand's commitment to social responsibility and sustainable development goals, which have increasingly become important sources of emotional resonance with consumers. With the deepening of brand awareness, consumers' attention has gradually shifted from the frontstage presentation to the value position embodied in the backstage operation.

2.4. The Brand Ensemble as Team Building

The brand ensemble can be understood as the core team involved in brand shaping and communication, including designers, advertising and marketing personnel, and frontline sales and service staff. Members carry out collaborative cooperation with clear division of labor, and take ensuring the consistency of brand image in different scenarios as the common goal, so as to form a relatively stable and clear emotional perception of the brand in consumers' minds. In the actual operation of the brand, the role of the troupe is not only to build the brand's products and value culture, but more importantly, to promote the unified expression of the brand's emotional information and value stance across all channels, from offline experience and online social interaction to content marketing. This builds a rich, multi-dimensional brand image with unique vitality, and ultimately drives the commercial growth of the brand.

2.5. Impression Management as Brand Image Construction

Impression management in the framework of Dramaturgical Theory refers to the process in which individuals consciously or subconsciously adjust their behavior and external presentation in social interactions, to guide others to form perceptions and evaluations consistent with their expectations. This concept is extended to brand operation: brands design contextual performances and communication strategies

matching the brand culture, to shape consumers' emotional cognition, and influence their purchasing decisions and consumption preferences at the psychological and behavioral levels. Consumers' perception of a brand stems not only from visual symbols or direct marketing content, but also from the brand impression conveyed through multi-scenario interactions.

Brand impression management is not only about building an external public image, but more importantly, establishing a consistent and profound emotional connection in consumers' minds. This kind of emotional bond depends on the continuous emotional expression in advertising, product design, service experience and cultural communication, embedding brand values into every touchpoint with consumers. For example, Nongfu Spring has long adhered to the brand positioning of advocating healthy drinking water. By participating in sports events and public welfare activities, it has continuously deepened the public's goodwill towards the brand, and effectively shaped a healthy and socially responsible brand image [6].

In the evolution of contemporary brand design, brand experience has transcended the boundaries of single product attributes or visual symbols, and become a dynamically generated result in specific contexts and interactions. Brands no longer exist merely as symbols or visual systems, but actively participate as actors in the consumer-scenario interaction, and their behaviors themselves become a core part of meaning generation. The theoretical framework of Dramaturgy provides a structured path for analyzing how brands shape their images in different scenarios and guide users to participate in brand interactions.

3. Application of Dramaturgical Theory in Scenario Interaction Design for Jellycat

In specific research, the reasonable division of "scenarios" directly affects the effectiveness of the analytical framework. In contemporary interaction design research, scenarios have transcended the concept of single space, and increasingly manifested as a dynamic interactive structure co-constructed by the subject's actions with the participation of media [7]. Combined with the research focus on the mature practice of Jellycat and the core goal of explaining the brand performance and impression management mechanism through Dramaturgical Theory, this paper divides the practical scenarios of Jellycat into objective scenarios and virtual scenarios according to the differences in interaction carriers and performance environments.

3.1. Objective Scenarios

In physical environments, Jellycat's brand practice is mainly carried out through offline stores and themed pop-up shops. Its brand performance presents highly perceptible frontstage characteristics, and such spaces become the core performance arena where brand personas are directly exposed to users (e.g., Figure 1). Interaction design in retail environments must prioritize the progression of content, with a focus on scenario details that evolve from functional to emotional dimensions [8]. Jellycat deliberately weakens the display logic of traditional retail spaces driven by efficiency and function. Instead, through open display, visually unified color system and contextualized layout, it places plush toys in the scene close to daily life and emotional companionship. This transforms products from "selectable commodities" to "perceivable characters" in the frontstage presentation. This frontstage construction is not just a superficial visual decoration, but guides users into the specific scenario

through spatial storytelling, laying a stable perceptual foundation for brand performance.



Figure 1. Jellycat cafe Shanghai pop-up store.

