# How McDonalds Make the Online Marketing Strategy to Grab the Chinese Market

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Abstract: Nowadays people are more willing to receive information directly through the internet, especially for the restaurant ratings, so the issue is very valuable to discuss, and it's also easy to research and gather the important data, because it's more related to the citizen's daily life. Besides, the article used the SWOT analysis to explore what kinds of factors should the restaurant online publicity be focus on in order to attract more potential customers, and the research found a lot of evidences from the universities and different businesses, because those sources are more reliable and authoritative. In addition, the research also made an example about the McDonalds, so the analysis will become more practical. Moreover, according to the Marketing Mix Theory, the article concluded that the online publicity for restaurants should more focus on prices of the products or services they provide and different promotion strategies that they use, because these factors have a stronger relationship with the customers and these factors were definitely more straightforward for them. Finally, because of the technology developing, the offline promotion will cost a lot of inefficient works, like the rental fees or other indirect expenses, so the online publicity seems much important than decades ago. So the result of the research will not only affect the restaurants, but also bring effects to all of the tertiary sector businesses.

# 1. Introduction

With the accelerating pace of world economic integration, a large number of enterprises choose to invest or set up companies abroad. Due to the rapid economic development and the large population base, China, a country with huge consumption capacity and consumption potential, has attracted a large number of transnational catering investments and operations and the fast-food industry has also developed vigorously in China in recent years. However, the industry competition is becoming increasingly fierce, and the business style of the fast-food industry is also changing, it required operators to constantly carry out business innovation and adapt to the changes of the consumer market in order to maintain a long-term competitive advantage [1].

McDonalds, founded in 1955, is one of the largest fast-food chain enterprises in the world, it opened more than 30000 restaurants in more than 120 countries around the world and entered the Chinese market in 1990 [2]. Many types of research had been done regarding the marketing strategy of McDonalds' and the catering market of China. For instance, Kauai has analyzed the situation of the Chinese catering market and provided some localization suggestions for foreign fast-food companies and Chen Jingrong has provided suggestions for marketing strategies for McDonalds in China without focusing on online marketing part [3, 4]. Therefore, there is less of an analysis of the online marketing

strategies for McDonalds in China and this article will mainly focus on the online marketing strategies of McDonalds in the Chinese market.

Although the previous studies showed some marketing strategies of McDonalds in the Chinese market, the Internet and relevant computer technologies in China also has been developed a lot. McDonald's couldn't rely on those proposed marketing strategies more, the traditional ways of Chinese marketing lose efficacy as more and more Chinese consumers use online channels to see a new advertisement, choose which brand and specific product to order, using previous marketing strategy is inefficient that could also lose the existing market size of McDonald's. Chinese Consumers now are used to living using different online channels like social networking software, Live-broadcasting software, and online brand applications, Chinese consumers get the new message at once browsing the online platform wherever they are, not only could they get the information of the flavors and prices, they also see the instant comments from other consumers of products like hamburgers and new fried chicken wings shown in an online platform. The efficient way to get new information helps them make the faster buying decision, which makes McDonalds' have to seize the opportunity, cater to the new habits of consumers, use the right marketing strategies to benefit more. McDonalds needs to adapt to the new Chinese market, so the Chinese online marketing strategy needs to be proposed. Many factors that influence the online marketing process, the online channels themselves have their characteristics, however, the previous studies haven't shown a thorough analysis of the Chinese online marketing strategy of McDonalds including that should be paid enough attention in the marketing process, what should be shown more clearly in the online advertisements and online applications. The question 'How McDonalds make the online marketing strategy to grab the Chinese Market' is worthy of study, in the paper, the Chinese online marketing strategy could be a guide and good summarize of the factors consumers of McDonalds in China could notice in the process of seeing the online marketing propagation until making a final buying decision. In those factors, some are influenced due to the online channels themselves, some advantages of online channels also bring good opportunities to McDonalds, which McDonalds should take into consideration. The paper not only could be a good online marketing strategy for McDonalds, but it also could be a reference to other brands. With the right Chinese online marketing strategies, high-quality food or products could be known and propagated in China and satisfy more consumers.

