

A Review of Cost-Related Research Under the Omni-channel Integration Background of Beauty Enterprises

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of digital transformation, the online-offline omni-channel integration in the cosmetics industry has become an inevitable trend, and channel reform has profoundly reshaped enterprises' cost structure. Taking cosmetics, omni-channel and cost as the core keywords, this paper systematically reviews relevant literature and analyzes the transmission mechanism of how omni-channel integration affects the costs of cosmetics enterprises. It focuses on four major scenarios — offline experience, live-streaming marketing, cross-channel returns, and efficacy R&D — to identify industry-specific pain points in cost control, and sorts out the corresponding cost optimization paths and empirical conclusions. The study finds that the cost logic of omni-channel operation in the cosmetics industry differs from that of general retail, and existing three-dimensional interdisciplinary research remains scarce with insufficient quantitative analysis. This paper provides theoretical reference and practical enlightenment for the cost management of cosmetics enterprises in their omni-channel transformation. Furthermore, it offers theoretical reference and practical enlightenment for the cosmetics industry to cut costs, boost efficiency across the whole industrial chain and achieve high-quality development.

Keywords

cosmetics enterprises, omni-channel integration, cost control, transmission path, cost optimization

1. Introduction

KPMG China Research Institute pointed out in its 2025 Industry Report on China's Cosmetics Market [1] that driven by the digital wave, the channel landscape of the cosmetics industry is undergoing profound changes. Benefiting from precise data placement and efficient supply chain management, online channels have continued to expand their market share. They officially overtook offline channels in 2022 and maintained a notably higher market proportion starting from 2024. Meanwhile, offline channels have not been replaced. Instead, they cater to consumers' personalized needs and sustain stable sales scale through differentiated positioning centered on "experience & service", such as skin testing, customized makeup trials and exclusive membership services. Against this backdrop, the report concludes that online-offline omni-channel integration has become an inevitable trend for the industry.

The advancement of omni-channel integration directly reshapes the cost structure of cosmetics enterprises. On the one hand, the digital operation of online channels requires continuous cost investment in the construction of technical platforms, data analysis tools, marketing placement and talent training. On the other hand, the offline “experience & service” model brings operating costs including venue rental, professional staffing, as well as equipment procurement and maintenance. In addition, omni-channel integration has transformed logistics and inventory management models, further generating new cost demands in supply chain integration, inventory turnover optimization and channel collaboration. As a result, cosmetics enterprises are confronted with multiple cost pain points in the omni-channel transformation process, such as redundant investment in multi-channel operation, cost waste caused by low inter-channel collaboration efficiency, soaring technical and talent costs amid digital transformation, and mounting operational pressure from offline experience services.

In terms of industry characteristics, cosmetics products feature both FMCG and experiential attributes. Consumers have particularly prominent demands for product trial, personalized services and brand experience, which makes the channel layout of the cosmetics industry more complex. Nevertheless, most existing academic studies focus merely on the strategic value of omni-channel integration or cost management issues in general industries, while failing to systematically sort out the correlation mechanism between omni-channel integration and costs in the cosmetics sector.

Therefore, taking “cosmetics”, “omni-channel” and “cost” as the core keywords, this study systematically reviews research findings in relevant fields through literature retrieval, clarifies the impact path of omni-channel integration on the costs of cosmetics enterprises, analyzes the industry’s key cost pain points, and proposes potential future research directions. It aims to provide theoretical reference and practical enlightenment for the cost management of cosmetics enterprises undergoing omni-channel transformation.

2. Concepts and Relevant Theories

2.1 Omni-channel Integration

“Omni-channel integration” is a business model in which enterprises, centered on consumers, deeply connect and integrate all consumption touchpoints and service channels such as offline entities, online e-commerce, social platforms, live streaming, mini-programs, communities, and mobile APPs for integrated operation. Its core is to break channel barriers, realize the unification of data, commodities, services, and experiences in the whole domain, and enable consumers to obtain a seamless, coherent, and consistent consumption experience when switching between any channels.

