

Research on Overseas Marketing Strategies of Cross-Border E-commerce Brands

-- Taking SHEIN as an Example

Xiaotong Song

School of Literature and Media Studies, Guangzhou University of Applied Science and Technology, Zhaoqing, Guangdong, 526000, China
sxtt20041213@outlook.com

Abstract: Against the backdrop of deep integration between globalization and the digital economy, Chinese cross-border e-commerce is transitioning from "product globalization" to a new stage of "brand globalization." As a phenomenal brand in the fast fashion sector, SHEIN's success provides a highly valuable research model for Chinese enterprises. However, existing research shows a lack of systematic analysis regarding its cross-cultural marketing and localization adaptation strategies. This paper takes SHEIN as a case study and systematically analyzes its overseas marketing strategies based on the Network Integrated Marketing 4I Theory, combined with analytical tools such as PEST, Porter's Five Forces, and SWOT. The research finds that SHEIN's success does not rely on a single advantage but is the result of its pioneering dual-drive approach: integrating a data-driven "small orders with quick response" flexible supply chain with direct-to-consumer (DTC) brand operation. Its marketing strategy deeply implements the 4I Theory: attracting Generation Z users through Interesting social media content; providing diverse Interests through extreme cost-performance and community belonging; achieving deep Interaction through a KOL/KOC matrix and user-generated content (UGC); and satisfying consumers' personalized (Individuality) needs through a massive SKU range and algorithmic recommendations.

Keywords: Cross-border e-commerce; Brand Globalization; SHEIN; Digital Marketing; 4I Theory.

1. Introduction

In recent years, cross-border e-commerce has become a core engine for China's foreign trade growth, with import and export volume exceeding 2.8 trillion yuan in 2025, a year-on-year increase of over 15%. Against this backdrop, SHEIN, with a daily launch rate of 5,000 new items and annual revenue exceeding \$30 billion, has become a phenomenal brand in the global fast fashion sector. However, existing research mostly focuses on supply chain efficiency and traffic operations, lacking systematic analysis of its cross-cultural communication mechanisms and the adaptability of its localization strategies. This study aims to systematically analyze the overseas marketing strategies, cross-cultural communication mechanisms, and localization adaptability adopted by cross-border e-commerce brands like SHEIN under globalization. Given the complexity and multidimensionality of the research subject, purely quantitative or qualitative analysis is insufficient to fully capture the entirety of its strategies. Therefore, this study adopts the case study method as the core research approach, supplemented by literature analysis and multi-model analysis, to construct a comprehensive and rigorous research framework ensuring depth and breadth.

2. Literature Review

The rapid development of the e-commerce industry has spurred diversified exploration of brand-building and communication strategies. Scholars have examined the development paths, marketing models, and communication effects of e-commerce brands from various perspectives, providing theoretical support for industry practices [1]. In the field of cross-border e-commerce brand research, Li Qian

(2018) applied Lasswell's 5W Theory to analyze the communication logic of cross-border e-commerce brands, emphasizing the core roles of brand positioning, content production, and channel integration. Using NetEase Kaola as an example, the study pointed out its shortcomings in penetrating lower-tier markets and user retention, proposing the need to leverage social commerce to enhance user loyalty [1]. Zhang Heng focused on the communication strategies of small and micro e-commerce brands in the post-pandemic era, revealing their neglect of off-site communication and content quality issues, and proposed optimization strategies for communication subjects, channels, content, and audiences [2]. Guo Xuxing highlighted the importance of social media marketing for cross-border e-commerce brand-building and proposed methods such as content innovation, interactive communication innovation, and user participation mechanisms to achieve precise brand positioning and overcome cultural barriers [3]. Wang Lu explored the international communication effects of cross-border e-commerce live-streaming sales, affirming its positive role in cultural exchange and brand promotion while identifying challenges such as language barriers, logistics issues, and uneven content quality, along with corresponding optimization strategies [4].

