



Research on Social Marketing Strategy on MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea

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Abstract. The new tea drink industry is developing rapidly, and many tea drink brands have risen rapidly in recent years. In such a competitive market, MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea has come out of the red sea with its excellent marketing strategy. Some researchers use 4P or 4I theoretical models to analyse MIXUE's marketing strategy mix. However, there is a research gap on the social marketing strategy of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea. Therefore, this paper investigates the social marketing strategy of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea through case study method and literature reading method. It is found that MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea has adopted excellent social marketing strategies both in terms of social media operation and brand IP construction and promotion. However, its marketing strategy still suffers from the risk of over-marketing and the lack of interaction with consumers. In this regard, the author suggests replacing high quantity with high quality to avoid over-marketing and enrich the emotional interaction experience.

Keywords: MIXUE; social marketing strategy; social media marketing; IP

1 INTRODUCTION

Tea culture originated in Asia, loved by people around the world. In the traditional tea drinking habits based on the background of today's consumer upgrading, the new tea drinks industry came into being, in recent years ushered in a period of rapid development, the market scale is expanding rapidly. According to the data of Ai media consulting, 2016-2022 China's ready-made tea drinks industry market size from 29.1 billion yuan to 293.9 billion yuan, compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 47% [1]. The market size of ready-made tea drinks will continue to grow steadily in the future, and it is expected that the market size of the industry will reach 374.9 billion yuan in 2025 (see Figure1 [1]). Accompanying the huge market size is the fierce competition in the new tea beverage industry. At present, many milk tea enterprises are still struggling on the profit and loss line. In this situation, MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea successfully entered the public's view in 2021 by virtue of a magical brainwashing theme song marketing out of the circle, both online and offline has caused a wide range of hot topics, in a great increase in brand awareness at the same time, but also offline shops to obtain more market share [2].

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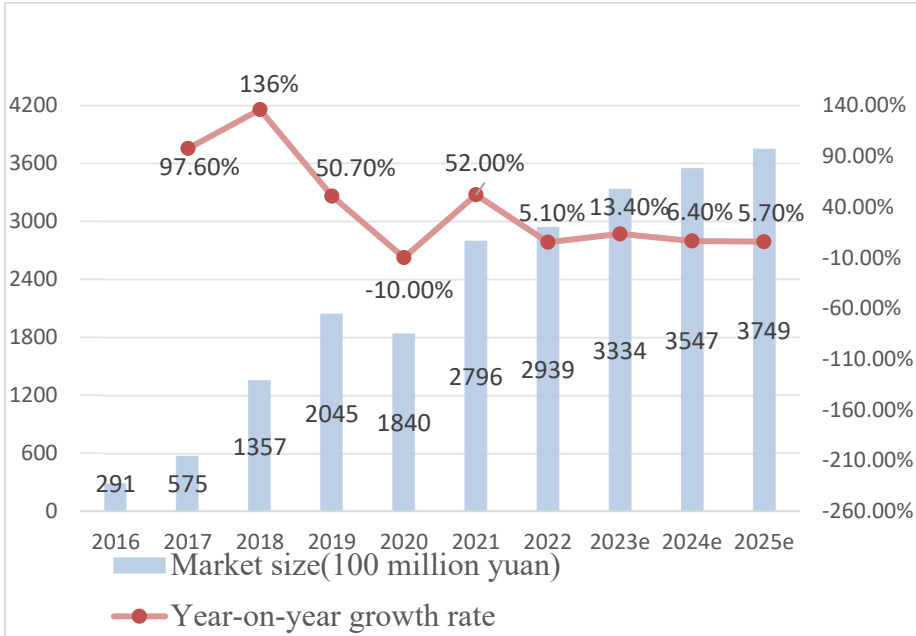


Fig. 1. The market size and forecast of current tea drink in China [1]

MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea (hereinafter referred to as "MIXUE"), founded in 1997. MIXUE has grown rapidly over the past two decades, expanding with extraordinary momentum and gradually becoming a tea drink chain with national influence. From a small window in 1997 to a behemoth with over 20,000 shops worldwide [2]. In 2018, it began to use "Snow King" as the brand's IP for external publicity and activated the slogan "I love you, You love me, MIXUE Ice Cream and Tea" [3]. In 2021, the brainwashing theme song of MIXUE was launched. In October 2023, the official news released by its official microblogging site showed that the number of its shops around the world had reached 30,000, which was the first of its kind among all the tea drink brands. At present, MIXUE has more than 29,000 shops in China, and more than 3,000 shops in overseas markets. MIXUE has come out of the red sea and into the blue sea with its extremely cost-effective as well as excellent social marketing strategy.

