Analysis of the Communication Strategy of Fast Fashion Brand Uniqlo in Cross-Cultural Contexts

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Abstract: With the globalization of culture and the improvement of economy, overseas sales of big brands have become a major destination. The international fast-paced, high-quality labels with location and mobility advantages have quickly entered the Chinese domestic market characterized by strong demand and demographic dividend, and soon have conquered a market place. Under the current cross-cultural context, whether the product message sent overseas can suit the culture, psychology and customs of the target country, has become a key factor in its determining business success. This article chooses UNIQLO as the main example, put its Chinese Localization strategy under the difference of Chinese and Japanese cultures. Base on the grasp of the status quo of China's fast fashion market, consumers' life attitudes and media habits under the background of economic and social development, uses the theoretical frameworks related to cultural differences to analyze the brand’s cross-cultural explanations of its own concept, the location of the communication Discourse, the choice of media and its communication effect to further promote the understanding of brands’ cross-culture communication and provide reference to fast fashion brands’ communication beyond the boundary.

Keywords: Uniqlo; Cross-cultural Communication; Fast Fashion; Communication Strategy.

1. Concept and Theoretical Support

1.1. The Concept of Fast Fashion

The so-called fast fashion is a mode of clothing management that offers new products in a short period and at a high frequency. Originating in the United States in the 1980s, the industry follows the latest fashion trends in mass production and frequent updating, and sells to mainstream consumers at low prices. In recent years, domestic and foreign fast-fashion brands not only filled up the urban business district, in the third and fourth tier cities are also expanding, sales channels and service experience is to the online and offline dual-channel linkage to complement the direction of continuous improvement. Its style with the seasonal trend of flexibility and change, with a good price and a variety of styles to cover the needs of different occasions to wear, and with the change of the times gradually began to promote the improvement of materials and quality, not only to meet the general commuting daily wear needs, but also with its "big single product" attribute to activate the multiple possibilities of fashion collocation, with multi-sized With multiple sizes and colors, the products are available to a wide range of age groups. The cooperation with famous designers, IP co-branding and the application of popular elements strive to be fashionable and innovative, and the large discounts during holidays and seasonal changes shorten the renewal cycle and promote multiple repurchases.

1.2. Cultural Dimension Theory

From international communication to cross-border marketing, to localized user research and product design, it is indispensable to understand the local lifestyle, culture and social psychology. There are many theoretical frameworks to analyze and interpret the cultural attributes of various countries, among which the most widely accepted is the cultural dimension theory of Dutch scholar Hofstede. He points out that with the accelerated globalization in many areas, such as the economy, companies in different countries have directed their strategies to more markets and customers, and the key to the success of this strategy is the understanding of different cultural values. Although people in the same country and region have different educational and working backgrounds, and their behavioral preferences vary according to their personalities and ages, their values and ways of thinking naturally show common dimensions as they live in the same natural and social environments. Cultural dimensionality theory uses six dimensions to describe the characteristics of a culture, including Power Distance Index, Individualism Versus Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance Index, Masculinity or Femininity, and the Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), Masculinity, Long Term Orientation, and Indulgence Versus Restraint. [(Dutch) Gilbert Hofstede. Culture and organizations: the power of mental software (2nd ed.). [M]. Li Yuan, Sun Jianmin (Translated). People's University of China Press,2010:222.] The power gap index is the degree of acceptance of privileged treatment, the individualism or collectivism bias responds to the degree to which an individual is integrated into the collective, the uncertainty avoidance index reflects the tolerance of uncertainty by members of a society, and the masculinity or femininity bias refers to the bias for competitive arbitrariness or soft and caring, the long-term orientation measures the degree of influence of current and future factors in the decision-making of members of a society, and the indulgence and tolerance bias is a measure of the degree to which current and future factors influence the decision-making of members of a society. Long-term orientation measures the degree of influence of current and future factors in a society's decision-making, and indulgence and restraint describe the degree to which a society's members are in control of their needs and desires. These dimensions provide a concise and three-dimensional outline of the culture of a country or region, and provide a perspective and basis for cultural research in various fields, as well as an indication of the entry point and direction of cross-cultural communication.
2. **Uniqlo's Cross-cultural Communication Layout in China**

