



The Effect of Social Media and Consumers' Reviews on Consumers' Purchasing Behavior of Beauty Products

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ABSTRACT. The impact of social media on the performance of beauty brands has been a topic of interest, but few studies have examined this relationship. As the use of social media continues to grow in the beauty industry, the specific effects of social media on customers remain unclear. In this study, I aim to fill this gap by using social exchange theory and social identity theory to examine the relationship between social media use and brand performance in the beauty industry. Through case analysis, survey research and analysis of some apps, I find that the use of social media has a positive impact on customers' purchasing behaviors, which ultimately improves brand performance. My study extends the current understanding that social media can be an effective tool for beauty companies to interact with customers and enhance brand performance. These findings provide valuable insights for beauty companies to consider and implement in their marketing strategies, shedding light on the crucial role of social media in the beauty industry. At the same time, social media should pay attention to consumers' reviews, and analyze these reviews to better understand consumer needs.

Keywords: social media, consumer reviews, beauty brands

1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of social media reviews on consumer purchasing behavior of beauty products, with particular attention to the role

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of social identity and social exchange theory. Prior literature has extensively examined the significant role of social media in shaping consumers' product choices in the beauty industry. Research has shown that social media platforms serve as influential sources of information and comparison for beauty product consumers (Saima, & Khan, 2020). Users often engage in social media platforms to gather product-related information, reviews, and recommendations, enabling them to make informed purchase decisions (Yadav & Rahman, 2018). However, there is a research gap in understanding the specific effects of emerging technologies on consumers' purchasing behavior of beauty products. My study aims to explore how technological advancements have further transformed the beauty industry, offering consumers enhanced convenience and improved shopping experiences. Moreover, I will analyze various live-streaming platforms to assess their distinct advantages in delivering superior customer experiences (Liao et al., 2023). By addressing this research gap, I can contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolving influence of social media and consumers' reviews on consumers' purchasing behavior in the beauty product market. Therefore, the research question is: How does social media and consumers' reviews influence consumers' purchasing behaviors of beauty products?

I examine that there are some effects of Social media and consumers' reviews on consumers' purchasing behavior of beauty products, integrating social identity theory and social exchange theory in this research. Specifically, Social identity theory posits that individuals construct their self-concept based on personal and social aspects (Tajfel 2004). Personal identity pertains to an individual's distinctive traits and abilities, while social identity, known as social identification, refers to the perception of belonging to a specific social group (Ashforth, & Mael, 1989). Social exchange theory is another important factor to consider. This theory suggests that individuals make decisions based on the costs and benefits of a particular transaction. According to Homans' social exchange theory (1958), individuals engage in relationships based on a perceived balance of costs and rewards.

The beauty industry has experienced a profound shift in consumer behavior due to the influence of social media, which has provided consumers with unprecedented access to information, recommendations, and reviews (Ferine et al., 2023). Social media platforms have become influential factors in shaping the industry, democratizing beauty knowledge, and empowering consumers with choices (De Veirman, 2017). Consumers are more likely to use social media to gather insights about beauty products, following influencers and experts who provide valuable

information, tutorials, and honest reviews (Lu, Qiang & Mengguo, 2016). Brands leverage social media to showcase products, communicate directly with consumers, and foster loyalty (Lu, Qiang & Mengguo, 2016). Moreover, consumers pay more attention on reviews, whatever positive or negative. Positive reviews can significantly influence consumers' perceptions of a beauty product's quality, efficacy, and value for money, leading to increased purchase intention (Park, 2007). Conversely, negative reviews can deter potential buyers and damage a brand's reputation. Beauty brands need to actively monitor and manage online reviews, responding to customer feedback, addressing concerns, and leveraging positive reviews to build trust and credibility with consumers (Park, 2007). By understanding the importance of online reviews and incorporating them into their marketing strategies, beauty brands can effectively engage with consumers, shape brand perception, and drive purchasing decisions. Negative consumer reviews can be detrimental to a company's reputation and can significantly impact consumer perception. Competitors or individuals with ulterior motives may post negative reviews to harm a company's image or promote their own products. On the other hand, positive reviews can sometimes be generated by fake accounts or paid endorsements, presenting a distorted picture of a company's offerings.

As a result, understanding the impact of social media on consumer buying behavior in the beauty industry has become a topic of great interest to researchers and beauty brands. Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the influence of social media on consumer behavior and decision-making processes. Researchers have explored the role of social media platforms in shaping consumer preferences, the effectiveness of influencer marketing, and the effects of user-generated content on purchase intentions (Trivedi, Jay & Ramzan Sama, 2020). These studies provide valuable insights into how social media influences consumer perceptions, attitudes, and purchasing decisions in the beauty industry.

