

Analysis of Female Marketing—Taking Nike as an Example

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, there are more and more brands in the market under the banner of gender equality and service for women, and female marketing has become one of the most popular marketing field. This thesis would focus on the introduction, advantages and disadvantages of female marketing. It would also give a successful example of Nike's female marketing, analyzing its strategy of products, advertisements, and offline activities through qualitative analysis, inductive method, and observation method. The most meaningful thing is that this paper is going to offer valuable suggestions to Chinese corporations in order to improve their sales volumes and reputations effectively. At the end of the thesis, the author draws a conclusion to show what is the key of optimal female marketing for brands. Launching proper marketing strategies for women from products, advertising, and activities which are the key factors of female marketing. The goal of brands is not only to earn profits, but also to help women break the stereotype and confine.

Keywords: Female Marketing, Nike, products, advertising, activities, suggestions

1. INTRODUCTION

Along with the intense competition among corporations all over the world, every company or brand is eager to attract more consumers to improve their sales volume. Nowadays, in order to stand out in the fierce competition, companies use a variety of strategies and tricks to do marketing. In addition, being faced with the development of new media in Information Era, it is a valuable opportunity for corporations to launch plans of new media marketing as novel marketing tactics. The most important issue is that the marketing channels are extending and the marketing forms are enriching, while the role of innovative and attractive content has never changed as a core of marketing. In this new era, how could companies draw consumers by valid and efficient marketing strategies and how to make the content be more thought-provoking and meaningful? Marketing to women is an intelligent way to sell products. Today, everyone pursues equality, especially women and colored people who often meet unfair stuff in their daily life. Marketing to them is beneficial to invoke attention and resonance of the public. However, this kind of strategy is not always successful, especially when you express the meaning in a wrong way leading to public anger. Therefore, this paper will not only take Nike as a great example of marketing to women, but also show how the advertisement and products of Nike can be related to women's rights and desires successfully. What is more, through analyzing the model of Nike's female marketing, this paper will offer suggestions to Chinese brands in order to help them understand the psychology of consumers and improve the quality of female marketing.

2. OVERVIEW OF FEMALE MARKETING

Nowadays, everybody lives in a "she era" and would like to focus on those people who are suffering from unfair treatment, especially women. Today, women are awake and stronger, so almost everyone needs to be aware of their positions, rights, and desires, which are essential to corporations particularly. The flowing important indicators in the United States show the importance of women [5]. For example, the proportion of women receiving higher education has increased significantly. Take business education as an example. According to the statistics of the Federal Reserve, in the 1970-1971 academic year, only 3.6% of women obtained master's degree in business; by the 2000-2001 academic year, the proportion had risen to 41.1%. Plus, according to the data released by the U.S. Department of labor in 2005, women account for 50% of the higher paid management and professional related positions. There will be many changes in the coming decades, and the proportion of important business units led by women is rising. At that time, some wise companies knew that they should concentrate more on female costumers, thus the female marketing was born. Female marketing obviously means that doing marketing to women. Because women and men have different social attributes, psychological characteristics, consumption habits, and forms, some experts have been taking women's consumption as their research direction in recent years, and have tried to find out some unique marketing theories, strategies, and rules for women. In general, the essence of female marketing is to define less and understand more, eliminating stereotypes and inequalities. The researches

and practices of female marketing in Western countries are prevailed and profound, while corporations in China still lack comprehensive recognition and developed practices about female marketing. This paper finally aims to help corporations understand what is true female marketing, as well as provide useful and practical suggestions on female marketing, especially for Chinese brands.

Female marketing has profound advantages. Female marketing strategy could make the brand be warmer and closer to consumers. Expressing feelings from consumers' perspective would let them feel the sense of reality and resonance. It is undoubtedly a more humanized marketing new mode. As long as the company implement this marketing method in a correct way, it will not only attract many customers and enhance their loyalty, but also improve the reputation and value of the particular brand. Establishing and enhancing the reputation of brand is the foundation for enterprise's sustained development. In this situation, female marketing, the humanized marketing strategy will be a key factor in enlarging the market.

However, if the marketing strategy is abused and misused by companies, it will bring the potential risks to them. Nevertheless, if the advertisements that target women express improperly, it will provoke the audience to anger. Take IKEA as an example. In 2017, in a TV advertisement of IKEA, the daughter went home to visit her parents. As a result, her mother directly threw away her chopsticks, "if you do not bring your boyfriend back, don't call me mom." then she took away all the dishes and chopsticks. In just 29 seconds of advertising, IKEA magnified women's anxiety, delivered wrong values, and aroused the collective anger of consumers. This advertisement is inappropriate, which not only diminished brands' reputation, but also irritated most women, losing public credibility. Therefore, using female marketing strategy also can be risky. If enterprises market and propagate in a wrong way, it will lead to bad results. Corporations should be careful with making appropriate female marketing plan according to the following example and suggestions.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS OF NIKE'S SUCCESS IN FEMALE MARKETING

This part will be analyzed from three perspectives, which are advertising, products, and different kinds of activities. One of the most successful things is that Nike penetrates female marketing into every aspect, which enhances women's preference for it and enlarges its brand influence.

