What's "He" Culture and its Effects on Foreign Consumers' Preference in the Context of Chinese Brands

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Abstract. The globalization competition makes the national brand become more vital to the advantage development of a country than in the past, and the influence of culture on the brand preference of foreign consumers is becoming more and more important. This paper uses qualitative research to explore the driving factors of foreign consumers' forming Chinese brand preference. The results show that foreign consumers' preference for Chinese brands is influenced by China's "He" culture, which is driven by the three-dimensional dynamics of "Harmony", "Tolerance" and "Respect". These conclusions make up the deficiency of the existing research, and have theoretical innovation and strategic guidance.

Keywords: "He" culture; brand preference; Chinese context.

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization, Chinese brands compete with global brands. The international market competitiveness of Chinese brands has been steadily improved, but on the whole, Chinese brands have low brand recognition in the minds of global consumers [1]. Foreign consumers, who have less exposure to Chinese brands, still regard China as a "low-quality, low-price" manufacturing power. A survey shows that Chinese brands in terms of reputation, trust, value and familiarity of evaluation significantly less than western brands as well as Japan, South Korea [2].

From the perspective of consumers, the globalization of economy and culture has an important impact on consumer behavior. On the one hand, the global spread of culture makes global consumers have increasingly similar consumption preferences. At the same time, consumers have more contact with foreign cultures and more desire to explore foreign cultures. This makes the influence of culture on the preferences of foreign consumers increasingly important. Although "made in China" products cannot give foreign consumers the impression of high-grade, but "Chinese culture", especially "Chinese traditional culture" in the minds of foreign consumers has a good image. Using the advantages of Chinese traditional culture and history to shape the brand with culture and arouse the positive cognition of overseas consumers may become the breakthrough point for the internationalization of Chinese brands [3].

In recent years, Chinese marketers have realized that incorporating Chinese cultural elements can help Chinese brands enter the international market. However, in the same cross-cultural strategy, Chinese enterprises have both success and failure in the practice process. For example, the classic Chinese workers' shoes -- Jiefang shoes (ospop), with the Chinese character "gong" around the red circle as one of the corporate logos, keep the classic quality of Jiefang shoes extremely simple and practical [4]. And at the same time, integrate with the diligent and optimistic spirit of the Chinese working people, so that it is greatly sought after by consumers abroad. Li Ning's strategy of 'internationalizing its brand and making the market Chinese' didn't lead them deep into the hearts of foreign consumers, who said they couldn't understand the Chinese style it displayed and thought it was just imitating Chinese style [5].The above phenomenon leads to the following questions worth considering: 1) Which Chinese cultural factors can influence foreign consumers' preference for Chinese brands? 2) How does Chinese culture influence foreign consumers' preference for Chinese brands? This article examines all of this.

2. "He" Culture

2.1 The Definition of "He" Culture

Chinese culture has been passed down for five thousand years. Chinese people are introverted and modest in thinking and very polite in dealing with people. First of all, this is the basis for foreigners to like Chinese culture and understand it. Secondly, Chinese culture is extensive and profound. It not only has the civilization of Han people, but also gathers the cultures and civilizations of other 55 ethnic minorities. It has different customs from those of foreigners, and it is also something foreigners are eager to know and will never know [6].

Chinese culture advocates harmony, and Chinese "He" culture has a long history, which contains the world view of the unity of heaven and man, the international view of harmony and all nations, the social view of harmony without uniformity, and the moral view of people's kindness [7].

(1) "He" in modern words means harmony, and its essence should be "harmony without uniformity".The spirit of "He" is based on the premise of acknowledging the difference and diversity of things, and the adherence to diversity. The coexistence and integration of different things or factors help each other and complement each other, so that all things will flourish.

(2) A culture of "He" is a culture of harmony.The word "He" itself already contains the meaning of "union", that is, new things are produced by the fusion of things with harmony.

Schwartz starts from the influence of values on consumption at the individual level and concludes that cultural value is the main standard to measure the purchase tendency and preference of individuals. Therefore, it is very important to determine the cultural dimension.

2.2 The Dimension of "He" Culture

There is no consistent dimensionality division of "He" culture in existing literature, only its connotation is interpreted.This paper explores the dimensions of "He" culture with the grounded paradigm of Pandit [8]. Grounded theory is a qualitative research method that uses systematic procedures to take root in the induction and deduction of social reality, and then constructs the theoretical system. It is applicable to individuals' interpretation of the real world, or to explore conceptual connotations from phenomena, or to show causality through the sequence of events, which is of great significance for the construction of new theories [9].

