

The Impact of Animation Marketing on Brands: A Case Study on Mixue Ice Cream & Tea

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Abstract. Following COVID-19's regional impact on the mainland China has weakened, Chinese inhabitants' thirst for beverages has grown, and there are several beverage brands on the mainland. "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea," a milk tea brand with a specific market share, officially announced the schedule and transmission of the connected cartoon "Snow King Arrives" on August 13, 2023. The first episode of the animated series will air on August 25. The purpose of this research is to determine the influence that the broadcast of this animation will have on the milk tea brand "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea." The cartoon "Snow King Arrives" is used as a case study in this study to undertake a complete examination. It will be used to track the length, number of episodes, and substance of the cartoon, as well as the number of likes, comments, plays, and ratings it receives on key platforms. The situation will be examined using marketing and other relevant expertise. This study examines the influence of the "Snow King Arrives" broadcast on MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea in terms of customer purchase intention, brand loyalty, and brand value and makes recommendations on how to improve these areas. Product placement and product-related material; creating additional sequels and animating the group's philosophy; event marketing.

Keywords: Purchase intention; Brand loyalty; Brand value.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

As the spread and influence of COVID-19 on the Chinese mainland have weakened, the home blockades and other prevention and control measures implemented by cities during the epidemic have gradually been lifted. The lives of residents on the Chinese Mainland have gradually returned to normal. During the epidemic, the demand for drinks, food, and other commodities that were forced to be repressed due to home living has also been released. During the pandemic, the rise in China's unemployment rate and unemployed population have also made people's consumption behavior more conservative. Figure 1 reveals the urban registered unemployed population and registered urban unemployment rate during the pandemic in China [1].

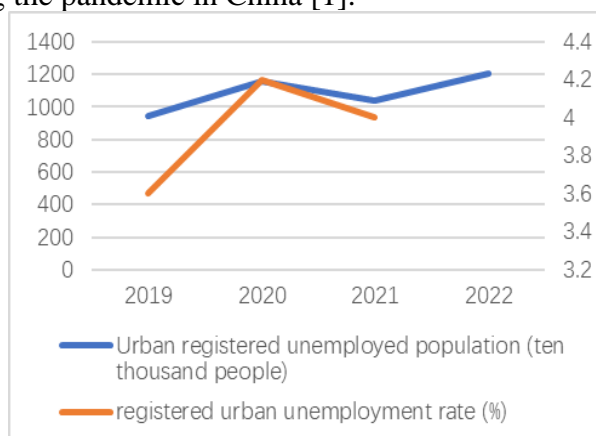


Figure 1. Urban registered unemployed population and registered urban unemployment rate [1].

Compared to bulk commodities, the consumption of small commodities has increased. The market size of China's beverage industry has slightly expanded, and consumer demand for beverages

continues to grow. Figure 2 reveals the Consumer Price Index of Food, Tobacco, and Alcohol Residents in China [2].

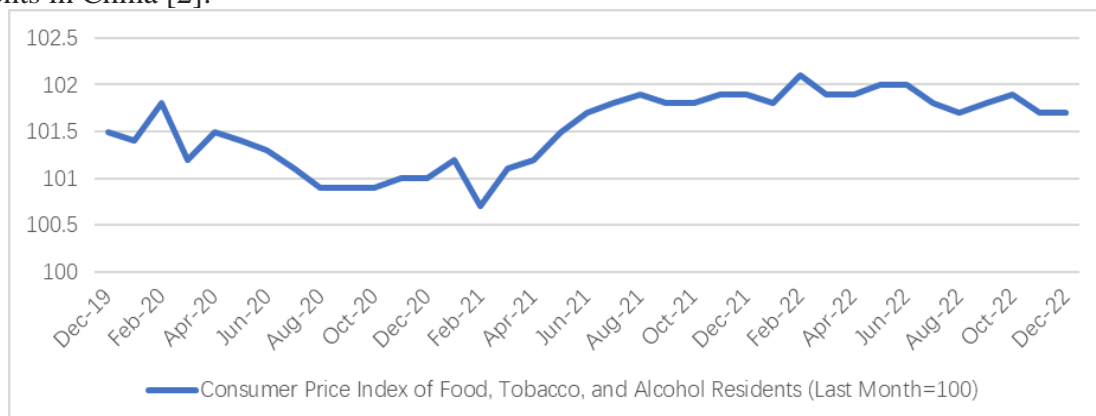


Figure 2. Consumer Price Index of Food, Tobacco, and Alcohol Residents in China [2].

