Barriers to Beauty Brand Communication on Xiaohongshu and the Role of User Interaction in Enhancing Consumer Decision-Making

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Abstract: With the accelerated proliferation of social media, Xiaohongshu (RED) has emerged as a pivotal arena for beauty brand communication. However, despite its popularity, beauty brands frequently encounter multifaceted dissemination challenges on the platform, significantly hindering their capacity to convert consumer interest into actionable decisions. This study delves into the complexities inherent in beauty brand communication on Xiaohongshu, identifying core impediments such as the attenuation of content diffusion efficiency, the erosion of user trust mechanisms, and the imbalance within platform traffic distribution. Moreover, the research explores the mechanisms through which user interaction can recalibrate consumer decision-making trajectories by enhancing information acquisition efficiency, deepening emotional resonance, and reinforcing decision-making confidence. Drawing on these insights, the paper proposes a triadic optimization framework—refining content interaction design, fortifying community-based engagement operations, and implementing data-driven adaptive interaction strategies. These propositions are intended to offer both theoretical enrichment and actionable guidance for beauty brands seeking to transcend communication bottlenecks and leverage user interaction to drive decision efficiency within the Xiaohongshu ecosystem.

1. Introduction

In the context of an increasingly dynamic social media landscape, Xiaohongshu has carved out a distinctive niche as a vital conduit for beauty brand marketing, underpinned by its unique "planting grass" (content seeding) culture and user-generated content ecosystem. Nevertheless, the platform's explosive user growth, escalating content heterogeneity, and intensifying brand competition have collectively generated formidable barriers to effective brand communication. These challenges have not only diluted message penetration but also obstructed the seamless translation of brand exposure into consumer decision-making actions. Simultaneously, the influence of user interaction—ranging from peer-to-peer engagement to community-based feedback loops—has become ever more salient in shaping consumer behavior. It is within this paradigm shift that this study seeks to intervene. By interrogating the structural constraints that inhibit effective beauty brand communication on

Xiaohongshu, and unpacking the mechanisms through which user interaction catalyzes decision-making, the research aspires to bridge theoretical insight with pragmatic strategy. The ultimate aim is to articulate a robust framework for optimizing user interaction, thereby enabling beauty brands to navigate the platform's intricate communicative landscape and achieve sustainable growth through heightened consumer decision efficacy.

2. Dissecting the Communication Bottlenecks of Beauty Brands on Xiaohongshu

2.1 The Erosion of Content Dissemination Efficiency

As Xiaohongshu's user base continues to expand at an exponential pace, the volume of content generated within the beauty sector has simultaneously experienced an explosive surge. According to the 2024 Xiaohongshu Beauty Industry Research Report released by iResearch, by the end of 2024, the platform witnessed an average of over five million newly published beauty-related posts per month. This unprecedented deluge of information has led to a state of severe content oversaturation. In such an overcrowded media landscape, even meticulously crafted and high-quality branded content struggles to gain traction, often rendered invisible within the algorithmic noise and digital clutter. Xiaohongshu's recommendation engine, undergoing constant iterative optimization, is primarily oriented toward refining user engagement through hyper-personalized content delivery—anchored in individual preferences and behavioral cues. Within the beauty vertical, the algorithm's selection criteria emphasize three core dimensions: content novelty, temporal relevance, and alignment with user interests. However, a large proportion of beauty brands have become ensnared in a homogenization trap. Whether in the form of product reviews, makeup tutorials, or promotional copy for new releases, there is a striking uniformity across content—ranging from structural composition and visual aesthetics to rhetorical tone and narrative framing—resulting in diminished differentiation and a weakened capacity to capture user attention[1].

2.2 The Degradation of User Trust Mechanisms

In recent years, Xiaohongshu has grappled with recurring instances of inauthentic content propagation, deceptive promotional tactics, and excessive commercial manipulation—phenomena that have profoundly undermined the platform's long-cultivated ecosystem of user trust[2]. In pursuit of rapid traffic acquisition and short-term sales booms, certain beauty brands have resorted to ethically questionable practices. These include orchestrated campaigns involving fake user endorsements, the deployment of paid comment farms to fabricate a false sense of product popularity, and collusive collaborations with influencers to produce highly exaggerated, often misleading, "planting grass" content that bears scant resemblance to the product's actual efficacy. Notably, a 2024 investigative report from The Paper disclosed that in the latter half of the year, Xiaohongshu launched a targeted campaign to curb such deceptive practices—culminating in the removal of over one million fraudulent beauty-related posts and the exposure of hundreds of implicated brands. For consumers, repeated encounters with false or manipulated information have cultivated a pervasive sense of skepticism, triggering a crisis of confidence toward beauty brand narratives on the platform. This erosion of trust has had far-reaching implications: not only does it attenuate the persuasive power of brand messaging, but it also triggers psychological resistance among users, thereby obstructing the formation and actualization of purchase intent[3].