In the frontstage performance of objective scenarios, in addition to spatial display and product presentation, Jellycat further consolidates its performance structure through the role-based behaviors of brand staff. In retail scenarios, the sense of ritual is a psychological experience generated for consumers to enhance self-image and status through the combined effect of ritual settings, ritual actions, ritual performers and participants [9]. Taking the brand's pop-up store practice in Shanghai as an example, the on-site staff did not strictly abide by the traditional retail norms centered on service efficiency. Instead, they adjusted their dress, movement rhythm and interaction methods to integrate their behaviors into the overall brand narrative (e.g., Figure 2). The staff interacted with consumers in a gentler, more approachable way with role-playing attributes, and their behaviors were highly consistent with the brand's doll-like character aesthetics, positioning themselves as "scenario guides" in the frontstage performance.



Figure 2. Staff packaging products.

The staff's role-playing is not an accidental service strategy. Their behaviors in the pop-up store are different from the standardized services in conventional commercial spaces, but they do not become exaggerated theatrical performances. Instead, they present a performance state consistent with the brand narrative, which is seamlessly integrated into the spatial layout and conceptual design of the brand scenario, and becomes a core part of the brand's performance system. This subtly theatrical approach allows consumers to naturally immerse themselves in the narrative constructed by the brand without explicit prompting, thereby enhancing the overall credibility of the frontstage performance.

At the same time, the staff's role-playing relies on the support of the backstage. Through the systematic management of behavioral norms and interaction protocols, the brand ensures the consistency of performance style in different pop-up

experiences, and reduces the possible damage to the brand performance caused by individual differences. Although these backstage operations are invisible to consumers, this standardized and institutionalized support ensures the stable execution of frontstage performance, and maintains the continuity and consistency of the brand image in different offline scenarios.

Different from traditional brands, the collaborative operation of frontstage and backstage transforms the staff from mere sales agents into the tangible embodiment of the brand in real scenarios. To a certain extent, the performance of brand service personnel constitutes the brand performance itself. They become a key link connecting the brand's offline space, products and consumers, thus transforming the brand performance from traditional static display to dynamic interaction. This change makes Jellycat's brand scenario interaction go beyond simple physical product sales, extends the design elements of brand image to the consumer's interactive experience, enables consumers to perceive and understand the complete brand culture in the interaction process, and then forms a comprehensive recognition of the brand impression and cultivates emotional identification with the brand.

Through the analysis of various elements in objective scenarios, it can be found that Jellycat's brand image is not only shaped by product design or a single consumer experience, but gradually formed through continuous contextual performances based on experiential carriers such as physical stores and pop-up shops. The carefully created store atmosphere, unique anthropomorphic product design and role-playing performance of service staff jointly form an immersive brand cultural experience, which allows consumers to quickly enter the brand's interactive narrative after entering the space. It is this interactive model that takes real scenarios as the carrier and performance as the communication method that repeatedly strengthens the brand image through multiple offline contacts, and finally solidifies into a stable and clear cognitive impression in consumers' minds.

3.2. Virtual Scenarios

In scenario analysis, only one scenario can occupy the dominant position as the primary scenario, while all others are secondary scenarios [10]. For the Jellycat brand, the process of users experiencing products and completing purchases in physical stores (real-world scenarios) constitutes the primary scenario, while obtaining brand information or completing online purchases through digital platforms (virtual scenarios) are secondary scenarios.

Compared with the embodied presence of physical scenarios, the brand's frontstage manifestation in virtual scenarios is mainly the integration of interface presentation, narrative content and interactive mechanisms. Playful frontstage designs that emphasize interactivity and presence can effectively improve consumer engagement [11]. On Jellycat's online flagship stores and official social platforms (rerdnote, Douyin, etc.), the brand constructs a continuously perceptible frontstage performance space through unified visual language, personified narrative tone and highly consistent content structure (e.g., Figure 3). The product pages are no longer just information display; through contextualized pictures and character-driven copywriting, products are endowed with distinct roles in the media scenario, extending the brand's performance logic from objective scenarios to virtual environments.

