

A comparative study of cosmetic brands' discursive appeals to their consumers on Weibo and Twitter.

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Abstract

In today's interconnected global landscape, international cosmetic brands have adopted increasingly sophisticated discursive strategies to appeal to their audiences across various online platforms. Notably, their focus lies on Twitter and Weibo, two important social media platforms that cater to distinct market segments, each with its own language and cultural influences.

This study explores how these international cosmetic brands tailor their advertisements to appeal to Chinese audiences on Weibo and Western audiences on Twitter. It involves a mixed-method thematic discourse analysis of 160 posts of online cosmetic advertisements, collected from the official accounts of eight international cosmetic brands across both Twitter and Weibo.

The analysis identified the recurring key appeals in the posts and the discursive strategies used to structure these appeals, ultimately facilitating the observation of the similarities and differences in how international cosmetic brands engage with their audiences on Weibo and Twitter. The findings show that while there are many similarities, for certain appeals the brands optimise their social media content to align more specifically with the cultural preferences and language nuances of each platform, tailoring their linguistic content accordingly. This approach allows them to effectively resonate with their target audiences, expand their brand reach, and foster a stronger online presence in the global beauty market.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date: 28/7/2023

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

1.0 Overview

This dissertation employs thematic discourse analysis to identify and explore the appeals used by international cosmetic brands in their efforts to engage customers on Twitter and Weibo, as well as the discursive strategies used in these appeals. It also examines the similarities and differences in how these brands appeal to their respective audiences on these platforms.

To establish the context and rationale for this analysis, the introductory chapter begins by presenting an overview of cosmetic brands' use of social media platforms for marketing purposes. It then identifies the significance of Twitter and Weibo as the most popular channels for the promotion of cosmetic brands and their products. Subsequently, the study's motivation is provided, followed by a description of the dissertation's organisation.

1.1 Social media and cosmetic advertising

In the digital era, cosmetic brands have come to recognise the immense value of leveraging social media platforms for advertising purposes. Twitter and Weibo, in particular, have emerged as prominent players in this landscape, serving as pivotal platforms for promoting cosmetic products to a global audience (Hootsuite & We Are Social, 2020). The unparalleled reach and accessibility of these two platforms has redefined the advertising landscape for cosmetic brands, revolutionising the way they that they engage with consumers.

This marketing revolution has occurred in a number of ways. Firstly, social media has become an easily accessible medium for cosmetic brands to showcase their products, and connect with potential customers (Brennan & Croft, 2012). This is because its interactive nature fosters direct and meaningful communication between the brand and their consumers, enabling real-time

feedback, strengthening brand attachment, and shaping positive perceptions (Alsaleh et al., 2019). By forging these authentic relationships with their audience, cosmetic brands are able to enhance both their visibility and reputation.

Secondly, the popularity of Twitter and Weibo allows cosmetic brands to cater to the specific preferences and interests of a diverse user base. People worldwide are easily connected through these platforms, providing brands with a unique opportunity to influence consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions in a variety of distinct ways (Kaur et al., 2013).

Thirdly, the powerful global influence of social media is able to extend beyond simple marketing to actively shape consumer lifestyles and preferences. As a result, these platforms have become the most influential institutions of socialisation in modern society, impacting on consumer choice and perceptions, most notably within the context of cosmetic advertising (Hidayat, 2020).

1.2 Cosmetic brands and the language of advertising appeals

Central to the nature of marketing on these new platforms is language, and consequently the use of language in online advertising has become a critical skill for marketers seeking to effectively engage consumers. In the realm of cosmetic advertising, language is carefully tailored to target specific demographics, in particular women who hold significant sway as consumers in the beauty industry (Tehseem & Hameed, 2015). By strategically using language to appeal to certain desires, emotions, and aspirations, cosmetic brands can establish a powerful and persuasive presence in the digital landscape (He & Qu, 2018).

Examples of cosmetic consumer appeals include the creation of a sense of urgency, presenting products as the only solutions to certain problems, employing technical expressions that give the impression of value and exclusivity, or representing a particular look as an ideal (Kaur et al., 2013; Tehseem & Hameed, 2015). The accessibility, level of interactivity and widespread reach of social media platforms provide cosmetic brands with a unique opportunity to promote

their products through these appeals, and as indicated, influence consumer perceptions and self-representation (Brennan & Croft, 2012).

An understanding of the language used in cosmetic advertising and how it works to appeal to the consumer can reveal the persuasive tactics and often complex linguistic strategies employed by cosmetic brands to influence consumer perceptions, shape beauty ideals, and foster self-representation. From a marketing perspective, this understanding could empower cosmetic brands to refine their advertising campaigns and craft more impactful messages that resonate with their target audience. However, more critically, it could contribute to the broader discourse on consumerism and the social implications of beauty representations in the digital age.

1.3 The Motivation for the research

Having worked as a social media content manager and copywriter for marketing O2O platforms and online education in China, I have gained valuable insights into the world of marketing and advertising on social media. These experiences have provided me with a unique perspective on the marketing potential of different social media platforms. In my roles, I have not only created content but also closely observed customer behaviors and content operations on various social media platforms. This firsthand experience has heightened my awareness of how cultural and historical contexts influence the creation and reception of marketing content on social media. Now as a student in a largely English medium country, I am interested in exploring the discursive strategies used in branding operations across different platforms, particularly given the differences and similarities between the English and Chinese language platforms. Online cosmetic advertising is of particular interest, and because a number of key brands advertise across both Weibo and Twitter, I am able to study and compare the impact that cultural nuances have on the choice of appeals and discursive strategies used by these brands to engage with the different audiences that use these English and Chinese language platforms. My background as a social media content manager and copywriter has shaped my approach to this study, providing me with a unique lens through which to examine the intricacies of online branding and marketing strategies.

To address these concerns, this exploratory study seeks to identify and compare the appeals and associated discursive strategies used by prominent cosmetic brands as they engage with their customers across Twitter and Weibo. To achieve this, I will employ a thematic discourse analysis (e.g., Botelle & Willott, 2020; Braun & Clarke; 2008; Peker-Dural et al., 2022). This methodological approach will be further explained in Chapter 3. Of particular interest to the study are those language choices that often go unnoticed by the everyday consumer, for example, verb and adjective choice, collocations, and the use of special emojis.

As indicated, the study focuses on Twitter and Weibo as the chosen platforms. Both Weibo and Twitter are among the largest social media platforms globally, and their selection clearly enables an examination and comparison of the key discursive strategies used by international cosmetic brands to appeal to customers. According to Weibo's user data report for 2019, for example, beauty makeup videos received an astounding one billion monthly views, making it a highly popular topic. Similarly, Twitter had over 118 million tweets about beauty throughout the year, with skincare and makeup dominating the discussions (Sprinklr, 2020). To date, there has been no prior research using thematic discourse analysis to examine cosmetic advertising on these platforms.

The study seeks to answer two questions:

1. What key discursive strategies are used by international cosmetic brands to appeal to customers on the social media platforms Twitter and Weibo?
2. What are the main similarities and differences in the way that international cosmetic brands discursively appeal to their audiences on Weibo and Twitter?

1.4 Organisation of the chapters

The dissertation is structured into five distinct chapters. Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant scholarly texts pertaining to the research topic. The literature review commences by examining the presence, significance, and impact of social media in marketing. It then delves into studies

that have employed content and discourse analysis to explore the language strategies employed in cosmetic advertising. Next, discourse studies exploring advertising appeals on Weibo and Twitter and within the domain of cosmetic branding are reviewed. Finally, the chapter includes an examination of cultural perspectives which contribute to the distinct discursive strategies employed on Twitter and Weibo.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methods employed in this study, specifically focusing on thematic discourse analysis. It elaborates on the development of two corpora for analysis, the data collection process, and the analytical resources employed for the analysis. Additionally, the chapter highlights limitations of the chosen methodology.

Chapter 4 provides the results of the analysis. It involves a number of sections with each focusing on a specific cosmetic advertising appeal, and examining in particular, the key discursive strategies employed to construct the appeal.

In Chapter 5, the final discussion chapter, conclusions are drawn based on the main observations made in Chapter 4. The chapter concludes by discussing the limitations of the study, while also highlighting its potential impact on future research.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the relevant literature regarding the nature of social media marketing, with a particular emphasis on cosmetic marketing on Weibo and Twitter. The chapter commences by providing a brief introductory background to social media and marketing. It then provides a focus on cosmetic marketing on social media, moving more specifically to cosmetic marketing on the social media platforms Weibo and Twitter. Finally, after a brief review of studies on cultural difference in marketing, the chapter identifies the research questions that will be the focus of this dissertation.

2.1 Social Media and Marketing

Social media platforms have emerged as dynamic and interactive organisms that allow individuals to build networks, share information, and express sentiments (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Consequently, these online platforms have brought about a fundamental shift in marketing, one that is characterised by its dynamic, interconnected, egalitarian, and interactive nature (Peters et al., 2013). As Belch and Belch (2018) point out, the advent of social media has revolutionised the advertising industry, providing new opportunities for companies and brands to connect with their customers in ways that were previously unimaginable.

Benefits of social media marketing

The marketing benefits offered by social media are numerous. Firstly, social media enables companies to expand their geographic reach beyond traditional boundaries, allowing them to engage with a vast number of individuals simultaneously (Gao et al., 2018), and thus providing an effective means to enhance brand evaluations and foster closer connections with customers

(Naylor et al., 2012; Rapp et al., 2013). Furthermore, social networking sites such as Facebook, microblogging platforms such as Twitter, and content communities such as YouTube, facilitate the formation of social networks based on shared interests and values, further enhancing the connectedness between brands and their target audience (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Secondly, social media has transformed the nature of interaction and influence between firms and customers. Brands now have the opportunity to engage in collaboration and dialogue with customers, leveraging social media as a platform to improve the overall brand experience. Customers, in turn, are empowered by social media, actively participating in the marketing communication process as creators, collaborators, and commentators of messages (Hamilton et al., 2016). This social interaction, whether through active communication or passive observations, significantly influences the choices and consumption behaviours of others (Chen et al., 2011).

Thirdly, social media provides a dynamic space where customer voices can be harnessed for greater impact (Hewett et al., 2016). It offers a platform for customers to express their opinions, preferences, and experiences, which can be leveraged by brands to shape their strategies, improve products and services, and enhance overall customer satisfaction. This amplification of customer voices through social media contributes to a more customer-centric approach in marketing.

Challenges with social media marketing

While social media marketing offers immense potential, it also presents significant challenges for companies, many who still struggle to successfully develop a successful social media presence and participation (Choi & Thoeni, 2016; Griffiths & Mclean, 2015). One key issue is that individual social media platforms are often approached as standalone entities rather than integrated components of a larger comprehensive marketing strategy designed to establish meaningful customer engagement and cultivate valuable, long-term relationships across multiple platforms (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011; Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Furthermore, researchers have also demonstrated that a mere presence on social media does not

automatically generate customer value. Instead, value is derived from the establishment of connections and interactions between the company and its customers, as well as among customers themselves (Li, Larimo & Leonidou, 2021).

2.2 Social media marketing approaches

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for commercial promotions, allowing companies to attract potential consumers online and foster effective communication between customers and marketers. Given these characteristics, three key marketing approaches, *interactive*, *interconnected* and *brand-oriented*, underpin social media marketing (Hafez, 2021).

2.2.1 Interactive

Social media platforms offer a unique opportunity for interactive engagement, leading to a surge in companies conducting diverse social media marketing activities which directly engage with both existing and potential customers. This interactive nature of social media has transformed the dynamics of firm-customer interactions. Customers now play an active role in these interactions, participating in activities such as sharing, gaming, expressing opinions, and networking where customers have the power to influence each other's attitudes and behaviours (Peters et al., 2013). This shift empowers customers to actively participate in the marketing communication process, assuming roles as creators, collaborators, and commentators on various messages and content (Hamilton et al., 2016).

2.2.2 Interconnected

It has also become increasingly important for marketers to influence their customers' preferences and purchase intentions through social media. To achieve this, brands need to find out about and understand their consumers' needs, by developing deeper customer connections, so as to establish emotional relationships with them (Man & Rahman, 2019; Villarroel et al., 2018). Numerous organisations have started to identify ways of cultivating strong relationships and communication channels with social media users. By doing so, they foster friendly and close connections, ultimately giving rise to vibrant online brand communities (Ibrahim &

Aljarah, 2018). The ability to establish meaningful interconnections and build online brand communities has opened up new avenues for brands to engage with their target audience, foster loyalty, and create a sense of belonging.

2.2.3 Brand-oriented

Social media marketing has proved very successful for a large number of companies. Beauty companies, in particular, heavily invest in social media marketing to increase brand awareness and reinforce brand loyalty. When utilising social media to build relationships between brand and customer, companies must, in particular, explore how to stimulate the customer's brand engagement and brand preference (Solem & Pedersen, 2016). To achieve this, they often create a culture behind their own brand. This includes the development of their own distinct language and persona, which they market, in particular, to younger consumers (Shen & Bissell, 2013).

2.3 Social media and cosmetic advertising

In the realm of cosmetics, traditional advertising channels like television and magazines have long been the primary means of reaching customers. However, with the advent of social media, cosmetics companies have shifted their focus towards engaging with customers through these platforms (Kumar et al., 2006). The beauty and cosmetic industry, in particular, emerged as an early adopter of social media marketing and believed in the significance of social influencers. Beauty brands were pioneers in harnessing the power of social influence and made it an integral component of their marketing strategy.

The online advertisements of cosmetic companies enable consumers to acquire information about a company's products and make informed purchasing decisions, and cosmetic brands use social media marketing to specifically target these users who regularly use social media. This participative, interactive and transparent nature of social media is a major advantage of the medium and one that cosmetic brands strategically exploit (Zhou & Wang, 2014). Social media is also an especially successful tool for attracting the attention of consumers, especially females, and as a result develops cultural and monetary value among these users (Liu & Suh,

2017).

2.3.1 Content Strategy in Cosmetic advertising

As international cosmetic brands have increasingly used social media platforms to strategically cultivate brand loyalty and engage with their customers, there has been a number of research studies examining the content employed by these brands. Shen and Bissell (2013), for example, found that the Facebook posts of representative international cosmetic brands predominantly revolve around entertaining and interactive features, such as beauty polls, Q&As, surveys, and activities offering rewards. These initiatives not only provide enjoyable experiences for customers, but also serve as platforms for product discussions and promotional information. Importantly, the integration of such user-generated content and interactive features on social media platforms enables international cosmetic brands to foster a sense of community, deepen customer engagement, and ultimately strengthen brand loyalty (Bartl & Ivanovic, 2010).

In terms of language content, studies have shown that in cosmetic advertising, the language employed in online marketing can range from extreme product promotion (Sarjono & Bram, 2021), to encouraging customers to use the product by offering them enticing incentives, such as rewards and discounts (Shareef et al., 2019). In another example, Susanti (2019) examined the use of language in beauty advertisements and explored how advertisers employ persuasive strategies to influence consumers. She found that advertisers often present factual information about their beauty products using words that convey positive representation. By emphasising scientific evidence and highlighting the benefits of their products, advertisers aim to establish a perception of professionalism and credibility. This also creates the perception that their products have been scientifically proven and offer numerous advantages. Advertisers also often use emotive words to evoke a sense of power and control over beauty, suggesting that their products can overcome unattractiveness. Moreover, they reinforce their message through the use of words that provide positive representation and scientific evidence. These linguistic techniques aim to influence the consumers' perception and create an illusion that using the product will enhance their beauty (Kaur, et al., 2013).

Overall, key to cosmetic advertising on social media is the implementation of a content strategy which facilitates effective branding and word-of-mouth (WOM) communication (Holliman & Rowley, 2014), most often involving the creation and distribution of informative and compelling content in various formats, which are tailored to attract and retain customers. Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) add that the delivery of content needs to be timely and strongly based on customer needs and desires, so that the target audience is successfully engaged, ultimately driving product or service sales (Malthouse et al., 2013).

2.4 Cosmetic advertising on Twitter and Weibo

Globally, Twitter and Weibo have emerged as popular platforms for social media marketing, each with its own unique characteristics and user bases. Weibo, with its massive user base, particularly excels in beauty-related content. The platform's user data report (2019) revealed that videos related to beauty makeup garnered over one billion monthly views, making it one of the most popular topics on Weibo. On the other hand, Twitter is known for its simplicity and frequent postings. Over the course of a year, there were more than 118 million tweets about beauty, with skincare and makeup being the most discussed subjects (Sprinklr, 2020).

