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The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Retailer Sales: A Case Study of J Cosmetics Company, China

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to identify and analyze the factors influencing the impact of social media marketing on retailer sales. The sample consisted of 414 consumers who had utilized the services or purchased products from J Cosmetics Company through major social media platforms, namely Rednote, TikTok, WeChat, and Weibo. The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which exhibited Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.902. Data analysis included averages, percentages, Pearson's correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. Results showed that content strategy, engagement, platform usage, advertising, and influencer marketing all had a significant positive impact on sales performance. Advertising had the strongest positive correlation with sales performance ($r = 0.473$, $p < 0.01$), followed by content strategy ($r = 0.422$, $p < 0.01$). The regression model explained 30.5% of the variance in sales performance. All five hypotheses, which proposed positive relationships between the social media marketing variables and sales performance, were supported. The study concluded that social media marketing plays a crucial role in driving retailer sales, and J Cosmetics Company should focus on diversifying product offerings, building a strong brand community, enhancing data-driven personalized marketing, and engaging in co-branding collaborations to further enhance their social media marketing effectiveness.

Introduction

In today's digital era, social media has become an important channel for consumers to obtain information, interact and make purchasing decisions. According to statistics, by 2023, there will be more than 4 billion social media users globally, and China is one of the largest social media markets in the world with nearly 1 billion users (Kemp, 2023). These users are active on platforms such as WeChat, TikTok, Rednote and Weibo, which not only play an important role in consumers' daily lives but also provide unprecedented opportunities for interaction between brands and consumers. In the cosmetics industry, social media has a particularly significant impact on purchasing decisions, with a survey showing that more than 70% of young consumers refer to reviews and recommendations on social media when

purchasing cosmetics (Kim & Ko, 2017). This reliance will lead to an increased focus on social media marketing as a strategic tool to enhance brand awareness, connect with consumers and drive sales growth (De Vries et al., 2017)

Although existing research reveals the extensive use of social media in corporate marketing, there is a lack of systematic empirical research on the relationship between the use of social media marketing strategies and sales performance in the Chinese cosmetics industry, especially for specific brands (Li et al., 2021; Wang & Kim, 2017)

This research gap not only limits the ability of enterprises to optimize their social media marketing strategies, makes retailers lack effective theoretical support and empirical evidence when formulating their marketing strategies, but also weakens their flexibility and responsiveness in market competition. Therefore, in-depth research on specific enterprise cases is particularly necessary.

To fill this research gap, this study focuses on the marketing practices of J Cosmetics Company in China's social media environment, using the company as a case study, with the aim of exploring how social media marketing strategies (including content strategy, engagement, platform usage, advertisement investment, and influencer marketing) affect retailers' sales performance.

Objectives

To identify and analysis factors to the impact of social media marketing on retailer sales.

Literature review

J Cosmetics Company

J Cosmetics Company, established in 2017 and headquartered in Shanghai, China, was a beauty company focused on the research, development, and sale of cosmetics. Its product offerings spanned various categories, including color cosmetics, skincare, and beauty tools, primarily targeting young consumers aged 18 to 30. J Cosmetics Company positioned itself as "young, trendy, and individual," (Hwang & Kim, 2020) emphasizing product diversity and fashion to provide high-quality yet reasonably priced cosmetics for young women. Since its inception, the company rapidly rose to prominence, gaining consumer favor through its innovative products and unique market positioning. As a well-known domestic cosmetics company, J Cosmetics Company actively employed social media marketing strategies to enhance brand awareness, effectively increase consumer purchase intentions, and boost retailer sales. Furthermore, the company's interactivity and engagement on social media enabled it to establish emotional connections with consumers, thereby enhancing brand loyalty. Therefore, the study of J Cosmetics Company's social media marketing strategies and their impact on sales provided valuable insights for other retailers.

Social media marketing

Social media marketing (SMM) was a form of digital marketing that utilized social networking sites to market and promote products, brands, and services. It involved creating and sharing content on social media platforms to achieve marketing and branding goals. SMM utilized social media sites to connect with the target audience to build brands, increase sales, and drive website traffic (Kemp, 2023).

