

Study on the Communication Strategy of Neo-Chinese-Styled Tea Drink Brand CHAGEE on Douyin under the Perspective of Ritual View

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Abstract. In recent years, China's economic growth and rising international status have fueled a surge in consumer confidence and identification with local culture, leading to the emergence of Neo-Chinese-Styled tea drinks. CHAGEE, a representative brand founded in 2017, has rapidly expanded globally with over 4,500 shops, demonstrating the potential of this new tea drink category. This study focuses on the communication strategy of CHAGEE on the short video platform Douyin, examining how the brand leverages the platform's capabilities and adopts a ritual view of communication to engage consumers and promote its Neo-Chinese-Styled tea drinks. Adopting a qualitative research approach, this study utilizes content analysis to examine 189 works released by CHAGEE's official Douyin account. It analyzes how the brand employs brand symbols, cultural images, and interactive content to shape a ritualized brand experience and foster brand loyalty. This study demonstrates that CHAGEE's successful communication strategy on Douyin stems from its effective integration of the ritual view of communication, cultural narrative, and consumer engagement. It provides valuable insights for Neo-Chinese-Styled drink brands seeking to leverage new media platforms for effective brand communication and sustainable growth.

1 Introduction

In recent years, along with the rapid development and widespread popularity of Internet technology, a number of new Chinese national brands have keenly captured the pulse of the new consumer trends and have quickly emerged in the market with their novel design, full of personalisation, and cost-effective features, winning the favour and popularity of many consumers. At the same time, with the continuous rise of China's economy and international status, consumers' self-confidence and sense of identification with the local culture are also increasing, and Neo-Chinese-styled tea drinks have emerged. Neo-Chinese-styled tea drink is a new type of beverage based on fresh tea leaves, skillfully blended with milk, cream, or fresh fruits and other multi-dimensional ingredients, which not only inherits the essence of the traditional tea culture but also gives it a new connotation of the times and aesthetic value in the innovation. Neo-Chinese-styled tea drink brands such as "CHAGEE", "Chayan Yuese"

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are occupying an increasingly important position in the tea drink industry by virtue of their distinctive brand characteristics and unique product positioning. They have launched Neo-Chinese-Styled drinks with a strong cultural heritage, not only in the taste of bold innovation but also in branding, marketing strategy, and other aspects of the show a high degree of cultural self-confidence and innovation.

CHAGEE was founded in 2017 in Yunnan province. Since its inception, it has been upholding the core concept of fusing the essence of oriental culture, inheriting the wisdom of tea affairs and the spirit of innovation. The brand not only explores the profound heritage of traditional Chinese tea culture but also cleverly combines it with modern consumer trends, with raw-leaf fresh milk tea as its core product line, covering pure tea, fresh fruit tea, and a series of peripheral derivatives, in an attempt to reshape and promote the unique concept of "Oriental New Tea Shop" in the modern the social. The brand concept "CHAGEE TOGETHER" deeply reflects its ambition to promote Chinese tea culture to the world, aiming to let young people and consumers all over the world appreciate and fall in love with the unique charm of Chinese tea through high-quality tea experiences. Since 2018, CHAGEE has begun to enter the Southeast Asian market, successively opening more than 60 shops in Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. In less than 7 years, CHAGEE has a total of 4,500 shops, of which 2,300 were added in 2023 alone. As of 20 May 2024, Bawang Tea Ji has over 130 million registered users globally and is expected to have an annual GMV of over \$20 billion in 2024.