Against the backdrop of globalization and digital technological innovation, overseas marketing has become a core strategy for enterprises to expand into international markets [5]. Hou Chanyi noted that Guangxi's high-quality light industrial products face challenges such as limited international recognition and market share but benefit from the accelerated global digitalization process, cross-border e-commerce development, and national policy support. The study proposed strategies such as market research, localized team-building, and new media platform operations [5]. Sui

Hanqing used Genshin Impact as a case study to examine cultural hybridity strategies in the overseas marketing of online games, finding cultural elements crucial for game globalization and proposing hybridity strategies based on cultural distance [6]. Chen Rongrong categorized overseas digital media marketing into content operations, advertising, and influencer collaborations, emphasizing the importance of viral content creation, brand storytelling, and influencer selection [7]. Chen Yijun and Zhao Lin explored the accelerated globalization of China's media industry and the trend of overseas marketing service providers upgrading to full-chain marketing solutions [7, 8]. Huang Chuanxing studied Media Company A, analyzing its opportunities and challenges in international markets and proposing growth strategies such as establishing an overseas media communication matrix and producing valuable content [5].

In research on SHEIN, scholars have extensively explored its business model and overseas communication strategies [5]. Zhu Shuying et al. applied grounded theory to analyze

SHEIN's overseas communication strategies on Instagram, identifying four dimensions—product attributes, brand-building, consumer profiling, and communication formats—and proposing optimization paths [9]. Hamas Mohammed Al-Qadhi used questionnaires to demonstrate the positive impact of firm-generated content (FGC) and user-generated content (UGC) on parasocial relationships, with parasocial relationships mediating the effect of FGC on brand equity [10].

3. Research Process

3.1. SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is a classic strategic analysis tool used to assess the internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats of an enterprise or project. A detailed SWOT analysis of SHEIN is conducted below, along with corresponding strategic combinations. See Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. SHEIN's SWOT Analysis Chart (1)

Category	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
Internal Factors	1. Flexible Supply Chain ("Small Orders with Quick Response"): World-leading flexible supply chain system enabling rapid launch of massive SKUs, high product iteration speed, and strict cost control. Short delivery cycle (7-11 days, 3-5 days for hot items). SKU count far exceeds competitors.	1. Weak Brand Cultural Connotation: Focuses on transactional value (price, trendiness), lacking deep emotional or cultural connection with consumers, affecting long-term brand loyalty and risk resilience.
	2. Data-Driven DTC Model: Core data-driven approach to rapidly capture, analyze, and respond to market demand, enabling precise user profiling and personalized product recommendations, enhancing shopping experience and conversion rates.	2. Over-Reliance on Online Channels: Lack of offline physical stores limits brand experience and reach to consumers preferring offline shopping.
	3. Massive Private Traffic Pool & Strong Digital Marketing Capability: Extensive social media presence and effective UGC strategy build a large private traffic pool, fostering user loyalty and reducing reliance on paid traffic. High social media activity and significant fan growth.	3. Insufficient Brand Awareness in Some Emerging Markets: Uneven brand awareness and market penetration in certain emerging markets, requiring more resources to build initial recognition.
	4. Extreme Cost-Performance & Massive SKU Range: Product prices significantly lower than competitors, offering a vast selection of styles to meet diverse needs.	4. Limitations of Fast Fashion Brand Characteristics: Success model may be confined to the fast fashion sector and difficult to replicate directly in other industries.
	5. Consumer-Centric Product Development & Design: Deep understanding of consumer needs, experienced design team capable of creating unique styles.	5. Low-Key Operation & Limited Public Information: Historically low-key operational style and scarce public information hinder in-depth external research.
	6. Strong Localization Operation Capability: Precise localized marketing strategies, adjusting content and KOL selection based on local aesthetics and cultural customs.	6. Difficulty in Traffic Acquisition/Conversion & Rising Marketing Costs: High customer acquisition cost, significant challenges in acquiring and converting new traffic, significant rise in advertising costs.
	7. Advanced Warehousing & Logistics Management: Digital warehousing system, strategic overseas warehouse layout shortening delivery times, improving efficiency, and simplifying return processes.	7. Shortage of Cross-Border E-commerce Talent: Lack of comprehensive talent with international vision, digital marketing expertise, IT skills, and local language capabilities.
	8. Comprehensive Customer Service System: Globally dispersed multilingual customer service team, generous return policy (45-day unconditional refund, free shipping for first order).	