Benefits of social media marketing (SMM)

SMM offered numerous benefits for businesses. These benefits included the following:

1) Brand awareness: SMM helped businesses increase brand awareness by reaching a large audience of potential customers. Social media platforms had billions of active users, providing businesses with a vast pool of potential customers (Kemp, 2023).

2) Lead generation and conversions: SMM helped businesses generate leads and convert them into customers. Social media platforms allowed businesses to target their ideal customers with relevant content and offers (Alalwan et al., 2017).

3) Website traffic: SMM helped businesses drive traffic to their websites. By including links to their websites in their social media posts, businesses encouraged users to visit their websites (Tuten & Solomon, 2018).

4) Customer engagement: SMM helped businesses engage with their customers. Social media platforms provided businesses with a channel to communicate with their customers, answer their questions, and provide customer support (Alalwan et al., 2017).

5) Cost-effectiveness: SMM was a cost-effective marketing strategy. Creating and sharing content on social media platforms was relatively inexpensive (Tuten & Solomon, 2018).

Key aspects of Social Media Marketing

Several aspects of social media marketing were considered for a successful campaign. These aspects included the following:

1) Strategy: A social media marketing strategy was a plan that outlined a business's goals for using social media. It included the target audience, the platforms to be used, and the content to be shared (Alalwan et al., 2017).

2) Content: Content was the heart of social media marketing. Businesses needed to create and share engaging content to attract and retain followers. This content was tailored to the interests of the target audience (Tuten & Solomon, 2018).

3) Community: Building a strong community on social media was essential for success. Businesses needed to engage with their followers, respond to their comments, and create a sense of belonging (Alalwan et al., 2017).

4) Analytics: It was important to track the results of social media marketing efforts. This data was used to improve future campaigns (Tuten & Solomon, 2018).

5) Advertising: Social media advertising was a powerful tool for reaching a wider audience. Businesses used social media ads to target their ideal customers with relevant content and offers (Kemp, 2023).

Social media marketing has become an essential tool for businesses of all sizes. By understanding the benefits and key aspects of SMM, businesses used social media to achieve their marketing goals.

The Importance of Social Media Marketing for Beauty Retailers

In the beauty industry, social media marketing was particularly significant. Social media provided beauty brands with a unique platform to showcase products and interact with consumers, especially by using visual content such as videos and images to capture the attention of younger audiences (Chae, 2018). Influencer marketing, a core component of social media marketing, was proven effective in boosting brand awareness and driving sales conversions (Lou & Yuan, 2021). Through social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, beauty brands could demonstrate product performance, share makeup tips, and engage with consumers in real time (Marbach et al., 2017).

Social media marketing factors affecting retail performance

The effectiveness of social media marketing was influenced by multiple factors, including content strategies, engagement, platform usage, advertising, and influencer marketing (Ashley & Tuten, 2021). Social media content marketing strategies took various forms, such as text, images, videos, and live streams, each offering unique advantages in terms of engagement and information delivery. Effective content strategies viewed audience engagement as the key to marketing success. This was particularly true on visual platforms like Instagram and TikTok, where high-quality images and creative videos were crucial (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Brands tailored their content presentation to the characteristics of each platform and user behavior to maximize appeal to their target audience. User engagement on social media directly affected brand communication effectiveness, user loyalty, and purchasing decisions. Brands that actively encouraged user interaction, such as through comments, shares, and likes, often achieved higher brand loyalty and customer satisfaction. Social media advertising also had a significant impact on retail performance. Social media ads came in various forms, including display ads, video ads, and sponsored posts, all of which were characterized by high interactivity, real-time feedback, and precise targeting. Research indicated that social media advertising could significantly enhance brand awareness and favorability, and brands that advertised on social media often saw increased sales (Bilgin, 2020; Kaplan, 2020; Kumar et al., 2021; Leeflang et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021). Influencer marketing, a key social media marketing strategy, was widely adopted across industries, particularly in the beauty sector (Ki & Kim, 2019). Influencers built close connections with their audiences on social media platforms and enhanced brand message delivery by creating personalized and authentic content (De Veirman et al., 2017). Studies found that, compared to traditional advertising, influencer marketing was more effective in stimulating consumer engagement and brand loyalty (Huang & Shao, 2020). Research also showed that influencer marketing was especially effective among younger consumers, who were more likely to follow and trust influencers on social media (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019).

