A Study on The Influence Of 'She-Economy' Upsurge on The Development of Clothing Companies: Taking Anta as An Example

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Abstract. With the awareness of people's self-consciousness, the 'she-power' of female consumers begins to emerge. The upsurge of the 'she-economy' has become a highly-concerned economic phenomenon. Various industries turned their attention to the female market and female groups. On the basis of previous studies on 'she-economy', this paper focuses on clothing enterprises, summarizing the impacts of this economic phenomenon on the cases concerned in this paper through case study, literature study and event study, so as to provide suggestions for the development of the clothing industry. The study found that the coping strategies made by clothing enterprises in response to the 'she-economy' phenomenon have a significant positive impact on the enterprises themselves, which is reflected in the profitability, asset structure and female consumption performance of the enterprise. Whereas, inappropriate marketing methods may bring a negative impact to enterprises. Hence, enterprises need to exercise sound judgement when making decisions. From the market situation, it can be found that the women's clothing market still has a large development space. In the future, clothing enterprises can learn from the excellent cases in the industry, try to open up the female business, transform the new-born 'she-power' into their customers, expanding their consumer group. Other industries can also carry out researches on the impacts of the 'she-economy' phenomenon, learn from the development experience of those clothing enterprises, and enter the huge consumer market of women's business.

Keywords: Female Market; Clothing Industry; Consumer Preference; Brand Recognition.

1. Introduction

The awareness of self-consciousness and the improvement of status have increased the consumption ability of female consumers day by day. More and more women begin to pay attention to their own preferences, showing diverse needs for various products. They are more willing to high-level consumption [1]. The 'she-power' created by women constantly affects the whole society. Female market has become a market with development potential. In response to this trend, many brands actively establish their brand image, gain the recognition of female consumers in a way closer to modern women, so as to turn this part of consumption power into their own use. Economists have given a clear name for the consumption phenomenon caused by the trend, that is, the 'she-economy' phenomenon focused by this paper. As one of the important economic phenomena in today 's society, 'she-economy' phenomenon may become a breakthrough for some brands to overcome existing troubles and gain new impetus. Meanwhile, 'she-economy' can also become a key point for enterprises to achieve profitable growth and provide assistance for the development of enterprises themselves. These benefits have aroused great interest in 'she-economy', from all walks of life in the market. The magical 'she-economy' phenomenon is gradually affecting the development direction of various industries and even the whole market.

There are three research methods using in this paper. First of all is the case study method. In this paper, Anta has been chosen as the main research object, supplemented by other cases. The second is the literature study method. This paper refers to many literatures at home and abroad, supporting the viewpoints in the article and providing data to increase the accuracy and credibility of the study. In addition, this paper uses the event study method, paying attention to the impacts of specific events and subsequent changes on the research objects.

Regarding the 'she-economy' phenomenon, there have been a lot of previous research on brand marketing, consumer demand, etc. The society has gained a certain understanding of women's purchasing power. In the domestic literatures cited in this paper, QuestMobile has made a professional report on the upsurge of the 'she-economy'. Foreign literatures quoted show that researchers have studied female consumerism in 'she-economy' and consumers' reactions to feminine advertising. However, all these studies have not specifically focused on the industry, they mainly focus on the analysis of the 'she-economy' phenomenon from an overall perspective.

In the industry relevant to women, the clothing industry has always been of importance. Its sales account for a large proportion. Hence, this paper focuses on the clothing industry which is greatly influenced by 'she-economy’ and analyzes the specific performance of the head brand Anta in the industry, so as to investigate the influence of this phenomenon on the development status and trend of the clothing industry. Meanwhile, this paper pays attention to the performance of other clothing brands in the researching process and refers to the relevant literatures. It is supposed to provide clothing enterprises with suggestions that are more in line with the current situation of the industry. Furthermore, it hopes to inspire the industry for its future development and even for the entire market.

2. Anta's Measures and Performance Under 'She Economy'

According to the McKinsey report, women averagely spend 15%-20% more on sports and fitness than men [2]. Recent years have witnessed the rise of the popularity of 'she-economy'. Research on this topic have also increased. In this regard, industries have responded differently. Take the clothing industry studied in this paper as an example. Original women's clothing brands have increased publicity and expanded the product market. Comprehensive clothing brands have carried out acquisitions and other strategies to target the rapidly growing female clothing market, optimize product configuration, and attract as much female consumers as possible to buy their products.

