

# *Research on Anta's Overseas Market Development Strategy*

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**Abstract:** As the largest sports goods group in China and the third largest sports brand in the world, Anta has made remarkable achievements through its unique brand development strategy and overseas mergers and acquisitions. Through the acquisition of internationally renowned brands such as FILA, Salomon, and Arc'teryx, Anta has built a complete brand matrix covering mass professional sports, high-end fashion sports, and outdoor markets. However, compared with international giants such as Nike and Adidas in the expansion of overseas markets, Anta still faces challenges such as a lack of local brand awareness, complex multi-brand management, and insufficient innovation ability. To solve these problems, Anta should enhance brand exposure through event sponsorship and social media, clarify the market positioning of each brand, and strengthen research and development capabilities. By improving its acquisition strategy, Anta can strengthen the influence of unknown brands, and with the current growth momentum, Anta is expected to further narrow the gap with leading international brands and rebuild the competitive landscape of the global sporting goods industry.

**Keywords:** Anta, Overseas markets, Brand strategy, Mergers and acquisitions.

## **1. Introduction**

Anta is China's largest sports goods group and the world's third-largest sports brand. Founded in 1991 by Mr. Ding Shizhong in Jinjiang City, Fujian Province, the company started as a shoe factory, and after more than 30 years of development, it has now become a multinational sporting goods giant with a market value of more than 100 billion yuan. Anta's success stems from its unique brand development strategy. In 1999, the company pioneered the marketing model of "star endorsement + CCTV advertisement", signed the table tennis world champion Kong Linghui, and quickly opened the market with the advertising slogan "I choose, I like". In 2009, Anta acquired the Chinese business of Italian brand FILA and successfully entered the high-end sports fashion field. In 2019, the Anta Consortium acquired Amer Sports, including Archaeopteryx, Solomon, Wilson, and other international top outdoor brands, completing the transformation from a single brand to a multi-brand group. Anta therefore builds a complete brand matrix: the main brand Anta locates the mass professional Sports market, FILA focuses on high-end fashion sports, DESCENTE and KOLON cover the professional outdoor field, and Amer Sports' brands occupy the top professional sports equipment market. Anta has more than 12,000 stores around the world, and its products are exported to Europe, America, Southeast Asia, and other regions. As an official partner of the Chinese Olympic Committee, ANTA has provided equipment support to the Chinese delegation for eight consecutive Olympic Games. In terms of research and development investment, the company spends more than

5% of its sales revenue on product research and development every year and has obtained more than 1,400 patented technologies. Anta always adheres to the brand spirit of "never stop" and promotes the development of enterprises through continuous innovation.

Yang et al. studied Anta's brand image, marketing strategy, and development strategy respectively, and provided suggestions for improvement through SWOT and 4P analysis[1][2][3]. Yang's research shows that while Anta's brand transformation has been more successful than other Chinese brands, improvements are still needed in terms of brand ambassador selection, product quality, and the culture the brand represents. To enhance brand professionalism, Anta should strengthen product-centric research and design capabilities and optimize marketing resources to leverage the recognition of athletes and professional bodies. At the same time, brands need to be positioned and pay attention to the culture and attitude that the brand represents to enhance market competitiveness [1].

Wei's research further analyzed Anta's marketing strategy, pointing out that its marketing plan mainly meets the needs of the Chinese market, but it still faces low brand recognition, lack of targeted marketing campaigns, and design issues overseas. To solve these problems, Anta needs to optimize brand concept and media communication, use social media topic marketing, establish effective measurement and optimization mechanisms, and promote the diversification of brand building. At the same time, Anta should achieve differentiation in domestic and foreign market strategies and strengthen innovation and dispute management to enhance the international competitiveness of the brand [2].

