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ANALYSIS OF XIAOMI TECHNOLOGY'S BRAND COMMUNICATION
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In the context of ever-increasing global competition, the role of effective marketing communication is growing. This is especially true for brands of electronic products, since the strategy of international branding of digital goods allows to successfully promote the brand in any country, region and city. Facing the constant challenges of the external environment, Xiaomi Corporation is successfully advancing in the Russian market of smartphones and intelligent equipment (IoT). However, there are a number of problems of international communication that require immediate solutions. That is why the purpose of this paper is to analyze the marketing plan of Ingate for Xiaomi Technology in Russia from the perspective of cross-cultural brand communication, taking the current economic situation in Russia, the background of the Russian electronic products sales market, and the background of the Sino-Russian trade cooperation, and to analyze the marketing case from the perspectives of communication means, communication content, cultural adaptability, cultural integration ability, and brand localization by using literature reading and empirical analysis. We also propose improvement measures from four perspectives: setting up a marketing mechanism, improving the accuracy of user profiles, weakening audience resistance, and enriching brand driving force. The project will also provide experience in the industry's marketing communications in Russia and other countries.

Keywords: *Xiaomi, Ingate, Xiaomi Technology, Russia, China, Russia-China cooperation, brand communication, marketing communication, branding, marketing case.*

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В условиях постоянно растущей глобальной конкуренции возрастает роль эффективных маркетинговых коммуникаций. Особенно это актуально для брендов электронной продукции, поскольку стратегия международного брендинга цифровых товаров позволяет успешно продвигать бренд в любой стране, регионе и городе. Сталкиваясь с постоянными вызовами внешней среды, корпорация Хиаоми успешно позиционирует себя на российском рынке смартфонов и умного оборудования (IoT). Однако существует ряд проблем международной коммуникации, которые требуют немедленного решения. Именно поэтому цель данной статьи – анализ маркетингового плана Ingate для Хиаоми Technology в России с точки зрения межкультурной коммуникации бренда и маркетингового кейса с точки зрения средств коммуникации, содержания коммуникации, культурной приспособляемости, способности к культурной интеграции и локализации бренда. Мы также предлагаем меры совершенствования исходя из четырех моментов: создание маркетингового механизма, повышение точности пользовательских профилей, ослабление сопротивления аудитории и укрепление движущей силы бренда. Проект даст возможность получить опыт в области маркетинговых коммуникаций отрасли в России и в других странах.

Ключевые слова: *Xiaomi, Ingate, технология Xiaomi, Россия, Китай, российско-китайское сотрудничество, бренд-коммуникация, маркетинговая коммуникация, брендинг, маркетинговый кейс.*

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Introduction

Global competition is growing year by year, and in order to stand out from competitors and occupy a niche in the market, increase competitiveness and ensure high profitability of business, it is necessary to organize effective marketing communication. In the context of the global digitalization of the economy [Astratova 21 and 22; Kotler, et al. (2017).], the relevance of using marketing tools for brands of electronic products is increasing. One of the key tools is the international branding of digital goods, which in modern conditions is a strategy involving the development of uniform marketing products and packaging, taking into account geographical and cultural specifics. This allows to successfully promoting the brand in any country, region and city [Feoktistova U.A., Romanovich V.K. (2022)].

It should be noted that Xiaomi corporation, which is engaged in the production of smartphones and intelligent equipment on the Internet of Things (IoT) platform, this company focuses its attention on the introduction of innovations and ensuring a high level of service quality and operational efficiency. This allows to adhere to the vision of "Become a friend to your users and the coolest company in their hearts" and the mission of producing quality products at fair prices so that every user's life becomes better thanks to innovative technologies. According to Canalys, Xiaomi's share in the smartphone sales market in the second quarter of 2022 was in 3rd place worldwide. The Xiaomi has also created the world's leading consumer platform At (AI + Internet of Things), to which more than 526.9 million smart devices are connected as of June 30, 2022². Xiaomi products are available in more than 100 countries and regions around the world, including in Russia. In August 2022 Xiaomi corporation was included in the list of the largest companies in the world Fortune Global 500 for the fourth time and took the 266th place in it, which is 72 points higher than in 2021. Xiaomi is also represented in Hang Seng Index, Hang Seng China Enterprises Index, Hang Seng TECH Index and Hang Seng China 50 Index³.

