



## ARTICLE

# Analysis of Dove's Brand Communication Strategy in the Chinese Market

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### ABSTRACT

DOVE is one of the chocolate brands launched by MARS in China. For more than ten years since DOVE entered the Chinese market, she has continuously adjusted her marketing model to conform to the Chinese market and has become more and more popular with Chinese people. Her unique advertising model and fresh advertising style have formed a deeper brand impression in consumers' hearts generated by brand loyalty. This article mainly explores DOVE's brand communication strategy in China from the marketing communication in DOVE's overall brand marketing, and studies how DOVE, as a foreign brand, adapts to the local market and gains the first position in the market. DOVE serves as a leader for Chinese chocolate businesses to step out of difficulty and provides helpful reference experience for China's multinational enterprises to survive in the context of global economy.

## 1. Introduction

The birth of a brand is the existence of "a brand used to distinguish the products of different producers"<sup>[1]</sup>, which refers to the means of differentiating from its competitors in terms of its product name, packaging, and image symbols. The connotation of the brand is constantly updated and injected with new understanding. From the initial use as a product interval symbol to a product value guarantee, it has gradually evolved into an associated carrier of the product, and the brand has gradually developed into an intangible asset. A brand is a manifestation of quality and value for the product itself, as well as an expression of soft power for the company, society and the country. Shu Yongping once said that "the person who is transferred as an individual is a personal

brand; the parallel transfer is for various different social organizations. They constitute the brand of different organizations; and if they rise to a country, then the country also becomes a brand"<sup>[2]</sup>. The formation of a brand is a comprehensive reflection of the inherent cultural and technological level for products, enterprises, and even the country. China vigorously promotes the establishment of brand awareness, strengthens scientific and technological construction, and realizes *creation by China*. In his speech, Xi Jinping instructed that "a brand is a comprehensive reflection of a company's technical capabilities, management level and cultural level, and even its overall quality. In a sense, brand is efficiency, competitiveness, and added value"<sup>[3]</sup>. The means and methods used in the image and the image displayed are the process of com-

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munication between the product and the consumer. Duan Chunlin held this view: "Integrated Brand Communication Theory (IBC) believes that there is a two-way interaction between brands and consumers "Brand communication activities are centered on the core value of the brand, and the process of maximizing brand value and values through the value co-creation of consumer participation"<sup>[4]</sup>. Carrying out effective communication to realize brand value and achieve brand recognition in the minds of consumers is the reason for brand communication analysis. Yang Yan and Luo Ziming once mentioned: "The purpose of brand communication is to integrate various communication methods available, carry out different levels of communication with the audience, empower the brand image and maximize the value of the brand"<sup>[5]</sup>, brand Communication is mainly divided into internal communication and external communication, and external communication is divided into marketing activities and marketing communication.

## 2. Market Analysis of Dove Chocolate

Mars Corporation, as the headquarters of Dove, was established in 1911. Its main business involves the manufacturing and marketing of snacks (candy chocolate), pets, staple foods and electronic products. In 1993, Mars established a factory in Beijing, which mainly produces chocolate and confectionery in China. The market is developing rapidly and is popular with the public. The English name of the Dove brand is DOVE, which is intended to mean *Do you love me*. DOVE is one of the chocolate brands launched by Mars in the United States. It is well known to the public for the love story of Bazaar and Lyon. In order to deepen this brand impression, DOVE focused on the narration of emotions in advertising and expressed the connotation of DOVE Chocolate—out of love<sup>[6]</sup>. At the same time, DOVE uses a simple packaging method on the product packaging, with a simple shape and simple and smooth lines to show the silkiness of DOVE products. The overall image displayed by DOVE is firstly an expression of feelings, and secondly, the taste is delicate, reflecting a light luxury style.

### 2.1 Analysis of Market Competition

China's chocolate market is fiercely competitive. The top ten chocolate brands are DOVE from Mars, Ferrero from Italy Ferrero Trading Group, Hershey from Hershey Company, Cadbury from Swaziland, and Gote from Belgium. Vatican, Swiss lotus, Swiss Snickers, American M & M'S, Meiji of Japan, Nestlé of Switzerland, (see Table 1).

