Marketing Communication for Chinese Cosmetics Promotion on the TikTok Application

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Abstract

Background and Aim: (1) To explore the current situation of Chinese cosmetics marketing on the TikTok application, which is a platform gaining significant popularity in the online world, especially among consumers interested in cosmetics and beauty products. (2) To study the marketing communication strategies of Chinese cosmetics on the TikTok application. This study will analyze the marketing communication strategies employed by Chinese cosmetics brands on the TikTok application. It will focus on using data from surveys and interviews to examine how strategies such as the use of KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders) or live streaming on the platform influence consumer purchasing behavior. (3) To propose a model for using marketing communication to promote Chinese cosmetics on the TikTok application. The study will propose a TikTok Marketing Communication (TMC) Model suitable for promoting Chinese cosmetics on TikTok. It will explain various strategies, such as AI-driven marketing, user engagement, and other relevant approaches that enhance the effectiveness of marketing on the platform.

Materials and Methods: This research adopted a mixed-methods research approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews with five groups of key informants, including marketing communication stakeholders, executives from Chinese cosmetics companies, Douyin software developers, marketing communication scholars, and Chinese cosmetics consumers. A total of 15 experts were selected through purposive sampling. Quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire survey of 400 Douyin users who engaged with beauty and cosmetics content.

Results: (1) Current Market Trends: The TikTok platform has transformed the marketing landscape for Chinese cosmetics. Short video promotions, influencer marketing, and live-streaming commerce have played a significant role in influencing consumer behavior. (2) Effectiveness of Strategies: Marketing communication strategies such as short video storytelling, collaboration with KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders), algorithm-driven content recommendations, and interactive brand challenges have significantly increased consumer engagement and brand awareness. (3) Proposed Model and Strategic Guidelines: This study proposes the TikTok Marketing Communication (TMC) Model to guide the promotion of Chinese cosmetics on TikTok. The model encompasses four key strategies: utilizing AI-driven personalization to target content, integrating social commerce features to boost sales conversions, enhancing brand storytelling through UGC (User-Generated Content) and KOL (Key Opinion Leader) collaboration, and ensuring regulatory compliance for sustainable growth. The data were analyzed using statistical methods through the SPSS program to calculate frequencies and percentages of the collected data, which were then interpreted to derive the study's findings.

Conclusion: This study explores the effectiveness of TikTok in promoting Chinese cosmetics, highlighting the platform's impact on consumer behavior. It identifies key strategies, including influencer engagement, live streaming, and price sensitivity. The proposed TikTok Marketing Communication (TMC) model offers a strategic framework for brands to optimize their presence and reach on TikTok.

Keywords: Marketing Communication; Chinese Cosmetic Product; Promotion; TikTok App; TikTok Platform

Introduction

Short video marketing emerged in 2016 with the creation of short videos designed to capture viewers' attention, gaining significant popularity. This led to the rapid growth of the short video industry. Short video creation became a new marketing method that quickly engages audiences, leading to its development in various forms, including the involvement of influential figures in marketing who host live broadcasts to promote products. Therefore, it is undeniable that the short video industry has had a significant impact on marketing and has evolved into a global phenomenon through the development of social media applications (Cai Lirong, 2024).

The TIKTOK app is a highly influential platform in digital marketing, particularly among the younger generation. With its personalized content recommendation system and easy-to-use video creation tools, it has made content go viral and spread rapidly, reaching a wide range of audiences. Additionally, TIKTOK serves as a platform that connects brands with young consumers, creating new marketing opportunities in various industries, such as cosmetics. This includes short videos, advertisements, and live broadcasts featuring celebrities or influencers who shape consumers' perceptions and beliefs. As a result, many cosmetic brands have gained significant attention and demand from consumers.

The cosmetics industry is rapidly developing, driven by increasing demand for beauty and health products, as well as growing awareness of self-care in both physical and mental health aspects. As a result, cosmetics have become widely consumed, making China the world's second-largest cosmetics market by 2021. The market has continued to grow, with online marketing trends improving (Xie Zhijie, Su Jianming, Li Bin, 2023). Consumer preferences and behaviors are also influencing the rise of products with natural and organic ingredients, which have become a prominent feature of modern cosmetics. In the face of intense market competition and external pressures, businesses must adapt to these trends. Digital transformation, particularly the growth of e-commerce and social media, has created new sales channels and marketing opportunities for cosmetics brands. One notable example is the emergence of new social media platforms, such as the TikTok app, which is reshaping the consumer purchasing decision-making process. As a result, brands need to develop more creative and interactive marketing strategies. In this highly competitive and continually evolving market environment, cosmetic brands must constantly innovate and adapt to meet consumer expectations and maintain their market position.

In the digital and social media era, the purchasing behavior of the younger generation has had a significant impact on the cosmetics industry. They often rely on platforms like the TIKTOK app to discover and evaluate cosmetics. Traditional advertising methods are being replaced by influencer (KOLs) and celebrity marketing, which help enhance brand awareness. Celebrity endorsements can improve a brand's image. Consumer purchasing decisions are now influenced not only by product quality but also by the overall shopping experience, including brand interaction and after-sales service. Therefore, cosmetics brands need to adapt their marketing strategies on platforms like TIKTOK to attract and retain modern consumers. Social media, especially the TIKTOK app, has become an essential marketing tool in the cosmetics industry. Short videos quickly capture consumer attention and concisely provide relevant information. The use of big data technology allows platforms to recommend content based on consumer interests and behaviors (Tang Mengwei, 2022). Brands are shifting toward creating engaging and entertaining video content, such as product tutorials and user reviews, to increase consumer engagement. Influencer marketing also plays a crucial role by enhancing brand awareness and product trust. Social media allows brands to interact directly with consumers, creating an engaging shopping experience. Effectively leveraging TIKTOK's marketing strategies helps improve the market performance and sales of cosmetics brands.

The interaction between brands and consumers on TikTok not only transforms marketing communication but also creates new sales opportunities for the cosmetics industry. By engaging with users through topics, comments, and user-generated challenges, brands increase exposure and build closer customer relationships. Interactive strategies enhance brand image and enable consumers to actively participate in shaping the brand's narrative. The strong influence of User Generated Content (UGC) provides an effective and trustworthy marketing approach, converting online engagement into actual sales (Wang Xuefei, 2022). With the advancements in cosmetic products, marketing communication, and the use of social media in current marketing strategies, the researcher is interested in conducting this study. This research introduces a new approach to applying traditional marketing theories to social media platforms, such as TikTok, by adapting the 4P marketing theory and Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) theory within the context of short videos and highly interactive media. Additionally, it examines the psychological and social influences on consumer decision-making, as well as the impact of these influences on consumer behavior and purchasing decisions.

