

## BRAND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR YILI IN INNER MONGOLIA

### ESTRATÉGIAS DE COMUNICAÇÃO DE MARCA PARA A YILI NA MONGÓLIA INTERIOR

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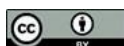
#### Abstract

This study focuses on the "Inner Mongolia Yili Brand Communication Strategy," aiming to explore effective ways to enhance Yili's brand communication effectiveness, thereby promoting its sustainable development in fierce market competition. The significance of this research lies in optimizing brand communication strategies to strengthen Yili's influence in both domestic and international markets, driving the upgrading of the dairy industry. The research aims to build a set of communication strategy system adapted to the development of Yili brand, and improve the brand awareness and reputation. The theoretical support is based on strategy theory and brand communication theory, combined with the current situation of dairy industry development and the characteristics of Yili brand, which provides a solid foundation for the research. The research method combines quantitative and qualitative analysis, collecting data through questionnaires, in-depth interviews, big data analysis, and other tools. Data analysis is conducted using computer software and artificial intelligence technology to ensure the scientific rigor and practicality of the findings. The scope of the study covers the current status, issues, and optimization strategies of Yili brand communication, providing theoretical and practical guidance for brand development.

**Keywords:** Inner Mongolia, Brand Communication, Yili, Strategies.

#### Resumo

*Este estudo centra-se na "Estratégia de Comunicação da Marca Yili na Mongólia Interior", com o objetivo de explorar formas eficazes de aumentar a eficácia da comunicação da marca Yili, promovendo assim o seu desenvolvimento sustentável em meio à acirrada concorrência de mercado. A importância desta pesquisa reside na otimização das estratégias de comunicação da marca para fortalecer a influência da Yili nos mercados doméstico e internacional, impulsionando a modernização do setor de laticínios. A pesquisa visa construir um conjunto de estratégias de comunicação adaptado ao desenvolvimento da marca Yili e melhorar o reconhecimento e a reputação da marca. O suporte teórico baseia-se na teoria da estratégia e na teoria da comunicação de marca, combinadas com a situação atual do desenvolvimento da indústria de laticínios e as características da marca Yili, o que fornece uma base sólida para a pesquisa. O método de pesquisa combina análise quantitativa e qualitativa, coletando dados por meio de questionários, entrevistas em profundidade, análise de big data e outras ferramentas. A análise de dados é realizada utilizando software de computador e tecnologia de inteligência artificial para garantir o rigor científico e a praticidade dos resultados. O escopo do estudo abrange a situação atual, as questões e as estratégias de otimização da comunicação da marca Yili, fornecendo orientação teórica e prática para o desenvolvimento da marca.*



*Palavras-chave: Mongólia Interior. Comunicação de Marca. Yili. Estratégias.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Inner Mongolia Yili, as a leading brand in China's dairy industry, has long been the focus of media and market attention. Similarly, a brand, as a medium of communication, also has a wide range of functions and has integrated the characteristics of media. Yili, Mengniu, Bright and other companies continue to increase their investment in brand building, and the development potential of dairy brands is still expanding. In recent years, Chinese dairy brands have also exported excellent products to the world. Over the past five years, the overseas promotion of Chinese dairy brands has made great progress. Among them, Yili, as a domestic dairy giant, has become the main force in promoting Chinese dairy to the world. Yili is expanding the global reach of Chinese dairy brands through different market strategies and various approaches.

Dairy brands have become an indispensable part of today's society, attracting hundreds of millions of consumers. A brand is no longer just a product identifier; it is also a potential medium of influence. A brand not only shapes consumers' consumption experiences but also affects their cognition, attitudes, and values. As brands develop, the connotation of ideology has become an important element of a brand. Connotation refers to the additional meanings contained in brand symbols or emblems, which can evoke emotions, resonate with consumers, and even convey specific viewpoints. For example, in brand communication, Yili's brand image may represent health and vitality, while its iconic "Golden Classic" series may represent high-end quality. These symbols and emblems can be used in brand communication to convey various brand concept messages and influence consumers' attitudes and emotional responses. Therefore, this study focuses on the analysis of consumers' brand experience.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Origin of inner Mongolia Yili brand

Inner Mongolia Yili brand generally refers to the corporate image of providing high-quality dairy products to consumers based on premium milk sources, through modern production technology and strict quality control. In the early 1990s, Yili was established in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, marking the birth of China's modern dairy brand. Yili established this brand to meet the domestic consumer demand for high-quality dairy products and to promote the modernization of China's dairy industry. However, due to intense market competition at the time and limited brand recognition, Yili faced numerous challenges in its early stages. Nevertheless, this venture remains historically significant and can be regarded as a milestone in the rise of Chinese dairy brands.

