

Research on the trend of China's integrated marketing strategy under the background of new media era

Ruoqi Yuan

Communication University of China, Beijing, 317200, China

YliuL_work@163.com

Keywords: Chinese market, integrated marketing strategy, new media, innovation, sustainability, crisis management, market competitive advantage

Abstract: This paper aims to examine the current state of marketing strategies in the Chinese market, specifically focusing on the opportunities and challenges associated with developing integrated marketing strategies in an era characterized by the saturation of new media within marketing strategy paradigms. The study posits that China's competitive market environment is progressively intensifying due to the influence of diverse consumer demands and behaviors. To achieve the development and transformation of Chinese marketing strategies, the innovative application of integrated marketing strategies is considered an indispensable approach. Moreover, it underscores the imperative for businesses to adapt flexibly in the era of new media by focusing on data utilization and pioneering marketing tactics while emphasizing strategy sustainability and crisis management. The paper proposes that companies should comprehensively consider diverse channels, consumer segments, and societal factors when formulating integrated marketing strategies to attain enduring market competitiveness.

1. The failure of Single Marketing Strategy

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is an innovative business management and communication model that redefines traditional marketing concepts by placing consumers at the center through adjustments in organizational structure and principles of value creation. IMC was first introduced in the late 1980s in the United States and has gradually gained influence in global markets. However, implementing IMC faces new challenges due to the unique characteristics and rapid transformations observed in the Chinese market.

With the extensive adoption of digital media, marketing strategies have reached a point of saturation. The availability of various promotional channels and well-developed multifaceted marketing approaches have significantly influenced consumer perceptions towards marketing practices. As a result, relying solely on one marketing strategy is no longer feasible in today's market environment. Instead, businesses must embrace comprehensive and coordinated strategies to effectively disseminate information while ensuring consistency in brand image.

2. Research background and market status

2.1 Market Overview

In the complex and diverse market of China, different groups of consumers display unique characteristics and requirements. Covering a wide range of ages, including young, middle-aged, and elderly consumers, each group showcases distinct consumption patterns. For example, the younger generation places significant importance on brand influence in online platforms, while middle-aged consumers prioritize product quality and traditional reputation. On the other hand, elderly consumers prioritize practical functionality and cost-effectiveness. Additionally, consumer needs and behaviors are also influenced by regional cultural customs and habits.

Contrarily, Chinese consumers exhibit distinct preferences when it comes to promotional channels. The rise of social media and the internet has propelled digital marketing to the forefront

as the primary means through which consumers engage and make personalized choices. Nevertheless, a portion of consumers still trust television media, such as CCTV advertisements and product placements within popular programs. At the same time, consumer selection of promotional channels is influenced by various factors including age, geographical location, education level, and socioeconomic status. It is crucial to comprehend these preferences and underlying rationales in order to formulate precise marketing strategies that align with Nature journal's requirements.

Given the vast array of consumer demographics in the Chinese market and the complex nature of promotional channels, relying solely on a single marketing approach, such as social media advertising, to meet diverse consumer needs becomes increasingly difficult. The drawback of this strategy lies in its inability to effectively address the unique requirements and preferences of different consumer segments. Considering the ever-changing market landscape and the widespread use of digital media, consumers' access to information has undergone a significant transformation. Over-reliance on traditional advertising or other isolated marketing methods may result in missed opportunities for engaging with consumers and subsequently affect competitiveness.

Hence, the significance of integrated marketing strategies lies in their ability to address inherent constraints in individual approaches, successfully catering to various requirements, and attaining a competitive edge within a dynamic environment marked by swift transformations.

2.2 Literature Review

As market competition becomes increasingly fierce and digital media rapidly advances, the study of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) continues to progress in response. This evolution reflects a growing need for more sophisticated and nuanced approaches to communication strategy in today's complex business landscape.

