

The Influence of Brand Image on Chinese Customers

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Abstract. When an enterprise develops, its brand image can have a significant impact on its development. An enterprise has a positive or negative brand image, just as a person has a good or bad reputation. The reputation of a person is valued by its partners and the reputation of the brand is also valued by consumers. In recent years, brand image has attracted more and more attention from consumers, which has also caused entrepreneurs to reflect, brand image is the credibility of the brand show, leaving a positive image or a negative image to consumers, depending on the brand's actions. This paper will display events such as Xinjiang Cotton, DIOR horse-face dress, and ERKE donation, and their impact in China, to analyze the positive feedback generated by positive images such as enterprises taking the initiative to assume social responsibility, and the negative impact of such behaviors such as enterprises spreading rumors, blindly following and plagiarizing. Brand image has a significant impact on consumers and is very powerful. Many factors affect the development of enterprises. From the perspective of brand image, this paper summarizes the factors that influence brand image on Chinese consumers by combing relevant literature and analyzing the above brand marketing data and analyzing the influence of brand image on Chinese consumers, as well as the magnitude and Time Cycle of the influence. Hope the enterprise management brand image has a certain enlightenment.

Keywords: Brand image; contrastive analysis; time cycle.

1. Introduction

With the more and more diversified competition of brands, the brand image is paid more and more attention by people. In China, when similar events such as Xinjiang cotton and DIOR horse-face dresses occur, Chinese consumers will set off a patriotic wave and advocate not buying products of the brands involved; After the ERKE donation event, Chinese consumers set off a frenzy to buy products from ERKE. Public opinion orientation and consumers' impression of the brand image have a great impact on the brand, constituting the brand image in the minds of consumers. Over time, these highs declined accordingly. At this time, the image of the brand has not changed, but the consumer behavior of the brand has changed. Based on the analysis of the above events, this paper will take the influence of brand image on Chinese consumers as the theme, study its influencing factors, the size, duration and far-reaching degree of the influence, and study the reasons for the changes in consumer behavior when brand image remains unchanged. This paper mainly analyzes the positive image and negative image of the brand from two aspects. Firstly, the negative images of the Xinjiang cotton incident and the DIOR horse-face dress incident are taken as examples to discuss the impact of negative images on Chinese consumers; Taking ERKE's donation and the Chinese Hanfu organization's approach to DIOR's horse-face dress incident as examples, this paper discusses the impact of positive images on Chinese consumers. Finally, the two are combined for comparative analysis to study the different effects of two completely different images on consumer psychology.

2. Negative Brand Image

2.1. Xinjiang Cotton Event

In March 2021, a number of foreign-funded enterprises released information to boycott Xinjiang Cotton, denigrate China, falsely accuse Xinjiang Cotton of quality problems, and cancel cooperation with Xinjiang Cotton. At that time, Chinese consumers set off a wave of patriotism, and carried out

a series of campaigns such as Chinese netizens boycotting "H&M", "to clear the name of Xinjiang cotton" [1], Chinese people voluntarily boycotted the products of these brands, including Adidas, NIKE, Converse and other brands.

On March 26, 2021, Global Yearly Brand Institute released China's top ten sports brands in the first quarter of 2021[2], ANTA and LI-NING ranked first and second respectively, and NIKE and Adidas retreated to the list third and fourth, it can be seen that the negative image of the brand has a strong negative impact in the hearts of Chinese consumers. This impact, especially at this moment, is very strong. When the activity passes over a period of time, the influence of the brand image will also change. According to the data of June 2021 in Figure 1, LI-NING still ranks first in the sales list, but ANTA falls, and NIKE and Adidas rise one level each. By this time, three months after the Xinjiang cotton incident, some Chinese consumers had begun to forget about it, and the media was no longer occupied by the story, so sales of these brands began to pick up.

