

Ningbo Companies on the Global Stage

Boosting the Visibility of "Made in Ningbo" Products Worldwide

By Jin Lu

As one of China's largest foreign trade hubs, Ningbo is home to more than 25,000 import and export companies, employing over 2 million people in trade-related jobs. In today's highly competitive global market, how are trade professionals sharing China's story and boosting the visibility of "Made in Ningbo" products worldwide? This article explores how these successful businesspeople use Chinese culture to help guide their brands through the complexities of global commerce.

Bringing the Flavors of China to Global Tables

Wu Dinglu, Marketing Department, Zhejiang Quansheng Food Co., Ltd.

When I was a university student, I befriended a group of international students in a theatre club. While cooking together, I noticed the stark contrast in our culinary habits—while Chinese cuisine values color, aroma, and taste, my international friends focused on precise measurements to ensure their dishes were uniform in flavor. The more we interacted, the more I realized how meaningful cultural exchange could be. As China's global influence continues to grow, our ties with the rest of the world are becoming closer than ever.

After starting my career in the food industry, I began to ponder: How can we use our festive foods to share Chinese culture with the world?

Quansheng specializes in festive foods for the Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and Spring Festival—three holidays deeply embedded in Chinese tradition and increasingly recognized internationally. I know many foreigners who have become loyal fans of our brand.

In 2024, well ahead of the Mid-Autumn Festival, we received orders from Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, and beyond. After understanding our



Zhejiang Quansheng Food. [Photo provided to Ningbo Times]

customers' needs, my colleagues and I formed a dedicated team to handle the orders. Exporting mooncakes, however, was no easy feat for a company focused primarily on the Chinese market, as food regulations vary by country.

Through hard work and patience, our team gained a deeper understanding of international food export standards. As a result, our compliance-ready Quansheng mooncakes successfully cleared customs and reached clients on schedule—demonstrating our commitment to quality and integrity.

Today, our zongzi, mooncakes, and qingtuan (green rice balls) have become a source of nostalgia for overseas Chinese communities. Our products are now widely available in Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, and beyond, earning high praise from local consumers.

The more authentically Chinese something is, the greater its potential to go global. Our latest gift sets incorporate symbolic Chinese elements in their design, like red packaging for good fortune, persimmons for luck, lotus flowers for prosperity, and gourds symbol-

izing fortune and longevity. We are also experimenting with new flavors and designs to share China's "taste of home" with the rest of the world.

Bridging Cultures with Quality Manufacturing and Local Connections

Ying Haijun, HR Manager, Zhejiang Weixun Electronic Technology Group Co., Ltd.

Weixun is a Chinese brand that specializes in digital devices and accessories for the global market. Our mission is to promote both our brand and Chinese culture through a variety of online and offline channels, reaching audiences at home and abroad.

In our early days, like many other Chinese companies, we focused on producing cost-effective products. I noticed that foreign consumers viewed Chinese goods through a lens of stereotypes, often dismissing them as OEM products for foreign brands or as cheap alternatives.

On one occasion, an American client demanded a

10% price reduction. We stood our ground, prioritizing a long-term commitment to quality over short-term profits, and ultimately walked away from the deal. This pivotal moment inspired us to create our own brand.

In 2011, we officially launched the Weixun brand and secured trademarks in over 160 countries.

Building and maintaining a global brand presence is no easy task. One of the biggest challenges I faced as an HR manager was assembling a sales team with both the expertise and localized knowledge to navigate specific regional markets effectively. Initially, we relied on Chinese expatriates, but progress was slow. We soon realized that we needed local brand ambassadors.

Two years ago, we recruited Enrique, a sales manager from Spain's largest consumer electronics distributor. Leveraging his connections, we quickly gained the trust of local customers and successfully signed a deal with one of Spain's biggest electronics retailers.

Today, we have senior local managers in over ten countries. They are not just Weixun employees but also cultural ambas-

sadors for China.

During our 13th anniversary celebration, Enrique and his girlfriend visited our Ningbo headquarters. They toured Cicheng Ancient Town, sampled Ningbo rice cakes, and even purchased Hanfu, traditional Chinese robes. They shared their captivating experience on social media, generating significant interest among their Spanish friends.

As our global footprint grows, these brand ambassadors not only advance Weixun's presence but also help showcase Ningbo to international audiences, inspiring curiosity and understanding. Each year, thanks to their efforts, we see a 50% increase in the number of business delegations visiting us in Ningbo. These cultural exchanges have fostered deeper friendships and even provided inspiration for our product designs.

