

Within the Lens of “Keep”: The Convergence of Consumer Context and Brand Development in Chinese Fitness Apps

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Abstract

The mobile internet's business strategies offer a new approach to traditional health communication's self-renewal. In China, where offline medical resources are scarce, leading sports applications (Apps) provide users with the ability to seek health solutions at any time, thereby helping to alleviate the strain on medical resources. However, there is still a relative scarcity of discussions on brand construction strategies for sports Apps. This study analyzes the Chinese sports mobile application 'Keep' as a case study. The research approach involves collecting data through external document analysis and observation, using a case analysis approach. The aim is to explore brand construction strategies for sports apps, with a focus on consumer scene construction. The research findings highlight 'Keep's' unique strengths, such as its wide target audience, exceptional experiential marketing, and significant content advantages. In the online consumer market, 'Keep' strategically focuses on cross-platform marketing, integrating high-quality courses, and synergizing with smart hardware. Offline, the emphasis shifts to promoting familiarity and creativity, with the introduction of innovative physical fitness projects. This understanding of 'Keep's' approach provides valuable insights for sports apps navigating the dynamic consumer landscape. In conclusion, our research not only illuminates the strategic intricacies of brand construction for sports apps but also provides actionable recommendations. As the industry evolves, establishing core strengths and cultivating meaningful connections with users are imperative for enhancing a sports app's communicative power. This study contributes to both academic discourse and practical applications in the sports app industry. It offers innovative perspectives for traditional health communication in the mobile internet era, benefiting practitioners, decision-makers, and researchers.

Keywords: Keep, Fitness Apps, Consumer Scene Construction, Brand Development, Health Communication

Introduction

The prevalence of chronic diseases is increasing in developing countries, posing a challenge to global health systems. Yin et al (2021) reported a rise in the number of people with chronic diseases in China every year, while Yach et al (2004) highlighted the impact of chronic diseases on morbidity and mortality rates. Based on a 2013 national epidemiological study, the standardized prevalence of diabetes among Chinese adults was approximately 10.9% (Pan et al., 2016). Additionally, data from the 2015 Report on Nutrition and Chronic Disease Status of Chinese Residents revealed that in 2012, the overweight rate among Chinese residents aged 18 years or older was 30.1%, while the obesity rate was 11.9%. These rates increased by 7.3% and 4.8%, respectively, compared to 2002. The prevalence of overweight and obesity has increased in the under-18 age group. Overweight and obesity rates were significantly higher in 2012 than in 2002, as reported by (Ma et al., 2020). Meanwhile, China's core healthcare resources, which have advanced modern diagnostic and treatment technologies, continue to be overcrowded. Therefore, there is an urgent need to find new ways to control the high prevalence of chronic diseases and alleviate healthcare resource congestion, as noted by (Ding et al., 2021). Chronic diseases can be a significant burden on individuals. Without effective measures to control risk factors, they may become a major public health concern that could seriously endanger citizens (Strong et al., 2005).

In a 2016 report, the Chinese health sector identified tobacco and alcohol use, lack of exercise, unhealthy diet, and conditions such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and dyslipidemia as risk factors for chronic diseases (National Center for Chronic and Non-communicable Disease Control and Prevention Prevention & Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). Empirical data from 2004 to 2011 shows that the rate of developing chronic diseases increased by 58.58% for individuals with high leisure sedentary time (LSED) in China. Individuals in the high LSED group were more likely to choose fast food, salty snacks, and soft drinks, and were also more likely to smoke or drink alcohol compared to those in the low LSED group. However, they were also more likely to prefer walking, exercise, and fitness (Yin et al., 2021).

Research suggests that exercise can play a crucial role in controlling the prevalence of chronic diseases, both in the initial and later stages of recovery. Developing good exercise habits can contribute to improving chronic disease conditions (Ehrman et al., 2022; Frontera et al., 2006; Beavers et al., 2010). Teaching movement through cell phone applications can be a new way to address this challenge. Cell phone exercise applications are widely available (Adu et al., 2020) and can be engaging and all-encompassing (Muñoz et al., 2022). Users can share their exercise experiences, interests, and perceptions of the functionality of the applications with a wider audience (Dennison et al., 2013), which can help them to more quickly adopt new healthy lifestyles and actively integrate exercise into their daily routines.