This article is organized into three sections. Section "literature review" By synthesizing and integrating existing literature on the impact of social media on consumer behavior, this study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of various platforms. In the context of beauty products, this means that consumers may be more likely to purchase a product if they believe the benefits outweigh the costs, such as price and potential side effects. Social media can greatly influence consumers' perceptions of the costs and benefits of a product through product reviews, tutorials, and influencers' endorsements. The results of this study could provide valuable

insights for beauty companies to better understand and attract their target audience in the realm of social media. By understanding the role of social identity and social exchange theory in consumer purchasing decisions, companies can develop more effective marketing strategies and improve their overall online image. Additionally, this research may contribute to existing studies on the impact of social media on consumer behavior and clarify the broader implications of modern social media use.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Background of Social Media Development

In recent years, social media has become an integral component of modern marketing strategies, transforming the way companies engage with their target audience (Weinberg, 2009). The advantages of social media are manifold, offering businesses a dynamic platform to connect with customers, cultivate relationships, and promote their products or services. Unlike traditional advertising, social media platforms enable individuals to access content that goes beyond mere commercial intent, fostering the sharing of information among peers and family members, thereby facilitating rapid dissemination (Weinberg, 2009). Moreover, social media platforms present companies with unique opportunities to position themselves as valuable participants within communities (Weber, 2009; Silverman, 2001). By actively addressing feedback and concerns from community members, businesses can forge robust relationships with their audience. This active involvement also allows companies to establish a strong presence and foster meaningful connections, leading to enhanced brand loyalty and business growth. The integration of social media into marketing strategies has opened up new avenues for businesses to connect with their customers and harness the power of digital platforms to achieve their marketing objectives (Weber, 2009; Silverman, 2001).

Engagement behavior holds significant importance in the realm of social media. As the popularity of social media platforms continues to rise, so does the prevalence of social media influencers, who leverage their online presence to sell products and services (Arora et al, 2019). Unlike traditional media, social media users are not required to ensure the accuracy of the information they provide, granting influencers greater ease in disseminating content and information (Lou, Chen, & Yuan, 2019). Influencers' success relies on two levels of engagement behavior: following the

influencer and positively interacting with them. Followers serve as a valuable resource for influencers, granting them access to platform features, brand endorsements, networking opportunities, and additional revenue streams (Tang, Gu, & Whinston, 2012). Furthermore, the number of followers plays a crucial role in social media algorithms, determining the visibility of an influencer's posts in users' feeds (Jin et al., 2022). Positive interaction, on the other hand, builds trust and relational advantages, leading to increased product/service purchases or recommendations (Loureiro, Serra, & Guerreiro, 2019). Interactions also contribute to the algorithms, attracting more followers and enhancing post visibility (Agung, Ananda, & Darma, 2019). In summary, engagement behavior not only facilitates influencers' revenue opportunities but also creates a sense of community for followers, fostering trust, connection, and a deeper relationship with the influencer (Dolan et al, 2019).

Research on the impact of social media can be categorized into two main streams. The first stream focuses on the influence of social media on firm performance. For instance, Yang et al. (2014) conducted an event study and found that a firm's decision to engage in social network platforms positively affects its market value. Additionally, Luo et al. (2013) demonstrated that consumers' actions in social media, such as posting content about a firm on blogs and providing reviews on websites like CNET.com, can significantly influence a firm's market value. Although these studies offer valuable insights into the importance of social media in a firm's strategy, they do not specifically analyze the returns on firms' social media efforts. Building upon this research, my paper proposes three dimensions of a firm's social media efforts—intensity, richness, and responsiveness—and investigates their relationship with the firm's market performance. The second stream of literature focuses on the impact of social media on consumer behavior. Rishika et al. (2013) found that customers' social media participation increases their website visit frequency and profitability, while Goh et al. (2013) discovered that user-generated content on a firm's Facebook page has a stronger effect on purchase behavior compared to firm-generated content. However, these studies are limited to data from a single firm and do not examine the comprehensive relationships between firms' social media efforts, consumer behavior, and firm performance. In summary, while previous research has explored various aspects of the impact of social media on corporate performance and consumer behavior, my study aims to contribute by examining specific dimensions of corporate social media efforts: the strengths and weaknesses of

different platforms, their audiences and customers, and their subsequent impact on customer behavior and financial performance.

