

A Review of the Role of Social Media in Brand Marketing - Based on Platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu

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Abstract. With the advancement of modern technology, social media has become a crucial channel for brand marketing, and for some brands, it is their sole promotional approach. This article comprehensively examines the role of social media in brand marketing, focusing on the cosmetics marketing on the most influential platforms in China -Red Note and Tictok. This study will combine case analysis to explore how these platforms achieve user conversion from brand marketing. The core research question is to explore how to leverage their unique advantages on different social media platforms to expand brand influence and achieve sales targets. The research results show that Tictok promotes viral marketing through short videos and collaborations with key opinion leaders (KOLs) in live broadcasts; while Red Note uses its trust-based ecosystem to launch targeted soft advertising that matches user profiles. The research conclusion emphasizes that in the digital age, formulating multi-channel integrated strategies that adapt to the unique attributes of each platform is crucial for effective brand marketing.

Keywords: Social media, Marketing, Cosmetics products, Tictok, Red Note

1. Introduction

In today's era when the digital wave sweeps across the globe, emerging social media platforms such as TikTok and Red Note have deeply integrated into consumers' daily lives, changing the traditional modes of information dissemination and consumption. These platforms, leveraging their unique algorithmic mechanisms and content ecosystems, have driven brand marketing from one-way dissemination to two-way interaction and from mass exposure to precise customer demand-driven push notifications. As the user base continues to expand, social media has become an important platform for brand incubation. Although academic attention to social media marketing is increasing day by day, existing research still has shortcomings. Most studies may view social media as a homogeneous whole or focus only on the characteristics of a single platform, lacking a horizontal comparative analysis of the joint construction of a unified ecosystem by different platforms. This research gap prevents brands from achieving optimal resource allocation.

This study aims to explore the mechanism of the role of platforms like TikTok and Red Note in the growth process of emerging beauty brands. The study selected representative domestic beauty brands such as IntoYou and Huazhizhao as analytical cases to explore their successful mechanisms on different platforms. Through analysis, this study will reveal the differences in brand positioning,

product innovation, user interaction, and sales conversion among different social media platforms. By drawing on the successful experiences of brands like IntoYou and Huazhizhao, this study hopes to provide more emerging brands with feasible social media marketing ideas and also point out the drawbacks of brand reliance in social media marketing.

2. Literature review

Currently, the research on the relationship between social media and brand communication has become a popular topic in the marketing field. Social media has significantly enhanced brand awareness and influence through its vast user base and diverse content formats. The main forms of short-video dissemination, dominated by TikTok, can be classified into the following three types:

The first type is user-generated short videos related to the brand, including user-generated short-video advertisements where users actively participate in the creation of brand short-video advertisements or imitate the creation of brand short-video advertisements. The second type is when the brand collaborates with KOLs to incorporate brand advertisements into short videos. The third type is when the brand directly pushes short-video advertisements, which mainly focus on showcasing products, allowing the brand to have real-time interaction with users [1].

In social media marketing, KOL marketing has become one of the most favored marketing methods by brands. Research indicates that 49% of consumers will make purchasing decisions based on the recommendations of KOLs [2]. The 2024 business update released by Red Note shows that the monthly active users of Red Note have reached 260 million [3]. In terms of user experience, the real-time communication channels and personalized services provided by social media have significantly improved user satisfaction, while user-generated content (UGC) has enhanced the authenticity and credibility of brand communication. Currently, the research on the impact of user-generated content on consumer attitudes and behaviors mainly focuses on aspects such as the characteristics of the publisher, the characteristics of the viewer, the characteristics of the content, and the characteristics of the form [4].

Furthermore, social media provides a unique platform for brand image building. By telling brand stories and conveying core values, brands can establish emotional connections with consumers. This transformation requires brand owners to fully utilize the characteristics and functions of social media, follow the market to formulate corresponding communication strategies, and be able to maintain competitiveness in the market.

