

# Research on the Marketing Strategy of Girlcult National Beauty Brand

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**Abstract:** Generation Z is characterized by the consumption habits of pursuing quality of life and personalized expression. The consumption concept has gradually transitioned from focusing on product functions, cost performance and following Western trends to pursuing the spiritual attributes, aesthetics and cultural pride of products. "As soon as the concept of "national trend" appeared, it quickly occupied every corner of the market. National trend beauty brands with Generation Z as the main consumer target group are full of vitality by taking advantage of this consumer trend. As one of many Chinese fashion beauty brands, Girlcult is the first to create a personalized Chinese fashion girl beauty brand positioning of "weird, romantic and adventurous". Open the market quickly. The purpose of this article is to study the marketing strategy of Girlcult, a national fashion cosmetics brand, to explore ways of reference for the development of the national fashion cosmetics brand market, and to promote its rapid and healthy development.

**Keywords:** Girlcult; National Trend; Beauty Brand; Marketing Strategy.

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## 1. Introduction

With the rapid development of China's economy and the improvement of the overall quality of the people, the group of young consumers with distinctive personalities born between 1995 and 2009 is called Generation Z consumers. As one of the main forces in the future consumer market, Generation Z has injected new vitality into the consumer market, guided a new trend, and formed a new situation. One of the manifestations of consumption upgrading is the diversification of demand. Generation Z has more diversified consumer interests and shows a tendency to seek self-pleasing experience, pay attention to social attributes, and express value. In this context, the beauty industry that can meet the needs of self-pleasing and the national tide beauty brands that contain the needs of value expression have won the favor of a large number of Generation Z consumers. According to the relevant data of the "China Cosmetics Yearbook 2023" released by Qingyan Intelligence, the overall scale of China's cosmetics industry in 2023 is 797.2 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 5.2%. At the same time, in 2023, the sales of domestic beauty products increased by 21.2% year-on-year, and the market share reached 50.4%, surpassing foreign cosmetics brands for the first time. Girlcult, a local beauty brand, has deeply rooted its national trend genes in its unique understanding of traditional culture. With its personalized positioning, avant-garde visual design style, rich product lines, and effective brand marketing strategies, it has successfully established its brand image and attracted the attention of a large number of young consumers of Generation Z.

## 2. Girlcult Brand Overview

Girlcult (hereinafter referred to as Girlcult) is a stylish national trend cosmetics brand, mainly targeting the Z generation consumer group. After its establishment in July 2018, it quickly entered the cosmetics market with blush, a vertical cosmetics category, and has a high degree of topic in the cosmetics circle, and quickly emerged among the young

consumer group. Girlcult's product line has covered a variety of categories such as makeup, foundation, and skin care. Among them, the makeup line is currently the main product line, including eye shadow, eyeliner, blush, lip glaze, lip cream and other categories. It has launched a series of products such as glam rock, religious legends, emotional blush, Shanhaijing, Utopia, Cyber Liaozhai, Dream of the Garden, Four Great Inventions, and Gold Rush. Girlcult has a deep insight into the aesthetic and emotional resonance needs of Z generation consumers, takes personalization as its brand label, and takes "weird, romantic, and adventurous" as the underlying keywords of the brand concept architecture. It is committed to showing the diverse charm and individual attitude of young women through cosmetics products.

## 3. Girlcult Brand Marketing Strategy

Lynn Apshaw defines brand as follows in her book "Shaping Brand Characteristics": Brand is the name, logo and other displayable marks that distinguish a product or service from other products and services. The formation of a brand in consumer cognition requires a process of first gestation and then incubation, from the accumulation of relevant cognitive materials to the change of actions. Girlcult adopts a full-range and multi-perspective marketing strategy to showcase the brand's product and service characteristics and the brand's irreplaceability, so that consumers can reach, remember and associate with brand information, and promote brand loyalty and influence.

### 3.1. Give Vitality: Differentiation of National Trend Style

Girlcult was founded in 2018, when Chinese products were on the rise. The relevant Chinese elements have penetrated into various subcategories of daily necessities such as clothing, beauty products, and stationery, and have been greatly welcomed by young people. The beauty industry, which is highly sensitive to market demand, has also rapidly carried out the Chinese trend of brand and product positioning. Currently, Chinese beauty brands that occupy a large market

share, such as Huaxizi, Perfect Diary, Juduo, and Colorkey, were all founded in 2017 or 2018, and appeared in the public eye as "Chinese beauty brands". The visual design of brand products that are recreated based on and inspired by traditional Chinese cultural elements is also common in the beauty industry.