3 Discussion

China's social media emerge and grow rapidly, with highly active and mobile-savvy users. China's social media market is not beyond comparison with its Western counterparts. When it comes to social networking, China's media developed quickly, except that these sites are domestically designed platforms. Despite censorship, China's social media landscape is more dynamic, diverse, and competitive, with platforms rising and falling faster than a handful of major players that dominate Western markets. In addition, the application of artificial intelligence is also increasing. In terms of content forms, apart from short videos, such as Douyin (aka TikTok) and Xiaohongshu (a cross-border e-commerce community), life streaming on these platforms has become the norms of Chinese social media. Other platforms, such as Kuaishou, are early beneficiaries of this market trend and are more active in smaller third - and fourth-tier cities. In various online platforms, consumers often share their feedback and comments, which can significantly influence the purchasing decisions of others.

3.1 Factors Influence Beauty Consumers' Purchasing Behavior

The changes in the purchasing behavior of beauty consumers are influenced by various factors, including marketing methods, and changes in content.

In recent years, consumers' purchasing behavior has been changed by the social media. So, I argued that some of the influences that have taken place in recent years. The changes in marketing strategies has also had an impact on the purchasing behavior of beauty consumers compared to the past. Previously, people heard about beauty products through television and radio. However, with the rise of e-commerce platforms, the influence of different platforms and target groups on the purchasing behavior of beauty consumers has become increasingly evident. Taking TikTok, Xiaohongshu, and Kuai Shou as examples, these three platforms are popular e-commerce platforms in the market. They attract a large number of users through short videos, but they each have unique characteristics and advantages for promoting and selling beauty products. Therefore, understanding these characteristics can better

attract and satisfy consumer needs, and increase sales. In 2023, TikTok's download volume has exceeded 800 million. The users on TikTok are diverse, not limited by age or gender. Therefore, beauty products on this platform are usually endorsed by celebrities, and influencers will be influenced by them to make purchases. In addition, the number of likes and reviews on TikTok short videos is also an important factor influencing consumer purchasing behavior. Consumers generally believe that videos with higher likes are more popular. Xiaohongshu's main target group is primarily female consumers born in the 1990s and 2000s (Chi, 2022). Users share their experiences and insights on products in the community, and consumers trust authentic evaluations from users. Xiaohongshu users have a deeper understanding of the texture, ingredients, and application scenarios of products. Kuai Shou is a short video sharing platform with a user base mainly concentrated in third- and fourth-tier cities and rural areas. The consumer group on this platform is relatively small, and price is an important factor influencing their purchasing behavior. Because of their lower purchasing power, beauty products on Kuai Shou are relatively cheaper. However, beauty products on Kuai Shou are not as competitive as those on TikTok and Xiaohongshu, so brand awareness and product characteristics have a relatively smaller impact on consumers.

Apart from the unique features of each platform, the marketing strategy on different platforms also varies. For example, on TikTok, live streaming for product sales is very popular. On Xiaohongshu, some bloggers share their daily life Vlogs, which include beauty, travel, shopping, and they also recommend products that they have used themselves. This is actually a kind of indirect marketing tactic. One of the popular users on Xiaohongshu is the celebrity Ouyang Nana, whose vlogs are diverse, covering topics such as studying abroad, travel sharing, and fashion outfit recommendations. She also shares products that she has used, and many fans consult her for product information and make purchases based on her recommendations. Many beauty and internet-famous bloggers are also signed by MCN or Zhaixinggeon Xiaohongshu. At the same time, it provides celebrity endorsement and promotion services for brands. In the beauty industry, bloggers signed by Zhaixingge often share their usage experience and insights on platforms such as Xiaohongshu and recommend high-quality products to their fans. Among them, the most famous internet celebrity is Yimeng Ling, whose every product recommendation generates extensive attention and discussion. Her platform has over 20 million followers, and her influence cannot be underestimated. This kind of marketing method, which

incorporates celebrity and internet celebrity effects, can be said to combine social media with e-commerce, increasing consumers' desire to purchase through their love for celebrities and bringing more exposure to brands. For brands, working with celebrities can increase brand awareness and reputation and enhance consumers' willingness to purchase.

