

# Marketing Problems and Solutions of Thai Local Cosmetic Brand MINSTINE in China Market

Bo Zhang<sup>1</sup> and Guiyu Su<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>MBA, Siam University, Bangkok, THAILAND.

<sup>2</sup>Business Administration Program in Marketing, Siam University, CHINA.

<sup>2</sup>Corresponding Author: suguiyu0@gmail.com



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## ABSTRACT

The Chinese market is fast becoming one of the fastest growing consumer markets in the world. However, this market is full of both opportunities and challenges. Thailand is home to many affordable and high quality cosmetic brands, including MINSTINE, and in the Chinese market, Thai cosmetic brands face a number of issues, such as fierce competition with other local and international brands and relatively low market awareness. In order to successfully enter the Chinese market, MINSTINE needs to deeply understand and satisfy the needs and tastes of Chinese consumers, develop a product line that suits the Chinese market, and sell their products directly to Chinese consumers through cooperation with domestic e-commerce platforms. In addition, they can conduct a lot of marketing activities on social media, including partnering with Chinese celebrities for endorsement and promotion of their products. In addition, companies should take steps to increase brand awareness, deepen their understanding of the Chinese market, and continually improve the quality of their products and services.

**Keywords-** Thai cosmetic; MINSTINE; China market; marketing strategy.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Thai cosmetic brands are getting a lot of attention in the Chinese market (Dai & Kim, 2020). There are many cheap and good cosmetics in Thailand, including the brand MINSTINE. MINSTINE was founded in Thailand in 1988 and entered the Chinese market in 2016. From the earliest days when it came out of the circle among young people with products such as feather powder and strawberry color-changing lip balm, to today when it occupies a place in consumers' hearts with sunscreen and primer, MINSTINE has now become the number one brand in the sunscreen and foundation major categories on e-commerce platforms such as Tmall. It is understood that MINSTINE is mainly based on online channels in China, with online accounting for about 90% of its sales. Since 2017, MINSTINE has been the top 3 international beauty brand on Tmall for 5 consecutive years, as well as the top 1 on Tmall's

imported sunscreen hot list, add-on list, repurchase list and positive reviews list. In 2022, MINSTINE's online sales increased by over 200% compared to the same period last year. During the Double 11th, MINSTINE sunscreen sales exceeded 1 million units, total marketing campaign exposure exceeded 800 million, and total interaction exceeded 4 million (Chen & Wang, 2019).

Among them, one of MINSTINE's hot foundations. According to user reviews on Zhihu, MINSTINE's foundation is known as an affordable foundation that provides concealing, moisturizing and long-lasting 24 hours without taking off makeup, priced at just under 50 RMB. MINSTINE also has over 12,000 cosmetic categories, all of which have been certified internationally (Chen et al., 2020).

The Chinese cosmetic market is becoming one of the fastest growing consumer markets in the world, and with the rapid growth of the Chinese economy, the demand for cosmetic products from Chinese consumers

continues to grow (Cheng et al., 2014). There are certain opportunities and challenges for Thai cosmetic brands in the Chinese market (Fu & Cai, 2019). The competition between Thai cosmetic brands and other leading local and international brands is fierce and MINSTINE needs to pinpoint its positioning and selling points in the market through market research and analysis. In addition, Thai cosmetic brands have relatively low awareness in the Chinese market and need to strengthen brand promotion and publicity to enhance brand awareness (Aaker, 1997; Gao et al., 2017). At the same time, Thai cosmetic brands also need to understand the needs and tastes of Chinese consumers and adjust their product lines according to the actual market situation.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Thai cosmetics in China

In recent years, Thai cosmetic brands have gradually entered the Chinese market and gained popularity as the demand for natural ingredients and environmentally friendly cosmetics has increased. Although there are few domestic studies involving the Thai cosmetics market, major organizations have conducted a number of research studies on the Thai cosmetics market in China one after another (Godey et al., 2016).