2.1. **Comparison of Chinese and Japanese Cultural Dimension Differences**

If a brand wants to enter an overseas market, the first thing to grasp is the similarities and differences between the local consumption and even values and the home market. China and Japan are separated by the sea and belong to the same Chinese cultural circle, with a history of exchanges and mutual understanding that goes back thousands of years. Japan, on the one hand, has been deeply influenced by Chinese culture since ancient times, showing many similar characteristics with China in terms of aesthetics and habits, and on the other hand, due to the early founding of the country in modern times and the association and negotiation with Europe and the United States, western culture and international temperament has been blended into its own cultural system, and in addition, as an island country in the Pacific Ocean, Japan tends to be conservative due to the influence of the natural environment and other factors, and attaches great importance to the local culture and traditional customs. In addition, Japan, as an island nation in the Pacific Ocean, tends to be conservative due to its natural environment and other factors, and attaches great importance to local culture and traditional customs. While integrating Eastern and Western cultures into its own cultural system, Japan is able to follow the changes of the times and make localized interpretations, integrating "ancient and modern, Chinese and foreign cultures" without being redundant, and China, which is located in the center of its culture and has a vast territory, share both common personalities and different or even opposite temperaments. Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions is used as a framework to analyze the cultural differences between China and Japan, and to provide theoretical support for the analysis of the target group's demand for fast fashion products and image preferences.

Looking at the six aspects of cultural dimensions, it can be seen that as China's economy and society develops, its long-term orientation is almost equal to Japan's, i.e., both sides place a similar emphasis on future factors, and their consumption expectations display many common characteristics. In terms of indulgence and restraint, both China and Japan are more conservative than Europe and the United States, while Japanese society, which emphasizes order and tends to be conservative, is slightly more restrained than China. The power gap index, individualism or collectivism bias, and uncertainty avoidance index of China and Japan differ to a similar extent, and Japan, which has been deeply influenced by Chinese Confucianism, especially the Zhu Zi school of thought, still retains this temperament in modern times. First, the Chinese are more receptive to preferential treatment in terms of products and services, while the Japanese are more inclined to the general than the particular. Secondly, in terms of individualism or collectivism, China and Japan, as representative Asian countries, tend to be more collectivist than the West, but there are still big differences in their specific manifestations. Japanese people attach importance to the circle to which they belong, will socialize with two kinds of inside and outside, to group and even social harmony, but with blood relatives, especially different generations of family members in the connection is weaker than China. In China, it is not uncommon for people to live with their parents after marriage and for parents to help take care of their children, whereas in Japan, where nuclear families are more common, most people live in three-person households. In terms of clothing purchasing decisions, Chinese people, who emphasize "family harmony", show their concern by buying clothes for their family members, while Japanese people, who prefer "social harmony" but are independent in their families, tend to make their purchasing decisions independently. In terms of masculinity or femininity, Japan, as one of the earliest capitalist countries in Asia, naturally places a higher value on material gain and personal quality of life, whereas Chinese people care more about interpersonal relationships and listen to others to a greater or lesser extent in their purchasing decisions. Finally, the biggest cultural difference between China and Japan is the avoidance of uncertainty. Both Japanese companies, with their strict quality control and clear hierarchical relationships, and Japanese consumers, who place a high value on age and position in their purchases, are comfortable with rules and are not radicalized; China, on the other hand, is more accepting of new things and is prone to setting trends. This also gives Uniqlo, a Japanese fast fashion brand with a natural foundation and a strong focus on versatility, an idea for a localized communication strategy.

