The International Communication Strategy of Chinese Local Brands from the Perspective of Cross-media Ecology

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Abstract

The research purpose of this paper is (1) the disadvantages of outsiders in the process of internationalization of Chinese enterprises; (2) problems such as single narrative framework of brand communication, lack of high-quality content, lack of coordination in cross-media practice, and lack of sustainability in user migration; (3) Rational development of the potential of China's excellent traditional culture. Based on this, this paper adopts a qualitative research method, conducts investigations and researches on business owners and consumer groups, through descriptive statistics and content analysis, combined with social movement and consensus theory from the perspective of social construction, and the reconstruction mechanism of brand value under cross-media narrative, the research results are as follows:

First, the essence of the brand is the social resonance under the frame connection. An excellent brand needs to be considered and maintained from a social and cultural perspective. Second, as an important strategy for brand operation and maintenance, cross-media narrative can promote positive interactions with consumer groups and social culture. Third, brands need to build an exclusive story world through products and culture.

Keywords: *Brand internationalization, Cross-media ecology, Narrative strategy, Social construction.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Since the reform and opening up, China has gradually integrated into the global trade map, and its economic aggregate has ranked second in the world for many years in a row. At the same time, China has also grown into the world's second largest advertising market. However, the presentation and reputation of Chinese companies and brands in the global market ecology are still relatively weak. It is an important task for Chinese brands to establish a Chinese brand narrative system that is compatible with the international market as soon as possible, gradually change the negative stereotypes of Chinese brands in the international market, and realize the Chinese story and the strategic positioning of Chinese brands.

This paper conducts research from the perspectives of brands and consumers, aiming to investigate the use of cultural image strategies by Chinese brands to enhance market penetration in host countries, and to reveal the background and motivations of sample brands

implementing cultural image strategies based on the data results. And based on this, combined with social and cultural construction, cross-media narrative and other theories, it analyzes the premise and top-level mechanism of implementation, deduces the factors that affect the brand's successful implementation of image strategy, and discusses the key measures and mechanisms of brand international image strategy.

By combing the existing Internet and newspapers and magazines data, the author determined the test brands in the questionnaire survey. After that, try to collect consumption data of different ages, different occupations, and different countries to test the relevant hypotheses proposed by the research. The results of structural equation modeling support most of the hypotheses. Based on this, research is mainly carried out from the following aspects: First, First, examine how brands can circumvent negative cultural influences and "outsider disadvantage" in their country of origin. Second, study how the cultural elements in the source country's culture that fit the product play a positive role. Thirdly, to study how the combined communication of cross media can effectively promote the establishment of brand cultural image.

1.2 Research Objectives

1.2.1 Theoretical aspects. In the social business ecology, the brand communication of an enterprise itself is a transformation process of "reconstructing social life and culture", which not only needs to be analyzed from the top-level framework of society, but also needs to accept psychological individual consumer groups. This article hopes to be inspired by successful cases in the course of historical development, combining social construction and advertising narrative strategies and other

theories, to explore the theoretical framework of cross-media narratives for the internationalization of Chinese corporate brands, aiming to provide appropriate guidance for the communication of commercial brands in the post-globalization era. Thinking coordinates.

1.2.2 Level of reality. Chinese brands, like Chinese culture, are the writing and expression of the Chinese spirit. Telling the story of Chinese brands well is to better interpret the cultural representation of China's strength. In the face of new audiences, new market environment and new media environment, brand stories need to be carefully designed and effectively operated and maintained. As more and more Chinese brands go international, the advertising creativity of Chinese brands will pay more attention to international narrative ability and performance skills.

2. Literature review

In order to conduct effective research, the author collects, organizes, and screens a large amount of information, and selects well-known journals and newspapers in the industry as the first choice to ensure the reference ability and authority of the literature. Specifically follow the following principles:

One is Chinese and foreign monographs and comprehensive works on Chinese brands and international communication in China, focusing on the compilation of historical culture and advertising documents. The second is to absorb the academic achievements and practices of Western theoretical classics as theoretical reference. The third is to comprehensively refer to relevant knowledge of other disciplines and theories, and collect a large number of representative cases as research objects as basic reference materials.

2.1 Overview of the international communication of Chinese corporate brands

2.1.1 The development process of cross-cultural communication of Chinese brands.1) Cross-cultural advertising information dissemination in ancient China.