Wang's discussed Anta's development path under the 4P marketing strategy from the perspective of business model and development strategy and summarized its development strategy. Although Anta has a greater influence in the Chinese market, due to its late entry into the international market, there is still a certain gap with the world's leading sports brands. As a result, Anta needs to invest more in advertising and technology research and development to promote its products and deepen its domestic market influence. At the same time, Anta should also actively expand overseas markets and strengthen the global layout of the brand to enhance its international competitiveness[3].

Mustamil et al. analyzed the stratified random sampling method. It shows that Nike sports shoes users have a high degree of awareness of health. Many people's choice of sports brands may be related to the personality they convey. Design and quality become the key factors that make each brand better than its rivals. Develop your brand and expand your market share by researching customer needs[4].

Mason analyzed different cases and literature and concluded that sports brands can form or change consumers' attitudes through effective sponsorship. At the same time, attitude has a strong influence on consumer behavior. So, sponsorship seems to influence the emotional component of attitudes by creating a positive association between a consumer-supported sports team and a company's product. However, sponsorship can also influence the cognitive component of attitudes by changing brand beliefs. Sponsorship can build Bridges between brands and consumers. The ultimate goal of corporate sponsorship is to change the overall attitude and thus induce the customer to buy[5].

Shan used the method of investigation, interview, and literature research to study how Anta developed in the patriotic tide. Anta launched Chinese fashion products, signed celebrity spokespeople, and sponsored sports events to help the company optimize its brand image. However, there are also some problems, such as decision-making bias, resulting in some categories entering the market late. It is worth thinking about how domestic sports brands will continue to develop after the enthusiasm has subsided, and consumers will return to reason. At the same time, Anta also needs to think about how to further open foreign markets[6].

## **2. Anta's overseas layout and development status**

### **2.1. A merger and acquisition history**

Anta has expanded its presence overseas by acquiring brands. It has accelerated its globalization process by acquiring numerous globally recognized sports brands, such as ANTA, and FILA[1]. Anta purchased the sports company DESCENTE in 2016. Amer Sports, a company with numerous well-known trademarks in the sports sector, was purchased by Anta in 2018. Among them are the well-known luxury outdoor gear brand Arc'teryx from Canada, the mountain outdoor cross-country brand Salomon from France, the tennis equipment brand Wilson from the United States, and others. This is a significant step for Anta to enter foreign markets. Since these companies themselves have a big international market. ANTA Sports, DESCENTE, Arc'teryx, FILA, Salomon, Atomic, and numerous other brands make up the brand matrix that ANTA Sports has created thus far. Anta divides different brands into different levels, including fashion and leisure brands, fashion sports brands, and professional sports brands. Different levels target different markets[1].

### **2.2. Form an industry position**

Global consumers now have additional options thanks to the brands that ANTA Sports has purchased, which span the entire sportswear sector. With its fashionable looks and superior products, ANTA Sports has consistently satisfied customer demands, gained the respect of customers worldwide, and effectively increased its level of competition and market share nationally as well as internationally. With a global presence, Anta Group has supplied its products to countries and areas in East Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, West Asia, Eastern Europe, North America, South America, Northern Europe, Africa, and more. In addition to realizing the internationalization of R&D design and the accurate placement of multiple brands, Anta Group has improved its R&D capacity and raised its R&D investment annually. This is also an important move to expand its market. In 2012, Anta overtook Li-Ning as the top sports brand in China. With a brand value of up to \$3.87 billion, Anta is currently the third-largest sports brand globally, behind Adidas and Nike. By 2020, the top four athletic goods brands in China will hold 25.6% of the market share, followed by Adidas (17.4%), Anta (15.4%), and Li Ning (6.7%), according to the Oriental Wealth Choice database. Anta's own sports brand still has a low market share in foreign markets.