Another important aspect of this study is its exploration of how TikTok can be utilized to promote cosmetics by leveraging features such as short videos and community engagement to enhance brand awareness and drive sales. It also recommends that cosmetics brands develop effective consumer engagement strategies and build stronger relationships with customers. The researcher anticipates that this study will help brands adapt to the challenges of the digital age and enhance their competitiveness in the market.

Objectives

1. To explore the current situation of Chinese cosmetics marketing on the TIKTOK application.

2. To study the marketing communication strategies of Chinese cosmetics on the TIKTOK application.

3. To propose a model for using marketing communication for promoting Chinese cosmetics on the TIKTOK application.

Literature review

In this chapter, the researcher compiles and analyzes concepts, theories, and research related to the study of marketing communication for Chinese cosmetic products on the TikTok platform. This provides a foundation for understanding the factors influencing consumer behavior on this platform. This chapter examines key concepts and theories, including communication theory, marketing theory, consumer behavior theory, as well as psychological and behavioral economic factors that influence consumer purchasing decisions on TikTok. Furthermore, related research both domestically and internationally has been examined to understand the context of using digital marketing strategies on the TikTok platform and to synthesize appropriate guidelines for marketing communication of Chinese cosmetic products on this platform. Under the dissertation title "Marketing Communication for Chinese Cosmetic Products on the TikTok Platform," the researcher reviews literature and related studies. Details are as follows:

1. Theory of Communication (Berlo, D.K., 1960).

- **SMCR Model**

The SMCR model, proposed by David K. Berlo in 1960, breaks down communication into four key elements: Source, Message, Channel, and Receiver. This model helps understand the communication process by focusing on the characteristics of each component. The source creates and encodes the message, which is transmitted through a selected channel to the receiver, who decodes and interprets it. Although the SMCR model has been widely applied, it faces criticism for being overly linear and failing to consider feedback or the complexities of digital and social media communication.

- **SMCRE Model**

The SMCRE model is an extension of the SMCR model, introducing the "Effect" (E) to measure the impact of communication on the receiver. This model emphasizes feedback and interaction, making it particularly suitable for digital marketing and social media contexts, such as TikTok. It evaluates the effectiveness of communication in achieving its objectives, such as influencing attitudes or behaviors. The SMCRE model has been applied in various fields, including advertising, political communication, and health campaigns, where assessing consumer responses and behavioral change is crucial.

2. Theory of Marketing

From a macro perspective, marketing communication is the use of various communication tools and channels to meet consumer needs, increase brand awareness, market share, and consumer loyalty (Belch & Belch, 2018; Percy, 2018). It involves not only delivering information but also strategic planning and analysis of market demand, consumer behavior, and the competitive environment to ensure marketing effectiveness (Schultz, Tannenbaum & Lauterborn, 1993; Dahlen, Lange & Smith, 2010).

The macro concept of marketing communication includes four key elements:

1. **Information Delivery** – How information is constructed and conveyed through various media.
2. **Audience Analysis** – Understanding consumer psychology, segmentation, and positioning.

3. Two-way Interaction – The feedback loop between brands and consumers is especially crucial in digital marketing.

4. Communication Effect Measurement – Evaluating whether marketing efforts lead to changes in consumer attitudes and behaviors (Keller, 2013; Lamberton & Stephen, 2016).

Theoretical frameworks and models are crucial for guiding companies in achieving marketing goals through effective communication. These models encompass various dimensions, ranging from consumer psychology to brand management, and explore how to influence consumers' purchasing decisions through different channels and media (Solomon, 2019; Percy, 2023).

The AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) is commonly used in marketing communication, outlining the process from consumer exposure to final purchase decision (Strong, 1925). The 4Ps marketing mix theory (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) provides foundational guidance for companies to design comprehensive marketing strategies and coordinate various marketing elements (McCarthy, 1960; Borden, 1984).

With the rise of digital marketing and social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and WeChat, modern marketers have adapted traditional marketing theories by incorporating interactive, data-driven, and personalized communication methods (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016; Voorveld, 2019). Additionally, the 4P model has evolved into the 7P framework (adding people, process, and physical evidence) to reflect the shift toward a service-oriented approach and experiential marketing (Booms & Bitner, 1981; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

2.1 4P Model

The 4P model, introduced by E. Jerome McCarthy in 1960, is a foundational marketing framework consisting of four elements: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. It helps companies design marketing strategies to meet consumer needs and stay competitive.

- **Product** refers to the core offering (goods or services) and involves strategic considerations like design, quality, and branding (McCarthy, 1960; Kotler & Armstrong, 1999).
- **Price** is the value exchanged for the product, with strategies like cost-based, market-oriented, and competition-based pricing (McCarthy, 1960; Nagle & Holden, 2002).
- **Place** focuses on how products reach consumers, including distribution channels, logistics, and market coverage (McCarthy, 1960; Bucklin, 1966).
- **Promotion** includes marketing communication tools such as advertising, public relations, and sales promotions to influence consumer decisions (McCarthy, 1960; Kotler & Keller, 2006).

The evolution of the 4P model has been expanded to accommodate the complexities of the digital economy and consumer-centric marketing, leading to the development of new frameworks such as the 4C model (Lauterborn, 1990) and the 7P model (Booms & Bitner, 1981). Despite these changes, the 4P model remains a foundational concept in designing marketing strategies and decision-making processes (Constantinides, 2006).

2.2 7P Model

Based on the 4P marketing theory (Product, Price, Place, Promotion), Booms & Bitner (1981) proposed the 7P marketing model by adding three additional elements: "People," "Process," and "Physical Evidence," making it more suitable for service industries and social media marketing. This model can be used to analyze the marketing strategies of Chinese cosmetic brands on the TikTok platform as follows:

People: In TikTok marketing, "People" refers not only to the brand but also to KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders), KOCs (Key Opinion Consumers), hosts, community managers, and customer service teams, all of whom play an important role in brand promotion. Examples include KOL/KOC Marketing in Brands collaborating with celebrities and influencers to promote products through short videos or live streams. Live Streaming Sales are increasing user trust and improving conversion rates through live broadcast interactions. Community Engagement is when Brands establish connections with consumers through TikTok comment sections and direct messages to enhance loyalty.