The rapid rise of this Neo-Chinese-Styled tea drink brand cannot be separated from the key factor of the traffic dividend given by the Internet's new media platform. In the digital era, new media platforms, as an important channel for information dissemination and interaction, play a pivotal role in branding and market expansion. In particular, Douyin, as one of China's most valuable short video platforms, has more than 700 million daily active users, and this huge user base not only reflects the breadth of Douyin user coverage but also reveals its powerful content dissemination and social influence. With its unique algorithmic recommendation mechanism, rich content creation ecosystem, and high user stickiness, Douyin provides brands with a highly promising marketing stage. At this stage, brands can achieve rapid dissemination and in-depth reach of brand information through carefully planned content creation and marketing activities in cooperation with the platform. For Neo-Chinese-Styled tea brands, Douyin is not only a window to display product features and brand culture, but also an important bridge to connect consumers, stimulate purchase intentions and promote word-of-mouth. Many brands know this well and have actively promoted brand communication and promotion through unilateral operation or cooperation with the Douyin platform, presenting the unique charm of Neo-Chinese-Styled tea drinks to the majority of users in a vivid and intuitive way, thus effectively enhancing the brand's popularity and reputation.

James Carey put forward the "ritual view of communication" that communication is a kind of sacred ceremony [1]. In the ritual view, "ritual" is linked to "communication" as a metaphor, and when people gather in rituals because of their common beliefs, the act of communication is no longer limited to the transmission of information but refers more to the formation of common beliefs in communication. The ritual view emphasises the fact that people with common identity gather together and create through the processing of certain symbols, so as to construct an orderly and meaningful cultural world.

For brands, Ritualistic display plays an important role that cannot be ignored in the shaping of brand image, the enhancement of user stickiness, and the consolidation of market position. Therefore, as a Neo-Chinese-Styled tea drink brand that is still developing and growing, studying the communication strategy of CHAGEE on the powerful platform Douyin under the perspective of the ritual view not only helps to deeply understand how brands can use the short-video platform for effective communication but also enables us to

further think about how to better apply the ritual view of communication to the new media environment, in order to achieve benign communication and sustainable development of the brand.

2 Literature review

As the No.1 brand in China and the No.7 most valuable brand in the world in 2024, many scholars have studied the communication strategy of brands in Douyin. Kang Jingkun's study mentions that one of the important reasons why Douyin has become so popular, apart from appropriate marketing strategies, high-quality content, and the ability of the product itself to satisfy various psychological needs of users, is the blurring of the boundaries of transmission and acceptance, and the fact that the consumers of content, in the traditional sense, also have the opportunity to produce the content [2]. Shi JiaoDi states that Chinese traditional culture and new media short videos should be developed in a complementary way. The feasibility of the development of the Douyin short video platform is infinite. Chinese culture should combine its own advantages with the high-traffic characteristics of short videos, so as to enhance the audience area of traditional culture, build accurate user profiles through personalized video content customization, and improve user stickiness [3]. Research by Sheak Elvin and Abdulrazak Sham also emphasizes the value of Douyin for brand communication, suggesting that brands have been quick to incorporate the Douyin platform into their social media marketing activities to take advantage of its popularity. activities to take advantage of its popularity [4]. Sloane and Rittenhouse further present supporting data that Douyin's appeal as a tool for branding is further strengthened by an assurance of at least 5 million daily views for advertisements on the platform [5].

Another focus of this theme is on rituals. Firstly, Philip Kotler describes the new consumer relationship, in which the new generation of consumers to whom new national brands are directed nowadays are "highly connected" and tend to favor high-touch and personalized exchanges when interacting with brands [6]. Shu Guanqun also stressed in his research that brands should see the subjectivity of consumers behind the traffic data, and adopt appropriate brand communication strategies, considering the process of brand communication as a dynamic process from "connectivity" to "interaction" to "establishing deep relationships" and the long-term maintenance of the relationship should be realized in the process of continuous exploration [7].

Regarding the importance of a brand's focus on ritualization in the interaction process, Timothy de Waal Malefyt emphasizes that the brand's experiential and economic value can thus be enhanced because a ritualized brand allows for interactivity that juxtaposes and conjoins the symbolic with sensory experience [8]. As for the communication of tea brands, Wang Wenhua and Li Jiaying propose that the communication of tea brands in the digital era is more like a cultural ceremony built and shared by brands and consumers according to the new changes in the context of consumer upgrading [9]. Zhang Li's study further focuses on ritualized communication on new media platforms. He mentions that there are a variety of marketing and promotional methods for brands on the Douyin platform, and from the perspective of the ceremonial view of communication, the all-round, ceremonial display of products, special features, and brand culture is the core element of brand communication value enhancement, and the user dividend, social attributes and technological advantages of the Douyin platform provide a lot of convenience for the brand's ceremonial communication [10].

