



Research on Influential Mechanism of Cause Marketing on Brand Image

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Abstract. In the process of marketing, different marketing strategies have different effects on brand image. As a part of the current marketing strategy of enterprises, cause marketing has a profound impact on the construction of enterprise brand image and the promotion of influence. Taking Erke cause marketing event as an example, this paper discusses the impact of cause marketing on corporate brand image. facts show that cause marketing can enhance brand influence, enhance brand trust, and form brand loyalty. China's cause marketing is still in its infancy. Enterprises should enrich the forms of cause marketing, increase the investment in cause marketing, and improve the guarantee of cause marketing to enhance the brand image.

Keywords: Influential mechanism, impact mechanism, cause marketing, brand image

1 Introduction

With the rapid development of China's economy, various brands of products emerge one after another, and consumers' choices become more diverse [1]. At the same time, consumers' purchase behaviour choice is no longer only affected by product quality, cost performance and other factors, but also more connected with brand image and corporate image. Especially with the vigorous rise of the Internet, brand image marketing has become an indispensable part of enterprise product promotion. Among them, the public service marketing is very popular with brands. Through cooperation with charity organizations and public service organizations, we can take the initiative to assume some social responsibilities and at the same time achieve the goal of improving the brand image, thereby driving performance growth, and promoting the subsequent development of the brand. In the process of enterprises participating in market competition, the brand image of enterprises, as intangible assets of enterprises, plays an extremely important role [2]. Enterprises actively focus on brand image construction, which can not only strengthen their own core competitiveness, but also play an important supporting role in driving the overall marketing performance of enterprises. In the case that the Internet makes the public more closely connected, the cause marketing of brands can achieve twice the result with half the effort. In this

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context, more and more enterprises choose cause marketing and have achieved phased results, but there are also some shortcomings. The internet enables the public to receive information in a wider and faster way. If a brand can make a difference in this environment, through one or more publicity and marketing of public welfare activities, it will be able to establish a good brand image in the minds of consumers and create a public welfare brand with high popularity and reputation. Based on the analysis of the case of Erke, this paper discusses the impact of cause marketing on the brand and enterprise's subsequent development, and explores the optimization strategy of cause marketing.

2 Key Concepts

2.1 Cause Marketing

At present, the academic circle has not reached a broad consensus on the main connotation of public service marketing. Generally speaking, cause marketing is a general term for marketing activities aimed at public welfare. Cause marketing mainly reflects the public welfare of marketing. The products provided by the enterprise are of a certain public welfare nature [2]. In this way, they can benefit customers or raise relevant public welfare funds. It should be emphasized that the marketing products themselves have certain social commonweal, and at the same time, the results of enterprise marketing are also feedback to the society. Therefore, as a kind of charity activities, cause marketing is also an important direction that many enterprises actively pay attention to. Compared with other marketing types, cause marketing highlights the commonweal of its marketing and the social contribution of its marketing results. In the process of cause marketing, enterprises need to actively build a public welfare product system around the product itself to meet the public welfare demands of society and relevant customers to better play the value of cause marketing. Be keenly aware of current affairs and hot spots, actively participate in post disaster public welfare, but never consume disasters. Public service marketing is built based on contributing to the society. When people are in disaster or need help, they actively participate in social welfare to gain the favour of consumers and enhance the competitiveness of homogeneous brands. It requires a pair of sharp eyes to lend a helping hand at the right time. Only by seizing the opportunity of cause marketing at the right time can brands achieve twice the result with half the effort [4].

2.2 Brand Image

Brand image refers to the personality characteristics of an enterprise or its brand in the market and in the public mind. It reflects the evaluation and cognition of the public, especially consumers, on the brand. Brand image and brand are inseparable. Image is the feature of a brand and reflects the strength and essence of a brand. Brand image includes product name, packaging, graphic advertising design, etc. Image is the foundation of brand, so enterprises must attach great importance to shaping brand image [5]. Brand image can be evaluated from three aspects: brand association

attribute, brand association benefit and brand association attitude. Among them, brand association attribute includes product related and non-product related. Brand association benefit is divided into functional, experiential and symbolic. At the beginning, people's understanding of brand image is basically focused on various factors that affect brand image. Brand image is a collection of images and concepts about various elements of the brand that exist in people's psychology, mainly brand knowledge and people's main attitude towards the brand. The original meaning of brand image is consumers' psychological experience of the brand, which is created by the brand's temperament identification. Brand temperament is a kind of psychological feeling and aesthetic experience generated by consumers after hearing about the brand. Brand temperament can also be called brand personality and brand personality. However, most of the brand works define the psychological experience of consumers on brand as brand personality, which constitutes a unique brand image [6].

