

Analysis on Anta's Marketing Strategies in the 2022 Winter Olympics Through Literature Analysis

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Abstract: In the 2022 Winter Olympic Games, Anta sports was seen everywhere. The shiny “Chinese Red” along with Anta’s logo on every single Chinese uniform, foreshadows Chinese players’ success and strengthens Anta’s brand identity as the Chinese national sports brand. This article focuses on Anta’s marketing strategies through a literature analysis of the 2022 Winter Olympics, which is the main factor in its success. This article analyzes Anta’s marketing strategies, including digitalization, brand identity, and technology. This article is formatted in the way of marketing strategies analysis along with their problems and suggestions. Anta successfully expanded its business in the 2022 Winter Olympics but still has areas of improvement in its marketing strategies. Anta Sports needs to improve its self-innovation by developing new technologies that improve production efficiency and product quality. Anta can also use AI technology and social media to optimize user profiles and recommendation algorithms in order to improve user stickiness.

Keywords: Anta sports, marketing strategies, brand identity, social media

1. Introduction

In 2022, China held the 24th Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, which was an international event that came with both opportunities and challenges for the host country and brands. This event was a milestone of winter sports in China since it was the first time China hosted the Winter Olympics. The Chinese government invested heavily in the infrastructure and facilities, with 26 venues constructed or renovated for the games [1]. The Winter Olympic Games brought messages beyond just sport, but the spirit that encourages people to exercise, pursuing health and well-being for all humans. Additionally, it was a chance for China to strengthen its international reputation and relationships with other countries. The Chinese government set a goal to mobilize at least 300 million people to participate in winter sports, directly resulting from hosting the Winter Olympic Games [2]. “Event and traveling”, “sports and leisure”, “events and training” and “event +marketing” built up the primary influence of the 2022 Winter Olympics [3]. It was a sign of a new mode of sports industry in China and closely bound to sports brands. 91 nations participated in 109 events held in this Olympic games, with over 64 million people, providing sports brands an excellent opportunity to enhance their brand identity, promote their products, and raise their impacts in the global sports industry. The official slogan for the 2022 Winter Olympics was “together for a shared future”, implying that people should unite together overcoming global problems as one community. The 2022 Winter Olympics happened to be the first Olympic games held in the post-covid world when the pandemic still

significantly impacted people and their daily lives. From the marketing perspective, the pandemic was a huge challenge for sports brands because people could not try products themselves or play most sports [4]. However, the pandemic also provided an opportunity for sports companies to transform their marketing strategies, ushering in a new era of sports marketing. It was a time of revolution; the new mode of Chinese sports brands and the new era of sports marketing collided. Anta, a Chinese sports brand, had a unique chance to expand its business. Recently Anta has grown rapidly and becomes the world's third-biggest sports brand. Similarly, Anta got a great chance to introduce itself to the world through the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics. In 2022, Anta was trying to redo what it had done in 2008 but facing a totally different situation.

2. Background of Anta

Anta is a Chinese sports brand founded in 1994 by Ding Shizhong, specializing in designing, developing, and manufacturing athletic footwear, apparel, and accessories. In 2007, the brand was listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. By the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Anta successfully expanded its marketing to footwear. In 2009, Anta completed the acquisition of Fila's business in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau. Including Amer Sports, Anta expands its branding and owns more than 25 sports brands, such as Salomon and Wilson [5].

Furthermore, Anta also made big moves in the international sports industry. Anta signed the all-star NBA players Kevin Garnett and Klay Thompson in 2010 and 2017, respectively, after they left their original brands. This has been essential in Anta's international marketing, signing more and more top foreign players. In China, Anta sponsored 26 Chinese national sports teams, including winter sports. This move helped Anta expand its business in China because Chinese people recently started supporting their own brands. Sponsoring the Chinese national teams builds an image of the national brand to Anta. From 2004 to 2020, Anta's operating income increased 114 times, from 311 million to 35.512 billion yuan. Its assets have increased 174 times, currently reaching 32.717 billion yuan [5].