Although there have been many studies on brand communication in the Douyin platform, few studies have been conducted on Neo-Chinese-Styled tea drink brands. In addition, although there are many communication analyses of brands under the ritual perspective, there is a lack of research on communication in Douyin on this basis. Therefore, studying the

communication strategy of CHAGEE in Douyin under the threshold of the ritual view not only helps to gain a deeper understanding of how the brand can make use of the short video platform for effective communication but also allows us to further think about how to better apply the ritual view of communication to the new media environment, so as to achieve the benign communication and sustainable development of the brand.

3 Methodology

The qualitative research method can deeply analyse how the brand constructs and spreads its unique sense of ritual and cultural identity through the Douyin platform and reveals the deep-seated emotional connection and interaction mode between the brand and consumers.

This study chooses the content analysis method. Firstly, by classifying and summarising the 189 works (up to the end of the article) released by CHAGEE official Douyin account, to analyse the embodiment of the concept of ritual. Secondly, the study analyzes the content from two different perspectives: 1) explores how CHAGEE uses brand symbols and culture to shape the ritual kernel based on the brand promotion videos and new product promotion graphics in CHAGEE's account; 2) pays attention to CHAGEE's interactions with consumers in the Douyin platform, and then explored how CHAGEE participated in the ritual process in brand communication.

4 Result

Firstly, CHAGEE attaches importance to transmitting brand culture. The official account profile has published 189 works so far, including 42 graphics and 147 videos. The content is mainly new product promotion, celebrity endorsement, and public welfare information. In the latest 30 non-public welfare works released, the brand concept #CHAGEE TOGETHER tag appeared 17 times. CHAGEE also cooperates with sports champions, celebrities, and cultural IP to convey the brand characteristics of healthy tea drinks around the themes of health and sugar control.

Secondly, CHAGEE shapes the kernel of the ceremony through brand symbols and cultural images. Under the perspective of ritual, the brand symbols of CHAGEE in Douyin are language and image. CHAGEE has unique brand labels and characteristics in product naming and copywriting, such as "ShanYe ZhiZi", "BoYa Juexian", "Guifu Lanxiang" and other Chinese-Styled flavours. There is also copywriting like "Intangible cultural heritage Kung Fu to the world guests, drink a cup of Wanli Mulan together", which has a Chinese cultural background and expresses the concept of contact with the world. Besides, CHAGEE's Douyin profile picture is the brand logo, the product packaging is also designed in a classical Neo-Chinese style, and the new promotional videos released on Douyin have a distinctive Chinese character as well.

Last but not least, CHAGEE focuses on communication and interaction with consumers. The official Douyin account has a total of 1,581,000 fans, and there are 13 fan groups, 11 of which have reached a full capacity of 500 people. Fan group name followed by brackets to add "live welfare early to know". 12 April 2024 to 14 April, CHAGEE and China National Geographic cooperation to carry out themed live broadcasting, delivering DJI cameras, Polaroid, and other prizes. According to Douyin statistics, the cumulative number of viewers of the three-day broadcast of CHAGEE exceeded 23.61 million. Besides, in the comment area, CHAGEE also set up a comment prize and other activities, such as award-winning commenting on the "CHAGEE, modern oriental tea".

5 Discussion

On the platform of Douyin places emphasis on the transmission of brand culture, which coincides with the "communication is the realization and external form of cultural sharing" mentioned by Carey in the concept of ceremony.

