

SPORTS

Purcotton scores with women's soccer coach Shui Qingxia

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After being slammed for a sexist ad last year, Chinese cotton brand Purcotton is doubling down on its women's empowerment messaging. But is it too late? Image credit: Purcotton

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Chinese cotton product brand Purcotton has collaborated with China Women's News to release a nine-minute mini-documentary about Shui Qingxia, the head coach of China's women's soccer team.

The film tracks Ms. Shui's road to victory and highlights her desire to win and her courage to make changes. So far, Purcotton's hashtag "##" has attracted 410 million views and 77,000 discussions.

Posts especially from women have been overwhelmingly positive. This latest installment is a continuation of Purcotton's original documentary series "," which celebrates inspirational women who have made a positive difference in the world.

The Jing Take: The rise of feminism in China has made women-related topics more effective in generating traffic.

At the same time, the increasing economic power and consumption ability of Chinese women has motivated platforms and businesses to increasingly cater to their needs.

For Purcotton, launching such a campaign is also a means to make amends.

On Jan. 7, 2021, it released a video in Douyin showing a young woman wiping away her makeup with Purcotton's make-up removal wipes to scare off a male stalker with her "ugliness." Netizens called out the brand for humiliating women and trivializing sexual assault victims.

Although Purcotton defended the video and then apologized, its apology was "20 percent apology + 80 percent boast," triggering another round of public outrage.

There are more than 30 negative Weibo hashtags surrounding this incident, many of which entered the "top search" rank and seriously damaged its image.

Learning from this, Purcotton has started actively launching campaigns that focus on women's needs.

For example, in February 2021, its sub-brand donated 20,000 period panties to female medical workers fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

In October, it then launched the "PinkBag" care initiative to help increase awareness of breast health.

The newest partnership is especially notable considering how China Women's News slammed the company in a post last year, which even became a Weibo hashtag attracting 213,000 reads.

Although the public awareness of this documentary cannot be compared with the high discussion rate of the company's PR disaster, the choice of Shui Qingxia as its main character illustrates an important and progressive shift in Chinese society: its women's soccer team has become a symbol for Chinese women's power especially after winning the Asian Cup this year. Who knows, it might even help Purcotton win some prized customers back.

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