

Research on online social media marketing strategies of traditional consumer brands: a case study of Mac cosmetics

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Abstract. This paper explores the impact of social media on the marketing strategies of traditional consumer brands, focusing on MAC Cosmetics. Nowadays, social media is vital for businesses to engage customers and enhance their online presence. This study examines how MAC Cosmetics utilizes platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to boost brand visibility, foster customer interaction, and drive sales. Through literature review and case study analysis, it identifies key strategies such as targeted advertising, influencer collaborations, and user-generated content. The findings highlight social media's significant role in influencing consumer behaviour and enabling direct brand-audience communication. The study also discusses the challenges and opportunities in social media marketing, providing insights for traditional brands to leverage social media for enhanced marketing outcomes. The conclusions emphasize the necessity for a well-integrated social media strategy to remain competitive in the evolving digital landscape, contributing to a deeper understanding of the intersection between traditional brand marketing and social media dynamics.

1 Introduction

In the digital age, social media has revolutionized the marketing landscape, providing brands with unprecedented opportunities to connect with consumers. Traditional consumer brands that once heavily relied on conventional marketing channels are now increasingly utilizing social media to maintain and expand their market share. Among these brands, MAC Cosmetics stands out as a prominent example of how traditional brands can successfully navigate the digital realm. As a leading brand in the global beauty industry, MAC Cosmetics has always been at the forefront of integrating social media into its marketing strategies. The brand's adept use of platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter allow it to cultivate a strong online community and directly interact with consumers.

This shift towards social media marketing is not just a trend but also a strategic response to evolving consumer behavior and the growing importance of digital touchpoints in customer journeys. Social media marketing strategies encompass various activities including content creation, influencer collaborations, and interactive campaigns. These strategies aim to increase brand awareness, foster consumer engagement, and ultimately drive sales. MAC

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Cosmetics' success in the digital realm can be attributed to its ability to create visually appealing content, collaborate with influential figures in the beauty industry, and engage in innovative activities that resonate with its target audience.

A key aspect of MAC Cosmetics' social media strategy is emphasizing user-generated content (UGC). By encouraging consumers to share their experiences and creativity using MAC products, the brand not only expands its influence but also establishes a sense of community and authenticity. Research shows that UGC significantly enhances consumer trust and engagement, making it a valuable asset for brands looking to strengthen their presence on social media [1]. Additionally, using internet celebrities has become the cornerstone of MAC Cosmetics' social media strategy. By collaborating with beauty influencers who have a large following, MAC can leverage their audience and benefit from their credibility and influence. This strategy aligns with research indicating that influencer marketing can generate high returns on investment and effectively enhance brand awareness and loyalty.

The success of MAC Cosmetics in utilizing social media marketing emphasizes the importance of adopting a multi-faceted approach, including content creation, influencer collaborations, and user engagement. This article will first review relevant theories and research findings on social media marketing, exploring its status and trends. Then, it will analyze the case study of MAC Cosmetics' social media marketing strategy, providing an overview of the brand and analyzing its marketing strategies and effectiveness across various social media platforms. Furthermore, it will discuss the driving forces behind social media in marketing, analyze insights from the MAC Cosmetics case study, and propose strategies for addressing challenges in social media marketing. Finally, this paper aims to summarize research findings by offering recommendations for MAC Cosmetics while pointing out future research directions. Through this structure, we strive to comprehensively explore the role of social media platforms in driving online marketing, using MAC Cosmetics as an example to reveal its successful experiences and provide valuable references for businesses [2].

2 Literature review

2.1 Overview of the development of social media marketing

As an emerging marketing tool, social media marketing has experienced rapid development in just over a decade. With the advancement of internet technology and the popularity of smartphones, social media platforms have quickly become an indispensable part of people's daily lives. According to Statista, as of 2023, the global number of social media users has exceeded 4 billion, accounting for nearly half of the world's population [3]. This explosive growth in user base provides unprecedented marketing opportunities for brands. Traditional consumer brands have also begun to realize the immense potential of social media and are engaging in innovative ways to better reach and influence their target consumers.

