

Analysis of Marketing Strategies for China-chic Brands under the Perspective of Cultural Confidence

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Abstract: With the acceleration of the globalization process and the rise of cultural identity, cultural confidence has emerged as a crucial concept guiding contemporary trends. Against this backdrop, the China-chic culture, as an expression deeply rooted in local essence, exemplifies a nation or region's amalgamation of history, tradition, and modernity. Amid the surging popularity of the China-chic culture, brands associated with it demonstrate unprecedented momentum. These brands continuously evolve and elevate their marketing strategies to align with the consumption characteristics of the new era. In the perspective of cultural confidence, the captivating charm of China-chic marketing has made significant inroads in the current consumer market. Grasping this opportunity has become one of the focal points for these brands. This paper, set against the backdrop of the rise of the China-chic, employs methodologies like surveys and case studies to deeply analyze the current market status of China-chic brands. It delves into the underlying logic of their developmental paths and marketing strategies, aiming to offer valuable insights and practical references for more China-chic brands.

Keywords: Cultural Confidence, China-chic Brands, Marketing Strategies

1. Introduction

Cultural confidence, as a positive cultural attitude and self-identification, emphasizes the transmission and display of one's national cultural characteristics while respecting multiculturalism. The rise of "China-chic" (a term referring to Chinese trendy culture) as a conscious fashion trend has wielded substantial influence in the branding scene of China. Within the purview of cultural confidence, marketing strategies for China-chic brands encompass celebrity endorsements, IP marketing, and crossover marketing. Celebrity marketing enables mutual empowerment between brands and celebrities, leveraging the latter to fortify the brand's image. Crossover marketing maximizes the value of marketing resources, promoting cross-branding and mutual success. This leads to enhanced consumer engagement and improves conversion efficiency, amplifying the effect of collaborative ventures. IP marketing, characterized by inherent growth potential, high conversion rates, and organic spread, can also benefit from fanbase reinterpretation of IP content, infusing

vitality into the brand's persona. Therefore, this paper will examine representative China-chic brands in sectors like cosmetics, apparel, aroma, tea drinks, cultural creations, and IP personas. The aim is to dissect their marketing triumphs, evaluate their challenges, and distill future China-chic branding trends, offering a theoretical framework for their high-quality marketing advancement.

2. Analysis of China-chic Brand Marketing Strategy

2.1. Market Segmentation: Accurate Target Audience Positioning

Underpinning China-chic culture are diverse consumer preferences, signifying a vibrant China-chic era. For instance, confronted with market saturation, overcapacity, and product homogenization in the sportswear category, the Chinese sportswear brand Li Ning redefined its market positioning. Embracing *a single brand, multiple categories* [1] marketing strategy and targeting age demographics of 15-40, Li Ning bifurcated this into two consumer matrices: 15-24 and 25-40. Beyond meticulous segmentation, Li Ning has pursued a differentiated branding strategy, solidifying its China-chic sports brand persona. Regular sponsorships, endorsements, and equipment provision associating with sports events subtly align the brand with sports in consumers' minds, demonstrating brand resilience. This tells us that only by accurately promoting products to target consumer groups can it occupy a particular category ladder in the minds of target consumers and then help the brand form a market segment.

2.2. Crossover marketing: Accelerating Brand Breakout

In the context of crossover marketing models, numerous China-chic brands have adopted crossover marketing to heighten brand visibility and resonance. The crossover marketing of many China-chic brands is usually based on attractive trend color matching, with a large number of traditional Chinese cultural elements, highlighting the diversified charm of Oriental beauty. For instance, in 2020, the China-chic tea brand Xicha collaborated with internationally-renowned Dutch-Chinese artist DIGIWAY and time-honored Chinese stationery brand Rongbaozhai, modernizing the Tang Dynasty painting Han Xizai's Night Banquet. Such endeavors facilitate interactions among enthusiasts from diverse spheres like trends, traditional Chinese aesthetics, and art. Similarly, the Forbidden City's collaboration with Taobao in a DIY journal tape event rejuvenated its ancient culture, appealing to consumers of various tastes. Another brand, Anta's sportswear collaboration with the animation *Mulan* in March 2020, employing design elements representing loyalty, bravery, and authenticity, led to a series of athletic shoes celebrating female empowerment, marking a successful foray into the women's sportswear market. These examples underscore how China-chic brands leverage crossover marketing to resonate emotionally with consumers, capture potential audiences from diverse sectors, and endow their brands with profound significance.

