

SOME CURRENT COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF NETWORK MARKETING (the case of the chinese brand «The Beast»)

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With the continuous development of mobile Internet, network platform has become an important approach for brands to expand markets, which means both an opportunity and a challenge for the marketing communication of major brands. This article takes THE BEAST, a rising Chinese brand in the market, as the research object, combined with the 4I theory of integrated marketing, from four perspectives: crossover marketing, classic inheritance, story-telling, and Interaction with Internet users, and draws the following conclusions. The brand should fully reflect the Interesting, Interaction, Individuality and Interests in network marketing to enhance the efficiency and durability of brand communication.

Key words: THE BEAST; marketing strategy; 4I theory; brand communication; network marketing.

НЕКОТОРЫЕ СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ КОММУНИКАТИВНЫЕ СТРАТЕГИИ СЕТЕВОГО МАРКЕТИНГА (на примере китайского бренда «Зверь»)

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С непрерывным развитием мобильного Интернета сетевая платформа помогает брендам расширять медиарынки, что влечет как новые возможности, так и новые задачи для маркетинговых коммуникаций. В этой статье в качестве объекта исследования рассматривается растущий китайский бренд THE BEAST в соответствии с теорией интегрированного маркетинга 4I с четырех точек зрения: перекрестный маркетинг, классическое наследование, расска-

зывание историй и взаимодействие с пользователями интернета. Показано, что отражение заинтересованности, индивидуальности и интересов в сетевом маркетинге помогает повысить эффективность и долговечность маркетинговой коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: THE BEAST; маркетинговая стратегия; теория 4I; брендовая коммуникация; сетевой маркетинг.

In the time of communication technology progress, various major brands take network marketing as their main way of publicity and promotion, and the emergence of mobile Internet has exploited online communication channels for the marketing of all brands. It is not difficult to find that when many brands use the Internet for marketing communication, the communication content is mainly the promotion information and specific product introduction, and part of the publicity content is customer feedback. These communication strategies belong to the traditional «I say you listen» preaching communication strategy. Lack of development and presentation of brand culture and product connotation makes it difficult for brands and products to have a strong emotional connection with consumers.

Scholar Xiao Mingchao contends that the emergence of new platforms such as social media has disintegrated the life cycle of marketing creativity. In the era of traditional media, a good creative brand can last for several years, while on social media, it may only survive for a few hours [1, p. 44]. It can be seen that under the Internet marketing environment, the marketing cycle is constantly changing and shrinking, and the insight into consumer trends has become an important foothold in enterprise marketing. At the same time, some scholars believe that the psychological distance with consumers should be narrowed through diverse marketing methods to strengthen their sense of brand identity. Scholar Yang Dajun points out that it is not only products that impress consumers, but also emotional resonance with consumers through stories, so as to keep the brand in their mind [2, p. 58].

Therefore, how to carry out successful brand marketing communication on the Internet has become a problem of research value. So, this paper chooses THE BEAST, a Chinese brand, as the object of analysis on the current state of marketing communication. According to the CN10 PaiPaiBang Technology Research Department and the CNPP Brand Research Institute, in the 2022 Chinese Flower Brand List, THE BEAST ranks first with a brand index of 85.3. It can be seen that THE BEAST has been deeply loved by consumers. This article will use case analysis and 4I theory to study this problem. By choosing THE BEAST as a case study, 4I theory is used to analyze the communication strategy of THE BEAST in the process of marketing communication, and a methodology with

reference value is proposed for the brand's communication strategy in network marketing.

THE BEAST, founded in 2011, is a Chinese brand focusing on «selling household items». Under the tide of the Internet, THE BEAST initially used the social media Weibo platform to focus on «very special» flowers. Florist based on the real story told by consumers or the personality characteristics of the recipient, for consumers to match the exclusive, with the connotation of the story of the bouquet. With the continuous development of the brand, THE BEAST has expanded from selling flowers to household articles. As of December 1, 2022, the number of fans of THE BEAST in Weibo has reached 1.029 million, and the cumulative video broadcast volume has reached 206 million times. During the 2022 Carnival Shopping Festival, Tmall's Double Eleven sales data shows that in the fragrance industry, THE BEAST ranks among the top 20 list of brand transcripts in the first 4 hours, and first in the domestic fragrance category.

