Analysis of Online and Offline Marketing Approaches in the Beauty Industry

Xingyan Chen *

New Channel International Education Group Limited, Kunming, 650051, China

* Corresponding Author Email: chenxingyan7373@outlook.com

Abstract. With the penetration of digital technology and changes in consumption patterns, the marketing direction of the beauty industry is transforming to the integration of online and offline omni-channel. This study focuses on the change of marketing mode in the beauty industry in the context of digital economy, with the purpose of exploring the status quo, problems, and optimisation paths of online and offline omni-channel marketing. Through the analysis, it is found that the main selection factors of customers in different marketing channels of online shopping platforms, live broadcasting rooms, and offline shops are the sense of shopping ceremony, service experience, discount strength, shopping gifts, and consumption atmosphere. Meanwhile, this paper combines some brand cases to sort out online and offline marketing methods such as social media e-commerce, platform flagship shops, traditional counters, and membership activities. Based on the questionnaire data, it reveals the dominant position of online channels, the value of offline experience, the consumption preference of young groups, the importance of consumer atmosphere, the importance of discounts and other characteristics. Aiming at the problems of "high marketing cost" and "the decrease of offline turnover leads to the decrease of counters", this study puts forward strategies of strengthening offline experience, optimising online precision marketing and deepening omni-channel linkage, which provide practical reference for beauty enterprises to balance the online and offline resources and enhance the marketing effectiveness. The study provides a practical reference for beauty enterprises to balance online and offline resources and improve marketing effectiveness.

Keywords: Online and offline marketing; beauty industry; digital technology.

1. Introduction

At present, the development of the digital economy is advancing by leaps and bounds, and under the strong support of the Internet, big data, artificial intelligence and other technologies, the new retail model has come out of nowhere, bringing radical changes to the marketing layout of the beauty industry. The new retail model always puts consumers in the core position, makes every effort to break the boundaries between online and offline, realizes the efficient integration of resources, and creates an all-round, undifferentiated shopping experience for consumers [1].

Among the many online channels, the development of social media platforms is very strong, among which Jitterbug and Xiaohongshu are outstanding. With about 800 million monthly active users domestically and 1.2 billion globally, Douyin dominates the short video field, and its precise algorithmic recommendation mechanism can push personalized content based on user behaviour, which means that beauty brands can improve their marketing efficiency by accurately reaching their target users. In terms of live e-commerce, Jitterbug's GMV accounted for more than 35%, and the average daily user time was 120 minutes, so the strong user stickiness provides a natural soil for the closed loop of "planting grass-conversion" for beauty live broadcasting. Xiaohongshu 210 million monthly active users, female users accounted for more than 70%, as a gathering place for beauty enthusiasts, the platform of beauty notes on the annual growth of 40% and e-commerce conversion rate of vertical platforms in the first place, this "content + consumption" ecology makes it become the core platform for word-of-mouth dissemination and product promotion of beauty brands [1-3].

With the rise of these social media platforms, beauty brands have shifted from traditional single-channel marketing to the "online + offline" omni-channel model, and the importance of online revenue in the beauty industry has become increasingly prominent. Perrier's online revenue accounted for 93.07% in 2023, which intuitively reflects that the online channel has become the core driver of the revenue growth of beauty brands [1]. In addition to social media e-commerce, traditional online shopping platforms such as Taobao and Tmall are also important positions for beauty sales. Taobao monthly activity of 951 million, ranked first in integrated e-commerce, Taobao Tmall active buyers in the opening year of 2025 exceeded 1 billion level, the core consumer group 88VIP reached 49 million, a huge user base for the beauty brand to provide a broad traffic pool. 2025 618 promotion period, Taobao Tmall beauty turnover in the mainstream e-commerce platform accounted for 48.7%, and the beauty and personal care became the platform's third largest industry, indicating that the comprehensive e-commerce platform is still the mainstream choice for beauty consumption [1,2]

