Research on Competition Pattern and Response Strategies of Sporting Goods Brand Market—Take ANTA Brand as an Example

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Abstract. In view of the large number of sporting goods brands that have emerged in recent years, there is an urgent need for brands to improve their brand competitiveness by analyzing the market competition landscape. Researching the market competition pattern can help companies understand market competition trends and competitors' advantages and disadvantages in more detail and improve marketing strategies in a targeted manner. ANTA has successfully used its own strength to promote China's charm and great Chinese spirit to the world through this Winter Olympics. Through the above three successful cases of Anta, the study studied the corresponding three marketing strategies from the two aspects of positive impact and negative impact, and through data collection and integration, compared Anta with Nike and Li Ning and obtained the differences between brands in marketing strategies. The research provides corresponding marketing strategies for the areas found to need improvement in Anta. Anta can gradually narrow the gap between itself and other brands in the market competition pattern by strengthening cooperation with international brands and increasing product innovation and product R&D investment. Anta Group has achieved customer coverage through the acquisition of foreign high-end and high-end brands and the acquired brand marketing investment. On the one hand, it has also appropriately compensated for This solves the problem of insufficient foreign marketing of the independent Anta flagship store brand. But this can become the future development direction of Anta's independent brand.

Keywords: Anta, Marketing Strategy, Advantages and Disadvantages, Future Trend.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

In recent years, people's demand for sporting goods has continued to grow, and the sporting goods industry is also in a golden development period. On the one hand, today's sporting goods market has begun to involve basketball, football, gymnastics, and other sports, and consumers have more diverse choices when purchasing products. On the other hand, people are more willing to invest money in sports, so more and more fashionable and environmentally friendly innovative sports products are loved by consumers. In addition, the emergence of a large number of sporting goods brands has also caused fierce market competition. In the five years from 2013 to 2018, the expansion of the Chinese sports industry achieved rapid growth of 1.1-2.4 trillion yuan and is expected to exceed 5 trillion yuan by 2025. The important sporting goods industry performed strongly, with a year-on-year growth of 10.07% in 2018 [1]. Anta Group is one of the leading companies in China's sporting goods industry, and its successful experience in marketing strategies has high research value. Therefore, if companies want to harvest a promising market, a good marketing strategy is essential. Research on the competitive landscape of the sports brand market helps companies make full use of resources to improve marketing efficiency, reasonably optimize marketing strategies while understanding current market development trends, and effectively promote the development of the entire sports industry. In addition, the study of the competitive landscape of the sporting goods brand market is also very helpful for each brand to conduct an in-depth analysis of its own market competitiveness and that of other brands and to determine which aspects it has advantages and disadvantages based on competitiveness. When brands have a general understanding of each other's market competitiveness, they can consider looking for complementary brands to cooperate and jointly develop creative new

development models in which each brand can exert its strengths, bringing more creative products to consumers.

1.2. Literature Review

In his research, Hong pointed out that the high-quality development of the sporting goods industry has made a vital contribution to realizing the sports power strategy and building international brands. At the same time, Hong Hui also discovered that China's sporting goods industry has problems such as insufficient innovation drive and talent shortage and gave effective suggestions such as strengthening innovation and cultivating professional talents [2]. Sun believes that competition in China's sporting goods market is fierce. Chinese sports brand sales are facing problems such as limited marketing communication channels and the lack of scientific market research as a basis. The corresponding response strategies have been studied. In addition, Sun also discussed the significance of using marketing strategies in the sports industry [3]. By analyzing and comparing the marketing strategies of Nike and Li-Ning, Zhang concluded that compared with international brands such as Nike, which attach great importance to branding, domestic sports brands extremely lack good brand awareness and lack innovation in products. Therefore, Zhang Zheng believes that domestic sports brands can improve in terms of brand positioning and marketing plans [4].

Most scholars mainly study the market competition pattern of domestic sporting goods brands and compare domestic and foreign sports brands. A large number of researchers' research on the market competition pattern involves market share and market concentration, helping companies improve their marketing strategies and improve brand competitiveness. This study aims to compare and analyze domestic and foreign consumer demands and market characteristics to help Chinese brands improve their international marketing strategies, improve their international status in the international market, and enhance their brand influence. Few scholars have analyzed typical marketing cases of a certain brand, compared them with other brands, and studied the impact of relevant marketing strategies on the market competition pattern.

