



# After the “China-Chic”: The Circle Marketing Model of China’s Domestic Makeup Brands - Flower Knows

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**Abstract.** With the popularity of the “China-Chic”, Chinese people’s acceptance of domestic brands has increased. Many Chinese makeup brands have also attracted a large number of consumers through their own unique marketing and communication strategies, but Chinese cosmetics brands are still under the great competitive pressure of their counterparts at home and abroad. How to stand out from many brands is a difficult problem for the survival and development of Chinese brands. This paper selects the Chinese niche makeup brand Flower Knows as the main research object, through the case study process tracking method, the communication and marketing strategy of Chinese cosmetics brands was explored. Through the analysis of the brand marketing strategy known by Flower Knows, it was found that Flower Knows has gone viral from a niche makeup brand to a popular makeup brand in the two-dimensional circle with its unique circle marketing. The circle marketing strategy relies on personalized positioning, subdividing professional products, and improving the brand’s sales efficiency and brand loyalty, which helps to accelerate the popularity of the brand. At the same time, the circle marketing strategy also has certain limitations. Including data complexity, potential market neglect, changes in the market environment, and high competitive pressure at the circle. Flower Knows uses the brand strategy of circle marketing to successfully break the circle, which is of great guiding significance for solving and breaking through the survival and development problems of Chinese cosmetics brands in the context of the “China-Chic”.

**Keywords:** Flower Knows, Circle Marketing, Brand Marketing.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

As the world’s second-largest consumer market for cosmetics, China has a large market demand for cosmetics [1]. At a time when the “China-Chic” is popular, many Chinese makeup brands have gradually emerged in the fierce market competition. Broadly speaking, the “China-Chic” is a certain consumption concept, that indicates that Chinese products or products with Chinese characteristics have become popular. This paper selects the Chinese niche makeup brand Flower Knows as the main research object.

Mainly through literature research and case analysis methods to analyze its brand communication and marketing strategy, through the exploration of its marketing content and the analysis of online and offline marketing models, this paper puts forward the concept of circle marketing, analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of brand circle marketing, and analyzes how brands can achieve further development through circle marketing. In the theoretical sense of this paper, this paper aims to enrich the research of Chinese cosmetics brands in brand communication strategies and provide more targeted guidance to expand the depth and development of Chinese cosmetics brand communication. From a practical point of view, after the “China-Chic”, the competition between Chinese cosmetics brands has become more and more fierce. It is also worth exploring how brands can stand out from them and make Chinese brands bigger and stronger.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

By finding and reading relevant literature, it was found that previous studies involve areas such as marketing, brand management, consumer behavior, etc. The classification and review of relevant literature can be divided into the following main directions:

The first is brand positioning and communication strategy. This kind of research focuses on how Chinese cosmetics brands create a unique brand image through clear positioning and effective communication strategies. The research involves brand stories, brand image design, advertising communication, etc.

The second is new media and digital marketing strategies. With the rapid development of the Internet, Chinese cosmetics brands are paying more and more attention to marketing strategies on new media platforms. These studies focus on the application of new channels such as social media and e-commerce platforms, involving social media marketing, live sales, brand e-commerce, etc.

The third type of research is related to consumer behavior and market research. This kind of research focuses on the target consumer groups of Chinese cosmetics brands and their purchase decision-making process. From the perspective of consumers, the content includes consumer demand, channel selection, brand loyalty, etc.

Although the research results of existing industry scholars cover many aspects, most of the research still focuses on the description and analysis of existing marketing strategies and brand development models, lacking novel views and suggestions. Wang Yu and Wang Xiahe, scholars who study circle marketing, mentioned in their article “*Research on Brand Circle Marketing Practice in the All Media Era*”: with the support of Internet technology, community operations rely on QQ groups, WeChat groups, Weibo and other network social platforms to develop rapidly [1]. Their research on brand circle marketing mainly stays at the level of new media communication. Scholars Liu Yuchen and Yan Jia respectively mentioned two main characteristics of the background of the cosmetics consumer market in their research — “*Analysis of the Creative Communication Strategy of Domestic Makeup Brands in the Xiaohongshu APP - Taking the Perfect Diary as an Example*” and “*Research on the communication strategy of Chinese*

*cosmetics brands*”, one is the popularity of the “China-Chic” and the rejuvenation of consumer groups [2, 3].

