

# Online & Offline Media of Selected Microenterprises in The Digital Era Towards an Improved IMC Strategies in Guangdong China

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**Abstract:** This study explores the integration of online and offline media strategies of selected microenterprises in Guangdong Province, China, aiming to enhance integrated marketing communications (IMC) in the digital era. Through questionnaire-based empirical analysis, the study identifies key elements that influence marketing effectiveness, focusing on online social influence and offline media. The findings show that enhancing customer engagement, improving content quality, and leveraging platform relevance are critical to maximizing online interactions. In addition, integrating digital channels, implementing omnichannel marketing strategies, and optimizing digital footprints are key to improving offline media effectiveness. The study highlights the need for microenterprises to adopt a coherent approach that leverages online and offline channels to create a unified brand experience that drives better market performance. The study highlights the importance of constantly adapting to changing consumer behaviors and preferences to ensure that marketing plans remain relevant and effective. For businesses, the research underscores the urgent need to better leverage digital channels and deepen customer engagement to stay competitive and foster growth in a constantly evolving market. By providing actionable insights, this study provides practical recommendations for microenterprises seeking to optimize their marketing strategies in a rapidly evolving digital environment.

**Keywords:** Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC); Microenterprises; Online Media; Offline Media; Guangdong; Marketing Strategies.

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## 1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of rapid platform expansion and deep integration of technology into daily life, the pattern of online social influence has undergone significant changes. Large social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have become the primary channels for individuals and businesses to connect with audiences and friends, greatly promoting content sharing and transforming consumer behavior. Mahesh V.J. and Thanushree (2020) pointed out that consumers have a strong attraction to brand advertisements displayed on these platforms, which enables new brands to quickly attract audiences. However, offline media still plays an undeniable role in promoting consumer participation and enhancing brand awareness. Although online social media and traditional offline marketing have brought many opportunities for brands, they also come with many challenges. A significant issue is the surge in fake followers, especially fake accounts including bots, which not only weakens the brand's real influence but also damages the credibility of online influencers. In addition, companies sometimes adopt fraudulent strategies on social media, further weakening trust. While facing these challenges, complex algorithms have also had a profound impact on content strategies on social media platforms. Anand, Dutta, and Mukherjee (2020) discussed in detail these barriers in influencer marketing, emphasizing the many challenges faced in managing and adapting to constantly changing social media rules and trends.

Companies attempting to maintain high visibility and engagement in their target markets often face various challenges brought about by the complexity of social media. The changes in algorithms and content selection make it

difficult for companies to ensure effective interactive effects, and the exposure rate of content will also be distorted as a result. In addition, the moderation policies of social media pose sustained pressure on companies committed to maintaining brand awareness and audience engagement. At the same time, offline media marketing is not without obstacles. The effectiveness of traditional advertising channels is gradually declining, and data distortion often occurs in offline activities. Wang, Fu, Zhou, and Zhu (2022) pointed out in their research that when formulating marketing strategies, companies need to pay attention to the number of followers, interaction rate, content quality, specialized knowledge in specific fields, and platform relevance to ensure effective reach of target audiences.

In recent years, Chinese enterprises have faced numerous problems, trends, and challenges, making it particularly urgent to conduct in-depth research on online social influence and issues in offline media marketing. This study aims to reveal the underlying reasons for false participation, algorithmic bias, and reduced investment in offline media marketing. By exploring these obstacles, research provides guidance for strategic development and suggests effective solutions to enhance the reliability and impact of online and offline marketing activities. This study identified effective predictive models from data collected from Twitter and Medium, highlighting the crucial role of user profiles in defining online social influence (Gong et al., 2021).

It is worth noting that there are still gaps in existing research on digital marketing. Especially, it is urgent to analyze the correlation between the company's digital footprint coverage, omnichannel marketing strategy, digital capabilities, and customer engagement practices, and how these factors affect the company's online social influence and

offline media performance. The study by Bigsby, Ohlmann, and Zhao (2019) demonstrates the significant impact of social media on real-world outcomes; They found a correlation with the rate of athlete scholarship acquisition through tweet analysis. Capturing these factors and understanding how they synergistically affect a brand's market position and consumer perception provides important basis for optimizing strategies for businesses.