Thirdly, marketing strategy for products are also a key factor influencing sales. A unique sales approach is more likely to attract consumers, increase more followers, and improve the trust of consumers. For example, the New Oriental live streaming room, which was popular last year, used a more gentle promotional approach compared to other live streaming rooms that used noisy and loud marketing techniques. The hosts in the New Oriental live streaming room not only explained agricultural products but also quoted poetry and allusions or talked about some of the latest hot topics in society, providing viewers with more knowledge and information. This different style compared to other live streaming rooms attracted a lot of attention from consumers. When the live streaming room first started broadcasting, it caused a great sensation. Even now, many consumers still regularly visit the New Oriental live streaming room and have become loyal customers. This unique marketing strategy not only made customers recognize the New Oriental brand but also brought them opportunities to collaborate with other brands and platforms. Differentiated marketing techniques are very important for brands because they can help them stand out in a highly competitive market. In the Chinese live streaming industry, differentiated marketing techniques have become the choice of more and more brands, and this approach has also influenced New Oriental's marketing strategy. For example, Yuhui Dong is a highly regarded anchor in New Oriental's live broadcast room, and he possesses many distinctive characteristics. First of all, he is known for his deep knowledge and humorous way of expression. He is able to explain complex knowledge in an easy-to-understand way, making learning interesting and engaging. Unlike other live streams, Yuhui Dong does not create a noisy environment in order to sell his products. Instead, he will first tell the story of the products and guide customers to consume them in a meticulous way, so that they can feel the value behind the purchase.

Currently, the competition in the Chinese live streaming industry is intense, and differentiation between different brands is crucial. The marketing strategies used in live streaming rooms are also receiving great attention, as they not only attract consumers' attention but also increase brand awareness. However, many live

streaming rooms still have some pain points in their marketing strategies, such as focusing too much on promotions and using vulgar advertising methods. These strategies not only fail to attract consumers but may also harm the brand image. In this context, finding differentiated marketing strategies is an opportunity for brands. Brands can use their existing resources to develop new marketing strategies, as New Oriental Live Streaming Room has done. They chose to attract consumers' attention by teaching cultural knowledge and product features, thereby increasing their brand awareness and image. At the same time, this differentiated marketing strategy also brought more business cooperation opportunities to New Oriental Live Streaming Room, enhancing its competitiveness in the market.

3.2 The Importance Of Consumers' Reviews

In addition to marketing methods, and changes in content, consumer reviews play a significant role in shaping the purchasing behavior of beauty consumers. In today's digital age, consumers have easy access to information and reviews about beauty products through various online platforms and social media channels.

Consumer reviews serve as a valuable source of information for prospective buyers. Before making a purchase, many beauty consumers actively seek out product reviews and testimonials from other users. They rely on the experiences and opinions shared by fellow consumers to gauge the quality, efficacy, and suitability of beauty products. Positive reviews can build trust and confidence in a product, influencing consumers to make a purchase. Online platforms such as e-commerce websites, social media, and beauty-specific communities facilitate the sharing of consumer reviews. Customers can leave detailed feedback, ratings, and even upload photos or videos showcasing their experiences with the products. This user-generated content adds authenticity and credibility to the reviews, as they come from real people with firsthand experiences. Consumer reviews also provide insights into product performance, application techniques, and compatibility with different skin types or concerns. Consumers often value these practical insights from fellow users, as they help them make more informed decisions. Additionally, reviews that highlight specific benefits or address common concerns can sway consumer preferences and influence their purchasing behavior. Negative reviews, on the other hand, can deter potential buyers. Consumers are cautious and take into account the experiences of others to avoid potential disappointments or wasted investments. Brands need to

actively monitor and address negative reviews, addressing any issues raised by consumers, and demonstrating their commitment to customer satisfaction. This engagement with consumers not only helps in resolving concerns but also showcases a brand's responsiveness and dedication to product improvement. Furthermore, brands can leverage positive consumer reviews as part of their marketing strategies. Testimonials, before-and-after photos, and success stories shared by satisfied customers can be used in advertising campaigns or on product pages to enhance credibility and persuade potential buyers. The power of social proof cannot be underestimated, as consumers are more likely to trust recommendations and experiences shared by their peers.

