

Research on the Impact of Marketing Strategy Differences between ANTA and Nike on Consumers' Purchase Intentions

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Abstract—The global sportswear market shows a trend of integrating globalization and localization. International brands such as Nike dominate the high-end market with a mature global marketing system, while local brands such as ANTA achieve rapid growth through local operations. This paper focuses on the marketing strategies of ANTA and Nike in the Chinese market. It uses the comparative analysis method to conduct a comparative analysis from four dimensions: advertising communication, brand layout, channel operation, and endorsement strategy, to explore the influence mechanism of different marketing strategies on the purchase intention of different consumer groups in China. The research indicated that Nike successfully enhanced the purchase intention of affluent consumers via its premium positioning, emotional marketing, and global celebrity endorsements; however, its brand premium and the prevalence of counterfeit products also influenced consumer purchasing decisions to a degree. In contrast, ANTA has addressed the practical needs of the mass consumer demographic through its multi-brand strategy, direct-to-consumer channel transformation, and cost-performance positioning, thereby earning consumer trust through its authentic product assurance and channel control advantages. This study supplements an empirical study comparing marketing strategies of domestic and international sportswear brands, providing a theoretical reference for marketing innovation in the sportswear industry.

Keywords—Marketing strategy, Purchase intention, ANTA, Nike, Brand comparison

I. INTRODUCTION

With the global sportswear market booming, competition between international and domestic brands is becoming increasingly fierce. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the total scale of China's sports industry reached 3.84 trillion yuan in 2024, and the added value of the manufacturing industry of sports goods and related products increased by 424.5 billion yuan year-on-year (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2025). Nike, as the preeminent global sports brand, commands the high-end market with its established global marketing system; ANTA, a notable Chinese local brand, has experienced rapid growth through localized operations and exceeded Li-Ning's single-brand revenue in the first half of 2023.

Existing studies have mostly focused on the global marketing of international brands or the single marketing model of domestic brands. There is still a research gap in comparing the systematic marketing strategies of ANTA and Nike and analyzing the differentiated impacts of their strategies on the purchasing intentions of different consumer groups. Based on this, this paper focuses on the differences in marketing strategies of ANTA and Nike in the Chinese market. It compares them from four dimensions: advertising communication, brand layout, channel operation, and

endorsement strategy to explore the mechanism by which different marketing strategies affect the purchase intention of different groups in China.

This paper employs a comparative analysis and combines a literature review with a case study to systematically examine differences in marketing strategies between the two major brands. The research significance lies in: theoretically, supplementing empirical studies comparing marketing strategies of domestic and international sports brands, and improving the analysis of the mechanism by which sports brand marketing strategies affect consumers' purchase intentions. In practice, it provides ideas for marketing innovation in the sportswear industry and helps domestic brands optimize their marketing strategies to cope with international competition.

II. THEORETICAL BASIS AND RESEARCH STATUS

A. Core Theories of Sports Brand Marketing

Sports brand marketing lacks a fully independent theoretical system, and existing research primarily relies on classic marketing theories for analysis. The 4P marketing theory, as a fundamental framework, divides marketing strategies into four dimensions: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, providing a systematic perspective for analyzing the marketing mix of sports brands (McCarthy, 1964). The emergence of the consumer-centric era has led to the 4C theory, which highlights Consumer, Cost, Convenience, and Communication, offering a novel analytical framework for sports brands to comprehend consumer behavior (Lauterborn, 1990).

In the digital marketing era, the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model is widely used to explain the influence mechanism of social media marketing on consumers' purchase intention. This theory holds that external stimuli first affect an individual's cognitive and emotional states, and then determine their behavioral responses (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) indicates that brand awareness, brand image, and brand attitude are key antecedents that influence consumers' purchase intention (Ajzen, 1991). These theories provide a solid theoretical basis for this study to analyze the differences in marketing strategies between ANTA and Nike and their impact on consumer purchase intention.

B. Research Status of Sports Brand Marketing Research

Academic research on sports brand marketing is primarily focused on three levels. First, research on brand globalization and localization strategies. The research shows that international brands such as Nike maintain brand

consistency through standardized global marketing strategies while making moderate localization adjustments to adapt to different market environments. In contrast, local brands such as ANTA are more focused on their home markets and upgrading their brands through acquisitions of international brands (Wang & Zhang, 2023).

