

The Construction Mechanism of Brand Identity in Mixue Bingcheng

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Abstract. In the context of social media gradually dominating the communication environment, the formation of brand identity presents new features. Compared with the previous mode of relying on advertising and one-way information transmission, the role of user participation and content co-creation in brand communication is becoming more and more obvious. Focusing on the case of Mixue Bingcheng, it can be observed that it has formed a special propagation path in the combination of network memes and surrounding products. Based on the theory of participatory culture, brand community and social identity, after combing the relevant content, it can be found that the formation of brand identity is often not caused by a single factor, but gradually accumulates between user re-creation, platform distribution and real consumption. The meme content is constantly imitated and expanded in the process of communication, and the surrounding products transform these symbols into visible expressions in reality to a certain extent. The linkage between the two makes the brand gradually shift from a commodity provider to a symbol carrier with cultural attributes. The correlation analysis is helpful to understand the formation logic of brand identity in the digital context and provide reference for brand communication practice.

1 Introduction

In recent years, with the popularity of social media platforms, brand communication has gradually shifted from traditional media to interactive platforms. In this process, the path of information dissemination is no longer unidirectional, but is constantly reconstructed through user participation. Consumers are no longer passive recipients but active participants in content circulation, engaging in processes of forwarding, imitation and re-creation, which reflects the logic of participatory culture, so that brand information can be re-understood in different contexts [1].

In this change, online memes have gradually become a common form of communication. Because of its simple structure and easy imitation, memes tend to achieve rapid attention due to their high replicability and adaptability in digital environments [2]. At the same time, as a kind of physical carrier, brand peripheral products also begin to bear the symbolic significance beyond the function. When the two appear in the same communication process, the formation path of brand identity presents more complex characteristics.

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Mixue has a certain representativeness in this regard. Around its 'Snow King' image and related music content, continuous user re-creation can be observed on multiple platforms. At the same time, the display frequency of related peripheral products in real life has gradually increased. These phenomena show that brand communication has been embedded in the daily expression of users to a certain extent. Therefore, from the perspective of integration, it is of certain research significance to analyze its brand identity construction mechanism.

Given the context above, this paper takes Mixue Bingcheng as a specific case to examine how its brand identity takes shape within today's social media environment. The analysis follows a case-study approach and draws on theories of participatory culture, brand community, and social identity. It traces the path from user participation to meme diffusion and symbolic transformation, looking closely at how the "Snow King" image, the brand's theme song, and its merchandise have been circulated and reinterpreted. The goal is to understand how brand identity gradually emerges from user-driven content creation and everyday interactions, and to explore the interplay between online memes and physical products in shaping brand recognition. In doing so, the paper hopes to offer both theoretical insights and practical guidance for brand communication in the digital age.

2 Mixue Bingcheng's case and target group

Mixue Bingcheng originated in 1997 and was originally founded in Zhengzhou, Henan Province. After years of development, its business scope has gradually expanded from single drink sales to the research and development and production of ready-made drinks, ice cream and upstream raw materials. It also covers many links such as brand operation, forming a relatively complete industrial chain structure. From the perspective of market performance, Mixue Bingcheng has opened 20,000 offline stores nationwide with a lower price strategy and a wide range of store layout. Its consumer groups are mainly concentrated in young people and student groups [3]. This group uses social media frequently in daily life, has a higher acceptance of entertainment content, and is more likely to participate in interactive communication.

Through the accumulation of experience in the early stage of operation, Mixue Bingcheng added a specific 'Snow King' image to its brand system in the later stage. In the practice of communication, Mixue has gradually formed a more unified visual symbol by continuously strengthening the image of 'Snow King' ip. Then, in June 2021, the source song of 'You love me, I love you, Mixue Bingcheng Sweet', the theme song of 'Mixue Bingcheng Sweet', was born with the image of Snow King IP, and the official Chinese-English bilingual theme song MV exceeded 10 million playback. Bilibili's Up owners who are good at second creation also created a large number of second-creation videos. At one time, local dialect versions and national language versions emerged one after another. Image symbols and mv materials were repeatedly used by users in Douyin, Bilibili and Xiaohongshu. The second-creation videos about Snow King on Bilibili have a total of more than 60 million broadcasts. The spread of this content on social media makes the image of Snow King become an important symbol to identify the brand to a certain extent. At the same time, the surrounding products such as dude and cup developed around the image of Snow King extend the relevant content from online to offline [4]. The total video playback with similar labels around Snow King on Tik Tok has reached an astonishing 1.7 billion +. Taking a recent Snow King joint name activity as an example, on December 19, 2025, in order to welcome the Year of the Horse in 2026, Mixue Bingcheng launched a series of marketing activities for the legacy of Tang Sancai "Snow King." This activity launched a series of surrounding objects with Chinese traditional cultural connotation and positive implication. In this marketing activity, the total interaction volume of the topic of 'Tang Sancai' came to 354.85 million, and then the user-generated

content achieved an overwhelming result in the dissemination volume of this activity, accounting for 95.28 % [5].