In the complex digital environment, micro enterprises particularly need to integrate online and offline media to effectively enhance the effectiveness of integrated marketing communication (IMC). Guangdong, as an economically active region in China, has an ideal background for studying the integration of micro enterprise media. The researcher's personal interest in this topic stems from her rich academic and professional background. With her undergraduate and master's degrees in marketing, she has a keen understanding of these marketing principles. As a marketing educator, she is dedicated to researching how to convey unified information among consumers through Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), helping businesses achieve effective communication in rapidly changing markets.

Focusing on improving IMC was aimed at developing improved strategies that microenterprises in Guangdong could leverage on traditional and digital media to achieve greater marketing competitiveness in the digital era. Such a pursuit not only enriched the researcher's teaching but also contributed to the broader field of marketing.

Summing it up, Integrated Marketing Communication issues, trends, and challenges were unique in China and deserved focused attention. A significant issue was the rapid technological advancement coupled with digital transformation, which resulted in fragmented media. Moreover, consumer interactions included social media, e-commerce, and traditional media, thus the need for a cohesive IMC strategy. Furthermore, the rise of digital influence and livestreaming became fragmented components of campaigns. To effectively convey and reach target audiences, one must maintain brand consistency and coherence across diverse media.

## 2. Methodology

The methodology section outlines the research design, the study's setting, the population and sampling techniques, the research instruments used, the data collection procedures, and the statistical treatment applied to the data. These elements are integral in ensuring the reliability and validity of the research findings.

### 2.1. Research Design

This research employed a comprehensive data mining approach to address the research questions outlined, focusing on company features, online social influence, and offline media marketing practices. The research design incorporated descriptive quantitative methods to gather and analyze data across multiple dimensions within the context of Guangdong, China. Through this research design, online social influence dynamics, and offline media marketing strategies in Guangdong, China.

### 2.2. Data Management

The research employed a quantitative methodology, utilizing existing datasets collected through data mining to gather numerical data. This approach enabled statistical

analysis to quantify behaviors and opinions, facilitating hypothesis testing and identifying correlations. The data collected included three types: numeric data, such as engagement rates, follower counts, and digital adaptability scores, provided measurable insights into online influence and company features; textual data, gathered from literature reviews, open-ended survey responses, and interviews, offered qualitative insights into offline media marketing practices; and categorical data, which classified information by company types, sectors, and marketing strategies, allowing for segmentation and deeper analysis. Together, these data types supported a comprehensive analysis of the factors shaping marketing strategies across both online and offline platforms.

## 2.3. Sampling Design

### 2.3.1. Sample Population

The selection criteria included enterprises actively engaged in both online and offline marketing activities. The population for this paper comprised microenterprises operating within Guangdong Province, China. Guangdong is a highly dynamic and economically significant region known for its rapid technological advancements and diverse market landscape. This study conducted a comprehensive analysis of the marketing strategies of micro enterprises in Guangdong Province, with a sample of managers from 400 micro enterprises. These samples are distributed in different cities to ensure that the research results can comprehensively reflect the operational status of micro enterprises throughout the province. Specifically, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Dongguan each provided 108 samples, while Foshan, Zhuhai, Zhongshan, Jiangmen, Huizhou, and Shantou each provided 11 samples, and Zhaoqing provided 10 samples.

The reason for choosing these cities is that they are not only economically active, but also have a large number of micro enterprises, which can provide diverse samples for research. This geographical diversity, including large commercial centers and relatively small regional markets, makes the research results widely representative, reflecting the commonalities and differences in marketing strategies of micro enterprises in Guangdong Province, ensuring the comprehensiveness and balance of analysis.

### 2.3.2. Respondents

After identifying the subject companies using proportionate stratified sampling, the selection of representatives from each business was based on a criteria-driven approach aligned with the selection process.

1. The company had to be registered as a micro enterprise and had to have marketing activities such as offline media or online influence.

2. Such companies had to be involved in e-commerce and retail online regarding their involvement with the issues on online influence and offline media.

