

# How Did ANTA Win During the Olympics?

## Introduction

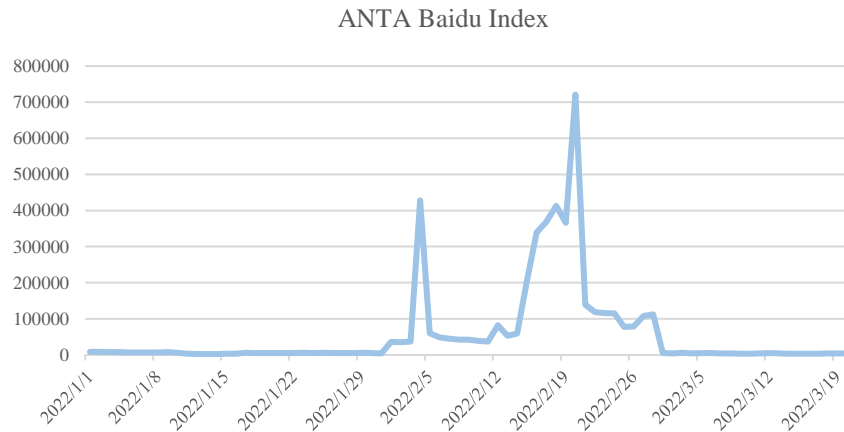
With the great development of internet and social media nowadays, a lot of companies may try to make full use of internet platform and public events to implement their marketing strategies, which may help company to increase its sales directly by attaining higher level of brand awareness and public attention. This kind of usage is similar to the lever, which means companies apply the leverage marketing strategy that is to use the tools consisting of internet platform, public events and emotional value to gain a higher exposure with relatively low cost of time and money.

We noticed that there is a famous Chinese company ANTA which is a patriotic brand implementing similar marketing strategy recently during the Winter Olympic Games. Aiming to maintain the market expansion and improve the brand awareness, ANTA made full use of internet platform and social media (Weibo), and combined the public events with the emotional resonance which is about the patriotism of the people during the Winter Olympic Games. To better understanding the implementation of this marketing method, we try to make analysis on how ANTA implemented its marketing strategy to improve its sales and brand awareness, or in other word, it is to unfold the process of how ANTA 'won' during the Winter Olympic Games (From February 4<sup>th</sup> to February 20<sup>th</sup>) on the aspects of sales and brand awareness.

Moreover, Erke, one of the famous brands in China which is also considered as a symbol of patriotism, implemented similar strategy before. We may also try to give a brief analysis on it to make the illustration of marketing strategy more comprehensive.

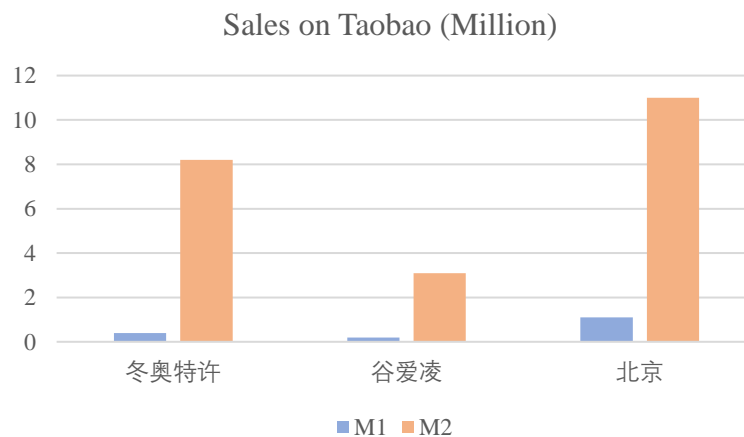
## Background information

ANTA, founded in 1991, is a traditional Chinese company specializd in sports clothes. As the sponsor of the Chinese National Team, it carried out a lot of marketing campaigns both on CCTV and Weibo during the Winter Olympic Games (2/4 - 2/20). There were more than 30 trending topics related to the brand on Weibo across the period, enabled ANTA to continuously gain enormous exposure to Chinese audience. According to the Baidu Index, ANTA's index hit 428,217 and 721,213 respectively on the opening and closing ceremony. It remained a relatively high value during the Olympic as well.



