



A Study on the Characteristics and Driving Factors of the Value Driven Chinese Consumer Brands

Xi Chen

Business School, China University of Political Science and Law, China

***Corresponding Author:** Xi Chen, Business School, China University of Political Science and Law, China

Abstract: This article uses a single case study method to focus on the Chinese domestic underwear brands NEIWAI, explores its core brand value, reveals the basic characteristics and underlying driving forces of the formation of its value driven positioning strategy. Research found that firstly, the value driven branding NEIWAI, applies a consumer's self pleasing attitude rather than pleasing others attitude in terms of the body shape attitude, secondly, it advocates view from product to lifestyle, and then employs the advertising spokespersons that perfectly match brand values. These three characteristics collectively become the main characteristics of value driven branding NEIWAI. Besides, research reveals the underlying driving factors behind the formation of brand NEIWAI, namely the rising female consciousness, founder's ideas, and insights into consumer needs

Keywords: Value driven, brand values, characteristics, driving factors, Chinese local consumer brands

1. INTRODUCTION

In a context where discussions about women's body beauty are more focused on topics of sexiness and slimness, the Chinese domestic lingerie brand established in 2012 NEIWAI bravely put forward a counter mainstream proposition about women's body beauty, advocating for comfort rather than artificially oriented sexiness, emphasizing the rise of feminism, and seeing the boost of women's subjectivity.

So how is this value system of the brand NEIWAI reflected? What are the basic characteristics? Secondly, what is the mechanism behind the formation of this value system, and what factors drive the formation of this brand value system? Understanding these issues will help gain insights into how Chinese domestic consumer brands can achieve brand success through differentiated value shaping. This study will also enrich the relevant theories of value based brand marketing and provide good reference for the successful practice of value driven marketing for Chinese local brands.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of brand values originated from the rise of corporate culture theory in the 1980s. With the intensification of global competition and the upgrading of consumer demand, value driven gradually became the core paradigm of brand management. This field integrates multidisciplinary perspectives such as marketing, psychology, sociology, etc., forming a rich theoretical system.

Essentially, brand values refer to the right and wrong judgments and value orientations of a company. It reflects both the company's business philosophy and the spiritual expectations of consumers towards the brand (Li, Peng, and Li, 2012). Values refer to the persistent beliefs of an individual or group towards an ideal state, which directly influence behavioral decisions (Wang and Chen, 2010). Consumer behavior is not only influenced by external factors such as income and discounts, but also fundamentally driven by the endogenous factor of values (Wang and Chen, 2010). For example, Jin Liyin's study found that brand values enhance brand identity by being recognized by consumers (Jin, 2006).

In the integrated theoretical framework published in Modern Finance, Huang Haiyang et al (2019) innovatively applied Schwartz values theory to global brand positioning, proposing that building brand positioning based on common human values can effectively cross cultural boundaries and enhance global brand identity. Research has demonstrated the positive impact of value compatibility on consumer information processing fluency. When the values conveyed by a brand are compatible with

consumers' personal values, consumers' understanding of brand information is smoother, thereby enhancing behavioral intention (Huang et al, 2019).

The theoretical status of brand values has undergone an evolution from the periphery to the core. Early research mainly regarded it as an ancillary dimension of brand personality, while Aaker's (1997) brand personality theory, although influential, has limitations in cross-cultural applications due to its cultural dependence. As research deepens, scholars gradually realize that values are the most core and stable elements of a brand. The empirical study by Shepherd et al. (2015) showed a significant correlation between the intrinsic values of a brand and consumers' confidence in the social system. When consumers have high confidence in the social system, they evaluate brands that embody power values more positively. This discovery reveals the deep interaction mechanism between brand values and social mentality.

3. CASE INTRODUCTION

NEIWAI is a Chinese original lingerie brand, founded in 2012 and with headquartered in Shanghai. The brand's original intention is to create an underwear that allows people to have physical and mental freedom. It focuses on women's intimate clothing, covering multiple categories such as underwear, home wear, and sportswear, and is committed to creating a comfortable, simple, and well-designed lifestyle brand.