In addition, scholars Liu Sanquan and Liu Xinyi mentioned the importance of pluralistic transmission in their respective studies [4]. In the article “*Development Trends of Domestic Makeup Brands in China*”, Liu Xinyi also put forward the future vision of domestic cosmetics, including “natural green becomes the theme of the future development of the makeup market” and “the male makeup market is full of potential [5].” At the same time, some studies are only discussed at the theoretical level, and there are few guidance and suggestions for practical application.

## 3 CASE STUDIES

### 3.1 Content Marketing

By searching for “Flower Knows” on major social media platforms, it can be found that most of the relevant entries displayed in the search are visual publicity such as graphics and videos. In the “Xiaohongshu” app, which is popular with young Chinese women, the video covers and tweets of Flower Knows’s marketing are mainly light cream tones, and the packaging design is small and exquisite. In September 2023, the brand’s newly launched swan ballet series products are mainly pink, blue, and white. Whether it is lip gloss, eye shadow, blush, or other cosmetics, there will be a ballet-style exquisite little swan design on the shell, and the surroundings will be decorated with a silver frame with a sense of design. Flower Knows has attracted a large number of fans on social platforms such as Xiaohongshu by expanding the promotion of product appearance design advantages. Today, Flower Knows’s official account of Xiaohongshu has 334,000 fans (as of October 18, 2023).

After Flower Knows knew that the original Cute Cat series became popular, it continued to launch a limited series of niche theme products, focusing on not popular items, but on series promotion to make the connection between products closer and drive overall sales. Flower Knows will launch a new series almost every quarter, which has successfully shaped the brand differentiation. In 2022, Flower Knows launched three series of products, including the Crystal Unicorn series, Strawberry Rococo series, and Chocolate Store series.

The Crystal Unicorn series was launched on May 13, 2022. This series is the first time that the brand has launched a bright crystal palace-style design. The color is mainly a low-saturated pink-purple series suitable for spring and summer, changing the previous packaging characteristics with high color saturation and rich colors. The Crystal Unicorn series is an upgraded replica series of Flower Knows’s 2020 unicorn series products, which makes up for some of the regrets and shortcomings of a generation of unicorns. Blush, lip gloss, pressed powder, and perfume are added to the product category, and the packaging design is integrated with the shell pattern process to create a shining delicacy. Meanwhile, Flower Knows cooperates with WOW COLOUR, an offline cosmetics collection store, to promote and sell offline, and the products are also exported to W Cosmetics BW and other foreign offline makeup collection stores in Sydney.

The Strawberry Rococo series was launched on August 26, 2022. The style of this series is positioned as a classical and gorgeous oil painting girl style. The outer packaging design is bright in color, mainly red, blue, and pink. This series of products is similar to the Crystal Unicorn series and is also sold in cooperation with offline stores such as WOW COLOUR. The difference is that the Strawberry Rococo series pays more attention to the promotion and marketing of new media platforms. By searching for the official Xiaohongshu account, 47 notes related to “Crystal Unicorn” can be found, while hundreds of notes about Strawberry Rococo. In addition, under the official new product publicity notes, many netizens raised questions, accusing Flower Knows of “changing soup without changing medicine”, saying that they hoped that it would pay attention to the improvement and innovation of the internal quality of the product, instead of just replacing the outer packaging of similar but different themes, in order to quickly launch new and “perfunctory” consumers. The chocolate store series was updated on December 5, 2023, with pink and brown as the main color for autumn and winter matters, inspired by the British plaid skirt, and the silhouette of the braided girl as the main vision, focusing on the retro British style. The online and offline promotion and marketing of this series are about the same as that of the Strawberry Rococo series.

