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The role of big data in precision marketing from Weibo

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Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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Abstract

Today's big data technology has become a daily tool, and its application in the field of Weibo marketing has driven its growth exponentially. Many firms have official profiles on Weibo and analyze user data to accomplish appropriate product promotion. As an indispensable application for the public, Weibo has evolved in terms of rules, functions and marketing methods.

In the context of big data, this survey aims to analyze how businesses and brands may use precision marketing on Weibo to achieve long-term growth and profitability. We have thus carried out a thorough investigation on this subject, gathering pertinent data using qualitative as well as quantitative methods.

In this dissertation we use case studies to understand that brands should fully interact with users and create high-quality marketing content. It also spoke with a marketing specialist to learn that user engagement, rather than data and algorithms, is what mostly manipulates popular subjects on Weibo. Companies and brands may use big data to promote current themes, interactive activities, and collaborations with key opinion leaders (KOLs) in order to further engage target customers and eventually accomplish the goal of precision marketing.

All things considered; it seems that big data is among the most effective instruments available for Weibo precise marketing. However, enterprises and brands need to develop the most suitable marketing strategies based on their own characteristics and advantages.

Keywords: Big Data, Weibo, Precision marketing, Target users, Trending topics

JEL Classification:

M310 - Marketing

L100 - Market Structure, Firm Strategy, and Market Performance: General

Resumo

Atualmente, a tecnologia de grandes volumes de dados tornou-se a nossa ferramenta diária e a sua aplicação no domínio do marketing Weibo fez com que crescesse enormemente. Muitas empresas registraram contas oficiais e analisaram os dados de seus usuários no Weibo para conseguir uma negociação precisa de seus produtos. Sendo uma aplicação necessária para o público, o Weibo evoluiu em termos de regras, funções e métodos de marketing.

O objetivo deste estudo é analisar a forma como as empresas e as marcas podem um marketing de precisão no Weibo realizado no contexto de grandes dados, a fim de obter rentabilidade e desenvolvimento a longo prazo. Para o efeito, realizaremos um estudo aprofundado sobre este tema, extraindo informações relevantes através de métodos qualitativos e quantitativos.

Nesta dissertação, utilizamos estudos de caso para compreender que as marcas devem interagir plenamente com os usuários e criar conteúdos de marketing de alta qualidade. Também entrevistamos um especialista em marketing para compreender que os principais manipuladores dos trending topics no Weibo não são os dados e os algoritmos, mas são criados pela interação dos usuários. Com o apoio dos megadados, as empresas e as marcas também podem criar tópicos de tendências, atividades interativas ou cooperar com os KOL para chegar aos consumidores-alvo e, em última análise, alcançar o objetivo do marketing de resultados.

De um modo geral, consideramos que os megadados são uma das ferramentas poderosas que podem ser utilizadas para o marketing de precisão do Weibo. No entanto, as empresas e as marcas têm de desenvolver estratégias de marketing mais adequadas com base nas suas próprias características e vantagens.

Palavras-chave: Big Data, Weibo, Marketing de precisão, Utilizadores-alvo, Trending topics

Classificação JEL:

M310 - Marketing

L100 - Estrutura de mercado, estratégia da empresa e desempenho de mercado: Geral

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List of abbreviations

ACGN - Animation, Comic, Game, Novel

B&B - Bed and Breakfast

CRM - Customer Relationship Management

ERP - Enterprise Resource Planning

KOC - Key Opinion Consume

KOL - Key Opinion Leader

PR - Public Relations

SMEs - Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 The impact of data on marketing

In the last decade, the use of Data Sciences, which facilitate decision-making and extraction of actionable insights and knowledge from large datasets in the digital marketing environment, has remarkably increased (Saura, 2021). The emergence of the Big Data age has altered people's lifestyles while also transforming the way businesses and corporations produce and promote their products, providing them additional options for drawing in customers. In the past, we witnessed how businesses controlled the market's direction and trends, but today, customers are the ones who truly control it. With the development of the Internet and big data, everything related to clothes, food, housing, transportation, entertainment, social interaction, and money has undergone significant change.

We are able to use data processing techniques to uncover the underlying patterns in human behaviors thanks to big data. For instance, in some application circumstances, we discover how Amazon is capable to determine what things we require more accurately than we do. How is it that these emails in our Newsletters know our specific address, our friends' details, our travels, our health history, or our possessions? Because big data plays a central role in driving and analyzing these behind-the-scenes activities. This technology has turned people's lives and activities into data, and this data may be used to identify people's habits, hobbies, and social networks.

To accomplish the most accurate marketing, how precisely should businesses define the market's direction and cater to the wants of actual consumers?

Precision marketing cannot be generalized since diverse sectors and enterprises have unique benefits and drawbacks. Instead, organizations should create their own marketing strategies based on their unique resources and features. Marketers may locate marketing products more readily that are appropriate for their own organization with the use of big data. On the other hand, businesses should effectively utilize these state-of-the-art information technologies if they hope to continue developing given the enormous influence of the Internet and big data.

1.2 Weibo's contextualization and its significance in marketing

Weibo, or microblog, is a platform for sharing and disseminating information and accessing it based on user-followed link relationships. Sina Weibo is the most popular social media platform in China. By the end of 2019, there were 222 million active Sina Weibo users per day (Su *et al.*, 2020).

Weibo, often described as China's equivalent of Twitter (Now Twitter is renamed as "X"), owes its existence to the influence and concept of Twitter. Twitter, originating in the United States in 2006, pioneered the idea of microblogging, enabling users to share their thoughts, news, and opinions through short messages on a personalized website. The platform's innovation lay in its departure from traditional communication, allowing users to broadcast information to a wider audience rather than communicating directly with individuals.

Weibo born shortly after Twitter, closely mirrors its functionality and purpose. In addition to the Twitter-like functionality, Weibo allows rich media uploads into user feeds, provides threaded comments, and offers applications, games, and Weibo medals (Zhang & Pentina, 2012). Weibo's inception in China was influenced by Twitter's success, adapting and evolving to suit the preferences and regulations of the Chinese market.

With billions of subscribers, Weibo and Twitter are the largest microblogging sites (Chen *et al.*, 2021). There is a conceptual inspiration and adaption link between them. Weibo drew inspiration from Twitter's pioneering microblogging model, tailoring it to meet the unique cultural and regulatory context of China. While they share similarities in function, Weibo and Twitter exist independently, serving distinct user bases due to geographical and regulatory differences.

When a user on Twitter comes across any information that they find noteworthy or valuable, they often choose to share and circulate it among a broader audience. This implies that despite having only a limited number of followers, the information we share can experience significant amplification through repeated retweets by our followers, resulting in dissemination on a much larger scale, reaching hundreds, thousands, or even tens of thousands of users.

Moreover, social media users encompass a diverse range, including heads of nations, various celebrities, and leaders of renowned companies and institutions. Each of these individuals holds substantial influence and value within their respective spheres.

Similarly, Weibo's rapid expansion in China heralded the start of a new social media era. As social media has grown, an increasing number of Internet users are using these platforms to share their thoughts and opinions (Zhang, 2022). Weibo's user base has expanded as more people have joined, and as a result, the platform has spread to touch all facets of people's

lives. It has quickly transformed from a straightforward tool for archiving everyday life to a new kind of media with commercial value.

In fact, in the Internet age, running a Weibo account has become a standard marketing and promotion strategy for businesses and organizations. Additionally, running a Weibo account has become essential for businesses. Because it has the ability to alter and have an impact on the entire business community in which we live, in addition to being directly related to the company's image and external communication values.

1.3 Research problem

Big Data has caused significant changes in the way people live and consume, which has required adjustments in the way businesses create and promote. In order to achieve high-quality development for their businesses, domestic organizations should understand and implement big data technology, keep up with current trends, and mine valuable information using cutting-edge big data technology. (Wang, 2023). Since the market has demolished the conventional industrial business model, businesses that wish to thrive must strive to engage closely with customers and find innovative methods to meet their requirements in order to continue existing and growing. Therefore, the most reliable source for commercial decision-making is customer data.

Big Data technology has unquestionably improved transparency and convenience in our daily lives. Big Data increases market knowledge and strategic marketing intelligence, which helps firms become more profitable and competitive. Since data and humans have always had a relationship, big data is not a new technology. The advancement of technology is the only factor driving the continuous improvement of Big Data processing technologies.

On the other hand, Weibo may be utilized to market our products, increase awareness of our brand, and generate income. Weibo also allows us to express our own thoughts on many topics and produce excellent articles. These days, Weibo allows us to broadcast live videos and short films to draw in various audiences. Users may easily communicate and exchange information with one another through social media commerce. However, there aren't many studies that look at how customer involvement and marketing messaging affect marketing's financial performance. (Chen *et al.*, 2020).

Therefore, marketing needs to be precise, highly engaged, interactive, measurable, and deep into the target consumer, and all of this cannot be separated from the digital marketing. Data support is critical to digital marketing.

This is the core problem to be solved in this paper: How to use Weibo and big data to achieve precision marketing? Achieving precision marketing through Weibo and big data involves a strategic integration of these two powerful tools. For example, use big data analytics to determine trending topics, popular hashtags, and content preferences of the target audience. Develop a content strategy based on these insights to create content that resonates with users and encourages engagement. Also, Weibo offers advertising solutions that can be enhanced with big data insights. Utilize data-driven targeting options to display ads to specific audience segments. Refine ad targeting based on user demographics, interests, and online behaviors for maximum precision.

1.4 Dissertation objectives and research questions

In this sense, the theoretical purpose of this study is to explore the impact of big data on the implementation of precision marketing. In turn, the goal is to facilitate the latest developments in big data for businesses to market and gain revenue.

More specifically, this research aims to understand the practical impact of big data (using Weibo as an example) on businesses when it comes to precision marketing, and to better understand the factors that lead managers to decide to implement big data as a tool. In addition, this research also aims to understand whether big data and algorithms are the main manipulators of hot topics.

For this reason, our focus revolves around the issue of how to use Weibo and big data for precision marketing in this dissertation. In order to delve deeper into this inquiry, this dissertation charts the course of the research by framing three fundamental questions at the outset of the research:

RQ1) How can the target audience be chosen using Weibo customer behavior characteristic data in accordance with the product positioning? This question addresses the fundamental aspect of leveraging Weibo's customer behavior data. Understanding how to effectively utilize this data is crucial for businesses to identify and target the most relevant audience based on their behaviors and characteristics. By aligning this with product positioning, businesses can tailor their marketing strategies to resonate with the specific needs and preferences of their intended audience.

RQ2) How may Weibo relationships be used for marketing purposes? Developing connections on social media sites is essential to effective marketing. As a social media platform, Weibo provides businesses with special chances to interact with their audience. This

question delves into the strategies and tactics that can be employed to make the most of the relationship-building potential on Weibo. Effective use of these relationships can amplify the impact of marketing efforts, fostering brand loyalty and customer advocacy.

RQ3) How can one utilize Weibo in a sensible way to promote popular topics? Weibo experiences conversations and trends related to popular subjects, much like other social media platforms. The purpose of this question is to discuss how to strategically leverage Weibo to match marketing campaigns with these trends. Understanding how to rationally incorporate popular topics into marketing campaigns ensures that businesses stay relevant, capture audience attention, and capitalize on the virality associated with trending discussions.

1.5 Structure of the dissertation

This investigation will be conducted throughout 6 chapters with specific purposes.

The first chapter presents an introduction for the study, explains the background, research problem and objectives of the dissertation.

In order to provide this dissertation a strong theoretical foundation, the second chapter will be devoted to a literature review. In it, we will gather the theoretical justification for big data, precision marketing, and Weibo marketing. We will also try to grasp the conclusions drawn by contemporary researchers. The three presumptions of this study with relation to the research problem are finally listed at the conclusion of this chapter.

The third chapter explains the theoretical approaches that led to the research to be further developed.

The fourth chapter will analyze and discuss the findings of the topic of this paper through case studies of Weibo users, interview results, and officially released data.

In chapter five, some insights and recommendations for using big data for precision marketing will be derived from the analysis of these findings. And there will be a summarize of the conclusions obtained of the research, its limitations, and obtain some constructive comments and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2 – Literature review

2.1 Precision marketing

Big data has fundamentally altered the conventional marketing paradigm and created several opportunities for precision marketing of product information. Businesses may now cast a more focused net thanks to big data technologies, whereas in the past they had to adopt a wide net marketing strategy. In addition to saving businesses money, this improves marketing effectiveness. The implementation of correct product marketing for target consumers is the ultimate objective of organizations and enterprises. Precision marketing is, in reality, the ultimate goal of big data marketing, whether it is the exact positioning of customer demands or the selection of the proper target customers. The core idea of precision marketing is precision and measurability (Ferreira-Mello *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, the basis of precision marketing is to accurately position. Under the premise of using pioneering technologies and tools, establish a good communication system with customers in order to better serve them, in order to achieve low-cost but high-return business system of the enterprise.

The characteristics of precision marketing are as follows: the first characteristic is to meet the internal needs of users and have an impact on user behavior (Chen *et al.*, 2020). The second feature is to learn and meet the requirements of target customers. The third point is that there is no perfect precision marketing, but you can rely on advanced technology to get a direction.

