



DIGITAL BRAND IMAGE AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF MIXUE ICE CREAM & TEA IN TAIAN CITY, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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ABSTRACT

The research objective were: 1) to explore the digital brand image and positioning of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea. 2) to analyze potential digital branding strategies to enhance MIXUE's market position and 3) to study digital brand communication for awareness and recognition in Taian City, people's republic of China.

The research methodology was qualitative research. Through in-depth interviews and document research, the key informants were chosen by purposive sampling in 3 groups 14 people for example 1) brand image and positioning of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea consisting of one marketing director, one public relations managers, two branch managers, 2) potential branding strategies consisting of two brand academic professionals, two digital marketing managers, one Communication Arts Professor and 3) brand awareness and recognition of the marketing consisting of five consumers. The research instruments consisted of structured in-depth interview guides while the data were analyzed using content analysis to identify key themes.

Research found indicate that 1) MIXUE brand image is strongly shaped by its iconic "Snowman" mascot and widely recognized theme song, both of which are deeply rooted in consumers' minds. The bright and colorful store design conveys a youthful, fun, and playful atmosphere, effectively attracting customers and fostering emotional attachment. 2) Local marketing strategies further enhance this image, including partnerships with influencers, community events, and active use of digital platforms. Through WeChat, MIXUE provides product updates, promotions, and purchase links, while on Douyin, it shares engaging short videos about product-making and employee stories. These approaches reinforce its positioning as "delicious and affordable" and 3) help broaden consumer reach. At the same time, consumers primarily associate MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea with affordability, reflecting the effectiveness of its communication strategy in raising brand awareness. However, to remain competitive, the brand should adapt to the growing trend of healthy consumption, enrich its brand culture, and optimize services for diverse consumer groups.

Recommendations include formulating innovation policies, enhancing team training, and promoting sustainability to strengthen MIXUE's presence in Taian. In addition, adopting mixed-method research and exploring emerging technologies can further improve brand communication and the overall effectiveness of its strategic initiatives.

Keywords: Digital Brand Image, Communication Strategies, MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea, Taian City

Background of Research

MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea, a nationwide chain brand under Mixue Bingcheng Co., Ltd., has rapidly expanded to 46,479 stores as of December 31, 2024. The brand's success is not only rooted in its cost-effective pricing model and extensive franchise system but also in its ability to integrate digital brand communication into its business strategy. By utilizing social media platforms, mobile applications, and digital marketing tools, MIXUE has strengthened consumer engagement and created brand awareness among a diverse customer base. In Taian City, the brand has built a strong presence, particularly among students and young professionals, by leveraging digital communication channels to enhance visibility, recognition, and consumer interaction in the digital era.

However, despite its popularity, the brand faces challenges in maintaining consistent brand communication, differentiating itself from competitors, and ensuring franchisees adhere to standardized marketing strategies. Additionally, local consumer preferences and seasonal demand fluctuations pose further obstacles to sustaining customer engagement and sales performance. Addressing these issues requires a well-structured brand communication strategy to enhance brand loyalty, improve customer interaction, and reinforce a cohesive brand image across all franchise outlets (Smith, J. 2022).

In the digital era, as a nationwide chain brand, MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea has rapidly expanded in the Chinese market with its cost-effective pricing and extensive franchise system. In Taian City, MIXUE has established a strong market presence, attracting a diverse customer base, particularly students and young professionals. However, despite the brand's notable success in the Taian market, consumer perceptions of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea also exhibit diverse characteristics (Johnson, L. 2023). So, Digital brand communication MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea has the process by which a brand conveys its core messages, brand identity, and brand values to target audiences through various digital channels in an effective and strategic manner. The goal is to build brand awareness, encourage consumer engagement, and foster long-term emotional connection and loyalty to the brand.

Taian City, the beverage and ice cream market is highly competitive, with popular brands like Heytea, Nayuki, and CoCo dominating the mid-to-premium segments. While MIXUE holds a strong position in terms of affordability, it faces significant challenges in differentiating its brand image, particularly among young consumers and university students (Liu, 2022; Wang & Chen, 2021).

