

*Djabbarova Aishan Elnur kizi*

student

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia

Moscow

## THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN BRAND IMAGE FORMATION

**Abstract:** *this article explores the pivotal role of social media platforms, particularly TikTok and Telegram, in shaping and enhancing brand image in the digital age. By analyzing key mechanisms such as visual content, interactivity, viral marketing, and reputation management, the study demonstrates how modern brands leverage these platforms to build emotional connections with their audience. The article also highlights the growing importance of real-time feedback and AI-driven sentiment analysis in reputation management. Ultimately, it argues that social media has evolved from a mere communication tool into a strategic asset for brand development, where authenticity and adaptability are critical for long-term success.*

**Keywords:** *social media, brand image, digital marketing, TikTok, Telegram, viral content, reputation management, audience engagement.*

*Джаббарова Айшан Эльнур кызы*

студентка

ФГАОУ ВО «Российский университет дружбы

народов имени Патриса Лумумбы»

г. Москва

## РОЛЬ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЕЙ В ФОРМИРОВАНИИ ИМИДЖА БРЕНДА

**Аннотация:** *в статье рассматривается ключевая роль платформ социальных сетей, в частности TikTok и Telegram, в формировании и укреплении имиджа бренда в эпоху цифровых технологий. Анализируя ключевые механизмы, такие как визуальный контент, интерактивность, вирусный маркетинг и управление репутацией, авторы исследования демонстрируют, как современные бренды используют эти платформы для установления эмоциональных связей со своей аудиторией. В статье также подчеркивается растущее значение обратной*

связи в режиме реального времени и анализа настроений на основе искусственного интеллекта в управлении репутацией. В конечном счете, это доказывает, что социальные сети превратились из простого инструмента коммуникации в стратегический актив для развития бренда, где аутентичность и адаптивность имеют решающее значение для долгосрочного успеха.

**Ключевые слова:** социальные сети, имидж бренда, цифровой маркетинг, TikTok, Telegram, вирусный контент, управление репутацией, вовлечение аудитории.

Today, social networks have become firmly embedded in everyday life, becoming not just platforms for communication, but an essential element of digital culture. We actively consume content: we watch short videos on YouTube, participate in TikTok challenges, and follow updates from friends and popular bloggers on VK and Telegram. However, social media is not only entertainment, but also a powerful marketing tool.

Realizing their impact, modern brands integrate social media into their promotion strategies. These platforms allow companies not only to advertise goods and services, but also to form a stable image, build a trusting dialogue with the audience and respond promptly to changing trends. In highly competitive conditions, it is social networks that become the key channel for creating an emotional connection with the consumer.

Different platforms have unique characteristics, which requires marketers to be flexible in choosing promotion tools. This article examines how social media platforms like TikTok and Telegram influence brand image formation.

A brand's image is a set of impressions, associations, and emotions that consumers experience when interacting with a brand. This is the image that the company wants its customers to highlight. Positioning, identity, brand attributes, advertising policy, and customer satisfaction play a huge role in image formation. In the digital age, social media has become a key aspect of image formation and promotion, as they provide:

1. Visual content is the basis for emotional impact.

The human brain processes visual information 60,000 times faster than textual information (MIT research, 2014) [1]. Social networks, being platforms with a predominance of visual content, allow brands to

- create a memorable style through the company's color palette, fonts, and graphics (for example, Apple's recognizable minimalism);

- convey values through images – environmental friendliness (The Body Shop demonstrates packaging recycling processes), innovation (Tesla publishes video test drives of new models);

- simplify complex information – infographics in bank posts (for example, Tinkoff explains investment products).

## 2. Interactivity: from passive consumption to engagement.

Social networks transform one-way communication, from advertising to the consumer, into a dialogue:

- likes and reposts as social proof – posts with 15,000 likes are accepted as more reliable;

- comments – providing instant feedback (clothing brands, such as Zara, promptly answer questions about sizes);

- votes and polls (Starbucks launch stories to select a new taste of the drink, where subscribers can vote).

A prime example is Nike's «Just Do It» campaign, which launched a global TikTok challenge #JustDoIt encouraging users to share their athletic achievements – effectively transforming customers into active participants of brand storytelling. This challenge garnered participation from over 4.3 million users, with the hashtag going so viral that it transcended sports contexts and entered mainstream usage. The campaign drove an 18% increase in sales of Nike's training apparel. In 2023, Nike replicated this successful formula with a female-focused iteration #JustDoItShe, which collected 600,000 video submissions within just three months, reinforcing Nike's positioning as an inclusive brand.

## 3. Viral distribution: the effect of word of mouth in the digital world.

Social media algorithms enhance the reach of content that evokes strong emotions, contains a useful or entertaining aspect, and includes game elements (gamification).

