

Internationalization Strategies of National Casual Wear Brands from the Perspective of Cultural Identity

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Abstract: With the development of global economic integration, the internationalization of national brands of casual wear has become an inevitable trend, and cultural identity plays a crucial role. This topic, from the perspective of cultural identity, explores the internationalization strategies of national casual wear brands from three angles: enhancing brand differentiation advantages through the modern translation of cultural symbols, strengthening consumers' emotional resonance and brand loyalty, and helping brands break through cultural barriers with local culture. This thesis focuses on two aspects: the principle of "harmony without uniformity" and the transformation forms of cultural capital, as well as the global fashion ecosystem from cultural capital to civilizing dialogue. It specifically elaborates on the modern translation of cultural symbols, the exploration and inheritance of local culture, and the stratified strategies and innovative practices for expanding the communication channels in the international market through case studies. It provides references for national brands of casual wear to enhance their international competitiveness, thereby achieving sustainable development.

Keywords: Cultural identity; National brand; Casual wear; Internationalization strategy; Brand communication

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1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of global economic integration, international exchanges and cooperation in the clothing industry are increasing. National casual wear going abroad and reaching the world has become an important means to enhance brand influence and competitiveness. Casual wear is deeply loved by consumers all over the world for its advantages such as comfort, convenience and fashion, and the market demand is constantly increasing. In the context of the digital age, the internationalization process of national casual wear brands is not only a commercial activity but also a systematic project for building cultural identity. It not only relies on the quality and price advantages of products but also needs to take culture as the core, technology as the tool, and localization as the path to establish international brand recognition and differentiated advantages. Cultural identity refers to an individual or a group's sense of belonging and identification with a certain culture. For national brands, the transformation law of cultural identity recognition from symbolic expression to value resonance provides methodological support for national clothing brands to participate in the global fashion discourse power competition. The local cultural elements contained therein are an important mark to distinguish them from international well-known brands and also the key to attracting international consumers' cultural recognition. For instance, the "Sweat Blooms" technology of Li-Ning brand sportswear in China, when athletes sweat, the ink-wash lotus

flowers on their clothes gradually bloom. By integrating traditional culture with biosensing and unidirectional moisture-wicking fabrics, it achieves a poetic functional expression that is perceptible and wearable. The transformation of the ink-wash painting's artistic conception into an interactive wearing experience is more communicative and penetrating than simple pattern transplantation. It has been confirmed that the reconstruction of ink-wash painting symbols by smart fibers has become a typical case of the internationalization strategy of national brands, reshaping the international consumers' perception that Chinese brands have cultural depth and technological height in value creation, and gradually winning the recognition of the international market. The case shows that intelligent technology enhances efficiency and quality, infuses soul into the internationalization of national brands, and promotes the leap of national brands from product output to value output. Therefore, it is of great significance to explore the internationalization strategy of ethnic casual wear from the perspective of cultural identity.

2. Cultural identity is the core driving force for the internationalization of national brands of casual wear

2.1. The modern translation of cultural symbols enhances the brand's differentiated advantages

Cultural uniqueness is a powerful tool to break through the homogenized market. The international casual wear market is highly competitive with numerous brands, making it difficult for consumers to be deeply impressed by them for the time being. Cultural identity, on the other hand, can endow national brands with unique cultural connotations, making them highly recognizable and distinctive in the international market. Therefore, achieving brand differentiation through cultural symbols for ethnic clothing is the core strategy in global competition. National brands of casual wear are a type of casual wear with local cultural genes, mainly reflected in external forms such as style, color and fabric ^[1]. For instance, China's national brand casual wear can modern reconstruct traditional blue and white porcelain patterns, paper-cutting art, and embroidery techniques as cultural symbols. The national characteristic elements that combine Eastern aesthetics form a sharp contrast with the design styles of Western clothing brands, creating a visual impact that piques curiosity and attracts international consumers. When foreign consumers come into contact with clothing that contains unique cultural elements, it leads to a sharp increase in the foot traffic and social media topic volume of domestic brands. This kind of identification and differentiation based on cultural identity can not only help brands quickly open up the international market, but also reduce the homogeneous competition among similar brands, thus winning a unique market positioning for the brand.

2.2. Enhance consumers' emotional resonance and brand loyalty

Culture is a carrier of emotions. When the cultural elements contained in a national brand are in line with the cultural background, values or lifestyle of international consumers, it can evoke a strong emotional resonance in consumers. This emotional resonance can make consumers feel that the brand understands them and is related to them, and thus they have a sense of closeness and identification with the brand. For instance, for international consumers with an emotional attachment to Eastern culture, casual wear featuring traditional Chinese cultural elements can enable them to experience the charm of Eastern culture, satisfy their yearning and love for it, and thus develop a deep affection for the brand. Once consumers have an emotional resonance with a brand, they are more likely to become loyal customers of the brand, thereby demonstrating higher brand loyalty. They not only purchase the brand's products again and again, but also actively recommend them to people around them, becoming the brand's "promoters". This kind of loyalty based on cultural identity is very stable and is not affected by external factors such as price fluctuations and promotional activities. This can help national brands of casual wear maintain a stable customer base in the international market for a long time.

