The Impact of Short Video Platform Usage on the Purchasing Decisions of Generation Z Consumers

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Abstract. With the rapid development of social media and the widespread adoption of the internet, short video platforms have become an important part of consumers' daily lives. They have also become a significant medium for information acquisition, social interaction, and consumption decision-making. The rise of short video platforms has played a crucial role in the purchasing decisions of Generation Z. This study focuses on four key pathways: emotional arousal, social identity, platform algorithms, and user-generated content (UGC). It also explains them through real-life case studies. The research finds that short video platforms have changed the purchasing paths of Generation Z.This transformation is driven by immersive content, algorithm-driven distribution, and strong interactive features. Emotional drive, herd mentality, personalized recommendations, and trust in UGC jointly influence consumer behavior. Based on this, this paper proposes these recommendations: platforms need to enhance advertising transparency and standardize commercial content labeling. It should increase algorithm transparency and grant users the power to self-manage their data and guide consumers like Generation Z towards rational consumption.

Keywords: Generation Z Consumers, Short Video Platforms, Algorithm Recommendation, Social Identity, User-Generated Content

1. Introduction

The impact of short video platforms on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z consumers has become a key issue of social concern. With the rapid development of social media and the popularity of the Internet, short video platforms (such as TikTok, Kwai, Little Red Book, etc.) have rapidly penetrated the daily lives of consumers. They are becoming an important medium for information acquisition, social interaction, and even consumer decision-making. The number of short video users worldwide has exceeded 2 billion. The activity level of Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2010) users is much higher than that of other age groups. As' digital natives', this generation has a habit of frequently using short video platforms [1]. They also rely more on social content, visual stimulation, and personalized recommendations to complete their purchasing path [1]. Short video platforms offer high immersion, low information threshold, and instant conversion mechanisms. These features have become important factors that affect the cognition, attitude, and behavior of Generation Z consumers.

In recent years, multiple studies have focused on the role of short videos in consumer communication. The purchasing process of Generation Z consumers is highly emotional, non-linear, and strongly driven by social identity and conformity psychology [2]. This makes the role of short video marketing more complex and interactive. Some scholars have attempted to explain the effects of short videos from the perspectives of "consumer psychology" and "media technology integration". However, they lack comprehensive induction and empirical integration at the mechanism level.

This study explores the impact mechanism of short video platforms on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z consumers. It focuses on four key influencing factors: emotional arousal, social identification, algorithm recommendation, and UGC credibility. It explains how various mechanisms affect the "from heart to order" behavior of Generation Z consumers. This study wants to provide theoretical support for future empirical research. It also aims to offer a framework for developing short video marketing strategies for enterprises.

2. Development and media characteristics of short video platforms

In recent years, short video platforms have developed rapidly across the globe. They have evolved from simple entertainment and social content into comprehensive platforms. They combine marketing, trading, and community functions. TikTok, Xiaohongshu, Instagram, and other platforms have become important channels for content consumption in the digital era. They rely on short, flat, and fast information dissemination and provide a highly immersive audio-visual experience. Boeker and Urman found that TikTok's recommendation algorithm heavily relies on user behavior data such as likes, follows, and viewing duration [3]. The platform continuously strengthens user interest tags through algorithms and forms a content "echo chamber" [3]. It greatly improves content reach and retention [3].

Short video content features audio-visual impact, fast-paced rhythm, and scene-based narrative. These characteristics make it easier to stimulate emotional resonance and audience participation. Araujo, Perater, and Gouveia pointed out that short video advertising includes entertainment, emotional, and informational aspects [4]. These elements not only enhance users' attention but also significantly improve brand attitudes and purchase intentions [4]. Plötz, Härtel, and Gabriel found that short video platforms feature real usage scenarios, interactive comments, and instant feedback [5]. These features can enhance consumers' emotional identification and purchase intention towards sustainable brands [5]. Compared with traditional media, short videos have a shorter dissemination path and faster content feedback. They form a closed loop of "watching is participating, participating is trading".

To sum up, short video platforms demonstrate a high degree of personalization and immersion in algorithm distribution, content presentation, and interactive mechanisms.