In the future, we plan to launch limited-edition products incorporating Chinese traditional elements for holidays like the Mid-Autumn Festival, which we will gift to international clients. Through this, we aim to strengthen our global connections and share the richness of Chinese culture with the world.



SPOTLIGHT

Ningbo Treats Turned into Adorable Plushies by Local Department Store

By Zhao Yu

In recent weeks, Ningbo residents have been buzzing about a new trend on social media: local delicacies transformed into cute, collectible plushies. These dolls, inspired by beloved Ningbo foods, have gained widespread popularity for their charming designs that celebrate the city's rich culinary heritage.

This new range of stuffed toys launched by Intime Department Store just before Chinese New Year include "Ning Gao Gao", inspired by lard rice cakes, the

"Yuan Bao" family, which is modeled after Ningbo's famous tangyuan (sticky rice balls with sweet sesame filling), and "Crab Boss", a playful tribute to the swimming crabs often seen on local tables. These adorable creations have caused quite a stir, with over 2,000 sold shortly after their release.

Before these food-inspired plushies are handed to customers at the booth in Intime, the staff puts on a playful "cooking" performance. For example, the "Ning Gao Gao" toy is first "steamed", then "fried in lard until slightly charred", before being garnished with accessories resembling eggs, sausages,

and lettuce. The staff even wear chef outfits, creating an immersive and playful experience for customers. The quirky process has captivated many, prompting them to share photos and videos on social media.

Each doll in the series is designed with a unique personality that reflects the food it represents. For instance, "Ning Gao Gao" is depicted as cheerful and outgoing, mirroring the versatility of rice cakes, which can be filled with a variety of ingredients like vegetables, fried eggs, and fried dough sticks. The "Yuan Bao" family features "Xiaobai", a confused-looking character

whose name is a playful pun on the color of tangyuan and the Chinese term for a silly person. Another member, "Xiaoju", is an orange rice ball inspired by the osmanthus-flavored tangyuan, embodying the same cuteness and charm.

Since their launch, these dolls have drawn significant attention, especially among younger crowds. An online naming competition for the dolls generated lively discussion, with names like "Ning Gao Gao" and "Yuan Bao" emerging as fan favorites.



Local delicacies transformed into cute, collectible plushies. [Photo provided to Ningbo Times]

Ningbo Sees Strong Consumer Spending Growth This Spring Festival

By Jin Lu

The Spring Festival has long been a peak season for consumer spending in Ningbo, and 2025 is no exception. Dining and tourism continued to thrive, while shopping at newly opened flagship stores of major brands and attending recently launched exhibitions emerged as popular options. The latest national subsidies for consumers and over 200 million yuan in retail spending vouchers issued by the city further stimulated Ningbo's consumer market.

On February 4, the Ningbo Municipal Bureau of Commerce released data showing that during the eight-day Spring Festival holiday, fifty key enterprises across the city, selected as representative samples, recorded total sales of 844 million yuan, marking a 9.26% year-on-year increase.

The latest national subsidies played a key role in encouraging holiday spending.

"Under the new policy, mobile phones, tablets, smartwatches, and wristbands priced between 3,333 yuan and 6,000 yuan qualify for subsidies of up to 500 yuan, making these price ranges the most popular. Sales of some phone models surged by more than 500% compared to last year's Spring Festival. Mobile phone sales alone accounted for over 60% of our total revenue," said Qiu Xueqiao, store manager at a Suning Pro store, a physical store of the electronics retail giant Suning.com.

During the holiday, the fifty key enterprises' sales of mobile phones, tablets, and smartwatches reached 25.86 million yuan, a 56.3% year-on-year increase, while home appliance sales climbed to 21.71 million yuan, reflecting a 7.7% rise. The city's automotive sector also saw significant growth, with total sales reaching 130 million yuan, a 72.5% increase.

Dining out, a hallmark of Spring Festival celebrations, remained as popular as ever. At Tianyi Square, A-Mao restaurant was packed from January 23rd all the way to February 4th, with most private rooms fully booked in advance. "This Spring Festival, both our private rooms and main dining area were fully occupied during meal times, with long lines outside," said Mao Kelu, general manager of Ningbo Yinzhou Maozhi Catering Co., the company operating the popular restaurant chain.

"Ningbo's consumer market has been thriving, offering a wide range of options this Spring Festival. This vibrant activity enhanced the festive atmosphere and signals strong economic growth ahead for the city," said a spokesperson from the Ningbo Municipal Bureau of Commerce.

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