The qualitative research method needs to have a rich information data foundation. Personal interviews and group discussions were used to collect data [10]. A total of 15 foreign students, foreign teachers and foreign businessmen were interviewed in the personal interview, and a theoretical sample was preliminarily formed. In the group discussion, 60 people were randomly divided into 6 groups, and 5 groups were interviewed. The sixth group was reserved for theoretical saturation test, and each group was interviewed for 60-90 minutes. 1) Do you like to buy Chinese products? Give an example.2) Why do you like to buy these products? 3) Give examples of products you like to buy that are influenced by Chinese culture. All the discussion was recorded on the spot. According to the grounded research method, the dimension of "He" culture is finally obtained, as shown in figure 1:
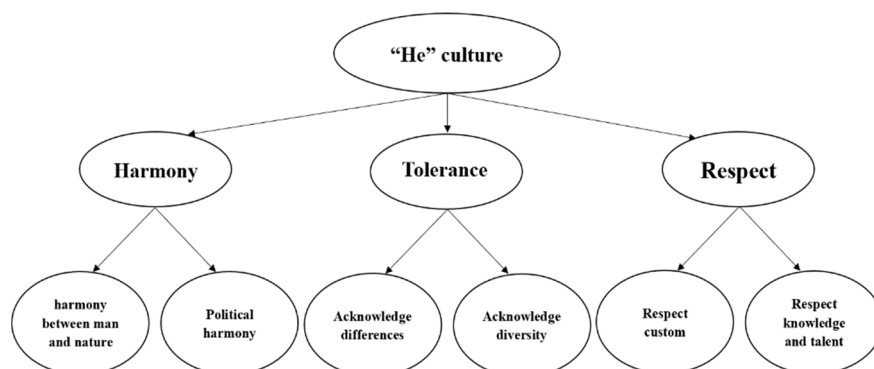

Fig. 1 The dimension of "He" culture

3. Brand Preference

Consumer behavior is guided and regulated by cultural values, and consumers' brand personality preference, as a kind of consumer behavior, is naturally influenced by cultural values [11]. Brand preference is an important part of brand power, which refers to the degree of consumers' preference for a brand in a certain market and the understanding of consumers' brand choice intention [12]. Local consumer brand preference is influenced by many factors, such as a country's relative level of economic development, the relative levels of manufacturing development, social trends, consumer perception of local brands and foreign brands characteristics, consumers' ideological consciousness and personality factors such as gender, age and level of consumption [13].

Consumers' brand preference is their preference for a certain brand of products and services, and it is a psychological complex. More importantly, brand preference is the prerequisite for the formation of customer loyalty. First of all, the formation of consumer brand preference is based on brand awareness. Brand cognition is manifested as consumers' impression, understanding, opinions and opinions on product quality, trademark, packaging, service and reputation, etc. In the process of cognition, consumers have formed their preference and habituation tendency. Secondly, the key to the formation of consumer brand preference is brand emotion. Brand emotion is the consumer about the quality of the goods, logo, packaging, service and reputation of like or dislike, appreciate or uncomfortable, such as emotional reaction, is the consumer's attitude toward brand product is in line with the need to experience, it tends to be consumers physiological instincts, temperament, personality, etc. The influence of psychological factors, therefore the brand emotion with the irrational tendency. Finally, the formation of consumer brand preference is manifested as behavioral tendency. Behavioral tendency is the final manifestation of consumers' brand preference, such as whether to buy a certain brand of goods or repeat purchases [14].

4. Summary

Through literature review, this paper puts forward a conceptual model of China "He" culture and brand preference, and gives a concept model of "He" culture influencing foreign consumer preference for Chinese brands. Through the interviews, it is concluded that "He" culture of three dimensions: "harmony", "tolerance", "respect", and their dimensions. Harmony includes political harmony, harmony between man and nature; Tolerance includes acknowledge differences and diversity. Respect includes respect customs, respect knowledge and talent.

The analysis helps Chinese brands use China "He" culture to attract foreign consumers. However, this study also has limitations. This study was mainly based on literature review and interview, but did not verify the accuracy and sufficiency of the model. Therefore, the following research focuses on scale development, research design, data collection and analysis, and uses scientific empirical analysis method to test the model.

Acknowledgments

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