

## **Social Media, Social Me: A Content Analysis of Beauty Companies' Use of Facebook in Marketing and Branding**

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*This paper initiated an investigation on how beauty brands employ social media, particularly Facebook, to increase brand awareness and reinforce brand loyalty. It is no doubt that changes in the consumptive patterns of media have led companies to shift their focus from products to people and from information delivery to information exchange. Few studies, to our knowledge, exist that examine beauty brands and/or beauty companies' use of social media as a means of engaging with or interacting with their current and potential consumers. Thus, the present study represented findings from a content analysis of Facebook posts from Estée Lauder, MAC cosmetics, Clinique, L'Oreal, Maybelline, and CoverGirl to see what types of social media tools were used more frequently by these brands to connect with their fans and users. Specifically, the study focused on the theoretical and practical implications of viral marketing in the branding strategies of the six beauty and/or makeup brands. Additionally, the study examined the way "high-end" brands used Facebook compared to the department store counterparts. These and other findings are discussed.*

**KEYWORDS** *social media, Facebook, beauty brands, viral marketing*

### INTRODUCTION

*The ultimate goal of creating and developing branding strategies is to enhance customers' brand loyalty.* According to the American Marketing

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Association's dictionary, brand loyalty is defined in two ways. From a sales promotion perspective, it refers to "the situation in which a consumer generally buys the same manufacturer-originated product or service repeatedly over time rather than buying from multiple suppliers within the category" (Brand Loyalty term, AMA Dictionary, 2012). From a consumer behavior perspective, it represents "the degree to which a consumer consistently purchases the same brand within a product class" (Brand Loyalty term, AMA Dictionary, 2012). Research on brand loyalty has showed that customers' loyalty has a highly positive correlation with companies' profitability and customers' insensitivity on product prices (Dawes, 2009; Reichheld, 1993).

On the 15th Annual Loyalty Leaders list of 2011, a phenomenon of particular interest was that 20% of the leading brands—out of the 528 brands assessed in 79 industry categories—were in cosmetics and skin care industry (Brand Keys, 2011). A survey on cosmetics brands was conducted among more than 26,000 American consumers between 18 to 65 years old (Frigerio, 2009). Results from the survey showed that cosmetics brands became a surrogate for value and that consumers have looked beyond the mere primacy of product and price.

Although online sales figures continue to grow in beauty commerce, traffic to branded beauty sites has been decreasing year after year. In the first half of 2011, purchase of U.S.-based cosmetics increased 4% from pre-recessionary levels (NPD group, 2011), whereas beauty sites visiting went down about 13.7% (Galloway, 2010). Some research has suggested that Facebook has increasingly become the destination for the desired brand experience or the hinge followed by the branded shopping URL (Galloway). Research has also showed that beauty campaigns, product sampling, and advertising on social interactive platforms have led to an average of 346% community yearly growth on Facebook (Galloway).

While Facebook has grown exponentially for individuals seeking new ways of connecting with other individuals, the social media website has also become increasingly more popular with companies looking to create a brand or enhance their current brand. Justin Smith, author of *The Facebook Marketing Bible*, says that Facebook now is the new way to get the word out and bring people in. Thus, the objective of the present study is to analyze the way beauty companies use Facebook to engage and interact with their fans, consumers, and clients. Using content analysis, the Facebook pages for six beauty brands were analyzed in terms of their frequency of communication with their clients, the types of engagement with their consumers, and the degree of connectivity with their fans.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

With the advent of digital bits of media content, "new media" has been coined to describe a highly hybrid communication environment, generally

having characteristics of being participatory, digital, networked, interactive, online, and ubiquitous (Anonymous, 2011). Furthermore, the media agenda is no longer set by a small group of people, such as journalists, editors, or producers. More and more people and social identities have access to the media. The advent of digital technologies also brings convenience to the processing of media content since conversations, posts, or other forms of communication can be copied, paste, resent, shared, or deleted. While being networked enables a systematic connection among multiple nodes, omnipresent online technology establishes an interactive context for which time and space are no longer a problem of concern.

### Definition and Nature of Social Media

Different from computer multimedia, DVDs, satellite TV programs, or other forms of new media, social media can be defined as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (A. M. Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p.61). As an important form of new media, social media have been dedicated to social interactions, including but not limited to, weblogs, microblogging, Facebook, Twitter, wikis, podcasts, and so on.

Among all the different characteristics between traditional and social media, interactivity has been one of the most analyzed dimensions (Flew, 2008; Gitelman & Pingree, 2003). The interactive level generated by a certain type of media refers to how media users can engage themselves with mediated activities as it emphasizes the dyadic relationship “between the tool or service and the increasingly active user (rather than passive consumer) of media” (Anonymous, 2011, para. 7). Traditional media are utilized by a small amount of social entities (an individual or an organization) to deliver information and messages to media consumers, such as TV programs, newspapers, magazines, or paper-based publications, which exemplify a one-way communication model. The communicative model embedded in social media, on the other hand, has evolved to a two-way experience.

Based on theories in social presence, media richness, self-presentation, and self-disclosure, A. M. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) classified social media into six different categories: collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia), blogs and micro blogs (e.g., Twitter), content communities (e.g., YouTube), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft), and virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life). Dawson (2007) mapped out the landscape of social media into four segments: widget/ component (e.g., Ning), rating/ tagging (e.g., Flickr), aggregation/ recombination (e.g., Snap), and collaborative filtering (e.g., ChaCha). Regardless of the standard to classify social interactive platforms, each form of social media is equipped with certain strengths and functions. Whereas Twitter is primarily used for

simplicity of information and frequency of postings (Grossman, 2009), blogs can be more useful for education (M. D. Kaplan, Piskin, & Bol, 2010).

Social networking sites, on the other hand, play an important role in building strong brands. Various statistics have demonstrated the ubiquitousness and effectiveness of social networking usage for individuals and organizations all over the world. The number one online activity is no longer pornography but social networking (Qualman, 2011). More importantly, 93% of businesses use social networking for marketing and branding (Qualman). During April 2012, there were more than 200 million active online users in the United States, with an average of 29 hours being spent on web browsing (Nielsen, 2012a). Facebook has been ranked as the number one social networking site, and earned approximately 152 million visits in the United States in March 2012 (Nielsen, 2012b). In addition, Facebook users spent the most time (7:09 hours) on the site on average in April 2012, compared with other websites (Nielsen, 2012a). The aforementioned figures and observations suggest that Facebook is capable of attracting a large amount of online users and keeping their attention for multiple hours. The increasing number of potential clients on Facebook and their dedication to online surfing have equipped this social networking site with business value and branding value.