Precision marketing necessitates the use of technical skills that are broad in knowledge and abilities, such as data analysis, project management, CRM management, marketing planning, and measuring the efficacy of communication channels.

Therefore, by looking at the prerequisites mentioned above, we can determine that precision marketing is possible and that it represents the fundamental principles and deeper moral of marketing.

First, unlike conventional marketing targeting, which can only be accomplished qualitatively, precision marketing is achievable through accurate and quantitative market targeting strategies.

Furthermore, precision marketing leverages cutting-edge database, network, and highly decentralized logistics technologies to provide enduring, customized contact between businesses and their clientele. As a result, it may have a quantifiable and customizable precision marketing effect, enabling businesses to use low-cost marketing.

Third, in order to realize the value-added response of the customer chain, achieve long-term stability, and achieve fast business development, precision marketing enables businesses and customers to maintain close interaction and communication. This allows businesses to meet the personalized needs of their customers. Additionally, precision marketing can help establish a stable and loyal customer base.

Lastly, precision marketing can help businesses eliminate their dependency on traditional marketing organizations and the convoluted supply chain of intermediary channel links, all of which contribute to a significant reduction in marketing expenses. This is made possible by modern, highly decentralized logistics.

2.2 The marketing value of Weibo

Weibo is a very active social media network in China that has revolutionized the dissemination of media and information due to its focus on brief content and speedy delivery. Weibo messages may also get “viral” and disseminate extensively. With all of this, Weibo has excellent marketing potential.

Weibo marketing describes how businesses use Weibo as a platform for marketing. They do this by posting interesting content or using updates to engage other Weibo users. This allows users to actively focus on disseminating information about the company’s products, which helps to establish a positive company image.

To start with, Weibo is a tool for communicating brands.

Both people and businesses may effectively express their brands on Weibo. Companies must first develop a Weibo message model before they may utilize Weibo for communication. Weibo communication is modeled using the following information diffusion formula: “People + Emotion + Behavior” (Qiu *et al.*, 2017).

People: Leaders in opinion and their devoted adherents. Opinion leaders personalize and engage with the issue since they each have a following. As a result, their communication broadens the topic’s scope and introduces a diversity of viewpoints.

Emotion: Give users a cause to assist the business in spreading the news. This implies that by coming up with ideas, we can effectively tie the brand to the subject and develop some positive brand messaging that work well with the communication. In addition, empathy for consumers is crucial; we must comprehend their viewpoints and responses to certain issues in order to tailor the corporate and brand images to suit their preferences.

Behavior: Encouraging people to actively produce content for sharing. It is essential to be aware of the impact of word-of-mouth. No business or media outlet can match the attraction of user comments and remarks to other users. If consumers can be encouraged to promote the business and brand again, this kind of marketing is the most effective technique to generate exposure.

Weibo spread information mainly through fans and forwarding. Readers of Weibo can receive information in real time when the user (business) posts a message. The connection between businesses and their fans can form a multilevel dissemination mode (Zhang *et al.*, 2019). In addition to this, companies can also organize marketing campaigns and leverage the celebrity effect through Weibo, which breaks geographical and numerical restrictions and leads to interactive marketing for users both online and offline.

Second, Weibo is a tool for customer relationship management.

Companies can use Weibo for customer discovery, maintenance and service. For example, in the user's online purchase, product packaging, logistics, and online and offline experience, the brand can guide the user to post pictures and comments, and if there are negative comments, they can also react and deal with them quickly to avoid causing a wider negative impact.

It is also a basic strategy for many businesses to promote one-on-one communication, feedback to their target customers through Weibo to prompt them to purchase or make additional purchases. In a customer-centric business model, customer relationship management requires companies to always maintain a harmonious relationship with their users, constantly delivering positive information about their products and services to them. At the same time, companies can collect comprehensive and timely feedback from their customers, thanks to Weibo's efficient delivery method. Weibo's approach to customer relationship management has also significantly reduced the cost of managing operations, and this low barrier to entry has allowed companies of all sizes to market online. This also opens up new opportunities for SMEs in customer relationship management.

Third, Weibo is a tool for market research and product development promotion.

Market research is an indispensable part of a company's marketing efforts. Usually, companies can investigate the needs and preferences of consumers through questionnaires, manual research, purchase of data, so as to obtain information about the needs and preferences of companies wish to understand from customers. However, these surveys are costly and labor-intensive, and their effectiveness varies from industry to industry. Weibo,

however, provides an innovative tool for companies to conduct market research in a cost-effective manner.

Product development is one of the most important issues that companies face before conducting marketing activities. The marketing behavior that ultimately has direct and in-depth contact with consumers is the company's products and services. How to truly meet the needs of consumers, understand their preferences, and create products that can be widely recognized in the market is always a challenge that companies strive to solve. Through Weibo, a young and dynamic medium, companies can gain access to the most potential users, thus catering to the public's psychology and taking the initiative in product development.

Fourth, Weibo is ideal for crisis communication.

Weibo is a double-edged sword that can be both a brand image booster and a brand-killing sword. Because public events involving defective product quality and questionable corporate credit of well-known companies can quickly become a trending topic on Weibo. Based on the trending topics, enterprises can quickly learn about the groups of consumers who are highly concerned about the incident and can also get a comprehensive understanding of the public's evaluation and opinions on the incident from the topics. As a result, companies can quickly target the target group of crisis PR¹ on Weibo, understand the cause and course of the crisis, and quickly make more targeted responses accordingly. In addition to successfully lowering the crisis to the lowest feasible level, prompt and efficient crisis communication can also use the crisis as an opportunity to improve the company's reputation. Weibo is a useful PR tool for firms to try to avert the danger of mishandling the situation to the point of malignancy when it happens. In the present world of expanding information, companies and brands cannot forecast when problems will develop.

2.3 Theoretical basis of data marketing

In response to the evolving landscape of business management, a pivotal strategy has emerged — the implementation of a sophisticated Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. This innovative approach is meticulously designed to enhance management efficiency and

¹ A PR crisis is any unfavorable incident or statement that makes headlines in the public realm that is connected to a company's or brand's operations. It may be connected to unethical business activities, situations involving customers, or personnel-related internal problems. PR Crisis? 6 Steps to Help Navigate the Storm. Source: <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/8935-recover-from-pr-crisis.html>

bolster customer engagement. The system, boasting diversified user interfaces and a well-defined structure, serves as a linchpin in efficiently managing order data and customer information. It goes beyond conventional methods, providing a clearer analysis of the current customer development scenario.

2.3.1 Customer relationship management system

In order to optimize the management efficiency and increase the stickiness of customers, a customer relationship management (CRM) system with diversified user interfaces and clear structure is designed for this traditional management method. The system can better manage order data and customer data, analyze the current customer development situation more clearly, make the company's management staff work more efficiently, and also greatly improve the company's efficiency in developing customers (Wang & Xiong, 2021). The key words in this concept are “optimize the management efficiency”, “diversified user interfaces”, “better manage order data and customer data”, and “developing customers”.

Figure 2.1: CRM system in an E-commerce company



Source: Self-elaborated

From the above definition, we can find that customer relationship management emphasizes the organizational structure, product design, sales, and after-sales service of a company. All of these aspects of the business model need to be customer-centric in order to improve profitability, revenue levels and customer satisfaction, which are factors related to the core competitiveness of the company. The CRM system is the front-end department that connects the customer-facing departments of an enterprise to the back-end department, and any one department has the responsibility of inputting and extracting information to the CRM system.

The data stored in the CRM system has strong industry-specific characteristics, as summarized in Figure 2.1 using an e-commerce company as an example.

Customer information represents the contact details and basic details of current and prospective consumers who have already made purchases.

Purchase history is the data that the operations department records when a consumer puts an order, including the product, price, promotion, package, and time.

Business opportunity information is important in the areas of Business to Business (B2B) and Business to Customer (B2C). For instance, a product's sales cycle is typically measured in weeks or months. In the event that staff changes or price adjustments are made within the company, the CRM system collects information about potential future business opportunities and works with various departments to analyze and discuss them.

By interfacing with the ERP² system, businesses may obtain product data required for marketing, including the current product catalog and the kinds of solutions packaged with various items.

The price information is the product's pricing strategy, which is comparable to the product information stored in the ERP system.

Operational information or data is, CRM systems are used in various sectors by businesses to collect data on how consumers use their products.

Marketing information is every piece of data produced during the marketing process.

In conclusion, the values surrounding the CRM system—processes, strategies, technologies, resources, and functions—enable the data stated above to be integrated into the firm's different business processes. These values provide business value that is advantageous

² Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) is a set of software tools used by businesses to handle day-to-day business activities such as accounting, procurement, project management, risk management and compliance, and supply chain operations. Source: <https://www.oracle.com/ca-en/erp/what-is-erp/>

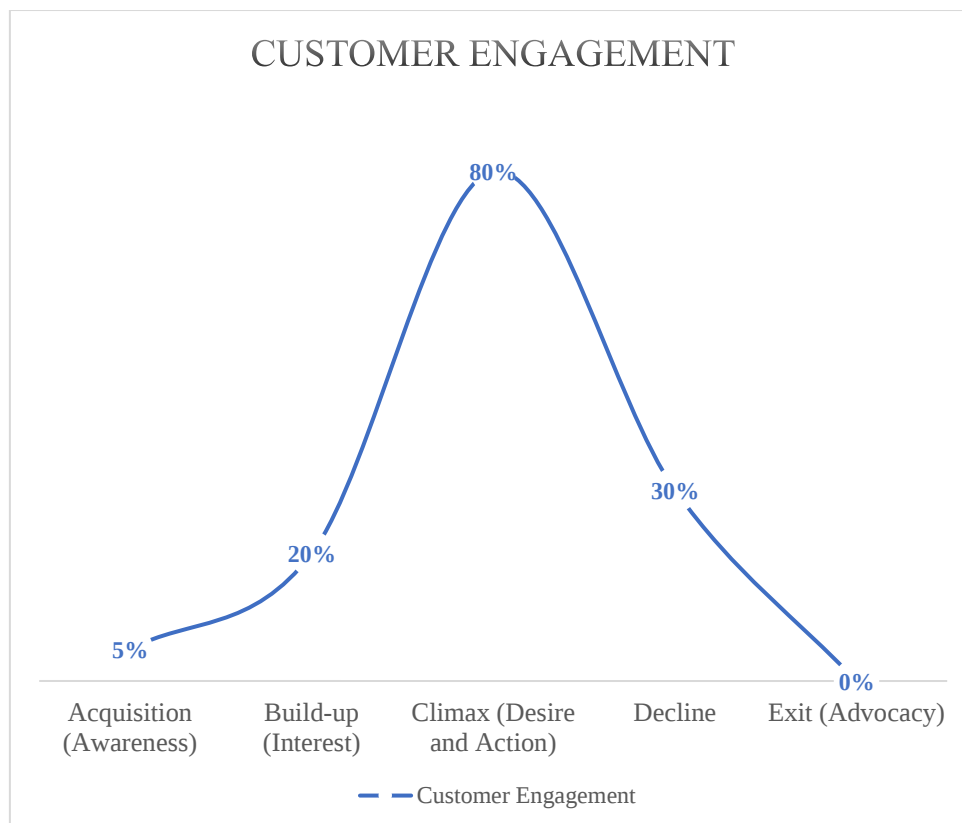
to the organization. The many departments involved in these procedures can query the CRM system for the information they require and submit changes to power the procedures.

2.3.2 Customer life cycle

Customer Life Cycle is also a part of Customer Relationship Management. Based on consumer and behavior data, the Customer Life Cycle plays a key role in helping businesses discover high profit margins and possible customer attrition.

Figure 2.2 depicts the evolution of the customer life cycle. The cycle begins when a client purchases a product. It ends as the product matures and a series of infrequent events occur, such as quality complaints, product cessation, and the emergence of substitutes. When the cycle ends, customers may stop purchasing this brand's products. Companies utilize this cycle to separate the stages at which their customers use their products, giving unique marketing and economic goals to each stage. Furthermore, various sectors have distinct cutoff lines for each step of the customer life cycle.