### **2.3. Overseas development status**

Anta's overseas development mainly relies on the overseas sports brands it acquired. Take the development of Salomon in the UK as an example, the brand mainly targets the X generation, with more male consumers than female consumers and more than half of them being high-income groups. The brand's sports shoes are deeply loved by people and 68% of its customers show loyalty to the brand. The brand has a large customer base overseas and is also an important force for Anta to develop overseas markets[7]. If Salomon refers to the high-end sports shoe market in the UK market, Arc'teryx is a high-loyalty brand for Anta to attract millennials with high income and love outdoor fashion products in overseas markets. British customers are 80% loyal to the brand[8]. Therefore, Anta mainly relies on the overseas companies it has acquired to develop in the overseas market, and different overseas countries have different market positioning and customer groups. These overseas brands have made important contributions to Anta's overseas development.

### 3. Problems and solutions

#### 3.1. Problems

Anta, as a company established in China, will face the problem of low recognition when entering overseas markets. According to the Research of Statista Research Department in 2024, Anta's brand value in the brand value of the world's top ten clothing brands in 2024 is only 2876 million US dollars, ranking 9<sup>th</sup> [9].

Compared with Nike, Adidas, and other overseas well-known brands, Anta store awareness is not high. According to the survey, it can be seen that although Anta exceeds Li Ning, its market share is still lower than Adidas, and it is not as good as Lululemon and other companies in terms of brand value, which is the main problem Anta faces in overseas markets. The first step in breaking into a new market is building brand awareness. A brand's image is developed based on the recognition it generates. Understanding the distinctions between domestic and international market brands is essential when transitioning from a domestic to a global brand and when growing into a strong brand that competes globally[10]. This difference may be the reason for Anta's low recognition in overseas markets. Customer recognition may lead to low customer loyalty to the brand and affect the sales of the brand.

Anta successfully entered the overseas market to carry out the merger strategy, this strategy to a certain extent for Anta to open the overseas market has made contributions but also will cause Anta brand management problems. Many Chinese enterprises fail to make long-term plans for their brands and lack a comprehensive understanding of brand positioning, which hinders the exertion of their core competitiveness and their development. It is essential to have a clear brand positioning[10]. Anta has acquired multiple brands and needs to understand their market positioning and formulate long-term strategies. Only in this way can the company manage its brands better and achieve better development.

Lack of innovation ability is also one of the problems facing Anta in overseas markets, innovation is one of the core competitiveness of the current market, but also an important means to attract customers. One of the most significant problems faced by Chinese enterprises is the relatively low level of technological research and development, as well as the lack of independent innovation awareness. Chinese brands that lack innovation capabilities find it difficult to compete with internationally well-known brands in the high-end market[10]. Although Anta has a sense of innovation, there is still a gap compared with international well-known brands, which is the direction Anta still needs to work hard.

#### 3.2. Solutions

Increasing recognition of the brand abroad is one-way Anta is solving the problem. Brand image is more concern by consumers, including the brand logo, product positioning, brand culture, and so on [1]. Anta can enhance its brand image by spreading stories about its brand mission, sportsmanship, and scientific and technological innovation. Sponsorship is also a way to increase brand recognition. Although Anta has also carried out some brand sponsorship, the influence is still not enough. For example, Anta sponsored the clothing of Chinese athletes during the Olympic Games, but its influence overseas was not enough. It can increase brand exposure through international top events such as the NBA and tennis Grand Slam. We can also cooperate with foreign athletes to improve the brand's visibility overseas. Social media marketing is now the main marketing means for brands. Although Anta has adopted some social media marketing strategies in China, the exposure of overseas social media is still insufficient, such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, etc. If you want to promote its products in overseas markets, these overseas social media are a good choice.

Clear market positioning and mutual help can also help Anta's development in overseas markets. Anta has many brands, strengthen the market positioning of each brand, and learn from each other. Learn the multi-brand management experience of international brand groups such as Nike, and Adidas in the global market, and clarify the market positioning and development strategy of each brand. For example, continue to strengthen FILA's mid-to-high-end market positioning, while letting Salomon, Arc'teryx, and other brands continue to develop in the professional sports market, ensuring that the brands complement each other, rather than compete. Anta's main brand can enhance its competitiveness by strengthening the layout of the mass sports market, while focusing on the scientific and technological content of products, and challenging Nike, Adidas, and other brands with high-cost performance.