However, the status of the offline market of the beauty industry is not optimistic. Nielsen IQ data show that during 2019-2023, the number of beauty counters in department stores and shopping malls in 51 cities across the country has drastically decreased from 15,415 to 9,502, and nearly 6,000 counters have disappeared in five years, with a contraction rate of nearly 40%, which is a direct confirmation of the contraction trend of offline beauty counters. From the brand point of view, Shiseido Group's IPSA Invisalign counters nearly halved a year, Shiseido and CPB Skin Key is also in the "not open anti-closure" state; Clinique and the source of wood last year not only did not open new shops, but also reduced by 2 and 9, respectively, the closure of these brands reflect the data of the international beauty brands in China offline The contraction trend of the channel

Data from the China Chain Store Management Association shows that in 2022-2024, in 447 key shopping centres in 13 cities, the ratio of switching shops in the cosmetics sector was 0.85, showing a clear contraction trend, indicating that offline beauty retail as a whole is facing operational pressure. Even veteran shopping malls are not spared, Ganjiakou Department Store has drastically reduced its beauty counters after renovation, Hong Kong beauty retail giant Sa International will close all offline shops in the mainland in 2025, Watson's China revenue declined by 16% in 2024 and its operating profit turned negative, and Sephora's China three-year cumulative loss of 981 million yuan, all of these cases show that offline beauty retailing is facing challenges to its survival, from special counters to collection shops [1].

The impact of online channels, fierce competition from domestic beauty brands, and the seizure of prime locations on the ground floor of shopping malls by emerging consumer brands have together led to the plight of beauty counters [1,4]. Against this backdrop, the beauty industry is in urgent need of rebalancing online and offline resources, optimizing marketing logic and exploring new paths for synergistic omni-channel development.

2. Existing Marketing Situations in the Beauty Market

2.1. Online Marketing

Among online channels, social media e-commerce is an important position for beauty brand marketing [1,2]. With the influence of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs), the live broadcast of Jieyin shows the effect of the use of beauty products and carries out "seeding" recommendations, which, together with limited time offers, discounts and other promotional activities, greatly shortens the purchase decision time of consumers [1,2]. Relevant data show that the average number of viewers of the Shake Beauty live broadcast can often reach millions, and the conversion rate is also rising. Xiaohongshu, with its unique User-Generated Content (UGC) model, allows users to freely share their real beauty tips and experiences, which can trigger the interest and resonance of other users, forming a virtuous cycle of "experience - sharing - repurchase". With hundreds of millions of beauty-related notes on the platform and billions of views per month, the platform provides an excellent platform for the promotion and dissemination of beauty brands.

Brand official websites and flagship shops on major e-commerce platforms are the key pillars of online sales for beauty brands [1,2]. The brand's official website mainly displays the brand culture, product line, and some exclusive content, which allows consumers to understand the brand more deeply and enhances brand recognition and user stickiness [1,2]. On E-commerce platforms such as Tmall and Jingdong, beauty flagship shops attract a large number of consumers by relying on the platform's huge traffic and mature shopping system [1,2]. At the same time, the brand uses the AIPL model for refined operation, and in the awareness stage, it creates interesting advertisements by cooperating with popular film, TV, and variety IPs, which triggers topic discussions on social media and enhances the brand's popularity [1,4]. For example, a beauty brand cooperated with a popular TV series to launch a co-branded makeup series, and the related topics were read hundreds of millions of times on Weibo. In the interest stage, personalized recommendation algorithms are used to push product content for users that matches their preferences; in the purchase stage, consumers are stimulated to buy through discounts, freebies and other promotions during the big sale [1].

Taobao and Tmall occupy an important position in the field of beauty sales by virtue of their huge user base and perfect e-commerce ecology [1,2]. In terms of product categories, they cover a rich range of beauty product lines. in February 2025, in the beauty and skincare sector, the cleanser category bucked the trend with a 9.3% year-on-year growth rate, with sales of 621 million yuan, reflecting the increased consumer demand for basic cleansing products. In terms of brand performance, among the top 10 brands in the beauty and skincare section of the Tmall and Taobao platforms in February 2025, Winona saw the fastest year-on-year sales growth of 59.9%, while SK-II grew by 57.2%. The platform also attracts consumers to buy by organizing various promotional activities, such as 618, Double 11, etc. During the 618 period in 2025, Taobao Tmall beauty sales performed well, and high-end beauty continued to grow, with Valentino's beauty growing by more than 100% year-on-year, and several brands, such as YSL, Hourglass, and Clarisonic, growing by more than 60% year-on-year.