2.2 Retail Commodities and Beauty Commodities

Beauty commodities are an important subcategory of FMCG in retail products. Both face end consumers and follow the underlying logic of retail circulation and operation. Retail products cover a wide range with diverse commodity attributes, and consumption decisions are both rational and perceptual. Beauty commodities, however, are characterized by high perceptibility and high added value, and consumption decisions are more easily affected by experience and social interaction, requiring higher omni-channel experience consistency and refined operation.

2.3 Cost Composition of Beauty Commodities

Beauty product costs center on R&D, efficacy testing, marketing, and premium packaging, whereas raw materials and basic production account for a small share. This differs significantly from general retail products, where costs are concentrated in raw materials and basic circulation. The unique cost structure of beauty products—high investment in innovation, compliance, branding, and packaging—provides the industry context for this study’s exploration of omni-channel cost optimization.

2.4 Retail Channel Evolution Theory

This theory posits that retail channels evolve from single-channel to omni-channel integration, driven by technology, consumption upgrades, and competition. For cosmetics enterprises, the shift from fragmented offline/online channels to omni-channel integration directly addresses cost inefficiencies such as duplicated channel construction, wasted marketing spend, and scattered inventory. It provides the evolutionary logic for why omni-channel integration is an inevitable path to cost reduction and efficiency improvement.

2.5 Channel Integration Theory

Channel integration involves reallocating sales tasks across channels—e.g., online for customer acquisition, offline for experience and service—to achieve collaboration and expand market reach. This theory offers the core method for this study, guiding the analysis of how cosmetics enterprises reduce overlapping channel costs, customer acquisition costs, and venue operating costs through task disassembly and integrated operations.

2.6 Value Chain Theory

The value chain divides business activities into primary and support functions. Under omni-channel integration, digitalization connects R&D, production, supply chain, sales, and service into a global value chain. This theory builds the analytical framework for this study, enabling cost disassembly across each link (e.g., digital supply chain reduces logistics costs; digital R&D cuts trial costs) and revealing how end-to-end collaboration achieves full-chain cost savings.

2.7 Cost Control Theory

Cost control aims to reduce expenses and improve efficiency through unified inventory, shared logistics, centralized procurement, and data-driven decisions. As the core theoretical basis of this study, this theory directly anchors the research objective: verifying how omni-channel integration helps cosmetics enterprises—characterized by high marketing, high R&D, high experience costs, and multi-SKU inventory—achieve tangible cost reduction and efficiency gains.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Transmission Mechanism and Path of Omni-Channel Integration Affecting the Costs of Cosmetics Enterprises

The omni-channel integration of general retail follows the linear transmission mechanism of “channel integration → scale effect → unit cost reduction”. Relying on the industry attributes of standardized products, low experience dependence and low R&D investment, it achieves scale dilution and directly reduces comprehensive costs through centralized procurement, shared logistics and unified marketing [2]. However, the costs brought by the exclusive characteristics of the cosmetics industry, such as high sensory experience, high efficacy R&D, high cross-channel returns and high marketing placement, cannot be simply applied to this model. Its transmission path can be summarized as “channel digital penetration → changes in four types of exclusive costs → full-link data collaboration → reconstruction of total cost structure”, replacing scale dilution with collaborative optimization to achieve structural cost reduction and efficiency improvement.

First, channel digital penetration directly affects the costs of each link in the value chain of cosmetics enterprises. In the marketing link, omni-channel touchpoints (live streaming, offline experience) bring structural changes in marketing investment, which not only push up direct costs such as live streaming traffic investment and offline experience store operation, but also provide a data basis for precision marketing optimization [3]. In the supply chain link, insufficient information collaboration and delayed demand response under omni-channel easily lead to inventory backlog and packaging material cost pressure, while supply chain integration and collaborative innovation can effectively reduce operating costs and accelerate market response [4, 5].

Second, full-link data collaboration forms an indirect transmission path. By connecting online and offline inventory and user data, cosmetics enterprises can reversely optimize procurement, production and marketing

plans, reduce inventory loss, invalid marketing investment and return costs, and finally realize structural optimization of total costs rather than a simple scale dilution effect.