The success of Xiaomi is also due to the fact that thanks to economic globalization, China has become the second economy in the world. As official data⁴ and expert research results [Woetzel, et. al. (2019)] show, the trade volume between Russia and China grew by 29.3% in 2022, reaching a record \$190.271 billion. The latest study on the market situation of household appliances and electronic products in Russia, released by the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China⁵, shows that the volume of the Russian market for home appliances and electronic products exceeded 1.69 trillion rubles in 2018. Among them, audio-video equipment, mainly cell phones, ranked fourth, with a share of 15.3%. This is also indicated by the results of independent studies [Winston Ma. (2017)]. Currently, companies U.S. Ericsson and Nokia have withdrawn from Russia, the Apple payment system is not available. Factors such as cost performance, the brand image of electronic products, and national sentiment have made more Russian nationals favor Chinese electronic technology products. As we have already noted above, Xiaomi Technology's products stand out in a series of competitor products by their superb cost performance and perfect brand ecological chain, becoming the head brand in the Russian cell phone consumer market.

At the same time, as many researchers note, the successful positioning of Chinese brands in other countries, and especially in Russia, depends more on understanding the socio-cultural characteristics of the receiving target audience than on the marketing strategy of the company [Chang Paolong, Cheng Minghua. (2006); Jonas Polfuß. (2020; Morozova V. S., Reunova V. A. (2020); Shuang Yang, et al. (2019); Xing-Song Shi, Wen-Juan Xu (2020); etc.]. Moreover, this issue has been very poorly investigated both in theoretical and practical terms of research. In this regard, the purpose of this study was to analyze the communication phenomenon through the marketing case developed by Ingate for Xiaomi Technology, combining its cultural adaptation, brand communication scene marketing, brand recommendation marketing, and other means, and to propose improvement means.

Materials and methods of research

This paper is written using two methods: literature reading method and empirical analysis method, reviewing data, analyzing existing theoretical results, and finally drawing conclusions.

Literature reading method: The analysis was conducted using an internet search and reading relevant domestic and international journal papers. For marketing strategy, brand communication concept information is to conduct a multi-faceted review, to clarify the relevant basic theory.

Empirical analysis method: Collect and analyze the classic cases of Xiaomi Technology's brand communication in Russia, find some shortcomings in the Russian market and put forward corresponding strategic suggestions.

1 The concept of brand cross-cultural communication and Xiaomi Technology's introduction

As it is well-known, brand cross-cultural communication refers to brand marketing communication activities that take place in two or more different cultural regions. It emphasizes managing cultural differences between buyers and sellers, actively responding and reacting to various cross-cultural conflicts to enhance the market competitiveness of a brand [Kotler, et al. (2017); Subbotina O.A., Sonawane Uppal. (2015); et al].

² Excluding smartphones, laptops and tablets.

³ Source: official website of the company: <https://www.mi.com/ru>

⁴ Data from the General Administration of Customs of China.

⁵ Data from the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China.

There are four main communication methods for brand communication: advertising communication, public relations communication, promotion communication, and interpersonal communication. The same applies to cross-cultural brand communication. Brand cross-cultural communication has the following characteristics. Cross-cultural communication of brands is a series of communication behaviors for the local consumer market, with individual characteristics. With the spread of the Internet, consumers in different countries have the same "audience" identity, so most of the measures of brand cross-cultural communication are universal.

The localized language applied by brands in the process of cross-cultural communication can quickly close the psychological distance between foreign brands and consumers. At the same time, as an international brand, its communication strategy should be reproducible, and the internationalization of language not only maintains the brand's positioning, but also provides a reference for the brand's cross-cultural communication behavior in other countries.

