

Analysis of the New Route of Brand Communication in the Post-epidemic Period -- Take the Outdoor Camping Brand TOREAD as an Example

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Abstract. In the post-epidemic era, the restrictions of the external business environment and the traditional communication methods of many brands have kept the brand from gaining and maintaining customers. At the same time, the communication of some "outdoor camping" brands has won the favor of more and more audiences, which hides their precise positioning for the concept of outdoor leisure lifestyle and the rise of minority cultural circles. This is exactly the opportunity for the growth of outdoor camping brands. Focusing on the local perspective, from the ups and downs of China's own outdoor camping brands, domestic local outdoor camping brands have penetrated into public life, which also represents the return of contemporary Chinese aesthetics. In the post-epidemic era, with consumption upgrading, the role of consumers has gradually changed into an important node in brand production and communication. They need to find a breathing space in their limited life. In this space, the consumer brand that best meets the audience's psychology makes them yearn for it. Based on this, brand development should be studied from the internal and external environment and consumer concepts. Nowadays, the competition of brand communication is not only the competition between products but also the development of brand communication through such countermeasures as increasing the added value of the brand, accurate positioning of the audience at all levels, and respecting the co-creation value of consumers' psychology.

Keywords: Communication; brand; camping; post-epidemic.

1. Introduction

In the post-epidemic period, in order to seek sustainable influence, many brands changed the focus of communication layout, broke the existing brand communication pattern in the way of data and virtualization, empowered people's subject consciousness, social relations and consumption behavior, and made the brand development begin to change from "logic of things" to "logic of people"[1].

People stay away from the noise of cities and get close to nature by camping, which has become the most popular outdoor pastime in recent two years. Many outdoor camping brands have benefited from this rise in China's suburban and short-distance peripheral travel. While Chinese local camping brands focus on catering to people's new lifestyle of "close travel", meet users' high-frequency and personalized needs, adapt to users' new consumption scenarios, and thus form a new communication pattern. In the existing research, many scholars pay attention to how to break the situation of brand marketing in the post-epidemic period, try to understand the changes in consumer behavior during the epidemic, and explore new opportunities for brand development. There are also scholars who analyzed the problems and countermeasures in the development of camping tourism in the post-epidemic era from the perspective of the tertiary industry. However, for the cases of outdoor camping brands that rose significantly in the post-epidemic period, no research has yet paid attention to the value they created together with the audience in the communication process at this stage.

This research will take the outdoor camping brand "TOREAD" in China as the research object. Through case analysis and content analysis, the article studies the development profile of outdoor sports brand communication in the post-epidemic period, summarizes the development trend and existing problems, studies the current work of specific brand construction, and summarizes the media integration communication strategy. The integration and change of the media environment has made traditional communication before the epidemic changes structurally. Understanding the difference between the two can provide some new ideas in the brand characteristic discourse system, topic

content setting and other aspects, and provide some directions for brand communication to effectively participate in the connection of the audience.

The main questions answered include: What is the market competition and communication power of the brand in the post-epidemic period? For the audience's perception and acceptance of the brand, what brand communication transformation has it achieved, and what problems still exist? Finally, this study will focus on whether there are some innovative strategies for outdoor brand communication in the post-epidemic period.

Camping culture has grown rapidly from a minority culture to the post-epidemic period, benefiting from the changes of the times and relying more on the brand to further meet the needs of the audience. When a large number of brands disappear and cannot adapt to the current era, only when brands have a deep insight into consumers and communication audiences and take active actions to accelerate the reconstruction of audience confidence can brands quickly get rid of the shackles brought by the epidemic in the communication process, and even explore new opportunities for brand development in the post epidemic era.

2. The Characteristics and Current Situation of Outdoor Camping TOREAD

2.1 Brand Features and Characteristics

With the improvement of national income and the acceleration of urbanization, outdoor sports and a positive and healthy lifestyle has spread rapidly in China and gradually become a part of people's life. On the one hand, the number of domestic outdoor products brands continues to increase, showing a trend of high concentration of major brands and gradual withdrawal of weak brands in the industry; On the other hand, domestic consumers have gradually deepened their understanding of outdoor products and began to recognize the difference between outdoor products and sports products. For example, in the past, Chinese consumers often wore sportswear to participate in outdoor activities such as mountain climbing. In recent years, more and more consumers have begun to wear professional outdoor products when participating in outdoor sports.