Table 1. SHEIN's SWOT Analysis Chart (2)

	Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
External Factors	1. Domestic Policy Support: The Chinese government strongly supports cross-border e-commerce development, issuing multiple supportive policies.	1. International Political Instability & Trade Protectionism: Prevalence of unilateralism and trade protectionism, geopolitical tensions impacting cross-border e-commerce operations.
	2. Continuous Expansion of Cross-Border E-commerce Scale: China's cross-border e-commerce import and export volume continues to grow; global retail e-commerce surges.	2. Increasingly Strict Regulations & Compliance Requirements: Stricter regulations on data privacy, intellectual property, taxation, etc., in various countries increase compliance costs and operational risks.
	3. Growth in B2C Model Share: Rapid development of cross-border e-commerce B2C models, promising prospects for DTC brands.	3. Intensifying Global Market Competition: Fierce competition from traditional fast fashion giants (ZARA, H&M) and emerging e-commerce platforms (Temu, Shopee, Lazada).
	4. Strong rebound in capital investment in cross-border e-commerce, indicating growth potential.	4. Chinese brands face cultural differences and cognitive biases in international markets, weakening brand image.
	5. China as a Major Cross-Border Shopping Destination: Strong overseas demand for Chinese products.	5. "Made in China" Stereotype: Long-standing "low-price, low-quality" stereotype hinders brand perception.
	6. The pandemic accelerated online consumption, providing SHEIN with significant growth opportunities.	6. Over-reliance on third-party platforms may lead to account bans and substantial losses.
	7. Generation Z's pursuit of individuality and emphasis on social interaction aligns with SHEIN's core target audience.	7. Severe product homogenization, fierce market competition, and declining traffic dividends.
	8. Social media platform traffic dividends and strong social shopping demand.	8. High Replicability of Fast Fashion Products: Designs easily imitated, requiring continuous innovation.
	9. High internet penetration, payment and logistics systems.	9. Reputation Management Challenges: Negative reputation (e.g., labor, environmental, plagiarism issues) may trigger consumer boycotts.
	10. Rapid internet growth in regions like Southeast Asia presents significant e-commerce potential.	
	11. Mature markets with high level of information and strong consumption capacity.	
	12. Trend of "Brand-Effect Integration" in Marketing: Emphasis on combining brand-building with performance in marketing.	

