

Study on Brand Construction and International Communication Strategy from the Perspective of Cultural Dimensions—Taking Apple Brands as an Example

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Abstract. Based on the three-dimensional framework of material culture, spiritual culture, and behavioral culture, this study adopts the cross-cultural case comparison and analysis method to systematically explore the brand construction and communication strategies of apple brands in global communication. Four apple brands with both international influence and brand communication reach at home and abroad are selected as cases, and an in-depth analysis is conducted on their differentiated paths in terms of product characteristics, brand symbols, values, and communication behaviors. The study finds that successful apple brands can combine regional cultural symbols with digital marketing to enhance brand cultural communication and brand identity. Product scarcity and quality at the material culture level are the cornerstone of a brand, while value resonance and emotional connection at the spiritual culture level are the core of brand differentiation, and marketing strategies and consumption experience at the behavioral culture level are the key paths for brand communication. This study provides a theoretical model and practical path for the construction and communication of agricultural product brands.

Keywords: Brand Culture, Product Brand, Culture and Brand, Cross-Cultural Communication

1. Introduction

Against the dual background of global consumption upgrading and the surge of digital technology, brand culture has become a core barrier to break through homogeneous competition. As an agricultural product category with both regional characteristics and market influence, apple brand construction not only involves the product itself but also requires the construction of cultural symbols to establish an emotional anchor in consumers' minds.

Existing studies mostly focus on the analysis of cultural characteristics of domestic brands, lacking research on brand international communication strategies from a cross-cultural perspective.

This study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the cultural construction and communication strategies of apple brands through case studies, explore the role of brand culture in brand international communication strategies, so as to fill the gap in existing research and provide new perspectives and methods for brand construction and communication.

2. Literature review

Early scholars' discussions on brand culture focused on the iconic nature of brands and the accumulation of cultural traits in brands. Domestic scholar Zhou Chaoqi [1] emphasized the symbolic role of brand culture; Chen Fang [2] argued that brand culture refers to the accumulation of cultural traits in a brand. In international theories, Kleiner and Dirlov [3] pointed out the differences between corporate culture and brand culture, and proposed that the two have an interactive and complementary relationship. Keller [4]'s Brand Resonance Model suggests that emotional identification is the ultimate goal of brand culture.

Existing literature pays insufficient attention to "the construction of agricultural product brand culture and global communication strategies" and lacks the perspective of international communication strategies. This study intends to fill this gap through cross-cultural case analysis.

3. Brand culture

The Structural Levels of Brand Culture Elements

Brand culture refers to the cultural atmosphere and values formed by an enterprise in its long-term development [1]. The construction of brand culture is the key to shaping brand image, enhancing brand value, and consolidating brand loyalty [5]. This study divides the three-level indicators of the brand culture framework into three levels—material, spiritual, and behavioral—as the elements for constructing the brand culture framework.

Table 1. Three-level construction indicators of brand culture

First-Level Indicators	Second-Level Indicators	Third-Level Indicators
Material Culture	Product Characteristics, Brand Symbols	Product quality, packaging, brand name, trademark, logo, promotional content
Spiritual Culture	Values, Vision and Goals	Spiritual characteristics of the locality, founding concept and vision of the brand, philosophical concepts conveyed by the brand
Behavioral Culture	Communication Behaviors, Consumption Behaviors	Behaviors to enhance brand awareness through products, prices, and communication channels; behaviors of brand managers, employees, etc.; cognition and behavioral habits of target consumers and existing consumers of the brand

By clarifying the brand culture framework, this study conducts an in-depth study on the brand culture construction process of existing fruit brands. On this basis, we can more clearly understand the current situation of brand culture of domestic and foreign apple brands, and formulate targeted brand culture strategies and measures. In the ever-changing market environment and increasingly upgraded consumer demand, we should construct, innovate, and develop brand culture to maintain the vitality and competitiveness of the brand.