Camping must be on the list of the most popular outdoor leisure and entertainment methods in the post-epidemic period. In the past two years, camping-related topics have become increasingly popular, becoming "big traffic" on social media. As a leading enterprise of outdoor products in China, TOREAD, driven by years of experience, caught this hot spot early and quickly followed up, and achieved good results.

In response to this phenomenon, TOREAD combines its own brand advantages, takes the "TOREAD" brand as the core, and further focuses on the professional outdoor sports market on the basis of the original market, focusing on professional outdoor fields such as hiking and mountain climbing. At the same time, for different groups, combined with the characteristics of various e-commerce channels, we launched a differentiated multi-brand development strategy.

In view of the characteristics that young people between the ages of 18 and 28 are fonder of online shopping, combined with the fact that cycling is becoming younger and there are few targeted brands in the domestic e-commerce market, Toread launched the e-commerce brand ACANU, which is mainly sold on Tmall, Taobao, JD, Yama and other online platforms. According to the characteristics that young people are more sensitive to fashion, it not only highlights technology and design functionality in fabrics. At the same time, it adopts younger and more fashionable styles and colors.

For people between the ages of 30 and 50 who pursue the quality of life and love outdoor sports, Toread launched a high-end leisure brand, Discovery Expedition, and selected the Tmall platform with high maturity of e-commerce users to sign up as an exclusive strategic partner. In order to meet the different preferences of such people, Toread launched different series of goods. For example, the self-driving series is launched for people who love self-driving tours. In order to meet the needs of self-driving enthusiasts for comfort and protection, functional fabrics, lightweight design concepts and multi-bag tooling styles are used; For ordinary outdoor enthusiasts, we launched a camping series, which integrates fashion elements on the basis of comfort; For outdoor enthusiasts who love wild

adventure, the series of Wilderness Survival is launched to meet their needs for adventure and survival in extreme environments.

As the three brands of Tread, Discovery Expedition and ACANU form a complementary relationship in terms of brand positioning, design style, target customers and market segments, Tread's products can cover target consumers in a wider range.

2.2 Market Competitiveness of TOREAD in the Post-epidemic Period

2.2.1 Co-branded with Well-known IP to Create Different Styles of "Refined Camping"

Brand crossover is usually the cooperation between two brands in different product categories. It is not only a way to attract consumers' attention through innovation to promote sales but also a common practice for parent brands to try to create new categories and new profit spaces. The design creativity of cross-border products usually starts from the commonness of cooperative brands. New products have both genes of both sides, making people bright and harmonious [2].

TOREAD brings a variety of camping experiences of different styles, such as dreamy childlike fun and exquisite luxury, by co-branding with a series of well-known IPs, including camping products co-branded with TEENIE WEENIE for two consecutive years. The brand also invited Hermes designers to create a luxury camping series with Hermes patterns; During Labor Day this year, TOREAD also launched a number of co-branded products with Doraemon.

On the online TOREAD, it focuses on promotion channels such as Tmall, JD, Tiktok, and small programs in Wechat and promotes grass planting on platforms such as Xiaohongshu, Bilibili, and Weibo. On the offline side, not only do their stores create a camping atmosphere, but they also provide a series of fashionable and interesting camping flash events that have been held in famous malls and landmarks in first-tier cities to promote the camping culture to a more popular consumer group.

2.2.2 Call on Participants to Camp in a Civilized Manner and Open a New "Teaching Mode"

With the popularity of camping, the subsequent environmental issues have also caused many disputes. On the one hand, the rise of "refined camping" has brought camping into the public's view. On the other hand, some campers lack basic environmental protection awareness, which causes damage to the ecological environment of the campsite.

On July 20, TOREAD Group's 2023 spring and summer new product ordering meeting and the standard launching ceremony of the Guide to Camping Behavior were held in Beijing. At the meeting, TOREAD, together with the China Exploration Association, released the standard of the Guide to Camping Behavior. All parties reached a consensus on the basic principles of camping and the No Trace Mountain and Wilderness (LNT) rule, jointly formulated standards and launched initiatives, and appealed to all groups and individuals involved in camping to abide by them.

2.3 Audience's Perception and Acceptance of the Brand

According to the "Labor Day" market data released by the 2021 performance announcement of Tread in May this year, the popularity of camping on this platform has risen sharply for three consecutive years. Following the year-on-year growth of 290% during the May Day holiday in 2020 and 230% in 2021, the platform camping-related content search volume increased by 746% during the Labor Day holiday this year [3].