The first brand to be truly defined as the first national dairy brand was Yili, which launched "Yili Pure Milk" in 1993. The product was based on advanced pasteurization and aseptic packaging technologies of the time and achieved widespread coverage through a nationwide sales network. This made "Yili Pure Milk" the first dairy brand to be sold across the entire country.

The term "dairy brand" can be traced back to the China Dairy Brand Research Association (China Dairy Brand Development Forum 2005). Li Ming, a brand expert, pointed out at the forum that the concept of "dairy brand" has many advantages over traditional brands, such as cross-regional characteristics and historical development. Wang Qiang, a scholar, also wrote in the inaugural issue of the relevant journal that brand research believes that the term dairy brand is highly compatible and is a collection of different products that constitute its unique field in the market environment.

### 2.2 Theoretical review

Yili brand communication is a highly influential social behavior in modern business society. It is not only the process of information transmission between enterprises and consumers, but also an important way to meet consumers' needs for

health, quality and emotion. The theoretical basis of Yili brand communication can be traced back to the classic theories of brand communication. For example, Lasswell's "Five Ws" theory states that communication behavior includes "who," "what was said," "through what channels," "to whom," and "what effect was produced" (Lasswell, 1948). In the brand communication of Yili, the Yili Group, as the communication entity, conveys brand value and product information to consumers through advertising, public relations activities, social media, and other channels, thereby influencing consumer perception and purchasing behavior. In addition, Yili's brand communication draws on the theory of brand equity, emphasizing that brand communication should not only convey product function information but also shape the emotional value and cultural connotations of the brand (Keller, 1993). Yili communicates its brand philosophy of health, care, and responsibility through public welfare activities and brand stories, building emotional resonance with consumers to enhance brand loyalty.

The formulation and implementation of Yili's brand communication strategy have also been greatly inspired by modern communication theories. For example, the theory of innovation diffusion emphasizes the process and influencing factors of information dissemination within social systems (Rogers, 2003). Yili collaborates with well-known e-commerce platforms, leveraging their robust communication networks and user base to swiftly convey brand information to a wide audience, accelerating the spread of the brand. At the same time, Yili focuses on personalizing and refining brand communication. By leveraging big data analytics, it delves into consumer needs and preferences to tailor content for different consumer groups, enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of its brand communication. Additionally, Yili actively applies cross-cultural communication theories, collaborating with international brands and participating in international exhibitions to promote its brand globally, thereby boosting its international influence and competitiveness.

### **2.3 Brand communication effect**

It is evident that the strategy, interactivity, and emotional connection of Yili's brand communication are becoming increasingly strong. More notably, from the very beginning, Yili's brand communication has not only been a commercial activity but also

one with social and cultural value (Wang Yajing, 2022). Consumers do not just buy products; they also seek to establish new emotional connections, trust relationships, and identity recognition through brand interactions. Consumers may use their own identities when participating in Yili's brand activities, which can be entirely different from their experiences with other brands, including lifestyle, values, and consumption preferences. Through the lens of brand activities, consumers experience consumption patterns that are starkly different from reality (Zhang Qian, 2024). Members of the brand community respond to consumer participation behaviors, This reaction is based on stereotypes about the other party's behavior and is likely to align with consumers' psychological positioning of the brand (Zhao Mengyuan, 2024). Consumers participating in brand activities will gradually strengthen their identification with the brand over a long period, thus blurring the boundary between self and brand (Bian Yuan, 2022). It can be said that Yili's brand communication provides new ideas for consumers to reconfirm their self-identity.

Compared with traditional advertising, Yili's brand communication effect is sustainable, but the satisfaction that consumers get from brand interaction is a renewable resource (Jane McGonigal, 2012). By participating in brand activities, consumers are more likely to achieve self-satisfaction quickly (Jiang & Tan, 2019). The self-satisfaction obtained in brand interaction is usually designed by the brand, requiring consumers to spend a certain amount of time to participate in activities, or obtain rewards through sharing, interaction and other ways. Consumers can gain points, gifts, coupons and so on through participating in activities, so as to achieve inner satisfaction. When consumers reach a certain level of engagement, they can usually share their progress and achievements with the official communication channels or social media platforms of the brand, which in turn satisfies their personal need for self-presentation.