1.3. Research Framework

This article first briefly introduces three typical marketing cases of Anta, summarizes the different marketing measures adopted by Anta, and shows the final marketing effect and the benefits these three marketing strategies brought to Anta in the case. The article then further analyzes the impact of the marketing strategies adopted by Anta in these three marketing cases on the market competition pattern. Among them, the impact is divided into two aspects: positive and negative impact for research and demonstration. In the end, the article chooses to compare Anta's marketing strategies and competition plans with other brands and provides strong data support. Successfully found the future development direction of the ANTA brand.

2. Case Description

2.1. Anta's Cooperation with the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics

On the afternoon of September 28, 2017, Anta officially became the sportswear partner of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and signed a sponsorship agreement with the Beijing Winter Olympics Organizing Committee. Since then, ANTA has provided comprehensive equipment support to Chinese sports delegations four times and established strong partnerships with multiple winter sports national teams [5]. In addition, ANTA also provides clothing for on-site staff and volunteers. The equipment provided by Anta is rich in Chinese elements. While vigorously supporting the national team, it generously demonstrated China's strength and unyielding power to the world. This is a win-win sports operation event.

2.2. Table Tennis Player as ANTA Brand Spokesperson

Anta decided to sign Sun Linghui as its brand spokesperson in 1999. At the Sydney Olympics, Sun Linghui became the Olympic champion. As Sun Linghui's sponsor, the Anta brand has become popular. From this point of view, although Anta's marketing initiative carries certain risks, it has indeed brought considerable benefits to the Anta brand. Sun Linghui has superb skills and a sunny image. Sun Linghui's image and experience perfectly cater to Anta's philosophy of "I choose, I like". The cooperation between ANTA and Kong Linghui also better publicized Kong Linghui's unyielding sportsmanship on the court. The positive brand spirit demonstrated by Anta in brand promotion has successfully won consumers' favor.

2.3. Anta's DTC Strategy

The DTC (Direct to Consumer) model is a sales model from the manufacturer to the brand and then directly to the final consumer. Anta Sports will undergo a DTC model transformation in 2020. Anta focuses on the retail end of the front-end efforts, and the back-end uses comprehensive data from the digital platform to achieve refined operations. Anta's DTC model mainly reflects the transformation of offline "brand retailers" into "direct retailers" and the construction of online multi-platforms [6]. Therefore, the transformation of the formal DTC strategy has allowed the Anta brand to take a leading market position in recent years, and sales have continued to increase.

3. Analysis of the Problem

3.1. Problem Identified of ANTA's Cooperation with the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics

3.1.1 Positive influence

Sports marketing strategy is a marketing method that conveys the brand image. Cooperating with large-scale sports events can help enhance brand awareness and reputation, increase exposure, and allow more people to see and purchase. Brands can use sports marketing strategies to promote positive sportsmanship while enhancing their brand value and gaining recognition and resonance from more people. Sports marketing strategies have many advantages. In addition, this strategy attracts a large number of stakeholders, such as teams, athletes, fans, etc., forming a mutually beneficial and win-win group. Moreover, cities and countries hosting sporting events also receive tax revenue [7]. Most importantly, this marketing method helps stimulate consumers' desire to buy, increase sales of brand products, and thereby increase market share.

3.1.2 Negative impact

First, the cost of sports marketing strategies is too high, so for some small and medium-sized enterprises, there is great financial pressure. Ineffective brand promotion will damage the brand's reputation, so it is necessary to choose partners scientifically. In addition, with the rise of sports marketing strategies, more and more sporting goods brands are choosing to use this strategy, which has resulted in many brands competing for the opportunity to host the same sports event. The competition is extremely fierce. This time, some companies are pursuing short-term interests too and instead use sports marketing as a short-term promotion method, resulting in insufficient business motivation in the later period, lack of sustainability in marketing activities, and easy-to-follow-suit [8].

3.2. Problem Identified by ANTA Brand Spokesperson

3.2.1 Positive influence

Celebrity endorsement is the most direct and effective way for businesses to increase brand awareness and consumers' trust in the brand because the public will pay attention to the products endorsed by celebrities out of their pursuit of celebrities, which has become a product once Listing is an effective way to attract widespread attention from society, thereby gaining more attention and

recognition. Brand companies can leverage the popularity of celebrity endorsers to ensure substantial increases in consumption of endorsed products. The brand can successfully attract a large number of fans to become their loyal consumers.

