

The Research on the Influence of Chinese Social Media little Red Book upon Chinese College Students' Cosmetic Purchasing Behavior

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Abstract. Nowadays, college students are trying to look more attractive and unique. Little Red Book, whose users are primarily between the ages of 18 and 35, is well-liked by the younger generation, especially college students. Little Red Book has provided many suggestions and recommended many products to help students become beautiful easier. Many students are influenced more or less by it when buying cosmetics. This paper focuses on whether the consumption behavior of contemporary college students buying cosmetics may be affected by the Little Red Book. The proposed method to solve the problem is a questionnaire survey, and the data was collected and analyzed. The results obtained in this research include influencing by group psychology and changing in consumer behavior. The research shows that basic life requirements have been solved, and college students pursue more material enjoyment. Moreover, influenced by group psychology, college students who lack social experience and the ability to identify advertisements are easily affected to purchase unnecessary cosmetics. This research can enable many skincare brands to grasp the purchase characteristics of college students from every angle. In past research, few scholars have concentrated on such a specific classification. The future direction of this research will focus more on the purchase behavior of different social media to college students and various goods.

Keywords: Little Red Book, Consumption behavior, Cosmetic brands.

1. Introduction

Little Red book, one of the rising forces in Chinese e-commerce, also known as “Instagram of China”, started in 2013. It is a platform that shows different lifestyles between generations and a consumption decision-making portal. Unlike other e-commerce platforms, Little Red Book started as a community. At first, users focused on sharing their overseas buying experiences in the community. Later, Little Red Book more focuses on beauty makeup, fashion trend, sports, tourism, home, travel, and other things that are more related to modern life and various lifestyles. As of July 2022, the number of Little Red Book users has exceeded 300million, and the monthly active consumer has passed a 200million, of which 72% are post-90s, 50%are distributed in first and second-tier cities, with a total of 43 million shares, of which the proportion of male and female users has risen to 3:7. On the Little Red Book, tens of millions of real consumer experiences from users have become the world’s largest consumer word-of-mouth database.

As of September 2020, more than 100 million notes have been released in Little Red Book, among which 70% of the users are post-90s, 300 million notes on life and 8 billion notes on a single day have been exposed. The top three interests of users are fashion and beauty 9.95% and food 8.05%. Red users continue to be preoccupied with fashion and beauty which are also the trendiest topics. According to Red’s internal data on beauty & fashion content, having to wear a mask doesn’t affect Chinese consumers’ pursuit of looking better and more confident.

The first high in the click index and search index can be seen in October 2021, according to Little Red Book's analysis of users' content consumption habits. During the 2021 Double 11 Shopping Festival, Chinese customers used Red as a kind of Chinese "Google" to obtain information and make purchasing decisions. After many significant shopping festivals, both indices decreased in February. Thanks to the Women's Day Shopping Festival in March 2022, business rose again very soon.

On the Little Red Book, tens of millions of real consumer experiences from users have converged into the world's largest consumer reputation pool, which also makes Little Red Book a "think tank" valued by the brand. Chief user officer of L'Oréal said: "In Little Red Book, the company can directly listen to the real voice of consumers. Real word of mouth is the most solid link between brands and consumers."

Little Red Book has become the link between Chinese consumers and excellent brands. Through the Little Red Book, Chinese consumers learned about good foreign brands. For example, Tatcha has a good reputation in the United States, but it is unknown in China. After users share their consumption experience in the community, it gradually attracts the attention and favor of Chinese consumers. Little Red Book became Tatcha's only partner in China.

Little Red Book is also committed to promoting Chinese brands to the world. Several excellent domestic brands have been gathered on the Little Red Book. With the public praise model of Little Red Book Community, these brands do not have to invest a lot of resources in advertising marketing but can focus on design and quality. Qu Fang, the founder of Little Red Book, said: "Little Red Book believes that as long as the best design and quality are connected with consumers, a Chinese brand with market potential will rise slowly".