Process: The marketing process on TikTok emphasizes smooth user experiences and effective conversion paths, including the Algorithm Recommendation System, which utilizes TikTok's AI system to deliver brand content to target consumers. Short Video Interaction is increasing user engagement through activities like challenges, polls, and interactive topics. Shopping Link Optimization is reducing consumer decision-making costs and improving conversion rates with features like live shopping carts, short video shopping links, and limited-time discounts.

Physical Evidence: Physical evidence refers to tangible elements that consumers can perceive, such as product packaging, store page design, brand logos, and user reviews. In TikTok marketing, brands can enhance their physical presence in the following ways: Short Video Visuals, using HD image quality, creative video editing, and product close-ups to allow consumers to understand the product's effectiveness better. Brand Page Optimization ensures that the brand's page contains comprehensive information, including brand introductions, product categories, and user reviews, to foster consumer trust and confidence. UGC (User-Generated Content) encourages users to share their personal experiences, such as unboxing reviews or makeup tutorials, to strengthen brand credibility and foster word-of-mouth communication.

This expanded 7P model provides a comprehensive approach to marketing, particularly in digital environments like TikTok, where interactions and consumer engagement are key to success

2.3 AIDA Model

The AIDA model, proposed by Elias St. Elmo Lewis in 1898, outlines the psychological process consumers go through when exposed to advertising. It has four stages:

1. Attention: The goal is to capture the consumer's attention by standing out amidst a lot of advertising noise.

2. Interest: Once attention is captured, the aim is to spark interest by showing how the product meets consumer needs.

3. Desire: Advertising should create a desire to buy by highlighting emotional and functional benefits.

4. Action: Finally, clear guidance is provided to encourage consumers to make purchases.

Although the model has been very influential in marketing, it faces limitations in today's complex, multi-channel digital marketing environment. Nonetheless, it remains a key framework in advertising, helping marketers design messages that guide consumers through these psychological stages.

The history and evolution of the cosmetics industry provide an insightful understanding of how beauty products have transformed over time. From the use of natural minerals and plant oils in ancient Egypt to the scientific innovations in modern cosmetics, the journey has been long and multifaceted.

Key historical milestones mark the transition from traditional methods to modern, research-driven approaches. The Industrial Revolution played a pivotal role in the commercialization of cosmetics, moving the industry toward a scientific foundation. One notable figure, Eugène Schueller, revolutionized the cosmetics industry with the creation of the first synthetic hair dye and the founding of the L'Oréal Group in 1909, marking the beginning of the modern cosmetics era. This era also saw the introduction of safety regulations, such as the U.S. Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938, which helped standardize and safeguard cosmetic products. With advancements in dermatology and the growing demand for multifunctional products, cosmetics have evolved to not only enhance beauty but also improve skin health and provide protection from environmental factors. Today's cosmetics industry continues to explore new frontiers, with an increasing focus on sustainability, eco-friendly ingredients, and cruelty-free practices. This shift has been driven by consumer demand for "green" cosmetics and growing awareness of environmental and ethical concerns.

Classification of Cosmetics

Cosmetics can be categorized based on their purpose, ingredients, and regulatory classifications. The International Nomenclature of Cosmetic Ingredients (INCI), established in 1973, laid the groundwork for these classifications, which are now adhered to globally.

1. Skin Care Products: These are designed to protect, nourish, and improve skin health. They include moisturizers, sunscreens, and anti-aging creams. Modern formulations incorporate active ingredients such as vitamin C, hyaluronic acid, and retinol, providing not only basic skin care but also anti-aging and skin rejuvenation benefits.

2. Makeup Products: This category includes foundation, lipstick, eye shadow, and other products aimed at enhancing facial features. Technology has advanced makeup products also to include skin-nourishing ingredients, catering to consumers' desire for products that offer both cosmetic enhancement and skin care benefits.

3. Hair Care Products: Shampoo, conditioner, and styling products are formulated to improve hair health and achieve various hairstyling goals. With the development of specialized products for different hair types, this category has seen an increase in technology-driven formulations focused on hair repair and protection.

4. Perfumes: Perfumes and colognes are used to impart fragrance. The variations depend on the concentration of essential oils, with categories ranging from essence to eau de toilette and cologne.

5. Special Purpose Cosmetics: These products are designed for specific skin concerns, such as medicated skin care, acne treatments, and hair dyes.

Technological and Functional Advances

Modern cosmetics have embraced technological advancements to create multifunctional products. Notably, anti-pollution and sunscreen products have seen significant development due to the growing recognition of environmental damage caused by pollution and UV radiation. These products often contain physical blockers, such as titanium dioxide and zinc oxide, to create a protective barrier on the skin. The emphasis on functional cosmetics is expanding, where products like anti-aging and whitening creams combine beauty benefits with functional improvements to skin health. The line between cosmetics and skincare has become increasingly blurred, and demand for products that not only enhance appearance but also provide skin health benefits is on the rise.

3. Theory of Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior theory is a vital area of study within marketing and economics, aiming to explain the decision-making process behind consumers' choices, purchases, and product usage (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010; Solomon, 2019). This theory helps to explore how consumers make decisions not only based on rational considerations, such as preferences and budget constraints, but also through emotional, psychological, social, and cultural factors that influence behavior (Bettman, 1979; Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995).

Origins and Development

The theory of consumer behavior traces its roots to early economic and psychological models that attempted to understand consumer decision-making from a rational perspective. Economists initially focused on utility maximization models, which assumed that consumers always act logically to maximize their benefits (Samuelson, 1938; Stigler, 1950). However, as the research expanded, the focus shifted from rational decision-making to the inclusion of emotional, behavioral, and cultural dimensions of consumer behavior (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Thaler, 1985).

As global markets expanded and economies, such as China's, underwent rapid development, scholars in both the West and East began examining how different social, cultural, and economic contexts influenced consumer behavior. Chinese scholars, for example, have emphasized the social influences, collectivism, and the impact of digital marketing and mobile commerce on consumer decision-making in China (Hofstede, 1984; Gefen, Karahanna, & Straub, 2003).