Advertising, or product promotion, has been a necessary means of social resource allocation since ancient times. In the Qin Dynasty, China already had direct economic and trade relations with the Korean Peninsula and Indochina. During the Tang and Song dynasties, Chinese cultural exchanges were very prosperous. Chang'an City was the core hub of the East Asian cultural circle at that time. Merchants and envoys from various countries gathered here. Physical commodities with Chinese culture and elements began to flow overseas, becoming an important factor in cross-cultural exchanges.

Figure 2.1 The sea routes of ambassadors from ancient Japan to Tang China. (Image source: Public Domain, 2017)
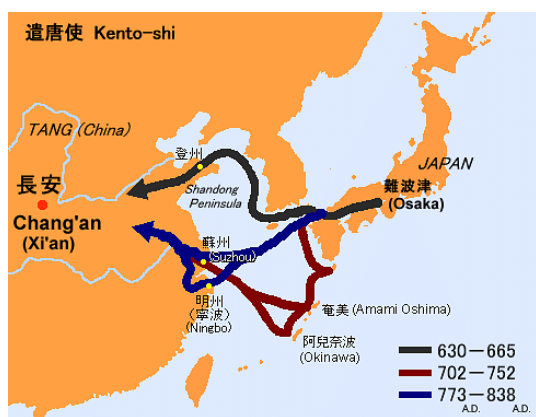
The urban commodity economy in the Song Dynasty was highly prosperous, and the invention and use of movable type printing left a rich and colorful stroke in the advertisements of the Song Dynasty. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, advertising forms such as signboard advertisements spread overseas

along with the foreign trade of merchants. Businessmen living and doing business in the Japanese archipelago have even gradually formed a "Chinatown", and their business activities abroad have become a global memory of the spread of Chinese culture and elements.

2) Cross-cultural advertising information dissemination in modern China. After the outbreak of the Opium War, foreign capital and goods poured into China in large quantities. At that time, the most notable sign of advertising development was the appearance of newspaper advertisements. For example, Declaration and Shanghai New News have published large-format advertisements.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, with the development of social economy, the national level gradually realized the important role of advertising in economic development.

3) Cross-cultural advertising information dissemination of Chinese brands in the new era. After the reform and opening up, in addition to setting up advertising majors in colleges and universities, the government also issued a series of laws and regulations related to advertising.

After joining the World Trade Organization, many multinational companies poured into China. In 2006, the Chinese Elements International Creative Competition came into being, and well-known domestic and foreign advertising competitions such as the China International Advertising Festival and the Global Chinese Advertising Awards were established one after another. In particular, the success of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games pushed the design of "Chinese elements" to a climax. Since then, with the help of a series of international events such as the Shanghai World Expo, the 2010 Guangzhou Asian

Games, the Hangzhou G20 Summit, and the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, the "Chinese Elements" advertisement has shined internationally.

The new era puts forward higher requirements for Chinese advertisements. It is necessary to properly use Chinese elements to spread Chinese values and moral sentiments, but also pay attention to the aesthetic orientation and cultural traditions of other countries.

Figure 2.2 Chinese Elements in the Opening Ceremony of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. (Image source: Maddie Meyer/Getty Images, 2022)

2.2 Transmedia narrative strategy

Transmedia storytelling is to create a complete content experience by constructing a shared story space (universe), planning concepts in different media forms and telling different branch stories according to the needs and acceptance preferences of different target consumer groups.

In the 1990s, the US economy continued to develop steadily, and the advertising and marketing industry achieved a new round of rapid growth. In 1992, Henry Jenkins published "Word Poachers: TV Fans and Participatory Culture", and then formally proposed transmedia narrative in 2003, in his book "Converging Cultures: The Conflict Zone of

New and Old Media" (2006), he defines a "transmedia narrative" as: "A story that unfolds across multiple media platforms, in which new texts in each medium are adapted to make them unique and valuable contributions to the overall story. It's ideal form is that each media performs its own duties and fulfills its responsibilities.".

Figure 2.3 Alibaba short-selling Jingdezhen "Xinhua Porcelain Code" cross-media creativity. (Image source: Tianyukong Advertising)

2.3 Brand IP operation mode

Brand and IP are not concepts in the same category. The academic definition of IP stems from different inductions on certain media businesses. Fan Yang and Zhao Mengran (2015) believed that IP refers to content, and content is the source of the adaptation of the original work. Yang Xinmin (2016) believes that the essence of IP is anything that can quickly bring greater benefits after creation or re-creation. It doesn't matter whether the creation of these things has intellectual property rights, what matters is whether they can quickly bring huge profits... The concept of IP has nothing to do with works, but the production and reproduction of capital. Li Jianxin, Li Xin, Yuan Huanxin (2016) summarized the conditions that can be transformed into IP: "financial", "marketable", and "capable Appreciation". However, this definition is easy to fall into the pursuit of

commercial value while ignoring the artistry of the work misunderstanding.