DOVE's sales in the Chinese market reached 39.8%,

occupying the first position, and its biggest competitor was Ferrero (market share 19%). Foreign brands reach more than 90% of the market share. In 2016, Jindi, China's largest local chocolate brand, was acquired by Good Neighbor Co., Ltd. due to market losses and brand aging. China's local chocolate brands cannot support and can only survive at a lower end of the market.<sup>[7]</sup>

**Table 1.** Top 10 chocolate Brands in the Chinese market

Top 10 Chocolate Brands		
Ranking	Brand	Company
1	Dove	Mars Foods (China) Co., Ltd.
2	FERRERO	Ferrero Trading (Shanghai) Co., Ltd.
3	HERSHEY's	Hershey (China) Investment Management Co., Ltd.
4	Cadbury	Cadbury MDL Foods Enterprise Management (Shanghai) Co., Ltd.
5	GODIVA	GODIVA GODIVA (Shanghai) Food Trading Co., Ltd.
6	Lindt	Lindt Trading (Shanghai) Co., Ltd.
7	SUCKERS	Geotechnical Mars Food (China) Co., Ltd.
8	M&M'S	Mars Foods (China) Co., Ltd.
9	Meiji	Meiji Food Industry (Shanghai) Co., Ltd.
10	Nestle	Nestle (China Co., Ltd.)

*Data source:* China Report Hall Database 11:22 on June 26, 2018 ([www.china.baogao.com](http://www.china.baogao.com)).

### 2.2 Analysis of Target Audiences of Major Competitive Products

Ferrero's target audience is economically independent young women who are pursuing fashion and romance, are, have a high level of consumption, have a high awareness of the brand of the product, and like gift box packaging.

Hershey's target audience is mainly independent consumers aged 15 to 44. The main target group is women, followed by teenagers aged 15 to 24.

Jindi Chocolate's target audience is people who are relatively economically independent, interested in promotional products, and value money more than life quality.

### 2.3 Analysis of Advertising Media

With the development of the Internet, companies have to pay attention to the impact of online marketing on brands. Hot search on the Weibo homepage, Baidu homepage, Taobao webpage, and various small windows push advertisements as new means of communication. Network communication can be used to the largest extent in time and space, and the target audience is wide. However, there are some shortcomings in online communication. It only introduces product-related activities and generates a shal-

low understanding of the brand. Therefore, TV advertising is still the most important communication method. In the selection of television media, more attention is paid to the selection of national media, with a wide range of dissemination and high credibility. Secondly, we will choose the media means such as outdoor (bus body, waiting hall, outdoor LCD, subway, light rail, elevator posters, etc.), plane, network and some soft sponsorship. The following comparisons are made on the amount of money, media combinations, and program types.

In terms of the amount of media investment, Dove far exceeded Ferrero. In the first quarter of 2018, Mars's advertising reached 3.5 billion yuan, and Ferrero Asia Ltd. invested 1.4 billion yuan (data source: Nielsen Networks AIS Media advertising monitoring data), and Jindi Meizi's advertising is far lower than that of foreign brands. Large-scale advertising can promote brand image, guide consumers' consumption concepts, and generate brand awareness to achieve purchase behavior. This plays a significant role for Dove in occupying the top position in sales<sup>[8]</sup>.

In terms of media combinations, Dove is more used in non-TV media than Ferrero and Hershey. It makes full use of more media communication methods such as magazines and outdoor advertising to expand its audience and form a brand recognition for consumers. know. For example, placing advertisements on the bus body, the advertising costs are low, contacting different groups of people, close to the lives of consumers, the mobility is relatively strong, the feeling is intuitive, and it is more likely to attract consumers' attention. Mars 'chocolate brand Snickers and Dove 's seasonal advertising in China present a phenomenon of high and low staggering, which can achieve the effect of maintaining customers.