2.3. Local cultural collaboration leads to the formation of a cross-cultural business ecosystem for brands

There are differences in language, religion, values, customs and other aspects among different countries or regions, and

these differences often become obstacles to the internationalization of China's casual clothing brands ^[2]. The inherent essential characteristics of cultural identity help brands understand and adapt to the culture of the target market, thereby overcoming these obstacles. The value of integrating local culture with the culture of the target market lies in the cognitive tension and harmony generated when different cultures interact. This enables casual wear brands to accurately identify the cultural constants and capture cultural variables of the target market when entering new markets, achieving the goal of being easily accepted by consumers in the target market. For instance, when domestic brands of casual wear enter the Islamic cultural circle market, they can take into account the clothing habits of local women and incorporate some looser styles and simple colors. Only in this way can the cultural characteristics of their own nation be better reflected. It can not only meet the local consumers' cultural needs, but also showcase the brand's unique cultural charm, enabling it to smoothly enter the market and win consumers' recognition. Cultural identity serves as a bridge that connects brands of various ethnic groups and international consumers. Promoting exchanges and understanding among different cultures is an important way for brands to go international.

3. Challenges Faced by National brands of casual wear in internationalization

3.1. Cultural differences lead to cognitive and acceptance barriers.

Due to significant cultural differences among countries and regions around the world, cognitive impairment is rooted in deep-seated differences in values and ways of thinking. Therefore, there are considerable differences in the recognition and acceptance of domestic casual wear brands among international consumers. The local cultural elements they contain may be very valuable and aesthetically pleasing to the Chinese people, but they are difficult for foreign consumers to understand. It may even cause misunderstandings ^[3]. For instance, traditional Chinese auspicious patterns are symbols of good fortune and nobility in China, but in some Western countries, they are regarded as evil and mysterious symbols. Therefore, international consumers show a strong resistance to casual wear with dragon patterns, which needs to be resolved through the emotional dimension of cultural identity. Under different cultural backgrounds, clothing has different demands and preferences in terms of wearing occasions, styles, and color meanings. For instance, in some more formal countries, the style of casual wear may need to be simpler and more appropriate, while in certain countries that pursue individuality and freedom, casual wear can be more fashionable and exaggerated. If national brands fail to fully understand and adapt to such cultural differences, they will find it difficult to enter the international market and hinder brand internationalization. It is necessary to build an emotional resonance with cognitive barriers.

3.2. The international market is highly competitive

The international casual wear market has long been monopolized by many well-known brands. These brands, with their long history, significant brand influence, advanced design concepts, smooth sales channels, and rich marketing experience, have a large customer base and high market share in the international market. For instance, fast fashion brands like ZARA, H&M and Uniqlo have gained a foothold in the international market by virtue of their advantages such as rapid style updates, low prices and global layout. High-end luxury brands like Chanel and Dior have attracted the attention of high-end consumers with their exquisite craftsmanship and unique brand culture. In comparison, domestic casual wear brands started their internationalization late and have limited brand influence. They lag far behind international well-known brands in terms of design, marketing and supply chain management. In the process of entering the international market, China's casual wear is facing huge market pressure and needs to compete directly with these strong competitors. China's casual wear is facing a severe challenge in the process of internationalization, that is, how to find its own position in the fierce international competition.

3.3. Brand building and promotion are highly challenging

Brand is an important component of an enterprise's core competitiveness. Creating national brands with international

influence is the key to the internationalization of China's casual wear. Brand building is a long-term and arduous project, which not only requires a great deal of human, material and financial resources, but also demands a scientific and reasonable brand strategy. In the process of internationalization, domestic brand casual wear, due to the lack of an international market, finds it difficult to accurately grasp the demands and preferences of international consumers and to establish brand positioning and image for the international market. At the same time, many difficulties have also been encountered in the process of brand promotion. There are significant differences among various countries or regions in terms of media environment, communication channels, and ways for consumers to obtain information, making it difficult for national brands of casual wear to find effective ways for international communication. For instance, some countries mainly rely on social media, while others mainly rely on traditional media such as television and newspapers. Furthermore, due to the influence of factors such as language and cultural differences, brand information is difficult to be accurately and effectively conveyed to international consumers, thereby affecting the brand's recognition and influence.

