

ELECTRONIC WORDS-OF-MOUTH IN WEIBO: A CASE STUDY OF MISTINE
IN CHINA



ELECTRONIC WORDS-OF-MOUTH IN WEIBO: A CASE STUDY OF MISTINE

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine how electronic-word-mouth (EWOM) of foreign cosmetics brand has been engaged by the brand and communicated among Chinese consumers via Weibo, popular social media in China. This study used a mix-method – content analysis and textual analysis. Messages on Mistine Weibo official account page from January 2018 to April 2018 were sampled and analyzed based on the Uses and Gratification Theory. The content analysis results reveal that ‘personal identity’ and ‘personal relationship’ are two kinds of EWOM in Weibo being engaged by Mistine. Results of the textual analysis yield that EWOM about Mistine in Weibo has been communicated among Chinese consumers with three purposes, -- diversion, personal relationships, and surveillance. The findings of this study provide not only academic implications regarding EWOM for communication scholars, but also managerial implications for brand marketers of foreign cosmetics or related products who would like to understand how EWOM about particular brand was communicated among Chinese consumers. This enhanced understanding will

develop more effective brand communication strategies for important foreign markets such as China.

Keywords: Electronic words-of-mouth (EWOM), social media, Weibo, Mistine, Chinese digital marketing, Uses and Gratifications Theory



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This research aims to examine Chinese people's communication behavior in social media, and to learn how foreign brands used electronic words-of-mouth (EWOM) in Chinese social media to promote their brands in Chinese marketing through a case study of Mistine in China. This chapter provides the background information of this study including rationale and problem statement, objectives of the study, scope of the study, research questions, significance of the study, and definition of terms.

1.1 Rationale and Problem Statement

Human beings are now living in the digital world. It seems that digital technology becomes part of the consumers' lifestyle. People are more likely to know products through the Internet. The companies are more likely to use cloud computing technologies to save their management information or data. Brand communication management in all business categories is becoming digital. Many brands now are more likely to use social media to communicate with their potential consumers and public.

In recent years the bulk of digital marketing takes place on the Internet, which provides businesses with numerous opportunities to connect with consumers (Crelin, 2013). We can see now that more and more businesses are looking for possible

opportunities to connect with consumers via digital marketing, and we also can see the importance of digital marketing. The digital marketing communication is taking an important place in the business marketing for all types of products. Digital marketing connects with consumers through a variety of ways -- e-mail marketing, social-media marketing and viral marketing field (Wind & Mahajan, 2001). In the realm of brand communication in China, it has become common that marketers use social media platforms to connect their brand with their target consumers.

During the past ten years, more and more Chinese people are satisfied to use social media to engage in their shopping behavior. They think they can get better high quality life from social media (Guo, 2017). Chinese consumers enjoy using social media to check the product information, what people said about the product, how many people liked the product. Now social media become more and more convenient in Chinese people's life; they like sharing emotions derived from their product usage on the social media to let more people know about the product's information. From another side, brands also think a great deal of social media: how to use social media to build their brand to get high sells; how to use social media to let more people know their brands, and how to communicate with their consumers in social media. At present, the social media marketing in China plays more and more important role for both the consumer and the brand.

Now in China, based on the improvement of network technological development; information becomes more and more timely, shareable and socialized in the Internet. Many social networking sites (SNS) in China become the main and popular media platform in people's life. Comparing with traditional media, this new

social media is likely more satisfied to Chinese people. Sometimes even the users in the SNS can also be the information transmitter (Kent, Ellis, & Xu, 2017).

With the help of social media, consumers can check new product information, limitations of time and space, which is contradict to traditional information sharing. Products can offer two types of information through social media: First, offering information created by brands themselves from traditional communications. Second, offering information created by consumers based on their recommendations or complaints on the social media.

Based on the Kantar company's research, the Kantar China social media impact 2017 report (Guo, 2017), it was found that generally Chinese people were happy about the changes from social media. In an upgraded satisfactory survey about Chinese people's use of social media in 2017, they gave 79.8 points on social media's impact on their lives. In this research, people were asked to rate their feeling towards the impact brought by nine social media (see details in Figure 1.1):

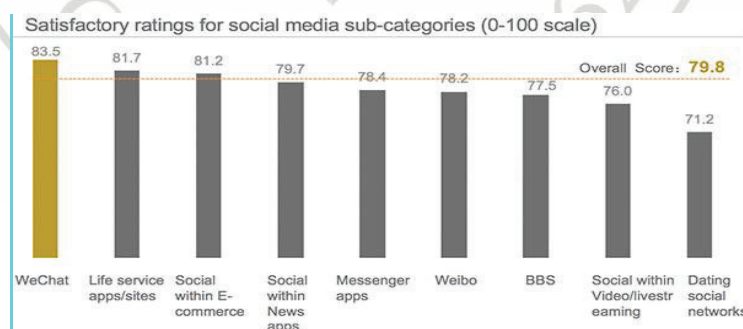


Figure 1.1: Chinese people's use of social media in 2017

Source: Guo. (2017). *2017 The influence of China social media*. Retrieved from <https://cn-en.kantar.com/media/social/2017/kantar-china-social-media-impact-report-2017/>

From the data presented in Figure 1.1, we can see that Wechat continues its dominant, but the report said that the growth of WeChat has largely slowed down comparing with last year of research. However, Weibo is making a comeback. Report from Kantar company's research reveals that "Weibo, the dominant social media platform before WeChat, recently made come-backs in both user base and stock price. Kantar's survey showed that it received particularly positive scores by younger generations: the younger the users are, the higher score they would give Weibo. Those born in 1990s gave it 79.3 score." (Guo, 2017, para. 5).

According to are search conducted by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC, 2017), the cosmetics industry in mainland China has been growing fast with the rapid development of the Chinese economy in recent years (HKTDC Research, 2017). This research reported the sales of make-up products in China reached RMB 28.3 billion respectively in 2016, achieving year on year growth of 12% respectively. Those items recorded a significance growth in recent years include color correcting (CC) cream, blemish balm (BB) cream, eye make-up products, and lipsticks.

According to the China's Skincare and Cosmetics Market, a 2016 HKTDC Research survey reported that Chinese women's most important considerations for purchasing cosmetics include: "product benefits/efficacy" (66%), "brand" (64%), and "word-of-mouth" (60%). Young respondents were more influenced by factors such as "word-of-mouth" and "price", while mature respondents were more attracted by "natural/organic/herbal ingredients" and "high-tech/biotech products" (HKTDC Research, 2017).

For Thailand, Chinese tourists are considered a huge customer group of Thailand's tourism industry. There were nine million Chinese tourists visiting Thailand in 2017 (GMA, 2017). Chinese tourists visiting Thailand represent 30% of the total inbound travelers in 2017. Chinese tourists spend nearly 6 billion baht a year. Therefore many Thai brands look for business opportunity in marketing to Chinese consumers since it is a big valuable market for them. In addition, the Chinese market is far from being saturated.

It is known that Thai cosmetics products are liked by Chinese tourists. Many Chinese women like to buy Thai cosmetics products when they travel to Thailand. They usually share the product information on the Chinese social media to allow more Chinese women whom plan to travel to Thailand to gain useful information of those Thai cosmetics brands.

Based on the importance of Chinese social media to Chinese consumers and the importance of Chinese social media to both local and foreign brands, Chinese social media have become one of major factors influencing purchase decision of Chinese consumers. Through social media, consumers not only learn about product information, but also share its information to others. Brand communication through social media creates valuable product information. Due to lack of study investigating how word-of-mouth in Chinese social media facilitates the brand communication of the foreign brands in Chinese market; this study aspires to fill this knowledge gap.

1.2 Objectives of Study

This study aims to understand Chinese consumers' EWOM behavior in China social media in the context of Thai cosmetics brand communication. The following research objectives are developed.

- 1) To investigate what kind of EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetics brand has been engaged by Mistine.
- 2) To investigate how EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetics brand has been communicated among Chinese consumers.

1.3 Scope of Study

This study will focus on Weibo as the most popular and potential type of social media in China. It is designed to examine different types of information on Weibo of one cosmetics brand and using them as materials to analyze Chinese consumers' EWOM behavior in the social media. Understanding how consumers engage in EWOM in Weibo enables communication strategists to develop brand communication that achieves their marketing goals.

This research will choose Thai cosmetics brand, Mistine, as a case study. It is one of the Thai local cosmetics brand which is most liked by Chinese women in recently years (360xh.com, 2016). It has attained some popular voice in Chinese cosmetics industry in recently years; And it is also has potential to attract more Chinese consumers to buy its product. From 360xh.com news, in 2015 Mistine's sales from Chinese market was one billion THB (convert into Chinese Ren Min Bi is one hundred million and eight hundred sixty nine thousand CNY). According to the

Mistine brand manager, Chinese consumer would like to buy Mistine product via the Internet platform. In March 2016 Mistine was launched in the Guangzhou Beauty Export, and it wished to do any positive action regarding starting the Chinese Internet marketing.

In terms of geographical area, this study will investigate EMOM behavior among representatives of the Mainland Chinese citizens who are current Weibo users.

1.4 Research Questions

This study will reviewed the literature on online communication behaviors and analyzed how Chinese consumers engage in EWOM in the Chinese social media, Weibo, for Thai cosmetics brand, Mistine. Therefore, the following two research questions were developed:

RQ #1: What kind of EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetics brand (Mistine) has been engaged by Mistine?

RQ #2: How has EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetics brand (Mistine) has been communicated among Chinese consumers?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results of this study enable foreign cosmetics brands which desire to develop effective marketing communication in China.

Firstly, this study helps foreign brands to have a better understanding of the Chinese market via Chinese social media platform, Weibo, which in turn allows brand strategists to develop more effective marketing strategies via Chinese social media.

