

A Study on the Construction Mechanism of Brand Image for New Technology Products: A Case Study of New Energy Vehicles

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Abstract. Despite entering the market, many new technology products still suffer from an insufficiently established brand image, making the construction of a strong brand image a critical issue. This study takes four major new energy vehicle enterprises—Tesla, Xiaomi, NIO, and BYD—as research cases, and adopts a multi-case analysis approach to examine the construction mechanism of brand image for new technology products. The findings indicate that different brands adopt differentiated strategies to construct their brand image. The process of brand image formation can be divided into four stages: brand image design, brand image communication, brand image reception, and feedback, with each brand producing distinct outcomes. The significance of this study lies in providing references for brand image construction in emerging technology industries. By comparing different new energy vehicle brands, it further responds to the application of brand image theory in the marketing practice of new technology products.

Keywords: brand image, brand image building, new technologies, new energy vehicles

1. Introduction

In recent years, the high-tech industry has grown very fast. More and more new tech products have come into the market. These products have advanced technology. But people usually know little about them when they just enter the market. So consumers do not have a clear idea of what these products are. Take new energy vehicles for example. They cost less to use, make less noise and are friendly to the environment with low carbon use. But the public can easily see their weak points too. For example, their batteries can only support a limited driving distance. Charging stations are not easy to find and maintenance costs are high. All these things make many consumers think carefully and hesitate before they decide to buy. So new energy vehicle companies need to improve brand building and promotion. In this way, more consumers will choose and use these cars.

Current studies on new energy vehicle brands can be divided into three main parts. One part is about brand building. Yue Zetong says that new energy vehicle companies should set a high-end brand position to make brand promotion work better [1]. The second part is about brand marketing. Zhao Ziyang uses communication and marketing theories to analyze the role and value of brand marketing [2]. The third part is about brand channels. Brand channels mean all ways and retail stores

that send products from brand owners to consumers. Many researchers have done deep studies in these fields. But some parts still need more exploration. In particular, there are not many studies on how to build the brand image of new technology products.

Because of this, this paper compares brand images of different new energy vehicle companies. It looks at differences in how companies build brands, use marketing methods and run sales channels. It also gives advice for other Chinese brands. The advice is about how they can build strong and useful brand images well in the future.

2. Literature review

2.1. Research on new technology products

New technology products have an official definition. They are totally new products made from original scientific ideas. They can also be made with new technology rules or design thoughts. These products show big improvements and new ideas compared with existing technologies.

Studies about new technology products can be divided into several main parts. The first part is about their economic influence. New technology products bring big trade results. This is especially clear when tariffs become lower. AI is a very important part of many new technology products. AI can take the place of human work. It makes work run more efficiently and cuts labor costs. So it brings higher returns and profits for companies [3].

The second part talks about innovation models. The innovation model of new technology products means the full process and clear logic. Enterprises use newly developed technologies and meet market needs in this process. They create, pass on and get value in an organized way. Studies about innovation models mainly have four parts. First, studies from a multi-dimensional system structure pay attention to building a combined frame. This frame includes technology, organization and ecosystem parts. These parts work together and support each other [4]. Second, research about improving and breaking all production factors. It focuses on making technology breakthroughs by keeping improving when resources are limited [5]. Third, studies look at sorting out the main power that leads to innovation [6]. Fourth, research about digital transformation ways. It stresses that digital plans should work well with company innovation plans to make results better [7].

The last part is about branding of new technology products. Making independent brands for new technology products is more difficult and risky. But brand effects can make more people know the brand and raise its real value. So it brings greater returns. The level of technology research and the number of patents a company gets are very important for building independent brands. Now, more and more new technology companies choose to develop their own brands. For example, Huawei applies for thousands of patents. This makes more people recognize its brand [8].

2.2. Brand image construction

Brand image is the general idea, feeling and full judgment that consumers, the public and other related people have about a brand. They form these thoughts through direct or indirect experiences with the brand.

