

Research on the Overseas Communication Image of Chinese Cosmetic Brands

-Case Study of Florasis and Perfect Diary

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Abstract: The overseas expansion of Chinese brands and the presentation of their video advertisements has been a crucial topic in media studies. Researchers have found that more and more Chinese companies are expanding abroad in the context of economic globalization, yet there is still a research gap on the issue of advertising in overseas markets. Therefore, this paper aims to further analyses the similarities and differences in advertising presentation between two Chinese local cosmetic brands, Florasis and Perfect Diary with a particular focus on their advertisements on overseas online platforms. The comparative study reveals that there are significant differences in the brand images established by the two brands in overseas markets. The advertisement of Florasis has distinctive Chinese cultural characteristics and expresses the concept that "the national is the global", which reflects the unique cultural specificity in the international market. In contrast, Perfect Diary's advertising is integrated into the international market without Chinese traces, which shows its ambition to compete with other world-renowned brands.

Keywords: Brand Overseas, Advertisement, Florasis, Perfect Diary, Social Platform

1. Introduction

With the ever-changing landscape of the Chinese cosmetics industry, the topic of international expansion has emerged as a focal point in both academia and industry. In the context of economic globalization, Chinese enterprises continue to grow in size and influence in the Chinese market, while at the same time also are also looking at the broader overseas market [1]. In recent years, some domestic cosmetics brands are gradually rising, and they have been reshaping their brands with the help of new media [2]. The branding of Chinese cosmetics has also attracted the attention of English academia too. Chaoqun Wang took the case of China's long-established cosmetic brand Pechoin to analyze its strategy for expanding its overseas business. He asserts that the reason for the success of Pechoin lies in its adaptation to local culture [3].

To clarify Chinese brands' presentation in advertisement in the international market, this paper will discuss two representative Chinese domestic cosmetic brands, Florasis and Perfect Diary. Within only four years since establishment, the Gross Merchandise Volumes (GMV) of the top two brands, Perfect Diary and Florasis, have exceeded 3 billion Yuan in 2020 [4]. Both of them have demonstrated their ambition in overseas branding by targeting advertisements in multiple countries. The previous research has studied Florasis and Perfect Diary in detail in terms of new media advertising, development strategy, marketing, etc., however, the comparison of these two brands in terms of advertising presentation is still uncovered. In order to provide a clearer understanding of how these two brands utilize distinct advertising strategies to expand their markets abroad, this paper will closely examine the unique features of each brand's overseas advertising. Furthermore, it will provide insights into how these brands are navigating the new wave of brand globalization amidst China's increasing soft power influence.

2. Brand Image of Florasis

"Florasis" is a makeup brand born in Hangzhou, China, on March 8, 2017, with the concept of "oriental makeup, flower makeup". The brand concept and brand characteristics based on the Chinese traditional elements make it stand out among the crowd of Chinese domestic cosmetics brands [5]. In September 2019, Florasis made its debut at New York Fashion Week, making its first international appearance. In March 2021, the national make-up Florasis ventured into the Japanese market, with its products available on Amazon Japan.

The name "Florasis" is a combination of "Flora" and "Sis", symbolizing the concept of a "Flower Goddess". It is a metaphor that women who use Florasis products are as beautiful as Xishi, the goddess of lotus flowers. Florasis has intensely cultivated Chinese local culture and has used traditional oriental aesthetic elements such as the West Lake, Miao silver, and Dai flowers as inspiration for its products. It has also hired a number of well-known singers, actors, and models at home and abroad to promote its products. Its use of ethnic culture in advertising could be seen as an attempt to convey Chinese culture to consumers of other cultures.

2.1. Florasis's Overseas Advertising on Digital Media

Observing Florasis' official accounts across various online platforms, one can discern this brand's overseas strategy. The comparison reveals that Florasis has established distinct official accounts for specific countries particularly on social media like Instagram or Facebook. Accounts could be found as "florasis.fr," "florasis.jp," "florasis.sg," and the like. In each account, the content is slightly different. The posted copywrite will be translated into languages that are spoken by the target consumers. Compared with the content posted on social media platforms such as Instagram, the video promotion in YouTube shows a more comprehensive presentation of the brand. The videos posted on social platforms are basically short videos of less than 20 seconds, with most of the content showcasing the product or models using the product. They adopt a compact and dynamic style, aligning with the communication norms of social media. Conversely, the videos on YouTube are longer, feature more polished graphics and styles, and place a greater emphasis on highlighting the brand's distinctive characteristics.

