The Impact of Online Marketing Methods in the Social Media Era on Teenagers' Purchase Behaviors

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Abstract:

During the period of the continuous development of social media, the influence of online marketing on the purchasing behavior of teenagers has received widespread attention. However, there are still deficiencies in terms of the consumption characteristics and environment of teenagers as well as the risks posed by the internet to teenagers. This article analyzes the consumption psychological characteristics of teenagers in the digital age, the promotion and influence of social media on the consumption environment, as well as the impact and problems of online marketing on the purchasing behavior of teenagers. The study found that teenagers have consumption characteristics such as being prone to the internet, following the crowd, being impulsive, and being influenced by brands. Social media has broadened their consumption horizons, but it also has incorrect behaviors that induce and mislead the values of teenagers. Based on this, this article suggests that enterprises implement responsible marketing, platforms strengthen protection mechanisms, and society and families strengthen consumption and financial education for teenagers.

Keywords: Social Media Era; Online Marketing; Teenagers; Purchase Behavior; Key Opinion Leader Marketing

1. Introduction

With the continuous digitalization of the world, social media has deeply integrated into the lives of teenagers, becoming an important channel for their social interaction, entertainment, information acquisition and consumption. In this context where people's daily lives have become highly dependent on the internet, the COVID-19 pandemic has further increased children and teenagers' access to the internet, leading to a significant increase in their internet usage and overall screen time [1].

From spending leisure time watching short videos to be inspired by new stationery or new clothes, to browsing Rednote's "recommendations of affordable and good products for students" before bedtime, social media has established a new marketing ecosystem connecting brands with teenagers. Analyzing the impact of online marketing methods in the social

media era on teenagers' purchasing behavior can not only help enterprises precisely apply appropriate marketing strategies in the young consumer market, but also concern the shaping of teenagers' consumption concepts and the governance of the online consumption environment.

Currently, social media marketing is characterized by diverse content. The "immersive" product promotion in short videos and the "interactive" group-buying activities have been constantly challenging the decision-making logic of young consumers. However, behind this marketing frenzy, it has led to many irrational consumption behaviors and problems such as being misled and deceived by false information among many immature teenagers.

Compared to adults, minors' minds are not yet mature, and they are easily misled by online information, leading to impulsive consumption and even being cheated out of a large amount of money. This study is based on the new scenario of social media marketing, systematically summarizes the characteristics of marketing methods, carefully analyzes the guiding paths of these methods on the purchasing behaviors of teenagers, deeply explores potential problems and causes, and proposes optimization suggestions from the social level to the individual level. Through the application of empirical and case study methods, it provides theoretical references and practical guidance.

2. Overview of Online Marketing in the Social Media Era

2.1 The Process of Social Media Marketing Model

The social media marketing model is a closed-loop process based on understanding users, content creation, precise distribution, and dynamic optimization. Its core lies in establishing a deep connection with users through the characteristics of social media platforms, ultimately guiding the target group (such as teenagers) to make purchasing decisions.

Firstly, it emphasizes the classification of customers based on the data. Marketers utilize the platform to analyze and integrate users' basic data, including demographics (age, gender, location), psychographics (interests, values, lifestyle), and online behaviors (content interaction, browsing habits), thereby being able to determine the core needs of the teenage group. This segmentation focuses on capturing the collective behavioral tendencies rather than user classification through specific individuals.

Secondly, marketers will tailor different content for different platforms and then implement different strategies, rather than using fixed content templates. The key to this step lies in making the content compatible with each platform. The focus is on matching the content style with the habits of the platform users.

Thirdly, marketers are no longer limited to adjusting strategies. Marketers will monitor the participation rate (likes, comments, shares) and conversion efficiency of users as overall indicators, and adjust the strategies based on the feedback from the summarized data. For example, increasing investment in platforms with good data or adjusting the content.

This process always centers on user needs, leveraging the "interactivity", "real-time nature", and "community nature" of social media to achieve a full route guidance from brand recognition to purchase.

2.2 Classification of Online Marketing Methods

2.2.1 Content marketing

Content marketing is a marketing approach that focuses on creating and disseminating valuable content as a strategy. Its core objective is to attract and retain a clearly defined target audience, such as teenagers, and ultimately stimulate customers' purchasing behavior. Therefore, their marketing messages ought to be relevant to their target audiences. Thus, the content should be carefully adapted to the targeted audience [2].

Attract teenagers with high-quality content, including educational and entertainment content. Educational content such as collaborating with brands that are familiar and beloved by teenagers and launching joint educational products. For example, the stationery brand Pellet collaborated with the Japanese anime IP "Detective Conan" to launch a joint pen. At the same time, in packaging and promotion, emphasize its auxiliary role in learning to attract teenagers to purchase. Entertainment content like McDonald's is collaborating with the game "Minecraft" to launch themed meals and joint toys. At the same time, McDonald's stores underwent themed decoration, attracting many children and young consumers who like to play this game, further expanding the influence of the event. This entertainment-oriented marketing campaign increased the product's appeal, closely integrating entertainment content with brand marketing.

