

Research on the Impact of Social Media on Consumer Shopping Behavior:

Based on Case Analysis of the Adolescent Population

Ruiying Sun

Beijing No.4 High School International Campus, Beijing, 100031, China

ruiying163sun@163.com

Abstract:

Starting from the underlying logic of the impact of social media on consumers, this article focuses on analyzing the shopping habits of young consumers and the influence and shaping of social media on their consumption behavior. It analyzes the positive and negative effects of social media and puts forward relevant opinions and suggestions. Compared to the adult consumer group, the adolescent consumer group has not yet formed a relatively fixed consumption value system, and their consumption behavior is more susceptible to various external factors. Adolescents are in a critical period of character development and self-value establishment, so they will pay attention to social trends and seek the unique value of their own existence during this stage. Social media, as a fast channel for transmitting information, is also the main communication platform for adolescents. It provides a huge amount of information, including product purchasing channels, consumer evaluations, etc. These pieces of information constantly influence adolescents' thoughts and subtly shape their shopping behavior. This article advocates for the correct guidance and shaping of the values of young people, exercising and cultivating their independent thinking ability, to enable them to have healthy and good consumption behavior.

Keywords: Social media; Shopping habit; Adolescent; Consumer behaviour.

1. Introduction

With the further development of economy and the continuous progress of Internet technology in recent years, the internet platform has developed rapidly, and online shopping has become a popular new consumption channel. The online consumption of the public is not only limited to online trading platforms such as Taobao, JD, PDD and Xianyu, but also extended to most online social networking platforms, such as TikTok and Xiaohongshu. The various online shopping E-commerce platforms provide consumers with more convenient shopping methods and a wider range of consumption choices and are increasingly favored by more and more people. In recent years, the scale of youth groups on the internet has gradually increased, which has injected a fresh and strong force into online consumption and has also become a new consumption force that cannot be ignored by e-commerce. Various marketing channels and methods on the internet influence the consumption behavior habits of adolescents from multiple aspects. Adolescents' consumption has gradually shifted from direct purchases in offline commercial shopping stores to online e-commerce, live streaming, and

online link purchases. According to a survey, more than 80% of the surveyed adolescents use online shopping at least once a month, and the number of urban adolescents in this group even exceeds 90% [1]. At the same time, the publicity of official advertisements on the Internet, the guidance of opinion leaders, the evaluation of netizens and consumers and other factors have a significant impact on the consumption decisions of young people. As the age at which adolescents are exposed to e-commerce consumption gradually decreases, the impact of social media on adolescents' shopping behavior has gradually attracted widespread attention. Adolescents are in the stage of physical and mental growth and have not yet established mature consumption concepts. Their psychological attitudes towards goods and services, as well as their pursuit of consumption behavior, are often easily influenced by their surrounding environment, especially the online and social media environment. Exploring the impact of online social media on the consumption behavior of adolescents and how to help them establish correct and healthy consumption concepts has become a very important topic in contemporary society. This article will explore the impact of social media on the shopping behavior of adolescent

consumers based on case analysis, comparative analysis, and second-hand literature analysis. The following article will explore in depth the impact of social media on the shopping behavior of adolescent consumers, case studies, and suggestions for improving adolescent consumption behavior.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition and Characteristics of Social Media

Social media are Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others [2]. Nowadays, the social media platforms popular with Chinese adolescents include WeChat, Weibo, TikTok, Xiaohongshu, Bilibili, etc., while the social media platforms of foreign adolescents include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, U tube, TikTok, etc. Social media has a diverse range of categories and a broad mass base, allowing for real-time dissemination of information and ample interaction among netizens. It is the active participation of the vast number of netizens in online social life and the initiative to provide a steady stream of new information for the Internet that makes online social media maintain extremely high vitality in the information age.

