

Brand Trust Building and Crisis Response Strategies from the Perspective of Communication: Take Xiaomi as an Example

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Abstract. In the new media era, the brand trust building and responding to trust crises have been widely concerned. However, the current research on the communication mechanism of trust building is still insufficient. This paper analyzes the success of Xiaomi Automobile in the process of brand trust building from the perspective of communication, and systematically analyzes the process of brand trust building, the reasons for the emergence of trust crisis and the countermeasures. This paper concludes that brand trust is established and produced by the joint action of agenda-setting, symbolic interaction, spiral of silence, and algorithmic mechanism. The emergence of a trust crisis is caused by the improper propaganda strategy and the untimely crisis response. It is worth mentioning that the push algorithms of new media platforms play a role in both building brand trust and causing trust crises, two seemingly contradictory aspects. Based on this, the paper puts forward the following suggestions: strengthen the publicity of authenticity and comprehensiveness, promote consumers from emotional trust to rational trust, establish a sensitive crisis response system.

Keywords: Brand trust, trust crisis, agenda setting, spiral of silence, algorithmic recommendation

1. Introduction

The establishment of brand trust throughout the brand marketing level is the brand strategy success of the highest performance. Research indicates that brand trust now ranks above all other organizational and platform-based trust, trailing only three core trust scenarios: family and social circles, neighborhood stores, and employers. This underscores the pivotal role of brands in shaping consumer trust systems.

In the presence of the new media, the network space has become the brand marketing stronghold. With the development of self-media, the diversification of opinion leaders, and the improvement of video platform algorithms, the influence of brand trust on brand marketing effectiveness has been further amplified. The establishment of brand trust no longer relies solely on the one-way output of traditional advertising, but rather on the long-term and meaningful symbolic interaction and co-construction of meaning between brands and consumers. Trust building is a necessary step for

brands to win a foothold in the increasingly complex network public opinion field. Meanwhile, empowered by new media, consumers, opinion leaders, mainstream media platforms, and their recommendation algorithms collectively create a public opinion environment where information spreads rapidly and emotions resonate easily. In this environment, the outbreak of trust crisis is more destructive, sudden and unpredictable. Therefore, the research on brand trust building and crisis response in the new media environment is particularly important.

Since its establishment in 2010, Xiaomi has rapidly grown into one of the iconic brands of China with its unique "Internet thinking" and "user participation" model. Xiaomi's new energy vehicle series products, as a viral internet-famous new energy vehicle years, showcase typical branding characteristics of the new media era in their promotional process: unique brand events, distinctive founder IP, massive online communities, and a communication philosophy of "making friends with users." This series of measures helped Xiaomi quickly build trust and emotional connections with users in a time. Its rapid growth has also brought some trust crises.

Based on this, this study takes Xiaomi as an example to deeply analyze the path of brand trust building, the causes of, its impacts, and corresponding countermeasures in the new media era

2. Building brand trust: taking Xiaomi's example

Brand trust refers to the degree of consumers' a brand's reliability and its commitments, influences purchasing decisions and brand loyalty. With the advancement of internet technology, consumption scenarios are rapidly expanding from offline to online models [1]. Under such circumstances, the establishment of brand trust is a complex and multifaceted process, formed through dynamic interactions between brands and consumers, symbolic meanings, public opinion environments, media platforms, algorithmic mechanisms, and various other factors. This section takes Xiaomi as an example to construct a reasonable theoretical perspective studies that can explain the process of brand trust establishment. The theoretical mechanism integrates symbolic interaction theory, agenda-setting theory, and the spiral of silence theory, providing new insights into the process of brand trust establishment in the media era

2.1. Agenda setting creates a trust atmosphere

The promotion of new energy vehicles by Xiaomi is based on topical issues, which fulfills both responsibilities to the opinion and regulates the discussion somewhat, trying to provide a favorable environment of confidence in the brand and expectations of the products. Xiaomi focuses on choosing the topics in the promotion of new energy vehicles since it is not only a reaction to the opinion of the population, but also a strategy to influence the discourse. This is aimed at building a good reputation among the populace that leads to confidence in the brand, and great anticipation of the products. To some degree, this strategy of posing brand advantage topics as a conversation point with consumers facilitates the establishment of trust as a process which fits into the logic of agenda-setting.