From a financial perspective, Anta has already become one of the top sports brands in the world. For Chinese people, buying Anta's products is closely tied to patriotism. Starting in 2020, the pandemic outbreak shut down most of the business in China overnight. Brands, including Anta, were not prepared for the pandemic, and their marketing strategies were greatly challenged. Consumers could not go to the store and try their products on, which strongly influenced sporting goods brands such as Anta. Therefore, Anta was forced to enter the stage of marketing transformation, focusing more on online marketing and encouraging employees to work at home. Additionally, Anta cooperated with online exercise apps such as Keep, advocating for people to exercise at home during quarantine. Anta also worked with Tiktok, creating a challenge for people to post videos of people practicing basketball at home. However, Anta's income was still down 10.7% year-on-year. Compared to other sports brands, Anta stayed competitive during the pandemic, entering the post-covid era as a top sports brand in 2022. In the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games, Anta was known as the official partner of this event, sponsoring Chinese national teams. The story of Anta and the 2022 Winter Olympics can be traced back to 2014. That year, Anta signed a contract with the Chinese Olympic Committee and became the only sporting goods supporting company for the 2022 Winter Olympic bid. There are three levels of Olympic sponsorships, and Anta was on the third level from 2009-2017 [6]. Anta also contributed to helping China win the 2022 Winter Olympics bid. In 2015, Liu Yandong, the leader of the 2022 Winter Olympics bid team, highly praised the 2022 Olympic bid team, which Anta was also an important part of [5]. In 2017, Anta made changes in Olympic sponsorship, and it successfully increased its level of sponsorship. Anta got the third-level sponsorship as always, but it also got the second-level sponsorship with a large amount of investment. After Anta became the only sporting goods supporting company for the 2022 Winter Olympic bid in

2014, it expanded its business into winter sports in the following years. In 2016, Anta made its first move by establishing a joint venture with Japanese winter sports brand Descente, having the exclusive right to operate in China and to design, sell and distribute all categories of products bearing the “DESCENTE” trademark. Other than expanding its winter sports business, Anta followed the Chinese government’s policy to prepare for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games. In 2018, “Highlights of the Ministry of Education’s Work in 2018” of China listed an important policy promoting ice and snow sports in schools to reach the goal of mobilizing 300 million people to participate in winter sports. Following the government’s policy, Anta cooperated with the True Love Dream Commonwealth Foundation, promoting the “Anta Dream Camp - Burning Snow and Ice” campaign in China. In the 15 sports of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games, Anta has provided equipment for 12 Chinese teams, becoming the sports brand that supported the most equipment to Chinese national teams. The Anta logo and slogan-” KEEP MOVING,” shined every time people saw Chinese players on the field, which was the best way for Anta to promote itself in winter sports [5].

On social media, Anta stuck with the slogan- “Love sports, China has Anta”, which combined its brand identity with national pride. Anta’s multidimensional marketing strategies successfully built it as the national sports brand of China through the 2022 Winter Olympics. The 2022 Winter Olympics happened in the post-covid world, when a lot of people could not go to the games themselves. Thus, Anta’s marketing transformation during covid time helped to gain advantages over other sports brands. Anta’s digital marketing, cooperating with one of the largest Chinese online retail companies, Tmall, presenting “Ice and Snow Digital Digital Spiritual Realm”, where 1.4 billion people can experience the combination of sports and technology through the Internet. This brought about Tianmao’s “Double 11” sales that grew 35% against the trend. With the opening of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games and the intensive exposure brought by many athletes, and the capital market has also given corresponding “feedback”. Closing on February 4, Anta Sports shares rose 6.35%, and in less than half a month from January 31 to February 14, Anta Sports shares rose by more than 8% in total. Compared to Anta’s marketing strategies in 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics, Anta made many changes in 2022. The only thing similar was that Anta sponsored the uniforms for Chinese national teams in both Olympics. However, the 2022 Winter Olympics was held in China, which gave Anta a great chance to build up its brand image. However, Anta could not expand its business easily in Pyeongchang due to its location. At the same time, Anta’s marketing strategies just transformed to online marketing, which put Anta ahead of other sports brands in the post-covid era. Overall, Anta successfully used the 2022 Winter Olympics to complete its expansion.

