

Analysis of Marketing Strategies in Collaboration between HEYTEA and Otome Games

Zixuan Jin *

Shanghai Southwest Weiyu Middle School - Int'l division, 200233 Shanghai, China

* Corresponding Author Email: Zj2521@nyu.edu

Abstract. In today's fiercely competitive market environment, brand collaboration has become an important strategy to attract consumer attention. HEYTEA and Otome Games, as leading brands in their respective fields, have successfully conducted joint marketing activities, bringing more attention and recognition to both parties. This paper analyzes and compares the joint marketing strategies of HEYTEA and Otome Games to explore the reasons for their success and the implementation effects of marketing strategies. The analysis focuses on the joint marketing strategy of HEYTEA, a Chinese tea brand, and Otome Games, targeting a specific audience and its impact on them. It begins with an introduction to the brand backgrounds of HEYTEA and Otome Games, followed by an analysis of their product and brand culture, joint marketing strategies, and their significance and impact. Through the analysis of this study, it can be found that joint marketing is an effective brand promotion strategy that can enhance brand influence and competitiveness. Meanwhile, when brands choose joint cooperation partners and design joint products, they need to fully consider the needs of the target audience and the consistency of brand image to achieve better marketing results.

Keywords: Marketing strategies; brand collaboration; HEYTEA; Otome Games.

1. Introduction

The tea beverage industry in China is currently in the stage of new-style tea beverages. Represented by brands like HEYTEA and Nayuki, the industry is gradually moving towards standardization and high-endization, with freshly made tea beverages as the main focus. These brands have attracted a large number of young consumers' attention and love through innovative product development, high-quality raw material selection, and unique brand shaping. HEYTEA holds a significant position in the Chinese tea beverage market, belonging to the high-end segment of the new-style tea beverage market in China. According to HEYTEA's 10th-anniversary report, HEYTEA has expanded to 83 cities globally, with a membership base exceeding 63 million. Among them, the highest daily sales of the first store in 2022 reached an astonishing 5,400 cups, demonstrating its strong market appeal and consumer base. Additionally, during the Spring Festival in 2024, HEYTEA's sales performance was robust, with a growth rate exceeding 300%, and new store sales booming, further proving HEYTEA's strong momentum in the market. With the rapid emergence of many new items in the consumer market, brand competition is becoming more and more fierce. This situation makes it difficult for traditional marketing strategies to make brands gain more profits. This motivates brands to find new marketing strategies. Nowadays, many brands try the strategy of co-branding to increase the sales of their products. Because brand partnerships enable them to open up a unique competitive advantage in a highly competitive market, retain loyal customers and attract new customers [1]. As a new marketing means, cross-border co-branding has become a password for some brands to break the circle. Some brands are keen on cross-border co-branding in order to break the boundary of differentiation, detonate consumer sentiment through IP, and then stimulate consumption. Chongqing Fuling Mustard products Wujiang mustard and B station official announcement joint, jointly released "together, just really sweet" creative video, and launched Wujiang and B station joint mustard. The cooperation between Luckin Coffee and Kweichow Moutai has made "Have you drunk the sauce latte" a greeting. In order to meet consumer needs and changes in consumption scenarios, brand co-branding has adopted a younger brand positioning. "Young people's first cup of Moutai" and other marketing slogans lock the product positioning in the market segment of young consumer groups,



aiming to attract more young consumer groups, which not only satisfies the curiosity of young people for new things, but also provides a different new product to choose from. In the new tea industry, cross-border joint branding is a normal marketing means. A "hot pot toothpaste" jointly launched by Dengkang's Cold Acid Ling toothpaste and Xiaolong Kan has become popular on the Internet. The products were pre-sold on the e-commerce platform, and the first batch of 4,000 pieces sold out within half a day - Chongqing's time-honored toothpaste brand tasted the sweetness in its cross-border attempt. Consumers care most about the product itself. Cross-border co-branding is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it helps to enhance brand attention, especially for time-honored brands, which can attract the attention of young people. But on the other hand, many co-branded products are also a flash in the pan, how to continue to attract and retain consumers, especially young groups, is the biggest problem facing cross-border co-branding brands [2, 3]. The joint marketing campaign between HEYTEA and the otome game "Love and Producer" achieved significant sales results. Otome Games target female players and are particularly popular among young female players. The joint marketing strategy of the two integrates tea culture and game culture, aiming to attract more consumers' attention and participation. Through clever joint design, HEYTEA successfully attracted a large number of otome game players and tea enthusiasts, further expanding the brand's market share [1, 2]. This article will analyze the case of the joint name of Hicha and Otome Games and extend the analysis of the joint name strategy. Based on the sales data of happy tea published on the news and the feedback of many netizens on this activity, this research reached a conclusion. This case is the joint name of tea brand and Otome Games. Different from the product, there is a stronger emotional link between Otome Games and the customer, which makes this joint name different. Through this case study, we will explore a very specific co-branding combination that will provide inspiration for future co-branding strategies.