2.2.2 Influencer marketing

The growing use of social media allows users to access massive information, and tech advances let influencers interact powerfully with followers, influencing young people. Findings show influencers' features are interconnected and impact teenagers' behavior, offering insights for psychologists and academics [3].

This marketing approach involves leveraging individuals who have a certain fan base on social media, possess certain influence and credibility, and, through their content

creation and recommendation behaviors, convey brand or product information to teenagers, thereby influencing consumers' purchasing decisions. In marketing targeting teenagers, influencer marketing is particularly effective because it aligns with teenagers' psychological needs for "peer recognition" and "following trends". By relying on influential bloggers with varying levels of influence, this approach is implemented. Headline influencers can quickly enhance brand awareness. Mid-level influencers focus on specific vertical fields, and their content will be more targeted. Micro-influencers interact with their fans more frequently and have extremely high trust levels.

2.2.3 Social e-commerce marketing

Social e-commerce marketing is a marketing model that utilizes the social relationships, content dissemination, and interaction functions of social platforms to convert traffic into consumption behavior. This marketing model enables the process from customers browsing content, to stimulating their interest, and finally to making an immediate purchase. It reduces the erosion of teenagers' impulse consumption by the jumping process, and is highly in line with the characteristics of teenagers' impulsive consumption.

2.3 Technology Innovation in Online Marketing

The technological innovations in online marketing have greatly enhanced the efficiency of interaction with teenagers.

The first is artificial intelligence. AI can precisely analyze the browsing and interaction data of teenagers. For example, it can send relevant brand advertisements to teenagers who like campus fashion.

Secondly, VR and AR, which have strong prospects in the industry, are also included. VR can create virtual scenes, allowing teenagers to immerse themselves in the product usage scenarios. The AR try-on and try-use function enables teenagers to visually see the effect of wearing the clothes, easily solving the problem of mismatched products when shopping online.

The third, Cloud computing also plays a very important role. Cloud computing enables marketers to access data stored in databases and manage service configurations, helping organizations allocate resources most optimally. The rapid development of cloud computing technology, along with its low cost and efficient features, has brought opportunities for enterprises to conduct e-commerce activities. Moreover, cloud computing can be combined with other technologies. For example, social networks can be used for retargeting campaigns, as well as for handling big data and data analysis to enhance customer experience and customer loyalty programs [4].

3. Characteristics of Teenagers' Purchase Behavior and Consumption Environment

3.1 The Psychological Characteristics of Adolescent Consumers

Teenagers are prone to getting addicted to the internet due to its novelty. Many teenagers are initially attracted by the numerous unknown and novel things on the internet. Those lacking willpower and self-control will gradually become immersed in the internet once they develop a fondness for it. Once teenagers become addicted to the internet, they find it extremely difficult to break free. They will constantly stare at their mobile phones or computers, unwilling to miss any information in the online world [5]. Secondly, under the circumstances of extremely high learning pressure and intense tension, underage consumers view shopping as a form of leisure and entertainment. This is also because it is convenient and can save time. The "virtuality" of online consumption can meet this demand [6].

Teenagers' consumption behavior exhibits both herd mentality and impulsive traits. Teenagers are in the period of building their self-identity, and their consumption psychology is characterized by conformity, influenced by their peers or online bloggers. In some private schools, some teenagers, upon seeing their classmates buying designer bags, will develop a competitive mentality and also want to follow the trend and purchase them, showing a pursuit of ideal consumption. The lifestyles presented on social platforms are often beautiful, and some teenagers, not knowing how to distinguish good from bad, will get addicted to them, blindly pursuing false things. During the stage when teenagers are building their self-identity, their consumption is influenced by herd mentality and is easily affected by their peers and bloggers. In response to the stimulation from social platforms, they tend to blindly pursue and engage in impulsive consumption.

The behavior of teenagers is relatively independent and is deeply influenced by factors such as brands. At this age, they attach great importance to their own image and recognition from society, which is reflected in their beginning to pay attention to their appearance and material aspects. They always categorize themselves into a specific group and believe that they are very unique. Therefore, teenagers are deeply influenced by brands, luxury goods, and entertainment.

Teenagers attach great importance to their own image and social recognition. They tend to categorize themselves into specific groups and consider themselves unique. Therefore, they are easily influenced by brands, luxury

goods, and entertainment content when making purchases. During adolescence, children's psychological characteristics vary. They are prone to getting addicted to the internet and making impulsive purchases. At the same time, due to their emphasis on their own image and social recognition, they begin to become independent and develop their own thoughts. These traits together form the complex picture of adolescent consumption psychology [7].