The natural ingredients and high cost performance of Thai cosmetic products meet the needs of Chinese consumers (Dong & Wu, 2019). However, Thai makeup brands still face a number of problems and challenges in the Chinese market (Brakus et al., 2009). Firstly, factors such as ethnic and cultural differences and political environment may affect consumers' perception and trust of Thai brands; secondly, Thai brands face fierce competition compared to other leading local or international brands. At the same time, Thai cosmetic brands need to pay attention to compliance, market human atmosphere and marketing characteristics when advertising and promoting in China (Bui et al., 2020).

In order to succeed in the Chinese market, Thai cosmetic brands can take a number of steps (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003). First, they need to strengthen brand promotion and publicity to increase brand awareness and recognition and establish a good brand image among the public and target customers. Secondly, Thai brands need to dig deeper into Chinese consumers' preferences and needs and develop product lines that are in line with the Chinese market and continuously improve product quality and service levels to meet consumer needs. Finally, targeted marketing strategies on channels such as online marketing and social media should be developed to enhance brand image and attract more consumers (Chrousos, 2000).

Although Thai cosmetics have a promising future in the Chinese market, they also need to pay attention to market characteristics and consumer needs, and actively face competition and challenges. In order to successfully enter the Chinese market, Thai cosmetic brands need to understand and adapt to the market and improve their core competitiveness and brand influence.

### 2.2 Marketing strategy of Thai cosmetics in China

#### 2.2.1 Social media marketing

Thai cosmetic brands in the Chinese market can enhance brand awareness and recognition through targeted social media marketing on platforms such as Sina Weibo, WeChat and Jitterbug. Thai cosmetic brand MINSTINE's affordable foundation has become a highly sought-after "Netflix product" among Chinese consumers, and its word-of-mouth effect has greatly increased brand awareness and sales (Cao et al., 2020).

#### 2.2.2 Celebrity endorsement

Thai cosmetic brands can enhance the influence of their brands and improve their reputation and credibility by inviting celebrities with good reputation in China to endorse them.

For example, the Thai cosmetic brand SABINA has chosen the well-known star Jolin Tsai as its spokesperson in the Chinese market, which has successfully attracted the attention of fans and established a connection between the brand and consumers (Brown & Sherry, 2003).

#### 2.2.3 Discount Promotion

Thai cosmetic brands can attract consumers and increase sales and market share through some discount promotions and full discount activities.

Thai cosmetic brand SNAIL WHITE uses e-commerce platforms such as Tmall and Jingdong to sell in the Chinese market and attracts more consumers through online activities such as limited-time discounts, second sales and other promotions (Chen et al., 2013).

#### 2.2.4 Highlighting product features

Thai cosmetic brands can meet Chinese consumers' needs for quality and environmental protection by introducing product lines with unique characteristics, such as natural ingredients, low sensitivity, and affordable prices.

Thai cosmetic brand INDY cosmetic has attracted more and more Chinese consumers to choose its products by promoting the concept of natural and organic products, and has gained good reputation and sales in the Chinese market (Chernatony, 2010).

Another example is SNAIL WHITE, which has introduced Thai-style packaging in the Chinese market, attracting many Chinese consumers' attention. In addition, in the context of the Netflix economy, SNAIL WHITE also conducts advertising campaigns through cooperation with Chinese celebrities and Netflix spokespersons (Cao et al., 2013).

### **2.2.5 Publicity and Promotion**

Thai cosmetic brands can draw public attention by carrying out some publicity and promotion activities, such as holding thematic events and releasing posters.

For example, Red Sister Mamonde (Mamonde), which launches a natural skincare line with natural plants as raw materials, has increased its brand awareness through marketing campaigns in cooperation with Chinese celebrity spokespersons. The brand has also opened an official online store and launched promotions on e-commerce platforms such as Tmall and Jingdong to increase product sales (Anselmsson et al., 2014).

### **2.2.6 Product word-of-mouth marketing**

Thai cosmetic brands can invite some internet celebrities or websites to conduct product word-of-mouth marketing, or carry out activities such as user reviews and sunshine pictures to enhance brand awareness and recognition.

For example, SABINA, the brand has launched a product line for Chinese consumers in the Chinese market, such as pearl powder and cordyceps, to meet Chinese consumers' needs for whitening, spot removal and anti-wrinkle. In addition, SABINA also uses new media channels such as Weibo and WeChat to carry out online activities to interact with users and attract more young consumers (Ali et al., 2019).