Internationally, scholars emphasize the dynamic and flexible nature of the IMC concept, viewing it as a model adjusted according to market and technological environments. [1] Meanwhile, research on integrated marketing communication (IMC) is expanding beyond external factors to encompass internal factors such as organizational support, interdepartmental collaboration, and data management. Scholars are increasingly recognizing the significance of feedback and learning in IMC, utilizing insights from past IMC practices to inform future decision-making for enhanced outcomes. Research in the IMC field is also becoming more global, with attention to the influence of geographical and cultural factors on IMC strategies, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. [2] Future research directions in the IMC field incline toward innovation, encompassing studies on digital transformation, social media applications, data-driven decision-making, sustainability, and social responsibility. [3]

In 1996, the introduction of IMC theory to the domestic academic community was formalized through scholarly publications in *International Advertising* by esteemed researchers including Lu Taihong and Li Shiding. [4] Since then, Chinese scholars have extensively explored the concept of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), with a particular emphasis on the dynamic evolution of the Chinese market and effective localization strategies. Noteworthy research areas encompass multimedia integration, the burgeoning influence of digital media, brand culture analysis, as well as cultural adaptation studies. [5]

In today's marketing environment, which is dominated by digital and social media advertising, there is a lack of significant research on Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) channel tactics that are relevant to the developing market landscape.

3. Marketing Case Analysis Based on STP Theory and 4Ps Theory

3.1 Successful Case: Pop Mart

3.1.1 Company profile

Pop Mart is a prominent player in the entertainment industry, specializing in the creation, manufacturing, and distribution of cutting-edge intellectual property (IP) toys. Through strategic focus on five key areas - global artist acquisition, IP development and management, consumer

engagement strategies, promotion of fashion-forward play culture, as well as innovative business expansion and investment - Pop Mart has effectively established a comprehensive operational platform that covers the entire value chain of the fashion toy industry.

3.1.2 Analysis of marketing strategy based on STP theory

In terms of market segmentation, Pop Mart is a prominent cultural entertainment company that specializes in the research, development, and sales of fashionable intellectual property (IP) toys. Renowned for its iconic brands such as Molly, Skullpanda, and Dimoo, Pop Mart employs a unique business model known as 'fixed styles + hidden styles' to cultivate an aura of scarcity and deliver delightful surprises, thereby enhancing the perceived value of its products. With a specific focus on targeting female white-collar workers from Generation Z with monthly incomes ranging between 8000 to 20000 yuan, this demographic exhibits remarkable levels of acceptance, purchasing power, and brand loyalty.

Pop Mart strategically positions itself in the growing global trend of fashionable toys by utilizing blind box models to cultivate social and collectible value, attracting Generation Z users who are looking for unique and emotional attributes. The company stays updated with market trends through collaborations with artists and creative design teams, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of its products. In the thriving global trendy toy market, Pop Mart successfully captures a significant market share, establishing itself as a leading Chinese brand in this industry.

3.1.3 Analysis of marketing strategy based on 4Ps theory

In terms of product offerings, Pop Mart strategically focuses on the production of IP culture dolls made from PVC and ABS materials. By collaborating with renowned IPs such as Harry Potter and Disney, they have established a dedicated team of artists to foster innovation and diversification in their products. The introduction of hidden editions serves as a pivotal catalyst for premium purchases, effectively catering to the emotional needs of young consumers.

Regarding pricing strategies, Pop Mart has successfully minimized consumers' decision-making costs and gained a competitive edge in the trendy toy market through the implementation of differentiated pricing strategies: 59 yuan, 69 yuan, 79 yuan, and 99 yuan. Furthermore, by employing psychological pricing techniques, they offer hidden editions at the same price as regular editions while incorporating a probability factor of 1/144. This allows for potential market premiums and creates an engaging "lottery" shopping experience.

In terms of distribution channels, Pop Mart effectively integrates online and offline strategies through the establishment of an omni-channel sales network. This encompasses the development of an official online platform, a vast physical store network comprising over 200 outlets, as well as innovative robot containers. Moreover, the implementation of social operations and pop-up stores serves to further augment user engagement and elevate the overall shopping experience.