Through this example and overall observation, it can be found that the spread of Mixue Bingcheng does not rely entirely on traditional advertising, but more on the spontaneous generation of content by users to participate in the spread of the relevant Snow King image, and not only on the spread of this image, but also on the spread of actual surrounding objects. This way of communication makes it easier for brands to integrate into the context of daily life, and also provides a basis for the formation and circulation of subsequent brand identity.

3 Brand identity construction mechanism of Mixue Bingcheng

3.1 The generation and re-creation of memetic content

The brand identity of Mixue is not pre-defined and passively accepted by consumers, but is gradually constructed through continuous imitation and adaptation by users, which reflects the co-production logic emphasized in participatory culture [1]. The content around the image of 'Snow King' and the theme song is clear in structure and simple in rhythm, which is also an important reason why the theme song of Snow King is easy to be transformed into different versions. The logic of mentioning the meaning of users' co-production in participatory culture is that this cultural image is easy to recreate [1]. Therefore, the reason why dialect version, campus version and mixed clip video are easily spread quickly is that they follow this underlying logic. Relevant research also points out that memes are easy to spread largely because they are replicable [2, 4]. Therefore, in 2018, Snow King ip was launched. This image, which is mellow in shape, witty in expression and in line with the aesthetic tendency of young people to 'cute' things, quickly won the favor and love of the audience, followed by a variety of users' creations on the theme songs of Snow King and Mixue Bingcheng.

3.2 Platform distribution and propagation amplification

If user re-creation is the starting point, then the platform mechanism is the key to amplifying dissemination. In the short video platform, the content of high interaction, high stay and high replication is more likely to be recommended, and the image of Snow King in Mixue and the meme composition of the theme song are in line with this feature. The more easily recommended content is often those that are easily imitated, and the easier it is to enter the next round of diffusion [6]. Through the amplification of social media platform mechanisms such as Douyin, Kuaishou and Bilibili, the interesting short videos of 'Snow King', including 'Snow King' imitating popular dances and participating in various challenges, have triggered a large number of retweets and imitations by netizens. These unified Mixue Bingcheng theme music, repeated similar movements and fixed brand elements continue to appear, so that the audience has formed a stable memory of the Mixue Bingcheng brand and the image of snow king. In the comment area of all kinds of videos, the common words such as " brainwashed " and " brushed again " also show that this kind of content is not only individual viewing, but also forming common experience [2].

3.3 Symbolic transformation of peripheral products

When these online content accumulates to a certain extent, communication begins to enter the real consumption scene. The dolls, cups and co-branded products developed around 'Snow King' have turned symbols that originally existed in the network into physical objects that can be placed, photographed and displayed. According to the brand information released

by Mixue, the official Snow King perimeter was officially launched as early as 2020, and the official flagship store also landed on the e-commerce platform in the same year, indicating that the brand has long been trying to transform 'Snow King' from a communication symbol into a physical product that can be purchased [7]. At the same time, it also shows that the theme song will be popular in 2021, and the network broadcast will reach 9.5 billion times, which also means that the brand has already had a strong foundation for symbol extension after completing high-frequency communication. The official page also makes it clear that the surrounding products are becoming one of the important growth engines of Mixue which is used to enhance the emotional connection with consumers.

From the perspective of real stores, the surrounding products are not separate accessories, but are incorporated into a more complete consumer experience. In the flagship store of Zhengzhou Headquarters, the income proportion of Snow King's cultural and creative products has exceeded 80 %, indicating that the commercial value of the surrounding in specific stores is not lower than the beverage itself [8]. From the perspective of consumers' use, the more important function of such products is not daily practicality, but display and recognition. Many people buy the surroundings because they can be placed in dormitories, on desks and in office spaces, be seen, discussed and photographed. This kind of consumption behavior is consistent with the logic of group belonging emphasized by social identity theory, because individuals will confirm whether they belong to a group by sharing symbols. Brand community theory can also explain this phenomenon, because these peripheral products are not only commodities, but also specific carriers of common memory, common discourse and common identity.

3.4 The formation and intervention boundary of brand identity

Combining the above three points, the brand identity of Mixue is gradually formed in the interaction of multiple links. Users recreate around 'Snow King', so that the brand content is continuously copied and extended, and the platform's recommendation mechanism further amplifies this process, so that some memes are continuously exposed [6]. When these symbols accumulate to a certain extent in the dissemination, the surrounding products transform them into physical forms that can be held and displayed, bringing cultural expressions that originally stayed online into the real scene [7]. In this process, the brand gradually changes from the publisher of information to the provider of symbolic resources, while users strengthen their sense of identity with the brand in continuous participation [1]. This circular structure composed of 're-creation-amplification-materialization' enables brand identity to continue to extend in different media and situations. However, this mechanism is not established in all situations. It is not necessarily successful as long as there is a meme and a periphery product. Instead, it needs to be less involved in this communication and provide a certain space for users to create so that the mechanism is easier to succeed [9].