Despite MIXUE's rapid nationwide expansion, there is a notable lack of academic research focusing specifically on its brand image and communication strategies within Taian City. Existing studies tend to address general consumer behavior or national-level branding but overlook local dynamics and regional consumer perceptions (Zhang & Chen, 2022; Li, 2021). No prior study has analyzed MIXUE's brand positioning in Taian or proposed localized branding strategies tailored to the Taishan District context. This study fills a critical gap in localized brand communication research in second-tier Chinese cities. Consumers in Taian generally perceive MIXUE's products as affordable and cost-effective, with items such as the 2 yuan ice cream and 4 yuan lemonade being particularly popular. The brand's "Snow King" mascot and its theme song have high recognition among consumers, conveying a youthful and lively image. Additionally, MIXUE maintains frequent interactions with consumers through social media platforms such as Douyin and Weibo, enhancing the brand's approachability and visibility (Zhang, X. 2023).

Furthermore, with the rise of health-conscious consumption trends, some consumers hope that MIXUE will introduce more low-sugar and low-fat healthy beverage options. In addition, although the "Snow King" image is fun, the brand's cultural depth still requires further enrichment. Consumers expect MIXUE to incorporate more cultural elements to strengthen emotional resonance with the brand. Regarding service, consumers have also suggested areas for improvement, such as providing more personalized service experiences tailored to the needs of different consumer groups, including students, office workers, and the elderly.

MIXUE's Ice Cream & Tea branding appeals to young consumers with its fun, playful image and affordable treats. Otherwise Strong Local Presence: The brand maintains visibility in Taishan District with eye-catching store designs and strategic locations, and Social Media Engagement: Active on digital platforms, leveraging trends and promotions to attract and retain customers. Giving rise to delving into the corporate image communication strategy of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea in the new media environment is not only beneficial for the brand's growth but also has far-reaching implications for the entire industry and academic research. It has the potential to unlock new strategies for corporate success in the digital age. (Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L., 2016)

However in Taian City, Shandong Province, represents a rapidly urbanizing area with a dense population of young consumers, including university students and first-jobbers. As the economic and administrative center of Taian, it has seen rising demand for trendy, affordable beverages and desserts, positioning it as a strategic site for MIXUE's expansion (Liu, 2022). Unlike first-tier cities such as Beijing or Shanghai, where global trends and high purchasing power dominate, Taishan District features a cost-sensitive yet brand-aware demographic, shaping unique opportunities for localized branding (Wang & Chen, 2021). Prior research on brand communication in China has focused mainly on national markets or major cities, with little emphasis on second-tier cities like Taian. Therefore, analyzing MIXUE's digital brand communication in this district helps address this gap while offering insights into consumer behavior in emerging urban markets (Zhao, 2023).

Therefore, researchers are interested in studying “Digital Brand Image and Communication Strategies of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea in Taian City, People’s Republic of China”. The expected benefits include understanding the brand’s image and positioning, identifying potential digital branding strategies for marketing positioning, and recognizing the digital communication necessary to create brand awareness and recall. Scholars and businessmen interested in digital communication about beverage brand communication can apply this knowledge.

Research Objectives

1. To explore digital brand image and positioning of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea in Taian City, People’s Republic of China.
- 2 To analyze potential digital branding strategies for MIXUE’s market position in Taian city, People’s Republic of China.
3. To study digital brand communication for awareness and recognition of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea in Taian City, People’s Republic of China.

Research Scope:

1. Scope of content: To analyze the digital brand image and positioning, To Explore potential digital branding strategies for MIXUE’s market position, and to examine brand awareness and recognition digital communication of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea in Taishan District, Taian City.
2. Scope of Key Informants: were chosen by purposive sampling in 3 groups of 14 people directly involved with brand communication Mixue’s Ice Cream & Tea awareness and recognition including 1 marketing director, 1 branch managers, 1 public relations managers, 2 digital marketing managers, 2 brand academic professionals, 1 communication arts professor and 6 consumers.
3. Scope of Area: Taian City, in People’s Republic of China.
4. Scope of Time: January 2025 – March 2025.

