

How Advertising in Social Media Shapes Users' Consumption Behavior: The example of the RED Marketing Layout of CHI FOREST

Luyi Chen^{1, *}

¹Department of Fujian Normal University, Fujian, China

*Corresponding author: 154042020006@student.fjnu.edu.cn

Abstract. In the information age, the rapid development of the Internet has made social media play a vital role in people's daily lives. Social media platforms have become the primary place for brands to advertise to attract users better. This paper analyzes the marketing strategy of "CHI FOREST" based on the process-tracking method in case studies, followed by two theoretical models to analyze the marketing mechanism and conclude the impact of advertising on consumer behavior in social media. This study not only gives reference value to some online brands about social media marketing through the consumers' perspective but also provides suggestions for brands to design social media advertising content marketing.

Keywords: Social media advertising covered; Marketing; Consumers; Impact.

1. Introduction

With the rapid advancement of technology, social and economic development, based on government regulation providing a relaxed environment for the development of the Internet, and driven by a large consumer base and the impact of the new crown epidemic, China's digital economy market is expanding, the number of users is proliferating, innovations are emerging, and social media is gradually taking over people's lives. Modern society has seen a gradual increase in the number of objects and consumer situations available for consumption, and competition between businesses is intensifying. Mobile social media platforms have become a new advertising platform to attract more consumers. Thanks to the abundance of mobile social media platforms, the volume of advertising messages is far greater than in traditional media, and advertising formats are more varied and prosperous. People are increasingly relying on social media to search, publish and communicate information, and social media marketing is now one of the leading marketing methods for companies, making it both an opportunity and a challenge for companies to share product information and shopping experiences in social media to influence consumer behavior to a great extent.[1] At the same time, the autonomous selectivity of social media has also changed the way audiences engage with information and, to some extent, influenced modern consumer psychology. This study aims to understand the impact of social media advertising on various consumer perceptions and behavior and to analyze how social media advertising influences consumer behavior.

Based on the process-tracing method in case studies, this study first reverts to the marketing strategy of CHI FOREST on RED. Secondly, it analyses the intrinsic marketing mechanism of the brand based on the CHI FOREST case, and finally, it summarises how advertising in social media influences consumer behavior. The significance of this study lies in both the object of the study and the research results. Firstly, CHI FOREST is a new product in the context of the "Internet + Food/Drink" era and is one of the most successful online brands in recent years. Its sales and brand awareness are rising rapidly, but it is also a bottleneck in the brand's development. Its rapid development through social media marketing and advertising, such as RED, represents the latest marketing situation in the Internet era and the growing problem of Netflix brands such as CHI FOREST. Secondly, the research results of this paper on the optimization and design of social media advertising and marketing are forward-looking and original. They have specific reference value and practical significance for existing Netflix brands and other brands that want to create another sales miracle through social media marketing thinking in the future. Sources of Research Material.

There are two primary sources of material for this study: first, through literature combing and review, to analyze the current state of research, identify research problems, and propose research directions to determine the topic of the thesis. In the literature study, the author pays attention to the research background of the current research results, the empirical analysis methods, and their shortcomings. The second is the combination of the questionnaire method, in which the researcher will specify the research questions and the hypotheses to be tested based on the research questions and the results of previous research so that the respondents can give their answers without misunderstanding according to their personal opinions. Regarding the target population, this research focuses on the classification of social media in the literature. It selects "RED," a typical representative of social media in China, as the research environment. According to relevant data, RED has over 200 million monthly active users and is one of China's fastest-growing social media platforms.[2] Therefore, this study chose to administer the questionnaire on the RED. To encourage more users to complete the questionnaire, the author will send a random red packet as a reward when the respondent answers the question.

2. Case Restoration: The Phenomenal Marketing of CHI FOREST

The subject of this paper is CHI FOREST (Beijing) Food Technology Group Limited. Founded in 2016, CHI FOREST is an innovative internet beverage brand with independent research and development and independent design.[3] The brand focuses on "0 sugar, 0 fat, 0 calories" drinks, upholding the idea of "user first, global service worldwide" to make good and healthy drinks. The brand includes "Soda Sparkling Water," "Milk Tea," "Burning Tea," and "Full Score! "Aliens" and many other product lines.[4] The packaging style is Japanese, using the Japanese word "気" to increase the brand's identity and capture the preferences of young Gen Z customers. The target group of CHI FOREST is young people who pursue healthy living and personalized service. It is trendy among young female users in first and second-tier cities. As people pay more attention to health, the trend is to go sugar-free and reduce sugar. CHI FOREST uses erythritol, the "noble of sugars," as a sugar substitute sweetener, taking into account the health of customers and the taste experience. As an "internet + beverage" company, CHI FOREST has adopted an "online + offline" marketing strategy, firstly has made use of convenience stores to rise rapidly, and has also chosen to put in intelligent freezers to monitor product sales data in real-time at various retail terminals. Secondly, it has placed many lifts, metro, and outdoor advertisements in the city, making its 0 sugar, 0 fat, and 0 calories slogan visible everywhere. In addition, the company has also conducted extensive promotion through new media platforms, with exclusive titles or sponsorships in music festivals, variety shows, and TV dramas, in addition to inviting endorsements from traffic and sports stars, as well as KOL(Key Opinion Leader) promotions for live streaming with goods.[5]