## **2.3 Problems faced by Thai cosmetics**

### **2.3.1 Ethnic and Cultural Differences**

The large cultural differences between Thailand and China may affect consumers' awareness and trust in Thai brands. Some Thai cosmetic brands launched in the Chinese market have a large gap between the positioning of their products and the needs of Chinese consumers, which cannot meet the needs of consumers, resulting in poor sales (Alreck & Settle, 2002).

### **2.3.2 Unstable political environment**

The political environment in Thailand is unstable, which may bring uncertainty to Thai cosmetic brands in the Chinese market. Thailand's unstable political situation and frequent social unrest have led to distrust of Thai products by some consumers, which has affected the sales of Thai goods in the Chinese market (Bodnar & Cohen, 2012).

### **2.3.3 Brand awareness and trust**

Thai cosmetic brands have relatively low awareness and trust in the Chinese market compared to other leading local or international brands, and need to strengthen their brand promotion and publicity. With the rising popularity and buzz of Thai cosmetics in the Chinese market, counterfeit and shoddy products have begun to flood the market, negatively impacting consumers and creating considerable competitive pressure on Thai cosmetics sold through regular channels (Cui & Lui, 2007).

### **2.3.4 Fierce Competition**

Thai cosmetic brands face fierce competition from other leading local and international brands in the

Chinese market and need to continuously improve their product quality and service levels. Thai cosmetics are increasingly competitive in the Chinese market, but many brands have not found their own competitive differentiation and lack innovation, making it increasingly difficult to stand out in the market (Deng & Lu, 2019).

## **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a qualitative research method to analyze the development of Thai cosmetic products MINSTINE in China and the dilemmas it faces, from which solutions are given.

### **3.1 Literature Analysis**

By reviewing relevant literature, such as MINSTINE's official website, e-commerce platform, and social media, we can understand MINSTINE's product series, characteristics, and sales channels in the Chinese market. It is also possible to summarize and analyze the development history and market performance of MINSTINE in the Chinese market through literature materials such as market reports and academic papers.

### **3.2 Case Analysis**

Select some representative cases, such as MINSTINE's marketing strategy, brand promotion and channel management in the Chinese market, summarize the reasons for its success and failure, explore how to optimize MINSTINE's performance in the Chinese market, and provide guidance for the subsequent research.

### **3.3 In-depth Interviews**

Through in-depth interviews with representatives of MINSTINE in the Chinese market or consumers to understand the brand strategy, product positioning, marketing strategy and consumer demand, MINSTINE's performance in the Chinese market and future development direction were explored.

## **IV. DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Internal factors**

#### **4.1.1 Brand power influence**

Thai cosmetic brands lack visibility and a good brand image in the Chinese market, and lack a brand-loyal consumer base, which can affect the brand's sales performance. As the Thai cosmetic brand MINSTINE is not well known in China, there are difficulties in product promotion and publicity. The low product awareness of Thai cosmetic brand MINSTINE in the Chinese market may be related to the following factors: fierce competition with international brands, and therefore the need to spend a lot of money and effort on promotion and publicity to increase product awareness (Denisova & Kornienko, 2020).

#### **4.1.2 Product positioning**

The types of products and price positioning of Thai cosmetic brands in the Chinese market do not fully

match the needs of Chinese consumers and require an in-depth understanding of the market's needs to develop a more accurate market strategy. The promotion of Thai cosmetics in the Chinese market also suffers from a lack of clarity in product positioning (Dong & Wu, 2019).

Unlike Chinese consumers' needs and tastes for cosmetics, Thai cosmetics are characterized by a greater focus on naturalness, gentleness and moisturization. However, in the Chinese market, many consumers pay more attention to aspects such as product concealment, sunscreen effect, and comfortable texture (Eysenck et al., 1978; Han, 2017).

Thai cosmetic brand MINSTINE has not been promoted enough in the Chinese market, and its brand image and reputation are not strong enough, resulting in low product recognition in the Chinese market. In the Chinese market, consumers pay more attention to aspects such as brand background, quality and reputation, and if a brand performs poorly in these aspects, it will seriously affect consumers' perception and purchase behavior of the brand.