Girlcult focuses on the booming "national tide culture" and officially introduced the "new Chinese" style in 2022. It is committed to creating the brand image of "new Chinese national tide beauty" and constantly developing classic elements and IP of traditional Chinese culture in the appearance and name design of the products. It combines them with Western mythology and punk and Gothic elements in subculture, and has opened up a path that is national tide, but not just national tide. With "new Chinese grotesque girl" as the core style of the brand, it has established brand differentiation barriers, opened up vertical market segments, and seized the minds of consumers. The new series of products launched by Girlcult in November 2022 are based on the product concept of "Cyber Liao Zhai". The four-color eyeshadow palettes are named "Sea City", "Mirage", "Dyeing Flowers", and "Provoking Grass", and the mirror lip glazes are named "Meng Po Soup", "Pink Fox", "Pillow Wind", "Love Flower", etc., which cut and reorganize the words highly related to the content of the Liao Zhai story, expanding the depth and breadth of the audience's memory; the color design of the eyeshadow palette has both a sense of daily life and a sense of specialness. In addition to the more common earth brown series, some more special fluorescent green, tender pink, mint blue, silver glitter, and black glitter are added. Each chameleon glitter color is mixed with four different colors, which fits the weirdness of Liao Zhai and highlights the concept of "ever-changing". The innovative color selection brings a strong sense of freshness and curiosity to the audience. While highly consistent with the content and style of the Liao Zhai story, the high-purity and high-saturation green, the gloss brought by the glitter eyeshadow color and the mirror lip glaze, and the transparent acrylic material of the gift box packaging all show the cyberpunk aesthetics. "Liao Zhai" and "Cyber" are a fusion of ancient oriental mythology and future technology, and mystery is the bond that connects them. Such in-depth exploration, connection, and innovative reshaping of traditional culture and niche subculture factors give them a unique sense of the times and fashion, which is the source of the vitality of the Girlcult brand.

## **3.2. Building influence: Grasping the attention economy**

As early as the end of the 20th century, scholars keenly discovered that information is prone to overload, and the audience's attention is the truly scarce resource. Michael Goldhaber formally proposed the concept of "attention economy" in his article "Attention Buyer" published in 1997, inspiring many companies and businesses to learn to spend the lowest cost to maximize the attention of consumers and cultivate consumers' interest in brand products. Especially in today's highly developed Internet, the flood of information will cause the audience to consciously filter the information they want to obtain and establish a natural information filtering barrier. For brands, the difficulty of successfully reaching consumers with advertising information has increased significantly. For brands such as Girlcult, which targets digital natives as Generation Z, the audience

consumers have a higher degree of resistance to advertising information and selective reception of information. Therefore, in the promotion of products, it is necessary to catch the attention of consumers as much as possible, tap into potential consumers, and produce the best advertising effect.

Girlcult adopts a pulsating media schedule model. The main marketing cycle is one quarter, and within the quarter, new products are released and old products are continuously promoted on a monthly basis. During the main promotion period of each quarter, Girlcult will release a series of makeup products, such as "Cyber Liao Zhai", "Dream in the Garden", "Four Great Inventions", "Gold Rush" and other series. The sense of the series of new products is not only reflected in the product category (for example, a series of lip makeup products must be in the same category, lip cream, lip glaze or lip gloss, etc.), release time, product packaging design and gift box design, but also in the clear theme setting of the product. The theme extracted from Chinese traditional cultural elements comes with a story background and concept setting. The brand uses the content output with rich visual sense and associative power to IP the theme, making it more three-dimensional and vivid, giving consumers more sensory stimulation, thereby leaving a deeper impression and gaining more attention from consumers. In addition to the unit IP of the new series of products, the image of Fuwa, which is based on the shape of "Sun God", is used as the brand's exclusive IP image as the core element throughout the visual design of the entire series of products and surrounding areas to create a brand visual hammer.

## **3.3. Improving Competitiveness: Deeply Persuading the Audience**

With the widespread recognition of the concept of self-pleasing consumption and the rapid development of the "beauty economy", the beauty industry has gradually become saturated. As a scarce resource, market share is constantly being seized by major domestic and foreign brands. Beauty brands have launched endless advertising and marketing strategies for consumers, while the persuasiveness of advertising on consumers is also declining. When social media is used moderately, users have a more positive attitude towards social advertising by satisfying their information and entertainment needs; when the time is excessive, users feel more and more that advertising is intrusive and have concerns about privacy, and their attitude towards social advertising is becoming more and more negative. Compared with simply expanding the number, duration and coverage of advertisements, refining the content of advertisements to deeply persuade the audience and improve the purchase conversion rate can more directly play a role in product sales and brand promotion.

### **3.3.1. Strengthening in-depth Cooperation with KOLs**

It has become a common marketing method for beauty brands to use KOLs to promote on all UGC social platforms. The media content used by KOLs to promote beauty products has been limited to a few fixed forms, and consumers have begun to feel a little tired of such fixed forms. In addition, some KOLs will perform post-processing on product promotion videos and pictures in order to pursue more ideal product effects, which makes the actual experience of consumers different from their imagination, and reduces their trust in KOLs.