Table 2. SHEIN's Strategic Combination Analysis Chart

Strategy Type	Strategic Content
SO Strategy	1. Leverage the flexible supply chain and data-driven DTC model to rapidly respond to the "stay-at-home economy" and Generation Z's growing purchasing power: Continuously launch massive personalized products to meet consumers' fashion and self-expression needs.
	2. Capitalize on strong digital marketing capabilities and private traffic pools to seize opportunities from the social commerce boom: Increase investments in platforms like TikTok and Instagram, using creative content and KOL/KOC collaborations to amplify brand influence and achieve viral transmit.
	3. Combine domestic policy support and China's status as a major cross-border shopping destination to consolidate and expand market share.
	4. Leverage technological advancements and data-driven advantages to continuously optimize personalized recommendations and user experience, improving conversion rates.
ST Strategy	1. Use the flexible supply chain and data-driven DTC model to answer global market competition: Maintain product competitiveness through rapid iteration and cost advantages, addressing price wars and homogenization threats.
	2. Employ robust digital marketing and localization strategies to address cultural differences and the "Made in China" stereotype: Use precise content and community to interact local culture, building trust and brand reputation.
	3. Utilize comprehensive customer service and generous return policies to deal with increasingly strict regulations: Enhance consumer trust and brand reputation, mitigating negative impacts from compliance risks.
	4. Strengthen internal circulation and improve product quality to cope with international political and economic uncertainties: Consolidate internal foundations during unstable external environments to prepare for future expansion.
WO Strategy	1. Make up for the disadvantage of insufficient brand awareness in some emerging markets by increasing investment in digital marketing and localized operations, and seize the opportunity of huge potential in emerging e-commerce markets.
	2. Take advantage of the opportunities brought by the "stay-at-home economy" and the booming development of social e-commerce to make up for the experience limitations caused by over-reliance on online channels through innovation and optimization of online channels, and explore the online-offline integration model.
	3. Make up for the weakness of weak brand cultural connotation by cooperating with independent designers (such as the "SHEIN X" project), seize Generation Z's demand for individuality and self-expression, and enhance brand value.
	4. Use technological progress and data-driven approaches to solve the problems of difficult traffic acquisition and conversion and rising marketing costs, and achieve more precise and efficient marketing.
WT Strategy	1. Avoid blind expansion and reduce international operation costs to cope with international political and economic uncertainties and difficulties in traffic acquisition and conversion.
	2. Strengthen the construction of digital compliance ecology and recruit international talents to cope with increasingly strict regulations and data security compliance risks.
	3. Deal with the threats of high copyability of fast fashion products and product homogenization through continuous innovation in product design and supply chain optimization, while reducing excessive reliance on a single online channel.
	4. Establish a strong reputation to resist negative public opinions and consumer boycotts.

3.2. In-depth Analysis of 4I Theory

The core analytical framework of this study revolves around the Network Integrated Marketing 4I Theory, which provides an effective tool for analyzing how brands establish deep connections with consumers in the digital age from four dimensions: Interesting, Interests, Interaction, and Individuality. This section will elaborate on how to use the collected data to deeply analyze SHEIN's specific practices in each 4I dimension during the research.

3.2.1. Interesting

When studying how SHEIN attracts target audiences through "Interesting", this research focuses on its content strategies and communication effects across major social media platforms.

(1) Data Collection and Analysis

Social media platform data: Key data from SHEIN's official accounts on major overseas social media platforms (TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter) were collected, including follower counts, follower growth rates, post frequency, content formats (short videos, live streams, images, text), hashtag usage, and user interaction metrics (likes, comments, shares).

Official event information: Data on SHEIN's online events, such as the "SHEIN Together" virtual event and the spring-summer virtual fashion show "SHEIN for all", were gathered from news reports and official announcements, including event themes, participating celebrities, and view counts.

Third-party evaluation data: OS scores for SHEIN's social media accounts from third-party institutions like OneSight were cited to quantitatively assess its social media operation quality and activity levels.

(2) Research Process and Findings

Innovation in content formats: Observations of SHEIN's social media content reveal that its production aligns closely with Generation Z's visual preferences and fragmented consumption habits. For example, on TikTok, SHEIN's marketing content often takes the form of short videos integrating popular music, dance challenges, and haul videos, embedding product displays into daily scenarios to enhance entertainment value and viral potential. On Instagram, high-quality images, fashion styling guides, and lifestyle sharing are used to cultivate a trendy, positive brand image.

Use of hashtags and challenges: SHEIN effectively leverages trending topics, challenges, and fads on social media. For instance, it launched hashtag challenges like #SHEINgals, encouraging users to share their SHEIN outfits and shopping experiences. These challenges not only boost brand exposure but also make brand communication engaging and entertaining through user participation.

Global impact of live events: Analysis of global live events such as "SHEIN Together" shows that SHEIN successfully introduced live-stream commerce to overseas markets. Collaborations with local influencers and even international celebrities (e.g., Katy Perry, Lil Nas X) attracted millions of global viewers, significantly elevating brand awareness and engagement.

