

The Challenges and Optimization Strategies of Social Media Marketing in Cross-Border E-Commerce

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Abstract: This article examines the symbiotic relationship between social media platforms and cross-border e-commerce, and discuss the opportunities and obstacles in the cross-border e-commerce operation in social media platforms. It outlines the exponential growth of cross-border trade thanks to internet connectivity and technological advancements. Social media platforms are playing a crucial role in the operation of cross-border e-commerce. The study identifies key challenges faced by cross-border e-commerce firms including language barriers, intellectual property infringement risks, and the complexities of social media management. Moreover, it proposes strategic solutions for the issues and challenges on, such as cultural integration, enhanced copyright awareness, and standardized social media management. By solving these challenges, businesses can unlock new chapters for cross-border e-commerce and achieve further success. This article provides insights and several suggestions, aiming to provide strategic solutions for companies running cross-border e-commerce businesses.

Keywords: Social media marketing, cross-border e-commerce, strategic solutions, global connectivity

1. Introduction

With the increasing connection among different countries, cultural groups and races, the word, globalization begins to raise attention. Now, with the rapid development of the internet, people can not only connect with their friends, searching for news and posts they favored, but also shopping for whatever they like through some slight finger touches. With the rising of internet, one outstanding mediator that connects people tight is the social media platform. Social media platforms aim at providing an opportunity to tell others unique stories, share ideas and keep all followers in touch. In the era where borders of reality and virtualization dissolved due to the development of the internet, social media platforms provide a profound opportunity for cross-border e-commerce. As starting businesses trying to stand out from competitors, social media platforms manifest a great shell for them to gain dominance. This essay is devoted to introduce the challenges of using social media marketing in cross-country e-commerce, and optimization strategies that draw positive effects profoundly. The research method of this study is the literature analysis method.

2. The Development of the Cross-border E-commerce Industry

2.1. The Rapid Growth and Development in Cross-border E-commerce

Cross-border e-commerce has now become one of the most important composition in the era of internet and continuous growth of online shopping tools. Cross-border e-commerce is gaining a significant increase within few decades. According to the China E-Commerce Report (2022) by the Ministry of Commerce of The People's Republic of China, in 2022, China's cross-border e-commerce import and export (include B2B, B2C, C2C) reached 2.11 trillion RMB, a significant increase of 9.8% compared to the past year. Among them, exports amounted to 1.55 trillion RMB, up 11.7% year-on-year, while imports totaled 0.56 trillion RMB, marking a 4.9% year-on-year growth, as shown in Figure 1 [1].

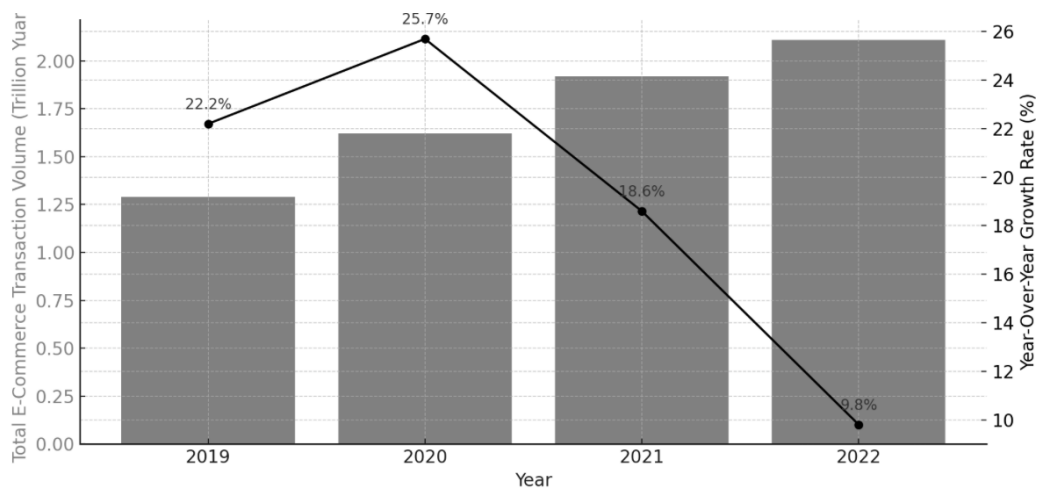


Figure 1: The cross-border e-commerce import and export amounts and year-on year increasing rate [1]

The rapid growth and huge development of cross-border e-commerce are truly remarkable. But ways this cross-border e-commerce becomes the new trend, reasons the cross-border e-commerce is been seen as the hot cakes in the markets for those starting trade businesses are still questionable.