Girlcult chooses to carry out in-depth cooperation with KOLs with a large voice that matches the brand's tone. It is

no longer confined to traditional forms such as simple unboxing and color test sharing, but invites them to co-create eyeshadow palettes. When Girlcult launched the "Cyber Liaozhai" series of new products in October 2022, the famous beauty blogger "Nie Xiaoqian's Boss" released a promotional video, and in the video he showed the process of co-developing eyeshadow colors with Girlcult, saying that some of the colors in the new eyeshadow palette were mixed by him and selected by the brand. The video has achieved high popularity and discussion, and played a good role in product promotion. After that, Girlcult continued the idea of co-creating eyeshadow with beauty KOLs, and successively launched a blogger co-creation series with makeup artist Li Ze (Xiaohongshu Douyin ID: Zeshu Laozhuang) and Nicole Sansan (Douyin ID with the same name), and sold them through the Douyin live broadcast room channel. Consumers' love for beauty KOLs mostly stems from their appreciation and admiration for their makeup skills. Compared with brands, consumers are psychologically closer to KOLs and have higher trust in them. There are many cases of beauty KOLs establishing beauty brands and achieving success abroad, such as Jeffrey Star, Fenty Beauty, Rare Beauty, etc. The method of co-creating eyeshadow palettes with KOLs not only takes advantage of the fan effect, but also breaks the psychological barriers to consumers caused by rigid and unrealistic content, further narrowing the distance with consumers and increasing consumer involvement.

### 3.3.2. Pay Attention to the Construction of Scenes and Emotions

The consumption behavior of Generation Z consumers has significant emotion-oriented characteristics. They focus on self-pleasant experience and self-personality expression, which guides the differentiation and diversification of the marketing market. Brands are increasingly focusing on building a scene-based atmosphere to stimulate consumers' shopping desire. , the stimulation and satisfaction of consumers' spiritual needs for products go beyond the mere functional application of the product. Brands that are good at setting up scenes for consumers and providing emotional incitement are often more favored by consumers.

Girlcult defines its brand with three key words: "romance", "adventure" and "weirdness", and it has been consistently implementing them. Romance lies in the shopping experience of consumers. For example, if you buy products related to the glam rock series, you will be given gold feathers, gold snowflakes and candles; each package of the Pitao co-branded emotional blush is stamped with a wax seal, telling consumers that each package is unique; the Cyber Liaozhai gift box comes with tattoo stickers and wearable armor related to the theme, giving consumers a unique sense of refinement and ritual, and forming positive feedback on the brand during the evaluation process. The adventure lies in the meaningful experience of the product. Girlcult mostly adopts personalized and niche product design. The audience who likes "playing with makeup" (avant-garde and bold makeup style, creative makeup design) constitutes the brand's natural vertical market, but for many Z-generation girls, "playing with makeup" is unconventional and difficult, and it is also a field they are full of interest and curiosity. Girlcult constantly instills the concept of "encouraging girls to take risks, bravely explore new fields, release themselves in makeup, and live out their own different colors in ordinary life" to consumers, deeply insight into the psychology of potential consumers, and complete the scene-based deep persuasion. The weirdness

lies in the visual style of the product. Girlcult has a representative Fuwa IP image, the ugly and cute packaging of the emotional blush co-branded with Pitao, and the color design of lip and eye makeup products. These designs do not follow the mainstream aesthetic trend, and most consumers cannot even appreciate them. However, it is this weird visual design style that makes the brand full of mystery and high-end atmosphere, establishes an image that focuses on personalized and artistic expression, and gives consumers full pleasure and value recognition.

## 4. Enlightenment from Girlcult's Brand Development Strategy

David Aaker proposed the five-star brand model in his book "Managing Brand Equity" in 1991: Brand equity is composed of five parts: brand loyalty, brand awareness, consumer perceived quality, brand associations other than perceived quality, and other brand-specific assets such as patents, trademarks, and channel relationships. From the perspective of the five-star brand model theory, Girlcult's brand marketing development strategy has great implications for other domestic beauty products.

### 4.1. Breaking the "Big Circle" with "Niche"

Girlcult has covered the popular and popular core concept of "national tide" with a mysterious subculture veil. It does not simply pile traditional cultural elements on brand IP design and product appearance design to shape the national tide style in a flat and superficial way, but deeply integrates traditional culture and subculture elements in a more three-dimensional and comprehensive way. It injects new vitality and vigor into the national style that people are about to be aesthetically fatigued, transforms universality into particularity, thus creating topics, and also opens up more and richer ways for brands to break out of the circle, spreading the core of national tide from the path of subculture elements, which is both popular and retro, both traditional and new, leading a new trend and breaking through the shackles between circles.