These three series of gift boxes contain a series of makeup mirrors and hair clips. It can be seen that the brand marketing model of Flower Knows has gradually been finalized. The three series of products mentioned above also use KOL drainage in large quantities to search for information about “Flower Knows”, and then many bloggers’ evaluation recommendation articles will be displayed. In addition, every week before the new product is launched, the brand will release a well-made one-minute short video to introduce new products through image animation and girlish heart visual design, attract traffic, and expand consumer groups.

The brand spokespersons of Flower Knows are mostly well-known young female idols. They are basically the image of big-eyed two-dimensional cute girls, and their image is consistent with the brand style of “two-dimensional, girlish heart”. Flower Knows mainly attracts traffic by shooting celebrity spokesperson promotional videos and cooperating with stars to carry out online and offline promotional activities.

Flower Knows has also cooperated with LOLITA, PRETTY ROCK BABY, VASLISA, and other brands to launch a limited series of gift boxes. The unicorn series mentioned above is a series of products launched in cooperation with VASLISA. Flower Knows enhances brand topics, enhances popularity, and attracts consumers to buy through the co-branded limited sales model.

### 3.2 Circle Marketing

The main focus of the first stage is to carry out internal marketing within the minority community.

The initial target market positioning of the brand is two-dimensional COSER, a makeup brand in this subdivision. Its products are mainly sold on bilibili, the main gathering place for two-dimensional culture lovers. By using accurate marketing strategies, targeting the target customer group, and using emotional marketing to trigger

emotional resonance between consumers and brands, Flower Knows successfully established the initial consumer group. This consumer group mainly comes from the two-dimensional niche community. Its brand awareness has gradually improved in this field, but it is still relatively limited, with a small audience and low public awareness.

In the second stage, Flower Knows aims to attract customers by making full use of the interactivity and immediacy of major online social platforms and adopting a variety of innovative methods to ensure the visibility and attractiveness of brands in the digital age.

With the power of new media platforms, the brand actively interacts with users on social platforms such as TikTok, Weibo, and Xiaohongshu, especially cooperating with key opinion leaders (KOL) to attract traffic with its extensive fan base. Through cooperation with KOL, Flower Knows can promote their products and brands to a wider audience, improve visibility, and build trust and interest among potential customers.

In addition, Flower Knows also pays attention to users’ feedback and opinions. They actively accept comments and feedback from netizens to understand the needs and expectations of users. This open communication helps to continuously improve products and services and make them more in line with market demand. The brand also consolidates its private community customers by regularly distributing fan benefits. This method not only rewards fans who have paid attention to and supported brands but also increases customer loyalty [6]. Fan benefits may include coupons, gifts, or exclusive promotional information, which can stimulate fans’ active participation and word-of-mouth communication.

In general, the second stage of Flower Knows’s marketing strategy has given full play to the potential of the social media platform, enabling the brand to stand out in the fiercely competitive market and continuously strengthen its brand influence.

In the third stage, Flower Knows interacts with consumers through e-commerce live broadcast and other means, so that consumers can be interested in brand products in a short period of time. This real-time interaction not only provides consumers with a more intuitive understanding of the products but also establishes a sense of closeness to the brand. By providing convenient purchase channels and even providing exclusive promotions, it encourages consumers to make purchase decisions during the live broadcast [7].

Secondly, Flower Knows also expanded its brand influence through offline pop-up store activities. When the teddy bear series was launched in 2021, the brand launched offline pop-up store promotion activities in Hangzhou; in June 2023, the Moonlight Mermaid series pop-up store opened in Japan for a limited time. The opening of offline physical pop-up stores can give consumers a more immersive shopping experience, which can not only make consumers feel the products more intuitively, but also increase the topic and exposure of the brand, and realize the promotion of the brand to the public [8].

Flower Knows adopted the style of “national style girl” as a selling point when entering the international market, and this strategy has successfully attracted young women overseas. In 2019, Flower Knows made good use of popular short videos and successfully promoted its products to the Japanese market. They actively use multiple social media platforms, including Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube, to operate

official accounts to interact with Japanese consumers and publish various attractive content to improve brand awareness. In addition, Flower Knows cooperates with well-known foreign online opinion leaders (KOL) from time to time to create content. Among them, the co-creation content in the vertical field of ASMR has the best response.