3 Analysis of Erke's Cause Marketing Event

3.1 Overview of Erke's Cause Marketing Event

Erke was founded in 2000 and has been developing for more than 20 years. Today, it is still an influential sportswear brand in China. However, in recent years, there have been fierce attacks from international brands such as Nike and Adidas, and the rapid rise of domestic enterprises such as Li Ning, Anta, and Tebu, which have continuously impacted the epidemic. The follow-up development of Erke has been weak, encountering a series of difficulties such as store closure, overstock of inventory, and declining sales year by year. Now, it has been forced to transfer the market to the third and fourth tier cities and counties, and implement the brand strategy of "strengthening the county level and optimizing the prefecture level".

In 2020, Erke's annual turnover was 2.84 billion yuan, less than one tenth of Anta's annual turnover and less than one fifth of Li Ning's annual turnover. However, on July 20, 2021, after Henan suffered from a rare continuous rainstorm disaster, it generously donated 50 million yuan of materials to Henan, ranking first among many sports brands. This news quickly landed on the hot search lists after the release of microblog. As an enterprise with a net loss of 220 million yuan in 2020 and a loss of 60 million yuan in the first quarter of 2021, it is not easy to donate such a large sum of money in a time of crisis. The mismatch between the donation amount and its own turnover is one of the important reasons why this public welfare act ignited the network, and demonstrates Erke's national justice and strong sense of responsibility at the time of public crisis. Subsequently, Erke's charitable behaviour quickly aroused netizens' sympathy for his family and country and gave back his wild consumption. As of July 24, Erke's donation microblog had nearly 10 million likes and hundreds of thousands of comments were forwarded. The number of fans in live broadcast room soared to about 15 million and more than 10 million likes were received. Many of its products on the e-commerce platform were out of stock. The total sales of the live broadcast room reached 206 million yuan, up 52 times year on year. According to relevant statistics, the sales volume of Erke within three days after the donation has

exceeded the total sales volume in the first half of 2021. Many Erke franchised stores have seen people shopping crazily, and their products were rapidly out of stock.

3.2 Survey Results and Analysis

This survey adopts the online survey method, and carries out the distribution and recovery statistics of questionnaires through the online social networking platform. 200 questionnaires were distributed, including 198 valid ones, with an effective rate of 99%. Most of the respondents are between the ages of 18 and 35, with a balanced distribution of gender and occupation. Table 1 shows the basic information of the sample.

Table 1. Description of sample basic information (table credit: original)

Index	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	108	54.5%
	Female	90	45.5%
Age	Under 18	31	15.7%
	18 to 35	100	50.5%
	35 to 50	50	25.3%
	Over 50	17	8.6%

The survey results are shown in Table 2. Nationals have a strong sense of belonging and pride to national enterprises, and have an understanding of consumer behavior due to patriotism or other reasons. Therefore, it is predictable that the brand recognition caused by the donation event will soar. According to the survey results, 68.2% of people remember and know this old brand of Chinese goods. After the donation event of Henan rainstorm and flood, the brand awareness of Erke has increased again. The survey data shows that 30.8% of people have increased their awareness after the donation event. It can also be understood that Erke's national awareness reached 99.0% after the donation event. This event not only brought Erke popularity, but also brought Erke a brand aura. We have collected all the praise words such as “patriotic brand”, “old brand domestic products”, “conscientious enterprise with strong sense of responsibility”, and the survey data shows that Erke's donation event with poor management has reached 97.5%. The direct benefit of the praise rate and brand aura to Erke is that it has greatly increased the purchase desire of users, and the number of potential users has increased in a straight line. The proportion of people who have consumed for Erke after the donation hot spot event is quite large, up to 68.2%, which shows that the positive impact of this event on Erke is considerable. Therefore, the consumption caused by the donation event has an obvious positive impact on consumers' purchase of Erke brand products.