3. Efforts were made to ask representatives involved in marketing the products for research purposes.

### 2.3.3. Research Instrument

This paper involves data mining techniques to collect information from online influence and measure its effectiveness. This includes follower count, engagement rate, content quality and social media platforms. Additionally, it also looked into niche expertise and relevance of platforms. This section seeks to identify key strategies that successfully engage users. The result will help us understand the complexities of online influence to craft tactics and strategies

that resonate with digital customers.

## 2.4. Statistical Treatment

The primary data collection tool for this research was a questionnaire, designed to gather information on the marketing strategies of micro-enterprises, specifically focusing on the integration of online and offline media. The questionnaire was divided into several sections: online social influence, assessing the use of social media platforms in terms of follower count, engagement rate, content quality, and platform relevance to the target audience; offline media strategies, which examined the use of traditional media like print, radio, and TV, as well as integrated marketing tactics such as experiential marketing, geo-targeting, and storytelling; and customer engagement, exploring how businesses interact with customers both online and offline and the effect of these interactions on customer loyalty and satisfaction. The questionnaire was reviewed by marketing and business research experts for validity, and a pilot study was conducted with a small sample to test reliability. Based on the feedback, adjustments were made, and the final version was distributed to the respondents.

## 3. Literature References

Abascal Mena (2019) emphasized the importance of awareness regarding digital footprints, particularly in corporate settings for managing online presence and reputation. They proposed a methodology for individuals to discover.

Brodie, Fehrer, Jaakkola, and Conduit (2019) built upon service-dominant logic to propose a framework for understanding the multi-actor engagement process. Their study expanded the concept of customer engagement to include engagement with various actors within networks, elucidating its implications for service ecosystems.

Hossain et al. (2020) explored the factors influencing omnichannel marketing integration quality and its effects on buying behavior and customer value, based on data from banking customers in Australia. Their study revealed that integration quality has hierarchical effects on marketing outcomes.

Jiang and Murmann (2022) compared digital economy developments between the US and China, with a focus on internet-based services and e-commerce. They found that China has surpassed the US in retail e-commerce and digital payment, attributing this to mobile-first digital infrastructure and rapid commercialization of digital products and services.

Lyu and Brewster (2020) investigated the relationship between influencer size and brand attitudes, suggesting that smaller influencers may foster stronger relationships with followers, indicating an inverse relationship between influencer size and strength of relationship.

Zatout, Guessoum, Neche, and Daoud (2019) predicted engagement rates on Algerian dialect Facebook pages, highlighting the significance of engagement rate in social media marketing.

Hollebeek and Macky (2019) developed a framework to identify antecedents and consequences related to content quality, providing insights into its role in enhancing consumer engagement, value, and trust.

Sayed A (2022) explored the interrelationship between competitiveness and niche marketing, suggesting that specializing in a market segment can be a superior strategy for companies seeking competitive advantage.

Zhang, Zhan, Li, and Ren (2022) Analyzed the semantic attitude formation among users in online platforms. The result showed that different types of social media platforms provide users with different attitudes towards a product or brand.

Hu and Xu (2019), the authors discussed the coexistence of both physical promotion and digital channels. They anchored their study on the integration theory and that of marketing mix. They termed it each other support thus providing guiding significance for SME's.

Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut (2020) build engagement and trust among social commerce sellers. They studied how platforms like Facebook influenced consumer engagement in small online sellers leading to trust and repeated sales. Eventually it found out that symbolic utilitarian and hedonistic values of live streaming affects customer engagement and trust in its products as well as the sellers.

Mikalef, Boura, Lekakos, and Krogstie (2019) investigated how firms can translate big data analytics into valuable insights for businesses. They highlighted resource configurations and contextual factors leading to performance gains with investments in big data.

Mishra (2019) analyzed digital storytelling on social media platforms using netnographic analysis, illustrating the evolutionary impact of storytelling on business and marketing strategies.

Kawanaka and Moriwaki (2019) emphasized the use of location-based models in online advertising campaigns to predict consumer segments with high advertising effectiveness.