2.2. **Uniqlo's Cross-cultural Communication Ideas in China**

Against the background of increasingly tight competition in the fast-fashion industry and even the entire clothing market, Uniqlo has been able to maintain a steady growth in market share thanks to both innate advantages and innate efforts. First of all, Uniqlo, which entered China earlier, has been accepted by the public in the accumulation of time and quantity, and has a certain first-mover advantage. Secondly, the natural texture and low-key taste favored by Japanese nationals are also adapted to the needs of Chinese consumers; the partial overlap of Chinese and Japanese cultural values makes Uniqlo a fish out of water in the Chinese market. As an Asian brand, UNIQLO is easier to adapt to Chinese people's body type and skin color, and its basic style and cost-effective price-performance ratio, which includes technology and design, also meet the needs of Chinese consumers' consumption upgrading and rationality return to a large extent. Again, in the brand image communication, Uniqlo did not focus on or even moderately weakened the attributes of Japan as the country of origin, the focus of the target group to the clothing itself, thus greatly reducing the barriers to cross-cultural communication. Finally, on the basis of sticking to the brand's Japanese gene without moving, UNIQLO respects and adapts to the preferences of the target group of the audience country in its publicity and design, and adopts a strategic layout in a way that is pleasing to the Chinese people. The concept of "Dress for Life", which is at the core of the brand's philosophy, has been a common value since its inception to eliminate cross-cultural barriers, and its popular positioning and affordability have lowered the psychological cost of accepting this multinational brand for foreign consumers.

Of course, Uniqlo's operation in China has not been a smooth ride, and its success today should be attributed to its unremitting efforts to adapt to the needs of the Chinese market and target groups. During the trial-and-error period when it first entered China, Uniqlo adjusted its traditional Japanese...
management concepts and original brand information dissemination model, and found a balance between price and quality, thus moving its operations onto the right track. During the period of accelerated store expansion, Uniqlo not only took advantage of the development of online sales channels and adapted to the social e-commerce media communication model, but also seized the opportunity to enter the sinking market. On the basis of retaining the "natural characteristics" of all-age basics, Uniqlo has conducted research and insights into Chinese people's living habits, optimized the purchasing experience through digital retailing, and skillfully blended the characteristics of the products themselves with their functional and emotional values. By taking advantage of traditional Chinese festivals and traditional Chinese design elements, combined with the multi-level selection of spokespersons and social platforms for matching and sharing, the "acquired efforts" have borne fruit. In the past 20 years in China, Uniqlo has been sticking to its quality and low-priced characteristics, closely linking itself to the attributes of "versatility", "basic" and "comfort", from store display to shopping guide service, to advertising tone and product introduction. From store displays to shopping guide services, to advertising tone and product introduction, the company has adjusted itself according to the target market, and has infiltrated the systematic communication strategy into word-of-mouth, advertising tone, media channels and other aspects, and has given an up-to-date interpretation to its core values in focusing on them, so that they can be deeply rooted in people's hearts in the process of observing what is right and what is new.