3. The example of social media marketing in TikTok: IntoYou

INTO YOU was established on December 31, 2019, with a focus on youth and innovation. It pioneered the "lip mud" category and expanded into product lines such as eyeshadow and blush. The brand name conveys the meaning of "yearning for you and going together," emphasizing the emotional connection with consumers. Following the trend of short-video marketing, the sales volume and popularity of INTO YOU increased at an astonishing rate after its establishment, becoming a well-known emerging domestic cosmetic brand among the younger generation of today.

INTO YOU's primary strategy is to clearly define the target consumer group. According to the "2021 China Local Cosmetics Industry Report" released by Research, in 2020, 33.6% of Chinese cosmetics and skincare consumers were aged 18-24, 22.0% were aged 25-29, and 18.7% were aged 30-34 [5]. Based on this data, the brand targeted young women who are interested in cosmetics and have a demand for them. Most of them do not have high spending power, but they have strong purchasing power for affordable cosmetics-especially lip products. INTO YOU successfully targeted

the customer group and completed customer conversion through the strong entertainment attributes of Tictok and its viral dissemination effect, combined with the anchoring effect set by the brand.

According to the "2019 Tictok Makeup Group Analysis Report," among the content views of makeup-related videos, makeup-related content accounted for the highest proportion, far exceeding skincare and other body care categories. Among the makeup subcategories, lip-related videos accounted for 60.2%, facial 18.9%, and eye 11.8% [6]. However, as the demand for lip cosmetics products increases, the competition becomes fierce, and various products and packaging keep emerging like bamboo shoots after rain. INTO YOU, based on its anchored customer group positioning, has entered a somewhat special yet widely accepted market segment - "lip mud" lip cosmetics.

In the stage when e-commerce channels were emerging and the cosmetics market was not yet saturated, INTO YOU first proposed the concept of lip mud. In April 2020, INTO YOU launched the "Heroine" series of lip mud. The new product and new concept quickly became popular across the entire network. The quickness and immediate happiness brought by the simplicity and convenience of Tictok short videos helped INTO YOU increase sales and expand its popularity. When consumers were pushed to INTO YOU's promotion videos, they would be attracted by its attractive pictures, such as the model's application effect and various color numbers suitable for different people and styles. And Tictok would combine simple and convenient product information and place it in the lower left corner of the shopping cart, which has strong accessibility.

INTO YOU's pricing strategy fully reflects the brand's insight into the psychological mechanism of consumers. In its short-video advertisements, the brand often adopts illusionary discounts such as 9.9, 19.9, and 29.9. Consumers are easily attracted and place orders. "A cup of milk tea price" is a common marketing strategy on Tictok short videos in recent years. To explore the reasons for its success, one must trace back to its underlying logic - the psychological account theory. The psychological account theory was proposed by Nobel Prize-winning economist Richard Thaler. This theory holds that people will categorize money in their minds into different "accounts." In this era, consumers may have two accounts applicable to different scenarios in their minds: one "cosmetics budget" (cautious, rational), and one "daily entertainment/snack budget" (casual, emotional). "A cup of milk tea price can buy a lip mud" successfully transferred this purchase of lip mud consumption from the "cosmetics account" to the "milk tea entertainment account." Because buying a cup of milk tea is almost an effortless decision that can be regarded as a small reward for oneself. When combined with the left-digit effect that brands can create, it reduces consumers' price sensitivity, significantly lowering the decision threshold for purchasing lip balm.

Tictok live streaming plays a crucial role in brand marketing. Take intoyou as an example. Its live streaming room is not only a sales channel but also a venue for deep interaction between the brand and consumers. Through live-streaming hosts providing real-time color tests and answering questions, the brand effectively eliminates the uncertainty of online shopping and strengthens user trust. At the same time, the brand collaborates with KOLs to launch activities such as limited-time discounts and exclusive mechanisms in the live streaming room, creating a sense of urgency and exclusive value, prompting consumers to make quick purchase decisions. This combination of immediate interaction and exclusive benefits makes Tictok live streaming the core for brand efficient conversion.

