Research on the Application Strategy of Online Opinion Leaders in Virtual Community Brand Word-of-Mouth Marketing

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Abstract: With the development of Web 2.0, electronic word-of-mouth marketing is loved by more and more brands with its high credibility and low cost. The virtual community is the main location for word-of-mouth marketing using online opinion leaders. Through the case analysis method, this paper chooses the marketing method of Estée Lauder, a typical case, to carry on the concrete analysis, in order to explore and summarize the application strategy of the online opinion leaders in the virtual community word of mouth marketing. In order to provide clear advice for enterprises.

1. Introduction

Now, More and more brands are keen to advertise in virtual communities, and through comment marketing, live e-commerce, social e-commerce and other ways to create their own brand reputation. According to Zenith latest ad projections, Global social media advertising spending grew 72% between 2016 and 2019. Among them, China contributes 25% to global growth in social media advertising spending. Even if online advertising stopped growing for the first time in 20 years in 2020, Social media still grew 9%, To $98.3 billion. Warc's report predicts social media advertising spending will grow 12.2 percent to $110.3 billion in 2021, accounting for 18.6 percent of all advertising spending.

Among them, the virtual community with User Generated Content (UGC) as the main mode of information dissemination has become a hot place for the masses to gather on the network, and it is also the first choice advertising place for brand marketing. By encouraging consumers to interact with consumers and share information, social functions are used to improve the reputation of brand network and ultimately enhance consumers' willingness to buy. The core of virtual community operation is "people ", and opinion leaders play an important role in the dissemination and guidance of information, the formation and development of group behavior and so on[1]. In a virtual community, users are affected by certain characteristics (such as professionalism and interactive activity) of the core characters in the social scene, which may have multiple identities, such as Internet celebrities, shopping talent and authority figures, through the stable information sharing and interaction mechanism among users formed in the community, which makes "leading" users like

them become information diffusion centers, and online marketing with virtual community as the main media becomes popular[2]. In order to facilitate research, this paper refers to them as "online opinion leaders ".

Online opinion leaders, as their own traffic and influential groups, although they can have a great impact on brand reputation and consumer shopping choices, but enterprises in the effective cost, In the face of the online of virtual communities and opinion leaders how to effectively choose to make advertising value greater, word of mouth more successful is a problem worth exploring. Looking back on past studies, we mainly focus on the study of influencing factors of consumer purchase intention and the hypothetical study of which traits of opinion leaders will promote consumer purchase. Therefore, this paper focuses on enterprise behavior, from the perspective of how enterprises choose virtual community platform and online opinion leaders, select typical successful cases to study, in order to sum up the application strategy of enterprise electronic word-of-mouth marketing.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Online Opinion Leaders

The concept of "opinion leaders" was put forward by Lazarsfeld American communications scholar in the book people's choice -- how voters make decisions in presidential campaigns. According to the Lazarsfeld research, there are two levels of communication in the process of information dissemination, the mass media will not directly transmit the information to the general audience, through an intermediate link -- opinion leaders, pass the information to the less active public through the opinion leaders. With the development and popularity of the Internet, opinion leaders are now often defined as individuals who have the greatest impact on the recognition or adoption of others in the process of spreading products and technologies in social networks[3]. According to previous studies, opinion leaders on the Internet found that there are three main dimensions, including "position in the life cycle, socioeconomic status in the region and the social scope of personal contact ", which determine the influence of opinion leaders. At the nodes of different life cycles, there is a corresponding degree of knowledge familiarity, and the degree of understanding and solving of the problem determines whether the individual can become a online opinion leaders. The dimension of social and economic status is embodied in education, income and social identity. At the same time, the development of two-level communication theory provides a new idea for the application of opinion leaders in enterprise marketing: with the help of the core role of opinion leaders in interpersonal networks, relevant information or ideas are widely disseminated through word of mouth.

2.2 Electronic Word of Mouth Marketing

At present, consumers are using a variety of channels (online and offline) to familiarize themselves with and buy products. In the past decade, the Internet has become an important platform for individuals to become "media" for collaborative sharing of information, thus fundamentally changing the business environment[4]. The social media platform provides a global platform for consumers to share information through advice and opinions by clicking the mouse[5].

Web 2.0 enables consumers to get information through social networks, through friends and friends. This kind of online information search and recommendation has been defined as online word of mouth in the literature. Electronic word-of-mouth marketing (eWOM) is the result of the integration of online marketing and word-of-mouth marketing. On the online communication platform, readers publish word-of-mouth information in the form of graphics and text, and expand

the marketing channels and interest space of enterprises[6]. Such as MicroBlog, Xiaohongshu, Tit Tok and so on can become the brand electronic word of mouth marketing platform and channel. According to relevant research, 20%-50% of consumers think that online word of mouth is the primary factor of their willingness to buy, so its importance to enterprises is self-evident. Compared with the traditional marketing methods, the most significant advantage of word-of-mouth marketing is strong credibility, online marketing is low cost, and electronic word-of-mouth marketing is to bring the advantages of the two into full play.