4. Analysis of apple brand culture construction based on the brand culture framework

This study selects four internationally representative apple brands—Yantai (Shandong, China), Aksu (Xinjiang, China), Washington (USA), and Aomori (Japan)—and conducts a comparative analysis

from the three dimensions of material culture, spiritual culture, and behavioral culture in accordance with the structural level framework of brand culture elements, so as to reveal the differentiated paths of brand culture construction in different regions.

4.1. Material culture

4.1.1. Product characteristics

- Yantai Apples (Shandong, China)

Relying on the geographical advantages of "temperate monsoon climate + sandy soil" in the Shandong Peninsula, it has formed the product characteristics of "regular fruit shape, sweet, crisp and juicy" (with an average sugar content of 14.6°). As "the birthplace of Chinese apples", its 150-year planting history serves as the core endorsement of material culture [6].

- Aksu Apples (Xinjiang, China)

Utilizing the geographical conditions of "long sunshine hours + glacial meltwater" in the Tarim Basin, it highlights the physical feature of "rock sugar core" (sugar content $\geq 18\%$), and transforms the natural environment into a "scarcity" product symbol.

- Washington Apples (USA)

Taking advantage of the ecological advantages of "synchronized rainfall and heat, slightly acidic soil" in Washington State, it focuses on "organic certification (USDA Organic)" and "crisp, sweet and juicy" taste, which meets the demand of European and American consumers for healthy food.

- Aomori Apples (Japan)

Relying on the humid climate of the Tsugaru Strait and volcanic ash soil, it has cultivated the variety gene of "the birthplace of Fuji apples" and emphasizes "craftsman-level quality control" (single fruit weight error $\leq 5g$).

4.1.2. Brand symbols

The "thumb logo" of Yantai Apples conveys the functional value of "quality approval" through a concrete design (as shown in Figure 1-a); Aksu Apples constructs a regional imagination with the "snow mountain symbol" (as shown in Figure 1-b); Washington Apples conveys the concept of environmental protection and trust in origin through a simple brand name and abstract apple logo (as shown in Figure 1-c); Aomori Apples conveys Japanese aesthetics with an anthropomorphic apple icon (as shown in Figure 1-d).



Figure 1. Typical brand logos

Brand logos, slogans, and packaging give consumers the first impression when they come into contact with products. They play an important role in shaping brand image, cultivating potential consumers, and expressing brand personality. In the process of brand symbol analysis, this study finds that some Chinese apple brands lack unified logos and slogans, making unified brand image recognition impossible. In the process of brand culture construction, the inconsistency of brand logos and slogans leads to weak brand culture shaping.

4.2. Spiritual culture

4.2.1. Values

- Yantai Apples

With "centennial inheritance, quality as the foundation" as its spiritual core, it integrates the concepts of "Jiaodong farming culture" and "openness and innovation", and puts forward the brand narrative of "one apple tree, half of China's fruit industry history" to strengthen the identity of "industry benchmark".

- Aksu Apples

It emphasizes "frontier products" and integrates "national unity" and "Western Regions culture" into its brand narrative.

- Washington Apples

It advocates "sustainable agriculture" and conveys the values of "environmental responsibility" and "healthy life" through "carbon-neutral orchard" certification.

- Aomori Apples

Adhering to the "craftsman spirit", it puts forward the brand philosophy of "one apple, a century of craftsmanship" and emphasizes "zero defects" from planting to packaging.

4.2.2. Cross-cultural value resonance

Brand culture needs to be based on social consumption trends and build consumer resonance through cultural symbols, thereby influencing brand image power and loyalty [7]. All four brands take "health" as their underlying logic, but differentially anchor the content of cultural identity. In regional brand communication, different brands show different regional differences in their communication methods: when Washington Apples enter the Chinese market, they downplay the "organic" concept and emphasize the positioning of "imported high-end gifts" to adapt to China's cultural demand for "dignified gift-giving"; when Aomori Apples are promoted in Southeast Asia, they combine local "tropical fruit preferences" and launch "apple + coconut milk" mixed drinks to realize the localized transformation of cultural symbols.