Social media marketing and the impact on retail sales

Social media not only provided a channel for brands to interact with consumers but also provided an opportunity for brands to showcase their products and services. The core feature of social media was user-generated content and interaction, which enabled brands to build stronger connections with consumers and influence their purchase decisions and brand preferences. Positive social media interactions enhanced brand image and increased brand loyalty among consumers, and retailers that adopted social media marketing showed higher sales conversion rates during promotional campaigns (Kumar & Gupta, 2016). Empirical studies showed a positive correlation between social media marketing and retailers' sales performance, and the wide dissemination of social media and the active participation of users provided brands with a strong incentive to improve sales performance (Tuten & Solomon, 2017).

Research conceptual framework

Based on the results of the literature review, this paper identified five important social media marketing variables—content strategy, engagement, platform usage, advertising, and influencer marketing (Ashley & Tuten, 2021; De Veirman et al., 2020; Kaplan, 2020; Kumar et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021)—as independent variables, and retailer sales performance as the dependent variable. A conceptual framework was defined accordingly, as shown in Figure 1.

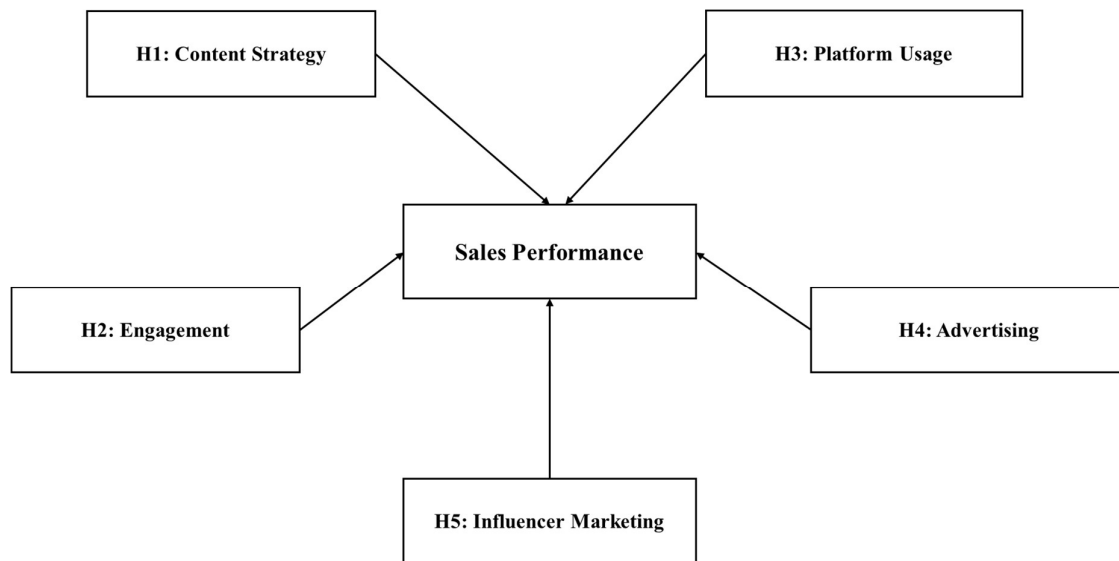


Figure 1. Research conceptual framework

The five hypotheses, derived from the provided independent and dependent variables, were as follows:

H1 (Content Strategy): A positive and significant relationship existed between effective content strategy (including type, format, and quality) and retailer sales performance. Specifically, higher quality content, diverse content formats, and a strategic mix of content types (product-focused, user-generated, educational, and promotional) positively influenced sales revenue, conversion rates, and the number of units sold.