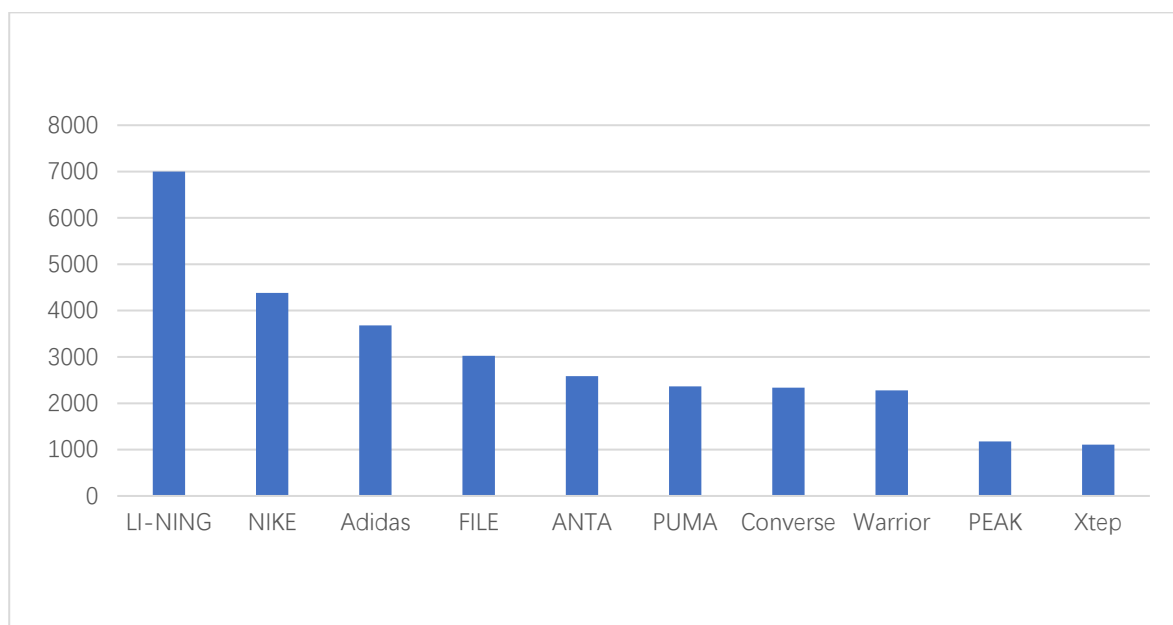


Fig. 1 Top 10 sports brand sales in China in June 2021

Photo credit: Original

In July 2022, DIOR launched a mid-length skirt priced at 29,000 yuan, with overlapping front and back pieces, similar to the version of the traditional Chinese horse-face dress, and many details are similar [4], but DIOR did not say in its product introduction that the inspiration is from the horse-face dress, but the official introduction said that "using the iconic Dior silhouette" original. This is considered an act of cultural appropriation by the Chinese people. [5] Relevant Chinese Hanfu institutions sued DIOR, but because China's horse-face dress has a long history and has not applied for a modern patent, the lawsuit was unsuccessful, and DIOR did not make any comment on it, which caused a great negative response from the Chinese people, so China set off another wave of patriotism, and Chinese consumers advocated boycotts of DIOR products. The boycott was in full swing, lasting about three months, and then there is a significant decrease in the boycott, and consumers returned to DIOR stores and buy its products.

3. Positive Brand Image

3.1. ERKE Donation Event

In 2021, during a rainstorm in Zhengzhou, China, the Chinese sports brand ERKE donated 50 million yuan to the affected areas, as shown in Figure 2. Author Alice Yan wrote in the South China

Morning Post, ERKE is not a big brand, it only sells clothing primarily aimed at tennis and table tennis. [6] And the company was losing money at the time, so the 50 million was not a small amount for them, equivalent to 1/6 of their company's assets.

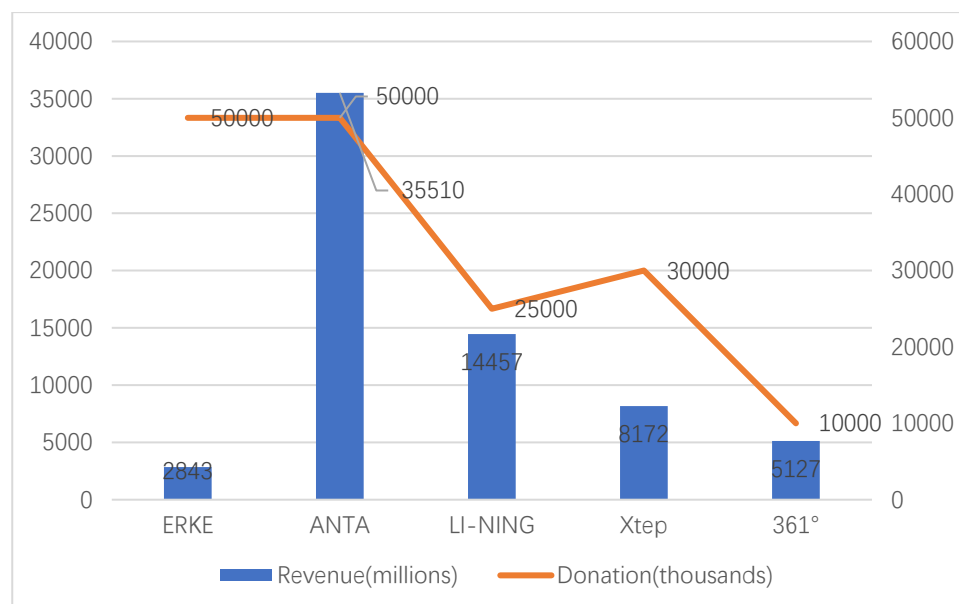


Fig. 2 Comparison of revenue and donation of Chinese sports brands (unit: millions, thousands)
Photo credit: Original