2. Case Study

2.1. Introduction of HEYTEA

HEYTEA, full name HEYTEA, is a new-style tea beverage brand originating from China, headquartered in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province. HEYTEA originated from a small alley in Jiangmen City, Guangdong Province, in 2012. HEYTEA, a unique brand in the tea beverage field, has become a favorite among young people. Its success is not accidental but the result of a series of carefully planned brand strategies, analyzed as follows:

Consumer-Centric Product Strategy: HEYTEA knows that products are the cornerstone of brand development, so it always adheres to a consumer-centric product strategy. Its pursuit of tea taste has reached almost demanding levels. To meet the diverse and personalized tea beverage needs of young consumers, HEYTEA continuously explores various tea leaf combinations and innovatively introduces various flavors such as cheese tea and fruit tea [3]. In addition, HEYTEA also pays attention to the design and texture of product packaging to attract consumers and enhance brand recognition.

2.2. Brand Culture Shaping and Communication

HEYTEA attaches great importance to brand culture shaping and communication. It takes "love, vitality, and sharing" as its core values and interacts with consumers through various channels and forms to convey brand concepts. For example, HEYTEA actively interacts with consumers on social media platforms, regularly releases new product information and tea knowledge to increase consumers' awareness and favorability towards the brand. Additionally, HEYTEA collaborates with major trendy cultural IPs, such as limited-edition merchandise and joint signature tea beverages, to further bridge the gap with young consumers. Since 2017, HEYTEA has entered a rapid development stage, expanding rapidly not only in mainland China but also gradually entering the international market, becoming a premium milk tea brand in the eyes of overseas consumers. Its products feature various series such as original tea, fruit tea, and cheese tea, with each product undergoing strict quality

control and continuous innovation, aiming to provide consumers with the freshest, most delicious, and healthiest milk tea experience. Otome Games, full name Otome Games, is a type of love simulation game targeting a female audience. Players can romance multiple characters through the game's storyline, with the romance targets typically being male characters. Otome Games not only provide exquisite "card faces" for visual stimulation but also gain popularity among players due to their high interactivity in gameplay and emotional sense of romance. It originated in Japan and has become one of the beloved subcultures, forming its unique national otome culture after entering China. Currently, "Love and Producer" by Papergames, "Love and Producer" by Tencent, "Travelers of Time and Space" by NetEase, and "Unscheduled Events Log" by miHoYo are known as the four major otome games in China.

3. Analysis of Joint Marketing Process

3.1. Joint Activity Content

In the joint activity in 2024, HEYTEA chose White Valentine's Day, a festival related to romance, to launch the activity, inviting game players to a romantic rendezvous. HEYTEA introduced limited-edition packaged beverages and presented joint character transparent cards, joint certificates, and other peripheral gifts. These peripheral designs cleverly integrated the daily habits of game players, triggering players' enthusiastic purchasing desires. In addition, HEYTEA actively promoted the activity on social media platforms, set up check-in stores, and further increased the exposure and participation of the activity [4]. The joint beverages all adopted white customized cups with character images and names displayed on the cup body, while the customized hollow cup sleeves combined with gold stamping craftsmanship further reflected an elegant and solemn feeling like a pledge. In addition, HEYTEA simultaneously launched White Valentine's Day-themed joint paper bags and insulated bags featuring the formal attire of the characters, creating a more complete experience of joint beverages. Among them, the peripheral transparent cards present the five characters of "Love and Producer" dressed in suits and holding HEYTEA beverages, with blank DIY positions reserved for group photos. Players can take "photos" with the characters by taking photos with the transparent cards or pasting photos. The joint certificates are designed based on the concept of card envelopes in the game, and when opened, not only can the name be filled in the "recipient" blank, but the joint transparent card can also be placed in the storage area, creating a sense of "oath-making" ceremony beyond dimensions. During the event, consumers who purchased packages on the HEYTEA GO WeChat mini-program could also share the limited White Valentine's Day-themed WeChat statuses, deepening the immersion of "joyful romance." According to Weibo's hot search data, this joint activity garnered a staggering 200 million reads and 70,000 discussions, indicating its popularity. The two joint beverages, "Ganyu · Lingering Fairy Cheese" and "Shenhe · Double Pomelo Fairy Dew," launched by HEYTEA in cooperation with the popular game characters Ganyu, Shenhe, and Liuyun, sold nearly 3 million cups within just three days of their release. The highest daily sales of a single store even exceeded 3,600 cups, becoming the summer's hit product at that time. AiMedia Consulting data shows that Chinese new-style tea beverages are mostly consumed by female consumers, accounting for 68.5%, of which 22-40-year-old young consumers account for 86% [5]. This group of customers is not only heavy users of new tea beverages but also deeply engaged users of romantic interaction games, with extremely strong stickiness and consumption willingness. This achievement not only reflects HEYTEA's strong brand influence but also demonstrates the huge appeal of otome games among female consumers.