Furthermore, Weibo, being a prominent platform in China, serves as an extensive hub for building a brand's reputation and driving sales. Cosmetic companies have effectively employed Weibo to engage consumers, encourage feedback and opinions, and provide personalised information on products, brands, promotions, and events (Cosmetics China, 2020; Ecommerce China, 2018). Previous research regarding Weibo and cosmetic marketing has focused on international cosmetic brands and their strategies to appeal to customers. Emotional appeals, in particular have emerged as prominent advertising techniques on Weibo and have been found to effectively stimulate consumer desire for cosmetics (Li & Huang, 2010; Ma, 2012). Studies have also indicated that emotional appeals yield particularly satisfactory outcomes if they employ a spokesperson, such as a celebrity (Lin, 2011). Rational appeals, such as introductory explanations, comparative appeals, technology appeals, along with the dissemination of beauty

knowledge and usage techniques, also play a role in guiding cosmetic purchasing decisions on Weibo (Ma, 2012). These rational appeals require informative content and must demonstrate the benefits and effectiveness of the advertised products.

Likewise, Twitter plays a significant role in cosmetic brand engagement, often utilising topical content and hashtags to stimulate conversations with followers (Soboleva, Burton & Khan, 2015). Research shows that beauty brands effectively engage their Twitter followers by sharing concise makeup tutorials which showcase their products and encourage user-generated content (Barnhart, 2018). Furthermore, research examining beauty brands' presence on various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, indicated that Twitter users demonstrated a particular interest in enhancing their self-presentation (Saravanan & Adnan, 2018). Other research focusing, in particular, on the marketing of high-end makeup on Twitter supports these findings (Pinzón, Osuna & Barrera, 2021). Previous studies have also shown that tweets related to beauty often include text accompanied by images or links directing users to blogs, news articles, or shopping websites (Bello et al., 2016). This approach encourages product exploration and purchases. According to Jin (2012) the presence of multiple customer segments contributes to this trend, as makeup users associate brands with their self-image, often considering them an extension of their personality (Jin, 2012).

2.5 Cultural differences in cosmetic advertising

Researchers have noticed differences in the cosmetic advertisements in different countries, which they suggest often reflects cultural differences in the perception of beauty (e.g., Allison, 2020; He, 2007). This supports the earlier findings of Albers-Miller (1996) who indicated that cultural variety leads to differences in the production of advertising designed to influence the consumer's decision-making for cosmetic products. In particular, research suggests that there is a marked difference between Asian and Western aesthetic perspectives and that these cultural differences are particularly manifest within beauty standards (He, 2007). They are reflected, for example, in different choices of lipstick colour or in approaches to skin care (Wang, 2005). As a consequence, there are often significant differences both in the selection of products promoted to consumers in Chinese and western countries and the methods by which they are marketed

(Allison, 2020). Likewise, the models chosen for cosmetic advertising typically represent the target country's aesthetic preference. This is largely because the marketing of cosmetic products tends to pay attention to the target cultural backgrounds, modes of thinking, aesthetic views, ethnic customs and habits. This practice is referred to as localisation, or specialisation (Mueller, 1996).

Ultimately, these differences impact on the way that cosmetic advertisements in these respective cultures are designed to appeal to consumers, and therefore differ in the types of discourses that they reproduce. Accordingly, they may also differ with regards to the impact that they have on the young women who are the primary consumers of these advertisements, for example, with regard to appearance-related pressure, body image concerns and self-objectification.

2.6 Aim of this study and research questions

In order to examine this concern in more detail, this explorative study will compare the way that big brand cosmetic advertisements appeal to their Chinese audiences on the social media platform Weibo and their western audiences on the Twitter platform, looking in particular at the types of discursive strategies that are used across these different appeals. The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What key discursive strategies are used by international cosmetic brands to appeal to customers on the social media platforms Twitter and Weibo?
2. What are the main similarities and differences in the way that international cosmetic brands discursively appeal to their audiences on Weibo and Twitter?

The next chapter provides details of the methods employed to answer these questions.

Chapter 3:

Methods

3.0 Introduction

The primary objective of this exploratory study is to identify and compare the discursive strategies used by big cosmetic brands to appeal to customers on Twitter and Weibo, with the wider goal of providing insights into the variations found in the marketing approaches adopted across the two platforms and their geographical regions. As a result, the following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1. What key discursive strategies are used by international cosmetic brands to appeal to customers on the social media platforms Twitter and Weibo?
2. What are the main similarities and differences in the way that international cosmetic brands discursively appeal to their audiences on Weibo and Twitter?

In order to answer these two research questions, the study will employ thematic discourse analysis (e.g., Botelle & Willott, 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2008; Peker-Dural et al., 2022) to compare two corpora. One corpus consists of online cosmetic advertisements of Twitter posts in English, while the other consists of online cosmetic advertisements of Weibo posts in Chinese. This chapter will provide an overview of the research methods used in this study, including the collection and compilation of the two corpora, as well as the methods used to carry out the analysis. Additionally, it will briefly reflect on any potential issues or limitations associated with these methods.

3.1 Research paradigm

The thematic discourse analysis methodology employed in this study involves both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Qualitative research aims to understand and explore complex phenomena by gathering and analysing non-numerical data (Boyatzis, 1998). It typically focuses on the search for patterns in the data by identifying recurring themes, concepts, or categories, in order to facilitate the identification of key insights for the study (Creswell, 2009; Dörnyei, 2007). As will be described in more detail below, the first research question will primarily be considered using qualitative methods. In contrast, quantitative research refers to the use of techniques that involve the collection and analysis of numerical data. The emphasis is on the use of measurable quantities and statistical analysis to draw conclusions and make generalisations about a population or phenomenon (Creswell, 2009; Dörnyei, 2007). Again, as will be described in more detail below, the second question will predominantly be considered using a quantitative approach.

This use of both qualitative and quantitative methods is commonly referred to as mixed-method research (Creswell, 2009) and can often be found in thematic analysis, especially where issues of prevalence are concerned (Braun & Clarke, 2008). The quantitative dimension in thematic analysis, in particular, often involves the counting and comparison of ‘code frequencies’ which according to Guest et al., (2012) “can help to highlight patterns in the data that may be difficult to discern otherwise” (p. 129), and “may be read as a proxy of salience or relevance of a given theme to a particular analysis” (p. 129). The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods also widely found in genre and discourse analysis where the qualitative analysis of the specific meanings or functions of words, clauses, linguistic patterns, discursive strategies, or rhetorical moves, among other areas are combined with quantitative measures regarding the specific occurrence of these features (e.g., Hashemi & Gohari Moghaddam, 2019; Hocking, 2021).

A mixed method approach typically draws upon a pragmatic worldview (Creswell, 2009). In the pragmatic worldview, researchers prioritise the research problem and utilise all available approaches to gain insights into the problem. There is a greater concern with “what works - and solutions to problems” (p. 10), rather than a commitment to a single system of philosophy or reality. Mixed

methods research is often perceived as offering a more comprehensive understanding of phenomena, as it combines the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a broader perspective and richer insights into the research problem (Creswell, 2009).

3.2 Data

In order to identify and compare the discursive strategies used by big cosmetic brands to appeal to their Chinese audiences on Weibo and their western audiences on Twitter, this study involved the compilation of two specialised corpora. The first corpus comprised online cosmetic advertisements posted by eight different big brand cosmetic companies in Chinese on Weibo. A total of ten cosmetic advertisements were collected from each of these eight cosmetic brands, resulting in an overall sample size of 160 online cosmetic advertisements. Similarly, the second corpus comprised online cosmetic advertisements posted by the same eight big brand cosmetic companies in English on Twitter. Again, a total of ten cosmetic advertisements were collected from each of the eight brands, also resulting in a sample size of 160 online cosmetic advertisements. The data collection period took place from 20th July to 9th August, ensuring a diverse range of advertisements within this timeframe. The total number of 160 collected advertisements was determined based on the five-month time constraint set for the dissertation study. This sample size was chosen to ensure a sufficient amount of data for analysis while considering the practical limitations of the research timeline.

The choice of Twitter and Weibo, as well as the selected brands, was based on their prominence and influence in the cosmetic industry. Twitter is known for its global reach and high user engagement and serves as a vital platform for big brand cosmetic companies to connect with their English-speaking customers worldwide (Dorney, 2021). As an example, 118.4 million beauty-related tweets were recorded between July 2019 and July 2020 on Twitter, with makeup being the most popular topic (Sprinklr, 2020). Similarly, Weibo is the most widely used social media platform in China, making it essential for brands targeting Chinese-speaking audiences (Ecommerce China, 2018). The significance of Weibo for the Chinese cosmetics market is highlighted by the 2018 Weibo Beauty Industry White Paper (2018), which reported that with average of over 91 million beauty-related

posts per month and with 160 million Weibo users visiting the site due to their interest in cosmetics, Weibo has emerged as the primary marketing battleground for cosmetics brands.

The eight brands whose posts were selected for the study are Estée Lauder, L'Oréal Paris, Lancôme, ColourPop, Clinique, Revlon, Benefit, and Make Up For Ever. These brands were specifically chosen because they all demonstrate a strong active online marketing presence and regularly engage in advertising on both Twitter and Weibo. Their selection, therefore, allows for the identification and comparative examination of the discursive strategies they employ in their advertisements in order to appeal to their respective audiences.

3.3 Data Collection and preparation

To collect the data for the two corpora, the researcher manually searched for and selected every 10th post from each of the eight selected big brand cosmetic companies on both Twitter and Weibo, working chronologically through the data collection period, until the designated number of posts was reached. This systematic approach ensured that the data collection encompassed a wide range of advertisement types posted within the designated timeframe, including promotional campaigns, product launches, influencer collaborations, and customer testimonials, among others. The collection of posts was conducted without imposing any other specific conditions or restrictions, allowing for a comprehensive and unbiased representation of the brands' advertising practices, and the collection of a broad spectrum of language strategies employed by the brands on both Twitter and Weibo.

The Twitter data were collected and analysed in English, and the Weibo data were collected and analysed in Chinese. As the final study was to be presented in English, the Chinese Weibo data were also translated into English. The English translations of the Weibo data also assisted the study's supervisor to understand and help verify the ongoing findings. The researcher carried out the translations of the Weibo data into English, which were then validated using Google Translate.

3.4 Data analysis

3.4.1 Thematic Discourse analysis

The analysis first involved analysing the content of the posts from the two corpora, using thematic discourse analysis. Thematic discourse analysis is a qualitative research method that combines elements of both thematic analysis and discourse analysis (e.g., Botelle & Willott, 2020; Rodriguez et al. 2023). Thematic analysis is a technique that involves identifying, analysing, and interpreting recurring patterns of meaning in a dataset. This process typically entails the systematic coding and re-coding of a collection of texts and grouping these codes into broader themes. A code refers to a segment of text that can be meaningfully assessed in relation to the phenomenon under study (Botelle & Willott, 2020; Tuckett, 2005). Discourse analysis examines language use in social contexts, aiming to understand how language shapes and reflects social interactions, power relations, ideologies, and cultural practices. In doing so, it often focuses on the persuasive aspects of language; that is, how language is used to influence, persuade, and shape beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours (Paltridge, 2012). In bringing these two methods together, a thematic discourse analysis examines language use to identify recurring discursive practices or themes within a particular context or dataset.

The combination of discourse analysis and thematic analysis has also been used for the analysis of the language of social media. For example, Rodriguez et al. (2023) carried out a thematic discourse analysis of Facebook posts, looking in particular at confession pages, Peker-Dural et al. (2022) examined online collaborative dictionaries written by anonymous writers to analyse differences in the ways that foreign and Turkish women are represented, while Botelle and Willott (2020) examined online posts on parenting forums to study the post-partum consumption of the placenta.

3.4.2 Analytical Procedure

Qualitative Procedures

The qualitative analytical procedure involved a coding process aimed to identify and analyse how brands appealed to their consumers. This coding process, which simultaneously involved both the

Weibo and Twitter Corpora, involved a number of stages regularly associated with a qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2008; Dörnyei, 2007). The first stage involved becoming familiar with the data, so as to gain a comprehensive understanding of its content and nuances. Following this, initial codes were generated. These focused on systematically assigning labels to relevant sections or segments of the data that represented advertising appeals to the consumer. This stage involved was iterative in that the posts were coded and recoded multiple times. Furthermore, open coding was largely employed; that is, rather than specifically looking for predetermined codes, they were developed and modified throughout the process. Nevertheless, while carrying out this open-ended process of coding, knowledge of advertising appeals, such as those discussed in Goatly and Hiradhar (2016) were drawn upon. After this initial coding process, second level coding was carried out. This involved looking for initial codes that could be clustered together under a broader and more meaningful patterns or theme (Miles & Huberman, 2014; Tuckett, 2005). Tables were employed throughout this process to streamline the process and to help examine the grouping of various combinations of codes into themes. The process involved considering the relationships between codes and themes in relation to the first research question. Once established each theme's corresponding data were colour-coded for easier identification and reference.

Finally, the extracts found in each of the themes representing advertising appeal, were further investigated to identify the discursive strategies used to facilitate the appeal. For example, in the appeal for flawless skin, brands often construct a perceived skin imperfection that the consumer can avoid by using the cosmetic product. Chapter 4, which presents the results, is organised first according to the key appeals found in the analysis, and then into a discussion of the discursive strategies that facilitate these appeals.

Quantitative Procedures

The quantitative component of the analysis involved quantifying and comparing the code frequencies of the different appeals on both Weibo and Twitter. This was done to provide an exploratory indication of the main similarities and differences in the way that the cosmetic brands engage with their audiences on the two platforms. The analysis identified not only the overall occurrence of advertising appeals across Weibo and Twitter, but also the specific usage of these appeals by the eight selected international brands. To assist the outcome of this component of the analysis, the statistical test Fisher's Exact (two- tailed) (Frost, 2023) was carried out on both the occurrence of the appeals overall, and for each brand. Fisher's Exact (two- tailed) test calculates the probability of obtaining the observed results. It is useful for this component of the analysis, as it can provide accurate results even when dealing with small datasets. The Fisher's Exact (two- tailed) test produces a p-value which can indicate whether the quantitative results are statistically significant, that is, the degree to which the results are likely to have occurred by chance. In the humanities and discourse-based research, a p-value of less than 0.05 is viewed as statistically significant (Dörnyei, 2007). Mixed-method thematic analyses that also involve use of the Fisher's Exact (two- tailed) Test, and take a similar methodological approach to this study, include Skorunka et al. (2022).

The findings of the analysis are presented in Chapter 4. In presenting the findings, the data extracts are embedded within an analytic narrative to compellingly illustrate the story emerging from the data. The analytic narrative goes beyond data description and makes arguments in relation to the research question, so as to provide a deeper understanding of the language strategies employed by cosmetic brands to appeal to their consumers.

3.5. Issues

Thematic analysis, despite being a widely used qualitative research method, has certain disadvantages when compared to other qualitative analytic approaches. One potential drawback is the lack of specific guidance focusing solely on thematic analysis. This can sometimes leave novice researchers uncertain about how to conduct a rigorous thematic analysis, potentially

impacting the reliability and validity of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2008). Furthermore, the inherent flexibility of thematic analysis, while advantageous in many respects, can also present challenges. The absence of clear guidelines for carrying out higher-level coding, for example, can make it difficult for researchers to determine which aspects of the data to prioritise, potentially hindering the development of coherent and consistent themes (Holloway & Todres, 2003). There is perhaps less difficulty in this regard with the thematic discourse method, as the emphasis on searching for specific discourse-oriented themes, in this case advertising appeals, can provide the researcher with some analytical clarity.

Thematic analysis is also often criticized for its reliance on the researcher's perspective and understanding in interpreting the data and developing themes (Holloway & Todres, 2003). However, bringing a mixed methodological focus to thematic analysis can perhaps help to mitigate these issues. The use and analysis of code frequencies, for example, facilitates the identification of prevalent themes and patterns within the data, providing a solid foundation for generating more meaningful interpretations. Nevertheless, concerns are also raised about the use of statistics in thematic analysis. Guest et al. (2012), explain that certain researchers strongly believe that quantifying qualitative data goes against the fundamental principles and assumptions of qualitative research, by diminishing or undermining the integrity of the data. Nevertheless, and as indicated earlier, Guest et al. go on to argue that the act of counting and quantifying qualitative data is able to reinforce the validity and persuasiveness of qualitative data.

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter presented a detailed overview of the research methods employed in this study, specifically focusing on the mixed methodological thematic discourse analysis selected as the primary approach to investigate the language strategies used by cosmetic brands on Twitter and Weibo. This method offers flexibility and the potential for generating rich and nuanced findings and facilitates the exploration of underlying ideas, assumptions, and ideologies present in the collected data. The following chapter will delve into the results of the thematic discourse analysis and present the findings in relation to the research objectives.