4 Optimization strategy

Combined with the previous analysis, it can be seen that the spread of Mixue does not rely on a single means, but forms an interactive relationship between meme content, platform mechanism and peripheral products. Therefore, in the subsequent optimization, instead of simply amplifying a certain link, it is better to adjust around this overall process to make the connection between the parts more stable.

From the perspective of content, brands need to consciously retain re-creation space when designing communication materials. The existing cases show that the reason why the image of 'Snow King' and the theme song can continue to spread is not because the expression is complete enough, but because the structure is relatively simple and easy for users to adapt in

different situations. This "unfinished" state is more likely to stimulate participatory behavior and is more in line with the meaning-building process emphasized in participatory culture [1]. If the content is over-packaged at the initial stage, the space that users can participate in is compressed, and the propagation is often difficult to sustain. Thus, in the follow-up communication, providing more open material forms, such as standardized movements, fixed melodies or visual templates, can be considered so that users can extend on this basis.

At the platform level, there are obvious differences in the communication logic of different platforms, and the way of content delivery needs to be adjusted accordingly. The short video platform emphasizes more rhythm and repetition, which is suitable for forming short-term high-frequency exposure, while the graphic platform is more suitable for displaying the use scenarios and life-oriented expressions of peripheral products. If the same content is copied directly to different platforms, it is often difficult to form effective interaction. Relatively speaking, content segmentation based on platform features is more helpful to improve user engagement and stay time [6]. From the actual observation, users pay more attention to the expression itself rather than the official information of the brand when participating in the communication, which is also consistent with the interactive relationship emphasized in the brand community theory [10]. Therefore, in the process of operation, users can be guided to participate continuously through interaction in the comment area, second-creation collection or offline activities, rather than relying only on one-way output.

In terms of peripheral products, its role should not only be understood as a sales supplement, but should be regarded as an important medium to connect online content with the real situation. The dolls and co-branded products developed around 'Snow King' enable the symbols that originally stayed in the network to enter daily life and be displayed and re-spread in specific scenes. From the perspective of social identity, when individuals use these symbols, they are often expressing a certain group affiliation, rather than just completing a consumption behaviour [11]. Consequently, in the design of the perimeter, more consideration can be given to its visibility in the real space, such as whether it is suitable for display, photographing or social display, rather than only emphasizing functional attributes. Studies have also pointed out that products with cultural symbolic meanings are more likely to have a sustained impact in communication [4].

Further, the brand also needs to establish a more realistic evaluation method. In the past, marketing often used sales or clicks as the main indicator, but in the process of meme transmission, such indicators are difficult to fully reflect the changes in brand identity. For example, the number of users' second creations, the frequency of comment interaction, and the appearance of the surrounding in the social scene can all reflect the communication effect to a certain extent. Relevant marketing reports also show that some activities with cultural attributes may not be directly converted into sales in the short term, but can significantly enhance brand attention and memory [5]. Hence, in the evaluation system, content participation and long-term brand identity can be used as supplementary indicators, which can be used together with traditional data.

It should be noted that this propagation path is not completely replicable. The differences in audience structure, content basis and platform environment of different brands will affect the actual effect of the mechanism. The scope conditions in the case study suggest that the research conclusions usually depend on the specific situation and cannot be simply extended to all brands [9]. Therefore, in practical applications, a more appropriate way is to use it as a reference framework and adjust it according to its own conditions, rather than directly applying the existing model.

5 Conclusion

In the information dissemination environment dominated by social media, the brand identity of Mixue does not rely on a single marketing strategy, but is gradually formed under the joint action of multiple elements. Around the image of 'Snow King' and related content, a circular mechanism composed of meme transmission, user re-creation and peripheral products can be observed. The meme content is continuously imitated and expanded in the platform, so that the brand symbols are continuously exposed, while the peripheral products transform these symbols into visible expressions in reality, further strengthening their sense of existence in daily life. With the continuous participation of users in re-creation and display behavior, the brand has gradually shifted from a commodity provider to a symbol carrier with cultural attributes, which plays a key role in the process of brand identity construction.

From a theoretical perspective, the correlation analysis integrates the perspectives of participatory culture, brand community and social identity, and further explains how digital content and physical symbols interact in the same communication process. Compared with the research that only focuses on the effect of communication, this perspective emphasizes the process characteristics of identity formation. From a practical point of view, research shows that brands need to retain a certain amount of expression space for users in the process of communication, and maintain an interactive relationship with symbolic products through content that can be recreated.

It should be noted that this study is based on a single case, the sample range is relatively limited, and there is a lack of quantitative analysis of sales transformation, so the conclusions still need to be cautious when extrapolated. Subsequent research can be compared in different brands and platform environments, and combined with questionnaires or experimental methods to further test the relationship between meme transmission and brand identity, so as to improve the robustness of the conclusions.

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