

The Impact of Social Marketing Strategies on Brand Loyalty

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Abstract: In this era of rapid Internet development, competition among brands is becoming increasingly fierce, offering consumers a wide variety of choices and making their decision-making process complex and hesitant. Against this backdrop, brand loyalty plays an important role in a company's marketing and development. As an emerging marketing model, social marketing strategies, with their unique interactivity and speed of dissemination, enable brands to establish and maintain relationships with consumers based on target audiences and product characteristics. This paper will explore the impact of social marketing strategies on brand loyalty and reveal the regular factors involved through research methods such as literature review, observation, and qualitative analysis. The conclusion of the study is that proper use of the right social marketing methods can improve customer loyalty to the brand, and the emphasis on product quality is as important as marketing methods.

Keywords: Social media, social marketing strategies, brand marketing, brand loyalty

1. Introduction

With the booming development of the internet industry, a favorable macro-environment has been established for corporate marketing communication, giving rise to an increasing number of new social marketing forms based on the internet. Social media provides users with new platforms and spaces, where more and more users engage in social activities such as purchasing, learning, working, and communicating on social media. This shift has changed the form of information dissemination from traditional one-to-many to one-on-one [1]. Social marketing is a field that has rapidly developed in recent years with the rise of social media. Studying its impact on brand loyalty helps to enrich and refine existing marketing theories. By analyzing the impact of social marketing strategies on brand loyalty, we can gain a deeper understanding of consumer behavior patterns and psychological mechanisms in the social media environment. Furthermore, studying social marketing strategies offers practical value for brand marketing. Understanding the mechanisms and effects of social marketing strategies can help companies more effectively tailor and adjust their marketing strategies, bringing a more stable customer base and sources of income into a competitive market and achieving precise marketing to enhance long-term competitiveness. The purpose of this research is to analyze the main strategies of social marketing, the practices of brands regarding social marketing means, the mechanisms by which social marketing tools enhance brand loyalty, and to conduct a cost-benefit analysis. In the following section, the influence and pros and cons of the two brands' social marketing methods on brand loyalty will be discussed.

2. Development status of social marketing strategies

In 2017, about one-third of the global population of 7.6 billion were social media users. Although the growth rate of social media users slowed slightly compared to 2016, the overall trend was still on the rise. Social media has grown into a massively influential channel that is changing the world [2]. The global number of social media users has exceeded 4.5 billion, indicating that the number of users determines the feasibility of social marketing strategies. The growth in the user base and the increasing demand for accessing valuable content and entertainment services anytime, anywhere, mean that social marketing strategies are at a highly mature stage of development. Companies are actively seeking the right social marketing strategies to enhance customer loyalty to brands and maintain competitiveness for maximum marketing effectiveness. Storytelling, personalized marketing, social media advertising, collaborations with influencers, and spreading brand culture are all key methods of social marketing. The core of social marketing strategy lies in leveraging the communicative advantages of social platforms to build a bridge between brands and consumers. According to foreign media reports, a recent survey by market research agency GlobalWebIndex shows that Instagram has become the world's fastest-growing social site in the last six months. Meanwhile, users are increasingly accessing social sites via mobile devices rather than PCs [3], indicating that improvements and advancements in social platforms have greatly increased the chances for consumer groups to engage with social media, laying a solid foundation for increasing brand loyalty in terms of both consumer quantity and dissemination platforms. In summary, social marketing strategies are currently in a phase of rapid development, with modern consumers increasingly relying on social media for information gathering and sharing, making social media an important venue for interaction between brands and consumers.