Figure 2.2: Customer life cycle



Source: Self-elaborated

At these different stages, the marketing strategy is shown in Table 2.1:

Table 2.1 - Marketing programs for different life cycles

	Acquisition	Build-up	Climax	Decline	Exit
Customer characteristics and needs	Understanding the characteristics of products and services	Regular and consistent use of products and services	Satisfied with the use of products and services	New needs or chance factors emerge, users look for alternatives to products and services	When a product or service reaches its end of life, people begin using fresh alternatives
Focus the Market	1. Bring in fresh consumers. 2. Present the goods to the customer	1. Analyze how customers use and comment on goods and services 2. Raising customer contentment and loyalty	1. Preserve customer loyalty by enhancing the value added to goods and services 2. Make your marketing to valuable users stand out	Early warning	High-cost maintenance of departing users

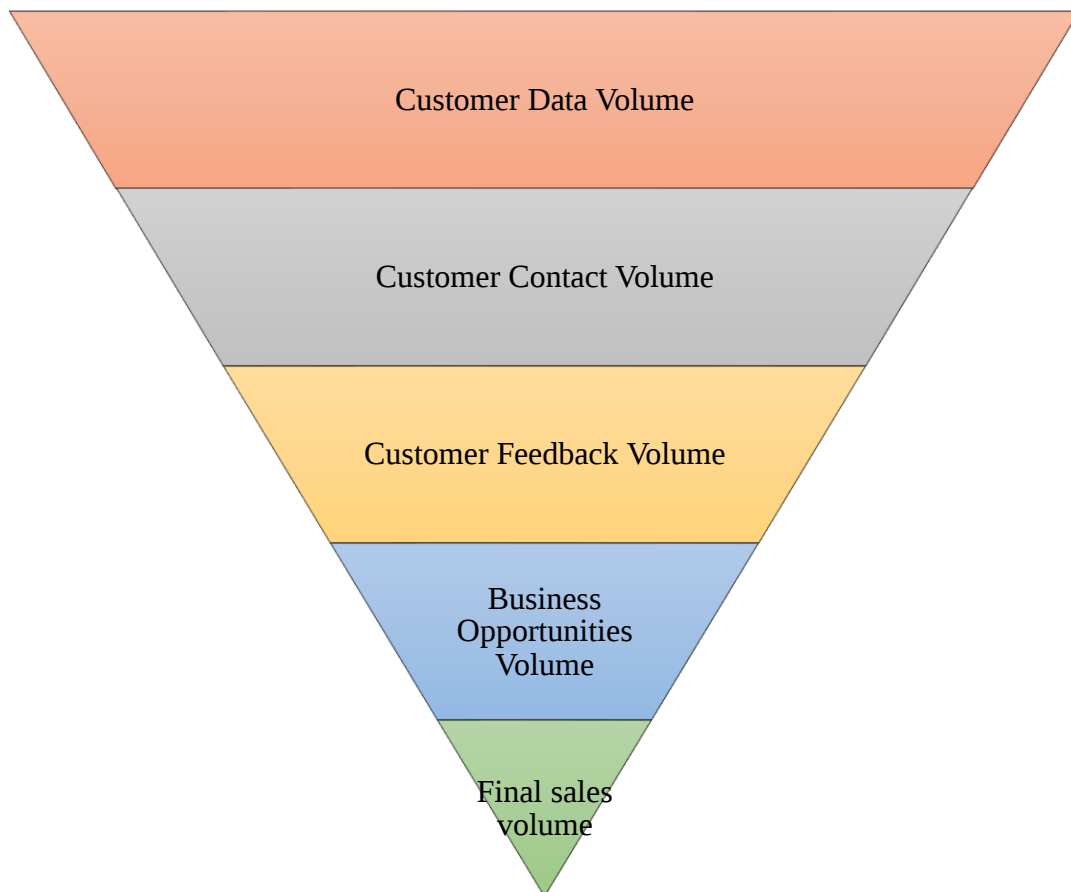
Source: Self-elaborated

In essence, the utilization of current customer product usage behavior data in the CRM system is the customer life cycle. It enables businesses and brands to determine the most effective marketing focus and approach for product and price strategies by differentiating between the stages at which every individual customer uses the product.

2.3.3 The purchase funnel model

The funnel model concentrates on finding new consumers, whereas the customer life cycle concentrates on keeping current customers.

Figure 2.3: Funnel model



Source: Self-elaborated

Figure 2.3 above is a representation of the stages of the funnel model, showing the entire process of customer acquisition for a business.

Customer data volume. This is the quantity of client information in the CRM system that satisfies the marketing manager's screening requirements. It comprises both clients who have not yet made a transaction and potential customers from different marketing channels.

Customer contact volume refers to the number of consumers who can be reached by a marketing strategy, such as newsletters, given the aforementioned customer data volume. To boost the conversion rate, marketers should clean and gather data to expand the reach of their marketing strategy, since the quality of the data is the determining element.

Customer feedback volume is that when customers get a marketing promotion and the marketing material is not relevant to their interests, they often ignore it. However, there is a minority of target consumers that are moved and inspired by marketing material, making them want to learn more about the things being promoted. Customer feedback behavior differs depending on the marketing approach used. The overall marketing quality has an impact on the conversion rate of customers responding to customer feedback.

The number of customer business opportunities is when the firm gathers feedback from customers, keeps following up, and then looks into possible commercial ventures. The attractiveness of the product to consumers—that is, the prices and items that are advertised in marketing materials have the power to entice consumers to make a purchase—determines this conversion rate.

Customer sales volume is the funnel's last link, which speaks to a salesperson's ability to finally turn a prospective client buy opportunity into sales income once it has been identified in the preceding stage. The salesperson's ability to close deals is what determines this conversion rate. After the buyer is impressed by the marketing material, sales should persuade them to make a final purchase in a short amount of time.

2.4 Overview of big data

As technology has advanced and proliferated, we now have access to a multitude of data sources. For instance, the widespread use of smartphones has produced an enormous volume of data about mobile phone users. Humans today produce a vast and diverse amount of data. Concurrently, the computational power of computer hardware and algorithms has increased, opening up new avenues for data processing. As a result, we are able to learn more about the value that the data has.

2.4.1 Basic forms of big data storage

The enormous amount of data that can be saved is the fundamental characteristic of big data storage. Consequently, it is not always feasible to store data on a single system. This is because the amount of data that can be saved on a single system is limited. Under these circumstances, a distributed storage strategy is required to handle huge data storage. Table 2.2 illustrates the three categories of big data storage techniques:

- Apache Hadoop HDFS (Distributed File System)
- Apache Hadoop YARN (Yet Another Resource Negotiator)
- Apache HBase

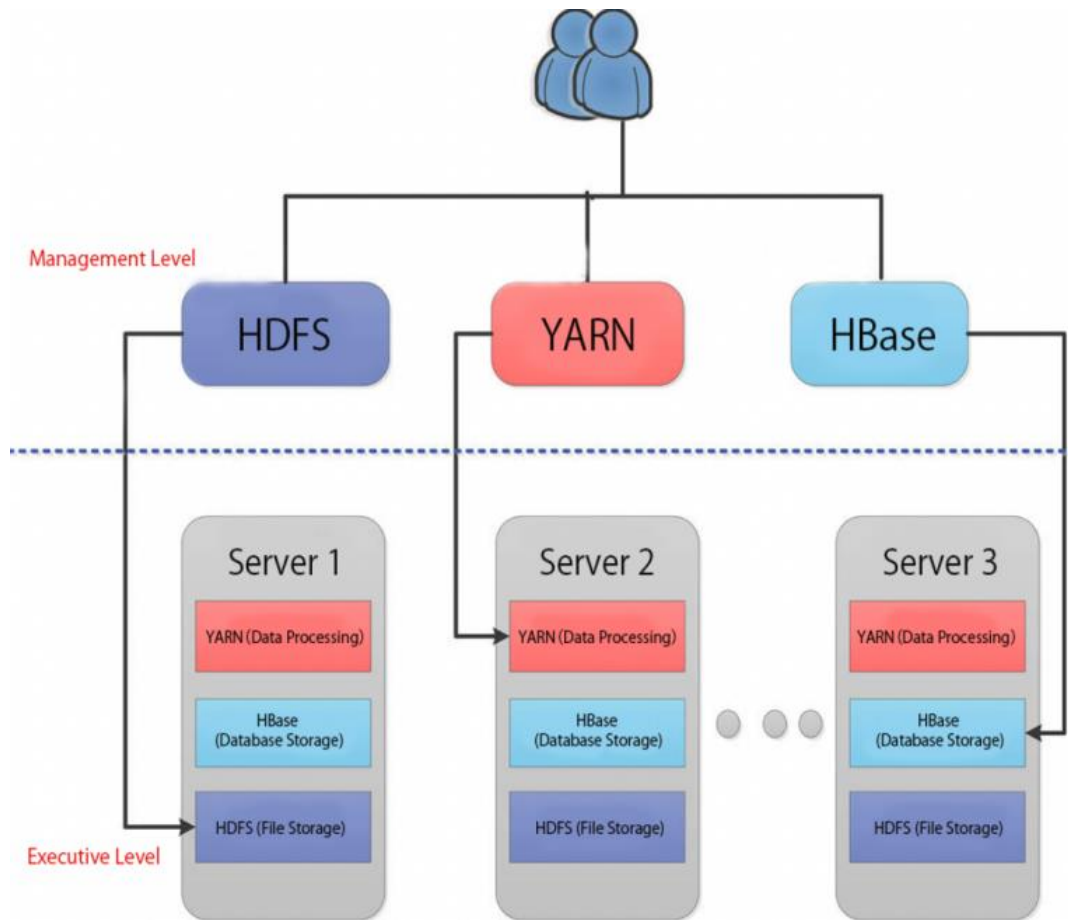
Table 2.2 - Three basic forms of big data storage

Data storage methods	Explanation
Apache Hadoop HDFS (Distributed File System)	File storage is required as processing vast amounts of unstructured data. Unstructured data lacks a consistent format and cannot be described using a structured database. In this context, distributed file systems are employed extensively.
Apache Hadoop YARN (Yet Another Resource Negotiator)	The structure of the data that is saved must be specified by the database, and in many cases, using a few primary keys can help locate the relevant values throughout the storage process. Key-value pairs have a straightforward structure, yet they may allow incredibly sophisticated applications. Key-value pairs are really utilized for storing at the underlying layer of many databases, and they have been employed extensively in stand-alone devices.
Apache HBase	Databases are capable of modeling data through abstraction. Many table-based applications that may be utilized in the government, institutions, schools, and libraries are only a few examples of the real application scenarios for which models can be used to develop a multitude of actual data abstraction models. A lot of Internet apps store their data directly in databases at the back end, and an application accessing the database at the front end displays the final information on a web page. Most commonly used programs rely on databases for their back-end support.

Source: Self-elaborated

Figure 2.4 summarizes the principle of Big Data storage:

Figure 2.4: Three basic forms of big data storage



Source: Internet

2.4.2 Intelligent search

Knowledge makes people great, and the knowledge graph will make search engines wiser. The knowledge graph is a knowledge foundation that has been enhanced by big data. As a result, knowledge graphs serve as the foundation for real-time communication, information prediction, and answer discovery by search engines, marking a fundamental shift from the information age to the knowledge era. Knowledge graphs are used by search engines as the gateway to intelligent search, which is an unavoidable technological advancement. The user's search use normal language, and the knowledge graph is organized for storage. As a result, it transforms the user's natural language into query phrases that the system can understand. Three layers of analysis are used to gradually examine it: pattern matching, knowledge deconstruction, and merging solution.

Pattern matching: Because not every user's search results in a single query to the knowledge graph, we compare users' search words to ascertain if a knowledge graph query is necessary.

Knowledge disassembly: After a search phrase is matched, the search data must be broken down into distinct sub-knowledge searches before the knowledge graph is searched for each sub-knowledge search.

Merge solution: The user receives the results after combining the sub-knowledge search results obtained from the knowledge graph with the query solution.

2.5 Assumptions

Three theories are developed in light of the study's focus and the previously mentioned theoretical information:

Assumption1: If brands can drive visitors to Weibo, they can succeed in marketing.

Assumption 2: The subjects and information that are popular on Weibo are those that are produced and distributed by technology (big data, machine learning, and data analytics).

Assumption 3: There is a positive correlation between a brand's social skills and sales.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Case study method

Case study research is common in many disciplines and a range of general guidelines have been published (Wohlin & Rainer, 2022). A case study is a description of a real event or scenario in the form of written text by a researcher based on a certain methodology, either directly or indirectly, mainly for teaching or research. This leads to a further understanding of the problem and research and analysis.

Currently case studies include many fields such as sociology, anthropology, political science and management. Case studies, as an important qualitative method in empirical research, have received much attention and use in practical research (Wang & Zhang, 2022). First of all, case studies can help researchers to find out the causal relationship of how things work. Especially when studying decision-making behaviors, case studies can be used to deeply analyze the intentions of actors and make inferences and information processing accordingly.

In addition, case studies also make it easier to obtain data. If some relevant information is concentrated in a single case, it is easier to obtain it by using case study analysis. That is, collecting new data and correcting existing data is often easier in case studies than in many other studies.

A final obvious advantage is that case studies can make theoretical knowledge more tangible and concrete, allowing the researcher to have a fuller understanding of the theory.

If Weibo serves as a marketing tool, then Weibo with big data serves as the cutting edge, enabling businesses and their brands to succeed on the Weibo marketing route. We believe this dissertation, which uses Li Ziqi's Weibo precision marketing as a case study, will serve as an inspiration to you.

3.2 Background of the case

In 2016, Li Ziqi began posting videos of herself online in an antiquated manner. Her films mostly discuss how ancient foods were made and other related topics. For instance, using conventional culinary techniques to process food or using same techniques to process cosmetics, cloth, clothing, pens, ink, and paper. Her movies, which span a large period of time and feature a lot of the natural beauty and sceneries of the Chinese countryside, are more

about her rural lifestyle than they are about teaching. She also dons Chinese Hanfu, or traditional Chinese attire in her films, which frequently show her working in the fields and at home.