2.3 The Imbalance of Platform Traffic Distribution

Within Xiaohongshu's fiercely competitive beauty landscape, traffic acquisition has become

increasingly monopolized by top-tier brands and celebrity influencers. Armed with deep brand equity, substantial financial resources, and expansive market recognition, these dominant players are able to secure a disproportionate share of platform visibility. Prestigious global beauty conglomerates such as Estée Lauder and Lancôme routinely allocate marketing budgets amounting to tens of millions—or even upwards of one hundred million—RMB annually for Xiaohongshu alone. These funds are strategically channeled into exclusive collaborations with high-profile Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) in the beauty vertical, leveraging their massive follower bases, persuasive credibility, and superior content production capabilities. Such partnerships not only confer authority in initiating and steering discourse on trending topics but also enable precise manipulation of platform search algorithms through keyword saturation strategies. As a result, branded content from these industry giants consistently dominates top-tier placements in search results, effectively securing premium traffic streams. Conversely, small and medium-sized beauty brands—despite often possessing product quality that rivals or even surpasses their larger counterparts—find themselves disadvantaged due to limited financial bandwidth. Their inability to invest in influencer partnerships or large-scale advertising campaigns means their content remains perennially buried under a mountain of promotional noise. This lack of exposure significantly hampers their capacity to reach target audiences and stymies efforts at market expansion. The asymmetric distribution of visibility and engagement opportunities thus presents an existential challenge for emerging brands on Xiaohongshu, severely constraining their growth potential and impeding meaningful brand breakthroughs[4].

3. The Mechanisms through Which User Interaction Shapes Beauty Consumer Decision-Making

3.1 Enhancing the Efficiency of Information Acquisition

Within Xiaohongshu's hyper-saturated beauty content environment, user interaction has evolved into a vital filtration and transmission mechanism that dramatically enhances the efficiency of consumer information acquisition. Faced with an overwhelming volume of content, consumers bear an increasingly unsustainable cognitive burden when attempting to manually discern useful information. However, interactive features mitigate this friction by facilitating real-time, targeted knowledge exchange. One of the most salient examples is the comment section, which has become a central arena for dialogic engagement and contextual inquiry. Here, prospective consumers pose highly specific questions—ranging from skin-type compatibility to shade selection nuances—and receive rapid, experience-based responses either from prior users or official brand representatives. This exchange model effectively circumvents the need for exhaustive note-by-note browsing, condensing what was once a fragmented search process into a streamlined interaction. According to the 2024 Xiaohongshu User Behavior Insights Report by QuestMobile, over 80% of beauty consumers consult comment-based interactions prior to making purchase decisions, with information retrieval time reduced by approximately 60% compared to autonomous search behaviors. Moreover, private messaging functionalities fulfill more specialized information needs, particularly for consumers with sensitive skin or unique dermatological concerns. In such cases, one-on-one dialogues—initiated via direct messaging with influencers or brand personnel—enable the transfer of deep, personalized content concerning product ingredients, formulation rationale, or the scientific underpinnings of skin compatibility. This mode of bespoke communication ensures both precision and discretion, empowering consumers to make judicious judgments regarding product suitability with greater speed and confidence.

3.2 Deepening the Intensity of Emotional Connection

In contemporary beauty consumption, affective dimensions increasingly shape consumer-brand relationships. User interaction now functions as a critical conduit for emotional bonding, effectively reconfiguring the traditionally top-down pathways of emotional marketing[5]. Thematic engagement initiatives—curated and launched by brands—serve to mobilize user participation and emotional resonance. For instance, Estée Lauder's "Don't Panic, No Wrinkle Problem" campaign on International Women's Day invited users to narrate personal struggles with aging and beauty expectations. This not only recast users from passive recipients into emotionally engaged co-creators but also amplified brand intimacy through shared vulnerability and empathetic storytelling. Empirical evidence underscores the potency of such interactive strategies. Data from SocialBeta reveal that users who participate in brand-led engagement campaigns exhibit a 45% higher average brand favorability and are 30% more likely to convert into purchasers compared to non-participants. Additionally, live-stream interactions with influencers serve to intensify emotional stickiness by humanizing product experiences. Streamers often share candid anecdotes—such as skin recovery journeys after sleep deprivation—while demonstrating product use, thereby fostering authenticity and relatability. The resulting affective contagion is further reinforced through comment-section feedback loops, where users reciprocate by sharing their own stories and emotive responses. This virtuous cycle of emotional reciprocity progressively narrows the psychological distance between consumer and brand, increasing the likelihood of brand preference when purchase decisions are made.