Within the realm of beverages, there exists a wide array of milk tea brands, each boasting a significant presence through physical retail outlets situated in prominent urban centers. In contemporary society, the proliferation of social media platforms and the intensification of daily routines have led individuals to exhibit a greater propensity for consuming shorter video content as a means of leisure during their leisure hours. "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea" is a milk tea brand that holds a significant market share in the Chinese market. The brand boasts a substantial number of stores and enjoys relatively high levels of brand recognition. In light of the conclusion of the epidemic and a surge in catering demand, the Chinese beverage business is currently experiencing a period of growth. Additionally, there is an increased inclination among individuals to engage with short video content. The brand-related animated films for "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea" were officially approved on August 13, 2023, and then broadcasted on August 25.

1.2. Research Gap

The milk tea brand "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea" has been a hot topic of discussion and research by many scholars in recent years. For example, Yang Chen has studied the supply chain of "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea" and its strategy of prioritizing the supply chain [3]. Wang Kun has taken the profit model of "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea" as the research object, studying the profit targets and profit points of its affordable tea drinking model [4]. Wang and Li have also studied the brand communication of "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea" and explored the communication strategies of tea beverage brands in the digital era [5].

Numerous scholars have extensively investigated the subject matter of "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea". Recently, the company has adopted a promotional strategy involving the release of animations. While this approach has garnered some consumer support, there is a dearth of research examining the potential influence of animation production on future beverage sales and brand perception. This study aims to address the existing research gap by employing a case study approach, focusing on the marketing approaches employed by "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea." The primary objective is to examine the influence of these marketing strategies on the promotion of animation production. This study aims to offer decision-making help to Chinese milk tea firms about the potential adoption of animation production as a marketing strategy. Additionally, it intends to provide thoughts and suggestions on the production of animation. Simultaneously, this study can aid Chinese milk tea businesses in the rational allocation of their limited resources.

1.3. Structure of This Paper

This article will use the development of animation in "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea" and its release on major video platforms in China as a case study to solve the aforementioned research topics. This new marketing model will assess the impact of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea in numerous aspects, the

reasons for these impacts, and present justifications based on existing phenomena and statistics. Finally, based on the study of the reasons, views and ideas are made as to what MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea should do next in order to attain better results.

2. Case Description

"MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea" is a chain establishment that specializes in milk tea and other novel beverages. It is well-known for producing high-quality, creative, and one-of-a-kind beverages, with the goal of satisfying the desires of modern youthful customers for fashionable, delicious, and diverse beverages. The forerunner of "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea" was launched in 1997 by the originator of "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea." The brand name "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea" was first used in 2000. "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea" began franchising in 2007. With the growing number of franchise locations, "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea" Trading Co., Ltd. was formed in 2008 to create Enterprise VI, formally unifying the store image of all franchisees.

Zhengzhou MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea Trading Co., Ltd. was renamed Zhengzhou Cross Strait Enterprise Management Company in 2010, after passing the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China's franchise registration and launching a "direct sales + franchise" market model. MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea achieved self-production of key raw ingredients and owned various patented technologies after the establishment of Henan Daka Food Co., Ltd. in 2012.

The MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea Logistics Park was opened in 2014, and a logistics-free shipping policy was introduced, accomplishing the strategic goal of "One Zhengzhou City in China." MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea constructed a 550-acre intelligent manufacturing industrial park in 2018, producing a high-tech developing ecological park that integrates market research, product R&D, process transformation, intelligent production, and logistics. Honey Snow Ice City's Guangzhou branch opened its doors on July 20th. Honey Snow Ice City's first foreign store opened in Hanoi, Vietnam on September 5th. "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea" debuted a new brand image named "Snow King" in November 2018. "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea" launched a theme song adapted from Oh, Susanna on December 23, 2019, which contained an animated video of the mascot "Snow King" on June 3, 2021. The official account of "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea" stated on social media on August 13, 2023, that its animated feature "Snow King Arrives" was set to be published and posted a corrected file PV. The animated film had its official premiere on August 25, 2023. This animated film is available on Tencent Video, iQiyi, Youku, Bilibili, Mango TV, and other platforms. It is updated every Friday at 10:00 a.m. Beijing time and features 5 episodes. In one season, there are 12 episodes, each consisting of a short series of roughly 9 minutes. The main figure in the cartoon is the mascot "Snow King" of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea.

On bilibili, "Snow King Arrives" has 5.998 million views, 168,000 likes, 9.9 ratings, 8,814 ratings, and 7,188 comments as of September 15, 2023 [6]. On iQiyi, Tencent Video, Mango TV, and Youku, there are a total of 4905 comments, with an average of 981 comments each episode. There are a total of 17104 likes on iQiyi, Tencent Video, and Mango TV, with an average of 3420.8 likes per episode.

3. Analysis on Problems

3.1. Effect on Purchase Intention

The publicity method of making animations for marketing publicity can increase consumers' willingness to purchase to a certain extent. Guo Ziyi takes Douyin as an example in her paper and analyzes the impact of short video marketing methods on consumers' purchase intentions based on stimulus-organization-response theory. When constructing the model, the three characteristics of short videos, namely usefulness, interest, and popularity, were selected as stimulus factors, and consumers' trust, pleasure, and perceived value were used to measure the organism and finally reflect on consumers' willingness to purchase [7]. It is concluded that the interest, popularity, and usefulness of short videos will have a strong positive effect on consumers' pleasure, perceived value, and trust

to varying degrees and then affect consumers' purchase intentions through these consumers' intrinsic perception factors [7]. As a consequence, it can be concluded that short videos with factors of interest, popularity, or usefulness can have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intentions.

"Snow King Arrives" has a certain interest as a cartoon, and based on the data above, it can be seen that it has a certain popularity on Tencent Video, iQiyi, Youku, Bilibili, Mango TV, and other platforms. Accordingly, this paper judges that the production and release of the animation "Snow King Arrives" will have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intentions.

3.2. Effect on Brand Loyalty

MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea's marketing method of producing short video animations is conducive to enhancing consumers' brand loyalty. Liu Dan believes that user loyalty includes two aspects: emotional loyalty and behavioral loyalty [8].

Facing the milk tea brand MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea, emotional loyalty is reflected in the recognition and trust of the quality and taste of its drinks, while behavioral loyalty is represented by repeated purchases of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea brand drinks. Xin Jie believes that during the short video animation marketing process, users' actions such as liking, commenting, and sharing on short videos can stimulate their enthusiasm for participating in interaction with the brand and improve users' trust in the brand, thereby increasing users' emotional loyalty [9]. The trust in the brand will also be transformed into the purchase behavior of the brand's products, thereby improving the brand's behavioral loyalty [9].

"Snow King Arrives" has a certain number of likes, comments, and shares on Tencent Video, iQiyi, Youku, Bilibili, Mango TV, and other platforms. It also has high ratings on some platforms, such as Bilibili. This shows that a certain number of consumers watched "The Snow King Arrives" on these platforms and interacted with the official. Consumers' interactions on these platforms can deepen the familiarity and trust of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea themselves and other consumers who watch the animation, thereby increasing consumers' emotional loyalty to it. The familiarity and trust in MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea will also make consumers more inclined to its drinks compared to other brands the next time they buy drinks, thereby increasing consumers' behavioral loyalty to it.