4. The example of social media marketing in RedNote: flower knowns

Red Note, as the leading lifestyle sharing platform and consumer decision-making gateway in China, has established a unique "content community + e-commerce" ecosystem that has become a

fertile ground for brand marketing. This chapter takes the popular domestic beauty brand "Flower kowns" in recent years as a typical case to analyze how it precisely utilizes the push mechanism and platform soft advertising ecosystem of Red Note to accurately identify consumer groups and capture consumers, combined with its own unique brand design, to build a special brand marketing mechanism, successfully establishing itself in the highly competitive beauty market.

Flower kowns is a Chinese teenage makeup brand founded in 2016, belonging to Hangzhou Flower kowns E-commerce Co., Ltd. Its parent company, Shenzhen Flower kowns E-commerce Co., Ltd., was established in 2020, positioning itself as a new-generation domestic beauty brand that integrates anime culture and teenage aesthetics. The brand takes "using makeup to ignite users' teenage hearts" as its core concept, launching 3-4 original product series annually, covering categories such as eyeshadow, lipstick, and blush, with sales exceeding 100 million yuan in 2020. By 2025, its products have entered markets in Japan, Southeast Asia, and Europe, covering over 1,000 overseas retail channels. The brand uses a high-frequency new product launch strategy (with over 100 SKUs per year) and deeply integrates with the Red Note ecosystem to form a "research, modify, select, test" product incubation mechanism [7].

In the Red Note ecosystem, overly commercialized hard advertisements often fail to gain user trust, while "soft advertisements" have become the mainstream mode of brand communication. Flower kowns accurately grasps this characteristic and constructs a hierarchical matrix through differentiated collaboration between KOC and KOLs, creating a trust system that combines "authenticity" and "professionalism."

First, KOCs create a real atmosphere through extensive promotion. Whenever Flower kowns releases news about a new series, there are numerous users taking screenshots, sharing, and discussing. Most of this revolves around the color options, the exquisite packaging of the new products, and discussions about "what to buy for the new product." Flower kowns collaborates with a large number of small KOCs, and their notes focus on the gorgeous product packaging, new product opening videos, color number sharing and selection. Although each individual note has limited influence, the overall number is large, and the content is friendly, permeating every corner of consumers' lives like "capillaries," bringing "watering" traffic to the brand.

Second, KOLs delve deeply to provide professional endorsements. Different from KOCs, who provide a more personal touch, the content presented by top- and mid-level beauty KOLs is more professional and in-depth. KOLs will detail the texture, color accuracy, and longevity of the products, recommend different color numbers to suitable groups, or create special "makeup videos" based on festivals or themes. Such content not only provides consumers with professional shopping references but also links Flower kowns's products with concepts such as "exquisite," "creative," and "gorgeous," helping to build the brand positioning. Third, collaborating with top influencers to enhance brand potential. Flower kowns invites top beauty influencers for cooperation and launches a joint product series. Through the extensive influence of KOLs and their professional makeup skills, it serves as a backup for the brand, quickly boosting brand visibility, combined with an exclusive mechanism for the influencers, achieving brand image upgrade and expansion, and pushing the brand popularity to a climax.

The success of Flower kowns's marketing is the perfect integration of its products as "content" and the social media function, and its unique brand design is the cornerstone of all these marketing activities. Flower kowns's characteristic lies in its visual aesthetics. Its product packaging has a dreamy and teenage feel, and the design usually includes elements such as fairy tales, angels, and unicorns. This highly stylized visual language gives its products a strong "social currency" attribute. The first reaction of the users after receiving the product was "It's so exquisite. I want to share it on

Red Note/Facebook,” thus spontaneously completing the role transformation from consumers to brand disseminators, which greatly promoted the generation of UGC. In addition, Hu Zhaowen will regularly launch a series of new products, each series having its own unique product concept and style design. This has greatly cultivated a fixed group of "fans" among consumers and enhanced customer loyalty. Users purchasing and sharing are not only using the product but also expressing their aesthetic tastes and seeking identity recognition.