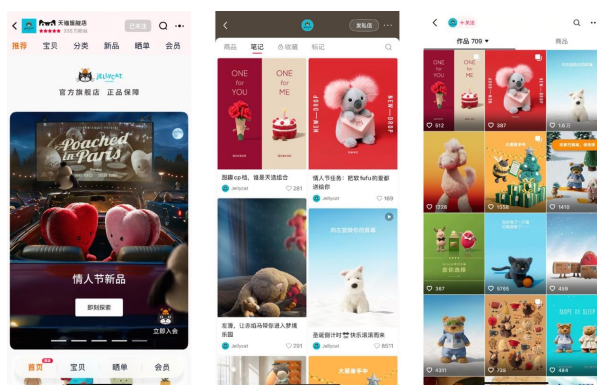


Figure 3. Jellycat's homepages on Tmall, Rednote, and Douyin.

Different from the explicit presentation on the frontstage of online platforms, the backstage management in virtual scenarios focuses on the implicit control of content production, visual presentation and interactive feedback. The brand ensures the consistent frontstage presentation on short video platforms and social media by controlling the image composition and copywriting style.

At the same time, it carries out adaptive content creation according to the unique interaction mode of each platform, which effectively avoids the perceptual gap and cognitive bias of the brand image in the process of media format conversion. Notably, when users like, comment on or share the brand's content, their roles shift from passive information recipients to co-performers in the sense of Dramaturgy. Such spontaneous interactive behaviors of consumers are not only consistent with the brand's communication objectives, but also expand the emotional dimension of brand interaction through the emotional projection from the user's perspective, thus improving the effect of brand communication.

By comparing objective and virtual scenarios, it can be found that despite the differences in media conditions and interaction modes, Jellycat maintains a highly consistent design and management logic in frontstage construction, backstage support and performance structure. The brand always carries out performance around the stable product character persona, and maintains a unified brand impression in multiple scenarios through consistent image management. This allows consumers to ignore the experiential differences between physical and virtual environments, and form a unified brand perception in diverse interactive environments.

4. Research on Emotional Brand Scenario Interaction Design Strategies Based on Dramaturgical Theory

Based on the theoretical framework of Dramaturgical Theory and aiming at the practical dilemmas in contemporary design, the scenario interaction design of emotional brands needs systematic optimization from multiple dimensions. Combined with the principles of Dramaturgy, this study proposes five core design strategies: precise role positioning, refined performance details, clear frontstage-backstage boundaries, unified troupe collaboration, and consistent impression management, so as to achieve the simultaneous improvement of user experience and brand value.

4.1. Define Precise Role Positioning to Build Emotional Compatibility in Scenario Interaction

The diversification of interactive media enables brands to influence user perception through multiple channels. Consequently, brand personas are no longer static and fixed as those of traditional brands, but can flexibly adapt to the changes of scenario contexts and diverse user needs. In space-centered scenarios, whether physical stores or immersive virtual environments, brand personas are perceived through atmospheric design, interaction modes and behavioral details. In media interface-driven scenarios, from adapting to the community style of different apps to the content management of official accounts, brand personas maintain consistency through unified visual aesthetics, language tone and interactive rhythm.

The core of emotional brand scenario interaction design is to transform abstract character positioning into sustainable behavioral traits, and maintain the consistency of emotional orientation and interactive attitude in different scenarios. The brand persona is no longer an aloof abstract label, but is gradually recognized and strengthened through each specific interaction, which naturally fits the user's emotional expectations in the scenario. This is precisely the key balance that emotional brands need to grasp in scenario interaction design.