### Facebook and Branding Strategies

As is claimed by Andrew L. Shapiro in 1999, the “emergence of new, digital technologies signals a potentially radical shift of who is in control of information, experience and resources” (Shapiro cited in Croteau & Hoynes, 2003, p. 322). Characterized as such, social networking sites have been considered a powerful tool with great potential to better shape democracy. Malone and Klein (2007) did an online forum experiment, the climate collaborium, and claimed that controversial issues were reduced by facilitating the electronic democracy via the use of social media. When this function is applied in business and marketing, a “push-pull marketplace” (Belch, 2009, p. 20) can be developed by online communities, in which customers can gather together to extol, criticize, or question a particular brand. Product reviews, swaps, and sweepstakes all make contributions to build up communities such as Facebook.

Not only does Facebook democratize or facilitate the information exchange in the marketplace to some extent, it also triggers higher expectations from brands held by consumers (Awata, 2010). A service-oriented study on brand value (Tynan, McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2010) suggests that there is “a shift from a firm- and product-centric view of value creation to one that focuses on personalized brand experiences” (p. 1156). With social networking sites allowing people to have better control of what they are willing to

receive or reject, consumers are more informed and knowledgeable about a particular brand which interests them nowadays. Their attention and expectations have been shifted from rationalizing product attributes and service qualities to emotional engagements and para-social experience.

Social networking sites enable consumers to have all aspects of dialogue with companies, brands and other consumers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Dialogue with brands improves consumers' brand experience. Brand represents "a tangible or intangible concept that uniquely identifies an offering, providing symbolic communication of functionality and differentiation, and in doing so sustainably influences the value offered" (Jevons, 2007, p. 6). For instance, Estée Lauder Companies Inc. is one of the world's most renowned beauty companies, which has a total of 27 brands, such as Estée Lauder, Clinique, and MAC Cosmetics. Belonging to the same company and offering similar types of beauty products and services, each of the three brands still has unique values respectively.

Numerous brands and business entities have Facebook page nowadays. Given that forming an attachment between companies' brands and their consumers and potential consumers is the primary goal in brand marketing efforts (Rossiter & Percy, 1997), the present study will investigate how Facebook has been used to promote brand loyalty among the six beauty brands: Estée Lauder, MAC Cosmetics, Clinique, L'Oreal, Maybelline, and CoverGirl. The six brands were chosen because of their performance on both the Annual Loyalty Leaders list of 2011 and the beauty digital index in 2011. According to the 2011 Brand Keys Customer Loyalty Engagement Index, 12 brands out of the top 100 brands were categorized as cosmetics, more than the total number of brands in any other specific category (Brand Keys, 2011). Nine brands were narrowed down through further observation. Sephora was excluded from the present analysis since it is a chain of cosmetic stores which carries hundreds of makeup brands. Lancôme Paris and Chanel were excluded since both of them are France-based luxury brands. For instance, the major language used by Chanel on its Facebook page is French. Not only may the language used on Facebook bias the interpretation, the geographic location also differentiates how a brand is discussed. In Galloway's study, local country sites "have grown at twice the rate of Global and U.S. prestige communities and register 50 percent higher engagement" (2012, p. 3).

On the other hand, after examining the effectiveness of brand site, efforts of digital marketing, and performance on major social media platforms and mobile devices, the beauty digital index released in 2011 by Galloway (2010) identified five classes of brands in the beauty industry: genius, gifted, average, challenged, and feeble. Six color cosmetic brands were finally selected from the nine brands for the present study based on their digital rankings and functions. More specifically, Estée Lauder (No. 3), MAC Cosmetics (No. 1), and Clinique (No. 2) were grouped as genius, of which "... social media

efforts complement broader digital strategy” (p. 5). L’Oreal (No. 7), Maybelline (No. 13), and CoverGirl (No. 14) were classified as gifted, who have been exploring and experimenting with digital presence. Branding strategies on Facebook adopted by the six beauty brands will be analyzed individually and comprehensively.

### Theoretical Implications: Viral Marketing

Considering the characteristics of cosmetic brand marketing, features, and functions of Facebook in business, there are some implications in viral marketing to examine the applications of Facebook in beauty brand promotions. Viral marketing, also called viral advertising or buzz marketing, refers to the spread of the original message about products or services through interactions among consumers or relevant users (Greg, 2006), similar to the self-propagating viral processes. The term was first coined by Steve Jurvetson and Tim Draper in 1997 to analyze the success of Hotmail, which “denote(s) a type of marketing that infects its customers with an advertising message, which passes from one customer to the next like a rampant flu virus” (Montgomery, 2001, p. 3). Viral marketing can be used to achieve all sorts of marketing objectives, such as product launches or brand image promotions.

In *The Virus of Marketing*, Rayport (1996) talked about six rules to achieve success of viral marketing.

#### “RULE 1: STEALTH IS THE ESSENCE OF MARKET ENTRY” (PARA. 3)

How to enter consumers’ minds has always been one of the major concerns for marketers. Milne, Rohm, and Bahl (2009) conducted an online survey among 1,930 participants in the United States and found decreased consumer attitudes toward products and purchase intentions among those who were aware of marketing strategies in social media. The study revealed the major advantages of viral marketing which can help implement and achieve relatively more covert and surreptitious branding campaigns. A good example would be the Gorilla advertising campaign created to promote Cadbury’s Dairy Milk chocolate in 2007, which earned great popularity on Facebook and YouTube. A 90-second commercial featuring the Cadbury’s drumming gorilla was so well-received that it gained more than six million hits on the internet, and more than 70 Facebook groups were formed to share the same pleasure (Sherwood, 2007). If a gorilla bashing a drum kit to the music can make promotions for milk chocolate, wall posts created by beauty brands covering all sorts of content may be persuasive as well, since viruses need to get into that host “under the guise of another, unrelated activity” (para. 3). Furthermore, the more feedback a wall post can get, the more Facebook users will notice it since the action/feedback of a Facebook user is usually

visible to his/her Facebook friends. In other words, reactions and responses to that wall post will spread exponentially fast. The first research question is therefore associated with “the most viral” post or post type for beauty brand development and engagement on Facebook:

*RQ1:* What are the most popular and engaging post types on the Facebook pages of the six beauty brands: Estée Lauder, MAC Cosmetics, Clinique, L’Oreal, Maybelline, and CoverGirl? How do these posts engage their Facebook fans?