The existing communication media are mainly divided into traditional media, such as radio, TV, newspapers, and magazines, and digital media, mainly developed by Internet technology. The two together provide diverse platforms for brand cross-cultural communication behaviors. At the same time, the birth and application of digital media do not mean a "one-size-fits-all" approach to traditional media. Therefore, the two ones coexist.

We also find similar approaches from other authors [Kotler, et al. (2017); Subbotina O.A., Sonawane Uppal. (2015); et al].

2 Case of Xiaomi Technology contents⁶

Founded in China in April 2010, Xiaomi is a consumer electronics and intelligent manufacturing company with a core focus on smartphones, innovative hardware, and IoT platforms. As of 2018, Xiaomi is in over 80 countries and regions worldwide.

Xiaomi was listed on the Main Board of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on July 9, 2018. Xiaomi is committed to making quality technology from China available to everyone worldwide by removing the middle ground with its Internet model. In the second quarter of 2020, Xiaomi phones reached a 22% market share of the total number of smartphones delivered in Russia.

Take Xiaomi Technology's four series of cell phones as an example, the price range ranges from 5,500 - 60,000 rubles, which can cover different levels and ages of consumers, with high product cost performance and low price threshold. In response to the situation that cell phones can become feverish and overheated when used for too long, Xiaomi has developed cost-effective consumer fever terminals. Using network channels effectively saves sales costs, and its precise brand positioning and high-cost performance make Xiaomi Technology hold a particular market share.

Xiaomi cell phones officially entered the Russian market in 2016, and in February 2017, Xiaomi's share of the Russian smartphone market reached 2.7%, with its cost-effective features attracting consumer recognition and favor. In 2017, when Russian customs seized Xiaomi's cell phones, tens of thousands of Russian netizens signed a petition to protest against Russian customs banning the entry of online purchases of Xiaomi.

In order to further expand the Russian online market, in 2018, Xiaomi officially entered into strategic cooperation with Russia Speedy Supply Chain. 2019, all Xiaomi cell phone online business will be served by Russia Speedy Supply Chain. Research by M.Video-Eldorado, Russia's largest electronics and home appliance sales company, shows that in 2020, a total of 17.3 million Chinese smartphones will be sold in the Russian market, up 15% year-on-year, and the share of Chinese smartphones in Russian market sales will reach 55%, with Xiaomi phones accounting for 24% of the Russian smartphone market.

For online sales, Xiaomi adopts a combined B2B and B2C marketing approach; offline, it brings consumers an experiential purchase, which enhances the company's brand image while also providing convenient conditions for after-sales service.

Xiaomi is good at starvation sales strategy, promoting the advantages of its products with comprehensive media advertisements to arouse consumers' interest in the early stage, and then selling new products at a very low price for a limited time within a specified period so that consumers will be satisfied with the high-cost performance of the products while consuming impulsively.

Ingate (Ingate), specializing in digital marketing, is dedicated to enabling companies around the world to find their customers faster. With an extensive database of customers from different sectors of the economy, it specializes in developing and implementing comprehensive promotion strategies.

The marketing plan developed by Ingate Company for Xiaomi Technologies achieved 3,000 smartphones and 7819,461 rubles of total sales and was recognized by the head of Xiaomi Technologies' Russian market.

Ingate provided advertising support for the sale of RedmiS2 and Redmi5 smartphones at the DNS supermarket chain.

Project goal: Xiaomi and the DNS chain launched a week-long promotion together: when buying one model of smartphone, another smartphone was given as a gift.

The common claim of Ingate and Xiaomi Technologies: is to increase sales of RedmiS2 and Redmi5 products while making DNS one of Xiaomi's main sales channels in Russia.