For the Japanese market, Flower Knows also cooperated with the popular Japanese women's magazine *VIVI*, which presented product samples to attract new consumer groups. This strategy not only increases the brand's exposure among magazine readers but also gives potential consumers the opportunity to experience the products they know.

At the same time, Flower Knows provides more offline shopping opportunities for overseas consumers through well-known brand stores such as Loft and Plaza in Japan, further improving the coverage of overseas offline markets.

On the whole, Flower Knows's international market expansion strategy includes multi-channel online and offline promotion methods. These innovative promotions have successfully introduced their brands into overseas markets (the main target market is Japan), improving popularity, expanding consumer groups, expanding sales channels, and promoting the internationalization and globalization of brands.

## 4 ANALYSIS OF CIRCLE MARKETING MODEL

### 4.1 Strategic Advantages of Circle Marketing

Circle marketing, as an accurate market strategy, provides multiple benefits. First of all, it allows enterprises to implement personalized positioning and accurately present products and services to specific consumer groups. This is because each circle has unique needs and interests, so enterprises can customize products, services, and marketing strategies according to these characteristics, to improve consumer satisfaction and loyalty [9].

In addition, circle marketing also improves the sales efficiency of the brand. By accurately positioning the target circle, enterprises can allocate resources and budgets more effectively and use them for targeted advertising and promotional activities. This not only improves sales efficiency but also reduces the waste of resources so that enterprises can make better use of limited resources to achieve better sales results.

Circle marketing also promotes the specialization of products. Enterprises can make full use of their professional knowledge and experience in a specific field and focus on improving the quality of special products, to improve the competitiveness of the brand in a specific circle. This will help enterprises consolidate their position in special circles and achieve stable revenue growth.

Finally, circle marketing helps to build brand loyalty. By establishing a deep connection with the target circle, enterprises can cultivate brand loyalty. Loyal customers are more likely to become strong supporters and word-of-mouth communicators, which can bring long-term sustainable profits to enterprises through word of mouth [9]. This strategy not only helps to meet the needs of consumers but also helps to build a strong brand and loyal customer base.

## 4.2 Limitations of the Circle Marketing Strategy

Circle marketing strategy also has a series of limitations.

First of all, the complexity of this strategy cannot be ignored. It requires enterprises to conduct detailed market research and data analysis, which may require a lot of investment in time and resources. At the same time, managing multiple circles may also increase the operational complexity of enterprises. Another potential problem is the neglect of the potential market. Over focusing on specific circles may lead to the neglect of other possible market opportunities. For example, some potential high-value customers may not meet the characteristics of the circle, so they may be ignored, which may lead to the loss of potential economic profits of the brand. In addition, the market environment and consumer behavior are uncertain and may change at any time. Therefore, the circle marketing strategy needs to be continuously adjusted to adapt to these changes. For example, a certain circle may be very popular at a certain moment, but its popularity may also decline rapidly, which requires enterprises to constantly adjust their strategies to maintain competitiveness. Finally, competition is also a key consideration [10]. If multiple enterprises compete against the same circle, the market competition may become very fierce and even trigger a price war, which will lead to a decline in corporate profits. In order to avoid self-consumption within the same circle, enterprises may try to pay attention to more potential consumer circles at the same time. However, this will also cause resource allocation problems, especially for small enterprises, which may not have enough resources to meet the needs of multiple different circles, so they need to face difficult resource allocation decisions.

## 5 CONCLUSION

To sum up, this article guides how Chinese cosmetics brands can move from niche to the public through circle marketing strategies. Through fine market segmentation and personalized positioning, the brand can better meet the needs of consumers in different circles, and establish brand loyalty and word-of-mouth communication. However, the strategy also faces limitations such as complexity and resource constraints, which require enterprises to constantly adjust and innovate to cope with market changes and competition. On the whole, circle marketing provides an effective promotion path for Chinese cosmetics brands to help them move from the minority to the mass market. However, how Chinese cosmetics brands can become bigger and stronger step by step through different marketing strategies to achieve brand internationalization and sustainable development is still a question worth exploring.

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