“RULE 2: WHAT’S UP-FRONT IS FREE; PAYMENT COMES LATER” (RAYPORT, 1996, PARA. 5)

Viruses can maintain dormant for quite a long time before making any changes or asking for payback. As one of the pioneers in viral marketing, Pepsi Cola created a Mountain Dew campaign targeting at children. In this campaign, only qualified children got to win a Motorola pager. However, not only did winners have to pay for the following paging service themselves, they also did not have the right to cancel Dew-related messages (Rayport, 1996). The potential economic value of viral marketing in social interactive platforms have caught the attention of numerous brands/companies looking to establish Facebook presence, market their products, and increase their fan bases (Sun, Youn, Wu, & Kuntaraporn, 2006). Chevalier and Goolsbee (2003) found that positive book reviews provided by readers online can boost sales for the books. While word-of-mouth (WOM) may impact the operation strategies of a company/brand in many ways, companies may still put their major social media marketing efforts on selling products (Schultz, 2009). Therefore, the second question regarding the rule two is advanced:

*RQ2:* What kind of promotion techniques do the six beauty brands use on their Facebook pages? How do these techniques engage their Facebook fans?

“RULE 3: LET THE BEHAVIORS OF THE TARGET COMMUNITY CARRY THE MESSAGE” (RAYPORT, 1996, PARA. 8)

This rule actually delineates the key component of viral marketing. The spread of viruses mainly results from the high frequent activities and interactions of their hosts. Customers’ brand evaluations have mutual impacts on each other, and negative evaluations may receive greater attention than positive ones (e.g., Chevalier & Goolsbee, 2003). Regardless of the valence of the messages offered by online community members, they may act as a driving force for sales by disguising promotion purposes of companies as conversations or fan activities (Spratt, 2008). In December 2009, a WOM

marketing campaign for The Mike O'Meara Show was launched on Facebook to encourage its viewers to download the show. Audience can "like," "comment," and "share" how they thought of the show on its Facebook page. To actually click the "like" button, make comments, or "share a post" embodies the realization of eWOM. Therefore, the third research question is advanced when the rule three is applied in the six beauty brands:

*RQ3:* How do the six beauty brands use the apps of like, share, and comment on their Facebook pages to nurture their community? What kind of methods do the six beauty brands use on their Facebook pages in particular to deliver their product messages?

**"RULE 4: LOOK LIKE A HOST, NOT A VIRUS"** (RAYPORT, 1996, PARA. 10)

Viruses will not break into a human body or a software system until they have succeeded in mimicking the original human cells or systematic codes. Rule four tells marketers that **if they want their customers to commit to their brand, the customers themselves should act as the host or feel identified with the brand.** Ki and Hon (2007) suggest that people will show more favorable attitudes and greater support toward an organization which maintains open and reliable relationship management strategies. **Beauty brands on Facebook have started all kinds of approaches to display their openness and reliability, such as live talk chances with a company's CEO, runway shows with famous models and makeup artists, cooperation with celebrities, and so forth. These approaches also exemplify personality endorsement of each brand, which makes customers feel more identified with a brand** (Duboff, 1986; Plummer, 1985). Different market segments can be targeted by brand personality (Plummer). By constantly delivering personality testimonials and catching the attention of the target customers, the use of a calendar or event shared on the Facebook page of beauty brands can increase the extent to which their fans feel identified with them. Therefore, the following research question is advanced:

*RQ4:* How do the six beauty brands develop and share their calendar? Furthermore, does each company use its calendar emphasizes the events in the past, in the future, or at the current moment?

**"RULE 5: EXPLOIT THE STRENGTH OF WEAK TIES"** (RAYPORT, 1996, PARA. 11)

Each brand or company does not distribute its digital efforts evenly to every online platform. However, relatively balanced distribution will help a brand or company garner more potential customers since every customer likes different types of social media. Take Aveeno, as an example. Classified as a challenged brand, Aveeno "provides opportunity to earn Recyclebank

points via Facebook, but needs YouTube presence to clean itself up online” (Galloway, 2011, p. 8). In this case, YouTube represents the weak tie in Aveeno’s digital efforts. In July 2010, Old Spice initiated an online viral video campaign, garnering 6.7 million hits in just one day. It was considered the fastest growing viral advertising campaign since the figure jumped to 23 million after another 12 hours. The spokesperson for Old Spice, Isaiah Mustafa, showed up in bathroom setting and gave live responses through Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Digg, and so on (Keath, 2010). Integrated social media channels and marketing approaches have been reshaping the landscape of beauty industry. Branding and marketing innovations in social interactive platforms such as WOM endorsements can not only detail product characteristics and price highlights, but also strength the dynamic interactions between fans and brands/companies (Smith, 2009). Therefore, the following research question is advanced:

*RQ5:* How do the six beauty brands integrate across other channels to increase brand awareness and brand image, thus to enhance brand loyalty?

“RULE 6: INVEST TO REACH THE TIPPING POINT” (RAYPORT, 1996, PARA. 13)

After the accumulation of viruses reaches a certain point, the viruses would turn into an epidemic. Companies hoping to increase their sales figures directly through social media are still not recognizing the importance of interactions between brands/companies and consumers and the maintenance of such interactions (Smith, 2009) in a place that asks for the trustworthiness from brands/companies (Lee & Park, 2007). Response time represents a valuable building block in fostering accountability from brands/companies, especially when the content itself has correlations with time. For instance, a great many global brands/companies post coupon alerts on their Facebook page; some of them share their event calendar; brands like Clinique have designed certain type of posts such as Happy Thoughts on a regular basis. Facebook fans who are familiar with the behavior pattern of a brand might have expectations to interact with the brand at a certain time. They may look forward to the \$1 coupon or the Happy Thought every Wednesday, or the information about the latest TV show sponsored by a particular brand on weekends. People can check wall posts of a brand every day, every week, or every month for a variety of reasons and motivations. If the time to issue a post on Facebook or the frequency of postings can make a difference in viral marketing, the last research question regarding the rule six is advanced:

*RQ6:* How frequently do the six beauty brands issue posts on their Facebook page each week? Is there a correlation between the level of brands (high-end vs. department store) and regularity of postings?