According to the data of China Business and Industry Times [7], among the famous sports brands in China, ERKE's donation amount is equal to ANTA's, but ANTA's revenue amount is much higher than ERKE's. ERKE has the least revenue among these brands, but it is the largest donation amount. This behavior helped ERKE establish a very conscientious corporate image in the hearts of Chinese consumers, and to this day, Chinese people will unconsciously give a thumbs-up when they mention ERKE. After the ERKE donation, it did not hype for donation, so consumers praise its entrepreneurial spirit, have chosen to buy ERKE products, but at this time, ERKE studio staff are urging consumers to rational consumption, and even, Hongxing Erke's boss Wu Rongzhao personally arrived to advocate everyone to rational consumption, unless someone needs to buy. But unexpectedly, netizens responded with a witty "advise him not to meddle" [8]. At this point, ERKE established a very positive brand image for consumers, so consumers flocked to ERKE, making it popular. After ERKE's donation, the number of fans on the e-commerce platform rose sharply, and the number of orders for the broadcast room also rose sharply. Statistics show that within 36 hours, the company sold more than 67-million-yuan worth of goods on its social media platform. [9] Some call it "donation" marketing, but Chinese consumers are willing to pay for this kind of charitable marketing. After three months of sales, the number of ERKE's live fans began to decline and the marketing volume also began to decrease [10]. As shown in Figure 3, the marketing volume in August cannot be compared with that in July, but it can be seen that ERKE still maintains the highest sales volume.