Source: Baidu Index

On Taobao, the main e-commerce platform in China, among ANTA's products which showed a dramatic rise in sales are goods that contained the keywords: 'Olympic Specialized', 'Gu Eileen' and 'Beijing', displaying a growth rate of 1950%, 1450% and 900% respectively.

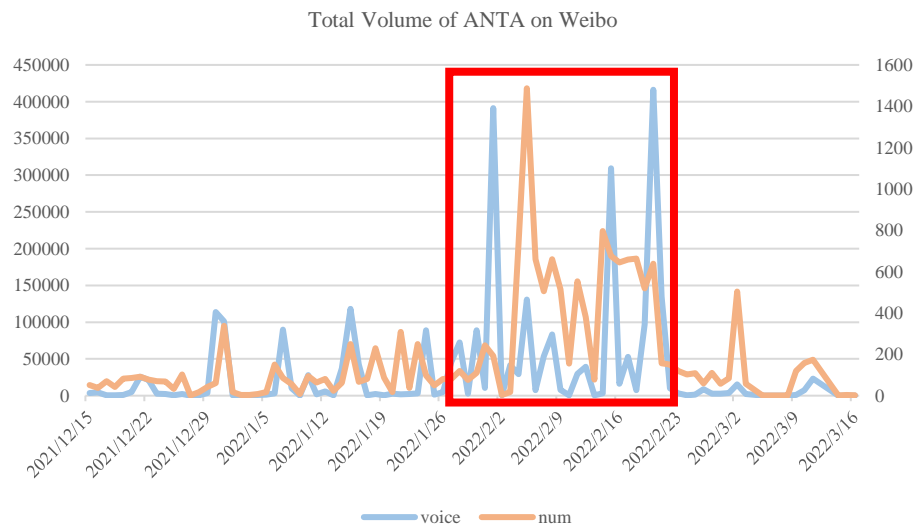


Source: JiuQian Data Platform

Series of actions ANTA took successfully promoted brand exposure and sales. At the stage where new consumer-goods brands like 'Genki Forest' are reforming brand marketing and people are talking about 'The Rise of Domestic Goods', we believe ANTA provides a perfect case for us to study how those traditional brands transform and reinforce their brand recognition. Therefore, we are interested in the strategy ANTA took on Weibo during the Winter Olympic games and more particularly, the reasons why ANTA gained this phenomenal popularity in this case. ANTA's case reminded us with another sportswear brand, Hong Xing Erke, who was also recognized as a patriotic brand and gained large amount of social exposure last year during the flood in Henan. To make our research more comprehensive, we also chose Erke as a comparison with ANTA's case.

## Data Inspection

We collected all posts containing the key word ‘ANTA’ on Weibo from 12/15/2021 to 03/15/2022 by web crawler, with a total number of 16,628. The major features of this dataset are the post’s publish time, content, forward number, like number and share number. As the figure below shows, during the Olympic both the total voice (sum of the number of forward, like and comment) and number of posts on Weibo hit the top and maintained at a relatively high level.



The result is in line with the trend of Baidu Index. Each spike in the plot represents a trending topic related with ANTA, even before the Olympic there are more than 5 peaks. One of the most iconic topics was #15 events, 12 Chinese Team are wearing ANTA#. Those evidence demonstrates that ANTA intentionally prepared its campaign to promote brand recognition. What’s more, we collected ANTA’s sales on Tiktok so that we can explore more on the relationship between brand recognition and short-term sales.

## Methodology

We are going to use social listening method to evaluate ANTA’s performance by looking at what people are talking about the brand and their reaction based on every post’s content. Tags, emoji and special notations were removed from the text to facilitate the analysis.