## METHOD

The objective of the present study was to analyze beauty company's use of social media, specifically Facebook, as a means of engaging and interacting with their followers, fans, and consumers. In order to identify the specific types of communication patterns each company/brand used in its interactivity with consumers, a content analysis of each brand's Facebook page was conducted over the course of nine months. Thus, data for this study were obtained through a content analysis on the Facebook pages of the six beauty brands: Estée Lauder, MAC Cosmetics, Clinique, L'Oreal, Maybelline, and CoverGirl. One of the authors/coders collected Facebook posts from these beauty brands. Categories in the coding book were defined by observations on early posts of multiple beauty brands and discussions between the two coders. Revisions were made along the coding process to make sure coded categories were as exhaustive and mutual exclusive as possible. One coder made judgments about all the posts in the sample. Fifty-seven posts (12%) were randomly selected and independently coded by the second coder. Krippendorff's Alpha was used to test the inter-coder reliability, which yielded the value greater than .80 for each variable. Overall, the coding system showed high inter-coder reliability.

Since almost any Facebook user can have access to the public posts and make changes to them, such as adding comments or clicking the "like" button on a certain post, it is possible that some figures archived for analysis in this investigation are different from those on each brand's current Facebook page. Due to the potentially large number of postings, only posts sent on the first 14 days of each month from January 2011 to September 2011 were coded. Therefore, postings of 18 weeks in total were coded.

Some brands may carry more than just one type of product, leading to a variety of posts on each brand's Facebook page. Thus, posts about hair products (e.g., L'Oreal), skin care or body moisturizer (e.g., Clinique) were excluded from analysis. Based on such criteria, a total of 469 posts were analyzed: 68 posts from Estée Lauder, 49 posts from MAC Cosmetics, 84 posts from Clinique, 81 posts from L'Oreal, 89 posts from Maybelline, and 98 posts from CoverGirl. Furthermore, the six brands were classified into two groups: high-end brands (Estée Lauder, MAC Cosmetics, Clinique,  $n = 201$ ) and department store brands (L'Oreal, Maybelline, CoverGirl,  $n = 268$ ).

Preliminary information used for analysis included post time and the number of "likes," "comments," and "shares." Three types of post time were generated by pure observation. If a post was sent during 9 am to 5 pm on weekdays, it would be coded as an office hour post; if it was added during other time slots on weekdays, it would be coded as a non-office hour post; if it was issued on Saturday or Sunday, the post would be coded as a weekend post. The number of "likes," "comments," and "shares" were obtained by reading the following line of each post. In addition, when a survey or quiz was issued, different names might be used on Facebook: "follows" instead

of “likes”; “votes” instead of “comments.” Under these circumstances, votes would be re-coded as comments because consumers need to read the question and go over all the choices to give their answer, similar to the cognitive processing of making comments; follows would be re-coded as likes because consumers in both the situations only need to click on a button to show their interests.

Following the viral marketing rules and basic characteristics of post contents, coding for post types included event, product, promotion, entertainment, and other. *Event* was defined as sharing a calendar, for instance, a post from Estée Lauder on September 9th saying that “Last night Tom Pecheux and Emily from Into The Gloss hosted our Fashion’s Night Out Party at Saks Fifth Avenue. . .” Posts under the category of event were further classified into four groups: *events in the past, today, tomorrow, or in the future*. The aforementioned post was coded as event in the past. If a post talked about *product launch, reviews, or tips*, it would be coded as *product*. A post would be coded as *promotion* if its purpose was to stimulate consumer demand, for instance, a post from CoverGirl on July 3rd claiming that “Coupon Alert! Get \$1 off any one COVERGIRL product or \$2.50 off any 2 products . . .” Posts under this category were further classified into four groups: *coupon/discount code, sample/gift with purchase, giveaway, or other*. *Entertainment* was coded if the post suggested direct interactions between the brand and consumers, including: *beauty pool, Q&A, survey, activity with reward, application services (apps) within the Facebook page, or other*. If a post did not fit into any of the categories defined above, it would be coded as *other* (e.g., Festival Greetings). For instance, a post sent by Clinique on August 12th saying, “Happy Thought: Designate a time frame for chores & errands to make your weekend less stressful. Block out 2–3 hours max. That’s it.”

To analyze how the six beauty brands integrated across other channels to enhance brand loyalty, indications (*No* = 0; *Yes* = 1) were made whether or not the following items were present, respectively: *Twitter, spokesperson/model, expert/artist, blogger, brands within the same company, other*. In response to whether or not traditional media or other forms of support were incorporated by the beauty brands, coding was made in a similar manner (*No* = 0; *Yes* = 1) about whether the following items were present, respectively: *picture, video, newspaper, magazine, other*. To examine the proposed research questions, descriptive analyses, ANOVA, and chi-square tests were employed.

## RESULTS

The first research question asked about the most popular and engaging post type on the Facebook page of the six beauty brands, and asked how these posts engaged their Facebook fans. A descriptive analysis of the type of

posts (*event, product, promotion, entertainment, other*) showed that 63.2% of Estée Lauder's posts, 30.6% of MAC Cosmetics, 26.2% of Clinique, 46.9% of L'Oreal, 48.3% of Maybelline, and 52% of CoverGirl's posts were related to what was coded as *entertainment*. When it comes to the specific type of *entertainment* each brand used to interact with and engage its followers and consumers (*beauty poll, Q&A, survey, activity with reward, applications, other*), results showed relative homogeneity for all the brands: open-ended questions posed to each brand's Facebook followers (Q&A) was the most frequently used engaging tool for all the six brands, with Estée Lauder using it in 83.7% ( $n = 36$ ) of its entertainment-related posts; MAC Cosmetics used Q&A in 60% ( $n = 9$ ); Clinique used Q&A in 63.6% ( $n = 14$ ); L'Oreal used Q&A in 55.3% ( $n = 21$ ); Maybelline used Q&A in 46.5% ( $n = 20$ ), and CoverGirl used Q&A in 43.1% ( $n = 22$ ) of its posts.