3.2 The Promotion and Influence of Social Media on the Consumption Environment

Social media has broadened the consumption horizons of teenagers, enabling them to access products from all over the world. Teenagers in cities start interacting with the internet from a young age and receive information from various sources, learning about brands from all over the world. Teenagers from remote rural areas can also understand Japanese and Korean stationery, as well as European and American trendy brands through these platforms, breaking through geographical limitations.

The instant dissemination nature of social media can accelerate the pace of consumption trends. A product may sell out in a short period due to a popular short video, and its sales may also decline rapidly due to the emergence of more cost-effective alternatives. For example, a few weeks ago, the doll of the British brand Jell Cat became extremely popular online, and many students rushed to purchase it. Within a week or so, many merchants also started selling similar dolls, giving students more affordable options. Up to now, people's love for Jell Cat has not been as strong as before.

Social media has transformed consumption from an isolated individual behavior into a collective social activity, deeply linking consumption with social identity. This consumption environment makes the purchasing behavior not only about obtaining goods, but also about integrating into the group and gaining attention.

3.3 The Consumption Patterns of Teenagers in the Digital Age

In the digital age, before making a purchase, teenagers will watch review videos and read user comments in advance, giving priority to cost-effectiveness. They are accustomed to buying while watching, and they can't resist purchasing when they see their favorite stationery in short videos or find limited-time discounts in live-streaming rooms. The convenience of mobile payment (such as Alipay and WeChat Pay) further lowers the consumption threshold.

Compared to the products themselves, teenagers value the novelty and participation in the consumption process more. Young people's desire for exploration and curiosity

makes them obsessed with unknown experiences. Just like many teenagers like to collect trendy toy boxes, they even repeatedly purchase them to get the hidden editions.

4. The Influence and Potential Problems of Online Marketing in the Social Media Era on the Purchasing Behavior of Teenagers

4.1 The Influence of Marketing Content on the Cognition of Teenagers

The carefully designed marketing content influences teenagers' perception of products and brands. This influence encompasses both guiding value judgments and potentially causing cognitive biases.

The marketing content creates specific scenarios, endowing certain products with additional meanings beyond their practical functions. This changes teenagers' understanding of the product's value. This scenario-based marketing makes teenagers associate the product with their own lives, forming a mistaken belief that owning the product means having the ideal experience. The selective amplification of product details in the marketing content and the downplaying of product flaws lead teenagers to prioritize non-core functions such as appearance, while ignoring practical factors like durability and cost-effectiveness. As a result, teenagers may experience a significant sense of disappointment when they receive the product. Overall, the influence of marketing content on teenagers' cognition has a "double-edged sword" characteristic: it can help them quickly understand the product's value and perception, but it may also cause cognitive deviations due to one-sided information. Teenagers' minds are not yet mature, and their ability to distinguish marketing content is weak. This process of cognitive shaping requires more regulation and guidance.

4.2 Peer Influence and Social Interaction in Marketing

In social media marketing, the influence of peers and social interactions forms a powerful driving force for consumption, which can easily trigger impulsive purchasing behavior among teenagers. Impulsive purchasing is a common phenomenon in the shopping process of people. It refers to the situation where, after being stimulated by external factors, consumers will experience emotional fluctuations or trigger their latent purchasing needs, thereby prompting them to make an immediate purchase [8].

In social situations, teenagers tend to have a stronger sense of belonging to a group than adults. When teenagers

see their peers showcasing a certain product (such as a new Nike shoe) on social platforms or sharing some of the product during a gathering, this can cause them to feel a strong sense of "not wanting to be left behind". This anxiety makes them unable to make a rational judgment on whether the product is truly what they need. Even if they originally had no purchase plans, they might impulsively make a purchase just to fit in with the group. For example, several high school girls shared Chanel perfume on their social media, which led many of their classmates who saw the posts to follow suit and make purchases. Many people even impulsively placed orders without knowing the product's ingredients, simply because their classmates had done so. This behavior is influenced by external stimuli and lacks careful consideration.

This impulsive purchase triggered by social interaction is essentially aimed at obtaining the psychological satisfaction and comfort that is on par with that of peers. However, this impulsive purchase, triggered by the influence of peers and social interaction is essentially an impulsive decision made by teenagers under the dual pressure of group pressure and irrational emotions. Teenagers blindly purchase unnecessary items in order to integrate into the group and follow the trend, getting trapped in an irrational consumption cycle.