In 2021, Tread Group's revenue increased by 36.23% over the same period. For seven consecutive years, the number one brand in the outdoor equipment industry achieved operating revenue of 1.243 billion yuan, an increase of 36.23% over the same period last year, and a net profit attributable to shareholders of listed companies of 54.4652 million RMB.

In terms of the reception effect, most of the fans of camping culture are "projection and identification" consumers. They seek satisfaction from the text for their psychological lack, which is related to their deprived and repressed life experience in real life [4]. Therefore, the camping brand plays a dual role of virtual spiritual freedom and actual relaxation in the brand in the contemporary post-epidemic era.

3. Brand Communication Transformation in the Post-epidemic Era

3.1 Reasons for the Rise of Outdoor Brands and their Communication Methods

3.1.1 China-Trendy Culture

In the era of increasingly homogeneous products, the focus of many consumers has shifted from the use value of products to whether they can bring emotional resonance and a cultural sense of belonging. "China-Trendy" is derived from the combination of two Chinese words, "China" and "Trendy". It is a fashion brand that reflects Chinese culture and design characteristics. Its appearance is the result of the improvement of Chinese consumers' cultural self-confidence and their emphasis on cultural belonging. When we saw that European, American, Japanese and Korean brands were taking over the international market, consumers began to reflect on the existence and value of local Chinese brands, had higher expectations for domestic brands, and spontaneously pursued products with Chinese cultural characteristics and significance, which also became an opportunity for local brand action [2].

For decades, the trend culture of our country has been constantly changing, and the confidence and love for the new social lifestyle is the most invincible "trend" in today's society. Nowadays, "outdoor camping" is not only the exclusive ownership of traditional brands. The outdoor lifestyle and social activities have revealed the connotation of camping, integrating travel entertainment with local life aesthetics into camping products and developing them. TOREAD has received a good response through cross-media communication. It combines camping with a trendy local lifestyle and attracts many consumers to chase it.

3.1.2 Recognition and Appreciation of Domestic Products

Due to the outbreak of the epidemic, the diversity, subdivision, wide area and renewal of the marketing environment have increased the competitive pressure on the market in many aspects. Overseas enterprises have reduced the output of products, and domestic enterprises have also contracted the import volume. Consumers' recognition of Chinese products has increased, and their national sentiment has risen. They are more willing to buy domestic products and share the crisis with the state and enterprises. For the "China-Trendy" brand, "cost performance" and "product innovation" are two attractive points of concern in the minds of consumers [5]. During the epidemic, with the development of e-commerce platforms and the emergence and rise of the new marketing model of online live streaming with goods, online sale was a new opportunity, and the recognition of the "China-Trendy" brand was greatly improved during this period.

3.2 Brand Positioning and Maintenance

In the 2021 annual report of Tread Holding Group Co., Ltd., it was mentioned that TOREAD is committed to providing consumers with online and offline Omni channel services and digital consumption experience and realizing the three-dimensional development of the company's online and offline. TOREAD has created a member club to explore emerging interactive exchanges. During the reporting period, the company increased the investment in brand promotion, focused on the promotion resources, strengthened the new brand spirit of "brave to explore" of pathfinders, and used this as an emotional bond to strengthen the accurate touch and communication with young consumers, and achieved brand promotion synchronously through integrated programs.

At the same time, the company continued to strengthen the promotion and interaction of community fans through new marketing models such as "live marketing", "online celebrity marketing", and "knowledge marketing" to obtain new young users and improve the conversion rate of user purchases.

4. Specific Countermeasures for Outdoor Brand Communication in the Post epidemic Period

4.1 Positioning the Brand

According to Iwahara Mian, a Japanese sociologist, a group refers to a collection of multiple individuals with a common goal orientation and sense of belonging and an interactive mechanism [6]. On the social media platform, unlike the traditional "push" information, it can reach users directly. Today's brand communication is "pull"; that is, it needs to be actively selected by users. Using big data technology to achieve personalized and real-time brand communication is easier to cater to the tastes of specific audience groups and fully demonstrate the brand's humanistic care [7].

