

Cross-Cultural Variations in Gendered Marketing for Male Grooming Products Through Digital Strategies in Chinese and Western Markets

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of global integration, the market for male beauty products is growing rapidly, and digital marketing has become the core competitiveness of brands. However, due to the cross-cultural differences between China and the West, there are also significant differences in marketing models. This research aims to analyze the cross-cultural differences in the impact of digitalization on male beauty products in China and the West, explore the market shares occupied by male beauty products in China and the West under the cross-cultural background differences, and conduct a comparative analysis of the digital marketing strategies implemented by different brands for male beauty products. Through case studies, it compares the impact of digitalization differences on marketing strategies. Furthermore, innovative marketing strategies have been proposed for the digital marketing of male beauty products, with the aim of providing new ideas and references for research in this area.

Keywords

China and the West "Cross-cultural Male; Beauty Cosmetics; Digital Marketing.

1. Introduction

Currently, the global male beauty cosmetics market is in a stage of rapid growth. According to the statistics of L 'Oreal in 2024, the global male beauty cosmetics market size has reached 102.34 billion yuan in 2024 and is expected to increase to 146.435 billion yuan by 2023[1]. Among them, the Asian market, Especially, the potential of the male consumer market in China is huge. With the continuous rise in the popularity of male beauty topics on social media and the Internet, male cosmetics have evolved from a traditional single product structure to a diversified one. Even male-specific makeup products are highly favored by male consumers. Although the demand for male beauty cosmetics is constantly increasing, the cultural differences between China and the West have led to significant variations in the needs and preferences of male consumers. Influenced by traditional culture, Chinese male consumers mainly choose functional beauty cosmetics, while Western men tend to pursue more personalized experiences and makeup products. Driven by the digital marketing model, the male beauty and cosmetics market is facing new development opportunities and challenges. Analyze the underlying logic of the differences between Chinese and Western marketing, provide strategic references for domestic brands to "go global" and international brands to "enter China", help brands reduce cross-cultural communication costs, and improve the accuracy of digital marketing.

2. The Differences between Functional Pragmatism and Individual Expressivism

Due to the distinct cultural differences between China and the West, there are significant variations in men's purchasing intentions and product demands for beauty cosmetics. Influenced by traditional Confucianism, Chinese men tend to be more reserved and conservative when it comes to choosing beauty cosmetics. The demands of male consumers for product value mainly focus on their functionality and practicality. There is a high demand for products with functions such as "oil control", "acne removal" and "moisturizing". With the rapid development of the Internet and new media, the keyword search volume of "anti-aging" in men's beauty products on e-commerce platforms is also constantly increasing. According to the market report research of L 'Oreal, the personalized demands of Chinese men for beauty cosmetics are also continuously increasing[2].

From the perspective of cross-cultural differences, there are significant objective differences between the male beauty and cosmetics markets in Europe, America, Japan and South Korea and the Chinese market. Western men have a higher acceptance and daily application of beauty cosmetics. When choosing beauty cosmetics, Western men pay more attention to their needs in terms of individual expression, aesthetic demands, and functional effectiveness. For the male consumer market, beauty brands pay more attention to binding their products with the identity of male consumers. For example, in the digital marketing of Neutrogena in the US market, through the "Your Skin, Your Style" themed campaign, moisturizer was combined with various scenarios such as outdoor exploration and workplace socializing[3]. Convey the concept that "skin care is an expression of self-respect." Shiseido's Nars makeup brand, which is mainly promoted in the European and American markets, takes "breaking gender boundaries" as its core value. The diverse looks of male models in its advertising materials, including business, street, workplace and home, cover different subcultural groups, driving a 284% increase in North American sales over three years.

3. Differences in Digital Platform Ecosystems and Traffic

With the rapid development of Internet technology, new media platforms have permeated every aspect of people's lives and studies. An increasing number of male consumers are purchasing beauty and cosmetics through platforms such as Douyin Live and Taobao Live. The differences between Chinese and Western digital channels stem from the cultural attribute differences of platform ecosystems, resulting in different paths such as "aggregation of diverse communities" and "penetration of vertical scenarios". The Chinese men's cosmetics market features multi-platform collaboration and private domain accumulation. The core channels include content communities such as Xiaohongshu, Douyin, Tmall, and JD.com, as well as social tools like wechat and Douyin, forming a digital marketing closed loop of seeding, conversion, and repurchase. Xiaohongshu, as a core platform for male beauty product "seeding", has over 480,000 notes on "male skin care product recommendations", and the interaction rate of KOL review content is 37% higher than that of ordinary users. Brands typically adopt a combined strategy of "Douyin short video traffic diversion + Tmall live room conversion + Enterprise wechat private domain maintenance". For instance, during the 618 period, L 'Oreal Paris Men's attracted over 20 million exposures through the Douyin KOL Challenge, directly driving traffic to its Tmall store and contributing to a 35% increase in sales. The Western market adopts a strategy of in-depth development of core platforms and scenario-based penetration. Facebook, Instagram and YouTube have become the three core channels, respectively carrying out the functions of social interaction, visual display and professional content dissemination. In the advertising campaigns of Laneige, a brand under the South Korean brand AMOREPACIFIC, in the US market, 92% of the exposure came from Facebook and Instagram. By precisely targeting

the male group aged 18 to 34, the quarterly exposure increased by 229%. Professional content on YouTube is more influential. The average time male users spend watching skincare tutorials is 8.2 minutes, far exceeding the 3.1 minutes of similar content in China, reflecting the demand for in-depth information[4].