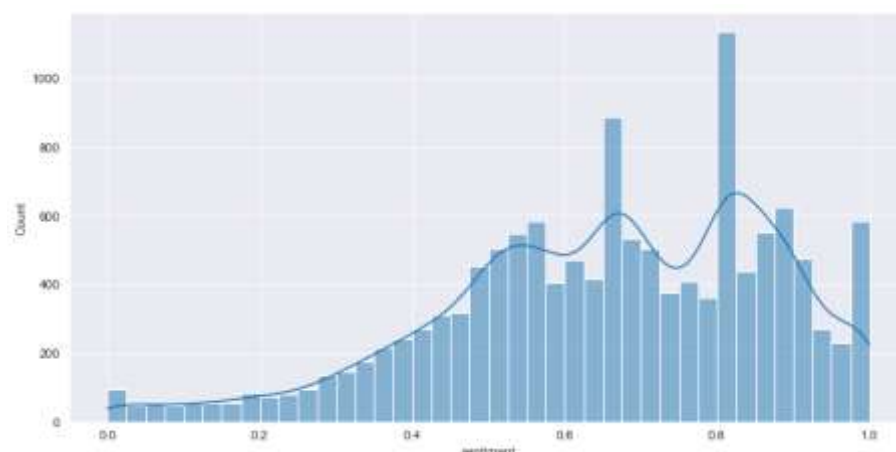
To get a brief idea about ANTA’s brand image during the Olympic Games, we adopted sentiment analysis to get a score for every post in our dataset, which indicates whether the emotion is positive or negative. The package we used was SnowNLP, an open-source

package for Chinese language process. However, the default training dataset was prepared for analyzing shopping comments, which was not an optimal option for analyzing Weibo contents. Therefore, we collected nearly 100 thousand positive and negative sample Weibo sentences as our training dataset. After training, the *snownlp.sentiments* function will return a value ranged from 0 to 1, indicating the probability of the context to be positive. In this case, we set the threshold to be 0.8 and 0.2. Therefore, post with a score larger than 0.8 would be labeled as positive and one with score lower than 0.2 would be negative. To get a score for each post, the content was split into sentences and scores were calculated for each sentence. The final score was the average score of the sentences within the post.

Term Frequency – Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF) algorithm was also applied to conclude topics or keywords, thus helping us infer ANTA's campaign strategy during the Olympic. The basic principle of this algorithm is that a word's importance gets higher as it appears more frequently in the TF document, and the reversed way for the inverse corpus file. In this way, we can evaluate a word's importance in the context without considering redundant words such as 'is', 'what', 'she' and etc. The function *extract\_tags* will return K most important words based on your choice and *only\_adv* allows you to decide whether only adjective and verb-nouns ('动名词' in Chinese) should be considered. After extracting keywords, we consolidated those words to a Wordcloud so that the result could be presented in a more vivid way.

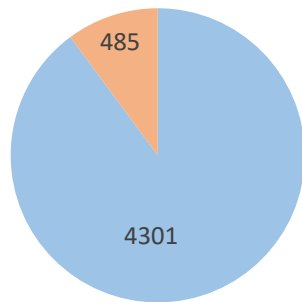
### Sentiment Analysis for ANTA

The figure above depicts the score distribution of all posts in the dataset. The average score is 0.655 and it is obvious that the distribution is extremely right skewed. Instead of showing a density figure of normal distribution, it's more similar to a logarithm function, which means users on Weibo tend to have a positive attitude towards ANTA.

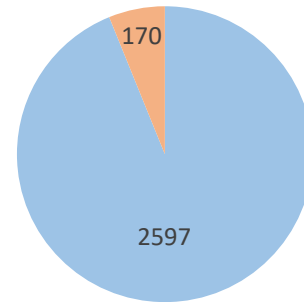


According to the sentiment definition mentioned in the last section, the positive post ratio was 89% and the proportion rise to 94% during the Olympic, as the figure below shows.