2.3. Celebrity Endorsements: Perfectly Aligning with Brand Connotations

In the era where traffic is king, domestic brands in China have realized the power of celebrity influence to drive consumer behaviors. By leveraging fans' adoration and loyalty towards celebrities, brands aim to attract a more extensive consumer base. For instance, on May 20, 2021, the domestic beauty brand Colorkey partnered with the star Dilraba Dilmurat as its global spokesperson. By August 19, 2022, the Weibo topic that *Dilraba Dilmurat became the international face of the Colorkey brand* had almost 1.5 billion views with over 10.69 million discussions [2]. Consequently, Colorkey elevated its status from a famous local brand to a representative of domestic trendsetting beauty brands. In 2023, the domestic sportswear brand Peak signed NBA star Alvarado as the endorser for their "Big Triangle Series" products [3]. Peak's collaboration with Alvarado was not just

due to his basketball skills and influential stature but also because his journey aligns seamlessly with Peak's brand culture. Such endorsement strategies by domestic brands have capitalized on the celebrity's influence, converting their popularity into brand energy and sales, linking fans' impressions of the star to the brand, thereby enhancing brand credibility and affinity, resulting in a win-win for both sentiment and sales.

2.4. Virtual Personas: Endowing the Brand with Personality

With the maturity of digital technology and social media, to encapsulate the Oriental Aesthetics in their brand image [4], China-chic brands have been utilizing virtual personas for marketing. For example, in October 2022, the daily-use brand Miniso collaborated with Sanrio's IP character Kuromi [5], launching 15 Kuromi-themed stores nationwide featuring a unique black-purple design and hosting a flash event titled *Kuromi's Black-Purple Party*. Through this cooperation, Miniso has also successfully become a representative of the China-chic brand of the Two-dimensional culture. In May 2020, the domestic IP B.Duck teamed up with the famous Chinese mobile game Peacekeeper Elite, unveiling merchandise featuring the duck character wielding a frying pan, wearing a Level 3 helmet, and riding a motorcycle. This crossover allowed the brand to expand beyond its usual demographic and blend the animation character with gaming scenarios, enriching B.Duck's character experiences. Virtual IP, as influential symbols, Can give the brand more personality value, creating a more appealing and unique brand image.

2.5. Visual Aesthetics: Subtly Expressing Chinese Culture

The China-chic is not simply the application of symbols and patterns. Instead, they delve into the rich aesthetic elements embedded in Chinese cultural values, integrating them into product designs. This approach ensures that the products not only possess aesthetic value but also cultural significance, embodying Chinese aesthetics. For example, the beauty brand Perfect Diary integrated the concept of Oriental Aesthetics into its marketing strategy, collaborating with National Geographic China to launch an eyeshadow palette featuring *Chinese geographical patterns*, subtly conveying the essence of Chinese culture. In 2021, the sports brand Li Ning hosted the *Thirty Years Established Silk Road Exploration-themed* party and introduced the Dunhuang-themed *Tuo·Qianxing* sneakers, integrating millennia-old Dunhuang elements into the design and reflecting the beauty inherent in Chinese culture. Additionally, the *Fanwu City Limited* sneaker series incorporates regional characteristics from various Chinese cities, interpreting the historical stories and cultural connotations behind each city. In summary, China-chic brands should root their product presentations in the profound essence of traditional Chinese culture, promoting Chinese culture through their products, extending brand value, and conveying a unique Chinese cultural narrative inherent to the brand.