Table 1. Comparison of Digital Marketing Differences for Male Beauty Products between China and the West

Characteristics of the Chinese market	Characteristics of the Western market	Cultural differences	Data support
Emphasizing functionality and pragmatism	Individual expression, lifestyle	Conservatism long-term orientation	The proportion of functional keyword search is 65%. Sales in North America increased by 284%
Xiaohongshu, Douyin, Tmall	Facebook, Instagram, YouTube	Community culture vs. individual social interaction	Xiaohongshu recommends 480,000 notes. Facebook /IG accounted for 92% of the exposure
Authoritative endorsement (Experts + Top Kols)	True narrative	High power distance vs. low power distance	The proportion of expert recommendation decisions is 42%. The trust level of UGC is 58% high
Community check-in, private domain operation	Individual empowerment, technological interaction (AR makeup try-on)	Collective belonging vs. individual participation	The repurchase rate of the community is 45% high. The conversion rate of AR makeup trial is 18%

The Chinese market relies on a trust-building logic of "authoritative endorsement and community verification". Brands generally adopt a three-level content system of "experts + top Kols + testimonials from ordinary people" : L'Oreal Men invited dermatologists to participate in a live stream on Douyin, and the single session explaining "The mechanism of male skin oil secretion" received over 5 million views. At the same time, it has collaborated with top live-streamers such as Li Jiaqi, and the facial cleanser it recommended has sold over 100,000 units in a single session. This model aligns with the "authority dependence" mentality under high power distance - data shows that 42% of Chinese men's purchase decisions are made due to "expert recommendations", far higher than the 23% in Western markets.

The Western market, on the other hand, focuses on a narrative approach of "real scenarios + user co-creation". Brands tend to build trust through the Real experiences of ordinary users. For example, Kiehl's launched the "Real Men, Real Skin" campaign in the US market, encouraging consumers to share before-and-after skin care comparison pictures on Instagram. There are 120,000 pieces of content with the hashtag #KiehlsMen, among which user-generated content (UGC) accounts for over 70%. This model reduces the sense of advertising and meets the need for "equal dialogue" in a low power distance. Data shows that Western men's trust in UGC content is 58% higher than that in brand advertisements.

4. Digital Marketing Strategies for Male Beauty Products in China and the West based on Cross-cultural Differences

4.1. Cultural Adaptation and Precise Matching of Demands

Digital marketing for men's cosmetics needs to target the Chinese market, and brands should strengthen their dual-driven positioning of functionality and authority. On the one hand, focus on core functions and launch "problem-solution" type products, such as the "3-step oil Control Set" for oily skin and the "Emergency Repair Series" for night swearing-prone skin. Clearly mark the efficacy data in the promotion, such as "improve acne-prone skin in 28 days". On the other hand, with the endorsement of authoritative institutions, we have collaborated with dermatology hospitals and beauty evaluation agencies to release the "White Paper on Men's Skincare", inviting dermatologists from top-tier hospitals to participate in product development and promotion to enhance consumer trust. For the Western market, implement specific places where men live and work, and design digital marketing strategies based on their identities and work requirements. Deeply explore the demands of subculture groups, such as launching "Graffiti-style packaged men's makeup" for street culture enthusiasts and designing "high sun protection factor portable skin care sets" for outdoor adventure enthusiasts. Deeply integrating products with life scenarios, presenting product usage scenarios in scenarios such as men's workplace needs, outdoor work, and business socializing in marketing, for instance, Neutrogena combines moisturizing cream with outdoor exploration, conveying the concept that skin care is suitable for diverse lifestyles and enhancing consumers' identity recognition.

4.2. Adaptation of Platform Features to User Behavior

The Chinese market needs to meet the personalized demands of male consumers. With Xiaohongshu and Douyin as the core "grass-planting" platforms, Xiaohongshu focuses on the stratified operation of Kols. Top Kols build brand recognition, mid-level Kols conduct in-depth evaluations, and ordinary users provide genuine feedback, forming a three-dimensional communication matrix. Douyin showcases the core functions of products through 15-30 second short videos, such as a test video of "10-second Rapid Foaming Facial Cleanser", and pairs it with a topic challenge of "# Men's Efficient Skincare" to drive traffic. At the same time, accumulate the platform traffic to the private domain of wechat, establish user profiles through Enterprise wechat, and push personalized product recommendations and exclusive discounts based on skin type and consumption habits to increase the repurchase rate. In the Western market, a strategy of integrating vertical platforms with scene marketing is implemented. Core platforms are selected based on target groups, and Instagram is focused on young people[5]. Product visual effects, such as the application effect of men's makeup, are displayed through text, images and short videos. For mature groups, lay out YouTube and produce 5-10 minute professional skincare tutorials, such as "The Full Process of Anti-Aging Skincare for Men", inviting beauty bloggers to deeply analyze product ingredients and usage methods. At the same time, precise targeting should be carried out in combination with user scenarios. For instance, advertisements for sunscreen products can be placed on Facebook targeting the "outdoor enthusiasts" group, and business skincare sets can be pushed to "office workers" on Instagram to enhance the accuracy of the channels.

5. Conclusion

With the rapid development of Internet technology, digital marketing models have been deeply integrated into the field of cosmetics sales. Such sales models are highly compatible with consumers' living habits and consumption preferences. For male consumers, their choices of cosmetics are quite different from those of female consumers. Coupled with the cultural differences between China and the West, male consumers tend to be more rational when

choosing beauty cosmetics and pay more attention to the practical functions of the products. In the future, when conducting digital marketing for men's cosmetics, efforts can be intensified in aspects such as packaging, functions and materials, while incorporating more cultural added value to meet the diverse needs of men in different identities and scenarios.

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