Conceptual Framework

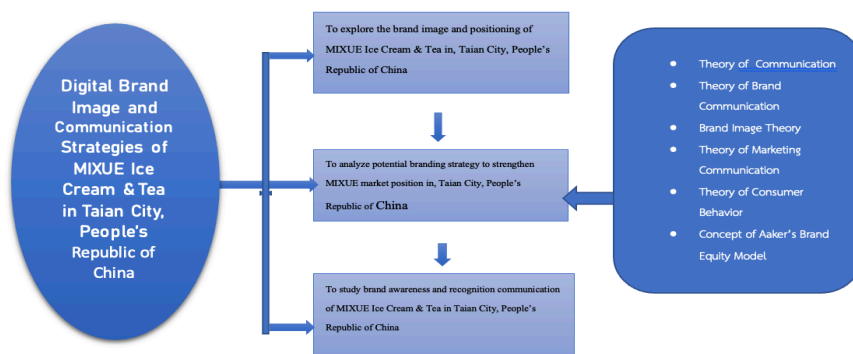


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

Definitions of Terms

1) Digital Brand Image

Refer to the overall perception, impression, and associations that consumers form toward a brand through digital platforms and online interactions. It encompasses how a brand is represented, communicated, and experienced via websites, social media, mobile applications, and other digital touchpoints. These digital interactions shape consumer attitudes, trust, engagement, and loyalty, influencing both brand preference and long-term relationship with consumers in the digital environment in Taian city.

2) Communication Strategies

Refers to the strategies and methods a brand uses to interact with its audience through digital channel. This includes social media, websites, email marketing, online advertising, search engine optimization (SEO), and other digital platforms to create awareness, engage and build brand loyalty in Taian city.

3) MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea

Refers to the brand communication strategies and practices used by MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea, a popular Chinese beverage and dessert chain. It encompasses how MIXUE interacts with its target audience in this local area, including Marketing communication (advertising, promotions, and events), Brand Equity, Brand image and messaging (how the brand presents itself to the public) Customer engagement (online and offline interactions with consumers behavior), Local partnerships or community involvement Adaptation to regional culture and consumer behavior in Taian City.

4) Taian City

Refers to City is a prefecture-level city in Shandong Province, China. It is best known for Mount Tai (Tai Shan), one of China's most sacred mountains and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Taian has a rich cultural and historical significance, attracting tourists and pilgrims alike (UNESCO, 2006).

Theory and conceptual

1) Theory of Communication

Based on Berlo Communication Model SMCR model (Berlo, 1960) outlines communication through four elements: Source, Message, Channel, and Receiver. MIXUE effectively applies this model in Taishan District by managing its brand communication strategically. The Source represents MIXUE's brand identity and core values. The Message includes affordability, quality, and joy in consumption. Digital platforms and in-store experiences act as Channels to reach young, budget-conscious consumers. This structured communication enhances brand loyalty and supports MIXUE's local and global market growth.

By leveraging the SMCR model, MIXUE ensures effective brand communication, fostering brand loyalty and engagement across multiple platforms. This structured approach contributes to its rapid global expansion and strong market presence.

2) Theory of Brand Communication which is Brand image consists of characteristics namely: 1) Brand Identity, 2) Brand Competence & Benefit, 3) Brand Personality, 4) Brand Behavior & Attitude and 5) Brand Association. Through various channels. Then delve into how brands convey messages, interact with their audiences, and shape brand perceptions. In the current competitive business landscape, this theory holds significant importance for companies aiming to establish a strong brand presence. (Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L., 2016).