Secondly, this study allows marketers to understand Chinese consumers' EWOM behavior. This understanding helps them to create better product content when they communicate with Chinese consumers via social media.

Thirdly, the results of this study are beneficial to foreign marketers such that lessons learned can be applied to marketing other types of products such as personal care and apparel products, and so on.

1.6 Definition of Terms

The followings are conceptual definitions of all the concepts being studied in this research.

1.6.1 Electronic words-of-mouth (EWOM)

Electronic words-of-mouth is consumers' verbal communication about products and brands circulating via electronic platform. Similar to word-of-mouth, it has positive and strong influence on consumer buying behavior (Saleem & Ellahi, 2017). It is considered a type of buzz marketing (Kremers, 2017). EWOM makes communication between message senders and receivers more convenient and possible.

1.6.2 Social media

Social media is defined as “a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumer intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues” (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2004, p.2).

1.6.3 Chinese social media

As we know, based on the government censorship of the Internet; those foreign social media platforms are blocked in China such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. In China, local variations of Internet usage are driven by language, culture, levels of economic development, and the underlying digital ecosystem. Therefore, those local social media platforms which have Chinese-owned properties such as QQ, Weibo, Wechat, Tudou are liked by Chinese online users. About Digital ecosystems: The platforms, around which populations focus online communications, can vary wildly between countries and within a single country. It means even without government blocks, Internet users such like in Japan and South Korea, for example, Japanese are more likely using GREE (www.gree.jp) and Korean are more likely using Cyworld (www.cyworld.co.kr) rather than internationally known social medias (Crampton, 2011).

1.6.4 Weibo

Weibo is the most popular blogging platform for Chinese users. While fundamentally structured like Twitter, the length of communication on Weibo is considered much more extended than its English version since 140 characters in Mandarin can hold much more content than 140 characters in English (Fang, 2017). It is widely used by Chinese users to follow celebrities, influencers, and like-minded individuals (www.weibo.com).

1.6.5 Social media users in China

It refers to Chinese online users who have very different behaviors with others, the things they care, the content they created and shared. They like reading personal recommendations online. They are more likely to be influenced by personal recommendations than people in other countries. They like reading web celebrities' product recommendations in social media, and that can affect their purchasing decisions.

1.6.6 Mistine

Produced in Thailand in 1988, Mistine is claimed as Thailand's No.1 Cosmetic brand (Mistine, n.d). Its 6000 products are divided into five categories: make up, body care, personal care, fragrance care, and skin care (Mistine, n.d). In recent years, Mistine entered many foreign markets including Myanmar, Japan, South Korea, Iran, Dubai, and France. As an opening of the Chinese market was believed to bring thirty billion THB profit for Mistine's foreign marketing sales, Mistine has enthusiastically promoted its brand into the Chinese market (360.com, 2016).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to give the review of literature and related studies on Word-of-Mouth (WOM), electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWOM), China Internet marketing and the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which provides a foundation for developing a theoretical framework and research questions for this study.

2.1 Word-of-Mouth (WOM)

2.1.1 Definition of WOM

Word-of-Mouth is the most important element influencing consumer purchase behavior (East, Romaniuk, & Uncles, 2017). In the past, before the written word coming, Word-of-Mouth was an oral communication from people to people. They used this oral communication to pass on history and tradition of their culture. Based on this oral communication at that time, people with different culture can understand the history and tradition from culture to culture (Caffrey, 2015). We can see in the ancient time, WOM is the way to use language art and communication skill, which are the two elements the marketer currently uses to promote their product to target consumers (Bansal & Voyer, 2000). Based on Westbrook (1987, p.260), word-of-mouth communication was “informal communications directed at other consumers about ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services and/or their

sellers.”Kimmel (2012) also confirms that word-of-mouth is person to person conversation with noncommercial purposes, regarding a product or service.

Blackwell, Engel, and Minard’s work (1995) concluded that marketers encourage consumers to communicate product in the form of Word-of-Mouth. When compare with other conventional marketing, WOM marketing is more effectively. The goal of people using Word-of-Mouth is to be eager by creating, sharing, and using review around products. When there are conversations of products among consumers, it becomes Word-of-Mouth.

Basically, WOM communication spreads within two steps: first, depend on traditional media platform, which gathers different profession people whom will become a communicator perceiving with noncommercial as they are early opinion leader; after that the opinion leaders spread the product information in their professional aspect through a variety of traditional media (Huang, 2017).

2.1.2 WOM marketing

Marketing is the function of organization, to keep in touch with consumers; knowing what consumer needs and develop product as consumer need; and build the communication to express what the organization offers (Kotler & Achrol, 2012).

WOM is the most powerful communication skills, acting from one person talking to another one (Barber & Wallace, 2010).

Silverman (2011) claims that Word-of-Mouth marketing (WOMM) is not Word-of-Mouth advertising, and explains the difference between WOMM and advertising as follows:

“Word of mouth is communication that’s independent, unbiased, and lacking in vested interest. Advertising is the exact opposite. Putting the terms together reveals either sloppiness of thinking or a wanton disregard for clarity. Often both.”

Word-of-Mouth marketing is no longer a new marketing, and it’s incorporating marketing mix that can be really work; people cannot only use the one tool to make WOMM successful. For example, advertisers only put it into next advertising, their sales or some few “reviews” in blog. WOMM is the completely the new way in which marketers need to think about it (Silverman, 2011). In other words, WOMM needs completely new marketing strategies to support it. WOMM works the best when it is really genuine and with truly passion (Barber & Wallace, 2010).

At the present, technology stimulates WOMM to be developed. Comparing with mass communication, WOM can give more accurate information to people. WOMM allows consumers to read the useful information and help them to make a careful decision. With the help of digital technology, Word-of-Mouth marketing also becomes online Word-of-Mouth marketing (Bueno, 2007).

2.1.3 Positive and Negative WOM

Positive WOM (PWOM) can give the good profit to organization by bringing products or services consumers really need; it seems like a win-win practice. Oppositely, negative WOM (NWOM) would damage organization profit and damage product’s or service’s reputation in consumers’ mind.

A journal reported from positive and negative side of WOM about driving purchase probability concluded that PWOM and NWOM both had positive and negative impact on consumer-purchase probability; the result of the research was that PWOM had very stronger impact on brand purchase than NWOM (Vázquez-Casielles, Suárez-Álvarez, & del Río-Lanza, 2013). The authors also concluded that the senders' expression had greatest influence on both positive and negative WOM. Positive WOM construct is driven with considered rational evaluation where as negative WOM has largely emotion in it and is driven by emotion (Anderson, 1998).

2.2 Electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWOM)

2.2.1 Electronic Word-of-Mouth Marketing

As now is in the digital world, electronic word-of-mouth marketing is more effectively than other marketing (Anum, 2017). With growth of the Internet technology, EWOM marketing is much more fast spread information in the marketing. People can more conveniently search product or service information spread in EWOM marketing.

EWOM marketing encourages marketers to develop interactive communication, both from one to one and to group. EWOM marketing makes consumers' virtual words connecting with our real life. Comparing with other traditional marketing, EWOM is more leeway and not limited by anything (Levy & Gvili, 2015). Through variety of media platforms like social media, e-mails, website, blogs and so on, marketers are able to publish or receive product messages in the EWOM marketing (Dobele, Toleman, & Beverland, 2005).

EWOM marketing is like a chain, in this marketing one person shares information online and his friend shares it to another person and so on. People like sharing product information online to help others who are interested in it or want to be seen as someone who knows those products like the professionals (Digital Marketing, 2016).

Comparing with traditional marketing, marketers can reduce operational cost by using EWOM marketing, based on the development of digital technology. EWOM marketing gives marketers boundless space to develop communication types with an unprecedented large scale; with those elements that may also arise with new problems in EWOM marketing (Litvin, Goldsmith, &Pan, 2018).

Consumers can send or receive product information in EWOM marketing more conveniently in the widely online space, through 'link' and 'share' by the search engines. The search engine will also depend on people's knowledge, perception of life or others to give results satisfying their needs. EWOM marketing also changes the traditional information used in the digital world (Litvin, Goldsmith, &Pan, 2018).

The difference between WOM and EWOM marketing are in the unprecedented scale and the diffusion of the speed. Traditional WOM marketing can only spread in the context in which the people who knew each other whereas EWOM marketing can spread in the context with different types of communication and with no limitation by any physical problem or personal acquaintance (Deszczyński, 2017).

2.2.2 EWOM and Social Media

EWOM plays a significant role in marketing. Social media is another area that is also as important as EWOM in the digital world. Both of them depend on the growth of network information technology. Today online users trust online reviews more than product information available in traditional media. In the EWOM marketing, opinion leaders send to others their own opinion through social media platform. This is one of the main sources of EWOM (Nunes, Freitas, Freitas & Ramos, 2018).

At present, social media plays an important role on product selling. People would like to view a variety of product information from other consumers who post reviews through social media. After they read the reviews, they are likely to make their purchase decision (Huang, 2017).

2.2.3 Effect of EWOM

Based on Lee and Lee's research (2009), they indicate that the influence of EWOM communication can be developed in two levels: Market-level and individual-level. On one hand, market-level researchers use market parameters such as the price or the sales to examine the impact of EWOM information on the products or service (Christy&Dimple, 2014). On the other hand, individual-level researchers examine EWOM as a process of personal influence -- the communication between message senders and receivers -- to see whether EWOM affects the consumer purchase decision (Christy& Dimple, 2014).

In terms of market-level, there is an “influence mix” developed by Simonson and Rosen (2014) when they argue what marketer needs to notice for online reviews. They give three factors called “influence mix” to help marketer to understand how to make online strategy. And those three factors would be like zero-sum game “the greater the reliance on one source, the lower the need for the others”(Simonson & Rosen, 2014).