3.3 One to one interview

Interview belongs to a kind of qualitative research. Among the main methods uses in qualitative research, the first and most commonly used is interviewing (Denny & Weckesser, 2022). This method usually involves designing open-ended questions so that respondents are free to express their views. The pinnacle of interviewing is successful chatting with a purpose (Wang, 2021). The researcher gathers information by interacting with the respondents, which can be used to gain insights into the views, experiences and attitudes of an individual or a group of individuals, thus obtaining detailed information about a particular issue or topic.

In addition to this, the interview method provides insight into the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the respondents, thus helping us to better understand their behaviors and decisions. The interview method can also help us explain the causes and effects of certain phenomena, thus providing a deeper understanding and analysis. Finally, the interview method can be used to assess the effectiveness of certain policies or programs, providing suggestions for improving strategies or programs.

In this dissertation, the data collection was carried by an interview with a marketing specialist who has been working at Meituan³ for over 10 years. In the process we asked a few open-ended questions related to Meituan's marketing campaigns on Weibo and gained insights from this professional.

Meituan is a Chinese e-commerce site that offers regional goods and services for eating, travel, entertainment, and delivery in China. Meituan offers a range of items such as food delivery websites, shared bike internet platforms, online vehicle services, rail and airline tickets, hotels, travel, and bed and breakfast apartments.

3.4 Official survey data from Weibo about its “Hot Search Ranking”

Regarding the collection of data, we have mainly utilized the data method which is quantitative research. Quantitative research can be utilized in fields such as economics,

³ Source: www.meituan.com

marketing, and education. It is also often performed by social scientists in various disciplines, including sociology, psychology, public health and politics through the exploration of numeric patterns (Maula & Stam, 2019).

The data method is a commonly used method for quantitative research, which is better adapted to the contemporary need to keep abreast of changing trends in social development. Secondly, it greatly improves the precision of social research standards through the use of statistical mathematical analysis, and is characterized by rigorous logical reasoning, resulting in accurate and scientific results. Finally, the data method allows the researcher to make objective and quantitative descriptions, statistics and judgments after collecting, analyzing and interpreting numerical data.

Data analytics is changing the industry. In the financial industry, data analytics is used in areas such as risk assessment and risk pricing; for example, when lending money, analyzing your past credit data, income data, consumption data, etc., to determine whether to lend money and the number of loans, etc. In the healthcare industry, data analytics is used in marketing placement, product recommendation and other fields; through the collection of demand data and behavioral habits of consultants, etc., it clarifies the direction of business push, develops personalized treatment plans and so on. In this dissertation, we have collected the official publicly released research data from Weibo for our study.

3.4.1 What's hot search?

Hot search is a kind of algorithm. It alludes to the handful or dozens of phrases that Weibo's search engine generates the greatest traffic for. It uses an algorithm to determine the ranking for these keywords. Following the data of Weibo users' search, follow, browse, like, and comment activity, the algorithm pushes these phrases with the most attention and search traffic. Hot search phrases so represent the subjects that are currently trending and popular throughout time⁴.

3.4.2 The algorithm formula of hot search: how is the heat of search terms calculated?

⁴ Weibo Hot Search Management Rules: <https://weibo.com/1934183965/KuKyPkp8Y?type=repot>

To determine how hot a search word is, multiply its heat (search heat + discussion heat + spread heat) by its interaction rate⁵.

1) The quantity of search is searching heat. Examples of search types include click-to-jump and manually input searches. It may be an indicator of how much users are paying attention to and examining trending topics.

2) The quantity of conversation is the intensity of the debate. The user's initial Weibo postings and debates that have been reposted, for instance. This demonstrates the fervor with which Weibo users participate in discussions.

3) The quantity of measurements equals the spread heat. It displays how different subjects are discussed on Weibo.

4) The proportion of involvement on the popular search result page is called the interaction rate. It stands for people's readiness to dedicate themselves to content consumption.

⁵ Weibo Hot Search Management Rules: <https://weibo.com/1934183965/KuKyPkp8Y?type=repost>

Chapter 4 – Obtained results, findings, and discussion

The case study of Li Ziqi's precision marketing on Weibo offers a fascinating exploration into the dynamics of digital marketing, emphasizing the influential role played by a renowned content creator on the platform.

Li Ziqi's Weibo account presents a nuanced evolution, transitioning from a self-publisher to a team-based business operation, credited as the "Founder of Li Ziqi Brand." The content strategy revolves around captivating short videos, showcasing the rustic charm of Chinese rural life. With a focus on "Traditional Oriental Food," Li Ziqi has created a distinct brand image through ancient-style food videos and garden-themed content. The account's popularity lies in its ability to resonate with users, emphasizing natural food over flashy packaging, and portraying an idyllic countryside life through artful videography.

Li Ziqi's case serves as a beacon of inspiration for precision marketing strategies. The success hinges on quality content, deeply rooted in Chinese tradition, contributing to a unique brand value. Li Ziqi strategically positions herself as a personal brand, differentiated through her ancient-style culinary creations and the portrayal of traditional Chinese skills. The case underscores the importance of precise content positioning for building a personal brand with distinct influence.

Moreover, Li Ziqi's collaborations with cross-border brands, such as the Forbidden City Food campaign, showcase the power of strategic partnerships. By associating with cultural icons like the Forbidden City, Li Ziqi taps into a broader audience interested in traditional culture, simultaneously achieving her business objectives. This collaborative approach demonstrates the mutually beneficial nature of cross-border partnerships.

4.1 Case study of precision marketing on Weibo: Li Ziqi

Li Ziqi's Weibo account has over 25.9 million users as of September 2023, and she gets tens of thousands of comments on each post. Furthermore, Li Ziqi's operation team has used Weibo as its platform for a great deal of e-commerce promotion, as shown by its homepage. It has channeled a large number of Weibo subscribers to Li Ziqi's "Tmall flagship shop"⁶ to

⁶ Tmall.com is a Chinese-language website for business-to-consumer online retail, spun off from Taobao, operated in China by Alibaba Group. It is a platform for local Chinese and international businesses to sell brand-name goods to consumers in Greater China. Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tmall>

purchase products. Based on the idea of “Traditional Oriental Food”, Li Ziqi’s operation team has been working to expand and diversify her product range on the e-commerce platform since the company attracted its first set of wealthy members in 2018.

4.1.1 Analysis of Li Ziqi’s Weibo account

Figure 4.1: Homepage image of Li Ziqi’s Weibo account



Source: Internet

A snapshot of Li Ziqi’s Weibo account may be found above in Figure 4.1. The fact that her Weibo account includes an email address indicates that the team in charge of it places a lot of emphasis on outside collaborations. The “Founder of Li Ziqi Brand” is ascribed to the account. This indicates that the account is now run as a team-based business instead of as a self-publisher.

The screenshot of Li Ziqi’s publicly available video in Figure 4.2 displays the content aspects of her Weibo. Li Ziqi’s vintage-style and garden-inspired cuisine films made her stand out in the intense market rivalry.

Figure 4.2: Li Ziqi's videos



Source: Internet

Her account showcases China's rural and countryside life in each short video that is uploaded. Almost five million people have watched each of her videos. Users are more likely to be impressed by the natural cuisine displayed in Li Ziqi's movies than by the exquisite packaging and commercially driven goods. Additionally, she uses a filter in her movies to show us the idyllic country life, which enhances the appearance of Li Ziqi's homemade meals. Li Ziqi's account has also been tagged with the terms "ancient style garden" and "oriental food and lifestyle". Moreover, thanks to People's Daily's official media coverage, Li Ziqi and her films have come to represent rural life in peoples' hearts and thoughts.

Li Ziqi's account demonstrates that self-publishing accounts mostly concentrate on content marketing, in contrast to corporate accounts that primarily handle social and event marketing.

Regarding strategies for drawing in subscribers, Li Ziqi's operations team uses high-caliber video content and e-commerce campaign management to increase account profitability and follower development. The Weibo platform's resources also assist with this. On Weibo, high-quality self-publishing accounts can get resource support. Li Ziqi is therefore the most well-known blogger who has received official Weibo certification.

4.1.2 The execution of the precision marketing project of Li Ziqi

Phase 1: In order to prepare for the "Double 11"⁷ campaign, Li Ziqi's Weibo account started to post preview content in October, which gave her subscribers something to look forward to and prepared for the campaign in advance.

⁷ Double 11 is a Global Shopping Festival created by Alibaba Group in China.

This is strategic content teasers. Initiating the process in October, Li Ziqi's team strategically employs content teasers to build anticipation among her substantial subscriber base. This early engagement not only generates excitement but also lays the groundwork for the upcoming campaign. By providing glimpses of what's to come, Li Ziqi establishes a connection with her audience, fostering a sense of anticipation and expectation.

Phase 2: Weibo's food account collaborated with Li Ziqi's account to introduce a tailored theme: "Warm you up with food", aiming to amplify content engagement. This strategic thematic collaboration encouraged followers to share videos from Li Ziqi's account, consequently drawing the interest of new users and enhancing Li Ziqi's brand visibility.

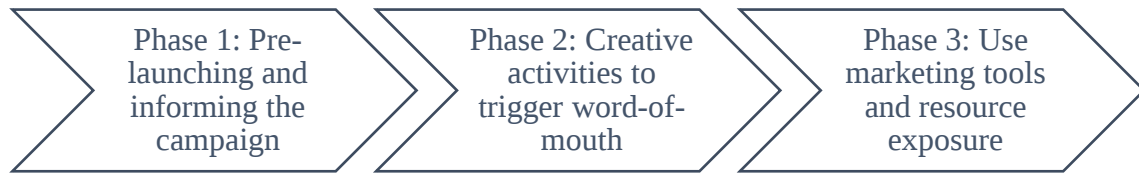
It is customized topic collaboration. The collaboration between Weibo's food account and Li Ziqi's account showcases a synergistic approach to marketing. The creation of a custom topic, "Warm you up with food," exemplifies strategic thinking to amplify content visibility. By encouraging subscribers to retweet Li Ziqi's videos under this custom topic, a collaborative community engagement strategy is employed. This not only serves to enhance the content's reach but also captures the attention of potential users. The emphasis on warmth and food aligns with the emotional and lifestyle appeal characteristic of Li Ziqi's brand, creating resonance with the audience.

Phase 3: In the midst of the "Double 11" frenzy, Li Ziqi's Weibo presence captivated a vast audience with targeted marketing strategies, rapidly amplifying product conversions. Additionally, leveraging official Weibo food influencers, Li Ziqi's account orchestrated strategic retweets, garnering industry acclaim and expanding the reach to untapped user demographics.

This is precision targeting and influencer amplification. During the critical "Double 11" period, Li Ziqi's Weibo account adopts precision targeting through the utilization of marketing tools. This approach ensures the message reaches a large and accurate user base, enhancing the chances of conversion. Simultaneously, leveraging official Weibo food bloggers to retweet Li Ziqi's content serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it elevates the industry's awareness, positioning Li Ziqi as a key player in the food domain. Second, it extends Li Ziqi's reach to a larger and maybe unexplored market sector by leveraging the bloggers' current following.

Figure 4.3 The three phases of Li Ziqi's Weibo precision marketing.

Figure 4.3: Li Ziqi's operation steps of precision marketing



Source: Self - elaborated

Lastly, Li Ziqi's Weibo account made use of additional promotional materials and Weibo's opening screen advertisements, which raised the campaign's visibility. A comprehensive marketing approach is demonstrated by the deliberate transition from teaser material to group subject creation and targeted targeting.

Li Ziqi's team effectively combines anticipation-building tactics, community collaboration, and influencer amplification to maximize the impact of the "Double 11" campaign. The integration of various phases underscores a nuanced understanding of Weibo's dynamics, audience engagement, and industry collaboration, contributing to the success of Li Ziqi's precision marketing efforts.

Figure 4.4 is the Li Ziqi-related content that users will see on the screen when they open Weibo.

Figure 4.4: Li Ziqi's Weibo ad (Theme: Oriental Gourmet Lifestyle)



Source: Internet

4.1.3 The insights of Li Ziqi's precise marketing

First and foremost, the foundation of self-media's promotion is high-quality content. Li Ziqi uses deep-meaning content marketing to achieve financial rewards, and her work is characterized by sophistication. As a result, her Weibo account's marketing relies on content innovation to create a distinctive brand value that encourages her followers to pay attention to traditional Chinese culture. Li Ziqi has so established her own distinct impact.

Secondly, Li Ziqi has a distinctive personal brand on Weibo. Li Ziqi showcases a variety of delicacies in her short movies, including peach blossom wine, peach blossom sauce, and autumn pear cream, all of which have a distinct old flair. She primarily shoots in rural and agricultural areas. This displays the food's organic appearance. Her cooking utensils are also painted in an antique tint and designed in a rustic manner.

The snapshot of Li Ziqi producing autumn pear cream and peach blossom wine is shown in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5: Screenshot of Li Ziqi's video



Source: Internet

Furthermore, Li Ziqi's posts highlight traditional Chinese crafts like woodblock printing and papermaking in addition to cuisine. So, her story demonstrates the need for a precise and distinctive content strategy while developing a personal brand. This shapes their brand identity in a catalytic way.