3. Research Methodology

In order to make the research more practical, this paper uses case analysis method to explore and study the whole process of typical cases in the near future. In order to understand the relationship between online opinion leaders and electronic word-of-mouth marketing and the application of concepts in practice.

In order to make the application strategy summary of enterprise electronic word-of-mouth marketing more representative, this paper chooses Xiaohongshu as the representative of virtual platform -- which was rated as the highest advertising value in China in 2020. At the same time, choose Xiaohongshu 2020 brand skin care note interaction as a typical enterprise representative. This paper will focus on the relationship and role between online opinion leader and electronic word of mouth marketing from how Estée Lauder chooses the appropriate virtual community platform. Finally, according to the feedback of consumers, the application strategy of enterprise electronic word of mouth marketing is obtained.

4. EstÉe Lauder Online Marketing Path Based on Xiaohongshu Virtual Community Platform

4.1 EstÉe Lauder and Xiaohongshu Virtual Community Online Opinion Leaders Adapt

Affected by the epidemic situation in 2020, offline brand stores have been hit to a certain extent, and online marketing channels have entered the stage of deep development. In promoting brand influence and strengthening brand image has been widely recognized by the market.

In order to analyze the reasons why Estée Lauder chose Xiaohongshu Virtual Community platform for brand marketing, first of all, from the perspective of adaptability, this paper studies whether the user portrait of the online opinion leader's platform or community matches the brand. And platform or community online opinion leader development is good.

From the point of view of user orientation of Xiaohongshu platform, the users of the platform are mainly Guangdong women aged 18-34 years old, among which urban white-collar workers and elite women in the workplace account for a large proportion, and the consumption level of such users is high. Estée Lauder and other cosmetics and skin care brands, according to Ai media data "2019-2020 Chinese cosmetics online shopping user portrait and behavior insight "content, its user base is mainly concentrated in Guangdong 19-25 years old women, and among all consumers ,47.4% of consumers will be more inclined to buy cosmetics on integrated e-commerce platforms, which coincides with the user positioning of Xiaohongshu as an e-commerce platform. Under the influence of "her economy ", Xiaohongshu, which is dominated by young female users, has become a necessary place for precision marketing of opinion leaders of beauty makeup and skin care brands. This is also the natural reason to promote Estée Lauder's opinion leaders brand marketing role in Xiaohongshu platform.

In this context, Xiaohongshu's online opinion leaders have developed very rapidly. From the development of Xiaohongshu's online opinion leaders, as of September 2020, more than 100,000

active opinion leaders have published more than four notes a week. With a high increase in number, its fan activity is much higher than the market average of 40.

The original ecological opinion leaders of Xiaohongshu has brought great commercial value to Xiaohongshu. As a beauty brand, Estée Lauder's user orientation and online marketing needs match the platform development of Xiaohongshu. In addition to Xiaohongshu's own brand number promotion, needle to Xiaohongshu opinion leaders careful screening and accurate delivery for Xiaohongshu users, but also into the Estée Lauder Group brand marketing links. In 2020, Estée Lauder Group's Estée Lauder, Jo Malone London, LAMER in the top three commercial launch list, this is Estée Lauder in the Xiaohongshu marketing situation positive response.

4.2 EstÉe Lauder Brand Marketing Delivery

Estée Lauder's brand marketing on the Xiaohongshu platform is mainly carried out through the original opinion leaders of it. Estée Lauder's marketing notes in Xiaohongshu with opinion leaders are as high as 15000. And from it review and 1.46 million related interaction point of view, is as high as skin care brand marketing first.

According to the whole marketing cycle from content to marketing to final trading in Xiaohongshu, Estée Lauder focuses on the choice of opinion leaders and the output of notes recommendation. Marketing defines the time of brand delivery to achieve the best results, and strengthens the interaction between opinion leaders and users during this period.

The following is a specific description of Estée Lauder brand marketing through its opinion leaders in Xiaohongshu virtual community.

The first is the choice of opinion leaders, which needs to be seen from the distribution of "pyramid" talent in the Xiaohongshu itself (see figure 1), not only multi-layer drainage, but also full consideration of long tail flow, step-by-step propagation and diffusion. Estée Lauder does not focus on choosing celebrity endorsements, but regards the intermediate opinion leaders from the "pyramid" as the core promotion crowd of 50% of Estée Lauder brand marketing, with large interaction, large number of fans, traffic and user trust, low risk and high return on investment. In this level of brand promotion, its original reputation makes it easier for users to recommend notes, and these opinion leaders who have fans and establish close relationships with fans naturally become the export side of the brand and a natural bridge between brands and consumers. Brand marketing through intermediate opinion leaders has a good impact on marketing accuracy and final conversion effect.
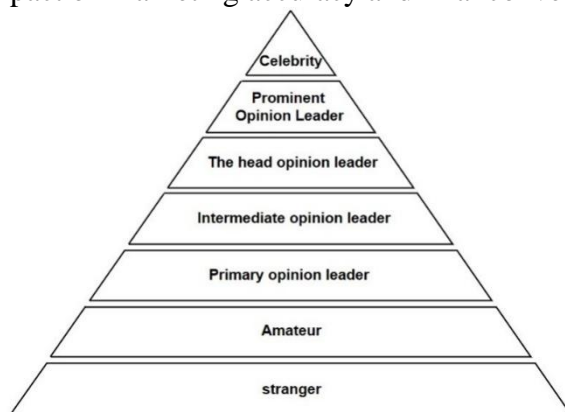