2.2 Classification and characteristics of social media platforms

There are various types of social media platforms, each with unique features and user groups. The main social media platforms can be roughly divided into the following categories. 1) Social networking platforms, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, are mainly used for social interaction between individuals and businesses, suitable for establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships. Facebook has a wide range of user groups and diverse content formats, making it an important key arena for brand marketing. 2) Image and video sharing platforms, such as Instagram and YouTube, focus on visual content to effectively convey

brand image and product features. Instagram is known for its high engagement rate and young user group, while YouTube is the primary platform for video content creation and consumption. 3) Instant messaging platforms, such as WhatsApp and WeChat, are primarily used for instant communication but also provide rich business functions like public accounts and mini programs to achieve deeper user interaction and services. 4) Short video platforms like TikTok primarily feature short videos with novel content formats that have a high potential for viral spread. TikTok's rapid rise demonstrates its powerful ability to attract young users and create topics.

2.3 The role and influence of social media in online marketing

Social media plays a crucial role in modern marketing, with its influence primarily manifested in the following aspects. Firstly, social media provides brands with a wide and efficient communication channel. By publishing high-quality content, brands can quickly increase their visibility and reputation. For example, MAC Cosmetics has successfully attracted a large following and established a loyal fan base by posting beautiful makeup tutorials and user-shared experiences on Instagram. Secondly, there is user interaction; social media platforms offer various interactive tools such as likes, comments, shares, and live streaming that enable brands to engage with users in real-time. This interaction not only increases user involvement but also enhances brand affinity and credibility [4]. Additionally, social media platforms provide powerful data analysis capabilities that allow brands to understand market trends and user needs through analysing user behaviour and feedback so as to optimize marketing strategies. Through data analysis, MAC Cosmetics can accurately target their desired audience, design personalized marketing campaigns, and improve marketing effectiveness. Lastly, UGC and word-of-mouth promotion are integral parts of social media marketing. By encouraging users to share their experiences using products or recommending them to others, brands can achieve low-cost word-of-mouth promotion while enhancing brand loyalty and customer satisfaction [5]. In conclusion, the development of social media marketing has not only transformed traditional marketing models but also brought unprecedented opportunities as well as challenges for brands. By fully utilizing the characteristics and functionalities of social media platforms, brands can achieve more effective market promotion, user engagement, and stand out from fierce competition.

2.4 Overview of the cosmetics market

The cosmetics market is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the global consumer goods market. According to the Global Market Insights report, the global cosmetics market size reached nearly \$600 billion in 2023 and is projected to exceed \$800 billion by 2027 [6]. This growth is primarily driven by increasing consumer demand for beauty products, particularly strong performances in the Asia-Pacific region and North American markets. Additionally, there is a growing demand for personalized, natural, and effective skincare products, which further fuels the continuous expansion of the cosmetics market.

2.5 The application and effects of social media in the beauty industry

Social media plays a crucial role in the beauty industry. Beauty brands leverage social media platforms to launch new products, promote their offerings, and engage with consumers. Through these platforms, brands can quickly reach a broad audience and enhance brand visibility. For example, Instagram and YouTube are popular platforms for beauty brands, where they attract followers by posting makeup tutorials, product review videos, and user

testimonials. Research has demonstrated that social media significantly boosts beauty product sales, particularly when products are endorsed by influencers and beauty bloggers, who can rapidly propel a product to viral status.

2.6 Overview and brand positioning of MAC cosmetics

MAC Cosmetics is a globally renowned professional makeup brand, founded in 1984 and headquartered in Toronto, Canada. As a leader in the beauty industry, MAC is known for its extensive product line and high-quality professional makeup products. The brand positioning of MAC primarily focuses on professionalism, innovation, and diversity, aiming to provide high-quality makeup for consumers of all skin tones and personalities. MAC's target consumers include professional makeup artists, makeup enthusiasts, and everyday consumers, with the brand advocating for an inclusive philosophy of "all ages, all races, all genders." The brand image of MAC consistently emphasizes fashion, artistry, and inclusivity. By collaborating with numerous internationally acclaimed makeup artists and artists alike, the company continuously releases limited edition products and special collections to maintain its freshness and cutting-edge appeal. Additionally, MAC actively participates in various social responsibility activities such as the MAC AIDS Fund by selling specific products to raise funds for HIV/AIDS prevention efforts. This strategy not only enhances the brand's social image but also strengthens consumer loyalty towards it. MAC's branding positioning and marketing strategies have allowed it to occupy a significant position in the highly competitive cosmetics market. By maintaining continuous innovation and efficient market promotion, MAC has successfully attracted and retained a loyal customer base, making it one of the leading brands in the global cosmetics industry [7].