3) Theory of Marketing Communication

MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea utilizes the Marketing Communication Model to build its brand and Engage with consumers in Taishan District, Taian City. The brand employs a mix of advertising, social media marketing, public relations, and sales promotions to create a strong brand presence. For example, MIXUE uses social media platforms like WeChat and Douyin to promote new products and engage with customers through interactive content. The brand also collaborates with local influencers and participates in community events to enhance its local identity and credibility. By leveraging the Marketing Communication Model, MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea effectively communicates its brand values, such as affordability, quality, and fun, to its target audience. This integrated approach helps the brand maintain a consistent image across different channels 1) Advertising, 2) Public Relations 3) Sales Promotion 4) Personal Selling 5) Direct Marketing 6) Digital Marketing 7) Event Marketing 8) Word-of-Mouth Marketing.

4) Brand Image Theory

Brand image theory highlights the importance of how consumers perceive a brand—its personality, values, and emotional associations. Effective advertising and consistent visual identity contribute to building a strong brand image (David Ogilvy, 1983).

5) Theory of Consumer Behavior

Theory examines how individuals and groups select, purchase, use, and dispose of goods, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and desires. This field draws from psychology, sociology, economics, and anthropology to understand buying decisions and consumption patterns. (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). Understanding consumer behavior is essential for MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea to effectively attract, engage, and retain customers. By applying key consumer behavior theories, MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea has successfully built a strong brand presence and loyal customer base.

6) Concept of Aaker's Brand Equity Model

Focuses on how the value of a brand is built through consumer perceptions and associations. Developed by David A. Aaker, the model outlines the concept of brand equity as the value premium that a company gains from a product with a recognizable name, compared to a generic equivalent. Aaker's model emphasizes that strong brand equity leads to higher customer preference, premium pricing, and long-term brand success. By managing these elements effectively, businesses can build a brand that holds value in the minds of consumers (Aaker, D. A., 1991).



Figure 1.2: The Aaker model

Source: <https://www.canto.com/blog/aaker-model/>

In Conclusion, Aaker's model posits that a strong brand equity is built over time through consistent positive MIXUE has successfully built brand experiences, emotional connections, and clear communication of brand values, which collectively contribute to the brand's long-term success. According to Aaker, brand equity is a straightforward concept built on the foundation of recognition. Brands that trigger emotional connections and are easily identifiable are the ones that achieve the most tremendous success.

7) Background of MIXUE Ice Cream&Tea Taian City

MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea was founded in 1997 in Zhengzhou, starting with selling shaved ice and fruit tea at low prices, targeting students and young consumers. The brand later expanded its menu to include bubble tea and ice cream, using a "low price + good quality" strategy. It launched a franchise model, enabling rapid nationwide expansion. Mixue developed strong brand identity through the Snow King Mascot, theme songs, and digital marketing on platforms like WeChat and Douyin. The brand has grown both across China and into Southeast Asia, including key areas like Caiyuan Street in Taian City.



Figure 1.3: Mixue Ice Cream & Tea

Source: <https://focus.cbbc.org/what-is-mixue-the-worlds-largest-fast-food-chain/>

Research Methodology

1) Research Design: The study was Qualitative Research with In-Depth interview and Research Documentary.

2) The key informants: were chosen by purposive sampling 3 groups from 14 person directly involved with Digital Brand Image and Communication Strategies of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tean: one marketing director, one public relations managers, two branch managers, 2) potential branding strategies consisting of two brand academic professionals, two digital marketing managers, one Communication Arts Professor and 3) brand awareness and recognition of the marketing consisting of five consumers (students teenager, working adults)

3) Research Instruments: The research instruments used were 3 sets are composed and add the sequence number as follows: 1) Semi-structured in-depth interview scripts used to collect data from the interviews and document. 2) The researcher studied and reviewed the literature and related research, collected data to be used as a framework for creating a structured interview. Before using it, the researcher initially checked the quality of the created instruments by considering the consistency of the questions with the issues studied according to the objectives of the study. 3) The instruments used for data collection were submitted to the advisor