In terms of promotion, Pop Mart establishes brand influence through an IP matrix that includes renowned franchises such as Harry Potter and Minions. The astute utilization of themes like "randomness," "scarcity," and "mystery" is employed to enhance product exposure by means of blind box formats and O2O linkage strategies within a comprehensive diversified marketing approach. The brand's slogan, "Create the trend, deliver the beauty," underscores its commitment to cultural guidance while fostering the dissemination of Chaoplay culture in collaboration with artists and Peking University.

In summary, as the sole independent and innovative toy brand in China, Pop Mart effectively capitalizes on its extensive intellectual property (IP) reserves and efficient IP operations to establish an omnichannel sales model that generates a strong brand impact. Its core competitive advantage lies in its diversified product strategy, marketing approach with social attributes, and cultural guidance. Through a multi-channel and comprehensive marketing strategy, Pop Mart successfully dominates the dynamic toy market landscape.

3.2 Unsuccessful Case: Maotai's Youth-oriented Marketing

3.2.1 Company profile

Maotai, a renowned liquor in China, originates from Maotai Town in Guizhou Province and is highly esteemed for its unique brewing process and use of high-quality ingredients. Despite being considered a valuable product by most consumers, Maotai has witnessed a decline in sales in recent years. In an effort to attract younger demographics, Maotai attempted to boost sales by introducing co-branded products aimed at the youth market segment. However, this exclusive focus on marketing towards young people led to a decrease in the brand value of Maotai. To maintain its prestigious reputation, Maotai made an announcement in September 2023 stating that it would discontinue co-branding strategies and cease collaborations with new brands.

3.2.2 Analysis of marketing strategy based on STP theory

By conducting an STP analysis, Maotai has positioned itself in the premium liquor market with a focus on being perceived as a prestigious gift, investment opportunity, and collectible item. Its exceptional value and luxurious status have made it highly sought after in the gifting market while also attracting investors who appreciate its scarcity and potential for appreciation. Additionally, Maotai has implemented a high-price product strategy to highlight the exclusivity and upscale nature of its offerings, setting it apart from other alcohol brands. However, there are certain drawbacks to Maotai's marketing efforts targeted towards younger consumers that may impact its positioning in the high-end market segment. The frequent use of youth-oriented marketing campaigns can significantly undermine Maotai's esteemed brand image and excessive exposure might diminish its reputation as a rare luxury liquor brand.

3.2.3 Analysis of marketing strategy based on 4Ps theory

In terms of product strategy, Maotai, a premium Chinese liquor brand, has gained a strong reputation for its distinctive brewing process and use of high-quality ingredients. However, in an attempt to appeal to younger consumers, Maotai ventured into integrating their liquor products with popular food items such as ice cream, coffee, and chocolate. Despite employing sophisticated packaging design, the mismatch between the characteristics of the products and the youth-oriented fusion became apparent. In terms of pricing strategy, Maotai initially positioned their liquors at a higher price point (e.g., 3000-5000 yuan for a 500ml bottle of 53% Flying Fairy Maotai). This stark contrast in pricing compared to the youth-oriented co-branded products (e.g., 66 yuan for Maotai ice cream) attracted young consumers but failed to convert them into regular customers due to limited purchasing power and an increasing trend towards health consciousness. The misalignment between marketing efforts and the actual consumer base ultimately resulted in the failure of Maotai's youth-oriented marketing approach in effectively driving liquor sales.