People can use their free time not only to consume content but also to create and share it in the age of the Internet. By sharing and discussing knowledge freely, users can create new channels for knowledge reserves. This has led to the formation of an unorganized power among internet users Shirky (2008), which is also reflected in the health education provided by sports apps. Traditional offline health education is often limited to interpersonal communication. However, health communication in the online environment is more diverse, allowing for connection, sharing, and creation. With the lower threshold for user

participation, users are free to participate in health information dissemination and share their own health views through the powerful role of the community (Zhang et al., 2023). According to Goffman's Theory of Drama Wang (2023), the creation and maintenance of a 'foregrounded self-image' can promote users' active participation in health interactions, which may increase the likelihood of users adopting healthy behaviors.

The fitness and exercise market in China is transitioning to online platforms (Wang, Yin, & Zhu, 2021). Keep, an exercise app, is a prominent player in this market. Launched in April 2015, Keep won the Apple App Market's 'Featured App of the Year' award in the same year. Its business objective is to provide a comprehensive solution for fitness instruction, running, cycling, socializing, and dieting. The objective of Keep is to provide a comprehensive fitness solution that includes fitness instruction, running, cycling, socializing, eating, and equipment purchasing (Baidu online encyclopedia, 2015). Keep's business model comprises three components: online fitness classes, smart fitness equipment, and complementary exercise products, which form a closed loop (refer to Figure 1). Keep's remote application experienced significant growth in users during the COVID-19 pandemic (Lu, 2021). Based on the available data, as of 2021, Keep Group has completed seven rounds of financing and has over 6 million daily active users, with a total user base of approximately 300 million (Cucumber Media, 2019). In the first half of 2023, Keep's member subscriptions and online paid content generated \$449 million, a 10% increase from the previous year (Sina-mobile, 2023). On October 26, 2023, Pamela announced that she had officially joined 'Keep', according to Tech IT Picks (2023).

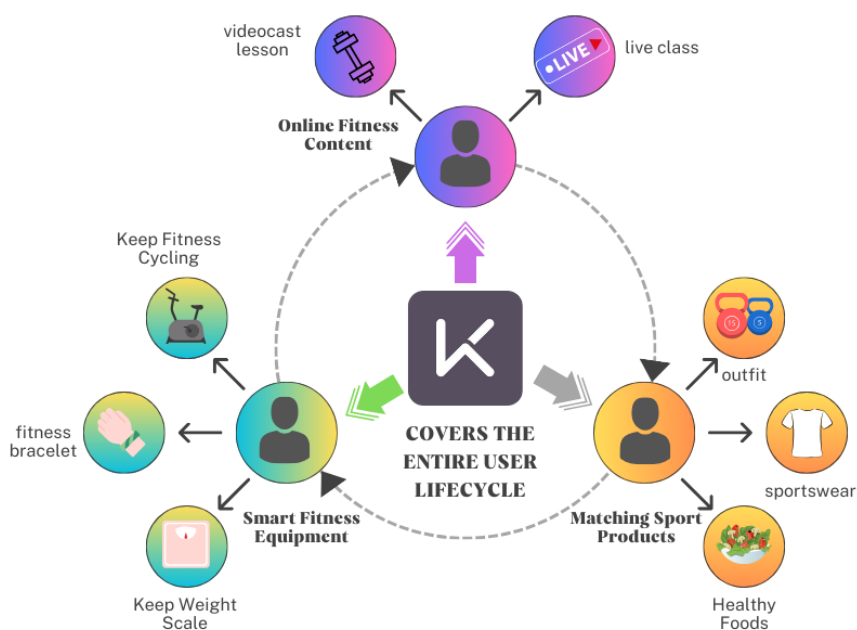


Figure 1. The "Keep" business pattern.

Sports apps, such as 'Keep', provide users with a platform to improve their health and share their progress. These apps promote healthy lifestyles through features like nutrition and exercise tracking. Additionally, 'Keep' has expanded its offerings to include healthy food sales (Lu, 2021). This innovative approach to new media interaction and sharing can aid in the prevention and management of chronic diseases. At the same time, 'Keep' has launched a

platform for selling healthy food (Lu, 2021). This innovative approach combines health communication with consumption scenarios. Research has shown that placing health communication in the context of consumer culture can help to communicate health on a wider scale (Lewis, 2014).

The study aimed to answer two specific questions

- 1) What are the core strengths of 'Keep'?
- 2) How does the Keep brand build scenarios from the perspective of user consumption?