The core features and brand philosophy of the brand are comfort and steel free design. Its differentiation strategy of "no steel ring bra" emphasizes a comfortable and free body experience, reducing the feeling of confinement. In addition to underwear, the product portfolio also extends the brand to home wear, sportswear, girl's series, etc., covering different scene needs. In 2020, the independent sports brand NEIWAI ACTION was launched, focusing on multi scene sportswear such as dance, yoga, Pilates, etc. By 2025, there will be approximately 150 stores in over 40 cities across the country. In 2023, the brand will enter overseas markets and open flagship stores in Singapore and New York, becoming the first Chinese brand to enter the high-end lingerie market in the United States. The brand values advocate "the body will know" and "the earth will know", focusing on women's physical feelings and environmental sustainability. Through marketing activities such as "NO BODY IS NOBODY" , the brand NEIWAI, has explored the issue of female body diversity, showcasing a tolerant, confident, and optimistic attitude towards life to women.

4. CASE ANALYSIS

The success core of the women's underwear brand NEIWAI founded by Liu Xiaolu lies in deeply integrating value driven into the brand's genes, forming a unique market competition barrier.

4.1. Concept of Value Driven Brand

Values Driven Brand refers to a brand paradigm that takes the core values of a company as the core driving force of brand management, shapes brand image, establishes brand assets, and achieves sustainable development through consistent internal and external dissemination and practice of values. This concept goes beyond the traditional brand model that focuses on product functionality or emotional appeal, emphasizing the role of brand values as the strategic center and requiring brands to establish a deep fit between commercial goals and social values.

The brand values of NEIWAI, are shifting from pleasing people to pleasing oneself and advocating for the diversity of women's body shapes. In the traditional lingerie market, "sexiness" is defined solely as a visual symbol under the gaze of men, while the profound changes in contemporary Chinese women's consciousness are keenly captured by NEIWAI. Brand insight shows that women's self-awareness has shifted from "pleasing others" to "pleasing themselves", awakening their subjectivity. Therefore, they no longer accept the traditional definition of sexiness centered on pleasing others, but instead pursue an inner balance between self comfort and physical and mental freedom. The second pillar of brand values of NEIWAI is the firm defense of bodily diversity. They believe that we should embrace the diversity of body shape, see it, respect it, and care for it. Products should serve the diversity of the body.

4.2. Core Characteristics of Value Driven of NEIWAI

4.2.1. The Transformation of Body View from "Pleasing Others" to "Pleasing Self"

Brand NEIWAI breaks the traditional logic of "sexy shaping" in underwear, proposing "comfort is sexy", and binds product functions (no steel rings, zero sensitivity fabrics) with women's spiritual

demands for self-acceptance. For example, the "Zero Sensitivity Series" solves the pain point of "empty cup" for women with small breasts by imitating the steel ring structure and half size system, conveying the concept of "not sacrificing comfort to cater to aesthetics".

Against the backdrop of the traditional lingerie industry's long-standing adherence to the standardized size system of "S-M-L", brand NEIWAI has taken the lead in breaking through industry conventions, establishing a full size coverage system: a professional bra matrix ranging from AA to G cups, covering special needs groups such as adolescent girls to lactating women, and launching support styles specifically designed for women with large breasts. Behind this product strategy is a profound value judgment - women should not modify their bodies to meet industrial standards, but products should serve body diversity.

4.2.2. Transformation of Product Concept from Product to Lifestyle

The brand NEIWAI does not limit their brand to physical products, emphasizing the functional attributes of the products. Instead, they expand the category logic around women's life scenarios, which can be seen from the extension of their product line. Underwear has expanded into home casual wear (with outerwear design), and a new NEIWAI ACTION sub brand sports product line has been launched. For example, its ballet series echoes the inner tension of women with "softness and strength", and collaborates with singer Tan Yuanyuan to strengthen spiritual resonance. At the same time, the brand spreads its brand values through cross-border art, such as the Sleep No More immersive exhibition to position itself as a community platform for women's spirit. It actively holds various public welfare forums, such as Her Voice Forum, which provides a platform for women to express their values.

4.2.3. Using Spokespersons as Symbols of Values

The core values of NEIWAI is "comfortable body and mind, free expression", emphasizing authenticity, diversity, inclusiveness, texture, and a sense of inner strength. The long-term cooperation of its global spokesperson Dujuan and the diverse character selection in the "NO BODY IS NOBODY" project have become important carriers of brand values.

The brand uses the image spokesperson of film and television star Dujuan. The personal temperament of Dujuan is very compatible with the brand image. The temperament naturally carries a sense of calm, introverted, and understated power. Her beauty is not outwardly impactful, but can withstand the accumulation of time and radiate from the inside out. This is highly consistent with the pursuit of "texture" and "restrained sense of power" of NEIWAI. Dujuan has always maintained a low-key, focused, professional, and tasteful image in the public eye, without excessive exposure or pursuit of traffic. She presents a life attitude that is loyal to herself and not influenced by external noise, perfectly interpreting the core of "comfortable body and mind" - not only physical comfort, but also spiritual harmony and composure.