3.2.2 Negative influence

First of all, the cost of a celebrity endorsement strategy is very high; that is, the endorsement fee of a celebrity spokesperson will be very expensive, so the brand needs to have a certain financial foundation. Otherwise, it will cause a big burden to the brand. Secondly, there are certain risks in the marketing strategy of celebrity endorsement. Negative news about the spokesperson is an uncertain factor, and the image and reputation of the spokesperson determine, to a certain extent, the brand image of the cooperative brand and the brand's sales volume.

3.3. Problem Identified in Anta's DTC Strategy

3.3.1 Positive influence

The DTC model can enable brands to understand consumer preferences and market trends and help Anta further consolidate the brand's position in the sporting goods market more effectively. In addition, some high-quality brand experiences, such as price strategies and service quality, are very helpful in enhancing consumers' loyalty to brands and products. Some brands, such as Anta, have successfully improved corporate operating efficiency by acquiring high-performance head stores and transforming them into direct-operated models. After the brand's DTC strategic transformation, it will give consumers a better consumption experience through a direct-to-consumer marketing model [6].

3.3.2 Negative influence

The DTC model requires merchants to have good inventory management capabilities. Otherwise, it will lead to a sudden increase in inventory pressure in the short term. This model will make DTC transformation brands overly dependent on online sales, thereby suffering the adverse effects of similar network security factors. Once there is a problem in the channel, the overall operation of the brand will be affected. In addition, the transformation of the DTC strategy requires a large amount of capital investment. Whether it is the operation of online or offline stores or the investment of manpower and material resources, money is needed. Of course, the cost of promoting some products is also very expensive. For example, advertising requires advertising fees, and conducting online and offline product marketing activities is also very expensive.

3.4. Anta Compared with Other Brands

3.4.1 Anta and Li Ning comparison

(1) In terms of revenue

In the first half of 2023, Li Ning's overall revenue will not be as good as Anta's single-brand revenue, as shown in Table 1 [9].

Table 1. Comparison of financial performance evaluation between Li Ning and Anta

	Revenue	Year-on-year growth	Net Profit
Lining	29.65billion yuan	14.20%	52.64billion yuan
Anta	140.2billion yuan	13.00%	21.2billion yuan

(2) In terms of marketing strategy

Li Ning adheres to the "single brand, multi-category, multi-channel" strategy, while Anta implements the "single focus, multi-brand, omni-channel" development strategy. Anta and Li Ning are also very different in terms of brand positioning. Anta's consumer group is oriented to the public, so the price should be more affordable. However, Li Ning is positioned in the mid-to-high-end market and is more expensive. To a certain extent, Li Ning's brand internationalization is more high-end than Anta's.

3.4.2 Anta and Nike compare

(1) In terms of revenue

Anta Group's revenue in China surpasses Nike. However, no single brand under the Anta Group can reach the level of the Nike brand, as shown in Table 2 [9].

Table 2. Comparison of revenue performance between Anta and Nike

	Sales volume (before August 2023)	Revenue
Nike (including Jordan)	224,000	$3.804 billion (27.49 billion yuan) (December 1, 2022 - May 31, 2023)
Anta	13,000	29.65 billion yuan (The first half of 2023)

(2) In terms of marketing strategy

Nike is loyal to brand building, has a strong brand awareness, and attaches great importance to the development and innovation of new products. Nike creates unique products based on the special needs of sports to provide consumers with a good experience [10]. However, Anta is far inferior to Nike in terms of product innovation and brand positioning, but its target market is broader. Anta and Nike have huge differences in brand positioning. Anta is positioned in the mid-to low-end market, but Nike has already established a firm foothold in the high-end market. It has close ties with consumer groups in different countries around the world, and its brand awareness and product recognition far exceed that of the Anta brand.

4. Suggestions

Anta can use the following marketing strategies to narrow the gap with other brands in the market competition landscape.

4.1. Optimization of Brand Market Positioning and Improvement of Target Consumer Groups

Compared with Li Ning's focus on the mid-to-high-end market, Anta's target consumer groups are relatively broad, mainly young people, and belong to the mid-to low-end income consumer groups. Therefore, Anta can expand its market and improve its brand's market position by improving its consumer groups.