3. Generation Z consumers' characteristics and media usage habits

As a person born and growing up in the Internet era, Generation Z consumers have significant consumption characteristics. Compared to traditional online shopping platforms, Generation Z consumers prefer to place orders through short video platforms. This is not only because their acceptance and frequency of use of emerging media are much higher than other groups. McKinsey's research shows that Generation Z prefers instant, visual, and interactive content formats [6]. They often browse short videos frequently during their break time to gain information, entertainment, and social identity [6]. Due to prolonged exposure to group life, Generation Z exhibits a strong herd

mentality. Generation Z has a strong sense of trend participation and FOMO (fear of missing out) psychology [7]. Popular challenges, topics, and music on platforms can quickly stimulate their imitative behavior, thereby affecting their consumption decisions [7].

Generation Z has developed a long-term habit of using short video platforms. They are highly sensitive to the authenticity and trustworthiness of media content. They believe more in life-oriented and non-commercial UGC, rather than traditional advertising. The empirical research by Wahyudi et al. shows that influencers' approachability and authentic experiences play an important role in short video content [8]. These factors can significantly increase the purchasing intention of Generation Z [8]. The results of Nature Scientific Reports show that short video platforms offer perceived entertainment, perceived usefulness, and ease of use [9].

These factors indirectly drive purchase intention by enhancing user trust [9]. These characteristics encourage brands to pay more attention to being close to real life. They emphasize interaction and feedback in short video content creation. It is worth noting that Generation Z also exhibits strong interactivity and immediacy on short video platforms. They are not only recipients of content, but also participants in commenting, liking, sharing, and recreating.

Overall, Generation Z consumers possess digital native media literacy and a strong social identity. They have become the core force driving the commercialization and consumption conversion of short videos.

4. Analysis of impact mechanisms

4.1. Emotional arousal and immersive experience

Emotional arousal is one of the primary mechanisms on short video platforms that influences Generation Z's purchasing intentions. Short video content can arouse the personal emotions of young consumers. This emotional response can directly or indirectly influence their purchasing decisions.

Short video creators typically use scenario-based scripts, background music, and real-life trials. They let viewers feel how their products fit into their ideal lives. Taking unboxing videos as an example, many beauty influencers showcase new product packaging, texture, and before-and-after effects in front of the camera.

They create an "I also want to have" mentality by using emotional tone and atmosphere rendering. For example, the common slogan "Buy it!" in Li Jiaqi's live broadcast room is not a simple sales order. Through highly emotional mobilization, admiring tone, and interactive color testing displays, the audience's emotions are stirred. This emotional resonance often leads to one-click purchases. During his live broadcast, he frequently uses phrases like "OMG, really good to watch!" and "limited time flash sale!". This kind of strong emotional language makes people feel rushed and causes a shared change in feelings.

Generation Z trusts real-life and authentic content rather than traditional ads with filters. For example, a short video of a bare-faced blogger testing sunscreen is more likely to arouse audience interest and resonance than a TV advertisement. In this situation, emotional excitement comes not only from what people see and hear, but also from feeling connected.

4.2. Social identity and conformity psychology

The social identity mechanism plays an important guiding role in Generation Z's purchase process. The Bandwagon effect and FOMO psychology prompt them to pay attention to what their peers are

using.

A short video with many likes, comments, or shares looks valuable to Generation Z.

They are more likely to pay attention to this kind of content. This social proof reinforces young consumers' positive perception of the product. For example, multiple well-known bloggers may recommend the same sports shoe [10]. Even if the user has not heard of the brand, they may choose to try it because everyone is buying it [10]. The topic of ice cream assassins is a phenomenon of reverse conformity psychology. In 2022, a video of a high-priced cream lying quietly in the corner of the freezer on TikTok became popular on the Internet. This video caused thousands of consumers to imitate, criticize, and evaluate. It formed a wave of collective cognition and consumption judgment. This phenomenon-level spread in short videos often becomes the basis for Generation Z to judge whether a product is worth buying.

Short videos are not just a consumer platform. It is also an important way of expressing identity and belonging to social circles. Generation Z often buys products that show a certain attitude toward life. For example, they may buy Vlog-style coffee cups or trendy lipsticks to take photos and share online. They are not just buying products in this process, but also purchasing a lifestyle and social capital. On Xiaohongshu, fashion videos made by international students often feature certain brands. Brands like Lululemon and Dior fragrances appear many times in these videos.

They have become symbols of the "returnee lifestyle" and guide young users to follow and relate to them.

4.3. Platform algorithm and personalized recommendation

Short video platforms use AI recommendation mechanisms to convert user behavior data into accurate content push paths. Algorithms not only determine what people will see, but also quietly influence what they will buy.