Now, academic studies about brand image can be split into several main parts. The first part is about the effects of brand image. For example, B2B branding can help B2B suppliers get better financial results. It also has a strong influence on their financial gains. But B2B brand image can bring value benefits to companies. It may also lower the felt relationship value between OEM firms [9]. This shows that brand image not only gives benefits to enterprises but may also cause bad

effects. In the same way, building brands for exhibitions has a clear good effect on their appeal. Exhibition branding makes them more attractive directly. It also works as a partial bridge in this process [10]. These examples show that brand image has many different kinds of influences.

The second part is about spatial design of brand image. Simply speaking, spatial design changes a brand. It turns a brand from a 2D symbol like a name or logo into a 3D space experience. For example, when people protect intangible cultural heritage and improve brand value, they can build brands for such heritage. Then it can be shown as real 3D forms that come from traditional skills. The "Hong'an Embroidery Heritage Center" has changed its brand image to be more young and modern. This lets the public know more about Hong'an embroidery deeply. This shows the good points of building brand image [11]. In the same way, building brands for farm products with visual design uses color plans to make expression better. This helps more people know the products in the market, makes people remember them easily and leaves deep feelings in consumers' minds [12]. These examples show the spatial design part of brand image.

The third part is about building brand image itself. In fact, this process changes the brand image in consumers' minds. It turns a cold trademark into a lively and warm "human-like" image. For example, building local brands for the Biluochun tea-fruit agroforestry system gives these tea and fruit products special local features, meanings and values. This makes consumers think more highly of them and raises the total value of the brand [13].

According to the analysis above, this study pays attention to the way of building brand image. It looks at how brand image is formed for new technology products.

3. Research design

3.1. Research methodology

This study adopts a multi-case study approach. A multi-case study refers to a research method that systematically and in-depth compares multiple cases in order to explore or validate a particular phenomenon or theoretical framework [14]. By applying this method, the study compares four new energy vehicle enterprises in order to obtain consumer evaluations of different brands, examine their distinct brand positioning strategies, and analyze differences in brand image perception among domestic and international consumers.

The selected cases and their basic information are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of the research objects

Company Name	Tesla	BYD	Xiaomi	NIO
Year Founded	2003	1995	2010	2014
Country of Origin	United States	China	China	China
Years of Operation	22 years	31 years	15 years	11 years
Mission Statement	Accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy	Build Your Dreams	Continuously create "amazing products with honest pricing" so that everyone can enjoy a better life through technology	Blue Sky Coming: co-create a sustainable and better future

Table 1. (continued)

Representative Models	Model Series	Dynasty / Ocean Series	SU7	NIO Series
Average Price	RMB 266,000	RMB 124,800	RMB 260,000	RMB 346,000
Cumulative Sales Volume	1.6361 million units	4.6024 million units	410,000 units	326,000 units

3.2. Data analysis

The data in this study were collected from multiple online platforms, including Weibo, Xiaohongshu, Bilibili, Zhihu, and various news reports. Using keywords such as "Tesla," "Xiaomi," "NIO," "Huawei AITO," and "reviews," relevant information was retrieved and compiled. The primary focus was on user-generated content under videos and posts related to new energy vehicle evaluations, with particular attention to comment sections in order to capture relatively authentic consumer feedback and public perception.

Table 2. Consumer perceptions of four types of new energy vehicles

Brand	Xiaohongshu Comments	Bilibili Comments
BYD	"I disagree, BYD's technology is actually very good. My Seal EV looks amazing."	"The main reason models like Tang L and Han L are considered unsuccessful is their insufficient aesthetics."
	"BYD cars are fuel-efficient, but build quality is average and minor issues are relatively common. I haven't driven one myself—this is what a ride-hailing driver told me."	"EVs in a class of their own."
	"Many female users dislike BYD's interior design, and the cabin feels somewhat cheap. On uneven roads, it feels like a small boat."	"In EVs, visible aspects like design and interior often matter more than technology. BYD still needs to improve in these areas."
	"Interior is underwhelming."	"Looks good and drives well. If not for this car, I might not have taken the initiative to learn about BYD."
Xiaomi	"This pink color is so gentle—completely charming!"	"I was worried about Xiaomi's first car, but after observing for a year I bought the YU7 and am very satisfied."
	"The actual car feels so soft and cute—who understands this feeling?"	"I've bought several domestic cars over three years, and Xiaomi is currently the only one with zero failures."
	"It drives very well, even more comfortable than BMW, though the sound system is slightly lacking."	"Most new cars have minor issues in the first year, but Xiaomi has had zero faults so far."
	"Regret buying the grey model; I actually prefer pink."	"Support Xiaomi—there are now ready-to-ship units, Mi fans should go for it."