4.3. Behavioral culture

4.3.1. Application of digital marketing in communication scenarios

- Yantai Apples

The Yantai Municipal Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Affairs operates the Douyin account "Yantai Brand Agricultural Products". As of 2024, it has released 618 short videos with the main content of "daily life of fruit farmers + processing technology", attracting 149,000 followers. During the epidemic, 26 live streaming events drove a 35% increase in sales of unsold apples [6].

- Aksu Apples

It cooperates with top streamers to carry out "exploring frontier fruits" live broadcasts, with live footage directly showing orchard scenes, and supporting interactive sessions of "rock sugar core test", which has received over 20 million views; the Xiaohongshu topic #100 Ways to Eat Aksu Apples has 52,000 UGC (User-Generated Content) pieces.

- Washington Apples

It launched the #AppleADayChallenge campaign on Instagram, inviting fitness bloggers to showcase "apple + salad" light meal combinations, with exposure exceeding 120 million times; it realizes 48-hour direct delivery from "origin to table" through Amazon's "one-click order" service.

- Aomori Apples

It has developed the "Aomori Apple AR Guide" app, allowing users to watch virtual fruit farmers explain planting stories by scanning the packaging; it launched "apple emoji stickers" on the LINE platform, with downloads exceeding one million times, enhancing brand recognition among young people.

4.3.2. Consumption behaviors

- Yantai Apples

It holds the "International Apple Festival" and sets up activities of "picking experience + health run". Tourists can participate in the "Apple King" selection in real time through a mini-program; offline stores provide services of "freshly squeezed apple juice + preserved fruit DIY" to enhance the cultural belonging of local consumers.

- Aomori Apples

It has built the "Apple Museum", which displays the planting history through immersive installation art (such as the apple light and shadow tunnel), cultivating tourists' awareness of Aomori Apples. It receives over 300,000 tourists annually, 40% of whom are international tourists.

5. Analysis of apple brand culture communication

5.1. Application of digital marketing

5.1.1. The role of digital channels such as social media and e-commerce platforms in apple brand promotion

As the trend of the Internet strongly penetrating daily life becomes increasingly evident, digital marketing has broken the limitations of traditional marketing models. While realizing the rapid dissemination of brand information, it has shortened the perceived distance between consumer groups and the brand. It has become an inevitable choice for brands to use digital marketing strategies for promotion.

Digital channels such as social media and e-commerce platforms are important channels for brand communication, and they have extremely high influence especially among young consumer groups. Brands skillfully use these channels to present brand symbols, tell brand stories, and convey brand values through multimedia presentation forms. Through interactive portals, users can establish direct and real-time communication channels with brands. At the same time, digital channels also provide a convenient channel for UGC content, thereby helping brands form positive word-of-mouth. Consumers' sense of trust and identification with the brand are gradually established in this process.

For apple brands, it is equally important to use digital marketing strategies for brand promotion. Multimedia communication extensively covers target audiences, enhancing consumers' awareness and interest; through high-quality graphic and video content, the brand story of apples is vividly displayed, thereby enhancing consumers' trust in the brand; live streaming e-commerce not only shortens the distance from brand to consumer but also stimulates consumers' purchase desire and deepens brand impression through a highly real-time and interactive experience process.

5.1.2. Brands that have successfully utilized digital marketing methods

In 2019, Yantai Apples registered the official Douyin account "Yantai Brand Agricultural Products" on Douyin, delving into topics related to the industrial advantages of Yantai Apples and exploring video materials. As of October 2024, 618 videos have been shot and produced, gaining 149,000 followers and 167,000 likes. In 2020, affected by the epidemic, Yantai's agricultural products were once unsold. The official account of Yantai Brand Agricultural Products carried out 26 live promotion events for Yantai Brand Agricultural Products by linking with other accounts; it cooperated with Jiaodong Online to carry out 18 "cloud-based" live poverty alleviation events for Yantai Apples; it also participated in relevant exhibitions and conducted 18 on-site live streams. Through self-media promotion and live streaming, it effectively converted orders relying on the public credibility of Yantai Brand Agricultural Products.