Chinese Consumer Behavior and Cultural Context

Chinese consumer behavior has been profoundly influenced by the country's distinct social and cultural environment. In particular, the concept of "face" in Chinese culture plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior. The desire to improve one's social standing or gain recognition from others often influences Chinese purchasing decisions, especially for luxury goods and high-status items (Zhou & Hui,

2003). Chinese consumers are particularly influenced by a brand's image and the status symbols associated with its products.

Another important aspect of Chinese consumer behavior is collectivism. In Chinese culture, the opinions of family, friends, and colleagues play an essential role in decision-making. Social networks, word-of-mouth, and recommendations from social media influencers have a strong influence on purchasing decisions in China (Wang & Lin, 2018).

The rise of China's digital economy and mobile commerce has also drastically altered consumer behavior. E-commerce platforms such as Taobao, JD.com, and Pinduoduo have become integral to the purchasing habits of Chinese consumers, with social media platforms like WeChat and TikTok influencing trends and buying decisions. Live streaming e-commerce has become a significant driver of purchases (Cao & Li, 2020).

Modern Consumer Behavior: Multi-Channel and Digital Influence

Digital channels and cross-platform interactions increasingly shape modern consumer behavior. Consumers today are often influenced by a multitude of touchpoints, including social media, online reviews, brand experiences, and digital advertising. The consumer decision-making process is no longer linear but is instead influenced by multiple stages and interactions across various digital and traditional media (Cao & Li, 2020).

The emotional and experiential aspects of consumer behavior have also gained more attention. Consumers now seek more than just functional benefits from products. They desire personalized experiences and emotional connections with brands, which significantly influence their purchasing behavior. As companies increasingly focus on creating unique brand experiences, emotional engagement becomes a key factor in customer loyalty and brand advocacy (Solomon, 2019).

The evolution of consumer behavior theory has transitioned from the early models based on utility maximization to more sophisticated frameworks that incorporate psychology, sociology, and cultural influences. As globalization and digitalization continue to advance, consumer behavior theory will increasingly need to account for complex, multi-channel decision-making processes and the role of emotions and social factors in purchasing decisions. Particularly in markets like China, where social networks and digital platforms play an outsized role, understanding the intersection of digital marketing, cultural values, and consumer decision-making is crucial for businesses aiming to succeed in today's rapidly evolving market landscape.

The Global Cosmetics Market: The cosmetics industry is highly dynamic and varies across different regions. While the United States remains the largest market for cosmetics, countries like China are rapidly catching up. China has become the second-largest consumer of cosmetics, with a growing demand for high-end skincare and functional beauty products. E-commerce platforms and social media have played a key role in propelling Chinese brands to prominence (Euromonitor International, 2023; Statista, 2023). In comparison, the European and American markets tend to focus on traditional marketing, with an emphasis on luxury and established beauty brands. However, they are also seeing a shift toward sustainable and natural ingredients, as well as cruelty-free products (KPMG, 2022).

China's Growing Influence: China's cosmetics market has been experiencing significant growth, driven by rising consumer income and an increased interest in beauty products. Local brands, such as BIOHYALUX and Florasia, are gaining ground not only in domestic markets but also internationally, often incorporating traditional Chinese medicine and advanced technology (Cheng, 2021). The functional skincare market, particularly in anti-aging, whitening, and anti-pollution products, is experiencing significant growth in China. This shift aligns with the broader trend of consumers seeking products that offer practical benefits beyond aesthetics (Cheng, 2021). The cosmetics industry has evolved from simple beauty aids to complex, multifunctional products that provide both aesthetic and health benefits. With continuous advancements in technology and increasing consumer demand for sustainability and ethical practices, the future of cosmetics looks promising. In markets like China, innovation and digital marketing

continue to drive growth, and the global competition is pushing brands to adapt quickly to changing consumer preferences and technological advancements (McKinsey & Company, 2022).

4. Knowledge of Cosmetic Products:

The history of cosmetics dates to ancient civilizations, with evidence from ancient Egypt where people used natural minerals, plant oils, and spices for skin care, beauty, and sun protection (Spencer, 2012; Corson, 1972). Cosmetics were not only used for decorative purposes but also served protective and religious functions. In ancient Greece and Rome, renowned doctors such as Hippocrates and Galen began studying the beauty and medicinal properties of plants and minerals, marking the early beginnings of cosmetic research (Balsam & Sagarin, 1972). Over time, cosmetics evolved into daily necessities and became a cross-cultural phenomenon (Peiss, 1998). With the advancement of the Industrial Revolution, cosmetics began to enter the domain of modern scientific research. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, chemistry and biology enabled the production, research, and development (R&D) of cosmetics to become science-based, rather than relying solely on traditional methods (Jones, 2010). A significant figure in the modern cosmetics industry was Eugène Schueller, who founded L'Oréal in 1909 and developed the first synthetic hair dye, marking a pivotal shift in the industry toward modern, science-driven cosmetics (Jones, 2010; Delort, 1978). Schueller's work demonstrated that cosmetics could enhance appearance while also being safer and more effective. In the mid-20th century, as the cosmetics industry rapidly expanded, governments introduced regulations to ensure the safety of products. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) passed the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act in 1938 to regulate cosmetic safety systematically (FDA, 1938). The Act provided the legal framework for modern cosmetic research, ensuring that products were safe, effective, and of high quality (Draelos, 2010).

Another key area of cosmetic safety research is the testing of allergies and skin irritation. As demand for skin care products increased, cosmetics were designed for sensitive skin and specific skin problems (Elsner & Maibach, 2000). Testing for potential irritants and toxicity, including animal testing and clinical trials, led to safer products and increased demand for "no additives" and "no animal testing" products (Draelos, 2000; Barel, Paye, & Maibach, 2014). As the cosmetics industry expanded, the range of products grew, encompassing skin care, makeup, hair care, and perfume (Shin et al., 2012). These products not only fulfilled beauty needs but also integrated scientific advances, evolving into multifunctional products that combine beauty, functionality, and skin care (Barel et al., 2014).