Chapter 4:

Results

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of a mixed-method thematic discourse analysis, combining qualitative exploration of marketing appeals and their discursive strategies with quantitative assessments of their occurrence (Hashemi & Gohari Moghaddam, 2019; Hocking, 2021). The analysis is organised into eight discrete sections, each of which focuses on a key appeal identified through the thematic analysis. Each section begins with an introductory explanation of the appeal, followed by a table that identifies the code frequencies of the appeal as found across the Weibo and twitter corpora. After a commentary on the table, the main discursive strategies used to construct the appeal in the data are discussed in detail. These are presented in an analytic narrative, where data extracts are integrated to compellingly illustrate the emerging story from the data. This approach aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the discursive strategies used by cosmetic brands to appeal to their consumers.

4.1 Puffery

The analysis shows that the discursive strategy of puffery is regularly found in both the Twitter and Weibo posts. According to DeFrancis (2004) puffery is a term frequently used to denote the exaggerations used by a brand to describe the quality of their products. Puffery expressions are frequently seen in marketing communications, and typically employ non-verifiable, subjective views to describe products or services through the use of superlatives, exaggerations, vague and overly general language, and which often involve a lack of specific supporting facts (Kamins & Marks, 1987). The aim of these exaggerated claims is to persuade consumers to take the inflated assertions literally. One of the reasons why such subjective and exaggerated claims are regularly found in advertising is that regulatory agencies tend to overlook the practices and acknowledge brands' rights to extol their products with complimentary

words, believing that consumers are largely unaffected by it (Toncar & Fetscherin, 2010). The occurrence of the use of puffery in the two corpora can be seen in Table 4.1. The final column provides the p-value of the findings using Fisher's exact test.

Table 4.1

Number of Posts using puffery in the two corpora.

Brand	Weibo	Twitter	P-value (Fisher's exact)
Estée Lauder	5	5	1
L'Oréal Paris	2	3	1
Lancôme	3	3	1
ColourPop	0	1	1
Clinique	1	2	1
Revlon	2	0	0.4737
Benefit	4	1	0.3034
Make Up For Ever	2	1	1
Total	19	16	0.7025

As can be observed in Table 4.1, both corpora predominantly employ the puffery appeal to an equal extent. Some cosmetic brands, such as Lancôme and Estée Lauder, employ it on both platforms with a similar level of frequency, while two brands (ColourPop and Revlon) rarely use exaggerated claims to emphasise the benefits of their products. Of all brands, Estée Lauder uses the approach more than the other cosmetic companies. According to the Fisher's exact test, there is no significant statistical difference in the use of puffery between the two social media platforms, and similarly, the differences observed at the brand levels also do not show any statistical significance. The following sections analyse the primary discursive strategies employed for puffery across the two corpora.

4.1.1 Discursive strategies used in puffery

Two primary discursive strategies were used by the cosmetic brands for the puffery appeal: the use of superlatives or comparative adjectives, and the implementation of subjective claims.

The use of superlatives and comparative adjectives

In the posts from the two corpora, puffery often takes the form of superlatives and comparative adjectives (Extracts 1-6). These are employed across both platforms.

Extract 1: *Best things come in small packages – just like the perfect size of ... it's a small wonder with BIG benefits.* (Twitter)

Extract 2: *The prettiest collection is back in stock.* (Twitter)

Extract 3: *intensely hydrates for brighter, younger-looking eyes.* (Twitter)

Extract 4: *leaves eyes feeling softer, smoothed, and more moisturized.* (Twitter)

Extract 5: *help your makeup more attractive~* (Weibo)

助你完妆更出彩~

Extract 6: *the hotter it gets, the more I love it this summer! #The hotter it gets, the more I enjoy it!* (Weibo)

今夏 #越热越热爱#

In Extracts 1 and 2, the superlatives *best* (Ex 1) and *prettiest* (Ex 2) are used to make claims which constitute the target brand or product as superior to other brands or products (Snyder, 1989). Accompanying lexis such as *perfect* and *big* (Ex 1), the latter emphasised through the use of caps, discursively support the superlative statement. Similarly, in Extracts 3, 4 and 5, clusters of comparative adjectives, for example, *younger*, *brighter* (Ex 3), *more attractive* (Ex 5), *softer and more moisturized* (Ex 4) work to construct the positive changes that come from using the product. Extract 6 shows a different approach to adopt the comparative words. The use of '*the hotter*' to denote the product usage scenario and '*the more I enjoy it*' to refer to the readers' sentiments uses a personal connection with feelings to make a strong emotional

connection with its audience.

The use of subjective claims

Another form of puffery is the subjective claim. According to Preston (1996), a subjective claim is puffery that makes a subjective assertion about the product, as opposed to the other forms of puffery, such as those that use language superlatives or hyperbole. As seen in Extracts 7-8 below, fragrance advertising heavily relies on subjective statements, given that it is challenging to convey a scent in an advertisement and that the perception of scents are often exceedingly personal and individualised. Examples of subjective claims in fragrance advertising can be seen in Extracts 7-8. It is of interest that fragrance advertising was only found on Twitter.

Extract 7: *Experience our latest unstoppable fragrance, Idôle Aura. Building on Idôle's clean and glow accord of jasmine, rose and chypre notes with vibrant solar roses and freshness from sea salt, Idôle Aura radiates intense luminosity.* (Twitter)

Extract 8: *Have you tried Idôle Aura yet? Our new light-infused fragrance with solar roses, jasmine, vanilla and sea salt make this the ultimate sun-drenched scent!* (Twitter)

In comparison to the marketing of many other items, fragrances provide a unique obstacle, as it is difficult to communicate a scent and market it in an advertisement. Drawing upon Extracts 7 and 8, one might classify the adjectives used in these subjective claims as belonging to either concrete or abstract descriptors. For instance, *unstoppable* (Ex 7), *glow* (Ex 7), *vibrant* (Ex 7), *intense luminosity* (Ex 7), *light-infused* (Ex 8) and *ultimate sun-drenched scent* (Ex 8) are more abstract and symbolic descriptors, while *jasmine* (Ex 7 & 8), *rose* (Ex 7), *chypre* (Ex 7), *solar rose* (Ex 7 & 8), *freshness*, *sea salt* (Ex 7 & 8) and *vanilla* (Ex 8) are more concrete. The concrete descriptions are related to audience's prior experiences and common sense, whereas for the abstract descriptions, advertisers appeal to the consumers' potential for multi-sensory perception by inducing them to genuinely imagine the scent by using language which triggers emotional association associated with their sense of smell (Toncar & Fetscherin, 2012).

4.1.2 Conclusion: Puffery

Despite being blatantly false, inflated claims are often not seen as deceptive since, according to the FTC (Federal Trade Commission), they are arbitrary assertions that no sensible individual would take literally. However, this stance has not been consistently supported by empirical evidence (Kamins & Marks, 1987). Cowley (2006), for example, has shown that consumers are prone to accepting inflated promises in certain circumstances, while Vanden and Reid (1980) have found that exaggerated claims are considered to have harmful impacts (Vanden & Reid, 1980). Furthermore, as Haan and Berkey (2002) argue, salesmen and marketers would stop engaging in puffery if it failed to work. As a result, Toncar and Fetscherin (2010) advise consumers to be skeptical of cosmetic advertising that makes a lot of subjective and exaggerated claims, especially when language puffery is included. Ultimately, what is clear is that while puffery is found to have negative effects, it is used equally in both the Weibo and Twitter corpora.

4.2 Specified context

Also frequently found in both the Twitter and Weibo corpora is the construction of an appeal to a ‘specified context’ in which the cosmetic product may be used. By placing the product in a particular specified context, the viewer is able to immediately visualise themselves using the cosmetic product and experiencing its benefits. For instance, a company may contextualise their product in a luxurious spa setting to create a sense of indulgence and pampering. As in this example, the specification of the context can evoke vivid, abundant, and elaborate mental images (Truong, McColl & Kitchen, 2010), more so than if the focus was simply on the provision of product information. (Myers & Sar, 2013). The discursive strategy of ‘specified context’ is particularly important in social media settings, such as Twitter and Weibo, where products cannot always be so easily experienced visually (as in a glossy magazine advertisement) or physically (as in a department store), and the evocation of mental images becomes critical for influencing the target audiences’ purchase intentions (Li, Daugherty & Biocca, 2003). The occurrence of the use of the discursive strategy specified context can be seen in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Number of posts using specified context in the two corpora.

Brand	Weibo	Twitter	P-value (Fisher's exact)
Estée Lauder	5	0	0.0325
L'Oréal Paris	4	5	1
Lancôme	8	2	0.0230
ColourPop	4	0	0.0867
Clinique	5	10	0.0325
Revlon	4	1	0.3034
Benefit	10	0	0.0001
Make Up For Ever	5	5	1
Total	45	23	0.0007

As seen in Table 4.2, while specified context is used in both corpora, it is evident that the discursive strategy is used almost twice as often in the Weibo corpus than in the Twitter corpus. It is also used more consistently across the Weibo corpus, with all cosmetic companies making use of the strategy. Contrastingly, in the Twitter corpus, three companies (Estée Lauder, ColourPop and Benefit) do not specify an idealised context for their cosmetic brands at all, while another (Revlon) only uses the strategy in a single post. The company Clinique uses the discursive strategy to promote their products considerably more than the other cosmetic companies. The Fisher's exact test indicates a strongly significant statistical difference in the use of the appeal to specified context between the two platforms. Moreover, the differences observed at some brand levels also show considerable statistical significance. A more detailed analysis of the use of specified context is provided below.

4.2.1 Discursive strategies used in specified context

Three main discursive strategies identified in the cosmetic brands' appeal to specified context included the use of party-themed context, weekend context, and summer context.

Party-themed context

In the tweets seen in Extracts 9-11, a party is constructed as the specific context in which the cosmetic products referred to might be used.

Extract 9: ... *the party look of the century: shiny lips, glossy eyes and glowy complexion using #RougeArtist lipstick, #MixingGloss and #Reboot foundation.* (Twitter)

Extract 10: ... *the coolest nightlife and the DJ podiums ... breaking the codes, without a defined gender.* (Twitter)

Extract 11: *Your eye makeup came off before the party finished?*
派对放肆未尽兴，眼妆先一步玩“脱”？ (Weibo)

The use of adjectives such as *glossy* and *glowy* (Ex 9) contributes to the evocation of the vivid mental imagery associated with the party context and constitutes the product as associated with special occasions where one needs to shine. Similarly, the use of expressions such as *the coolest nightlife* and *DJ podiums* (Ex 10) further assist consumers to imagine themselves at the party by providing descriptive entailments typically associated with the context (Myers & Sar, 2015). Extract 3 works in the same way by raising a question about a cosmetic related problem that an audience might experience in the party scenario. It is affect-based and perhaps facilitates the recall of the subject's past experiences.

Weekend Context

Several other examples use the situated context of the upcoming weekend (Extracts 12-14).

Extract 12: *Who's headed to the beach this weekend? [Emoji: Beach with umbrella] Shown: #ColorStay Satin Ink & #SuperLustrous Glass Shine #beachmode.* (Twitter)

Extract 13: *#WeWantToKnow Which Infallible Pro Gloss PLUMP shade are you grabbing for the weekend?* (Twitter)

Extract 14: *Who is going to rock a bold red lip this weekend? [Emoji: Lipstick Kiss mark]*
(Twitter)

In these tweets, the advertisers imply that the audience needs to use the cosmetic products to transform themselves for an upcoming weekend scenario. Extract 12 extends this visual evocation by making reference to the particular context of the *beach*, a common weekend destination for many. This specified context is made more evocative through the use of a beach with umbrella emoji, and the hashtag #beachmode, while the use of the verb *grab* in Extract 13 evokes the situation of ‘grabbing something on the run’ implying a sense of urgency and busyness that is often associated with the excitement and rush of weekend activities. It is also of interest that these three extracts all employ the interrogative mode which further assists in prompting the audience to imagine particular contexts or scenarios.

Summer Context

The following Weibo extracts (Ex 15-18) deploy the specified context of the summer.

Extract 15: *[Emoji sun] summer with makeup "travel = oil"? [Emoji Bulging biceps] A spray to save the off makeup, stabilise the base makeup!*

夏日带妆“出游=出油”？一喷拯救花式脱妆，稳住底妆！(Weibo)

Extract 16: *Are you most afraid of the problem of makeup off in summer? Do not be afraid!*

三伏天最怕的就是脱妆问题啦！不用怕！(Weibo)

Extract 17: *Summer vacation is the great time to have fun! ... play with fancy makeup preparation!*

暑假嗨玩不停！.....玩转花式妆备！(Weibo)

Extract 18: *[Emoji Surfing] Summer vacation essential beautiful eye makeup, hurry to learn up. Full of enthusiasm.*

暑假出游必备的靓眼妆面，还不赶紧学起来？为热情充满电，谁见了不想贴贴？(Weibo)

These extracts show, in particular, how the identification of a specified context (i.e., the summer) can be used to evoke the audiences' own emotions and fantasies, thus leading to an empathetic experience (Gavilan et al., 2014). For example, Extract 15 and 16 raise the fears that potential consumers may have about applying make-up in summer (i.e., facial oil, make-up removal), a fear that the advertising product could prevent. Extract 17, in contrast, positions the summer as a time when the application of makeup can be a fun and playful experience. The use of emojis to support the construction of the specified context is also evident in these extracts. Extract 15, for example, uses a sun emoji and Extract 18 uses a surfing emoji.

4.2.2 Conclusion: Specified context

In summary, the construction of a specified context and reference to entailments related to that context is a frequently used discursive appeal in both the Twitter and Weibo corpora. As indicated by Samper, Yang and Michelle (2018), when an advertisement frames a cosmetic product as facilitating a situational scenario, this framing can work to mitigate the customer's tendency to overlook the product.

4.3 The appeal to flawless skin

Cosmetic advertising often influences consumers' purchasing decisions through the suggestion that their products will contribute to an idealised state of skin perfection. Strategies to achieve this may include the use of linguistic techniques such as persuasive language, appealing visuals, or endorsements from well-known figures in the beauty industry (Stepaniuk & Jarosz, 2021). Advertisements may also highlight the unique features and benefits of their products, such as the use of specific ingredients, promising visible results in a short period of time. Importantly, they also evoke terms that reference skin flaws, such as “age spots”, “wrinkles”, and “blemishes”, which evoke feelings of anxiety and create an urgency for the consumer to address such perceived skin imperfections. Researchers suggest that these strategies work by influencing consumers' ideological beliefs regarding the nature of appearance and the idealised feminine image (Fill, 2002; Yazdanparast et al, 2018). The use of discursive strategies related to the construction of the desire for flawless skin can be seen in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Number of posts related to flawless skin in the two corpora.

Brand	Weibo	Twitter	P-value (Fisher's exact)
Estée Lauder	6	4	0.6563
L'Oréal Paris	6	2	0.1698
Lancôme	5	5	1
ColourPop	3	0	0.2105
Clinique	6	0	0.0108
Revlon	3	0	0.2105
Benefit	7	0	0.0031
Make Up For Ever	4	1	0.3034
Total	40	12	0.0001

As shown in Table 4.3, the appeal to flawless skin is used almost four times as frequently in the Weibo corpus as it is in the Twitter corpus. Additionally, it is employed consistently throughout the Weibo corpus, with every cosmetic brand using the appeal to flawless skin. In contrast, the appeal is rarely found in the Twitter corpus where four brands (ColourPop, Clinique, Revlon and Benefit) do not make reference to flawless skin at all, while it is only used once by Make Up For Ever. The Fisher's exact test indicates an extremely significant statistical difference in the use of the appeal to flawless skin between the two platforms. Furthermore, the differences at some of the brand levels also demonstrate significant statistical significance. Further elaboration on the discursive strategies found in the two corpora to appeal to flawless skin is presented below.

4.3.1 Discursive strategies used in the appeal to flawless skin

Three primary discursive strategies are identified in the cosmetic brands' appeal to flawless skin. These are aspiration for flawless skin, perceived skin imperfections, and desire for youthful skin.

Aspiration for flawless skin

A key strategy in this appeal, found across both corpora, involves constructing the consumer's

desire for flawless skin, or for make-up which makes the users skin appear flawless

Extract 19: *Count on #DoubleWear Stay-in-Place to keep your complexion looking flawless.*
(Twitter)

Extract 20: *This multi-tasking skin beautifier hydrates with antioxidants Vitamins C&E while instantly transforming to your perfect shade for a flawless, bare skin finish.*
(Twitter)

Extract 21: *...pores and oil trouble are swept away, and then makeup looks flawless.*
毛孔油光烦恼一扫而光，再照照镜子妆容服帖无瑕(Weibo)

Extracts 19, 20, and 21 all refer to the requirement of a *flawless* condition (无瑕 in Extract 19) for both the facial skin and the makeup when applied to the face. They demonstrate that the posts construct a standard of what is considered to be the “perfect” woman, and viewers may identify with this standard or aspire to it. This identification or aspiration can be used to promote the use of products that claim to achieve this ideal skin condition.