The brand concept of CHAGEE is "CHAGEE TOGETHER", that is, to use the good tea of the East to make friends with the world. This concept is not only a modern interpretation of the essence of oriental tea culture but also a positive practice of cross-cultural communication vision in the context of globalization. At the content creation level, CHAGEE has built a social field connecting the East and the West through the medium of tea, crossing age, and geographical boundaries by continuously using the brand's concept as a tag and embedding it in the text. This strategy not only deepens the awareness and recognition of the brand concept among the target consumers but also promotes the differentiation and uniqueness of the brand image, making it stand out in the highly competitive tea market.

Further, CHAGEE's co-branding with key opinion KOLs, celebrities, and popular IPs is an important part of its brand rejuvenation strategy. This initiative is not only an interpretation of the brand's positioning of "creating value around the rejuvenation of Chinese tea", but also an effective way to modernize and innovatively develop traditional tea culture. As President Junjie Zhang said, "We are committed to exploring the cultural heritage of Chinese tea and integrating it with youthful elements and contexts". Through cross-border cooperation, the ancient tea culture can be widely disseminated and accepted by young people in a more vibrant and relevant way. and acceptance.

CHAGEE should continue to deepen the brand culture narrative and further deepen the cross-border cooperation and IP linkage to enhance the brand influence and broaden the brand communication channels and audience scope. At the same time, while combining young elements, we should also pay attention to the creation of differentiated content, and produce content according to the characteristics and needs of different users.

Language symbols, including spoken language and written language, not only carry the function of information transmission but also profoundly influence cultural identity, branding, and consumer perception. The product naming of CHAGEE is characterized by its strong Chinese style, which is highly compatible with the tone pursued by the brand, and jointly builds a brand image with distinctive cultural characteristics. The core elements of "tea" and "China", as representative symbols of Chinese culture, are cleverly integrated into the product naming, so that when consumers hear these names, they can naturally associate them with the category of new Chinese tea drinks. This naming approach not only enhances the brand's cultural recognition but also stimulates cultural resonance and emotional connection among consumers. Further, these original and Chinese-inspired names are not just simple combinations of words but are also carriers and extensions of the brand's culture. They form a strong brand memory and cognitive association in consumers' minds through the association mechanism of fixation and repetition. Whenever consumers come into contact with these names, they can quickly associate them with CHAGEE and the new Chinese tea culture it represents, thus realizing the ritualized effect of brand communication.

In addition to the ancient style of writing, the texts released by CHAGEE in Douyin are mostly inspirational or warm words that can trigger resonance. For example, "for beyond, more together." In the highly interactive and fragmented communication environment of short video platforms, CHAGEE's texts are more like an instant brand dialogue, they are concise and direct to the heart of the way, one-to-one or one-to-many emotional exchanges with the audience. This dialogue style of communication not only enhances the affinity and accessibility of the brand but also promotes the three-dimensional construction of the brand image. In the interactive behaviors of browsing, liking, and commenting, the audience not only deepens their knowledge and memory of the brand but also gradually forms emotional dependence and loyalty to the brand.

In the process of branding and communication, full attention should be paid to the use of language symbols and innovation, with culture as the soul and symbols as the medium, to shape the ritual core of the brand of CHAGEE. At the same time, attention should be paid to the richness of the use of language symbols, rather than the pursuit of very literary, which should be in a reasonable range of some entertainment creation, to avoid aesthetic boredom.

Image symbols are also an important part of CHAGEE's image-shaping ceremony, from logo to product packaging. These image symbols not only carry the brand's visual identification function but also the visual communication medium of the brand's story and values, which shows a relatively elegant and refined aesthetic orientation. However, in the era of digital communication, relying only on beautiful product promotional videos under the traditional aesthetic framework, although it can highlight the professionalism and high-end of the brand, it may be difficult to reach a wider audience due to the lack of close connection with the public's daily life. From the video traffic data, those videos that cost a lot of money did not gain high popularity either. On the contrary, some unofficial entertainment creations have gained a high level of attention and discussion. Such content is often cleverly integrated into daily life scenarios, touching viewers with light-hearted humor or emotional resonance, thus promoting the wide dissemination and deep penetration of brand messages.