The minority circle culture has taken shape in ancient China, and the emergence of new media has provided strong technical support for the rapid development of minority circle culture. Brands can rely on the timeliness and interactivity of new media information dissemination so that groups keen on minority culture can quickly gather in the network field and form a circle. The minority circle culture has the dual characteristics of closing and opening and has gradually established a unique internal order and discourse system in the long-term development [8]. While satisfying the sense of identity and belonging of the groups in the circle, the minority circle culture is also gradually expanding its popularity with the help of new media, showing a trend of breaking the circle. Once the brand cuts into this unique internal discourse, both can form a high degree of tolerance.

4.2 Create the Brand Image that the Audience is Looking For

Joseph Pine believes that experience means that people spend a period of time in a very personal way in essence and obtain a series of memorable events from it. Bernd H. Schmidt defines experience as an activity in that enterprises take service as the stage, goods as props, and consumers as the center to create activities that can enable consumers to participate in and be worthy of consumers' memories, usually including five types of feeling, thinking action, and relationship [9].

Comparing the two scholars' interpretations of the word "experience", we can find that experience emphasizes a psychological aspect. This kind of feeling does not always follow the logic of rational facts but rather follows the value logic brought by irrational factors such as illusion, immersion and belief. Although the "experience age" emphasizes more on people's economic consumption behavior, it is not difficult to see that this irrational characteristic has already jumped out of the simple economic consumption behavior in the current society and spread to all aspects of daily life practice, becoming a prominent characteristic of people's cognition, understanding and memory in the Internet society.

In the era of experience, especially after the social upheaval, the user's cognitive logic is undergoing a huge transformation; that is, people often no longer recognize the world based on objective facts but rely more on irrational factors to build their own understanding of themselves and society [1].

For brands, we can explain the three characteristics that affect people's new cognitive changes in the experience era from the three dimensions of relationship, emotion and scenario and reasonably guide and influence user behavior and consumption choices based on this.

Based on the above analysis, brand innovation in the post-epidemic period can focus on communication and value exchange with the audience. The so-called communication is to convey new images actively and continuously strengthen new links. Not only the content of communication needs to be more from the perspective of consumer needs, but it also needs to adapt to the trend changes of consumers. The attitude of communication needs to be more flexible, and the communication methods need to be designed accordingly. The epidemic broke people's habitual life order and made consumers rethink their values, consumption patterns and living habits. The experience during the epidemic will also profoundly shape the shopping habits of consumers after the epidemic has eased. Therefore, the brand should also pay attention to the continuity of communication and the mutual communication between multiple contacts so as to obtain the resonance and

recognition of consumers. The value exchange requires the brand to start new sales and Siebian to provide new value flexibly.

4.3 Exchange with the Audience

In the long history, the media has constantly reshaped the interaction mode between individuals and updated the way knowledge is accepted and disseminated by society [10]. Information exchange between people and the outside world is the basis of all social practices. Therefore, the impact of the widespread use of new media technology is not limited to changing the way of information dissemination. We should also see what changes have taken place in various social practices based on information exchange under the influence of new media.

As a rising social practice, the leisure way of outdoor camping has driven the spread of outdoor camping brands. At the same time, the interaction between camping brands and audiences based on new media has also changed the participation of audiences. Therefore, brands can further extend the communication space and expand the action dimensions of participants. Use modern new media technology to expand the connection way and expression space with the audience and expand the audience's independent choice. In this process, brands can also explore more diverse user needs.

5. Conclusion

Camping culture emerged in the post-epidemic period is a kind of minority culture with practicality and healing. With the explosive growth of participating groups and users of camping products, this group's extensive influence on its community and culture cannot be underestimated. The influence of outdoor camping brands has shaped new brand usage habits through the extension of communication space with users and the expansion of individual action dimensions. The brand also tries to further standardize the sustainable development of outdoor camping life and play some social roles.

In interactive and full-channel communication, the outdoor camping brand meets the needs of the audience for products and ideas to improve the camping experience and also provides a channel for the release of feelings and sensibility in the communication in advance. On this basis, the brand further reshapes the original outdoor camping experience and practice norms, amplifies the cultural circle's sense of identity with symbolic interaction, promotes interaction with the help of a sense of presence and convenience, and forms a unique communication space.

When outdoor camping has gradually become the norm of leisure life, how will the brand further shape the audience's experience behavior, and what new practice scenes and cultural circles will be constructed? This paper takes the application of media diversity of brand attempts and the relationship between camping culture as a perspective. However, the audience's lifestyle is dynamic. Future research can further analyze the dynamic phenomena and relationships between camping brands and camping culture, as well as other cultural phenomena extending to the post-epidemic period and corresponding brand communication strategies.

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