4) Data collection method: The researcher made an appointment in advance to request an interview and explained the objectives before collecting data according to objectives 1-3. It was a self-data collection using a semi-structured in-depth interview and adhered to the ethics of human research. When an appointment was made for the date, time, and location with the informant, Based on current environmental factors and to make the interviews more convenient for the interviewees, the interviews will be conducted through video conferencing software and audio recording. The purpose of the interviews will be made clear to the interviewees before the start of the interviews, and they will be informed that any information that is not readily available for public consumption will be kept confidential and that all the interviews will be audio-recorded with explicit consent to facilitate subsequent transcription and analysis. The researcher recorded the interview tape and transcribed it in detail after making a phone call via Line to facilitate data analysis

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the study employed triangulation methods, including: 1) Data Triangulation – Information was collected from multiple sources, such as survey responses, interviews, and secondary data, to cross-verify the findings. 2) Investigator Triangulation – The research process involved reviews or input from more than one researcher or supervisor to reduce individual bias in data interpretation. 3) Methodological Triangulation – A combination of data collection methods, including qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires, was used to compare and enhance the accuracy of the results.

5) Data Analysis: The researcher will analyze the data using the content analysis method according to the 4 following steps are composed Step 1: Transcribe the data from the interviews. Transcription: The first step is to transcribe the recorded interviews accurately. This involves converting the spoken words into written text, capturing all the details and nuances of the conversations. Step 2: Prepare data from notes and interviews for analysis. Similar data will be categorized to find findings. Step 3: Collect data and summarize only important data. Step 4: Process and summarize real data to analyze the data by creating conclusions by describing the description analysis.

The results of the study obtained from the interviews will be analyzed by analyzing the conceptual framework base on the following theories : Communication, Theory of Brand Communication, Theory of Marketing Communication, Theory of Consumer Behavior and Theory of Brand Equity.

Result

From objective 1: Analysis Results of the digital Brand Image and Positioning of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea in Taian City:

The results of the study were as follows: it can be seen that consumers in Taishan District, Taian City, have a clear perception of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea's brand image, considering it affordable, stable in quality, and unique. MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea has achieved certain results in digital marketing, The bright and colorful store design creates a lively and friendly atmosphere that effectively attracts, 'Snow King' image is deeply rooted in people's hearts, and its theme song is widely spread. Most consumers will feel very relaxed and happy when they see the online content of MIXUE Bing cheng. The various funny videos of "Snow King" enjoy cost-effective drinks and ice cream. Therefore there is still room for improvement, such as precise marketing using big data and strengthening brand culture construction. At the same time, product and marketing innovation combined with local characteristics will help further strengthen digital Brand Image and Positioning of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea in Taian City, China.

In conclusion, this objective 1 using the Theory of Brand Communication, Theory of Communication according to the 5W principle :(Who, What, In Which Channel, To Whom, and With What Effect.) was focus on positive and consistent with analyzing MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea's brand image and positioning in Taian. Image according to the established framework.

From objective 2: Exploration Results of Potential digital Branding Strategies to Strengthen MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea's Market Position in Taian City :

The results of the study were as follows: the digital branding strategy can be characterized by a dynamic interplay between centralized branding direction from headquarters and locally adaptive implementations. 1) Headquarters' Strategic Direction The headquarters provides a unified branding framework that includes consistent use of the red-and-white color scheme, the snowman mascot, and standardized store design, all of which reinforce brand recognition across markets.

Moreover, the headquarters focuses on brand image promotion and new product launches, utilizing integrated online and offline communication to strengthen the brand's overall visibility and consistency. 2) Localized Strategic Adaptation Individual store operators adapt marketing strategies to fit the local context, placing emphasis on customer service, in-store promotions, and community engagement. They also implement digital marketing on popular local platforms such as WeChat, Douyin, and Meituan, to better align with consumer behavior in Taishan District. 3). Application of the "Glocalization" Concept MIXUE's branding strategy in Taian reflects a clear application of the "glocalization" concept balancing global brand consistency with local market adaptation. While visual identity and brand personality remain consistent across regions, product offerings, recipes, and promotional tactics are often tailored to match local tastes and preferences.