3. Case study

3.1. The marketing strategy of To Summer Aromatherapy

"To Summer" is an Oriental cultural fragrance brand born in 2018, drawing aromatic inspiration from Oriental culture and art, and selecting precious plant ingredients from China and around the globe to create fragrances that harmonize the five senses with an Oriental aroma. In just four years since its establishment, it has carved out a niche fixed consumer group among the new national trend brands in the same industry and quickly developed into a leading brand in the domestic fragrance industry. In the new economic era, the "post-90s" and "post-00s" consumer groups have become important targets for the brand. The rise of the fragrance industry reflects a shift in the consumption concepts of Chinese youth: compared to the previous generation, young consumers are beginning to awaken to aesthetic consciousness. They pay more attention to expressing their individuality and improving the quality of life, seeking aesthetic design of products and their spiritual demands, completing a transition from pragmatism to a pleasure-seeking mindset, which is the consumption view of Generation Z [4]. "To Summer" insists on content creation and dialogue with readers, with public data showing that since the release of its first post, a readership of over 100,000 has almost become the norm for the brand's official account. "International Brand Watch" noted that, in the current situation where the readership of WeChat official accounts is generally declining, the "To Summer" brand account still consistently hits over 100,000 per article. Thinking like a magazine in product creation exemplifies the storytelling approach [5]. What is brand storytelling? It involves brands telling their stories through social media, including the origins of the brand, its values, and mission. "To Summer" is well aware of the importance of brand stories and cultural value in shaping the brand image, enhancing its appeal, and increasing brand loyalty. Therefore, "To Summer" emphasizes the story behind the brand and the profound cultural heritage of the Orient in its social marketing strategy.

Through carefully planned content marketing, "To Summer" has shared numerous stories about Oriental philosophy, art, and fragrance culture on social media platforms like WeChat, Weibo, and TikTok. This content not only includes the initial intentions of the brand and the sources of design inspiration but also covers the exploration of harmony, tranquility, and inner beauty in Oriental culture. Through this deep cultural dissemination, "To Summer" has successfully positioned itself as a brand that not only provides products but also conveys a philosophy of life and aesthetic concepts. This unique brand positioning and cultural communication strategy have greatly enhanced the value of "To Summer" in the minds of consumers, thereby deepening their identification with and loyalty to the brand. Through its unique positioning on social media, emphasizing the depth of Oriental culture and art, "To Summer" has successfully created a distinctive brand image and attracted a large group of consumers interested in Oriental culture. The content published by the brand on social media, which blends Oriental philosophy, traditional art, and modern design, is not only colorful and educational but also provides consumers with not just a product but a cultural experience and emotional resonance. This strategy enables "To Summer" to stand out in an increasingly competitive homogeneous market and establish strong brand loyalty.

From the research, we can see that the themes of "To Summer's" storytelling not only exhibit a tendency to focus on products but also include narratives on non-product-related themes [6]. These non-product narrative themes involve the brand, brand principals, customers, artisan craftsmanship, interactive activities, collaborative stores, and more. Although non-product narrative themes are not directly linked to the core interests of the brand, they play a very important role in conveying brand culture and shaping the brand image.

In conclusion, the "To Summer" fragrance brand has successfully increased customer brand loyalty through its social marketing approach of storytelling. This strategy not only resonates with consumers on an emotional level but also plays a significant role in building the brand image, enhancing consumer engagement, spreading content, and maintaining long-term customer relationships.

3.2. The marketing strategy of Casetify

One of the core competitive advantages of Casetify is its provision of highly personalized services, allowing consumers to design and customize unique phone cases according to their preferences. Users can upload personal photos or choose favored patterns and colors on Casetify's platform, creating phone cases that reflect their individual style. This personalized service not only meets consumers' desires for individualization and differentiation but also establishes a deeper emotional connection between consumers and the brand during the creation process. Each customized product serves as a mode of self-expression for the consumer, and this unique consumption experience significantly enhances consumer loyalty and satisfaction with the brand, thereby promoting word-of-mouth and the formation of brand loyalty. Casetify strives to make the brand more accessible to a wider consumer base through the influence of celebrities and internet stars on platforms like Instagram. Notable figures such as Lionel Messi, supermodel Kylie Jenner, and the globally renowned group Blackpink have become loyal users of Casetify, continually promoting it "for free" on social platforms like Instagram, which has led to substantial sales and solidified consumer mindshare [7]. Another factor driving Casetify's expansion of brand influence is its collaboration series. The brand has consistently sought partnerships with well-known IPs, such as Barbie, the Louvre art collection, and the Minions series, effectively attracting consumers of different ages and interests. "To this day, I still remember our first collaboration series, launching the Saint Laurent series in partnership with the renowned buyer shop Colette. This collaboration provided us with a very important learning opportunity and helped advance our collaborative projects, making our strategy more concrete and enabling successful partnerships with famous IPs and artists like Marsper, Barbie, BLACKPINK," said Casetify founder Wes Ng [7]. Moreover, environmental sustainability is another reason why

Casetify is beloved by users. On its official website, Casetify commits to a "Drop to Zero" mission of zero carbon emissions and zero waste to protect the environment. "Our biggest and most famous strategy is the RECASETiFY program," which promotes recycling of old phone cases by users, while encouraging them to choose new cases under an environmentally friendly policy, aligning with national calls for green conservation.