Therefore, this paper believes that MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea's production and release of the animation "Snow King Arrives" can simultaneously improve consumers' emotional loyalty and behavioral loyalty, thereby improving consumers' brand loyalty.

3.3. Effect on Brand Value

The utilization of animations in marketing promotion has the potential to augment brand image and awareness, thus bolstering brand value. According to Xu Minna, there is a belief that short videos have the ability to effectively communicate a larger quantity of information within a condensed timeframe when compared to traditional forms of media such as text and images [10]. Consequently, the utilization of concise videos enables a more immersive and precise depiction of the subject matter, thereby facilitating effective engagement with the target audience.

The brand's concept, style, characteristics, and logo can also be more naturally integrated into short videos through disassembly and interpretation, allowing users to immerse themselves in the brand's content scene experience in a more comprehensive manner, enhancing consumers' awareness of brand products and recognition of brand value. At the same time, the sensory, fragmented, and entertaining characteristics of short videos enable them to attract users' attention more quickly on social platforms compared to general text and image forms, thereby achieving rapid dissemination through social networks and quickly increasing brand awareness.

The image of the brand mascot "Snow King" is used as the protagonist in the animation of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea, and the scepter of the brand trademark "Snow King" is used as a key prop in the plot, making users more familiar with the mascot and trademark of Honey Snow Ice City while watching the animation. Snow King's appearance as a positive image in the plot can also, to some extent, enhance the audience's impression of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea. Due to the shorter duration

of each episode, "Snow King Arrives" can meet the entertainment needs of today's people in a fragmented time when the pace of life is accelerating, and the form of animated films can more easily attract young people. It has a faster dissemination speed on social platforms and short video platforms, with mainly young users, and is also more likely to attract more social traffic, thereby increasing the brand's visibility.

4. Suggestions

4.1. Suggestions on Purchase Intention

In addition to the animated story content, product-related content can also be appropriately implanted. Zheng Yixin argues that short video marketing can successfully shorten the audience's psychological distance in both cognitive and emotional entertainment content dimensions, consequently raising purchase intention for the marketed brand [11].

In this situation, "Snow King Arrives" as a cartoon has provided the audience with adequate emotional and entertaining content through its storyline, character visuals, and so on. Apart from emotional entertainment content, the cartoon did not introduce or advertise its own items. Audiences who are unfamiliar with MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea before seeing the animation will not be able to learn more about product price and features, the source and quality of raw materials, the number and location of stores, and other information that consumers care about by watching the movie. The brand itself only used cartoons to promote its own mascot and trademark, as well as other very limited content, and failed to leverage the use of cartoons for efficient advertising.

As a result, "Snow King Arrives" can include a specific introduction about the brand and items in the future animation content without causing viewers to become disgusted. This can assist consumers in better understanding the product's content and allowing them to select products that are more suitable for themselves. As a result, consumers who buy things that are more fit for them will be more ready to buy since they are more satisfied with the product.

4.2. Suggestions on Brand Loyalty

Making more sequels and reflecting the brand concept more in cartoons is another way to enhance brand loyalty. Before MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea, Haier Group in the home appliance industry jointly produced a long series of cartoons called Haier Brothers with Hongye Computer Animation Production Technology Co., Ltd., which started broadcasting in 1995 and ended in 2001. It was broadcast again on the CCTV Children's Channel on February 22, 2018. The length of a single episode is about 11 minutes, and there are 212 episodes in total. While telling the story, it also popularizes science and humanities knowledge among the audience.

Because of the greater number of episodes and longer broadcast time span, viewers who watched animation at the time were able to follow the plot and character development of the story for a longer length of time. This kind of continuity and coherence can help the audience form a deeper emotional connection with the company, increasing their attention and loyalty. A larger number of episodes can also help viewers create a sense of trust in the brand over a longer viewing period, and this sense of trust can help strengthen the audience's loyalty to the company. Simultaneously, the Haier brothers' story lines frequently include themes such as family, friendship, and teamwork. These ideals are congruent with the Haier Group's principles and concepts. These emotional ties can also help users feel close to Haier Group, increasing their trust in the company and brand loyalty. In the end, this \$60 million investment was worth hundreds of billions of dollars to Haier Group [12]. At the time, both MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea and Haier Group were advertising through the creation of animations, with the content of the cartoons geared toward teenagers and children. The lengths of the two animations' single episodes were likewise comparable.