Table 2. (continued)

	"Battery subscription costs are too high—at this price I might as well buy a fuel car."	"Just placed an order—support domestic brands!"
NIO	"First, battery swapping eliminates worries about battery degradation; second, swapping is very practical at present."	"Owner here—overall pretty good."
	"You are right, NIO's swapping system is basically equivalent to lifetime battery warranty."	"Advantages are very obvious: design, materials, balanced handling and comfort, and service—all top-tier."
	"I don't even know where charging stations are near my home, but swapping is very convenient."	"As an ES6 owner, I will still choose NIO for my next family car."
	"After driving 10,000 km, the best summary is: smooth."	"In my opinion, buying Tesla at this stage is like choosing a fuel car when Tesla first emerged."
	"Everything feels like marketing."	"Range is top-tier; everything else is acceptable."
Tesla	"Competitors are basically doing the marketing for Tesla by constantly benchmarking against it."	"Five-year interest-free financing is a huge advantage."
	"Technologically, Tesla is ahead in all aspects."	"No excessive features, no complicated configurations—just practicality, ease of driving, quality, safety, and handling."

4. Research findings

4.1. Construction of brand ideological image in new energy vehicles

The construction of brand image in the new energy vehicle sector reveals that BYD, Xiaomi, NIO, and Tesla each exhibit distinct positioning, characteristics, and brand identities.

First, BYD mainly sees itself as a leader in technology. It also has a wide collection of car products. BYD does its own research and development across the whole car industry chain. It owns key technologies such as blade batteries and the DM-i hybrid system. These strengths help BYD win great influence in the new energy vehicle field and push its sales to grow fast. Its brand goal is clear. It uses technological innovation to make high-quality cars at reasonable prices. BYD is a top brand in China. It also wins more and more foreign buyers. It is slowly becoming a global technology-focused brand.

Second, Xiaomi Auto uses the brand influence and user groups it built in the electronic product market. It directly brings its smart device ecosystem advantages into the car industry. Xiaomi Auto mainly serves young people aged 18 to 35. These people care much about high technology and fair prices. Its key plan is to offer high cost-performance. It provides cars with good specifications at competitive prices. This challenges the old high-price rules of expensive car brands. Xiaomi entered the car industry later than many other companies. But it has spent a lot of money on research and development. It works with companies like CATL and BYD. Together they make high-performance electric motors. These motors support long driving distance and fast acceleration. Besides, its "Human × Car × Home" ecosystem is a special highlight. With HyperOS system, Xiaomi links cars, mobile phones and smart home devices into one whole system. Users can control home machines directly from their cars. This experience is very popular among young consumers.

Third, NIO pays much attention to service quality and user experience. It only serves the high-end car market. Its features are very easy to tell apart from others. NIO develops its own computer chips and operating systems. It combines hardware and software to build a strong technology base. This helps it offer a special user experience. People often call NIO "Haidilao in the car industry" because of its quick and user-friendly service system. Its service covers pre-sales and after-sales stages. Many people regard NIO's service as a top model in the car industry. It cares a lot about making users satisfied. So NIO has very loyal customers. Old users often recommend the brand to others for free. This cuts down NIO's marketing costs by a lot.

Fourth, Tesla has a clear goal. It wants to speed up the world's use of sustainable energy. Its brand has a global vision and looks far into the future. Tesla has advanced technology. It also builds a global charging network with more than 7,500 supercharging stations. This network greatly eases drivers' worries about driving distance. Its "T" logo outside and simple interior design are very famous. The interior has almost no physical buttons. They have become special cultural signs. They stand for technology, future style and new ideas.