H2 (Engagement): A positive and significant relationship existed between user engagement (likes, comments, shares, click-through rates, and reach) and retailer sales performance. Higher levels of engagement positively influenced sales revenue, conversion rates, and the number of units sold.

H3 (Platform Usage): A positive and significant relationship existed between strategic platform usage (specific platforms used, frequency of posting, and features utilized) and retailer sales performance. Strategic selection of platforms, consistent posting schedules, and effective utilization of platform-specific

features positively influenced sales revenue, conversion rates, and the number of units sold.

H4 (Advertising): A positive and significant relationship existed between social media advertising (investment, targeting, and ad formats) and retailer sales performance. Increased investment in targeted advertising, utilizing appropriate ad formats, positively influenced sales revenue, conversion rates, and the number of units sold.

H5 (Influencer Marketing): A positive and significant relationship existed between influencer marketing (use of influencers and types of collaborations) and retailer sales performance. Strategic use of influencers, particularly micro-influencers, and engaging in diverse collaboration types (sponsored posts, product reviews, giveaways) positively influenced sales revenue, conversion rates, and the number of units sold.

Methods

1. Population and sample

The population for this study comprised consumers who engaged with J Cosmetics Company's services or purchased its products through major social media platforms, including Rednote, TikTok, WeChat, and Weibo. Given the unknown size of the population, a sample size was determined using Cochran's formula. This calculation, based on a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level, yielded an approximate sample size of 414 individuals.

2. Research instruments

This study employed a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire comprised three sections: The first section collected respondents' demographic information, including age, gender, occupation, and frequency of social media use. The second section consisted of questions designed to assess the five key variables using a five-point Likert scale. The third section included an open-ended question designed to elicit respondents' subjective opinions regarding J Cosmetics Company's social media marketing strategies. The questionnaire underwent rigorous reliability and validity testing, achieving Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.902 for reliability.

3. Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through an online questionnaire distributed via J Cosmetics Company's primary social media sales platforms in China—Rednote, TikTok, WeChat, and Weibo. A total of 414 responses were collected.

4. Data analysis

This study employed quantitative analysis methods, specifically utilizing averages, percentage, Pearson's correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis.

Results

1. Respondent Demographics

Presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. As shown in Table 1. Table 1. The demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Frequency analysis summary table			
Category	Title	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age	20 years or younger	15	3.62
	20-30 years	184	44.44
	30-40 years	104	25.13
	40-50 years	83	20.05
	Over 50 years	28	6.76
Total		414	100.00

Gender	Male	100	24.15
	Female	314	75.85
Total		414	100.00
Frequency of social media use	Daily	186	44.93
	Several times a week	160	38.65
	Weekly	57	13.77
	Less often	11	2.66
	Total	414	100.00
Whether it is a purchaser of J Cosmetics Company	No	40	9.66
	Yes	374	90.34
Total		414	100.00
Learn about the company's channels for the first time	Other	40	9.66
	Brand official website	41	9.9
	Search engines and content platforms	46	11.11
	Recommendation by friends	63	15.22
	Social Media Advertising	95	22.95
	Offline channels	86	20.77
	Beauty communities and forums	43	10.39
	Total	414	100.00

Table 1. presents the demographic characteristics of the 414 respondents. Regarding age, the largest group (44.44%) was between 20 and 30 years old, followed by the 30-40 age group (25.13%). Respondents aged 40-50 comprised 20.05% of the sample, while those over 50 years old represented 6.76%. The smallest group (3.62%) was 20 years old or younger. In terms of gender, most respondents were female (75.85%), with males representing 24.15% of the sample. Regarding social media usage frequency, the most common response was "Daily" (44.93%), followed by "Several times a week" (38.65%). "Weekly" usage was reported by 13.77% of respondents, while only 2.66% indicated using social media "Less often." A large majority of the respondents (90.34%) had purchased J Cosmetics Company products, while 9.66% had not. When asked how they first learned about J Cosmetics Company, the most frequent response was "Social Media Advertising" (22.95%). "Offline channels" (20.77%) and "Recommendation by friends" (15.22%) were also significant sources. "Beauty communities and forums" accounted for 10.39% of responses, followed by "Brand official website" (9.9%) and "Search engines and content platforms" (11.11%). "Other" channels accounted for 9.66% of first-time encounters with the brand.

