

# Arc'teryx's Marketing Strategies: Inappropriate Positioning of The High-End Outdoor Brand and Imbalance in Its Global Market Strategy

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**Abstract.** As the high-end outdoor sports market grows, building a strong brand and smart marketing have become very essential. This article notices Arc'teryx faced some developing issues, so it focuses on three cases, using the methods of literature investigation and case analysis, to help it do better in marketing. The article shows that marketing activities that deviate from the brand's spirits will damage brand trust; the improper declaration of high-end position neglects consumers' perception and causes market dissatisfaction; reliance on the domestic market leads to a global marketing imbalance. Based on these three issues, the conclusion points out that for the brand sustainable development, the company must stay true to its core spirit in all marketing activities. It needs to actively build a good reputation and stronger influence through real quality and customer care. Also, it should find smart local business strategies which suit different markets instead of using the same approach everywhere.

**Keywords:** Arc'teryx; marketing; brand; consumer.

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, the market of high-end outdoor sports products has continued to grow, making the formulation of brand image and marketing strategies pretty crucial. Arc'teryx, as a famous top-level outdoor sports brand, has established a professional reputation with its outstanding product performance. However, since being acquired by a China's company Anta, the brand has expanded its market in an inappropriate way. Its marketing strategies and its way to become high-end also have some problems. These caused potential challenges to the brand's reputation and long-term development. Existing research mostly focuses on the financial performance after acquisition or the superficially marketing strategies. However, there is a lack of deeply case analysis on why these strategies have bad effects.

Therefore, this article will focus on how specific marketing events impact the public image of a professional brand, how the brand balances user perception and its own position during the process of high-end, and the strategic coordination of global operations in China and abroad. It has significant theoretical and practical value. Theoretically, it concentrates on one particular brand, deepen the understanding of marketing strategies. Practically, through a systematic analysis of Arc'teryx, it not only provides a reference for its own strategy adjustment, but also offers valuable experience and warnings for other Chinese brands trying to become high-end and global, helping them avoid damaging their long-term brand value.

The core topic of this study is to analyze three public crisis and market challenges of Arc'teryx, and to explore the problems behind its brand image shaping, selection of high-end path, and global business strategy. For this purpose, this article will mainly use the methods of literature investigation and case analysis. Firstly, by collecting information of academic journals, professional reports, and authoritative media, the background and industry environment of the brand's development will be known. Secondly, focusing on three typical cases: the fireworks display incident, the comparison with Hermes remarks, and differences in domestic and international markets. Analyzing the causes, public opinion feedback, and market impact of these cases. The main content of the article will be developed based on this main topic, covering case descriptions, multiple dimensional analyses, and strategy suggestions.

The purpose of this article is not only to show the current problems that Arc'teryx faced, but also to analyze their deep causes, assess the negative impact they bring to the brand, then provide some suggestion for its improvement, helping it to achieve a healthy and sustainable global development.

## **2. Cases of the Issues That Arc'teryx Faced**

### **2.1. Fireworks Show in Himalayas**

In September 2025, Arc'teryx and an artist collaborated to display an art fireworks show in the Himalayas. The event aimed to reinforce the brand's high-altitude position, but after the video published online, it immediately sparked widespread criticism for the potentially damage to the fragile mountain ecosystem.

Although Arc'teryx claimed that the fireworks used materials which do not have bad effects on the environment and they have an ecological protection plan, the public and experts were concerned that the low temperatures on the Himalayas would slow down the degradation of the materials, and the noise and dust of the fireworks would disturb the wildlife [1].

Due to the public concern, the government promptly established an investigation group to the scene for survey. During the investigation, environmental experts found and cleared away garbage such as purple copper and plastic there. Then, both Arc'teryx and the artist apologized to the public.

This event has become a typical public opinion crisis triggered by a commercial activity crossing the ecological red line.

### **2.2. Improper Way of High-End Development**

In 2022, the executives of Anta said in public that Arc'teryx, would fully align with Hermes, and hinted that in the future, purchasing their classic products might require accessories. This quickly sparked a public discussion.

The "accessories" is a common strategy used by top luxury brands such as Hermes to select customers and maintain classic. It requires consumers to purchase a lot of other products before they are able to purchase the popular products [2]. But use this strategy to a functional outdoor brand has left many consumers confused and dissatisfied [3]. The public questions that this deviate from the practical original intention of outdoor brands and will not pay for this.

Facing the intense criticism of public, the Anta and the Arc'teryx brand promptly made clarification. They denied that customers need accessories to buy products, explaining that their intention was to learn from the strengths of luxury brands in customer service and experience, rather than replicating their sales strategies. This incident reflects that a brand's incorrect self-positioning and statements can cause public dissatisfaction.