With the accelerating pace of world economic integration, a large number of enterprises choose to invest or set up companies abroad. Due to the rapid economic development and the large population base, China, a country with huge consumption capacity and consumption potential, has attracted a large number of transnational catering investments and operations and the fast-food industry has also developed vigorously in China in recent years. However, the industry competition is becoming increasingly fierce, and the business style of the fast-food industry is also changing, it required operators to constantly carry out business innovation and adapt to the changes of the consumer market in order to maintain a long-term competitive advantage [1]. With the rapid development of Internet technology, customers in China rely heavily on smartphone applications, online mini-program, website, these technologies using habits have huge impacts on the way they order fast-food, the process of purchasing decision also have differences with an offline situation, to adapt the new environment, a new online marketing strategy should be used. The previous studies couldn't give us a great solution as most of the studies were based on the traditional background and had their fixed features like Jennifer in 2004 mentioned how did McDonalds deliver brand messages through Website, Yueying in 2014 showed how Chinese people think about CSR of McDonalds, A. Tălpău in 2011 pointed out the customer-oriented strategy of McDonalds, which reflected the way McDonalds did in Chinese customer analysis and brand online broadcast [5-7]. In online case, things have been changed as online marketing is a different domain and has its new characteristic, so in this study, an important issue 'How McDonalds make its online marketing strategy to grab the Chinese market?' it to be researched, for online marketing, time and regional characteristic is particularly important, the study tends to have a marketing strategy integrated comprehensive consideration like current Chinese customers habits, the way of online product promotions in current China, targeting and segmentation based on the online channel. It's considerable to using the marketing mix to analyze the online marketing strategy, so the study needs to research and figure out the Chinese online marketing mix strategy, emphasize the points that need to be considered in online channel in current China, the online application or method could be used to advertise when there is a new product as customers couldn't see or touch them in reality, the factors could influence online pricing, the way could be used as the most efficient one to do promotion, also crucial factors like Chinese online surroundings like online policy, marketing position, how consumer's behavior help to do in online marketing and the online relevance, so after analyzing all these elements, the study could figure out the Chinese online marketing mix strategy.

As the study use marketing mix strategy, marketing mix theories are to be reviewed like Borden's "Marketing Mix", McCarthy's 4Ps Strategy, Philip Kotler's 4Ps marketing method, Booms, Bitner's 7Ps, Wu 4V Theory, and Schultz 4R Theory [8-15]. Then in methodology, the study uses qualitative research method and SWOT analysis, tends to study how online channels affect the production, pricing, promotion, place, process, people, physical evidence of McDonalds marketing strategy, know their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats in all dimensions of Chinese online marketing mix strategy, after getting their specific advantages and disadvantages, the study shows and discusses the answer of a research question, summarizes the rule, shows some further suggestion and points of view, makes a comparison with the previous studies. When finally, the conclusion is gotten, the implication of the study, how the study could contribute to the real situation and further study will be demonstrated.

#### 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Development

The first serious discussions and analysis of 'Marketing Mix' emerged in 1953, Borden NH compared a marketer to a chef, a marketing executive a mixer of ingredients, to produce a profitable enterprise and mentioned 12 factors of Marketing Mix of Manufacturers, then McCarthy concluded 'Price, Promotion, Place, Product' as the four significant elements as '4Ps' theory, Kotler et.al broadened the concept of 4Ps play the core role and could be used in other fields as they have the same functions in 1969 [8-10]. Boom and Bitner increased the 'People, Process and Physical' to '4Ps' to finally comprise '7Ps' in 1982 [11]. Wu suggested 'Variation, Versatility, Value and Vibration', 4V theory, Schultz proposed 4R Theory 'Relevancy, Reaction, Relation and Reward' [12, 13]. As Marketing Mix Theory tends to point out the influence factors of purchase behaviors in marketing, the theory developed as the situation changes and grows.

4P, 7P, 4V, 4R, and other marketing mix models are all based on the certain marketing environment and the marketing practice of enterprises. Those marketing mix theories are developed inherently with intrinsic relation. The relationship among different marketing mix models is not a substitution one, but a complementary one [14]. As the basic theory, 4Ps theory puts forward the combination analysis of the product, price, channel, and promotion, which should not be ignored by any enterprise. Specifically, the marketing mix does not evolve from 4Ps to 4R, but continuously improves and develops the marketing system based on 4Ps and 7Ps, so as to provide new marketing ideas for the development of enterprises. Although other marketing mix models such as 4Cs are also applicable, they cannot replace 4Ps and 7Ps. Those theories are the innovation and development of 4Ps under the new situation. And the change and development of the marketing mix reflect the alternation of marketing concepts.