3.2. Comparison of Joint Marketing Strategies

Target Audience: There is a certain difference in the target audience between HEYTEA and Otome Games. HEYTEA mainly targets young consumers, while Otome Games primarily target female players. Through joint activities, the two successfully combined tea culture and game culture, achieving cross-border attraction to the audience. **Brand Image and Cultural Communication:**

HEYTEA emphasizes core values such as "love, vitality, and sharing" through brand culture shaping and social media interaction, establishing a closer connection with consumers. Otome Games focuses on understanding and resonating with players' emotions, considering game characters as companions in consumers' growth journey, providing emotional value. Through joint activities, both successfully conveyed their respective brand's core concepts, deepening consumers' awareness and favorability towards the brand. Joint Product Design and Marketing Channels: In terms of joint product design, HEYTEA and Otome Games jointly designed limited-edition packaged beverages and presented exquisite peripheral gifts. These peripheral gifts not only reflect the joint characteristics of the two brands but also meet consumers' demands for personalization and emotional value. In terms of marketing channels, both parties exerted efforts online and offline, attracting more consumers to participate and pay attention through social media promotion and store check-in activities.

3.3. A Number of Joint Marketing Cases of Happy Tea

First co-branding helped Hicha gain traffic in different regions and quickly enter new markets. In addition to the joint name of this tea and B Tour, there are many joint cases of tea. For example, the joint name of a popular tea brand. Hitea cooperates with many fashion brands such as Adidas and Hiroshi Fujiwara. These co-branded products not only integrate the brand characteristics of both sides, but also stimulate consumers' desire to buy through limited sales and limited time concessions. Through co-branding, Hicha has attracted fans of these fashion brands, thereby expanding its consumer base.

In addition, Hicha is also co-branded with cultural IP, such as Sesame Street, Marvel, etc. These co-branded products incorporate cultural elements into tea drinks, bringing consumers a new experience. By co-naming with Cultural IP, Hecha not only attracts the fans of these IP, but also increases brand awareness and reputation.

Moreover, co-branded marketing not only expands online sales channels but also increases the brand's exposure in the Internet field. It has joint names with Internet companies, such as QQ Music, iQiyi and so on. These joint products usually combine the service features of both parties, such as the joint products of Happy Tea and QQ Music include Green Diamond card discounts, and the joint name of iQiyi offers joint cup sets.

3.4. Co-branding Marketing Strategy

Before the use of co-branded marketing strategies, there are also many companies using marketing strategies to make famous cassolet-branding is often used in marketing. There are many different forms of Co-branding, such as Horizontal co-branding, cooperative branding, Ingredient co-branding, etc. Co-branding can be used in all walks of life. The earliest co-brands appeared in the fashion industry. In 2017, luxury brand Louis Vuitton and fashion brand Supreme collaborated. The joint products created by classic fashion brands and personalized street wear brands have been widely concerned and favored by young people once they were launched. Luxury fashion products enter the mass market through Co-branding. Like H&M and Jimmy Choo. A similar case is McDonald's joint name with Bangtan Boys (BTS Korean boy band). In addition to expanding the consumer base, co-branding has many other functions. Co-branding as a tool to enhance the perceived value of products. HUL co-signed with Disney and used the story of Disney's Rapunzel to make people intuitively feel that the shampoo can make hair more supple. In addition, co-branding can create a database of customers. The United credit Card is a good example. Big Bazaar, Lifestyle, Amazon and ICICI Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, Citibank and other companies jointly launched credit cards. This gives customers access to discounts, new product alerts and other enticing offers, and in exchange, retailers can build customer databases that help them better understand customer preferences [3].