The research provides a new approach to traditional health communication innovation in the mobile internet era. Additionally, it offers strategic guidance for practitioners and decision-makers in the sports app industry.

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative research method, specifically a case study, conducted between March 2022 and December 2023. The sports App 'Keep' (Lu, 2021) was selected as the single case due to its high activity and corporate value, making it suitable for typical analysis.

Data was collected through a dual approach of external document collection and observation, including participatory and on-site observation. During the external document collection, the study underwent a preparation period and an implementation period. In the preparation period, Xin Zhang conducted a long-term quantitative study on the user strategy of 'Keep.' The research identified diverse characteristics of 'Keep's' consumer scenes, showcasing distinct operational features on different online platforms. This attracted a large number of new users and sparked the researchers' interest. Xin Zhang decided to conduct specific research on the brand strategies of 'Keep' in consumer scene construction. The research group (All authors are included) selected relevant documents on the construction of consumer scenes on WeChat, TikTok, Weibo, mobile applications, and offline. The group also agreed to summarize the problem-solving cycle and strategies.

During the implementation phase, Xin Zhang provided preliminary research materials including platform basic information, pre-research results, and operational information. Xin Zhang also thoroughly explained the preliminary materials. The research group engaged in comprehensive discussions on individual platforms. Xin Zhang studied App, Yingying Cai studied WeChat, while Dr. Syafila and Qingqing Tang respectively focused on Weibo and TikTok. It is important to note that all evaluations presented are objective and free from bias. During the implementation, researchers raised new questions, which led to collective discussions. They summarized viewpoints and documented pros and cons in oral or written form. This process ultimately helped derive the core strengths and strategies for constructing consumer scenes.

The research primarily utilized a combination of on-site and participatory observation methods in the observational approach. To implement this approach, Xin Zhang and Qingqing Tang created a personal 'Keep' account, actively participated in courses, checked in, and shared experiences across multiple platforms. Because the social module is a unique aspect of this fitness app, it attracts a diverse audience, including experts, fitness enthusiasts, beginners, and first-time participants. The researcher proactively managed the social module by posting content related to nutrition knowledge, social interactions, and experience

feedback. During this engagement, the researcher interacted with fans of the 'Keep' to gain insight into their consumption needs and preferences.

The researcher maintained contact with backend staff through platforms such as Weibo, WeChat, and the client feedback system while keeping their identity hidden. This allowed for the recording and analysis of potential operational mechanisms and consumer demographics on the 'Keep' platform. Xin Zhang, Qingqing Tang and Yingying Cai conducted observations by purchasing 'Keep' services and products. They visited offline fitness centers in Beijing, observed their current state of operation, and engaged in objective communication with students and coaches through questionnaires. They also tested various smart hardware devices, tried on branded clothing, and experienced advertising scenes in the subway. The purpose of these activities was to investigate the measures and feedback mechanisms utilized by 'Keep' in creating consumer scenes.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection method, the research team regularly sought feedback, conducted cross-document checks when examining content on different platforms, and employed Member Checking to inform 'Keep' users about the research results, soliciting their feedback and validation to enhance the study's credibility. The research process was overseen by Dr. Syafila. Privacy protection measures, including anonymous methods, were implemented to ensure the privacy of the participants.

Results

"Core Advantages" of "Keep"

Wide Target Audience

Upon its launch, the Keep app did not target 'regular exercisers and fitness enthusiasts' as its primary user group. Instead, Keep deviated from traditional marketing strategies by adopting a 'mass-oriented' approach. In other words, Keep's marketing strategy is geared towards a broader definition of 'fitness people' rather than limiting itself to a specific core group of users. This is achieved through a deliberately vague targeting strategy. During its initial launch, 'Keep' identified individuals with limited exercise habits and time for fitness as the 'experimental user group', while slightly adjusting the positioning for professional fitness enthusiasts. Through continuous operation and experimentation, 'Keep' systematically expanded its user base, eventually encompassing anyone who desires to be fit as potential users. Observation of Keep's user base suggests that it defines health-consciousness as its ultimate user boundary, making anyone who is health-conscious a potential user of Keep.