Classification of Cosmetics

Cosmetics can be classified by their use, ingredients, or regulatory definitions. The International Nomenclature of Cosmetic Ingredients (INCI) proposed the classification system in 1973, which was later refined by the European Union (EU), U.S. FDA, and China's NMPA to meet safety regulations and market needs (INCI, 2006; EU Cosmetic Regulation, 2009; FDA, 2020). Cosmetics are primarily divided into the following categories:

- **Skin care products** (e.g., moisturizers, sunscreens, anti-aging creams) – these protect, nourish, and improve skin health (Draelos, 2010).
- **Makeup products** (e.g., foundation, lipstick, eyeshadow) – these enhance facial features and create a more attractive appearance (Shin et al., 2012).
- **Toiletries** (e.g., shampoo, shower gel, deodorant) – these focus on daily hygiene and grooming (Peiss, 1998).
- **Perfumes** (e.g., perfume, cologne, body spray) – used to impart fragrance (Barel et al., 2014).
- **Special purpose cosmetics** (e.g., medicated skin care, anti-acne products, hair dyes) – designed for specific skin issues (FDA, 2020).

This framework is widely accepted in cosmetic science, dermatology, and regulatory systems globally (Barel et al., 2014; FDA, 2020).

Functional Cosmetics: These cosmetics blend beauty and skincare benefits. Ingredients such as vitamin C, hyaluronic acid, and retinol are known for their anti-aging, pigmentation-reducing, and moisturizing effects (Sultana & Bushra, 2016). This trend is blurring the lines between skincare and

cosmetics, with many products now offering both decorative and functional benefits. Additionally, the demand for anti-pollution and sunscreen products has increased. These products utilize ingredients such as titanium dioxide and zinc oxide to shield the skin from harmful UV rays and environmental pollutants, offering both aesthetic and health benefits.

Sustainability and Innovation: Sustainability has become a major focus in the cosmetics industry. There is a growing emphasis on using natural, renewable resources and reducing environmental impact. Cosmetics research is increasingly focused on non-toxic and biodegradable ingredients, as well as plant extracts like green tea, aloe vera, and ginseng (Jimenez & Dobrosielski Bergona, 2012). In response to concerns about animal rights, there has been a shift toward developing non-animal testing methods, such as cell culture and computer simulations (Adler et al., 2011). These advancements offer solutions for sustainable and ethical cosmetic development.

Cosmetics Market in China: China's cosmetics market has grown rapidly and is now the world's second-largest, after the U.S. Rising consumer incomes, a shift toward high-quality products, and an increasing awareness of beauty (Cao & Li, 2020) drive this growth. E-commerce and social media have played a significant role in expanding the market, with live streaming and KOL marketing influencing purchasing decisions, especially among younger consumers (Wang & Lin, 2018). Chinese consumers are increasingly seeking functional skincare products that offer anti-aging, whitening, and anti-pollution benefits. Domestic brands are rapidly rising to meet this demand, integrating traditional Chinese medicine with modern technology (Sun, 2021). The cosmetics market in China differs significantly from other major global markets. While China's market is growing rapidly, especially for high-end skincare, the U.S. market is more mature, with a focus on cosmetics and perfume. Japan is known for its emphasis on scientific, safe skincare technologies, while European markets prioritize natural ingredients and environmental sustainability (Adler et al., 2011). In conclusion, the Chinese cosmetics industry stands out for its technological innovation and strong e-commerce presence. However, there is room for improvement in terms of environmental sustainability, a focus that is already well-established in European markets. The future development of China's cosmetics industry is likely to be influenced by ongoing technological advancements, market expansion, and global competition in sustainability and product innovation.

5. Background of TikTok

TikTok, launched by ByteDance in September 2016, has rapidly grown into a global short-video platform. It initially attracted young users with its 15-second videos, easy editing tools, and vast music library. TikTok's success is driven by its AI-powered recommendation system, which customizes content for users based on behavior, and its focus on user-generated content (UGC) (Chen Lijuan & Tan Rong, 2018). By 2017, TikTok had over 100 million daily active users in China (CNNIC, 2018). The platform integrates e-commerce, live streaming, and influencer marketing, further boosting its growth. TikTok's business model encompasses ads, live broadcast rewards, and e-commerce integration, creating opportunities for both users and brands (Wu Jianguo, 2019). While facing competition from platforms like Kuaishou and Weibo, TikTok continues to diversify its content, expanding into education, health, and gaming to meet broader user needs (Wu, Jinhai, Zhang, Feng, & Li, 2022). With a focus on global expansion, TikTok's growth continues to be supported by ByteDance's innovative algorithms and market positioning (Zhang Qing & Zhao Lin, 2022).

The information provided above is a summary of the researcher's findings from studying the details related to the cosmetics business, cosmetics marketing in China, relevant marketing communication, and the TikTok application. This serves as the basis for the study on "Marketing Communication for Chinese Cosmetic Products on the TikTok Platform," providing a foundation for understanding the factors that influence consumer behavior on this platform.

Conceptual Framework

This study focuses on Marketing Communication for Chinese Cosmetic Promotion on the TikTok Application, with the details outlined in the research framework below.
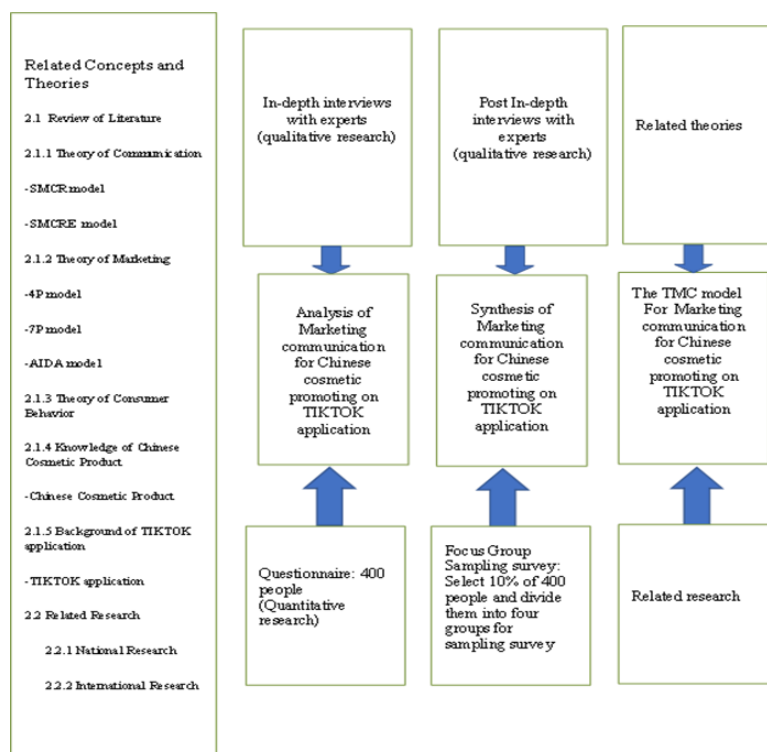
Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Population and sample

The questionnaire survey aims to collect quantitative data to gain a broader understanding of the current application status of Chinese cosmetics on the TIKTOK app platform. The target group of this survey is TIKTOK app users aged 18 and above, including consumers who have purchased or intend to purchase cosmetics, as well as users who follow cosmetics brands on the TIKTOK app.