3. **Uniqlo's Localized Communication Strategy Adapted to Chinese Culture**

3.1. **Effect-oriented Word-of-mouth Communication**

In the modern era of increasingly diversified brand communication modes, word-of-mouth communication, known as "medium zero", breaks through the typical interpersonal communication framework by combining with social platforms, and is increasingly favored by major brands due to its strong relevance, low cost, and excellent communication effect. Unlike advertising campaigns in which brands or merchants take the initiative, word-of-mouth communication, as a kind of bottom-up feedback from consumers, not only effectively reflects the image of a brand or product in the minds of consumers, but also becomes a kind of spontaneous impetus for brand image maintenance and product information promotion. Uniqlo as an early entry into China, one of the fast-fashion brands, through the business district as the center, expanding the layout of offline stores in the embryonic period and ride on the trend of Tmall e-commerce development of the growth period, on the one hand, through the filling of cost-effective clothing market space, the scale effect of the settlement of shopping malls around the scale effect of the settlement of shopping malls around the promotion of the visibility of the "wide," on the other hand, through a long time of e-commerce and social platform evaluation and On the other hand, the "depth" of recognition has been accumulated through the evaluation and experience of e-commerce and social platforms over a long period of time. With the development and penetration of new social media platforms such as microblogging, the circle of friends, jittery voice, and Xiaohongshu, Uniqlo has realized "tap water" exposure on user-generated content in its maturity, with graphic and even video content ranging from store layout renewal, to fitting room selfies, to co-branded new model cards and daily wear sharing. The emergence of "vegetarian models" wearing Uniqlo on the streets and user-generated content on various platforms is due to the brand's strict quality and image standards, but also to the brand's high-frequency product updates and the beauty of its minimalist but unobtrusive design. Contents such as "new product effect" and "single product wearing inspiration" are to a large extent free from the commercial attributes of brand information dissemination, and with the big data interest push, effectively presenting in the form of an audience's attention or interest naturally, and continue to build a high credibility and affinity with the brand. With a high degree of credibility and affinity, the brand continues to build and strengthen the degree of memory and sense of existence. While the brand itself crosses cultural barriers and innovates communication strategies, UNIQLO also encourages users to create and interact with its content, thus realizing high-quality communication with two-way communication. It can be said that the word of mouth accumulated by Uniqlo in China over the past 20 years has become an intangible asset, and today, when the brand has entered a mature stage of development, it can still inject new life and vitality into the brand by virtue of its large volume and sustained sound volume and potential energy.

3.2. **Advertisements and Communication Strategies that fit in with Chinese Culture**

With the evolution of Chinese consumers' consumption upgrading and rationalization trend, consumers are paying more and more attention to the brand's emotional value and personality experience. Therefore, it is more and more important for brands to adapt to the value orientation of the target group and use reasonable communication methods to gain their empathy and sympathy. As a multinational company, Uniqlo should grasp the common meaning space of Chinese and Japanese cultures and respect the differences in national sentiments and habits, so as to make adaptive and customary adjustments and layouts to its advertising and communication strategies. In terms of overall aesthetic tendency, Chinese people like to be generous and grandiose, taking grandeur as their top priority, while Japanese people favor smallness and seek refinement in the smallest details. The two seem to be far away from each other, but in fact, they are intertwined. Inherited the Japanese gene Uniqlo in the embodiment of meticulous, simple and comfortable at the same time, but also generous, small in the big, for its interpretation of the concept of China has left a lot of space. On the basis of keeping a simple tone and retaining brand elements, UNIQLO employs a large number of Chinese talents, extensively absorbs Chinese culture, and consistently pushes forward the localization of its communication strategy, so that it can "follow the customs of the countryside" without "taking over the countryside".

3.2.1. **Smart Use of the Festival Nodes**

The Chinese New Year has a long history in China, and its ritual of saying goodbye to the old and welcoming the new is undoubtedly a great opportunity for brands to promote sales and emotional communication. Although the celebration of the New Year in contemporary China has been simplified to a greater or lesser extent, "new clothes" are still generally accepted as an essential part of "New Year's New Weather", and the color red has always been a symbol of joy and good fortune in the minds of Chinese people. Although Uniqlo is
from overseas, it has grasped the important communication node of the Lunar New Year as early as possible, and utilized the festive and auspicious red color in its official website, flagship store and offline stores to show the needs of clothing for different celebration scenarios, and the effectiveness of the momentum is no less effective than that of local brands.