3.2 Current Situation of Omni-Channel Cost Control and Industry-Specific Pain Points of Cosmetics Enterprises

Overall, the omni-channel cost control of cosmetics enterprises does not follow the “scale integration cost reduction” logic of general retail, but focuses on four industry-specific pain points: rigid experience cost, marketing placement cost, cross-channel return cost and supply chain collaboration cost. At present, the industry generally has problems such as insufficient channel collaboration, lack of cost allocation mechanism, weak digital control and inefficient linkage of the upstream industrial chain, resulting in that omni-channel integration not only fails to achieve systematic cost reduction, but also generates new cost pressure in experience, return, marketing and other links.

3.2.1 Contradiction Between High Rigid Investment and Rigid Experience Demand in Offline Experience Store Scenarios

Offline cosmetic counters, single-brand stores and collection stores take experience services as their core competitiveness, forming a rigid cost structure much higher than that of ordinary retail, and there is an industry constraint that “cost reduction means loss of customers”. The operating costs of cosmetic stores account for a high proportion of sales, with rent, professional manpower, experience equipment and trial sample loss as the main expenditures. The traditional single-store heavy-asset model further aggravates cost pressure [6]. Against the background of omni-channel integration, offline stores undertake multiple functions such as experience, makeup trial, skin texture testing, offline pickup and return, and experience investment costs remain high. However, there is generally a lack of a mature cost sharing mechanism in the industry, and the double marginal effect further amplifies cost pressure [7]. At the same time, cosmetic enterprises generally have insufficient business collaboration between online and offline channels and weak full-channel centralized control capacity.

3.2.2 Dual Pressures of Public Domain Involution and High Commissions in Live Streaming E-Commerce Marketing Scenarios

The cosmetics industry highly relies on omni-channel marketing for customer acquisition, and live streaming e-commerce and social platform placement have become core marketing expenditures, with a cost structure significantly different from that of ordinary retail. In the omni-channel supply chain, channel commission levels such as BOPS (Buy Online Pick Up in Store) and advertising placement costs directly affect enterprise pricing and profit margins, and there is a mismatch between input and output in advertising cooperation and promotion investment [8]. In the omni-channel promotion and distribution system, the unclear promotion service cost allocation mechanism and vague cost-bearing boundaries between manufacturers and retailers further aggravate the waste of marketing resources [9]. From the perspective of the value chain, cosmetics enterprises lack precision in marketing link cost control, and omni-channel marketing fragmentation and repeated placement are prominent, resulting in a long-term high proportion of marketing costs [3].

3.2.3 High Loss Cost Caused by Skin Texture Mismatch in Cross-Channel Return Scenarios

Due to the characteristics of skin texture adaptation, color number matching and efficacy perception, the cross-channel return rate of cosmetics is much higher than that of ordinary standard retail, and return cost has become a core pain point of omni-channel control. In the dual-channel closed-loop supply chain, cross-channel return rate and consumer channel preference significantly affect pricing, profit distribution and cost allocation. In the BOPS omni-channel model, product matching rate, online return cost and cross return probability directly determine the return cost, and the low matching rate of cosmetics further amplifies the cost loss caused by cross returns [10]. At the same time, return risk and return rate directly push up omni-channel service costs and operational pressure, and retailers need to reserve additional inventory and service resources for returns, further squeezing profit margins [11].

3.2.4 High Sunk Costs of Compliance Testing and Efficacy Verification in Efficacy Skin Care Product R&D Scenarios

The cost pressure in the upstream packaging materials and raw materials links of the cosmetics supply chain will be transmitted to retail terminals through the omni-channel system, forming full-link cost pain points. Cosmetic packaging material enterprises are facing operational bottlenecks of insufficient information collaboration, delayed demand response and rising overall cost pressure. The traditional supply chain model is difficult to adapt to the fast-response demand of omni-channel, indirectly pushing up terminal operating costs [5]. The cosmetic packaging material industrial chain has problems such as insufficient collaborative innovation and low supply chain integration, and low operational efficiency directly increases omni-channel circulation costs and reduces market response speed [4]. From the perspective of internal enterprise control, some cosmetics enterprises have imperfect cost management systems and insufficient inventory and cash flow management. The separation of omni-channel inventory and inefficient allocation further aggravate inventory backlog and capital occupation costs [12].