#### **4.1.3 Product Quality**

If the quality of a Thai cosmetic brand's products in the Chinese market does not meet the requirements, it will affect consumers' trust in the brand and potentially damage its brand reputation.

An article from Zhihu mentions an affordable foundation from Thailand, MINSTINE Foundation, which is known as an affordable foundation with long-lasting 24-hour coverage and moisturization. However, some consumers have also reported that it causes allergies and acne after use, which involves the quality of Thai cosmetics (Kong et al., 2020).

In addition, there is also an article from the School of Journalism and Communication of Tongji University that summarizes the quality problems of Thai cosmetics. The article argues that some cosmetic manufacturers may use inferior raw materials or raw materials that have not been adequately tested in order to reduce costs, which can lead to problems such as color differences, expiration dates, and excessive bacteria in their products. In addition, there may be problems with production processes and environmental hygiene, resulting in substandard product quality (Dai & Kim, 2020).

Some Thai cosmetics are inexpensive in the Chinese market, but they also face quality problems and consumers need to consider carefully when purchasing them. To avoid this, consumers can choose to buy Thai cosmetics sold through regular channels and pay attention to the production date, shelf life, and ingredient information of the products to ensure the quality and safety of the products they buy (Deng & Lu, 2019).

## **4.2 External factors**

### **4.2.1 Cultural differences**

China and Thailand have different cultural backgrounds, resulting in significant differences in the perceptions and needs of cosmetic products between the

two countries. For example, Thai people tend to prefer light colored makeup and natural makeup styles, while Chinese consumers pay more attention to concealing and emphasizing the effect of eye and lip makeup. This cultural difference has led to a poor understanding and acceptance of Thai cosmetic brands in the Chinese market (Chernatony, 2010; Chen et al., 2020).

According to Wikipedia, cultural differences are differences between cultures that create reactions such as shock, competition and loss when they meet. Cultural differences can arise due to differences in religious affiliation, ethnic group, language ability, political stance, social class, gender, nationalism, age gap, literacy, artistic perception, education, etc (Fu & Cai, 2019).

As a local cosmetic brand from the tropical region, MINSTINE Thailand also faces the problem of cultural differences when facing the Chinese market. First, there are obvious cultural differences between Thailand and China, such as religion, traditional culture, and food culture. These cultural differences may affect the consumers' perception and acceptance of the products. Thai MINSTINE needs to understand the cultural background and consumption habits of Chinese consumers in order to make differentiated adjustments in product design and marketing strategies (Dong & Wu, 2019).

Secondly, there are also differences between Thailand and China in terms of legal system, political system and economic development. In particular, the political environment in Thailand is not very stable, which is different from the social environment and political atmosphere in China. Therefore, in terms of laws and regulations, operation methods, etc., Thai MINSTINE also needs to make corresponding adjustments and adaptations (Han, 2017).

In addition, there are also differences between Thailand and China in terms of consumer culture. For example, there are differences in product packaging, product taste, usage scenarios, consumer psychology, etc. Thai MINSTINE needs to understand the different needs and preferences of Chinese consumers and make differentiated adjustments in product positioning to meet the needs of different consumer groups (Cao et al., 2020).

To sum up, cultural differences inevitably exist, and as an international cosmetic brand, MINSTINE Thailand needs to be sensitive in marketing, focus on the cultural background and consumption habits of consumers, and develop corresponding marketing strategies based on these understandings. This requires close communication and cooperation between MINSTINE and local distribution channels, agents and media to combine market resources while better integrating the local Thai cosmetic culture with Chinese consumers' needs, and collaborating to achieve optimal brand building and market expansion.

#### **4.2.2 Fierce competition in the market**

According to the article, the Southeast Asian beauty and cosmetics market has become one of the future markets that the global cosmetics industry is focusing on developing. In 2018, the size of the Southeast Asian beauty and cosmetics market has exceeded 100 billion yuan, and is expected to exceed 300 billion yuan by 2025, with a compound annual growth rate in the next five years or higher than that of the Chinese and European regions (Gao et al., 2017).