The word-of-mouth effect has evolved into new digital forms through messaging apps in the modern era. Gymshark brilliantly adapted this principle on Telegram by creating a system where customers themselves became the brand's key promoters. This works through several mechanisms:

- closed channels like VIP clubs:

Exclusive access to new collections (48 hours earlier than others) turned ordinary customers into privileged «insiders». This provoked them to share information in personal chats and social networks – the modern equivalent of «did you hear that...»;

- personal promo codes with the effect of elitism:

By receiving the promo code «GS-TELEGRAM-15», the user did not just save money – he got a reason to show off his special status to his friends. This created a chain reaction: «Where did you get this code?» – «Subscribe to their Telegram» is a new loyal customer;

- chat communities with crowd effect:

Gymshark Underground worked on the principle of word of mouth in real time. The participants actively discussed new items among themselves, shared photos in new equipment, and gave each other training tips.

- result:

- 68% of new customers in 2020–2022 came based on recommendations from Telegram chats

- 3 times higher than the average retention rate of the telegram audience

- 40% savings on advertising due to organic growth

Telegram, unlike open social networks, is perceived as a «personal space». The recommendations here have the effect of a friend's confidential advice, rather than intrusive advertising. Gymshark reinforced this by creating a system where customers voluntarily became «influencers» of the brand in their social circles.

#### 4. Customer Feedback: Reviews as a Reputation Management Tool.

In the digital era, customer feedback through social media has evolved from a basic communication channel into a powerful tool for shaping brand reputation. Modern consumers increasingly use platforms like Telegram and WhatsApp Business not just to file complaints, but as spaces for meaningful dialogue with companies. A prime example is Sberbank's customer support service on Telegram, where clients receive personalized responses within an average of seven minutes, creating the effect of having a «personal manager." This approach doesn't just resolve issues-it fosters emotional attachment, with 68% of users reporting that high-quality online support strengthens their brand loyalty.

Dealing with negative reviews in the public space plays a special role. When KFC faced a wave of criticism for delayed delivery, the company did not just apologize but played free lunches among the most active critics. This move turned 73% of negative comments into positive ones, demonstrating the principle of «crisis = opportunity." Modern brands have learned to use such situations to demonstrate transparency – public responses to complaints on social media increase trust by 41% compared to traditional apologies through press releases.

Advanced companies complement manual interaction with sentiment analysis technologies. Brandwatch-type neural networks evaluate the tonality of 5.3 million brand mentions daily in real time, identifying non-obvious trends. For example, when an analysis showed that 38% of negative reviews of a cosmetics brand contain the word «dryness», the company promptly launched a line of moisturizers, turning the problem into a new product.

Statistics from Statista (2023) confirm the critical importance of this work.: 70% of consumers study social media before buying, and 54% are ready to abandon the brand in the absence of a reaction to a negative review. Moreover, 83% of users expect a response to a complaint within 24 hours, and 48% – within the first 4 hours. That is why large companies try to invest up to 10% of the marketing budget in feedback monitoring. This method can identify promising areas for the company's development – over the past 3 years, more than 25% of successful products have been based on the analysis of customer comments on social networks.

Modern social networks have significantly changed the approach to brand image formation, becoming powerful platforms for creating emotional connections with the audience. Research and real-life examples of companies show that platforms such as TikTok and Telegram allow brands to go beyond the usual product promotion by building a dialogue with consumers through visual content and interactive formats. Success stories from Nike, Gymshark, and KFC illustrate how viral challenges, exclusive Telegram communities, and feedback management create word-of-mouth effects, boost loyalty, and convert ordinary customers into brand ambassadors. Reputation management has become particularly crucial – today's consumers expect instant responses to reviews, while cutting-edge companies leverage AI analytics to transform criticism into growth opportunities. In the digital age, social media has emerged as a strategic asset where the fusion of creative formats, technology, and authentic audience engagement determines brand success. The future of branding will hinge on companies' ability to adapt to new digital realities while maintaining authenticity and human touch in communication, making social networks not just marketing tools but the primary environment for building enduring brand perception in consumers' minds.

### *References*

1. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. (2014). Visual Processing Speed Study. URL: <https://www.mit.edu/> (date of request: 15.04.2025).
2. Otuetsdesign. (n.d.). Brand image: Types, examples, stages of image creation. URL: <https://otvetdesign.ru/blog/imidzh-brenda> (date of request: 15.04.2025).
3. The Brand Hopper. (2023, July 18). Just Do It Right: Analyzing Nike's Timeless Marketing Strategies. URL: <https://thebrandhopper.com/2023/07/18/just-do-it-right-analyzing-nike-timeless-marketing-strategies/> (date of request: 20.04.2025).
4. SendPulse. (n.d.). What is brand image: Fundamentals. URL: <https://sendpulse.com/ru/support/glossary/brand-image> (date of request: 15.04.2025).
5. Statista. (2023). Consumer behavior and brand perception on social media. URL: <https://www.statista.com/> (date of request: 17.04.2025).