Research instruments

This study employs quantitative research through questionnaire surveys to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the TikTok app platform in promoting cosmetic brands. The survey results are designed to complement and validate the findings of qualitative research. The development and refinement of the research instrument followed several key steps: (1) A comprehensive literature review was conducted to explore relevant principles, theories, and prior studies related to TikTok marketing, consumer behavior, and digital advertising. Under the guidance of the research advisor, this review informed the development of a structured questionnaire aligned with the study's objectives. (2) Based on the reviewed literature, the structure and scope of the questionnaire were defined. The survey aimed to collect quantitative data from TikTok users aged 18 and above who engage with cosmetic-related content, either through following brands, watching promotional videos, or making purchases. Items were categorized by variable types and refined under expert supervision. A panel of five experts reviewed the draft questionnaire to evaluate content validity. (3) To ensure the accuracy and alignment of questionnaire items with research objectives, the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) technique was used. Experts rated each item on a three-point scale: +1 (clearly consistent), 0 (uncertain), and -1 (inconsistent). Items scoring 0.50 or above were retained; those below were revised or removed. (4) After incorporating expert feedback, the questionnaire was revised for clarity and structure. The final version was reviewed and approved by the research advisor before being administered for data collection.

To support systematic data analysis and better reflect the variables under study, the quantitative questionnaire was divided into three main sections, as follows:

Section 1: Demographic Information

This part includes data on respondents' age, gender, educational background, income level, occupation, and place of residence.

Section 2: Marketing Communication

This part explores the effectiveness of TikTok marketing strategies for cosmetics, including preferred content formats, engagement with promotional videos, influencer impact, and advertising preferences.

Section 3: Consumer Behavior

This section focuses on respondents' purchasing habits, TikTok usage frequency, shopping behavior, and interaction patterns with cosmetic content on TikTok.

The questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." All items passed the IOC test, with IOC values equal to or greater than 0.50, ensuring the instrument's content validity.

Research tools: (1) In-depth Interviews: Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews with five groups of key informants, including marketing communication stakeholders, executives from Chinese cosmetics companies, Douyin software developers, marketing communication scholars, and Chinese cosmetics consumers. A total of 15 experts were selected through purposive sampling. (2). Structured Questionnaire: Quantitative data were gathered by surveying 400 Douyin users who engaged with beauty and cosmetics content. The survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire designed to collect relevant data on user behavior and attitudes.

Data Collection: Sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed for further analysis. Participants were encouraged to share their real-life experiences with TikTok marketing and discuss which factors had the greatest impact on their purchase decisions.

Data analysis: The recorded discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common patterns and key insights. Responses were grouped into major themes, including trust in influencer recommendations, engagement with promotional content, and triggers for decision-making. The findings were cross-referenced with the SMCR communication model to understand how different information sources and channels influence consumer behavior. By combining the focus group findings with the overall study, this qualitative approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how TikTok marketing affects different consumer groups in the Chinese cosmetics industry.

Results

The results of the study showed that:

(1) Current Market Trends: The TikTok platform has significantly transformed the marketing landscape for Chinese cosmetics. Short video promotions, influencer marketing (KOL), and live-streaming commerce play a key role in influencing consumer behavior. TikTok enables brands to quickly reach their target audiences and increase brand awareness, particularly among users who prefer short-form content and are interested in trendy products. This transformation is particularly effective in capturing the attention of younger consumers who are active on social media platforms.

Popular marketing strategies, such as collaborating with KOLs or engaging consumers through brand challenges and live streams, have proven to increase engagement and drive purchase decisions. Live-stream commerce allows for real-time product demonstrations and promotions, further motivating immediate purchases. This direct interaction between brands and consumers through live streaming enhances trust and stimulates impulse buying, effectively increasing sales and brand loyalty.

The study's findings show that TikTok's ability to personalize content through AI, collaborate with KOLs, and employ user-friendly marketing strategies has proven effective in boosting consumer engagement and brand awareness. Chinese cosmetics have gained significant traction in both domestic and

international markets, particularly among digitally savvy consumers seeking convenience and unique shopping experiences.

(2) Effectiveness of Strategies: Marketing communication strategies, such as short video storytelling, collaboration with Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs), algorithm-driven content recommendations, and interactive brand challenges, have significantly boosted consumer engagement and brand awareness. Short video storytelling, a key feature of TikTok, enables brands to create compelling narratives that capture users' attention in a short amount of time, making it more likely that consumers will engage with the content. Collaboration with KOLs has also proven to be highly effective in enhancing brand credibility and trust. When popular influencers promote a product, their followers are more likely to view it as authentic and credible, which increases the likelihood of purchase.

Furthermore, TikTok's algorithm-driven content recommendations ensure that users are presented with content that aligns with their preferences and browsing behavior. This personalized experience keeps users engaged for longer periods, increasing the likelihood that they will discover new products and brands. Interactive brand challenges also play a significant role in driving engagement, as they encourage user participation and foster a sense of community. By participating in these challenges, users feel more connected to the brand and are more likely to share their experiences with others, amplifying the brand's reach and influence.

These strategies have shown remarkable success in increasing both consumer interaction with brands and overall brand visibility. Brands that effectively use TikTok's features have seen notable improvements in consumer loyalty, purchase intention, and the spread of positive word-of-mouth, resulting in higher conversion rates and sustained brand awareness.

(3) Proposed Model and Strategic Guidelines: This study introduces the TikTok Marketing Communication (TMC) Model to optimize the promotion of Chinese cosmetics on TikTok. The model focuses on four key strategies designed to enhance brand visibility, consumer engagement, and sales conversion.

1. AI-driven Personalization: The first strategy emphasizes the use of TikTok's algorithm and artificial intelligence (AI) to personalize content, ensuring that each user receives recommendations tailored to their preferences and browsing behavior. This personalized approach enhances user engagement by delivering content that resonates with individual interests, resulting in higher interaction rates and a deeper connection to the brand.

