

# *Exploring the Successful Marketing Strategy of EQLZ*

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**Abstract:** EQLZ started as a street basketball brand which aims to provide high-quality, affordable basketball products. The brand has since expanded into other areas, such as footwear and apparel. The manager, who came from a background in street basketball, wanted to create a domestic brand of shoes that would represent grassroots players. The products are of good quality and have a reasonable price, which most street ball fans favor. In addition, the brand's good reputation has also been recognized by the majority of consumers. Nike, Under Armour, and many other equipment brands are costly, and the quality is not as good. Equalizer gives kids who love to play basketball an affordable equalizer. Thus, it is essential to analyze the reason underlying the success of EQLZ and its future market strategy. Through the investigation in real life and research online, it can be concluded that most of the people who purchase this brand are young people who do not have a lot of money to use, but they all love basketball very much. The emergence of this brand, in part, has promoted the development of Chinese basketball culture, its unique design style, and better quality, from the first draft of every design are their original works. This plagiarism era can do so out of the mud without dyeing how precious, and it is critical for EQLZ to continue innovating. It is also believed that EQLZ SOCIETY will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the sneaker community.

**Keywords:** marketing strategy, EQLZ, basketball brand, sneaker community

## 1. Introduction

EQLZ INC., a basketball trend brand, was formed by Zhang Yi, Rocky Fan, He Xiaokang, and Jiang Yi from the core divisions of Adidas and Anta Global Brands and products and recruited former Jordan Brand founding member and Under Amour Curry Brand global general manager David Bond in 2022 to launch the Los Angeles-based US subsidiary at full speed. The team members include professional streetball players, independent musicians, product designers, independent directors, and other elites in many fields. However, they all come from the grassroots, are rooted in the ground, and make things out of nothing. When the wildfire burned out, the action was now rampant [1].

During the current era, sneaker culture has evolved beyond basketball to become more diverse. Sneaker culture is no longer only seen as a "vassal" of basketball because of its shared love for sneakers. As the sneaker community has become increasingly aware of these aspects, it has begun to consider its concurrent connections and humanistic colors embedded in the culture more significantly. Equalizer is one of the leading sneaker brands rooted in the basketball community and youth culture, as well as keeping up to date with the latest sneaker trends as sneaker culture continues to evolve.

(Archysport) This led to EQLZ being created, a sneaker brand focusing on the various sneaker community, advocating the concept of "future sneakers." Currently, the brand has nearly one million active users aged 15-25, mainly in super-first-tier and first-tier cities in China. It recently completed a Pre-A round of financing totaling more than 10 million US dollars [2].

Equal=equality, EQUALIZE=equaling, EQUALIZER=the person who equalized the score, from zero to one, from the heart to zero. People always want to be the person who equalizes the score. People are eager for all competitions that sound like "no chance to win." This is the value logic created by the team. EQUALIZER is also often called "CAO", meaning growing from the roots. "CAO" word is also a complete embodiment of the brand's spirit, roots, out of thin air. It covers various fields, including clothing, footwear, and jewelry. They have in-depth cooperation with many major brands and emerging brands. EQUALIZER sold its first pair of basketball shoes, EQUALIZER ZERO, on December 20, 2018, which corresponds to the process of the brand from scratch, and this is also the first pair of basketball shoes in the true sense of the "CAO" brand [2].

In 2020, the brand will be expanded into two cultural and commercial branches: EQUALIZER Black Grass and EQUALIZER Blue Grass. "Black Grass" takes root in the street basketball community and takes the independently planned city brand war alliance. "The Legend of Fights in CAO Factory," is the core platform to stimulate community imagination and incubate young sports cultural leaders to create innovative products leading in the industry. "Bluegrass Blue Grass" takes improvisational music as the core, gathers highly imaginative independent musicians eager to explore the unlimited possibilities of spontaneous music creation, and makes street cultural products with open source thinking [3].

