

# Sony: Troubling Coincidence for a Product Launch During a Major Chinese Commemorative Day

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*At 22:00 on June 30, 2021, Sony China released a notice on Weibo, which is the main social platform in China, saying that, “The new camera is coming at 22:00 on July 7, 2021. Please look forward to it.” This immediately caused an uproar in China. The date of the new product launch from a Japanese brand coincided with the July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1937 Nanjing Massacre done by the Japanese imperial army. The coincidence fueled the indignation of Chinese netizens on Weibo and revived patriotic sentiment. Most people who believe Sony’s behavior is deliberate and is insulting China express their intention to boycott the brand. Some people just gave their neutral opinion. And minorities conceded that it is just a coincidence and gave their explanation. At last, Sony deleted the post and apologized.*

## BRAND BACKGROUND

Sony (*Sony China Corporate Portal*, n.d.) is a world-renowned comprehensive multinational enterprise group in Japan, it was founded in May 1946. Tokyo Telecommunications Engineering Corporation, the predecessor of Sony Group Corporation (Tokyo Tsushin Kogyo K.K.) started as a small company with a capital of only 190,000 yen and about 20 employees. The founder, Masaru Ibuka said the company was set up to “establish an ideal factory”. This emphasizes a spirit of freedom and openness, which will contribute to Japanese culture through technology.

Sony Corporation (Sony) is a designer, developer, manufacturer, and marketer of audio, video, imaging, gaming, communications, and information technology products. It sells products to industrial, consumer, and professional markets. The group operates through nine divisions: Gaming and Network

Services (G&NS), Graphics, Imaging Products and Solutions, and Music. The gaming and Network Services segment provides hardware products and others, such as home and portable game consoles, peripherals, and packaged software. This segment also provides web services related to gaming, video, and music content through its subsidiary, Sony Interactive Entertainment LLC.

Geographically, Sony divides its operations into six regions: Japan, Europe, the United States, Asia Pacific, China, and Others. In FY2020, Japan accounted for 29.9% of group revenue, followed by the US (22.9%), Europe (20.5%), Asia Pacific (10.5%), China (8.9%) and other regions (6.3%) Sony operates across Asia Pacific, Africa, Europe, Latin America, North America and the Middle East, Africa. The group is headquartered in Tokyo, Japan. The group is in about 200 countries and territories. Sony manufactures plants in Asia, including Japan. It sells directly through subsidiaries, unaffiliated distributors, and the Internet. The group also uses third-party contract manufacturers for certain products.

Sony started its business in China in 1978 and set up representative offices in Beijing (1980), Shanghai (1985), Guangzhou (1994), and Chengdu (1995). In August 1998, Sony Electronics Technology (China) Co., Ltd. was established. Mainly engaged in international procurement and logistics supply chain management in China. Sony Group CEO Nobuyuki Izui promised Sony Group's global board of directors that the rapidly developing Chinese market will be the top priority for future development and hopes that China will become the growth engine of Sony's East Asia business region. To this end, Sony has set ambitious goals for the development of its electronics in China: by 2005, sales in China will reach 5 times that of 2002; by 2008, it will double its 2005 target, surpassing the Japanese market to become Sony's second-largest market after the United States.

For example, Sony expended its strategic development into Bilibili which is the most popular cultural community and video platform with a high concentration of young generations in China, saying that it was optimistic about the entertainment business and attached importance to the Chinese market. In 2021, Sony's Hangzhou direct-sale store opened on January 9. The direct-sales store is the seventh direct-sale store opened in China after the direct-sale stores in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Chengdu, at the opening site, Sony China Chairman and President Takahashi Yang came to the scene and was interviewed by the media. He said that Sony's direct sales store is the most important platform and window for Sony's "close to people", hoping to meet the needs of Hangzhou Sony users through first-class practical experience and service, and communication with every consumer.

Sony has, therefore, many loyal fans in China. They praise the high technology and performance of Sony's products and pay high attention to the information on Sony's related products, including their Game & Network Services, Music, Electronics Products and so on. Many Chinese consumers with professional photography needs will always choose to trust Sony's high quality and the brand's technological content. According to the financial report released by Sony, its sales in China reached 9 trillion yen in 2020, an increase of 9% compared with 2019.

## THE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE

From July 23 to 31, 1921, the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China was held in Shanghai. The Party Congress announced the official founding of the Communist Party of China. The founding of the Communist Party of China was considered by the Chinese people to have brought light and hope to the Chinese people who have suffered great disasters and pointed out the direction of the Chinese revolution. As Chairman Mao Zedong emphasized: the founding of the Communist Party of

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