3. Reflection on the Marketing Challenges of China-chic Brands

3.1. Stereotyped positioning: It is difficult to promote Chinese culture

The stereotyping of Chinese fashion brand positioning is often reflected in the two dimensions of market and target audience. Regarding audience positioning, there's a tendency to pigeonhole specific age groups into distinct styles, associating certain products with particular age demographics. Such a stereotypical approach can be limiting. Philip Kotler, often regarded as the father of modern marketing, suggested in his book *Marketing Management* that consumers with similar demographic features might have vastly different consumption psychologies and motivations [6]. Younger groups might not necessarily prefer trendy, fashionable, or casual styles, and middle-aged consumers might not gravitate towards professional styles, instead favoring youthful trends. Thus, even if the market

has been segmented, superficial segmentation without deep consumer insights leads to a generalization of preferences for a particular age group. This could restrict the brand's potential and place it in a passive position. In terms of market positioning, many China-chic brands mistakenly equate China-chic design with a mere replication of Chinese cultural elements, needing a deeper exploration of traditional cultural essence and values. This superficial approach results in products that dilute the original significance of conventional culture and need more avant-garde trendiness resonance.

3.2. Marketing homogeneity: challenging to grasp the innovation trend

China-chic represents the current trend direction of Chinese brands, especially after the Xinjiang cotton incident, which garnered heightened attention and recognition for China-chic brands. Numerous brands have followed the tide by employing China-chic elements in their marketing strategies, leading to the rapid proliferation of similar China-chic products. This has given rise to product homogenization and monotonous marketing strategies, which could make China-chic stale over time. In the long run, This will ultimately lead to the expulsion of good money from bad money, and in the long run, it will be difficult for national wave brands to lead the innovation trend in China. For a Chinese brand to be genuinely trendy, it shouldn't merely jump on the bandwagon but integrate its unique product value, cultural expression, and aesthetic concepts with creative marketing to convey beauty and cultural appreciation. China-chic brands can only break the homogenization cycle by continuously deriving insights from Chinese cultural essences, innovating while respecting traditions, and leading the fashion trend, allowing Chinese brands to flourish and stand out.

3.3. Short-sighted cross border: challenging to revive the tide of culture

With crossover marketing becoming the primary marketing method for many brands, it's becoming frequent and oversaturated. On the one hand, audiences are experiencing aesthetic fatigue. On the other, brand decision-makers are losing reverence for crossover marketing. While unexpected crossover collaborations can grab consumer attention, the gap between expectations and reality might also convert them into brand deserters. For instance, the China-chic apparel brand Semir controversially launched a series named China-chic crossover Marketing with Shaolin Kung Fu. However, the Shaolin Temple in Henan claimed they never authorized Semir to use Shaolin Kung Fu on clothing labels or product names. Semir also never officially proposed such collaboration, and the Shaolin Temple was unaware. The Shaolin Temple has commissioned lawyers to take action; the temple reserved the right to take legal action for infringement. This incident garnered widespread criticism online. In the long run, disorderly crossover marketing could tarnish a brand's reputation, eroding its intrinsic value and making it challenging for the brand to bear the responsibility of rejuvenating the great wave of Chinese culture.

4. Future Marketing Trends for China-chic Brands

4.1. Define Market Objectives and Optimize Resource Allocation

In the media era, multi-channel product promotion can quickly capture consumers' attention in a short period. However, this also means a pile-up of costs. From now on, China-chic brands should define their marketing goals before formulating promotional plans. Resources are prioritized and allocated, brand momentum can be sustained, and substantial profits can be realized. For instance, Guan Xia, a China-chic fragrance brand positioned around oriental botanical notes, aligns well with Chinese traditional cultural aesthetics regarding fragrance application, scent creation, and overall product packaging design. It depicts conventional Chinese scenes through its fragrances. Guan Xia's precise

market positioning and successful tapping into the Chinese fragrance category and audience mean that its modern aromatic products strongly resonate with traditional cultural sentiments, modernizing the expression of conventional cultural essence. Consequently, Guan Xia has received positive feedback in the market and holds the potential to represent China-chic fragrances in the future.