## 2. Uniqueness of EQLZ

### 2.1. Brand Culture

Creating an EQUALIZER basketball culture brand always leaves competitors with a sense of "wild" energy that is not constrained by reality. Basketball shoe EQUALIZER ZERO was launched in 2018, vulcanized EQUALIZER FALUT shoes broke stereotypes with their incorrect design, and oasis dragging shoes EQUALIZER OASIS were released in 2018 with innovative design ingenuity. It is said that the "destruction" of current systems and principles formed the creative design of EQUALIZER. The best representation of its primary principle of "creating something out of nothing" is bold innovation and forward-thinking [2].

Every year, the Spring, Summer, and Autumn Winter collections will be launched, and some young basketball players or musicians will be invited to be spokespeople. Now, the brand Equalizer is very common on China's basketball courts. For example, people's bags, towels, clothes, shoes, tights, underpants, and socks are all "CAO" brands. Its price is not very high, and the product quality is also excellent and popular with students and street players [4].

In 2021, the brand released a pair of slippers named oasis. The price is 189 yuan. The price is not low for a pair of slippers, but it has sold out just a few seconds after the sale. Its wearing feeling is very soft, and the shoes are also very suitable for fashionable wear or relaxation tools. Its design inspiration comes from cactus. The details of the whole pair of shoes are vibrant. The surface of the shoes uses fragile cracks, which makes them feel excellent. A giant brand logo on the shoe's side is consistent with the theme of oasis, desert, and cactus. The oasis ecological texture of the sole can ensure good friction, and it also expresses the cultural theme of the brand's roots [5].

The English words "BORN WITH NOTHING EQUALIZER WITH EVERYTHING" are printed on the edge of the top of the upper to express the brand idea. It has also been co-branded with the famous sock brand - instance. In addition to the instance brand, Equalizer has also been co-branded with many other big brands. They will also promote their brands by holding street ball games and

providing teams with jerseys and shoes. Every year, the brand will hold basketball competitions, including many famous players and stars, which will attract the attention of many basketball fans and fans of stars [1].

In 2022, it will also develop a high-end branch line - equals, which will manufacture some high-quality leisure products at a much higher price than the Equalizer. Compared with other shoe manufacturers, the "CAO" brand has always insisted on original design, independent design, and manufacturing. Since its creation, all products have been unique and dazzling.

## 2.2. Creative Design

On the consumer side, in the trend of sports shoes, consumers do not seem to care about or pursue the latest and best technology in shoes; instead, consumers choose many shoes that feel very "original." Today's young people receive and extract information faster than ever; they know what is good. They can also be sensitive to bad things and look for "honesty." In the era of adding things to products for a long time, the market may have to enter the stage of "deletion" [6].

Natural plants, humanistic people, and imagination are the brand's core values. The inspiration for EQLZ's first series, #1series, comes from the three major humanistic and natural elements of cells, oceans, and jungles (see Figure 1). The team researched the movement of whales/three-eyed tigers and cells, extracted abstract sense, and finally achieved the creative expression of "biological sense" after repeated debugging, which gave life to shoes [1].



Figure 1: EQLZ #1 series [2].

The design of this series differs from standard sneakers in appearance. The physical characteristics of the all-in-one sneakers give designers much creative space. It has a 3D modeling dimension far beyond the reach of traditional sneakers, which is enough to excite every designer and fully release their imagination. It leaves much room for creativity, whether it is the special-shaped foaming of the midsole, the smooth and natural texture on the inside side, or the inspiration from the ocean. Future sneakers like this have stealthily entered the public eye recently when the sneaker industry is seeing a creative upgrade. The concept of "future shoes" has become a future trend [4].