2.2 Consumer Shopping Behavior Theory

After gaining a basic awareness of multiple products, consumers are influenced by various factors, gradually developing interest in certain specific products and further understanding them, leading to purchasing actions. After purchasing a product, they become loyal to certain products, which further affects their next repurchase. People have summarized several important models for a deeper understanding of consumer shopping behavior by analyzing their consumption behavior, such as AIDA model, AIDMA model, AISAS model, and consumer shopping behavior model. AISAS model is the development of AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire and Action) which has been widely used on advertising in social media and other media, then developed into AISAS model in appropriate with the internet era and the character of modern consumers who tend to search before making a purchase for the product [3]. The consumer behavior model involves five elements: demand recognition, information search, evaluation options, purchasing decisions, and post purchase behavior. The following are four specific consumer behavior models: consumer behavior learning model, psychological analysis model, cognitive model, and

socio-cultural model. Nowadays, consumer behavior not only involves considering whether a product can meet my actual needs but is also influenced by factors such as consumer consumption habits, internal psychology, cognitive decision-making, and the social and cultural background of the consumer.

2.3 Characteristics of Adolescent Consumers

Compared to adults, adolescents have not yet formed a relatively fixed consumption value system, so their consumption behavior is more susceptible to various influences. Adolescents are in a critical period of character development and self-value establishment, so they will pay attention to social trends and seek the uniqueness of their own existence at this stage. This mentality will be reflected in their consumption habits. In the context of integrating social media into the lives of adolescents, adolescent consumers will follow the trend of the internet and purchase products that can satisfy their psychological needs, thus ignoring whether they really have actual needs for the product. At the same time, adolescent consumers are eager to find their own value in interpersonal relationships, so they are influenced by social media to buy gifts for their parents, teachers, and friends during holidays to demonstrate their importance. This behavior deserves a certain degree of recognition, but at the same time, there is also a hidden danger of being influenced by consumerism, which deserves appropriate guidance.

3. Analysis of the Influence of Social Media on the Shopping Behavior of Adolescent Consumers

3.1 The Influence of Social Media Information Acquisition on Shopping Behavior

Social media provides a convenient and fast channel for the transmission of information. Adolescent can actively search for keywords of corresponding products on social media and obtain the necessary information, including product purchase channels, product reviews, and other information. The amount of information is huge, and the sources are very rich. Rapid access to information can enable consumers to have further opinions about the product and influence the further purchasing behavior of young consumers. Official accounts providing goods and services on social media can provide information about products for young consumers, and opinion leaders and major internet celebrities can further elaborate on products. Netizens' evaluations of the actual use of products also affect consumers' perceptions of the products. Positive information about the product will strengthen the decision of young consumers to purchase it, while negative information

about the product will make young consumers terminate their purchase behavior or try to purchase related products from other brands. While actively searching for product information, adolescent consumers also passively receive massive amounts of product information through various channels, such as posts, short videos, live broadcasts, and advertisements. Through big data calculation, adolescent are targeted as specific customers for some products, and these products information is tailored and pushed to them, with concise and engaging features that are easy for adolescent to understand. Adolescents are more likely to receive information about affordable, convenient, practical, and trendy products, such as stationery sets, affordable beauty products, trendy clothing, and handmade accessories. During the long-term information reception process, some young consumers may be willing to purchase specific goods due to low prices or a trend-following mentality and may even make further purchases. The consumption values of adolescent are relatively easy to change, and they are easily influenced by a large amount of marketing information and unhealthy values on social media, resulting in impulsive consumption, excessive consumption, and even the development of unhealthy consumption habits. Adolescent have relatively less money to spend, and they tend to consider the cost-effectiveness of goods and prefer low-priced practical items. Therefore, low prices are a temptation for most adolescent consumers. Because adolescent have a relatively strong mentality of following the trend of the times, buying trendy toys or clothes has become their choice. It is worth noting that social media is full of false and misleading information, such as businesses providing photos that do not match the actual product, and netizens making false or exaggerated comments about physical products. Adolescent consumers have a certain ability to distinguish information, but due to their relatively lower ability to distinguish information compared to adults, this non-objective information often seriously affect the purchasing behavior of adolescent consumers. Therefore, it is very important to guide young consumers to correctly identify information on social media and establish a correct and healthy consumption concept.