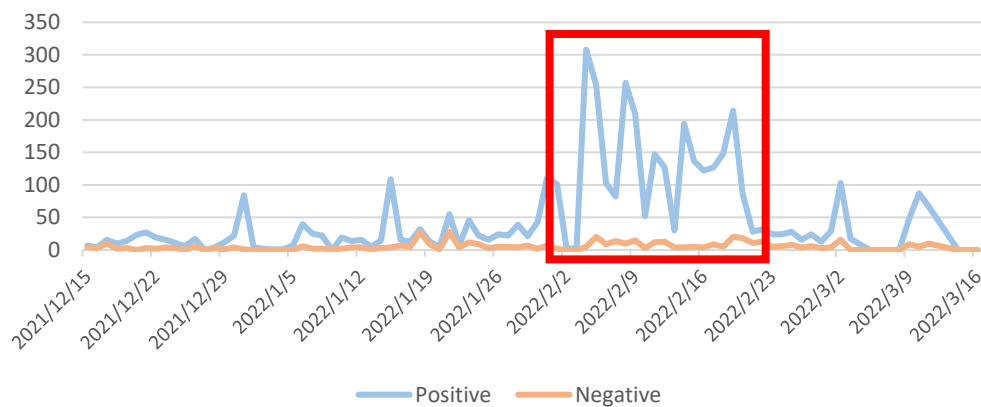
**Sentiments Throughout the period**



**Sentiments During the Olympic**



**Sentiment Trend**



Let's take a look at the trend of positive and negative posts separately. Before the Winter Olympic Games, the number of positive and negative messages did not have much difference despite of several time points when ANTA carried out a campaign. However, the number of positive posts broke out during the Olympic while the negative messages stayed at a relatively low level. Not only did ANTA attract enormous attentions from the public, but more importantly, people's attitude towards the brand was mainly positive, indicating a huge success in improving brand image. Therefore, we may conclude that in terms of affecting people's sentiment towards the brand, ANTA did a great job during the Olympic. But how did ANTA tie its brand with the Olympic topic remains undisclosed. The content analysis based on TF-IDF algorithm may help us discover more about the outbreak of ANTA's positive sentiments.

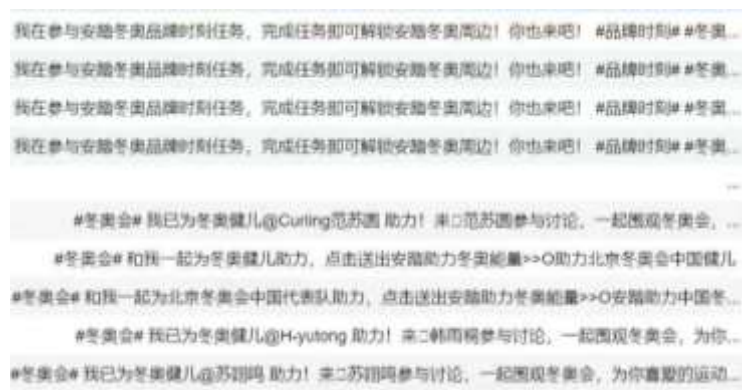
## Content Analysis of ANTA

If we look at all the posts on Weibo during the Olympic, we can see that despite of words like ‘cheers’ and ‘athletes’, most ANTA related keywords are pretty ambiguous such as ‘finish’, ‘energy’ and ‘task’, which do not have a direct relationship with the Olympic.

### Keywords during the Olympic



We took a look at the contents of the posts which contained those keywords, and found that all of those posts were in the same format. Actually, those were campaigns organized by ANTA where people could participate in a lottery by uploading a cheer-up post in this format.