Consumer reviews are influential on social media and have a multi-faceted impact on both consumers and beauty companies. Positive reviews can serve as social proof, verifying the quality and effectiveness of beauty products. When potential customers see positive feedback from satisfied customers, they are more likely to develop trust in the brand and feel confident in their purchasing decisions. Positive reviews also help build brand loyalty, as satisfied customers are more likely to become repeat customers and help grow the brand through word of mouth. However, negative consumer reviews have a detrimental effect on both consumers and beauty companies. For consumers, negative reviews can serve as warning signs about potential problems or flaws in a product and help them make more informed purchasing decisions. For beauty companies, negative reviews can damage reputations and lead to lower sales. If a product continues to receive negative feedback, it can reduce consumer trust, which can hurt sales. It is a fact that some negative reviews can also let the consumers see the products and bring some positive reviews, and consumers will choose the suitable one by comparing. Therefore, beauty companies need to deal with negative reviews promptly and effectively to mitigate potential damage to brand image. To make the most of consumer reviews, beauty companies can actively engage with consumers on social media platforms. By monitoring and responding to reviews, companies can demonstrate a focus on customer satisfaction and address questions or concerns raised by consumers. Active participation in open and transparent communication with consumers helps build trust and a positive brand image.

In conclusion, differentiation in marketing strategies is a significant opportunity for brands. In a fiercely competitive market, each brand should consider how to use existing resources to differentiate and find more excellent marketing strategies. The

success of New Oriental Live Streaming Room's case demonstrates that finding differentiated ways can help brands win more consumers, increase brand value and awareness.

4 Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence between social media platforms and brand marketing performance in the beauty industry in terms of consumers reviews. The results show that the use of social media has a positive impact on customers' purchasing behavior, thus improving brand performance. Social media platforms offer beauty companies unprecedented consumers reviews to interact with customers, provide product information and enhance brand image. However, there are also challenges, such as managing negative comments. By integrating the role of social identity and social exchange theory, beauty companies can develop more effective marketing strategies that leverage the power of social media to connect with their target audiences. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge about the impact of social media on consumer behaviour and highlights the critical role of social media in the success of the beauty industry. Ultimately, beauty companies that harness the power of social media will be more competitive and able to thrive in this digital age because most of consumers are female, and they prefer to read reviews, more careful, and will compare a variety of different products.

In addition, the study found that different social media platforms have unique advantages and characteristics that beauty companies can use to promote products and improve brand performance. For example, Douyin is known for its short videos and livestreaming functions, online trends that can quickly gain widespread attention and boost brand awareness and sales. Xiaohongshu, second, provides a more community-oriented platform that allows users to share their experiences and reviews of beauty products to build the trust and credibility of the brand. Kuaishou, third, is a more transactional platform with a fixed audience, perfect for promoting and selling beauty products directly to customers.

Consumer reviews on the social media have influential impact on both consumers and beauty companies. On the one hand, positive reviews can serve as social proof (Talib, 2017), verifying the quality and effectiveness of beauty products. When potential customers see positive feedback from satisfied customers, they are more likely to develop trust in the brand and feel confident in their purchasing decisions.

Positive reviews also help build brand loyalty, as satisfied customers are more likely to become repeat customers and help grow the brand through word of mouth. On the other hand, negative consumer reviews have a detrimental effect on both consumers and beauty companies. For consumers, negative reviews can serve as warning signs about potential problems or flaws in a product and help them make more informed purchasing decisions. For beauty companies, negative reviews can damage reputations and lead to lower sales. If a product continues to receive negative feedback, it can reduce consumer trust, which can hurt sales. Therefore, beauty companies need to deal with negative reviews promptly and effectively to mitigate potential damage to brand image. It is undeniable that some negative reviews can also let consumers analyze the product, bring some positive feedbacks, consumers will choose the right one through comparison. To leverage the consumer reviews, beauty companies can actively engage with consumers on social media platforms. By monitoring and responding to reviews, companies can demonstrate a focus on customer satisfaction and address questions or concerns raised by consumers. Active participation in open and transparent communication with consumers helps build trust and a positive brand image.

In addition, beauty companies can harness the power of consumer reviews by highlighting positive consumer reviews on social media channels or websites. Sharing customer testimonies and success stories can strengthen brand credibility and further influence potential customers' purchasing decisions. Therefore, encouraging customers to leave comments and feedback not only provides valuable insights, but also creates an atmosphere of brand community.

It's important to note that not all reviews, whether positive or negative, accurately reflect overall consumer sentiment. Some comments may be biased or influenced by personal preference, while others may be intentionally deceptive or malicious. Therefore, beauty companies need to adopt strategies to identify and deal with any false or misleading reviews in order to maintain brand integrity and increase consumer trust. All in all, in the social media environment, consumer reviews have an important impact on both consumers and beauty companies. Positive reviews can enhance brand credibility, build loyalty and drive sales, while negative reviews can raise concerns and damage a brand's reputation. By actively engaging and leveraging positive consumer feedback, beauty companies can harness the power of consumer reviews to enhance brand performance in the highly competitive beauty industry.

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