Last but not least, Li Ziqi's frequent partnerships with international businesses are another factor in her success with precision marketing. For instance, Li Ziqi began an official partnership in 2019 with the Beijing marketing initiative "Forbidden City Food." There is a wealth of cultural material that may be utilized in the Forbidden City itself because it is home to millions of artifacts and thousands of years of cultural legacy. Because to Li Ziqi's partnership with the Forbidden City, a larger audience of admirers of Chinese culture who may become Li Ziqi customers have been reached. Finally, Li Ziqi's success with precision marketing may also be attributed to her many collaborations with foreign companies. For example, in 2019, Li Ziqi formally joined forces with the Beijing marketing campaign "Forbidden City Food". With millions of items and thousands of years of cultural past, the Forbidden City alone offers a plethora of cultural material that may be used. Li Ziqi's collaboration with the Forbidden City has allowed it to reach a wider audience of Chinese cultural enthusiasts who may potentially become Li Ziqi clients.

4.2 First half of 2023 Weibo popular search ranking trend report data

Weibo's hot search analysis offers a useful lens through which to view the pulse of public interest in the dynamically changing world of social media.

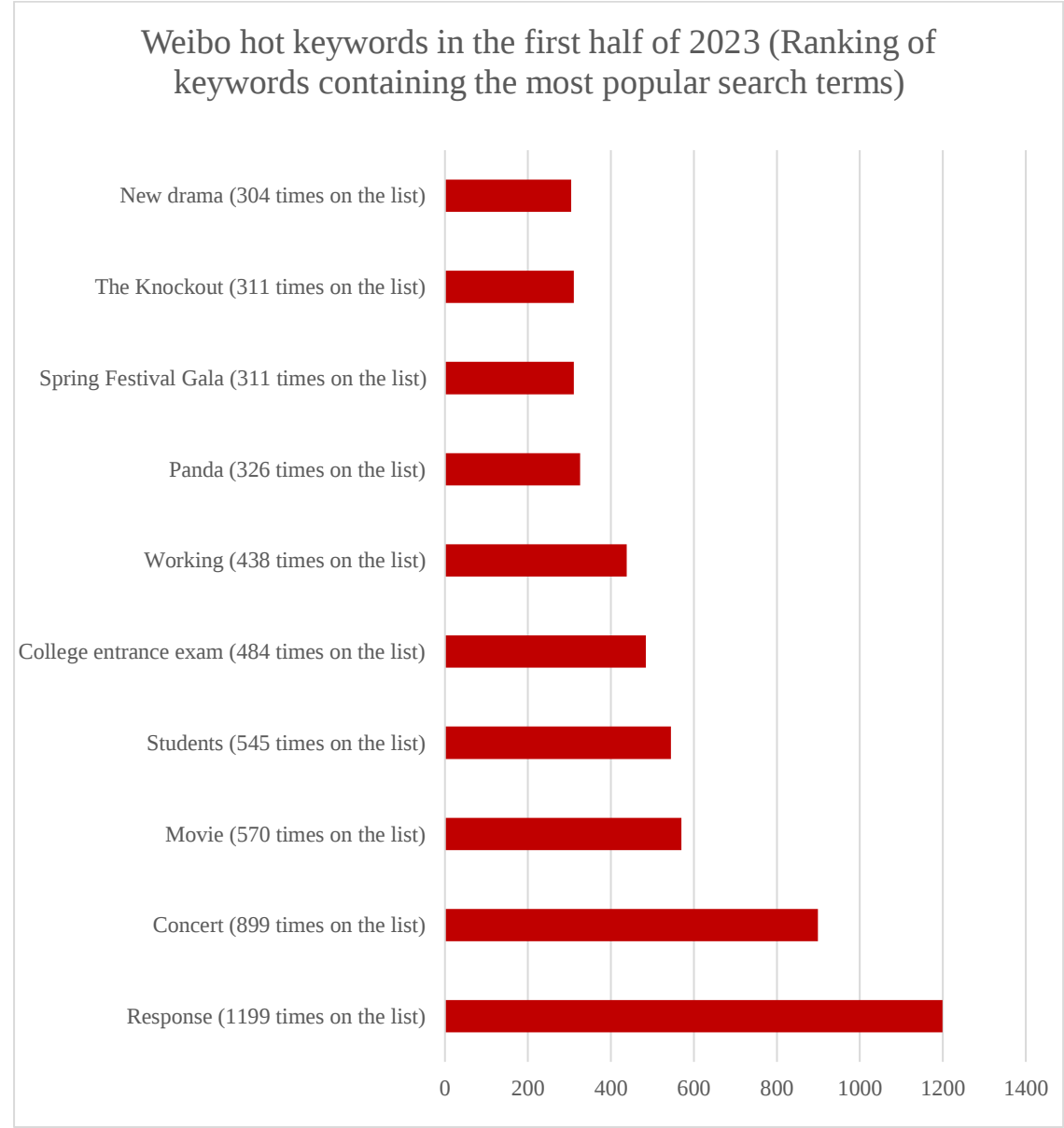
As the data unfolds, it becomes apparent that Weibo's significance extends beyond the realms of social and entertainment discourse. The comprehensive coverage of hot topics spans social, entertainment, and vertical spheres, demonstrating Weibo's versatility as a platform encompassing an extensive range of industries. The platform emerges not just as a medium

for social dialogue but as a crucial tool and channel for individuals seeking information on trending subjects.

In essence, the exploration of Weibo’s hot searches not only unveils the prevalent themes capturing public attention but also sheds light on the platform’s role as a cultural barometer, reflecting the diverse tastes and preferences of its dynamic user base.

Using the data from popular searches, we can obtain the ranking of terms over time. The top 10 popular searches in the first half of 2023, as revealed by Weibo, are displayed in Figure 4.6. The majority of the phrases, such as reaction, concert, students and working, etc., are found to be associated with social and entertainment concerns.

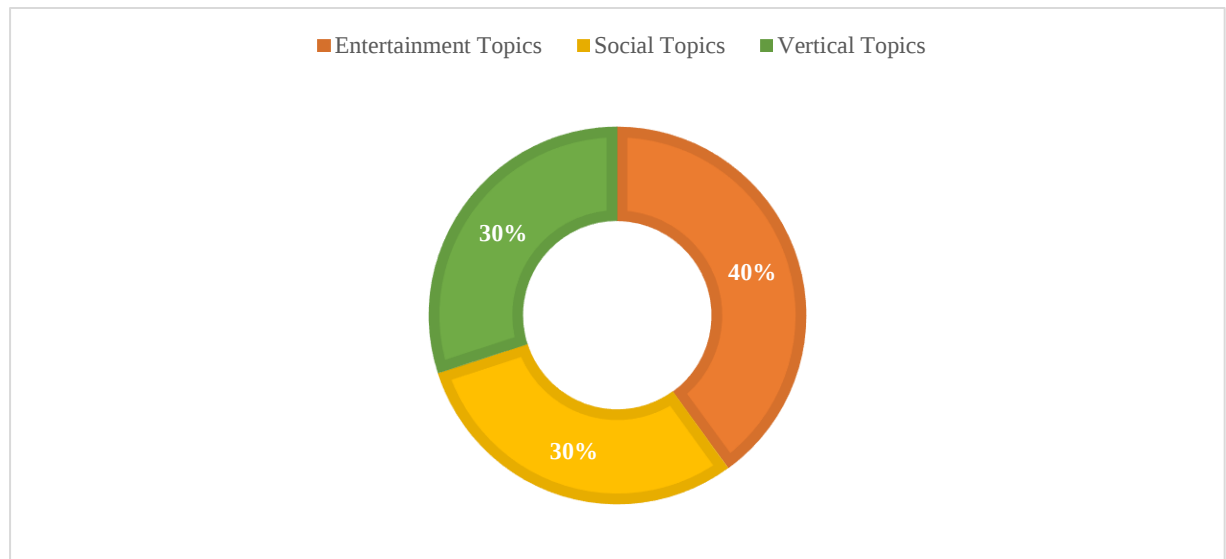
Figure 4.6: Weibo hot keywords in the first half of 2023



Source: Self – elaborated

We can observe from the data in Figure 4.7 that there is an emphasis on content.

Figure 4.7: Users' attention to different age groups



Source: Self – elaborated

We can see that in the first half of 2023, people's attention to social hot topics, entertainment hot topics and vertical hot topics are relatively balanced. Among them, entertainment hot topics account for the largest share, which also shows that Weibo plays an extremely important role in the entertainment industry.

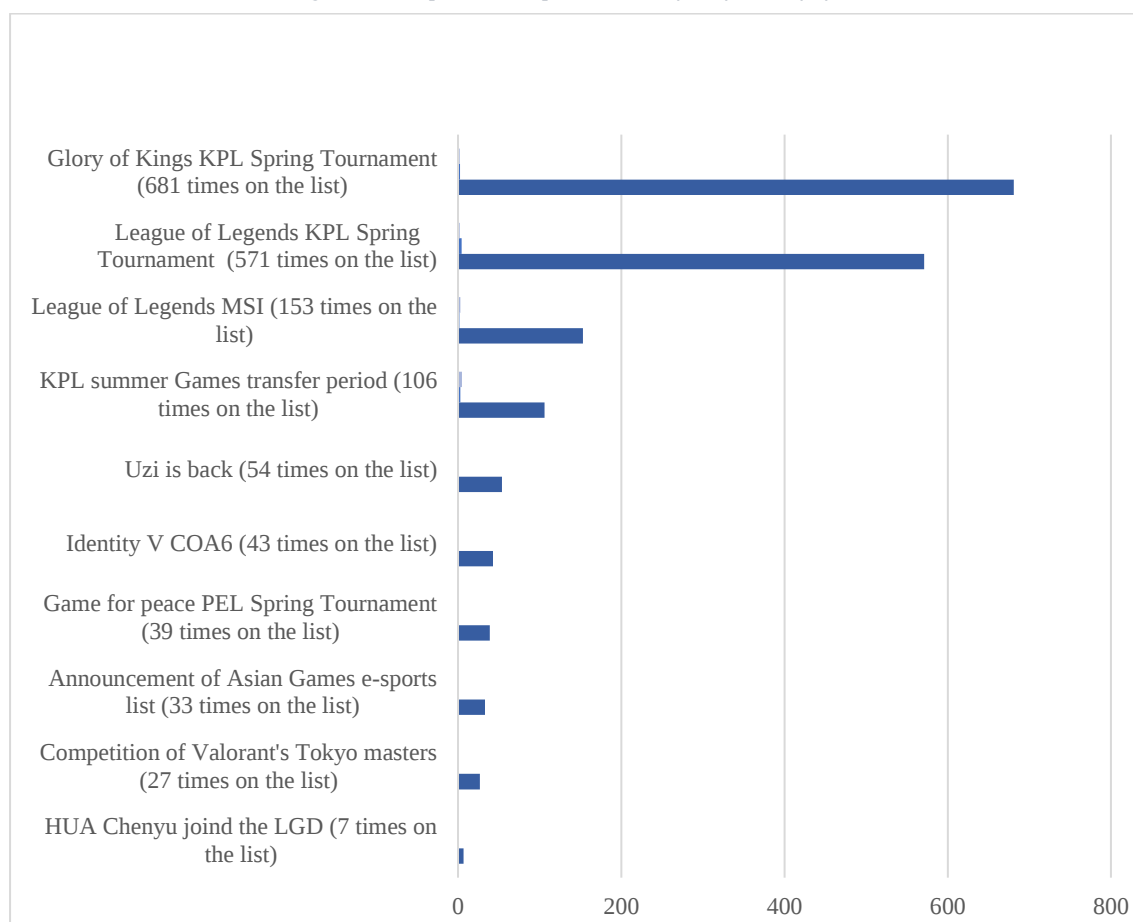
However, the attention of social and vertical hot topics is also not low. This shows that Weibo covers a huge range of industries and is an important tool and channel for people to search for hot topics.

4.2.1 Hot topics in the vertical field

In actuality, trending searches cover a wide range of vertical themes. There are industries for phones, vehicles, gaming, sports, and animation. Not only that, Weibo also listed the relevant hot search brands and events that have been on the list in the first half of 2023 under each of these industries. Among them, the topics of e-sports in the games industry and athletes in the sports industry are the two most frequently listed. Their highest numbers on the list reached 681 and 150 times respectively.

Professional League of Legends and Glory of Kings events are the most watched e-sports material, as Figure 4.8 illustrates. This demonstrates that young people continue to make up the majority of Weibo's user base.