In this way ANTA gained huge exposure on Weibo, but this does not contribute to our content analysis. Therefore, in the following analysis we removed those posts and picked 3 dates (2.20, 2.15, 2.5) when ANTA got relatively high voice

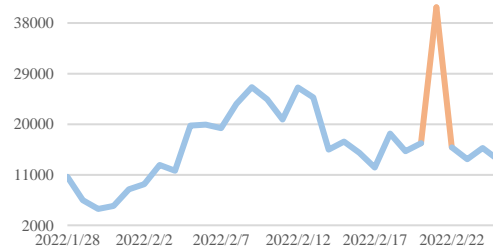
On Feb. 5th, which was the hottest day with most voice from the public, the main topics were ‘the first gold medal’, ‘speed skating’, ‘design’ and ‘coat armor’. Analyzing the events on that day, we could find it was the day that China got its first medal in relay speed skating, which set off a craze at that time. Taking advantage of this hot topic, ANTA advertised its Olympic technology by illustrating how ANTA’s design on the athletes’ armor protected them from being hurt by the skates. ANTA applied the same strategy on Feb. 15th, when GU Eileen and SU Yiming gained huge attention because of their brilliant performance, boosting sales by launching clothes of those athletes.

Keywords on Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>Keywords on Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>

February 20<sup>th</sup> was the closing ceremony of the Winter Olympic Games, where the Chinese delegation showed up wearing ANTA down coats. The design and technology of ANTA clothes were discussed widely online. People's comments on the brand's products were also positive such as 'Good-looking' and 'well-designed'. Audience's attention was then converted to purchasing behavior, sales on Tiktok during the closing ceremony hit over 40,000, which stood out across the whole period.

Keywords on Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>

ANTA's Sales on Tiktok



Despite of all those trending topics, we also noticed that there were more than one hundred negative contents during the Olympic and two negative posts spikes on Jan 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> despite of the huge number of positive sentiments. According to the word-cloud below, those negative posts were mainly complaining about the difficulty to buy ANTA products and urges to replenishment. Even though those posts are labeled as negative, they show the popular trend and great brand awareness ANTA attained during the Olympic, indicating the success of ANTA's campaign. Those negative posts before the Olympic also indicate that ANTA organized several successful campaigns to warm-up for the Olympic.

Keywords of Negative posts During the Olympic

Keywords of Negative posts on Jan 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>

To sum up, we conclude ANTA's action throughout the Olympic period into two strategies. The basic one is that as the sponsor of the Chinese National Team, ANTA

naturally turned those key points and popular athletes such as closing ceremony and Gu Eileen into the brand's advertisement, successfully promoting its products and their core technology. More importantly, by integrating the brand with topics related to the Olympic, ANTA portrayed itself as a patriotic brand which has the technique and product to compete with international giants. Through the high exposure, ANTA successfully entered customer mind-set (用户心智). When talking about domestic sports or clothing brand, people will come up with ANTA immediately. If we look at the keywords after the Olympic, we will find some keywords like 'domestics brand', 'support' and 'vote'.



Actually, people were picking the top 10 'Annually Domestic IP' and lots of them voted ANTA, from which we could see a strong reinforcement of ANTA's brand recognition.

### Further Analysis

To explore the relationship between Sales and the sentiment/volume on Weibo, we simply ran a linear regression of the number of positive, negative and total posts on the sales on Tiktok. The chart below shows the result.

	Estimated Coef	P-value
Intercept	1.710e+04	<2e-16
Positive	-1.246e+01	0.6216
Negative	3.011e+02	0.0697
Voice	5.375e-03	0.6274
Num	3.043e+00	0.6616