Second, research on digital marketing and consumer behavior. The existing literature confirms that new marketing methods, such as social media marketing, influencer marketing, and live-streaming e-commerce, significantly affect consumers' brand awareness and purchase intention. The informational, entertaining, interactive, and authentic nature of brand content has been proven to be a key feature influencing consumers' purchasing decisions (Li & Yu, 2025).

Third, brand endorsements and sports marketing research. As a core marketing tool for sports brands, athlete endorsement is significantly influenced by the credibility, professionalism, and attractiveness of the endorsers. Research shows that successful athlete endorsement can not only enhance brand awareness but also strengthen the emotional connection between the brand and target consumers (Erwin *et al.*, 2025).

Nevertheless, existing research exhibits notable deficiencies: the majority of studies concentrate on individual brands or marketing strategies, failing to provide systematic comparative analyses of leading international and domestic brands; investigations into the mechanisms influencing consumers' purchase intentions predominantly emphasize a singular dimension, neglecting a holistic examination of multi-dimensional marketing strategies. This study attempts to fill the above research gaps.

III. A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL COMPARISON OF MARKETING STRATEGIES BETWEEN ANTA AND NIKE

A. Advertising Communication Strategy

Nike and ANTA show significant differences in their advertising strategies, mainly in three aspects: brand narrative style, channel selection, and content creation concepts.

In terms of brand narrative, Nike has long adhered to the brand spirit of "Just Do It", stimulating consumers' enthusiasm for sports and desire for self-transcendence through emotional and storytelling advertising content. Nike's advertisements often go beyond mere product features and instead tell stories of athletes overcoming difficulties and pursuing their dreams, sparking widespread discussion and engagement on social media by touching on deep themes such as empowerment, diversity, and perseverance. This emotional marketing strategy effectively builds an emotional bond between the brand and its consumers, enhancing brand recognition.

In contrast, ANTA's advertising strategy emphasized the practicality and affordability of their products. ANTA, the inaugural firm in China's sports goods sector to engage sports celebrities as endorsers, has augmented its brand recognition via endorsements from sports stars and Olympic marketing initiatives. In recent years, ANTA has stepped up its emotional marketing investment, but its overall communication strategy still focuses on rational appeal,

emphasizing the practicality and price advantage of its products.

In terms of communication channels, Nike has a strong presence on mainstream social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, expanding brand reach and fostering brand loyalty by encouraging User-Generated Content (UGC) (Zhang & Li, 2024). Nike has also established a full suite of digital touchpoints, including SNKRS, NRC, NTC, Nike.com, and the Nike App, truly building private user assets that belong to the brand. ANTA implements marketing strategies through mainstream domestic social media platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin, aiming to "encirclement" potential user groups.

B. Brand Layout Strategy

Brand positioning strategy is one of the most distinct dimensions between ANTA and Nike. Nike adheres to a single brand, multiple categories, and globalization. It covers a wide range from professional sports to lifestyle through its main Nike brand, while meeting the demands of different market segments with sub-brands such as Jordan Brand and Converse.

In contrast, ANTA has implemented a "single-focus, multi-brand, omni-channel" development strategy, building a multi-brand matrix through acquisitions of international brands. In 2019, ANTA led the acquisition of Amer Sports, the European sports giant, which was the largest Chinese acquisition in the sports goods sector. Amer Sports owns high-end brands such as Arc'teryx and SALOMON, effectively complementing ANTA's presence in the high-end outdoor sector (Liu, 2020). In 2023, ANTA acquired a 75% stake in the women's sports brand MAIA ACTIVE to fill a gap in the yoga and women's market. With this, ANTA's brand portfolio now covers a wide range of sports scenarios, from mass sports to high-end fashion and from professional outdoor to women's yoga.

The differences in this multi-brand strategy directly affect the market positioning and target consumer groups of the two companies. Nike maintains its high-end positioning through the strong influence of a single brand, emphasizing the professionalism and authority of the brand; ANTA, on the other hand, has achieved full coverage of different consumer tiers and sports scenarios through its brand matrix, with its main brand, ANTA, targeting the mass market and its acquired brands targeting mid-to-high-end segments.

C. Channel Operation Strategy

In terms of channel operations, both Nike and ANTA are actively promoting the Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) transformation, but there are significant differences in the transformation paths and strategies.