3 Social media activities

The analysis of MAC's social media activities reveals that they have significantly increased brand exposure and user engagement. The 2016 limited-edition makeup collection collaboration between MAC Cosmetics and Selena Gomez serves as a prime example. Social media played a pivotal role in this collaboration, which was not merely a product launch but also a meticulously orchestrated social media marketing campaign.

Firstly, pre-promotion on social media was a key strategy for the success of this collaboration. Before the official product release, MAC and Selena Gomez created considerable buzz by posting teasers and behind-the-scenes footage on Instagram. These teasers showcased product design details, Selena Gomez's makeup trial photos, and her personal introduction to the collection. This approach not only generated consumer interest but also created an aura of mystery and anticipation, effectively stimulating purchase desire.

Secondly, collaborating with Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) was crucial to the success of this limited-edition series. As a celebrity with a substantial fan base, Selena Gomez shared her experiences with these products on her social media accounts. Through detailed product descriptions and personal testimonials, she enhanced the products' credibility and deepened consumer connection. Additionally, live streaming events, where she interacted with fans in real-time, further bridged the gap between the brand and its consumers, intensifying interest in the products [8].

Furthermore, the strategy of leveraging UGC also significantly impacted the success of the limited-edition series. The brand encouraged users to share their makeup results using the exclusive hashtag #MACSelenaGomez. This not only boosted brand exposure but also promoted active user participation. By enabling consumers to organically promote the product on social media, this strategy further extended the brand's influence and reach [9].

4 Social media marketing analysis

4.1 Analysis of consumer behaviour changes

The popularity of social media has significantly altered consumer behaviour patterns. Traditionally, consumers relied on advertisements and in-store promotions for purchasing decisions, which was a relatively slow process. However, the immediacy and interactivity of social media now enable consumers to quickly access information and make decisions. Through social media platforms, consumers can view product reviews, user experiences, and receive recommendations from friends and family. This instant feedback mechanism not only accelerates the decision-making process but also enhances consumer trust in brands [10].

In the case of MAC Cosmetics, the brand engages directly with consumers by publishing makeup tutorials, user comments, and product images. This practice not only boosts brand exposure but also fosters greater consumer engagement and loyalty. Consumers share their makeup results and product experiences on social media, creating a positive feedback loop that further amplifies brand promotion through UGC [11].

4.2 Evaluation of the impact of social media on sales

Social media marketing has significantly and positively impacted MAC's sales. By targeting specific advertisements and collaborating with KOLs, MAC effectively converts social media attention into actual sales [12]. This social media-driven marketing model has generated considerable profits for the brand.

MAC Cosmetics' social media marketing strategy has demonstrated notable success with both limited-edition collections and charity events. Firstly, the limited-edition collection launched in collaboration with Selena Gomez achieved remarkable sales performance post-launch. Research indicates that within two weeks of its release, this collection experienced a 40% increase in sales compared to other collections during the same period. This substantial growth is largely attributed to extensive promotion on social media platforms and the influence of Selena Gomez. By leveraging platforms like Instagram, MAC not only boosted brand exposure but also capitalized on Selena Gomez's star power to drive consumer purchase desire, resulting in rapid sales growth [13].

Secondly, MAC's VIVA GLAM charity series has also seen significant sales growth through social media. Research reveals that each year, when a new edition of the VIVA GLAM series is launched, sales typically rise by 25% to 35%. For instance, one year saw a 28% increase in sales within one quarter after the release. This growth is primarily due to the promotion of charity initiatives on social media, which enhances brand awareness and boosts consumer willingness to purchase, thereby supporting charitable causes while significantly driving sales [14].

5 Challenges and strategies for social media marketing

5.1 Challenges

Social media marketing brings many opportunities, but also face many challenges. Brands like MAC Cosmetics need to fully understand and respond to these challenges while seizing opportunities to maximize their marketing effectiveness when using social media for marketing.

5.1.1 Management of negative comments

Management of negative comments is a significant challenge in social media marketing. In the fast-paced social media environment, information—including negative feedback—can spread rapidly, posing a potential threat to brand reputation. For MAC Cosmetics, issues such as product quality concerns, service problems, or other negative events can quickly lead to amplified user criticism and dissatisfaction, thereby impacting the brand's image. To effectively manage negative comments, MAC must implement a robust strategy that includes real-time monitoring of social media platforms, prompt responses to negative feedback, and proactive issue resolution. This strategy should involve developing detailed crisis response plans to ensure that negative comments are addressed swiftly and professionally, all while maintaining a positive brand image [15].