Beyond excellent personalized marketing and the traffic bonus from the influence of internet celebrities, Casetify also maintains strict control over product quality. Most transparent smartphone cases are designed with silicone, acrylic, or thermoplastic polymers, and contact with sweat and oils can cause oxidation reactions, which is why most inexpensive transparent cases turn yellow [8]. Casetify's prices are above market primarily due to investment in material research and development costs, making it a preferred choice for consumers looking for durable products. Protecting the phone is also one of the initial intentions of the brand's founder, Wes Ng. On YouTube, many bloggers have conducted durability tests on Casetify phone cases, and most cases emerge unscathed, attracting many platform users and adding to the brand's credibility in terms of quality.

In-depth analysis reveals that Casetify stands out in the market and has successfully enhanced brand loyalty through carefully planned social marketing strategies, product personalization, increased customer engagement, community building, and a commitment to environmental sustainability. Casetify's practices show that in the era dominated by social media, companies seeking to build and maintain strong customer loyalty must continuously innovate and adjust their marketing strategies while also focusing on brand image and social contributions.

"To Summer" aromatherapy has carved out a niche in the fragrance sales market through its unique positioning on social media, attracting many consumers interested in its emphasis on Oriental aesthetics, art, and culture. By sharing content that merges Oriental philosophy with traditional arts and modern design, the brand has not only offered rich and educational content but has also provided consumers with a cultural experience and emotional resonance, beyond just products. This strategy has enabled "To Summer" to stand out in a market increasingly characterized by homogeneous competition, establishing strong brand loyalty. However, this strategy also has its limitations, particularly in terms of brand promotion and market expansion.

First, the high cultural specificity and depth of the "To Summer" fragrance brand might make it less accessible to a portion of the target consumer base. For international consumers not well-versed in Oriental culture, cultural differences may make it challenging for them to fully comprehend the brand's conveyed values and meanings. This situation, to some extent, limits the brand's widespread promotion and international development. Second, the information overload on social media platforms makes it difficult for the cultural content of the "To Summer" fragrance brand to stand out among the multitude of entertainment-oriented, fast-consumption information. In this context, the visibility and influence of the brand's message are diminished, thereby affecting the brand's position in consumers' minds. Additionally, the "To Summer" fragrance brand primarily promotes and sells through online channels. While this helps quickly expand brand influence and coverage, it relatively neglects the development of offline markets. For fragrance products, offline experiences are crucial. Direct experiences can significantly enhance consumers' willingness to purchase, but the potential of "To Summer" in the offline market has not been fully tapped, limiting the brand's influence and sales potential among a broader consumer base.

Casetify, through carefully planned social media operations, quickly enhanced its brand recognition and successfully attracted many young users. The brand launched personalized and limited artist series on platforms like Instagram and Facebook, showcasing not only product diversity and innovative spirit but also highlighting the brand's fashionable and youthful characteristics. Thanks to the interactive nature of social media, Casetify can directly converse with consumers,

receive feedback in real-time, and quickly respond to market dynamics, thus securing a favorable position in the competitive market.

However, over-reliance on social media as a marketing channel also presents challenges. Social media platform policies and recommendation algorithms frequently change, and effective marketing strategies may quickly become obsolete. For example, if a social networking site updates its recommendation algorithm, it might reduce the visibility of brand content, thereby affecting the frequency of interaction between the brand and consumers. This algorithmic instability requires Casetify to continuously optimize its social media strategy to maintain content visibility and user engagement. Moreover, since social media is an open platform where anyone can post comments and opinions, brands are vulnerable to negative impacts. A single negative comment or unsatisfied feedback can quickly spread across social networks, especially when widely shared, potentially damaging the brand image severely in a short period. Competitors might also use social platforms for negative publicity, further increasing the difficulty for brands to maintain their image.