2. Integration of Social Commerce Features: The second strategy involves integrating social commerce features, such as in-app purchasing options, live-streaming sales events, and clickable product links. This approach enables users to transition seamlessly from discovering products to making purchases, thereby enhancing the likelihood of conversion and boosting overall sales.

3. Enhancing Brand Storytelling through UGC and KOL Collaboration: The third strategy highlights the importance of user-generated content (UGC) and collaboration with Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs). By leveraging the influence of KOLs and encouraging customers to create and share content, brands can foster trust and authenticity, thereby enhancing brand loyalty and attracting new customers.

4. Regulatory Compliance: Finally, the model stresses the importance of ensuring regulatory compliance, including adherence to advertising standards, data privacy regulations, and industry-specific guidelines. This ensures that marketing practices remain ethical and transparent, protecting both the brand and consumers while maintaining a positive reputation in the market.

Together, these four strategies provide a comprehensive framework for effectively promoting Chinese cosmetics on TikTok, driving consumer engagement, increasing brand awareness, and optimizing sales conversion.

Discussion

(1) To explore the current situation of Chinese cosmetics marketing on the TIKTOK application.

Through expert interviews and focus group discussions, this study examined the current landscape of Chinese cosmetic brand marketing on TikTok from the perspectives of industry, platform, and consumers. The findings reveal that communication has evolved from a traditional, one-way information delivery model to a dynamic one driven by "content + algorithm + interaction." High-end brands prioritize professionalism and credibility by leveraging expert endorsements, dermatologist reviews, and scientific insights into ingredients to establish trust. In contrast, mass-market brands focus on entertainment and engagement through short videos, humorous storytelling, influencer narratives, and real-time promotions, such as live sales.

This evolution reflects a shift from brand-centered communication to user-centered ecosystems, where engagement is co-created through interactive content, comments, and user-generated participation. These findings are consistent with previous studies that have pointed out the transition from linear promotional models to algorithm-driven, socially amplified communication patterns. The TikTok algorithm no longer simply delivers brand content; it acts as a mediator that amplifies high-engagement content, allowing for real-time feedback and the potential for viral dissemination. Additionally, this study highlights how "content as advertisement" has become normalized on TikTok. Consumers often struggle to distinguish between marketing and entertainment, making embedded native advertising more effective than traditional banner ads or commercial breaks. This confirms the growing consensus that seamless, scenario-based marketing is the new norm in short-video platforms.

(2) To study the marketing communication strategies of Chinese cosmetics on the TIKTOK application.

The quantitative findings from 400 valid questionnaires revealed three dominant strategic factors: price sensitivity, real-time interaction through live streaming, and trust building through product and brand credibility. Price (88.25%) emerged as the most critical influence on purchasing decisions, indicating that consumers remain highly responsive to price reductions, flash sales, and time-limited promotions. Live streaming (80.50%) was identified as the second most effective channel, due to its immediacy, interactivity, and enhanced persuasion. Brand trust (77.00%) and product ingredient transparency (50.50%) were also key considerations, especially among older consumer groups.

Cross-tabulation analysis further revealed age-based differences in content preferences and decision-making logic. Younger consumers (18–24 years old) are attracted to short videos, influencer content, and emotionally engaging storytelling. Meanwhile, older consumers (aged 33–40 years) place greater emphasis on information, safety, clinical endorsement, and long-term brand reputation.

These results are consistent with existing research, which shows that consumers have shifted from passive receivers to active participants who evaluate content based on emotional relevance, practical value, and social proof. The study reinforces the importance of personalized marketing strategies, segmented by audience characteristics, and delivered through platform-native content formats. Moreover, it confirms that the most effective TikTok marketing content combines emotional resonance, interactive structure, and credible information delivery to create persuasive power.

(3) To propose a model for using marketing communication for promoting Chinese cosmetics on the TIKTOK application.

Based on the integration of qualitative insights and quantitative data, this study developed the TikTok Marketing Communication (TMC) model. This multi-layered framework addresses both theoretical and practical aspects of digital brand communication. The model consists of five key players: (1) Brand Marketing Strategy, (2) Consumer Decision Journey, (3) Content Dissemination & Algorithm Optimization, (4) Social Influence & Community Engagement, and (5) AI-Driven Personalization & Retention. While grounded in the AIDA model structure (Attention–Interest–Desire–Action), the TMC model extends it by integrating TikTok's unique media logic, which includes fast-paced content, algorithmic distribution, interactive functions, and participatory content creation. It emphasizes the balance between conversion triggers (e.g., price, livestreaming), trust builders (e.g., KOLs, UGC, product ingredients), and exposure mechanisms (e.g., brand challenges, algorithm visibility).

The structure was validated through cross-tabulation analysis, which revealed that different communication elements have varying effects on different consumer segments. For instance, livestreaming and discounts are more effective for younger consumers, while product safety and detailed ingredient breakdowns appeal more to older users. UGC content contributes broadly to trust-building across all groups.

This model aligns with current theories in digital and social media marketing, including the ideas of full-funnel digital strategy, platform-native content creation, and community-based trust mechanisms. It expands the application boundaries of traditional frameworks, such as 7P and AIDA, in the context of intelligent, interactive platforms like TikTok. The TMC model thus offers both theoretical advancement and practical guidance for Chinese cosmetic brands seeking effective strategies in the short-video ecosystem.

Conclusion

Based on the study titled *Marketing Communication for Chinese Cosmetic Promoting on TikTok Application*, the following findings were made:

(1) To explore the current situation of Chinese cosmetics marketing on the TIKTOK application (Qualitative). Through expert interviews and focus group discussions, this study examined the current landscape of Chinese cosmetics marketing on TikTok. The findings suggest that TikTok has become a significantly influential platform for cosmetic brand communication, largely due to its unique algorithmic push mechanism, short video format, and social engagement features. High-end cosmetic brands often adopt professional and knowledge-based strategies, such as expert reviews, dermatologist endorsements, and explanations of ingredient science. In contrast, mass-market brands tend to emphasize entertainment, viral content, and real-time promotions through short videos and live streaming. UGC (User-Generated Content) and comment-based interactions play a vital role in enhancing consumer engagement and trust. These qualitative insights provide a foundational understanding of how Chinese cosmetic brands are adapting to TikTok's dynamic media environment.