Overall, the four companies have very different strategic positions. BYD depends on strong product ability and many sales stores. Xiaomi uses an internet way of thinking and an ecosystem-driven experience plan. NIO draws customers with top service quality and user-centered care. Tesla keeps moving forward through technological innovation and the development of its global ecosystem.

4.2. Brand image communication mechanism of new energy vehicle enterprises

The brand image communication mechanism of new energy vehicle enterprises refers to the process that companies send their strategic goals and ideas through a series of marketing actions, and finally turn them into the brand image that consumers can understand and accept. This study makes an analysis of four new energy vehicle companies on the basis of the 4P marketing theory.

First, BYD's product strategy has two main features, which are a wide range of product types and technological innovation. To begin with, BYD has put forward the "7+4" strategic layout. The "7" means seven kinds of vehicles such as taxis, buses and private cars, and the "4" means four special use fields including warehousing, mining, airports and ports, and its aim is to realize full electrification in the road transportation field. Secondly, BYD uses a dual-track technology strategy. It pays attention to both DM-i plug-in hybrid and pure electric technologies, which can not only meet people's need for full electric driving but also increase the driving range. Finally, BYD carries out a multi-brand strategy. It has built a complete brand system from low-end to high-end markets to satisfy different consumers' preferences, such as the Dynasty series, the Ocean series, and the high-end Yangwang and Fangchengbao brands. Second, BYD's pricing strategy is very flexible. First, it uses competition-oriented pricing and sets relatively low prices to gain more market share, so it directly takes the place of traditional fuel cars and other similar cars in the same price level. Second, it uses value-based pricing in the high-end market and sells expensive products with advanced technology, successfully entering the luxury car market with million-level products. Third, BYD has strong cost control ability because most core parts like batteries, electric motors and electronic control systems are made by itself, which brings it a big cost advantage. Third, in terms of distribution strategy, BYD has developed offline channels deeply and built a large number of 4S stores around the world. The company has a huge dealer network, and research shows that thousands of BYD dealers cover markets from first-tier to third-tier cities and towns, which greatly improves sales efficiency and total sales volume. Fourth, BYD's promotional strategy depends on new media communication. For example, it uses KOL and UGC to let consumers share their driving

experiences, and these contents are spread again on Weibo and Douyin. Besides, BYD communicates with the public through official accounts on major platforms to promote its products, so it builds a friendly and easy-to-approach brand image.

Second, compared with BYD, Xiaomi's 4P marketing strategy is quite different. First, Xiaomi's product strategy focuses on the integrated "human-car-home" ecosystem and very high cost-performance. Its car products mainly include the SU7 and YU7 series, which are priced between 200,000 and 300,000 RMB. These cars have high-quality configurations such as 800V high-voltage fast-charging platform and high-strength body structure, and their relatively low prices make consumers feel they get great value. In terms of appearance, Xiaomi learns from high-end brands like Porsche to create a strong visual effect and attract consumers. Second, Xiaomi's pricing strategy uses the anchoring effect and aims at the mid-to-high-end market. Before the SU7 was launched, people guessed it would cost as much as 800,000 RMB, but its official price was only about 200,000 RMB, which made consumers think it was very worthwhile. Xiaomi also makes it clear that it will not enter the ultra-low-end market and only focuses on the 150,000–500,000 RMB mid-to-high-end market. Third, Xiaomi's distribution strategy combines online and offline channels and integrates sales and services. It does not use the traditional car sales model but adopts a mixed system. The first part is the "1+N" model: "1" refers to Xiaomi's self-built delivery centers that are in charge of sales, delivery and after-sales services in core cities, and "N" refers to partner dealers that help sell cars. The second part is channel cooperation by reusing its ecosystem: Xiaomi turns its mobile phone users into potential car buyers, which greatly cuts down marketing and channel costs. Fourth, Xiaomi's promotional strategy relies on founder IP marketing and user community communication. Lei Jun, the founder of Xiaomi, is the company's most important brand ambassador and is very popular on Chinese social media. He uses Douyin livestreams, public speeches and personal test drives to attract a large number of "Mi Fans", which reduces promotional costs a lot and makes users more loyal to the brand.