In the era of big data, the diversification of channels, the fragmentation of media, and the openness and transparency of information have increased the choice of products, and the brands no longer control the consumers' willingness. Social media has become the main channel for the new generation of consumers to obtain information. In response to the consumer values of young consumers, CHI FOREST, which comes with an internet gene, has managed to empathize with consumers. It has taken advantage of the new media platforms and spared no effort in showing the detailed process of production, ensuring that the product is "real," "healthy," and "tasty," giving consumers. It offers consumers the objective facts they need and makes them recognize and believe in them. At the same time, it introduces ingredients, processes, and research and development through different social media platforms, taking every opportunity to repeatedly emphasize them and "brainwash" consumers with the consistency of its message through the fragmented and continuous output of the same content. In addition, CHI FOREST is good at using superior media to give voice to its brand and is constantly polishing its hardcore product power as it grows.

Take RED as an example. Looking at the user profile of RED, most of them are women aged 25-34, who pursue a quality of life, have high consumption levels, strong spending power, and have good

usage habits. On average, about one in ten Chinese women share their life experiences on RED daily. In RED, there are more than 500,000 notes on "sugar control" and "sugar withdrawal," with more than 4.27 million notes on the word "calories" alone. "Calories" is included in 400,000 notes. They want to control their sugar but also have a sweet tooth, so CHI FOREST is perfect. On RED, CHI FOREST is mainly promoted by KOC and KOL, mainly through amplification and reviews, to convey the brand's influence and continue to expand the brand's voice, and then through cooperation with celebrities to publish promotional soft articles to strengthen the brand effect.

Content marketing and soft advertising on social media, such as RED, have enabled the brand to capture the domestic market in just four years quickly. According to statistics, there are nearly 10,000 notes about CHI FOREST products on the RED App, including product reviews, low-calorie drink recommendations, and sharing of high-value drinks, which have been viewed nearly 100 million times. In 2019, Tmall took first place in the beverage category in 618 and was the runner-up in sales on Double 11, beating world-class beverage giants Coca-Cola and Pepsi; in 2020, Tmall ranked first in sales of the beverage category in the 618 shopping festival, as well as in sales of the water beverage category in Tmall and Jingdong in Double 11; in mid-December 2021, CHI FOREST became the only Chinese beverage brand to enter the list; in August 2022, it was listed in the Top 500 Chinese Brands 2022 with RMB 3.526 billion, ranking 490th. CHI FOREST has become a classic case of relying on advertising within social media to achieve success in recent years.

3. Case Study: The Shaping of Consumer Behaviour by RED

This study analyzes the Little Red Book marketing strategy based on the "Stimulus-Organism-Response" and Motivational Attribution Theory.

Stimuli-Organism-Response is one of the foundations of modern cognitive psychology, explicitly explaining the predictive influence of environmental characteristics on users' emotional responses and subsequent behavior. The model suggests that stimuli elicit consumer purchase behavior from physiological and psychological factors within the consumer's body and the external environment [6]. In other words, the user passively receives inspiration from the seeding promotion of CHI FOREST during the browsing process of Little Red Book, and is motivated to buy it, makes a purchase decision based on the motivation trend, and implements the purchase behavior. After the purchase makes a review of it, the release of this review will be seen by more groups of users, and so on, one after another, the consumer cycles through the whole process. This model has been commonly applied to studying consumer buying behavior in online shopping, focusing on which stimuli can prompt consumption. The inspirations recognized by domestic and international scholars include product quality and value, website quality and information, online shop atmosphere, image, brand, and promotion. As advertising in social media is highly variable, it has a different impact on the psychological attitudes of the recipients, which in turn leads to different reactions to these messages.

Motivational Attribution Theory is used to provide an explanation of the nature of people's behaviors and the mechanisms that generate the motivations that drive these behaviors. Attribution theory explains how people use their common sense explanations of the world to make these causal inferences. Individuals use the cognitive process of causal attribution to find possible reasons why observed events occur to take better control of their lives and their environment. The behavior of users posting advertisements on social media will be attributed to either irritant (product performance) or non-irritants (the individual themselves). The consumer's attribution of this causal relationship will influence their subsequent purchase behavior. That is a theoretical explanation of the behavior of RED users who purchase CHI FOREST and then post their reviews to RED.

