

# A Study on the Impact of Short Video Platforms on Teenagers' Spending Habits

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## **Abstract:**

With the rapid popularity of short video platforms, teenagers' consumption habits have been increasingly shaped by them. This paper takes short video platforms and teenagers' consumption behaviors as its main focus. Drawing on existing literature and publicly available data, it systematically examines how short videos influence teenagers through algorithmic recommendation, content dissemination, and social interaction. The findings suggest that current teenage spending is characterized by "small but frequent purchases, concentrated product categories, convenient payment, and impulsive behavior." Further analysis shows that factors such as algorithm-driven consumption concepts, peer conformity, and commercial modeling have made short video platforms a major force influencing teenage consumption. Beyond overspending, other risks include false advertising, hidden promotions, and privacy issues. Based on these findings, this paper proposes improving platform governance, strengthening legal regulations, and enhancing family and school education to promote rational consumption among teenagers. The rise of short video platforms has also led to new consumption patterns, bringing both opportunities and challenges to teenagers' healthy development. Theoretically and practically, this study deepens our understanding of the relationship between media and consumption, and offers references for governments, platforms, and educational institutions.

**Keywords:** Short video platforms, Teenagers, Consumption habits, Impulsive buying, Social interaction

## **1. Introduction**

With the fast development of mobile internet, short video platforms have quickly become one of the most frequently used media by young people. Compared

with traditional television and long-form videos, short videos are favored by teenagers for their fragmented, interactive, and highly immersive nature. According to industry reports, the number of short video users in China has surpassed one billion, with

teenagers showing the highest engagement rates and daily viewing time. Short videos are not only a major source of information and entertainment but also a driving force in shaping how young people spend money.

The rise of live streaming, influencer marketing, and social recommendations has changed the way teenagers shop—their motivations, frequency, and preferences are now quite different from before. However, these changes have also brought problems such as impulsive decisions, declining brand loyalty, overspending, and even potential financial risks. Studying how short video platforms affect teenagers' spending habits is therefore essential—not only for understanding modern consumer culture but also for improving youth protection and creating a healthy media environment (Li, 2024).

This study aims to explore how short video platforms influence the formation of teenagers' consumption habits and analyze the patterns and trends of their behavior. In a commercialized, algorithm-driven environment, teenagers are no longer passive viewers—they are active participants within the platform's flow of traffic. This paper focuses on how algorithms, content distribution, and social features of short video platforms shape young users' psychology and purchasing behaviors. It specifically examines how algorithmic recommendations interact with teenagers' conformity tendencies, desire for instant gratification, and identity-building needs, forming new patterns of consumption. The study also discusses emerging marketing models—such as livestream shopping and emotional marketing—and the risks they bring, including false advertising, overspending, and privacy breaches. Theoretically, this research bridges media studies and consumer sociology by building an integrated framework of “platform–psychology–social–market–governance.” Practically, it provides useful insights for government policy, platform optimization, and media literacy education at home and school, with the goal of fostering more rational and sustainable consumption habits among teenagers.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Background

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, 1974) suggests that individuals use media for various motivations, such as entertainment, information, and social interaction. These motivations jointly shape both media use and consumption behavior. Social Identity Theory (Guo, 2025) further argues that people build self-identity by imitating opinion leaders and peers—a process often reflected in their consumer choices. Teenagers, in particular, tend to mimic influencers or friends they watch on short video platforms,

creating a sense of belonging and often displaying conformity and impulsive buying behavior (Li, 2025; Liang, 2025).

Consumer sociology also emphasizes how media environments shape consumption culture. Baudrillard (1988) argued that in the age of symbolic consumption, buying is no longer just about material needs—it's an expression of identity. Short video platforms embody this idea: through algorithms, they amplify popular culture and consumerist values, making teenage consumption more emotional and symbolic.

### 2.2 The Influence of Short Video Platforms on Teenagers' Spending Habits

As algorithmic technology and media commercialization evolve, short video platforms have become crucial spaces that shape teenagers' consumption behavior. Studies generally point out that algorithm recommendations, social interactions, psychological stimulation, and new marketing tactics collectively influence young people's spending patterns.

Through personalized content distribution—so-called “one feed per person”—algorithms precisely capture users' interests and traits. This not only increases user engagement but subtly shapes their purchasing decisions (Li, 2024). Continuous exposure to targeted content creates an “information bubble,” where teenagers' preferences and buying intentions are unconsciously steered (Guo, 2025).

Meanwhile, social interaction features reinforce consumption motives. Likes, comments, shares, and challenges build virtual communities that foster belonging. Under peer comparison and imitation, teenagers often mimic influencers or peers' shopping behaviors to gain recognition or status (Wang, 2024). In this socially mediated environment, consumption becomes a form of social expression—a way to signal identity and fit in.

Moreover, the rapid tempo and reward systems of short videos fulfill teenagers' desire for instant pleasure but easily trigger impulsive buying. Psychological studies show that the dopamine stimulation from watching short videos can create a cycle of “watch–buy–satisfaction,” fostering addictive consumption patterns (Huang & Zhang, 2023). This instant gratification weakens rational decision-making and leads to fragmented, emotion-driven purchases. On top of that, livestream shopping, flash sales, and emotionally charged promotions further intensify these tendencies. With low entry barriers, strong visual stimulation, and instant feedback, short video platforms have built a closed-loop consumption ecosystem where users easily shift from content consumers to compulsive buyers and even promoters. This dynamic, algorithm-driven structure

has created a new kind of digital consumer culture among teenagers.