Nike's DTC model is product innovation-driven, relying on strong brand power to build a direct-to-consumer system. Nike builds its direct-operated stores from scratch, relying on its brand power to drive new growth, while cutting off some dealers directly and encouraging others to build large direct-operated stores for those that cannot be cut off. Nike has built a complete digital ecosystem, including SNKRS, NRC, NTC, Nike.com, Nike APP, and a full set of digital touchpoints to connect directly with consumers.

ANTA's DTC transformation is characterized by "channel first", which is more about adjusting the internal

organizational structure, transferring the management rights of dealers to direct operation by the group, and absorbing existing resources rather than creating new ones. ANTA's DTC transformation began in August 2020 by strengthening the brand's "centralization" through the "decentralization strategy": eliminating 30% of inefficient stores, upgrading 10%–12% of top stores, and directly managing about 60% of mid-level stores while retaining the original operation team. By the end of 2022, ANTA had adopted a hybrid operating model in 23 provinces and municipalities across the country, with 44% of its 5,100 ANTA main brand stores and 67% of its 2,100 ANTA Kids stores directly operated by the ANTA Group (Sports Vocational College of Hunan, 2025).

D. Endorsement Strategy

Endorsement strategy is a core component of sports brand marketing, and Nike and ANTA differ significantly in endorser selection, partnership models, and marketing effectiveness.

Nike has long established deep partnerships with the world's top athletes, forming a unique athlete endorsement matrix. From Michael Jordan's legendary partnership with Air Jordan to contemporary sports superstars like Cristiano Ronaldo, LeBron James, and Serena Williams, Nike has tied itself to the world's top athletes, strengthening the brand's high-end image and professional authority (hbem.org, 2025). Nike's endorsement deal with Jordan has become a model case for athlete endorsement strategies.

Nike's endorsement strategy focuses not only on athletes' competitive achievements but also on their personal stories, social influence, and alignment with Nike's values. For example, Colin Kaepernick was chosen as the star of the "Dream Crazy" campaign for his stance on social justice. Although controversial, it effectively strengthened Nike's value propositions of empowerment and inclusiveness (Zhang & Li, 2024).

ANTA's endorsement strategy has evolved from a local sports star to an international superstar. In the early days, ANTA mainly signed up Chinese sports stars to boost brand awareness and product sales through their endorsements. In recent years, ANTA has stepped up its international endorsements, signing NBA star Klay Thompson. However, there is still a gap in the international influence of the overall endorsement lineup compared with Nike.

Notably, ANTA has gained better endorsement resources through brand acquisitions. FILA hired Korean experts to optimize its product and marketing strategies and collaborated with renowned designers and brands to enhance its brand image. High-end brands such as Arc'teryx and SALOMON rely on their professional image to attract specific consumer groups.

IV. THE IMPACT OF DIFFERENTIATED MARKETING STRATEGIES ON CONSUMERS' PURCHASING INTENTIONS

A. Impact on the Purchase Intention of the High-end Consumer Group

The impact of Nike's marketing strategy on the purchase intention of high-end consumers is primarily reflected in three areas: brand identity, emotional connection, and social value expression.

In contrast, ANTA's advertising strategy emphasized the practicality and affordability of their products. ANTA, the inaugural company in China's sports goods sector to engage sports celebrities as endorsers, has bolstered its brand recognition via endorsements from athletic stars and Olympic marketing initiatives. Nike's "Just Do It" brand spirit and emotional advertising content have effectively enhanced brand awareness and brand association, making high-end consumers willing to pay a premium for the brand.

Secondly, Nike has met the high-end consumer group's pursuit of professionalism and authority through its global top athlete endorsement strategy. Research shows that credibility, professionalism, physical attractiveness, and social attractiveness all positively affect brand identity, with social attractiveness having the greatest impact (Hans press, 2024). Nike's deep ties with superstars like Jordan and James not only enhanced brand credibility but also strengthened consumers' brand identity through the athletes' social influence.

Third, Nike's brand narrative enables its products to express social value. By purchasing Nike products, the high-end consumer group not only gains functional satisfaction but also expresses self-identity and social identity. Nike's limited-release strategy also creates scarcity, further stimulating the desire to purchase among high-end consumers.

However, Nike also faces severe challenges in the high-end market, where counterfeiting is particularly prevalent. As an international top sports brand, Nike's high brand premium and wide market recognition make it a major source of counterfeit production and sales. Nike products have a serious problem of counterfeit circulation on online e-commerce platforms, secondary markets, and even some physical channels. This proliferation of counterfeits not only directly damages Nike's brand image and consumer trust but also, to some extent, weakens the purchasing intention of the high-end consumer group. When consumers cannot verify product authenticity, they become more cautious in their purchasing decisions, and some may even switch to other brands to avoid the risk of counterfeits.