Agenda-setting theory was put forward by American communication scholars Maxwell McCombs in 1972. It is that while mass media cannot directly determine people's views on a particular event or issue, it can affect the public's perception of the importance ranking of events by selectively reporting certain topics. This classic communication gradually evolved into "network agenda-setting" in the era, which emphasizes not a single issue but a systematic series of issues, and no longer linear logic within the series but nonlinear relationships [2].

Xiaomi also examined the responses of the people of the community before the release of its first new energy vehicle to shortlist the top 10 questions asked by netizens, including price, technology, safety, and competition with other products offered by rivals. The personal update by Lei Jun to the population regarding the top 10 issues of the population involved a series of video replies, and it has created a favorable, convinced, and receptive perception of the population towards the product launch. By responding to concerns of consumers in a specific way, it will establish a strong building brand trust in new products.

A grand product launch, an encouraging speech from the founder, and a single appearance of rivals were the highlight of the Xiaomi introduction of the first new energy vehicle on the market. Directly, namely, with the assistance of the press conference, the consumers will be able to observe such performance parameters of the SU7, its production experience, looks choices, and respect to competitors. Coupling together a chain of iconic events, the initiative was proactive in its place, making the emphasis on such central themes as the technological breakthroughs, user-centric design, high-performance products, and the cutting-edge aesthetics. Categorising the areas of strength of the brand as the public evaluation zones is a subtle way of setting the brand trust mechanism.

2.2. A symbol of trust

Xiaomi dedicates much attention to the construction of the image of its identity in the process of brand trust construction, which is consistent with the logic of the symbolic interaction theory.

The theory of symbolic interaction was identified by American sociologist G. H. Mead and officially postulated by Blumer. Idea the things that people understand through social interaction, and people cognize them based on the meanings they signify. It is not fixed, and at the same time, the meaning of things is understood progressively with the process of social interaction. The brand image created by the interaction boosts the participation and belonging of consumers and therefore creates a strong emotional attachment and builds trust in the brand. In the process of symbolic interaction, virtual consumption mirrors can be created, thus further fueling the consumption demands of the fans [3].

Xiaomi Corporation uses its established founder image to advertise new products, and at the same time, the persona of the founder to advertise its branding.

During the launch event, Lei Jun effectively created the image of a considerate businessman and a hardcore tech-savvy male sharing brand stories and taking down the performance details of the SU7. In the following live stream, Lei Jun engaged with the first group of car owners- shaking hands, hugging, capturing group photos and would even open the door of the car on their own. The act became viral once again and netizens once again presented him as a down-to- earth leader. '

At the same time, the nature of the SU7 was also expressed by Lei Jun. The various features of the SU7 such as the acceleration rate of 0-100 km/h of 2.78 seconds, a range of 800 kilometers and a maximum range of 220 kilometers with the fast charge of 5 minutes depict a high-performance and affordable product image of the SU7. Through the establishment of emotional rapport, like paying an emotional homage to the rivals, Xiaomi Su7 is a favorite to be a custodian of technology, and this aspect will help minimize the resistance of consumers to new products.

The positive interaction between the brand and the public is when the latter turns into an active meaning creator out of a passive recipient of information, and has a greater feeling of participation and belonging. The emotional connection between the public and the brand is further enhanced in this process and the trust of the public transforms to that of an interactive relationship with the brand to the emotional and relational trust. Trust in a brand is also formed invisibly.

2.3. Algorithms of the new media streamline trust building

The new media algorithm, in a nutshell, i.e. that the more people want to see specific the more it will be promoted by the platform. Original attitudes towards brands are enhanced even further with the help of algorithms.

After the successful agenda-setting and image-building in the early stage, users' trust in the new product was initially established. Video platforms generate data streams from user behavior, using preferences, interests, and browsing history to recommend highly relevant video content [4]. Algorithmic recommendations enable systematic and efficient content delivery, enhancing users' positive brand perception and accelerating trust-building.