During the Spring Festival of 2019, Uniqlo themed its promotional campaign "New Clothes, Telling Our Stories", displaying family photos of several families in new clothes, and connecting the close ties and intimacy between family members with the details of the clothes, which injected emotional and cultural values into the clothing elements such as family clothes and New Year's red color. Around the Chinese New Year in 2021, based on the current situation of the new crown epidemic, UNIQLO has observed the changes in consumer lifestyles and behaviors over the past year, and has adopted "Clothes Shun, Hundreds of Shun for a Good New Year" as the theme of the Chinese New Year, which is to look forward to the new weather and start the Year of the Snake with the positive attitude of new clothes for the New Year in the midst of the adversity. The word "Shun" not only implies the Chinese people's yearning for a safe and smooth passage through the epidemic, but also the new normal in the context of the epidemic, which expresses the flexibility and ease of enjoying every day and every piece of clothing to the fullest. The new red-colored products are auspicious and eye-catching, and the upgraded fabrics have returned to the pursuit of pleasing oneself in the consumption of clothing. 2023 is the year when the epidemic tends to stop, and the fireworks of the Spring Festival will return to the land of China together with the tide of homecoming. Uniqlo's "Clothes" and "Clothes" theme marketing focuses on warm and cozy homecoming clothes, integrating many functional advantages of its products, such as cashmere, and creating an impression of the New Year's Eve goods with big red color and Chinese elements. In addition to the Spring Festival, UNIQLO also actively voices in the Mid-Autumn Festival, Chung Yeung and many other traditional Chinese festivals, combined with Chinese people's popular cultural symbols to convey the positive energy of life, based on the Chinese context, the product's functionality and emotional value of the momentum of the dissemination of the Chinese audience.

### 3.2.2. Borrowing Chinese Culture and Expressions

In addition to the active communication strategy, Uniqlo also carries out product innovation and production based on China, applying Chinese techniques and adapting to Chinese sizes at the production end. In terms of design, Uniqlo has also launched new domestic limited products in cooperation with Chinese artists, on the one hand, utilizing its own Japanese simple and versatile temperament, and on the other hand, introducing the design elements favored by Chinese consumers with an open mind, so as to keep the original spirit of "Dress for Life" and at the same time push forward the development of new ideas. Under the trend of increasing modernization of China's apparel market and consumers' growing concern for brand social responsibility, UNIQLO has also adapted its vision of sustainable development in public welfare, environmental protection and humanities through actions in China. From donating warm clothes during the epidemic, to updating plastic-reduced packaging in all Chinese stores, recycling used clothes for public welfare, and supporting the culture of Miao embroidery in cooperation with the Soong Ching Ling Foundation, Uniqlo has taken a number of initiatives. All these practices are not only in line with the brand's own sustainable development vision of "Protecting the Earth, Caring for the Humanities and Contributing to Society", but also in line with China's national strategy, focusing on social hotspots while assuming social values, incorporating Chinese expressions in image communication, promoting China's beautiful creations, and displaying its spiritual core in spiritual essence and further Rooted in China and close to the psychology of the Chinese audience, it has achieved the status of "national brand" that is widely known and accepted today.

### 3.3. Endorser Strategy

As the ambassador of the brand or product, the spokesman not only provides endorsement and demonstration for the brand or product, but also intuitively conveys the brand impression, attracts public attention and fan traffic. From the perspective of communication, spokesman is both a source of communication, and a kind of communication information. Playing the role of communicator spokesman has a high degree of visibility and credibility, and can attract traffic and provide endorsement for the brand or commodity through dynamic action. In the actual communication process, the spokesman relative static materials such as posters, images, etc. is more in the form of a kind of information presented in front of the audience, not subject to the constraints of time and space, to achieve the brand or product information intuitive transmission.

To "basic models", "simple", "versatile" as the leading Uniqlo to practical in the sense of sophistication, in the choice of spokespersons is also naturally biased in favor of self-contained temperament and a sense of fashion artists. The spokesperson selection is also naturally in favor of artists with a sense of temperament and fashion. Uniqlo in China chose Sun Li, Chen Kun, Ni Ni, Jing Bo Ran and other celebrity endorser that match the brand's tone, amplifying the brand's daily high-quality image with their simple but not too hot characteristics. It is worth noting that, although Uniqlo has signed a number of endorsement stars, but the focus of publicity on print ads and visual presentation, in the video class promotional materials, but the camera to the general public and show the daily use of the scene. This spokesperson strategy not only allows spokespersons with a certain popularity and fashion taste to show the best wearing effect, and to enhance brand and product exposure in the screen exposure and topic heat drive, while not forgetting the original intention of the public versatility, so that the actual wearing application of clothing close to the habits of Chinese consumers, "flying into the homes of the common people!" It realizes the Chinese application and interpretation of the brand concept.