From the perspective of enterprises, this paper selects Anta as the main research object, focusing on its coping measures to the 'she-economy' phenomenon and changes brought by those measures. Table 1 briefly introduces the basic situation of Anta and other related cases.

Anta is a leading group in the sports goods industry with a large business scale. Its main products can be seen in Table 1 below. The main consumer group of Anta fluctuates around the age of 30, and the potential of women market is initially demonstrated [3]. The proportion of Anta's male and female consumers is not much different, but the proportion of male consumers in commodity transactions is still higher.

Table 1. The Strategies of Anta and its competitors

Corporate Name	Anta	Lululemon	EEKA FASHION
Establishment Year	1991	1998	1994
Major Business	Design, production, sales of sports shoes, clothing, accessories and other sports equipment	Yoga clothing and multi-functional sportswear	High-end women clothing
Brand Concept	Keep Moving	SweatLife	Unique charm for every woman
Brand Vision	Become the world's leading multi-brand sports goods group	Stimulate potential and enhance people's happiness	Become the leading corporate in Chinese high-end women clothing field

Affected by the epidemic situation and the intensified competition of industry differentiation in the market, Anta is facing the challenge of changing the market pattern, and its business shortcomings also need to be completed. In this regard, Anta adheres to the strategy of "Single-focus, Multi-brand, Globalization", strengthens the product combination, and enhances the competitive edge of each product in its market segment. Anta has made a series of changes in order to keep up with the trend of 'she-economy' and make rational use of 'she-power' to improve the attractiveness of its products to female consumers. This paper mainly focuses on two measures.

First, Anta announced on October 16, 2023, that it had entered into an agreement with the designer sportswear brand MAIA ACTIVE, acquiring it as an affiliate of Anta. In 2022, when sports giants were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and grew slowly, the well-known yoga clothing brand Lululemon had achieved a revenue growth of 28%, which was closely related to its move to keep up with the 'she-economy' upsurge for market expansion [4].

Most of the audiences of Lululemon's products are female consumers. Since its inception, the brand has constantly pay attention to women's needs, adjusted the product combinations according to market changes, and continuously expanded the influence of its products in the female consumer group. Different from traditional sportswear brands, Lululemon attach more importance to details and functions. The design of its products is unique. Close relationship between the brand and consumers enables Lululemon's consumers to have a close brand intimacy with the brand [5]. Hence, Lululemon can develop stably in the overall market downturn.

MAIA ACTIVE, Anta's acquisition target, is a female sportswear brand which is similar to Lululemon. It has been established for just a short time and is influential in the market. This brand is regarded as the "replacement" of Lululemon in the industry. The purpose of this acquisition is to effectively utilize the 'she-economy' phenomenon, create a female sportswear brand benchmarking against Lululemon, and be as successful as Lululemon.

Anta has always adhered to its multi-brand strategy throughout its development history and has completed a large number of acquisitions over years. This is relevant to its brand vision shown in Table 1, and the purpose is to make up for its shortcomings in the market [6]. Three sports brand groups formed by this enable Anta to meet differentiated needs of different consumer groups, and now Anta wants more [7]. In recent years, Anta has paid more attention to user needs of middle and high-end products, and more emphasized the specialization and comfort of products [7]. This is similar to the product position of MAIA ACTIVE. Hence, MAIA ACTIVE can help Anta to join the market competition of women sportswear and use the distinctive characteristics of its brand to further expand Anta's brand influence.

Second, also in 2023, Anta's brand FILA China (hereinafter referred to as 'FILA') continued to increase its investments in women's industry, announced its new endorser, and more determined to develop the female clothing market. Since acquired in 2009, FILA has long been Anta's cash cow brand. Anta has gained a large part of its income from this sub-brand. This time facing with the 'she-economy', FILA focuses more on industry and attracts potential consumers to consume.

3. Anta's Financial Performance

Following comes analyses of Anta's performance changes under these influences, from the perspectives of profitability, asset structure and female consumption performance, then some appropriate suggestions.