Data indicates that SHEIN's social media accounts achieved an OS score of 829.90, approaching that of Lazada and Shopee, reflecting high operational quality and activity. Its follower growth rate also outperformed peers, with an 187,400 increase in the past 28 days (a 0.73% growth rate). Single-post interaction metrics far surpassed those of H&M and Shopee, demonstrating strong exposure and user

engagement.

SHEIN's "Interesting" strategy extends beyond content creation to crafting a holistic entertainment experience, which naturally drives brand participation and viral dissemination. By making brand interactions engaging and culturally relevant, it circumvents young users' resistance to traditional advertising, fostering organic, peer-to-peer sharing—more credible and scalable than paid advertising. This shift from "advertising" to "entertainment" is a key driver of its success.

3.2.2. Interests

In examining how SHEIN satisfies consumer needs through "Interests", this research focuses on its pricing strategies, promotional mechanisms, and provision of emotional value beyond material benefits.

(1) Data Collection and Analysis

Pricing data: Price comparisons between SHEIN and competitors (ZARA, H&M) in women's clothing categories (e.g., T-shirts, dresses, jeans, outerwear) were collected to quantify its "extreme cost-performance" advantage.

Promotional mechanisms: Rules for SHEIN's membership points system, coupons, limited-time discounts, and flash sales were reviewed via its official website and related reports.

Customer service policies: Information on SHEIN's return policies (e.g., 45-day unconditional refund, free shipping for first orders) was analyzed to assess how it mitigates consumer risks.

Brand community information: Insights into how SHEIN builds a sense of belonging and identity through community construction were gathered.

(2) Research Process and Findings

Quantitative analysis of extreme cost-performance: Comparative data shows that SHEIN's prices are significantly lower than ZARA and H&M. For example, SHEIN's women's T-shirts typically range from \$2 to \$30, while ZARA and H&M's range from \$5 to \$50. This price advantage makes fashion trends accessible to a broader audience, serving as a cornerstone for attracting users.

Effectiveness of material incentives: SHEIN has developed a robust system of membership points, coupons, and limited-time discounts to encourage frequent app/website visits and increase purchase frequency. Users earn points through check-ins, comments, and shares, which can be redeemed for cash, creating a positive cycle.

Construction of psychological and emotional value: Through massive SKUs and rapid product updates, SHEIN offers consumers an experience of "fashion empowerment", enabling budget-conscious young people to experiment with styles and express themselves at low cost. Simultaneously, brand community building and user interaction satisfy Generation Z's needs for social connection and group identity.

Risk mitigation strategies: SHEIN highlights its 45-day unconditional refund and free first-order shipping as key selling points. These policies significantly reduce consumers' perceived risks, encouraging larger initial purchases and strengthening trust.

SHEIN's "Interests" strategy is not merely a low-price model but a sophisticated value proposition. It integrates affordability with psychological satisfaction (e.g., access to trends, self-expression, community belonging) and risk mitigation (e.g., hassle-free returns). This holistic approach effectively attracts consumers and fosters loyalty beyond mere transactional savings, demonstrating how SHEIN builds loyalty by comprehensively meeting consumer needs.

3.2.3. Interaction

In studying how SHEIN builds two-way communication mechanisms and encourages user participation through "Interaction", this research analyzes its social media strategies, KOL/KOC collaboration models, and incentives for user-generated content (UGC).

(1) Data Collection and Analysis

Social media interaction data: Comments, private messages, and live stream comments from SHEIN's social media platforms were collected to analyze response speeds and user engagement.

KOL/KOC collaboration cases: Cases such as the "SHEIN X" program and the global live design competition "SHEIN X 100K" challenge were reviewed to understand collaboration models, incentive mechanisms, and communication effects.

UGC activity information: Data on SHEIN's hashtag challenges (e.g., #SHEINGals, #SHEINhaul) were collected to assess UGC volume and viral transmission effects.