2.4 IMC and brand international communication

Don E. Schultz and Stanley I. Tannenbaum (1993) proposed a relatively complete concept of integrated marketing communication (IMC). After years of development, IMC has become a mainstream marketing method. Through the marketing strategy of IMC, many multinational brands such as IBM have achieved success.

Modern scholars began to study the issue of brand internationalization in the 1950s. In the 1980s, researchers such as Levitt (1983) and Wind (1986) began to explore the relationship between brand internationalization and localization.

When an international enterprise enters an international market, it will be affected by the disadvantage of outsiders. Its operation and maintenance costs also include secondary costs faced by outsiders (Luo, 2019). Robertson and Barwise (2012) propose three paths for international brands to enter new markets. First, entering new markets by acquiring brands that sell in new markets but not owned by the company, second, entering new markets by exporting existing company brands to new markets, and third, entering new markets by establishing brand alliances with other companies. Three criteria, speed, control and investment, can be used to evaluate different paths.

2.5 Brand internationalization and source country culture

There is an old saying in China that goes, "One side of the water and soil nourishes the other side's people". The influence of the culture of the country of origin of products and brands on marketing effects has become the focus of many scholars' research. The cultural image of the country of origin is one of the important factors affecting consumers' attitudes towards brands and products (Wang Linlin, 2015; Shen Tao, 2017; Ni Wanru, 2018; Liu Jianli, 2020; Yang Xinyang, 2023). The country-of-origin effect usually means that consumers' overall cognition and impression of a country will affect consumers' judgments on the country's products and brands (Wang Linlin, 2015; Yang Xinyan, 2023). When consumers face unfamiliar foreign products, they tend to judge the product value from the image of the country of origin (Shen Tao, 2017), and then form an attitude towards the product. The formation mechanism of the image of the country of origin and the influencing factors of the country-of-origin effect have been Extensive discussion (Liu Jianli, 2020).

Figure 2.4 Li-Ning brand in Paris Fashion Week (2019).

(Image source: https://daoinsights.com/works/guochao-the-chinese-brands-breaking-the-made-in-china-stereotype/)

2.6 Disadvantages of outsiders

For multinational companies, specific costs such as cultural identity and brand communication increased during the internationalization process lead to an objective competitive disadvantage, which is the "disadvantage of outsiders". There are also

many scholars who simply summarize it as "responsibility in different places" (Kostova and Zaheer, 1999; Zeheer and Mosakowski, 1997).

Empirical studies have shown that the disadvantage of outsiders leads to poorer performance of international firms than local firms (Miller and Parkhe, 2002), higher market exit rates (Hennart, Roehland Zeng, 2002) and more legal disputes (Eden and Miller, 2004). How to weaken the stereotype caused by the disadvantage of outsiders? This is a problem that Chinese enterprises must face in their brand internationalization.

3. Conceptual framework

In order to present the opinions of enterprises and consumer groups more objectively, this paper conducted a sample survey at home and abroad. Referring to previous studies, we set up the inspection indicators of Chinese corporate brand communication and advertising marketing perception from the dimensions of brand international communication, cross-media narrative strategy, social construction perspective, and cultural communication strategy, targeting at business owners and consumer groups. Conduct research on sample identities in order to know the cultural identity trends of both the subject and the recipient in the brand communication process.

Based on the above assumptions, the conceptual framework of this study is as follows:

**Figure 3.1 Thematic research conceptual model.**
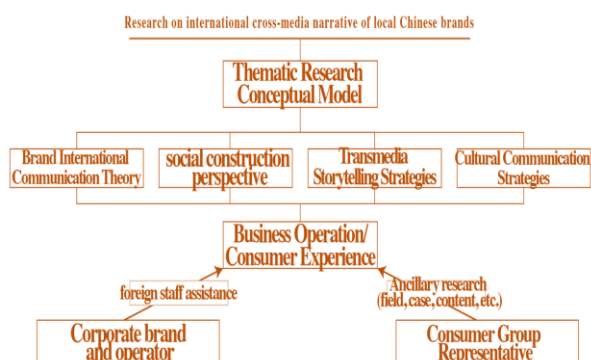
(Image source: Organized by this study)

4. Research Methodology

This paper sets up two sample identities of business owners and consumer groups to carry out research, in order to know the cultural identity trends of both the subject and the recipient in the brand communication process. First, a total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, and 102 valid questionnaires were finally recovered.