This paper analyses the social marketing strategy of MIXUE through literature reading method; case study method, and puts forward solution suggestions for the problems existing in the marketing strategy of MIXUE, finally provides ideas and references for the development of marketing strategy of other tea drink brands.

2 MIXUE CURRENT SOCIAL MARKETING STRATEGIES

2.1 Social Media Marketing

MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea launched a theme song on all major social media platforms in 2021, then invited KOLs from Bilibili.com, a video website in China like YouTube, to make secondary creations, so that the song has been adapted into more than 20 languages from 14 countries, creating a very high level of popularity. The theme song is adapted from the American ballad Oh,Susanna. It was earworm with simple melody and straightforward lyric, so it is easy to be remembered. Coupled with cute "Snow King" as the protagonist of the promotional video, this song once launched has been sought after by young people pursuing the new trend, imaginative and creative, and then appeared in various countries, language funny version [4]. In the first month after the release of the theme song video, it had over 10 million plays on Bilibili, 580 million reads on related Weibo topics, and 1.2 billion plays on Tiktok. It has been spread on the social media, instantly gathering large-scale traffic.

Along the path of "creating meme - receiving meme - exploding meme", MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea firstly created the theme song, then invited KOLs such as famous bloggers on Bilibili to create second versions of the theme song and released various funny versions or translations in other languages, and finally played the theme song and adapted songs repeatedly on all major platforms as well as in the offline shops. In addition to the theme song itself, Honeysnow Ice City constantly uses its derivative topics to refresh its popularity on major social media platforms. For example, in 2019, MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea launched the activity of "getting the marriage certificate" for couples who buy drinks in the shop. After the launch of this activity, many young people go to shop to buy drinks for the certificate and posted photos on social platforms, which contributed to the popularity of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea and the formation of strong memories among consumers, besides the growth of sales in the offline stores.

2.2 Brand IP Marketing

In 2018 MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea launched its brand image IP - Snow King. This is a smiling snowman wearing a red cape, holding an ice cream scepter. It often walks on the streets to dance and interacting with passers-by, it gets a lot of children and young people love because of its cute image. The image are often adjusted according to current events and hotspots , such as black skin snow king in the summer, or the climbing Mount Tai snow king, increasing its exposure and goodwill in front of consumers [5].

In addition to the Snow King Air model dolls commonly seen on the street interacting with passers-by, MIXUE also promotes its IP image in a variety of ways. For example, MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea held an ice cream music festival in 2019, where the entire festival stage was set in the arms of a giant Snow King, and many Snow King peripherals were placed on the site. Since 2020, MIXUE has organised the Hundred Changes Snow King Cup Creative Competition in November every year. Participants draw their own Snow King and post their creative works with the topic of Hundred

Changes Snow King Cup on social media platforms. The top 30 winners of the contest receive prizes ranging from 100 yuan to 600 yuan. In August 2023, MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea co-branded with China Post and launched the first green shop in China with distinctive China Post features. This co-branding, once launched, has caused a huge amount of conversation in China, netizens have chimed in "Snow King became to director Snow," "Snow King landed a government job". The topic of "MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea has been officially inducted into the system." quickly had more than 1.9 million readers on Weibo.

Also in August 2023, MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea launched its first image IP animation film, *The Snow King Arrives*. The animated film was launched on 25 August, with 12 episodes, and detonated all over the internet as soon as it started broadcasting [6]. On Weibo, the title of # MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea has made animation # has a reading volume of 2,900w+; on the Bilibili, the total broadcast volume has exceeded 1,200w; and on social media platforms, a new social storm of "whether the villain is Tiktok coffee or Starbucks" has been stirred up [6].