3.1. Advertisement of Nike

During the half-time of the Academy Awards in 2019, Nike officially launched the latest advertisement "Dream Crazier" for the first time in the world. This advertisement

focused on females and their rights. Dozens of female athletes appeared in one minute and thirty seconds of video advertising, including athletes specialize in track and field sports, gymnastics, swimming, and ball games. Li Na, Asia's first Grand Slam women's singles champion and the world's highest ranked women's singles player in Asian history. She faced with unfair judgments on the field and distorted public opinion under the field. She was hostile to the judges, journalists, and even the audience, but she never remained silent. Serena Williams won 23 Grand Slam titles and 4 Olympic gold medals in women's singles. In September 2017, she gave birth to a baby. In the case that everyone thought she would completely retire, she returned to challenge French Open, Wimbledon and American open in 2018, hitting the 24th Grand Slam champion. Becky Hammon, Alex Morgan, Ibtihaj Muhammad and Caster Semenya are all in this video advertisement. At the end of "Dream Crazier", the screen stops at Serena Williams and says "show them what crazy dreams can do". In order to realize their dreams and equal rights of female athletes, female athletes of Williams' generation wave their blood and tears in the sports field, also play a vanguard role in society. That is not only for themselves, but also for the new generation of female athletes. "Dream Crazier" is also the best embodiment of women's determination. The ad showed not only lots of victorious and fighting moments but also a variety of unfair and challenged scenes that female athletes have met. The end of the ad expressed that it is only crazy until you do it, which was powerful and thought-provoking. The whole advertisement revealed that women are always willing to insist their dreams and pursue the equality, advocating the legal rights of themselves. The art of advertising communication and the generation of sales force are not only from the statement of product function, but also from the deep identification and emotional communication. This advertisement shows women's bravery, independence, and their pursuit of equality. It caters to women's psychology successfully without making mistakes, which is a brilliant model of female marketing [3].

3.2. Products of Nike

Since 2018, Nike has produced the Air Jordan I SOH series specially designed for women, and Nike has also launched women's universal sizes for some of the classic Jordan shoes, which not only reflects the universality of the shoe culture, but also avoids women's frustration because they can not get the right size shoes. In addition, Nike has launched a new global digital retail concept, Nike unlaced, which aims to provide women with excellent service in terms of product styling and local planning. Nike unlaced is Nike's shoe shopping destination for women, with a selection of footwear products, a wider range of sizes, innovative performance shoes and an iconic

collaboration series, providing women with a wide range of footwear products. From customized matching to VIP member experience, Nike unlaced aims to enhance women's attention and access to shoes through these services. For example, members will have the opportunity to make a one-on-one appointment with a guest stylist to bring home their carefully selected products in custom packaging. Nike has a lot of classic brand stories, but there are not many opportunities for women to become the leading role, and the company has never designed sports shoes from the perspective of female athletes. Georgina James, senior director of Nike women's sneakers, said: "We are very clear that we need to maintain close contact with consumers and ensure that we provide them with products that conform to the trend of fashion, and it is better to shorten the design to market cycle as soon as possible". At the end of 2017, Nike opened pants studio, a women's sportswear Sales Zone in its 5000 brand stores, and also made online matching. Pants studio has launched nine types of sports pants, including training tights, running tights and running pants. Jamie Lee, senior design director of Nike women's training apparel, said: "in addition to adding styles, we offer a variety of choices for materials, decorations, touch, belt height, length and features." This is a new concept of women's sportswear classification service design, which also shows the great sincerity to female customers. Nike's senior female creative director said that in most cases, the market rarely pays special attention to female sports shoes lovers, so Nike decided to carry out some special projects for women and design some distinctive female sports products. They found the potential customer group of women and the benefits of female marketing. In recent years, cross-border creativity based on sports brands has become particularly frequent. In view of the upgrading of marketing system in the whole industry, retail cooperation has become a new driving force. In the past, however, none of these concepts considered the needs of female audiences alone. Now, Nike is trying to change this phenomenon. Besides, it is so comprehensive that they implement the female marketing in terms of both advertising and products.