2.2. Presentation of Chinese History and Culture with Chinese Symbols

The advertising campaign of Florasis showcases distinct Chinese characteristics and serves as a mediation to portray China's history and culture. In order to identify itself as a Chinese brand, Florasis usually incorporates historical sites such as the Great Wall, Terracotta Warriors, the Forbidden City, and the Temple of Heaven in their promotion. They also feature traditional Chinese folk arts such as

shadow puppets, paper cuttings, face-painting, etc; Additionally, promoting Chinese calligraphy, ancient poems, heroic figures, and traditional festivals rooted in Chinese culture is also a crucial part of Florasis's promotion strategy [6].

Among the videos posted on Florasis' official YouTube account, the most popular video, "Blooming Rouge Long-Lasting Liquid Lipstick | Florasis" has garnered over 300,000 views. This video artistically presents the "M518 Autumn Palace" lipstick by interspersing close-up shots of the lipstick with visuals reminiscent of ancient Chinese paintings, effectively merging the lipstick's color with traditional Chinese artistry. Another instance within the video features the "M308 Blooming Lotus" lipstick, incorporating imagery of water droplets gliding on a lotus leaf, while the model gracefully holds a fully bloomed lotus flower. Such symbols - dragon, phoenix, and lotus - hold significant roles in benevolent traditions and the broader landscape of modern Chinese art [7]. In specific, the lotus flower is represented in the video as an element that symbolizes Chinese culture.

2.3. Tell a Chinese Story to the World

Some brands integrated traditional Chinese elements to show the world the fashion design from China, and some combined with international trend elements to make China-chic brands in line with international fashion, which not only met the demand of the Chinese market for local trend brands but also showed the world what fashions from China look [8]. In addition to its intricate incorporation of Chinese elements, Florasis also integrates international facets well into its overseas advertisements. Even within the video "Blooming Rouge Long-Lasting Liquid Lipstick | Florasis", neither of the two models is Chinese. The background music accompanying the video featured is non-Chinese and non-traditional. In a separate video which is entitled "Impression of Dai Collection | Florasis", posted on the official Florasis YouTube account, the script states that "through the exuberance of Eastern rainforest, I unveil Dai community to the world", further asserting "The nation's beauty is the world's beauty".

3. Brand Image of Perfect Diary

Established in March 2017 in Guangzhou, China, Perfect Diary is committed to delving into fashion trends from Europe and the United States. Concurrently, the brand blends the unique facial and skin attributes of the Asian demographic to create a range of premium, thoughtfully crafted makeup items tailored for the modern generation of women, ensuring both top-notch quality and user-friendly application. The core essence behind Perfect Diary's brand is "Unlimited Beauty." This philosophy encourages the younger generation to resist being confined by external stereotypes and instead, strive to overcome personal limitations. It inspires them to wholeheartedly explore the myriad possibilities life offers, embrace self-growth, and ultimately uncover their enhanced selves.

3.1. An International Taste in Overseas Advertisement

The brand concept of Perfect Diary is to hope that young people can break their own limits, actively explore different possibilities, tear off the so-called labels attached to their bodies, and achieve a more perfect self. Compared with other domestic beauty brands, Perfect Diary is more committed to researching fashion styles and trends similar to those of European and American beauty brands, and at the same time, combining Asian women's facial features with theirs, to develop high-quality beauty products that are suitable for Asian women, but with European and American styles at the same time.

3.2. Localized Promotion Campaign

When exploring overseas markets, they also targeted Southeast Asia instead of Europe, America, Japan, and Korea. When entering foreign markets, Perfect Diary launched the Sanrio co-branded series of products according to the popular IPs in Southeast Asia. In addition, more colors were added to products such as foundation and lipstick to suit the skin tone of local users. There is a significant demand among women for makeup products that offer long-lasting wear, particularly those that effectively control excess oil. In response to this demand, Perfect Diary has placed a strong emphasis on formulating their powder products to deliver effective grease control. With careful selection and their localization strategy, Perfect Diary has quickly gained prominence in the Southeast Asian market and has garnered recognition from prominent local media outlets.

3.3. Collaborations with Local Celebrities in Social Media

In addition, Perfect Diary has also cooperated extensively with local celebrities, such as Vietnamese singer AMEE, who will be the first Vietnamese lip make-up spokesperson for Perfect Diary, and Malaysian actress Charlene Choi, who will launch Perfect Diary's lucky koi collection. The advert video was released on social networks. These partnerships are promoted through advertisement videos on social networks and complemented by an extensive array of engagement activities, such as ping tests and unboxing content, shared across platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and more. The brand uses the power of the fans of these celebrities to draw more attention to the brand [9]. This strategic approach, often referred to as a "sea of people tactic," has enabled Perfect Diary to rapidly cultivate a positive reputation among users in diverse regions.