Therefore, for brands such as CHAGEE, diversified paths may be explored in brand image-building and communication strategies in the future. For one thing, maintain the professionalism and rigor of the official account, and continue to output high-quality product information and cultural connotations; for another thing, consider setting up or cooperating to open an account dedicated to fun creations, and through short dramas and other forms, incorporate more grounded elements and creative expressions, to broaden the boundaries of brand communication in a way that is more in line with the psychological needs of consumers, and to enhance the emotional link between the brand and consumers. This will help to enhance the brand's emotional connection with consumers. Such a strategic adjustment not only helps to enhance the brand's market recognition and goodwill, but also stands out in the fierce market competition, and realises the continuous upgrading and deepening of the brand image.

CHAGEE interacts with consumers through the establishment of fan groups, live draws, and interaction in the comments section. In essence, it is a further highlight of "people-oriented". Brand communication is no longer just product marketing, the interaction between people has become the focus. Rituals play a very important role in the interaction process. In short, ritual is an objective set of actions and determinations that is imposed on individual selves to situate them within the field of the social. Well-planned media rituals can be effective in stimulating emotional resonance, strengthening social solidarity, creating shared values, and promoting coherence in collective action.

CHAGEE has been culturally rendered through the content posted on Douyin, which strengthens the audience's recognition of the brand. In response, the audience spontaneously discusses and searches for relevant information through these contents, forming interesting groups with the same hobbies and the same topics. The sense of ritual and strong resonance of topics delivered by the brand is an important part of promoting this bond, and at the same time, these spontaneous discussions and dissemination further promote the expansion of the brand's influence.

In order to promote positive interaction between brands and consumers to achieve better communication results, it is necessary to fully understand the needs of consumers, give full play to their initiative, and encourage them to make further eye creations and think out of the box on the basis of the ritual content released by the brand's account. At the same time, brands also need to pay attention to the control of the online interaction process, fully explore the current positive emotional value, in the creation of the brand, to achieve a long-term bond between the brand and consumers.

6 Conclusion

This study delves into the communication strategy of CHAGEE, a Neo-Chinese-Styled tea drink brand on Douyin, especially analyzing how it effectively uses the short video platform to convey its brand culture, establish an emotional connection with consumers, and achieve sustainable development from a ritualistic viewpoint. Through qualitative research methods and content analysis, the study analyzed in detail CHAGEE's 189 works on Douyin and found that its success is mainly attributed to the following aspects:

Effective communication of brand culture: CHAGEE has successfully conveyed its brand culture and the concept of healthy tea drink to consumers through its brand slogan "#CHAGEE TOGETHER" as well as its cooperation with celebrities and cultural IPs. This strategy not only strengthens the brand's uniqueness and recognition but also promotes its global recognition and acceptance. Firstly, CHAGEE shaped the brand's ritual core through unique linguistic symbols and visual branding elements, such as product naming with Chinese style and culturally rich copywriting. This ritualized display not only enhances the brand's cultural heritage, but also stimulates consumers' cultural resonance and emotional connection, further consolidating brand loyalty. Secondly, CHAGEE emphasizes interaction with consumers and greatly enhances their sense of participation and belonging by setting up fan groups, organizing live draws, and commenting on interactive activities. These interactive behaviors not only promote the wide dissemination of brand information but also enhance consumers' emotional dependence and loyalty to the brand.

To sum up, CHAGEE's successful communication strategy on Douyin is attributed to its effective ritualized communication, deep cultural narrative, and active consumer interaction. These strategies have not only won CHAGEE wide market recognition and good brand image, but also provided valuable reference and inspiration for other new Chinese tea beverage brands. In the future, with the constant changes and development of the new media environment, how to better integrate the concept of rituals into brand communication strategies in order to realize benign communication and sustainable development of the brand will be an important topic worthy of further exploration and research.

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