5. Platform comparison and comprehensive analysis

In the ecosystem of social media marketing, TikTok and Red Note are not in a substitutive relationship; rather, based on their core attributes, they have formed a pattern that is both distinctly opposed and functionally complementary. If brands aim to maximize their marketing effectiveness, they must understand the differences between the two and formulate complementary integrated strategies on this basis.

The core differences between TikTok and Red Note stem from their fundamental positioning: TikTok is an "interest-boosting" content entertainment platform, while Red Note is a "need-solving" life decision-making platform. This fundamental distinction leads to their divergent marketing paths. Firstly, in terms of content paradigms and user mindsets, TikTok, with its short-video format, has constructed a zone measured in "seconds." Its content pursues immediate appeal, entertainment, and immersion, using the "golden three-second" principle to stimulate users' latent interest and achieve "product finding users." In contrast, Red Note's text and medium-length videos create a space for "slow reading." Its content emphasizes authenticity, knowledge, and practicality, and users typically search actively with clear needs (such as "makeup product recommendations"), making it a typical "users finding products." Secondly, in terms of marketing paths and core values, TikTok excels in creating momentum and sparking interest. By tracking TikTok hot searches, the star list of influencers, and live broadcasts, brands can rapidly increase their visibility and volume in a short period, with their marketing logic being "wide reach-interest stimulation-immediate conversion." Red Note, on the other hand, is skilled at promoting and deepening. Through in-depth notes, word-of-mouth accumulation, and community interaction, brands can gradually build trust and word-of-mouth, with their marketing logic being "need insight-trust establishment-guiding consumption." Therefore, the two form indispensable complementary links in marketing: TikTok is the front end for expanding the funnel opening and capturing traffic; Red Note is the back end for filtering users, creating momentum for brands, and converting users.

6. The drawbacks of social media marketing

Firstly, the excessive saturation of information leads to the fragmentation of consumers' attention, causing marketing costs to rise while the effectiveness remains uncertain [8]. When every brand is competing for the "golden three seconds" of users' attention, the marketing battlefield has turned into a "sea of red." The gradual decline of the traffic dividend has led to a significant increase in advertising placement costs. Meanwhile, the attention threshold of users has been continuously elevated. As a result, ordinary marketing content is highly likely to be submerged by the vast amount of information and difficult to reach the target audience. Moreover, excessive commercialization is eroding the users' trust foundation [9]. When users realize that the content is actually carefully disguised "soft advertisements" or find that their trusted KOL is "bad news," they will experience strong aversion and distrust. This aversion will break the trust relationship established between the brand and the users, ultimately leading to user churn. Additionally, data privacy and algorithmic

push are also two major challenges faced by brands [10]. On one hand, users have strong concerns about data security and privacy. On the other hand, the precise user push makes consumers feel "monitored," causing unease and eventually leading to a serious "trust crisis."

7. Conclusion

This article focuses on TikTok and Red Note as the main research objects, exploring the mechanism of social media in the marketing of beauty brands, including emerging and popular beauty brands such as Intoyou and Flower kowns. The research found that TikTok, through its short-video format, algorithm recommendations, and live-streaming ecosystem, achieves precise push and immediate conversion by stimulating interests and impulsive consumption; while Red Note, relying on its community ecosystem and strong trust, focuses on in-depth promotion and brand building through soft, real notes and KOL/KOC. The two complement each other effectively in the user purchase path, with TikTok responsible for attracting traffic and creating hit products, and Red Note for cultivating trust and retaining users. The research ultimately indicates that in the current digital marketing environment, brands need to formulate marketing routes that match the product characteristics and leverage the advantages of different social media to achieve their goals. However, this study still has certain limitations: Firstly, the cases selected are mainly concentrated on a few emerging domestic beauty brands, and the applicability of the conclusions needs to be further verified; Secondly, empirical data from the perspective of consumers (such as user questionnaires or in-depth interviews) have not been fully included, and the analysis of user perception and behavior transformation mainly relies on content observation and secondary data. Future research can expand to more brand types and industry categories, combine quantitative and qualitative research methods, and deeply explore users' psychological reactions and long-term behaviors towards social platform content, thereby more comprehensively revealing the influence mechanism of social media marketing.

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