In terms of brand loyalty, Girlcult focuses on developing niche IPs to cultivate highly loyal consumers and help brands extend their life cycles. Compared to well-known traffic IPs, it not only avoids the risk of negative reviews due to excessive attention, but also provides consumers with more room for interpretation. Only by grasping the culture of niche segments can we have the power to create popular culture. In terms of brand awareness, the public's vision has long been immersed in mainstream aesthetics, and things that conform to their usual cognition cannot effectively arouse their interest. Unique, novel, and contrary to habits can better capture the public's attention and gain higher brand visibility and awareness. Girlcult often stands out with its niche design style. In the "Cyber Liaozhai" series that has received good market response, one of the products that consumers discuss the most is the lip glaze called "Meng Po Tang". This lip glaze is moss green when it is first applied on the lips, and then it will turn into a brown base color with green glitter polarization, which has its own sense of mystery. The color of this lip glaze is definitely not "daily", it is jumpy and bold, but it has the highest attention and discussion, and has brought the brand name Girlcult into the public eye. In terms of consumer perceived quality, because consumers have accumulated a lot of experience in using versatile daily style makeup products,

they naturally formed a functional evaluation system for related products, and compared products with similar functions from different brands, resulting in consumers' expectations for basic makeup products. It is difficult for new brands to enter the market with such products to easily give consumers a good perceived quality, while for niche style makeup products, consumers' cognition is relatively blank, which can easily bring good perceived quality. In addition, in order to increase consumers' awareness and association of the brand, the brand needs to establish its brand image and provide consumers with brand association keywords by telling a lot of brand stories, and brand stories are the part that Girlcult has always adhered to and deepened in the process of product style changes. For example, in order to avoid letting the brand remain a category brand or a white-label brand, Girlcult is determined to be a "brand with style", tell niche stories well, create an artistic temperament, spread the spirit of adventure, let culture empower the brand, provide consumers with dreams and imagination space, so that the brand's story and spirit can truly be recognized by consumers, support brand premium, enhance consumers' awareness of the brand, and broaden associations.

#### 4.2. From the User-Oriented Perspective

In the five-star model of brands, brand loyalty is the core of brand assets. Once a brand is separated from the loyalty of brand consumers, it will become a trademark or a symbol of distinction that has almost no value. From the perspective of brand loyalty marketing, sales are only the beginning of establishing a lasting and positive brand relationship with users. It is also an opportunity to establish brand loyalty and convert brand buyers into brand loyalists, but it is not the ultimate goal. Accurate and detailed user portraits, in-depth insights into consumer needs, in-depth exploration of what consumers really want, like, and are interested in from the perspective of consumers, familiarity with consumers' consumption habits and consumption concepts, familiarity with consumers' media usage habits, and user-centered product development and marketing strategy formulation are the keys to building brand loyalty.

Girlcult has reflected the user-oriented perspective in every aspect of its marketing strategy, reflecting the brand's deep insight into the Z generation consumer group. In the early stages of product development, Girlcult established fan groups on platforms such as QQ, had close conversations with users, collected their ideas and suggestions, and brainstormed on this basis to determine the story theme and color style of the new product. The inspiration for the "Shanghai" series comes from the "Classic of Mountains and Seas", the element cornerstone of the "Cyber Liaozhai" series is "Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio", and the design source of the "Dream in the Garden" series is the Kunqu opera "Peony Pavilion" excerpt. Girlcult can always dig out the elements of traditional culture that contemporary young people are interested in after precise user research, and use them for themselves, and then create a secondary stylized visual creation of these elements, creating artistic and niche labels, in order to attract young

consumers who pursue individuality and value expression. Unlike other beauty brands that are crowded on Douyin, Weibo and Xiaohongshu, Girlcult chose to focus on media placement on Bilibili, which is characterized by a long video deep grass-planting mode, in order to convey the brand story and connotation to users in depth. At the same time, a large proportion of Bilibili's young user groups are fans of niche subcultures. Personalized and emotional expressions can effectively reach this group of audiences, successfully promote products, and establish loyal consumers of the brand.

## 5. Conclusion

As the beauty industry becomes increasingly saturated and market competition becomes increasingly fierce, how to stand out and become the first choice in the minds of consumers has become a question that every beauty brand needs to think deeply about. Girlcult's brand marketing strategy provides a feasible way for the beauty industry. Focus on the shaping and dissemination of brand culture, inherit excellent cultural genes, innovate and practice, consolidate infrastructure, and extend the depth and breadth of the brand; use refined marketing strategies to deeply persuade the audience, deeply understand consumer needs, focus on consumer experience, build emotional connections, and maximize brand value. From the perspective of the industrialization of the beauty market and the professionalization of brand operation management, Girlcult's way to success provides in-depth analysis and reference for national trend beauty brands, and finds ways to break through, thereby promoting the rapid, healthy and thriving development of the national trend beauty industry.

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