4.2. Refine Performance Details to Enhance the Immersion of Scenario Interaction

The performance in scenario interaction is different from the fixed plot structure of theatrical performances; it is dynamically adjusted with the advancement of interaction in the whole consumer experience. Different scenario types determine the presentation mode of performance: In space-dominated scenarios, performance is gradually unfolded through the action sequence and trigger points at the pause nodes. As users move, stay and interact with the brand, they naturally perceive the brand culture with the advancement of the performance stage. In interface-driven scenarios, performance is unfolded through the UI design of the platform, the rhythmic content operation of the brand account, and the processing of user feedback. Each user's click, comment or fragmented interaction is actively involved in the construction and completion of the brand narrative, and becomes an integral part of the performance. Emotional brand interaction design must focus on the perceivable way of these details, and guide users' immersive participation through the control of rhythm and the continuity of experience.

4.3. Clarify Frontstage and Backstage Boundaries to Enhance the Layering and Credibility of Scenario Interaction

In scenario interaction, the frontstage experience perceived by users and the backstage mechanism supporting its operation are complementary to each other, which jointly ensure the orderly development of brand operation and brand performance. The functions of frontstage and backstage vary in different scenarios: In physically-centered scenarios, the frontstage is manifested as tangible space and offline interaction, which is the main place for consumers to participate in brand performance, while the backstage involves the process management and operation maintenance to ensure the continuity of brand scenarios. In virtual scenarios dominated by online experiences, the frontstage is manifested as content presentation and interactive feedback, which serves as a core channel for consumers to obtain brand information, while the backstage consists of content planning and publishing mechanisms, which are usually maintained and operated by the brand team.

The boundary between frontstage and backstage is not completely rigid; on the contrary, the clear division of labor between the two ensures the continuity of the

experience. When designing scenario interactions, emotional brands must take into account both frontstage experience and backstage operation, and establish a stable and coordinated operation support relationship in different scenarios.

4.4. Strengthen Troupe Collaboration to Ensure the Consistency and Professionalism of Scenario Interaction

Scenario interaction of a brand is never the work of a single subject, but the result of the collaborative operation of multiple elements. Although the specific elements involved in different scenario types are different, the collaborative management of these elements ultimately determines the quality of the overall experience. In scenarios anchored by physical spaces, service personnel, products and physical environment work together to create an immersive offline experience. In scenarios mediated by digital platforms, interface information architecture, content form and user interaction mode jointly construct the virtual brand interaction space. Effective collaborative management of these elements directly affects whether users can form consistent brand emotional recognition in multiple scenarios.

When designing scenario interactions for emotional brands, it is necessary to clarify the roles and division of labor of different elements in the interaction, and ensure that the experience remains stable and consistent through unified brand performance, without being affected by individual execution differences. From the coordination of personnel, products and environment in physical stores, to the unification of interface, content and interaction mode on online platforms, the collaborative structure will evolve with the iteration of scenarios, but its core logic is always centered on the continuity and sustainability of brand experience.

4.5. Coordinate Impression Management to Achieve Emotional Resonance Throughout the Entire Scenario Interaction Process

Brand impression is never the product of a single scenario, but the cumulative cognitive result gradually formed by users through repeated contact with the brand. The experience connection between different scenarios directly affects the integrity and stability of impression formation. When users contact the brand in different scenarios, new experiences will cross-reference with the existing cognition, so as to adjust their overall cognitive judgment of the brand. Emotional brands must pay attention to the continuity and resonance of experience between scenarios in interaction design, to ensure that the previously formed impression can be naturally deepened in the subsequent interaction experience. The core of impression management lies in the overall control of the whole-scenario experience, maintaining emotional consistency from the initial contact to long-term interaction, and gradually clarifying and solidifying the brand image through sustained participation.

5. Conclusions

This study adopts Dramaturgical Theory as the analytical framework, combined with the brand scenario practice of Jellycat, to systematically explore the optimization path of emotional brand scenario interaction design. The case study shows that Dramaturgical Theory has a high degree of fit with the scenario interaction needs of emotional brands. On this basis, the five design strategies proposed in this paper provide actionable implementation methods for brands to cross scenario boundaries and deepen emotional connections with consumers. Future research can further explore the applicability of Dramaturgical Theory in different types of emotional

brands, and study the innovative scenario integration mode in the context of digital transformation.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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