Third, NIO sets itself as a high-end smart electric vehicle brand. One big difference between NIO and other new energy vehicle companies is its many battery swap stations. NIO has built more than 2,500 battery swap stations in all parts of China, and these stations offer users fast services to refuel their cars with new energy. The battery swap system works with high efficiency. Common electric vehicles need to wait for a long time at charging stations, but NIO's system uses robotic arms to take out and change the car battery automatically. The whole process only takes about 10 minutes, and then the car can drive on the road right away. Another feature of NIO is its sales strategy. It takes basic car configurations as the base and lets users choose extra paid custom choices. In simple words, the basic settings of NIO cars are simpler than those of other electric vehicle brands, but users can pick and buy extra inside and outside car parts online freely. This makes cars more personal and makes users feel the product has higher value. When talking about pricing, NIO uses a mid-to-high-end price strategy. Its car models include ET sedan series, ES SUV series, EC SUV series, EP supercar series and ET5. Even the cheapest model costs about 298,000 RMB, which means NIO cars are still expensive for common Chinese consumers. For promotion, NIO uses a special way. It gives rewards to car owners who help advertise its vehicles, and this helps NIO get almost free marketing coverage on commuting roads, living areas and shopping places. For sales channels, NIO uses a direct-sales model that mixes online and offline ways. Online, users can choose car types and extra functions on NIO's official website. Offline, consumers can go to NIO stores in shopping centers to talk with salesmen and pick cars. Putting offline stores in urban business areas helps NIO make its high-end brand image firmer.

Fourth, Tesla also uses a direct-sales model the same as NIO, with special online and offline sales channels. The most special part of NIO is its battery swap system, while Tesla tried battery swapping at first but gave it up at last because the cost was too high. Tesla's cars have three main features, which are simple interior design, self-driving technology and closely arranged small-cell battery structure. With the help of advanced artificial intelligence, Tesla cars can drive to customers by themselves. Compared with other electric vehicle brands, Tesla's interior design is much simpler. There is only a steering wheel and a digital screen for showing information, and all physical buttons are replaced by a central touch screen. Users control temperature, lights, gear shifting and other functions through this screen. When it comes to pricing, Tesla's cars are a little more friendly to consumers than NIO's, and its entry-level models cost about 250,000 RMB. Tesla supports a global unified pricing strategy and open price information, which shows Elon Musk's idea. He believes that treating all consumers equally is very important for long-term development. For promotion, Tesla started a low-interest financing plan before March 31, 2026, and this plan includes a five-year installment plan with no interest. Just like NIO, Tesla also uses a direct-sales model with official online shopping channels and physical stores.

4.3. Consumer reception and feedback of brand image

Consumer reception of brand image means the process where consumers learn and understand information about a brand. Consumer feedback means the public comments that people make about their understanding. This feedback can be good or bad.

First, let us talk about consumer feedback on BYD. On the whole, many female consumers do not like BYD's interior design and outside look. They usually think the inside of the car is old-fashioned and the appearance is not nice. According to surveys, questionnaire results and user comments from online platforms, many people connect BYD with ride-hailing services like Didi. They also think that people who own a BYD new energy vehicle do not have high social status. Some even call it a "low-end brand". On the other hand, BYD also gets good comments. After taking test drives or using after-sales service, some consumers say BYD has great driving performance. It also has an advantage in charging speed. These strengths can bring some emotional value to users.

Second, let us look at feedback on Xiaomi. Compared with BYD, Xiaomi cars are more popular among young female consumers for their outside and inside design. Many female consumers say they buy Xiaomi cars mainly because of the good look. Other consumers care more about safety performance. For example, some users say they once fell asleep when driving on the highway because of tiredness. But Xiaomi's intelligent driving system helped control the car and stopped an accident. This clearly shows that Xiaomi cars have strong functions and safe protection. On the whole, Xiaomi cars get mostly good feedback because of nice design and solid performance. However, there is also bad feedback. Some consumers worry about product quality. They say that if the car crashes, the battery is easy to break and catch fire, which may make the whole car burn.

