

## The Localization Strategy of Promotion of Coca Cola Company

The advent of globalization provides a good opportunity for multinational companies to explore the foreign market. However, these companies also confront a great challenge that how to make foreign countries accept their companies and attract foreign consumers to purchase their products. Inevitably, multinational companies need adapt to the local market by learning about local conditions from various aspects and achieving overall localization of their brands. Localization refers to a series of brand management strategies adopted by international companies to meet the unique market demands, which is determined by the aiming market's special cultural context (Yu 280). In 1979, Coca Cola Company entered Chinese market. Confronting different market situation and cultural context, its business developmental strategy was gradually converted from standardization to localization in order to deal with cultural conflicts and achieve cultural adaptation. To attract more Chinese consumers, Coca Cola Company has make efforts to launch appropriate advertisements to impress consumers and deal with public relationship to establish a good corporate image. Their localization strategies of promotion are largely influenced by values of Chinese consumers and characteristics of Chinese society.

### The localization strategy of advertisements and analysis with Schwartz's Value Types

Originally, almost in all advertisements, Coca Cola Company relates the product with happiness, conveying the same brand message to customers in all countries that drinking cola creates a feeling of great pleasure. Bryant points out that satisfaction or festivity is the common theme in Coca cola's advertisement (46). And other researchers further argue that "Coca Cola uses the same theme across the world but customizes it to specific regions by taking the region's culture into consideration." Themes like 'Share a Coke' and 'open

happiness' remain global, however the communication aspect varies across regions" (Saraf et al. 2). Without exception, Coca cola's advertisements in China also convey this brand message that cola brings happiness to consumers, but they try to express the theme in a way which can be acceptable in China and have launched a series of unique advertisements according to the distinctive social-cultural situation.

First of all, Coca Cola's advertisements connect happiness with traditional festival. Since 1999, Coca Cola Company has launched a series of New Year advertisements to celebrate Spring Festival. Some traditional symbols that Chinese admire such as dragon, paper-cutting and mascots, and Chinese folklore such as pasting couplets, playing firework can be noticed in the advertisements. Also, the setting of these advertisements of Spring Festival celebration is usually a family where all family members reunite, celebrate the important traditional festival and enjoy happiness together in a warm and peaceful atmosphere. Correspondingly, slogans are also changed into some phrases that highlight the importance of family reunion, such as "Nothing can be comparable to returning home" and "Reunion tastes like cola". By launching such advertisements, Coca Cola Company defines happiness as celebration of traditional festival, company of family members and harmonious family relationship. In addition, successful celebrities including famous athletes and popular singers, also appear in Coca cola advertisement as representatives of fame and wealth. These people usually seem content and satisfied when drinking cola.

Coca cola's advertising is successful in catching Chinese consumers eyes and arousing empathy in their mind, because the information disseminated by the advertisements is consistent with Chinese's values. Feng has done a research to find out the configuration of Chinese values by using Schwartz's Value Types. She found that Chinese tend to prefer the value of conservation including tradition, conformity and security, and the value of

self-enhancement including achievement and power (399-400). First, one aspect of Chinese's values is tradition, which is an integral part of Chinese culture. Chinese value the past, respect and comply with ancient customs. So when Coca cola is related to Chinese traditional festivals, it is much closer to Chinese consumers and triggers empathy with Chinese. Also, the value of tradition is intimately related with the value of conformity. Respecting the traditional customs that returning home and keeping parents company in Spring Festival are widely-acknowledged social norms in China. Chinese people tend to obey these long-established norms instead of doing something special. The scene of celebrating Spring Festival within a family showed in Coca cola's advertisements conforms to these social norms. Moreover, harmonious family atmosphere and good family relationships in these advertisements further move Chinese, since security is another aspect of Chinese value. Chinese pursue the stability in interpersonal relationship and the harmony of family relationship, because good relations can give them sense of safety while any disagreement or confrontation that may violate the good relations make Chinese uncomfortable. Coca cola advertisements with harmonious atmosphere indicate that cola can contribute to establish harmonious interpersonal relationships. Lastly, Chinese would like to pursue achievements and appreciate people with great achievements. So celebrity endorsement makes use of Chinese's admiration for achievements, indicating that successful people would like to enjoy the jollity brought by cola. Chinese audience will have the desire to enjoy such kind of happiness.