Therefore, this paper believes that the characteristics of "Haier Brothers" in producing more episodes and embodying brand concepts in animation can be learned from "Snow King Arrives".

4.3. Suggestions on Brand Value

More than the animation itself, the event "Drink Brand Animation" itself can also be used for event marketing. Event marketing is a marketing strategy designed to promote products, brands, and services through activities associated with specific events.

In China, before MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea, no beverage brand had ever produced and released animations for marketing. This incident itself has already gained a certain degree of popularity, is in line with MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea's own behavioral philosophy of taking the lead in setting an example, and has attracted the attention of some consumers. Taking this opportunity to continue event marketing can take advantage of its low publicity cost, short-term effectiveness, high resource utilization, and fast information dissemination to increase the brand's exposure at a low cost and efficiently, thereby enhancing the brand value [13]. MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea can show the public the behind-the-scenes stories of animation production and the brand itself through articles and other means before the popularity of this incident subsides.

Business orders can also be sent to personal video bloggers on various platforms and ask them to analyze the animation story or review the brand's business history so as to further increase the brand's brand awareness and thereby increase the brand value in conjunction with the animation itself. At the same time, when conducting event marketing, attention should also be paid to ensuring that dissemination runs through the entire process of the event, so as to maximize the communication effect. When the dairy brand Mengniu and the entertainment program "Super Girl" cooperated in 2005, they sponsored and placed advertisements for "Super Girl" for a long time. This cooperation was so successful that it was even called "China Marketing in 2005: The First Case." This case also illustrates that dissemination throughout the entire event is helpful to the success of event marketing.

5. Conclusion

Based on the background that the lives of Chinese residents are gradually returning to normal and the consumption of small commodities is increasing, this paper studies the animation incident of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea as a milk tea brand, the related animation videos, and the audience's response to the animation videos, trying to explore the impact of using animation as a promotional method on the brand itself. Finally, it comes to the conclusion that producing animation as a marketing promotional method will increase customers' purchase intention, brand loyalty, and brand value to a certain extent.

In view of some of the existing shortcomings of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea Animation and the measures that can be further implemented, suggestions for moderately embedding brand-related content, producing sequels and reflecting the brand concept, and conducting event marketing are put forward. This paper once again verifies how the interest, popularity, and usefulness of short video animations affect consumers' purchase intentions. Once again, the knowledge related to users' behavioral loyalty and emotional loyalty was sorted out, as was how interaction with consumers can improve these two kinds of loyalty.

From a practical point of view, the cases studied in this paper can also provide certain decision-making support for the retail industry, which mainly focuses on food and beverages and whether to use animation or short videos for marketing in the future. The suggestions put forward can also be used as a reference for brands that publish short videos or animations on social media for promotion and marketing and decide whether to adopt them based on the actual situation of the brand.

This paper, however, has some problems and limits. To begin with, due to the short duration of the research, this paper failed to record and evaluate the shifting trends of the data when monitoring and evaluating the data on each platform in depth. As a result, this article is insufficiently detailed in examining the impact of popularity on consumers' purchase intentions. Further research can be conducted for a longer duration of observation and data recording for each platform over time. Second, this report neglected to analyze all of the effects of making animations for marketing on the brand. This article does not investigate how marketing might broaden the target market, boost sales, and

boost the competitiveness of brand products or services. These effects can be added to the analysis in the future to perform more in-depth research. Finally, this study does not address how to conduct intentional marketing based on the qualities of the promoted product as a drink. In the future, beverage features can be analyzed in comparison to other types of products to create more specific ideas on how to leverage beverage product characteristics for marketing.

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