

Effect Analysis of the Marketing Strategy of Mixue Ice Cream & Tea on Social Media Platform Based on 4I Theory

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Abstract. This article begins by analyzing the rapid development and high prevalence of social media, highlighting the current marketing trend where brands widely use social media for promotion. Using Mixue ice cream & tea as a brand example, it examines the benefits of social media marketing for the brand. Summarizing Mixue ice cream & tea marketing strategies, including its key attributes, product pricing, distribution channels, and promotion, it provides an overview of the brand's current marketing methods and business model. Building on Mixue ice cream & tea's business model, the "4I" theory is applied to analyze the promotional methods employed by Mixue ice cream & tea on social media and their impact. After analysis, it is evident that Mixue ice cream & tea's marketing strategies on social media encompass elements of fun, profitability, interactivity, and personalization, resulting in nearly doubled economic benefits for the brand. Building upon the brand's existing success, some suggestions have been made for its future development, such as strengthening hygiene supervision and services, as well as diversifying the content of short videos.

Keywords: 4I; social media; marketing; Mixue ice cream & tea.

1. Introduction

In the era of digitalization and information technology, the development of social media has gone through various stages, from the early online communities to today's diverse and global social platforms, all within just a short span of a little over a decade. In the mid-2000s, social networks like MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter began to emerge. These platforms introduced user profiles, social connections, dynamic updates, and facilitated interactions and sharing among users. In the early 2010s, image and video-sharing platforms like Instagram and YouTube gained prominence, emphasizing the sharing of visual content and providing users with opportunities to showcase their lives, skills, and creativity. This marked the diversification and multimedia nature of social media content. With the rise of social networks and the development of mobile devices, social media has become increasingly ubiquitous, deeply embedded in the lives of individuals.

Social media platforms boast extensive and diverse user bases, encompassing people of all ages, regions, interests, and backgrounds. This allows brands to reach a broad spectrum of potential customers and target audiences. These platforms enable brands to directly interact and communicate with their audience. Brands can respond to user comments, answer queries, and even engage in interesting discussions. Such interactions help in building closer relationships, increasing user loyalty, and fostering trust. Social media platforms collect a wealth of user data, which brands can leverage for personalized marketing. By understanding users' interests, preferences, and behaviors, brands can deliver customized content and advertisements, thereby enhancing user engagement and conversion rates. Social media serves as a powerful tool for brand marketing, aiding in building brand identity, engaging with the audience, boosting visibility, increasing sales, and spreading word-of-mouth. However, successful social media marketing necessitates a strategic use of various platforms, understanding audience needs, consistently providing valuable content, and actively participating in interactions.

Social media has emerged as a cost-effective and more effective means of boosting brand recognition. Brands like Mixue Ice Cream & Tea have harnessed the power of social media to successfully enhance their brand awareness by maintaining official social media accounts. Using the 4I framework, this article analyzes how social media marketing has a positive impact on brands [1].

As an illustrative case, this research examines the brand "Mixue ice cream & tea," a chain of ice cream and tea beverage stores under the Mixue ice cream & tea Corporation. With over two and a half decades of development, Mixue ice cream & tea boasts a network of more than 25,000 stores in China and is actively expanding into international markets. In 2018, Mixue ice cream & tea adopted a new brand image featuring a crowned snowman as the Chief Quality Officer. In June 2021, Mixue ice cream & tea launched a themed song video on social media platforms, with the catchy melody "You love me, I love you, Mixue ice cream & tea is sweet," which quickly went viral, creating a phenomenon in brand marketing that continues to have a lasting impact. This article examines how Mixue ice cream & tea's social media marketing has positively influenced the brand.

2. Brand Information of Mixue Ice Cream & Tea

2.1. The Establishment and Development of Mixue Ice Cream & Tea

The predecessor of Mixue ice cream & tea, known as "Hanliu Shaved Ice," was founded in 1997. In 2006, it transformed into a national chain brand dedicated to offering fresh ice cream and tea beverages specifically for young people under the name "Mixue ice cream & tea." Transitioning from primarily selling ice cream to diversifying into the tea beverage business, Mixue ice cream & tea achieved core ingredient self-production, obtained numerous patented technologies, established its own company, and adopted a "direct-operated + franchised" market model. Starting from 2017, Mixue ice cream & tea actively expanded into international markets.