Perceived skin imperfections

A related discursive strategy in this appeal is the construction of perceived skin imperfections. This strategy can be found in both corpora.

Extract 22: *#Tighten eye zone never loss of firmness# ...which can strengthen and cushion skin to repair your eye zone deeply.*
#绷紧眼周不放松#强缓冲，深修护,立体修护眼周，撑出双眸年轻神采! (Weibo)

Extract 23: *-20% visible reduction in stubborn lines in 10 days.*
10天顽固纹-20%。(Weibo)

Extract 24: *Up late scrolling? ... instantly fortifies and cushions the delicate eye area and helps boost natural collagen to reduce the look of lines and fight the visible*

impact of eye micro-movements. (Twitter)

Extract 25: *Fight back against fine lines with our... It works to help repair the visible effects of your late-night scrolling ...* (Twitter)

These extracts display a problem-solution structure typically found in cosmetic advertising (Ringrow, 2016), in which a perceived problem or imperfection is discursively evoked, after which a solution is provided which involves the use of the product being advertised. Extract 22, for example, constructs the skin problem through the phrase *loss of firmness* (绷紧), with the product subsequently identified as being able to *repair* (修护) this problem. In Extracts 24 and 25, the skin problem involves the imperfections related to the *look of lines* or *fine lines*, which are the result of *up late scrolling* or *late-night scrolling* and the supposedly resulting *micro-eye movements*. This perceived issue can be *reduced* or *repaired* by using the product, creating a supposedly logical and plausible connection to the product. It is of interest that words such as *repair* and *reduce/reduction*, or their equivalent Chinese translations, are regularly seen in these extracts. The problems created by these extracts are also constituted as involving a sense of fear and urgency which can be resolved through the quick solutions offered by the product. Extract 23 suggests that the product will reduce wrinkle lines within 10 days (10 天), while Extract 24 suggests that the product *instantly fortifies* the eye area.

Desire for youthful skin

Extracts 26-28, all Weibo posts, focus on constructing a desire for youthful skin. Youthful skin is often semantically associated with flawless skin.

Extract 26: *Whole face precision repair keeps the skin in a youthful condition at all times!*
全脸“精修”让肌肤时刻拥有年轻好状态! (Weibo)

Extract 27: *Also, it strengthens the skin barrier to say goodbye to aging.*
告别老化，强韧屏障。(Weibo)

Extract 28: ...has made a breakthrough in deciphering the mystery of freeze-aging. SIRT 1 promotes cell renewal and repairs the anti-aging barrier. (Weibo)

突破性破译肌肤冻龄奥秘。以王牌 SIRT 核芯抗老科技，触启肌肤主动抗老源动力。SIRT 1 促进细胞新生修护抗老屏障。

By repeatedly emphasising the product's ability to combat aging, e.g., *keep the skin in a youthful condition* (Ex 26, 让肌肤时刻拥有年轻好状态), *say goodbye to aging* (Ex 27, 告别老化) and *repairs the anti-aging barrier* (Ex 28, 修护抗老屏障) the extracts constitute aging as something undesirable, and construct an aspirational perception for youthful, i.e., flawless skin. Again, it is worth noticing that the verb translated as *repair* (Ex 26 and 28, 修) is recurring here. It constitutes the idea that something can be made new or redone and implies the proactive steps women might take to improve what they perceive as skin shortcomings (Searing & Zeilig, 2017).

4.3.2 Conclusion: Appeal to flawless skin

As seen in these extracts, this appeal persuades women that a flawless or youthful skin is desirable, and subsequently provides them with products which function to help them keep or achieve a flawless skin condition (Fill, 2002). As a result, the repeated descriptions and images of flawless skin, or the construction of skin imperfections that can be 'restored' or 'repaired' become normalised for the consumers (Kilbourne, 1987). It is not difficult to picture scenarios in which feeling unsatisfied with oneself would increase after perusing social media platforms such as Weibo or Twitter.

It is worth noting that the emphasis on flawless skin seems to be particularly prominent in Chinese Weibo posts. Jackson, Jiang and Chen (2016) found that Asian media generally depict physical beauty in a more positive light than western media. Their research also revealed that appearance demands are more significant for young Chinese women than for their western counterparts. As noted by Hughes and Hertel (1990), physical attractiveness for young Chinese women is often linked to having a lighter skin tone and a youthful appearance. Therefore, it is clear that online cosmetic advertisements reflect and represent the cultural

context in which they are created (Searing & Zeilig, 2017). Furthermore, Searing and Zeilig also demonstrate how the facial skincare and cosmetics industries are endlessly mutable and will continue to exploit women's insecurities as they age. Consequently, the trend of portraying women with perfect skin in cosmetic advertisements can exacerbate the pressure on women to conform to unrealistic beauty standards.

4.4 The appeal of colour-naming

Colour-naming for cosmetic products refers to the process of assigning names to specific shades or colours of cosmetic products, such as lipstick and eye shadow. These names are often descriptive and can be inspired by a variety of factors, such as the product's hue, texture, or the mood or image it evokes. Skorinko et al., (2006), who classified colour names as either "generic" or "fancy", found that consumers tend to favour fancy colour names over generic ones, because typical colour names are familiar and lack the ability to elicit surprise or unexpected emotions. As a result, in order to impress and attract customers, companies often create colour names for their products which relate to lifestyles, tell stories, or evoke emotions. These appeal to individuals' desire for uniqueness, and hence products perceived as helping to express a consumer's self-image will increase in value (Simonson & Nowlis, 2000). This view is also supported by the research of Hsu, Chang, and Chen (2012) who found that creative colour names can enhance the perception of product playfulness, improve consumer attitudes, and increase purchase intention. Table 4.4 provides an overview of the number of posts made by cosmetic brands on Weibo and Twitter which employ the appeal of colour-naming.

Table 4.4

Number of posts referring to colour-naming in the two corpora.

Brand	Weibo	Twitter	P-value (Fisher's exact)
Estée Lauder	4	0	0.0867
L'Oréal Paris	3	0	0.2105
Lancôme	3	0	0.2105
ColourPop	5	0	0.0325
Clinique	4	0	0.0867
Revlon	5	0	0.0325
Benefit	5	0	0.0325
Make Up For Ever	3	0	0.2105
Total	26	0	0.0001

Table 4.4 shows that Colour-naming is found in posts from all eight cosmetic brands on Weibo, and for some (ColourPop, Revlon and Benefit) it appears in all five posts. In contrast, none of the brands on Twitter have posted any content that employs colour-naming. This absence highlights an important difference between the strategies of the two social media platforms, with Weibo being considerably much more active in the use of colour naming in comparison to Twitter. The Fisher's exact test reveals an extremely significant statistical difference in the use of colour-naming across the two platforms, and the differences at the brand level also indicate significant statistical significance. The following extracts will be analysed to explore the discursive strategies used in the colour-naming appeal in more detail.

4.4.1 Discursive strategies used in the appeal of colour-naming

Three essential discursive strategies emerged in the cosmetic brands' appeal of colour-naming. These are sensory associations and emotions, fusion of classical and contemporary elements, and colour-incorporated product names. These strategies were largely found on Weibo.

Sensory associations and emotions

In the Weibo posts seen in Extracts 29-31, colour naming is used to discursively create sensory associations, memories or emotions.

Extract 29: *505 Vitality Orange-Red, just like the orange soda in summer!*

515 Milk Tea Apricot, gentle and brightening without picking skin tones~

520 Cherry Blossom Pink, rich texture and dripping with bright colour!

505 元气橙红，夏日的橘子汽水!

515 奶茶杏棕，温柔显白不挑皮~

520 车厘玫红，质感唇色鲜艳欲滴! (Weibo)

Extract 30: *505 Slightly Sour Orange, full of vitality and energy!*

515 Soft Muslin Brown, milk tea apricot brown is captivating~

520 Cherry Stain, a touch of red makes you look bright and shiny!

505 微酸橘，元气橘调活力满分!

515 柔纱棕，奶茶杏棕令人着迷~

520 樱桃渍，一抹玫红令人鲜艳! (Weibo)

Extract 31: *[Emoji Rose] Combining the Sunset Rose with the Peachy Rouge*

[Emoji sunset] This one palette can easily create the #Summer Beach Sunset Makeup#, which will bring back memories of the vibrant and energetic summer.

落日玫瑰搭配桃气胭脂

一盘搞定 #夏日沙滩落日妆# 开启记忆中元气又活力的夏日吧~(Weibo)

In Extract 29, creative colour names, such as *Vitality Orange-Red* (元气橙红), *Milk Tea Apricot* (奶茶杏棕), and *Cherry Blossom Pink* (车厘玫红), are used instead of traditional colour names to create sensory associations with common objects like fruits and beverages (Chou, Chu & Chiang, 2020). A similar approach is taken in Extract 30 and Extract 31, with the use of phrases such as *Slightly Sour Orange* (微酸橘, Ex 30), *Cherry Stain* (樱桃渍, Ex 30), *Sunset Rose* (落日玫瑰, Ex 31), and *Peachy* (桃气, Ex 31). Colour names are also creatively drawn

upon to construct certain emotions or memories associated by the product. For example, Extract 29 evokes memories of summer and vitality by drawing upon the colour name to compare the product to *the orange soda of summer* (就像夏日的橘子汽水), while Extract 30 draws upon the product's colour names to associate it as *full of vitality and energy* (活力满分), *captivating* (着迷), *bright and shiny* (鲜艳). Additionally, Extract 31 employs the combination of the Sunset Rose and Peach Shimmer colour names to evoke a look that is reminiscent of a summer beach sunset. The use of the emoji symbols for a rose and a sunset also contributes to reinforcing this evocation. Advertisers often employ these kinds of comparisons or similes to highlight the features and effects of the products, aiming to help the audience visualise the effects and benefits of using the products.

Fusion of classical and contemporary elements

Another discursive strategy involved in the colour naming appeal can be seen in both Extract 2 and Extract 3 where the use of classical Chinese language features (e.g., classical Chinese vocabulary, sentence structures, and rhetorical techniques) are incorporated into modern Chinese language usage to express ideas and evoke emotions and memories. According to Chan and Huang's (2001) study on Chinese advertising language, the compounding structure in brand promotion often follows a modifier-noun pattern, as seen in phrases like *Slightly Sour Orange* (微酸橘, Ex 2), *Cherry Stain* (樱桃渍, Ex 2) and *Peachy Rouge* (桃气胭脂, Ex 3), resulting in a modern Chinese expression style with a classical Chinese influence. The use of associative and poetic language to convey a sense of elegance and beauty, which has been a characteristic of Chinese literature and art for centuries. Also, the use of compounding structure and modifier-noun pattern also reflects the influence of classical Chinese grammar, which emphasises the importance of context and the relationships between different elements in a sentence (Chan & Huang, 2001). Such language style often evokes elegance, refinement, and nobility. Hence, the use of these linguistic features in modern Chinese advertising reflects a fusion of classical and contemporary elements, resulting in a distinctive style that resonates with Chinese consumers.

Colour-incorporated product names

In another strategy related to the colour naming appeal, rather than simply assigning an evocative name to the colour of a product such as lipstick, a colour is incorporated directly into the product's name. This use of colours, often when combined with certain modifiers, produces connotations which can have an unconscious impact on consumers (Martín-Santana & Reinares-Lara, 2019).

Extract 32: #Little Brown Bottle¹ Hidden Trick#
#小棕瓶隐藏招式# (Weibo)

Extract 33: #Clinique Peptide-Anti-Aging Purple Light Bottle²#
#倩碧肽 A 抗老紫光瓶# (Weibo)

Extract 34: #Clinique Moisture Surge Pink Water³#
#倩碧水磁场粉水# (Weibo)

In Extract 32, the product name incorporates colour-naming, specifically *brown* (棕), which describes the hue of the bottle. The modifier *little* (小) by emphasizing the small size of the bottle provides it with a possibly desirable cute or delicate appearance (i.e., Brown Bottle alone, is not particularly evocative), while brown (棕) by itself, is sometimes associated with reliability, simplicity, and practicality. Furthermore, *Hidden Trick* (隐藏招式) connotes the product as possessing a concealed or unique attribute that may intrigue potential consumers. Likewise, in Extract 33, the colour-naming strategy features the word *purple* (紫), which when collocated with the word *light* (光) can refer either to the colour light purple, or to the purple colour of the light emitted from the purple-coloured glass bottle. Importantly, the Chinese character for purple (紫) is commonly used in Chinese product names or descriptions to convey a sense of elegance, luxury, or anti-aging properties, while light (光) in this context implies gentle or non-invasive properties. Furthermore, the use of *peptide* (肽) in the product formulation is directly highlighted in the name to attract consumers looking for products with this specific ingredient.

¹ Advanced Night Repair Eye Concentrate Matrix

² Clinique Smart Clinical Repair Wrinkle Correcting Serum

³ Clinique Moisture Surge Hydrating Lotion

In Extract 34, the colour-naming used is *pink water* (粉水), which highlights the product's hydrating properties and suggests a light and refreshing texture, while the colour *pink* by itself (粉) may evoke a youthful or feminine. The product name also incorporates *Moisture Surge* (水磁场), indicating the intensity of the product's ability to attract and retain moisture. Thus, the combined use of colour and evocative language conveys the product's hydrating and refreshing qualities. Again, both Example 33 and Example 34 here use the compounding structure of modifier-noun pattern. This method of naming products with the function and colour helps customers learn about the product in detail and persuades them to make a purchase based solely on its name. Furthermore, colour-naming, compounding structure, alliteration and rhyme in these three hashtags demonstrate how Chinese advertisers employ such linguistic techniques to make a product name memorable.

4.4.2 Conclusion: The appeal of colour-naming

In summary, colour-naming is a prevalent marketing strategy in the advertising industry, allowing advertisers to create emotional connections with their target audience and highlight their products' unique features. This technique also helps differentiate products in a crowded marketplace. Moon and Kim (2001) found that creative colour names increase the perception of product playfulness, which can improve consumer attitudes and increase purchase intention, while Chou, Chu, and Chiang (2020) have argued that standard naming methods could result in consumer disinterest. By using unique colour names, brands can stand out and capture consumers' attention. To generate interest, at least in the Chinese market, a trend has emerged in coining colour names that contain no information about the hue, instead using topics, events, or sentences with no apparent meaning. A practice that suggests colour-naming is a crucial factor in influencing Chinese consumers' decisions.

4.5 Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity endorsement has become a popular appeal for companies to maintain their competitive advantage in consumer markets. The cosmetic industry, in particular, frequently employs actors, singers, athletes, and models as brand ambassadors to generate interest and awareness of their products and services. Advertising through social media celebrities incorporates aspects of word-of-mouth marketing, social media marketing, and content marketing, resulting in a highly effective means of promoting brands (Lamasi & Santoso, 2022). Many corporations build brand awareness by using celebrities to capture a larger share of the market. To some extent, consumers view celebrities as a reference group for the brand, making them more trustworthy and attractive endorsers (Chung & Cho, 2017). Thus, marketers believe that celebrities attract the attention of consumers and could transfer their positive traits to the endorsed brands. Moreover, celebrity endorsements can significantly increase the visibility of cosmetic products or services and enable them to reach a broader audience than they would through other marketing strategies. Table 4.5 offers a summary of the quantity of posts by cosmetic brands on Weibo and Twitter that employ celebrity endorsement as an appeal strategy.

Table 4.5

Number of posts referring to Celebrity Endorsement in the two corpora.

Brand	Weibo	Twitter	P-value (Fisher's exact)
Estée Lauder	7	0	0.0031
L'Oréal Paris	7	1	0.0198
Lancôme	9	0	0.0001
ColourPop	0	0	1
Clinique	0	5	0.0325
Revlon	5	1	0.1409
Benefit	6	0	0.0108
Make Up For Ever	1	7	0.0198
Total	35	14	0.0005

Table 4.5 illustrates significant differences in the use of celebrity endorsements in cosmetic advertising across two social media platforms. Weibo seems to be a more popular platform for this marketing strategy, with a total of 35 posts related to celebrity endorsement across all brands, compared to only 14 posts on Twitter. On the other hands, the frequency of celebrity endorsements varies across different brands and social media platforms. As shown in the table, some brands, such as Revlon, Benefit, L'Oréal Paris, Lancôme, and Estée Lauder, had more posts related to celebrity endorsement on Weibo than on Twitter. Conversely, Clinique and Make Up For Ever had more posts referring to celebrity endorsement on Twitter than on Weibo. Notably, ColourPop did not have any posts about Celebrity Endorsement in either corpus. The Fisher's exact test demonstrates an extremely significant statistical difference in the use of celebrity endorsement between the two platforms. Moreover, the differences observed at the brand level also indicate statistical significance.

4.5.1 Discursive strategies used in celebrity endorsement

Three key discursive strategies were found in the cosmetic brands appeal to celebrity endorsement. These are specific product promotion, beauty enhancement solutions and celebrities at events.