The first factor: Prior preference, beliefs, and experience (referred as P). This factor involves habitual products such as milk and water which consumers would not check information online before buying.

The second factor: Information from marketers (referred as M). This factor usually delivers the product which consumers need to notice the price, place, and promotion such as tooth brush, etc. Normally, the information was transmitted by marketers before the product is purchased.

The third factor: Input from other people and from information services (referred as O). Based on the first and second factor, we can see them are low-involvement product. In contrast, when people buy high-involvement product like restaurant, cloth, cosmetics and so on, they usually check the comments made by other product users.

2.3 Chinese Internet Marketing

2.3.1 Chinese Internet Thinking

This word, “Internet thinking” maybe too far from any English language media to understand. After Alibaba moved one step into US IPO, many foreign media

are looking into Chinese Internet marketing and they come up with the word about “Internet thinking” (Jeongwen, 2014).

Shortly within only 20 years, Chinese Internet marketing was developed three stages through web 1.0, web 2.0, and China Mobile Net (CMNET) (Wanqiang, 2014, p. 9). Now in the Chinese Internet marketing, mobile users are outnumbered PC users (Ba, 2016).

Based on the book of a sense of millet participation (Wanqiang, 2014, p.9), the main idea of Internet thinking is composed of three factors: Focus and perfection, EWOM, and fast. Those factors are the core of Chinese Internet marketing motioned by Jun Lei who is the founder of Chinese mobile phone called XiaoMi (Wanqiang, 2014, p.8).

a. Focus & Perfection: these two words are relevant to the product. With the high speed developing marketing in China now, product users cannot only be content with its function. Like some Chinese said, your products must be higher than perfect, after that it can have some sales in the Chinese Internet marketing. For many organizations, when they focus on developing new product, they think they had far more focus on it; but many organizations will develop several new products at the same time even in the different categories. Here, “focus” means organizations only focus on one product’s development. If that product is not considered one of the top three in the industry, the organization’s core focus is not on this product (Wanqiang, 2014, p.28).

“Perfection” is the result of the product. Only when product gets the best recognition among the consumer, we can say this product made perfection. Like

iPhone, not only how expensive it has been sold in past years, there were still many people crazy for it. At present, we can say that its success result from its WOM.

However, during the launch of iPhone, the only reason of its success is based on the fact that the product had made perfection in consumers' mind. Perfection is not only how perfect your product had been made. It means that the perfection had become a charm of your product (Wanqiang, 2014, p.28).

b. EWOM: In Chinese Internet thinking, marketers only focus on product. They can make it fast; only when they make it fast, they can do product with nearly to perfection; only when they make perfection, there will have good electronic word-of-mouth (Wanqiang, 2014, p.24).

If marketer needs to get good EWOM, consumers' usage experience is an important element. This is also the function of Word-of-Mouth through product users sending information online to affect potential consumers' purchase decision. Based on that way, marketers develop consumers' usage experience to the sense of participation. It means that consumers' usage experience is also a part in product developing system. Consumers who participate in the product development can give more useful suggestion to organization. The more satisfied the consumers; the better their usage experience will be posted online. This way usually results in good EWOM.

Organization being trusted from consumers also gets good WOM. Like Google, in 2004 Google developed Gmail based on consumers' EWOM. At that time, Google only gave thousand accounts for free trial. People who wanted to try at that time, they must get invitation code. Those limited invitation codes were suddenly popular in the whole Internet; even some people sold it on eBay for 75pounds (Wanqiang, 2014, p.9).

c. Fast: Within the development of the Internet, all businesses become quick to do their work. If the businessman does not notice that, his business will drop down as fast as it can (Infront webworks, 2011). Fast does not only mean the speed of developing new product in the market, but also means that marketers need to have the fast logic to think of every element in terms of their product and consumer demand (Wanqiang, 2014).

2.3.2 Chinese Online Consumer Behavior

Kolter and Keller (2017) argue that consumer behavior is not an easy job to determine; consumers may say that they want to buy this one but at last they buy another one. It is possible that consumers were influenced and changed their decision by the second shopping time, or even consumers do not recognize which one is really what they need and so on. However, all of those behaviors can be viewed as consumer characteristics. Based on Kolter, Keller, and Leong (2017), there are three major factors: culture, social, and personal perspective. Online consumer characteristics can be identified as: consumers' cultural characteristics, their social characteristics, and their personal perspectives (Dan, 2012).

a. Cultural characteristics

Culture is the extensively and deeply influencing characteristic for consumer (Kolter, Keller, & Leong, 2017). Due to the fact that a series of people growing up with culture, culture determines people's thinking and behavior. Culture also determines consumers' purchase decision. Culture includes consistent sub-culture to each person. Subculture is specific to one person. It includes nationalities, racial

groups, religions, etc. (Kolter, Keller, Ang, Tan & Leong, 2017). The online consumers have sub-culture based on their online shopping.

China and Thailand have similar culture. They are all in Asia. Therefore, Chinese people can accept many Thai products and Thai food. This thing can be seen from many Chinese tourists who visit Thailand time by time, and they like buying Thai culture product.

b. Social characteristics

Social online characteristics influence people's online shopping behavior (Kolter, Keller, & Leong, 2017). Such as reference group, it is the group whom consumers believe they belong to it. Reference group will directly or indirectly influence people's attitude and behaviors (Hasslinger, Hodzic, & Opazo, 2008). For example, family is the first reference group to people, and friends are also an important reference group impacting people's purchase decision. People shops online in the virtual communities. Reference group will be like some online groups, social media platform etc. Those opinion leaders or famous bloggers tend to influence people's online shopping behavior (Hasslinger, Hodzic, & Opazo, 2008).

In recent years, Chinese consumers changed their shopping behavior from "buying products from its function" to "buying products from its brand" to "buy product from consumers who had tested it" (Wanqiang, 2014). It can be understood that at first, people need the product due to its function; at second time, people buy it based on the brand; and right now people buy the product by checking other users' online information to decide whether to buy it. Therefore, Chinese people's shopping behavior is now basically like social online characteristic.

As Oliver (2015) mentioned that almost when the online shopping started, many academic researchers give high attention to the consumer satisfaction of product. Consumer satisfaction can be understood as a result of their post-purchase outcome. As now in the digital marketing, people like checking information on the Internet. Accordingly, Chinese consumers' consider action whether to buy product or not depends on the online reference group.

c. Personal perspectives

Personal perspective includes people's personal conditions, like ages, status, occupation, personality and lifestyle (Kolter, Keller, Ang, Tan & Leong, 2017). In the early research, researchers point out that age is the most important reason to influence people's shopping behavior and making-decision (Smith, 2014). Young people can accept new things easier than old people. Like online technology, young people usually use it, shop on it, and search any information on it.

2.3.3 Chinese EWOM and Chinese social media

Based on China E-commerce research center (100EC)'s report (2013) indicates organizations like using EWOM this low cost and can direct communicate with consumer's way on China social media now.

Organizations look forward to two results in social media.

a. With high truly information sharing

Organizations communicate consumer in social media wants getting high information sharing in the social media marketing. At here will notice that information not like spam, as we know now social media environment is getting huge damage from those junk information, and it also broke many people's casuistry (Sohu, 2016). Organizations want to use this way to get much higher marketing share in the social media (John, 2016).

Based on this result, 100EC point out that, there are two factors need to be noticed: First, content; organization post content in social media should make sense with consumer; it means the content need close to consumer. Second, convenient; if share function is difficult to operate, consumer will just read not to share it.

b. Getting EWOM in social media

With good EWOM there will trend good sales, good brand effect and more and more target consumer know brand (Shen, 2018).

Marketer needs to let brand get close to consumer, do not make sense like brand is a frozen mountain. There is a good example giving from South Korea singer PSY. PSY is a famous singer in the world, based on one happy rhythm dancing song "Gangnam Style". PSY gives up the copyright of this song to let many people to post the same dancing style and song through in the internet. Even Ban Ki-moon the former UN secretary-general posted the video through YouTube.

2.4 Synthesis of Related Past Studies

As Chinese consumers spend more time online, foreign companies should enhance their knowledge of domestic social media platforms. Based on Crampton's

study (2011), it is suggested that companies should learn how Chinese consumers use social media and take advantage of the platforms to conduct consumer research, launch products, manage public relations crises, and more. EWOM is the fastest and most effective way for foreign brand aiming to enter China market. Kolter, Keller, and Leong (2017) found that social online characteristics influence people's online shopping behavior. In similar vein, Shen (2018) proposed that with good EWOM, there will be trend for good sales, good brand effect, and more and more target consumers know the brand.

2.5 Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) is developed by Elihu Katz, Jay. G Blumler, and Micheal Gurevitch in 1974 (West, & Turner, 2010). This theory approach why and how audiences specifically use one media and whether such media uses satisfy their needs. This theory regards audience accepting one media as initiative, it focuses on "what do people do with media?" (Huang, 2017).

In 1944 Herzog examined three factors of Soap opera fans like watching Soap opera: Releasing emotions, when they face in some situation like they are in trouble they will use watching Soap opera to release emotion. Click a hit, when they watch Soap opera, the actor has the same experience. Learning from soap opera, they can learn how to manage the same thing if happened in the real world like the soap opera showing (West& Turner, 2010).

At that time of 1972, McQuail, Brown and his colleagues proposed four factors explaining why people use media (West & Turner, 2010):

a. Diversion: It is defined as “escaping from routines or daily problems” (West & Turner, 2010, p.406). For example, people prefer to enjoy watching film after working, instead of studying.

b. Personal relationships: It occurs when people substitute the media for companionship (West & Turner, 2010, p.406). For example, when people have a long journey, they are using social network to connect with their family and friends. They not only pass time, but also keep in touch with family and friends.

c. Personal identity: It is defined as “ways to reinforce an individual who accomplish something” (West & Turner, 2010, p.406). For example, truck driver would like to listen to broadcasting when they drive car in the midnight; instead of not listen anything when they drive.

d. Surveillance: It is defined as “information about how media will help an individual’s value” (West & Turner, 2010, p.406). Like when some people watch home decoration TV program; they will learn how to transform their house in the TV program.