Smart Experiential Marketing

Brands without operational capabilities may face a difficult situation in the new media environment. The internet operation industry is currently experiencing verticalization and fierce competition, leading to a shrinking blue ocean area. This has resulted in significant brand homogenization. In response to this trend, the 'Keep' operation team has developed a strategy to further increase the variety and quality of the product experience. In a competitive environment, consumers are increasingly demanding high-quality experiences. It is important to note that 'Keep' prioritizes a comprehensive, multi-level marketing strategy that emphasizes channel diversification, enhances user experience, and expands connection points. The platform-specific sub-strategy operation on channels such as Weibo, WeChat,

TikTok, and APP has resulted in effective communication. Additionally, 'Keep' recognizes the significance of opinion leaders in the sports industry. Since sports and health require specialized knowledge (Ray, 2015), 'Keep' improves the quality of user experience by integrating well-known sports stars, experts, and entertainment figures for marketing communication. A successful example is the fat-burning course launched on 'Keep' by Li Xian, a popular Chinese idol drama star. The course attracted a large number of fans through multi-platform promotion and utilized their support to generate revenue. Additionally, the company proactively seeks to understand user feedback. On one hand, the company has abandoned the traditional e-commerce advertising model and instead uses embedded advertising that allows users to close it at any time. On the other hand, the company has integrated online courses with offline gyms and developed a social module to enhance the user experience.

Compelling Content: Clear, Engaging, Resonant

"Keep" embodies its purpose, which is to provide high-quality content. This includes sharing health knowledge, creating exercise videos, developing thematic modules, and producing social content. These findings are based on a preliminary survey of "Keep" users conducted by Xin and Qing in 2019. According to Xin and Qing's (2019) survey of 'Keep' users, the primary reasons for using the app were to acquire health knowledge (40.51%, N=300), access high-quality exercise videos (54.43%, N=300), and participate in themed running modules (37.97%, N=300). Additionally, 'Keep' has developed a series of WeChat applets that are integrated with the mobile app and offer a range of premium courses. Health professionals, fitness experts, certified trainers, and entertainment and sports stars, such as Zou Shiming, are included in these courses. The courses are well-positioned with clear price tiers and excellent quality. Additionally, targeted and interesting health columns are frequently published on Weibo, WeChat, and mobile applications, authored by both experts and users. These columns have enhanced the information pattern, significantly improving the comprehensiveness and practicality of exercise and health information. Users believe that these contents have effectively expanded the diversity, effectiveness, scientific rigor, and community of the 'Keep' brand.

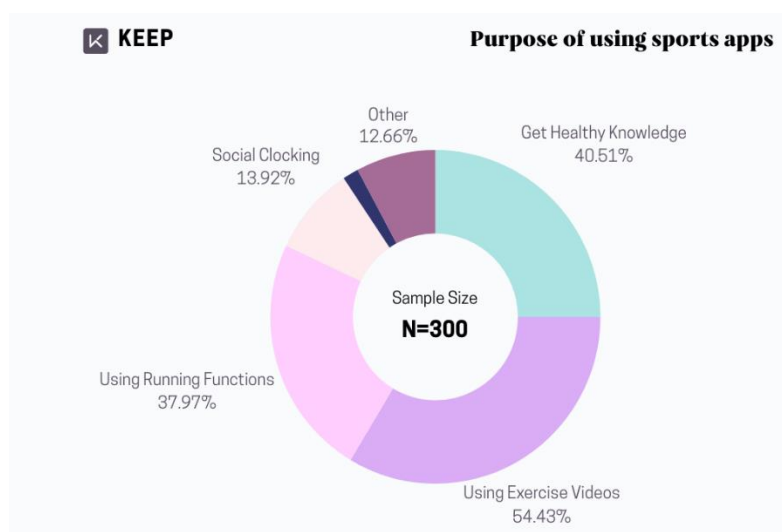


Figure 2. Purpose of using sports app

"Keep" Online Consumer Scene Construction**Cross-Platform Marketing Approach**

Since 2020, "Keep" has taken the brand logo as the core of product creation and comprehensively built its brand mall, covering indoor IoT equipment, outdoor running equipment, yoga supplies, low-calorie food, staple food replacement, clothing, and other categories. In its APP, "Keep" has a self-management section that can be accessed from the "Mall" interface. Through optimized logistics services and systematic home gym construction, a series of home gym equipment has been launched, including wristbands, body fat scales, elastic bands, foam axes, yoga mats, and so on. The promotion and sales of this series of products formed a multifaceted closed loop, including product delivery, quality assurance, and price concessions.

On the TikTok account, the products are promoted through video implantation, live sales, and window sales, and celebrities are often used to carry goods live. On the WeChat public number of "Keep", such as the launch of the Beijing delivery of "lite light food" service, and the provision of goods for sale in the same window, increasing the "Keep" goods This increases the connection point between "Keep" products and users.