3.1. Profitability

The acquisition has improved Anta's profitability. After the announcement on October 16, it can be seen in Table 2 that Anta 's stock price continued to grow, rising from HK$84.85 to HK$94.25 in three days. This change reflects that the market as a whole is highly concerned about women consumption. Due to it, Anta's profit expectations improved. Moreover, MAIA ACTIVE has made profits before the acquisition. Its DTC marketing model is also similar to the development direction of Anta in recent years. Additionally, the novelty and value consciousness of the product will directly affect the brand's reputation [8]. Overall, the addition of this brand will enable Anta to be more motivated to enter the middle and high-end women sportswear market, further improving its brand competitiveness.

Table 2. Stock price trend of Anta

	October 16, 2023	October 17, 2023	October 18, 2023
Close Price (HK$)	84.85	85	94.25
Rising Scale	1.07%	0.18%	3.63%

Positively affected by the new cooperation, Anta's brand FILA performed well in the second half of 2023 and successfully returned to growth.

In 2022, due to the impact of the pandemic and the decline in customers' willingness to consume, revenues and profits for Anta declined. Many stores in high-line cities and shopping centers had to suspend. As Anta's cash cattle brand, FILA's operating status is related to the income of the entire Anta Group. Hence, FILA actively sought development opportunities in 2023, partnering with a number of actresses and continuing to increase investments in the women's industry. Then its performance improved. According to FILA's 2023 financial reports released by Anta, the operating income for FILA for the year was 25.103 billion yuan, increasing by 16.6% year-on-year. Its retail sales in the fourth quarter grew by 25-30%. Considering FILA's scale, especially when the average growth rate of the industry was less than 10%, it was not easy for the brand to maintain a growth rate of more than 10%, as FILA cares more about high-quality growth.

Anta Group's first quarter report released on April 17 this year shows that all its brands grew stably. Among which Anta brand and FILA achieved the growth of medium and high units respectively. All above prove that Anta's actions have positively affected the profitability of the entire group. Such changes sent a positive signal to the market. Anta's brand power has been improved, which may encourage more clothing enterprises to pay attention to the 'she-economy' phenomenon.

3.2. Asset Structure

Anta's asset structure continues to optimize. From Table 3, it can be inferred that the liquidity of Anta has generally increased in the past five years, and the growth rate increased in 2023. Combined with the stock price changes in Table 2, Anta's solutions to the 'she-economy' are in line with market expectations.

Table 3. Liquidity indicators of Anta

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Current Assets (Million Yuan)	23320	32717	39902	42596	52140
Growth	20.93%	40.3%	21.96%	6.75%	22.41%
Current Ratio	1.88	2.79	2.5	1.63	2.53
Growth	-26.27%	48.4%	10.39%	-34.8%	55.21%

Data in Table 4 is from the high-end women clothing brand EEKA FASHION. According to Table 4, its current ratio fluctuates, but the scale of current assets expands constantly. This fully reflects the development potential of the female clothing market. EEKA FASHION can also become a reference for Anta.

Table 4. Liquidity indicators of EEKA FASHION

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Current Assets (Million Yuan)	2131.8	2409.5	2616.1	2634.6	3549.7
Growth	44.7%	13.02%	8.57%	0.71%	34.73%
Current Ratio	1.19	1.43	1.60	1.59	1.78
Growth	-60.73%	20.17%	11.89%	-0.13%	11.95%

FILA's revenues in the past five years are shown in Table 5. Among them, operating income grew rapidly in 2019, followed by a steady growth in the next two years, but in 2022 it declined. That was the reason why FILA actively promoted new cooperation. Table 5 illustrates that, in 2023, FILA's operating income exceeded ¥ 25 billion, increasing by 16.6%. Its capital status was in normal. This verifies the rationality of FILA's actions, truly reflecting the impacts of the 'she-economy' upsurge on the company.

Table 5. Revenues for FILA in the past 5 years

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Operating Income (Billion Yuan)	14.77	17.45	21.82	21.52	25.10
Growth	73.9%	18.1%	25.1%	-1.4%	16.6%

3.3. Female Consumption Performance

Women's consumption has been constantly rising. According to the 2024 'She-Economy' Insight report released by QuestMobile, nowadays there are nearly 610 million female active users on the mobile Internet. These users' TGI in sports is 111.3. Women are showing a higher interest in sports and fitness [9]. Compared with 2023, women's online consuming capacity above 2000 yuan has risen significantly, and that in 1000–1999-yuan part increased by 40.5%.