2.2. Reasons Causing the Rapid Growth of Cross-border E-commerce

The cross-border e-commerce is becoming the new trending topics. As the introduction part of this essay claimed, the rapid growth of cross-border e-commerce owes much to the pervasive influence of the internet and advancing technologies. For example, according to CNNIC, China Internet Network Information Center, by the end of 2018, China had reached 829 million of internet users. The internet penetration rate reached 59.6%, increasing by 3.8 percent compared to the end of 2017. Moreover, the propensity for online shopping among users witnessed a remarkable increase, soaring by 17.1% from the preceding year. This surge, exemplified by the jump in online shoppers from 505.62 million to 591.91 million, emphasizes the vast potential awaiting cross-border e-commerce businesses [2].

Furthermore, effective marketing strategies such as social media marketing, help businesses reached further and deeper. For example, by using targeting techniques such as personalized recommendation page, cross-border e-commerce can deliver their goods and services based on their browsing history and online activities. Social media marketing distributes vast users of social media

platforms into different categories. Thus, ads (targeted marketing) and influencer marketing can work better by focusing on their potential customers only.

2.3. Importance of Social Media Platforms for Cross-border E-commerce Business

With the continuous mature of different marketing strategies and online shopping applications, promotional tactics of cross-border e-commerce have undergone a profound transformation. Through this transformation, the rising of social media platforms has become as the key to the success of businesses expanding their reach globally. Properties and benefits of social media platforms are cleared; a wide range user's base, an opportunity for every users' voices can be heard; where everyone can share their experiences and interact with others who shared the similar hobby around the whole world. Aside from policies and legal issues in certain countries, social media platforms are globally reached. According to Hubspot's Global Social Media Trends Report, as shown in Figure 2, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), YouTube and TikTok are the top 5 popular social media platforms preferred by U.S adults in Jan. 2023 [3].

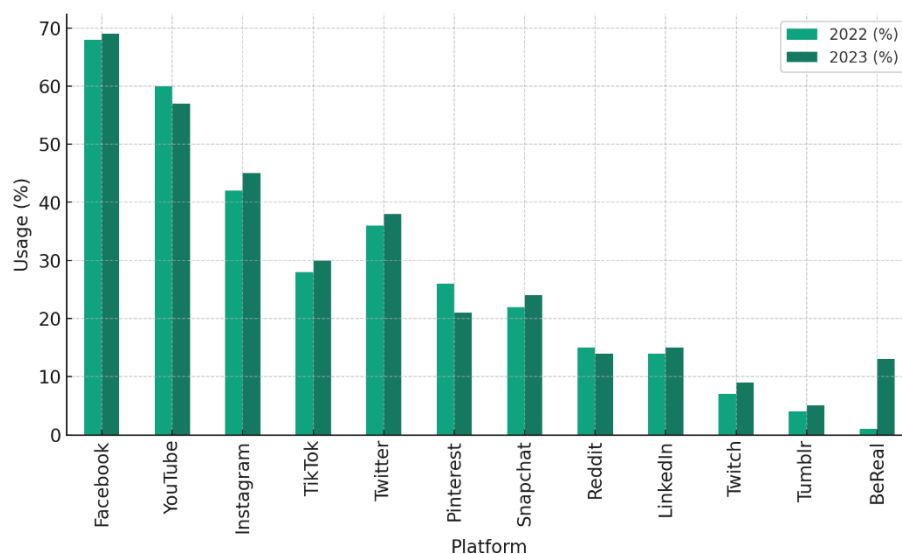


Figure 2: Usage of social media platforms by U.S. adults (May 2022 vs. Jan. 2023) [2]

This huge user base created a great cradle for cross-border e-commerce industry. According to Semrush's study of "Top Trends in E-commerce for 2023 & Beyond", they believe by 2025, the total market value for products sold directly from social media is estimated to reach \$1.4 trillion. Additionally, the performance of emerging apps such as TikTok has been astonishing for its fast development and increasing dominance [4]. As shown in Figure 3, which highlighted the rank of TikTok, a coming-up global trend is forming in just one year.