In brand advertisements, the state of Dujuan is often relaxed, natural, and not deliberately staged. The camera captures her true body lines and movements, with calm or thoughtful expressions, conveying an atmosphere of not needing to please others and being at ease in the present moment. This directly reflects the true essence of "truth" and "free expression" - being oneself, without the need to play. This perfectly matches the core values of the brand.

4.2.4. Brand Activities and Brand Communication

Through diversified and three-dimensional communication strategies, NEIWAI also manages to showcase its unique value to consumers. From 2019 to 2021, the brand launched the "NO BODY IS NOBODY" project to promote the brand's mainstream values. This series of advertisements abandons the traditional standard of perfect models in lingerie advertising and instead presents a diverse and authentic body. For example, in 2020, the brand invited six amateur women, and the camera calmly displayed imprints such as sun scars, growth lines, and surgical scars, accompanied by poetic copywriting that "flat, wrinkled, and mottled are all stories worth telling," declaring that "no body shape is insignificant," directly challenging mainstream aesthetic hegemony. In 2021, this promotional story was further upgraded, proposing the concept of "micro and full path, no distinction between you and me". Through the portrayal of collective women, it emphasizes the connection between women and conveys a consciousness and advocacy of equality where beauty needs no comparison.

These brand planning activities and brand communication projects have sparked strong resonance among female consumers and become a hot topic of discussion. This advocacy and insistence on the authenticity of women's bodies have shaken people's hearts and triggered emotional empathy.

4.3. The Underlying Driving Mechanism of the Formation of Value Driven Approach

4.3.1. Rise of Female Consciousness

Why does the brand have such brand values? Firstly, this is due to the brand's profound insight into the changing social trends, namely the rise of feminism and women's stronger sense of subjectivity. The traditional lingerie market has always been popular for its inherent thinking about sexiness, advocating for a "sexy and pleasing" look. For example, Victoria's Secret has always advocated for a "perfect figure", and its related advertisements have sparked a lot of controversy. The old logic about women's body shape is that women should look good for themselves.

Under this old logic, women's bodies have always been imperfect and need to be transformed. However, this traditional old positioning is in sharp conflict with the "self comfort" needs of the new generation of consumers. Therefore, in response to this change, the brand has recognized this contradiction, which is the contradiction between the traditional lingerie market's sexy positioning of women's underwear and the logic that women themselves need "self comfort". It has keenly captured the value shift of Chinese consumer women from "male gaze" to "self pleasing". Based on this, it has proposed opposing values and new logic, which is that women wear for the sake of pleasing themselves, not for the sake of pleasing others, their bodies do not need to be modified, and their bodies need to be accepted. Based on this, the brand regards "pleasing oneself" as its core spirit, responding to women's demands for physical and mental freedom. The brand leverages the wave of post female consciousness awakening to transform social issues such as bodily freedom and anti-gaze into a narrative pivot for the brand.

4.3.2. Consumer Demand

The core values of NEIWAI "comfortable body and mind, free expression" - emphasize authenticity, diversity, inclusiveness, texture, and a sense of understated power. Its essence also stems from a deep insight into consumer demand. Brand insights into consumers' upgraded functional and emotional needs.

Firstly, brands have noticed that consumers are gradually shifting from purchasing sexy underwear to seeking comfortable underwear. This kind of customer demand that takes comfort as the starting point is not only present among mature women after marriage, but the brand has also noticed that the consumer group with a particularly strong demand for comfort has become younger, from 28 to 35 years old in the past to 18 to 25 years old now. According to the brand's consumption data introduced by founder Xiaolu, the population aged 18-25 has increased from 25% to 37%.

Secondly, the brand has seen the changing attitudes of young women towards life, who are more self-reliant, not easily swayed, and value their personal consumption experience more. They are willing to pay a higher premium for good design, and they love the details and small ideas in product innovation, including fabrics, materials, and ease of use. For example, the Boundless series of home clothes has been launched, which can be worn inside or outside, covering different scenes of modern women's lives. For example, brands have found that many young female consumers use sports bras instead of daily underwear when wearing underwear because their pace of life is faster and they often don't have time to change clothes when they go to the gym after work. Therefore, they prefer to wear sports bras so that they can start exercising directly when they arrive at the gym.

