

Chinese Skincare Brand Pechion Sansen: The Way of Retro and Fashion Brand

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Abstract: Sansen is the most distinctive sub-brand of Pechion. Pechion Sansen has created a unique retro and stylish brand image through its individual and beautiful brand name, Shanghainese style retro packaging design and oriental beauty fashion communication. Keeping close to consumer psychology and brand characteristics, providing excellent examples for the building of Chinese national brands and it is worthy of study and research.

1. Introduction

The brand Pechion was born in 1931, it is one of the earliest Chinese skincare brands. Its founder Gu Zhi Min is a native Shanghainese, he has experienced more than a decade of hardships before the creation of the "Pechion" brand, it competed with Shanghai's many foreign brands and domestic brands then. In order to open up the market, Pechion advertises on newspapers and outdoor billboards, and its popularity and sales gradually increase. After the victory of the Sino-Japanese War, because of the rising prices and the shortage of materials, Pechion became a popular domestic skincare brand in mainland China.

In the Eighties of the last century, with the economic recovery, the brand of Pechion, which has remained in the ups and downs of history, has finally ushered in a new development opportunity. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, the impression of the public on the Pechion was still the classic blue iron box (fig.1), inexpensive and popular, "mommies" skincare product, outdated product. Pechion, liked all other domestic brands, faced fierce competition, either changing to meet the needs of the modern market, or quietly becoming a nostalgic collection.



Fig. 1. Pechion Classic Blue Iron Box Cream

Pechion was undoubtedly successful. After being sent abroad as a "country gift", Pechion, the brand that silent for many years once again into the public's view, became the focus of public. From year of 2000, after the start of product innovation and brand transformation process experienced a lot of hardship and effort. Nowadays, Pechion is no longer a cheap, outdated, "mommies" skincare product, but an oriental herb, oriental beauty, and fashionable skincare product. It has 7 sub-brands, and "Sansen" is skincare product exclusively for young female consumer groups under Pechion Brand.

2. Sansen: women are beautiful like flowers, and flowers brewed beauty

Women with flowers since ancient times and formed an indissoluble bond, Li Bai's poem wrote "The gorgeous clothes are like clouds, the delicate face is like beautiful flower ", He likened

Concubine Yang's¹ face to beautiful blooming flower. Women are like flowers, they are very beautiful when they are young, but when they get older, all the beauty will disappear, therefore, since ancient times, women have searched the world, picking fragrant grass for makeup, hoping that beautiful appearance will never disappear.

(1) Sansen: Personalized and beautiful brand name

On the official website of Pechion, the brand of Sansen is interpreted as a representative brand of Shanghai style fashion and a brand of poetic and artistic life. Using flower and plant oil to maintain skin, using literature to nourish the soul. Oriental flowers and plants brew endless beautiful.

Judging from the brand name alone, Sansen is very attractive to these young, dreamy and intellectual women. Women love flowers, and many young girls have a common dream, that is to open a flower shop, strolling among colorful flowers every day, the fragrance is in the breath, how beautiful life should be. And "Sansen" originated from Buddhism, symbolizing the marriage of "past life", "present life" and "future life", symbolizing romantic love, and "Sansen" flowers, representing the endless beauty like flowers.

(2) Different women love different flowers: product series with different functions

According to the different functions of different flowers and plants, and according to the different needs of the target consumer groups, it is committed to building Sansen into a leading brand of domestic herbal skin care market, so it has launched four series of products to occupy the herbal skin care market, namely: Moisturizing series, Pore Reduction Series, Oil Control and Clear skin Series, Youth elasticity Series, and Four kinds of floral essences of "camellia", "gardenia", "tricolor pansy" and "orchid" are used in the products.

It can be seen that the brand name, product raw materials, efficacy and other aspects of Sansen have been closely focused on the needs and preferences of the target consumer groups. It is no wonder that Sansen has attracted a lot of consumers as soon as it goes on the market.

3. Retro genes: the modern charm of Shanghai

As early as in the Republic of China (1912-1949), as a skincare product made in mainland China, it sold well. It advertised in major newspapers and outdoor billboards. Butterfly Hu², Lily Yuen³ and Chow Hsuan⁴, all endorsed for it. In Shanghai, the city known as "Oriental Paris", it also formed its own fashionable and high-end brand image with the help of these famous ladies.

(1) Advertisement of Pechion in Early Republic Era (1912-1949)



Fig. 2. Pechion powder Advertising (1)

At present, we can see advertisements of Pechion powder and Pechion cream in the newspapers of Early Republic Era. As shown in the advertisement of Pechion powder (fig. 2), published in the 27th edition of "Young Companion Pictorial". The headline is "Pechion powder, Makes You Beautiful as a Flower", The main part of the advertisement stated the characteristics of Pechion powder "delicate fragrance, ... white and natural, no trace of powder ...".The figure is a beautiful

^①Concubine Yang, the most beautiful woman in Tang Dynasty

² Butterfly Hu, famous film actress in the 1920-1940's

³ Lily Yuen, famous film actress in the 1920-1930's

⁴ Chow Hsuan, iconic singer and film actress in the 1930-1940's

woman with fashionable curly hair, high nose, oval face, closed eyes to enjoy the fragrance of Pechion powder and the beautiful experience of using Pechion powder, There is a bunch of blooming rose on the shoulder, showing the theme "as beautiful as flowers".

Fig. 3 is another advertisement of Pechion powder, which was published on the 27th edition of "Young Companion Pictorial" in October 1941. The enlarged font shows the consumer experience of Pechion powder: "beautiful, fragrant, and pleasant", here not only includes the efficacy of thyme powder, which makes people beautiful and fragrant, but also makes people happy. The figure shows a modern girl using Pechion powder on her neck and back. The lower left corner of the ad also has a magnified image of Pechion powder.