Figure 4.8: Top 10 hot e-sports events of the first half of 2023



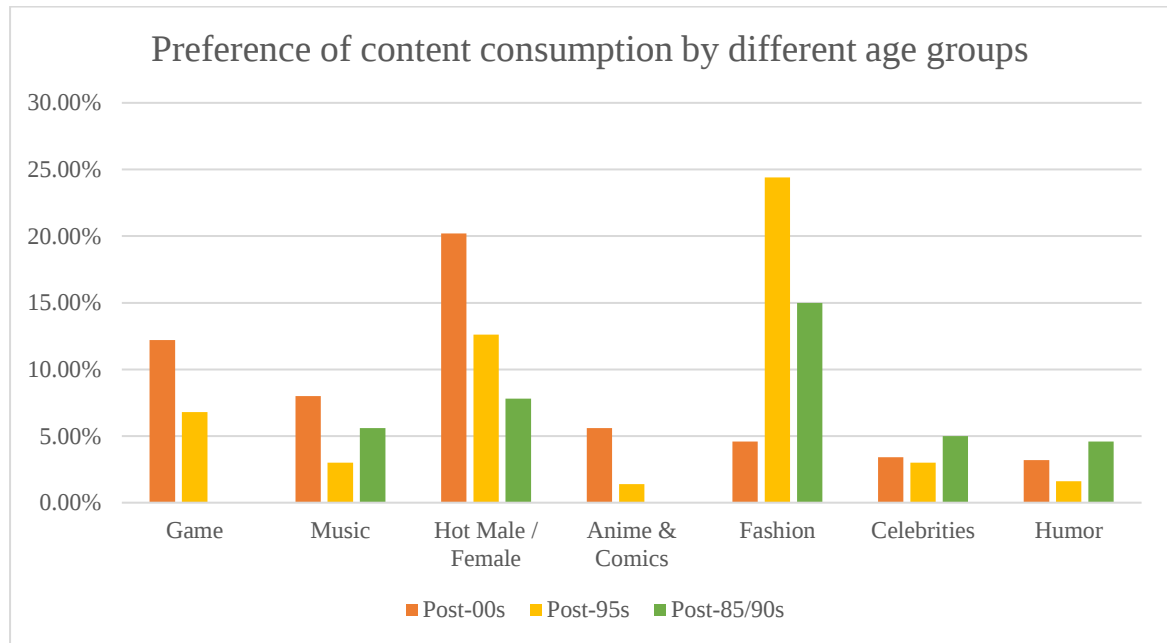
Source: Self – elaborated

Moreover, as depicted in Figure 4.9, based on the findings from TOPKLOUT.COM⁸'s study regarding the content consumption preferences among Chinese youth, it becomes evident that individuals born in the 2000s exhibit a fondness for gaming, animals, and the emotionally immersive ACGN subculture, commonly known as the Two-dimensional circle.

Additionally, the top interests of Generation Z customers are beauty and skincare, followed by entertainment and gaming. Customers of Generation Y are mostly interested in topics like parenthood, celebrities, cuisine, movies, and television.

⁸ TOPKLOUT, Beijing Xin San Excellent Technology Co. It is the leading domestic authoritative self-media value ranking and copyright brokerage management second-party data monitoring organization.

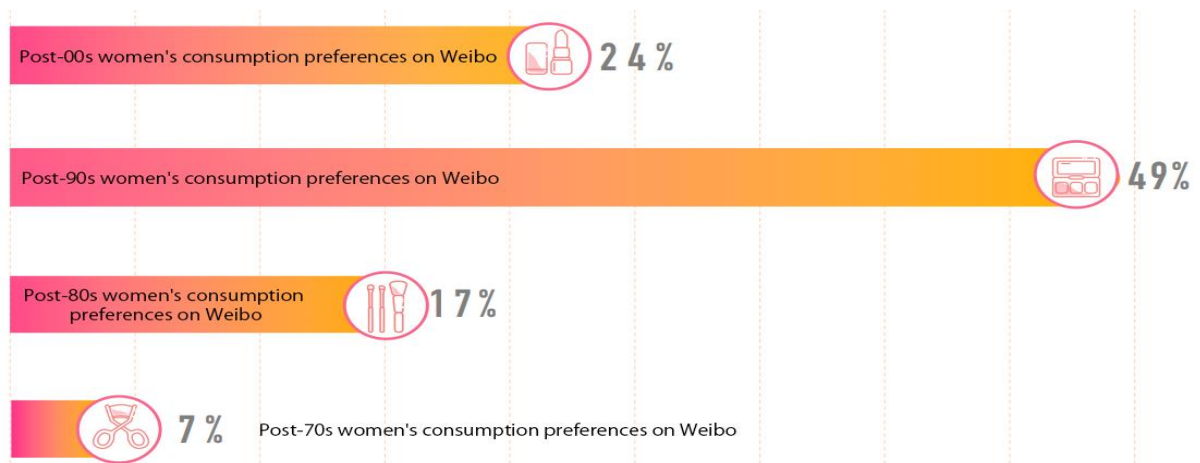
Figure 4.9: Preference of content consumption by different age groups



Source: Self - elaborated

From the official data published in Figure 4.10 below, we can also find that the group of women who spend the most on Weibo is the post-90s generation. According to statistics, the top3 products they consume are beauty and skin care, fitness and health care, and digital products.

Figure 4.10: Age of Weibo's female consumer base



Source: Internet

In summary, the Weibo platform hosts a diverse array of hot topics across verticals such as phones, cars, games, sports, and animation industries. Industry-specific hot searches, brands, and events are meticulously compiled by Weibo, with e-sports and athletes emerging

as the most prominent topics, appearing 681 and 150 times, respectively, in the first half of 2023.

In the gaming realm, professional tournaments of League of Legends and Glory of Kings take center stage, indicative of Weibo's youth-centric user base. The content preferences of Chinese youth, as per TOPKLOUT.COM's survey, reveal the 00s generation's fondness for games, animals, and the emotionally rich ACGN subculture (Two-dimensional).

Different tastes appear throughout the generations, with Generation Z showing a keen interest in skincare and cosmetics, gaming, and entertainment coming in second. On the other hand, Generation Y customers prioritize food, parenthood, celebrities, movies, and television shows.

Official data underscores the significant spending of post-90s women on Weibo, with beauty and skincare, fitness and health care, and digital products ranking as their top-three consumed categories. This data offers valuable insights into the varied interests and consumer behaviors exhibited by different age groups on the Weibo platform.

4.2.2 Unboxing video

The official Weibo research also discovered a phenomenon: viewers are incredibly interested in unpacking and review videos. In 2022, 15 million users are expected to watch unboxing and review videos on Weibo daily. Additionally, consumers may see the goods regardless of its categorization. A few samples of unboxing films taken by various bloggers are displayed in Figure 4.11. In actuality, jewelry, skincare, cosmetics, luxury goods, and a few niches and reasonably priced luxury companies are the most popular categories of unboxed products.

Figure 4.11: Unboxing video



Source: Internet

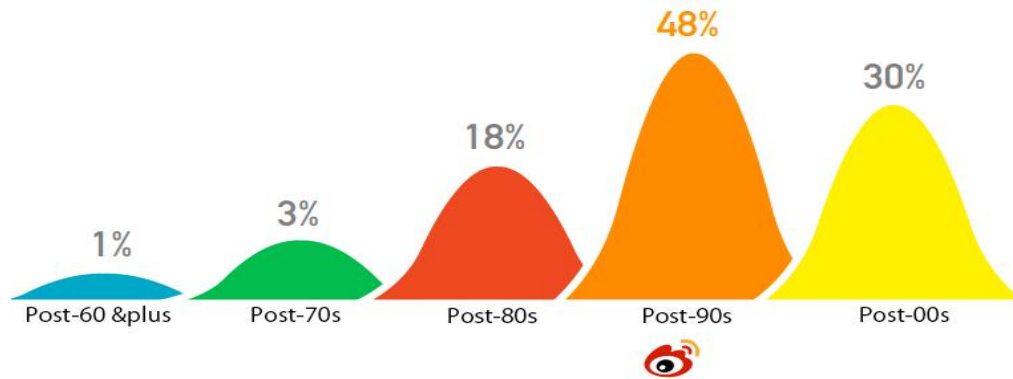
It marks a significant phenomenon in consumer behavior throughout 2022. What's intriguing about this trend is its inclusivity across various product categories. Regardless of the product type, users exhibit a keen interest in unboxing and review videos. This widespread appeal suggests that consumers are not confined to specific niches but are open to exploring a diverse array of products through this engaging format.

Unboxed products span a broad spectrum, with prominent categories including makeup, skincare, luxury goods, jewelry, and a range of niche and affordable luxury brands. This indicates that consumers on Weibo are not only seeking insights into mainstream and everyday items but are equally intrigued by premium and specialized products, showcasing the versatility and impact of unboxing and review content across different segments.

4.2.3 Scale of active Weibo users

We can observe the age distribution of these active users by looking at Figure 4.12, which is Weibo's user development report. The post-90s and post-00s make up the majority of the Weibo user base. Between the two categories, the combined proportion is around 80%. Consequently, we might infer that young individuals make up the majority of Weibo users.

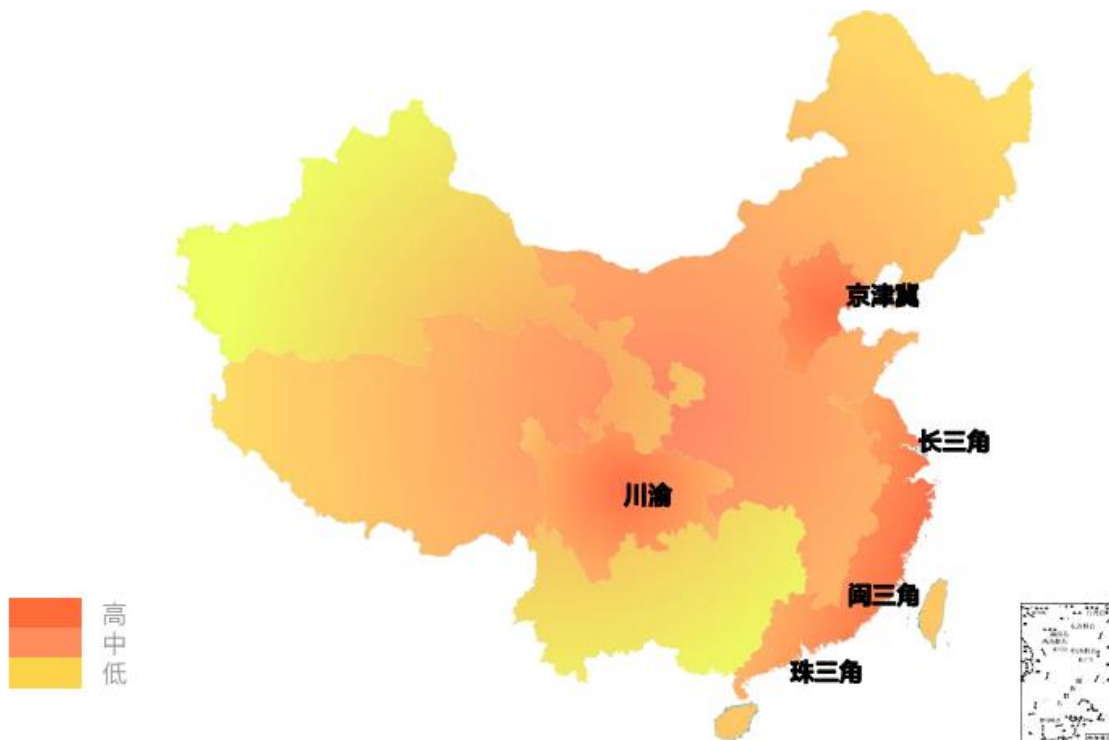
Figure 4.12: Weibo active user size and age



Source: Internet

Based on Figure 4.13, we can observe that Weibo is highly prevalent in first-tier cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen. In actuality, they are also China's economically developed regions, where the average person has more purchasing power.

Figure 4.13: Cities covered by Weibo



Source: Internet

The correlation between Weibo's robust presence in these urban centers and their economic affluence suggests that the platform effectively appeals to and influences consumers in regions with greater spending capacity. This strategic alignment positions

Weibo as a vital channel for brands and businesses targeting the young demographic in economically thriving areas, amplifying its relevance in the digital marketing landscape.

4.2.4 Celebrity endorsement of car brands

In the battlefield of the Women's 100m Hurdles event of the Hangzhou Asian Games final held in 2023, Chinese player Lin Yuwei won the gold medal with a score of 12 seconds 74. Figure 4.14 is a photo of the moment Lin Yuwei won the championship.

Figure 4.14: Lin Yuwei won the gold medal of women's 100m's hurdles



Source: Internet

After this, as China's new energy automobile industry leading brand BYD invited Lin Yuwei as the spokesman of its off-road vehicle Leopard 5, which was officially launched in November of this year. An off-road vehicle brand with a champion who fights on the hurdles is undoubtedly a perfect match. Figure 4.15 is a promotional photo of Lin Yuwei for this car she is endorsing. Lin Yuwei seems to be the best interpreter of BYD's brand philosophy: strength and perseverance are used to conquer all difficulties and obstacles. BYD, in this cooperation, has obviously become a "correct model", and its cooperation with Lin Yuwei has made the brand's image more deeply rooted in people's hearts.