In terms of program types, Dove and Ferrero both mainly choose TV dramas, movies, news and entertainment programs in terms of program types. The difference is that Ferrero's emphasis on news information and sports programs is higher than Dove's. Ferrero focuses on It is male viewing habits, while Dove pays more attention to female viewing habits. The chocolate market is biased towards female groups. Dove's program types are more reasonable in the audience of the program.

### **3. Analysis of DOVE's Brand Communication Strategy**

DOVE has always ranked No. 1 in sales and brand love in the Chinese market. The overall branding has played a role that cannot be ignored. For more than ten years after DOVE entered China, it has continuously explored and innovated on the road of brand building, constantly ad-

justed to adapt to the changes in the Chinese market, and constantly injected new feelings and new connotations into DOVE 's brand. In the process of advertising dissemination, their own "big ideas" have gradually formed, that is, they have formed a unique value demand, which must meet the needs and demands of the audience, and must be distinguished from competitors, which can develop with the inherent tension of business development.

### **3.1 Advertising Communication of Dove Brand**

#### **3.1.1 Analysis of Advertising Elements**

Dove's advertisements have always adopted the method of music and scene change to show a high-end refined, romantic and pleasant atmosphere. The final result of Dove 's advertising is to show the silky and delicious product itself. In summary, all Dove 's advertising ideas will end with a dark coffee-colored ribbon around the leading actress. Delightful and satisfying expressions, using the synesthesia method to show the silky feeling of chocolate. In the scene, Dove uses different forms in different scenarios. In the window, it shows the buildings with British style, exquisite luxury clothing stores, and expensive necklace jewelry, showing a stylish romantic scene; in the advertisement of Tang Wei, appeared in the city, a small party, the suit is a suit and evening dress, the whole atmosphere is romantic and extravagant; Guo Caijie's advertisement appeared in the antique bookstore, the delicate sunlight gives a quiet feeling, the book in the bookstore Presenting a simple, wooden desk and green potted plants show a fresh scene; the advertisements of Yang Ying and Li Yifeng appear on a fairytale park bench. The scene is small and delicate, and an ambiguous feeling can be presented in a small space. Diverse scene changes give the audience a sense of freshness, and the reduction of repetitive factors will increase the interest of the audience. The choice of music is also an important factor for advertising. It must be consistent with the atmosphere of the scene display and at the same time be able to render the emotions of actors. On the whole, it presents a relaxed and pleasant emotional experience. Music can form a sensory memory and deepen the audience's impression.

#### **3.1.2 Advertising Experience Analysis**

The main feature of Dove advertising is emotional appeal. The Dove brand is well known and loved for the love story of Lyon and Bazaar, thus forming consumers' brand awareness. Dove continuously invests in new advertising connotations in each year's advertising to raise the brand awareness. The purpose is gradually expanded from love

to pursuit of dreams and affection. In the original window display of Yang Shiyin, the heroine wore a beautiful skirt, and looked at the necklace and hat in the window. The entire environment was permeated with a brisk and pleasant atmosphere. At last, the heroine took out Dove, the wonderful taste was like It is silky and, showing the audience what is beautiful in urban life, even if it is not possible to own it, but Dove will give you a better experience than having it, Dove chocolate gives a double surprise experience in "deliciousness" and "emotion", and renders the spiritual vision pursued by women in pursuit of freedom and independence in the new era<sup>[9]</sup>.

During the new year of 2017, Guan Xiaotong's "Blessings for Every Year" advertisements were launched, with Chinese characters and other scenes appearing in Chinese characters, such as writing brush characters. The plot of the story develops around the relationship between the mother and the daughter. The development is based on the growth timeline of the lead actress. The advertising scene shows the ordinary Chinese family, showing a warm atmosphere. The scene where the mother teaches her daughter to write repeatedly appears to promote the development of the storyline. The ad combines the scene of celebrating the Chinese New Year and DOVE'S *securing happiness* shows the implicit love which is unique in Chinese people. This ad captures the pain of the status quo in China. Young people who leave their hometown for a career have a loss in their parents' affection, especially in such important festivals as the Chinese New Year, which can arouse the audiences' resonance and identity. Dove's emotional marketing approach satisfies consumers' emotional aspirations, thereby promoting consumers' brand identity.

