

# Research on Brand Equity of Sports—Take the Replacement of the Brand Lining as Example

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## Abstract

Taking the replacement of the brand lining as example and drawing lessons from domestic and international relevant research results about brand equity, based on customers' viewpoint, through analysis of the case of the replacement of the brand Lining, the article systematically elaborates such problems as the connotation and formation mechanism of sports brand equity. The authors thought: The brand equity of Lining is important intangible properties of their enterprise. The replacement of the brand not only builds new brand image and appeal, but also inherits accumulated brand assets. The establishment and promotion of brand identity are just a starting point and stage in building a brand, so enterprises should seize key work according to general logic that brand equity forms.

**Keywords:** Lining, Sports brand, Brand equity

On June 30, 2010, the new logo and slogan of Lining were launched officially. With inheritance of the implication of balance and dexterity and structural of visual effect of original logo 'Lining crossing', new log explains sports values with the shape of gymnastics movement created by Lining in an abstract way in the shape of the character "人". New slogan was changed into 'Make the Change' from 'Anything is possible' used for several years. The brand head in Lining company said: This was to encourage everyone to dare to seek for difference and break through, and the appeal to new generation of creators. From the viewpoint of communication, new symbols combination offers Lining's brand personality, corporate vision and social responsibilities to customers in materialized form. The figure and characters which were given significance made Lining's brand personality and culture trait clear, specific and visualized, which were beneficial to disseminate the brand of Lining conveniently and efficiently, meanwhile, also tested customers' cognition, acceptance and loyalty for new Lining. After the replacement of the brand Lining, the problem of Lining's brand equity has become the social focus.

## 1. The definition of brand equity

Brand equity, as source of brand property, reveals the dynamic process that brand properties form and their interaction mechanism between different elements. Since brand equity caused increasing public disputes in the end of 1980s, scholars have written articles about how to define, establish, manage and extend brand equity, research results have promoted the construction of enterprise brand and also have made the research of brand equity issues plural co-existence in the aspects of the definition of concept, research point of view, focus and research content. Currently, there are two main perspectives for the definition of brand equity in academia: one is from the perspective of individual customer, to analyze customers' cognition, attitude, image and knowledge about brand; the other one is from the perspective of an enterprise, to analyze premium, excessive market share and sales income brought by brand and excessive shareholder value (Yu, Chunling et.al. 2005).

The definition based on certain one-side perspective has some difficulty in practical operation, so western scholars Shocker and other people attempted to define brand equity from two perspectives: from the perspective of individual customer, it was defined as the differences in utility, loyalty and image of a product that its physical attributes cannot explain; from the perspective of an enterprise, it was defined as excessive cash flows compared brand-name products with the others. A western scholar Aaker pointed out that brand equities included five aspects as follows: brand loyalty, brand recognition, perceived quality, brand association and other properties such as patent, mark, channel relation and so on. Western scholar Keller proposed the concept of customer-based brand equity, which was defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand, including four aspects as follows: brand awareness, brand meaning, the response of customers to the deed of brand marketing and the relation between customers and brand (KELLER K L. 2001).

From the constitution of Lining brand equity, in the aspect of brand loyalty, the emergence of the slogan "post-90's Lining" locked the target clients of Lining in the generation with stronger consumption capacity so

that the loyalty of more than 50% of old customers was challenged. In the aspect of brand recognition, since Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games, Lining Company has sponsored China's national sports team in every Olympics. In the process of internationalization, Lining is the leader of domestic sports brands, from sponsoring the teams of individual events such as Gymnastics, basketball to all the previous Olympic marketing from 2004, from signing with famous sportsmen to the strategic cooperation with sports leagues such as NBA, F1 Motorboat, Lining brand recognition has no doubt; In the aspect of brand association, while the national feeling and patriotic fervor of customers brought by Lining brand have achieved the rapid development of its brand, narrow nationalism has restricted its internationalized development. Obviously the customers of younger generation didn't pay for it. They thought Lining is inferior to some international brands in the cool, fashion, personality and internationalization; in the other aspects such as perceived quality, solutions to a series of problems including institution framework, marketing network, market segmentation in Lining Company coordinates with transverse departments including products development, market, sales and supply, so that Lining's brand quality become more professional and refined, and has more personalities and creativity spirits.