2021 spring and summer series Zhou Yumin, Ni Ni, Jing Bo Ran for the wonderful life voice, more as a kind of communicator to elaborate the core concept of the brand, close to the post-epidemic era of people's pursuit of health and comfort, the sense of beauty and daily comfort organic connection, once again adapted to the changing attitudes of consumers' lives and needs. The diverse and multi-level selection of spokespersons conveys a vivid and three-dimensional brand image, and translates the term "dress for life" in the Chinese context in a vivid and natural way that is deeply rooted in people's hearts.

4.1. Enhance Product Strength

Domestic fast fashion brands started late, and although they are more familiar with China's local market and Chinese people's consumption and living habits than international brands, they still have a lot of deficiencies in their core competitiveness. The status quo of focusing on low-priced products and sticking to online sales is not conducive to the establishment and dissemination of brand image in the long run. The stereotyped and patterned communication discourse and media combination also have limited communication effect under the trend of information diversification. Therefore, on the one hand, domestic fast fashion brands should learn from the experience of international fast fashion brands such as Uniqllo, adapt to the changes in consumers' consumption and living habits after the new era of epidemics, focus on product quality, and strengthen the ability to innovate. In the information dissemination of brands and products, they should clearly define their brand positioning, create a unique brand image, and set up and continuously strengthen the core elements of the brand on the basis of riding on the trend without blindly following the trend. To fit the brand concept and excellent quality, personality and novelty of the product as the basis, and through interaction with consumers to practice more effective communication.

4.2. Strengthening Cultural Soft Power

On the other hand, local fast fashion brands, as China's native apparel brands, should also live rather than committed to the local advantage, further explore traditional culture, dig deep into the cultural psychology of Chinese consumers, with Chinese consumers enjoyable communication methods, choose to meet the habits of Chinese consumers of the media mix, so as to truly achieve the advantages of the lead, maximize the expansion of the possibilities of the local business, to meet the increasingly changing and diversified needs of consumers. This will maximize the possibility of expanding the local business and satisfy the changing diversified needs of consumers. Only by taking into account both the hard power of products and the soft power of culture can we stand firm in the fierce market competition and seek further development.

4.3. Implications for Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies of Fast Fashion Brands

In many areas of economic and cultural globalization has become the development of the trend now, the brand of cross-border business has long exceeded the simple product and brand promotion, has become a cultural collision and exchange. However, we should also see that there are still many problems that need to be solved when cross-border enterprises deliver product information and brand propositions in the international market. In this regard, the ups and downs and successes of Uniqllo in the Chinese market undoubtedly bring cross-cultural communication insights to fast fashion brands as a whole.

4.3.1. Clarify Cultural Differences and Weaken Cultural Barriers

When disseminating information and interacting with other countries and regions outside the host country, fast fashion brands should fully estimate the asymmetry of information dissemination and acceptance brought about by different cultures and values, and abandon the preconceived notions and stereotypes on the basis of a large amount of research to correctly recognize the cultural customs of the target country, while also grasping the trend through real-time monitoring, controlling the risks and paying attention to the hotspots and even the direction of public opinion, public opinion. At the same time, all multinational brands, including fast fashion brands, should fully respect the culture and national psychology of the target countries, and do not touch or cross the line on the bottom line and sensitive issues.

4.3.2. Conduct Extensive Research and Integrate into the Local Environment

When carrying out brand information dissemination, the brand should take the collection and analysis of the target country's audience, media, market and other information as a guide, and while not destroying the brand's own positioning and tone, it should try its best to fit in with the target country's "customs" from the perspective of the target group, so as to achieve the "local customs" of the product, communication and experience in multiple senses. "We will do our best to adapt to the local customs of the target country, so as to realize the multiple meanings of product, communication and experience, and to get rid of the hard sell and realize effective persuasion. Based on the core concept of the brand and dynamic interpretation with the passage of time and geographical changes, it is possible to grasp the rhythm and initiative of communication in "seeking common ground with differences" and "transforming differences with common ground", and provide support and impetus for overseas business and even international exchange and cooperation.

References