2.2. Commercial Development of Mixue Ice Cream & Tea from the Perspective of 4P

In terms of products, Mixue ice cream & tea's primary offerings are ice cream and tea. Apart from desserts made on-site at their physical stores, Mixue ice cream & tea has expanded its product line. Buyers can also purchase Mixue ice cream & tea's tea leaves for brewing and bottled beverages on various e-commerce platforms.

Regarding pricing, the majority of Mixue ice cream & tea's products are priced 30% lower than similar products, providing a significant price advantage. This strategy allows Mixue ice cream & tea to adopt a high-volume, low-margin approach, resulting in a substantial customer base and a broad audience. Particularly in large cities like Beijing and Shanghai, Mixue ice cream & tea's pricing differs significantly from other dessert shops, making a strong entry into the dessert market. On cost control, Mixue ice cream & tea uses "No middleman to earn the price difference, with the cost price to supply franchisees." business model, self-built factory to provide warehousing logistics services, realize the core raw materials, which makes them to upstream many of the raw material procurement has a higher bargaining advantage, ensure the product quality and quality at the same time reduce costs, improve the franchise profit [2].

In terms of place, Mixue ice cream & tea's primary sales channels are direct sales at physical stores and relatively smaller-scale online sales. The brand collaborates with major e-commerce platforms, making it easy for customers to place orders through various food delivery apps and ordering platforms. Mixue ice cream & tea also has its own mobile app, allowing customers to place orders directly through the app without relying on other channels. Additionally, with a widespread network of physical stores, Mixue ice cream & tea has at least 20,000 offline outlets in China, making it convenient for customers to find and purchase from Mixue ice cream & tea stores.

As for promotional channels, Mixue ice cream & tea's primary promotional platform is social media. The brand rarely invests in television advertising or street posters and promotional materials. Instead, most of their new product launches are preceded by video releases or tweets on social networks to generate excitement and anticipation.

3. The effect of Mixue Ice Cream & Tea Social Media Marketing

Brand image, digital marketing, and lifestyle has a positive and significant effect on repurchase intention [3]. Social media facilitates content sharing, collaborations, and interactions. These social media platforms and applications exist in various forms such as social bookmarking, rating, video, pictures, podcasts, wikis, micro blogging, social blogs, and weblogs. Social networkers and business firms are using social media to communicate, with its use increasing tremendously. Businesses leverage social media for marketing and promotional purposes. The ease of communication and interaction on social media enables cost-effective and efficient execution of integrated marketing efforts, bringing together consumer engagement, events, media, digital services, and retail interactions [4]. Undoubtedly, Mixue ice cream & tea has been extremely successful in its marketing efforts on social media platforms. One of its most famous marketing events occurred in June 2021 when Mixue ice cream & tea released a catchy and mesmerizing promotional song MV on its official account, which subsequently went viral on various social media platforms. On Bilibili, the infectious melody and lyrics of the theme song quickly propelled it to the trending charts, attracting a large number of fans' interactions and high-quality content creators' remixes. On Weibo, hashtags like (Mixue ice cream & tea's New Song) and (Is this Mixue ice cream & tea's New Song) garnered over 600 million reads combined.

From 2021 to early 2022, the number of Mixue ice cream & tea's stores in China increased by approximately ten thousand, marking significant growth compared to previous years. Mixue ice cream & tea did not neglect its offline presence either. The brand launched an activity where customers could sing the theme song in their stores to get their orders for free. This activity resonated with the younger generation's concept of "social death," making it novel and entertaining for consumers. More and more social media users shared videos of these activities, leading to another wave of increased brand awareness and popularity.

3.1. Interesting-Based Marketing Strategy

Creating a corporate mascot is an effective method for cultivating a favorable brand perception, fostering positive associations with consumers [5]. Without a doubt, Mixue ice cream & tea's mascot, the "Snow King," has been a successful design. This mascot is both adorable and distinctive. The brand's mascot design has proven to be a significant factor in winning over customers. The brand's popularity also receives a boost thanks to the mascot's influence. Close to 90% of customers have reported forming an impression of the brand after encountering Snow King, the mascot. Furthermore, among customers familiar with the brand's mascot, a majority have provided either positive or neutral assessments of the mascot's appearance and appeal [1]. Snow King also has a cute, sweet, and happy personality. These also bring the Snow King its fans. Following that, the fans will likely purchase the milk tea or other derivative products associated with the snow king, realizing the goal of brand promotion and generating extra revenue [6]. While Mixue ice cream & tea maintains a strong brand image, its employees also treat customers with a friendly and charming attitude. The alignment of these two aspects creates a highly unified and friendly brand image for Mixue ice cream & tea. Employees and brand representatives serve as the bridge between the company and its consumers. If an employee does not align their actions with the company's values, any consumer they interact with may not perceive the company in the intended brand image [5].