Specific product promotion

As shown in Extracts 35-39, the Celebrity Endorsement appeal involves the celebrity promotion of a specific product. This is found in both corpora.

Extract 35: *#CindyBruna is looking flawless in our Infallible Fresh Wear Foundation in a Powder on the Cannes Red Carpet. This formula is all about giving your skin a natural look with a soft touch and weightless feel - perfect for the summer months!*
(Twitter)

Extract 36: *What, afraid of sun exposure? Take the #L'Oreal small gold tube# carefully selected by @朱一龙 (@Zhu Yilong), and win against the UV rays this summer!*

什么，害怕日晒？拿好@朱一龙 精心挑选的#欧莱雅小金管#，这个夏天稳赢紫外线！(Weibo)

Extract 37: *Lancôme Asia Pacific's brand spokesperson@周冬雨 (@Zhou Dongyu) shares online the secrets of achieving polished skin! Use Lancôme's Advanced Génifique Serum to achieve clear and radiant skin! #ZhouDongyuSharesSkincareSecrets #PolishAwayTheBad# Repost*

-@周冬雨(@Zhou Dongyu):

Do you want to know my method for achieving polished skin? Lancôme's Advanced Génifique Serum can polish, clarify, and brighten your skin all in one bottle! #ZhouDongyuSharesSkincareSecrets #PolishAwayTheBad#

兰蔻亚太区品牌代言人@周冬雨 在线分享抛光肌养成秘籍！用兰蔻极光精华水，养成净澈透亮的肌肤！#周冬雨公开护肤秘籍# #不好的全抛光# 转发微博

@周冬雨

想知道我的抛光肌养成法吗？兰蔻极光精华水，抛光、净澈、透亮，一瓶搞定！#周冬雨公开护肤秘籍##不好的全抛光# (Weibo)

Extract 38: *On August 10th at 8:00 p.m., tune in to L'Oreal's Taobao live broadcast room and join the Chinese Valentine's Day Alliance @鼓手胡宇桐 (@Drummer Hu Yutong) to experience the sun protection superpower of #L'Oreal Ocean Defender Sunscreen# and enjoy exciting surprises and fan benefits!*

8月10日晚 20:00 锁定欧莱雅淘宝直播间，和气运联盟@鼓手胡宇桐 一起感受#欧莱雅大海王者防晒#的防晒超能力，更有神秘惊喜、宠粉福利等你来 Pick 喔！(Weibo)

Extract 39: *Unlock the limited edition Valentine's Day gift box of the Little black bottle, same as @周也 yeah's (@Zhou Ye yeah) ... Repost*

-@周也 yeah

Ding! The exclusive Valentine's Day romantic gift from @兰蔻 LANCÔME has arrived. The little black bottle limited edition gift box ... Come to the official

*flagship store of Lancôme on JD to unlock the romantic gift.*解锁@周也 yeah
同款小黑瓶七夕限定礼盒.....转发微博 @周也 yeah
叮，七夕专属心动礼物已送达~@兰蔻 LANCOME 小黑瓶七夕限定礼盒.....
快来兰蔻京东官方旗舰店解锁心动浪漫礼~ (Weibo)

In Extracts 35, 36, and 37, the brand collaborates with celebrity models and actors to endorse specific products and emphasise their benefits, such as *natural-looking skin with a weightless feel* (Ex 35), *protection against UV rays* (Ex 36), and *polished, clarified, and brightened skin* (Ex 37). This focused use of celebrity endorsement is further highlighted by the celebrities themselves recommending and sharing their experience of using the products, for instance, *looking flawless in our Infallible Fresh Wear Foundation in a Powder* (Ex 35), *carefully selected* (Ex 36) and *shares online the secrets of achieving polished skin* (Ex 37).

Extracts 38 and 39, on the other hand, use a different approach. Extract 38 promotes an upcoming event on the Taobao Live broadcast room, featuring the celebrity. It emphasises the exciting surprises and fan benefits of the event in order to appeal to consumers. Extract 39 promotes the limited-edition gift box. It uses the celebrity endorsers repost to encourage consumers to unlock the product on the brand's official flagship store. The use of the @ symbol to tag the celebrity endorser and hashtags in these extracts increases their visibility and engagement on social media platforms.

Celebrities and beauty enhancement and solutions

Extracts 40-44 feature the use of celebrities, experts, or influencers, along with promises of beauty enhancement or solutions to common beauty concerns.

Extract 40: *Enjoy the summer vacation and shine every day! Why not follow the influencer, Pocket Doll Meow Meow, and play with new colours?... Benefit four-color highlighter blush palette - Flame Palette, is as passionate and free as your holiday fun! Learn the beautiful eye makeup that is a must-have for summer vacations.*

暑假嗨玩不停，天天要出彩!不如跟着达人口袋娃娃喵喵 #翻开“心”色彩# 玩转花式!.....贝玲妃四色高光腮红盘-火焰盘，热情自由，就如假日撒欢的你!暑假出游必备的靓眼妆面，还不赶紧学起来? (Weibo)

Extract 41: *On the beach in the summer, there are sandy shores, sunsets, and you! Follow beauty influencer Sara 楠 (Sara Nan) and use the new four-color highlight and blush palette from Benefit to unveil the beautiful sunset ~*

夏日的海边，有沙滩，有落日，还有你!跟着达人 sara 楠用一盘贝玲妃新品四色高光腮红盘落日盘，掀开绝美落日~ (Weibo)

Extract 42: *Charlotte and Laura Tremble, members of the French National Artistic Swimming Team, introduce their beauty routines just before the big jump using our waterproof eye products #AquaResist! (Twitter)*

Extract 43: *On the field, freestyle skier @青蛙公主爱凌 (@Frog Princess Ailing), synchronized swimming world champion @花游蒋文文(@Jiang Wenwen), @花游蒋婷婷(@Jiang Tingting), and women's nine-ball pool champion @潘晓婷 (@Pan Xiaoting), with their sharp eyes and full postures, always confront the challenges ... Fortunately, with the presence of #Estee Lauder Advanced Night Repair Eye Concentrate Matrix#, they can resist external damage, support the skin around the eyes, reduce fine lines, and let their eyes shine.*

赛场上，自由式滑雪运动员@青蛙公主爱凌 花样游泳世界冠军@花游蒋文文 @花游蒋婷婷 九球天后@潘晓婷 目光如炬，时刻以饱满姿态迎战。还好有#雅诗兰黛液体眼绷带#早晚相伴，抵御外界伤害，撑住眼周，淡根细纹，让双眸绽放神采。(Weibo)

Extract 44: *「Whitening, please ask the experts」 Part 2 is now live! [Conversation with skin expert Dr. Zhang Guirong] Is special beauty treatment the only way to whiten? Is it true? Follow L'Oreal Paris brand spokesperson @辛芷蕾 (@Xin ZhiLei) and enter the large-scale scientific popularisation (recommendation) event with dermatology skin expert Dr. @医美博士张桂蓉 (@MedicalBeautyDoctor Zhang Guirong). #L'Oreal White Bottle# #Reveal the*

truth about 24-hour scientific whitening#

「美白，请专家说」第二弹已就位！」[对话皮肤学专家张桂蓉博士]
变白只能靠特殊美容，真的是这样吗？赶紧跟随巴黎欧莱雅品牌代言人@
辛芷蕾，进入皮肤学专家博士@医美博士张桂蓉 的大型科(种)普(草)现场。
#欧莱雅注白瓶##扒一扒 24H 科研美白真相# (Weibo)

Both Extract 40 and Extract 41 aim to persuade the audience to incorporate the beauty products being advertised into their summer vacation routines by recommending the influencer's makeup tutorial. They employ imperative verbs such as *follow* (Ex 40, 41), *play* (Ex 40), *learn* (Ex 40) and *use* (Ex 41) to motivate the followers to take action. The language used in these extracts is upbeat and enthusiastic, using metaphors and comparisons to highlight the product's benefits. For instance, the colour of palette is described as *passionate and free* (Ex 40), similar to the customer's holiday fun, and the *sunset* (Ex 41) is compared to the beautiful effect of using the product. These extracts employ emotive adjectives to create a positive association with the product and rhetorical questions to make it seem like a must-have item.

In contrast, Extract 42 and Extract 43 emphasise the endorsement of the product by professional athletes. Extract 42 features two French National Artistic Swimming Team members endorsing waterproof eye products, emphasising the product's suitability for active individuals who require long-lasting makeup, while Extract 43 features female athletes with impressive accomplishments to showcase the effectiveness of Repair Eye Concentrate Matrix in protecting the skin around the eyes. The benefits of using the products in these extracts, are suggested through the use of imperative verbs like *resist*, *reduce* and *support*. In addition, the descriptive language used to describe the athletes' physical abilities, such as *sharp eyes* and *full postures*, also serves as a link to the benefits of the product. Differently, Extract 44 promotes a scientific popularisation event, featuring a dermatology skin expert and a brand spokesperson. Here the tone of the discourse is more scientific, with the phrases used including *24-hour scientific whitening* (Ex 44). Rhetorical questions are also employed to interest consumers, and emotive adjectives like *special* (Ex 44) evoking a positive association with the product.

Celebrities at events

In the Twitter posts seen in Extracts 45-47, the use of celebrity appeal involves locating the celebrity and their use of the brand's product at certain events. These events are often in support of specific causes, such as pride or vitiligo.

Extract 45: *Brazilian model @isabelifontana touching up her hypnotic #smokeyeyes and luminous lips by @elisarampi for the #festivaldecannes red carpet. #CliniqueAtCannes #Cannes2021 #CliniqueRedCarpet (Twitter)*

Extract 46: *Introducing Dustin Muchovitz as the face of our #Pride2021 campaign! Parisian icon of the coolest nightlife and the DJ podiums, Dustin is a model and a fashion icon. Breaking the codes, without a defined gender. Makeup by Masae ITO #Proudforever #makeupforever (Twitter)*

Extract 47: *MY VITILIGO – EPISODE 1
MEET PEOPLE WITH VITILIGO - a series in 3 episodes.
Tiger Lily, model, singer and body positive activist tells us about her experience with makeup and vitiligo. Let's watch her story. (Twitter)*

Extract 45 features an image of the model with the description of her makeup, emphasising the use of Clinique's products during her involvement in the Cannes film festival. The language used, such as *hypnotic, luminous, and red carpet*, implies that the makeup is of high quality and suitable for glamorous events. Moreover, the inclusion of hashtags like #festivaldecannes, #Cannes2021, and #CliniqueRedCarpet reinforces the association of the brand with high fashion, red-carpet events.

Furthermore, and according to Chan and Leung (2012), the cause fit of a celebrity endorsement can impact brand awareness, which in turn can influence consumers' willingness to purchase cosmetics. As an example, Extract 46 introduces Clinique's celebrity face of the brand's #Pride2021 campaign. The accompanying phrase *breaking the codes, without a defined gender*,

along with the nature of the event, construct both the celebrity and the product as representative of diversity, individuality, and inclusivity, thereby building a brand image that targets the consumer with similar interests. In Extract 47, the focus is on promoting a series of episodes that feature celebrities with vitiligo (a chronic autoimmune disorder which causes patches of skin to lose pigment, sharing their experiences with makeup). The brand emphasises body positivity, using personal pronouns and phrases like *body positive activist* and *experience with makeup and vitiligo* to describe the celebrity. They leverage this promotion of acceptance and diversity in beauty standards, to sell cosmetic products.

4.5.2 Conclusion: Celebrity endorsement

Using a well-known celebrity in cosmetic advertising can greatly expand a brand's reach and recognition. Consumers who are fans of a specific celebrity may base their evaluation of a product on the celebrity endorser, leading them to make a purchase in order to feel a connection with the celebrity (Mohmand & Mohmand, 2021). Social media engagement of brands can also be boosted through celebrity endorsements, with followers of the celebrity liking, sharing, and commenting on the post. The celebrity's professional reputation and expertise in the industry can also lend credibility to the claims made about the product, building trust with consumers. However, there are potential drawbacks to using celebrity endorsements. Consumers may become skeptical if they feel that the celebrity is being paid to promote the product and may view the endorsement as insincere. Additionally, if the celebrity endorser experiences a scandal or controversy, it can negatively impact the brand's image (Chung & Cho, 2017). Consumers may also be unsure if the celebrity endorser actually uses the product or experiences the service, leading to confusion and potential harm if false or misleading claims are made.

4.6 Fear of missing out (FOMO)

The fear of missing out (FOMO) is a marketing strategy which targets consumers' desires to seize unique opportunities and avoid missing out. According to Bright Logan and Grau (2018), this strategy is particularly effective in increasing brand awareness and driving impulse

purchases. They argue that FOMO appeals to the feeling of unease that arises when individuals suspect an engaging or captivating occurrence is happening without their participation. Williams (2018) supports this view, describing FOMO as an advertising message that triggers innate fears of missing out in the audience. However, he emphasises that the strategy needs to be conveyed implicitly. Featherstone (2018) further explains that the FOMO technique primarily works by stimulating consumers' emotional reactions and anxieties, which encourages them to take action and promotes product usage. He states that overall, it is a powerful tool in the hands of marketers for enhancing sales and creating loyal customers.

More recently, the growing popularity of advertising on social media has provided advertisers with an opportunity to leverage FOMO to effectively promote and sell their online products and services. Social media platforms offer a wide reach and allow for the easy creation of engaging content that triggers the fear of missing out. The use of the FOMO appeal across the two corpora can be seen in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Number of posts related to fear of missing out in the two corpora.

Brand	Weibo	Twitter	P-value (Fisher's exact)
Estée Lauder	3	9	0.0198
L'Oréal Paris	2	3	1
Lancôme	4	4	1
ColourPop	4	3	1
Clinique	2	0	0.4737
Revlon	0	1	1
Benefit	3	2	1
Make Up For Ever	3	0	0.2105
Total	21	22	1

Table 4.6 reveals that, with a total of 21 posts on Weibo and 22 on Twitter, cosmetic brands equally employ the FOMO appeal across both social media platforms. Among the brands, Estée

Lauder employed the most FOMO-related posts with a total of twelve, nine of which were on Twitter. Lancôme was second, having four posts on both Weibo and Twitter. In contrast, Clinique did not employ any posts using FOMO on Twitter, whereas Revlon did not have any on Weibo. The Fisher's exact test indicates no statistically significant difference in the overall use of FOMO between the two platforms and at brand level a significant difference is only evident with the brand Estée Lauder. A more detailed explanation of the discursive tactics used for the fear of missing out appeal will be provided below.

4.6.1 Discursive strategies used in fear of missing out

Three key discursive strategies were found in the cosmetic brands appeal to fear of missing out. These include the use of direct linguistic FOMO, immediacy-driven language, and scarcity-inducing language.

Direct Linguistic FOMO

Both datasets use the fear of missing out strategy in a linguistically direct way. This is perhaps in contrast to Williams' (2018) view that FOMO should be employed implicitly.

Extract 48: *JOIN US LIVE ON INSTAGRAM RIGHT NOW! You don't want to miss out.*

(Twitter)

Extract 49: *... extra gifts with star products, and amazing surprises. Don't miss it!* 明星单品超量再加赠, 超值惊喜, 不要错过! (Weibo)

Extract 50: *What are you waiting for? Click the link and buy it now. Pack your love and lock your sincerity!*

还在等什么? 即刻戳网页链接抢购, 将爱意装好, 锁定真心! (Weibo)

Extract 51: *The 25% discount on eyeshadow palettes is ending soon~*

眼影盘 75 折活动即将结束哦~ (Weibo)

Extract 48 and Extract 49 both persuade audiences to make a purchase by directly urging them not to miss out. *You don't want to miss out* (Ex 48) and *Don't miss it* (Ex 49) both play on the

fear of missing out on something exciting or valuable. In Extract 48, the capitalised phrase *JOIN US* and its use of imperative language creates a sense of urgency, which is further strengthened by the capitalised and punctuated expression, *RIGHT NOW!* Extract 49 similarly uses imperative language and enhances the FOMO strategy by offering *extra gifts* and *surprises* as a bonus for those who don't miss the promotion. Extract 50 emphasises the immediacy of the opportunity with *What are you waiting for?*, while *buy it now, pack your love and lock your sincerity* further plays on the fear that the viewer may miss out on a special or sentimental opportunity if they fail to act quickly. Extract 51 creates a sense of urgency, by employing the phrase 'ending soon' to indicate that the viewer may miss out on a 25% discount on eyeshadow palettes if they do not act quickly.

Immediacy-driven language

FOMO marketing is closely tied to the appeal to immediacy, which employs language such as 'buy it now' to create a sense of urgency and prompt consumers to make an immediate purchase. This is evident in the following extracts.