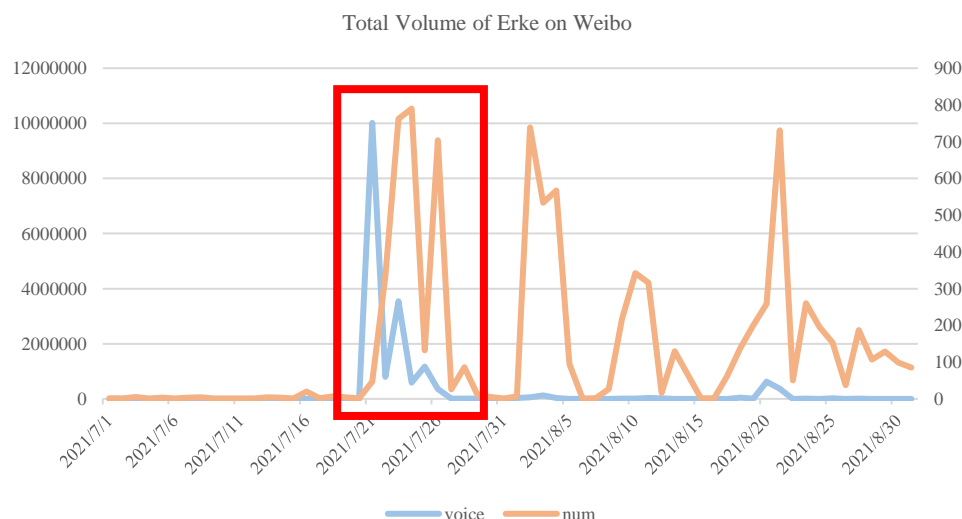
We can see from the result that there is no certain relationship between the brand exposure/positive sentiments and product sales. We postulate that since we used the sales on Tiktok, which heavily depended on Live Stream sales, the sales might not directly respond to the campaign on Weibo. What's more, as a social media, Weibo does not have a closed loop routine for customers like Tiktok, where people watch the campaign and purchase directly on the platform. People must switch to other APP for purchasing after they see the campaign on Weibo, which causes some lag in the customer journey. But there is also something



interesting, the p-value for the number of negative comments is relatively small and the estimated coefficient is positive. In our view, that's reasonable because the negative posts were actually complaining about the lack of stock, which indicates that there was a huge sale at that time.

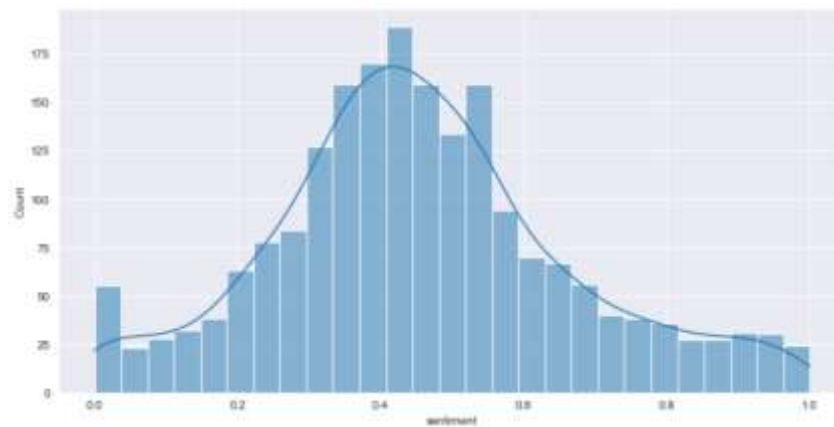
### Brief of Erke

HONGXING ERKE GROUP (Erke) is a Chinese sportswear brand since 2000. For years, Chinese sportswear brand Erke has been in a financial slump, delivering sinking profits in a shopping environment scrambled by the rise of both global and domestic brands. However, an unexpected event once in a life time happened in 2021, saving the company and inducing unbelievable sales. A flood-relief donation by Erke pushed the company to the cusp of the public opinion, especially on Weibo. People praised Erke that the company was on the verge of bankruptcy but it was still willing to contribute to the charity. These compliments snowballed into an extremely high voice peak in Weibo.