Previous literature on WOM, EWOM, China Internet marketing and Uses and Gratifications Theory were reviewed to provide sufficient background to investigate how foreign brands can use Chinese social media to develop their Chinese marketing by EWOM. This research involves a case study from Thai cosmetics brand ‘Mistine’ to research. The following two research questions are proposed:

RQ #1: What kind of EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetics brand (Mistine) has been engaged by Mistine?

RQ # 2: How has EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetics brand (Mistine) been communicated among Chinese consumers?

2.6 Theoretical Framework

According to the UGT, McQuail, Brown mentioned the four factors influencing why people use specific media. In order to investigate what kind of EWOM in Weibo regarding Thai cosmetics brand Mistine has been communicated among Chinese consumers; and how has EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetics brand, Mitine, has been communicated among Chinese consumers. The theorecial framework was developed for this study as shown below. (More details of this theoretical framework is provided in chapter 3 - Mothodology). This framework was used to answer the following two research questions.

Research question#1: What kind of EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetics brand (Mistine) has been engaged by Mistine?

It is assumed that EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetics brand (Mistine) engaged by Mistine involves two kinds:

(1) Personal relationships

Interactor with other Weibo users

(2) Personal identity

Reply consumers' questions

It should be noticed that, this study would not examined “Deiversion”factor and “Surveillance” factor.

Research question#2: How has EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetics brand (Mistine) been communicated among Chinese consumers?

It is assumed that EWOM in Weibo about Mistine communicated among Chinese consumers involves four factors based on the UGT:

(1) Diversion

- a. Gives the “like” in Mistine Weibo offical account.
- b. Post product photos in Mistine Weibo officla account page in the comment part.
- c. Give the comment on Mistine Weibo offical account page.

(2) Personal relationships

- a. Reply other users’ comment in Mistine Weibo officla account page reply part.
- b. Share product inforamtion to other Weibo users in Weibo.

(3) Personal identity

- a. Share product price information in Weibo.
- b. Add activity photos in Weibo.

(4) Surveillance

a. Product review in Weibo.

The theoretical framework was developed for this study as shown below:

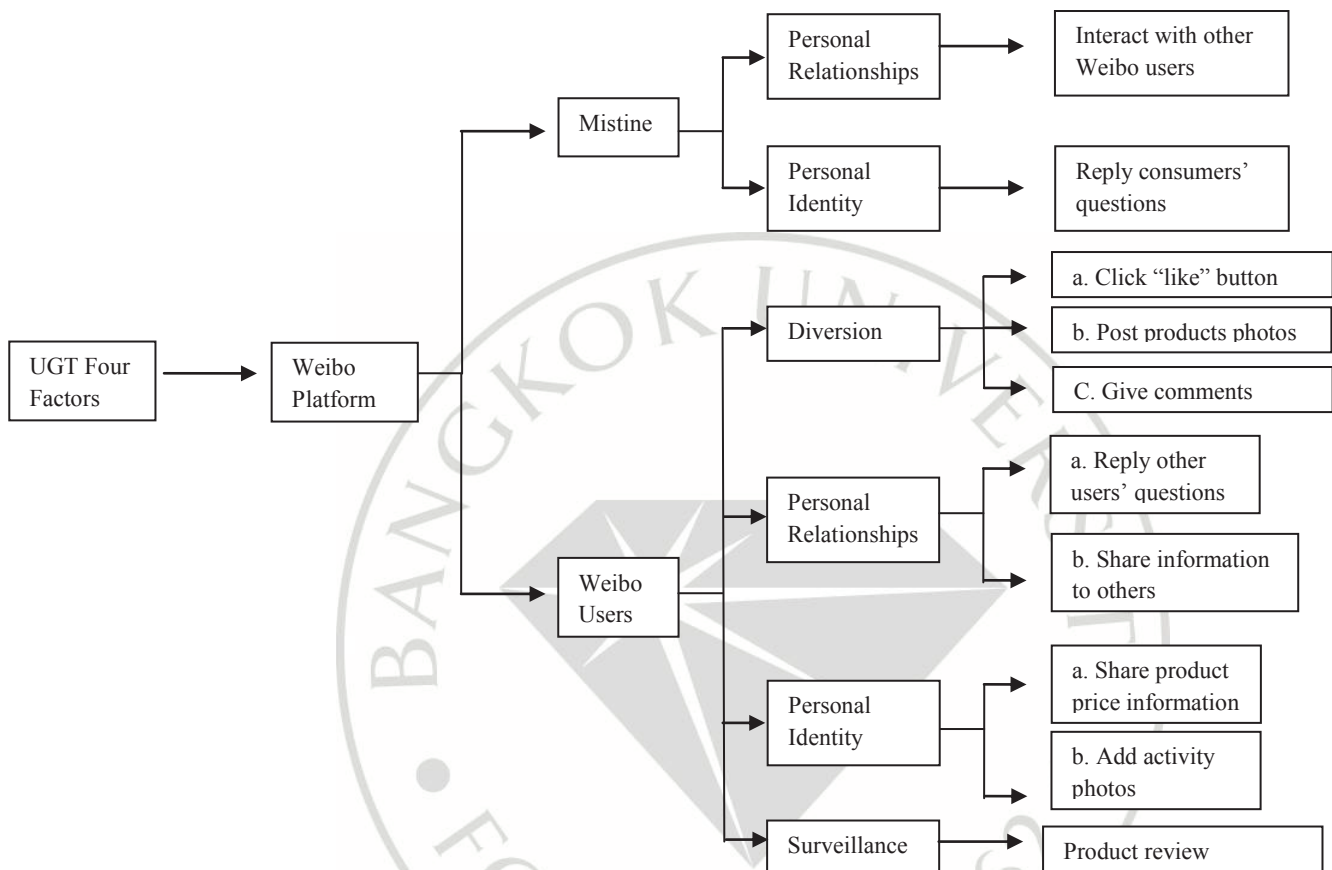


Figure 2.1: Theoretical Framework

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology of this research. It includes research design, population and sample selection, research procedure, research instrument, data analysis, validity and reliability of study.

3.1 Research Design

This research aims to understand Chinese consumers' communication behavior via social media, and to help foreign brands to learn how to use electronic words-of-mouth (EWOM) in Chinese social media to promote their brands in Chinese market through a case study of Mistine in China. Accordingly, this research used a mixed method -- content analysis was conducted to identify what kind of EWOM was communicated in Mistine's Weibo official account while textual analysis was performed to investigate how Chinese consumers communicate about Thai cosmetics brand, Mistine, in terms of EWOM in Weibo. It involves all the content on the branded content from Mistine Weibo official account page, together with a keyword "Mistine" in the Weibo's search engine which was communicated by Weibo users.

Findings from this mixed method allow the foreign brand marketers to apply what they learned regarding the EWOM by the Chinese social media users through this case study.

3.2 Population and Sample Selection

Weibo is chosen as the social media platform to investigate Thai cosmetics brand, Mistine. There are a couple of reasons that Mistine was selected as a case study. Firstly, Mistine is the most famous cosmetics brand from Thailand; even in China, people called Mistine is the “Must buy brand” when they travel to Thailand (Sohu Travel, 2017). Secondly, Mistine has already had its Weibo official account page, there are 121,411 followers in its Weibo official account page in which many Weibo users also post or share Mistine product experiences.

This study focuses on two types of contents in Weibo platform. One is the branded content in Mistine official account page in Weibo which is communicated with Weibo users from January to April 2018 whereas another one is EWOM in Weibo about all the word “Mistine” information posted by Weibo users from January to April 2018.

3.3 Research Procedure

The first step involves sampling of EWOM in Mistine Weibo Official account page and the EWOM content in Weibo.

Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2 show how to select the sampling of all the content from Mistine Weibo official account page from January to April 2018.

The first step, going to Mistine Weibo official account page; the second step, using searching engine to choose the posting time from January to April 2018. It is

displayed in Figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1: Mistine Weibo official account page

Source: Weibo. (2018). *Mistine weibo official account page*. Retrieved from

https://www.weibo.com/u/3288352831?topnav=1&wvr=6&topsug=1&is_hot=1

Figure 3.2 involves all the contents and the details of Mistine communicated with Weibo users in Mistine Weibo official account page from January to April 2018.



Figure 3.2: Mistine Weibo official account page content part

Source: Weibo. (2018). *Mistine weibo official account page*. Retrieved from https://www.weibo.com/u/3288352831?topnav=1&wvr=6&topsug=1&is_hot=1

Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.4 show how to select the sampling of the EWOM content in Weibo, from Weibo engine about all the words involve “Mistine” in Weibo from January to April 2018.