#### **2.2 Recent Researches**

More recent attention has focused on Marketing Mix in different fields. While Ivan did researches about the importance and significance of the marketing mix elements in a fashion retailing industry and indicated that the features of the range as a whole are the most important for consumers in fashion retail, Ravangard investigated how the marketing mix affects the patients' selection of a hospital using a low-income country as an example in 2020 [15, 16]. A large number of researches using marketing mix theories are investigating how the marketing mix affects customers' choices, for instance, how can marketing mix affect the buying interests and how can marketing mix affect the purchasing decisions [17]. There are also some researches from the perspectives of the brands, for instance,

researches done by Masri regarding brand loyalty and the article published by Ulrich regarding the brand images. Deoranto also gave the concept of Green Marketing Mix, in his theory green product, green prices, and green promotion influence the purchasing decision, but the green place is not that important [18].

Although there is a relatively large number of researches regarding different industries and enterprises using marketing mix, it is found that these researches are mostly focused on the retailing industry, pharmaceutical industry, and some other industries. However, the food industry has gained less attention. Moreover, it is hard to find marketing mix researches regarding the fast-food industry in China recently. Therefore, this paper applies marketing mix theory and PEST analysis to analyze the fast-food industry in China using the case of McDonalds.

#### 2.3 Marketing Mix of 7P

1) Price: The pricing of products is based on the enterprise's brand strategy and pays attention to the goodwill of the brand [19]. There are many factors affecting pricing, mainly reflected in the enterprise itself, market environment, and social economy, in terms of the enterprise itself, it should consider according to the production cost and its marketing objectives, and consider the socio-economic cycle and development level in terms of the social economy [19].

2) Promotion: The promotion strategies of enterprises will affect the consumption behavior of customers to a certain extent, and different promotion strategies will have different effects [20]. In order to encourage customers to buy products or services, enterprises should pay attention to promote the growth of consumption with short-term behaviors (such as offering discounts, buying one for free, marketing scene atmosphere, etc.) to attract consumers of other brands or lead to consumption in advance to promote the growth of sales and establish effective communication between enterprises and customers [20].

3) Place: Place is one of the most important factors in the marketing process. All products or services need to rely on various marketing channels to be known and accepted by customers, and finally occupy some target markets [20]. However, direct sales and distribution have their own advantages and disadvantages, so a reasonable Place strategy with the change of the target market should be chosen. It indicates that enterprises need to pay attention to the cultivation of dealers and the establishment of a sales network [21].

4) Product: This aspect is paying attention to the function of development, requiring products to have unique selling points, and putting the functional demands of products first [22]. The overall concept of product is divided into three levels: core product level, formal product level and value-added product level [23] The product strategy not only requires enterprises to have a deep understanding of the overall concept of products, but also requires a scientific grasp of product life cycle, product combination decision-making, new product development and so on [23].

5) People: A mature enterprise must fully realize the importance of employee behavior, manage employees with rules and regulations, actively advocate close cooperation among team members, jointly show excellent products or services to customers, ultimately affect the relationship with customers, and extend limited products or services to other customers [24].

6) Process: Process strategy is the process of transferring services or products from enterprises to customers. If the effective management of employees and the improvement of service quality are completed, it will affect customers' understanding of products or services [25]. That is, **employees'** high-quality service and friendly treatment can directly determine customers' satisfaction with the service [25].

7) Physical: The products or services purchased by customers are often based on their characteristics, so enterprises must accurately convey these characteristics to customers [26]. Especially for services, customer experience cannot be directly perceived before. Enterprises need to use auxiliary methods to realize the effective impact on customer perception, and finally enable customers to purchase services [26].

# 3. Method

### 3.1 Research Design

This paper uses qualitative methods to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of McDonald's online marketing in China, using SWOT Analysis.

Since there are some former studies regarding different enterprises using SWOT Analysis, for instance, using SOWT Analysis, Song has successfully pointed out the advantages and disadvantages of Banc assurance in China in 2004, the opportunities and threats it faces, and the corresponding four development strategies, while Xu, based on the SWOT analysis of Alibaba, puts forward general countermeasures, countermeasures against the bottleneck of China's cross-border e-commerce and Countermeasures against the threats and challenges faced by cross-border e-commerce enterprises [27,28]. A large number of researchers have applied 7Ps and SWOT analysis to do researches and the results of the researches have been proved credible. Therefore, it is reliable to choose the SWOT qualitative analysis method to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of McDonald's online marketing in China.