### 3.1.3 Endorsers

The image of the product spokesperson can intuitively reflect the brand image of the product. When selecting the spokesperson, pay attention to whether the personality of the spokesperson's image is consistent with the product positioning. At the same time, the public image of the spokesperson, consumer preferences, and topicality can affect the effectiveness of advertising communications, so in choosing a spokesperson, not only the characteristics of the image are considered, but also the aesthetic standards of the target audience are more satisfied<sup>[10]</sup>. After Mars entered the Chinese market, it changed its previous strategy, using local Chinese actors, and using the spokesperson's own fan effect to drive the economy and raise the topic. Dove followed the fashion hotspots when choosing spokespersons. For the target market, the spokespersons ever selected were Yang Shiyin, Tang Wei, Guo Caijie,

Deng Ziqi, Yang Ying, Zhao Liying, Audrey Hepburn and Guan Xiaotong. Choosing a star with a high degree of topic and discussion can achieve the desired price promotion effect. Tang Wei became hot thanks to her starring in the film "Beijing Meets Seattle" in 2013 and was loved by the audience. Tang Wei is a first-line star in the domestic market and has a sound fan base. The advertisement chose Tang Wei as the spokesperson to continue the role and popularity of the movie. The promotion of Zhao Liying's advertisement is based on the Chinese myth story Chang'e. Zhao Liying herself has a high reputation among the young generation of actresses well known for generating network traffic and has become more controversial after the works such as "Flower A Thousand Bone", which has triggered a Dove advertisement. The contrastive debate between spokespersons Yang Ying and Zhao Liying attracted the attention of a large number of fans and citizens. Guan Xiaotong is reputed as a child star and the "national daughter" by the public. Her image has always been smart and docile. In 2017, Dove chose Guan Xiaotong as the spokesperson and used the image of "national daughter" to interpret the family affection. DOVE is even more "blessed." "To impress the audience with warmth is a major breakthrough in Dove's advertising.

### 3.1.4 Advertising Medium

Advertising medium is a platform for consumers to get in contact with advertisements. Advertising medium promotes product information and advertising ideas. The choice of advertising media affects the consumer's acceptance of information and the effectiveness of advertising dissemination.

(1) The rapid development of the Internet and the advent of online shopping have gradually transformed national consumption from a single offline consumption to an online and offline consumption model. DOVE has teamed up with major platforms, including Tmall, Jingdong, Baidu, Weibo and other traffic-intensive platforms. For example, in Jingdong Taobao's 6.18 festivals in 2019, full reduction activities will be posted on the homepage. When you log in to the homepage of Baidu, a small window of Dove ads pops up automatically.

(2) As shown in Table 2, in the first quarter of 2016, Dove's advertising was distributed on 86 channels. The main channels for TV media were Hunan Satellite TV, Zhejiang Satellite TV, Tianjin Satellite TV, and Guangzhou Satellite TV. Favorite Wei video said. Hunan Satellite TV's idol solo theater, Happy Base Camp and other programs have been well received by female consumers. Zhejiang Satellite TV has enjoyed great popularity for its variety shows such as Brothers, Ace vs Ace, and Running

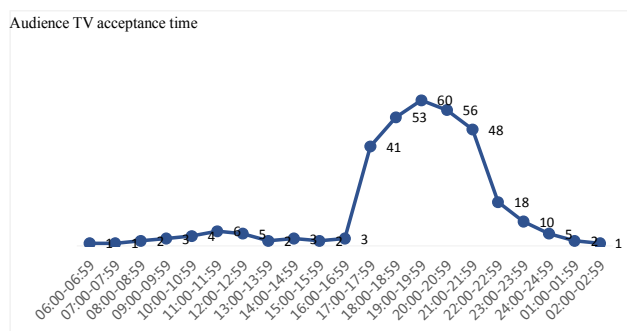
Man in which Yang Ying, the spokeswoman of Dove, participates. Dove's commercials in such programs can attract consumers' attention. Dove has relatively few advertisements and frequencies on CCTV. CCTV advertisements are authoritative, but the cost of advertising is relatively high, and the target group is not obvious. Therefore, she chose to place on CCTV's music channel.