2. Correlation analysis

In this study, Pearson's correlation analysis was employed to examine the significance and direction of the relationships between the variables, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Pearson's correlation analysis of social media marketing on retailer sales.

Pearson's Correlation analysis (n = 414)						
	Content strategy	Engagement	Platform Usage	Advertising	Influencer Marketing	Sales Performance
Content strategy	1					
Engagement	0.396**	1				
Platform Usage	0.445**	0.395**	1			
Advertising	0.473**	0.396**	0.470**	1		
Influencer Marketing	0.407**	0.408**	0.502**	0.380**	1	
Sales Performance	0.422**	0.365**	0.413**	0.436**	0.386**	1

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

Table 2. presents the results of Pearson's correlation analysis, examining the relationships between the independent variables (content strategy, engagement, platform usage, advertising, and influencer marketing) and the dependent variable (sales performance). All correlations were statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed). Content Strategy: Content strategy exhibited a positive and statistically significant correlation with sales performance ($r = 0.422$). It also showed positive and significant correlations with engagement ($r = 0.396$), platform usage ($r = 0.445$), advertising ($r = 0.473$), and influencer marketing ($r = 0.407$). Engagement: Engagement demonstrated a positive and statistically significant correlation with sales performance ($r = 0.365$). Furthermore, it had positive and significant correlations with platform usage ($r = 0.395$), advertising ($r = 0.396$), and influencer marketing ($r = 0.408$). Platform Usage: Platform usage showed a positive and statistically significant correlation with sales performance ($r = 0.413$). It was also positively and significantly correlated with advertising ($r = 0.470$) and influencer marketing ($r = 0.502$). Advertising: Advertising exhibited a positive and statistically significant correlation with sales performance ($r = 0.436$). It also had a positive and significant correlation with influencer marketing ($r = 0.380$). Influencer Marketing: Influencer marketing demonstrated a positive and statistically significant correlation with sales performance ($r = 0.386$). Among them, the independent variables examined, advertising demonstrated the strongest positive correlation with the dependent variable, sales performance ($r = 0.473$, $p < 0.01$).

3. Regression Analysis

The results of the regression analysis further elucidated the impact of social media marketing on retailers' sales performance, as detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. Regression analysis of social media marketing on retailer sales.

Results of Regression Analysis (n = 414)						
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p	Collinearity diagnosis
	B	Std. Error	Beta			VIF
Constant	1.264	0.197	-	6.418	0.000**	-
Content strategy	0.164	0.048	0.171	3.397	0.001**	1.495
Engagement	0.109	0.046	0.114	2.353	0.019*	1.376
Platform Usage	0.126	0.049	0.134	2.564	0.011*	1.61
Advertising	0.194	0.05	0.198	3.916	0.000**	1.507

Influencer Marketing	0.119	0.047	0.127	2.521	0.012*	1.494
R^2				0.305		
Adjusted R Square				0.296		
F				F (5,408) =35.806, p=0.000		
D-W values				1.874		
Note: Dependent Variable = Sales Performance						
*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01						