2.2. Offline Marketing

Traditional beauty counters are still an important scene for offline experience and service [4]. The counters provide on-site colour and fragrance testing services, as well as one-on-one consultation and recommendation by professional buyers, which enables consumers to intuitively feel the products, obtain professional advice, and satisfy their personalized needs for beauty products [4]. Mao Geping's offline counters attract a large number of loyal customers through free make-up services, allowing consumers to feel the effect of the product, and the repurchase rate of its high-level members is more than 80% [4]. The counters also provide convenience of instant pickup, so consumers can get the goods immediately after purchase, which solves their urgent needs.

Beauty brands hold offline new product launches, members-only salons, and other events to increase interaction with consumers and foster brand loyalty [4,5]. Marimekko launched the "Store Manager for a Day" campaign on 8 March 2025 in its offline shops in 24 cities across China, inviting KOLs to act as shop managers for a day and interact with customers to share their beauty experiences, which resulted in a 30% year-on-year increase in sales in the offline department store channel during the campaign period [4,5]. The perfect membership system provides members with benefits such as points exchange, birthday privileges, and exclusive discounts, which effectively enhance the loyalty and repurchase rate of members [4,5].

2.3. Online and Offline Linkage

Omni-channel linkage has become a new trend in the beauty industry [1,5]. Perrier extends the online popular "Early C, Late A" skincare concept to offline flash shops, online publicity to attract traffic, and offline flash shops to provide immersive experience, successfully realizing the online and offline traffic feeding each other. In accelerating the sinking of Sephora into third- and fourth-tier cities, Sephora promotes the preferential activities and special services of offline shops through online platforms to attract traffic to offline shops, and at the same time guides offline consumers to the online membership system for subsequent marketing interactions.

3. Questionnaire Data Analysis

This study adopts a quantitative research method to collect consumer preference data on beauty purchase channels by distributing questionnaires through the online questionnaire platform Credamo Seeing Numbers. The questionnaire was designed to focus on consumers' main purchasing channels and the reasons for their choices, including multiple choice questions and single choice questions, involving four dimensions: purchasing channel preference, channel choice drivers, demographic characteristics and consumer behaviour. The samples were targeted through the platform's user pool, and 60 valid questionnaires were collected. The data collection period was dynamically adjusted according to the platform's settings and the users' responses. The questionnaire first identifies the channels that respondents commonly used to purchase beauty products and then conducts a detailed analysis of the reasons for choosing each channel. At the same time, information on the respondents' age group, average monthly expenditure on beauty products, and commonly used categories is collected to support cross-tabulation analysis and consumption behaviour segmentation. The study reveals key trends through descriptive statistical analyses, providing empirical evidence for beauty channel strategies

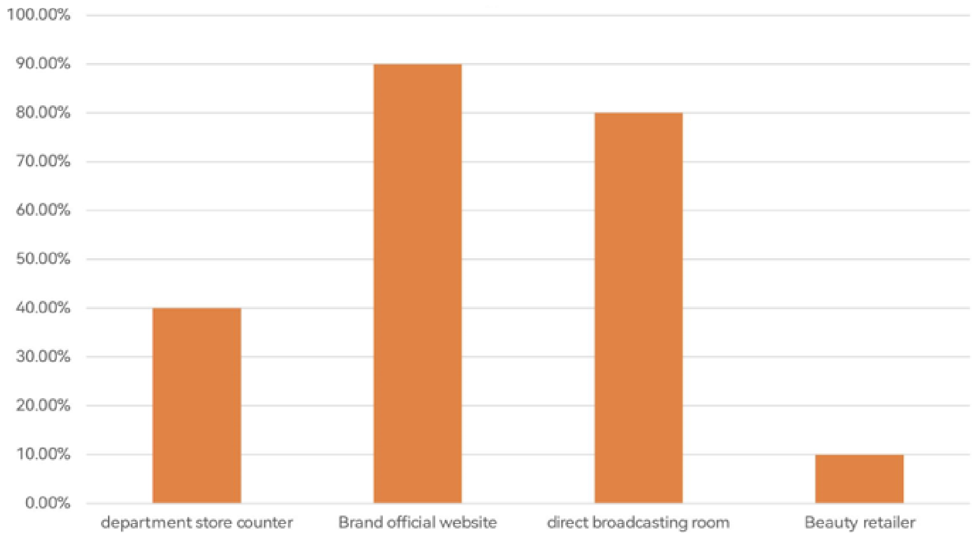

Fig 1. Consumer channel preferences.