# 3.2 Research Object

1) Introduction of McDonalds: Since its establishment on May 15, 1955, McDonalds has rapidly completed the process of globalization in half a century. With more than 32000 fast-food restaurants distributed in 121 countries and regions around the world, McDonalds has become the world's largest fast-food chain group and food group [29].



Figure 1. McDonalds [30].

2) McDonald's business philosophy: The strategic positioning of McDonalds is clear. 'Q, s, C + V' is the highest business philosophy of McDonalds company (see Figure 1). McDonalds has been following the QSCV concept of operation and management in restaurants all over the world and has achieved good market feedback. Q stands for quality, focusing on the standardized implementation of products and services, so as to bring consumers high quality. S S stands for service, which gives customers a hundred percent cordial smile service and convenient, rapid, and correct meal service. C stands for cleanliness, which means brings consumers a good dining experience and the cleanliness of the internal dining environment, while V stands for value, so as to make every customer feel valued and achieve the highest satisfaction as much as possible, and feel that it is worth spending at McDonalds [31].

With the rapid economic development, China's fast-food industry also continued to grow. At present, China's fast-food industry as a whole belongs to the growth period, some cities have entered the golden period, the scale of the whole industry has gradually expanded and the overall competitiveness has improved [32]. This paper, therefore, applies SWOT analysis to analyze the marketing strategy of McDonalds and its advantages and disadvantages of online marketing in China.

# 3.3 SWOT Analysis

### 3.3.1 Strength

McDonalds' product is always changing to adapt to the flavor and taste of Chinese consumers, in breakfast, McDonalds proposed some kinds of Chinese traditional dishes like porridge with vegetables, soybean milk, and fried breadstick, which won the love of consumers, online marketing could place relevant ads with Chinese style, the online picture and some classical set meal like 'soybean milk with fried bread stick' with a cheap price could be spread rapidly throughout the Internet. The size of McDonalds' hamburger is also optional, consumers could choose to add more vegetables or bread, even more sauces, Children special set meal fit the number of little kids and products like Big Mac could be enough for a big stomach, so different consumers could be satisfied with McDonalds. McDonalds is also popular because of its favorable price, it offers a cheaper way 'set meal' with a direct around 40-50% discount and amount saved shown in the Website and online application, online marketing place includes Website, an online application like Chinese 'Weibo' and 'Tiktok', in these two places, McDonalds give consumer coupon throughout the online live and blog article, which win more consumers and fans, preparing to the further selling. Online marketing has its characteristic, like all the consumers could propagate McDonalds and show their evaluation, the lover or fans of McDonalds could be the online mini 'marketer' of McDonalds and help win more consumers.



Figure 2. McDonald's new porridge [33].

# 3.3.2 Weakness

Although the strengths of the product of McDonalds is obvious, the weakness of the size of hamburger is getting smaller and smaller could be the weakness of McDonalds (see Figure 2), which may give the consumer a sense of cheating, as the pictures shown online is different from the real hamburgers, McDonalds needs to improve the situation, choose to propagate 'the real hamburger and picture are of the same size' so it will give the consumer the sense of being respect again. The quality of hamburgers of McDonalds is also judged as 'not supreme, just a fast-food' so choose the better raw material of food and upgrade the cooking process. The people of McDonalds, like the manager of the restaurant or the staff, couldn't provide direct service to the consumers, which may reduce the customer's feeling of being served. The people who dislike McDonalds could also have a bad evaluation in the online channel like 'Tiktok' or 'Weibo', which could affect the decision of customers. Physical Evidence could also be a huge weakness, as the consumer could smell the food and look at the other person's eating process, which may reduce the desire of buying the product, and consumer couldn't touch and feel the product, see the real food, all the reduction of the perception could make them want to buy the product less than an offline channel.

The evaluation of the quality of the product is not so high just because the price is also cheaper, to make up for the weakness, McDonalds offers more kinds of products that fit the Chinese consumer, although the staff could serve the consumer in the restaurant, McDonalds application has online customer service, closing the service gap with offline, a well-organized and captured picture could also make consumers want to taste the food. The strengths have more impact on the consumer than weaknesses.