Table 3 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis, examining the impact of social media marketing variables (content strategy, engagement, platform usage, advertising, and influencer marketing) on retailer sales performance. The model was statistically significant ($F(5, 408) = 35.806, p < 0.001$), indicating that the independent variables, as a set, significantly predicted sales performance. The R-squared value was 0.305, suggesting that the model explained 30.5% of the variance in sales performance. The adjusted R-squared was 0.296. The Durbin-Watson value of 1.874 suggested that there was no autocorrelation among the residuals. The Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) ranged from 1.376 to 1.610, suggesting that multicollinearity was not a problem. The following variables demonstrated a statistically significant positive impact on sales performance: Content Strategy: Content strategy had a significant positive impact on sales performance ($\beta = 0.171, t = 3.397, p = 0.001$). Engagement: Engagement had a significant positive impact on sales performance ($\beta = 0.114, t = 2.353, p = 0.019$). Platform Usage: Platform usage had a significant positive impact on sales performance ($\beta = 0.134, t = 2.564, p = 0.011$). Advertising: Advertising had the largest significant positive impact on sales performance ($\beta = 0.198, t = 3.916, p < 0.001$). Influencer Marketing: Influencer marketing had a significant positive impact on sales performance ($\beta = 0.127, t = 2.521, p = 0.012$).

4. Hypothesis Testing Results

The results of the multiple regression analysis supported all five hypotheses. Each of the social media marketing variables—content strategy, engagement, platform usage, advertising, and influencer marketing—demonstrated a statistically significant positive relationship with retailer sales performance. Advertising had the strongest positive impact, followed by content strategy. While all variables were significant, the model explained 30.5% of the variance in sales performance, suggesting other factors beyond these five variables also influence sales, as detailed in Table 4.

Table 4. Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Result (β, t, p)	Interpretation
H1	Content Strategy	Sales Performance	0.171, 3.397, 0.001	Supported: Content strategy had a significant positive impact on sales performance.
H2	Engagement	Sales Performance	0.114, 2.353, 0.019	Supported: Engagement had a significant positive impact on sales performance.
H3	Platform Usage	Sales Performance	0.134, 2.564, 0.011	Supported: Platform usage had a significant positive impact on sales performance.
H4	Advertising	Sales Performance	0.198, 3.916, <0.001	Supported: Advertising had a significant positive impact on sales performance.
H5	Influencer Marketing	Sales Performance	0.127, 2.521, 0.012	Supported: Influencer marketing had a significant positive impact on sales performance.

Discussion

This study examined the impact of social media marketing on retailer sales performance, using J Cosmetics Company in China as a case study. The findings revealed that content strategy, engagement, platform usage, advertising, and influencer marketing all had a significant positive impact on sales performance. These results are consistent with existing research emphasizing the importance of social media marketing in the beauty industry and the broader retail landscape.

For instance, a 2024 study by Chen & Zhang (2024) highlighted the influence of social media marketing on consumer purchasing decisions within the live-streaming sales model on the Douyin platform (the Chinese version of TikTok). Their research underscored the effectiveness of social media engagement and platform usage in driving sales conversions. Explored the broader impact of social media on marketing effectiveness, emphasizing the role of strategic platform usage and advertising in achieving marketing objectives.

The significance of content strategy in influencing consumer behavior is supported by Chae's (2018) research on the role of social media in beauty product marketing. This study emphasized the importance of visual content and effective content strategies in capturing the attention of younger audiences and driving engagement. Furthermore, the positive relationship between engagement and sales performance observed in this study aligns with findings by Huang & Shao (2020), who demonstrated the mediating role of consumer engagement in the relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intentions.

The current study's findings regarding the strong impact of advertising on sales performance are consistent with research by Wang et al. (2021) and Kumar et al. (2021), who examined the effects of social media advertising on consumer purchase intent.

Their study indicated that social media advertising can significantly enhance brand awareness and favorability, leading to increased sales. Wang (2021) further explored the impact of brand advertising content on consumer engagement, highlighting the importance of crafting compelling content to drive interaction and achieve marketing goals.

Finally, the effectiveness of influencer marketing in boosting sales, particularly among younger consumers, is supported by Djafarova & Trofimenko's (2019) research on the relationship between trust in influencers and purchase intentions. Their study found that influencer marketing is particularly effective in stimulating consumer engagement and brand loyalty among younger demographics. This finding is further corroborated by Ki & Kim (2019), who investigated the mechanism by which influencer marketing affects purchase intention, emphasizing the mediating roles of trust and perceived value.