**Table 2.** Channels on which Dove invests more than 1 million in ads

	Advertising cost (Thousand Yuan)	Release Time (seconds)	Number of commercials (Time)
Total Advertising cost	508607124	159505	10634
Hunan Television	70791400	11715	781
Zhejiang Television	63471900	10620	708
Tianjin Television	45700000	7050	470
Guangzhou Television	62498550	26790	1786

*Data Source:* China Report Hall Database 11:22 on June 26, 2018 (www.china.baogao.com).

(3) Whether chocolate itself has an impact on health has been questioned by consumers and chocolate cannot be regarded as a daily necessity. Therefore, chocolate itself, as a conveyer of emotions, will have a clear off-peak season in sales. The period from October to March in the following year is its annual peak season and Dove often reaches its peak in January. The New Year, the Chinese New Year and Valentine's Day all fall in this period. Dove will bombard various media with its advertising during this period. During the course of a day, consumers' exposure to advertisements will be different. Consumers will reach a higher level at off-duty nodes, and they will reach a small peak between 17 pm and 22 pm. Dove plays its advertisements most frequently during this time, see Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Time audience spend on TV

*Data source:* Nielsen AQM Market: National.

Dove has various degrees of advertising in magazines, outdoor videos, waiting halls, subways, and broadcast cinemas. For white-collar workers, subway and waiting room

advertisements will be perfect media to enhance these audiences' impression of the brand; although broadcast movies are not widely distributed, they have the highest audience preference. If they are placed closer to the target group in cinemas, they will have a high publicity effect. Dove mainly places advertisements on high-end fashion magazines, but the Internet release has gradually diluted the magazines in terms of advertising effect. The use of multiple media methods for advertising can maintain customers and make up for the shortcomings of seasonal chocolate sales.

### 3.2 Dove's PR Communication

Compared with advertising communication, public relations communication can also strengthen the influence of brand communication, and conducting public relations activities to improve the public image of enterprises and products has become an essential step for enterprises. Successful public relations events can raise brand awareness and reputation, and at the same time, generate more recognition and brand loyalty among consumers. Consequently, more and more companies are devoting themselves to charity and paying attention to community.

#### 3.2.1 Public Welfare Activities

The Spring Festival is the most traditional festival in China, and it is a time for the Chinese families to reunite. However, with the increase in the number of people going out, it is difficult to grab tickets, which became a hot topic in society. In 2012, Dove launched a "Dove on Journey" charity event in 2012 to provide home buses in Beijing, Chengdu, and Shanghai. Through online platforms, consumers can win air tickets and bus services and Dove gift packages. Nearly 30,000 people participated in this event. Tang Yan, Qi Wei and other stars participated in this event to boost the topic and discussion. This activity of Dove by making full use of the Chinese people's anticipation of reunion during the Spring Festival, used hot social issues, helped solve such issues, promoted product brands while strengthening the sense of social participation, and left a good impression on consumers.

#### 3.2.2 PR Activities in Promotional Strategies

In addition to public welfare activities, Dove has launched a lot of public relations activities based on promotional strategies in the Chinese market, using the Internet for large-scale information bombardment, and using Weibo hot search topics to connect Dove with brand spokespersons. As a result, a high degree of topical discussion has been formed; by taking advantage of China's unique festi-