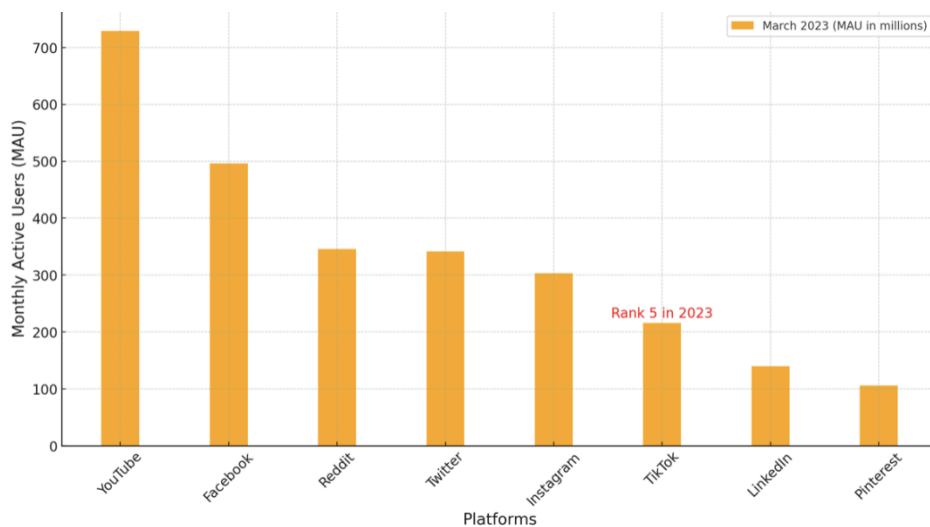


Figure 3: E-commerce Audiences Social Media Preferences, Global 2023 [4]

In short, social media platforms is now gaining more attention than ever before. These platforms are no longer just for individuals to share their life and experiences; their rapid increasing users and global reached make them an invaluable opportunity for cross-border e-commerce to promote their products and services, establish brand identity world widely, connect with potential customers in meaningful interactions at presale stage, and thus drive sales [5].

2.4. Introduction of Common Social Media Platforms

According to Hubspot's Global Social Media Trends Report, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), YouTube and TikTok are the top 5 popular social media platforms preferred by U.S adults in Jan. 2023. Here are common functions and applications of the top 5 popular social media platforms.

Facebook is a comprehensive social networking platform that allows users to connect with friends and family, share updates, photos, and videos, join group chats, and follow pages of interest. It also offers advertising options for businesses to reach their target audience.

Instagram is a visual-guided platform focused on sharing photos and short videos. It also includes features such as Stories, and Reels, allowing users and businesses to create visual content. Instagram is popular for its influencer marketing opportunities and visual branding. Business can upload their product lines picture easily.

Twitter is a blogging platform where users share short text-based updates known as tweets. Twitter is also commonly used by businesses for customer service and brand promotion. Through Twitter, business can make connection with their potential customers.

YouTube is a video-sharing platform where users can upload, view, and interact with YouTuber. It hosts a wide range of content, for example, tutorials, vlogs, entertainment, and so on. Businesses often use YouTube for advertising, content marketing, and building brand authority. Also, by corporate with influencers, they can utilize influencer marketing strategy.

TikTok is a short video platform where users can create and share videos set to music or audio clips. It is known for its viral challenges, trends, and creative content. Businesses can leverage TikTok for their brand awareness, influencer collaborations, reaching younger demographics, and providing short-term contents that drawing others' attention.

In conclusion, there are a lot of choices if a starting cross-border e-commerce business is trying to gain their brand identity and attract more customers, but a suitable consideration should be taken before making actions. For example, if a company is aiming to provide low-cost but considerably

high quality products especially for youths, they should better focus on social media platforms that contain younger social groups. Instagram and TikTok are some suitable platforms that they should concentrate on.