With the advent of the mobile internet era, new concepts, theories, and methods are constantly emerging compared to the previous advertising and marketing environment, making advertising and marketing in the whole market increasingly complex. People can see the constant failure of traditional advertising concepts, which has caused anxiety and strenuous exploration by all parties in the marketing chain. Only by quickly adapting to the times and embracing change can brands capture

their market share in a market environment that is undergoing significant changes today. For a new brand, advertising and marketing costs become a necessity. Scale and efficiency of use of funds are both critical factors for brands to break through today. For brands primarily selling online, the increasing cost of in-site advertising under the Alibaba Group and the increased demand for off-site leads have hit traditional advertising concepts. The old advertising and marketing promotion forms are no longer suitable for today's brands. Brands whose online sales dominate are gaining more traffic from off-site placements, and new social media advertising placements such as RED, Tik Tok, and Weibo have emerged to demonstrate their value of bringing goods and brand dividends.[7] As the digital economy continues to develop over the years, CHI FOREST has developed new channels, retaining its traditional advertising methods and taking advantage of new media to market itself, making it a success story in the "Internet+" industry.

4. How Social Media Empowers Marketing

The data collected in this study through a questionnaire distributed on RED shows several reasons for the influence of advertising on consumer behavior in social media and suggests the following for brands.

4.1 Convenient Publicity Channels

It used to be that people found a product, saw it advertised on TV several times, and they might go shopping and get it in the coming weeks. Now, however, this process has been cut down considerably. According to the questionnaire results, more than 80% of users prefer to shop online. Not only is the customer's shopping journey shorter, but the shopping process is also more diverse and complex. For instance, suppose a customer notices an ad for a product on RED. In that case, they can immediately open up the major social media platforms and search the hashtag for more information or find some reviews to decide whether they should buy the product. This process helps consumers get a more holistic view of the product. Marketers need to publish their product information on social media so that new and informative content is more appealing to users and designed for the proper placement to drive their consumption.

4.2 Social Guarantees for Quality

As social media permeates people's lives, the influence of information society is increasing. Social proof refers to the tendency of humans to follow the behavior of others when making decisions and to 'refer' to the findings or behavior of others to ensure that they make the 'right decision.' People are social animals, and our behavior and lives are interconnected with others, groups, and collectives. And people have been advising each other for centuries, providing guidance and counter-advice that tens of thousands can now hear people. According to Forbes, 81% of purchase choices among consumers are impacted by posts on social media. For example, when a customer wants to buy a product and goes to get information about it, they find that more than half of the comments are negative, which can significantly affect the user's desire to buy, which can be very detrimental to the brand. The questionnaires also show that user reviews quickly unwilling nearly 80% of people's willingness to accept. This is why it is essential to keep a close eye on brands' online reputations on social media platforms.[8]

4.3 Discourse Guidance from Key Opinion Leaders

Nowadays, the rise of social media has also led to the emergence of various influential people - internet celebrities - who have a powerful appeal and thus contribute to the development of the "internet celebrity economy." Their opinions are naturally spotted by a large number of people who trust them.[9-10] According to the survey results, almost 61.43% of users buy tweets directly from influencers. Micro-influencers are particularly effective at persuading audiences because they are often experts in certain market segments and specific topics, which makes them a natural source of

advice. Companies can screen suitable internet celebrities for promotion according to their marketing objectives, guide their followers through a reasonable content layout and promote content as a whole to avoid losing influence through too much advertising while being more aware of the negative impact that internet celebrities may bring to brands by formulating plans in advance to protect the legitimate rights of consumers.

4.4 Relatively Objective Information Perception

Unlike the media model, where consumers passively receive information from merchants in a single way, the emergence of social media and the development of search engine technology has provided consumers with plentiful knowledge about products and brands. At the same time, thanks to the interactive nature of the new online media platforms, consumers can quickly address any doubts or snags that arise during the various stages of consumer behavior by seeking out different information or communicating with businesses and other consumers. Today's consumers do not easily believe the words of merchants and often make decisions to buy or not to buy after repeated comparisons. As the information on social media platforms is primarily interpersonal rather than commercial, it is objective and rational. It can provide consumers with a better basis for reference and purchase decisions. Some studies have shown that word of mouth on social media is more estimable and easier to persuade consumers than commercial information from companies.

5. Conclusion

Social media is a type of media that highlights social function, which is based on people's social attributes and uses interpersonal networks to make the dissemination of information more personal and circle-oriented. In the field of consumer research, the impact of social media on consumer behavior has also become a significant focus of attention. Advertising, on the other hand, as the name suggests, is a communication activity that delivers information to as many consumers as possible at the same time. Through social media marketing, combining the two allows products to be recognized and accepted by the most significant number of consumers quickly, generating consumer behavior. However, in a competitive market, advertisers should be cautious, as too much advertising and a strong presentation can be off-putting, hurt the brand, and will not stimulate sales. Today, social media marketing communications have overturned the traditional one-way communication approach and replaced it with a multi-directional communication network that involves consumers. Companies should pay attention to the economic effect and make reasonable use of resources to spread healthy and positive values so that more consumers can generate more positive consumer behavior and promote the country's social and economic development.

This study is based on the marketing strategy of CHI FOREST on RED only, as there are some differences between its marketing format on other social media platforms (e.g., Tik Tok, Weibo, etc.) and RED, and this paper has some limitations. Future research on social media advertising on consumer behavior will need to be combined with various social media platforms to enable brands to optimize their social media marketing through the consumer's perspective and thus promote the further development of the digital economy.

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