3.2. Interest-Based Marketing Strategy

Under the principle of emphasizing benefits, Mixue ice cream & tea's social media marketing considers audience expansion, increasing user loyalty, and enhancing economic benefits. Mixue ice cream & tea effectively portrays a very friendly brand image by utilizing a cute mascot and lyrics like "you love me, I love you." For those customers who choose Mixue over other brands primarily due to its affordability, this marketing approach undoubtedly strikes a chord. Such marketing deeply impacts customers' impressions of the service, greatly enhancing their goodwill and loyalty. In the

year 2021, Mixue ice cream &tea's operating revenue increased by more than 1.2 times compared to the previous year. Within two months of the video release, Mixue ice cream &tea's search index on domestic search engine websites in China quadrupled. It can be said that Mixue ice cream &tea reaped significant benefits from this initiative.

3.3. Interaction-Based Marketing Strategy

In terms of the publishing platform, Mixue ice cream &tea initially chose Bilibili, a video-sharing website, as its promotional platform. Bilibili is a unique and scarce PUGC (Professionally User-Generated Content) video community known for its strong sense of community. Unlike short videos, PUGC videos have a higher barrier to entry and offer more substantial content, making Bilibili a leader in the PUGC video industry. Due to its vibrant community atmosphere, high user engagement, and extensive user-generated content, Mixue ice cream &tea's video content on Bilibili is often creatively adapted into animated characters, real-life personas, and integrated with other internet trends, resulting in a wide range of interesting creations. Various clusters or groups engage in distinct discussions, implying that a greater number of clusters leads to a wider array of discussion topics related to "Mixue" being conversed about by internet users [7].

On this platform, influential content creators with strong creative abilities already have a significant fan base. When the Mixue ice cream &tea craze took off, many of these creators, who already had a substantial following, joined in the creative process, leading to the broad dissemination of their content. This not only increased the creators' own visibility but also provided excellent and free marketing for Mixue ice cream &tea.

In terms of content, Mixue ice cream &tea primarily utilized videos for its marketing efforts, which can be broadly categorized into two types: mascot-themed videos and consumer review videos. As mentioned earlier, mascot-themed videos significantly enhanced the brand's appeal, making it memorable for new customers and strengthening brand loyalty among existing ones. The process is as follows: Buyer purchases Mixue ice cream &teas, Satisfied with the product, User posts content on social media, Content is viewed and shared. Such videos greatly increase consumer interest in making a purchase [8]. Consumer review videos, on the other hand, typically featured internet influencers tasting Mixue ice cream &tea's desserts. These videos overwhelmingly praised Mixue ice cream &tea for its delicious taste and affordable prices. Influencers often shot visually appealing videos to attract viewers and promote consumer interest. Comment sections of such videos frequently saw discussions about the taste of specific products, sparking conversations and debates about Mixue ice cream &tea's offerings on social media.

3.4. Individuality-Based Marketing Strategy

Under the principle of uniqueness, brand marketing on social media emphasizes the differences and distinctiveness of a brand or company compared to its competitors. Looking at Mixue ice cream &tea's marketing content, the brand composed a catchy and unique song that stood out for its exceptional composition. Users on the platform could remember this song deeply after hearing it just once. The song's popularity remains high to this day.

Regarding brand positioning in marketing, Mixue ice cream &tea adopts a highly personalized approach. The brand places a strong emphasis on the theme of friendliness, repeatedly emphasizing the brand spirit of "You love me, and I love you." This approach helps establish a deeper subconscious connection between the brand and its customers, allowing customers to feel the company's sincerity and a sense of being well-served.