4. Comparison of Advertising Strategy of Florasis and Perfect Diary

Florasis uses a lot of traditional Chinese totems, colors, and imagery in its promotion videos, highlighting its cultural specificity, while Perfect Diary discards elements related to local culture and adopts the world's more common fashionable and popular elements, taking the initiative to connect with the international community.

To be more specific, Chinese traditional elements are manifested in the brand as follows: 1) Colors: in terms of the color in advertisement, Florasis predominantly employs natural, low-saturation colors in their products, complemented by hues inspired by flowers and minerals, for example carmine, amber yellow, bamboo green. 2) Music: the background music of Florasis advertisement is often played by traditional ethnic instruments such as flute, Gu zheng, Erhu, and Gu qin. 3) Chinese motifs: In the setting, Florasis uses elements like peacock feathers, seven-leaf flowers, mimosa, and lotus flowers. The models in the advertisement also put on typical Chinese costumes, which incorporate cheongsams, embroidery, and floral decorations. The utilization of these symbols reflects the implicit, gentle, and dignified traits of the East. In specific, in the first half of Florasis's videos, the background music blends classical instruments with sounds of birds, water, and cicadas. The latter part features ethnic music with a flute, explicitly showcasing its cultural identity.

In contrast, the advertisement of Perfect Dairy shows little connection with Chinese culture, and it embraces a more universal visual presentation than what Florasis does. The international product promotion strategy generally uses highly saturated colors with strong visual impact and more fashionable clothing to create a sense of trend; the music also uses more modern instruments and electronic synthesis. Perfect Diary gives a lot of close-ups of animal eyes and human eyes, and emphasizes women's outgoing, flamboyant, independent, and adventurous qualities through various styles of make-up to show the impact of eyeshadow, and to express the core of the video, "Hunt What I See". The Perfect Diary video is composed of rock music synthesized with modern music features,

which is more in line with the style of current pop music and is more easily accepted by young consumers around the world.

At the same time, the models of both brands appearing in the promotional videos also have a strong symbolic meaning. Du Juan, the spokesperson in Florasis's advertisement, is a model who has become popular in the world with her classical Chinese looks and style and has gained wide recognition and popularity in the international fashion industry. Florasis' decision to appoint Du Juan as their spokesperson accomplishes two key objectives. Firstly, it underscores the brand's commitment to showcasing a wide range of national specialties, reinforcing their mission to share the essence of their culture with the world. Secondly, the choice of four different beauty bloggers in Perfect Diary's ads, each with their unique styles and substantial followings, effectively communicates the brand's embrace of diverse aesthetics. This, in turn, encourages young people to express themselves freely and caters to the varied tastes of the youthful consumer base.

5. Conclusion

This study presents and compares two typical cases of Chinese cosmetic brands going overseas. It provides more rational choices for Chinese cosmetic companies to make decisions in the field of advertising. Specifically, this study can help Chinese cosmetic companies reposition their products and redesign their marketing strategies in the new context of "overseas", considering their own characteristics. Analyzing the advertising strategies of different overseas brands also helps to perceive the different impacts of Chinese fashion styles on the global environment in different ways, thus helping cosmetic companies to improve themselves more effectively. Finally, for consumers, this study can help them understand the characteristics of different cosmetic brands from a novel perspective. The advantages and potential problems faced by differently positioned Chinese cosmetic brands identified in this study can help consumers and businesses develop a more mature understanding of the international market, develop their own strengths, and avoid known risks.

In terms of advertising art, these two brands embody two branches of mainland China's pop culture - the national- trend style and universalized global style. This article helps to analyze the degree of convergence between these two different styles and popular culture around the world, to find the differences between different cultures. It analyzes the social factors for the formation of different styles and trends as a clue and critically investigate the cultural implications of these two promotion strategies will bring to the industry. At the same time, it emphasizes that "spokesperson" is also gradually playing a potential role in the cosmetics overseas advertisement. It suggests that the spokesperson can also help to re-establish a new brand image in foreign markets. This study aims to bridge the information gap concerning the impact of traditional Chinese culture and domestic pop culture on foreign audiences. It provides insights into the potential avenues for creating a successful brand image in other countries. Analyzing the significance of spokesperson selection in the overseas market for mainland Chinese cosmetics can also aid in redefining the brand image in foreign markets. Commencing the analysis with the spokesperson as a non-aesthetic element of advertising contributes to a more comprehensive examination of advertising strategies.

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