4. Improvement and future direction of social marketing strategies

In the intense market competition, marketing strategies for brands and products play a crucial role. They not only attract consumers but also enhance sales and shape brand images. However, when the promotion of products excessively overshadows the simultaneous improvement in quality, it might lead to a crisis in brand trust and adversely affect the brand's long-term development. Over-marketing refers to businesses overly relying on marketing strategies to pursue their development goals, such as placing too much faith in the effect of advertising or overly depending on pricing strategies, exceeding the company's management capacity and internal endurance. While such strategies might yield short-term profits, they often fail to achieve long-term goals as competitors adopt similar strategies [9]. Initially, consumers may choose a brand or product due to the influence of marketing activities, but if the actual usage experience does not meet the promised level, it could lead to disappointment or even anger among consumers. In today's highly developed social media environment, such dissatisfaction can spread rapidly, not only influencing other potential customers' purchasing decisions but also damaging the brand's reputation.

Excessive marketing often comes with high promotion costs, potentially reducing the company's investment in product research, development, and quality control. In the long run, this could lead to difficulties in continuously improving product quality or even a trend of declining quality, affecting the brand's sustainable development. Facing these challenges, "To Summer" needs to adopt corresponding strategies for optimization and adjustment. The brand could consider combining in-depth cultural content with more popular, easily understandable content to introduce Oriental culture in a broader form and perspective, lowering the barrier for consumer acceptance and adding international elements to make the content more universally relatable and internationally resonant. In its social media strategy, "To Summer" could improve the attractiveness of its brand content and user engagement through innovation in visual content, diversification of storytelling, and the organization of interactive events. To enhance brand resilience, adopting a multi-channel marketing strategy is crucial. Casetify could expand its brand influence and consumer base by integrating online and offline marketing approaches. In the digital space, besides regular social networking platforms, the brand could attract and retain customers through content promotion, search engine optimization (SEO), and email marketing. Physically, Casetify might consider establishing collaborations with e-commerce and traditional retailers, organizing pop-up stores, exhibition events, or launching limited edition products to increase brand touchpoints with consumers, allowing them to personally experience the product's quality and innovative design. Moreover, strengthening community management is indispensable for shaping a positive and healthy brand image. Casetify could utilize social media tools and platform features for active communication with consumers, responding promptly to their

needs and feedback. By establishing brand-centric forums or groups to encourage users to share their experiences and creativity, not only can trust and loyalty towards the brand be enhanced, but valuable customer feedback can also be gathered, providing references for product improvement and innovation.

In the realm of modern marketing, the core of future competition has shifted to winning customer favor. Therefore, businesses must transform their marketing strategies from a product-centric model to a customer-centric one. This shift means that the relationship between businesses and customers should not just be a one-time transaction but a trust-based partnership. In interactions with customers, the method of communication needs to shift from one-way information transmission to two-way dialogue. Such exchanges can effectively reduce information asymmetry, thus decreasing customers' distrust of the company. Businesses should treat every customer fairly, not only to protect the customers' dignity but also to help maintain the company's reputation. By establishing and maintaining good customer relations, businesses can stay abreast of changes in customer needs and respond to market changes at the fastest speed. This way, businesses can not only better meet customer needs but also maintain an advantage in the fierce market competition [9].

5. Conclusion

With the increasing importance of social media, future social marketing trends will undoubtedly focus on the quality of products. In today's fast-paced information society, the foundation of consumer loyalty to a brand is the quality of its products. To stand out in the complex market competition and continuously gain consumer trust and support, businesses must ensure the high quality of their products. Moreover, as a key pathway for brand reputation dissemination, high-quality products naturally lead to positive user reviews and recommendations, helping form a positive feedback mechanism, thereby driving the brand's continuous growth. Due to the limitations of this study, there are no primary data to demonstrate how this type of positive feedback mechanism operates. Therefore, future social marketing layouts need to focus on the strengths of the product itself, making high quality the strategic core, complemented by innovative content creation and precise market positioning, thereby achieving a win-win situation for brand influence and sales outcomes.

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