### **2.3. Comparison of Domestic and International Markets**

According to relevant financial reports, the development of the Arc'teryx brand in the global market shows a significant imbalance. It keeps growing in the domestic market, but perform poorly in the overseas markets.

Based on the financial data, the company's financial growth is heavily dependent on the Asian market as shown in figure 1. In the first quarter of 2024, sales in the China region achieved a strong growth of over 50%, while sales in the Americas remained at the previous level. This reliance pattern had already started earlier in 2023, when the China region contributed 80% of the company's income, becoming the core motivation for the company's performance.

But, the sales in overseas markets such as North America and Europe was much lower. Another notable phenomenon is that the prices of the same product in overseas markets are generally lower than those in the domestic market, and there are often discount promotions. For example, some popular products that are priced at over 5,000 yuan on domestic markets may only cost 60% to 80% of the domestic price after tax free and discounts in multiple overseas markets, or even lower.

Therefore, Archaeopteryx has a significant contrast in the markets of the East and the West. Its brand influence, sales volume, consumer's enthusiasm and price abroad are all lower than those in the domestic markets.

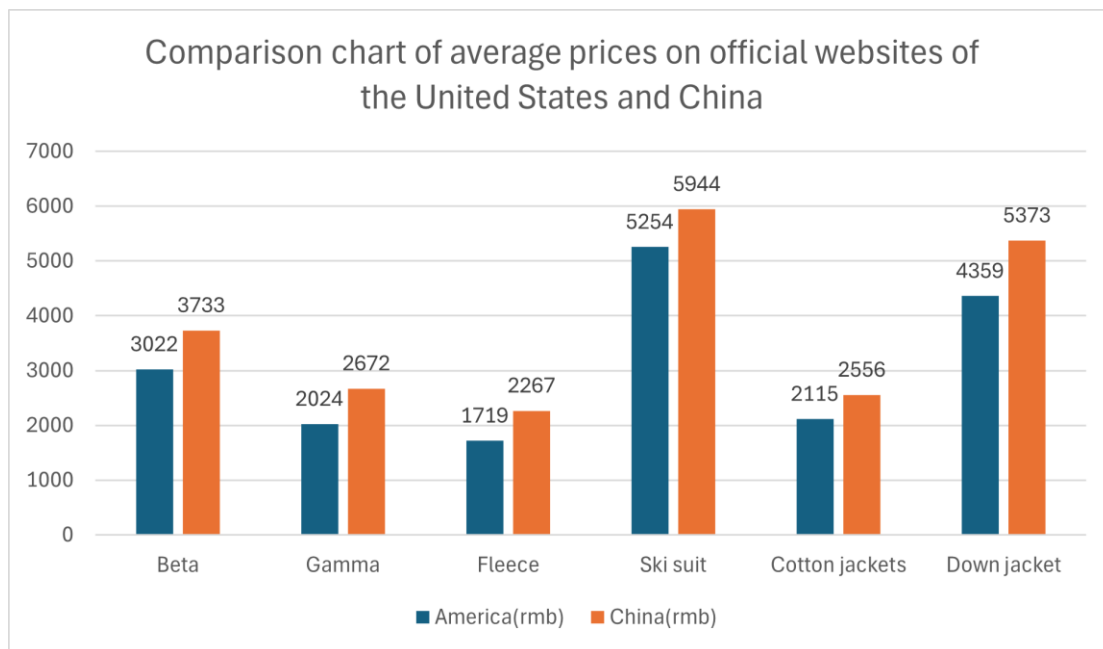


Fig. 1 Comparison of price of the United States and China

### 3. The Reasons behind the Cases

#### 3.1. Marketing Deviate from the Core Spirit of the Brand

Arc'teryx, as an outdoor sports brand, its core spirits is "professionalism, environmental protection and reverence for nature". So, the reason why public reaction was pretty strong is that the fireworks deviate its own brand value and spirit seriously.

On one hand, this event caused a very bad influence on public trust and the image of the brand. Arc'teryx might wanted to use this activity to attract more attention and enhance the artistic sense of the brand. It has realized that setting off fireworks is a little inappropriate, emphasizing the use of environmentally friendly materials. However, the public nowadays is not so easy to deceive. They think doing such intense visual and audio performance in high altitude mountains where are extremely fragile will severely damage the original natural environments, also hurt the animals and plants living there. So, the public denounce Arc'teryx for claiming they love nature but actually did things that harmed nature. When the brand's actions are regarded as conflicting with its environmental protection spirit, public do not doubt their product's functionality, but the morality of the brand [4]. This will reduce public trust, cause bad impression and damage the brand's reputation.