3.2 The Influence of Key Opinion Leaders in Social Media on Shopping Decisions

Key opinion leaders on social media have a certain degree of influence on adolescent' shopping decisions. Key opinion leader (KOL) refers to a person with high expertise, authority, and influence in a specific field or industry. KOLs can be celebrities, industry experts, well-known bloggers, internet celebrities, etc. They have many followers and can influence the shopping decisions of the general public through their own opinions, suggestions, or

recommendations. Young consumers often follow celebrities, internet influencers, and other KOLs on social media. The content posted by these KOLs on social platforms often has a certain degree of interest and creativity, which is in line with the interests and hobbies of young consumers, and has similar values to contemporary adolescent, attracting widespread attention and resonance from young consumers. Long-term interaction with KOLs makes adolescent consumers more likely to identify with some of their views, forming emotional dependence and thus trusting their consumption advice. This trust and recognition will further influence the purchasing decisions of young consumers. At the same time, KOLs on social media lead the trend, so the daily products, makeup and clothing, and lifestyle patterns used by these KOLs are often considered by adolescent consumers as the trend and direction of the times. Adolescents have the desire to pursue individuality and fashion, and through purchasing fashion brands represented by KOLs, they can gain a sense of belonging and self-identity among their peers or in their social groups. Therefore, they will purchase brands and products recommended by KOLs. Some KOLs have high professional standards in related fields, and their recommendations for products have a certain degree of authority and are based on their own actual evaluations. Young consumers can receive relatively accurate purchasing advice and make efficient and precise purchases, gradually developing trust in KOLs over the long term. The negative impact of key opinion leaders on young consumers cannot be ignored. In order to market products to this specific group of young consumers and expand their influence, businesses are likely to contact KOLs with a large number of young fans and use these KOLs to advertise corresponding products to young consumers. Adolescent consumers face challenges in accurately identifying the commercial nature of advice provided by each KOL, making them susceptible to misinformation and potentially purchasing products that do not meet their actual needs. Adolescents are in the stage of value shaping, and some KOLs may lead some adolescent to form unhealthy values, such as excessive focus on appearance and excessive pursuit of material goods, which ultimately leads to irrational consumption and purchasing behavior.

3.3 The Impact of Social Media Interaction on Shopping Experience

There is a lot of interaction in social media. Consumer behavior towards product purchases is influenced by the interactions of other consumers on social media platforms. This is because consumers attribute value to a product or brand based on their comments and opinions on social media, which can influence whether future consumers

decide to purchase that product. Alternatively, consumers who avoid purchasing too many products from a particular brand may still have the potential to influence others in the online environment. Hence, “a brand is no longer what we tell the consumer it is - rather it is what consumers tell each other it is” [4].

The same is true for adolescent consumers when shopping.

1) Social media provides convenient and fast communication channels for adolescent. Adolescent can communicate a lot with their relatives and friends about shopping, and they are more inclined to buy products recommended by those around them. Adolescents believe that information about products from their relatives and friends is more authentic and reliable, and they can establish their own identity in the purchase of these products and gain a sense of belonging in close relationships such as family, friendship, and love.

2) Adolescent can interact with other consumers in the comment section of social media. A large amount of information about products is shared by consumers who have used them, including positive comments about the products and comments on their shortcomings and problems. Through these real user experiences, adolescent gain a certain understanding of the real experience of the product. Recommendations from other consumers will prompt adolescent consumers to take further action to purchase the product, while negative reviews from other consumers may deter them from making a purchase. If other consumers recommend similar products of other brands, adolescent may shift their purchase goals to other similar products that have received positive reviews. By referring to the comments and suggestions in these comment areas, young consumers are more likely to have a good shopping experience. Adolescent also share their purchase experience in the comment area, providing other adolescent with product evaluations and suggestions that are more suitable for their age group.

3) There is real-time interaction between the host and netizens in online live broadcasts, including but not limited to bullet screen, live streaming, PK, and other forms, which brings the KOL and fans closer. During live broadcast, KOL can use the product on site, show the real usage of the product, and answer questions for consumers in a timely manner. At the same time, consumers who have actually used the product can also share their real feedback through live broadcast. Adolescent will carefully refer to other consumers' evaluations before making a purchase. Due to such relatively authentic social interaction, adolescent will have certain confidence in the products they are willing to buy, which to some extent guarantees the quality of the products purchased and enhances the shopping

experience.