## 4. Conclusion

### 4.1. Features

#### 1. Digital Footprint

When it comes to digital footprints, people are most likely to share activity data from health apps, while information like electricity usage is least shared. For customer engagement, published e-books are the mostly engaged activities, whereas webinars see much less use recently. In omnichannel marketing, microenterprises tend to involve customers in designing new products or services. At the same time, they're more inclined to invest in paid advertising than depend on earned media for boosting popularity. As for adaptability, customers feel confident in learning and using new technology, but they're less certain that tech alone can handle the challenges of the future. At the same time, a good digital footprint can enhance market competitiveness through online and offline integration, but enterprises need to avoid the negative impact of multi-platform information fragmentation.

#### 2. Customer Engagement

Micro-enterprises often post updates on social media (mean value 3.67) and publish new blog content (mean value 3.71). These activities can effectively promote customer participation and interaction. However, compared to other activities, webinars are held less frequently (mean 3.61), which is consistent with Sharma et al.'s (2021) findings on "webinar fatigue", indicating that excessive participation in such activities may lead to Customer fatigue and dissatisfaction. Customer engagement is crucial in improving brand loyalty and user stickiness. Through effective interaction, high-quality content and platform relevance, companies can strengthen their connection with consumers, thereby stimulating engagement and driving purchase decisions.

### 3. Omnichannel Marketing

This study found that micro-enterprises show active participation in omni-channel marketing, especially in product development that actively seeks and incorporates the consumer perspective, with a weighted mean of 4.41 (“always”). Schweitzer et al.'s (2020) research on new product innovation. By drawing inspiration from customer feedback, microenterprises can significantly enhance product innovation and market success. However, micro-enterprises are relatively less likely to use earned media (such as customer testimonials), with a mean of only 2.01 (“rarely”).

Omnichannel marketing plays a key role in ensuring seamless interaction between businesses and consumers. By integrating online and offline channels, businesses can improve satisfaction and brand loyalty. Omnichannel marketing not only expands the market coverage of enterprises, but also meets consumer needs more accurately through personalized contact methods. In addition, the government can promote the application of the omnichannel model in different industries, and help enterprises innovate marketing strategies through policy support and digital infrastructure construction, thereby promoting the stable growth of the market.

### 4. Digital adaptability

Microenterprises excel in digital adaptability, particularly in their confidence in learning and using new digital tools (weighted mean 4.03, described as “often”). The research of Herlina et al. (2023), which pointed out that Generation Y and Generation Z entrepreneurs have strong ability and confidence in using digital tools. Although they are confident in learning new technologies, they still have some concerns when facing digital challenges, which echoes the findings of Abaddi and Al-Shboul (2023) in developing countries, indicating that although these entrepreneurs feel uncomfortable with technology Confident, but constraints on market access, funding and guidance still leave them facing challenges. Therefore, micro-enterprises should strengthen training for employees to help them effectively respond to changes in the digital environment. Adaptability is a key feature for companies to remain competitive in a rapidly changing market environment.

## 4.2. Online Social Influence

By optimizing content quality and timely interaction, companies can increase engagement rates and enhance users' brand identity. Gap between content quality and credibility Although content quality has the highest correlation score (4.73), the relatively low credibility score (1.99) reflects problems with the credibility of information disseminated through social media. This finding is consistent with Khairunissa's (2020) concerns about disinformation. Therefore, when formulating policies and guiding enterprises, the government should emphasize the importance of platform selection and encourage enterprises to reasonably use diversified social media platforms according to their own brand characteristics and target audiences to maximize their marketing effects and brand influence. By promoting the activities of enterprises on appropriate platforms, the government can help enhance overall market vitality and competitiveness.

## 4.3. Features and Online Social Influence

Socujaji et al. (2022) pointed out that the attributes of content (such as target location, video length, and whether the

content is sponsored or spontaneous) are important predictors of digital footprint, which in turn affects participation rates. Furthermore, customer engagement was significantly related to platform relevance ( $P = 0.003$ ), which emphasizes the importance of users tending to choose high-quality platforms for interaction. Rukiastindari et al. (2023) found that platform features indirectly affect loyalty and customer engagement, further demonstrating the importance of platform relevance. Content quality also has a study on the correlation between high-quality YouTube videos and engagement rates. However, there is no significant relationship between the omni-channel strategy and the various dimensions of online social influence, which reflects that consumers switching between different channels have become the norm. As Akter et al. (2021) pointed out, consumption Consumers often switch between offline and online when looking for more cost-effective products. Finally, the non-significant relationship between digital adaptability and online social influence suggests that as adaptability to technology increases, users may pursue more meaningful experiences. By strengthening these characteristics, companies can more effectively use online social influence to promote their market performance and brand loyalty. Therefore, micro-enterprises should focus on optimizing their digital footprint, improving content quality, and choosing the right platform to enhance their online social presence.