As *entertainment* was used most frequently by the six beauty brands, a one-way ANOVA was used to test for differences in "likes" among the six types of *entertainment* (*beauty poll, Q&A, survey, activity with reward, apps, other*), which yielded no statistical significance. However, the number of "comments" differed significantly across the six types of *entertainment* posts from the six beauty brands as a whole ( $n = 212$ ,  $F = 13.09$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Tukey's post-hoc comparisons of the six groups indicated that the *survey* group ( $M = 2479.30$ ) garnered significantly more comments than four other groups: *Q&A* ( $M = 109.92$ ,  $p < .001$ ), *activity with reward* ( $M = 34.27$ ,  $p < .001$ ), *apps* ( $M = 7.67$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and *other* ( $M = 26.25$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The results also indicated that the *beauty poll* group ( $M = 1307.63$ ) garnered significantly more comments than three other groups: *Q&A* ( $M = 109.92$ ,  $p < .001$ ), *activity with reward* ( $M = 34.27$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and *other* ( $M = 26.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Comparison between the *survey* group and the *beauty poll* group was not statistically significant at  $p < .05$ . The results also suggested that the most engaging *entertainment* that urged an individual to make comments was *survey* or *beauty poll*, although beauty brands/companies preferred to give open-ended questions (Q&A).

Similar effects were also observed across all the high-end brands (Estée Lauder, MAC Cosmetics, Clinique) on the number of "comments" ( $n = 80$ ,  $F = 16.10$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As none of the examined posts was related to Facebook *apps*, and only one was *beauty poll*, Tukey's post-hoc comparisons were made among four groups of *entertainment*: *Q&A, survey, activity with reward, and other*. The statistical results revealed that the *survey* group ( $M = 1712$ ) had significantly more answers than all the other types of *entertainment* ( $p < .001$ ), while no difference was found among groups of *Q&A, activity with reward, and other*.

Another one-way ANOVA showed a significantly different number of "comments" across all the department store brands (L'Oreal, Maybelline, CoverGirl) among the six types of *entertainment* ( $n = 132$ ,  $F = 9.74$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As none of the analyzed posts was coded as *other*, five groups of

*entertainment* were further compared. More specifically, Tukeys post-hoc tests suggested that the *survey* group ( $M = 2671.13$ ) was more likely to be commented on than the three other groups: *Q&A* ( $M = 107.57, p < .001$ ), *activity with reward* ( $M = 37.37, p < .001$ ), and *apps* ( $M = 7.67, p < .05$ ). The tests also suggested that the *beauty poll* group ( $M = 1389.87$ ) was more likely to be commented on than *Q&A* ( $M = 107.57, p < .01$ ) and *activity with reward* ( $M = 37.37, p < .01$ ).

The second research question examined the kind of promotion techniques the six beauty brands used on their Facebook pages and how these techniques engaged their Facebook fans. For high-end brands, only 20 posts were observed to carry *promotion* information, with MAC Cosmetics having no posts related to sharing a *coupon/discount code*, a *sample*, a *giveaway*, or *other* sorts of sales promotion. Estée Lauder had two posts in total under this category: one was about free samples and gift with purchase on its Fashion's Night Out, issued on September 8. The other Estée Lauder post related to promotions was issued on June 14, and it was only marginally related to promotion techniques: "... Ever wondered how the practice of sampling began? Mrs. Estée Lauder was the free sample pioneer! Read about her passion here..." Among the 18 posts Clinique had, 15 were about *gift with purchase*. For the high-end brands as a whole, no significant correlation was identified using Chi-square test between post time and *promotion* techniques. One-way ANOVA tests were performed to see how the number of "likes"/"comments" differed across the four types of *promotion* techniques (*coupon/discount code*, *sample/gift with purchase*, *giveaway*, or *other*), which yielded no significant results. A chi-square test revealed that there was a relationship between *promotion* techniques and "share" ( $X^2 = 9.47, df = 3, p < .05$ ). However, the significance could be due to the small sample size in the category of *promotion* techniques that only one post releasing coupon code was shared.

On the other hand, the department store brand L'Oreal ended up having seven posts talking about *promotions*, while Maybelline had 12 posts and CoverGirl had 14 posts. The majority of these *promotion* posts offered *coupons* or a *discount code* (L'Oreal: 4/7; Maybelline: 7/12; CoverGirl: 10/14). It seems that department store brands were more likely to use Facebook as a sales tool. For the department store brands as a whole, a significant correlation was found between post time and *promotion* techniques ( $X^2 = 12.77, df = 6, p < .05$ ). In addition, posts offering *coupons* or a *discount code* were more likely to be added during weekends than weekdays. A series of one-way ANOVA tests showed that promotion-related posts had significant differences on their possibility to be "commented" ( $n = 33, F = 2283.87, p < .001$ ), but not "liked" or "shared." The post about *free samples* had more "comments" than all other types of promotion-related posts.

The third research question was related to consumers' willingness to "like," "comment," or "share" on the Facebook some aspect of a post from

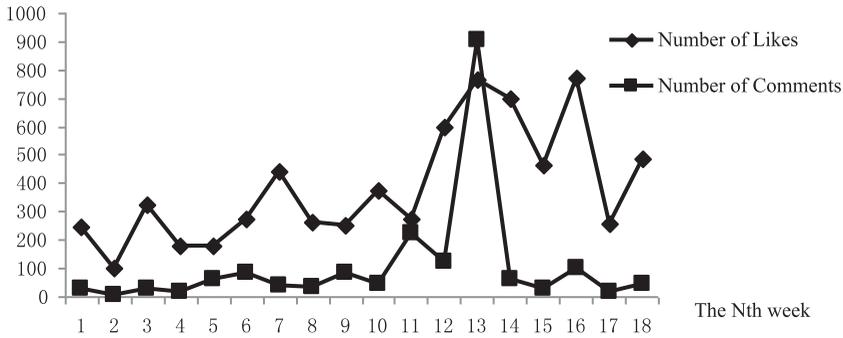


FIGURE 1 Estée Lauder.

one of the six beauty brands. Figure 1 (Estée Lauder) indicates that the number of “likes” increased in a fluctuating fashion across the coded 18 weeks, whereas the number of “comments” did not change that much but had its greatest peak during the thirteenth week of analysis. In addition, the most liked post ( $n = 1568$ ), appearing on July 7, was about the top selling lipsticks in 2011. The post issued on July 5 earned the most answers to a question posed to the brand’s Facebook followers ( $n = 3350$ ), which was a Q&A type of post asking fans when they wear foundation.

Figure 2 about MAC Cosmetics illustrates that that both the number of “likes” and the number of “comments” did not increase or decrease in one direction across the coded 18 weeks. On February 11, MAC Cosmetics had its most-liked post ( $n = 2650$ ), which was a series of pictures taken in the VENA CAVA’s runway. On July 14, a post notifying the live chat opportunity with the Vice President of Product Development Nick Gavrelis from MAC cosmetics earned the most comments ( $n = 314$ ).