In December 2016, Little Red Book was selected as one of the "top ten e-commerce companies" in the eyes of FMCG manufacturers. In September 2017, Red won the application list of the previous year in December, Little Red Book was rated as a "Chinese brand" by People's Daily. In March 2018, Jiefang Daily reported that Little Red Book was a "Chinese brand trusted by young people" In June 2019, Little Red Book was selected into the "2019 Forbes China's Most Innovative Enterprise List"; In January 2020, Hurun Research Institute released the 2019 Hurun Top 500 Private Enterprises in China, and Little Red Book ranked 367 with a market value of 20 billion yuan; The "2021 China Fashion Festival" released nine fashion honors, and Little Red Book won the annual achievement of the special honor fashion organization of the Organizing Committee. In 2022, it was selected as one of the top ten Taiwanese people who love to use mainland apps.

2. Literature Review

With e-commercial playing an increasingly significant role in people's daily life, many scholars have carried out research on marketing strategy and consumption decisions. Virtual community has become one of the essential parts of brand marketing and balancing the value of the content in the community and commercial value has become the key problem for community development.

As Little Red Book became popular in major social media, many scholars began to study whether it affects consumer behavior. Cai Dongyu found several factors that influence audience decision-making and concluded six factors, such as high-quality content, high interactivity, positive impact on the audience's cognition attitude etc. Four factors, such as preferential mechanism and additional experience, have a positive effect on the audiences cognitive. The conclusion is that the audience's cognitive and emotional attitude has a positive effect on consumption intention [1]. And Xu Xinyue taking the field of fashion and beauty as an example, believed that the strong consumption desire of college students was closely related to the consumption concept spread by E-commerce and already paid the heavy price, and put forward a series of suggestions on this situation [2].

Due to the huge market in China, there are a lot of problems with the mix of real and fake products, which makes this group of consumers' shopping information needs and consumption needs remain unsatisfied. In this situation, little Red Book was born. 78.16% of users said that the main purpose of using Little Red Book is to do some preparation for shopping, and some respondents said that users would always seek help from Little Red Book's tips before shopping, which has become a habit. And the continuous development and leap of Internet technology have broken the bondage of space so that the interaction barrier between users is dissolved and communication becomes more effective and convenient, and people can realize interaction in virtual space through various new media and Internet technology [3]. According to Yang Yunhong's paper, the younger generation, the target audience

group, has been affected greatly, and their consumption behavior is gradually alienated into “symbolic consumption”, and the consumption subject is alienated into “one-dimensional people” [4].

Nowadays WOW has become crucial to exchange marketing information between customers via online platforms. The reason why college students are willing to believe in Little Red Book is that the WOW of recommendation in Little Red Book is trustworthy and real. The strongly perceived usefulness leads to users' loyalty to the app even with a negative buying experience [5].

Henning-Thurau has explained the motivation for consumers to search for word-of-mouth information about products online, to the effect that consumers search: first, to obtain product information. Consumers want to improve their knowledge of products by sharing information with other consumers who have already completed their consumption behavior. The information created by merchants is product-oriented and focuses on product features, which may be exaggerated and embellished; whereas the information provided by consumers who share their experience is based on their personal feelings and makes judgments about the advantages and disadvantages of products from the perspective of users, which is more reliable and has a more intimate feeling. The information provided by consumers who share their experiences is based on their personal feelings. Second, meet the social psychology of online consumption behavior. More and more consumers are registering on virtual community platforms to browse other people's consumption experiences, obtain fashion trends, make purchase decisions, and interact with other consumers to share their shopping experiences, which is a reflection of consumers' social nature. The influence of active product information search on consumers' purchasing behavior has been proven in real life [6].

In the whole social education system, the mass media has penetrated almost every corner of people's lives with its unique advantages - rapid transmission, vivid image, a large amount of information, wide coverage, and strong orientation. Under the market economy system, mass media itself has to face the market and pursue the maximum economic benefits, which makes mass media instinctively conspire with consumerism. First, there is a strong tendency for pan-entertainment. The intensive dissemination of entertainment information in mass media makes college students easily regard popular culture, which is mainly characterized by entertainment, amusement, and leisure, as fashionable. Second, the tendency of vulgarization is becoming more and more prominent. The mass media is good at creating "hot spots" and introducing "new trends", and those who appear in front of the public are often successful businessmen and dazzling stars, and consumerism has almost reached a frenzy. Under such circumstances, the influence of media is always present and used in every stage of college students' growth and development, misleading their consumption orientation and manipulating their consumption style. According to the results of the survey, 86.6% of college students' choice of consumer products is guided by the media, and 91.2% of them choose brands with celebrity spokespersons as their first choice. The exposure rate of student consumers to advertising is almost 100% [7].