The interactivity and emotional connection in Yili's brand communication are becoming increasingly important. Brand communication is not just one-way information transmission but also two-way emotional interaction (Wang Yajing, 2022). Yili interacts with consumers through various channels such as social media and offline events, not only conveying product information but also brand values and emotional care. Consumers express their feelings and approval through comments, likes, and shares when participating in brand activities. This interaction not only enhances consumer loyalty to the brand but also promotes secondary dissemination of brand information

(Zhao Mengyuan, 2024). Through such interactions, Yili can better understand consumer needs and feedback, thereby optimizing its brand communication strategy and further improving the effectiveness of brand promotion.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research methods**

Since the research subjects are consumers of the Yili brand, a questionnaire survey method was chosen for sample collection. To ensure data accuracy, the study adopted multiple channels to gather samples. The completed questionnaires are mainly released through social media platforms, so the current data primarily applies to online active consumer groups.

#### **3.2 Research process**

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of Yili's brand communication strategy on the internet, in the first phase of this study, 350 questionnaires targeting consumers of different age groups were sent to online users and collected. After screening, 38 low-quality questionnaires were removed, resulting in 312 valid samples, with a response rate of 89.1%.

By organizing the samples, we can gain an initial understanding of the identity characteristics of Yili brand consumers. Based on this, we can discover these consumers' perceptions and feelings towards Yili brand communication. These issues involve the views, emotions, and behaviors of consumers after they come into contact with the Yili brand. The questionnaire will cover issues related to the main subjects of brand communication, methods of brand communication, content of brand communication, audience differences, brand awareness, and brand emotions. In addition, the questionnaire will include questions about consumer demographics such as age, gender, and education level. Based on this important information, during the distribution of the questionnaire, we will primarily target different age groups in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia.

### 3.3 Composition of samples

**Table 1**

*Sample survey of questionnaire survey*

	statistical	quantity	percentage
Sex	Man	150	48
	Woman	162	52
Age	Age under 20 years	22	7.1
	20-29 yeats ikd	93	29.8
	Age 30-39	65	20.8
	Age 40-49	83	26.6
	50 years and over	49	15.7
Education	High school and below	52	16.7
	Junior college	52	16.7
	Undergraduate course	127	40.7
	Master degree or above	59	18.9
Household monthly	Income lass than 10,000 yuan	56	17.9
	10,000-30,000 yuan	94	30.1
	30,000-50,000 yuan	91	29.2
	50,000-70,000	48	15.4
	More than 70,000 yuan	23	7.4
Where you live	Hohhot, inner mongolia	100	100

**Gender Distribution:** In the 312 valid questionnaires, males accounted for 48%, and females accounted for 52%, with females slightly outnumbering males. The overall gender ratio aligns with the population gender structure of Hohhot, reflecting the perceptions and attitudes of consumers of different genders towards Yili milk in the region. **Age Distribution:** The age distribution of respondents is as follows: under 20 years old (7.1%), 20 to 29 years old (29.8%), 30 to 39 years old (20.8%), 40 to 49 years old (26.6%), and over 50 years old (15.7%). Consumers of different age groups have varying focuses on brands and products due to their different life stages and economic capabilities. **Educational Level:** Among the respondents, 16.7% have a high school education or less, 23.7% have an associate degree, 40.7% have a bachelor's degree, and 18.9% have a master's degree or higher. The higher the educational level, the more rational consumers' perceptions of brands and products become, and the greater their demands for quality and personalized services. **Family Income:** The monthly income of the respondents' families mainly falls within 10,000 to 30,000 yuan (30.1%) and 30,000 to 50,000 yuan (29.4%). Higher incomes correlate with stronger consumption

capabilities and greater attention to brand and product quality. Regional Distribution: All respondents come from Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, which aligns with the survey objectives and accurately reflects the dissemination effect and market response of Yili milk in this region.