Figure 4.1 In recent years, the company's overseas advertising expenses accounted for about the proportion of the company's average annual total marketing expenses. (Image source: Organized by this study)
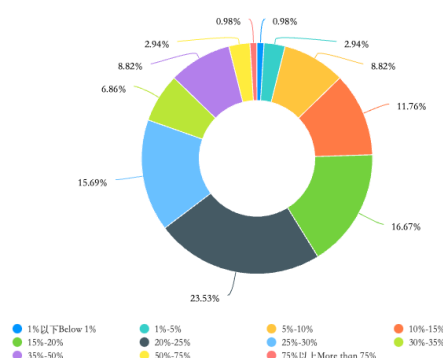
The above investigation and research on the brand internationalization and advertising cognition of Chinese enterprises shows that:

1) Judging from the basic situation of the interviewed companies, these companies are in the leading position in the same industry in the international market.

2) The overseas advertising expenses of the interviewed companies account for 15% to 20% of the average annual marketing expenses. This shows that due to the entry of new markets, it is normal for companies to carry out overseas promotion.

3) To overcome difficulties such as the barrier effect of international brands and national cultural differences, it is necessary to carry out communication activities by grafting the cultural elements of the source country, so that the brand can be favored by more consumers.

Secondly, with the content of the survey themed on consumer experience, a sample survey was conducted on international students from China, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and other countries. A total of 800 questionnaires were distributed, and 408 valid questionnaires were eventually returned.

The survey results showed that:

1) Chinese corporate brands such as Alibaba and Metersbonwe have relatively high levels of internationalization, but their awareness of international brands is low. Respondents generally classify them as local Chinese brands.

2) These brands are highly internationalized and their products are spread all over the world. In terms of advertising marketing, advertising has a great influence on consumers. In terms of narrative strategy and element selection, it needs to be structured from top-level thinking.

Form a brand style that combines the brand's own personality with the cultural commonality of the source country.

3) The export of brands in Chinese traditional culture is still not in place, and the international influence of "Made in China" needs to be strengthened.

5. Results and discussion

According to the above sample survey results for the two sample identities of business owners and consumer groups:

The internationalization of Chinese corporate brands still focuses more on the international sales of products. Due to the product-centered survival concept supported by China's large industrial system with cost advantages, even brand companies with relatively high reputation in China's domestic market spend relatively little in the process of brand internationalization, communication, operation and maintenance.

The image of the country of origin and the disadvantages of outsiders are also important reasons why Chinese companies dare not invest heavily in brand internationalization. This requires promoting an intensive collaboration mechanism among Chinese brands from the perspective of top-level mechanisms and social and cultural construction.

On the other hand, the data also shows that consumers have a more emotional view of brand image, but the decisive factor behind it may be the disadvantage of outsiders that all international companies face. As China's national strength grows and its role in international affairs becomes more and more important, domestic consumers' recognition of Chinese local brands is also getting higher and higher. In addition, with the support of a high-quality manufacturing system, domestic brands

with high-quality products are becoming more and more adept at using Chinese elements and Chinese cultural symbols for cross-media integrated marketing.

However, the internationalization of Chinese corporate brands presents a completely different situation. On the one hand, some countries and regions that lack a complete industrial system still have path dependence or cost value dependence on Chinese manufacturing. On the other hand, the encounters of Chinese corporate brands in the European and American markets, such as the Huawei incident in 2017, due to the reverse propaganda of the Western camp in recent years, this political factor is well known to ordinary consumer groups. Consumers are coerced to a certain extent in this market ecology. But in the long run, as long as Chinese corporate brands continue to maintain their own production and cost advantages, and continue to climb the peak of technological research and development, there is still room for global development in the future.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

During the development process of the past forty years, Chinese enterprises have almost completely followed the existing European and American systems in terms of rules, and operating standards due to their integration into the global market dominated by the European and American systems. However, the new crown epidemic has brought about major changes in the world structure, and the trend of anti-globalization has become more and more obvious. Standing at a turning point in history, we need to go back to the original point and re-understand the concept of brand international communication. Combining the above literature review and research analysis, the author tries to put forward some conclusions and suggestions on the cross-media communication strategy of Chinese corporate brand internationalization.