Figure 3 (about Clinique) shows that the number of “likes” proliferated during the coded 18 weeks, with its highest peak on September 8. The most-

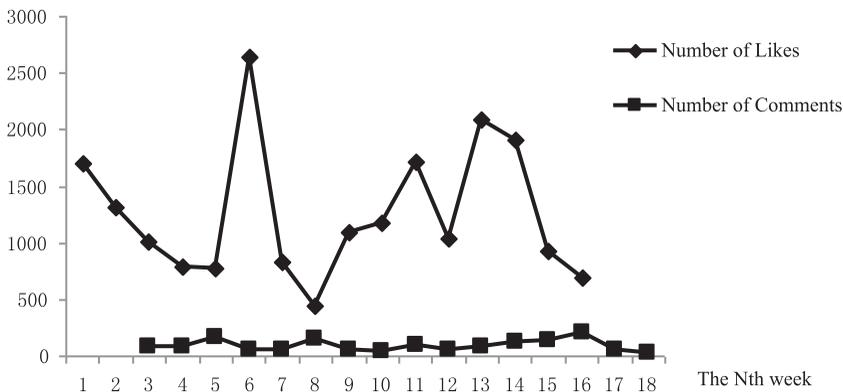


FIGURE 2 MAC Cosmetics.

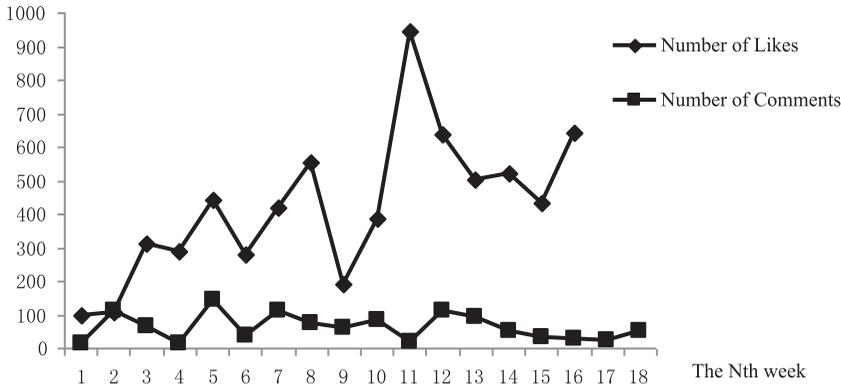


FIGURE 3 Clinique.

liked post ( $n = 1296$ ) on that day was to celebrate Clinique’s 44th birthday. On the other hand, the number of “comments” had several “ups and downs” throughout the 18 weeks of analysis, with its most commented post ( $n = 561$ ) being one that asked Clinique fans to talk about their favorite Clinique product and the reasons they loved it.

Figure 4 about (L’Oreal) illustrates that the number of “likes” increased steadily until the 14th week and then started to decrease. Furthermore, L’Oreal posted a question, which wound up having the highest number of “followers/likes” across the brands ( $n = 2968$ ): “What colorful beauty trends do you want to know more about from our pro make-up artist?” As for the number of “comments” made about posts, the number did not vary much over the analysis period. The most answered or commented post ( $n = 9821$ ) was a survey asking, “If you could only wear one beauty product, what would it be?”

Figure 5 (about Maybelline) shows that the number of “likes” dropped for the first six weeks and then increased steadily in the following 12 weeks.

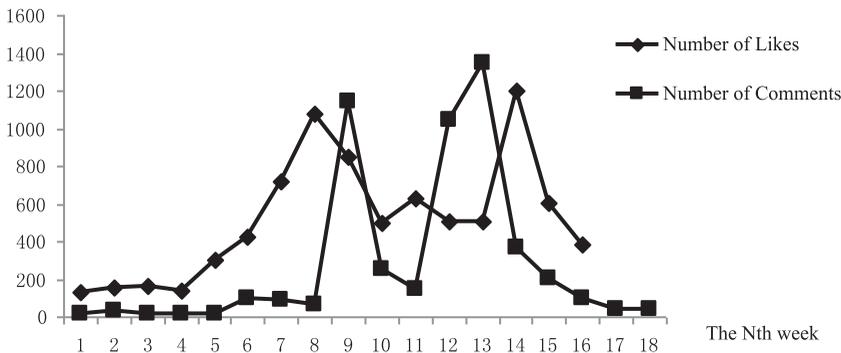


FIGURE 4 L’Oreal.

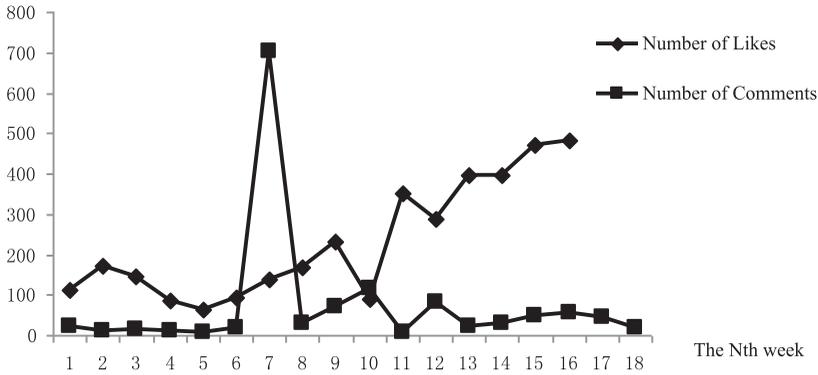


FIGURE 5 Maybelline.

On September 2, Maybelline added five new photos to the album Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Campaign Sept 2011, which earned the most “likes” ( $n = 2370$ ). As for the number of “comments,” there was not too much change in the trend with the exception of one post, issued on April 1. The survey post garnered 2761 answers to the following question: “Which spring makeup color trend are you excited about?...”

Figure 6 (about CoverGirl) illustrates that there was a slight decrease in the number of “likes” during the period of 18 weeks. The most-liked post ( $n = 917$ ) was issued at the fourth week, which was about Valentine’s greetings. On the other hand, there was little change in the number of “comments” made by followers on CoverGirl’s page. On June 3rd, the most answered post ( $n = 11741$ ) was found for both the brand itself and five other brands, “CoverGirl asked: Beauty Poll: On pool or beach days do you wear makeup or go bare?”