# 3.3.3 Opportunity

To adapt to the Chinese market well, the use of current online propagate channels like Chines 'Weibo' and 'Tiktok' is important as these channels grab the consumer's attention and could bring more and more customers, online life is also a popular method of online marketing so organize online selling activities and giving coupon, as the price is always important to customers. Higher quality could be a great advantage as Chinese consumer also has their requirement of the higher food quality and healthier meals, the enhancement of quality is also significant. McDonalds now has adapted more to the current marketing environment and won more than 1.5 million fans both in 'Weibo' and 'Tiktok', so McDonalds is facing a larger and larger online Chinese market. A well-organized

advertisement could also be the key point of winning online marketing, McDonalds could do more in this field.

# 3.3.4 Threaten

McDonalds now has cooperation with online take-out applications like 'Meituan', so the online take-out application itself could bring customers, but the online channel could deduct a percentage from a sum of money of McDonalds, and these platforms could take away the consumer from the McDonalds application, as the online take-out application has other fast-food brands, it's more popular than McDonalds application, as the McDonalds is not a company based on Internet, an online take-out application has preponderance in IT technology, so the richer screen, the smoother user experience could be a threaten to McDonalds.

#### 4. Result and Discussion

In conclusion, McDonalds' products have changed some characteristics to cater to the tastes of the local customers when they try to expand the Chinese market, so it will get more market shares from this strength. Besides, because the McDonalds' products can be customized, which means that they will be able to earn more money not only from the mass market, but also from the niche market. Furthermore, McDonalds' issues a lot of coupons through some online approaches, which can make more people to give free publicity for McDonald. However, there are still some weaknesses of McDonalds' products and services, first, because the size of the burgers are not exactly the same as the pictures showed, so consumers may feel that they be led by the advertisements. Furthermore, because McDonalds have provided a lot of online services, which may reduce the direct contacts between the consumers and the staff, and also because they couldn't touch and feel the product, so if they get some foods that they don't like, it may also reduce the reputation of McDonalds. All in all, the advantages of the McDonalds has already become one of the biggest fast-food restaurants in the Chinese market, so the weaknesses are not that remarkable, and the changes may even help McDonalds to extend their product life cycle and earn more market shares in the future

Finally, based on the McDonalds' example, this paper thought the prices reduction of the products is one of the most important factors of the online promotion for customers, because it is the most significant change of the product for customers, and if the customers really attracted by the product, they will help the business to advertise spontaneously. From theoretical point of view, this study thinks the online publicity can help a business to improve its image and attract more young consumers, so it's very important for a modern business, based on the 4Ps theory, the study thought it can help a tertiary sector business to save a lot of money to promote their potential customers, because the good comments will be spread very fast. Also, because the information will be diffused in a short time, so the companies have to put more time and energies to improve their quality of products/services. According to the example this paper has mentioned, it suggests that McDonalds can still give more discounts to the customers and they can improve the quality of their food resources at the same time. Besides, they can develop their own application to compete with the other take-out application, so their customers won't be appealed by other restaurants on the platform like "Meituan"

# 5. Conclusion

This article analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of the online marketing of McDonalds in Chinese market under the situation of rapid development of the global economy by using the theories of marketing mix of 7Ps and SWOT Analysis. The article also argues how can McDonalds improve its online marketing strategies and provides some suggestions of improvements of the online marketing strategy for McDonalds in China. For instance, strategies of price reduction, food quality improvements, and an increase in online publicity are recommended. The study shows the online Marketing Mix, introduces some critical aspects that could be influenced through the online marketing process. It could be a guide to online marketing campaigns or online activities for brands. Especially it's useful when doing specific things like when designing promotion posters, the cheap price should be shown in an obvious position as it's the strength of some fast-food brands, using an online promotion or popular online channels is significant as they could bring more customers, controlling the comment in each online channel shouldn't be ignored as each person in online applications could propagate the bad news which damages the reputation of the brand, also on the online channel, less staff is used so the restaurant must pay attention to the customer services team. With a thorough analysis in Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threaten of the online channel, finding the significant items in a similar situation like organizing online fast-food marketing, deciding how to adapt to the new environment could be faster, for the one who to start their new business needs could be better compared to the big-name brand.

Although the structure of the Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threaten for the online Marketing Mix in Mc Donald is clear, the study doesn't show the results of the application in other brands, the study lacks the relevant data so more questionnaire or studies about the online promotion in the fast-food industry should be used.

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