

Examining the Marketing Strategy of Celebrity-Founded Brands: A Case Study of Skims by Kim Kardashian

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Abstract. As the trend of celebrity-founded brands rises, several celebrities attempt to create their own brand with the assistance of professionals, or to take on roles as creative directors of an existing brand. However, one may wonder why some of these brands achieve greater success than others, especially when the celebrities involved are equally well-known. Through documentary research methods, this study reveals that there is a strong correlation between brand successfulness and the brand's marketing strategy. The conclusion is drawn from using the fashion brand Skims as an example of a typical celebrity-founded brand that employs effective offline and online marketing techniques. Skims has successfully established itself as a unique and welcoming fashion brand that is popular worldwide, emphasizing diversity and the ability to produce products in a wide range of body types and skin tones by developing successful brand positioning and segmentation. Nevertheless, all the above could still be improved through strategic positioning, relying less on celebrity presence, and using more creative marketing strategies, which shall be further discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Celebrity Endorsement; Consumer Marketing; Brand Image; Brand Marketing.

1. Introduction

Modernly, brands are diversely developed in forms that were not commonly seen before, celebrity-founded brands are a typical example. With social media as a major part of people's lives, people stay in touch with trends that are highly associated with celebrities. In this case, celebrity-founded brands have gained popularity as they often represent one's personal preferences, trendiness, or other pursuits. However, it is worth figuring out why some celebrity-founded brands achieve greater success than others, which can be highly related to the effectiveness of the brand's marketing strategies.

Therefore, in this paper, it aims to examine the marketing strategies that the chosen celebrity-founded brand utilizes currently and, in the past, while also providing specific insights that can address any existing weaknesses of the chosen brand and contribute to its overall improvement. This paper serves a purpose not only in presenting the chosen brand's success and impact in the fashion industry but also in offering valuable knowledge and insights related to the dynamics of the fashion industry, brand development, and consumer behavior.

2. Brand Background

Skims, a highly influential and prominent American shape wear and clothing fashion brand founded by Emma Grede and co-founded by Jens Grede and launched by the well-known celebrity, influencer, and businesswoman Kim Kardashian on September 10, 2019 as the co-founder and creative director of Skims, has achieved significant success [1]. The initial launch of Skims resulted in more than US\$2 million in profit, and within 10 minutes all products were sold out, this success lasted until today [2].

The primary objectives of Skims are to provide a clothing line that is appropriate for diverse body sizes from XXS to 4XL (with some additional pieces available in 5XL) and skin tones. This objective to enhance inclusivity has contributed to the brand's popularity and resonance with consumers globally [1].



Skims initially started by launching shape wear and underwear products, but has expanded to basic clothing, loungewear, socks, and some kid’s items as well. Currently, Skims is continuously developing its customer base and line of products while thriving in the fashion industry with its unique brand presence focusing on body positivity and comfortable products [3].

2.1. Brand Segmentation

Skims employs various consumer segmentation strategies to target its audience effectively. In terms of demographic segmentation, their target customers generally fall within the age range of 18–50 and are primarily female. The hashtag contributors of Skims could be a valid example, which 67.37% hashtag contributors are female while the rest are male [4]. Also Skims manage to influence mainly hashtag contributors in the age range of 25-34 and 35-44 in both male and female genders, ages 25-34 females contribute 30.35% of the whole female hashtag contributors population, and ages 35-44 males contribute 44.74% of the whole male hashtag contributors population as shown in figure 1 [4]. Moreover, it is observed as well that Skims specifically cater to individuals who engage in activities like yoga, social media-related events, and other trendy or fashion-focused occasions.

For the behavioral segmentation of Skims, it targets consumers who are willing to invest in comparatively pricy items, actively participate through social media platforms, and showcase brand loyalty towards the brand [5]. Which includes fans of Kim Kardashian and individuals who simply appreciate the brand's offerings and consistently make purchases of their new products.