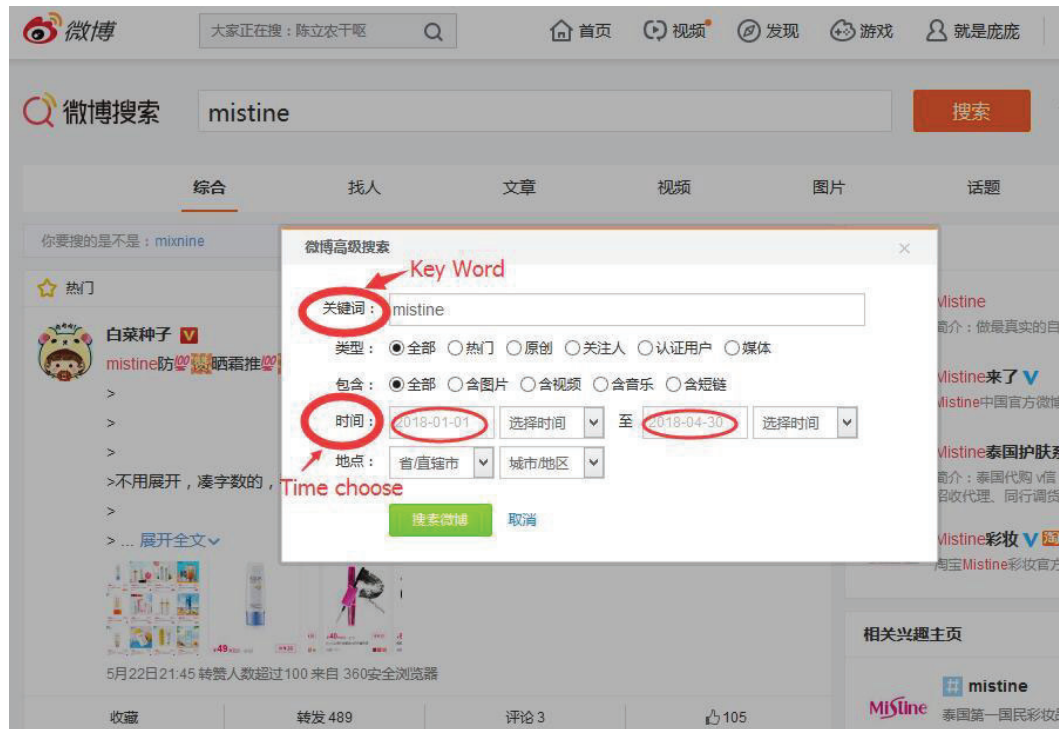


Figure 3.3: Weibo search engine

Source: Weibo. (2018). *Weibo search engine*. Retrieved from

https://s.weibo.com/weibo?q=mistine&wvr=6&Refer=SWeibo_box

Figure 3.3 explains how to search target information in Weibo search engine. First step, going to Weibo search engine; second step typing the key word as Mistine in the key word part; third step choosing time searching time from January to April 2018.

After that, there will get the result showing like figure 3.4. There involves all the content including “Mistine” words from January to April 2018; those content were all communicated among Weibo users.



Figure 3.4: The result of EWOM content in Weibo

Source: Weibo. (2018). The result of EWOM content in Weibo. Retrieved from <https://s.weibo.com/weibo?q=mistine&typall=1&suball=1×cope=custom:2018-01-01:2018-04-30&Refer=g>

The second step is data collection. At this step, secondary data in Weibo from January to April 2018 were collected in two categories: 1) Mistine Weibo official account communicated with Weibo users; and 2) EWOM posted by Weibo users with the word of “Mistine” in Weibo.

The third step is categorizing those two categories of content collected two different types: 1) from Mistine Weibo official account page content into two types of EWOM based on four factors of the Uses and Gratifications theory developed by Brown McQuail and 2) from Weibo users created content into eight types of EWOM, based on four factors of the Uses and Gratifications developed by Brown McQuail (see details in the research instrument part).

The last step involves conducting the textual analysis of both categories of contents. After the data analysis, the research report was written.

3.4 Research Instrument

Based on the theoretical framework which was mentioned in chapter 2, the two categories of content in Weibo from January to April 2018 were investigated as followed:

1. EWOM about Mistine in the Mistine Weibo official account (branded content)

For this type of content will answer the RQ#1: Whatkind of EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetics brand (Mistine) has been engaged by Mistine?

Based on the four factors of the UGT developed by McQuail; this research focus on two types of EWOM Mistine engaged in Weibo. (West & Turner, 2010).

1.1 Reply consumers' questions

This type of EWOM content includes answers given to users' questions in Mistine Weibo official account page.

1.2 Interact with Weibo users

This type of EWOM content includes various forms of interactions.

2. EWOM about Mistine has been communicated with its Weibo users in Weibo. EWOM made by Weibo users (cosmetics consumers)

For this type of content answers the RQ#2: How has EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetics brand (Mistine) been communicated among Chinese consumers?

Based on the four factors of the UGT developed by McQuail; this research focuses on eight types of EWOM by Weibo users. (West & Turner, 2010).

2.1 Click the "like" button

This type of EWOM content includes users' pushing "like" button in Mistine Weibo official account page.

2.2 Post product photos

This type of EWOM content includes users' posting of Mistine product photos in Mistine Weibo official account in the 'comment' section.

2.3 Give comments

This type of EWOM content includes users' giving comments in Mistine Weibo official account.

2.4 Reply other users' comments

This type of EWOM content includes users' replying others' comments in Mistine Weibo official account's 'reply' section.

2.5 Share product information

This type of EWOM content includes users' sharing Mistine product information in Weibo with other Weibo users, they will @ those weibo users whom they want to share this information to them.

2.6 Share product price information

This type of EWOM content includes People whom giving the Mistine product price information in Weibo.

2.7 Add activities' photo

This type of EWOM content includes users' posting of any photos about Mistine activities in Weibo.

2.8 Product review

This type of EWOM content includes users' reviewing of Mistine product(s) in Weibo. The reviews can be positive, negative, or/and neutral information about Mistine.

3.5 Data Analysis

The two categories of content which are Mistine's responses to users' EWOM in Weibo and EWOM created by consumers in Weibo were analyzed using the Constant Comparative method (Huang, 2017).

The Constant Comparative method was first posited by Glaser and Strauss and later elaborated upon by Lincon and Guba (Richard. W, 2010). Glaser and Strauss use the constant comparative analysis in inductive reasons (Huang, 2017). This methodology is typically qualitative research approach (Glaser & Strauss, 2010). Researchers gather data through interviews, statement, observations, and the examination of document; and researchers need to compare those gathering data; at last researchers can inductive the reasons those meaning from the data.

According to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the textual analysis was conducted via the following process:

1. Collecting those EWOM content as mentioned in research instrument during the research period, such as the posted photos, the like, and the users' comments.

2. Sorting those contents into different types, based on the four factors of UGT which were developed by McQuail. Thai cosmetics brand Mistine in Weibo are toward those two purpose: personal identity and personal relationships. On the other hand, EWOM communicated by Chinese consumers in Weibo focuses on the four purposes: diversion, personal relationships, personal identity, and surveillance.

3. Analyzing the meanings in those different types.
4. Comparing those types and giving the explanation for them.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Study

For the validity of the EWOM made by Weibo users. All the messages were created by the real consumers in Weibo. All the analyses were performed with the real textual materials sampled from Weibo. The EWOM includes both positive and negative directions.

For the validity of cosmetics brand Mistine in EWOM Weibo. This research focuses on Mistine Weibo official account used by Mistine to communicate with Weibo users in order to find out what kind of EWOM Mistine engaged in Weibo. All the data are actual communication between Mistine and consumers.

This study used inter-coder reliability to ensure the reliability of its investigation. A graduate student who is in communication field served as the second coder of 30 percent of the research materials (Huang, 2017). The analysis results from the major investigator were compared with the results from the second coder. The inter-coder reliability is 85 percent, which indicates that the study is reliable.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter provides the results of the textual analysis of EWOM between Chinese consumers regarding Thai cosmetic brand, Mistine, communicated in Weibo. Using Uses and Gratification Theory as the theoretical framework, the findings are based on the research questions which were developed in chapter 2. Conclusions are made according to the findings.

This chapter provides the result of how EWOM spread in Weibo regarding Thai cosmetic brand, Mistine, with the use of both content analysis and textual analysis, as a mixed method. The data collection was gathered from Weibo in four months period which was from January, 2018 to April, 2018. The Thai cosmetic brand, Mistine, was chosen as the research case study.

The findings presented in this chapter are divided in two sections based on the research questions. The first section quantitatively analyzed samples of EWOM from Mistine Weibo official account page engaged by Mistine. This section answers the first research question --What kind of EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetic brand, Mistine, has been engaged by Mistine? The second section textually analyzed samples from Weibo users as cosmetic consumers. This section answers the second research question --How has EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetic brand, Mistine, been communicated among Chinese consumers?

Based on Yui's research (2018) about how Thai cosmetics brand can get into Chinese marketing so fast; it is reported based on 93% Thai cosmetics brand chose through e-commerce to push their brand in China. In the research those brands included Mistine. And about the main media for those Thai cosmetics brands to do e-commerce are: the first is Weibo, the second is Wechat and the third is RED. And in her research also gives an example of the brand usually uses those media to do communication with their Chinese consumers. Mistine in the research is explained as the most using Weibo to do communication with its consumer; comparing with other Thai cosmetics brand, Mistine already had itself Weibo official account in Weibo and through this way the research said can achieve more trust between Chinese consumers, they can communicate with this Weibo official account feeling more safety. In her research, she explained how those Thai cosmetics brand can push their brands so fast in Chinese marketing: there are 80% data explained through do EWOM in the main digital media (Weibo, Wechat and RED). Those brand included Mistine, they are usually reply consumers' questions, post brand information in their digital media channel: like Mistine would use itself Weibo official account to reply with consumers' question and give the newest product information or advertorials on it. For Chinese consumer in her research is not the main target research objective, but she still illustrated how Chinese consumers build those brand EWOM in those digital media: in the all research she gave the top reason is that Chinese cosmetics consumer would like post review in their Weibo account to let other users to see (include 40% of the total data). And the second reason is that Chinese consumers usually like sharing those cosmetics information to others no matter the cosmetics information is from its official account or other users (include 32% of the total data) in this reason she

explained the brand including Misitne, Beauty Buffet and Cute Press. And the other reasons are press the “like” button (include 17% of the total data), mention other users cosmetics news (include 7% of the total data), digital media users (including Weibo channel) communicate product review in their personal chat message (include the 4% of the total data). Based on her code, there are nearly 40% of total data are similar between my findings and hers.