3 PROS AND CONS OF MIXUE'S SOCIAL MARKETING STRATEGY

3.1 Advantages of Social Media Marketing and the Operation of Brand IP

First of all, the huge popularity and topic volume caused by the launch of the theme song of MIXUE on social software has increased the popularity of MIXUE and also achieved traffic driving for its offline shops. MIXUE creates distinctive and interesting content based on the characteristics and preferences of its target audience, leaving consumers with a deep impression of the brand and the products launched by it, thereby maximising the future commercial benefits of it [4]. MIXUE often rushes to the hot search list on Tiktok, Weibo and other platforms. Its related words and phrases are often entering people's vision, such as #Embarrassing Incidents at MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea, #MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea Theme Song, #MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea Couples' Certificate, and other dozens of related topics, with a cumulative total of tens of billions of broadcasts [5]. This has made many young consumers from the original did not know MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea, began to recognize the brand, and willing to take the initiative to continue to pay attention on social media. This creates more possibilities for more consumers to go to offline shops to make actual purchases and experience the brand [4]. MIXUE continues to make consumers to form strong memories, making it a household name for bubble tea.

MIXUE's marketing of its IP-Snow King has also definitely worked well. After creating the IP image of Snow King, MIXUE has given this IP image a great independent personality. Snow King has its own independent social accounts on all major social platforms, and updated posts or videos with Snow King's tone of voice. These accounts create a series of short mini-scenes and dialogues based on daily life, so that consumers feel that Snow King seems to be a "human being" with independent thoughts, emotional

moods, likes and dislikes. What is more, Snow King has its own birthday, that is, 22 November, as a doll with an independent personality, Snow King kindly invited the netizens to participate in the "Snow King birthday party" [7]. Snow King also posted several videos on social media platforms celebrating its birthday, wearing a birthday hat and celebrating his birthday in a room filled with balloons and gifts. Now Snow King even has its own story of the animated film, which made its image fuller, character traits distinctive. Snow King was given on the independent personality, which makes consumers to think that MIXUE in their minds is not just a cold and heartless product brand, there is a soul. As the product and brand become more visual and emotional, consumers are more likely to make it their first choice. Creating an independent personality of the IP image gives life to MIXUE, exudes more interest and has a stronger vitality [7].

3.2 Flaws of Over-marketing and Lack of Interaction

Although the overall online marketing strategy of MIXUE have achieved a good response, it has the hidden danger of over-marketing. Marketing is a double-edged sword. Excessive marketing behaviour may cause negative network externalities as well as negative consumer sentiment, which can lead to consumer burnout [8].

Social media is increasingly becoming the primary venue for brand owners to introduce new products and announce events, which is why it is so popular. However, for the media habits and media psychology of online users, if too many promotions and advertisements are spread across social media platforms, it is easy to cause users to be rebellious, tired of the brand and resentful [9]. For example, consumers may complain that when they come home from work and want to browse more funny videos on Tiktok as a way to relax, while there are too many the content about MIXUE'commercial.

In addition, to a certain extent, MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea's promotion on social media lacks interactivity. The posts or videos it publishes are mostly unilateral output of marketing content from the official account, while the account operator rarely interacts with consumers through likes, comments, retweets, etc., which is not conducive for MIXUE to shape an intimate brand personality.

Furthermore, MIXUE in the small programs of purchase, social media operation posts also lack humane design and emotional expression. By contrast, if consumer click on the Lukin Coffee APP, they will find the top will be based on local holidays, weather conditions and a thoughtful greeting, just a few words, as with the user beside the intimate friends general interaction. In the first moment to start the APP, a wave of warmth instantly rushed through their hearts. Just like interpersonal communication, the cold and senseless APP cannot stimulate the user's emotional changes, the quality of the content and the emotion of the experience determines the pattern of the brand and the recognition of the audience [9].

4 SUGGESTIONS FOR MIXUE SOCIAL MARKETING STRATEGY OPTIMISATION

4.1 Avoiding Excessive Marketing

MIXUE should improve the quality of its video content instead of the number of videos. In addition, MIXUE should reasonably control the frequency of its posts and videos on social platforms, as well as the frequency of its promotional co-operation with Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs).

MIXUE's many accounts are active daily on major social platforms, constantly trying to create and explode meme. There is excess of marketing frequency to some extent. With the false likes, artificial hotspots, water army control comment, Internet excessive marketing phenomenon in the communication platform from time to time; commercial brands blindly pursuing netroots endorsement, purchasing network hot list and other news is no longer rare. Netizens on the "man-made popularity" perception gradually clear. The phenomenon of "popularity rejection" has begun to appear among netizens, especially young netizens [10]. They change from readily accepting to being wary of even rejecting content with a high level of popularity on the Internet [10].