3. The Challenges of Social Media Marketing Strategies in the Industry

3.1. The Language Barrier in Cross-border E-commerce

Since cross-border e-commerce usually makes business between two different countries, one of the most inevitable things through buying process is language barrier. There are over 7000 kinds of languages over the world, 23 of them are commonly used and spoken in the world [6]. Through different stages of sale, including pre-sales, sales and after-sales, various questions appeared.

For example, at the pre-sale stage, if a potential customer is asking about details about product in a different language, it is hard to express them correctly without ability to speak that kind of language. Language differences can hinder effective communication between sellers and potential customers during this stage [7]. Without an effective communication skill, potential customers may choose a substitution good with better language skills. Furthermore, descriptions of product, unique design styles and marketing materials may not be easily understand by viewers from another country with different language.

Additionally, language can also complicate post-purchase customer support. For example, The lack of consumer understanding of product operation after perceiving product often leads to incidents of user-induced malfunctions, which can be mistakenly perceived as product quality issues by consumers because they misunderstand it and think they are correctly using them, thus resulting in significant negative impacts on both the product and company reputation, causing a decrease of brand identity.

3.2. The Potential for Infringement in the Process of Sales and Marketing

Through the sales and marketing of cross-border e-commerce, another inevitable issue is the potential risk of infringement. Due to the characteristic of the cross-border e-commerce, which is its global reach, sellers should always prevent their products from infringing others' copyrights, or checking regularly whether their products are being infringed by others. Businesses should remain vigilant at following trends in styles. These trendy styles, titles, brand name may have been registered by others earlier. If a company continues to produce products that contain styles, names and ideas from others, it can be a possible infringement. This could not only result in the remove of the whole product line from online platforms, but also news that breaks brand credibility, potential fines forced by court due to copyright protection rules in different countries.

For example, Squid Game became one of the most popular TV series on Netflix after its release on Oct. 2021, since then, discussions about this TV series have been endless. On the online shopping platform, Amazon, keywords searching for costumes and clothes with Squid Game characters were arising continuously from the bottom to the top. Some small companies seized the opportunity, attempting to produce and sell similar products people favored. Unfortunately, these products with Squid Game style of design are suspected of infringing on others' intellectual property rights, and related items are quickly taken down by Amazon. It turns out that Squid Game's copyrights are belonging to the producer of this TV series, Netflix. These peripheral products were not authorized by Netflix and thus were being forcibly taken down. Those E-commerce companies involved can no longer recover their investment in production of infringing products, causing bankruptcy and the failure of business that can never go back.

3.3. The Difficulty of Operating and Maintaining Accounts

Through operating business for cross-border e-commerce, another difficulty can be discovered during the process of operating and maintaining official accounts on social media platforms. For a starting business, the social share of voice on the internet can be miserably small [8]. For those who just started their business, ways to gain potential customers more, methods that may interest web viewers and following and a further exposure on the internet are all matters that should be consider. These are hard to solve, but business have to solve these questions and find their way to do it to get business to the next level.

For example, take TikTok, the short video platforms mentioned above, which provide a great opportunity for businesses to draw brand awareness by creating some attention-gathered short pieces. However ways to increase video exposure, improve user conversion rates and creating a unique brand image and story are all questions that operators need to consider and figuring out before upload videos.

In conclusion, Language barriers, potential risks of infringement on trademark, copyrights and difficulties of operating social media accounts are some questions that businesses engaged in cross-border e-commerce must implement strategic solutions tailored to run the business successfully.

4. Strategic Solutions and Suggestions

4.1. Overcoming Language Barriers and Integration with Local Culture

Speaking of the differences between cultures and languages, the problem of language barrier should be overcome. For example, for pre-sale and after-sale services that properly guide customers. Hiring a professional customer service team with specific language capabilities to ensure end-to-end service from pre-sales to after-sales. There are a lot of outsourced teams nowadays that are specialized in cross-border e-commerce service. The company should cooperate with these teams and thus enhance their experience. The language barrier can thus resolved.

Furthermore, when translating the product introduction page and other related pages, Business should seek out specialized outsourcing teams [9]. This ensures that product information is not only translation accurate but also enhances translation eloquence that can better express the unique design and help potential customers understand better about product and stories behind the product.