4. Case Analysis: the Specific Impact of Social Media on Adolescents' Shopping Behavior

4.1 The Impact of Social Media Brand Promotion on Adolescents

According to the report of the People's Daily App on June 15, 2024, the “2024 China Beverage Cold Drink Industry Trend Report” released by the Shanghai Beverage Industry Association and the Oriental FMCG Center showed that the total output of beverages in China's beverage industry in 2023 was 175 million tons, a year-on-year increase of 4.06%;The industry can generate a sales revenue of 520.2 billion yuan, representing a year-on-year increase of 7.26%;The profit reached 50.3 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 7.01%.By the end of 2023, China's population will be 1.41 billion, and the market size of soft drink consumption matching that of the population-rich countries will also rank among the top in the world. Of course, in the beverage market, beer accounts for half of the market, while the beverage market is more consumed by adolescents. According to the “2022 Youth New Health Drink View Survey Report”, about 30% of post-00 users drink soda at least four times a week. In such a huge beverage market, a household-known brand product that has risen in recent years has done well. The new darling of this market is the Chi Forest. Chi Forest (Beijing) Food Technology Group Co., Ltd. is a Chinese food and beverage company founded in 2016. Currently, it has a series of products including Chi Forest Bubble Water, Alien Electrolyte Water, Sugar-Free Herbal Tea, Milk Tea, Iced Tea, etc., which are popular among consumers. With the slogan of “zero sugar, zero fat, zero calories, and delicious without gaining weight”, it has attracted loyal consumers of existing beverages to try new ones. With its fresh and stylish Japanese-style packaging and refreshing and explosive taste, Chi Forest quickly conquered young consumers who like fashion, pursue novelty, and value appearance. During the 2019 Tmall 618 Shopping Festival, Chi Forest sold 2.26 million bottles, ranking first in the beverage category. Then, on the day of the Double 11 Shopping Festival five months later, Chi Forest once again surpassed Coca-Cola and Perrier to become the champion of beverage sales on that day and has remained at the top of the ranking of carbonated beverages. According to an exclusive report by the big data company Xingtu Data, consumers aged 18-29, known as Generation Z, account for about half of the beverage consumption population and are undoubtedly the main force, while the gender ratio between men and women is not much different (Sohu News, January 13, 2019).

2021 is a brilliant year for Chi Forest, with only its core product bubble water selling 100 million boxes. From 2018 to 2021, the sales growth rate of Chi Forest was 300%, 200%, 309%, and 170.3% respectively, representing the fastest growth period in its development history [5]. The reason why the soft drinks of Chi Forest are widely welcomed is that, in addition to the “taste” that guides adolescents to continue to purchase, the Japanese-style packaging of the drinks also appeals to the aesthetic point of adolescents. At the same time, the company has hired celebrities who are popular among adolescents, such as Olympic champions like Gu Ailing, Xu Mengtao, and Su Yiming, as well as top-tier actors like Yiyangqianxi, Xiao Zhan, and Ni Ni, to promote its products on social media, with significant results. The frequent appearances of Chi Forest in various platforms and variety shows have always been in the field of vision of adolescents. Young consumers are attracted by people and things at first sight and never leave them for four seasons.

4.2 The Impact of Social Media Personalization on Adolescents

Adolescents' consumption often has the characteristics of irrational and arbitrary behavior, which is prone to impulsiveness, overconfidence, and addiction. The interaction on social platforms, big data push, purchase links, and the convenience of placing orders on the platform often easily lead adolescents to enter the game. With the algorithm's cyclic boost and frequent interactions with similar needs in the circle of friends, adolescents are trapped in a consumption vortex of certain products and cannot extricate themselves. For example, the recent growing trend of card collecting is the result of social media's continuous personalized push to adolescents.

Card is a cultural product, with the goal of collecting a certain type of card. Most cards are sold at a relatively low price, using a “blind box” sales method. Some types of cards are less common and difficult to obtain, resulting in their often-high selling prices. In recent years, “collecting cards” has rapidly gained popularity among primary and secondary school students, such as cartoon characters like My Little Pony and Doraemon, as well as popular IPs like Ultraman and Yeloli. The diverse range of cards and unique gameplay have been highly sought after by adolescents, especially primary and secondary school students. Many students first became interested in entering the card collection activity after seeing their friends excitedly sharing their precious rare cards on their Moments. They then became motivated to participate due to the low entry cost and easy consumption start-up. Due to the relatively rich channels for purchasing, it is easy to get started. For example, on platforms such as TikTok, WeChat, Xianyu,

Qiandao, as well as JD and Taobao, various flagship stores of cards can be purchased. Especially WeChat and TikTok, which are platforms for students to communicate, often communicate, and are often pushed by big data. Finally, they become addicted to the card collection track and “go forward without hesitation”. At present, the annual revenue of the card market is over 4 billion yuan, with a gross profit margin of over 70% (The annual income of selling Ultraman cards exceeds 4 billion yuan, and the card game has impacted the IPO of Hong Kong stocks, with the support of Sequoia and Tencent. finance.sina.com.cn, January 24, 2004.). The adolescents who are immersed in it are the absolute top player.

