

Chinese University Female Students' Consumption Tendency towards Different Product Promotion Ways on New Media Platforms

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Abstract. In an era when various new media platforms are widely entering people's lives, the content on these new media platforms is becoming more and more extensive. Various product merchants are also aiming at this trend, using the influence of netizens and bloggers to put more of their own product promotion on such platforms. Female college students, as a kind of customer group with strong willingness to consume and more exposure to new media platforms, have naturally become the target customers of many product merchants. The purpose of this study is to analyze the consumption tendency of female college students towards the existing mainstream new media platforms, and provide some reference and ideas for customers, product merchants, and new media platform operators. This study collected the familiarity, acceptance and consumption frequency of 150 female college students on five types of new media platforms' common marketing modes by means of questionnaires. After analyzing their responses, it is concluded that female college students are more familiar with the product marketing forms placed by well-known and female-targeted new media platforms and are more likely to accept more subtle marketing strategies with a smaller ratio of advertisements to the content itself, and to make multiple purchases under the marketing platforms and marketing styles that have easier and complete shopping channels and more emotional appeal.

Keywords: Female college students; New media; Marketing; Consumption tendency.

1. Introduction

Founded in 2016, TikTok has quickly integrated into people's lives around the world with its novel content and short, fast video rhythm. From its initial creation to its global popularity, TikTok just took less than two years. As of 2022, the total number of downloads of TikTok in China has exceeded 800 million, which means that more than half of the people in China have used or are using TikTok. Behind this short video trend is the rise of a global new media platform. Unlike traditional media, new media is rapidly gaining a foothold among young people with its high capacity, real-time and interactive nature. It usually takes only 30 seconds to 2 minutes for people to read a piece of information on new media platforms. This efficient interaction especially allows young people, who are busy with school and work, to spend their time freely and take in more information at the same time. According to industry surveys, about 40 percent of new media users are between 19-30-year-olds.

This wave of new media platforms has naturally attracted the attention of businesses. They use the traffic and buzz of these platforms to promote and market their products. The merchants pay the promotion fees to the new media contents creators, and the creators intersperse their videos and posts to advertise their products, which has become a mature and effective marketing method. In this new media marketing trend, the live video selling form also came into being. Live selling is usually done by an influential anchor in the form of live interaction on new media platforms such as TikTok to introduce the goods, and then quickly change the goods to continue to advertise. This means that a 2–3-hour live broadcast can efficiently advertise a large number of items. On November 11, 2022, the annual shopping festival in China, China's hottest selling anchor Li Jiaqi had a turnover of 10.6 billion yuan on the same day. This astonishing number shows that new media platforms are of great

help in marketing products, thus attracting businesses and content creators to keep opening more new media marketing methods.

Among the consumers of new media marketing, college students are a very special group. On the one hand, they generally do not have stable income to maintain high consumption, on the other hand, with free time, strong curiosity, and high energy, college students have a high desire to purchase. More importantly, college students are highly adaptable to the ever-changing new media platforms and have a strong interest in them. And among college students, the new media consumption behavior of female college students is very valuable to study. According to the 2020 Beijing e-commerce online shopping user survey, about 67% of consumers are female. At the same time, there are more products targeting female users on new media marketing platforms. Cosmetics, clothes, and jewelry are the most common products on new media marketing platforms. These products are generally inexpensive and have many varieties, so they are especially popular among female college students. Therefore, they became the main subjects of this study. According to the interview and survey, there are generally 4 types of new media platforms that female college students are mainly exposed to: (1) influencers' graphic advertisement with Weibo as the main platform; (2) video promotion with TikTok and Bilibili as the main platform; (3) live broadcasting of products as mentioned above; (4) text advertisements in the style of knowledge popularization with Zhihu as the main platform. (5) product promotion in the form of life sharing by ordinary people published on The Redbook. Weibo, Bilibili, TikTok, Zhihu, and The Redbook mentioned above are some of the most popular new media platforms in China today. Of these forms of promotion, the influencers' graphic advertisement on Weibo and live broadcasting of products are more straightforward, with the blogger promoting the product in a direct manner, while video promotion, text advertisement in the style of knowledge popularization and product promotion in the form of live sharing are more implicit. The second promotion form---video promotion on Bilibili and Tiktok--- is usually a 1–2-minute advertisement inserted in the blogger's personal video, which does not change the direction of the original video. The fourth form is mainly conducted on Zhihu, which is a Chinese question answering app like Quora. Some users ask questions on the app such as "how to ameliorate freckles", and the product merchant will then post some answers with basic knowledge, such as avoiding UV exposure. After that, they will also mention, seemingly inadvertently, that a skin care product is very effective for freckles. Thus, the purpose of promoting the product is achieved.