Third-party marketing data: Insights from marketing service providers like Youdao Ads were used to evaluate SHEIN's refined strategies and effectiveness in KOL marketing, overseas live streaming, and advertising.

(2) Research Process and Findings

Deep social media engagement: SHEIN actively uses social media interactive features to communicate with users in real time, rapidly responding to inquiries and feedback. Its high social media activity and interaction metrics (with single-post interactions approximately three times those of Shopee) confirm strong exposure and user participation.

User challenges and UGC generation: SHEIN launches engaging user challenges to incentivize massive UGC creation, including outfit videos, unboxing experiences, and product reviews. This content not only provides free, authentic promotional material but also enhances user participation and belonging, fostering powerful word-of-mouth.

Extensive KOL/KOC matrix and incentives: SHEIN has built a large, multi-tiered KOL/KOC network. Through affiliate marketing programs and UGC incentives, it encourages consumers, KOLs, and KOCs to participate in brand communication. For example, the "SHEIN X" program collaborates with independent designers, offering them channels for traffic monetization. KOCs promote products through unboxing videos, makeup tutorials, and recommendations, boosting conversion rates among potential users.

Live interaction and "reality show" elements: Events like the "SHEIN X 100K" challenge integrate social media with reality show elements, attracting millions of fans and promoting real-time interaction to maximize the impact of social media and live-stream marketing.

SHEIN's "Interaction" strategy represents a shift from traditional advertising to decentralized content creation. By empowering consumers, KOLs, and KOCs to create and share content, it expands reach through authentic, peer-to-peer influence. This approach is more credible and scalable than top-down marketing, cultivating a robust ecosystem of brand advocacy and viral transmission.

3.2.4. Individuality

In exploring how SHEIN meets consumer needs through "Individuality", this research focuses on its massive SKUs, rapid product updates, and data-driven personalized recommendation systems.

(1) Data Collection and Analysis

Product data: Data on SHEIN's SKU count, daily new product volume, and comparison with competitors (e.g., ZARA) in update speed were collected.

Data analysis capabilities: Information on how SHEIN's Digital Intelligence Center uses tools like Python and Google Trends Finder to capture big data on popular keywords, fabrics, colors, and styles was reviewed.

Personalized recommendation system: Insights into how SHEIN uses big data to analyze user behavior, build user profiles, and deliver personalized product recommendations were gathered.

"SHEIN X" program information: Data on collaborations with independent designers through the "SHEIN X" cross-border co-branding program were collected to assess how unique designs are provided.

(2) Research Process and Findings

Massive SKUs and rapid updates: SHEIN's "small orders with quick response" flexible supply chain enables it to launch 6,000–7,000 new SKUs daily. Its annual SKU count is 7–10 times that of ZARA. This vast product pool offers consumers nearly unlimited choices, allowing free mixing and matching to express unique personal styles.

Data-driven personalized recommendations: SHEIN leverages strong data analysis capabilities to mine user browsing history, purchase records, collection preferences, and even social media interactions, building precise user profiles. Based on these profiles, its AI algorithms deliver highly personalized product recommendations, significantly enhancing shopping experiences and conversion rates.

"SHEIN X" program and unique collaborations: The "SHEIN X" program actively partners with independent designers and artists, regularly launching exclusive designer collections. This directly meets consumer demand for unique, personalized clothing and their pursuit of distinctive fast fashion items.

Precise capture of micro-trends: SHEIN uses big data to monitor global social media, fashion blogs, and search engines in real time, quickly identifying emerging micro-trends and converting them into products. This allows consumers to access the latest fashion elements first, satisfying their desire for trends and personalized expression.

SHEIN's "Individuality" strategy is a direct result of its agile supply chain and advanced data capabilities. By offering unprecedented product variety and large-scale hyper-personalized recommendations, it democratizes individuality. This enables every consumer to create a unique style reflecting their identity—a powerful driver for a generation that values self-expression.