Extract 52: *Get your skin consultation in one selfie with our virtual beauty advisor! Try it now.* (Twitter)

Extract 53: *time to make room on your vanity for #DoubleWear Stay-in-Place #foundation! Learn more and shop now:[link:https://estee.cm/2Vc046f!]* (Twitter)

Extract 54: *Visit Estee Lauder's offline counters now to unlock the new experience.*
即刻前往雅诗兰黛各大线下专柜，抢先解锁新体验。(Weibo)

Imperative language, such as *try* (Ex 52), *shop* (Ex 53) or *visit* (Ex 54), is frequently employed with the adverb *now*, to construct these immediacy expressions. They are also often supported with an additional call-to-action which enhances the sense of urgency. In Extract 53, for example, the phrase, *time to make room* raises the viewer's consciousness that the timing is appropriate for the particular action in question. Extract 54 uses the term *unlock* to create a feeling of exclusivity and FOMO suggesting that users will miss out on something special if they don't visit the counters. All three extracts utilise imperative language, phrases emphasising

urgency and exclusivity, and immediate calls to action. These are all common elements of marketing strategies that utilise FOMO.

Scarcity-inducing

The strategy of scarcity is also commonly employed by marketers to induce FOMO among consumers. By promoting limited-time offers, or one-day-only sales, brands create a sense of urgency around the purchase, which in turn can generate fear of missing out in consumers (Hodkinson, 2019).

Extract 55: *[Emoji Rainbow] [Emoji Police cars revolving light] 25% OFF PALETTES [Emoji Police cars revolving light] [Emoji Rainbow] this is not a drill! pickup #ColourPop classics & newness now during our palette sale!! *some exclusions apply! (Twitter)*

Extract 56: *Get the summer artifact with maximum whitening power, and also enjoy limited edition gifts waiting for you to bring home. First come, first served!*

收获美白力 MAX 的夏日神器，同时更有限量加赠礼遇等你带回家，先到先得哦~ (Weibo)

Extract 57: *Our limited-edition Gift with Purchase will have you #FloatingOnAir emoji Winking face Now available at @Dillards – this cosmetic bag is filled with all your favorite makeup and skincare must-haves! Shop now: [link: <https://estee.cm/3Cc3WoC>] (See details, available while supplies last) (Twitter)*

Extract 58: *The first must-buy -Benefit Fouroscope: Earth Angel Bronze, blush & highlight palette.*

第一个必买的-贝玲妃贝玲妃四色高光腮红盘。(Weibo)

Extract 55, for instance, uses the phrase *this is not a drill* alongside the use of police car emojis which resonates with the viewer's instinctive response to an emergency situation, urging them to take notice and urgently engage with the discount message. Extract 56 employs the phrase *first come, first served* to create a sense of scarcity and around the *limited-edition gift*. The suggestion that the gift is highly sought-after and may run out creates a FOMO effect for

customers who may want to take advantage of the offer. In Extract 57, the use of phrases such as *available while supplies last* and *limited-edition gift with purchase* communicate to the consumer that the highly sought-after item is scarce. Likewise, Extract 58 employs language that suggests the product as a *must-buy*, indicating high demand and the likelihood of selling out. These discursive strategies are often used in cosmetic advertising to induce FOMO in consumers by creating a sense of scarcity and time-sensitivity that prompts consumers to take immediate action to avoid missing out on the opportunity to purchase what are often constructed as highly sought-after products.

4.6.2 Conclusion: Fear of missing out

In conclusion, fear of missing out (FOMO) is a psychological phenomenon characterised by a state of anxiety accompanied by negative emotions, which is often used in marketing campaigns to encourage consumer action (Elhai, et al., 2016). Marketers leverage limited edition or limited-time offers to create a sense of scarcity and exclusivity around a product or service, tapping into consumers' FOMO and motivating them to make a purchase. (Good & Hyman, 2020). In the context of cosmetic advertising, in particular, FOMO can lead to blind purchasing behaviour, sometimes in ignorance of the potential physical damage that might be caused by such behaviour. As indicated, recent FOMO studies have focused on its uses in social media. Social media provides an excellent breeding ground for FOMO, as users are exposed to all that is going on within both their inner circles and on a global scale and are able to compare their own experiences to those which they see online.

4.7 Special day

During public holidays cosmetic brands engage in extensive advertising and promotional activities to attract customers. This is because holidays present valuable opportunities for the brands to implement unique marketing tactics that can capture their audience's attention and increase customer engagement. Social media platforms, such as Twitter and Weibo, play a particularly important role in sharing information about the best holiday sales promotions to consumers (Rosenbloom & Cullotta, 2009).

Brands typically take advantage of holidays on social media platforms by creating attention-grabbing advertisements or employing strong calls to action that encourage readers to participate in promotions that have some thematic connection to the specific holiday. These social media promotions are often aligned with other digital media platforms, such as online newsletters, or develop paid-per-click ad campaigns to reach a broader target market.

In addition to traditional holidays, advertisers also create other special days, such as Black Friday, which provide customers with a reason to celebrate. Promotional strategies for these special days offer incentives such as discounts, value-added offers, or free trial opportunities for their products or services. While significantly discounted offers are expected during campaigns like Black Friday or Cyber Monday (Bell et al., 2014), brands also run campaigns throughout the year, such as on Boxing Day, which provide consumers with reduced prices in order to generate spikes in sales. Brands often participate in these events by developing fun and festive online videos or content that often presents the brand in a more personable way. Table 4.7 identifies the brands and number of posts in the two corpora that use the special day appeal.

Table 4.7

Number of posts related to Special Day in the two corpora.

Brand	Weibo	Twitter	P-value (Fisher's exact)
Estée Lauder	6	1	0.0573
L'Oréal Paris	1	3	0.5820
Lancôme	4	0	0.0867
ColourPop	0	0	1
Clinique	4	10	0.0108
Revlon	0	0	1
Benefit	3	2	1
Make Up For Ever	1	4	0.3034
Total	19	20	1

Based on Table 4.7, it can be argued that the frequency of posts that involve discursive strategies related to Special Day promotions is roughly equivalent for the brands across both platforms. The table does indicate, however, that Clinique had the highest number of posts

related to Special Day, with a total of 14 across Weibo and Twitter combined. On Weibo, Estée Lauder had the largest number of posts with six, followed by Lancôme and Clinique, with four posts each. Conversely, on Twitter, Clinique, as mentioned had the highest number of posts with 10, followed by L'Oréal Paris and Make Up For Ever, with three and four posts respectively. Interestingly, ColourPop and Revlon did not post any content related to Special Day on either Weibo or Twitter. The Fisher's exact test reveals no statistically significant difference in the overall use of special day between the two platforms. However, when examining the data at the brand level, some notable differences emerge, suggesting potential significance. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the social media strategies employed by these brands in their communication with their target audiences on these platforms, a further analysis is provided.

4.7.1 Discursive strategies used in the appeal to special day

Three key discursive strategies were found in the cosmetic brands appeal to special day. These are festive marketing, artificial holiday marketing and event-based marketing.

Festive marketing

Festive advertising is the most common promotional strategy employed during special occasions, as it tends to resonate well within the context of traditional festivals and their associated culture. This strategy largely found on Weibo.

Extract 59: *Countdown to Chinese Valentine's Day, @李现 ing invites you to show your love in a fancy way! #EsteeLauder Chinese Valentine's Day limited# gift box, shows classic floral pattern, in outstanding appearance which is just after your heart. help fancy confession, boldly convey the attitude of daring love, #LiXian Chinese Valentine's Day lock gift#! go and snap up the purchase. Package your love, lock your love!*

七夕倒计时，@李现 ing 邀你花式示爱! #雅诗兰黛七夕限定#礼盒，经典花朵图案，神仙颜值狙击心动;助攻花式告白，大胆传递敢爱态度，#李现七

夕锁定礼#!将爱意装好，锁定真心!

Extract 60: *As the love heats up on Chinese Valentine's Day, have you prepared all the makeup essentials for your perfect date? Prepare your Valentine's gift in advance and gather sweetness! ... Exclusive discounts and additional gifts are available for Chinese Valentine's Day, along with more added surprises.*

七夕爱意升温，满分赴约你的妆贝都购齐了嘛? 提前「贝」好七夕礼，为甜蜜蓄力!七夕限定礼优惠放送，加赠更多好礼。

Extract 61: *Estée Lauder's grand commitment event, promising a sweet declaration! Every girl deserves to be promised and protected! Together with @Xiameng, embrace the secrets of your best friend and share heartfelt gifts to be beautiful together! Walk alongside your best friend and enjoy exquisite beauty experiences together! #Promise of Beauty, Nurturing Youth#*

雅诗兰黛大型承诺现场,承诺，要甜蜜说!所有女孩都值得被承诺守护!和@夏梦一起，hold住闺蜜的小心思，用心意好礼，和她美在一起!与闺蜜同行，共享至美礼遇!#至美承诺礼蕴年轻#

Extract 62: *Estée Lauder's grand commitment on-site, promising to be confident! How long has it been since you pampered yourself? Follow the footsteps of @Reb Li Manxuan and confidently make promises to yourself! Estée Lauder prepares exclusive benefits for you, reminding you to give yourself a gift of love! #Beautiful Promise, Youthful Charm#*

雅诗兰黛大型承诺现场,承诺，要自信说!你有多久没有犒劳自己了? 跟随@Reb李蔓瑄的步伐，自信许下对自己的承诺! 雅诗兰黛为你准备臻选福利，提醒你为自己送上一份宠爱好礼! #至美承诺 礼蕴年轻#

All the examples are from the Weibo corpus and revolve around promoting Chinese Valentine's Day and related products. Extracts 59 and 60 both highlight the upcoming Chinese Valentine's Day and use persuasive language to encourage audience participation and preparations for the occasion. Extract 59 adopts an inviting and persuasive tone, leveraging celebrity influence to capture attention and generate interest in a limited gift box. It describes the gift box as having

an *outstanding appearance* (神仙颜值) that captures the heart, using phrases like *assisting fancy confession* (助攻花式告白) to imply the desirability and exclusivity of the product. It evokes feelings of romance and excitement by emphasising the romantic nature of the occasion and encourages followers to express their love in a unique and fancy way. The final slogan *package your love, lock your love* (将爱意装好, 锁定真心) refers to the *gift box* (礼盒) itself, serving as a metaphorical expression that encourages people to express their love and commitment sincerely and securely. This makes the gift box a symbolic and essential item in the ritual of the festival. In Extract 60, the use of emojis, such as heart and celebration emojis, aims to create a positive and joyful tone, associating it with the idea of Valentine's Day celebration. Extract 60 also poses a rhetorical question, engaging the audience and prompting self-reflection regarding their preparations for the perfect date. Furthermore, the expressions *prepare your Valentine's gift in advance* (提前“贝”好七夕礼) and *gather sweetness* (为甜蜜蓄力) appeal to the audience's desire for planning and ensuring a memorable Valentine's Day experience.

In contrast, Extracts 61 and 62 steer clear of explicitly mentioning Valentine's Day. Instead, they focus on highlighting promises and commitments, whether it is promising to be beautiful together with a best friend (Ex 61) or promising self-confidence and self-care (Ex 62). These extracts both revolve around positive messaging and emotional appeal. In Extract 61, the language used is persuasive and aims to evoke positive emotions. It portrays the festival as an opportunity to share experiences and beauty rituals among best friends. *Embrace the secrets of your best friend* (hold住闺蜜的小心思) and *walk alongside your best friend* (与闺蜜同行) promote a sense of togetherness and intimacy. It can be seen that this Chinese post incorporates the English word *hold*. This reflects the widespread practice of Chinese-English code-switching on social media and online platforms. This blending of languages adds emphasis, conveys specific meanings, and creates a fashionable atmosphere (Liu, 2019). It brings a playful and creative touch to Chinese sentences, showcasing the dynamic nature of language in the digital era. This combination can also make the text stand out and attract attention in crowded online spaces. On the other hand, Extract 4 focuses on the theme of self-confidence and self-care. The language used aims to inspire individuals to prioritise themselves and their well-being. It

emphasises the importance of self-pampering and making promises to oneself. *Confidently make promises to yourself* (自信许下对自己的承诺) and *give yourself a gift of love* (为自己送上一份宠爱好礼) promote self-love and position the product as a contributor to a sense of beauty and charm. The hashtag *Promise of Beauty, Nurturing Youth* (至美承诺, 礼蕴年轻) reinforces the message of promising beauty and youth through this product. The brands aim to connect with individuals who are seeking to express their love and care for themselves or their loved ones during the special day.

Artificial Holiday marketing

In the examples below from the Twitter corpus, advertisers seize the opportunities presented by special days to establish a connection between these occasions and their brands, as exemplified by events like World Vitiligo Day. They also artificially created holidays like National Lipstick Day for marketing purposes, generating content and driving engagement, resulting in increased sales.

Extract 63: National Lipstick Day isn't over yet! Have a colourful makeup play day and virtual try on all your favourite shades of Colour Riche Lipsticks! (Twitter)

Extract 64: HAPPY NATIONAL LIPSTICK DAY L'ORÉALISTAS! Emoji: LipstickKiss mark We can all agree that lips coated in colour can totally transform your look. Whether it's a classic Red Lip, a Nude, or something a little bolder, you're sure to love rocking a new shade of Lipstick. (Twitter)

Extract 65: MY VITILIGO – EPISODE 3
TODAY IS WORLD VITILIGO DAY - WATCH THE SEASON FINALE
Meet Katalina, a Spanish model with vitiligo. Let's watch her story. (Twitter)

Extract 63 and Extract 64 both promote National Lipstick Day. Extract 63 encourages ongoing celebration such as *isn't over yet* and highlights the virtual try-on feature for Colour Riche Lipsticks. The enthusiastic and inviting tone aims to engage the audience in exploring different lipstick colours, ultimately leading to a purchase. Extract 64 opens with a happy greeting

specifically addressed to the L'Oréal community, using the term *L'Oréalistas*. This creates a sense of belonging and camaraderie among the brand's followers. *Totally transform your look* emphasises the transformative power of lip colour. It examples *classic red, nude, and bolder* shades, suggesting a variety of options for users to choose from. By mentioning that *users are sure to love rocking a new shade of Lipstick*, it creates anticipation and excitement, encouraging readers to try out different lipstick colours and embrace a refreshed appearance. The inclusion of the LipstickKiss mark emoji adds a playful and visual element to the post, further engaging the audience. Extract 65 introduces a series or program created by the advertiser to raise awareness about vitiligo. The tone is supportive and encourages viewers to learn about the condition, support those affected by it, and promote acceptance and understanding. By sharing personal stories, the brand aims to foster empathy and shed light on the journeys of individuals with vitiligo and how they transform themselves through makeup. As indicated previously, this approach effectively builds the brand's image by promoting self-acceptance, celebrating diversity, and encouraging research into the causes and treatment of vitiligo.

Event-based marketing

Brands often use a combination of product promotion and event-based marketing, utilising significant events like the Cannes Film Festival and Olympic Games to generate excitement and promote specific products or product lines.

Extract 66: Spot something new Lipstick? You can say you saw it at Cannes first. Coming soon to a Clinique near you: seven custom-fit red lip shades for every complexion. #CliniqueAtCannes #Cannes2021

Extract 67: 1st gold in gymnastics! Congratulations to #LiuYang for winning the gold medal in men's hand ring# #China bagged both the gold and silver medals in men's hand ring#! Clinique beauty #Olympics #multiplied by the victory, the stability of the world's all-round gymnasts #Clinique Genius Butter#, refreshing and moisturising non-sticky, stabilise your every key moment!

体操项目第 1 金! 祝贺#刘洋获男子吊环金牌#, #中国包揽男子吊环金银牌#! 倩碧美肌#奥运会#乘胜助阵, 维稳界全能体操选手#倩碧天才黄油#, 清

爽保湿不黏腻，稳住你的每个关键时刻！

Extract 68: Witness the Clinique beauty #Olympics #highlight moment! Freestyle swimmer in the moisturising area #Clinique Moisture Surge Hydrating Lotion# leaps to the forefront. High moisture strongly locks the water and makes your skin bouncy soft tender ~

见证倩碧美肌#奥运会#高光时刻！保湿界自由泳选手#倩碧水磁场粉水#一跃夺目，高保湿，强锁水，膨弹软嫩~

Extract 69: #If makeup were an Olympic event# A triple backflip, makeup is so smooth! Blending, outlining, and applying colours, every inch of the face is meticulously handled. MAKEUPFOREVER's professional- grade brushes are ready to compete!