Findings

Based on the research questions, the data in Weibo were grouped into two sources:

1) Mistine Weibo official account page

The total number of this category is 886 messages. 96.05% of the total responses involve “Reply consumers’ questions” whereas 3.95% of them are “Interact with other Weibo users.”

2) EWOM in Weibo posted by Weibo users

As shown in Table 4.1: the total number of this category is 7393 messages. The highest response in this category, 31.90% of the total responses, involves “product review,” followed by “give comments” (19.48%), “share product information” (17.46%), “click the “like” button” (13.49%), “share product price information” (9.05%); “reply other users’ comments(6.71%), “post product photos(1.69%). The lowest response involves “add activity photos” (0.23%).

Table 4.1: Summarizes frequency and percentage of data from each source of EWOM in Weibo which were sampled and analyzed in this research.

Table 4.1: Frequency and Percentage of EWOM on Weibo

Type of Content	Types of EWOM	Amount of Comments (Percentage)	Total Amount of Comments (Percentage)
Branded content in MistineWeiboofficial account	Reply consumers' questions	851 (96.05%)	886 (100%)
	Interact with other Weibo users	35 (3.95%)	
EWOM in Weibo communicated among users	Click the "like" button	997 (13.49%)	7393 (100%)
	Post product photos	125 (1.69%)	
	Give comments	1440 (19.48%)	
	Reply other users' comments	496 (6.71%)	
	Share product information	1291 (17.46%)	
	Share product price information	669 (9.05%)	
	Add activity photos	17 (0.23%)	
	Product review	2358 (31.90%)	



Figure 4.1: Mistine Weibo official page communicated with consumers

Source: Weibo. (2018). *Mistine weibo official account page*. Retrieved from

https://www.weibo.com/u/3288352831?topnav=1&wvr=6&topsug=1&is_hot=1



Figure 4.2: All the content about “Mistine” posted by Weibo users

Source: Weibo. (2018). “Mistine” post by weibo users. Retrieved from

<http://s.weibo.com/weibo/mistne&typeall=1&suball=1×cope=custom:2018-01-01:2018-04-30&Refer=g>

4.1 Research Question #1

Based on the first research question, the textual analyses of EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetic brand Mistine communicated among Chinese consumers revealed that Thai cosmetic brand, Mistine, gratifies the personal relationships and personal identity factors based on the UGT four factor developed by McQuail (West & Turner, 2010). According to this purpose, Thai cosmetic brand, Mistine, revealed a

relevant theme, *replying consumers' questions*. Comparing with another factor personal relationships, personal identity this factor was found in a much higher number and high quality content.

4.1.1 Replying consumers' questions

Analysis of the content in the MistineWeibo official account revealed that 'replying consumers' questions' are most frequently found. Major questions being asked are the price of product, product effects, and the promotion activities. Examples are shown below:

“Wow, this pressed powder is very fit to your skin type!
As you said, your skin is the super oily skin. This pressed powder will all day control the oily skin. And it is water-proof type, so it can be last very longtime on your face in case that you don't have any cosmetics to use facially.
Thank you for supporting for us. Wish you have a nice day.”
(Mistine Weibo official account, January 16, 2018)

“Yes, there will be the new packing for AQUA daily facial moisturizer. It will come soon. Please keep focused on the updated information on new packing. And don't forget to keep shopping Mistine product in Mistine official online store in Taobao. Thank you.”(Mistine Weiboofficial account, February 15, 2018)

“You are so big fan for the eyebrow, here will be the promotion about it; it will be on May 1st. This promotion

is that buying the second eyebrow will get 50% off discount. Hope you enjoy your shopping that day.”(MistineWeibo official account, April 12, 2018)

4.1.2 Interact with other Weibo users

During the four-month period, there are only 35 data regarding “interacting with other Weibo users”. Those data reveals that “interact with other Weibo users” is sending Emoji to those Weibo users. And those Emoji are not any meaning in the Weibo. They only use of those Emoji is explaining their state of mind whether they are happy or others.

4.2 Research Question #2

Referring to the second research question, Weibo users gratified three factors based on UGT theory of four factor developed by McQuail (West & Turner, 2010): Diversion, personal relationships, surveillance.

4.2.1 Diversion

Chinese consumers like communicating Thai cosmetics brand, Mistine, in Weibo in terms of diversion. Weibo users like to read, share or post product information in Weibo during their relaxing and pleasant time; instead of posting any political news to read or share in Weibo. Their EWOM includes: 1) clicking the “like” button, 2) posting product photos, and 3) giving comments.

4.2.1.1 Click the “like” button

Weibo users click the “like” button in Mistine official account as the feedback after they had read this information and also care about it or be interested in it. When the current Weibo users are reading that news, they will see how many likes there are; it means how many people had read it and also cared about it or interested in it.



Figure 4.3: Click the “like” button

Source: Weibo. (2018). *Weibo users click the like button*. Retrieved from

https://www.weibo.com/u/3288352831?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E6%98%A5%E5%AD%A3%E7%BE%8E%E5%A6%86%E8%8A%82#_0

4.2.1.2 Post product photos

Weibo users who posted the product photos in Mistine Weibo official account gave the product photo information to other Weibo users as the reference in the page's comment part. It is also the way how those Chinese consumers in Weibo communicate Mistine brand among other users in Mistine Weibo official account page behavior. In this way, they can enjoy relaxing time in the Weibo to communicate with others, and not too serious like discussing political news or working things. They saw the product photos in the comment part and also posed the problem regarding Mistine product in the comment part; those Weibo users who had used the product or Mistine Weibo official account answered those questions in the comment part. This is considered a pleasant way.



Figure 4.4: Post product photos

Source: Weibo. (2018). *Consumer post product photos*. Retrieved from https://www.weibo.com/u/3288352831?is_ori=1&is_forward=1&is_text=1&is_pic=1&is_video=1&is_music=1&is_article=1&key_word=&start_time=2018-02-15&end_time=2018-02-15&is_search=1&is_searchadv=1#1531554590449

4.2.1.3 Give comments

Weibo users frequently gave comments in Mistine Weibo official account page. There were totally 1,440 comments in the sampled data. Most of the comments include asking price, product effect; how to buy the product, promotion news; sharing personal experience.



Figure 4.5: Give comments

Source: Weibo. (2018). *Give comments*. Retrieved from

https://www.weibo.com/u/3288352831?is_ori=1&is_forward=1&is_text=1&is_pic=1&is_video=1&is_music=1&is_article=1&key_word=&start_time=2018-02-07&end_time=2018-02-07&is_search=1&is_searchadv=1#_0

4.2.2 Personal Relationships

EWOM in Weibo regarding Thai cosmetic brand, Mistine, was communicated in terms of personal relationships. That means consumers like to keep in touch with their friends online for companionship or communicate with people who know each other from online. In this case, EWOM about Mistine in terms of personal relationship includes 1) replying others' comments and 2) sharing product information.

4.2.2.1 Reply other users' comments

In Mistine Weibo official account page, people can comment on every news posted by Mistine Weibo official account. When any one see those comments, they can also reply those comments in the reply section. In this way, people can get companionship through communication.



Figure 4.6: Reply others' comments

Source: Weibo. (2018). *Reply others' comments*. Retrieved from

https://www.weibo.com/u/3288352831?is_ori=1&is_forward=1&is_text=1&is_pic=1&is_video=1&is_music=1&is_article=1&key_word=&start_time=2018-01-01&end_time=2018-01-31&is_search=1&is_searchadv=1#_0

4.2.2.2 Share product information

Weibo users shared Mistine product information in Weibo and also mentioned @ another Weibo users whom they want to share the information too. As a result, the Thai cosmetics brand, Mistine, in Weibo was communicated to increase companionship.



Figure 4.7: Share product information

Source: Weibo. (2018). *Share product information*. Retrieved from

http://s.weibo.com/weibo/%25E8%25B0%25A2%25E8%25B0%25A299%2540%25E5%258F%25AA%25E8%25AE%25B2%25E6%2595%2585%25E4%25BA%258B%25E4%25B8%258D%25E5%2596%259D%25E9%2585%2592&Refer=STopic_box

4.2.3 Surveillance

In this factor, surveillance means people learn through information distributed in mass media and use this useful information in their life. EWOM regarding Thai cosmetic brand, Mistine, in Weibo reveal only one theme as the Weibo users always monitor the product reviews in their own Weibo page.

4.2.3.1 Product review

Weibo users learned about Thai cosmetic brand Mistine in Weibo. They learnt how to make up by Mistine cosmetic products and post those product reviews in their own Weibo page. In this way, their friends who were following them can see; and their friends also could share those review in their own Weibo page to let more people see them. In this factor, Weibo users communicate about Thai cosmetic brand, Mistine, in Weibo as a lessons learned by Mistine.



Figure 4.8: product review

Source: Weibo. (2018). *Product review*. Retrieved from

<https://weibo.com/6531248849/GewLZ0rLn>

In summary, the textual analysis of EWOM in Weibo regarding Mistine Weibo official account revealed that the research question #1 Thai cosmetic brand, Mistine, gratifies the personal identity and personal relationships factor based on the UGT four factor developed by McQuail (West & Turner, 2010). The two relevant themes, 'replying consumers' questions' and 'interact with other Weibo users' were found. 'Replying consumers' questions' was communicated in a significantly larger amount than 'interact with other Weibo users'. The textual analyses of EWOM in Weibo regarding Weibo users revealed that the research question #2 The Chinese consumer communicate Thai cosmetics brand Mistine in Weibo gratifies the three factors: diversion, personal relationship and surveillance. There are six themes -1) "click the 'like' button", 2) "post product photos", 3) "give comments", 4) "reply other users' comments", 5) "share product information", 6) "product review".