### 2.3. Production Innovation

In addition to the "alienation" in outlook design, the production model of sneakers is gradually changing tradition. Not many companies will try to be environmentally friendly in producing injection-molded shoes like this. However, EQLZ tries to create a more user-friendly production environment, with minimal steps in the production process that could worsen it. The team firmly believes that "modular design" is the cornerstone of future sneaker manufacturing upgrades:

- how to get rid of harmful substances such as glue
- how to lead the innovation of integrated molding
- how to implement an intelligent shoe factory

"Compared to many sneaker brands, they are more like a technology company." New York fashion culture writer Jaxon Wang observed [1].

In the EQLZ1 series products just released in the world, the team boldly tried to add organic coffee grounds recovered in cooperation with the cutting-edge coffee brand M STAND to the EVA foam material and mixed them with the French Man Group (MANE) for the exclusive development of the brand. Of natural fragrances, creating an unprecedented user experience. Not only that, but the brand also revealed that it is building its recycling system and will reuse the colored foam waste on its new products in the future to create a more robust "playable feeling" [2].

### 2.4. EQLZ Community

Equalizers also organized players to participate in street basketball games in the United States so that Chinese players and NBA players could compete together and let foreigners know the strength of Chinese street basketball. They have been to New York's Rock Park, Brooklyn's home court, and Venice Beach Basketball Court, to compete with the most influential players in the United States. In September 2021, the brand opened the country's first community concept store in Taikoo Li, Qiantan, Shanghai, continuing to lead the Chinese basketball community culture [7].

Furthermore, members of the organization can turn their conceptual design ideas into actual items, producing a pair of shoes in a matter of months. According to its website, EQLZ also wants to conduct events and debates with promoters and change-makers in the sneaker industry and culture, allowing members to interact. Members also get first access to new products. They will have access to EQLZ's products before everyone else, both physically and digitally. As the company focuses on its future in the metaverse, holders will have access to content channels, community events, and benefits across the road-map [8].

The "Sky Curtain" that will open in September is EQLZ's new attempt to explore future sneakers. The EQLZ #1 Series, which fully applies the integrated structure, has achieved a high degree of 3D vision that is difficult in the traditional sneaker industry. This creative process has given sneaker design a more free dimension. Building the metaverse community EQLZ SOCIETY and introducing more creators to co-create will increase the possibility of creating future sneakers. Under the worldview of humanity, nature, and imagination, more youth communities will also resonate and sincerely participate in this novel creative process. The concept of automated manufacturing and sustainable design promoted by the EQLZ brand will also enter the minds of the youth community more deeply [4].

## 3. Future Envision for EQLZ

EQLZ regards sneaker culture as an independent individual and examines this ever-changing cultural form from three aspects: nature, humanities, and imagination. While developing the prototype of "future sneakers" based on this, young people are encouraged to think about and explore the new-generation sneaker culture from a variety of angles, and a "next-generation evolution" of the sneaker

community has also begun. While concentrating on the future of the sneaker industry, EQLZ aspires to gather the creative power of the world's new generation of shoes to fulfil the vision of "future sneakers collaboratively" [9].

Sustainability in design, automation in manufacturing, and the birth of new brands are the two trends in the sneaker industry. Although everyone is talking about sustainability now, for some super-large brands, some inherent impressions and models are difficult to reverse; for new brands, this is a considerable opportunity how to make themselves in this field characteristics and, in the process, resonate with the youth community and have the opportunity to participate in it, this is what EQLZ want to achieve next. The EQLZ SOCIETY Metaverse Project is set to change the sneaker game forever by allowing for a deep integration of virtual and reality. This will open up new possibilities for future sneakers, and we can't wait to see what's in store [10].

#### 4. Conclusions

EQLZ is still a relatively young brand. The evolution brought by EQLZ to the sneaker community is far more than what people have seen now. When encouraging young people to explore sneaker culture from different angles and pay attention to more aspects of this field, it has already set its sights on the "Metaverse Age." Perhaps soon, EQLZ SOCIETY will become a "key" to unlocking the next-generation evolution of the sneaker community.

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