3.3. Stores and Activities of Nike for Female

As far as offline activities are concerned, it also took a lot of energy and effort to carry out female marketing strategy. With the release of the Nike women strategy, the Nike 45 grand, located in SOHO District of New York City, opened in July 2015. It is an advanced fitness studio that can only be used by VIP of Nike. It is only open to women, aiming to give female consumers the most luxurious fitness experience. The whole space integrates a series of digital service facilities such as Nike with running and Nike with training, which combines the on-site experience with the coaching service of top trainers. Here, guests can not only preview the entire collection of Nike women's products, but also get the most personal and professional

suggestions from coaches and trainers. Nike's staff members talk to the experimenters, work out with them, and sometimes even talk to a girl for two hours. These consumer insights from offline activities and digital communities will be used in future product design, store experience and marketing activities. These represent a huge change of Nike's offline stores for women and also a wise choice that Nike made. What is more, there is a big offline experience, which is named the Nike+Training Club tour. This is a large-scale fitness experience held by Nike on a global tour every year, with star athletes and senior coaches leading women to launch a five hours training challenge. The world's first stop in 2015 was set up in Shanghai and officially launched in March. Li Na and more than 1000 young women attended the opening ceremony of the Shanghai station. Before going to Latin America, Europe and the Middle East, the second stop of N+TC tour was Los Angeles. In April 2015, 2000 women participated in this large-scale activity. The training experience course was led by professional athletes such as skateboarders, triathlons and basketball players to experience their better sports trip. These experience activities act in cooperation with activities at stores offline, reflecting the perfect female marketing strategy.

In addition, Nike, together with Peking University's women and children's research center and MIP data, surveyed more than 2000 girls aged 9 to 14. Data show that more than half of girls say they like physical education and sports activities, but seldom exercise in their spare time. The activity of girls in sports is lower than that of boys, and the probability of quitting sports is also higher than that of boys. On March 8, 2019, Nike officially launched the "boundless girls" project in Shanghai, aiming to promote more girls to participate in sports in the form of public welfare. The start-up phase of the project is to select 10 schools in Beijing and Shanghai, and Nike's campus coaches will design sports courses for girls in these schools. At the same time, Nike cooperated with China Youth Development Foundation to set up the "boundless girls" fund to encourage and call on physical education teachers to put forward plans and programs to improve the enthusiasm of girls to participate in sports. The goal of the project is to support 300 schools nationwide in three years. Nike will also donate sports underwear to the schools. This public welfare activity presented that Nike's female marketing is not just to attract customers and improve sales volume but to do practical things for women. It is the combination of a series of actions and marketing strategies that impress females. Product innovation, offline retail experience innovation, online integrated communication, and offline experience activities are all the layout made by Nike for women's sports market, which are all aspects of women's marketing. However, more importantly, they are not isolated from each other, but are organically and skillfully integrated, and become a brand ecosystem that can insight into the needs of female consumers and create value for them through innovative products, services and experiences.

According to Nike's successful female marketing example with documentary research, qualitative analysis and inductive method, the conclusion is that female marketing strategy should be appropriate, continuous, sincere, and comprehensive.

4. SUGGESTIONS

4.1. Suggestions on Overall Marketing Strategy

Nowadays, the essence of "women's special products or activities" with the slogan of respecting women is to continuously deepen gender separation and gender stereotypes, even gender discrimination. The worst thing is that this kind of products or advertisements actually reinforce the stereotypes of different genders, enlarging the effect of inequality, and it not just lose their female customers only. Therefore, some female marketing strategies not only failed completely, but also caused bad social influence. Obviously, the reason why they failed is that they just aimed to attract customers and improve their sales volume instead of focusing on female themselves for real. Those strategies are fake female marketing. Comparing Nike's strategy above, everyone could see Nike's effort on helping women break stereotypes. Their Air Jordan series shoes offer different sizes to women from very small to very large, which could cater all females' physical characteristics. Furthermore, those shoes represent that women also have rights and capabilities to play basketball. All of these represent that products should make women be more convenient and comfortable, to break the stereotypes for women instead of confining them to conventions and traditional thoughts [4]. Besides, according to example of Nike, corporations ought to devote themselves to the charity for the welfare of women or girls practically, which will definitely win high reputations for their brands. Words speak louder than deeds, so the practical behavior is an essential part of female marketing as well.

The importance of feminist power makes feminist advertising be a trend in the advertising industry. Female marketing can attract consumers' attention and increase the social influence of brands. However, businesses driven by interests are often unable to grasp what is propaganda and what is selling. If companies do not control the degree of female marketing and do not know what is an appropriate way to show their concerns to women, the marketing strategies' effect will be the opposite. Therefore, the first suggestion about female marketing that offers to Chinese brands is that the label of "female marketing" and "women's rights" cannot be abused but instead with sincere actions that concerning about women. A brand that really supports gender equality doesn't need to talk about feminism all day long. Consumers are actually very smart. They know when a brand is rubbing hot spots to cater to women, when they are really working for women, and

when necessary, they will stand together with these brands and speak out. Through authentic emotional resonance and inclusive action to do female marketing, the brand can really move consumers, not by selling a T-shirt with "I'm a feminist" or selling a key chain that says "I will do what I want". It should be always remembered that female marketing is not marketing for the sake of marketing.