Based on this situation, the quality of social marketing is obviously more important than the quantity. The marketing effect of one hot video far exceeds that of countless tepid and ordinary updates. On the one hand, MIXUE should enhance the content design of its marketing to ensure that each posting is effective rather than only serving to keep up the pace of updates, which may be counterproductive. MIXUE 2021's theme song was undoubtedly effective on marketing, with the video exploding all over the internet, expanding MIXUE's fan base, increasing awareness and offline shop sales. And since then, MIXUE has never surpassed its past self on the road to social marketing. Although MIXUE's account is continuously updated, the number of views of other videos is much lower than the number of views of the theme song video, and the popularity created on the Internet is lower than the popularity created by the theme song at that time. On the other hand, MIXUE should control the frequency of videos and posts to keep them at a "just right" level. In other words, one that enhances MIXUE's exposure to consumers but does not cause consumer fatigue or resentment by appearing too often.

4.2 Enriching Emotional Interaction Experience

Communication and interaction is an important way for brands to establish a good relationship with consumers, which greatly affects the consumer experience and the brand image. Good communication and interaction can promote consumers to have positive feelings towards the brand, so MIXUE should also make efforts in communication and interaction. In addition, according to the previous analysis, it can be seen that the brand personality of MIXUE is intimate, practical, approachable and integrity. So good communication and interaction can strengthen the presentation of its brand personality and further enhance the brand value.

Therefore, MIXUE should strengthen its friendly interaction with consumers on social media. On the one hand, it should give more feedback to netizens' likes and comments on the video content posted on their official social accounts, such as giving vivid replies to some of the wonderful comments in the tone of the Snow King. MIXUE can also conduct more activities to draw prizes for fans who gave comments or retweets about their videos or posts. This will increase the heat of the video or post and increase the number of account followers while enhancing the emotional interaction experience by increasing the participation of netizens. For example, MIXUE has launched the winter limited Flower cotton-padded jacket Snow King series of cup sets in November 2023 and released a number of related videos for promotion. In this case, MIXUE can launch a fan lottery in the comment section, and randomly select fans who have commented on the videos to give away Flower cotton-padded jacket Snow King peripherals.

On the other hand, MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea needs to develop the brand's own scene paradise, with the help of artificial intelligence, cloud computing and other technologies to improve consumer preferences, frequency, mobile trajectory and other accurate portraits, regurgitation feeding the product innovation and research and development of the mini-programme page [7]. The design of MIXUE's mini-programme and APP page is very simple, containing only basic functions such as ordering food, receiving coupons, checking orders, and promotional posters for recently launched activities. MIXUE should enrich the content of its interface to include content that reflects its consumer orientation. For example, MIXUE can incorporate a thoughtful message for seasonal changes when displaying promotional posters at the top of the interface of the APP and mini-programme, or display blessings with MIXUE's characteristics on specific festivals to show its concern for consumers, which can enrich their emotional interactive experience.

5 CONCLUSION

This study found that MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea achieved excellent results through social marketing strategies such as the melodious and magical theme song, the operation of interesting social accounts, and giving the brand IP Snow King an independent personality with emotions. Whether in terms of social media operation or brand IP construction and promotion, MIXUE has performed extremely well. However, with the rapid development of 5G and the spread of adverts across social media and the onset of consumer 'heat rejection', there is still a risk of over-marketing and a lack of consumer interaction with MIXUE's social marketing. In this regard, the author suggests the optimisation of avoiding over-marketing by replacing high quantity with high quality of operational videos and posters. In addition, the author also provides the suggestion of enriching the emotional interaction experience by increasing the interaction with consumers in the video comment section and developing the brand's own scene park.

This study fills the gap of previous research on the social marketing strategy of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea. It is hoped that this paper will provide a reference for further optimising the social marketing strategy of MIXUE and further promote the high-quality development of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea Co., Ltd. At the same time, it is hoped

that the study of MIXUE can provide ideas for other small and medium-sized catering enterprises' social marketing strategies with reference.

Finally, this study's summary of Chinese and international research is insufficient, and the practicability of the optimisation suggestions of social marketing strategies proposed in this study is still to be examined. These topic can be further studied and examined in depth in the future.

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