In general, the number of “likes” increased in overall frequency for all the beauty brands during the coded 18 weeks, while the number of

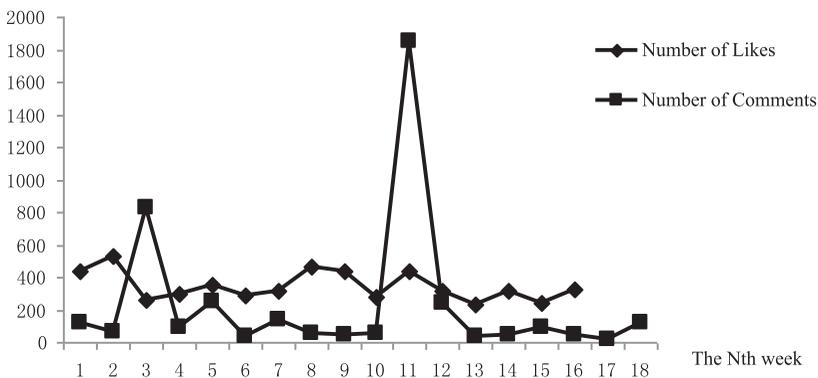
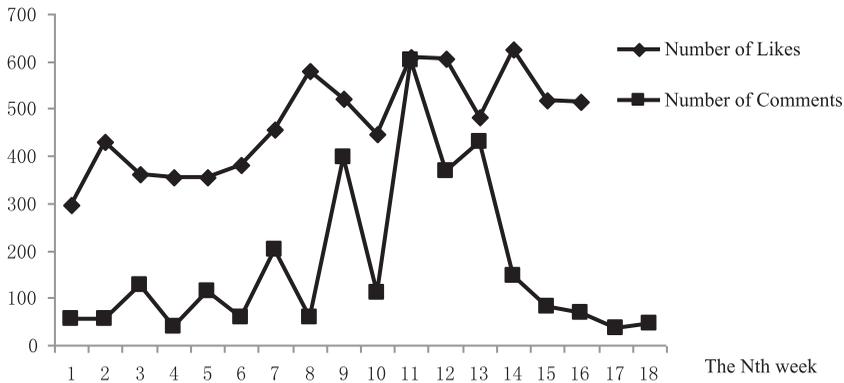


FIGURE 6 CoverGirl.



**FIGURE 7** All Beauty Brands. Note: The number of likes/comments within each week is averaged for all the seven figures.

“comments” has been fluctuating with several highs and lows. This could be because it is easier for a Facebook follower to click on the “like” tab on a Facebook page whereas typing in a comment sometimes takes more time. From a viewer or user’s perspective, liking something is easy whereas commenting on something requires more time and effort. Given that many of these social media users may be accessing their Facebook pages through their smart phones, it is possible the hassle of having to type something out on a phone device is not worth the effort. However, these explanations are still open to question. Further research is needed to determine why Facebook users are more willing to “like” instead of “comment” a wall post.

There is no particular research finding for the number of “shares” since only 23 out of 469 posts of all the six beauty brands were found to have been shared.

The fourth research question examined how the six beauty brands developed and shared their calendar and their calendar emphasis: *events in the past, in the future, or at the current moment*. All the six beauty brands posted their *event* calendar to their Facebook pages, even though it was to varying degrees: 29.4% of Estée Lauder ( $n = 20$ ), 59.2% of MAC Cosmetics ( $n = 29$ ), 11.9% of Clinique ( $n = 10$ ), 27.2% of L’Oreal ( $n = 22$ ), 57.3% of Maybelline ( $n = 51$ ), and 32.7% of CoverGirl ( $n = 32$ ) posts were related to sharing an *event* calendar. ANOVA tests showed no significant differences of the emphasis of event’s time on the number of “likes” or “comments.” However, both the high-end brands and department store brands showed the same emphasis/order for the time feature of the shared *events*: *today > future > past > tomorrow* (high-end brands:  $55.9 > 25.4 > 15.3 > 3.4$ ; department store brands:  $44.8 > 27.6 > 20.0 > 7.6$ ), which suggested that each beauty brand was more likely to emphasize or promote something happening “today” versus something happening in the future or the past.

The fifth research question measured how the six beauty brands integrated across other channels to enhance brand loyalty. All the six beauty brands registered high statistical significance in incorporating extra website links to share their posts: 60.3% of Estée Lauder ( $n = 41$ ), 61.2% of MAC cosmetics ( $n = 30$ ), 39.3% of Clinique ( $n = 33$ ), 44.4% of L'Oreal ( $n = 36$ ), 69.7% of Maybelline ( $n = 62$ ), and 66.3% of CoverGirl ( $n = 65$ ) all included the re-posting of a post or adding a link to some product. All the six beauty brands were also inclined to add extra pictures to flourish their Facebook page rather than using videos: This was found in 63.2% of the Estée Lauder ( $n = 43$ ) posts, 49% of the MAC Cosmetics ( $n = 24$ ) posts, 26.2% of the Clinique ( $n = 22$ ) posts, 64.2% of the L'Oreal ( $n = 52$ ) posts, 67.4% of the Maybelline ( $n = 60$ ) posts, and 46.9% of the CoverGirl ( $n = 46$ ) posts. Among the six types of cooperative channels (*Twitter, spokesperson/model, expert/artist, blogger, brands within the same company, and other*), 42.6% of the Estée Lauder ( $n = 29$ ) posts and 42.7% of the Maybelline ( $n = 38$ ) posts were in cooperation with makeup artists or experts over other types of social media channels; 27.2% of the L'Oreal ( $n = 22$ ) posts contained spokespersons or models, whereas MAC Cosmetics preferred to use the combination of makeup artists/experts and spokespersons/models (53.1%,  $n = 26$ ); Facebook posts by Clinique (26.2%,  $n = 22$ ) and CoverGirl (21.4%,  $n = 21$ ) had the broadest and most unique types of posts, including content categories not included on the original coding sheet.

The last research question asked about the frequency of postings per week for the six beauty brands. Specifically, this question asked if there was a correlation between the level of brands (high-end vs. department store) and regularity of postings. A descriptive analysis showed that each brand had its own particular pattern. When the level (high-end vs. department store) was taken into consideration, the results showed that 88.6% of posts ( $n = 178$ ) on the Facebook page of high-end brands were issued during office hours, compared with 3.5% ( $n = 7$ ) being sent during non-office hours on weekdays and 8% ( $n = 16$ ) being sent on weekends. For the department store brands, 66.8% of the posts ( $n = 179$ ) were added during office hours, whereas 19% ( $n = 51$ ) were sent during non-office hours on weekdays and 14.2% ( $n = 38$ ) were sent on weekends. A further chi-square analysis demonstrated that there was a relationship between the level of the beauty of brands and the post time ( $X^2 = 33.456$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

## DISCUSSION

This paper initiated an investigation on how beauty brands employ social media, particularly Facebook, to increase brand awareness and reinforce brand loyalty. It is no doubt that changes in consumptive patterns of the media have led companies to shift their focus from products to people and from

information delivery to information exchange. Brand-created content combined with eWOM approaches within the beauty industry reveal a paucity of theoretical and empirical investigations. The present study seeks to address this scarcity. Specifically, the study focused on the theoretical and practical implications of viral marketing in branding strategies of six beauty and/or makeup brands on Facebook.