3. Analysis of Anta’s Marketing Strategies

3.1. Digitalization

Since the 2022 Winter Olympics happened in the post-covid era, lots of fans and spectators could not come to watch the games themselves. Therefore, Anta’s digitalization was the key to its marketing strategies. In 2021, Anta first created the immersive urban “Ice and Snow Realm” event in Shanghai, setting the atmosphere of ice and snow sports to the public. Later, on New Year’s Day, it also launched the Ice and Snow Festival and the “Anta Ice and Snow Spirit Realm” online digital interactive space, where users can review Anta’s Olympic history. In 2022, Anta created the “Snow and Ice Digital Spiritual Realm” with Tmall, where people could experience sports and technology online [5]. Additionally, following the trend of the metaverse, Anta also cooperated with Tmall to launch the first Winter Olympics-themed digital collection to create an exclusive souvenir of the Winter Olympics for each user. Digitalization effectively helped Anta to expand its business in the 2022 Winter Olympics.

3.2. Online Marketing and Celebrities' Influence

Anta achieved its online marketing goals by cooperation with other companies and celebrities. From 2022, on WeChat, Weibo, Baidu, Tiktok, and Headline, Anta was on top of the visiting list. Among them, Weibo has been exposed and read 22 billion times. In addition, the "Anta Ice and Snow Spiritual Realm" has been online for only five days, with more than 300,000 interactions and more than 8,000 people leaving messages to cheer for the Winter Olympics. Anta reached over 500 million users on the leading social media platforms, Weibo, Tiktok, and Xiaohongshu. In addition, Anta's digital collection has also triggered numerous discussions among netizens, and the topic has been read more than 130 million times [7]. Furthermore, Anta products got even more online with Olympic athletes. For example, Eileen Gu, the Chinese freestyle skier, after she took the women's big air final champion, the Anta "Dragon Tee," she wore became viral overnight. Within a week, Anta launched the "Anta Gu Ailing Golden Dragon Tee", which people could purchase easily from Tmall and Jingdong Mall online. Anta also followed the trend and placed advertisements in time after the game. In addition, they also co-branded with MIGU Video to launch the Eileen Gu signature hand puppet, which is slightly overpriced. Still, it is cute and exciting image and unique meaning that attracted lots of young people. This can be seen as Anta's attempt to enter the field of trendy games loved by young people.

3.3. Brand Identity

Through years of sponsoring Chinese national teams and the cooperation of the international Olympic committee, Anta received tons of exposure in the Olympic Games and successfully connected its brand identity with patriotism. In the 2022 Winter Olympics, Anta kept consolidating its brand image with national pride. For example, the slogan "Love sports, China has Anta" [5]. The athletes wore Anta products in competitions, and the coaches wore Anta clothing on the sidelines with passion encouraging the athletes. Every time the national flag was raised and the national anthem rang through the clouds, the athletes waved to the audience wearing Anta's uniforms. All those moments have unconsciously impacted people's minds, and Anta is now becoming the national sports brand.

3.4. High-tech Products

In the 2022 Winter Olympic Games, Anta sports technology could be seen everywhere. The statistic shows that the uniforms provided by Anta for the Beijing Winter Olympics include 17 categories, such as down jackets, functional jackets, thermal underwear, and winter sports shoes, among which the uniforms use two kinds of self-developed fabric technology, incandescent heat technology, and waterproof and moisture permeable technology, which can store heat efficiently and warm up quickly. In addition, Anta also created competition equipment for the 12 participating Chinese ice and snow national teams, covering 15 events of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games. For example, in the short-track speed skating competition, the Chinese team members wore Anta-designed competition suits with advanced air turbulence control drag reduction and boundary slip drag reduction technologies, which can improve drag reduction by 5%~10% compared with ordinary skating suits [1]. Anta's high-tech products did impact its marketing positively, but Anta needed to improve its self-innovation.