3.3. Analysis of SHEIN's Overseas Marketing Strategies

SHEIN's success stems not only from its supply chain advantages but also from building an integrated marketing system centered on digital marketing and deeply embedded in target markets' cultural ecosystems. Its strategies focus on accurately capturing the psychology and behaviors of young consumers (represented by Generation Z) and establishing deep connections through diverse marketing methods. Below are detailed analyses of its most representative overseas marketing strategies.

3.3.1. Engaging Content Marketing and Social Media Matrix

SHEIN's overseas strategy abandons traditional hard

advertising, instead attracting users through highly engaging and entertaining content.

Strategy overview: SHEIN has built a strong account matrix on major overseas social media platforms (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube). Its content production aligns with Generation Z's visual preferences and fragmented consumption habits, embedding products into daily scenarios rather than simply displaying them. For example, on TikTok, SHEIN launches hashtag challenges like #SHEINGals to encourage users to create and share outfit transformation videos (haul videos), combined with popular music and dances, giving brand transmit viral potential. On Instagram, it focuses on high-quality fashion guides and lifestyle images to shape a trendy, positive brand image. Additionally, SHEIN has successfully introduced live-stream commerce to overseas markets through online virtual fashion shows and global live events featuring international celebrities like Katy Perry, further amplifying brand influence.

Strategy effects: This "advertising as entertainment" approach has achieved remarkable results. Data shows high social media activity and user engagement for SHEIN, with single-post interactions far exceeding competitors like H&M and a follower growth rate outperforming peers. By transforming brand transmit into an entertaining experience, SHEIN bypasses young users' resistance to traditional advertising, fostering organic sharing. This peer-to-peer dissemination is more credible and scalable than paid advertising, attracting massive initial traffic and loyal fans.

3.3.2. KOL/KOC Matrix and User-Generated Content (UGC) Ecosystem

Building on engaging content, SHEIN further empowers consumers and opinion leaders to create a decentralized content co-creation ecosystem.

Strategy overview: SHEIN has established a large, multi-tiered KOL (Key Opinion Leader) and KOC (Key Opinion Consumer) collaboration network. Rather than focusing solely on top-tier influencers, it includes numerous mid-tier and even ordinary consumers in its affiliate marketing programs. Through user challenges like #SHEINhaul, supplemented by incentives such as points and coupons, SHEIN encourages massive UGC creation (unboxing reviews, outfit displays, shopping experiences). Its "SHEIN X" designer incubation program, which provides end-to-end support (from production to sales) for global independent designers, also enriches the brand's content ecosystem and interaction formats.

Strategy effects: This strategy transforms consumers from passive buyers into co-creators and disseminators of brand value. Massive UGC not only provides a steady stream of authentic, free promotional material but also enhances user participation and community belonging, fostering strong word-of-mouth. This user-endorsed transmission effectively addresses cultural differences and trust barriers faced by cross-border brands in overseas markets. With social media interactions approximately three times those of competitor Shopee, it demonstrates strong user engagement and a robust brand advocacy ecosystem.

3.3.3. Data-Driven Precision Personalized Marketing

The foundation of SHEIN's marketing strategies is its strong data-driven capability, enabling large-scale personalized services.

Strategy overview: SHEIN's Digital Intelligence Center uses big data technology to monitor global social media, fashion blogs, and search engines in real time, accurately

capturing the latest micro-trends (keywords, colors, fabrics, styles). This data is quickly fed back to its flexible supply chain, guiding the "small orders with quick response" production model to test market reactions at low cost. On the user side, SHEIN's AI algorithms deeply analyze browsing history, purchase records, and collection preferences to build precise user profiles, enabling highly personalized product recommendations on its app and website.

Strategy effects: The data-driven model allows SHEIN to achieve an astonishing product update speed (thousands of new items daily), with an annual SKU count far exceeding traditional fast fashion giants like ZARA. This vast selection, combined with precise personalized recommendations, enables every consumer to easily find and match styles reflecting their unique identity—perfectly catering to Generation Z's core needs for self-expression and individuality. This not only significantly improves user shopping experiences and conversion rates but also democratizes "fashion", making it accessible and manageable for every young person.