## 4.4. Offline Media Marketing

Zhu (2023) believes that improving service transparency and providing consumers with flexible channel choices are key factors in enhancing interaction with digital channels. Secondly, in terms of experiential marketing, the creativity and visual appeal of offline advertising significantly affect consumers' interest and engagement. From customer feedback, product recommendations to demand forecasting, data analysis is considered extremely important for business decision-making. As Chen et al. (2023) pointed out, the improvement of data analysis capabilities can significantly enhance the growth performance of startups. This emphasizes the importance of integrating data analysis in marketing strategies for micro enterprises to adjust their marketing plans. By effectively combining offline media with online social influence, enterprises can not only enhance brand influence, but also achieve higher market coverage and customer satisfaction. This comprehensive strategy will provide greater flexibility and competitiveness for enterprises in future marketing practices. In summary, small and micro enterprises should integrate the above key factors into their offline media marketing strategies, optimize customer experience, and improve overall marketing effectiveness. This comprehensive strategy not only helps to enhance brand influence, but also increases consumer loyalty and engagement.

## 4.5. Features and Offline Media Marketing

Effective integration strategies are crucial for enhancing media influence. Bushuyev et al. (2021) pointed out that the digital footprint of a project affects its success through dynamic and integrated models, therefore, proper management and integration of digital footprints can improve project outcomes. These data can be used to optimize offline advertising strategies to ensure that ads reach relevant consumers, thereby improving the effectiveness of offline marketing activities. Research shows that companies with a good digital footprint can better predict consumer demand

and provide corresponding services at the right time and place. Companies can increase customer engagement through interactive offline activities, such as promotional events and product experience conferences. Research has shown that active customer engagement can effectively enhance brand awareness and market competitiveness. By integrating online and offline marketing, companies can create seamless customer experiences, thereby enhancing consumer trust in the brand. Omnichannel strategy also allows companies to collect real-time feedback and adjust marketing strategies based on changes.

#### **4.6. Online Social Influence and Offline Media Marketing**

Influential individuals or businesses with high fan numbers can better drive offline activities, such as participating in events, purchasing products, or increasing brand engagement through traditional advertising channels such as television, radio, or print media. Regarding the relationship between content quality and offline media, this indicates that as content quality improves, the effectiveness of data analysis may decrease. This phenomenon may be related to the "negative PR effect" present in social media, where low-quality content sometimes attracts more negative emotions but instead increases some form of engagement (Tsoumakos and Giannakopoulos, 2020).

High quality content can attract more consumer attention and participation, especially on social media. When brands are able to create engaging content online, consumers are more likely to share this content when participating in offline activities. This online and offline interaction not only strengthens the emotional connection between consumers and brands, but also promotes the improvement of brand image. Therefore, when designing offline marketing campaigns, brands should ensure that their content is consistent with high-quality content on social media to create a unified brand experience.

It can alleviate the online impact. Niche expertise is also important for the combination of online social influence and offline media marketing. A brand's expertise in a specific field can enhance its online influence, thereby increasing the attractiveness of its offline activities. For example, brands can showcase their expertise and attract target audiences by hosting professional lectures, seminars, or product launches. Through these strategies, brands can establish an authoritative image in the minds of consumers, thereby driving sales and customer loyalty.

#### **4.7. The Model of Integrating Online Marketing with Offline Media**

The online marketing and offline media integration model constructed in this study deeply reveals the multi-level relationship and interaction between enterprise characteristics, offline media and online social influence. This model clearly shows how to create higher market value and brand influence for enterprises by effectively coordinating online and offline resources. The model consists of two key substructures, which are summarized as follows:

In the model, customer engagement in enterprise characteristics is connected through platform relevance, content quality and engagement rate, which shows that these characteristics are crucial to enhancing the online influence of enterprises. The core elements of online social influence are engagement rate and content quality, which are particularly

important in driving user interaction, deepening brand awareness and enhancing market loyalty.