Figure 1 shows that option 1 (department stores/shopping centres) accounted for 40.00%, while option 2 (branded Tmall/Jingdong, etc.) accounted for 90.00%, reflecting that the official online platforms of the brand are favored, and that consumers value their guarantee of authenticity, branded services, convenient shopping and high degree of trust. The proportion of consumers choosing online shopping platforms such as Jitterbug/Taobao was 80.00%, reflecting that these comprehensive e-commerce platforms attracted a large number of consumers due to the richness of products and the strong consumer atmosphere. Those who chose to go to department stores or shopping centres accounted for 40%, indicating that a certain number of consumers prefer traditional offline shopping scenes, so that they can feel and experience the products in person.

The smallest number of people choose to go to beauty collection shops accounted for 10.00%, beauty collection shops are relatively niche, may be affected by its layout, product features, etc., the consumer group is narrower.

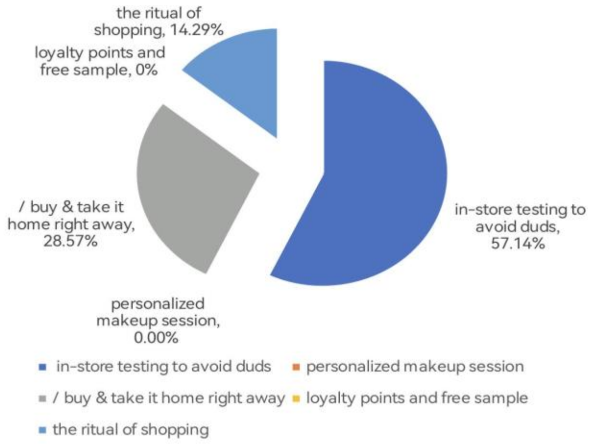

Fig 2. Determinants of consumers' in-store purchase intention at brand counters.

As shown in Figure 2, the number of people who chose option 1 on-site colour/fragrance trial etc. as the main factor accounted for 57.14%, which is the core advantage of offline shopping, and consumers attach importance to in-person trial and professional guide recommendation to reduce the risk of purchase. And no one chose option 2 trial service, accounting for 0%, indicating that the service is extremely low attraction to consumers, may not be in place or weak demand for the service. Accounting for the second largest consideration for option 3 on-the-spot pick-up, this factor accounted for 28.57%, reflecting the convenience of offline buy-now, suitable for consumers in urgent need of goods. Considering the 4th option, membership points accounted for 0% of the total number of people, this type of rights and benefits are not attractive to consumers, probably because the rights and benefits are not prominent or low awareness. Finally, the third largest factor for shopping rituals, etc. accounted for 14.29%, some consumers value offline shopping social, experiential atmosphere, as a way of leisure.

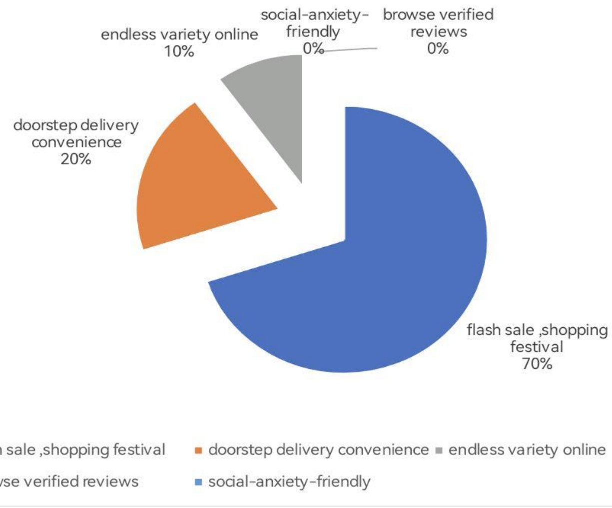

Fig 3. Determinants of consumers' online shopping intention on e-commerce platforms.