In terms of creativity, Mixue ice cream &tea not only created a music video for the song but also hired staff dressed in mascot costumes to engage potential customers outside various stores. What particularly interesting is that these staff members not only attracted customers but also roamed the streets and interacted with customers, even attempting to divert business from other bubble tea shops. This straightforward yet adorable approach was captured by many and shared online, creating a unique blend of online and offline marketing for the brand.

4. Current deficiencies and future directions

4.1. The Inadequacy of Social Media Campaigns

While Mixue ice cream &tea has released some interesting videos, the majority of their content tends to be homogeneous. Initially, people might find it refreshing when they first see it, but over time, they are less likely to click and watch. By 2023, Mixue ice cream &tea's popularity on social media platforms has significantly declined, highlighting the inherent limitations of short videos in marketing. Over time, it will only make customers think MIXUE is a low-end brand, and they will bury such an idea deeply. When people discuss MIXUE recently, the most mentioned word is "low-end" [6]. Mixue ice cream &tea, due to its significantly lower pricing, has never been perceived as a high-end brand by many consumers. Coupled with the viral spread of short videos, a lot of customers tend to view Mixue ice cream &tea as a budget product, deeming its marketing atmosphere as outdated. While these short videos have rapidly increased Mixue ice cream &tea's popularity, they have not entirely contributed to a positive brand image.

4.2. The Lack of Offline Stores

Purchasing decisions are based on consumer experience in using products or services as well as the influence of prices and other factors that allow consumers to determine whether to buy or not [9]. Mixue ice cream &tea, a brand known for its extensive offline store network, faces issues with inconsistent quality across these physical outlets. Despite a uniform taste, the hygiene standards and staff professionalism vary among the offline stores. In recent years, there have been instances of subpar hygiene in some outlets, negatively impacting the consumer experience. This has even led some consumers to blacklist the brand due to these hygiene concerns.

4.3. Inspiration and Suggestion

Brand image, is a comprehensive description of how consumers perceive a brand based on information and brand experiences [10]. From the perspective of maintaining brand image, Mixue ice cream &tea can promote positive corporate culture on social platforms or respond to customer concerns about product quality through videos. For example, Mixue ice cream &tea can initiate charitable initiatives and showcase the outcomes of these projects on social media. Alternatively, Mixue ice cream &tea can share news about increased oversight in its stores and use video to demonstrate the high quality and healthiness of its ingredients, reassuring customers about the quality of Mixue ice cream &tea products. At the same time, it is necessary to enhance the supervision and service quality of offline stores. After all, customers ultimately pay for the products, and product quality is the foremost factor in earning repeat customers.

5. Conclusion

This article begins by analyzing the rapid development and high prevalence of social media, highlighting the current marketing trend where brands widely use social media for promotion. Using Mixue ice cream &tea as a brand example, it examines the benefits of social media marketing for the brand. Summarizing Mixue ice cream &tea's marketing strategies, including its key attributes, product pricing, distribution channels, and promotion, i Mixue ice cream &tea provides an overview of the brand's current marketing methods and business model. Building on Mixue ice cream &tea's business model, the "4I" theory is applied to analyze the promotional methods employed by Mixue ice cream &tea on social media and their impact. After analysis, it is evident that Mixue ice cream &tea's marketing strategies on social media encompass elements of fun, profitability, interactivity, and personalization, resulting in nearly doubled economic benefits for the brand.

Mixue ice cream &tea's marketing on social media has been strategically designed. In terms of content, they have opted for catchy, infectious songs that have quickly captivated a large customer base, leading to repeat purchases. In terms of format, they have chosen to utilize multiple short videos

for product introductions and recommendations. They have also wisely selected Bilibili, a platform known for its high degree of user-generated content, quality, and active user engagement. This choice has turned their social media marketing into a classic success story.

In conclusion, Mixue ice cream & tea not only needs to maintain its current customer attraction but also needs to strengthen its supervision efforts, overseeing the service quality and hygiene conditions of its various stores. On the short video platforms, Mixue ice cream & tea should continue creating engaging content to keep their audience's interest fresh. This study further analyzed the assistance and benefits of social media marketing on various aspects of this brand. It can serve as a reference for other brands using social media for marketing. However, this paper only analyzed the brand Mixue ice cream & tea, which has certain limitations in the selection of the number of brands. To conduct a more in-depth analysis of the role of social media in brand marketing, additional brand data support is required.

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