## **5. Recommendations**

### **5.1. Features**

#### **1. Enhance Digital Footprint**

Microenterprises should leverage digital platforms to increase visibility and engage customers through online activities, such as sharing health-related content and participating in social media trends.

#### **2. Foster Customer Engagement**

Develop initiatives that encourage direct interaction with customers, such as webinars or online forums, to create meaningful connections and build brand loyalty.

#### **3. Implement Omnichannel Marketing**

Design strategies that integrate various marketing channels, ensuring a seamless experience for customers as they move between online and offline platforms. The importance of this was highlighted by Huang (2021), who found that microenterprises that effectively blended digital and physical customer interactions saw a 20% increase in engagement.

#### **4. Promote Digital Adaptability**

Invest in user-friendly digital tools and applications that support customer learning and engagement, making it easier for them to adapt to new technologies and enhancing their overall experience.

### **5.2. Online Social Influence**

#### **1. Enhance Follower Count**

Implement strategies such as engaging contests and collaborations with influencers to increase follower counts on social media platforms, thereby expanding brand reach.

#### **2. Boost Engagement Rates**

Use interactive content such as polls, quizzes, and live videos to actively engage followers, encouraging them to interact with the brand and share their experiences.

#### **3. Ensure High Content Quality**

Prioritize creating high-quality, valuable content that resonates with the target audience, enhancing credibility and encouraging organic shares and interactions.

#### **4. Leverage Niche Expertise**

Position the brand as a leader in a specific niche by sharing expert insights, tips, and unique content tailored to the audience's interests, fostering trust and loyalty.

#### **5. Optimize for Platform Relevance**

Tailor content to fit the unique characteristics and audience preferences of each social media platform, ensuring maximum engagement and relevance in communications.

### **5.3. Features and Online Social Influence**

Ensure that the features identified (such as digital footprint and customer engagement) are aligned with online social influence efforts to maximize their impact on marketing outcomes.

### **5.4. Offline Media Marketing**

**1. Integration with Digital Channels.** Seamlessly blend offline media with digital platforms to create a cohesive marketing strategy that allows customers to transition smoothly between online and offline experiences.

**2. Experiential Marketing.** Develop immersive experiences by creating visually attractive showrooms and web rooms, utilizing technologies such as virtual try-ons to enhance

customer engagement and overall experience.

3. **Data Analytics.** Regularly track customer feedback and employ data analytics to refine offline marketing strategies, ensuring they align with customer preferences and enhance satisfaction.

4. **Incorporate Storytelling and User-Generated Content.** Frequently introduce conflict or challenges in marketing narratives to make campaigns more engaging and relatable, capturing customer interest effectively.

5. **Geo-Targeting and Location-Based Marketing.** Utilize geo-targeting strategies primarily through email alerts and other communication channels to ensure timely and relevant outreach based on customer locations.

## 5.5. Features and Offline Media Marketing

Microenterprise features should be integrated with offline media marketing to optimize consumer experience. Align Offline Campaigns with Digital Insights. Use insights gained from online data analytics to inform and enhance offline media marketing strategies, ensuring a cohesive approach.

## 5.6. Online Social Influence and Offline Media Marketing

Combining online social influence with offline media marketing offers a seamless experience for consumers across platforms. Create Integrated Campaigns, develop campaigns that synergize online social influence and offline media marketing, ensuring each channel enhances the effectiveness of the other.

## 5.7. The Model of Integrating Online Marketing with Offline Media

Utilize the provided model to determine priority areas for enhancement within the integrated communication network. Focus on aspects with more lines, as these indicate the highest effect with the least effort required. Similar to the findings of Zhang and Liu (2023), which highlighted that microenterprises that prioritize resource allocation based on data-driven strategies tend to achieve higher returns, this strategic approach will optimize marketing strategies in the digital era for Guangdong, China. By adopting Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) principles, businesses can ensure that their messaging is cohesive across all platforms, further enhancing the effectiveness of resource allocation. By ensuring that resources are allocated effectively and aligned with IMC strategies, businesses can achieve significant outcomes.

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