Co-branding has obvious advantages, but at the same time this marketing strategy also has risks. It is possible for brands to be penalized for negative events involving partner brands. For example, Coca-

Cola's partner, NutraSweet, has been linked to brain cancer. As a result, Coca-Cola suffered from a crisis of social trust, resulting in loss of profits.

3.4.1. Strengths.

Brand complementarity: As a young and fashionable tea brand, Hicha co-names with "Love and Producer", a game beloved by young women, to achieve complementarity between brands and jointly attract target consumers.

Innovative marketing strategy: Through cross-border co-branding, Happy Tea and Love and Producer can jointly explore new marketing methods to increase brand exposure and topic.

Strengthen brand image: Through the joint cooperation with "Love and Producer", Hecha can further strengthen its young, fashionable and trendy brand image, enhance brand recognition and reputation.

3.4.2. Weaknesses.

Cooperation risk: There are certain risks in co-branded cooperation with the game, such as the decline of game reputation, user loss, etc., which may have a negative impact on the brand image of Hicha.

Consumer acceptance: Although Love & Producer has a certain audience base in the gaming sector, not all consumers who enjoy tea are players or fans of the game, which can lead to low acceptance of co-branded products.

Single product line: If Happy tea relies too much on the joint products with Love and Producer, it may lead to its product line being too single and lacking diversity, which is difficult to meet the diversified needs of consumers.

3.4.3. Opportunities.

Expanding market share: Through the joint cooperation with Love and Producer, Hecha is able to attract more young female consumers and further expand its share in the tea market.

Increase revenue sources: The launch of co-branded products can bring additional revenue sources for Hicha and improve the company's profitability.

Enhance brand influence: By co-branding with popular games, Hicha can increase its influence on social media and among young consumers, laying the foundation for the long-term growth of the brand.

3.4.4. Threats.

Market competition: The tea market is highly competitive, and other brands may also compete for market share through joint cooperation with popular IP, posing a threat to Hicha [6].

Consumer taste changes: Consumer tastes and needs may change at any time, if the tea can not timely adjust the product strategy to meet the needs of consumers, it may face the risk of market share decline.

Policy changes: The government's regulatory policies on the food industry may change, such as raising food safety standards, restricting advertising, etc., and these changes may have an adverse impact on the operation of Hicha [7].

4. Conclusion

The joint marketing activities of HEYTEA and Otome Games successfully combined tea culture and game culture, attracting more consumer attention and participation, enhancing the brand image and influence of both parties. In the future, HEYTEA and Otome Games can further strengthen brand cooperation, explore more innovative joint marketing strategies, achieve mutual benefits, and jointly promote the continuous development of the brand. Through the comparison and analysis of the joint marketing strategies of HEYTEA and Otome Games, it can be concluded that joint marketing is an effective brand promotion strategy that can help brands attract more consumer attention and participation, enhance brand influence and competitiveness. Meanwhile, when brands choose joint

cooperation partners and design joint products, they need to fully consider the needs of the target audience and the consistency of brand image to achieve better marketing results.

The partnership between HEYTEA and Otome Games is a successful co-marketing strategy that has effectively increased brand awareness and consumer engagement in a highly competitive market. By integrating the unique cultural and product attributes of both brands, the partnership has managed to capture the attention of their common target demographic - young, tech-savvy consumers who are interested in both innovative beverages and interactive, romantic gaming experiences. This case study highlights the potential for cross-industry collaboration not only to boost sales and market share, but also to build deeper emotional connections with consumers.

The success of this joint marketing project highlights several key insights. First, it is essential to understand and align the core values and brand image of the partner entity. HEYTEA and Otome Games effectively leveraged their respective strengths - high quality, stylish tea products and an emotionally engaging game story - to create a compelling and cohesive promotion. Second, the use of limited-edition products and themed marketing materials plays an important role in driving consumer interest and engagement. Finally, the strategic timing around White Day adds a layer of thematic relevance that further enhances its appeal.

Based on the findings of this study, future research could explore several avenues to deepen our understanding of co-marketing strategies and their impact. We can conduct comparative studies across different industries to identify patterns and best practices in cross-industry collaboration. Understanding what works in different situations can provide valuable insights for brands considering similar strategies.

In addition, consumer psychology is also worth our research, in-depth study of consumers' psychological response to joint marketing activities. Research can focus on how emotional engagement with a brand affects the perception and behavior of cooperative brands.

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