According to Dai Guoliang's paper, at present, social e-commerce business model innovations emerge endlessly, and it is necessary to classify them. Ai Media Consulting divides the business model of social e-commerce into three types: social content, social sharing, and social retail. Social content e-commerce is similar to shopping guide e-commerce, mainly because opinion leaders such as stars, online celebrities, and anchors create content to attract users through social media platforms such as public accounts, microblogs, live broadcast platforms, and shows, and then recommend products to users. Typical examples are Little Red Book [8].

Little Red Book is successful because, firstly, it has a unique strategic goal; secondly, it has a community marketing operation model and a closed-loop profit model; furthermore, it has a strong background in technical support; finally, Little Red Book itself strives to find innovative points in community marketing [9].

The main reason why Little Red Book can be the first choice for college students is that it also attaches importance to the needs of fans, which is good at making use of the star effect and is a community-centered cooperation model. Little Red Book has made full use of the fan economy to

achieve its development. Most college students are passive consumers, so it is a common phenomenon that Little Red Book used curiosity to exchange business value [10].

Although many scholars have studied this factor, few articles have studied the impact of social software on a group's purchase of certain categories of goods. Papers are talking about consumer behavior and the influences of e-commercial, but no papers can be specific to the consumer group-college students. If this topic can figure out why software can have such a great impact on purchasing behavior, it will be beneficial and have extra space for development for consumers, businesses, or short video platforms, especially the latter two. This article will explore how the red affects college students' behavior in purchasing cosmetics.

3. Methodology

The overall research method of this study is quantitative research which needs to do data collection and analysis. The research method is to make a survey and issue questionnaires. The questionnaire is made by using the questionnaire star platform. The sample selected in this study is 19-22 years old college students, but it is not specifically divided into freshmen to seniors. Send the questionnaire to Weibo, WeChat, and Zhihu, an app that is used by a large number of college students. The distribution period of the questionnaire is one week. A total of 500 questionnaires were collected, 16 of which were invalid since all the answers were selected, and the answers showed obvious regularity. Eleven non-college students were excluded, and 473 were left.

4. Result

There are 15 questions in this questionnaire and the author received the questionnaire that 336 from women and 137 from men. 93% of the respondents chose to use the Little Red Book as a reference, indicating that the number of users is large and widespread.

When students were asked would buy things that are beyond their ability to pay because of interest or not, 55% of students chose "YES" and two-thirds were male. 40% of students chose "NO" and 5% of students chose "It depends". That illustrates young generation always regardless the price and consumer behavior is not restricted by factors like money.

When students are asked will to purchase a product because a blogger recommended it or not, 69% of students chose "It depends", and 16% of students chose "YES" and 15% of students chose "NO". As mentioned in the last question, it is difficult to recognize whether this influencer is advertising this brand, this product or not. And when students are asked whether can recognize whether the products recommended in the article are advertisements or not, 47.6% of students chose "YES" and 33.2% of students chose "sometimes". It shows that nowadays advertisements are made in various ways to attract people, and it is hard for college students to distinguish.

When students are asked whether students want to buy a product because friends and family members have bought it and why, 39% of students chose "YES". The reason filled in the blank space can be summed up as "It must be functional and useful since all friends buy it". 38% of students chose "NO", and the reason why the students chose "NO" is that the students don't want to be like everyone else and want to be special and different. 23% of students chose "It depends" and the cause is "The product need to be tested personally". And when the question goes to "what the biggest advantage of Little Red Book is compared with other similar apps when selecting cosmetics", the answer was various, but a lot of students mentioned that: "Little Red Book recommends different kinds of cosmetics for different groups and preference", and "The product pushed by Little Red Book is more reliable than other platforms".

When students are asked whether the students would buy a cosmetic brand that is not popular and big but is shared by many people on Little Red Book, 71% of students chose "YES" and the reason provided is mostly "Would like to give it a try since those brands that are not hot is getting better than

ever, some of them even more beneficial than popular brands". 29%of students chose "NO" because only a famous brand is trustworthy.

When students are asked would turn to Little Red Book for help when students don't know what skincare products that companion needs, 93%of students chose "YES" and almost every male chose "YES". And when students are asked whether students would be affected by the Little Red Book recommendation and change cosmetics more frequently". 73%of students chose "YES" and 27%chose "NO".