In terms of distribution, Maotai follows a boutique approach by selling its products through both online and offline dealers to uphold its luxurious image. However, co-branded items are made available through the extensive distribution channels of partner brands. When it comes to promotion, Maotai liquor primarily relies on word-of-mouth marketing, which has led to remarkable sales in the gift market due to its reputation as the 'National Banquet Liquor.' On the other hand, co-branded products employ a popular marketing strategy that expands their reach through social media platforms and offline store experiences. For example, the collaboration between Maotai and Luckin Coffee in 2023 for the creation of 'Sauce Xiang Latte' garnered significant exposure but eventually resulted in public fatigue with regards to aesthetics. As a consequence, consumer interest in Maotai declined and had an adverse impact on the brand's high-end image.

Maotai's marketing approach of co-branding targeting the younger generation highlights the limitations of relying solely on one strategy. The frequent collaborations with other brands dilute the perception of luxury, while product fusion and inconsistent pricing undermine the brand's exclusivity. Moreover, extensive channel promotions further diminish its exclusiveness. This unsuccessful tactic serves as a cautionary example for future brand marketing endeavors, emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive evaluation and adoption of integrated strategies

across multiple channels and facets. Additionally, it underscores the importance of precisely catering to the demands of target markets in order to achieve sustainable development.

3.3 Conclusion

In summary, the success story of Pop Mart serves as a prime example of how Integrated Marketing Strategies can be effectively implemented. By employing comprehensive approaches that encompass product development, pricing tactics, distribution channels, and promotional endeavors, Pop Mart managed to establish a dominant position in the trendy toy market. The seamless alignment of these diverse elements allowed them to proficiently convey their brand message while catering to the evolving needs and preferences of their target audience.

On the contrary, Maotai's exclusive approach in co-branding marketing aimed at capturing the attention of young consumers has resulted in a diluted perception of their brand and caused confusion in the market. This highlights the importance of having comprehensive and integrated marketing strategies. When companies focus solely on one aspect or fail to seamlessly integrate their marketing efforts across different areas such as product development or pricing strategy, along with promotional activities, they face the risk of diminishing their brand image or confusing consumers about their value proposition.

Therefore, it is imperative for businesses to embrace comprehensive approaches that encompass all facets of integrated marketing communication (IMC) models such as Segmentation-Targeting-Positioning (STP) and the 4Ps framework (Product-Price-Promotion-Place). By thoroughly analyzing both international and domestic market trends while considering theoretical frameworks like IMC models mentioned above, companies can formulate effective strategies that ensure a competitive advantage in today's dynamic marketplace.

4. The development and transformation path of Integrated Marketing Strategies in China under the background of the New Media Era

After conducting extensive research on both domestic and international literature, analyzing theoretical models of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) such as STP and 4Ps, and examining current market trends, it is clear that the implementation of Integrated Marketing Strategies is essential in today's market. Successful companies like Pop Mart have utilized comprehensive strategies in product development, pricing, distribution channels, and promotional efforts to establish a dominant position in the trendy toy industry. On the other hand, Maotai's singular approach to youth-oriented co-branding marketing has resulted in a diluted brand image and confusion within their target market. Therefore, it is crucial for businesses to adopt comprehensive and synergistic Integrated Marketing Strategies to maintain a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

4.1 Strengthen the Innovation of Marketing Strategies with utilizing Data tools

In today's highly competitive market landscape, businesses are continuously striving to discover strategies that will give them a competitive advantage over their rivals. To achieve this, it has become imperative for companies to embrace innovative marketing techniques. Data analysis plays an essential role in assisting businesses in making well-informed decisions regarding their growth trajectories. Through the examination of extensive data sets, organizations can identify patterns and gain valuable insights that offer them a deeper comprehension of market dynamics. This empowers them to make strategic choices that align with current trends and meet consumer demands effectively.

Furthermore, the process of gathering data for the purpose of establishing user profiles allows companies to obtain a precise comprehension and analysis of consumer needs. By obtaining information pertaining to consumers' preferences, behaviors, and demographics, businesses can create comprehensive profiles that aid them in tailoring their marketing strategies accordingly. This targeted approach ensures that promotional activities effectively resonate with the appropriate audience at the most opportune time.