4I theory focuses on the four principles of Interesting, Interaction, Individuality and Interests in the marketing process. 4I theory attaches importance to the two-way communication and interaction between communicators and audiences, emphasizes the interest of content, attaches importance to win-win interests, and attaches importance to personalized service. The 4I theory is an integrated marketing theory that fully combines the communication characteristics of two-way interaction of the Internet, mainly affects the subjective will of consumers, and is applicable to the Internet. The 4I theory was first proposed by Don Schultz, a professor of marketing at Northwestern University. Don Schultz and Lauter Bowen believe that integrated marketing communication is a new way of looking at things as a whole. It can be seen that the application of 4I theory can inject vitality into brand communication strategies and achieve a new effect of information dissemination.

Use case analysis and 4I theory, we can summarize the following network marketing communication strategies. In Internet marketing, THE BEAST does an excellent job of building an emotional connection with consumers:

(a) Crossover marketing to create a distinct IP immersion. THE BEAST looks for other brands that are similar or related to its brand elements for joint marketing, and make use of the cultural connotation and original audience base of those brands to enrich its own brand personality. By creating co-branded products and diversified display forms, a strong sense of immersion is created, and the communication effect of brand marketing is enhanced. THE BEAST combines the brand proposition of «flower-like beautiful and interesting high-end artistic life» with the «love and responsibility» expressed by The Little Prince. With the assistance of eulogizing truth, goodness and beauty in the works, THE BEAST launched an out-of-print resurrection The Little Prince of Happiness eternal flower box, together with the classic quotation «The stars are beautiful,

because there is a flower that can't be seen» as the slogan. Consumers then are reminded of the delicate and charming rose on the planet and intoxicated with it.

(b) Inheriting classics and creating a sense of belonging in emotional memory. THE BEAST adds nostalgic elements and integrates traditional cultures into marketing communication to connect consumers' past memories with the present reality so that consumers can relive the good times and increase their closeness and trust in brands. Scholar Li Guangdou concedes that successfully shaping the IP image of national culture to interpret Chinese feelings is conducive to leading the trend of marketing and endows the brand more connotations [3, p. 30–31]. At present, when the Chinese trend prevails, THE BEAST actively gets inspiration from traditional Chinese culture, which makes the brand more cultural. Baby Tadpoles Look for Their Mother is the first ink cartoon in China, which has won many awards such as the Honorary Award of the 17th Cannes International Film Festival, and can be regarded as a classic at home and abroad. During Mother's Day in 2022, THE BEAST reproduced the classic Chinese ink animation art by cooperating with Shanghai Animation Film Studio, and produced the micro-video advertisement of Baby Tadpoles Look for Their Mother, arousing the audience's childhood memories and established deep emotional connection with consumers.

(c) Telling stories and highlighting ceremony of quality life. THE BEAST constantly empowers brand value and continuously exports brand ritual sense by telling stories and propositions in modern life. In the early days, THE BEAST expanded consumer channels through Weibo's «custom flowers with stories», and the slogan «Every flower should not be let down, and every story will be respected and cherished» has become one of its distinctive brand features. In addition, THE BEAST has formulated a unique and romantic flower language for each flower, expressing different feelings and meanings, and matching the «flower bouquet with a story outline» through the consumer's narration or the personality of the flower recipient. By stimulating consumers' deep participation, their understanding and recognition of brand value is increased, and the whole process is full of ceremony sense.

After development and exploration of more than a decade, THE BEAST, as a rising star of Chinese brand, has occupied a certain position in the market by virtue of its excellent brand marketing and communication ability. THE BEAST embodies the partial application of the principles of Interesting, Individuality, and Interests in the 4I marketing theory through cross-border marketing, inheritance of classics, and storytelling. The strong sense of immersion, belonging and ceremony touches the inner world of consumers, realizes the self-worth identity of consumers, and lays the foundation for the further development of the brand.

But simultaneously, by searching the official accounts of THE BEAST in Weibo, WeChat, Xiaohongshu and Douyin, the author found that fans' mes-

sages were few replied, which has reduced the enthusiasm of netizens to participate. The principle of Interaction in 4I theory is not fully reflected. In the era of electronic communication, it is necessary to make full use of the Interaction principle in the 4I theory, and bring the positive interaction with netizens into the link of brand marketing to expand brand influence. Through timely and enthusiastic communication with netizens concerned about the brand, consumers can feel the brand's attention and importance to them, and feel the sincerity and enthusiasm of the brand, so as to enhance consumers' awareness of the brand and brand attraction.

Through analysis, it can be found that in network marketing, only by fully following Interesting, Interaction, Individuality and Interests in 4I theory, can the efficiency and durability of brand communication be promoted and the brand influence be deeply rooted in people's hearts.

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