Research on the Communication Mechanism of Brand Narrative in Shaping Corporate Image

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Abstract: This study explores the communication mechanisms of brand storytelling in shaping corporate image. First, it analyzes the construction process of brand narratives, including key components such as defining core brand stories, creating narrative structures and plots, and developing character portrayals to resonate with consumers. Second, it examines the communication mechanisms of brand narratives from both internal and external perspectives, focusing on critical elements like employee engagement and cultural shaping, consumer touchpoints and strategies, as well as social media and viral marketing tactics. Through this research, we aim to provide valuable references for enterprises in brand building and communication strategies.

Keywords: brand storytelling; corporate image; communication mechanisms; internal communication; external communication; social media

1. Brand Narrative Construction Process

1.1 Defining the Core Brand Story

The core brand story serves as the cornerstone of brand narrative, embodying a brand's values, mission, and vision. This step requires companies to deeply explore their history, culture, and unique selling points, distilling a compelling narrative that resonates with target audiences. The story should evoke emotional resonance, fostering consumer identification and acceptance. By establishing this core narrative, businesses can build a clear, consistent brand identity that lays solid groundwork for future communication. When defining the core story, companies must also consider audience preferences and needs to ensure the narrative connects with them, thereby enhancing brand appeal and influence[1].

1.2 Crafting Narrative Structure and Plot

In developing narrative structure and plot, companies should maintain logical clarity and well-organized layers. Techniques like suspense, plot twists, and climactic moments can create dynamic storytelling that captivates readers. The narrative design must closely align with the core story while avoiding deviations from its theme. Additionally, multi-threaded narratives can be employed by weaving together different perspectives and dimensions to enrich the storyline, adding depth and dimensionality. These efforts make brand narratives more engaging, helping establish a distinct brand image in consumers' minds. When constructing narrative structures, companies should emphasize emotional integration and expression. Emotion acts as the bridge between brands and consumers, and through nuanced emotional portrayals, consumers can gain deeper understanding and appreciation of the brand's narrative. Companies can evoke emotional resonance by depicting protagonists 'growth journeys, overcoming challenges, or showcasing heartwarming interactions between brands and consumers. Emotional expression must align with brand image and values to ensure narrative coherence.

1.3 Character Development and Consumer Connection

In brand storytelling, character development is crucial. By creating vivid, multidimensional characters, businesses can effectively communicate brand narratives and build deep emotional connections. These characters may include brand founders, symbolic figures representing products/services, or even anthropomorphic representations of the brand itself. The key lies in developing unique, relatable, and credible characters that leave lasting impressions. To strengthen consumer resonance, companies should emphasize emotional bonds between characters and audiences. By showcasing shared experiences, values, or life philosophies, brands can foster identification and make their stories feel personally relevant[2].

2. Communication Mechanisms of Brand Narrative

2.1 Internal Communication: Employee Engagement and Cultural Shaping

Internal communication forms an essential component of brand narrative dissemination. It emphasizes employees'

active participation in brand storytelling and how corporate culture is shaped through these narratives. Employees are not merely storytellers but also ambassadors of the brand image. By gaining deep understanding of brand stories, they can effectively communicate core values and corporate culture to external audiences. When employees resonate with brand narratives, they become more proactive promoters of the brand, serving as its most powerful advocates. Additionally, internal communication enhances employee loyalty and sense of belonging, fostering greater alignment with corporate mission and vision. To achieve effective internal communication, companies should regularly organize training sessions to help employees understand brand history, vision, and core values. Simultaneously, encouraging employees to share their personal experiences with brand stories through internal exchanges deepens their comprehension and identification with these narratives. This enables employees to naturally convey brand stories in daily work, cultivating unique brand culture[3].

2.2 External Communication: Consumer Touchpoints and Strategies

In external communication, brand narratives need precise delivery to target consumers through effective strategies that evoke resonance and attention. Consumer touchpoints encompass all interaction channels between brands and consumers, including both online and offline platforms. Brands should fully leverage these touchpoints by integrating brand narratives, ensuring consumers perceive the brand's core values and unique appeal at every interaction. For instance, in online channels, brands can publish content related to their brand stories through social media platforms, official websites, and email marketing campaigns. This includes brand histories, product backstories, founder interviews, etc. Such content should be presented in an engaging manner to spark curiosity and exploration. Meanwhile, brands can utilize data analytics tools to understand consumer interests and preferences, enabling targeted delivery of personalized brand story content to enhance communication effectiveness. In offline channels, brands can engage consumers face-to-face through physical stores, trade shows, event sponsorships, etc. These occasions allow brands to create brand narrative zones or host storytelling sessions, providing consumers with tangible insights into brand stories. Additionally, brands can offer interactive experiences like product customization and trial programs, allowing consumers to personally experience the values and culture conveyed through brand narratives.