#如果奥运项目有化妆#直体翻腾三周半，化妆就是这么流畅！晕染、勾画、铺色，将每一寸区域精准把控，MAKEUPFOREVER 健将级刷具申请出战！

Extract 66 celebrates the achievements of Chinese athletes in the Olympics and seamlessly introduces Clinique beauty products, drawing a connection between the two. The tone is congratulatory and patriotic, aiming to associate brand with the success and pride of athletes. It implies that products can enhance *stability* and performance, mirroring *the stability of the world's all-round gymnasts* (维稳界全能体操选手). The following mention of product qualities like *refreshing and moisturising* (清爽保湿不黏腻), likening it to the athlete's prowess. By aligning the brand with *victory* (乘胜), it seeks to create a positive brand image and position products as reliable and performance-enhancing. Similarly, Extract 67 and 68 blend elements of sports and beauty to captivate the audience, leveraging the themes of the Olympics and beauty to promote featured products. Extract 67 metaphorically represents a *freestyle swimmer* (自由泳选手) as a symbol for the brand's skincare product, highlighting product properties by *high moisture* (高保湿) *strongly locks the water* (强锁水), and *makes your skin bouncy soft tender* (膨弹软嫩). The extract links the concept of the Olympics with beauty, positioning the lotion as a crucial product for achieving the hydrated and healthy skin of Olympic athletes. The use of the hashtag *Olympics* (奥运会) and mention of *highlight*

moments (高光时刻) add excitement and grandeur to the discourse, aiming to associate the product with athletic performance. Furthermore, Extract 69 imagines makeup as an Olympic event, describing a *triple backflip* (直体翻腾三周半) as the display of skill, suggesting the smoothness of makeup achieved with the featured tool. It emphasises the precision and skill required in makeup application, including *blending* (晕染), *outlining* (勾画) and *applying colours* (铺色). Brushes are portrayed as *professional-grade* (健将级) athletes ready to compete in this hypothetical event. By merging the realms of sports and makeup, the post creates a playful and engaging narrative. The hashtag *If makeup were an Olympic event* (如果奥运项目有化妆) adds a creative element and encourages the audience to envision the artistry and expertise involved in makeup application.

4.7.2 Conclusion: Appeal to special day

Special day promotion is a marketing strategy that capitalises on various commemorative days throughout the year to promote products and services. Its primary objective, aside from boosting sales, is to foster engagement with the company's target audience by communicating its values and brand image. Martí (2011) refers to this strategy as *dayketing*, where different daily events, whether present, past, or future, are leveraged for various commercial purposes. Advertisers utilise special days, celebrations, events, and public holidays as opportunities to connect with customers through tailored messages, deals, and promotions (Nencheva, 2021). The ultimate goal is to engage the audience's emotions and habits through advertising campaigns and events. With numerous world, international, and national holidays, as well as awareness days, weeks, and months, there are ample digital marketing opportunities for businesses. Seizing these milestone dates provides brands with opportunities for increased customer interaction and brand awareness.

4.8 Appeal to technical and scientific information

As a marketing strategy, advertisers frequently employ technical and scientific language to establish the credibility and authenticity of their products. According to Coupland (2007), by incorporating scientific language into non-scientific domains like advertising, brands aim to

evoke scientific implications and persuade consumers to perceive their products as scientifically beneficial. This approach, which leverages the trust that society has in science, aims to reinforce the legitimacy of the advertisers claims and create a connection with the audience based on the association of the product with scientific principles. Importantly, reference to scientific language is widely embraced by cosmetic companies. Jeffries (2007), for example, observes that scientific discourse is commonly employed in cosmetics advertisements to create an authoritative tone and that it is specifically found in the context of anti-aging skincare advertising. Table 4.8 identifies the brands and number of posts in the two corpora that use the appeal to technical and scientific information.

Table 4.8

Number of posts related to use of technical and scientific info in the two corpora.

Brand	Weibo	Twitter	P-value (Fisher's exact)
Estée Lauder	2	3	1
L'Oréal Paris	7	2	0.1672
Lancôme	1	0	1
ColourPop	0	0	1
Clinique	3	0	0.2453
Revlon	0	0	1
Benefit	1	0	1
Make Up For Ever	1	0	1
Total	15	5	0.0294

Overall, Table 4.8 shows a noticeable disparity in the number of posts related to the use of technical information between Weibo and Twitter, with Weibo having a total of 15 posts, and Twitter only 5 posts. Among the brands, Estée Lauder exhibits a relatively similar use of technical information across both platforms, while L'Oréal Paris is the only brand to show a considerably higher use of the technical appeal on Weibo (7 posts), than it does on Twitter (2 posts). On the other hand, Lancôme, Clinique, Benefit, and Make Up For Ever only have such posts on Weibo and none on Twitter. Notably, ColourPop and Revlon have not published any posts specifically related to the use of technical information on either platform. The Fisher's exact test shows that while there is a significantly statistical difference between the use of

technical information across the two platforms, the differences at the brand level indicate no significance. A more detailed analysis of the strategies employed in utilising the appeal to technical and scientific information will be provided below.

4.8.1 Discursive strategies used in the appeal to technical and scientific information

Three key discursive strategies were found in the cosmetic brands appeal to technical and scientific information. These are the use of accessible technical and scientific language, the use of specialised technical and scientific language, and identifying brand-led developments.

The use of accessible technical and scientific language

The brands incorporate technical language in their advertisements that is largely familiar and easily understood by the general public. This approach ensures that the benefits and features of the products are communicated clearly and in a way that is easily accessible to a wide audience. This strategy was largely found on Twitter.

Extract 70: Here's a riddle: What serum delivers overnight radiance, 8-hour antioxidant power, and 72-hours of hydration? emoji Thinking face If you guessed #AdvancedNightRepair Serum, you are correct! emoji Winking face Get your hands on our #LittleBrownBottle (Twitter)

Extract 71: Up late scrolling? Emoji Eyes NEW #AdvancedNightRepair Eye Matrix instantly fortifies and cushions the delicate eye area and helps boost natural collagen to reduce the look of lines and fight the visible impact of eye micro-movements. (Twitter)

Extract 72: Who else is obsessed with the TikTok Viral Magic BB Cream? This multi-tasking skin beautifier hydrates with antioxidants Vitamins C&E while instantly transforming to your perfect shade for a flawless, bare skin finish. (Twitter)

These extracts effectively incorporate technical information by highlighting specific features

and benefits of the promoted products, such as *antioxidants* (Ex70), *hydration* (Ex70), *natural collagen* (Ex71), and *Vitamins C&E* (Ex72), which are largely recognised and understood by consumers in the skincare and beauty product context. In Extract 70, a rhetorical device in the form of a riddle is employed to engage the audience. The post poses a question, asking about a serum that delivers specific benefits, and provides technical information such as *overnight radiance*, *8-hour antioxidant power*, and *72-hours of hydration*. This works to capture the audience's attention and simplifies complex technical concepts, making them more engaging and memorable for consumers. The use of emojis adds a playful tone and enhances the visual appeal of the post. In Extract 71, the post targets individuals who may stay up late scrolling through social media by creating a relatable scenario such as *Up late scrolling?* The product is introduced, highlighting its features with scientific claims, such as *boosting natural collagen to reduce the appearance of lines*. *Eye micro-movements* implies a scientific understanding and adds credibility to the product's claims. Similarly, Extract 72 capitalises on the trend of the *TikTok Viral Magic BB Cream* to generate engagement and excitement. The post employs inclusive language by asking, *Who else is obsessed with...?* This interrogative potentially fosters a sense of community and encourages audience participation in a way that resonates with consumers. The multitasking capabilities of the product are highlighted, mentioning its hydrating properties and the presence of *antioxidants Vitamins C&E*, which are ingredients familiar to the public and beneficial for skincare. The use of *obsessed* also implies the product has gained popularity and suggests it is worth trying.

The use of specialised technical and scientific language

The brand utilises specialised technical or scientific language, which is not commonly used or understood by the general public. This strategy confers the product with a sense of credibility, expertise, and innovation.

Extract 73: Clinique Laboratories breaks through once again with their annual new product, the # Clinique A Anti-Aging Purple Light Bottle#. Tmall pre-sale is now available! Introducing the next generation of Vitamin A-HPR, featuring advanced formulation with four powerful peptides that reduce stubborn wrinkles

by 20% in just 10 days.

倩碧实验室再突破，年度新品#倩碧肽 A 抗老紫光瓶#天猫抢先预售！！领航发布新一代维 A-HPR，精尖复配四重胜肽，10 天顽固纹-20%。(Weibo)

Extract 74: Deciphering natural treasures with cutting-edge technology

Ten years of research on Lancôme Essence

A revolutionary anti-ageing masterpiece

#The new Lancôme Absolute Serum#

Patented Perpetual Rose

Activates the AMPK factor, the master switch of cellular activity

以尖端科技解密自然瑰宝,兰蔻菁纯 十年精研,带来颠覆性抗老杰作#全新兰蔻菁纯精华#凝萃菁纯永盛玫瑰,一键激活细胞活性总开关【AMPK 因子】,肌肤源源焕新,恒绽饱满紧致。(Weibo)

Extract 75: 「Whitening, please ask the experts」 Part 2 is now live!

[Conversation with skin expert Dr. Zhang Guirong]

Is special beauty treatment the only way to whiten? Is it true? enter the large-scale scientific popularisation (recommendation) event with dermatology skin expert Dr. @MedicalBeautyDoctor Zhang Guirong. #L'Oreal White Bottle#, containing 99.9% high-purity arbutin + patent 377, efficiently repels pigmentation oxidation, breaks down melanin at the source for 24 hours, and fades spots and acne marks in 14 days. It performs equally well in daily whitening and post-beauty salon use! #Reveal the truth about 24-hour scientific whitening#

「美白，请专家说」第二弹已就位！

【对话皮肤学专家张桂蓉博士】

变白只能靠特殊美容，真的是这样吗？进入皮肤学专家博士@医美博士张桂蓉的大型科（种）普（草）现场。#欧莱雅注白瓶#，蕴含 99.9%高纯度阿魏酸+专利 377，高效击退色素光氧，24 小时源头断黑，14 天闪褪斑点痘印。无论日常美白，还是院线美容后使用，表现同样优秀！#一扒 24H 科研美白真相# (Weibo)

Extract 76: JOIN US LIVE ON INSTAGRAM TODAY! If you are wondering why Hyaluronic Acid is a dermatologist-recommended ingredient and the most searched ingredient - our experts are going to tell you WHY! And give you tips and tricks on how to use it. (Twitter)

In these extracts, the usage of terms like *peptides* (Ex 73, 肽), *Vitamin A-HPR* (Ex 73, 维 A-HPR), *AMPK factor* (Ex 74, AMPK 因子), *arbutin* (Ex 75, 阿魏酸), and *Hyaluronic Acid* (Ex 76) indicate a level of specialised scientific knowledge and expertise. These terms are not commonly used or understood by the general public and require a certain level of professional familiarity with skincare products and their ingredients.

In Extract 73, the introduction of *Clinique Laboratories* (倩碧实验室) at the beginning of the extract implies the brand's scientific expertise and research capabilities, potentially establishing a sense of trust and authority. *Breaks through* (突破) further implies innovation and advancement. Notably, specific data is employed to provide concrete evidence of the product's effectiveness, such as the claim that *four powerful peptides that reduce stubborn wrinkles by 20% in just 10 days* (四重胜肽, 10 天顽固纹-20%).

Extract 74 directs attention to the brand's scientific research and development achievements, emphasising *cutting-edge technology* (精尖科技) and *ten years of research* (十年精研). *Deciphering natural treasures with cutting-edge technology* (以尖端科技解密自然瑰宝) suggests that the brand utilises advanced scientific methods to unlock the potential of natural ingredients. This combination positions the product as a revolutionary anti-aging solution. The mention of a specific scientific process, such as *activates the AMPK factor* (激活 AMPK 因子), potentially creates a sense of uniqueness and expertise, appealing to consumers who value both natural ingredients and scientific advancements.

Similarly, Extract 75 and Extract 76 both promote a live format featuring experts to explain the ingredients. In Extract 75, the post presents a conversation with a skin expert discussing the topic of whitening. The inclusion of an expert in a live setting adds credibility and authority to the information being shared. Specific scientific data is also mentioned, such as *99.9% high-*

purity arbutin + patent 377 (99.9%高纯度阿魏酸+专利 377) and the product's efficacy in repelling pigmentation oxidation and fading spots and acne marks within specific timeframes. These specific data points discursively constitute the product's effectiveness, with the endorsement from the expert further reinforcing its credibility. Extract 76 similarly invites audiences to join a live online meeting to engage with the audience and provide information about the scientifically abstract *Hyaluronic Acid*. By featuring experts who explain the benefits and properties of Hyaluronic Acid as an ingredient, the brand adds credibility to its claims. The post's discursive construction of Hyaluronic Acid as the *most searched ingredient* further emphasises its scientific relevance. Furthermore, the use of a live format creates a sense of authenticity and immediacy, allowing the brand to directly connect with consumers. In the data this strategy is mainly found on Weibo.

Identifying brand-led developments

Cosmetic brands also identify the research and scientific developments developed by the brand themselves in order to differentiate themselves from competitors by identifying unique ingredients, technologies, or formulations that are exclusive to their products. By indicating they are invested in research and development the brand enhances their reputation by implying they are committed to innovation and advancing the field of cosmetics and producing cutting-edge products.

Extract 77: After more than 10 years of relentless exploration, Estée Lauder, in collaboration with research teams from Harvard and MIT, has made breakthroughs in deciphering the secrets of youthful skin. Leveraging the powerful SIRT core anti-aging technology, it ignites the skin's innate ability to fight aging. SIRT 1 promotes cell regeneration and repairs the anti-aging barrier, while SIRT 3 enhances cellular energy, leaving the skin smooth and supple. Internally, it activates the skin's anti-aging potential, while externally, it protects against environmental damage. With comprehensive anti-aging action, the skin becomes firm and rejuvenated from within.

历经 10 余年旷日求索，雅诗兰黛协同哈佛和麻省理工科研团队，突破性破

译肌肤冻龄奥秘。以王牌 SIRT 核芯抗老科技，触启肌肤主动抗老源动力。SIRT 1 促进细胞新生修护抗老屏障;SIRT 3 活细胞能量，肌肤细腻柔嫩。于内，激活肌肤抗老潜能，于外，抵御外界环境伤害。全方位对抗老化，肌肤由内而外紧致芯生。(Weibo)

Extract 78: Eye Concentrate Matrix technology is combined with "clock genes technology" which can Strengthen and cushion skin to repair your eye zone deeply. Solid repair supports the Eyes bounce back—look more youthful!

核心液体眼绷带科技搭配时 钟肌因信源科技，强缓冲，深修护,立体修护眼周，撑出双眸年轻神采!(Weibo)

Extract 79: Specialising in the research of wheat colour filter sunscreen technology, in synergy with four revolutionary ingredients including adenosine, effectively blocks 98% of UV rays, preventing skin photoaging. Its lightweight texture quickly forms a film upon application.

专研麦色滤防晒科技协同腺苷等四大革命性配方，有效阻隔 98%紫外线，预防肌肤光老化；质地轻薄，抹开上脸快速成膜。(Weibo)

In Extract 77, the brand introduces their product with a strong emphasis on the *SIRT core anti-aging technology* (SIRT 核芯抗老科技), highlighting its role in combating the effects of aging. By mentioning *in collaboration with research teams from Harvard and MIT* (协同哈佛和麻省理工科研团队), and emphasising *more than 10 years of relentless exploration* (10 余年旷日求索), the brand establishes credibility and implies a solid scientific foundation for their innovative approach. This utilisation of technical information, specifically referencing the core anti-aging technology and collaboration with renowned research teams, reinforces the product's claim of being supported by scientific expertise. Extract 78 showcases the brand's utilisation of *clock genes technology* (时 钟肌因信源科技) to describe their Eye Concentrate Matrix technology, suggesting a scientific approach to repairing the eye area and aligning with the body's natural biological rhythms. By incorporating the specific name of the technology, the brand adds a layer of sophistication and scientific appeal to the effectiveness of their product. In Extract 79, the brand sets itself apart by *specialising in the research of wheat colour filter sunscreen technology* (专研麦色滤防晒科技), creating a sense of uniqueness and cutting-edge

advancement. This specific technology, combined with revolutionary ingredients, particularly the mention of adenosine as an effective means of blocking UV rays and preventing skin photoaging, adds credibility to the brand's emphasis on research and development in this specialised area.

4.8.2 Conclusion: Appeal to technical and scientific information

Bernstein (1974) coined the term *reason advertising* to describe direct advertisements that appeal to rationality. These advertisements rely on facts, clinical truths, and consumer needs to provide a motive or justification for purchase. Cosmetics advertisers employing reason-based strategies use technical and scientific language to capture the attention of readers. By incorporating such terminology, they aim to project an image of professionalism and technological advancement. Furthermore, advertisers capitalise on the social influence of science. The media, as a cultural disseminator, has contributed to the popularisation of scientific terminology, particularly in medical, biomedical, and biochemical domains, which has to a degree increased "science literacy" among the general public (Lewenstein, 1995). Advertisers integrate these specialised terms into their advertisements, leveraging the familiarity of laypeople with scientific concepts like cells, collagen, and vitamins. As the media has made these concepts accessible to the public, advertisers employ them with a persuasive intent. Consumers are led to believe that the inclusion of scientific terminology will enhance the product's performance because it is based on scientific knowledge and the latest technology. Furthermore, according to Arroyo (2013), some brands also strive to provide scientific evidence or research that supports the technical claims of their products. This may involve referencing relevant publications, clinical trials, or expert endorsements. As indicated above, by making consumers aware of this research, brands construct a commitment to the product implying they are committed to innovation and the production of cutting-edge products.