On the other hand, this event disappointed its main consumers, the outdoor sports enthusiasts [5]. These consumers chose Arc'teryx not only because they trusted its functionality, but also because they deeply identified with the brand's spirit. However, the "human-centered" expressed in the fireworks show, that is, turning the mountains into a tool for marketing and ignoring the impact on the mountains, is conflict with the principles of "humility in exploration" that outdoor sports enthusiasts generally believe in. Therefore, this event not only failed to strengthen the connection with the main consumers, but was regarded by them as a betrayal of their common beliefs [4]. This disappointment may cause a decline in their brand loyalty and ultimately result in a weakening of their purchase intention and a decrease in sales volume.

To sum up, the "fireworks show" was an improper marketing event, deviating the brand's spirit, fails to achieve the expected promotional goals and reduce people's trusts at the value level. It not

only widely destroys the public impression but also hurts the emotions of core consumers, causing significant negative impacts on the brand image and market sales.

### **3.2. Brand's Incorrect Self-Positioning and Statements Cause Public Dissatisfaction**

After the Anta acquired Arc'teryx, it has tried many ways to achieve a higher-end position. Like increasing product prices, reducing discounts and quantity of products. However, "accessories" like Hermes is a bad choice. This revealed an important cognitive error of the brand on the path of high-end position: The high-end status is not determined by the brand raising prices or setting purchase restriction. Instead, it requires reaching a consensus about the brand's status with consumers [6].

But Arc'teryx attempted to create scarcity and exclusivity intentionally, imitate the strategy of the luxury brands, in order to give the market a signal that it has reached the top level of brand. The financial report of Anta also shows that it has continuously increased its marketing investment, aiming to enhance its brand status. However, this strategy ignores the fact that the status of luxury brands depends on their profound history and culture, strong popularity, and the widely recognized social significance [6]. The scarcity and exclusivity of products is often the result of this, rather than an intentional marketing strategy.

The reactions of consumers have revealed the failure of Arc'teryx's marketing strategy, they expressed doubts and even aversion. The fundamental reason is that consumers do not recognize that the two are at the same value level. On one hand, about brand influence, although Arc'teryx has a high reputation in the outdoor sports field, its influence mainly focuses on functionality and technology, lacking the top cultural significance and class identification that Hermes has. On the other hand, about product, some classic products of Hermes are regarded as unique works of art and investment, while the core products of Arc'teryx, and are still considered functional clothing, different from true luxury goods.

Therefore, this improper strategy indicates that underestimated or ignored the public's perception for it-a top sports equipment manufacturer rather than a comprehensive luxury brand. This will cause the dissatisfaction of the consumers, damage the brand's reputation. In this way, market sales will be influenced directly. More important, the brand need to spend more money to rebuild consumers' trust and brand's reputation.

### **3.3. Reliance in Domestic Market and Difficulties in Overseas Market**

After being acquired by Anta, the global performances of Arc'teryx have significant differences. The article finds a potential risk: It is highly dependent on the single market in China, and the performance in overseas markets are relatively weak, showing an unbalanced global development pattern.

One reason is the different marketing models. In the Chinese market, it quickly reformed after being acquired, shifting to a direct to consumer (DTC) model. The brand closed a large number of distributors and opened large stores in high-end shopping malls and shopping centers in big cities. This model successfully established a favorable brand image in China. In contrast, in overseas markets, the sales are still dominated by wholesale model. Retailers often offer discounts to boost sales. This means that the brand has weaker control to the price in overseas markets, so the same products often have lower price abroad [7].

Moreover, the brand has different positions and marketing strategies in the two markets. In China, Arc'teryx combined its professional outdoor performance with popular fashion. Through the social media, its products beyond the purely functional category and gradually represent a specific lifestyle and social identity, then attracting more consumers. However, in markets such as North America and Europe, the brand's marketing just focused on outdoor sports, maintaining its professional and functional position for sports brand. But its consumers are only outdoor enthusiasts, and the market expansion speed will be lower [7].

So, the differentiated global strategies have successfully promoted a huge growth in Chinese market. However, in the long term, the differences between domestic and overseas markets will bring challenges to the brand's globalization and its ultimate goal of becoming a global top brand.

## **4. Suggestions**

### **4.1. Make Sure the Activities Conform to Brand Spirit**

Arc'teryx needs to always keep its brand spirit in mind [4]. For any marketing plan, focusing on whether it obey the brand's commitment to nature, not whether the plan will attract more attention.