## 2. Economics explanation of the phenomenon of the replacement of Lining brand

For mass customers, different consumption groups will make their choices in the process of consumption according to their personality, preference, demand and value judgment. It's unnecessary for customers to waste more time, ways and channels to analyze and compare with different products. The process that customers purchase commodities is a transaction process, in which enterprises occupy two large production factors including technology and cost, while customers are in a weak position of information. On the one hand they cannot know the information, on the other hand, because of the limitation of capacity, time and energy, customers cannot master all the information of products so that it's difficult for them to identify key quality with similar products effectively (Cang, Ping, Hu, Xiaohong & Yu, Junying. 2008).

A series of visual and auditory information such as new logo 'the movement of Lining crossing', new slogan 'make the change', 'post-90s Lining', Lindan's 'I just don't dare to agree with that everything is unchangeable', LOLA's 'don't always take me to compare with others', Yelena Isinbayeva's 'I only compare with myself inch by inch' contains Lining's brand personality, feature, taste, horizon, quality, service and commitment, which consists new business mission, vision, responsibility and reputation and expresses value system and products information of 'post-90s Lining'. Objectively, Lining's brand remodeling may lead to the phenomenon of information asymmetry between customers and enterprises, which makes the consumption deed of customers conservative. In order to self-protection, customers who like benefit and avoid risk prefer to choose famous brands so as to lower the risks. Lining's brand remodeling has to pay the price during a period of time, but after that 'post-90s Lining' will be recognized out easily. After replacing the brand with new logo, on the way that customers can recognize Lining's new products through his new logo, perceive Lining's personality through his new slogan, and form target customers' accurate positions and emotional identity through his new advertisement, the cost Lining distinguishes from other products is lower than that obtains products quality. In this sense, while Lining's brand remodeling reduces transaction cost, it improves transaction efficiency and standardizes the transaction.

## 3. Analysis of forming mechanism of brand equity based on the perspective of customers

From the vivid concept of target customers group, Lining explicated the idea 'who they serve for', so that he is able to fix position accurately and do research on the group's characters and consumption demand, and according to potential demand of target customers, focus corporate dominant resources for defining and materializing new Lining's differentiation characters, thereby set up distinctive brand image and form the matching of popularity and loyalty. After Lining's brand remodeling is symbolized by 'the movement of Lining crossing' and 'make the change', new logo makes the external image and 'post-90s Lining' inherent meaning clear, and easier to be accepted by target customers and disseminate more conveniently and effectively, in favor of the formation of Lining brand equity.

For the analysis of forming mechanism of Lining's brand equity, Keller's Model, CBBE (Customer—Based on Brand Equity) model gives four steps and six evaluation standards as shown in figure 1 (Qiao, Jun, Chu, Junsong & Fu, Peipei. 2006).

Keller Model supposed brand power as the sum of all of the experiences that a brand exists in the heart of a customer as time went on, and existed in a customer's knowledge, perceive and experience about brand. He thought building a strong brand had to conduct four steps: establish brand logo, create brand connotation, guide correct response to brand and set up appropriate customer brand relation. Meanwhile, four steps relied on six standards: Salience, performance, Imagery, Judgments, feeling and resonance.

Based on Keller Model, research results of domestic scholars Yu Chunling, Zhao Ping and Wang Haizhong was worthy of reference. They thought the logic procedure that established strong brand should follow was: brand recognition→brand association(physical and social attributes)→brand response(brand confidence and brand love)→brand relation→overall brand equity. It explained the purchase acts that traditional customers' decision-making model and utility theory cannot explain, which also meant that traditional marketing took customers as sensible purchaser, saw customers' purchase decision as a process to solve a problem, analyzed and evaluated very rationally and finally decided to purchase. But new research showed that, in modern society, the ratio of the consumption of affection need increased. After physical customers' basic lives were guaranteed, it's necessary for them to seek for higher level's need. Customers often decide their identity for sports products and services through sense and preference. Now individual preference, irrational aspects occupies more and they may be controlled by their experiences and emotion.

