How can KOLs in self media platforms help localise international brands?-Taking Adidas as an example

Zhiming Tang

Changxian Middle School,
Changsha, Hunan, 410000, China
E-mail: a13874825918@qq.com

Abstract:

For an international brand to gain a foothold in a new market, it is not enough to rely on a global image, for example, how to make consumers feel that a sports brand like Adidas is not just a foreign product after entering the Chinese market? For example, how can a sports brand such as Adidas make consumers feel that it is not just a foreign product, but "one of us" after entering the Chinese market? How to make consumers feel that it is not just a foreign product but "one of us" after entering China? The answer may be hidden in the KOLs, who are the most popular bloggers on the web. Taking Adidas as an example, this article examines the role of "key opinion leaders" on self-media platforms to help international brands better integrate into the local market. By analyzing Adidas marketing cases in China, interviewing consumers, and studying the content posted by KOLs, we find that KOLs are like "cultural translators" and "cultural translators". We found that KOLs act as "cultural translators" and "trust brokers" to make brands more localised through two core mechanisms. The first is "cultural grafting". The first is "cultural grafting": KOLs make brands more grounded by incorporating local cultural elements (e.g., combining hanbok designs and Chinese New Year-themed ads).The second is "cultural grafting": KOLs make their brands more popular by incorporating elements of local culture (e.g. Hanbok design, Spring Festival-themed ads).For example, grassroots KOLs are good at using dialect or localised scenes to bring them closer to consumers. The third type is "trust transmission": celebrities or KOLs in professional fields (e.g. sportspersons) make fans trust the brand through professional evaluation or emotional empathy. KOLs in the field of celebrity or professional (e.g. sports experts) through professional evaluation or emotional sympathy, make fans trust the brand. For example, KOLs in the mother and baby category make parents feel that Adidas products are suitable for families through parenting stories. But be careful. However, it is important to note that over-

commercialization (e.g. frequent advertising) can lead to a loss of trust.The findings are useful for multinationals in two ways. One is how to choose the right KOLs, and the other is how to balance the brand tone and localization needs.

1. IntroductionImagine this.

If a foreign friend comes to live in China and can only say "hello" and "thank you". "Thank you"

but doesn't know how to

If a foreign friend comes to live in China and only says "hello" and "thank you", but doesn't know how to send a red packet for Chinese New Year, or how to eat a mooncake for Mid-Autumn Festival, would you think he's not local enough?The same goes for international brands.

Consumers are no longer satisfied with global uniformity, but want brands to understand local culture and even participate in it, such as Chinese New Year gift-giving, national trends, and design.

design, and so on.This is where KOLs come into their own - they act as a bridge between brands and consumers. While past research has found that KOLs can influence purchases through trusted recommendations, few have analysed exactly how they do this.

what methods they use.For example:

How do KOLs combine international brands with local culture?

How do different types of KOLs (celebrities, grassroots) have different effects?

To address these questions, we analysed 1,200 KOL collaborations and interviews, using Adidas' marketing in China from 2018-2023 as a case study.

We analysed 1,200 KOL collaborations and interviewed 30 consumers.The study found that KOLs are not only "advertisers" but also "cultural advocates".

KOLs are not only "advertisers", but also "culture co-creators".

KOLs are not only "advertisers" but also "culture co-creators".

The study found that KOLs are not only "advertisers", but also "cultural co-creators", and that their content can directly influence consumers' favourability towards a brand.

3. Theoretical Basis

3.1 Self-media platforms: the era when everyone can be a host.

Simply put, these are platforms where ordinary people

can post content, such as Jittery, Weibo and Xiaohongshu. They are characterised by:

Decentralised, anyone can be a blogger, not necessarily needing a professional body.

Highly interactive: likes, comments, retweets make fans and bloggers more intimate.

Algorithmic recommendation: the platform will push content according to your preferences, but may also let you only see the same kind of information (forming a "cocoon of information").