With the rapid rise of the Southeast Asian market, Thai cosmetics are facing fierce market competition. In addition to competition from domestic cosmetic brands, there is also competition from internationally renowned brands and cosmetic brands from other countries. Most of these brands are making continuous investment and innovation in product quality, brand image, and online marketing to attract more consumers' attention and purchase (Bui et al., 2020).

At the same time, consumers' choices have become more abundant and convenient due to the popularity and development of Internet technology. Thai cosmetic brands need to strengthen their online channels and cooperation with e-commerce platforms in order to better reach their target consumers and increase brand awareness (Chen & Wang, 2019).

The Chinese market is rich in cosmetic brands, ranging from domestic to international brands, each with its own market positioning and competitive advantages. Although the Thai cosmetic brand MINSTINE has a high awareness and market share in the local Thai market, it faces a lot of competition in the Chinese market from many domestic.

#### **4.2.3 Changing consumer needs**

Chinese consumers' tastes and needs for cosmetic products are somewhat regional and variable, requiring timely adjustment of product lines and marketing strategies according to market dynamics and consumer trends (Denisova & Kornienko, 2020).

The promotion of Thai cosmetics in the Chinese market is faced with the problem of changing consumer demand. According to Baidu, consumer demand is the sum of people's desire and ability to purchase material goods and services with monetary payment capacity in order to meet the needs of material and cultural life. In such an ever-changing business environment, consumer demand is constantly changing (Ali et al., 2019).

First of all, with the popularity and development of information technology, consumers have increasing access to information, and the vast amount of information has brought more choices to consumers' purchasing behavior and higher requirements for products. Thai cosmetics need to keep abreast of changes in consumer demand and conduct continuous market research in order to better understand market trends and consumer preferences, so as to adjust product design and marketing strategies in a timely manner (Ai & Chen, 2018).

Secondly, consumers' values and consumption habits are evolving. In the Chinese market, consumers are paying more attention to aspects such as product quality, safety, and cost effectiveness. Thai cosmetic products need to be designed to better meet the needs and tastes of Chinese consumers in order to better meet market demand. In addition, consumers are paying more and more attention to the credibility and reputation of brands, and Thai cosmetics need to strengthen brand marketing and image building to improve brand awareness and reputation (Brakus et al., 2009).

Finally, as consumers' lifestyles and consumption scenarios have changed, consumers' uses and functions of cosmetics have also changed. For example, consumers are beginning to focus on functional needs such as sun protection and concealer, rather than just looking for beauty and comfort. Thai cosmetics need to understand consumers' usage scenarios and needs, and continuously innovate and upgrade their products to meet consumer needs at different levels and in different scenarios (He & Harris, 2017).

## **V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Increase brand promotion efforts**

#### **5.1.1 Social media promotion**

Thai cosmetics can be promoted through social media platforms, such as Weibo, WeChat and Jitterbug. These platforms have a large user base and have wide influence in the Chinese market. Thai cosmetics can increase product awareness and reputation by posting attractive videos, pictures and texts to show consumers product features and interact with users to actively answer their questions.

Second, Thai cosmetics can increase publicity through offline activities. For example, promoting cosmetics at high-end shopping malls or women-themed events, inviting professional makeup artists to perform live makeup, and other forms. These activities can attract more consumers' attention and enhance the brand's image effect.

#### **5.1.2 Increase cooperation efforts**

Thai cosmetics can expand their promotion channels through partners. Cooperate with large e-commerce platforms, online cosmetic communities, and famous bloggers to increase brand exposure and guide users to buy products in physical stores or online.

#### **5.1.3 Participate in industry exhibitions**

Thai cosmetics can participate in industry exhibitions to attract more attention. At the exhibitions, Thai cosmetics can showcase the advantages of its products and interact with other industry players, thus expanding the company's influence and visibility.

#### **5.1.4 Summary**

For Thai cosmetic brands, it is important to promote and advertise in the Chinese market, and therefore more efforts are needed to promote the brand.

MINSTINE can increase brand awareness through various online and offline promotional activities. For example, it can launch a large number of marketing campaigns on social media, including endorsements with celebrities in mainland China, to advertise its products and increase brand awareness. In addition, consumers can be encouraged to share and discuss MINSTINE's products and services on social media. In conclusion, Thai cosmetics should increase their promotional efforts through innovative ways to enhance the awareness and reputation of their products. It is also necessary to continuously improve the quality of the products and the image of the brand in order to meet the higher demands of consumers for the products and win more market share.