Which of the above four new media marketing methods would the female college students prefer? This is the main question investigated in this article. The authors will analyze and answer this question by collecting the consumption habits of female college students and their attitudes towards different platforms.

2. Literature Review

Many scholars have conducted studies on the impact of new media on college students' consumption. Their studies all show that under the propaganda guidance of new media platforms, college students' consumption enthusiasm grows, and blind consumption often occurs. Jin and Deng in their study point out that the new media world has given the disadvantaged and minority groups the right to express their true opinions, and they are no longer silenced by authority. Compared with the traditional media era, college students' cultural consumption is more autonomous, more active and more willing to take the initiative [1]. Pianpian Li also mentioned in her paper about the effect of new media platforms on students' consumption that in the new online media environment, the stimulation of advertisements and the sharing and interaction among students make the irrational consumption of college students more serious. According to the survey results, 87% of the students had have impulsive consumption on new media platforms and regretted their purchases immediately [2]. It can be inferred that college students are prone to impulsive consumption and follow the trend when facing the promotion of products on new media platforms. Liulin Gan and Tian Wang offer an explanation for this impulsive consumption behavior: the new media deliver a variety of product

information as well as discount information on a daily basis, making it easy for consumers to feel that they are "taking advantage" of the situation and mistakenly believe that they are a rational consumer. At the same time, the new media platforms lacked a sense of scenario and real experience, making it easy for students to ignore the amount of money they spent [3]. Therefore, the act of placing a large number of product promotions in new media platforms can undoubtedly bring great benefits.

College students are aware that they are receiving a lot of product advertising from new media platforms? And if so, what is their attitude towards it? Yanqing Chen and Yuejia Li conducted a study on this topic. They found from the results of 383 questionnaires that most of the college students they investigated were aware that their lives were being surrounded by product advertisements. Among them, 67% of students avoided product promotion on new media platforms, while another 37% were happy to receive these advertisements. This is a very good number compared to traditional advertising. They also looked at the main channels through which college students receive new media product advertising. The college students in the sample received product advertisements mainly from social networking software such as Weibo, and less from video promotions and lifestyle sharing promotions. This data can reflect the difference in the number of product advertisements placed by merchants on each new media platform [4].

In addition, some scholars have also conducted a single analysis of the common product sales models of each new media platform. Quan Zhang and Wanting Shi studied the impact of live broadcasting selling on college students' consumption. Their study shows that more than half of college students are influenced by the herd mentality when watching live streaming. The celebrity effect and the hoarding mentality will also increase impulsive consumption [5]. Hongli Luo and Xiaoxue Ma studied "life-sharing" product promotions on The Red Book platform. According to their study, 65% of the college students in the study had spent money on such products. Their consumption is mainly due to the trust of the bloggers. They believe that this kind of product recommendation by seemingly ordinary people is very credible [6]. Wang Shuo analyzed the product advertisements made by opinion leaders in the knowledge Q&A platforms and concluded that the implicit advertisements from "objective" and "knowledgeable" opinion leaders on knowledge popularization platforms such as Zhihu are often more influential than recommendations from the general public [7]. Scholar Jia-Ning Zhang investigated the promotion of short video products on platforms such as TikTok and Bilibili. He found that short videos that are entertaining and interactive have a strong positive effect on product sales, and that female youth are more influenced by such videos than males [8]. Jia Lu and Xinchuan Liu explain this difference in their study of gender attributes in new media: feminine values, which are marginalized by hegemonic masculinity, are present in mobile phone-based new media technologies. Therefore, women's values are positively correlated with cell phone based new media technologies [9]. Similarly, Youjun Li in his article about the gender deconstruction of new media sphere points out that the new image of women shaped by the new media presents gender modalities and symbolic representations of gender images that are very different from those of previous gender relations. Women have the right to speak in a comprehensive manner and are able to promote their subject consciousness and body language "freely and autonomously" in the new media platform thus gaining an unprecedented gender identity [10].

The scholars' studies mentioned above indicate that various new media platforms have certain advantages and roles in product marketing models. However, the analyses of these scholars are only for single platforms, and there is no comparative analysis of these marketing models in the extant literature. On the other hand, most of the research subjects of these studies are college students and youth groups, and there is no precise analysis for the limited group of female college students. Therefore, this article aims to find the most suitable new media marketing strategies for female students by comparing their choices and attitudes toward different product marketing models.