In conclusion, this objective 2: Using the Theory of Marketing Communication, Theory of Consumer Behavior. MIXUE's digital branding strategy in Taian city demonstrates an effective combination of centralized brand control and localized responsiveness. This dual approach enables the brand to maintain a coherent national identity while simultaneously engaging meaningfully with local consumers through context-specific marketing and platform selection and MIXUE's commercial song goes viral on TikTok.

Table 1. Apply application of Marketing Concepts in MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea in Taian City

Model	Concept	Application of Marketing
Aaker's Brand Equity Model	Creating Brand Value through Brand Awareness & Loyalty	Utilize mascots and well-located stores to enhance brand recognition.
Word-of-Mouth & Viral Marketing IMC Model	Amplifying Brand Awareness through Social Influence	Harness TikTok and viral campaigns to increase brand awareness.
AIDA Model	Attracting Attention and Stimulating Purchase	Use mascots, vibrant colors, and viral campaigns to attract customers.
Keller's CBBE Model (Customer-Based Brand Equity)	Building Long-Term Customer Relationships	Use Snow King and the brand's theme song to create Brand Resonance.
IMC Model (Integrated Marketing Communications)	Multichannel Communication for Brand Building	Leverage advertising, social media, and promotions together.

From objective 3: To study Brand Awareness and Recognition digital Communication of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea in Taian City, People's Republic of China.

The results of the study were as follows: 1) Interactive Engagement through Social Media Respondents consistently emphasized the brand's active role in engaging consumers online. MIXUE's official social media accounts respond promptly to customer comments and private messages, which builds a sense of connection and value among consumers. This proactive digital interaction is perceived as crucial to building trust and reinforcing the brand's image in the digital space. 2) Digital Membership and Loyalty Programs

Multiple participants referred to MIXUE's online membership system, where consumers earn points that can be redeemed for free drinks or gifts. Birthday promotions and exclusive offers further strengthen consumer loyalty. These benefits not only encourage repeat purchases but also increase the "stickiness" of customer relationships. 3) Cost-Effectiveness and Accessibility: A recurring theme was affordable pricing and widespread store presence, which makes the brand highly accessible to various consumer groups. According to Wang Li and Uncle Chen, MIXUE appeals particularly to price-sensitive groups such as students and young office workers. This cost-effectiveness is a major factor contributing to brand awareness and frequent consumption. 4) Influencer and KOL Marketing: MIXUE also benefits from digital word-of-mouth via influencers and key opinion leaders (KOLs). When food bloggers recommend new products, their followers are motivated to try them, thus boosting both visibility and perceived credibility of the brand. This strategy helps reach new audiences and builds a modern, social-media-driven brand identity. 5) Brand Identity and Unique Image: highlighted the strength of MIXUE's brand image, particularly the distinctive 'Snow King' red mascot and joyful visual branding. This visual identity is unique compared to competitors and contributes to stronger consumer recall and recognition, especially in high-traffic or youth-centered areas. 6) Convenience and Service Quality: that online ordering and delivery services are fast and reliable, ensuring that products arrive fresh. This enhances customer satisfaction and supports the brand's reputation for convenience. MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea has successfully built strong brand awareness and recognition in Taian City through a combination of digital marketing, physical store presence, and strategic brand communication. Wide Store Presence. The visibility of MIXUE stores in high-traffic areas strengthens local brand recognition. Digital Marketing & Social Media. The brand engages local customers through platforms like Douyin (TikTok China), WeChat, and online promotions. Affordable & Trendy Image-MIXUE's budget-friendly pricing and fun branding make it popular among students and young consumers in Taian. Word-of-Mouth & Community Engagement-Local promotions, customer interactions, and visually appealing storefronts contribute to organic brand recognition. Overall, MIXUE's consistent brand communication strategy has effectively established its presence in aian City, making it a well-recognized and preferred choice for ice cream and tea lovers. However, it was also noted by MIXUE is cost-effective, some customers expect improvements in product quality such as using higher-quality raw materials to meet more diverse and evolving needs.