2.3 Social Media and Viral Spread Strategies

Social media platforms boast strong user engagement and interactivity, enabling rapid dissemination of brand narratives. Through strategically crafted brand stories and creative marketing campaigns, brands can stimulate users' sharing desires to achieve viral spread. For example, brands could design innovative short videos, graphic narratives, or interactive games that encourage participation and sharing on personal social media accounts. In addition, brands can also cooperate with opinion leaders or Internet celebrities to expand the spread of their brand stories by leveraging their influence and fan base[4].

3. Case Study: Hongxing Erke– The "Bankruptcy-Style Donation" Incident and the Narrative of National Brand Responsibility Behind "Wild Consumption"

3.1 Background and Causes of the Incident

3.1.1 Brand History and Current Status of Hongxing Erke Since its establishment

Hongxing Erke has been committed to providing high-quality sports apparel and footwear, dedicated to delivering comfortable athletic experiences for consumers. Through years of development, the brand has weathered market fluctuations and challenges while steadfastly adhering to its original vision and continuously innovating. In recent years, despite intense market competition, Hongxing Erke has maintained steady growth, consistently launching new products that meet consumer demands and earning widespread recognition and acclaim. However, compared with some international giants, Hongxing Erke still has room for improvement in terms of brand awareness and market share, which presents new requirements for its future development strategies.

3.1.2 Donations During Henan Floods Spark Public Attention

In July 2021, Henan Province suffered from a historically rare catastrophic rainstorm disaster, severely affecting multiple regions and touching the hearts of people nationwide. Faced with this sudden calamity, numerous enterprises and individuals extended their helping hands, bringing warmth and hope to disaster-stricken communities. As a local sports brand, Hongxing Erke demonstrated extraordinary compassion and responsibility through this donation initiative. It is reported that the brand immediately donated goods worth 50 million yuan to the disaster area, including clothing, shoes, and other essential living supplies, providing much-needed assistance to affected residents. This charitable donation quickly garnered widespread attention online, with netizens praising Hongxing Erke's "national pride" and calling it the "beacon of domestic products."

3.2 Internal Impact and External Image Rejuvenation

Following the Henan flood relief donation, Hongxing Erke not only earned widespread social acclaim but also generated profound internal effects. The donation ignited employees' patriotic fervor and national pride, strengthening team cohesion and unity. Employees witnessed the company's courage in assuming social responsibilities, further solidifying their resolve to grow alongside the enterprise. Externally, Hongxing Erke successfully revitalized its brand image through this donation. Previously, the company might have been less prominent in consumers' minds, but this initiative transformed it into a symbol of "national pride," winning substantial consumer goodwill and support. The "wild consumption" phenomenon observed online directly reflects consumers 'recognition of the Hongxing Erke brand. Not only did consumers spontaneously purchase Hongxing Erke products, but they also actively shared and recommended them on social media, significantly expanding the brand's influence.

3.3 Case Insights and Research Synergy

This event not only demonstrated corporate social responsibility during critical moments but also provided valuable lessons for other enterprises. First, companies should prioritize their brands' social value by actively participating in public welfare activities to establish a positive social image. This approach not only enhances consumer loyalty but also creates favorable public opinion momentum for businesses during pivotal times. Secondly, Hongxing Erke's strategies in supply chain management, brand image building, sales channel expansion, and talent development offer valuable references for other enterprises. Companies should continuously optimize internal management to enhance operational efficiency while strengthening brand building and market promotion to achieve sustainable growth. Moreover, the Hongxing Erke incident has sparked discussions about domestic brands. This highlights that when studying the development of Chinese brands, we must consider their underlying socio-cultural factors and evolving consumer psychology. Through in-depth analysis of these elements, we can better understand the rise and development trends of domestic brands[5].

4. Conclusion

Brand storytelling, as a vital tool for corporate image building, profoundly influences consumer perceptions and emotions through strategic crafting and dissemination. In the digital age, social media platforms have unlocked unprecedented possibilities for rapid brand narrative spread, enabling brands to connect with consumers in more vivid and intuitive ways. This study explores the development process of brand narratives and their internal/external communication mechanisms, particularly the application of social media and viral marketing strategies. As technology advances and consumer behaviors evolve, brand narrative communication approaches will continue to innovate. Therefore, companies should stay attuned to market trends and flexibly adjust their brand narrative strategies to adapt to dynamic market conditions, thereby standing out in cutthroat competition.

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