In Anta's consumer groups, females have higher brand loyalty than males. As proportion increasing year by year, female consumers have become a group that Anta cannot neglect. Based on the DTC system which can communicate directly with consumers, Lululemon can obtain feedback from consumers timely, enhancing users' experience [10]. MAIA ACTIVE, acquired by Anta, also has the same system. Since Anta itself has two marketing channels, online and offline, the combination of offline stores and DTC system can effectively help the company to improve consumers' brand loyalty. Hence, the growing female consuming capacity can be utilized by Anta.

FILA's core consumer group is the elite and high-net-worth individuals in the first tier and second-tier cities. They consider more about the product concept and the brand's attitude towards fashion. Female-empowered advertisings have significant impacts on female consumers' attitudes towards brands [11]. FILA choosing well-known actresses as endorsers can gain more recognition from its consumers, while attracting potential consumers such as celebrity fans to consume, thereby expanding its consumer groups.

4. Suggestions

At present, clothing market has entered a saturated state. Products are homogenized and competitions fierce. Yet female market still has sufficient development potential. Under the trend of "she-economy", many enterprises begin to plan for entering female market.

Based on the above research results, this paper gives the following suggestions for the development of women's industry.

Comprehensive clothing brands such as Anta, can acquire other female clothing brands and directly enter the female market if they want to maintain the profitability and open up new markets. Female clothing does not mean 'maiden style' and 'pink'. Brands can combine characteristics of their own products with the newly acquired female clothing brands and imitate brands such as Bosie and APPARITION to produce gender-free clothing. While reducing integration costs, they can also make it easier for the original consumer groups of the brand to accept new products. Furthermore, women are usually interested in the cultural background of products. For example, the popularity of the new Chinese-style clothing is to a large extent due to the promotion of Chinese traditional culture. Hence, new clothing brands enter the women's market can increase publicity, select the unique aspects of the products or the background stories as their cut-in points, attracting the attention of female consumers to products.

Female clothing brands can learn from the development strategies of top brands in the industry, refer to consumer demands to produce high-end products, improving reputation and competitiveness.

Lululemon mentioned in this article can be a good example. Referring to its practices, building a community with people who have outstanding social influences, which can link the brand and consumers more tightly. In addition, in the business where women are the main customer groups, feminism has become one of the keys to brand communication. Hence, female clothing brands can imitate FILA and tend to choose influential females as endorsers. This will make the brand show values adjoin to modern women, thereby enhancing the brand image [12].

What should be noted is that not only clothing enterprises, but all enterprises should also choose their right ways to avoid damaging the brand image when doing 'she-economy' marketing. Improper marketing methods may arouse consumers' disaffection and reduce their consuming enthusiasm. For example, beauty brands put commercial advertisements that may provoke age anxiety for 'she-economy' marketing. This is not in line with female consumerism in the new era. Conflicts exist between the values of the brands and the consumers, which may damage the impression of female customers on the brands 12].

5. Conclusion

At present, effects of the 'she-economy' upsurge is gradually reflected. Head brands in the clothing industry aware of the powerful role of this economic phenomenon, then start to follow the market trend and change the development strategies. Anta's good performance not only sends a positive signal to the market, but also makes the brand itself more capable to develop new businesses. Meanwhile, the brand's position and influence in the market have also been improved. These 'win-win' benefits made Anta a successful case for the clothing industry to cope with the 'she-economy'. Anta's reputation increased accordingly. While these changes have not deviated from Anta's development tendency. Other clothing brands successfully benefited from the 'she economy' phenomenon also have something to be referred to. Together with Anta, those brands show different measures that different types of clothing companies can adopt when coping with the 'she-economy' phenomenon to the market. In this paper, there are also some introductions of positive effects of some measures. In the future, clothing companies could refer to relevant cases, choosing development patterns suitable for their own situations, and achieving performance improvement. Additionally, the development experience of these head brands could not only be applied to the clothing industry, but also inspire enterprises in other industries to find suitable development patterns for themselves, occupying a place in the booming female market. It can be speculated that under the trend of the continuous development of female market, the whole economic market will gain a positive impact and be full of vitality in the future.

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