Chapter 5:

Discussion

5.0 Introduction

Drawing upon thematic discourse analysis (e.g., Botelle & Willott, 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2008; Peker-Dural et al., 2022), this explorative study aimed to identify and compare the key discursive strategies utilised by international cosmetic brands on Twitter and Weibo. The research questions guiding this study were twofold:

1. What key discursive strategies are used by international cosmetic brands to appeal to customers on the social media platforms Twitter and Weibo?
2. What are the main similarities and differences in the way that international cosmetic brands discursively appeal to their audiences on Weibo and Twitter?

To address these research questions, the study collected and analysed online cosmetic advertisements posted by the same eight brands on Twitter and Weibo. The analysis of these advertisements, presented in Chapter 4, revealed recurring patterns and themes in brand communication. While not all of the results are directly relevant, their overall findings contribute to our understanding of the distinct strategies adopted by international cosmetic brands to effectively capture the attention and engagement of their target audiences through online marketing communication. This chapter aims to provide a discussion and summary of the main observations discussed in Chapter 4, highlighting the significance of the study's findings. The chapter will conclude by addressing the limitations of the research and discussing its implications for future research.

5.1 Key observations

Eight key themes, representing appeals to the consumer, emerged from the findings of this study. Table 5.1 lists the engagement levels and patterns of the brands' usage of these eight appeals across for both Weibo and Twitter. To achieve this, the table summarises the code frequencies (and their respective percentages) for each of the appeals in both Weibo and Twitter, as well as the p-value using Fisher's Exact test to indicate the significance of the differences between the brands use of these appeals as found in the study.

Drawing upon table 5.1, this section first discusses the overall use of the appeals across the Weibo and Twitter, followed by a discussion of the main differences in the use of the appeals across the two platforms.

Table 5.1

Comparison of Category Frequencies on Weibo and Twitter

Appeal	Weibo (n=80)	Twitter (n=80)	Total (n=160)	P-value (Fisher's exact)
Specified Context	45 (56.26%)	23 (28.75%)	68 (42.5%)	0.0007
Flawless Skin	40 (50%)	12 (15%)	52 (32.5%)	0.0001
Celebrity Endorsement	35 (43.75%)	14 (28.6%)	49 (30.63%)	0.0005
Fear of Missing Out	21 (26.25%)	22 (27.5%)	43 (26.88%)	1
Special Day	19 (23.75%)	20 (25%)	39 (24.38%)	1
Puffery	19 (23.75%)	16 (20%)	35 (21.88%)	0.7025
Colour-Naming	26 (32.5%)	0 (17.5%)	26 (16.25%)	0.0001
Technical and scientific info	15 (18.75%)	5 (6.25%)	20 (12.5%)	0.0294

5.1.1 Total occurrence of the appeals across both platforms

Of the appeals, Table 5.1 shows that Specified Context appears as the most commonly employed across both Weibo and Twitter, occurring in just over 40 percent of all posts. Cosmetic brands on both platforms appear to acknowledge the benefits of constructing the product as relevant to a specific context so as to indicate how the product might cater to the potential users' needs. By evoking context and creating a sense of necessity for their products, this strategy seems to have gained popularity on both Twitter and Weibo as being effective for cosmetic promotion.

The appeal of Flawless Skin is also widely used by the brands and occurs in approximately one third of all posts. It would appear that the brands and content creators across both platforms recognise the benefits of emphasising the desire for flawless skin as a compelling appeal with which to engage their audiences. It is likely that this appeal also has some impact on societal values regarding the standard for beauty.

Celebrity Endorsement, although used significantly more frequently on Weibo than on Twitter, is the third most popular appeal, occurring in approximately 30 percent of all posts. It would seem that when marketing on Weibo, brands take advantage of China's celebrity culture and the influence that celebrities have on Chinese consumer behaviour (Yang, Lou & Tandoc, 2023). That is, brands, especially on Weibo, leverage celebrity endorsements for higher consumer engagement.

On the other hand, the appeal to Technical and Scientific Information is the least frequently used appeal of those identified in this study, only occurring in approximately 12 percent of posts across both platforms. This strategy, which involves providing technical and scientific information with a certain level of complexity, is perhaps less suitable for frequent use with the online public, than many of the other appeals. This is possibly because, while it can contribute to building brand image and reliability, it can also overwhelm individuals with often dense and possibly confusing information.

5.1.2 Comparison between Twitter and Weibo

Table 1 also indicates the overall differences between the use of the appeals on Weibo and Twitter, with the p-value providing some insights into which of these differences are significant.

It would appear that the majority of the brands in the study exhibit a significantly stronger preference for employing appeals such as Specified Context, Flawless Skin, and Celebrity Endorsement on Weibo than they tend to do on Twitter. This might perhaps be attributed to several factors. Firstly, Weibo, being a strongly visually oriented and interactive platform (Chan et al., 2012), allows brands to leverage the influence of celebrities and tap into the cultural significance placed on flawless skin in China (Jackson et al. 2016; Yang, Lou & Tandoc, 2023), and secondly by utilising Specified Context, the brands can provide detailed and specific information to meet the needs of their audience, while also evoking empathy and creating a sense of aspiration among users.

In support of the findings regarding the high occurrence of the appeal to Celebrity Endorsement on Weibo, Chan, Hung and Tse (2012) have stated that in China, where collectivist cultural values are prominent, celebrities play a crucial role in shaping consumer preferences by leveraging strong relational bonds, and Yau (1988) has found that celebrities often serve as opinion leaders and a reference group in Chinese culture, influencing consumer attitudes and behaviours. Such endorsements persuade consumers to make purchases, while well-executed marketing campaigns involving celebrities can lead to substantial profits and reshape public perceptions. Furthermore, Weibo provides affordances for fans to actively engage with celebrities through various actions such as posting, reposting, commenting, and direct messaging (Zhang, 2016). The dynamic platform also generates abundant user-generated content about celebrities and fans themselves. This fan-generated content not only contributes to the fan economy but also influences and shapes mainstream culture in China (Fulton, 2017). Recognising the immense potential of fans, many corporations view them as a valuable and easily marketable resource. As celebrity fan culture continues to grow as a significant sociocultural phenomenon, it increasingly involves a large population and contributes to the overall dynamics of Weibo.

On the other hand, brands' less frequent use of celebrity endorsement on Twitter is possibly because the platform is used across a more diverse range of cultures and societies, where the impact of celebrity endorsements may vary (Liu, Cheung & Lee, 2010). As a global social media platform, Twitter attracts users from around the world, each with their own unique cultural backgrounds and preferences. This diversity perhaps also presents challenges for brands seeking to leverage celebrity endorsements on the platform.

In support of the findings regarding the high occurrence of the Flawless Skin appeal on Weibo, research indicates that the Chinese media places stronger emphasis on portrayals of physical appearance compared to Western media (Jackson et al., 2016). For young Chinese women, beauty components such as lighter skin tone and anti-aging hold greater relevance, exacerbating appearance-related pressures. Unfortunately, however, the relentless portrayal of female images with flawless skin in advertisements only serves to compound the appearance pressure faced by Chinese women (Hughes & Hertel, 1990).

Another statistically significant difference between Weibo and Twitter is the use of the Colour Naming appeal. Although the second least used appeal of those identified in the study, it is of interest that Colour Naming is only found on Weibo, occurring in almost a third of all Weibo posts. This is most likely because the appeal takes advantage of creative features of communication and language regarding colours and their names which are frequently found in the Chinese language context, and which, as a result, resonate with the specific cultural context of Weibo's audience.

Finally, and although not exhibiting any statistical significance in terms of difference, it is perhaps worth positing that Twitter, with its shorter and more concise format (Lin et al., 2013), possibly lends itself well to the use of appeals such as FOMO and Puffery. This is because when marketing on Twitter, brands often attempt to create a sense of urgency and exclusivity, enticing followers to take immediate action and seize limited-time opportunities (Lee, 2020). These strategies may be particularly effective in generating buzz and capturing

the attention of Twitter users who given the global reach of the platform are constantly bombarded with a high content volume.

Overall, the different marketing preferences on Weibo and Twitter tend to reflect the unique characteristics and user behaviour observed on each platform. Brands recognise the importance of tailoring their promotional efforts to the specific features and preferences of their target audience for each social media channel. By understanding and leveraging these nuances, brands can maximise their engagement and effectively connect with their followers, ultimately driving brand awareness, loyalty, and sales.

5.2 Comparison between Cosmetic Brands

It is also of interest to identify the way the different individual cosmetic brands have engaged with the range of appeals identified in the analysis. Table 5.2 and 5.3 provide a summary of the code frequency of the eight different appeals for the cosmetic brands on Weibo and Twitter respectively.

Table 5.2

Comparison of Category Frequencies on Weibo for Cosmetic Brands

Brand	FOMO	Specified Context	Puffery	Celebrity Endorsement	Colour Naming	Flawless Skin	Special Day	Technical & Scientific Info	Total
Benefit	3	10	4	6	5	7	3	1	39
Estée Lauder	3	5	5	7	4	6	6	2	38
Lancôme	4	8	3	9	3	5	4	1	37
L'Oréal Paris	2	4	2	7	3	6	1	7	32
Clinique	2	5	1	0	4	6	4	3	25
Make Up For Ever	3	5	2	1	3	4	1	1	20
Revlon	0	4	2	5	5	3	0	0	19
ColourPop	4	4	0	0	5	3	0	0	16

Table 5.3*Comparison of Category Frequencies on Twitter for Cosmetic Brands*

Brand	FOMO	Specified Context	Puffery	Celebrity Endorsement	Colour Naming	Flawless Skin	Special Day	Technical & Scientific Info	Total
Clinique	0	10	2	5	0	0	10	0	27
Estée Lauder	9	0	5	0	0	4	1	3	22
L'Oréal Paris	3	5	3	1	0	2	3	2	19
Make Up For Ever	0	5	1	7	0	1	4	0	18
Lancôme	4	2	3	0	0	5	0	0	14
Benefit	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	5
ColourPop	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
Revlon	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3

The engagement patterns of brands across Twitter and Weibo in Tables 5.2 and 5.3 reveals some interesting insights. Firstly, Estée Lauder emerges as the most active brand, consistently employing a wide range of audience appeals across both platforms. The company also demonstrates a comprehensive utilisation of the various appeals, allowing them to effectively engage with different target audiences by catering to different aspects of their beauty needs and aspirations. Nevertheless, Estée Lauder also exhibits a contrast in its engagement pattern between Twitter and Weibo, having a higher engagement frequency on Weibo in comparison to Twitter. On Weibo, they actively utilise all appeals to engage their audience, while on Twitter, they tend to focus on specific appeals. This difference perhaps indicates that Estée Lauder, like many of the other brands, recognises the marketing importance of specifically catering to the cultural needs and preferences of their audiences, even within the microblogging contexts of Weibo and Twitter. By engaging their audience in a more targeted and impactful manner, it could be argued that they exhibit an approach which reflects their commitment to delivering tailored content and experiences which resonate with their diverse global audience, ultimately strengthening their brand presence and engagement across different platforms.

Lancôme and L'Oréal Paris also demonstrate an active, albeit slightly varied, use of the appeals. Both brands show a preference for Celebrity Endorsement and Flawless Skin appeals on Weibo, indicating their recognition of the platform's celebrity-driven culture and the importance of emphasising skin perfection in the Chinese context. Lancôme, however, utilises Specified Context more frequently to appeal to their particular audience, while L'Oréal Paris focuses on Technical and Scientific information, showing an approach that perhaps both recognises cultural preference, but also demonstrates an understanding of how audiences are more likely to specifically engage with the products offered by the brand itself.

Benefit also showcases a particular distinct engagement pattern, with significantly higher activity on Weibo (39) compared to Twitter (5). Like Lancôme and L'Oréal Paris, the brand also strategically utilises the Specified Context (10) and Flawless Skin (7) appeal on Weibo to tap into the platform's cultural nuances and cater to the particular interests of Weibo users. Clinique and Make Up For Ever, exhibit comparable levels of engagement across both the Twitter and Weibo platforms, however, they tend to focus on different appeals, again supporting the finding that the brands are aware of the different cultural preferences attributed to the distinct users of each platform.

Finally, ColourPop and Revlon exhibit lower overall engagement levels compared to other brands. It appears that they primarily focus on daily interactions, such as sharing product updates, responding to customer queries, and fostering a sense of community. While their usage of the appeals is less pronounced compared to the other brands, their emphasis on regular interaction does suggest a dedication to building and nurturing relationships with their followers.

Overall, in analysing the engagement of each brand across Twitter and Weibo, it becomes evident that a tailored approach is adopted by the brands to cater to the preferences, cultural context, and unique characteristics of their respective audiences. The varying levels of engagement and usage of appeals highlight the brands' commitment to establishing effective connections with their followers and capitalising on the dynamics of each platform to

promote their brand and products successfully. By recognising and capitalising on these platform-specific dynamics, brands can optimise their social media marketing efforts and enhance their brand presence across multiple channels.

5.3 Significance of the study

In the current era of internet technology, the marketing and brand communication landscape has experienced a profound transformation. Social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, along with collaborative consumption platforms such as Amazon, have emerged as influential players that challenge established institutions and disrupt traditional economic sectors such as journalism and retailing (Kloet et al., 2019). Among these platforms, Weibo and Twitter stand out as prominent social media channels that have revolutionised the way cosmetic brands engage with their customers. This study provides an exploratory contribution into the different approaches used by these brands as they attempt to appeal to their consumers on these platforms and the linguistic strategies underlie these online communications. The study could potentially serve as a foundation for future research in the field.

5.4 Limitations of the research

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Firstly, the data collection was limited to a single year, 2021, which may restrict the comprehensive understanding of long-term trends and changes in discursive strategies employed by cosmetic brands on Weibo and Twitter. Furthermore, given the six-month time constraints of this dissertation, and the extensive time requirements of carrying out a thematic discourse analysis, the data collected were also limited to a total of 160 posts. A more extensive data collection over multiple years would provide a more robust analysis of the evolving practices. Additionally, this study focused primarily on the analysis of textual content and did not extensively explore the visual aspects of brand communication on these platforms (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In future research, incorporating a visual analysis could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the discursive strategies employed by cosmetic brands. While the qualitative and quantitative

methodologies used in this exploratory study have provided valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge their limitations in capturing the full range of discursive strategies and their impact. Qualitative research (Creswell, 2009) inherently involves individuals' subjective understanding and interpretation, which is influenced by their own experiences and perspectives. Researchers cannot completely detach themselves from their own backgrounds, history, and prior knowledge when presenting their research. To gain deeper insights into consumer perceptions and responses, complementary research approaches like ethnographic studies or consumer surveys could be employed. These approaches would shed light on consumer experiences and provide a more holistic view of their engagement with these strategies.

5.5 Implications for future research

This exploratory study opens up possibilities for further research in the field of digital marketing and brand communication. Firstly, while it examines key discursive appeals and strategies used by cosmetic brands across Twitter and Weibo, future researchers could expand the scope of investigation by examining the appeals and discursive strategies employed by cosmetic brands on other social media platforms beyond Weibo and Twitter. Secondly, future studies could explore the interplay between textual and visual elements in brand communication on social media platforms, investigating how these elements collectively shape consumer perceptions and engagement. Thirdly, this research collected a limited number of posts from each brand on Twitter and Weibo. To capture a more dynamic picture of brand communication, future studies could expand the scope of data collection. Longitudinal studies that track the evolution of discursive strategies over time would also provide valuable insights into how brands adapt their communication approaches in response to changing trends and consumer preferences. Furthermore, conducting comparative analyses across different industries and cultural contexts could deepen our understanding of the diverse strategies employed by brands in the digital space. Exploring how brand communication strategies differ across sectors and regions can reveal nuanced insights into the factors influencing strategic choices and their impact on brand-consumer relationships.

5.6 Conclusion

This dissertation focused on examining the discursive appeals and associated strategies utilised by international cosmetic brands on Weibo and Twitter. Through an analysis of online cosmetic advertisements, the study identified eight key discursive appeals employed by these brands, shedding light on how they engage with consumers across these platforms. The findings revealed both commonalities and distinctions in the appeals adopted by the brands, providing insights into their specific marketing approaches as they attempt to cater to their respective audiences.

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