As shown in Figure 3, the proportion of those who chose option 1 big promotion discounts is the largest, 70.00%, big promotion discounts are large, is the key to attract consumers to online shopping, consumers pursue cost-effective. Option 2 one-click order to home in the options accounted for 20.00%, reflecting the convenience of online shopping, saving time and energy, in line with the needs of fast-paced life. On the contrary, the factor of more online choices only accounted for 10.00%, indicating that online platforms are rich in commodities, but compared with discounts and so on, it has less influence on consumer decision-making.

Option 4 (user evaluation screening) and Option 5 (sociophobic friendly) accounted for 0%, which is not within the scope of factors that consumers consider when choosing channels. Reflecting consumers' low demand for other users' feedback and avoidance of socialization, or offline communication is also acceptable.

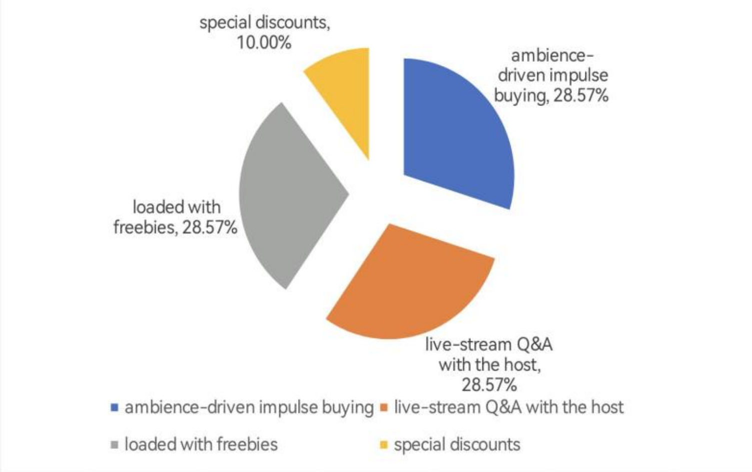

Fig 4. Live-stream shopping determinants.

As shown in Figure 4, there are three factors with the same percentage. The first factor is the anchor live color trial plus real-time Q&A, the second factor is the rich giveaways buy one get one free, and the third factor is the atmosphere to stimulate the consumption impulse. These three factors each account for 20% are tied as the most popular factors. This shows that the anchor live show, interactive Q&A, can let consumers understand the goods, promote the purchase. And gifts can increase the added value of goods, stimulating consumers to order because of the "extra get". Price discounts, which are more attractive on other channels, do not account for a large proportion of the factors affecting the live broadcast.

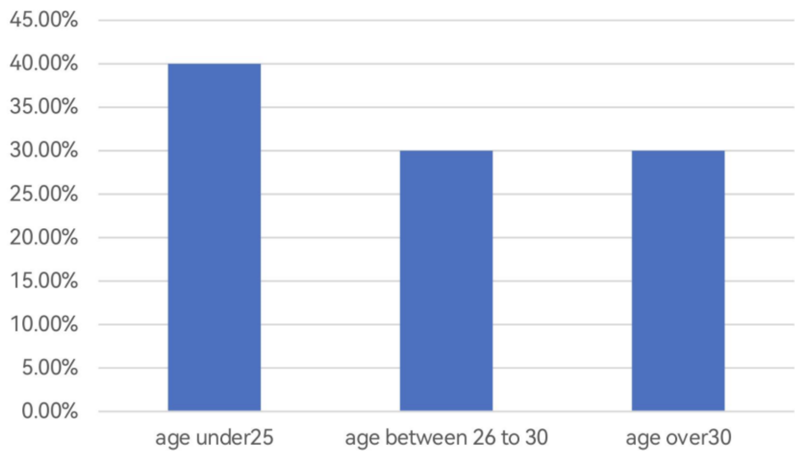

Fig 5. Age distribution chart.

As shown in Figure 5, the proportion of subjects under 25 years old is 40.00%, indicating that the young group (under 25 years old) accounts for a relatively high proportion of the sample and is an important consumer group. The proportion of subjects aged 26-30 is 30.00%, which means that consumers in this age group have a certain consumption ability and demand, and are an important component of the consumer market. In addition, subjects aged 31 and above accounted for 30.00%, and consumers aged 31 and above also accounted for a considerable proportion of their consumption preferences and needs are worthy of attention and can be mined for the corresponding consumption characteristics.