5.2. Strategy of integrating traditional media and new media

5.2.1. Advantages and disadvantages of traditional media and new media in brand communication

Traditional media such as television, radio, and newspapers can often cover audiences of different age groups and regions, and they usually have strong social credibility. When choosing traditional media for brand communication, it has certain advantages for brands that hope to conduct large-scale communication, and audiences have higher trust in communication channels, thus tending to invest higher trust and recognition in the brand. In 2014, CCTV broadcast Aksu Apples Are Ripe, which covered middle-aged and elderly groups, effectively enhancing brand awareness and adding authoritative endorsement to the brand [8]. However, compared with new media, traditional media have higher placement costs. Moreover, in the communication process, due to overly broad coverage, they cannot accurately reach target audiences. At the same time, traditional media have relatively monotonous content forms and one-way information transmission methods, lacking user participation and real-time feedback, which is not conducive to communication between brands and consumers.

In contrast, new media methods have more diverse content forms. Short videos, live streaming, and other forms of content meet the preferences of different users and enrich brand expression forms. At the same time, they realize interaction between users and brands and accurate positioning of target users. In 2019, Yan'an City launched the "I Have an Apple Tree in Yan'an" project, creating a new apple production and sales model of "sharing economy + customized agriculture + cultural and tourism services" [9]. Consumers can adopt fruit trees on online platforms and obtain cultural and tourism customization services for the adopted fruit trees. As of 2022, the platform has accumulated 181,700 adopted apple trees, benefiting more than 12,000 fruit-growing households and achieving sales of over 90 million yuan. This new media communication activity transformed from selling products to selling services, successfully realizing interaction with consumers and

further enhancing user recognition. However, new media also have certain disadvantages in brand communication. For example, the huge amount of information on new media platforms easily leads to information overload for users; there are diverse information sources, making it difficult to ensure the authenticity of some information; the content life cycle is short, requiring continuous release of new content to maintain user attention. Based on this, when formulating communication strategies, brands should flexibly select appropriate media combinations according to their own characteristics and target audiences, and integrate the advantages of traditional media and new media to achieve the best communication effect.

5.2.2. Ways to integrate online and offline resources to enhance brand awareness

Integrating online and offline resources plays an important role in enhancing brand awareness. By making full use of online platforms to expand the coverage of brand information and offline activities to deepen consumers' understanding and emotional connection with the brand, brands can build positive word-of-mouth, enhance consumers' sense of participation and loyalty, and maximize brand value.

Aomori Apples from Japan make full use of the rich apple-derived products and related industrial resources in the city, and actively develop tourism projects closely related to apples. Combining with the city's many apple pie shops, Aomori's online and offline platforms release apple pie tourism maps, which not only creates new check-in opportunities for offline tourists but also attracts the attention of a large number of potential online consumers, thereby enhancing brand awareness.

Similarly, similar apple-themed experience projects have also been carried out in places such as Yantai (Shandong) and Aksu (Xinjiang) in China. By providing offline user experiences, they stimulate tourists' active sharing of UGC on social media platforms, and through the live promotion of KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders) and KOCs (Key Opinion Consumers) at the event site, the influence of their respective apple brands has been effectively expanded.

6. Conclusion

The significance of studying brand culture lies in breaking the traditional perception that "brand = product". Marketing and brand management are two closely related yet distinctly different matters, and coordinating the two is a challenge. Based on this study, when conducting brand communication, we should start from culture and consider in which areas consensus can be formed with consumers. As Liu Ruiqi [10] pointed out, brand research should not only stay at the product, industry, and sector levels but also cover two dimensions: organizations composed of people and countries composed of people and organizations. These two dimensions cover tangible and intangible aspects and are often intertwined. Only by advancing on both dimensions simultaneously can enterprises comprehensively construct and communicate brand culture, and achieve deeper brand identity and market influence. Specifically, when promoting a brand, enterprises should focus not only on the quality and characteristics of products but also on cultural background, social value, and the resonance of consumers' emotions. Only in this way can they stand out in the fierce market competition and establish long-term brand loyalty [11].

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