Via advertising based on Chinese values, Coca Cola Company redefines the central brand message, "happiness" it brings to customers. Happiness is celebrating traditional festivals, enjoying family reunite and sustaining harmony, which is consistent with Chinese's concept of happiness. Happiness is pursuit something better and improving ourselves. Therefore, Coca cola's advertising is a good combination of the company's brand message

and Chinese consumers' values.

## The localization strategy of public relationships and Analysis with Hofstede's Dimensions of Cultural Variability

Another method of localizing the company is taking positive attitudes towards public relationships. Coca Cola Company engages in maintaining good relationships with other social parts such as government and citizens to establish a good corporation image in the community.

First of all, Coca Cola Company keeps an eye on social events that the public are concerned with. For example, it sponsored Beijing Olympic Game and launched related new products. And it positively responded to the Western Development Strategy, increasing its investment in the western area. These behaviors indicate Coca Cola Company is a member of the society who are proud of what the public are proud of and who can contribute to China economic development. Furthermore, the company tries to shoulder social responsibilities by engaging in public welfare programs to address social problems. In the poverty-stricken areas, Coca Cola Company helps local people to enhance their living standard by improving local education, water safety and rights of female. Besides, Coca Cola Company issues a report of sustainable development per year to summarize what they have done to promote the sustainability of community development, to protect the environment and to maintain the harmony between human and nature.

These localization strategies are consistent with the characteristics of Chinese society so that Coca Cola Company has been wildly accepted by Chinese. The website, Clearly Cultural, has published five numbers of Hofstede's Dimensions of Cultural Variability of China. Reflected by the minimum, twenty out of 120, in the dimension of "Individualism" and the maximum, 118 out of 120, in the dimension of "Long-term oriented", China is a typical collectivism and long-term oriented society. "In the collectivistic model, the self

cannot be separated from others and the surrounding social context, so the self is an interdependent entity that is part of an encompassing social relationship” (De Mooji and Hofstede 91). So in China, individuals usually have a strong sense of belonging. They believe that they need to interact and keep a relationship with others, and they should contribute to the development of the whole group which they belong to. Correspondingly, Coca Cola Company doesn’t do nothing but making money for its own benefit. Instead, it makes contribution to benefit the public and the whole society. In this way, Chinese do not regard Coca cola as a selfish and greedy merchant but a member of Chinese society. A good company image is established and good social relationships are maintained. As a result, Coca coal company adapts to the society and integrates in the society. In addition, long-term orientation “stands for the foresting of virtues oriented towards future rewards” (Hofstede 359). In a long-term oriented society, people can exhibit a pragmatic future-orientated perspective rather than a short-term point of view. Although Coca Cola Company cannot immediately benefit from the investment in social welfare programs and protection of environment, good corporation image and established social relationships are advantageous to the company’s further development. What the company concerns about is how to allow the company developing permanently, instead of only making immediate profit.

By clearly realizing the distinctive characteristics of Chinese society, Coca Cola Company tries to take social responsibilities and keep good public relationships in this society with collectivism and long-term orientation, so that coca cola has been mainstreamed in China.

In conclusion, Coca Cola Company to some extent insists in some original management ideas, such as the brand message, but it makes more efforts of localization as it seeks to achieve the ultimate goal of globalization. “As a company’s success in new markets is largely dependent on knowledge of the market and its ability to reach audiences with different

standards and beliefs, Coca-Cola's success makes it a good company to research when considering how advertising and culture interact to create product success" (Bryant 44). From the advertising strategies to the methods of dealing with social relationships, Coca Cola Company adjusts its strategies according to features of Chinese people and society. Therefore, if an international company is committed to sell its products worldwide and become competitive in global market, only providing standardized goods and adopting identical strategies are not adequate. Instead, developing overall strategies of localization on the basis of thorough learning about the culture of the target market is indispensable.

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