4. Suggestions

4.1. Digitalization

Anta has done a great job on marketing transformation to digitalization, but it still has areas of improvement. Firstly, Anta is at the beginning of digital marketing, so it has to set up a clear plan for its target market, competitors, and brand identity. In addition, the e-commerce platform has become

one of the main channels for the sales of sporting goods. Therefore, Anta can work with the e-commerce platform and promote its products by opening flagship stores. At the same time, Anta can make good use of big data. Anta can make use of the user data of e-commerce platforms for user profiling and accurate promotion. Furthermore, Anta can use data analysis tools to analyze user behavior, consumption habits and other data to optimize digital marketing plans [8]. Meanwhile, Anta can also use AI technology to optimize user profiles and recommendation algorithms in order to improve user stickiness. Anta can also hold more activities and events online, such as live competitions and online challenges, helping it get more public exposure. At the same time, Anta can also collect user feedback through online activities to optimize product design and service experience. Lastly, social media is the key to Anta's digital marketing. Anta can use social media to promote its new products, events, and other content. Also, Anta can cooperate with celebrities through social media. For example, Anta can launch a new challenge on TikTok with a famous athlete, using his or her popularity to expand its business. Cooperation would be a lot easier and faster online with less cost for both Anta and celebrities.

4.2. New Technology

Anta has been acquiring other sports brands as a way to expand its business. However, creating its own technology is the key to Anta's branding and marketing in the long term. Firstly, Anta can put more investment into new technologies. New technology is the main factor in future industrial development. By investing more in new technology, Anta can take the lead and gain more opportunities and advantages during industrial change. Also, Anta can follow the trend nowadays on metaverse and renewable materials. This move can help Anta attract more young people, who are more willing to purchase new products and easily accept new technologies. Additionally, Anta can develop new technologies that improve production efficiency and product quality. For example, the use of AI, automated production lines, and 3D printing technology may be considered ways to improve production efficiency and reduce costs [9]. Efficiency and quality are factors that drive a brand in the long run. Through AI, automated production lines, and 3D printing technology, the production process can be automated and digitized. As a result, they will improve production efficiency, reducing costs and human errors.

4.3. Brand Image and International Marketing

Other than the Olympics, Anta needs to find a way to develop its brand image, which has emotional connections with the consumers. Nowadays, Anta's brand identity is closely tied to Chinese national pride, that Anta is the national sports brand of China. However, this brand image is ineffective in its international marketing. Thus, Anta can create a brand story that could be related to Olympic spirits. In this way, Anta is able to expand its business globally because consumers have trust and identification with the brand. This brand story can also address Anta's history, culture, innovation, and commitment to sports and health. In addition, Anta can build different brand images in different areas. In China, the image of national sports brands is effective. Internationally, Anta can sign athletes around the world, using their popularity to promote its products, such as the NBA all-star player, Klay Thompson [10]. Furthermore, Anta can strengthen its brand image by doing charities and environmental initiatives. For instance, supporting charitable organizations, promoting healthy lifestyles, and advancing sustainable development. This image appeals to people no matter their cultural background, and it is what Anta lacks right now.

5. Conclusion

In the 2022 Winter Olympics, Anta, a Chinese sports brand, successfully expanded its business through competitive marketing strategies. The turnover of the sporting goods industry on the Tmall platform in February 2022 showed significant divergence. The overall turnover of the industry during the Winter Olympics decreased by 22% compared to the same period in the lunar calendar, with international brands reducing by about 30% year-on-year, but the national brand Anta achieved a counter-trend rise, with a 35% year-on-year increase in turnover during the Winter Olympics. Anta has been part of the Olympics since 2008, sponsoring Chinese national teams. Recently, it gained a higher position in Olympic sponsorship. Overall, Anta built a brand image of the Chinese national sports brand through the 2022 Winter Olympics. Combining sports and national pride together, Anta attracts Chinese consumers effectively. Attributed to its marketing transformation during covid, Anta's digital and online marketing strategies played a vital role in its 2022 Winter Olympics marketing. However, Anta still has areas of improvement. Firstly, digitalization and new technologies are areas Anta should focus on in the future. Additionally, the brand image of a national sports brand is limited and ineffective in international marketing. Thus, Anta should build another brand image by illustrating its brand story, and supporting charities and environmental initiatives which appeal to the general public. This article mainly focuses on Anta's marketing strategies in the 2022 Winter Olympics through data and literature analysis. Additionally, this article states few suggestions to the company Anta for its future development. However, this article also has limitations since the use of literature analysis might be influenced by misleading data. Since the world just enters the post-covid era, this article does not dive deeply into this topic due to limited data, which future studies can focus more on.

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