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter summarizes the findings of this study. Findings were discussed in terms of researchers' expectations, theories and previous research findings. In addition to its limitations, it provides conclusions and implications for academia, practitioners, policy makers, and government sectors.

5.1 Summary of Findings

As we know, due to an increasing number of technology development in the digital world, the social media platform creates much more communication opportunities for brand, to promote their brand or product on the social media platform. In China, as we mentioned before in chapter 1, there are more and more Chinese people who are satisfied to use social media in their life. Now in China, there are many brands developing their business in the digital world through the social media platform to do communication and sales with Chinese consumers. For this research, based on the Uses and Gratification Theory as the theoretical framework to find out what kind of EWOM in Weibo the Thai cosmetic brand Mistine has been communicated among Chinese consumers, and how the Chinese consumers communicated about the Thai cosmetic brand Mistine in Weibo.

Using the Uses and Gratifications Theory as a conceptual framework, EWOM content on Thai famous cosmetics brand Mistine's product in Weibo (a famous social media in China) from January 2018 and April 2018 were sampled and analyzed. The

result of the content analysis from Mistine Weibo official account page indicates that there are two kinds of EWOM in Weibo about Mistine communicated between Chinese consumers; they are ‘personal identity’ and ‘personal relationship’. Based on the results of the content analysis, Chinese consumers communicated having three purposes, including -- diversion, personal relationships, and surveillance.

Based on the two research questions being asked, the following sections provide discussion on their findings:

5.2.1 Discussions on Research Question #1

RQ #1: What kind of EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetics brand (Mistine) has been engaged by Mistine?

Based on the results of the content analyses, the two kinds of EWOM in Weibo about Mistine communicated between Chinese consumers is ‘personal identity’ and ‘personal relationships’.

5.2.1.1 Personal Identity

Personal identity factor (reply consumers’ questions) was found as the kind of EWOM in Weibo, Mistine has been communicated between Chinese consumers. Based on the data, there were 851 replies by Minstine Weibo official account in its own Weibo official account page; and each piece of reply was to every individual Weibo user (cosmetic consumer). Personal identity is developed by McQuail (West & Turner, 2010); it is defined as “ways to reinforce an individual who accomplish something” (West & Turner, 2010, p.406). In this case study, we can understand personal identity serves communicative function in Weibo. This indicates that

Mistine's major function in terms of EWOM in Weibo is replying consumers' questions.

In recently years, many brands prefer using social media to communicate its identity with their consumers. The report from Social Media Today pointed out that brands were winning at social media platform by catching consumers' attention today (Tabitha, 2018). Those brands were operating well themselves in the social media platform. Xiao's research about brand communication strategy in the era of social media indicates that now in the social media era, people would like to use social media platform asking brand questions. Accordingly, brand and consumers can get high level of communication through the social media platform and other social media users can also read those communication as a product reference for themselves; and brand needs to consider that building well their every official account in different social media platforms is one of the significant communication strategies(Xia, 2011). Based on the above information, we can see Mistine Weibo official account is doing the right task for building much higher EWOM to communicate with consumers in Weibo by replying consumers' questions.

As the founder of Chinese mobile phone XiaoMi, Jun Lei, said, company needs to build well the relationship between its brand and the consumer; only through this way, EWOM can be effectively built among the consumers (Wanqiang, 2014, p.8). At the present, all the businesses are in the digital world, brand must use digital communication to do EWOM in those social media platform. They must play a multiply role in its social media official account to give prompt services to every online users.

According to the Chinese culture, people see the responsibility as a very important factor when they do business or make friends, both between a person and a company (Li, Hsieh & Chang, 2016). Chinese people believe that responsibility is the basic and also most important element of communication practices. In other words, the more responsibility you have, the more trust you will gain. For the brands who desires to develop its business in China, they need do well in terms of responsibility, especially when dealing with EWOM.

In terms of EWOM marketing in China, brand needs to play a role regarding brand knowledge which can give the full information that consumers expect to know about the particular brands in the social media platform. In this study, like the Thai cosmetic brand Mistine in Weibo, Mistine has its own Weibo official account page. Through this account, Thai cosmetic brand can do communication with Chinese consumers in Weibo. This official account gives much more brand information to those consumers who want to know Mistine's product information from different aspects.

5.2.1.2 Personal relationships

As we mentioned in Chapter 4, comparing with personal identity, the data of factor personal relationships was found in a much lower number and low quality content. About personal relationships in this study, Thai cosmetics brand Mistine revealed 'interact with other Weibo users'. There is only 3.95% of the total data. Therefore, it is no need to be discussed more. For this 3.95% data in Weibo is like that brand can use Emoji to communicate with consumers, in this way to let the communication more joyful.

5.2.2 Discussions on Research Question # 2

RQ #2: How does EWOM in Weibo about Thai cosmetics brand (Mistine) has been communicated among Chinese consumers?

Based on the results of the content analysis, Chinese consumers communicated regarding Mistine in terms of three purposes -- diversion, personal relationships, and surveillance.

5.2.2.1 Diversion

Diversion (click the “like” buttons, post product photos, give comments) was found as one of the three factors that the Chinese consumers gratify to communicate about Thai cosmetic brand Mistine in Weibo. Developed by McQuail(West & Turner, 2010), this factor is needed when people have relaxing time and usually prefer to use social media as a recreation platform. The analyses yield that diversion factor was found in terms of three behaviors in Weibo:

a. Click the “like”Buttons

When people read the information which they care about or have an interest in, they are likely to click the “like” buttons in the MistineWeibo official account page. The Adobe 2017 research report pointed out that in the U.S., 57% of social media users clicked the “like” button for the brand which they liked, 53% of social media users said when they clicked the “like” button, they had already used the product (Sohu, 2017).

Zhang and Zhao (2017) pointed out that when people have the same tendentiousness, they click the “like” button as motivation is high. Contents became the main reason of online users clicking the “like” button in the social media. In terms of EWOM in Weibo, brand marketer needs to control those contents such that it can create more likes by catching online users’ eyes. It is also a useful idea in their marketing plan, and easy to analyze how each piece of content attracts what kind of consumers.

For the behavior of clicking the “like” button, some scholars argue on it whether it really helps the brand to create EWOM among the social media platform. Zhang (2016) argues that after Web 1.0, the social media usually uses the amount of “like” as the norm of whether this content is useful, but many social media platforms have some errors on the “like” function. That is, there is only one “like” button for the online users. If they want to express their sad or angry emotion, there are no other buttons in those typical social media platforms. When Facebook found that problem, they adjusted their “like” function into different emotions to let its users to express a variety of emotion. However, now in Weibo we can see this imperfection still exists. Li (2015) argues that people now in the digital world only use a symbol to express themselves; to do communication in this way is a matter of reducing communication or an easy way to communicate. As those argued in the previous research, when marketer sengage in EWOM in China, they also need to consider about them.

b. Post Product Photos

Huo dong he zi website (2018) indicates that content in the form of picture is created by a large number of female, and is the mainly consumed type of content by

female. When making their purchase decision, females tend to consider the product photos. If those product photos come from a brand or company, it is less powerful than product photos posted by other consumers who had already used such product. EWOM created by consumer can generate more trust between the non-users.

In terms of EWOM in Weibo, Mistine uses this function very ingeniously. They posted the product information in their own Weibo official account page; which enable consumers who had already bought the product to connect with those potential consumers, and to create more trust among them due to senders' authenticity.

c. Give Comments

In this research, Weibo users usually like to give comments in Mistine Weibo official account page. There are totally 1,440 pieces of comments in the sampled data. Those comments include two types of behaviors: product comments and information asking.

As we are in the digital world today, communication between a particular brand and its consumers is more convenient due to the development of high information technology. Admin (2013) pointed out that with the rapid growth of social media, brands has changed the way of brand communication. With the change from social media, brand in the digital world is no longer the singular source of brand messages. Brand can collect those brand messages from consumers via mobile phone, see what people talked about its brand in the social media. This will allow marketers to better understand their consumer today.

In another way, he pointed out that those consumers who gave comments in the social media have power to change the brand marketing. In this new genre, the new generation made the rules by themselves in the social media. Therefore, brand managers need to read those comments to find out whether the communication strategy being used in the social media was effective.

Nowadays, Chinese marketing has turned into digitization. There are 772 million Chinese online users reported at the end of December 2017 from China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC, 2018). In Weibo, 40.9% serves the function of short videos and mobile lives, which lead to the increasing number of consumer comments and interaction with the Weibo official account. The growth of Weibo mobile users is at 38%, comparing with last year. Many brands begin to register their Weibo official account to communicate with Weibo users to gain the marketing information from them and develop brand digital marketing strategy from the EWOM engaged by those users' comment information. Accordingly, brand marketers need to be careful with comments, which can be both positive and negative. It should be noted that this study did not focus its analyses on it.

5.2.2.2 Personal Relationships

Personal relationships factor (reply users' comments, share product information) found as one of the three factors that the Chinese consumers gratify to communicate about Thai cosmetic brand Mistine in Weibo. Developed by McQuail (West & Turner, 2010), it is defined as it occurs when people substitute the media for companionship (West & Turner, 2010, p.406). In this study, the analyses yield that personal relationships factor was found in terms of two behaviors in Weibo:

a. Reply Other Users' Comments

This is the interactive communication in Mistine Weibo official account page. EWOM have two levels as we mentioned in chapter two: Market-level and individual-level (Lee, 2009). Christy and Dimple (2014) point out that on individual level, researchers examine EWOM as a process of personal influence: the communication between message senders and receivers -- to see whether EWOM affects the consumer purchase decision. Accordingly, communication between Weibo users in MistineWeibo official account page tends to affect the purchase decision on cosmetics products. In terms of EWOM in Weibo, it is imperative that brand managers notice how Chinese consumers communicate in the comment section of their Weibo official account page.