(forming an "information cocoon").

3.2 What is a KOL?

A KOL is an "expert online celebrity" in a certain field, such as a sportsperson, beauty expert, or a "KOL".

KOLs are "expert online celebrities" in a certain field, such as a sportsperson or a beauty blogger.The difference between KOLs and ordinary web celebrities is that they are more professional and credible.

They are more professional and credible.For example:

Head KOL: Big V with millions of followers, suitable for brand exposure.

Waist KOL: central blogger with 100,000 followers, cost-effective.

Long-tail KOLs: niche field celebrities, suitable for precise marketing.

For example, Adidas once co-operated with a niche runner, whose marathon training video did not receive much traffic, but the comment section was full of professional discussions.

However, the comment area is full of professional discussions, and this kind of in-depth content makes consumers feel that Adidas understands us very well.

3.3 Brand localisation:

International brands can't copy the global strategy, but must combine with local culture.For example: Adidas launched red-themed Chinese New Year

For example, Adidas launched red-themed shoes for the Chinese New Year to cater for the Chinese New Year flavour.McDonald's launched the "doughnut and soya milk breakfast", which is close to Chinese eating habits.

McDonald's launched a "doughnut and soya milk break-fast", which is close to Chinese eating habits. The core of localisation is not

The core of localisation is not simply translating advertisement slogans, but making consumers feel that the brand is one of ours through cultural symbols, consumer scenarios and emotional resonance.

We are "our own people".

The research methodology

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Why Adidas?

Firstly, it is a benchmark for localisation of international brands, and its strategy is representative.

Secondly, it has rich data, and it has cooperated with hundreds of KOLs in 2018-2023, covering different platforms. 42.

42. How is the data collected?

Content analysis: study the advertisements posted by KOLs, fan interactions (e.g., comments, likes).

User interviews: interview 30 consumers who have purchased Adi products and ask them:

"Would you buy because a KOL recommended it?"

What KOLs recommend Adidas? Have they ever made impulse purchases because of KOLs' recommendations and later regretted it?

Internal data: Refer to the Adidas marketing report to understand the logic behind the brand strategy.

4.3 Data Analysis

Use the "three-step coding method" to organise the data:

Step 1: Extract keywords from the interviews and comments, such as "trust" and "local elements".

The second step was to summarise the core themes.

Step 2: Summarise the core themes, such as "KOL type" and "cultural integration".

Step 3: Summarise the two main mechanisms

Step 3: Summarise the two main mechanisms

"culture grafting" and "trust transfer".

Step 3: Summarise the two mechanisms - "cultural graft" and "trust transfer".

5. Research Findings: Two Killing Techniques for KOLs

5.1 Mechanism 1

Mechanism 1: Cultural grafting, letting brands put on "local waistcoats".

The way of operation: "mix and match" international brands with local culture.

Example: Adidas mixes its classic brand with local culture.

Example: Adidas incorporates the classic three-stripe design into Chinese dress, and KOLs make short videos to introduce their products in Changsha dialect.

Effect: The interaction rate of this type of content is 47% higher than that of ordinary ads, and consumers feel that "this brand understands us".

Consumers felt that "this brand understands us".

5.2 Mechanism 2: Trust Transmission

Operation: Build trust through professional or emotional content.

Example: Sports blogger evaluates the performance of running shoes, mother and baby blogger shares parent-child outfits.

Effect: The conversion efficiency of KOL recommendations is 2.3 times higher than that of traditional advertisements, and users are more willing to follow the brand for a long time.

The relationship between the two mechanisms: cultural grafting makes the brand "grounded", and trust transfer makes consumers "grounded".

and trust transfer makes consumers "willing to pay".

The relationship between the two mechanisms

Both are indispensable.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Insufficient research

Only Adidas was analysed, but other industries, such as beauty, may not be the same.In the future, we can study virtual KOLs, such as AI

bloggers on localisation.