3.3 Bolstering Consumer Confidence in Decision-Making

User interaction contributes substantively to alleviating decision paralysis and uncertainty by offering multifaceted reference points that reinforce buyer confidence and reduce perceived risk. Among the most influential elements are user-generated reviews and reputation-based content, which act as confidence scaffolds. By engaging with authentic testimonials and visual before–after comparisons, consumers can form concrete expectations about product performance and limitations. According to the 2024 Beauty Consumption Trend Insight Report by CBNData, when the number of positive user reviews increases from 0–2 to over 10, purchase intention rises sharply from 15% to 85%, and the decision confidence index escalates from 40 to 85 points—compelling evidence of the positive correlation between cumulative word-of-mouth credibility and consumer confidence. Moreover, expert-endorsed interactions inject an additional layer of authority and clarity into the decision-making process. Influential KOLs and domain specialists leverage their professional acumen to address consumer inquiries through scientifically grounded responses—offering ingredient analyses, skin-type compatibility breakdowns, and personalized regimen advice. For example, when consumers express uncertainty regarding the efficacy or appropriateness of a particular serum, expert-led clarifications can dispel ambiguity, illuminate product fit, and thereby minimize decision ambiguity. Such interventions are instrumental in transforming hesitancy into confidence, significantly elevating the consumer's readiness to act upon a decision.

4. Pathways for Enhancing Consumer Decision-Making through User Interaction

4.1 Optimizing Content Interaction Design

In the realm of content innovation, beauty brands can transcend the traditional reliance on static imagery and short-form video formats, pioneering more interactive content forms that engage users in deeper, more meaningful ways. One such avenue involves the incorporation of "interactive

product evaluations" within beauty content, where brands can integrate polling mechanisms into product review posts, thereby inviting users to vote on questions such as "Which makeup look best complements this lipstick?" or "Do you prioritize foundation coverage or longevity?" Additionally, brands can encourage users to elaborate on their choices within the comment section, fostering a richer dialogue. According to the 2024 Content Ecosystem Operations Guide released by Xiaohongshu, beauty posts that include interactive features such as polls and Q\&As witness a 50% increase in average user dwell time and a 35% rise in comment interaction rates compared to standard posts. For comparative purposes, Table 1 illustrates the engagement metrics across various content formats.

Table 1: Comparative Interaction Effectiveness of Different Content Formats

Content Format	Average Dwell Time Increase	Comment Interaction Rate Increase
Standard Image and Text Post	0%	0%
Short-Form Video Post	20%	15%
Poll-Enhanced Post	50%	35%
AR Virtual Try-On Post	65%	45%

Additionally, brands can develop "virtual try-on" content, utilizing AR technology to allow users to upload photos or take live pictures to test out shades of lipstick, eyeshadow, and other makeup products. Post-try-on, users can share their trial experiences, thereby forming an "experience-share-discuss" feedback loop that amplifies user engagement and product perception. In designing these interactive scenarios, it is essential for brands to align their content with frequent beauty consumption situations, such as "seasonal skincare," "quick commute makeup," or "makeup for special occasions." By embedding open-ended questions, such as "What skincare issues do you face during seasonal transitions?" or "Share your best commuting makeup tips," brands can encourage users to share their personal experiences, thereby further deepening their engagement. Moreover, it is imperative that brands respond promptly to user-generated content, amplifying high-quality interactions by resharing user-generated tips in curated collections. This type of recognition strengthens the alignment between brand content and consumer needs, thus fostering continuous, meaningful interaction that supports better-informed consumer decision-making.