It will be better to establish a brand risk prevention and review system which is composed of environmental experts and experienced outdoor sports enthusiasts. Every big marketing event planning must be approved by them. The core review standard is whether the event conforms to the brand's spirits [5]. This can prevent some "creative" ideas like fireworks shows that are contrary to the brand's spirit from the very beginning.

In the future, marketing resources should be used to support environmental protection, conduct outdoor safety education, and sponsor exploration activities, in this way, it can build emotional relationship with the main consumers and regain the trust of them [1,7].

### **4.2. The Right Path to High-end Position**

Arc'teryx should stop being luxury by its words and strategies. The core of high-end position is the intrinsic value that cannot be easily replicated by other brands.

Arc'teryx should focus on two things. First, is to make products' quality better, keep investing in research and development, making the material the top level of the world. Because, for the main consumers, outdoor sports enthusiasts, it does not matter whether this brand is a luxury item or not, its quality is more important [3]. Second, to pay attention to moving internal promotion, like spreading the true stories of those individuals who did remarkable jobs wearing Arc'teryx, linking the brand history with the human spirit of exploration [6]. It can build deeper emotional relationship with consumers which is more convincing than any advertisement.

It should abandon the strategy of accessories and find the good way to high end position. The true path to high-end position is to focus on core technology and authentic adventure culture.

### **4.3. Balance Markets**

To become a global brand, Arc'teryx needs to adopt differentiated strategies for different markets. In mature markets such as North America and Europe, the brand should develop detailed local plans. For instance, increasing the number of flagship stores can help directly control brand image and customer experience, avoiding distinct service standards caused by over reliance on distributors. At the same time, optimizing cooperation with wholesale retailers is crucial [8]. This can be achieved by regulating prices to maintain price stability and prevent excessive discounts from undermining the brand's high position.

Furthermore, local marketing is key to enhancing market acceptance. The brand should deeply integrate into local outdoor cultures and usage scenarios [9]. For example, in Europe, it could highlight the product's professional protection performance in Alpine environments, while in North America, emphasize its suitability for activities such as hiking in national parks. By telling local stories and spreading local advertise, Arc'teryx can emotionally connect with consumers.

But there is one thing to pay attention. If the brand's strategies too different, they will be exposed due to the transparency feature of social media, which will cause public criticism and reputation crisis. So, the brand should ensure the consistency of core values to cope with the complex public opinion environment in the age of social media [10].

At the global level, Arc'teryx needs to establish a diverse goal system, designing business models that match the development stages of different markets [7]. In domestic markets, focusing on products' quality and brand awareness building, while in overseas markets, deepening customer loyalty and

expanding consumers would be better. Through flexible strategy, the brand can promote the coordinated development of domestic and overseas markets, ultimately achieving sustained growth in its global influence.

## 5. Conclusion

This article based on three cases, revealing the core contradictions during Arc'tery's rapid development. The results indicate that the cause of the current problems faced by the brand lies in the deviation of brand behavior from its core values, the incorrect understanding of high-end position, and the imbalance in the strategy of global markets.

Specifically, the fireworks show incident reveals that in marketing activities, brand neglected its fundamental principle of "respecting nature" due to the pursuit of short-term marketing results, resulting in a crisis of trust among customers. The rumor of comparing with Hermes indicates that the brand's pursuit of high-end status is overly aggressive. It attempts to enhance its status by imitating the sales rules of luxury brand, but due to Arc'tery is still a functional outdoor brand and lacking the cultural and history, it has caused consumers' dissatisfaction and doubts. The different states of the domestic and overseas markets further reveal that under the leadership of Anta, the brand pursues short term performance and overly relies on a single market. In the overseas market, it still uses the wholesale model, ultimately leading to an imbalance in the global development of the brand.

Based on the above analysis, this article proposes that the sustainable development of Arc'tery must return to its original aspiration: Firstly, a strict brand review system should be established to ensure that all activities have correct values; Secondly, the pursuit of luxury brand should be abandoned, and focus on building high-end identity through quality and exploration stories; Finally, a differentiated global strategy must be planned to balance the development of each market and shape a global high-end image.

The significance of this article is not only providing specific improvement ideas for the Arc'tery, but also offering warnings and references for other Chinese enterprises that are facing acquisition, transformation, or global expansion. It emphasizes that brand's marketing is a long-term struggling that requires collaboration with consumers. Any marketing that deviates from the core values and market realities may have a negative impact on the brand.

Of course, this article has some limitations. It mainly relied on public secondary sources and media reports for analysis, failed to obtain primary sources and strategy details from the brand. Future research can analyze deeply, for example, surveying the changes of consumers' trusts to the brand by questionnaire, or comparing case of different brands, in order to reveal the marketing challenges faced by high-end outdoor brands in a comprehensive way.

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