5.1.2 Enhancing consumer trust

Enhancing consumer trust is an important opportunity brought by social media. By being transparent and actively responding, brands can strengthen consumer trust and loyalty. For example, MAC Cosmetics can utilize social media platforms to promptly address user inquiries and complaints, fostering an open and transparent attitude that helps establish the brand's reputation. Brands can demonstrate their value for consumers by regularly updating product information, sharing behind-the-scenes stories, and welcoming user feedback. Additionally, through social media platforms, MAC is able to directly interact with consumers to understand their needs and expectations, allowing for timely adjustments in marketing strategies. This interaction not only enhances consumer identification with the brand but also increases user engagement and loyalty.

5.2 Recommendations for coping strategies

In order to further optimize social media marketing strategies, MAC Cosmetics can start from the following aspects:

5.2.1 Strengthening data analysis capability

Firstly, brands should enhance their data analysis capabilities to gain a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour and preferences. This means that MAC needs to utilize advanced data analysis tools and technologies to systematically collect and analyse user interaction data, purchasing behaviour, and points of interest. Through this data-driven approach, the brand can identify key trends in the market and consumer demands, thereby formulating more precise marketing strategies. For example, analysing user activity data on different platforms can help MAC determine which types of content are most popular and which advertising placements yield the best results, thus optimizing advertising budget allocation and content creation. This data-driven optimization strategy not only improves ad performance but also enhances relevance of content and user engagement [16].

5.2.2 Continuous innovation content formats

Secondly, brands need to continuously innovate the format of their content in order to maintain consumers' interest and engagement. The social media environment is constantly changing, and users' expectations for content are also evolving. MAC can try more interactive forms of content, such as online challenges, live events, and contests for user-generated content. These activities not only attract user participation but also expand the brand's

influence through user sharing and dissemination. For example, MAC can hold makeup challenge competitions to encourage users to upload their own makeup works and establish reward mechanisms to incentivize participation. Additionally, brands can utilize the interactive features of social media platforms like Q&A sessions and polls to increase interaction frequency with users and maintain brand activity and relevance.

5.2.3 Improved crisis management mechanism

In addition, establishing a comprehensive crisis management mechanism is also crucial for optimizing social media marketing strategies. With the popularity of social media, brands need to have the ability to respond quickly and effectively when facing negative comments and public relations crises. MAC should develop detailed crisis response plans, including identifying potential crises, formulating response strategies, and implementing crisis management procedures. Timely addressing negative comments and handling brand crises not only helps protect brand reputation but also maintains good relationships with consumers. For example, when faced with negative comments, MAC can win user understanding and support through transparent communication and proactive resolution measures that demonstrate the brand's sense of responsibility and integrity [17].

6 Conclusion

This article provides a comprehensive study of MAC Cosmetics' online social media marketing strategy, examining how the brand enhances its influence, optimizes market strategies, and addresses marketing challenges through social media platforms. Firstly, MAC effectively boosts brand exposure and consumer engagement through well-crafted social media marketing strategies, including collaborations with KOLs and innovative content releases. The brand leverages the interactivity and immediacy of social media to accelerate consumer decision-making and amplify market impact through user-generated content.

However, this study acknowledges certain limitations. Due to the ever-evolving nature of social media, the strategies and outcomes discussed may change over time, making the findings applicable only to specific periods. Additionally, while the focus is on MAC Cosmetics, social media marketing strategies for other brands in different markets or industries may differ; thus, the conclusions drawn may not be universally applicable.

Future research should explore the application of social media marketing in other consumer goods sectors, particularly in emerging markets and diverse cultural contexts. Additionally, a deeper analysis of algorithm changes on social media platforms and their impact on brand marketing strategies will be valuable in understanding how to optimize marketing effectiveness in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Overall, this study offers valuable insights and recommendations for brands' social media marketing practices. Brands should continue to innovate their content and interaction methods to sustain consumer interest and engagement. Simultaneously, establishing a robust crisis management mechanism to address potential negative comments and brand crises will enhance market performance and contribute to long-term success.

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