

Application Analysis of Social Media Platforms in Automobile Brand Marketing

Jiyao Yang

Art and Science Department, University of Toronto, St. George Campus, Toronto, Canada

amyyang813@gmail.com

Keywords: Digital marketing; Social media; Automobile marketing; Brand marketing

Abstract: The influence of social media on the marketing structure makes brand marketing more dependent on information dissemination, social networks, value sharing, and other functions. Automotive brand marketing in the digital marketing era should pay attention to the importance of social media and build a consumer-centric digital marketing strategy. This paper points out that automobile brands can achieve brand marketing by establishing and strengthening brand positioning, increasing the interaction of end consumers, optimizing brand SEO management, and exerting the KOL marketing effect. However, there are still some problems in automobile brand marketing, such as isolated data islands, extensive investment, and lack of interactive effect. The article also puts forward appropriate protection measures, hoping that brand marketing can help automobile companies fully reap the benefits of digital and social media marketing.

1. Introduction

Since 2018, the automobile market in China has entered a severe negative growth era. With the saturation of car ownership, urban traffic congestion, and the trend of replacing fuel vehicles with new energy, many automobile enterprises have begun to enter the era of competition in the stock market. Especially after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the entity marketing channel encountered unprecedented resistance, and automobile enterprises had to seek brand-new marketing channels. The traditional marketing channels of automotive brands mainly come from outdoor advertising, website columns and commerce platforms such as Autohome, Bitauto and Pacific Auto.com. These sites have strengths in information dissemination and outreach, but are unpopular in the age of the digital marketing flow economy and are reluctant to build brands. In addition, automotive brand marketing has not been well integrated into the new era of consumer behavior.

From the perspective of the social environment of the digital economy, social media such as live broadcasting, KOL, and short videos have become the focus of digital marketing because such social media content symbolizes the flow of digital marketing. Moreover, user portraits composed of platform big data can be used to achieve accurate marketing. Social media push high-quality, accurate, and rich content to designated users and gradually change their awareness and attitude towards the brand. Therefore, automobile brand marketing in the digital age should focus on the application of digital technology. The operator had better use big data to construct the whole life cycle of consumers and establish a data-driven brand marketing strategy to cover consumers' car viewing, selection, purchase, and use. Through the whole life cycle of car replacement, every consumer can get lifelong value. Given that consumers in China have generally accumulated proficiency in using social media, social media has become an important medium in digital marketing for automobile enterprises. The article discussed the application of social media platforms in automobile brand marketing.

2. Relevant Theories and Literature Review

2.1 Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is the application of digitization in marketing. Digitalization refers to applying digital technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and the Internet of

Things in production, operation, and management operations to improve operational efficiency, response speed, and organization flexibility. Moreover, it can restructure industrial collaboration, value chain logic, and business models. Digital marketing is applying the above digital technology to marketing activities to serve the brand marketing goal of the enterprise and enable the enterprise to enhance its competitiveness in the brand-new marketing era. Therefore, digital marketing does not overturn traditional marketing. It is about adapting to the times and adding the concept of digital technology.

2.2 Social Media Marketing

Social media is different from traditional media, breaking the monopoly of official, mainstream, and authoritative media. Social media has changed from the past "one-to-many" communication mode and gradually into the "many-to-many" mode. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) [1] first defined social media applications, including blogs, microblogs, social networking sites, and content community sites. The author believes that the development of social media is following the progress of Internet communication technology. Lai Wei (2019) [2] reviewed the development history of Chinese and foreign social media. The author believes that Chinese and foreign social media sprouted from the primary website system, and China's "Internet of Everything" will also deepen the integration of residents' lives and enterprises.

Based on the previous literature, the effect of media marketing concentrates upon three aspects. First, Köhler and Gründer(2016) [4] noted that social media provides the market's supply and demand information for marketing personnel. In particular, the amount of attention, likes, comments, retweets, and other information from consumers in social applications helps marketers dig out essential information.

For example, Tuten and Solomon (2017) considered that marketing personnel could trace market emotion by text mining technology. Furthermore, this also allows enterprises to implement a marketing strategy oriented by market demand, which provides great competitive power for the brand. (Gundecha and Liu, 2012)

2.3 The Influence and Application of Social Media on Marketing

With the increasing influence of social media on people's life and work, more and more scholars have begun to pay attention to the application of social media in marketing. Among them, Tuten and Solomon (2017) [7] Dwivedi put forward the definition of social media marketing. They considered that social media marketing is a process of the marketer establishing, spreading, delivering, and exchanging the product's value for stakeholders depending on social media. Dwivedi et al. (2015) [8] suggested that social media can be used as a marketing communication tool to help enterprises promote goods. Some social media platforms also function as commodity sales channels. For example, Gruzd et al. (2018) noted that social media has a vast audience, allowing enterprises to deliver product value to end consumers. Social media is also an essential tool for enterprises to promote new products. The definition of social media marketing also includes social networks. For example, Kamboj et al. (2018) [10] proposed that social media provides social members such as friends, family members, enterprises, and strangers to establish, maintain and strengthen social relations. Therefore, social network marketing needs to play the role of member network relations to expand communication coverage. In addition, Misirlis and Vlachopoulou(2018) [11] also proposed that social network marketing is a way to give play to relationship marketing, which can deepen user stickiness through the communication between brands and users on social media.