3.3.4. Extreme Cost-Performance and Diversified Incentives

SHEIN has built an irreplicable comprehensive value proposition through extreme price advantages and non-material incentives.

Strategy overview: A core appeal of SHEIN is its extreme cost-performance, with prices significantly lower than major competitors like ZARA and H&M, making fashion trends accessible to a broader audience. However, its strategy is not merely about low prices but a sophisticated system of diversified incentives, including: a membership points system (points redeemable for cash) encouraging check-ins, comments, and shares; frequent coupons, limited-time discounts, and flash sales; and generous customer service policies (45-day unconditional refund, free first-order shipping) highlighted as key selling points.

Strategy effects: Extreme cost-performance attracts users, while diversified incentives enhance stickiness and loyalty. The robust points and promotion system effectively increases user visit frequency and repurchase rates, creating a positive behavioral cycle. Favorable return policies significantly reduce online shopping risks, strengthen brand trust, and encourage new users to make initial purchases and larger orders. This strategy—integrating "affordable prices" with psychological/emotional value (fashion empowerment, community belonging) and "risk avoidance"—builds deep user loyalty beyond mere financial savings.

4. Conclusion

This study systematically analyzes the overseas marketing strategies of global fast fashion giant SHEIN through case studies, revealing the internal mechanisms and core drivers behind its phenomenal global success. The findings show that SHEIN's success results not from breakthroughs in a single dimension but from the innovative integration of a data-driven flexible supply chain, DTC (direct-to-consumer) brand operations, and a 4I marketing framework deeply embedded in social ecosystems. This highly synergistic strategic system enables it to build unique and powerful competitive advantages in fierce global competition.

The integration of supply chain, DTC model, and 4I marketing forms a mutually reinforcing cycle: the flexible supply chain provides rapid product iteration capabilities for

the Individuality and Interests dimensions of 4I, while the DTC model continuously optimizes the supply chain and enables precise personalized marketing through direct user data feedback. SHEIN's "think globally, act locally" strategy allows it to adapt to diverse national markets while maintaining brand identity—fundamental to its success in crossing cultural barriers and sustaining global growth.

References

- [1] Guo, X. X. (2025). Innovative application of social media marketing in cross-border e-commerce brand building. *Market Weekly*, 38(12), 76–79.
- [2] Wang, L. (2025). International communication effects and optimization strategies of cross-border e-commerce live streaming. *Manager Journal*, (03), 73–75.
- [3] Zhang, H. (2022). Research on communication strategies of small and micro cross-border e-commerce in the post-pandemic era [Master's thesis]. Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics.
- [4] Li, Q. (2019). Research on brand communication strategies of NetEase Kaola [Master's thesis]. Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication.
- [5] Huang, C. X. (2020). Research on international marketing strategy of A media company [Master's thesis]. Shanghai University of Finance and Economics.
- [6] Sui, H. Q. (2024). Research on cultural hybridization strategies in overseas marketing communication of online games [Master's thesis]. Beijing Foreign Studies University.
- [7] Chen, R. R. (2023). Brand going global: How to leverage overseas social media for customer acquisition? *International Brand Observer*, (11), 74–75.
- [8] Chen, Y. J. (2022). The overseas expansion of China's media industry continues to accelerate in 2021. *International Brand Observer*, (03), 34–38.
- [9] Zhu, S. Y., Ni, J., & Yu, G. J. (2024). Research on overseas communication strategies of Chinese clothing brands based on grounded theory - A case study of fast fashion brand SHEIN. *Fashion China*.
- [10] L-Qadhi, A. M. H. (2023). Research on the role of social media marketing in brand equity construction: An analysis of the mediating effect of parasocial relationships [Master's thesis]. Zhejiang Gongshang University. <https://doi.org/10.27462/d.cnki.ghzhc.2023.001463>