3. Method

The research was mainly conducted by an online questionnaire. The author published the research questionnaire on Tencent Questionnaire, the most popular online questionnaire platform used by Chinese university students. The questionnaire consisted of three questions that asked about the familiarity, acceptance level and number of times of consumption of five common new media product promotion methods. Each question was designed with 3-5 options based on specific content. A total of 182 questionnaires were collected within one week after the questionnaire was placed. After filtering out the questionnaires that were not completed by the female college students and those that were obviously invalid (such as blank questionnaires, questionnaires with identical answers), a total of 150 valid questionnaires were collected as the data source. The questions included the respondents' habits of using new media platforms, their familiarity with different marketing models, and their tendencies and attitudes towards these marketing models. The experiment process consisted of releasing the questionnaire, filling out the questionnaire, and collecting the questionnaire to analyze the data.

4. Results

After collecting the total 150 pieces of questionnaires, the author categorized the results. First, the author analyzed the familiarity of female college students with the way products are advertised on these new media platforms. The author defined "familiar" for those answers with a familiarity level of 4 to 5 and "unfamiliar" for the answers below 4 and added up the number of answers with a familiarity level of 4 to 5 and 1 to 3 for each category to obtain the following results. The author found that female college students surveyed were more familiar with the 1st, 3rd and 5th promotion methods: 124 out of 150 respondents were frequently exposed to the photo promotion of celebrities and influencers on Weibo, 137 out of 150 respondents were familiar with the product advertisement in the form of live broadcast, and the surveyed 129 female college students were familiar with the product promotion in the form of life sharing on The Red Book. In contrast, the female college students were less familiar with the second and fourth types of product promotion. Among the 150 female university students, 96 of them were familiar with the product promotion in the form of short videos, while 63 of them were familiar with the product promotion in the form of knowledge popularization on Zhihu.

Second, the author analyzed the acceptance of the above product promotion methods by the surveyed female college students. The author defined "dislike" and "skip" as low acceptance, "continue to browse but do not pay attention to the product" as moderate acceptance, and those who chose "will be impressed by the product" and "will be interested in the product" were defined as having a high level of acceptance. From the data collected, the surveyed female college students have a high degree of acceptance of the second, fourth, and fifth new media publicity methods: 58, 63, and 74 of them responded in the "medium degree of acceptance" and "high degree of acceptance," respectively. In contrast, the first and third types of new media product promotion received lower levels of acceptance: only 34 and 41 people were in the "moderate acceptance" and "high acceptance" range, respectively. Interestingly, by analyzing the acceptance level of each category one by one, it can be observed find that the subjects' choice for the first and the third promotion method is more extreme and there are relatively lower people in the medium acceptance range: for the first type of influencers and celebrities' graphic publicity on Weibo, 97 people are in the "low acceptance" range while 24 of them are in the "high acceptance" range. For the third type of product promotion in the form of live broadcast, 86 people are in the "low acceptance level", but 34 people are in the "high acceptance level". For the remaining three new media promotion methods, the acceptance level of users is more even and scattered.

Finally, the author analyzed the number of times female college students spent money under the influence of these new forms of media product promotion. The author defined the responses with consumption more than or equal to two times as repeated consumption. After counting, 13 female

college students were guided by the first form of product promotion to consume multiple times, 22 were guided by the second form of promotion to consume multiple times, and 29 were guided by the third form of promotion to spend repeatedly. The fourth form of product promotion attracted 17 users to make repeated consumption, while the fifth form attracted 34 female college students to make repeated consumption. From the above data, the fifth form of promotion, which uses ordinary people sharing their lives on The Redbook as a marketing tool, attracted the most respondents to make multiple purchases, while the first form attracted the least number of multi-time consumers. It is worth noting that the third form of new media product promotion attracted about 70 percent of the users who are among the moderate or high acceptance level to make multiple purchases. For the other four forms of new media campaigns, the percentages are 38% (first), 37% (second), 29% (fourth), and 46% (fifth).

5. Discussion

For the above results, the author performed explanatory analysis and explored the implications. First, the author believes that the differences in the familiarity of the surveyed female college students with these five new media products are related to the number of female college users on these new media platforms and the characteristics of the platforms themselves. Weibo, like Facebook and Instagram, is a comprehensive platform for news release, opinion discussion and life sharing, and is very popular among young people, so most female college students use this app. The product marketing of live streaming is dependent on the existed influence of shopping platforms and brands, so that has become a hot social topic with their support. The Redbook itself is targeted at women, and most of the content on this platform is of interest to women, so many female students use this software frequently. On the contrary, short video apps such as Bilibili and TikTok have a larger proportion of male users and less female related content, so these short video apps should attract fewer female users in comparison. At the same time, the content on these short video apps is mainly entertainment, and less involved in product topics. Zhihu is similar to Quora, mostly in the form of more scientific and rigorous questions and answers to popularize knowledge and experience. This leads to the platform itself will be less users with several other platforms.