For the behavior of replying others' comments, due to the development of high technology, Chinese consumers are more likely to use social media platform to do a virtual communication than do a face to face communication. As we know that time is quite limited, it is not easy for most people to see each other in any time. Knowing how to create a topic or theme to let users in their official account page communicate with each other is an important way to make use of current consumers who had bought the products to influence other potential consumers.

b. Share Product Information

This is a significant behavior for developing personal relationships. With the development of digital technology, consumers are eager to share information through the social media. They like to share information not only with family and friends, but

also others whom they do not see each other in the real life. These people know each other via online platforms.

In terms of EWOM in Weibo, consumers trust those senders who reply their questions online. Based on this study, when consumers do communication in Mistine Weibo official account page through sharing Mistine products information, EWOM is circulated among the consumers.

For brand, EWOM created by consumers is more useful than that created by company itself. Wanqiang (2014) indicates that in China only when consumers communicate about your brand with each other, your brand can generate WOM among them. As now more and more people used social media to communicate with each other, brands need to think about how to stimulate their current consumers to share brand products with their friends and/ or acquaint ant.

When sharing product information is seen, we need to think about product itself too. Only when our product has some appealing functions, those consumers will share the product to their friends (Wanqiang, 2014). In similar vein, to encourage consumers to share brand information, competitiveness of your product is necessary.

5.2.2.3 Surveillance

Surveillance factor (product review) was found as one of the three factors that the Chinese consumers gratify to communicate about Thai cosmetic brand Mistine in Weibo. Developed by McQuail(West & Turner, 2010), it is defined as “information about how media will help an individual’s value”(West & Turner, 2010, p.406). In this study, we can understand this factor as Weibo users search for Mistine product

information and used it; after that they create a product review to share their experiences with the particular product to the public and the potential consumers in Weibo.

Product review or online consumers' product review, a form of EWOM, has attracted increased attention from researchers and marketers (Zhang, Craciun, & Shin, 2010). Consumers have different motivations to read product reviews. The most important motivation is perhaps making inferences of product quality (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh, 2003). Usually for cosmetic brands, product quality is always mentioned in the product review. The consumers who haven't bought the targeted product are likely to read product review from those consumers who had already bought it.

Yayli and Bayaram (2012) made an argument about the effects of online consumer reviews on purchasing decisions. They conclude that online consumers are frequently reading review before purchasing no matter in the online-shop or in the real store. Secondly, the reviews have the significant influence on consumers' purchasing, based on their perceived popularity of product. Thirdly, those reviews which are recent online posts have higher influence on typical online users. Based on these findings, we can see how product reviews are important for strategic planning by brand marketers.

The ASKCI Consulting reported that there were 165 million cosmetic Weibo users communicating cosmetic brands in Weibo; and there were more than 800 cosmetic brand names mentioned in Weibo everyday (Askci, 2017). Product review is communicated among Weibo users, in this study, Chinese consumers communicate

Thai brand Mistine in product review to generate EWOM on Mistine in Weibo. That is the best way as a foreign brand to enter the Chinese markets and generate by itself EWOM based on the Chinese consumers.

As the foreign brands aiming to enter the big market like China, they need to think about the related data of each social media platform in China, such as the user population annual report, the related industry users in that social media platform, and the effect of EWOM made in that social media platform. Although Chinese people like using social media platform, they use the different social media platform to communicate for different industries. In this study, Mistine chose a right social media platform to promote its brand.

5.3 Limitations

This research is based on Thai cosmetics brand Mistine as a case study. For the limitations, we need to think about brand industry, country's culture, and EWOM in Weibo social media platform. As this study chose Thai cosmetic brand as the research object, it is limited to the EWOM of cosmetic industry especially on the southeastern countries; and based on EWOM in Chinese social media platform.

This research applied the Uses and Gratification Theory as the conceptual framework. It only focuses on the factor of how brand and consumers use media to engage in two-way communication in terms of EWOM. There maybe other factors to effectively explain EWOM phenomenon such as motivation, gender, and marketing strategy.

This research does not focus on the valence of the EWOM. It would be more interesting to find out whether and how such negative or positive EWOM influence cognition, affection, and/or behaviors.

This research used a qualitative research method, it is quite difficult to compare or connect findings of this study to earlier studies with similar topics as they mostly used a quantitative research method.

As we know now there are more and more social media platforms in the digital world, Weibo as a significant social media platform to be examined in this study may become less important platform among Chinese consumers in the near future. In China nowadays, short videos and lives are very popular in consumers' daily life. Weibo also has those functions like short video in each Weibo official account page. However, this study did not pay attention to those functions as there were few short videos and lives in Mistine's official account page. As a result, there is a lack of findings on these video and live functions.

In terms of data collection, all the contents in Mistine's official account pages in Weibo are Chinese language. Translation into English was exclusively made by the major investigator. The quality of translation is merely assumed rather than assured. Although Mistine was used as the case study, its marketing communication plan was not considered along the line of its EWOM.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Application

This research gives various implications on EWOM in China Weibo social media platform to brand marketers. Firstly, it provides a case study for foreign

cosmetics brands to understand how Thai cosmetic brand, Mistine, has engaged in EWOM in Weibo among Chinese consumers. Those marketers can learn from Mistine to create its own communication in Chinese social media platforms. As Mistine was examined in this research, the findings build a responsibility on its Weibo official account to communicate with those Weibo users and create some values of its EWOM.

Secondly, the research gives better understanding of how Chinese consumers communicate in the social media platform. This is more convenience and faster for marketers to develop appropriate brand communication strategy that fits well with the Chinese consumers.

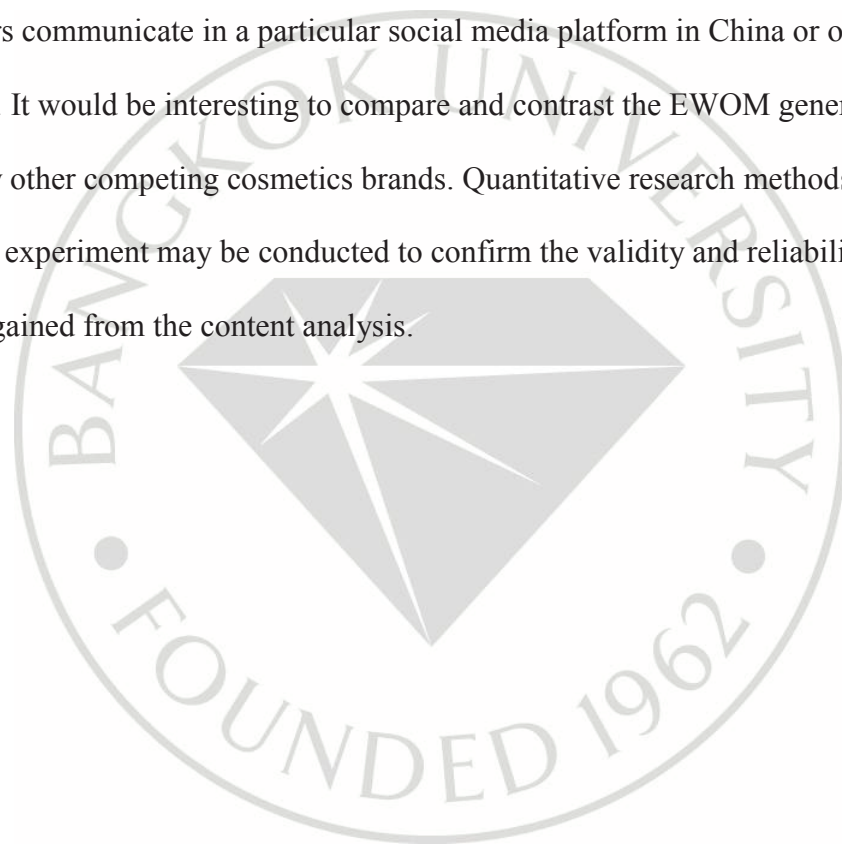
Thirdly, Chinese consumers in Weibo usually like asking brand or product information in Mistine Weibo official account, and they communicated about Mistine products in Weibo with the three purposes as aforementioned. All these factors found in this research can be useful for other marketers who want to promote their brand in China or generate EWOM in Chinese markets.

Fourth, this research will give the brand marketers' better understanding on Weibo as one of the significant social media platforms in China. Foreign brand marketers can use those functions of Weibo to create its own EWOM in other social media platforms in China.

Finally, this research is based on the UGT, detailed discussion on those four factor of consumers' using Chinese social media platform is considered useful for other marketers who promote cosmetics brands in China.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

For the future research, it is recommended to examine more popular functions of social media platform in digital world such as short videos or mobile lives. Future research may involve investigating how culture in a particular country influences EWOM in the social media platform. Other interesting theories such as Elaboration Like lihood Model or Social Learning Theory should be used to examine how consumers communicate in a particular social media platform in China or other countries. It would be interesting to compare and contrast the EWOM generated in Weibo by other competing cosmetics brands. Quantitative research methods such as survey or experiment may be conducted to confirm the validity and reliability of the findings gained from the content analysis.



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APPENDIX A: Mistine Weibo Official Account Page



APPENDIX B: Frequency and Percentage of EWOM on Weibo

Type of Content	Types of EWOM	Amount of Comments (Percentage)	Total Amount of Comments (Percentage)
Branded content in MistineWeiboofficial account	Reply consumers' questions	851 (96.05%)	886 (100%)
	Interact with otherWeibo users	35 (3.95%)	
EWOM in Weibo communicated among users	Click the "like" button	997 (13.49%)	7393 (100%)
	Post product photos	125 (1.69%)	
	Give comments	1440 (19.48%)	
	Reply other users' comments	496 (6.71%)	
	Share product information	1291 (17.46%)	
	Share product price information	669 (9.05%)	
	Add activity photos	17 (0.23%)	
	Product review	2358 (31.90%)	

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