Table 2. Survey results (table credit: original)

Question	Option	Frequency	Percentage
Do you know Erke?	1. Know before the cause	135	68.2%
	2. Learn about Erke through the cause marketing event	61	30.8%
	3. I still don't know Erke	2	1.0%
Do you agree with Erke's donation?	1. Very agree. It is an enterprise with strong sense of social	88	44.4%
	2. I quite agree. I have a good opinion of the company due to the	105	53.0%
	3. I don't agree. It's just a marketing method.	5	2.5%
Have you bought Erke's products?	1. I have bought Erke's product after the donation.	135	68.2%
	2. I have not bought Erke's product after the donation.	63	31.8%

4 Influential Mechanism of Cause Marketing on Brand Image

4.1 Improve Brand Influence

When enterprises provide products or services to the society, they also need to bear social responsibilities to reduce the burden on the government [7]. By implementing the cause marketing strategy, the enterprise has established a good brand image in the minds of consumers, narrowed the distance with consumers, improved brand awareness and expanded loyal consumer groups, which is conducive to the long-term development of the enterprise. Therefore, the commonweal marketing strategy should be one of the long-term business strategies of enterprises, and should become an important measure to establish brand image and enhance brand value. At present, the competition between corporate brand images is not only the competition between corporate brand image popularity, but also the competition between corporate brand image reputation on a large scale. The reputation mainly comes from the reputation generated by enterprises through products and related marketing activities or related cause marketing activities. Word of mouth has become a major direction for enterprises to compete in brand image. Therefore, the adjustment of marketing direction based on the enterprise's brand image is an important idea for the development of corporate cause marketing. Brand image has become a core weapon for enterprises to participate in market competition. Especially in the current market competition, more and more consumers begin to pay attention to the brand image, mainly because of the quality and guarantee represented by the brand image itself. By actively participating in cause marketing, the brand image influence of the enterprise

itself will be further improved on the existing basis to meet the development needs of the enterprise in brand image construction and brand image influence [8].

4.2 Enhance Brand Trust

Brand image has become a core weapon for enterprises to participate in market competition [6]. Especially in the current market competition, more and more consumers begin to pay attention to the brand image, mainly because of the quality and guarantee represented by the brand image itself. By actively participating in cause marketing, the brand image influence of the enterprise itself will be further improved on the existing basis to meet the development needs of the enterprise in brand image construction and brand image influence. In the short term, it seems that the actual interests of enterprises have been lost when they carry out cause marketing. However, from the long-term development of enterprises, cause marketing is conducive to the improvement of economic benefits and benign development of enterprises [9]. Cause marketing returns part of the profits of the enterprise to the society, and improves social benefits by assuming social responsibilities. At the same time, the good social image and high social recognition of the enterprise can lay a solid foundation for the enterprise to effectively carry out economic activities to improve the economic efficiency of the enterprise. With the development of cause marketing, enterprises make public investment and serve the public. Consumers understand the corporate culture and establish brand loyalty in the public welfare activities implemented by enterprises. In the process of implementing cause marketing, the enterprise has attracted the attention and support of consumers, rooted the enterprise brand image in the public's mind, and improved the image of the enterprise in the eyes of consumers. Consumers are more likely to accept the enterprise's products and services. The closer distance between consumers and enterprises is conducive to the long-term development of enterprises and enables enterprises to gain a favourable position in the fierce market competition [10].

4.3 Build Brand Loyalty

Brand image has become a core weapon for enterprises to participate in market competition [11]. Especially in the current market competition, more and more consumers begin to pay attention to the brand image, mainly because of the quality and guarantee represented by the brand image itself. By actively participating in cause marketing, the brand image influence of the enterprise itself will be further improved on the existing basis to meet the development needs of the enterprise in brand image construction and brand image influence. With the development of modern economy, the maximization of economic benefits obviously does not meet the needs of the current era. The increase of social responsibility and the improvement of social benefits have become the important work faced by enterprises. Through the implementation of cause marketing, the enterprise brings economic benefits to the enterprise, and at the same time, it also creates a broader development space for itself, spreads the enterprise's brand concept and cultural value to the society, improves

social benefits, and promotes the healthy and long-term development of the enterprise. The true feelings and brand loyalty of consumers due to cause related marketing are greater than that of sponsorship marketing. If the marketing resources of enterprises are limited, and the marketing purpose is to enhance the brand emotion of consumers, to achieve brand loyalty, cause marketing activities are better than sponsorship marketing activities. The company's investment in social welfare can also help maintain the support of regular customers, strengthen the contact with regular customers, greatly improve customer loyalty, and remain invincible in the fierce market competition [12].

5 Conclusions

At present, the research on public welfare marketing of Chinese enterprises is still in its infancy. Practice has proved that public welfare marketing can enhance the influence of enterprise brand, enhance the trust of enterprise brand, and form the loyalty of enterprise brand. If the enterprises want to occupy a favourable position in the fierce competition, they must abandon the old concept, according to the changing external environment, combined with their own characteristics, attach importance to public welfare marketing from a strategic perspective, and actively carry out public welfare marketing research. Enterprises must enrich the forms of public service marketing, increase the investment in public service marketing, improve the guarantee of public service marketing, and strive to find a development path of public service marketing that conforms to their own characteristics.

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