Body of knowledge

The research findings can be synthesized into a conceptual model framework, as illustrated in Figure 2.

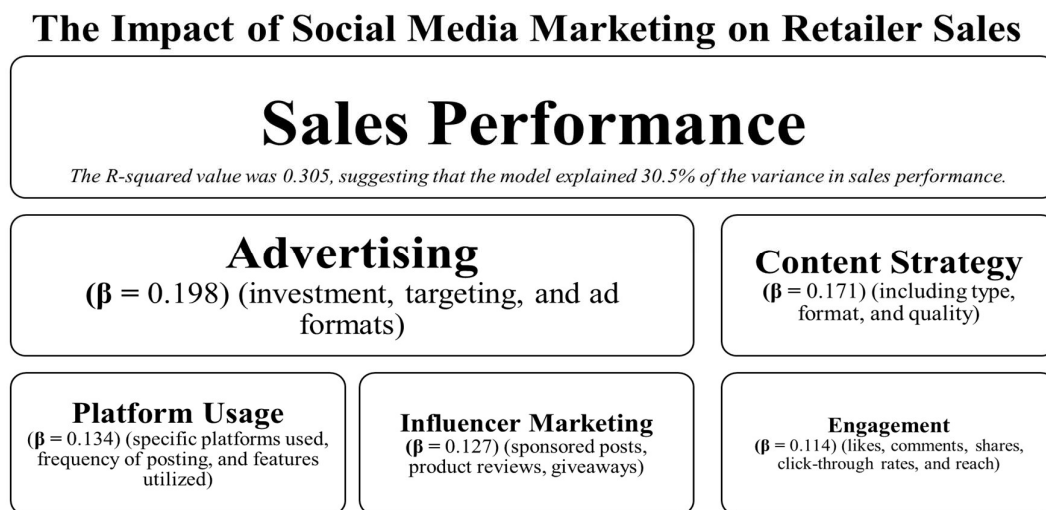


Figure 2. Conceptual model framework of social media marketing on retailer sales

Suggestions

Based on this study's findings regarding J Cosmetics Company's social media marketing, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Suggestions for applying research results

1.1 Product Line Diversification: to cater to evolving consumer preferences and mitigate risks associated with over-reliance on individual products, J Cosmetics Company should strategically diversify its product offerings. This can be achieved by introducing seasonal limited editions that capitalize on current trends and generate excitement. Additionally, marketing resources should be allocated across the entire product line to ensure balanced promotion and avoid overexposure of specific items. This strategy will enable J Cosmetics to attract a wider customer base, enhance brand resilience, and maintain long-term market competitiveness.

1.2 Community Building and User Interaction: Fostering a strong brand community is crucial for cultivating customer loyalty and engagement. J Cosmetics Company can achieve this by establishing online platforms such as exclusive forums and social media groups where consumers can interact with the brand and each other. Offline initiatives, such as beauty workshops and interactive activities like a "Weekly Makeup Challenge," can further strengthen the brand community. By providing opportunities for meaningful interaction and shared experiences, J Cosmetics can cultivate a loyal customer base, generate positive word-of-mouth marketing, and enhance brand advocacy.

2. Suggestions for future research

2.1 Data- Driven Personalized Marketing: Future research could delve deeper into the effectiveness of data-driven personalized marketing in the cosmetics industry. This could include investigating the optimal balance between personalization and privacy concerns, exploring the impact of different data sources and integration methods on consumer behavior, and examining the long-term effects of personalized marketing on customer loyalty and brand equity.

2.2 Co-branding and Cross-Border Collaborations: Further research could explore the factors that contribute to successful co-branding collaborations in the cosmetics industry, particularly in the context of social media marketing. This could involve analyzing the impact of brand fit and complementarity on consumer perceptions, investigating the role of influencer marketing in co-branding campaigns, and examining the potential of cross-border collaborations to expand brand reach and market share.

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