Reaping the advantages of precise consumer profiling, Integrated Marketing Strategies (IMS) can greatly benefit. By gaining a deep understanding of their target audience's preferences and interests, companies can enhance the effectiveness of their IMS campaigns across various channels like social media platforms or traditional advertising mediums. This comprehensive approach guarantees consistent messaging while optimizing the reach and engagement among potential customers.

In addition, through the efficient utilization of data analysis tools and techniques, organizations can constantly monitor the real-time efficiency of their marketing strategies. They have the ability to observe key performance indicators (KPIs), evaluate campaign success rates, promptly identify areas for enhancement, and adapt their tactics accordingly.

In conclusion, to successfully gain a competitive advantage in the face of intense market competition, companies must adopt innovative marketing strategies. Taking inspiration from successful cases such as Pop Mart enables businesses to comprehend how data analysis contributes to precise identification of industry trends and effective selection of development paths. Moreover, utilizing data to construct user profiles aids in accurately understanding consumer needs, thereby enabling the formulation of more targeted Integrated Marketing Strategies (IMS). Embracing these approaches empowers businesses to maintain a leading position in an ever-evolving marketplace while efficiently meeting diverse consumer demands.

4.2 Implementing Sustainable Marketing Strategies

As social media and internet platforms progress, businesses are becoming more aware of the opportunities to employ successful marketing strategies in order to generate highly successful products. These platforms provide extensive access to a wide audience and unmatched visibility, making them indispensable tools for companies aiming to advertise their offerings.

However, in the midst of striving for immediate success and increased traffic, it is imperative for companies to not lose focus on the long-term growth of their brand. Maotai's unsuccessful case serves as a notable example in this regard. By closely analyzing this instance, other businesses can glean valuable insights into the significance of upholding a consistent brand image while implementing marketing strategies.

In order to achieve success in new marketing endeavors, it is crucial for companies to prioritize the harmony between their brand image and marketing strategy. This implies that every promotional endeavor should be in line with the fundamental values and identity of the brand itself. By doing so, businesses can establish a consistent storyline that resonates with consumers across various platforms. Additionally, when devising marketing strategies, sustainability should take precedence. Although short-term benefits may appear alluring, it is imperative for companies to contemplate how these efforts will impact their overall brand perception in the long term. A well-planned approach ensures that each marketing campaign contributes positively towards constructing a solid foundation for future expansion.

Furthermore, it is crucial for companies to prioritize the preservation of their original brand image when venturing into new marketing strategies. Prior to engaging in any promotional endeavors that deviate from their established branding guidelines, organizations should thoroughly assess potential risks. Straying too far from what customers associate with a specific company can result in confusion or even alienation among dedicated consumers.

In conclusion, as social media and internet platforms continue to evolve into influential tools for marketers worldwide, it becomes crucial for companies to find a harmonious balance between short-term achievements and long-term brand development objectives. Drawing lessons from previous setbacks such as the Maotai case serves as a vital reminder that maintaining alignment between brand image and marketing strategy should always take precedence alongside sustainable growth goals, while also avoiding any harm to an established brand reputation during new ventures.

4.3 Crisis Management and Public Relations

In the current dynamic and uncertain market landscape, companies are increasingly recognizing the paramount importance of crisis management and public relations. The recent incident involving

Maotai's swift termination of co-branding partnerships serves as a compelling illustration of why it is imperative for businesses to establish robust mechanisms for effectively handling crises. In today's fast-paced digital age, characterized by rapid information dissemination through social media platforms and news channels, even the slightest negative incident or dispute has the potential to swiftly escalate into a severe crisis that poses a significant threat to a company's reputation. Consequently, organizations must prioritize establishing comprehensive strategies for managing crises in order to promptly and effectively address these formidable challenges.

An essential element of efficient crisis management involves the capacity to foresee potential hazards and devise backup strategies accordingly. It is crucial for organizations to regularly carry out comprehensive evaluations of risks, pinpointing any vulnerabilities that may exist within their operations or supply chains. By doing so, they can take proactive measures to address issues before they escalate into full-blown crises.