### 3.4 Correlation analysis

According to the correlation analysis of the collected questionnaire content, the following questions are summarized: consumer age; consumer gender; brand communication subject, brand communication mode; brand communication content; audience difference; whether brand communication produces resonance in emotion, mood or cognition, that is, brand cognition, brand emotion;

**Table 2**

*Hypothesis testing based on correlation analysis*

research hypothesis	correlation variable	correlation coefficient
H1	Communication subject $\leftrightarrow$ brand cognition	.337**
H2	Content dissemination $\leftrightarrow$ brand awareness	.279**
H3	Communication mode $\leftrightarrow$ brand cognition	.266**
H4	Audience difference $\leftrightarrow$ brand cognition	.332**
H5	Communication subject $\leftrightarrow$ brand emotion	.247**
H6	Spread content $\leftrightarrow$ brand emotion	.403**
H7	Communication mode $\leftrightarrow$ brand emotion	.284**
H8	Audience difference $\leftrightarrow$ brand emotion	.363**
H9	Brand cognition $\leftrightarrow$ brand emotion	.367**

Note: \*\*. Significant correlation at the 0.01 level (bilateral)

The correlation analysis is a basic method used in statistics to test the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables. In this study, the method was used to preliminarily verify the research hypothesis by analyzing the degree of association between each latent variable to judge the rationality of the hypothesis. The study used SPSS 26.0 software for data processing, calculating the descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, etc. ) of each latent variable, and conducted Pearson correlation coefficient tests. The range of the Pearson correlation coefficient is from -1 to 1; a positive value indicates a positive correlation, a negative

value indicates a negative correlation, and the larger the absolute value, the stronger the correlation.

The results showed that the latent variables involved in this study were significantly positively correlated ( $p < 0.05$ ), and the correlation coefficient was between 0.3 and 0.7, indicating a moderate to strong positive correlation. This preliminarily verified the positive relationship among the variables in the research hypothesis.

This study verifies nine core path relationships in the theoretical hypothesis through structural equation modeling, specifically including: the impact of brand communication elements on cognition: subject (H1), content (H2), method (H3), and audience differences (H4) on brand cognition. The impact of brand communication elements on emotion: subject (H5), content (H6), method (H7), and audience differences (H8) on brand emotion. The interactive relationship between brand cognition and emotion (H9).

The standardized coefficients and significance levels of all paths are detailed in Table 3. All hypothesized paths meet the statistical significance criteria ( $p < 0.05$ ), confirming the rationality of the theoretical model. Among these, the path from communication content to brand perception ( $p < 0.001$ ) and the path from brand perception to affect ( $p < 0.001$ ) exhibit the strongest predictive power.

**Table 3**

*Structural equation model path coefficient diagram*

	way	std.	Unstd.	S.E.	C.R.	P	Assume that Not established
Brand recognition	<--Communication subject	0.273	0.164	0.053	3.108	0.002	found
Brand recognition	<--Content to be disseminated	0.197	0.106	0.045	2.222	0.026	found
Brand recognition	<--- propagation mode	0.212	0.103	0.037	2.742	0.006	found
Brand recognition	<--Audience differences	0.375	0.257	0.063	4.021	***	found

<i>Brand emotion</i>	<--Communication subject	0.012	0.012	0.074	0.151	0.881	<i>false</i>
<i>Brand emotion</i>	<--- Content to be disseminated	0.314	0.292	0.068	4.208	***	<i>found</i>
<i>Brand emotion</i>	<--- propagation mode	0.146	0.125	0.057	2.252	0.024	<i>found</i>
<i>Brand emotion</i>	<--Audience differences	0.192	0.228	0.096	2.413	0.016	<i>found</i>
<i>Brand emotion</i>	<--- Brand recognition	0.217	0.377	0.175	2.143	0.032	<i>found</i>

\*\*\*=P<0.001

Table 3 The path analysis results show that except for the H5 hypothesis, all other research hypotheses are verified,

1. Factors influencing brand cognition: The main body of communication ( $\beta=0.273$ ), the content of communication ( $\beta=0.197$ ), the mode of communication ( $\beta=0.212$ ) and the difference of audience ( $\beta=0.375$ ) all have a significant positive impact on brand cognition (H1-H4 is established)
2. Factors influencing brand emotion: The content of communication ( $\beta=0.314$ ), the mode of communication ( $\beta=0.146$ ) and the difference of audience ( $\beta=0.192^*$ ) significantly affect the brand emotion (H6-H8 is true). The subject of communication has no significant effect on emotion ( $\beta=0.012$ ,  $p>0.05$ , H5 is not true)
3. Cognitive-emotional relationship:
4. Brand recognition significantly positively predicts brand emotion ( $\beta=0.217^*$ , H9 holds) Note: \* indicates  $p < 0.05$ , and all significant paths meet the statistical requirements. The study found that audience differences have the greatest effect on brand cognition ( $\beta=0.375$ ), while communication content has the most prominent effect on emotion ( $\beta=0.314$ ).