The real intention of this donation could hardly be known. No matter what the intention is, this donation is definitely a successful marketing strategy. It aroused the sympathy and patriotism of the mass and converted it into sales and revenue. Compared to ANTA, Erke is definitely another way of marketing on consumers' sentiment. Therefore, further business analysis on Erke will be made. The span of our data is from June 1<sup>st</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup>. It contains the same features as ANTA's data. We conducted the same operation as ANTA on Erke's Weibo.

## Sentiment Analysis for Erke



We derived the histogram of the sentiment score of Erke's posts on Weibo. The figure shows that the distribution of sentiment is slightly skewed to the left. The mean is 0.5512, which means that the mass held a neutral attitude towards this campaign. However, it was apparently incoherent with surge of the sales, which means that the market welcomed the Erke. However, when we check the data, the sentences include some negative terms like "sympathy", "disaster", "lack of inventory" and so on. "Sympathy" is actually a symbol that customers really cared about Erke and respected the selflessness of Erke. "Disaster" is just a statement of the fact because the background of Erke campaign is under a disaster. Moreover, "Lack of Inventory" imply that the popularity of Erke. Therefore, what is presented in a result can only be an estimation lower bound. Hence, the attitude of the mass should be positive.

## Content Analysis of Erke

Among the data we have retrieved from Weibo, the positive comment has described the following features.

### Keywords of Positive Posts



The word "consumption" means that the customer increased the consumption on Erke's sportswear. There are also many words like "marketing" and "live streaming" which also implied the surge of consumption on Erke's products. The high frequency of consumption

related concept demonstrated that the positive sentiments indeed increased the sales, and people held positive attitudes toward the consumption on Erke's products. Besides the consumption, there are word clouds regarding the high-cost performance of Erke. The words "cheap", "not bad", "excellent", "design", and "kindness (Liang xin)" implied that the Weibo user held positive attitudes toward the Erke's products after they bought them. Also, thank to this exposure of the brand, consumers began to appreciate domestic sports brand, for we can observe the occurrence of ANTA.

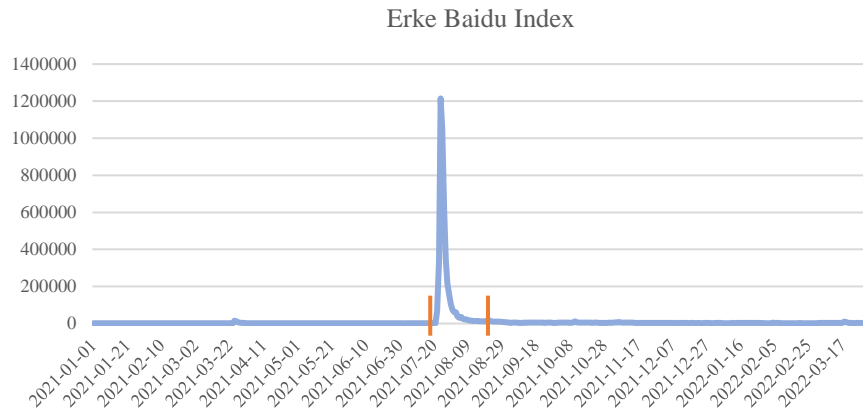
However, the negative word cloud also focuses on the consumption and conscience. This seems inconsistency here because of the high overlapping part with the positive one.

#### Keywords of Negative Posts



The NLP falls into a paradox to recognize the sentence with "sympathy" and so on. This resulted in an over-estimation of negative sentiments, which also accounts for the lower bound of sentiment score as what we have mentioned in the sentimental analysis part. For example, the word "easy" in the word clouds is actually stemmed from the phrase "not easy", which means that it is tough for them to make such donations. There are also some word clouds "outstanding (Li hai)", "suddenly", which is accounted for the severely insufficient supply of the sportswear. In such cases, the word clouds might be recognized wrongly and were classified into the negative word clouds. However, there is some voice that the Weibo users were tired of many people being so crazy about Erke and thought this campaign was a well-designed marketing strategy. This statement can be proved by the word cloud "Ying Xiao", which are mainly saying that the Erke was making money from the sympathy.