Discussion

From the study on the digital brand communication of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea in Taian City, People's Republic of China, the researcher presents the following key discussion points:

1) Discussion about major findings of objective 1

Focuses on exploring digital Brand Image and Positioning of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea in Taian City, People's Republic of China.

Discussion of the results of the study that indicate that MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea has successfully cultivated a distinct brand image in Taian through its affordable pricing strategy and the recognizable "Snow King" mascot. These elements contribute to a brand identity that is perceived as fun, fresh, and youthful, particularly resonating with students and young professionals, who represent a significant portion of the brand's customer base. This is consistent with Kotler and Keller's brand communication theory, which emphasizes the importance of creating memorable, emotionally resonant brand imagery to establish a strong market presence.

However, the brand's current market positioning is heavily skewed toward the low-cost segment, which while effective for mass-market appeal, limits its potential in attracting higher-end consumers seeking premium experiences. The absence of a premium product line or upscale environment may hinder the brand's long-term equity and diversification strategy. As such, there is a need to optimize positioning and enhance product quality to appeal to a broader market segment without diluting the core identity that has made MIXUE successful among value-conscious consumers. In terms of brand perception, consumers in Taian commonly associate MIXUE with affordability, accessibility, and a cheerful tone. The brand is often viewed as a daily refreshment option rather than a luxury indulgence. While this perception supports high-frequency purchases, it may also constrain the brand's aspirational value consistent with Johnson (2023), whose research emphasized the importance of user-generated content (UGC) in shaping brand narratives in the new media era. Johnson suggests that encouraging customers to share personal consumption experiences can enhance the depth and authenticity of a brand image.

Applying this insight, MIXUE can leverage UGC campaigns by inviting consumers to share photos, videos, and stories particularly at popular locations such as the Caiyuan Street store to promote positive emotional associations and increase organic engagement. This approach not only enriches brand perception but also supports digital positioning through authentic storytelling, a key strategy in digital era branding. Moreover, social media engagement has played a vital role in building brand loyalty in Taian. Promotions, limited-time offers, and interactive campaigns on platforms like Douyin and WeChat have sustained customer interest and repeat patronage, especially among younger demographics. However, qualitative feedback from the field indicates that inconsistencies in service and brand experience across franchise locations may affect overall customer satisfaction and perception of brand professionalism. To enhance its potential market position, MIXUE must address the dual challenges of standardizing brand experience across franchises and upgrading its perceived brand value. This could be achieved by introducing premium product lines, improving interior design elements in flagship stores, and ensuring consistent customer service through franchisee training and digital monitoring tools. In conclusion, while MIXUE's current brand image as an affordable, consumers are youthful option has effectively positioned it in the mass-market segment, strategic enhancements in quality, storytelling, and service consistency will be essential to expand its appeal and strengthen its digital brand positioning in Taian and beyond.

2) Discussion about major findings of objective 2

Focuses on analyzing potential digital branding strategies to enhance MIXUE's market position MIX Ice Cream & Tea's market position in Taian City, People's Republic of China.

Discussion of the results of the study that strengthening localized marketing strategies is essential to enhancing MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea's market position in Taishan District. Adapting to local consumer preferences by introducing flavors and product variations aligned with Taian's cultural and seasonal characteristics has proven effective in building relevance and consumer connection. This approach not only improves product-market fit but also strengthens emotional engagement with local audiences. One of the most promising digital branding strategies involves collaboration with local influencers and food bloggers to amplify brand visibility and credibility. Social media personalities play a vital role in shaping consumer behavior, especially among younger demographics. Through their authentic recommendations and viral content, MIXUE can extend its brand reach and foster greater community trust. This is consistent with Zhang (2023), who emphasized that the rapid local market penetration of national beverage brands such as MIXUE is driven by iconic brand symbols (e.g., the Snow King mascot and theme song) and their ability to shape a unique local identity. Moreover, engaging in city-based marketing campaigns such as sponsoring community festivals, university events, and local promotions has been shown to reinforce MIXUE's local presence and create a sense of brand belonging among consumers. These practices serve to humanize the brand and align it more closely with the lifestyle and values of the Taian community.