### **5.2 Digging deeper into localized needs**

Thai cosmetic brands need to understand the needs and tastes of Chinese consumers and adjust their product lines according to the actual market situation. By gaining a deeper understanding of the needs of consumers in different regions and of different age groups, they can launch cosmetics and skin care products that are more suitable for Chinese skin in a timely manner.

#### **5.2.1 Market Research**

In terms of market research, Thai cosmetics can communicate with local consumers to understand their preferences and dissatisfaction with various cosmetics, as well as information on product usage scenarios and needs. These research results can help Thai cosmetics better understand the local market environment and consumer needs, and improve the localization of products.

#### **5.2.2 Product Design**

In terms of product design, Thai cosmetics can be positioned and optimized according to localized needs. For example, in terms of product packaging, taste, formulation, efficacy, and quality, differentiated designs and improvements can be made based on local culture and consumer needs to meet consumer demands at different levels and in different scenarios.

#### **5.2.3 Brand Marketing**

In terms of brand marketing, Thai cosmetics need to pay attention to the media usage and shopping habits of local consumers and choose media platforms suitable for the local market for promotion and advertising. At the same time, Thai cosmetics can also carry out localized promotional activities and marketing strategies in response to local consumer characteristics in order to improve product recognition and reputation.

#### **5.2.4 Channel Construction**

In terms of channel construction, Thai cosmetics can make use of localized e-commerce platforms and physical stores to increase product exposure and sales channels. This will allow for better access to local consumers, understanding their buying habits and needs, and optimizing and improving for those needs.

### **5.2.5 Summary**

In summary, Thai cosmetics need to dig deeper into localized needs when promoting, understand the local market environment and consumer needs, and make differentiated designs and improvements to address these needs. Only by continuously enhancing the degree of localization of products can we better adapt to the local market and succeed.

### **5.3 Expanding sales channels**

#### **5.3.1 Expand sales channels through Internet sales**

Through cell phone APP, e-commerce platform and website, more consumers can learn about the product information and make purchases. At the same time, Internet sales can also reduce sales costs and facilitate quick and easy delivery of goods and customer service.

#### **5.3.2 Offline physical store sales model**

Through cooperation with local supermarkets and drugstore chains, we can sell our products in these places to better reach consumers and increase brand awareness and product coverage.

#### **5.3.3 Cooperation with overseas agents or wholesalers**

In this way, Thai cosmetics can penetrate more market segments and gain more sales opportunities. With the opening and development of overseas markets, Thai cosmetics can also further enhance the international visibility of its products and expand the company's influence and market share.

#### **5.3.4 Diversification of sales**

Thai cosmetics can achieve sales diversification through the dual track of online and offline sales channels. By expanding channels horizontally and grasping market opportunities, Thai cosmetics can continue to expand brand exposure and consumer reach to better achieve sales and profits.

### **5.3.5 Summary**

In summary, Thai cosmetic brands should further expand their sales channels in the Chinese market, for example, by cooperating with domestic e-commerce platforms. Thai cosmetic brands have a blue ocean of opportunities in the Chinese market, but they also need to face the challenges of fierce competition in the market. With the growing acceptance of cross-border e-commerce by Chinese consumers, MINSTINE can choose to cooperate with cross-border e-commerce platforms to sell its products directly to Chinese consumers. MINSTINE will need to develop a product line that meets the needs of the Chinese market and continuously improve the quality of its products and services in order to be successful in the Chinese market.

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## APPENDIX

### *Interview Questions*

- A. What is the sales of Thai cosmetics MINSTINE in the Chinese market in recent years? What are the star products? What is the reputation of the star products with high sales?
- B. What are the characteristics and advantages of Thai cosmetics compared with those of other countries?
- C. What are the main brands and types of Thai cosmetics currently sold in the Chinese market? What are their positioning and price points?
- D. What is your opinion on the strategy for selling Thai cosmetics in the Chinese market?
- E. Is there a problem of counterfeit and shoddy products in Thai cosmetics in the Chinese market at present? How to deal with this problem?