4.3 Potential Risk

With the continuous development and progress of online marketing, false marketing has been increasingly rampant. Some merchants exaggerate the efficacy of their products, such as skincare products claiming to whiten the skin in just three days, but the actual effect is very poor. These false marketing tactics can easily mislead teenagers and harm their interests. They may also distort their consumption and value concepts.

The excessive emphasis on trendy content in online marketing may distort the consumption values of teenagers. For instance, a large number of advertisements link owning brand-name shoes with success and popularity, which can lead teenagers to wrongly believe that consumption ability reflects personal value, thereby generating a sense of competition. Some teenagers are willing to skip meals or even resort to improper means, such as stealing their parents' money to purchase "internet sensation equivalents", which seriously affects their physical and mental health. These consumption behaviors have far deviated from the essence of consumption. Teenagers should engage in rational and reasonable consumption within the limits of their personal and family affordability, rather than becoming tools to satisfy their vanity. Moreover, some marketing content conveys vulgar and money-oriented values, which may also erode the spiritual world of teenagers.

5. Suggestions for Optimizing Online Marketing to Guide Teenagers' Purchase Behaviors

5.1 Responsible Marketing Practices of Enterprises

Enterprises should adhere to the principles of authenticity and transparency, fully presenting their products, highlighting both their advantages and shortcomings. For instance, an athletic brand should indicate the durability and applicable scenarios of its sports shoes, enabling teenagers to make rational choices. Additionally, enterprises should convey sustainable and healthy concepts. Clothing companies can promote the idea of "one piece of clothing with multiple wearings", advocating the virtue of thrift, which aligns with the positive and correct value pursuits of teenagers. The marketing content should also be designed to resonate with teenagers' perceptions, avoiding taking advantage of their impulsive nature and using sincere marketing to win the trust of customers.

Meanwhile, some technology companies can develop new products to protect minors. For instance, they can use facial recognition and age estimation to prevent minors from purchasing specific goods online [9].

5.2 Build Protection Mechanisms on the Network Platform Side

If it combines mainstream media with online platforms, it can create a highly attractive channel for people. For instance, the People's Daily account on TikTok has already gained millions of followers. At the same time, these mainstream media outlets need to establish a serious media image, with their reported content being authoritative, high-quality, and profound. They should correctly guide the values of minors and create a clean and clear information dissemination environment [10].

Online platforms such as Taobao and Jingdong should strengthen their content defense lines. They can combine AI and manual review to prevent false and misleading marketing. The platforms should also set up age-based protection measures, prohibiting the display of products related to credit and high consumption to minors. They should also innovate and introduce some new mechanisms. For example, a consumption reminder pop-up window. When teenagers make online purchases and complete the settlement, the platform will display a pop-up window asking "Are you sure you really need it?" or "Check your budget", helping minors who are prone to impulsive consumption to make calm decisions, thereby reducing the impact of bad marketing on teenagers.

5.3 Educating Teenagers to Cultivate the Ability of Rational Consumption

The school collaborates with the family to educate teenagers about consumption literacy. Firstly, a harmonious and warm family environment should be established. Parents should effectively guide teenagers on the correct use of the internet, spend more time with their children online, actively guide them to use the internet in a controlled and selective manner, and develop good internet habits. Some family rules can also be formulated, such as calculating the "expenditure on impulsive consumption" every month, so that teenagers understand the rational planning of money. Parents should also actively communicate and talk with their children about online shopping experiences, share cases of rational consumption, and guide them to reflect on "whether the purchase is a need or a want", gradually cultivating a rational consumption mindset.

Secondly, a harmonious school environment should be constructed, and the construction of campus networks and online moral education should be strengthened to enhance teenagers' self-control. Schools should also pay attention to teenagers' online psychological problems and prevent the occurrence of "online psychological disorders". Teachers should also provide more guidance to students, teach them some basic cognitive concepts, such as that buying brand-name products does not mean being superior.

6. Conclusion

In this era of advanced information and networks, social media has significantly changed the consumption patterns of teenagers. The internet has a strong appeal to teenagers, who are influenced by herd mentality marketing and make impulsive purchases, and are influenced by brands to pursue independence. They interact with marketing activities facilitated by social media.

Social media has also broadened its horizons. Online marketing influences teenagers' cognition and purchasing behavior through content and peer influence. However, this also brings risks such as information distortion, impulsive consumption, and value distortion. They realize their incorrect and irrational behavior and make corresponding changes. The internet also teaches teenagers an important lesson in their life journey, enabling them to progress and learn to think independently and make rational judgments.

To protect teenagers, marketers should adopt responsible marketing methods. Platforms need to strengthen protection mechanisms, and society must enhance consumption and financial education for teenagers. Only in this way can utilize the positive power of social media and online marketing while minimizing potential hazards and guiding teenagers towards rational consumption and the formation of healthy values in the digital consumption era.

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