4.2 Strengthening Community Interaction Management

To optimize community engagement, beauty brands must enhance their community management strategies through a dual approach: community segmentation and interactive incentive mechanisms. Community segmentation involves categorizing users based on various dimensions such as purchasing frequency, spending power, and interests, allowing for tailored interaction strategies. For instance, for newly acquired users, brands might focus on educational content, such as basic skincare knowledge or beginner-level makeup tutorials, while for more established users, the focus could shift to high-touch interactions, such as "Product Ambassador" or "Beauty Expert Training Programs." These advanced activities could involve inviting users to test new products and share feedback, or offering the chance to showcase their makeup techniques and tutorials. For example, Perfect Diary, within its Xiaohongshu community management, segments users into "Novice," "Intermediate," and "Loyal Fan" groups, with each category receiving customized engagement activities. As a result, community members exhibit a 40% higher repurchase rate and a 25% higher user recommendation rate than non-community members. Table 2 presents a comparison of conversion metrics across different user segments.

A critical aspect of maintaining community engagement is the establishment of an interactive

incentive system. By incorporating a range of reward mechanisms—such as point-based systems, tiered memberships, and physical prizes—brands can motivate users to actively participate in community exchanges. Users' engagement behaviors, such as commenting, sharing, and liking posts, can accumulate points that can be redeemed for product samples or discounts. Further, establishing community tiers based on activity levels allows for exclusive privileges, such as early access to new products or invitations to brand events. Regular, community-specific interactive events, such as "Beauty Knowledge Competitions" or "Makeup Challenge Days," can foster a sense of camaraderie and cohesiveness. These playful yet engaging activities can enhance brand loyalty and help reduce decision-making hesitation by allowing consumers to feel deeply connected to the brand.

Table 2: Conversion Effects of Different Community User Segments

Community Type	Repurchase Rate Increase	User Recommendation Rate Increase
Non-Community	0%	0%
Novice Group	20%	10%
Intermediate	35%	20%
Loyal Fans	40%	25%

4.3 Data-Driven Adjustment of Interaction Strategies

A robust, data-driven approach to interaction management allows beauty brands to precisely align their content strategies with evolving consumer preferences and maximize decision conversion rates. To achieve this, brands must establish comprehensive data monitoring systems that track key metrics, such as post interaction rates (comments, likes, saves per exposure), community activity levels (daily engagement counts, interaction percentages), and user profile data (age, location, interest tags). Leveraging data analytics tools available through Xiaohongshu's backend or third-party platforms such as Chameleon Mama or New Douyin, brands can continuously track user preferences and pain points, adjusting their content strategies accordingly. For instance, by analyzing comment keywords, brands may discover heightened consumer interest in product attributes like "ingredient safety" or "sensitivity compatibility," prompting them to accentuate these aspects in subsequent posts. If data indicates that certain interactive events (e.g., live-stream sessions) generate significantly higher participation rates than others, brands should increase the frequency of such events. A key feature of this iterative process is the "data feedback-strategy adjustment-effect verification" loop, which ensures that brand content resonates with the shifting demands of the audience. For example, Shiseido's optimization of its Xiaohongshu interaction strategy was informed by data that highlighted a higher conversion rate for content focused on "ingredient analysis." As a result, the brand increased the production of such content and restructured engagement questions to further guide decision-making, changing inquiries from "Do you like this product?" to "Do you believe the key ingredients in this product address your skin concerns?" This adjustment led to a 28% increase in decision conversion efficiency. Through continuous data monitoring and strategic refinement, brands can ensure that their interactions remain aligned with user needs, thereby maximizing their influence on consumer decisions.

5. Conclusion

This study meticulously examines the pressing challenges encountered by beauty brands on the Xiaohongshu platform, unequivocally identifying three core obstacles—namely, the attenuation of content dissemination efficiency, the weakening of user trust mechanisms, and the disproportionate

competition for traffic—as the primary factors impeding effective brand communication and the conversion of consumer decision-making. In addition to these challenges, the research delves into the multifaceted role of user interaction in fostering positive outcomes in consumer decision-making, encompassing the enhancement of information acquisition efficiency, the deepening of emotional brand connections, and the strengthening of decision-making confidence. To transcend these communication bottlenecks, this paper proposes three actionable pathways: the optimization of content interaction design, the reinforcement of community management systems, and the dynamic adjustment of strategies driven by data insights. These strategies are designed to offer both theoretical grounding and practical guidance for beauty brands seeking to achieve efficient communication and higher user conversion on Xiaohongshu. Future research could explore the differential applications of user interaction strategies across various brand types and stages of their lifecycle, thereby refining the specificity and adaptability of these strategies and fostering deeper, more meaningful connections between brands and consumers.

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