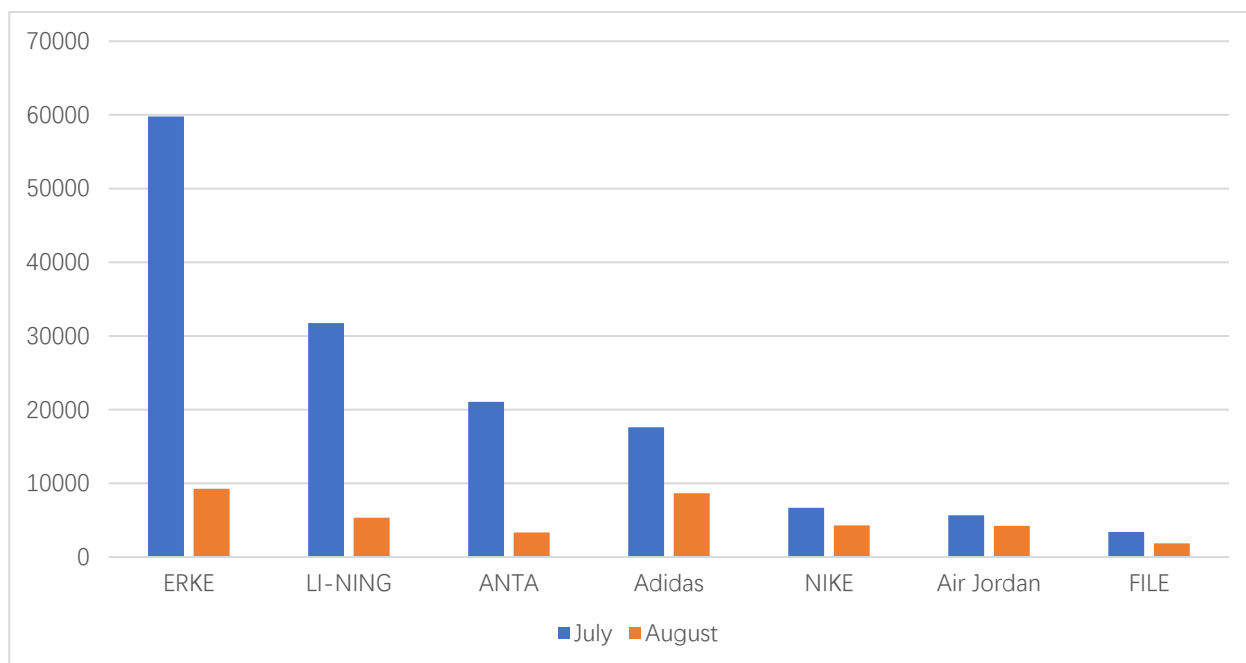


Fig. 3 July and August 2021 sports brand sales

Photo credit: Original

3.2. Chinese Hanfu Institution

In contrast to DIOR, because the relevant Chinese Hanfu institutions sued DIOR for this matter, it won the recognition of Chinese consumers, Chinese traditional clothing began to enter the public again, and these institutions also won the favor of consumers. Although Hanfu culture has a history of thousands of years, the Hanfu industry has only ushered in rapid development in recent years. Fashion business training instructor and commentator Leng Yun believes that only with enough influence and appeal of the brand, in order to let more people pay attention to and understand the Hanfu or a traditional cultural element, and promote its popularity, and eventually toward industrialization. [11] Just like this, these institutions have established a positive image for consumers, and have corresponding influence and appeal at this moment, so Hanfu culture is becoming more and more popular and more and more people pay attention to it.

4. Combined Contrastive Analysis

With the passage of time, some people have forgotten these things, some people say "Chinese people always have no memory". The fact is not so, the network has memory, and people also have memory, in the final analysis, or because the influential factors are not deep enough, brand image is not the only point of concern for consumers. But anyway, the eyes of the masses are clear, brand image is very important, and brand quality is also very important. As can be seen from Figures 1 and 3, time also has an important impact on brand image. No matter Xinjiang Cotton involved brand, DIOR or ERKE, their sales volume changed significantly within three months after the event occurred. It can be seen that the influence of brand image on brand sales volume has a Time Cycle. The impact of such a scale event is generally three months, and the scale also has an impact on the length of the cycle. During the cycle, consumers will buy or not buy certain brands because of herd mentality or other factors. After the cycle is over, other new events will reoccupy the Internet and people's lives, and the influence of this event will be weakened, or even forgotten by consumers, but there will still be some consumers who are deeply affected, so the impact of an event will not completely disappear, and someone will always remember it [11].

After the ERKE donation event became public knowledge, its sales skyrocketed and continued to be high for two months, until two months later, the popularity of the public dropped, so the sales began to decline, the third month sales continued to decline, and the fourth month sales were much lower than the hottest time, but in fact, it was still higher than the sales before the donation incident. In the past two years, ERKE has also been appreciated by Chinese consumers. Through this donation boom, ERKE has established a huge positive image in the hearts of Chinese consumers. After this donation, ERKE continues to do good deeds and donate money, which makes Chinese consumers more and more willing to take the initiative to buy the brand's products. After the Xinjiang cotton event, the sales of H&M, Adidas, NIKE and other brands fell sharply, but also after the trough of two months, sales began to pick up, but even if the recovery, it is difficult to return to the original state. Because they have established a negative image in the minds of Chinese consumers, after the negative event has passed the negative cycle, these brands may attract one type of consumer to buy through factors such as high quality, but another type of consumer will pay great attention to the brand image and remove the products of these brands from their consideration. This is why the sales curve has not returned to its original state during this period. But it has to be said that this second type of consumer will also have their brand image cycle, but it is longer than the first type, and how much longer depends on the individual.

5. Summary

This paper argues that brand image has a great impact on Chinese consumers. Before the above events, the marketing volume of each brand was relatively stable, but after the occurrence of these events, the marketing volume of these brands has undergone tremendous changes, which is undoubtedly the impact of brand image on Chinese consumers. As for the issue of "the influence of positive and negative brand images", this paper finds that it is difficult to compare the influence of positive and negative brand images on the brand, because there is a difference between the positive image and the positive image, and the negative image and the negative image, and the influence of positive and negative images is indeed different. In fact, it is not the difference between positive and negative images, but because of the length of the impact. According to the data presented in the article, the sales volume is also constantly changing with the change of time. After the event, the sales volume will change greatly within a short time, and after a long time, the sales volume will slowly recover to its original state. Therefore, this paper believes that the influence of brand image on Chinese consumers has timeliness, that is the Time Cycle of influence on brand image mentioned in the article. The size of the brand event determines the length of the Time Cycle affecting the brand image. If an enterprise wants long-term development, in today's era, it needs to pay attention to the establishment of brand image, if the brand establishes a negative image, it needs to find a way to change the impression of consumers, of course, time is also a good helper; If the brand has established a positive image, then if they hope to do business in the future, it needs to maintain the image, heat alone can not hold up a brand, brand image is not the only factor affecting consumers to make decisions, but its influence power can be seen. Enterprises still need to pay attention to the impact of brand image on consumers, establish a positive brand image, comply with legal regulations, and maintain good ethics, with the entrepreneurial spirit, for the sake of society, for the sake of consumers, the future of the enterprise has a long way to go!

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