2.4. The reinforcement of trust atmosphere by the spiral of silence

The public trust in Xiaomi will form the corresponding public opinion atmosphere, and the dominant opinion will be more prominent in this atmosphere, thus forming a self-reinforcing public opinion climate.

The Spiral of Silence theory, proposed by Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann, posits that when people express their views without receiving agreement or even facing criticism, they tend to remain silent. This theory has been further developed in the new media era. Thanks to the rise of self-media and of content production and dissemination channels, online hotly debated events, after being hyped and exposed by the media, trigger public discussion evolve into a trend where the more people talk, intense and bold the discussions become, known The Noisy Spiral [5].

In the new media environment, once the opinions about the brand's advantages or disadvantages form a synergy, it is easy to present a spiral upward trend. The more netizens speak, the more they dare to speak, and the more people participate, making the spiral grow like a snowball [5]. Upon receiving homogeneous viewpoints, individuals will intensify communication with group members, thereby weakening the homogeneity constraint effect. Simultaneously, they will be influenced by intergroup facilitation effects, leading to greater adherence to their original viewpoints when encountering heterogeneous perspectives [6]. Under such circumstances, groups holding opposing views may remain silent in the current public opinion climate. As there were hardly any negative comments online during the initial sales period of the Xiaomi SU7. This kind of public opinion environment can be perceived by the public, which has become a powerful tool to strengthen the public trust in the brand.

In the new media era dominated by algorithms, brands frame the scope of public topics through agenda-setting and establish brand symbol meanings in the process of symbolic interaction with the public, thereby enhancing the public sense of belonging and participation. In this process, the recommendation algorithms of media platforms and the public opinion climate represented by the spiral of silence work together to accelerate and solidify public trust in brands.

3. The causes and effects of the crisis of trust

In the new media environment, the speed of building is accelerated, but at the same time, due to the algorithmic, the spread speed of crisis events is also accelerated. The emergence of a trust crisis is also caused by the algorithm mechanism, brand publicity strategy, and other factors.

3.1. Amplification effect of algorithmic recommendation mechanism

The Matthew effect of algorithm recommendation mechanism is beneficial to the rapid establishment of brand trust, but it also amplifies the speed and scope of the spread of trust crisis, resulting in a "the bad getting worse" situation.

Most mainstream media platforms currently have a mechanism of cumulative traffic pool recommendation in their algorithms. The process by which, after a video is published, it conducts an. Based on the comments of users, it subsequently decides whether to widen the recommendation area or not. In case of negative feedback, the recommendation is stopped. In the event of positive feedback, serves the correct user and content, the system will recommend the same to more users [4]. With such a system, relying on this system, contentious or hot topics that crop up on the platform are likely to be detected by the system and be promoted to more people. The domains in which users like to explore also get smaller as time progresses and information they receive becomes more homogeneous and consequently an information cocoon is unknowingly created by the user [4]. Such negative content gives rise to the information cocoon that makes the users more distrustful. When the individuals continue their course of action after consultation, it would end up having extreme stances [7]. In case very negative attitudes are revealed, they might significantly hurt brand trust and result in a crisis of trust.

3.2. Overdependence on emotional marketing of the brand

The emotional story of the brand is favorable to the quick formation of the emotional connection between the brand and the consumer and the establishment of brand trust. Nonetheless, a brand with too much emotional marketing can make users misjudge the positioning of the brand, undermining the basis of trust and preventing the long-term process of the brand.

The core of emotional marketing is emotional trust, whereas the real functioning of a product is the embodiment of rational trust, which is directly proportional to the brand reliability. One of the important aspects in developing brand trust is brand reliability. Rational trust is more permanent and not as affected by the opinion of the masses as compared to emotional trust. When a brand is over dependent on emotional marketing, consumers can easily be cheated or deceived when the product turns out to be faulty which is difficult to rectify compared to a mere product problem. Due to the excessive emotion and expectation the consumer is setting in the acquisition of the products, the criticism will not only focus on the product itself, but will also focus on the brand behind the product, this will lead to a question on the brand image, as well as the brand quality, and will further exacerbate the crisis of trust.