Geographically, Skims primarily targets customers in the United States. Particularly focusing on cities such as Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Boston, Chicago, and Atlanta, since they noticed that their sales perform exceptionally well in warmer climates [2]. By employing these customer segmentation strategies, Skims ensures that their marketing efforts effectively reach and engage with their target audience.

Skims Hashtag Contributors Age

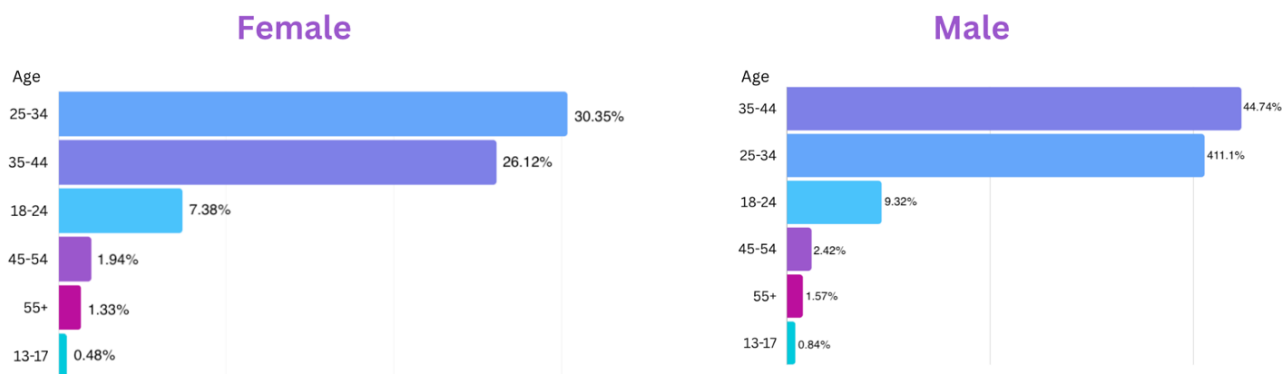


Figure 1. Skims hashtag contributors age

2.2. Brand Positioning

Skims positioning has the ability to create a favorable perception from a targeted audience towards the brand image, which is primarily accomplished by designing unique offerings and extensively communicating the offerings. In particular, the products created by Skims are highly different from those of other similar brands in the same product category. For instance, Skims offers nine color options of shape wear, including Sand, Mica, Clay, Ochre, Sienna, Umber, Oxide, Cocoa, and Onyx, that highlight the uniqueness of the brand and provide products that not only feel like a second skin for consumers but also come in the same skin color [1].

Moreover, Skims also presents effective positioning by extensively communicating its offerings. This is mainly achieved by the influence of one of the co-founders herself, Kim Kardashian. As the reality shows Kim participated in, “Keeping Up with the Kardashians” and “The Kardashians,” went viral

on the internet, Kim quickly gained popularity, and her posts about Skims on social media platforms could influence many people. Throughout the reality shows and Kim's reveal of her personal life on social media, Kim establishes a trendy and exquisite image of herself that is highly relevant to the brand image of Skims since all Skims products are basically inspired by Kim or originated from Kim's idea of shape wear that is presented to potential consumers.

2.3. Brand Marketing Strategies

The marketing strategies of Skims are undoubtedly the major factor that led to its success. These marketing strategies can be generally categorized based on the delivery of products through online and offline channels.

In online channels, Skims employs influencer marketing as a key strategy because this is the best way to gain popularity nowadays as a celebrity-founded brand, as the brand already has a fan base from the influence of the celebrity [6]. A simple post about Skims from Kim Kardashian on Instagram could get millions of views and exposure. However, Skims does not stop its promotional efforts at this point; they further utilize this popularity from Kim to assemble more resources. Skims, using Kim as their main communicator, communicates with other celebrities to promote their brand. For instance, the Kardashian family members have all promoted the brand on their social media accounts and have made contracts with other celebrities to endorse one of their specific series of products. Such as inviting the singer Lana Del Rey as their endorser for their Valentines series [7].