4.1.1 Adjust pricing

Because Anta only deals with mid to low-end consumer groups, the brand's coverage in the high-end market is not high, and it cannot attract a large number of high-income consumer groups. Therefore, Anta can choose to make appropriate adjustments in pricing. Anta's pricing is relatively more convenient, and the price range is more acceptable to consumers. Therefore, Anta can appropriately increase the price of its products, and by enhancing the multi-faceted value of items, it can produce high-end products that are more creative and more in line with the preferences of high-income consumers, attracting more high-income consumers to buy. Through the shift to high-end products, Anta's consumer groups will change from mainly mid- to low-end groups to more high-end income consumers.

4.1.2 Increase coverage of specific consumer groups

Although Anta can cover most consumer groups, it is still unable to meet the equipment needs of very few consumer groups fully. Take the extreme sports consumer group, for example. Anta can invest more money in the research and development of extreme sports equipment. While further innovating product styles, we use more high-end technology to ensure product high performance. Let the safety of Anta's extreme sports products be better guaranteed, thereby enhancing consumers' trust in Anta products. For other specific consumer groups, because Anta's understanding of these consumer groups is not deep enough, it can use offline physical stores to inquire and collect statistics

on consumer preferences one-on-one and online through questionnaires or online. The method of collecting data on consumer preferences in stores will increase the understanding of the preferences of these consumer groups so as to clarify the next research and improvement directions and create products that are more in line with the preferences of these types of consumers to attract more consumers. More consumers and expand the scale of these consumer groups.

4.2. Strengthen Product Innovation and Brand Innovation

Anta is not as innovative as Nike in terms of product design and needs to strengthen its brand innovation.

4.2.1 innovation in product design concepts

First, a good brand must have unique and attractive brand value and brand spirit. The innovation of brand spirit and concept is also part of design innovation. Good brand values are conducive to making consumers resonate spiritually and generate great interest in the brand and its products. Of course, when designing brand spirit and brand value, you cannot unquestioningly innovate. It referred to the aesthetic trends of consumers in today's era and the innovative achievements of other brands.

The second is innovation in product design. Anta can choose a variety of colors and different patterns in product design. These factors that can visually attract consumers can choose to follow social trends and add some very popular contemporary materials to the products, or they can also integrate the brand's spiritual image, as a unique element reflected in the product. In addition, Anta can add founder Mr. Ding Shizhong's indomitable entrepreneurial spirit or the ups and downs the brand has experienced to the present as design elements in product advertisements or slogans.

4.2.2 Inspire team innovation spirit

For a brand, if it wants to have creative products, the innovative spirit of the team and advanced innovative technology are very critical. Therefore, the Anta brand needs additional technical training and results acceptance for the product design team. Of course, it is also a good way for Anta to cooperate with other brands and exchange product design ideas and inspiration.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Key Findings

The study was conducted by three successful cases of Anta's cooperation with the Beijing Olympic Games, inviting Kong Linghui to be the brand image spokesperson and Anta's DTC strategy. The study was conducted on three marketing strategies: sports marketing, celebrity endorsement, and DTC transformation strategy, in terms of positive and negative impacts. Through data collection, Anta Nike and Li Ning were compared to a certain extent. Through comparison between brands, the study pointed out that compared with other brands, Anta has the problems of insufficient brand internationalization and insufficient product innovation in the market competition pattern, and gave some suggestions for strengthening international brand cooperation and strengthening product innovation. And it improved marketing strategies for corporate investment in product research and development. It will help improve the market competitiveness of the Anta brand and improve the brand image, allowing the Anta brand to develop better in the future.

5.2. Research Significance

The article's research on the market competition landscape and related marketing strategies will help sporting goods brands gain a deeper understanding of the competition in the overall brand market. The article takes the Anta brand as the main research case. Further, it analyzes the impact of relevant marketing strategies through the successful cases of the Anta brand, which has important reference significance for improving the Anta brand marketing strategy. The comparison and analysis of Anta, Nike, and Li Ning brands in the study will, to a certain extent, greatly promote the future development

and progress of the three brands. The research points out the direction of improvement of the Anta brand in the market competition landscape and provides solutions.

5.3. Limitations and Future Study

The article uses more documentary research methods and empirical research methods but lacks experiments, survey reports, or interviews, which make the research results more credible. Therefore, the prospect of research is to use more research methods, such as experimental research methods and survey research methods.

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