3.3. Selective promotion of brands

Selective propaganda mainly presents two states: one is to avoid the important and only talk about the advantages. Second, there is a gap between the publicity and the actual effect of the product. If the brand propaganda overemphasizes the advantages or overemphasizes the disadvantages, it may lay the hidden danger for the subsequent trust crisis.

The hidden danger of selective propaganda is mainly reflected in "cognitive bias". If users initially form a positive impression of a brand through early promotional efforts, but later develop negative perceptions based on actual product usage, reviews, or word-of-mouth. Although the brand propaganda is not false propaganda, the inconsistency of this kind of cognitive deviation is easy to

make users feel deceived, and then the brand is alienated, which is the hidden danger of a trust crisis.

3.4. The brand's crisis public relations lag

In the era of new media, the crisis response time for enterprises is greatly reduced, to respond promptly by the brand may lead to serious consequences.

The principle of "speed first" in crisis public relations should be highly, which means that authorities should respond promptly, take decisive actions, and establish effective communication with the public and media within the golden time to control the development of the situation [8]. With the support of platform algorithms, if authorities fail to respond promptly during the early crisis phase, their agenda-setting power may be usurped by media and opinion leaders. In the noisy environment of public opinion, the negative voices grow louder, the public feels the brand's public opinion climate deteriorates, and the official fails to clarify in time, the noisy spiral effect will be highlighted. Evolved into a trend where the more people speak, the more intense and daring people become to speak [5]. This poses significant challenges for subsequent brand public relations efforts.

4. Propose

4.1. Emphasizing authenticity and comprehensiveness in publicity

All dimensions of brand authenticity have a significant positive impact on brand attachment, brand trust, and brand loyalty [9].

Therefore, when promoting product highlights, they can supplement it with a sincere, and candid explanation of the current known boundary issues or known shortcomings of the product. The honesty and truthfulness in such propaganda can quickly build up consumers' trust in the brand, and transform the potential "cognitive bias" caused by selective propaganda into understanding and trust in advance.

4.2. Focus on building rational trust

Although emotional marketing can help to establish the emotional link with the brand and consumers quickly and promote the establishment of brand trust, excessive emotional marketing may affect the long-term development of the brand. The emotional trust should be the bond to build the rational trust, not a substitute.

Therefore, it is necessary to consolidate rational trust in time after the establishment of an emotional connection. Through factory live-streaming, technical experts stepping forward to explain product features, and performance testing, it transparently showcases the technology behind the products, transforming technical expertise into brand trust assets. The emotional trust vulnerable to shock is transformed into a more stable, rational trust.

4.3. Pay attention to the timeliness of crisis response

In the era of the new speed, dissemination has accelerated. A faster response is better when enterprises prioritize security information (guidance policies) [10]. Therefore, it should improve the speed of crisis response and construct a perfect response system.

Establish a crisis response system integrating monitoring, judgment and response. First, brands should establish a comprehensive new media matrix, leveraging platforms to achieve efficient and

extensive coverage. Secondly, establish a crisis response system with tiered PR protocols, activating the PR account's emergency procedures immediately upon crisis occurrence. Meanwhile, PR accounts are categorized into specialized types, such as those for professional scientific communication and those for emotional support.

5. Conclusion

This study, from the perspective of communication, analyzes the process of brand trust establishment, the causes of trust crisis, and the measures in the new media era. The main conclusions are as follows: First, the establishment of brand trust is formed dynamically under the coordination of agenda-setting, symbolic meaning interaction, algorithmic mechanism influence, and public opinion atmosphere. Secondly, the trust crisis is essentially the result of the malfunctioning of the aforementioned mechanisms after the brand commitment is broken. Therefore, enterprises should strengthen the publicity of authenticity, pay attention to the establishment of rational trust, establish a perfect crisis response system, and improve the speed of crisis response.

Future research can further deepen the conclusions through diachronic research and an interdisciplinary perspective.

Authors contribution

All the authors contributed equally, and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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