In contrast, ANTA's main brand has relatively limited influence on the purchasing intentions of high-end consumers. It is difficult for its main brand to shake the "affordable for the masses" stereotype, and it lacks best-selling products that can attract widespread attention. Its brand influence and premium pricing power are still not as strong as Nike's, but it has a unique advantage in its genuine product guarantee. ANTA has established a relatively comprehensive system for channel control and authenticity verification. As a local brand, ANTA has effectively reduced the circulation of counterfeit goods through a strict channel management system, deep cooperation with e-commerce platforms to combat counterfeiting, and direct sales controls during its DTC transformation, providing consumers with greater confidence in genuine products. For the high-end consumer group, authenticity assurance is an important consideration in purchasing decisions, and ANTA's advantage in this regard helps to enhance consumer trust.

B. Impact on the Purchase Intention of the Mass Consumer Group

The impact of ANTA's marketing strategy on the purchasing intention of the mass consumer group primarily manifests in three areas: cost-performance advantage, channel convenience, and product practicality.

First, ANTA meets the price sensitivity of the mass consumer group through psychological pricing and discount pricing strategies. Research shows that ANTA often uses the tail-number pricing method, such as pricing sneakers at 299 yuan instead of 300 yuan, to create the illusion of a lower price by exploiting consumers' psychological price sensitivity. During the off-season, ANTA encourages purchases through profit concessions and discounts to ensure stable annual production and sales. This pricing strategy effectively lowers the buying threshold and boosts the willingness of the mass consumer group to purchase.

Secondly, ANTA has enhanced purchasing convenience through its DTC transformation and omni-channel layout. ANTA implemented a hybrid operating model across more than 3,500 stores, successfully achieving a full DTC model by simplifying retail processes and operational standards, and improving overall efficiency. In the online channel, ANTA has established multiple platforms, such as Tmall and JD.com, Douyin, and WeChat Mini Programs to meet the shopping habits of different consumer groups. Research shows that e-commerce brand marketing strategies have a significant positive promoting effect on consumers' purchase intention and can effectively enhance consumers' engagement and perceived value (Wanfang Data, 2024).

Third, ANTA's multi-brand strategy caters to the diverse needs of the mass consumer group. Through brands such as FILA, Descente, and Kolon Sport, ANTA has achieved coverage of different sports scenarios and consumer tiers. Research shows that brand co-branded product attributes influence purchase intention through perceived value, with emotional, social, and cost value as key influencing factors (Qiao & Han, 2024). ANTA has effectively enhanced purchase intention among the mass consumer group through the diverse options offered by its brand matrix.

However, ANTA also faces challenges in the mass market. Research shows that the sports goods market is highly homogeneous, and consumers' doubts about product quality and price can affect purchase intentions. In addition, there is still a gap between ANTA's main brand and Nike in product innovation, lacking iconic product lines like the Air Jordan.

V. CONCLUSION

Through comparative analysis, this study compared the differences in marketing strategies between ANTA and Nike in the Chinese market and their impact on purchase intention. The study found that Nike focused on emotional marketing in advertising, while ANAT focused on product functionality. In terms of brand layout, Nike adheres to a single brand while ANTA implements a multi-brand strategy. In terms of channel operations, Nike is product innovation-oriented, while ANTA takes a channel-first approach. In terms of endorsement strategy, Nike is closely tied to top global athletes, while ANTA starts with local

stars. These differences led Nike to influence the high-end consumer group through brand identity, while ANTA met the demands of the mass consumer group through cost-effectiveness.

This study supplements an empirical study comparing the marketing strategies of domestic and international sportswear brands, refines the analytical framework for the mechanism by which marketing strategies affect purchase intention, and provides a theoretical reference for marketing innovation in the sportswear industry. The limitations of this study include: reliance on literature reviews, and a lack of first-hand data for empirical testing. The research concentrated on the Chinese market, and the generalizability of the findings requires validation. The moderating influence of individual consumer traits was not thoroughly examined. Future research could collect first-hand data through questionnaires, introduce individual consumer characteristics as moderating variables, and track the long-term effects of ANTA's DTC transformation.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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