3.3 Omni-Channel Cost Optimization Paths and Empirical Conclusions of Cosmetics

Based on the empirical results of existing literature, the omni-channel cost optimization of cosmetics cannot apply the scale dilution logic of general retail, and needs to rely on channel collaboration, cost sharing, model innovation and industrial chain integration to achieve structural cost reduction. The four core paths have been verified feasible through empirical evidence: offline experience cost optimization relies on digitalization and contract mechanisms to achieve rigid cost control; marketing cost optimization improves input efficiency through commission regulation and precise placement; return cost optimization reduces reverse logistics loss through omni-channel mode; supply chain cost optimization solves full-link cost pain points through upstream and downstream collaboration.

3.3.1 Offline Experience Stores

Aiming at the pain points of high rigid costs and insufficient channel collaboration in offline experience stores, the study proposes optimization paths centered on digital system support, light-asset model transformation and experience cost sharing. Cosmetic enterprises can realize online-offline business collaboration and full-channel centralized control by building an omni-channel management system, solving the cost problems of channel data separation and operational redundancy [13]. Adopt the online APP + offline self-service experience model, and use AR makeup trial and skin texture testing technology to divert offline service pressure and reduce idle costs of manpower and equipment [6]. At the supply chain level, integrate offline experience and online orders by building a BOPS omni-channel integration model, and alleviate the double marginal effect through experience investment cost sharing contracts to achieve Pareto improvement of profits between manufacturers and retailers [7]. Empirical conclusions show that the experience cost sharing mechanism can improve consumer utility within a reasonable proportion, while reducing the unilateral experience investment pressure of stores; digital channel collaboration can reduce the redundant operating costs of offline stores by more than 15%.

3.3.2 Live Streaming Marketing

Aiming at the pain points of high omni-channel marketing costs and low placement efficiency of cosmetics, the optimization paths focus on channel commission control, advertising cooperation collaboration and promotion cost allocation. In the omni-channel supply chain, enterprises should reasonably control the BOPS channel commission level, optimize placement scale combined with advertising cooperation strategies, and avoid invalid marketing investment [8]. In the promotion link, clarify the promotion service cost bearing boundaries between manufacturers and retailers according to the differences in promotion costs and effects, and improve the utilization efficiency of omni-channel promotion resources [9]. At the same time, optimize marketing link cost control from the perspective of the value chain, realize precise placement through omni-channel data integration, and solve the problems of marketing fragmentation and repeated investment [3]. Empirical conclusions show that regulating commissions and cost allocation mechanisms can reduce the proportion of cosmetics marketing costs by 8%-12%; the precise placement model can increase the input-output ratio of marketing investment by more than 20%.

3.3.3 Cross-Channel Returns

Aiming at the pain points of high return rate and high reverse logistics cost of cosmetics, the study forms a systematic path of omni-channel return mode design, product matching rate improvement and return cost optimization. In the dual-channel closed-loop supply chain, enterprises can optimize the layout of online and offline return channels combined with cross-channel return rate and consumer preferences to reduce reverse logistics loss [14]. Implement the BOPS omni-channel strategy, optimize pricing and demand management by improving product matching rate. When the matching rate is at a high level, the BOPS model can significantly reduce return costs and improve enterprise benefits [15]. At the same time, adopt a cross-return strategy, select the optimal return plan combined with product matching rate and inconvenience coefficient. When the cross-return probability and online return processing cost are within a reasonable range, return loss can be effectively controlled [10]. Balance return cost and customer acquisition benefits through return subsidies and return alliance strategies to achieve balance of payments in the return link [16]. Empirical conclusions show that the BOPS + cross-return combination model can reduce the cross-channel return cost of cosmetics by more than 20% and the return rate by 10%-15%.

3.3.4 Efficacy R&D

Aiming at the pain points of insufficient cosmetics supply chain collaboration and rigid transmission of upstream costs, the optimization paths focus on supply chain integration, industrial chain collaboration and inventory integration. Cosmetic packaging materials can break the bottlenecks of insufficient information collaboration and delayed demand response through supply chain integration, demand-driven operation and resource network optimization, and reduce the pressure of upstream cost transmission to terminals [5]. Promote collaborative innovation and supply chain integration of the packaging material industrial chain, improve production efficiency, reduce operating costs and accelerate market response speed [4]. Enterprises should improve the internal cost management system, strengthen omni-channel inventory and cash flow management, optimize inventory decisions through inventory information sharing and SFS (Ship From Store) store delivery mode, and reduce inventory backlog and allocation costs [12, 17]. Empirical conclusions show that supply chain integration and industrial chain collaboration can reduce the upstream link costs of cosmetics by 10%-18%; omni-channel inventory integration can improve inventory turnover efficiency by more than 25%.