For example, Apple, one of the biggest technology company that produce a lot of different product lines, provides various products all over the world. The official website offers various idioms, expressions, puns, and local nuances in different languages for different countries to enhance product awareness. From Apple's official website, for the introduction page of its product, MacBook Pro, the U.S website claims that it is "Mind-blowing. Head-Turning", which indicates that this product can compute in mind-blowing speed and attract others' attention. On the other hand, the official website in China Mainland claims the MacBook Pro has "Fierce character, stunning appearance" (direct translation from Chinese). By maintaining symmetry, keeping the same meaning and incorporating localization in phrases, the company enables consumers from different countries to appreciate its efforts in adapting to local cultures and embracing local customs. This can be another great opportunity for the company to establish a positive brand image.

4.2. Enhancing Copyright Awareness and Standardized Management

For the solution of infringement risks, cross-border e-commerce should enhance their copyright awareness, protect their rights and also prevent themselves from infringing on others [10]. Companies should conduct copyright and trademark research before launching the production of a product, so that they can ensure they do not infringe others' copyrights. Additionally, protections that keep themselves from infringing by others should also be considered. The company should submit a patent

report to legalize, and standardize from being cheated by other companies. Furthermore, companies should establish a monitoring system that can detect and warn any potential infringing activity online regularly. Thus, their business can run properly further and further.

4.3. Maintaining Rules in the Management of Social Media Platform

First and foremost, companies should develop a standardized strategy that can specifically target their audiences. For example, if the product is specialized for youths, the short video posted on TikTok should be attention-attracted and covered with humor, products' description should be youthful and colorful so that people can easily remember you. Furthermore, engaging and shareable contents should be made so that audiences can make interactions. Feedback and further exposure on the internet can be precious for the starting business. Additionally, the company should standardize the management of operational staff, preventing them from negative effect on the company's image due to individual remarks and reactions. Operators of the account should not post any opinions by the name of the official.

Meanwhile, within the cross-border e-commerce communication platform, cross-border e-commerce businesses should collaborate with local influencers or bloggers who are suitable for the product positioning. Through these influencers' followers and their followers' surroundings, brands can increase their exposure in the local market.

5. Conclusion

In the circumstance of the modern world where people are interconnecting seamlessly, the power of globalization is redefining the strategy of cross-border e-commerce. There is no doubt that the development and growth of the internet provide a huge opportunity for the significant growth of cross-border e-commerce. As the data from Ministry of Commerce of The People's Republic of China shown, cross-border e-commerce in China mainland has had a remarkable increase within a few years. It is now a non-negligible components of global economy.

In the process of gaining dominance in the global economy, cross-border e-commerce lies in the development and expansion of social media platforms. These platforms with large user bases and various target audiences manifest a perfect shell for those starting businesses to expand. Platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok are gaining absolute advantages for business to utilize. They become tools that are indispensable for starting businesses that are seeking to establish brand images and attracting more exposure on the internet. With the vast user bases and global reach, social media platforms offer a great opportunity for cross-border e-commerce to connect with consumers and show their products all over the world.

Though the future of cross-border e-commerce with the help of social media platforms is bright, there are a lot of decisions made before social marketing begins, a lot of challenges for business to successfully continue social marketing. The language barrier blocked the communication and further discussion with foreigners, potential for infringement in the process of cross-border e-commerce sales and marketing. Moreover, the intricacies of operating and maintaining official accounts on social media platforms can also challenge companies from running social marketing.

Despite the challenges and difficulties cross-border e-commerce companies may face at the beginning of social media marketing, several strategies can take to optimize the operation. Overcoming language barriers requires the integration of local cultural characteristics and the employment of specialized customer service teams specialized for certain languages. Similarly, enhancing copyright awareness and standardized management practices can reduce the risks of infringement, and enhance businesses' intellectual property rights and reputation. Furthermore, maintaining timeliness, consistency, and standardization in social media management is important.

In short, the use of social media platforms in cross-border e-commerce starts a new era of opportunity. By leveraging the power of social media, with its abundant users, astonishing spreading rate and global connectivity, businesses can work better in the digital age. The power of social media platforms is unlimited, by utilizing it, cross-border e-commerce can unlock potentials and get success in an interconnected world.

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