Moreover, Skims uses email marketing to keep clients informed of new product launches, promotions, and events. They provide a newsletter subscription option on their website, where customers can receive information and special offers. Skims keeps their audience connected and interested in their brand by sending out effective email marketing [8].

Additionally, the outstanding brand identity of Skims further supports its promotional efforts. Skims has developed its unique logo of smooth geometric shapes, presenting a sense of smoothness and curviness to the audience, which also reflects its shape wear product as a product with great texture that enhances body curves.

In offline channels, Skims understands the value of establishing a physical presence for their brand. They constantly set up pop-up shops in various locations for customers to try out products firsthand or to even meet some of their favorite influencers and celebrities. This is an excellent way of promoting the brand since it connects with the customers face-to-face, creating a more lasting impression and increasing brand transparency [9]. Also, Skims organizes their own events and fashion shows to promote their most recent collections. These events are open to both industry insiders and the public. It allows guests to get a view of the new items and to sense the entire "SKIMS" brand vibe.

To mention, it is often ignored that Skims utilizes the power of sensationalization to raise attention to their brand to support its popularity. For example, Kim Kardashian and her former husband wore a whole black outfit covering all their bodies, made by Skims, to the famous Met Gala red carpet. This unique outfit not only raises attention from audiences to these two people who dress sticking out from others but also sheds light on Skims when more and more people and social media accounts were introduced to Skims this way [1].

3. Recommendation

To improve Skims's overall marketing strategy, Skims could start by strategically positioning itself to attract its target audience. Granted, Skims has done well in this aspect, but it could still be developed by understanding existing competitors in the same field to a higher degree [10]. This will enable Skims to identify its unique value proposition, helping the brand capitalize on market gaps and differentiate itself from other brands. For instance, Skims faces competitors like Savage X Fenty and Spanx. Spanx, as a well-known shape wear brand for both men and women, has a more abundant

brand history. Spanx could be considered a competitor because of its dominant position in majorly 40-60 age groups of audiences [11]. In this case, Skims could focus on developing products for their younger targeted age groups, which is mainly ages 18-40 individuals, avoiding much competition with Spanx's already-developed marketing strategies in other age groups. Savage X Fenty is a strong competitor in the category of celebrity-founded fashion brands that also produce shape wear-related products. Skims could strategically position itself by emphasizing its uniqueness, which helps the brand stand out in a saturated market and enhances the brand's recognition.

While relying on Kim Kardashian's presence is a huge strength for Skims, it also carries risks. Like other celebrity-founded brands, it is a disadvantage to do so since there is a possibility that the celebrity might be considered a bad influence someday, which will also negatively influence the brand. Therefore, to prevent this from happening, it could be considered for Skims to try to put their investments into products that are less related to Kim, just to ensure that the profit of Skims does not decrease drastically if something goes in the wrong direction [12].

To attract younger audiences and enhance brand image, Skims could introduce its own mascot that aligns with the brand's trendy appeal but still maintaining its core style of sexiness and naturalness. While also attempting guerrilla marketing strategies for the same purpose, such as placing a huge standing sign of their new products or putting out signs about "nobody shame" related to their products at a famous landmark. This promotional strategy requires relatively little investment and will stimulate curiosity while adding surprise to stimuli, causing a lasting impression on potential consumers.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, Skims' successful marketing techniques have allowed them to accomplish outstanding success in the fashion industry. Due to its emphasis on diversity and the ability to produce products in a wide range of body types and skin tones, it has successfully established itself as a distinctive and welcoming fashion brand that is popular globally. By segmenting its target market and capitalizing on the prominent presence of Kim Kardashian, the brand's creator, the brand has effectively promoted Skims and sustained consumer interest through its marketing initiatives, including influencer partnerships, email campaigns, offline events, and pop-up stores. However, skims may further improve through strategic positioning, relying less on celebrity appearances, and using more creative marketing strategies to attract younger audiences to secure long-term popularity and effective marketing. With all things considered, Skims is a notable celebrity-founded brand that has used successful marketing techniques to solidify its position in the fashion industry.

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