vals, Dove's sales and public relations activities generally reach a small peak. For example, by collaborating with Xiaomi in using AI technology to spread the secret of love to the majority of technical boys, Dove has exploited another part of the market. Making use of hot domestic issues, Dove and Durex faltered each other at Thanksgiving and consequently the humorous form of the icon was loved and imitated by everyone. In Shanghai in 2019, Dove and LINE FRIENDS jointly launched the "Dove Little Fresh Series", and collaborated with two-dimensional characters, such as the mobile game "Love and Producer" which is popular with female audiences, and the domestic animation "Inhumane". This kind of cross-border cooperation is a manifestation of Dove's profound insight into the psychology of young consumers and is loved by consumers. At the approach of the Teacher's Day In 2018, Dove and Tencent jointly launched advertisements in Wechat moments and collaborated with Yonghui to generate applets. To celebrate the Teacher's Day, Dove launched a series of "Sweet Gifts for Teachers" promotional activities, which realized the unification of "marketing" and "sales". Using WeChat's huge user group, it covered the blind spot of snack food launch and opened up a new distribution chain for retailing. In the launch, the target audience is more optimized, the consumers are more efficiently reached, and considerable performances achieved. Under the public relations activities, Dove gradually formed some brand awareness in consumers and gained some new potential consumers' approval. At the same time, Dove also invested in large game pages, uploading some creative and attractive self-made small videos on websites with topic to grab women's attention, making the brand closer to life, and enhancing the consumer's recognition of the Dove brand.

Of course, Dove has also experienced some crisis events in recent years. For example, in 2018, high mineral oil content was reported and a consumer found three worms in Dove chocolate. Such negative incidents have caused extreme panic among consumers. The quality of Mars' products was questioned by consumers. Dove's public relations department responded to the complaint about the high mineral oil content by claiming that there were no relevant industrial standards on mineral oil in China, which stirred anger among consumers. After the worm incident, Dove's relevant public relations department did not make a timely response and lacked in ability to deal with crisis in public relations. In view of these unfavorable incidents, the relevant public relations departments of Dove should raise awareness and make appropriate adjustments. Chinese enterprises must also learn from them.

### **3.3 Word of Mouth Communication of the Dove Brand**

Word-of-mouth communication is divided into two parts here, corporate word-of-mouth and brand word-of-mouth. Word-of-mouth communication can increase consumer recognition of the brand and increase the reliability of advertising, thereby reducing the cost of brand communication<sup>[11]</sup>.

Dove has certain advantages in the company's information source. Dove is one of the brands of Mars, and Mars is the world's largest manufacturer of pet food and snack food and has high credibility in terms of production technology, raw material selection, and taste classification, so consumers' decision-making risks are relatively low.

The Dove brand itself has a very good consumer preference. Dove is different from other chocolate brands Dove Chocolate. Dove first used the love tragedy of Lyon and Bartha to arouse sympathy in consumers and gradually formed a brand impression. The spread of stories can arouse consumers' interest, and then convey brand information. Brands in the name of love have a higher degree of consumer recognition and credibility in the market, and have a relatively large number of brands with high brand loyalty and solid customer base. Dove's product spokespersons are loved and recognized by consumers in both image and temperament. Most of Dove's spokespersons are handsome men and beautiful women, which can promote the rapid growth and expansion of the brand.

### **4. Conclusion**

The market for chocolate is constantly expanding, competition among chocolate brands is becoming more and more intense, consumers have more choices of products, and consumer attitudes are changing. As a foreign brand, it is not an accident that Dove can successfully open the market in China and occupy the number one position in the market. Its success is inseparable from the efforts made by Dove in brand communication. In the process of brand communication, cross-cultural companies should always pay attention to changes in consumer needs and emotional demands, understand the local cultural environment, and adapt to market changes. China's consumer base is large, and in the process of market development, Dove gradually meets the special needs of consumers and opens up new markets. Moreover, it conducts close and detailed research on its competitors to develop their own unique product brand image and differentiate its products from its competitors'.

To enter the Chinese market as a foreign brand, Dove first relied on the strength of Mars, the company's reputa-

tion, and used a unique brand story to arouse the sympathy of Chinese consumers. The product has a unique taste and is loved by consumers. In particular, Dove has made tremendous efforts in public relations activities and advertising. Compared with other chocolate brands, it takes the lead in investment in advertising. Another factor for its success is its creativity in advertising and its attention to the culture-loaded phenomenon that Chinese people are reserved in revealing their emotions. The full use of emotional appeal marketing in its advertising makes Dove's brand well received and loved by Chinese consumers.

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