3. Application of Social Media Platforms in Automobile Brand Marketing

3.1 Establishment and Strengthening of Automobile Brand Positioning

With the help of big data and user portraits accumulated on digital marketing platforms, automobile companies can understand their brand image in the consumer market and adjust the product structure to cater to brand image cognition. It also helps brands to stay dynamic, not static.

After all, in digital marketing, consumers are still guided by social media, and brands must create a unique brand to attract their attention and arouse consumers' exploration and interest in brands.

To achieve this goal, automobile enterprises need to focus on their brand characteristics and the development trend and launch some keywords with a marketing gimmick, such as black technology, home comfort, rich functions, bright shape, novel materials, onboard systems, etc. At the same time, find a neglected wrestling point in the market to establish the positioning characteristics of this field to attract consumers' attention. For example, the Mini convertible series launched by Wuling Hongguang is a new energy mini-car with a household convertible of less than 100,000 yuan. At the same time, it meets the needs of young people for short-distance transportation, urban leisure, and cost performance and attracts customers' attention by its compact shape. The driving force for the marketing of this product is also in major media forums, such as WeChat public account, Tik Tok, Bilibili, and other social media platforms with more young users.

In addition, social media platforms might be a means for car brands to expand their target consumers. When some traditional domestic brands transition to mid- and high-end brands, they can try to launch concept models on social media platforms to test the reaction of target groups to new brands, which can also help improve and innovate brand image.

3.2 Growth in End Consumer Engagement

Social media platforms are the digital channel with the shortest distance between car companies and consumers. Brands can create official accounts on social media and publish content that users can follow and subscribe to. Next, the operator can maintain the brand stickiness by enhancing the intimacy of consumers, even enhancing the feedback enthusiasm of consumers to brand marketing activities, and actively answering consumers' questions. In addition, brands can manage public relations and public opinion crises and give full play to the digital technology of accurate recommendations within the platform. For example, car brand managers can see users' comments, concerns, reposts, and other information about different content in the background of official social media accounts and can use text to extract consumers' views on marketing content.

In the era of digital marketing, only by enhancing interaction and contact with consumers can we get a stable user base. Managers can build social media content management systems on Little Red Book, Tik Tok, Applet, Youtube, etc. Then, they set up departments to establish and manage social media accounts and interact with end consumers. In the early stages, managers will reply to every consumer message, use this contact link to encourage more people to join, and use the digital function of social media to reward consumers with medals or provide virtual rewards, such as ratings, fan salutations, etc. And then, the manager links them to the user's offline material rewards or provides in-vehicle system services to the user.

3.3 SEO Optimization Management of Brand

The search results of some automobile brands on social media platforms lack management. Usually, consumers get irrelevant content or negative comments or comments when searching for brand information on the platform. Car companies must pay attention to SEO optimization in digital marketing to arouse consumer interest or retain attention at the brand search end. Therefore, car brands' output keywords on social media should match hot spots because keywords will be placed in front of the search bar. For example, on Bilibili, the keyword "immersive" is relatively popular, showing users' aesthetic demand for professional videos. On November 11th, 2022, BMW released an immersive video of its M8 series cars. On July 8th, the same year, the account also released the immersive video of M4 series cars, both of which had high hits, which provided search optimization for related videos of BMW.

From content management, car brands can promote car review columns that comment on their best products, including mechanical properties, materials and quality, scientific and technical features, shape design, and more. In addition, car owners can be encouraged to take video pick-up or share car experiences, making it easier for people to search social media for positive brand-related information to support purchasing decisions.

3.4 KOL Marketing Effect

In the digital marketing era, many automobile self-media guides consumers' attention. Many consumers may buy a certain brand or model because of car evaluation from media programs. Therefore, automotive brands can connect online and offline channels, sign several professional KOL accounts, and provide continuous content output. This can trigger user interaction, turn KOL fans into brand fans, and achieve the transfer effect of brand tracking. In addition, the manager needs to play the KOL fan effect in a marketing promotion. For example, when BMW launched the M240i model in 2022, it gave full play to the advantage of the car review program. It cooperated with KOL on various social media to launch the car evaluation video, which attracted the attention and discussion of many netizens.

4. Analysis of Automobile Brand Marketing in the Social Media Era

4.1 Marketing of Isolated Data Island

Automobile enterprises in China often include the marketing department, sales department, 4S shop management department, and other departments. In recent years, new departments such as the innovation and digital marketing departments may also be launched. However, digital data between different departments have not been shared. Digital media motor and advertising data are concentrated in the digital marketing department, while the marketing department holds the user profile data of each brand's products. The sales terminal grasps the big data of real transactions, which has the problem of a separate division and does not open the data port. For instance, the sales channel of automobile enterprises depends on the third-party 4S shop. Suppose the digital marketing department refuses to provide marketing resources due to the need to control the channel dealer. In that case, the channel dealer may not get feedback on digital marketing, which weakens the marketing effect.