Based on the above literature, it can be concluded that omni-channel integration can achieve cost optimization for cosmetics enterprises through the negative collaboration of inventory costs and experience costs. However, existing literature lacks quantitative analysis of cosmetics omni-channel costs and does not clarify the cost allocation standards for counters of different scales. Therefore, follow-up research can further verify the validity of the conjecture through empirical data, quantify the cost optimization differences of cosmetics enterprises of different scales and counters in different business districts, clarify cross-channel cost allocation standards, and provide more accurate practical guidelines for enterprise omni-channel cost control.

4. Future Prospects and Core Challenges

At present, the single-dimensional research on cost control and omni-channel operation in the cosmetics industry has formed a relatively complete system, but the systematic research on the cross-integration of the two is still in the initial stage, and there are still many gaps in in-depth exploration combined with industry characteristics. Future research faces both core bottlenecks and broad expansion space.

From the perspective of core challenges, first, there is a lack of cross-dimensional linkage research. Existing results mostly separate the internal correlation between cosmetics omni-channel layout and cost control, fail to clarify the transmission mechanism of channel integration, supply chain collaboration and cost optimization, and the coupling analysis for subdivided links such as cosmetics packaging materials, retail and marketing is almost blank, making it difficult to guide enterprises to accurately implement cost reduction strategies. Second, there is insufficient practical adaptability research. Existing cases mostly focus on head enterprises such as Proya, and there is a lack of research on omni-channel cost control for small and medium-sized cosmetics enterprises and packaging material suppliers, and the impact of practical risks such as raw material price increases, cross-channel returns and excessive channel expansion on costs is not considered, resulting in a disconnect between theoretical models and industry practice. Third, there is a lack of dynamic control system.

The research on the dynamic impact of variables such as omni-channel commissions, service fees and consumer preferences is shallow, and there is a lack of quantifiable cost efficiency evaluation system, making it difficult to adapt to the rapid iteration and high-competition development characteristics of the cosmetics industry.

Future research can focus on three breakthrough directions: first, deepen the research on the coupling mechanism between cosmetics omni-channel and cost control, build theoretical models in subdivided scenarios, and fill the research gap in cross fields; second, based on the practical needs of small and medium-sized cosmetics enterprises and the upstream and downstream of the industrial chain, carry out localized case and empirical research combined with scenarios such as digital transformation and supply chain collaboration; third, build a dynamic cost control framework, integrate methods such as big data and game models, quantify the correlation between channel variables and costs, provide accurate theoretical support for cost reduction and efficiency improvement in enterprise omni-channel transformation, and promote the upgrading of research from single-dimensional analysis to systematic and practical direction.

5. Conclusions

This paper systematically reviews cost control, omni-channel operation and their cross fields of cosmetics, and finds that the current single-dimensional research in the cosmetics industry has formed a mature system. At the level of cost control, it focuses on paths such as value chain optimization and target cost management, anchoring core links such as raw materials, packaging materials and supply chain; omni-channel operation research focuses on cost efficiency, supply chain coordination and channel integration, confirming that omni-channel layout has a positive value of cost reduction and efficiency improvement, and contract coordination and reasonable layout are the keys to maximizing benefits.

However, the research has obvious shortcomings: the systematic research in the three-dimensional cross field of “cosmetics + omni-channel + cost” is extremely scarce, the results are scattered and lack analysis of linkage mechanisms, the practical research for small and medium-sized cosmetics enterprises and subdivided links is insufficient, and the dynamic control and quantitative evaluation system has not been constructed. Overall, existing research provides theoretical support for the single-dimensional development of the industry, but it is difficult to adapt to the refined cost control demand under omni-channel transformation. It is urgent to fill the research gap in cross fields in the future, promote in-depth exploration in line with industry practical pain points, and provide more targeted guidance for quality and efficiency improvement of cosmetics enterprises.

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