The platform tracks user behavior indicators such as clicks, likes, and dwell time, and builds user interest profiles. For example, after watching three skincare videos in a row, the platform will automatically recommend more related content. It forms an interesting echo chamber. If people search for affordable foundations on TikTok, the system will continuously push multiple price segments, skin classification, and popular recommended videos. This makes users feel like they are in an exclusive product selection space. Then it can increase conversion rates. Merchants and platforms use a combination of "interest tags+price sensitivity" to design recommendation logic. These all make the platform a personalized guide.

Although algorithms improve matching efficiency, they can also easily cause information cocoons. For instance, once a user clicks on the recommended light luxury women's bag. Then, almost all subsequent content revolves around that style. This will lead to irrational consumption impulses among Generation Z after looking many times.

Some platforms let merchants pay to get a better ranking. This helps them get more people to see their products. As a result, the information users see may be controlled by businesses.

4.4. User Generated Content (UGC) and authenticity trust

Generation Z stays careful about official ads and instead trusts the real feeling from "normal people's experiences". UGC has become an important source of information and reference for purchasing decisions in short videos. On Xiaohongshu, many users share their shopping experience of "should buy and should not buy". For example, a blogger released a "Guide to Avoiding Pitfalls for Internet Celebrity Cosmetics". They pointed out that although the outer packaging looks nice, the product

quality is poor. This type of content presents the advantages and disadvantages of the consumption process realistically. While enhancing the audience's trust in the content, it also promotes the formation of a rational consumption culture.

4.5. Purchase path refactoring and instant conversion

The traditional buying path depends a lot on searching for information. Short video platforms make decisions faster by turning content into ads and views into purchases. The platform has embedded functions such as "shopping cart", "live streaming sales", and "link redirection" in short video content, achieving an integrated process of "from heart to order" [11].

Live streaming e-commerce makes users feel more urgency. It uses limited-time flash sales, hosts explanations, and on-screen comments to push people to order quickly. Short videos are shifting from "media" to "channels" and becoming a part of the product distribution network.

5. Discussion

5.1. Problems and challenges

This study found that short videos have great potential to influence the purchasing behavior of Generation Z. However, they also face many problems and challenges.

Firstly, fake advertising and too much soft advertising. Some bloggers do not clearly label the advertising attributes. It may mislead consumers. This requires platforms and regulatory agencies to strengthen content standardization. Secondly, there are algorithmic biases and privacy issues. Algorithms can enhance recommendations. This may violate user privacy and even pose ethical risks of manipulating user behavior. Finally, it may affect young consumers' consumption attitudes. Short video content makes people want to buy things quickly. It gives them quick pleasure and may lead to unplanned or unwise spending. It is necessary to guide Generation Z to establish a rational consumption concept.

5.2. Solution

In response to many of the challenges and problems mentioned above, this study has identified the following solutions. Firstly, false advertising and the misuse of soft advertising are serious problems. Platforms should build a clearer and easier-to-spot system to label ads. For example, forcing bloggers to label "advertising" or "collaborative promotion" in commercial collaboration videos. This can verify whether the published content is authentic.

Secondly, platforms should open up some algorithm transparency mechanisms to reduce algorithm bias and privacy leakage risk. This can show users how content is chosen and what data is collected. It also lets users control their interest tags.

Finally, many Generation Z consumers care too much about quick pleasure when they shop. This attitude needs attention and guidance. Society should build a rational consumption culture through content guidance and educational intervention. The platform can create sections like "rational seeding" and "real evaluation". These sections can encourage users to give honest opinions about the good and bad sides of products. This can reduce misleading behaviors such as "persona marketing" and "filter consumption". At the same time, schools, families, and social institutions should also collaborate to promote consumer literacy education. Help Generation Z better understand how platform marketing works and avoid being misled. This can guide them to build more mature and lasting ideas about how to spend money.

6. Conclusion

Overall, this article first explains how short video platforms have developed and what their media features are. It also looks at how Generation Z consumes and uses these platforms. It uses several examples to study how short video platforms affect Generation Z's buying decisions. The study looks at this from four different angles.

This study finds that short video platforms have deeply changed how Generation Z makes buying decisions. They do this through things like emotions, social identity, algorithm suggestions, trust in user content, and new shopping paths. This medium not only reshapes the consumption process. It also redefines the relationship between "marketing communication conversion". Faced with emerging risks and opportunities, enterprises, researchers, and platforms need to collaborate to explore a more reasonable and healthy consumer ecosystem.

Future research can be improved from multiple perspectives. A model for quantifying consumption paths can be established. Build a more accurate path map of "short video influence cognitive formation purchase decision".

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