Third, let us discuss NIO. Compared with the two brands above, NIO is less well-known in both Chinese and foreign markets. Many female consumers think NIO cars are very expensive. They also criticize its driving range, battery quality and sound system. But data from online platforms shows that most people who have driven NIO cars give good comments. They usually think NIO has clear advantages in design beauty, material quality, balanced driving control and comfort, as well as customer service. All these points are seen as top level in the car industry. The only big problem is the high price, which many common people cannot afford. On the whole, NIO's service system still gets high praise from many users.

Finally, let us talk about Tesla. Most young female consumers are not happy with Tesla's seats. They think the back seats are too hard and uncomfortable. Some also feel bad about its regenerative braking system. On the contrary, some male consumers think Tesla has fast acceleration and good driving control. It brings a very smooth driving experience. Compared with female users, they like regenerative braking more. They say it works in a straight and gentle way. Users usually think Tesla's simple interior design makes it look more high-end. Its body quality is also good, and its safety performance is reliable.

5. Conclusion and discussion

5.1. Conclusion

Based on a case study of new energy vehicles (NEVs), this research finds that the construction of brand image in NEV enterprises can be summarized into three sequential stages.

First, companies need to build the conceptual identity of their brand. At this stage, firms must tell consumers clearly what business they do, what products they provide and what value they can bring to users. The key part of forming a brand image is to make clear the brand's mission and future goal. As this study says, the four major new energy vehicle companies each have their own core mission. For example, Tesla's mission is to speed up the world's turn to sustainable energy. Second, companies need to spread their brand image to the public. After setting up the brand identity, they should make sure the public knows and understands the brand image they want to show. The aim is to turn the corporate brand into a clear image that consumers can think of and accept in their mind. Third, companies need to collect how consumers receive and give feedback on the brand image. Enterprises should get consumers' opinions and thoughts about their brand image, and think about its weak points in time in a continuous way. By making changes and improvements step by step, the brand image can be made better and stronger.

5.2. Discussion

5.2.1. Theoretical contributions

The theoretical contribution of this study is that it takes new energy vehicles as examples to analyze the system of brand image building for new technology products. This helps make up for the insufficient parts in present studies about people's understanding of these products. Present important studies have stated that visual communication design can show brand image. They believe this design connects products with consumers and passes brand ideas in an effective way [12]. For example, studies on how Chinese new energy vehicle companies enter the ASEAN market suggest that working with local car makers, part suppliers and research groups can make brands more competitive [15]. But present studies still do not give a complete explanation of brand image building for new technology products. This study fills this blank by putting forward a three-stage model for building new energy vehicle brand image. It first tells how large new energy vehicle companies set up brand conceptual identity. Then it studies the working way of brand image communication. At last, it shows the importance of consumers' acceptance and feedback of brand image, which helps brands get improved and better continuously. In this way, this study takes new energy vehicles as examples to develop traditional marketing theory in the field of new technology products.

5.2.2. Practical implications

From the view of building brand image for new energy vehicles, this study looks at the branding practices of four large new energy vehicle companies and gets several useful practical ideas. First, building a clear brand conceptual identity is a very important first step for new energy vehicle companies, and it is the key part of corporate communication. A powerful brand image can bring companies large economic benefits and good social reputation. Second, when it comes to the mechanism of brand communication, we can find that only when a company successfully turns what it wants to express into something that consumers can understand and feel connected with, will consumers be interested in the brand, learn more about it and finally become loyal to it. Third, for consumer reception and feedback, consumers' responses give companies real and valuable ideas about their weak points and shortcomings. This kind of feedback is very useful for companies to make improvements. Only by fixing these problems all the time and making their products and brand image better can companies meet consumers' expectations more closely. In this way, they can improve both their sales results and how well people know their brands.

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