(2) To study the marketing communication strategies of Chinese cosmetics on the TIKTOK application. (Quantitative): The second research objective was addressed through a structured questionnaire administered to 400 TikTok users, aiming to measure consumer attitudes, preferences, and behavioral tendencies. The data analysis revealed that price sensitivity remains a dominant factor in driving consumer decisions (88.25%), followed by live streaming (80.50%), brand trust (77.00%), and product ingredients (50.50%). The platform's features, including real-time interaction, influencer engagement, and time-limited offers, were found to have a significant impact on purchasing behavior. Through cross-tabulation analysis, the study also identified segment-specific differences: younger users (18–24) are more likely to respond to emotional and entertaining content, especially UGC and influencer-driven promotions; mid-age users (25–32) take a more rational approach, valuing product quality and expert opinions; older consumers (33–40) are more cautious and place emphasis on safety, clinical endorsements, and brand credibility. These findings demonstrate that effective TikTok marketing communication must be tailored to the audience and combine effective engagement with credible information. Quantitative results not only validate prior assumptions from qualitative interviews but also provide an empirical foundation for the model-building process.

(3) To propose a model for using marketing communication for promoting Chinese cosmetics on the TIKTOK application: The third and final objective was achieved through the construction and empirical verification of the TikTok Marketing Communication (TMC) model, which synthesizes both qualitative insights and quantitative evidence. The TMC model is designed to help Chinese cosmetic brands systematically navigate TikTok's marketing landscape. It consists of five interrelated functional layers: (1) Brand Marketing Strategy Layer, (2) Consumer Decision Journey Layer, (3) Content Dissemination and Algorithmic Optimization Layer, (4) Social Influence and Community Interaction Layer, and (5) AI-driven Personalization and Retention Layer. Cross-tabulation results served as a critical input for validating the

model's structure, showing that different communication elements (such as price, KOL endorsement, UGC, live streaming, and algorithm recommendations) play complementary roles at various stages of the consumer journey, from attention and interest to trust and action. The model also reflects the hybrid nature of TikTok, serving both as a content platform and a social community, and emphasizing the importance of balancing algorithmic distribution with humanized, trust-building communication. Overall, the TMC model makes both theoretical and practical contributions. It extends classical marketing frameworks, such as AIDA and 7P, into a new media environment, and offers a strategic blueprint for Chinese cosmetic brands seeking a competitive advantage through TikTok marketing.

Recommendation
1. Practical Recommendations
1.1 Increase the Use of UGC and Build Brand Trust
The study found that UGC is more credible than KOL, especially for price-sensitive consumers, due to its authenticity and self-propagation among users, which helps drive purchase decisions. Therefore, it is recommended to increase the use of UGC and enhance brand trust. This can be done by:
- Creating incentive mechanisms to encourage users to share their experiences, such as the "30-day beauty challenge."
- Promoting high-quality UGC through official channels, such as short videos and re-creations.
- Building TikTok fan communities to foster stronger brand connections.

1.2 Optimize Marketing Strategy with Short Videos and Live Streaming
The study revealed that the "short video + live streaming" model has a substantial impact on increasing sales conversions, particularly during product launches and promotions. Therefore, it is recommended to optimize marketing strategies using short videos and live streaming. This can be achieved by:
- Using short videos to generate interest in the product before the live streaming event.
- Enhancing engagement during live streams through activities like lucky draws and special discounts.
- Editing highlights from live streams and sharing them on short video platforms to extend the marketing reach.

1.3 Targeted Advertising and Enhanced Personalization
Research data shows that personalized ads have a much higher conversion rate than traditional ads, and TikTok's AI can accurately recommend ads based on users' interests, interactions, and purchase history. Therefore, targeted advertising and enhanced personalization should be prioritized by using TikTok's data analysis tools to improve marketing decision-making.

1.4 Increase Brand Interaction and Strengthen User Loyalty
Establishing two-way communication with consumers on TikTok helps improve brand influence and user loyalty. Therefore, it is recommended to enhance brand interactions and build user loyalty by utilizing TikTok tools, such as TikTok Pixel and Audience Insights, to gain a deeper understanding of user behavior and optimize marketing strategies accordingly.

2. Recommendations for Future Research
2.1 This study focuses on consumers aged 18-35, who are the primary user group of TikTok. However, in recent years, TikTok's user base has expanded to a wider age range, particularly with middle-aged and elderly consumers increasingly using the platform.

Therefore, it is recommended to expand the research objectives and explore the TikTok usage behavior of consumers in different age groups. For example:
- Focus on users from different age groups and explore their short video consumption behavior. For instance, do middle-aged and elderly users prefer watching live broadcasts for longer periods, or do they prefer viewing short video streams?

- Analyze the consumer psychology and marketing preferences of different age groups. For example, younger users tend to prefer UGC content, while middle-aged users tend to trust recommendations from KOLs or official advertisements more.

- Study the social interactions of middle-aged and elderly users on the TikTok platform. For example, do they prefer discussing products in the comment section, or do they make purchasing decisions after private consultations?

2.2 This study explored the impact of TikTok's precise recommendations on consumer purchase decisions. However, since TikTok's algorithm mechanism operates as a black-box system, it is difficult to access its core logic directly.

Therefore, further research should be conducted on the impact of TikTok's algorithm on consumer behavior. For example:

- Analyze how TikTok's algorithm affects the content exposure of users. For instance, brands utilize algorithm strategies to enhance the completion rate of short videos, including view rates, comment interaction rates, and other metrics, thereby increasing the algorithm's recommendation weight.

- Study whether the "information cocoon" effect exists in TikTok marketing. That is, when TikTok recommends content based on user interests, users fall into a closed loop of information, reducing their awareness and attempts to discover new brands.

- Explore the relationship between personalized recommendations and consumer purchase decisions and analyze whether AI recommendation systems can increase consumption frequency and brand loyalty.

2.3 This study found that UGC content on TikTok has become a key factor influencing consumer decision-making. However, there is limited research on how UGC marketing can enhance brand loyalty.

Therefore, further studies should explore the relationship between UGC and brand loyalty, such as:

- Analyzing how the credibility of UGC content affects long-term consumer loyalty, such as which types of UGC are more likely to lead to repeat purchases (e.g., real reviews vs. exaggerated promotions).

- Studying how the UGC communication path influences brand perception, such as how brands use UGC to spread among different user groups and create lasting influence.

- Exploring the alignment between UGC and brand image, i.e., whether brands should fully open UGC communication or if there should be some review and guidelines to maintain consistency with the brand's image.

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