The familiarity of the female student population with different new media products has both advantages and disadvantages for the marketing of these products. For the ways they are familiar with, the good side is that products marketed on these platforms may reap more exposure, making it easy for female college students to access relevant product information and thus generate a willingness to buy. The downside is that they are more likely to recognize the content as advertising and thus have less interest and trust. For unfamiliar products, the exposure of products marketed on these platforms is lower among female students, but these unfamiliar marketing methods also make female students feel novel and unaware that they are advertisements, which prevents them from becoming wary of advertising. Therefore, product managers who target young female users as the marketing group can consider the flow of the platform itself and the novelty of the marketing method when selecting new media marketing platforms, so as to ensure the exposure while reducing the user's guardedness brought by obvious advertising.

Secondly, the author speculates that the acceptance of the surveyed group of female college students for different new media platforms' product marketing methods is likely to be related to the proportion of marketing content and the direct degree of marketing methods. The product promotion in the form of short videos, knowledge quizzes on Zhihu and life sharing on The Redbook are all interspersed with other contents, therefore, users are most likely to be attracted by the content of the original post or the original video itself and "accidentally" browse the product promotion in some part in the middle, but the product promotion that accounts for a relatively small amount does not cause too much interference for them to continue browsing. Therefore, users are not greatly repelled by this product propaganda. On the contrary, the live broadcast selling and influencers' graphic product promotions on Weibo are both focused on the product itself, with a very high percentage of product-

related content. Therefore, users who use these applications to browse other content and are not interested in the product being advertised are likely to skip these very direct advertisements, resulting in a lower acceptance of these product promotions.

Users' acceptance of the product marketing will directly affect their impression of the platform and the product, with a higher acceptance level making users more willing to learn about the product and try to buy it. On the other hand, lower level of acceptance will make users have a primitive resistance to the platform and the product, which will make them refuse to try shopping. Therefore, for the product side, appropriately reducing the content proportion of product information and adopting a more obscure way of product promotion may enable customers to have a better initial impression of the platform and the product and begin the buying experience on such platforms.

Finally, the author speculate that the purchase times of female college students surveyed on different new media platforms are related to their consumption experience and product discounts. The two factors in the platform marketing mode are reflected in the shopping interface, after-sales security, and the incitement of the marketing mode. In terms of the percentage of repeated consuming behavior compared with the number of subjects with relatively high acceptance level, it can be observed that the repeatedly purchase rate of the live broadcasting advertisement and the promotion on The Red Book is much higher than the other three marketing methods. This is in line with the explanation mentioned above: The live broadcastings and The Red Book both have platform-independent and easy-to-operate, process-complete shopping pages, while the other several new media platforms do not have internal purchasing functions. At the same time, in the live broadcasting channel, the hosts will often use exaggerated promotional words such as "large discounts", "limited quantities", etc. to constantly incite the audience's emotions, while the life sharing on The Red Book is very close to ordinary people, which makes it easy for customers to bring the effect and feeling of using the products on the post to themselves. As a result of these promotion characteristics, users of these two platforms are more likely to be incited to buy emotionally and thus make multiple purchases.

The number of users' purchases brought by inciting their emotion has obvious benefits for the platform and merchants, not only to increase product sales, but also to attract users to make multiple purchases. However, on the other hand, the sales generated by inflaming user emotions and the easy post-sale procedure of the platform can also increase the return rate of the products. Thus, in order to increase the number of product sales and avoid excessive return rates, merchants and new media platforms should learn to properly mobilize users' emotions while paying attention to the authenticity of product promotion, minimizing overly exaggerated descriptions to highlight the true efficacy of the product.

6. Conclusion

With the trend of using new media platforms as the main product promotion channel, studying the consumption tendency of certain customer groups is enlightening and valuable for both the merchants and the customers themselves. For customers, learning to identify common new media platform product marketing tactics can effectively help them avoid falling into the consumer trap. For product merchants and platform operators, the results of this research can help them grasp customer consumption psychology and consumption habits, thus increasing sales. Through this study on the tendency of female college students towards different new media platforms for product promotion, it can be found that female college students are generally more receptive to more subtle, interesting and less content-intensive product promotion methods. They are also more likely to be attracted by marketing methods that provide complete internal purchase channels and are emotionally provocative to make multiple purchases. The author also found that the familiarity of female students with the marketing mode of a platform does not predict their acceptance of the product promotion mode of these platforms, and the acceptance level of the marketing modes does not directly determine the final number of purchases. Each platform has its own strengths and weaknesses, so when selecting a platform for advertising, merchants should not only consider the number of users of the platform but

should also try to refer to the shopping habits and common shopping psychology of the users in order to achieve the purpose of increasing the marketing amount.

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