The message of the advertisement is generally designed by the advertiser for the current marketing objectives,

⁶ Source: official website of the company: <https://www.mi.com/ru>

and is a message with a certain persuasive nature, the purpose of which is to promote the short-term or long-term sales of the product⁷. Ingate linked contextual ads in Yandex and Google search. When the words "smartphone", "buy a smartphone", "buy cheap smartphone" When the words "smartphone", "buy a smartphone", "buy a cheap smartphone" etc. appear, they will jump to the promotion page of Xiaomi Technology. It has built a new mode of online marketing with "interest guidance" as the clue. When users are "interested, needed and looking," the marketing information of the company appears at the first time, which not only fully combines the needs and purposes of users, but also is a marketing method that fully satisfies the "mass + precise" needs of the promotion enterprise.

Targeted ads were launched on VK and Facebook⁸. The ads were placed by excluding owners and fans of iPhones, Samsung, and other higher-priced phones as determined by big data, and instead targeting customers interested in cheaper smartphones. In addition, big data was used to screen for parental status, and the tagline "If you buy a smartphone, you will buy another one for your kids" was used to gain the approval of this consumer group.

Powered by RTB advertising technology, which allows brand owners to find and show banners to their target audience as accurately as possible on the Web, merchants can set specific codes on pages that track users' visits to specific pages of the catalog in real-time.

A buyer views an item in the "Smartphones" category on a DNS site, but no purchase occurs. The brand owner can follow the user through the "digital path" and display the Xiaomi ad page on other websites connected to the RTB platform. When a potential customer clicks on the ad page and enters Xiaomi's official page, he or she can browse through the phone's performance, promotions, and other information displayed on the website to learn more about Xiaomi's products.

In March 2021, Xiaomi officially launched its new logo, which is recognized as not significantly different from the old version. However, the move has also successfully attracted consumers' attention at home and abroad. At the same time, different consumers present differentiated buying behavior and then develop personalized communication content to increase sales. For example, Xiaomi has four series for different consumers to choose from. In the brand communication strategy developed by Ingate for Xiaomi, the case of "parents buying cell phones for their children" was based on the characteristics of the fluctuating price range of Xiaomi's products and the large target consumer base, and the idea of parents wanting to buy cell phones for their children but also want to save money.

With the popularity and widespread use of the Internet, cell phones have become an essential tool in people's lives. However, because of the universal characteristics of this product, it has not been affected at the level of social factors division. With the continuous enrichment of cell phone functions, the entertainment, learning, and social functions added to the communication functions have also tapped into potential consumer groups, such as the elderly and children. In this context, Xiaomi Technology has taken into account the social factors, human factors, environmental factors, and social values in Russia, and has been able to accurately promote to consumers in the sink market, making it a household name and a popular electronic technology brand among young and old.

Since Xiaomi Technology entered the Russian market in 2016, it has focused on a cost-effective marketing line of affordable and powerful performance. In order to expand the Russian market, it has not only adopted the strategy of simultaneous online and offline sales but also actively cooperated with local Russian e-commerce platforms; developed marketing strategies adapted to the Russian market, and localized the brand. At the same time, Xiaomi Technology retains the membership treatment for customers in the Chinese market, such as birthday discounts, singing shelf life, and other rights and interests, taking into account globalization and standardization while localizing. At the same time, local authoritative marketing companies were invited to plan marketing programs for them, and the three major initiatives taken in the marketing case of Ingate for Xiaomi Technology resulted in the sale of 3,000 units of Xiaomi smartphones and a total sales turnover of 7.8 million rubles.

The marketing strategy developed by Ingate for Xiaomi Technology built a new online marketing model based on "interest-led + mass exposure + portal marketing", which is based on the use of big data and fully integrated with the needs and purposes of users to meet the "mass" and "precise" needs of enterprises. When the words "buy a smartphone", "buy a cheap smartphone", etc. appear, it will jump to the promotion page of Xiaomi Technology.

Although the Xiaomi brand does not have a clear spokesperson in Russia, it is possible to set up a recommendation marketing mechanism from the perspective of consumers and encourage them to become "walking evaluation spokespersons," which not only improves the accuracy, effectiveness, and credibility of the recommendation marketing but also helps to form a brand communication and publicity matrix.