4. Internationalization Strategies for National Casual Wear Brands Based on Cultural Identity

4.1. The Principle of “Harmony without Uniformity” for National Clothing Brands and the Transformation Form of Cultural Capital

The international essence of ethnic clothing brands requires the cross-domain transformation of cultural capital to achieve global value recognition of ethnic cultural symbols. National clothing brands adhere to the principle of “harmony without uniformity”, which essentially aims to achieve coexistence of differences, cross-domain adaptation and global dialogue through the creative transformation of cultural capital. The concept of “harmony without uniformity” originates from the Chinese civilization's value of “valuing harmony above all”, emphasizing that diverse civilizations can achieve symbiosis and common prosperity while maintaining their subjectivity. Local culture serves as the core basis for building the cultural identity of a national brand. It requires in-depth empowerment at three levels: the exploration of cultural elements, the transformation of traditional craftsmanship, and the connotation of brand culture. Under the principle of “harmony without uniformity”, the integration of local culture is not about eliminating differences through assimilation, but rather about constructing a cultural ecosystem that not only maintains cultural subjectivity but also promotes creative transformation. The core lies in building a cultural ecosystem where differences coexist. It is a transcendence of the “clash of Civilizations theory” and provides Chinese wisdom for building a community with a shared future for mankind.

According to the cultural capital theory proposed by the renowned French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, cultural capital is classified into three forms: materialization, objectification, and institutionalization, providing an operational logic for the internationalization of national brands. The first is embodied, which is reflected in the internalized skills and aesthetic sense of designers. It is the transformation of internalized traditional knowledge into modern design language. The internalization process requires designers to have both a deep understanding of national culture and the ability to grasp global fashion trends. The second is the objectification of , which is manifested as the material cultural symbol of commodities. The objectification form is transformed into the form of cultural commodities, which is the material carrier form that embodies cultural concepts. Third, the system is institutionalized, reflecting the authority of industry culture. It relies on long-term internalized professional skills and aesthetic tastes, such as art appreciation standards, patents, and awards for art works to establish authoritative boundaries and highlight the symbolic capital of professional status. Three forms exist and transform into each other. For instance, the Bosideng down jacket brand, by drawing on the ancient Chinese philosophy of “following the Way of nature”, has transformed the artistic conception of landscape paintings into the gradient colors and silhouettes of down jackets, successfully earning high praise for its “Modern interpretation of Eastern Aesthetics” at the Milan Fashion Week. The transformation process of ethnic elements achieving cross-cultural communication through material carriers and winning international design awards enables cultural capital to ultimately become the economic capital of the brand, achieving a leap in the core value of the brand. For instance, the inheritance of

intangible cultural heritages such as Suzhou embroidery and batik requires the combination of traditional craftsmanship and modern design. Bosideng has applied the Xinjiang Adelis silk tie-dyeing technique to down jackets and combined it with waterproof technology to achieve the integration of function and culture. By establishing a digital “craft archive”, the process and patterns of traditional craftsmanship are systematically preserved, constantly inspiring designs and achieving the goal of dynamic inheritance.

The exploration of traditional cultural elements and the in-depth refinement of their spiritual connotations^[4] are the only ways to highlight the subjectivity of culture. If the concept of “harmony between man and nature” is applied to the use of natural fabrics, and the totem silver ornaments of the Miao ethnic group are refined into narrative patterns, the “coexistence” series of Jiangnan Buyi draws on the “borrowing scenery” technique of gardens, presenting the beauty of eastern space through layer-by-layer cutting, making the systematic and local innovation of the symbol enter the international context an important way. The transformation of material symbols requires the establishment of emotional connections. Chinese brand Li Ning, with the theme of “Less in Sichuan”, presented hoodies deconstructed with Chinese characters and sneakers featuring terracotta army elements at New York Fashion Week, breaking the binary opposition of “tradition-modern”. The brand sparked discussions on “Oriental futurism” and formed a differentiated competitive advantage. Cross-cultural symbol translation can achieve emotional resonance. For instance, combining Chinese auspicious clouds with Western scroll patterns can create designs that are both elegant and complex. Combining the wabi-sabi aesthetics of Japan with the minimalism of Northern Europe, an aesthetic commonality is created by using aged fabrics and geometric cuts. The collaboration series between Taiping Bird and Disney reinterprets Mickey Mouse’s image through paper-cutting art. While maintaining the global IP recognition, it also infuses a sense of vitality from Chinese folk culture, earning recognition in the international market. The cross-integration of “function” and “culture” expands the boundaries of scenarios. In the field of sports and leisure, the organic combination of tradition and modernity can be achieved. For instance, the shoulder strap structure of Mongolian wrestling suits has been improved into the protective design of windbreakers. The Anta Paris Olympic award ceremony dress features a Chinese knot structure for fabric splicing. The button-up zipper pulls convey an Oriental charm, balancing sports functionality and cultural expression. Cross-border collaboration among designers generates creative collisions. Chinese designers have collaborated with Moroccan designers to combine Miao embroidery and Berber embroidery, creating a denim jacket with contrasting textures. In collaboration with Italian designers, using Xiangyunsha as the lining and Italian wool as the outer layer, we showcase cultural integration through material dialogue and expand the market by leveraging international designer resources.