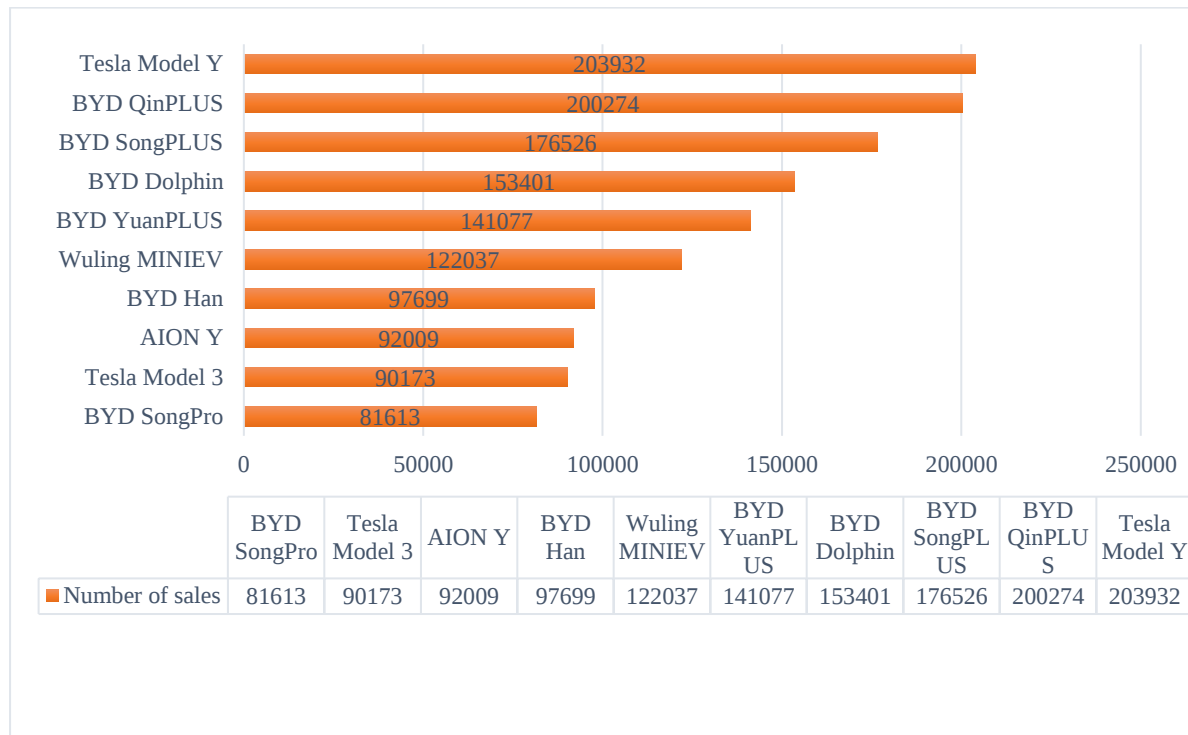
Figure 4.15: Promotional photo of Lin Yuwei endorsing BYD



Source: Internet

If we look at the new energy vehicle sales ranking for the first half of 2023, shown in Figure 4.16, the real winner is BYD, which takes up six of the top 10 spots. Specifically, the Model Y and Qin PLUS both exceeded the 200,000-unit mark, showing a remarkable achievement. In fact, from January to May, the first place in the new energy vehicle sales list still belongs to the BYD Qin PLUS family, but in June, Tesla's Shanghai super plant production mainly supplied the domestic market, so that the Model Y delivered more than 50,000 units in a single month, and directly took the first place in the half-year sales.

Figure 4.16: January - June 2023 new energy vehicle sales chart⁹



Source: Self - elaborated

Furthermore, following Lin Yuwei's appointment as a spokesperson, BYD announced a campaign on Weibo in which it asked users to comment on the spokesperson's official Weibo announcement with the subject "Leopard power, so for the champion" and offer their blessings to Lin Yuwei, the forerunner of Leopard Power. A select group of netizens will be chosen to receive an autographed photo of Lin Yuwei.

Figure 4.17 shows the comments sent by netizens under this Weibo. The comments include: "This is great, I have to come and support it. I want a signed photo of Lin Yuwei."

⁹ Source: China Passenger Car Association (CPCA), <http://www.qichepaihangbang.com/14823.html>

Figure 4.17: Consumers' comments on Weibo



Source: Internet

The case involving Lin Yuwei's victory in the Women's 100m Hurdles at the Hangzhou Asian Games and subsequent endorsement by BYD for their off-road vehicle Leopard 5 provides a compelling illustration of the symbiotic relationship between sports achievements and brand promotion.

Strategic Brand Alignment: BYD's choice of Lin Yuwei as the spokesperson for their off-road vehicle aligns strategically with the athlete's image of strength and perseverance, symbolized by her victory in the hurdles event. This alignment creates a seamless narrative that resonates with consumers, contributing to a more deeply rooted brand image.

Impact on Brand Image: The collaboration has elevated BYD's brand image, positioning it as a "correct model" through its association with Lin Yuwei's champion spirit. The brand's philosophy, embodied by Lin Yuwei, underscores the message that strength and perseverance conquer difficulties and obstacles.

Sales Performance: The success of BYD in the new energy vehicle sales ranking for the first half of 2023 reflects the positive impact of strategic partnerships and effective brand endorsements. BYD's vehicles, particularly the Qin PLUS, exceeded significant sales milestones, showcasing the effectiveness of their marketing strategies.

Social Media Engagement: Leveraging Lin Yuwei's endorsement, BYD initiated a Weibo campaign that actively engaged consumers. The campaign encouraged netizens to comment

and send blessings to Lin Yuwei, fostering a sense of community and interaction around the brand. Such initiatives contribute to building a positive online presence and consumer loyalty.

Consumer Participation: The Weibo campaign not only served as a platform for brand promotion but also encouraged consumer participation. Selecting lucky netizens to receive autographed photos of Lin Yuwei further incentivized engagement and created a sense of connection between the brand, the athlete, and consumers.

Flexibility in Marketing Response: The case also highlights BYD's adaptability in response to market dynamics. Despite facing competition, particularly from Tesla, BYD showcased resilience and maintained a strong market position, emphasizing the dynamism required in the competitive automotive industry.

In conclusion, the collaboration between Lin Yuwei and BYD demonstrates how a strategic partnership, combined with effective social media campaigns and consumer engagement, can significantly impact brand image and contribute to sales success in the competitive automotive market.

4.3 Insights from the interview

Based on the responses received, we may draw the conclusion that Weibo marketing should consider more than just traffic; rather, we must allow the brand's worth to prevail over time through social assets.

Weibo doesn't only rely on machine learning and big data to analyze user psychology and eventually push content since it uses real-time hot topics. The rationale is that Weibo users may not find interest in every material computed using technology.

Regarding Weibo's second "weapon", user insights, we may draw conclusions about the celebrities or KOLs that our brand's subscribers are interested in, as well as what kinds of interactive subjects these celebrities would be most suited to discuss. Which marketing materials can we use this insight data to customize? What kinds of interactive exercises and games can we create to increase subscriber awareness?

Additionally, we may infer from the interviewee's mention of Florasis' success story that marketers on Weibo are not only selling; rather, they are able to evoke feelings and associations in consumers by using relatable imagery. By adopting this strategy, firms may leverage the influence of KOLs and celebrities to spread their ideals on Weibo and eventually get customer acceptance.

Nevertheless, generally speaking, businesses may acquire social assets on Weibo using this “weapon” of user insights, and in time, it can produce qualitative improvements from quantitative changes.

4.4 Validation results of the assumptions

Table 4.1 - Validation results of Assumption 1

Assumption 1 If brands can drive visitors to Weibo, they can succeed in marketing.		
Conclusions drawn from the interview	Not valid, because traffic isn't the main source of value; it's merely a tool.	
Conclusions drawn from the case study	Valid, since increasing traffic is essential to being visible to potential users, LI Ziqi, for instance, employed the Double 11 to attract attention on Weibo.	
Conclusions drawn from the survey data	Not valid, its inherent strength remains the most crucial factor. For instance, before inviting celebrities to be brand endorsers, the BYD Qin PLUS family's sales climbed dramatically.	

Source: Self - elaborated

In summary, the notion that brands can achieve marketing success solely by gaining traffic on Weibo is contested. Some argue it is not valid, asserting that traffic is merely a tool and not the core of value. Others contend it is valid, emphasizing that acquiring traffic is pivotal for gaining visibility and potential users, citing examples like LI Ziqi leveraging Double 11 to garner attention on Weibo. However, there are those who refute this idea, asserting that the most crucial factor remains the brand's intrinsic strength. For instance, the increased sales of the BYD Qin PLUS family occurred before celebrity endorsements, underscoring the significance of the brand's inherent appeal over the reliance on Weibo traffic alone.

Table 4.2 - Validation results of Assumption 2

Assumption 2 The subjects and information that are popular on Weibo are those that are produced and distributed by technology (big data, machine learning, and data analytics).		
Conclusions drawn from the interview	Not valid, because Weibo users' true interests may not always align with what the technology advances.	
Conclusions drawn from the case study	Not valid, because Li Ziqi generates popular topics through content that is well-crafted and informative, as opposed to collecting data and continuously distributing it to people.	
Conclusions drawn from the survey data	Not valid, because hot research ranking = (search heat + discussion heat + spread heat) × interaction rate.	

Source: Self-elaborated

Furthermore, there is debate on the veracity of the claim that the subjects and information that are popular on Weibo are those that are produced and promoted by technology (big data, machine learning, and data analytics). Some claim it is invalid, arguing that technological advancements could not always reflect the true desires of Weibo users.

Others disagree, pointing out that popular subjects—like those started by Li Ziqi—are the result of intelligent and well-written material rather than persistent data manipulation. Others contest its validity as well, pointing out that the algorithm for rating hot research takes into account aspects other than just pushing data, such as interaction rate, search heat, debate heat, and spread heat.

Table 4.3 - Validation results of Assumption 3

Assumption 3	There is a positive correlation between a brand's social skills and sales.
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Conclusions drawn from the interview	Valid, the social media presence of the company might boost product sales.	
Conclusions drawn from the case study	Valid, Li Ziqi and her colleagues have developed a warm and affable Weibo character because they regularly interact with Weibo users by starting conversations and responding to queries.	
Conclusions drawn from the survey data	Valid, some brands ask KOLs to participate in unpacking and review films, which fosters customer interaction and enhances brand perception.	

Source: Self - elaborated

Finally, the assertion that the social ability of a brand is positively correlated with sales is deemed valid. This correlation is supported by the notion that a brand's social capabilities can positively influence product sales. Examples, such as Li Ziqi's active engagement with Weibo users, building a friendly persona, and brands inviting Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) for unboxing and review videos, highlight how social interactions contribute to consumer engagement, interaction, and ultimately, the enhancement of brand image, all of which can positively impact sales.

4.5 Discussion about research questions

4.5.1 How can the target audience be chosen using the Weibo customer behavior characteristic data in accordance with the product positioning?

Big data is used by companies and corporations to locate consumers on Weibo accurately. Typically, there are three channels:

To begin with, use topics to locate clients. The greatest benefit of Weibo topics is that we may utilize the Weibo search engine to immediately locate the user groups participating in a certain subject debate. Businesses and brands may utilize Weibo data to determine the subjects that the target market for their product will be discussing. For instance, if the company sells lotion, "dry skin" would be the most talked-about issue while discussing lotion.

Next, we may look up subjects associated with “dry skin”. Due to the fact that the individuals that engage in this issue are probably the intended market for the brand’s goods.

Second, to find users through hashtags. On Weibo, individuals typically tag their posts with various keywords based on their own traits or inclinations. Since users themselves create these tags, they may represent unique traits. Then, in order for retailers and brands to add users accurately, they must first specify which items are offered by the brand and which tags the target customer base for that product will typically own. Data analytics tools are a useful tool for businesses and brands to get pertinent consumer data.

Brands and companies may classify these individuals according to their age, identity, employment, and hobbies by looking at their tags. As Ahmadi *et al.*, (2023) noted in the study, Facebook divides its target audience based on a number of factors, including behavior, interests, demographics, and place of residence. Weibo users of this kind are the target user for the business if they belong to the same demographic. Brands may then target this group using content marketing strategies.

Third, using groups to locate the intended consumers. Because of a shared interest or topic, individuals on Weibo might gather to discuss and engage with one another; this is their group. The majority of the data created here is highly valuable, and businesses and brands may utilize group analysis to identify the people that offer the most value and achieve effective marketing outcomes. The findings of this study were consistent with what Allan & Nimer, (2017) defined, which states that the organization should confirm the target users’ prevalence, structure, patterns, requirements, and characteristics.

In fact, Weibo marketing must attract the active attention of its target users. Since the most important characteristic of Weibo users is their interest, the object of their attention is usually what they are interested in. If the target of Weibo marketing is not interested in the brand or product being marketed, then the marketing will not be very effective. Therefore, companies and brands should take the right approach to make attracting targeted followers easier.

Using data analytics as an example, companies and brands can build user interest profiles, which can help Weibo marketing to quickly identify target users and eventually develop appropriate campaigns. Waller, (2020) holds the same view that the better a brand knows its target audience, the easier it will be to communicate its message and build lasting, profitable relationships. For instance, a lingerie firm that aims to create a user interest graph finds that its primary customer base consists of young individuals who also happen to be Adidas and

Durex consumers. As a result, by examining Adidas and Durex's official Weibo followers, the lingerie brand's firm may create a basic user interest graph.

4.5.2 How may Weibo relationships be used for marketing purposes?

Weibo marketing may be classified as PR, customer service, or marketing; yet, the three interactions' areas of emphasis are quite different from one another.