4.2. Suggestion on Product Strategy

If enterprises want to do a good job in female marketing, it is necessary to have a deep understanding and grasp of the characteristics of female consumers' behavior, and it is also necessary to make corresponding marketing strategies according to the characteristics of female consumers' behaviors to guide female consumers to consume. The behavior characteristics of female consumers are different from those of other groups. Female consumers are more emotional in the choice of goods. According to the observation method, the main performance is as follows: Female consumers attach great importance to the beautiful appearance of products; the emotional characteristics of female consumers are particularly obvious when they buy goods; female consumers pursue quality and safety of products in consumption activities; female consumers pay more attention to cost performance; female consumers pursue uniqueness and diversity of personality. As a result, through the above analysis of the behavior characteristics of female consumers, this paper puts forward the following four targeted female marketing suggestions for Chinese enterprises [1].

As far as suggestions on products are concerned, Chinese companies need to make beautiful and unique products to cater women's preferences. Starting from the packaging and appearance, enterprises use the unique, exquisite and beautiful appearance to meet the first good impression of female consumers, thus leading to consumer behaviors [6]. Besides, the quality of products is better to be in a high level. Women's shopping experience is very rich, and value the use of the product, which requires the product not only to pay attention to the appearance of the beautiful, but also to pay attention to the practicality. Female consumers will consider whether it is necessary to buy products according to their own shopping experience. Therefore, only when the quality is better can they get more recognition from them. Plus, corporations should highlight the efficiency and function of their products to attract more female consumers, since women actually are wise and practical. In addition, the high-quality service is indispensable. As we all know, high quality service can meet the psychological needs of female consumers, so as to protect their self-esteem. Women are sensitive and emotional. Therefore, enterprises should carry out comprehensive training for sales and service personnel to bring patience and careful service experience to consumers, enhancing their loyalty and good impression on brands [7].

4.3. Suggestion on Price Strategy

According to the surveys on factors influencing female consumers, price is the basic consideration of female consumers when they buy a commodity, so the good quality and suitable price of the product are very popular with them. They will set an expected price level, and if products exceed it, they will have a psychological rejection. In the process of purchasing goods, women often connect the price of goods with their own will and emotion [2]. Some women think that the price level of a commodity is a mark of their social environment status and self-cultivation, while others pay more attention to the cost performance of the product. Therefore, Chinese enterprises should have an accurate positioning and recognition of their products and classify them, and then formulate reasonable prices according to demand-oriented pricing and differential pricing, so that women are able to obtain different psychological satisfaction in the appropriate prices of different kinds of commodities.

4.4. Suggestion on Promotion Strategy

Based on the above analysis of Nike women's marketing example, only by choosing the right way of female marketing can Chinese brands achieve the expected promotion effect. Specifically, the advertisements that target women should be appropriate and meaningful. This kind of advertising should be produced from female customers' perspective, drawing women's interest and resonate with them. It is worth noting that corporations cannot deepen the stereotypes of women and enlarge the gap between female and male accidentally. Besides, more and more new media appear nowadays. Chinese companies ought to seize the opportunity to advertise through various new media and broaden publicity channels.

As far as offline activities are concerned, Nike's activities are an essential part of their female marketing. Chinese corporations need to learn from that strategy. For the marketing towards women, one of the most necessary things is that brands should let women know the exact and sincere concern about them. In this case, the best method is to convey care and understanding to female by holding activities and participating charity about women. Corporations ought to remember that action is better than heart. It would be better to combine discount promotion with a good shopping environment.

5. CONCLUSION

Through the specific introduction of female marketing, its advantages and disadvantages, raising an example of Nike's advertisements, products, and offline activities about female marketing, this paper offers Chinese brands several suggestions and places great expectations on them. To summarize, it is a better choice to do female marketing with sincere heart, combining appropriate expression and

practical actions to convey the most concern to women. This paper hopes to help Chinese, even worldwide corporations realize the true meaning of female marketing and the astute strategy of female marketing without failing to market. In the future, a series of follow-up researches must continue. It is necessary to do market investigations on Chinese brands to check out if they obey the basic rules of female marketing and whether they change their strategies practically and efficiently or not. At the end of investigation, it is indispensable to renew advice on local corporations to improve their sales volume and reputations further.

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