4.2. Narrate Chinese Stories to Enhance Brand Value

Culture is the root and soul of a nation and its people [7]. With growing cultural confidence, China's rich traditional culture provides fertile ground for China-chic brands. Since China-chic incorporates the notion of a nation, it should steadfastly embody the essence of China's outstanding traditional culture. And being termed as trendy, it should stay contemporary, aligning with modern perceptions. Presently, China-chic brands should delve deep into the profound connotations of China's traditional culture rather than chasing fleeting trends and traffic. Brands should integrate culture into product philosophies. By leveraging diverse channels and employing content marketing, brands can craft their narratives, convey oriental culture, and shape the brand's spiritual and cultural transmissions, turning culture into a brand identifier. For example, In 2022, WonderLab launched a cultural event-themed *Silk Road Expedition*, aiming to retrace the ancient Silk Road. With products like probiotics and meal replacement shakes linked to physical health, this artistic exploration reinforces the brand's narrative of promoting a nutritious lifestyle to younger consumers. The initiative further amplifies the brand's spirit of exploration and breakthrough, fostering more interactive communication with users and expressing the brand value in a multifaceted manner.

4.3. Skillful Use of Digital Technology to Innovate Marketing Strategies

In the context of Marketing 4.0, the development of digital media offers a robust impetus to the promotion and propagation of Chinese trend brands. For instance, the Forbidden City Museum actively interacts with consumers on its official blog and Weibo, generating popular Weibo topics like the *Ginkgo trees at the Forbidden City's West Flower Gate are so beautiful* and *Autumn in the Forbidden City*, which engage and invite netizen discussions. This not only enhances the Forbidden City's exposure and influence but also establishes a foundation of traffic for promoting its China-chic cultural creative products. Additionally, the trend of utilizing digital technology to convey marketing content is rising; technologies like VR (Virtual Reality) have been integrated into Chinese trend brands. For example, the Chinese trend cosmetic brand Jialan has successfully transitioned to digital by establishing a data platform. When launching a new product, they can reach 40,000 retail terminals within 24 hours and deliver to all retail touchpoints within 36 hours [8]. During the 618 promotions for 2020, the Chinese trend home appliance brand Joyoung, with the assistance of Alibaba Cloud's data center, conducted targeted marketing, launching a more fashionable new IP series. The result was a 322% increase in ROI, a doubling of GMV, and a 10% increase in users under 27.

5. Conclusion

Brands embody the cultural soft power output of a nation. The rise of Chinese trend brands is inextricably linked to the significant enhancement of national comprehensive strength, the 5000 years of Chinese cultural heritage, and the growing cultural confidence and recognition of Chinese culture among the population. These brands stand out from the myriad of brands due to their unique Oriental Aesthetics brand positioning, precise marketing strategies, and original operational models, as well as their deep integration with the richness of traditional Chinese culture. To sustain development and solidify brand image, these brands need to define precise market segmentation, contemplate innovative marketing methods, and convey the essence of Chinese stories effectively to remain

unyielding in a fiercely competitive market. We have reason to believe that China-chic is a grand trend, and the attribute of China-chic will be penetrated and applied in various categories. In the future, more China-chic brands will emerge prolifically, continuously exploring the meaning of Oriental aesthetics, stimulating brand innovation capacity, and shaping a trendy local brand image. Ultimately, the goal is to produce a series of internationally recognized Chinese trend brands. By then, these products can serve as a bridge for cultural communication between China and the world, becoming essential symbols for the external dissemination of national culture. They will signify the shift from Made in China to Created in China and even Intelligently Crafted in China. More iconic China-chic brands will evolve into cultural business cards showcasing China's charm, conveying Chinese culture and voice to the world.

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