According to Keller Model and the changes of the ratio of modern emotion consumption, we can see the establishment of new Lining's brand is just a necessary start point and step in the process of remodeling Lining's brand. In face of the industrial and market response, the administrative decision about Lining's brand establishment should focus on abstracting and summarizing new Lining's brand connotation, guiding and dealing with the response to new Lining correctly, and building appropriate and logical brand relation.

#### 4. Lining's brand remodeling strategy

Lining's brand remodeling serves for corporate development strategy, and is important extension of Lining Company's corporate strategy. The establishment and promotion of new Lining's brand was just a start point and stage in building brand. Enterprises should comply with general logic that brand equity forms, understand the formation of brand personality and brand association, as well as the establishment of brand relation to brand association, are the explanation of forming brand equity based on consumers' perceive and evaluation from the perspective of customers. According to general logic of forming brand equity, it requests corporate brand remodeling should stimulate the association of target customers group through the establishment of brand image, arouse customers' resonance; Meanwhile, the research of customer-based brand equity issues also find evidence for the administrative decision of corporate brand remodeling, which conducts corporate brand establishment and marketing activities in the aspects of stage division, implementation step and development direction.

In the initial stage of the establishment of the brand, because of influence of various factors such as self brand attributes, brand position, the concept of operation and management, foreign and domestic competitors and so on, Lining were always trying changing; Twenty-year development history caused the problem of Lining's brand aging to be solved urgently. Under the influence of various stresses, Lining's brand has changed from products' distribution to products and brand innovation. Lining is attempting to refine brand personality and seek products DNA from more professional viewpoint, and adjust all the aspects including the design, research and development of products, organizational framework and marketing scheduling, in order to obtain higher products premium and customers recognition, which becomes the basic path for Lining to remodel brand.

#### 5. Conclusions

The replacement of corporate brand is coping behavior that aims to the transform of brand strategy, and corporate strategic choice at different stages of development. In order to cope with the need of corporate development, Pepsi-Cola has changed their brands over eleven times from its born. In response to brand internalization development strategy, Lenovo made the changes from Legend to Lenovo. Lining's brand equity is the accumulation of twenty years' marketing effect of Lining Company, which reflects the effect of Lining's brand construction and value of Lining's brand. From current discussion on the problems of the replacement of the brand Lining and Lining's brand remodeling in society, the problem how to understand, build, manage and extend Lining's brand equity is triggered. Lining's Logo has been familiar to customers and formed inherent impression. The replacement of the brand not only builds new brand image and appeal, but inherits accumulated brand properties. Lining is the leader of China's native sports brands. From wide concern about the replacement of Lining's brand, it's not difficult to see the path to Lining's brand remodeling has typical demonstration effect on China's native sports brands, as well as high research value.

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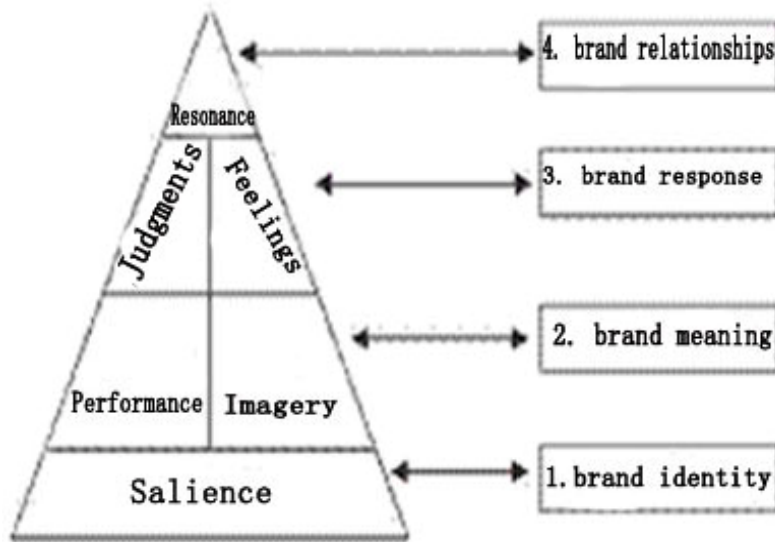


Figure 1. Keller brand equity model