Initially, marketing communication aims to reach as many target users as possible with the marketing message and capture as much of their attention as feasible. Secondly, the goal of customer service is to establish a good rapport with customers by first supporting or consoling them. Ultimately, the goal of public relations is to either directly or indirectly take the lead in shaping public opinion.

From a conventional standpoint, trying to focus on all three at once is challenging. It is therefore difficult for it to accomplish all three goals in a single Weibo post. Businesses and brands must reassess them using the data:

Marketing strategies first concentrate on how successful forwarding is—that is, where the message is passed among target followers and how often it prompts secondary or even repeated forwarding among users. On the same track, Xia *et al.*, (2019) noted the fact that the posting frequency of corporate Weibo has a direct impact on user word-of-mouth communication. Among them, users' sharing behavior is most obviously affected by the frequency of Weibo posting. Second, engaging comments might be the main emphasis of customer support. Yong & Li, (2021) also supported the idea that companies should frequently communicate and reply to their fans to understand their needs for products or services and to promote information exchange and value co-creation with their fans. Its goal is to lessen the quantity of unfavorable user remarks that surface. Finally, Weibo influence and recognition should be the main emphasis of public relations. Examples of this include the frequency of keyword searches on Weibo and word-of-mouth analyses of the brand in users' original Weibo feeds. In addition to the quantitative metrics such as the number of shares, comments, and event participation that data analytics can provide, there is another category of metrics for evaluating the effectiveness of social media marketing, and that is qualitative metrics such as discussion threads and user comments, as Murdough, (2009) concluded. To put it briefly, data analysis may facilitate efficient post-evaluation and provide a measurable

goal for Weibo positioning. It provides assurance for the creation of precise marketing campaigns.

4.5.3 How can one utilize Weibo in a sensible way to promote popular topics?

Weibo is a very effective instrument for communication; therefore, businesses should learn how to use it more to enhance engagement. Weibo activity is strongly correlated with followers' stickiness and Weibo content.

First, by effective engagement, make followers stickier. Creating visually appealing material on Weibo is the first step towards increasing the stickiness of followers. Brands and enterprises should then engage with their followers more often. Reposts, private messages, comments, and "@" reminders are all possible ways for people to communicate. Swani & Labrecque, (2020) explained that likes, comments and shares are common ways to measure the popularity of social media content. Kulikovskaja *et al.*, (2023) agreed on the same idea of the importance of relational content. It is considered as the most influential type of marketing content that generates customer interaction and engagement through all social media metrics.

Second, raise the quantity of reposts across various themes. The subject under discussion here has two connotations. First, material that is trending is current and spreadable if it is a popular subject. Weibo posts that encourage people to discuss and repost may also become hot topics. The second is Weibo's topic function, which allows users to draw attention to an issue by tagging its keywords with "#". More individuals may get interested in this.

In order to perform subject marketing, we also need to be aware of the following. First, consumers should feel as though they belong, and terminology and keywords should have a feeling of theme or coherence. Second, phrases and keywords should be as brief as feasible and simple for users to type; lengthy, uncommon words, and terms that combine Chinese and English should ideally be avoided. Lastly, businesses should steer clear of ambiguity or brand duplication when coming up with subjects. Yu *et al.*, (2018) believed that when conducting topic marketing, organizations can improve the efficiency of topic marketing in several directions, including the formation of topic marketing maps, the reasonable guidance of topic opinion leaders and the cultivation of the enterprise's own opinion leader group.

To put it clearly, Weibo precision marketing under big data is predicated on the examination of data from many angles. It is challenging to obtain results from these data since they are originally chaotic, whether for data collection, organization, or analysis. But with an

active Weibo platform, businesses and brands may more precisely target their consumers and offer their products provided they can do a complete and transparent analysis of the data.

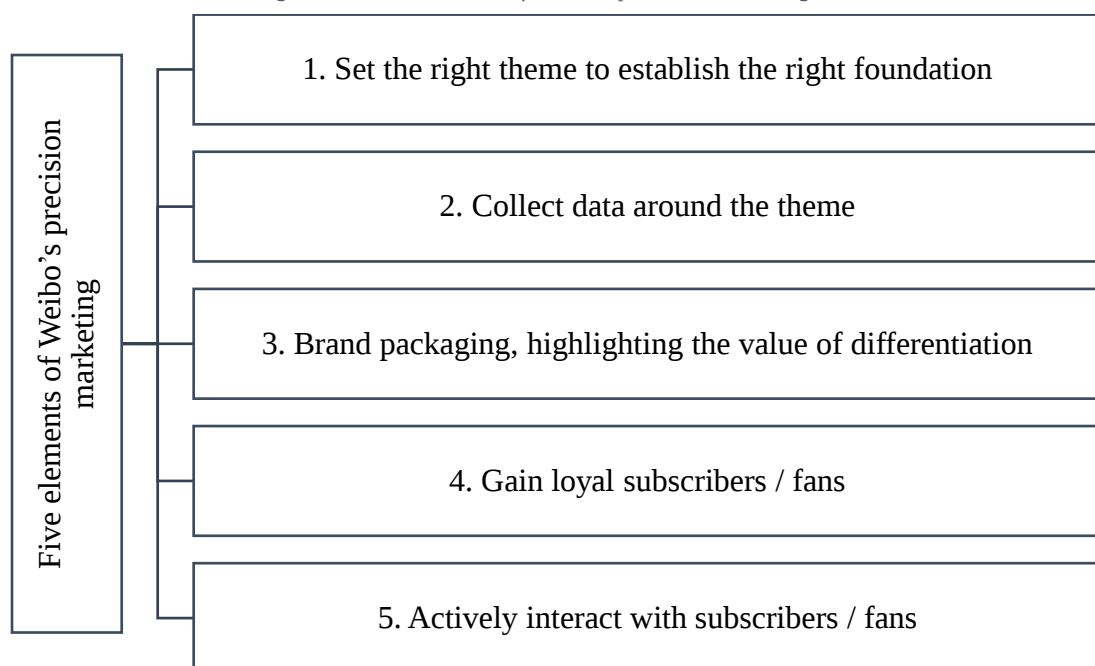
In conclusion, businesses utilize Weibo to gather consumer data and shape consumer behavior through purposeful socializing. In the end, this helps brands and businesses improve customer acquisition, retention, and loyalty as well as customer profit creation. However, social media data on consumer attitudes and trends may offer businesses a wealth of reference points for things like product design, optimization, pricing, expanding marketing channels, and scheduling and execution of promotions.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions

Companies must identify the genuine wants of customers and define the market's direction in order to implement precision marketing. What therefore ought to be done?

In general, companies and businesses should create their own backstage data, use data mining to understand the needs and traits of consumers, and make the right marketing decisions. The ultimate goal is to achieve online and offline connectivity and provide customers with a compassionate and astute level of service.

Figure 5.1: Five elements of Weibo's precision marketing



Source: Self - elaborated

Big data can accurately capture consumer psychology based on users' recent searches. It will divide consumers into different sectors, each of which sees similar resources. Due to the accurate grasp of the user's psychology, which leads to the user's subconscious that it is tailored for its.

However, although precision marketing is a common choice in the popularized application of big data, companies still need to develop marketing strategies based on their strengths and weaknesses. Figure 5.1 summarizes the five elements of precision marketing on Weibo. In the face of a large number of media platforms and data information, enterprises should carefully analyze and research to ensure that big data brings convenience to marketing, rather than becoming a burden for blind promotion. Big data is big, but it also needs to be

used accurately. Otherwise, it will be caught in a large amount of information, resulting in marketing and promotion costs invested and unable to recover the proper results.

5.1 Final conclusions

This dissertation demonstrates how businesses and brands may use big data technologies to implement targeted marketing tactics on the social media platform Weibo. A user's name, age, phone number, employment, and occasionally even their ID number, bank account, real-time location, personal preferences, and social circle may now be obtained by a website, app, or small application. Thus, all of these customer data points may serve as the foundation for data analysis for businesses and corporations. The power of big data is then used in precision marketing, which aims to convert prospective customers into devoted ones based on the findings of data research.

By analyzing the Weibo account of online star Li Ziqi, we discovered that self-media marketing had to prioritize enhancing the substance of the campaign rather than depending solely on employing technologies to drive visitors. Since the personalization and connotation of self-media are its fundamental values. Utilizing Weibo's platform to generate unique themes, activities, and material to enhance user connection and establish brand recognition.

Weibo's official survey report results and interviews also show that successful brand marketing cannot be ensured by Weibo's sheer volume. Although it may be viewed as one of the cornerstones of success, marketing failure might result if the product lacks core value, additional value, or a defined target user base. Similar to this, user interaction—such as reposts, comments, and likes—along with data tools help shape Weibo's popular topics rather than just algorithms and big data alone.

Ultimately, we discovered that in order to gain more loyal customers and high-quality attention, brands and businesses need communicate openly with consumers. One way to do this is by working with KOLs to create unboxing films. To put it concisely, big data is a potent instrument that can be employed for Weibo precise marketing.

5.2 The academic and corporate contributions

This dissertation proposes a new goal: how to use Weibo and Big Data to achieve precision marketing. The use of characteristic data of Weibo customer behavior to select target groups

according to product positioning, the social relations of Weibo and the use of Weibo for topical marketing are discussed in depth and critically analyzed. The case studies of LI Ziqi and BYD draw the conclusion that with the help of big data, enterprises and brands can further reach their target consumers by creating topics, conducting interactive activities and working with KOLs, ultimately achieving their precision marketing goals. In addition, the latest developments in big data and Weibo can help companies to provide new methods and insights into their marketing strategies.

From this study we can find that the arrival of big data has accelerated the flow of information while the cost of data acquisition has been greatly reduced compared to traditional marketing methods. This is a favorable opportunity for companies to engage in digital marketing.

In addition, for any relevant researcher who wants to figure out the role and function of big data in the modern business world, this dissertation can also be used as a basis to get some insights from the research methodology and conclusions.

5.3 Limitations

This dissertation is an analysis and interpretation based on the pre-existing literature on the topic and some data collected. The main limitations of this research exist mainly in the small size of the interview sample. In addition, the use of case study is somewhat probabilistic and not universal. This approach has some degree of technical limitations in its use, as it does not have a standardized method of data analysis and carries optionality in the presentation of evidence and interpretation of data.

Although the results of this study do not differ much from the results of the pre-existing studies, extrapolating certain results needs to be done with more caution. Therefore, we suggest that the method of using big data should be carried out according to the different characteristics of each enterprise and not generalized.

5.4 Suggestions for future research

Since the development of a business requires not only data analysis, but also making more informed decisions based on it to help the business to be profitable and long-lasting. Therefore, my suggestion is to further develop this type of research.

We know that big data is a large-scale collection of data that is processed efficiently, while artificial intelligence, which has been developed for decades, refers to the ability of computers to learn, reason and make decisions autonomously by simulating human intelligence. Obviously, there is a strong relationship between AI and big data before, so the first suggestion is that subsequent research could be done on how to make the perfect blend of big data and artificial intelligence, which would be very beneficial.

The second suggestion is that a larger sample of data could be included for analysis so that the conclusions drawn would be more convincing and practical.

The last suggestion is that the study of the role of big data can't be limited to Weibo. Researchers can diversify and connect big data to various industries, such as banking, law, finance, accounting, auditing, etc. This will make the study of big data more comprehensive and in-depth.

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Annex A – Interview script

Interviewee: Mr Lai Longkun, China, Marketing Profesional from Meituan

Interview time: September 1, 2023

Question 1: If brands can generate traffic on Weibo, is it reasonable to believe that they would succeed in marketing?

Considering my professional background, I believe that traffic is merely a tool and that the primary focus should be on the core values of the product brand, with KOLs and celebrity referrals serving as a means. Since every brand and product has a life cycle of its own, word-of-mouth assets on opinion platforms such as Weibo can only be brought about by a powerful brand.

Question2: How can companies, in your opinion, cultivate a more favorable reputation on Weibo? Do technologies like data analytics, machine learning, and big data contribute to the creation of popular topics?

Weibo, in my opinion, provides merchants with two crucial “weapons”. The first is its super topic feature, which consists of actual themes. Weibo is a place where opinions spontaneously emerge, unlike other social media sites. Thanks to user participation, this issue has become a genuine trend. The exact understanding of users is the second “weapon” This is closely related to current hot issues. Weibo receives precise user insights from the actual subjects that each user follows and sends. For instance, a company may view in the Weibo data management backend what subjects its subscribers are interested in, what TV series they watch, and whether or not they enjoy anime or music.

Question 3: Do you think there is a favorable correlation between a brand’s social media presence and sales? Put another way, there is a clear correlation between a brand’s capacity to sell on social media and product sales.

Because the brand’s social media presence may affect product sales, I believe there is a positive correlation between them. On Weibo, there are several instances like this. Take the Florasis brand, for instance. They started doing brand promotion on Weibo as soon as they joined the market four or five years ago. Many KOLs were approached to assist in the development of the brand image and to provide their thoughts on the product. During that era of content marketing, Florasis’ Weibo subscribers increased by the day. During Florasis’ quick expansion, they encouraged numerous KOLs and KOCs to collaborate with them to generate emotions and construct a persona with their subscribers, all of which contributed to Florasis’ Weibo success.