4.3.3. Founder's Philosophy

At the beginning of her entrepreneurship, founder Liu Xiaolu wanted to "make underwear that allows people to have physical and mental freedom", and the pursuit of comfort is the brand's mission. Therefore, when the early brand was founded by Li Jiang and Liu Xiaolu in 2012, they proposed that underwear should be comfortable as its essence, able to be worn close to the body, and bring a very good feeling to the body. At that time, all the advertisements for products in the market featured sexy images, but founder Liu Xiaolu went against the trend. She found that in 2012, many female friends around the founder could buy a lot of beautiful and sexy underwear, but could not find underwear that made them very comfortable to wear in daily life.

At the same time, in 2015 and 2016, people in Chinese society began to discuss women's self choice, and more women focused on values such as self-pleasure and self-gratification. So she wants to make an underwear that starts from the female body to meet the functional needs of comfort. Therefore, the founder designed products to achieve functional differentiation, and the main product is also a non steel ring underwear that reflects the comfortable selling point. At the same time, standing from a higher perspective, conveying the differentiated brand cultural values of pleasing oneself and respecting the body to consumers.

5. CONCLUSION

This article focuses on domestic lingerie brands NEIWAI, exploring the value driven characteristics of their brands, attempting to reveal the basic features and manifestations of value driven brands, and identifying the underlying driving forces that use value driven as the core of the brand.

Research has found that value driven branding of NEIWAI is first manifested in the replacement of pleasing self-body view with pleasing others view, followed by the product view from product to lifestyle, and third is the relaxed, free, and spontaneous temperament of the spokesperson, all of which serve as external manifestations, demonstrating the core of the brand's value driven approach.

Afterwards, based on case analysis, the article further revealed the underlying driving factors behind the formation of its value system. The study found that social trends, founder wills, and profound insights into consumer fundamental needs collectively contribute to the image of its values. Research has found that the essence of a brand is based on "women's physical and mental freedom" as the starting point, presenting values through design innovation, and building multidimensional experiences through space, communication, and community, ultimately forming a value loop of "concept product user". This mode transcends the "functional narrative" of traditional brands, elevates consumer goods into cultural symbols, and provides a key model for the construction of values of contemporary Chinese brands: real brand values must have the sharpness of social insight, the hardness of product landing, and the temperature of emotional resonance at the same time.

REFERENCES

- Huang Haiyang, He Jiaxun, Zhu Liangjie (2019). Value-Based Global Brand Positioning Orientation and Its Influential Effects: An Integrated Theoretical Framework [J]. *Modern Finance & Economics (Journal of Tianjin University of Finance and Economics)*, 39(12), 67-80.
- Jin Liyin (2006). Brand Equity-Driven Model Based on Brand Personality and Brand Identity [J]. *Journal of Beijing Technology and Business University Social Sciences Edition*, 21(1):38-43.
- Li Jing, Peng Renzhong, Li Ting (2012). Comparative Study of Corporate Culture Values in China and Foreign Enterprises-Using IBM Corporation and Lenovo Group as Case Studies. *Hubei Social Sciences* (1), 4.
- Waheed, A., & Gaur, S.S. Aaker, Jennifer L (1997). Dimensions of Brand Personality, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 34 (August), 347-356.
- Wang Xinxin, Chen Runqi (2010). Review of Research on Values and Their Impact on Consumer Behavior and Brand Management. *Future & Development*, 31(001), 54-58.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY



Professor Xi Chen is associate professor of Business School, China University of Political Science and Law. She is a consumer psychology and marketing researcher. Her expertise is in branding, luxury product management, consumer behavior, Chinese brand management. Her research focuses on consumer motivation and decisions, Chinese luxury brand, international luxury brand and industry management, branding, international marketing. Her publications appear in marketing and international management journals.

She was the recipient of the 2011 Emerald Excellent Paper Award for her research on 'Typology of the Chinese Exporters'. And She received the 'Best Teaching Cases of 100 Chinese Management Cases' annual award, and the cases she wrote appear in Ivey Business School Case.

Citation: Xi Chen. "A Study on the Characteristics and Driving Factors of the Value Driven Chinese Consumer Brands". *International Journal of Managerial Studies and Research (IJMSR)*, vol 13, no. 8, 2025, pp. 17-21. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20431/2349-0349.1308003>.

Copyright: © 2025 Author. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.