Fig. 3. Pechion powder Advertising (2)

Fig. 4 is the Pechion cream advertisement published on the second edition of December 11, 1947 in "Shun Pao". The advertisement content is concise, with more white space, "1" type composition, and the above are three personal images, respectively on behalf of famous actors of Peking Opera and movie stars. The advertising appeal is very concise and clear. "The famous actors of Peking Opera and movie stars have unanimously recognized Pechion as a wonderful product before and after makeup."



Fig. 4. Pechion cream advertising

(2) Retro design of Sansen

Compared with other brands under Pechion, such as Pechion Herbs, Xiaoquexing, Qiyun, etc., the retro design of Sansen is unique. It selects the most well-known representative element in Early Republic Era of China: cheongsam beauty, using modern illustrations, combining retro and fashion, whether it is the combination of character shape, expression or color, all are very fresh and beautiful, instantly attracting the hearts of intellectual young ladies.

Fig.5 is the packaging design of the deep moisturizing facial mask of Sansen. Surrounded by lilies, the long-haired girl in pink cheongsam is holding a branch of lily in one hand, the other hand gently stroked her neck and raised her head slightly, as if quietly smelling the fragrance of lily, admiring the beauty of lily. The girl is noble and mysterious, quiet and refined.



Fig.5. Sansen mask packaging design

Fig.6 is the packaging design of Pechion Sansen’s Hand Cream. The illustration design is in the same style as the above figure. Due to the different raw materials used in the product, this hand cream uses osmanthus as the main raw material, so the picture is a beauty dressed in blue cheongsam , Holding a golden osmanthus, unlike the lily beauty, the hair of the osmanthus beauty went up with a green leaf-shaped hairpin and round earrings. This series of illustrations of Sansen, designed the background according to the characteristics of flowers and plants, and designed the character and color matching according to the background. However, all the beauties are dressed in retro cheongsams, and their expressions are similar, revealing nobleness and mystery, quietness and vulgarity, and show the style of Early Republic Era vividly.



Fig.6. Sansen hand cream packaging design

4. Fashion Communication: Oriental Beauty, Shanghainese Fashion

In order to shape the tradition and fashion beauty of Sansen, Pechion specially signed the star Fan Bingbing as the spokesperson of the Sansen brand, and made a commercial film (Fig.7). From the appearance, Fan Bingbing has all the characteristics of the standard of traditional oriental beauty: Oval face, big eyes, little cherry mouth and slim body, she is very similar to the Shanghai style beauty in the illustration of Sansen.



Fig.7. Fan Bingbing Sansen TV commercial screenshot

In addition to choosing stars as spokespersons, Pechion also collaborated with Ms. Zhong Hua (Fig.8), the chief jewelry design consultant of The Peking Palace Museum, to shoot promo and

design products, linking Pechion brand with traditional Chinese culture and The Peking Palace Museum culture. Emphasizing that traditional and classic can also become fashionable, Pechion is such a brand that combines tradition, classic and fashion, and Sansen is the essence of oriental flowers and herbs to conserve the beauty of the East. Pechion and Zhong Hua created innovative products such as oriental hairpins, Bird-branch beauty makeup series, palace customization etc., which reveals oriental Beauty from the product to the spread.



Fig.8. Zhong Hua Pechion advertising screenshot



Fig.9. "1931" advertising (partial1)

Among all the Chinese local skincare brands, Pechion is the most distinctive brand in advertising. On the eve of Mother's Day in 2017, Pechion posted a long picture advertisement "1931" on the internet (fig.9 and fig.10), which astounded the entire advertising circle and exceeded 4 meters in length, is described in a 1931 story takes place in Shanghai, a mysterious beauty spy performs a secret mission, through the long street, the picture led us through a different street scenes, there are college students Parade scenes, scenes with young couples dating, scenes with parents sending their children to study abroad, breakfast stand, photo studios, European restaurants, train stations, etc. On some specific occasions, there are detailed copy descriptions, including the customs of Shanghai in 1931, the story deepened in the scenes, and finally revealed the true mission of the beauty female spy: shot the time, the task of the Pechion is to fight against the time. The whole advertisement left a suspense for the audience at the beginning. The mysterious mission of the beautiful spy, as the scenes were spread out, the story was also deepened step by step, and finally revealed the mystery. In addition, in order to increase the fun and modernity, the advertisement there have been some modern buzzwords, such as "mother's boy", "Batman."

Although the advertisement of Pechion "1931" is a print advertisement, it adopts the form of a long picture, in line with the characteristics of mobile media, along with the slide of the picture, the story a step forward, to achieve the effect of video advertising. Pechion was born in 1931. Therefore, this advertisement is actually "tracing back", linking Pechion's brand with Shanghai style, killing time, staying young, popular vocabulary and other factors to convey the retro, classic and modern fashion of Pechion's brand. The "1931" advertisement itself also led a wave of "long-picture advertising style" in advertising. Many brands imitated this advertisement and began to design long-picture advertisements to attract consumers.

With the continuous efforts of Pechion, in 2019, the British brand evaluation agency "Brand Finance" released the "2019 World's 50 Most Valuable Cosmetics and Personal Care Brands" ranking. Pechion is on the list for the first time, ranking 24th.

To sum up, Pechion Sansen has created a unique retro and stylish brand image through its unique and beautiful brand name, Shanghainese style retro design and oriental beauty fashion communication. It can be said that Sansen is also the most distinctive brand image among the seven

sub-brands of Pechion. Concurrently, Pechion also provides excellent examples for many Chinese national brands in the method of brand building, which is worth learning and researching by other similar brands.



Fig.10. "1931" advertising (partial2)

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