Through this campaign, not only Erke gained a huge boost of sales in the short term, but also managed to promote the brand recognition in the long run. According to the Baidu Index, Erke gained huge exposure during the period.



More importantly, the average index after the event surged to 3739 from 1337 before the event, indicating a huge improvement on the brand recognition and volume, which definitely showed that it is effectual for Erke to implement this marketing strategy.

### Discussion

So far, we had analyzed ANTA and ERKE's marketing campaign by means of both sentiment analysis and keyword extraction, and summarized their key strategies separately.

From the process of analysis, we can find that both ANTA and Erke implemented the similar strategy to gain the great exposure of brand, which is to label itself as the patriotic brand that is high related to the public emotion, and also make full use of internet platform and social media (Weibo, live stream and etc.) to improve the efficiency of strategy implementation and expand the overall influence.

Furthermore, the strategies of these 2 companies still have some difference. ANTA implemented the strategy during a relatively longer period with lots of daily events and hotspot, which may contain the ceremony, sports event and stars and so on. It is a definitely positive strategy that gather people together with patriotism and cheer for the country competition during the events. While for Erke, it attained the great success by making use of the sympathy and charity which can be seen as the relatively weak positive emotion compared with ANTA's strategy. And for the event, period was quite short and event was single.

There are lots of events that can be seen as opportunities to implement this kind of marketing strategy and combined with different angle of emotions. But important events is relatively rare, which can better help to attain a great level of success if using in a proper way. It is effectual for company to try to implement this marketing strategy and seize the chance when some important events come out.

## Limitations

However, there are several points where we can make an improvement on our research. One is about technique, if we can conclude a specific emotion such as anger, excitement or compassion rather than simply polarizing the sentiment for each post, we believe those specific emotion can help us better understanding the campaign and evaluate its effectiveness. What's more, those emotion can become strong evidence in support of our content analysis.

On the other hand, we were not able to access the data about each campaign's cost and the brands' sales in total. If we could get those data, we would be able to calculate the Return on Investment (ROI) and made a more comprehensive comparison between the two cases and maybe even to tell which strategy would be better.

Thirdly, we did not manage to explore the relationship between the sentiment and sales due to the lack of data and the essence of socializing of Weibo rather than conversion. If we can retrieve omni-channel sales and data from more dimensions, we may conclude some formula between sales and brand exposure or sentiments.

Those are the points that we believe can make our work better and further research could be done through designing a more comprehensive algorithm and extending the data source.

## Conclusion

To sum up, in this project we used social listening to analyze the marketing campaign strategy of ANTA and ERKE. We can see that both ANTA and Erke integrated their campaign into a hot topic or social issue which have been discussed widely on Weibo or other social media. On the other hand, they both elicited people's emotion. Those two factors play an important role under the marketing funnel framework. For example, an AIDA funnel states that before being a consumer, one must go through four mental stages: attention, interest, desire and action. And as the stages go down, the model will narrow down the candidates until there only left people who want to buy the product, just like a funnel.

**AIDA Funnel Model**



We can see that the hotspot method can increase the initial amount of people your campaign covers, in other words, let more people pay attention to the brand. Thus, it can increase the volume at every stage in the funnel, including the Action section. On the other hand, emotion can accelerate the customer journey. For ANTA, it was people's national-confidence which enabled them to engage in ANTA's campaign and have a kind of identity towards the brand. And the compassion towards Erke drove people to support the brand by buying their products. Both ways lead a road to promoting brand image and product sales. In fact, there were also several similar cases such as MengNiu's reward to the Chinese women soccer team which utilized a trending topic and emotion, especially patriotism to promote the campaign. This kind of campaign seems to be popular among domestic brands and we believe those two strategies are repeatable and can be used as a reference for other brands in their next campaign, which we believe is the most valuable conclusion of our project.

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