6.1 From country image to brand image

We need to re-understand the concept of internationalization, which refers to the transformation and exchange of politics, economy and culture between countries. In the process of internationalization, the corporate brand actually needs to be placed in the second place, not the first. This is because, in peaceful times, exchanges between countries are mainly based on commerce, and behind commercial interests is actually cooperation and competition between countries. Behind an influential and derivative commercial brand is actually a country participating in the global division of labor. Based on this, the national level should continue to promote the policy formulation and orderly guidance of building independent brands since 2011, establish a market-oriented, multi-investment financing system and industrial venture capital management system, and expand domestic and foreign financing channels to adapt to the current situation in China. The characteristics and practical needs of the high-quality development stage.

The government should change from direct management to indirect management, and continue to strengthen the external communication of the national image, build a scientific and perfect external publicity system, and focus on promoting a new, friendly, high-quality "Chinese brand campaign" from the perspective of social construction. Learn from the successful experience of overseas communication of industrial brands in other countries to promote the better international development of my country's local corporate brands.

6.2 Build a world-class advertising and public relations industry system

Secondly, strengthen the construction of a world-class brand marketing and advertising public relations industrial system. Behind global brands such as IBM, Microsoft, Apple, Tesla, SONY, Toyota, Samsung, etc. is the brand communication and advertising marketing industry that started on Fifth Avenue in Madison, New York in the 1960s.

"Going global" of Chinese brands has become the choice of more and more high-quality local Chinese companies. The internationalization of Chinese local brands also shoulders the important task of spreading Chinese culture, Chinese spirit and Chinese image to the world. As an important part of my country's cultural and creative industries, the advertising marketing industry needs top-level planning and guidance from the perspective of social and cultural construction, and overall planning from cultural policies and legal systems, taxation, and education.

6.3 Theoretical system of Chinese cultural cross-media narrative

Design a narrative mechanism based on Chinese traditional cultural images and genetic characteristics, and establish a distinctive theoretical system and element symbol system. Extending to the scope of advertising creation, the external driving force of advertising narrative across various media is "business and consumer audiences", its core is "brand narrative (story strategy)", and its operation process is "concentric circles". The "intertext" ripple in the "intertext" style, its technical means is a multi-type media combination that carries the brand experience, and its text processing skills are "unique humanistic and full of universal value", "non-simple appropriation" and "organic whole" , its object

is "multi-level cross-media audience", its purpose is to provide "implantation experience of brand story" and "promote more emotional investment and consumption conversion" (this is also the logic of business implicit in cross-media narrative), and ultimately "promote the integration of symbolic experience of brand image and real material experience", an operating system that greatly improves people's understanding of the core of corporate brand narrative strategies and cultural characteristics.

Figure 5.1 Transmedia narrative of advertising.
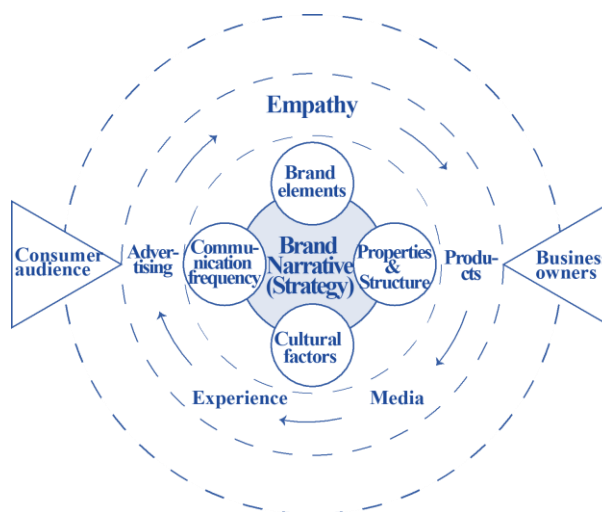
(Image source: Organized by this study)

6.4 Individuality and commonality

Chinese corporate brands need to learn to use Western narrative methods to tell stories about Eastern brands on the premise of clearly sorting out the culture of their own brand's country of origin. Moderately avoid the disadvantages of outsiders with narrative methods and content of universal value.

Pay attention to the mutual integration and derivation with the culture of other countries, enhance the cultural personality of the host country on the basis of commonality, be good

at subtly adding cultural elements of the host country.

From a long-term perspective, the internationalization of Chinese local corporate brands needs to truly integrate into the culture, customs, social lifestyle and interpersonal relationships of the host country. Through cleverly combining the culture of the source country, it is presented in a form where individuality and commonality coexist. Although the display and influence of Chinese corporate brands in the global market still has some potential and is still in its infancy, it is believed that with the support of my country's continuous economic and technological development, through in-depth research and research, we will actively explore common cross-border products in practice. The media narrative strategy will eventually promote more and more Chinese corporate brands to occupy a favorable position in the global market.

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