Facebook, a social networking site used by more than 900 million people worldwide, is now becoming one of the fastest growing ways for companies and businesses to promote their brands and products and to turn what used to be one-way communication into a more interactive model of communication (Sengupta, 2012). Facebook is used by 1 in every 13 people around the world, with approximately 250 million users logging in on a daily basis. This interactive form of media now touches individuals globally from very young children who are looking to connect with friends to senior citizens who are branching out into the world of social media to have a new level of interaction with people and businesses. More importantly, Facebook has created a nature WOM viral scenario for product promotion and brand management.

The Facebook pages owned by all of the beauty brands analyzed in the present study preferred activities whereby they could engage with their consumers (e.g., Q&A or beauty poll) to other types of activities (e.g., product or promotion) in designing their posts' content. Furthermore, open-ended questions (Q&A) rather than interactive questions with limited options (beauty poll) were used more frequently. However, the most engaging entertainment that urged an individual to make comments was neither Q&A nor beauty poll but rather a survey. Regardless of the "social" nature of social media, the dialogue aspect has still not been fully embraced by many brands/companies. More than one fifth of the assessed 100 iconic brands in Galloway's study (2012) "still do not engage in any two-way conversation, and a third prohibit fan posts on their Facebook walls" (p. 2). Research findings regarding the type of entertainment suggest that the two-way interaction in social media may give brands/companies better engagement control and allow them to react quickly to market developments.

Despite the fact that beauty industry has a long history in online commerce (e.g., Clinique started its e-commerce in the late 1990s), the emphasis of beauty brands such as Clinique on their Facebook websites was not about promotions or sales as in traditional media advertising but engagement and community. An interesting finding regarding promotion posts issued by department store brands was that these types of posts were more likely to be added during weekends than weekdays. However, few of the examined wall posts issued by all the brands carried promotion information such as a discount code or gift with purchase. As the champion of the beauty digital index 2011, MAC Cosmetics even had no post related to promotions at all. Instead, the most frequently used engaging tool was Q&A. Research findings

in this regard demonstrate one of the viral marketing rules: masquerade to be something else to get into the host, that sharing promotion information is not the only way to make profits. Collecting thoughts and advice from consumers via other activities, such as Q&A or calendar sharing, may be more helpful to achieve brand loyalty, which can ultimately translate into long-term efficacy for brands/companies.

It is particularly noteworthy that when examinations were made on consumers' willingness to "like," "comment," or "share" on Facebook some aspect of a post, each of the six beauty brands showed its uniqueness and strengths. MAC Cosmetics, for instance, created albums profiling professional surfers to promote a positive lifestyle, while at the same time increasing the awareness and memorability of Quite Cute and Surf Baby collections. When followers of a brand start to talk up, unique brand stamps will be carried into new territories. Just as is illustrated by the viral marketing rule, let the community members carry the brand messages. According to Harris and de Chernatony (2001), brand identity, which emphasizes the uniqueness of a brand or ways of making a brand unique, has gradually become the focus in the brand scholarship. The importance of unique brand images lies in that they offer companies control of overall market positioning, opportunities for developing purchasing power, and incentives for maintaining nurturing management relationship (Sheinin & Wagner, 2003).

All the six beauty brands have neither stopped adding posts about events to their Facebook pages (e.g., runways or fashion shows), nor stuck with a particular time to talk about events. Both the high-end and department store brands had the same time preference to share news about events, with today being the top choice. It was followed by "future," "past," and "tomorrow." By updating their content in a timely manner, Facebook has provided a platform for the beauty brands to have constant connections with their followers and fans. Although Facebook users can have access to the site and its content anytime they want to, at least theoretically, effective yet efficient responses from the page owners are expected. Galloway (2012) found that the growth of Facebook communities and "numb response times ... led to a decline in engagement rates of almost 50 percent" in just one year" (p. 2). On the other hand, the chi-square analysis demonstrated that high-end brands were more likely to send posts during office hours, which showed the flexibility of using Facebook or other social networking sites as a viral marketing tool.

Analysis on bringing other channels to enhance brand loyalty by the six beauty brands suggested that Facebook has become a hybrid mix to maximize the level of interactions between the beauty brands and their customers. CoverGirl, for instance, has been featuring Taylor Swift in numerous commercial pictures and adding these pictures to posts whether or not the content was relevant to this spokesperson. As is suggested by rule five in viral marketing strategies, a great community can be established through accumulating weak ties. It also suggests that the development and

implementation of eWOM branding strategies in terms of brand image and values has become a vital element of beauty corporate strategy.

There are some limitations of this study. First of all, additional research that examines promotion techniques on Facebook longitudinally is warranted. In this study, there were only 55 posts in total related to promotion information, which did not guarantee a meaningful statistical analysis on this type of posts. Researchers have argued that a large number of companies are still devoting their social media efforts solely to selling products or services, rather than anything else (e.g., Schultz, 2009). The study already showed that department store brands preferred to add promotion information during the weekends instead of weekdays. Thus, it would be interesting to examine how these promotion posts combined with eWOM techniques engage individuals and make profits for companies. On the other hand, the generalizability of the study may apply mainly to beauty or makeup brands/companies, since the findings are limited to the experience of the six U.S.-based beauty brands. Further in-depth analysis with large-scale beauty brands and companies at global level is needed.

As an exploratory investigation, findings of this study offer essential components for relevant research development to be applied within the beauty industry or to be extended to alternative types of brands/companies. Future research may examine whether the success of viral marketing strategies hold for different industries on Facebook. Examinations may also focus on the levels of interactivity and relationship from the perspective of Facebook users to determine how they generally use Facebook of beauty brands, such as their favorite type of posts, their motivations to make comments to a post, or their preferred integrated channels. Investigations are also warranted on beauty in loyalty via other kinds of social media.

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