5. Suggestions for Improving Adolescents' Consumption Behavior

Under the computation of big data, a large amount of product information based on personalized recommendations can easily lead adolescent consumers to be trapped in the so-called “information cocoon”. This product information is tailored for adolescent consumers and is popular among adolescent consumers, so these adolescent consumers will spend more energy and money on these products. The information of these commodities is huge, similar and single. Teenagers receiving such information for a long time will form a fixed consumption thinking mode and develop fixed consumption habits, only inclined to purchase commodities that they are familiar with and interested in, lacking diversity and creativity. At the same time, adolescents who are trapped in information cocoon are vulnerable to the influence of bad online trends, resulting in excessive and impulsive consumption. These unhealthy online information and unhealthy consumption habits not only affect the learning of adolescents, but also have a negative impact on their physical and mental health, and even shape their outlook on life, worldview, and values. Here are some suggestions to prevent adolescents from falling into bad consumption habits and improve their consumption behavior.

- 1) Schools should attach importance to students' information literacy education, teach adolescents how to distinguish deceptive and misleading information on social media, cultivate students' ability to use critical thinking to view ideas and opinions on social media, and cultivate students' independent thinking ability.

- 2) Parents should pay attention to the growth of adolescents, actively participate in their children's online life, provide correct guidance on their social media habits, cultivate their self-management skills, and help them further use the Internet reasonably. Parents should set a good example for their adolescent children and create a good

family consumption atmosphere to guide them to make rational and sensible consumption decisions.

3) Social media companies should improve their big data algorithms to push rich and diverse information that is suitable for adolescent consumers to reduce the possibility of adolescents falling into information cocooning. Relevant laws for adolescent consumers should also be gradually formulated to regulate social media platforms, safeguard the physical and mental health of adolescents, and further protect the legitimate rights and interests of adolescent consumers from a legal perspective.

4) Adolescent consumers should also have a certain degree of self-awareness and actively participate in non-online real life, increasing their reading, visiting museums, participating in sports, listening to different voices in society, and reducing their dependence on a single source of information. Adolescent consumers should exercise independent thinking skills and establish correct values in offline activities, so as to have healthy consumption behavior.

6. Conclusion

In summary, social media has a multifaceted impact on the shopping behavior of adolescent consumers, including the impact of social media information acquisition on shopping behavior, the impact of social media opinion leaders on shopping decisions, the impact of social media interaction on shopping experience, and the impact of social media advertising on shopping willingness. The two specific cases above further illustrate the impact of social media brand promotion and personalized social media recommendations on adolescent consumers. In the contemporary consumption environment, social media is a double-edged sword. While providing consumers with convenient shopping channels and enjoyable shopping experiences, it can also have unhealthy effects on adolescent consumers. Adolescent consumers should have a positive and open attitude towards the consumption impact of social media, make proper use of social media, develop healthy and good consumption habits, and enjoy a better life.

Although social media is an open network platform, and

many forms can be seen, the real situation behind it needs to be deeply analyzed to be discovered. For example, how can a brand use the amount of funds and advertising strategies to establish itself as a star product, and how can a platform use big data algorithms to guide consumers' consumption concepts and shape consumer behavior? The operational data of these enterprises and the business data of the platform are the most valuable and valuable materials for analysis and conclusion support. Researchers should have as much information as possible, but precisely because of the authenticity and preciousness of these materials, their confidentiality cannot be grasped by competitors. Therefore, the public channels for obtaining these "business secrets" are very limited, and the data obtained is also very scarce, which determines the difficulty of this study and is also the limitation of this article. Due to the scarcity of relevant research data, which underscores the significance of this study, the author will continue to monitor related topics and focus on the consumption habits and behaviors of the adolescent consumer group, aiming to provide insights and support for their better lives.

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