On the official microblog of "Keep", the core brand concept of "self-discipline gives me freedom" is promoted through theme effects and the economic power of fans, and cross-border cooperation promotes co-branded goods, such as "Sally Chicken Series Sports Set" and "Tom and Jerry Series Sports Set". Sally Chicken Series Sports Set" and "Tom and Jerry Health Management Equipment", achieved good sales results. However, the success of the multi-platform sales model not only depends on the core elements of "Keep" products, but also involves the creation of supporting elements: affordable prices (with coupons, group modes, etc.), high quality and durability, a perfect and effective delivery chain, and a wide range of categories designed for users who love sports or have sport needs. The service is specialized for users who love sports or have sport needs. All these factors together ensure the success of "Keep" in cross-platform marketing.

High-Quality Course Marketing

The main advantage of Keep lies in its course products, which are categorized into paid and free types. These courses are instructed by domestically and internationally certified professionals. Users can redeem service commitments by purchasing goods. For its combat-related courses on the proprietary app, Keep invites former special forces sniper and Chinese Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) middleweight leader Jingliang Li to conduct combat sports courses at introductory and mastery levels. The prices for paid courses generally range from tens to hundreds of yuan. Free courses are segmented based on fitness goals, body parts, categories, difficulty levels, and popularity to help consumers choose suitable exercise programs. By offering a variety of learning options, Keep establishes a positive brand interaction with its users. The core course products are priced based on a comprehensive strategy that categorizes them into paid and free courses. The paid courses are closely integrated with membership systems and are offered at lower prices to promote high-quality courses to users. Simultaneously, Keep combines its membership with other platform memberships, such as YOUKU (one of the largest video streaming platforms in China) and Keep Joint Membership, as a way to attract users to subscribe to memberships and enjoy higher-quality courses. Course sales are boosted through multi-platform joint sales, leveraging emotional appeal in copywriting, external link scenes, offline promotions, and various other methods.

Overall, Keep's course products are characterized by clear categorization, distinct features, and convenient accessibility. During observations, it was noted that the majority of users believe these courses align with their consumption habits.

Smart Hardware Association System

The current mainstream marketing strategy for sports products involves associating with smart hardware, which integrates proprietary goods with a proprietary platform to offer more user touchpoints. Brands such as Xiaomi, Weile, Lexin, and Huawei in the sports industry sell smart wristbands, running shoes, and related APP platforms that enable synchronized assessment of steps, sleep, heart rate, and exercise data. This approach enhances the scope and impact of Internet of Things (IoT) applications.

In contrast, 'Keep' derives its products from the platform and entered the market relatively late. Brands such as 'Xiaomi,' 'Weile,' and 'Lexin' often use products to build platforms, with products taking priority over platforms. Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages. In sports apps where products take precedence over platforms, it is crucial to prioritize product quality to ensure user satisfaction. Conversely, for sports apps that rely on platforms to create products, it is essential to build a proprietary platform and leverage the influence of a joint communication matrix.

Keep has released a range of IoT products, including walking machines, treadmills, smart wristbands, and body fat scales. These devices synchronize data with the app, providing personalized exercise recommendations and shaping user profiles through data collection for precision marketing across multiple platforms. In addition, Keep has introduced fat-burning courses that are only available to those using Keep equipment. This enhances the consumer experience and brand recognition. Furthermore, the sports wristbands not only have typical functions but also provide real-time course guidance, such as real-time shaking reminders for exercise heart rate, which significantly improves the effectiveness of user completion of courses. During the 2020 '11.11' shopping festival, 'Keep' achieved top sales in their respective categories with their smart exercise bikes, widened yoga mats, and yoga wheels (Lu, 2021). As of December 2023, the fourth generation of 'Keep's' wristband has been released.

"Keep" Offline Consumer Scene Establishment

Creating Familiar and Creative Offline Scenes

Scenarios have become a crucial focus for advertising transformation and innovation. Communicators drive the development of the advertising industry by reshaping familiar scenarios for users through unconventional methods (Weber, 1999). As shared devices such as subways, bus stops, and shopping malls gradually integrate into public life, leveraging familiar scenarios to create unique brand memories has become an effective strategy to break through competition among similar brands. More and more advertisements are beginning to focus on points and methods of connection between themselves and consumers, attracting attention through familiar yet unique offline scenes.