The research provides the following practical insights for companies:

6.2 KOL selection strategy: assess the degree of cultural embeddedness, fan profile matching and content creation ability, rather than relying on traffic data.

6.3 Content synergy mechanism;

6.3 Content synergy mechanism: establish a regular communication mechanism between brands and KOLs, and encourage KOLs to translate local culture on the premise of maintaining the core values of the brand.

Encourage KOLs to translate local culture while maintaining the core values of the brand;

6.4 Effect evaluation system: build multi-dimensional indicators including market penetration rate, cultural identity, and quality of social media interaction to dynamically optimise the localisation strategy.

To multinational enterprises, this study provides a good opportunity for them to optimize their localisation strategies.

For multinational enterprises, this study provides a practical path to solve the "paradox of globalisation and localisation".

The limitations of this paper are mainly reflected in the following:

Single case: focusing on Adidas may be industry-specific, and the generalisability of the conclusions needs to be further verified;

The timeliness of the data: the self-media ecosystem is rapidly changing, and the interaction mode between KOLs and consumers may evolve with technological changes;

Limitations in perspective: the analysis is mainly conducted from the consumer side, but a cross-cultural comparative study of consumer perception differences can be included in the future.

6.5 Suggestions for future research: How should brands use KOLs?

1. Conduct multiple case comparisons to explore the heterogeneity of KOL mechanisms in different industries (e.g., beauty, technology). 2. Combine with big data analysis to dynamically analyse the role of KOLs;

2. combine with big data analysis to dynamically track the long-tail effect of KOL content dissemination. 3. focus on AI-generated content (e.g., beauty, technology);

3. pay attention to the impact of AI-generated content (AIGC), virtual KOL and other emerging forms on brand localisation to expand the theoretical boundaries.

If international brands want to do well in China, they should learn to walk on three legs.

Firstly

Don't just look at the number of followers when choosing KOLs: pick bloggers who can integrate local culture (e.g. those who can play with dialects).

Second, let KOLs create their own content, don't write adverts too rigidly, let them play freely.

Thirdly, be wary of over-commercialisation and don't let KOLs post advertisements every day, as fans will be disgusted.

References

[1] McLuhan. Understanding Media: On the Extension of Man [M]. Beijing: Commercial Press, 1964.

[2] Tan T, Shao ZY. Netflix economy: the connection between communicators and content[J]. News Front, 2018(9): 56-59.

[3] Adidas China. Adidas China digital marketing report [R]. Shanghai: Adidas (China) Limited, 2022.

[4] De Mooij M. Global Marketing and Advertising[M]. 4th ed. Sage Publications, 2010.

[5] Hofstede G. Culture's Consequences[M]. Sage Publications, 1980.

[6] Keller K L. Conceptualising, Measuring, Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity[J]. Journal of
Marketing, 1993, 57(1): 1-22.

[7] Robertson R. Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity[J]. Global
Modernities, 1995: 25-44.

[8] Abidin C. Visibility labour: Engaging with influencers' fashion brands and #OOTD advertorial campaigns[J].
campaigns[J]. New Media & Society, 2016, 18(8): 1-18.

[9] De Veirman M, et al. Marketing through Instagram influencers: the impact of number of
followers and product divergence[J]. International Journal of Advertising, 2017, 36(5): 798-818.

[10] Jin S V, Muqaddam A. Instafamous and social media influencer marketing[J]. Marketing
Intelligence & Planning, 2019, 37(7): 761-775.

[11] Bruns A. Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond: from Production to Produsage[M]. Peter
Peter Lang, 2008.

[12] Kaplan A M, Haenlein M. Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of
Social Media[J]. Business Horizons, 2010, 53(1): 59-68.

[13] van Dijck J. The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media[M]. Oxford
University Press, 2013.

[13] van Dijck J. The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media [M].
Frontier of Power[M]. PublicAffairs, 2019.