We can use questionnaires and analyze users' browsing behavior to set up an extensive brand database, improve the accuracy of user profiles, update and iterate products according to user's actual needs, and develop reasonable and accurate marketing strategies to reduce marketing costs and further increase the market share of the brand.

Traditional advertising scenes are characterized by solid purposefulness and lack of novelty in communication, and audiences are prone to resist or even confrontation with them. The design of "soft ads" and "implantable ads", which integrate products into the scenes of daily life, can help reduce the conversion difference between encoding and decoding, enrich the means of communication, and reduce the audience's resistance to advertising.

In the cross-cultural communication of brands, it is an important part of international branding to fully understand

⁷ Data from the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China.

⁸ The company's activities are recognized as extremist and banned in the territory of the Russian Federation. The information resource is included in the Register of information distributed in violation of the law in part of Articles 15.3 and 15.3-1 of Federal Law No. 149-FZ, access to the site is restricted. – URL: <https://blocklist.rkn.gov.ru/>.

the culture and symbol system of the entering country in order to reduce cultural conflicts without losing brand characteristics⁹. The ultimate purpose of brand communication is mostly profit-oriented, but profit is not the only thing that matters. Brand communication is a comprehensive process, which should not only take into account the current situation of the Russian electronics market, Russian social factors, human factors, environmental factors, and social values, but also avoid cultural conflicts and localize propaganda, but also grasp the scale, respect and protect cultural diversity, and prevent itself from becoming the initiator of cultural connotation.

Conclusion

The authors analyzed the communication phenomenon using a marketing case developed by Ingate for Xiaomi technology, combining its cultural adaptation, marketing of the brand communication scene, marketing of brand recommendations and other means. This allowed the authors to suggest ways to improve their branding communication.

Firstly, taking Xiaomi Technology as an example, the analysis of the corporate brand communication marketing strategy will provide new ideas for more brands. Secondly, foreign enterprises doing business in Russia will also bring capital, technology, and more employment opportunities to Russia. Thirdly, providing more goods to Russian people and increasing the welfare level of Russian. Fourthly, good brand communication cannot be separated from corporate sentiment behind it, using products as a medium to enhance and consolidate the emotions between two peoples. And finally, through Ingate's communication and marketing plan for Xiaomi brand in Russia it can also provide a powerful reference for other brands' communication suggesting adjustment and improvement measures in the light of current situation.

The authors made the main conclusion that the study of Xiaomi's brand communication and marketing strategy in the Russian market is significant for theory and practice. Indeed, under the existing communication theory, taking Xiaomi Technology as the case study object and combining the differences between the cultures of the two countries, exploring the brand communication marketing strategies of goods in different cultural backgrounds can help develop market diversification strategies and further enrich and practice communication theory.

As for the practical significance of the study, first of all, this research and analysis will help provide experience for foreign companies to enter Russia for brand communication. Secondly, it will also help companies to find the gaps in the Russian market, understand consumer needs more clearly, and further expand their share in the Russian market by upgrading their products, developing new products, and changing their marketing strategies. In addition, by developing a reasonable marketing strategy for brand communication and fostering brand loyalty among Russian consumers, it will help companies expand their overseas markets and continue to benefit.

Finally, from point to point, practical brand communication rules can be summarized in different forms of cultural atmosphere to maximize brand potential and value. We also find similar approaches from other authors [Kotler, et al. (2017); Subbotina O.A., Sonawane Uppal. (2015); et al].

This paper selects a representative case, taking Ingate's marketing plan for Xiaomi Technology in Russia as an example, analyzes it from the perspective of brand cross-cultural communication, and proposes improvement measures to suggest sustainable development for Xiaomi's brand to occupy the economic market position in Russia and further increase its market share, and at the same time, from point to point, to provide marketing communication for the same industry in Russia or in other countries. It also provides the experience that can be learned from the same industry in Russia or in other countries. At the same time, in the future, the phenomenon of brand cross-cultural communication and the history of brand communication in a specific region can be systematically analyzed from different perspectives, which is of great significance for further research on brand communication and cross-cultural communication.

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