### 2.3 Review Summary

Both domestic and international scholars agree that short video platforms play a major role in shaping teenagers' spending behavior. International studies often focus on algorithmic ethics and psychological mechanisms, examining how algorithms affect self-identity and impulsivity (Guo, 2025). Chinese researchers, on the other hand, emphasize socio-cultural and educational dimensions, investigating how short videos reshape teenagers' values, lifestyles, and consumption psychology (Li N., 2023; Zhu & Wang, 2025).

However, gaps remain. Many studies focus on single variables—like algorithms or psychological effects—without integrating how multiple mechanisms interact. Cross-cultural and data-driven research is also limited, making it difficult to understand differences across social contexts. Moreover, few studies explore the symbolic and identity-based meanings of youth consumption.

To address these gaps, this paper builds an interdisciplinary framework of “platform–psychology–social–market–governance,” aiming to explain how technical and social mechanisms together shape teenagers' consumption patterns. This approach reveals not only how short video platforms influence consumer behavior but also provides theoretical and policy guidance for governance and education.

## 3. Analysis

### 3.1 Behavioral Features

In recent years, short video platforms have had a growing influence on how teenagers develop spending habits. Their consumption behaviors share several features:

- (1) Small, frequent spending: Teenagers tend to make small but frequent purchases while watching short videos. The immediacy of livestream shopping encourages “watch-and-buy” behavior.
- (2) Category concentration: Their purchases are concentrated in affordable categories such as fast-moving consumer goods, cosmetics, phone accessories, and trendy clothing. Algorithms make these products highly visible, leading to quick decisions.
- (3) Seamless payments: Mobile payment integration lowers transaction barriers and makes impulsive purchases effortless.
- (4) Conformity and emotional triggers: Seeing viral challenges, influencers' product showcases, or peer posts easily

triggers “follow-the-crowd” spending behavior (Wang, 2024).

While such patterns may reflect the vitality of youth markets, they also raise concerns. Dependence on algorithmic recommendations weakens teenagers' autonomy. Impulsive and irrational consumption has grown, with some teens even overspending or taking on debt. Hidden ads and misleading promotions further increase consumer risks.

### 3.2 Mechanisms of Influence

The impact of short video platforms on teenagers' consumption stems from multiple interacting factors:

- (1) Algorithmic recommendation: Platforms use big data to profile users and push tailored content. This creates information cocoons where product and entertainment content blend seamlessly, lowering rational decision thresholds and subtly guiding consumption.
- (2) Psychological traits: Teenagers, still forming their values and self-control, are easily affected by stimuli. Their sensitivity to novelty and “coolness” makes them especially vulnerable to the visual and fast-paced content of short videos (Huang & Zhang, 2023).
- (3) Socio-cultural context: Teenagers associate consumption with peer recognition and belonging. Through social interaction functions, influencers and peers reinforce a “herd effect.” Consumerism and pop culture promoted by platforms subtly shape teenagers' worldviews, linking spending to self-expression and social identity.
- (4) Commercial models: Platforms and merchants integrate livestreaming, product showcases, and in-app payment systems to create a closed consumption loop. Low-price promotions, limited-time deals, and emotional marketing stimulate buying impulses (Zhu & Wang, 2025).

### 3.3 Effects and Implications

The influence of short video platforms on teenagers' consumption is deep and multifaceted:

- (1) Changing consumption values: Instant gratification and social conformity have turned shopping into a way for teenagers to seek pleasure and express identity, rather than simply fulfill needs.
- (2) New marketing patterns: Short video platforms have driven innovation in marketing, allowing brands to precisely target teen consumers through influencer promotions and social recommendations.
- (3) Cultural impacts: Beyond economics, these platforms reshape social meanings of consumption. By embedding consumerism and pop culture into daily life, they influence how teenagers perceive identity, belonging, and suc-

cess (Miao, 2024).

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 4.1 Conclusions

Through literature review and analysis, this study finds that short video platforms play multiple roles in shaping teenagers' spending habits. Algorithmic recommendations capture their interests precisely; social interactions amplify peer influence; and commercial features accelerate impulsive consumption. Teen spending now shows clear traits of "small, frequent, instant, imitative, and symbolic" behavior. Yet, this media-driven consumption model also brings risks such as consumerism, privacy leakage, and deceptive marketing.

Overall, short video platforms have not only changed how teenagers shop but also redefined how they perceive value and social identity. The underlying mechanism reveals the deep integration between media and consumption culture—algorithmic logic has become a new social force shaping behavior.

### 4.2 Recommendations

(1) At the platform level: Increase algorithm transparency, improve youth protection systems, set spending limits, clearly label ads, and enhance "teen modes" to reduce impulsive buying.

(2) At the regulatory level: Governments should update relevant laws to regulate marketing and advertising on short video platforms, strengthen law enforcement, and promote co-governance involving government, companies, and the public.

(3) At the educational level: Schools and families should collaborate on media literacy and financial education to enhance teenagers' self-control and spending awareness. Public media and NGOs can also create accessible guides and campaigns promoting healthy and rational consumption habits.

### 4.3 Future Directions

This study sheds light on how short video platforms shape teenagers' consumption habits and offers theoretical insights and practical recommendations. However, limitations remain: the data used are mainly secondary sources

without fieldwork; demographic differences (gender, region, class) were not deeply examined; and international comparisons are limited. Future research could analyze cross-national differences and evaluate the effectiveness of governance measures. Using interdisciplinary and mixed methods could further clarify how short video platforms and youth consumption interact, supporting better policy-making and social interventions.

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