4. Optimization Recommendations

4.1. Offline Counter Optimization Strategy

Strengthen the experience service, further expand the range of trial products, in addition to popular products, and increase the provision of trial sets of niche and new products. At the same time, the use of disposable trial tools, such as lip brushes, eyeshadow sticks, etc., enhances hygiene and safety, so that consumers can feel more confident in the trial. Launching the activity of "free samples of various products when purchasing the original package", so that consumers can try more products and enhance their knowledge and love of the brand's product line [4-6].

Expand takeaway services. Cooperate with takeaway platforms to extend the advantage of instant pickup at the counter to online order delivery service. Consumers are able to obtain products quickly through the takeaway platform when they have urgent beauty needs to meet their timeliness needs and enhance the brand’s competitiveness.

4.2. Online Channel Optimization Strategy

Accurate marketing and cost control, based on big data analysis, can more accurately locate the target customer groups and optimize the KOL cooperation strategy. Reduce the over-reliance on high-cost head KOL, increase cooperation with mid-range KOL and vertical KOL, and improve the cost-effectiveness of marketing investment. For example, cooperate with KOLs that focus on ingredient analysis to promote efficacious beauty products and improve the targeting and effectiveness of product promotion [7, 8].

Online and offline linkage innovation. For live broadcast users, design "offline exclusive gift" activities, guide online consumers to offline stores to receive gifts, experience the product, and realize the diversion of online traffic to offline. Carry out online and offline synchronized membership activities, such as online points offline exchange for exclusive services, to enhance the omni-channel shopping experience and loyalty of members [4,5].

Cross-border co-branding and celebrity cooperation. Drawing on the successful model of cross-border co-branding of Mao Geping, launch co-branding cooperation with popular IPs, such as animation, games and art exhibitions, launch limited edition co-branded products, and set up exclusive pick-up or purchase scenarios offline to attract young consumers. Invite celebrities to be "one-day store managers" in offline stores or hold celebrity meet-and-greet events to create buzz and attract young fans [4,5].

Strengthen digital interactive experience. Using AR and VR technologies can provide young consumers with interactive experiences such as virtual makeup trials and virtual skincare tutorials, so as to enhance the fun and attractiveness of online shopping. Offline stores set up digital interactive devices, such as intelligent makeup mirrors, product interactive display screens, etc., to enhance the sense of technology and experience of offline shopping [4,9].

The use of short video platforms can provide online live purchase channels, optimize online marketing content presentation for different groups, such as online channels for male consumers, can use more direct product picture display, combined with celebrity and athlete endorsement, through the form of short videos to convey the core information of the product, while the female market with the narrative marketing approach [10].

5. Conclusion

This study focuses on the online and offline omni-channel marketing of the beauty industry in the context of the digital economy, and through case studies and questionnaires, it clarifies the core features of the current industry marketing: online social media e-commerce, platform flagship stores as the core, Shake, Xiaohongshu and Taobao Tmall have become the key position by virtue of the advantages of traffic and conversion, and Puraiya and other brands account for more than 90% of the online revenues; offline is affected by the impact of the shrinking of counters, but experience services and membership activities still have value; omni-channel linkage has become a trend, and Puraiya and Sephora have realized online and offline traffic mutual feeding. Although offline is affected by the shrinkage of counters, experience services and membership activities are still valuable; omni-channel linkage has become a trend, and Perrier, Sephora and other brands have realized online and offline traffic feeding each other. The questionnaire also reveals consumers' demand for online promotional discounts (70% preference), offline color-testing experience (57.14% preference), and the importance of young groups (40% under 25 years old), and proposes targeted optimization strategies. There are shortcomings in this study: first, the questionnaire only recovered 60 valid samples, with limited representativeness, which may affect the generalizability of the conclusions; second, it did not deeply break down the marketing differences between beauty categories (e.g., skincare, color cosmetics), and did not involve the influence of geographic regions, purchasing power, and other variables, so the research dimensions are relatively homogeneous. In the future, the study can be deepened in two aspects: first, expanding the sample size and scope, and subdividing the categories to explore the adaptive strategies; second, combining emerging technologies such as AI virtual makeup trial and meta-universe marketing, or focusing on sustainable marketing and men's beauty market, so as to provide the industry with a more forward-looking reference.

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