From August 29 to September 9, 2018, Keep established the Keep Calorie Department Store in Shanghai Joy City. The store's unique key performance indicator was set as 'selling a beautiful life' to the public. The store featured various sub-scenes, including the dopamine counter, candy seesaw, stress relief counter, Hawaii island treadmill, and flexible

decompression area. The purpose of these scenes was to enhance users' comprehension of health knowledge and encourage healthy behaviors. Users could receive calorie currency at the guide desk during the interactive process at the counters, which they could exchange for various types of gifts. This creative approach effectively conveyed Keep's philosophy that exercise can improve people's lives and help them achieve more meaningful goals. It is important to note that this is not the first instance in which Keep has promoted brand value through creatively designed offline scenes that are familiar to users. Previously, Keep had established a 'Courage Test Station' at Xujiahui Metro Station (Shanghai, China), which also yielded excellent communication effects and attracted many individuals to share their experiences on social media platforms.

Launching "Keepland" Offline Fitness Centers

The traditional marketing methods of conventional fitness centers have long been criticized, and the "fitness sales-membership growth" model seems outdated and somewhat obsolete in the era of widespread Internet penetration. To break away from the traditional annual membership system, some fitness centers are actively innovating by incorporating Internet elements. On the other hand, apps such as "Keep," which initially focused on online content, are actively introducing offline health services into users' lives to teach health concepts to a broader audience of young people. "Keepland" is one of their representative initiatives, where the project seamlessly integrates traditional gyms and online content communities, attempting to extend its industry chain.

Through on-site research conducted by researchers in Beijing, it was found that "Keepland" primarily adopts a "group class - fee-based" model, with a focus on coach guidance, providing services such as venues, sports supplements, and course guidance to students. Course offerings primarily include third-party Les Mills courses and in-house developed courses such as MIXT (Mixed Intensity × Training). The MIXT class in particular has received high praise from students, particularly for its well-designed movements, intensity measurement, and post-class feedback. The health community environment created integrates elements of online and offline interpersonal communication, heart-rate sensing instructional systems, and online fat-burning rankings to achieve significant health communication effects. Students can access the courses through online reservations, with fees ranging from 25 to 80 RMB.

Currently, the financial situation of offline fitness centers is worrisome, with some news reports even highlighting issues such as embezzlement and flight. For "Keep", venturing into gyms is both a challenge and an opportunity. However, given the current operational landscape of offline gyms, "Keep" has only experimented with the gym model in Shanghai and Beijing. In the future, aspects such as specialization, deepening services, and creating interactivity need to be further explored. A gradual expansion of fitness centers across the country should be planned.

Establishment of Other Offline Consumer Scenes

In other offline consumption scenarios, such as the "lite" food delivery activity in the extended industrial chain, food delivery services are available in both Shanghai and Beijing. The food delivered is produced under the company's own brand, with simple and vibrant packaging, in line with the health requirements of "low fat, high-quality protein and a combination of coarse and fine carbohydrates". In addition, the establishment of the "Keep Up" apparel

brand further expands offline consumption scenarios. However, in the diversified sports apparel brand market with numerous industry giants, standing out in the highly competitive industry is a major challenge. While expanding the industry chain is important, developing the core business remains crucial. Unlike some Chinese domestic sports apparel brands such as Anta and Li-Ning, which have deep roots in the industry chain for decades, "Keep" currently does not have an equivalent depth of industry chain advantage.

Discussion

Brand building has increasingly become a focal point in the strategies of major brands in today's era, as the reputation and image of a brand have a significant impact on the operational dynamics of a company (Kapferer, 2012). Analyzing the core strengths and scenario construction methods of the "Keep" brand can provide several innovative insights for the development of fitness-oriented mobile applications.

Establishing Core Competitive Advantages

Competitive advantage is achieved through products, services, and other means, providing unique benefits and value to consumers. This value is not limited to individual products but is reflected in the entire product line, making it difficult for other companies to imitate (Prahalad & Hamel, 2009). In the short term, brand commitment may be based on the product's superficial appeal. In the long term, consumers' decisions to continue purchasing are influenced by their perceptions of the brand's core strengths. A lack of unique core strengths can lead to confusion in market positioning, blindly following trends, and eventual decline.