4.2. National clothing brands build a global fashion ecosystem from cultural capital to civilized dialogue

Casual wear national brands leverage social media to achieve cultural cross-border integration, complete cross-domain value-added of cultural capital, and build a “mutual learning of differences” dialogue among civilizations. As an important interactive model for contemporary civilizing dialogue, social media requires national brands to establish a “cultural translator” to transform the principle of “harmony without uniformity” into an international market strategy. Youdaoplaceholder0 international market channel construction and expansion of a “online and offline” three-dimensional network, design language and functional requirements to adapt to participate in mainstream economic activities, which can be divided into several forms:

- Youdaoplaceholder1 international exhibitions. It is an important window for offline brands to showcase themselves. The Milan Design Week has specially launched the “Oriental Life Aesthetics” exhibition, which creates a complete cultural atmosphere through the joint display of clothing and traditional utensils, attracting the attention of high-end buyers^[5]. This Paris PV Fabric Exhibition focuses on eco-friendly fabrics such as bamboo fiber and brocade, precisely reaching out to professional customer groups.
- Open stores abroad. Both the display of culture and local experience should be taken into consideration. The flagship store in London can set up a “Cultural Experience Zone” and host activities such as a cheongsam

studio. The Dubai store is presented in a Middle Eastern style, featuring locally handcrafted carpets and offering exclusive services to guests to respect the local religious culture. Drawing on ZARA's successful experience, transform the store into a node for cultural exchange and convey the brand value in the space design.

- Online cross-border e-commerce operation. Big data optimization is needed. With the help of Amazon's "Global Selling" business, the Japanese market focuses on light and thin clothing with kimono elements, while the German market emphasizes ethnic functional outdoor clothing.
- Youdaoplaceholder0 multimodal expression system. Guided by Instagram short videos, a closed loop of "content seeding - conversion" is formed, enabling civilized dialogue to break through language barriers. Drawing on the SHEIN model, the acceptance of cultural elements is tested through digital channels, and the strategy is dynamically adjusted to promote holographic expression and form a three-dimensional communication that resonates across cultures. The communication system requires the synergy of "cultural narrative - media matrix - experiential interaction". Social media operation focuses on localization. It launched the "WearYourCulture Challenge" on Instagram to encourage users to share their ethnic costumes. TikTok showcases the process of making cheongsams in a "one-shot" format, combining popular music to attract young viewers. Li Ning released a short video of sportswear with Tai Chi elements on its overseas account, combining martial arts and street dance. The video has received tens of millions of clicks, effectively conveying the philosophy of Eastern sports.
- Cross-border cooperation, breaking cultural boundaries. In collaboration with the Louvre in France, the "Renaissance Dunhuang" series was launched, combining the Mona Lisa with flying apsaras elements. When collaborating with Marvel, the images of heroes were recreated in the form of paper-cutting art, and through the dialogue of cultural symbols, different circles were reached. Experiential marketing creates immersive interactive experiences and has become an effective carrier for connecting diverse cultures and promoting cross-border cooperation. For instance, the "Chinese Colors" exhibition in New York corresponds abstract cultural symbols to the perceivable color system of the Forbidden City, demonstrating that experience-driven international cultural consumption has become the new normal. Hold an event of "Intangible Cultural Heritage Fashion Show" in Sydney, connecting different cultures through costumes. During the dissemination process, it is necessary to transform the discourse system, translate "intangible cultural heritage" into "Living Heritage", interpret the cultural connotation with internationally recognized concepts, and cultivate a cross-cultural communication team to ensure precise reaching of the target audience.

5. Conclusion

In the process of internationalization of national casual wear brands, cultural identity plays an irreplaceable role. It can enhance brand recognition and differentiation, strengthen consumers' emotional resonance and loyalty, and help brands overcome cultural barriers. However, the internationalization of ethnic casual wear still faces cognitive barriers brought about by cultural differences, fierce competition in the international market, and difficulties in brand building and promotion. Therefore, ethnic casual wear enterprises should actively explore and inherit local culture, create their own unique cultural connotations and creative translations, integrate diverse cultural elements, expand overseas sales channels, increase brand coverage, strengthen brand promotion and publicity, and enhance the international influence of the brand. Only in this way can we remain invincible in the fierce international competition, go further and make our country's casual wear shine brightly on the world stage.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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