4.2 Too-Extensive Delivery

When social media invest in marketing resources, car companies may not choose an accurate platform because different platforms have different positioning. For example, portal websites may be more suitable for low-priced cars, and vertical media such as Car Home are more professional and authoritative.

4.3 Lack of interaction

Social media marketing is a practical approach to relationship marketing because social media is a bridge between brands and users to achieve "short, flat, and fast" communication. If enterprises do not take advantage of it, they may lose the opportunity to enhance user stickiness. In fact, the marketing of domestic automobile companies on social media is still one-way, lacking interaction with users. For instance, the digital marketing platform within the automobile brand has no user interaction function, such as a WeChat public account, Tik Tok, APP, or Video Channel. The number of followers is not high, and there are few users to share their opinions on the forum. Moreover, user engagement is low and disconnected from physical sales activities. As a result, consumers see a disconnect between the brand image in physical stores and on social media platforms.

5. Safeguard Measures of Automobile Brand Marketing in Social Media Era

5.1 Breaking Isolated Data Islands

A data middle station is necessary for constructing an enterprise digital marketing system. The data center is used to summarize the internal R & D, production, marketing, and user data of the enterprise and the external upstream and downstream industrial chain data and to screen, analyze and manage the data. Management staff can apply data standardization, normalization, and flow measures, share data to sales channels through API ports, and conduct conversion rate analysis of digital marketing investments to improve investments, thereby improving the profits for business units.

5.2 Fine Delivery

When launching in channels, automobile enterprises should also use models to analyze the impact of different channels on purchase behavior and calculate the budget of digital marketing investment. After settling the history data of marketing, the manager will classify the grade of the marketing channel and select the channel that has better effects and is more suitable for the user portraits. As a result, a virtuous cycle of planning in advance, strict implementation, inspection at any time, and timely improvement will be formed.

5.3 A Focus on Digital Interaction

From the digital marketing environment perspective, enterprises should pay attention to the operation and planning of user interactions. They need to categorize users, analyze which user portraits are more consistent with renewal or maintenance, adopt precise interactive strategies, acquire potential customers through various channel touchpoints, and constantly capture the attention and interest of potential customers. In this way, the enterprise will improve the breadth and depth of information dissemination, usually prompting the potential customers to make innovations and finally fission through them.

6. Conclusion

Social media has gradually invaded the marketing landscape, and brand marketers are increasingly relying on social media's capabilities, such as information dissemination, social networking, and value sharing. In the digital marketing era, automotive brand marketing should pay attention to the importance of social media and build a consumer-centric digital marketing strategy. This paper puts forward that automobile brands can realize brand marketing by establishing and strengthening automobile brand positioning, increasing the interaction between end consumers, strengthening brand SEO optimization management, and exerting KOL marketing effects. However, there are still some problems in automobile brand marketing, such as isolated data islands, extensive investment, and lack of interactive effects. Based on this, this paper also puts forward corresponding measures, hoping to be helpful to the application of automobile brands and the advantages of digital and social media marketing.

References

- [1] Kaplan A M, Haenlein M. Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media[J]. Business horizons, 2010, 53(1): 59-68.
- [2] Lai Wei. A Comparative Study of the Development History of Chinese and Foreign Social Media [J]. Young Journalists, 2019 (32): 20-21.
- [3] Ye Wenxin. Social Media Development Status and Trend Analysis--Taking Social Application Weibo, Zhihu as an Example [J]. China Newspaper, 2017 (2): 14-15.
- [4] Köhler A, Gründer M. Online-Marketing für die erfolgreiche Arztpraxis[J]. Auflage, Heidelberg, 2016: 2-142.
- [5] Evans D. Social Media Marketing: An Hour a Day[M]. John Wiley & Sons, 2010.
- [6] Gundecha P, Liu H. Mining social media: a brief introduction[J]. New directions in informatics, optimization, logistics, and production, 2012: 1-17.
- [7] Tuten T L, Solomon M R. Social media marketing[M]. Sage, 2017.
- [8] Dwivedi Y K, Kapoor K K, Chen H. Social media marketing and advertising[J]. The Marketing Review, 2015, 15(3): 289-309.
- [9] Gruzd A, Lannigan J, Quigley K. Examining government cross-platform engagement in social media: Instagram vs Twitter and the big lift project[J]. Government Information Quarterly, 2018,

35(4): 579-587.

[10] Kamboj S, Sarmah B, Gupta S, et al. Examining branding co-creation in brand communities on social media: Applying the paradigm of Stimulus-Organism-Response[J]. *International Journal of Information Management*, 2018, 39: 169-185.

[11] Misirlis N, Vlachopoulou M. Social media metrics and analytics in marketing–S3M: A mapping literature review[J]. *International Journal of Information Management*, 2018, 38(1): 270-276.