Our study group found that the key to Keep's core strengths lies in its course products, which is consistent with Lu's (2021) research. Building on its course advantage, 'Keep' has developed related products for consumer scenarios, as well as social interaction, physical goods, and multi-platform engagement, highlighting its core strengths. Compared to other sports app brands such as LeXin and Weile, which often rely on IoT device networking and have average device quality and platform construction, this brand lacks unique core strengths, making it difficult to establish a long-term presence in the market.

Huola Fitness, which focuses on its platform, appears to be lacking in proactive efforts to expand its industry chain and fully utilize its platform advantages. The course development often appears lengthy and lacks variety, which affects its reputation. This phenomenon is also observed in many sports apps, including Huola, FIT, and Feiha Fitness. These platforms and their extended industries do not emphasize clear advantages and excessively imitate and copy other platform business models. Their self-positioning is somewhat chaotic, resulting in a lack of long-term cognitive assets in consumers' minds, making it difficult to achieve sustained consumer appeal. Therefore, establishing unique core strengths is the foundation for building consumer scenarios and a key factor for sports apps to achieve long-term development.

Reconstructing the Connection with Users

Considering "How to Increase User Visibility"

Marketers increasingly consider popular social platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, and WeChat, among others (Parisini, 2022). Communicators also focus on diverse and rich offline scenarios. The main challenge is to attract consumers' attention. Similar to 'Keep',

Sports apps should design innovative and effective communication plans for both online and offline channels to increase opportunities for users to notice the app. These plans should encourage active participation in online and offline activities.

Increasing visibility requires creating more entry points, guiding users' attention, and stimulating their consumption behavior. Brands must keep up with internet media trends, use emerging platforms judiciously, and develop effective user interfaces based on each platform's characteristics. Additionally, they should not overlook the development of mobile applications and continuously improve platform service levels through channels such as data feedback.

Change the Interaction Approach with Consumers

When reconstructing a brand, it is crucial to objectively consider factors such as attraction, consumer perception of self-efficacy, acquisition costs for connections, and service innovation. It is important to note that 'Keep' has successfully innovated in these areas by adopting a more approachable stance to attract a broader consumer base. For example, 'Keep' aims to enhance consumer satisfaction by integrating online and offline experiences. The brand employs e-commerce holiday marketing strategies to reduce the psychological distance from consumers and offers competitive pricing for its courses and related products through multi-platform promotions. When developing the brand in the realm of sports apps, it is crucial to understand why consumers choose them and why they may consider leaving. To reconstruct connection methods, it is essential to incorporate user psychological factors such as attraction, consumer self-efficacy perception, connection acquisition costs, and service innovation. Starting from the user's needs, establish a strong connection between creative branding, emotional engagement with users, and the sports app brand to create a unique advantage for the brand.

Study Implications, Limitations and Directions

This study delves into the brand-building strategies of the 'Keep' sports app. Its main significance lies in understanding how sports app brands construct consumer scenes in the Internet era and insight into their core advantages. This research provides practical brand-building references for similar sports apps, especially in the current environment where consumers' attention to health and fitness is constantly increasing. It also offers new communication ideas for traditional health promotion methods, particularly in addressing user proximity issues, with valuable insights from business cases based on a thorough analysis of Keep's successful experience.

However, this study's limitations primarily stem from the specificity of the case study. The use of 'Keep' as a single case may be influenced by industry differences and individual factors, which limits the generalizability of the research results. Additionally, the timeliness of research data is a noteworthy concern given the dynamic changes in the internet market.

Future research could involve in-depth comparisons of brand-building strategies among different sports apps. The study could be expanded to a global market for cross-cultural and market differentiation research. Moreover, there is an opportunity to improve the investigation of user experiences and needs in consumer settings, while monitoring the lasting impacts of brand strategies to offer comprehensive and insightful guidance for the industry's sustainable growth from a more thorough and profound perspective.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, Xin Zhang; methodology, Xin Zhang and Dr. Syafila; software, Xin Zhang; validation, Xin Zhang, Dr. Syafila, Qingqing Tang and Yingying Cai; formal analysis, Xin Zhang; investigation, Xin Zhang, Dr. Syafila, Qingqing Tang and Yingying Cai; resources, Xin Zhang; data curation, Xin Zhang; writing—original draft preparation, Xin Zhang; writing—review and editing, Dr. Syafila; visualization, Xin Zhang; supervision, Dr. Syafila; project administration, Xin Zhang and Dr. Syafila. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data Sharing Statement

No additional data are available.

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