## 4 CONCLUSION

Through data analysis, it is found that brand communication subjects have a significant positive impact on brand cognition, but the influence on brand emotion is not significant. This study finds that the credibility and popularity of communicators are the key factors affecting the effect of brand communication. The authority of the government, industry associations and certification enterprises plays an important role in enhancing consumers' recognition of brand quality, but the promotion of brand emotional identity also needs to rely on other means such as brand story and brand value.

Brand communication content has a significant positive impact on brand communication effectiveness. Factors such as the product characteristics of Yili milk, traceability, packaging design, core philosophy, and brand culture collectively enhance consumers' perception and emotional connection to the brand. Brand communication content not only needs to convey the functional benefits of the product but also needs to resonate with consumers through brand stories and cultural connotations.

Brand communication methods have a positive impact on consumers' brand recognition and emotional attachment. Word-of-mouth has the most significant effect, followed by online dissemination, while mass communication and public relations have relatively weaker effects. New media channels such as short video platforms excel in leveraging consumers' fragmented time for dissemination, whereas word-of-mouth stands out as the most effective method due to its directness and persuasiveness.

The initiative, professionalism, level of involvement, brand sensitivity, and origin preference of consumers all have a significant positive impact on brand perception and emotional connection. As consumers' attention to the safety and reliability of branded milk continues to increase, their understanding of brand information also deepens. The higher the degree of consumer involvement in brand communication, the more effective the brand communication becomes.

## 5 DISCUSSION

In today's society, the value of brand communication is often underestimated. However, the Yili brand is not only a commercial symbol but also an important platform

for engaging in significant topics, capable of conveying complex values and fostering deep reflection and emotional expression (Angoli, 2025). In the era of immersive media, the Yili brand serves as an indispensableThe ubiquitous form of communication shows its potential to convey emotions and values. The Yili brand is not only an object or tool between products and consumers, but also an environment and medium that promotes consumer participation and action (Yuan Boxiong, 2025).

Some scholars argue that brand communication plays an indispensable role in emotional exchange. Brand activities involving profound emotional expression often encourage consumers to reflect on reality and achieve personal growth (Zhao Tingting & Wu Tianqi, 2025). For example, Yili evokes emotional resonance among consumers through public welfare activities and brand stories, enhancing empathetic experiences and fostering deeper interpersonal relationships (Isbister, 2016). Similarly, Lu Yangyu and Liu Weiping argue that brand communication serves as an emotional medium, capable of revealing consumers' inner emotions and projecting their emotional lives (Lu Yangyu & Liu Weiping, 2025). However, these studies primarily focus on how brands evoke emotions, with less in-depth exploration into the deeper relationship between emotion and the consumer environment.

Zhu Jiyao points out that brands can embed metaphors in their communication content, enabling consumers to go beyond the surface product functions and better understand the complex emotions and values conveyed by the brand (Zhu Jiyao, 2025). When consumers interact with the brand, they may experience an emotional journey similar to that of the brand creator, Thus, a deeper understanding of the emotions conveyed by the brand can be achieved (Harrer, 2013). For example, Fang Qian found through research that Yili educates consumers about health and quality through cultural activities such as "Hunan Tea Tourism," while also fostering emotional resonance through brand storytelling (Fang Qian, 2025). Like other media, brand communication can serve as an important channel for emotional expression.

#### Shortcomings and future research directions

This study primarily focuses on the exploration of Yili's brand communication strategies in Inner Mongolia, yet it still has many shortcomings. There are evident limitations in assessing the effectiveness of Yili's brand communication. During the data analysis process, only consumers from social media platforms were selected as samples,

which limits the comprehensiveness of the research due to this single-source sample. Future research will expand the sample size and use face-to-face interviews to obtain richer and deeper consumer feedback.

Secondly, theoretical research on Yili brand communication remains insufficient. As a medium of communication, Yili has the potential to integrate various media characteristics. In addition to focusing on user experience, it is also necessary to delve into the social, cultural, and educational impacts of brand communication, as well as how effective information delivery and educational goals can be achieved through brand communication. Yili brand communication is not only a representative of China's dairy industry, but also a business phenomenon with global influence. Future research can strengthen international cooperation and exchange, jointly explore the rules and effects of brand communication, and promote the prosperity and development of global dairy brand communication.

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### **Authors’ Contribution**

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

### **Data availability**

All datasets relevant to this study’s findings are fully available within the article.

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