#### 4. Implication and prospect

Anta's overseas acquisition strategy is a good strategy for Anta's development in overseas markets and can continue to be implemented. Most of the brands acquired by Anta are independent brands. If some brands with little influence are incorporated into the overseas brands it has acquired, its strong influence and customer loyalty will drive its newly incorporated brands. Managers need to think about whether this strategy is beneficial to Anta's development in overseas markets. Lenovo has adopted a relevant strategy. After Lenovo acquired MOTOROLA Mobility in 2014, it did not just retain its original appearance but slowly integrated its technology and products into the MOTOROLA brand. For example, Lenovo's previous ZUK phone no longer uses the brand alone, but some of its core technologies like the ZUI system are later used in MOTOROLA phones. At the same time, the folding screen mobile phones and tablets developed by Lenovo are also released in overseas markets under the name MOTOROLA. Now, MOTOROLA has become Lenovo's main brand in promoting mobile phones and smart devices around the world. This approach illustrates how Chinese companies can not only buy overseas brands but also make their products and technology part of those brands, achieving deeper integration. For Anta's overseas development, it is necessary to consider the feasibility of this solution. Anta can integrate some innovative technologies and products into the already influential overseas brands and develop with its overseas brand influence.

Anta's main strategy to enter overseas markets is through the acquisition of overseas brands. Since the acquired brand has a certain local popularity, resources, and customer base, for Anta, these overseas companies already have a basic structure, and its development will be smoother. For local Chinese brands like Anta, this is a good example to enter the overseas market. Anta acquired several overseas brands, so Anta adopted a multi-brand strategy. This strategy is also the success of Anta, such as FILA positioned in the middle and high-end, Salomon and Arc 'teryx positioned in professional sports, and FILA with high-end sports fashion positioning, in the field of footwear and professional sports apparel to achieve double-digit growth. The professional sportswear business, with Archaeopteryx at its core, grew the fastest, rising 36% to \$2.194 billion. This was followed by performance outdoor apparel, led by Salomon, which increased 10% to \$1.836 billion. Anta thus achieves multi-dimensional coverage in the global market. Many of Anta's brands have achieved high growth in their fields. Due to its successful strategy, Anta may overtake Adidas to become the second-largest sporting goods company in the future. Anta's sales in 2024 reached 108.587 billion yuan, and Anta Group's annual revenue reached 70.826 billion yuan, an increase of 13.6%. Anta Group and its acquisition of Amer Sports Group two-wheel drive increased the global market share to the third in the world, although Anta Group as early as 2019 has become the world's third largest sporting goods group, at that time the scale of revenue from the first two brands is still a big gap. Now, "Anta + Amer Sports " sales are catching up, and the global sports brand competition pattern maintained for many years may change. Adidas's sales in 2024 amounted to 23.7 billion euros or about 189.7 billion yuan. Although there is still a gap between Anta and Adidas, according to the forecast Adidas sales growth

rate in 2025 is not optimistic, only 2%. If Anta continues to maintain its growth rate, it may surpass Adidas in the future.

## 5. Conclusion

Anta is the largest sports goods group in China and the third-largest sports brand in the world. Through its unique brand development strategy and overseas merger and acquisition strategy, Anta has successfully realized the transformation from a single brand to a multi-brand group. Its brand matrix covers the mass professional sports, high-end fashion sports, and professional outdoor fields, and accelerates its global layout through the acquisition of well-known overseas brands such as FILA, Salomon, Arc'teryx, and other international brands to develop its overseas expansion strategy. However, Anta still faces challenges such as low brand recognition of local brands in overseas markets, complex multi-brand management, and insufficient innovation ability. To enhance international competitiveness, Anta needs to strengthen the image communication of local brands and optimize multi-brand positioning. In the future, Anta is expected to further narrow the gap with leading international brands through strategic integration and even surpass some competitors.

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