The use of digital platforms further enhances this localized approach. MIXUE's social media campaigns on platforms like WeChat, Douyin and Xiaohongshu have generated substantial consumer interaction and brand exposure. Consistent with Smith (2022) then on beverage brand marketing, social media platforms are instrumental in increasing brand awareness and engagement, particularly through user-generated content, influencer collaborations, and real-time feedback.

3) Discussion about major findings of objective 3

Focuses on study digital brand communication for awareness and recognition of MIXUE Ice Cream & Tea in Taian City, People's Republic of China.

Discussion of the results of the study that MIXUE has achieved high brand awareness largely due to its affordable pricing strategy and widespread franchise presence, which makes the brand highly accessible to a broad range of consumers, particularly students and young professionals. The extensive network of stores across the city ensures high visibility and frequent exposure, reinforcing brand recall. Furthermore, the brand's distinctive visual identity, especially the recognizable Snow King mascot and red-and-white logo, enhances visual branding and supports instant consumer recognition. These elements have led to increased foot traffic and a high level of impulse purchasing behavior, particularly among budget-conscious consumers. In terms of communication strategy, social media and digital marketing play a central role. MIXUE effectively utilizes popular, interactive campaigns, and customer engagement. Strategies including online discounts, gamified challenges, and user-generated content have successfully strengthened the brand's visibility and consumer engagement. The use of short videos, memes, and trending content aligns well with the media consumption habits of younger audiences, resulting in increased brand relevance and loyalty. These findings align with Smith (2022), that the role of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok in boosting brand awareness in the beverage industry, particularly among students and local communities. MIXUE's structured and localized digital communication strategy combining consistent brand messaging with culturally relevant content demonstrates the application of this principle in practice. This multi-channel integration not only supports real-time interaction but also builds long-term brand equity and loyalty in the local market. Similarly, MIXUE's participation in local events, sponsorships, and campus-focused marketing in Taian has enhanced its local brand recognition. Peer-to-peer marketing techniques such as group buying and referral discounts have also encouraged organic brand growth through word-of-mouth promotion. Moreover, the findings are consistent with Acar, Çizmeçi, and Turan (2021), that the impact of social media on consumer behavior in the beverage market highlights the value of monitoring social media data to adjust product strategies and communication content in real-time. MIXUE's use of such feedback mechanisms supports agile responses to consumer demands and enhances its marketing effectiveness

Recommendation

Recommendation for policy formulation

- 1) MIXUE headquarters should establish innovation-driven brand policies and provide dedicated funds to support locally integrated product and marketing innovations in Taian.
- 2) A professional training policy should be established for the brand communication team in Taian to enhance their creativity and marketing insight skills.
- 3) Promote sustainable practices and enhance community engagement to build a responsible and trustworthy brand image.

Recommendation for Practical Application

- 1) Enhance Digital Engagement and Communication – Utilize Chatbots, live streams, interactive polls, and social listening tools to maintain real-time two-way communication with consumers, monitor online sentiment, and adjust messaging strategies to strengthen brand image and customer satisfaction.
- 2) Develop Locally Relevant and Healthy Products - Introduce beverages and food items that cater to the taste preferences, health requirements, and cultural characteristics of consumers supporting innovation and market differentiation.
- 3) Strengthen Local Marketing and Cultural Activities – Collaborate with local media and cultural institutions, sponsor festivals and art events, and establish interactive brand experience areas to enhance cultural influence and consumer engagement in the community.

Recommendation for Further Research

- 1) Research mix Methods qualitative research and quantitative research to analyze the factors that affect consumers' attitudes towards the MIXUE Ice Cream and Tea brand.
- 2) Follow-up research to monitor the market response and consumer behavior after the adjustment of the strategy of MIXUE Ice Cream other area and analyze the changes in key indicators to help the long-term development of the brand.
- 3) Explore the potential of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality in the brand communication of MIXUE Ice Cream and Tea and promote communication innovation.

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