Fig.1 Pyramid Model of Xiaohongshu Platform

Secondly, it is clear that Estée Lauder's opinion leaders recommend a long time for brand launch. In order to maintain user stickiness in the big market for makeup and skin care, the publicity time should not be too long. From October 20 to November 11, a short period of node concentration is

conducive to creating popular styles on Xiaohongshu through opinion leaders. During this period, celebrities and the head opinion leaders first create momentum, arouse the interest of users, and then hand over to the talent for targeted community promotion, to promote the spontaneous dissemination of interested users, supplemented by screen advertising, brand topics. This targeted to create "a small brown bottle", "eye cream" popular style. From 2020 comments hot search words can be seen, the brand word "Estée Lauder" with 5.05% of the second, which also reflects the results of Estée Lauder brand marketing.

4.3 Consumer Feedback on Impact of Brand Marketing

From Estée Lauder's 2020 double 11 marketing results, whether as the first double 11 to enter the Tmall "billion yuan club" flagship store on November 1, or as the first Tmall beauty flagship store to break through 2 billion in the second double 11 on November 11, can explain the marketing results of the double 11.

In addition to large-scale brand promotion, its subsequent word-of-mouth marketing has also made good progress. From 2020 intention words: "good-looking", "like" and "recommended". We can see that Estée Lauder's whole marketing is accompanied by the propaganda of Xiaohongshu opinion leaders, which has a good dissemination and guidance to the brand reputation of enterprises.

The reason is that 60% of consumers are more interested in the promotion of talented "microinfluents" than "pan influencers" like celebrities, and 82% of consumers are more likely to be recommended by vertical opinion leaders when making consumer decisions, because of the long-term accumulation of word of mouth and trust. Although Estée Lauder only chose to focus on the intermediate opinion leaders, these opinion leaders only have their own user base in the corresponding community of Xiaohongshu, and the dissemination is far less powerful than that of celebrities. But these vertical opinion leaders as bridges achieve a complete business closed loop between brands, communities and ecommerce. Deep influence and strong stickiness can maximize the original users into consumers, but also promote consumers to publish UGC content to promote independent publicity.

In a word, the effect of consumer influenced by brand marketing has positive feedback from the point of view of final effect and intention word. With the development and specialization of online opinion leaders, consumers at the level of self-demand in Maslow's demand curve will be more interested in brands with attitude and personality, and will also have deeper recognition and emotional connection to online opinion leaders rooted in small private areas. In this case, the influence of online opinion leaders on consumers will continue to expand and even have a deeper role.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND REVELATIONS

Through the analysis of the whole process of online marketing path based on Xiaohongshu virtual community platform, this paper has three enlightenment in the application strategy of enterprise electronic word of mouth marketing.

1)Select online opinion leaders with high brand fit

The brand wants to carry on the high efficiency and the high quality marketing promotion through the online opinion leaders way, the choice high adaptability online opinion leaders is all the premise. By analyzing Estée Lauder's brand marketing case, the adaptability here should be from the following two angles: firstly, whether the user portrait of the platform or community of the online opinion leaders matches the brand, that is, whether the brand and opinion leaders -- consumers with purchase demand and purchasing strength for the same group; secondly, whether the online opinion leaders of the platform or community is in good condition.

2)Determine how online opinion leaders will be delivered

Estée Lauder's "pyramid" delivery method in Xiaohongshu has its certain significance and is worth learning from other brands. It is not just a fan economy with celebrity-based delivery, but a small part of the crowd. In the initial stage, the scope of online opinion leaders is delimited through data analysis, celebrity is used to drain and attract users' interest, and then online opinion leaders marketing is narrowed to each community for vertical promotion. With the help of its original user base to carry out note recommendation, word-of-mouth marketing, after transforming users into brand consumers, landing in the new consumer's independent promotion stage. This kind of whole process online opinion leaders will spread to each domain, produce the broken circle effect, finally counteracts to the brand marketing.

3)Affirmation of the Positive Role of Online Opinion Leaders

The impact of online opinion leaders on consumers and their impact on brand word-of-mouth marketing can be seen from the above-mentioned Estée Lauder double 11 cases. Enterprises must pay attention to the positive role of online opinion leaders in today's society. Because online opinion leaders, whether from the point of view of consumer trust, intimacy, or vertical community, brand promotion, are all brand investment in the lower cost, a wide range, a better marketing method.

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