Another crucial factor is the need to uphold transparent channels of communication with stakeholders amidst periods of uncertainty or hardship. This encompasses not just clientele, but also staff members, shareholders, vendors, and the wider community. Transparent communication fosters trust and reliability by guaranteeing that precise information reaches all relevant parties.

In addition, it is crucial for organizations to allocate resources towards providing comprehensive training programs for their staff members in effectively managing crises. It is imperative to establish crisis response teams that have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, ensuring that every individual understands the necessary actions to be taken when confronted with unforeseen circumstances. Conducting regular drills or simulations can significantly enhance the preparedness of these teams, enabling them to handle any potential situation that may arise proficiently.

Furthermore, it is of utmost importance for organizations to consistently monitor online discussions regarding their brand. Employing social listening tools can aid in promptly identifying potential issues by monitoring references across multiple platforms. By staying informed about public sentiment towards their brand on the internet, companies can effectively address concerns or dispel misinformation before they escalate beyond control.

Ultimately, the establishment of efficient crisis management mechanisms extends beyond mere reaction to problems as they arise; it entails proactive preparation and continuous surveillance to effectively mitigate risks. In today's rapidly evolving business environment where reputations can be built or shattered overnight, it has become essential for every company striving to uphold its brand reputation amidst dynamic market fluctuations to invest in comprehensive crisis management strategies.

In conclusion, the diverse consumer demands and behaviors shape the fiercely competitive current and future market environment. Companies need to adapt more flexibly to the digitization trend, focus on data application and social responsibility, while maintaining a high level of vigilance in crisis management. In this context, Integrated Marketing Strategies should consider different channels, consumer groups, and societal factors comprehensively to achieve long-term competitive advantages in the market.

5. Conclusion

Currently, the marketing strategies paradigm in the Chinese market is progressively saturating due to a multitude of consumer demands and behaviors that shape an intensely competitive market environment both presently and in the foreseeable future. The innovative implementation of Integrated Marketing Strategies emerges as a pivotal avenue for the development and transformation of marketing strategies within China.

This article explores the development opportunities and challenges in the field of Integrated Marketing in China under the backdrop of new media. In conclusion, it proposes a development and transformation path for Chinese Integrated Marketing Strategies: Companies need to adapt more flexibly to the digitization trend, emphasizing the application of data and the innovativeness of marketing strategies. Simultaneously, there should be a focus on the sustainability of marketing strategies while maintaining a high level of vigilance in crisis management. Companies should

comprehensively consider different channels, consumer groups, and societal factors in formulating Integrated Marketing Strategies to achieve long-term competitive advantages in the market.

References

- [1] Joep P. Cornelissen (2003) Change, continuity and progress: the concept of integrated marketing communications and marketing communications practice. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 11:4, 217-234
- [2] Jerry G. Kliatchko & Don E. Schultz. (2014) Twenty years of IMC. *International Journal of Advertising*, 33:2, 373-390, DOI: 10.2501/IJA-33-2-373-390, DOI: 10.1080/0965254032000159045
- [3] Wondwesen Tafesse & Philip J. Kitchen. (2017) IMC – an integrative review. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36:2, 210-226, DOI: 10.1080/02650487.2015.1114168
- [4] Zhou Hanzhang. Integrated marketing communication theories review [J]. *Modern marketing (school edition)*, 2021 (9) : 47-49. DOI: 10.19932 / j.carol carroll nki. 22-1256 / F 2021.09.047
- [5] Chu Guangzhi. Research on Localization of Integrated Marketing Communication -- the Perspective of marketing communication managers of Chinese enterprises [J]. *Journal of modern transmission (communication university of China)*, 2010 (12) : 84-91. The DOI: 10.19997 / j.carol carroll nki XDCB. 2010.12.019