5. Discussion

Little Red Book has always been very popular with the younger generation since its appearance. Under the influence of "the grass planting economy", contemporary college students are easily recommended. The word "planting grass" is used as a verb in this sentence, which generally refers to the act of sharing something and recommending it to another person to make another person like it. When the word "grass planting" became popular, Little Red Book thoroughly penetrated the whole software. Why are contemporary college students so easily "planted with grass"? With the development of China's economy, the basic life needs of college students have been met, and students want to pursue more material satisfaction. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory shows that after the low-level needs are met, high-level needs such as the desire to be respected and recognized in social groups will emerge. Short video apps are very popular. Under the influence of the new epidemic, Little Red Book ushered in a great opinion in developing "the grass expert", seizing the wave of e-commerce live broadcast. Young people obtain their spiritual needs through consumption. Their purpose of consumption is not the practicality of the commodity itself, but the pleasure of satisfying their needs through the brand attributes of the commodity packaging. Let consumers think that owning the product can satisfy their self-worth and obtain happiness. But this happiness is only temporary. For example, female college students will overdraw themselves step by step to buy skin care products that do not fall within the student's capabilities, and even worse, maybe borrow usury to meet their vanity. At present, male college students are also very concerned about image management. College students spend more and more money on skin care products, and some buy expensive cosmetics to give gifts to their girlfriends. Such alienated consumption behaviors force the youth group into a dilemma step by step.

In life, individuals are easily infected by groups, that is, the mentality of conformity. If many people recommend a certain skin care product, the herd mentality will urge people to try it. For example, female college students now have far more lipstick than needed, but when students see a video recommended by online celebrity bloggers, students immediately place an order and find that the color is not suitable for them after buying it.

Little Red Book bloggers can only get more "traffic", that is, more fans, more likes, more collections, and more views. Only after becoming a high-quality author can have the opportunity to find him through promotion. The blogger tried his best to put "signs" on all kinds of skincare products, such as "rejuvenation one night after use", "the effect is comparable to plastic surgery", "the trendiest color of lipsticks that must have" and so on. However, most college students are caught in such a "grass planting trap" because students lack social experience and the ability to identify advertisements. College students are caught up in the deluge of advertisements released by brands.

Little Red Book also pushes articles according to the data and preferences. College students tend to choose the products recommended by their favorite stars or online celebrities when consuming and choose different products for different "grass-growing talents". People will have a natural curiosity for new and beautiful things, but also will have a strong desire and desire to obtain them. For example, some stars join the Little Red Book and often publish some notes about skincare process. College students want to know about the stars' personal life from the side through the notes sent by stars, which satisfies college students' doubts about "how stars maintain their skin so well". This kind of

grass planting has both advantages and disadvantages: the advantage is that people can find more useful or niche things.

In this case, the platform should restrict the platform bloggers with a positive and good operating standard, strengthen the platform reporting and supervision mechanism, and Little Red Book should set up a special department to review whether the blogs are true, enhance supervision, investigation, and correction of the platform content, to avoid serious commercialization and forget the original intention. Also, college student consumer groups should improve their ability to identify information, enrich their inner world, avoid blindly following, and avoid falling into the trap of consumerism. Media platform bloggers should stick to the bottom line of the principle, conduct business cooperation selectively, and not cheat consumers to make money.

6. Conclusion

The main goal of the current study was to determine how red influences college students' behavior in buying cosmetics. This thesis has provided a deeper insight into how short video platforms affect people's consumption behavior in this small case. This study has identified why are college students influenced by Little Red Book so much that changes their consumption concepts. This research has also shown the factors that college students in the purchase of cosmetics are subject to the intervention from Little Red Book and the younger generation are more trendy to be induced by the influencer and various advertisement. With the gradual improvement of living standards, people have become more eager to pursue a better life, especially in the small category of cosmetics. Students are curious about other people's lives, especially those with better skin. College students want to know how to get better and whether it is because of the use of a certain product, which will induce consumption. Moreover, it is easy for people to have a herd mentality, want to have what everyone has, and also excessively pursue things that are not within their ability. A limitation of this study is that the sample size is small. Being limited that the related information lacks, this study is short of relevant data supporting. Future work is needed to fully understand the implications that Why people prefer to use social media such as Little Red Book to obtain useful information for themselves more efficiently and to shorten the distance between themselves and commodities and merchants through Little Red Book.

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