The Influence of User Sharing Behavior on Consumer Purchasing Behavior in social media

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Abstract. With the rapid development of information in the web 2.0 era, more and more "community+ e-commerce" shopping models are being built. The sharing function of social media platforms is gradually maturing, which affects consumers' willingness to buy in the process. In order to demonstrate the impact of user sharing on consumer purchase decisions, this paper explains the entire process from user sharing to influencing consumer decisions on social media platforms. It analyzes the motivation and value of the effect from the perspective of the sharer and the content that influences the decision from the perspective of the consumer. Consumers' perceptions of risk, their comprehension of the genuine nature of the product, and their readiness to purchase are all positively influenced by user sharing. Finally, the author reverses the thinking and gives practical suggestions on how to attract more consumers through social media users' sharing behavior in the marketing process. The author recommends that companies are supposed to form partnerships with key opinion leaders, create incentives for users to share, focus on opinion management, build brand reputation and increase sensitivity to popular culture.

Keywords: social media; marketing; user sharing; consumer purchasing behavior.

1. Introduction

With the establishment of the web 2.0 era, social media platforms are becoming more and more diversified. The user-driven Internet model has changed today's media market, and the traditional marketing methods of the past are difficult to adapt to the current media ecology. Therefore, new and mature marketing strategies based on social platforms should be constructed. Since the users are the main actors, more attention should be paid to the two-way interaction between the users and the media. "Sharing" is a very common user behavior on social media platforms. It is important to emphasize that "sharing" is a multi-meaning word, and the sharing in this study refers to the new content that users actively post on social media platforms. From the perspective of product marketing and promotion, it is assumed that users' "sharing" behavior has an impact on consumers' purchasing behavior. The study of this topic will help to further improve the practicability of the new marketing model.

The concept of social media platforms also needs to be defined in detail. Andrew T. Stephen and his companions in 2020 propose that, in a practical sense, the definition of social media is understood as a collection of software-based digital technologies. Apps and websites are manifestations of social media that enable users to receive information or digital content via the Web [1]. Based on these previous studies and definitions, it can be founded that the key elements of social media: hosting, presentation, and transmission. It empowers each person to create and distribute content. There are various types of social media such as content posting (e.g., YouTube), content sharing (e.g., Instagram), messaging (e.g., Whatsapp), and discussion (e.g., ZhiHu). Andreas M. Kaplan and Michael Haenlein have systematically categorized social media through the field of media studies and social processes, as the forms and uses of social media vary greatly depending on the purpose of use [2]. Among them, social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Xiaohongshu, Instagram) are characterized by high self-presentation.

2. AISAS Model

Based on the conventional AIDMA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Memory, Action), Dentsu Group established the AISAS model, which is in accordance with the web 2.0 era and contains the features of the web. The new model illustrates the whole process of consumer's purchase decision making behavior based on the decentralization of information as search and sharing social media become mainstream media. It shows a two-way interaction between brands and users, where consumers can actively request information from brands and product information is actively exchanged, reconstructing AIDMA's single-arrow model that emphasizes media-centered information transmission to users. The AISAS model consists of attention, interest, search, action, and share, which emphasizes the user's initiative in searching for information and is more applicable to the current consumer situation after the change of the Internet.

As an example, a company will place its relevant ads by displaying them in the public domain of Xiaohongshu, a social media platform. When the ads appear in the consumer's browsing interface, the starting point of the consumer's purchase decision is created. When the consumer sees the information, the headline or graphic is expressive enough to attract his attention and the consumer will click on the detail page. The consumer will then discover what he needs from the information displayed by the company, which will further stimulate his interest in the product. This is the first level of receiving information. Then the consumer will establish a further detailed understanding of the product from the internet search methods he is familiar with, such as searching for relevant tags in Xiaohongshu, observing the experience shared by other users and the real display of the product. From there, the consumer will make a comprehensive evaluation or side-by-side comparison of the collected reviews and information to decide whether to buy or ignore the product. Consumers often share their experiences on the Internet after purchase. This new sharing will be pushed to other target customers' homepages, which creates a closed loop with the whole process of other consumers' purchasing decision behavior.

Jonah Berger and Kathrine L. Milkman found in their 2012 marketing study that whether or not communication content is positive is not as complex as the role of emotion in the communication process [3]. They found that content that evokes high-arousal emotions is more viral anyway. From this, the author can conclude that when a text has strong emotional content that highlights the author's personal subjective thoughts, it creates a great boost for social communication. Social communication then plays a decisive role in whether or not the consumer community will pay attention to the item. The emotion contained in these shared texts will be a key factor in the consumer's overall evaluation of the product and final behavior, which is the SEARCH and ACTION aspect of the AISAS model.

3. Motivations of Social Media Users' Sharing Behavior

In order to study the impact of user sharing on consumer buying behavior in social media, the first thing to focus on is the underlying source of high self-presentation characteristics. That is, it is important to focus on the motivations of users who are willing to share on the platform. This motivation is also broadly depicted.

Users' general social media sharing motivations are divided into four dimensions: social presence, social conversation, ease of connection, and self-management [4]. Austrian psychologist Dichter (1966), in an article published in Harvard Business Review, also noted that four factors – product-involvement, self-involvement, information-involvement and other-involvement - cause people to talk to others about the goods they buy. This set of concepts establishes the basis for describing users' sharing behavior later on. In social media sharing circles, ease of connection and self-management are commonly found in the fixed circle of friends, which are peer-to-peer sharing. In contrast, the scope of the research object of this paper is weak relationship social class platform. It belongs to point-to-point sharing and focuses more on content dissemination. It also has the characteristics of viral spreading, which spreads more widely. Therefore, social presence and social conversation become the main sharing motives of social media studied in this paper, guided by the four

psychological factors of product-involvement, self-involvement, information-involvement and other-involvement.

4. The Impact of the Three Channels of Social Media Sharing Sources on Consumers' Purchase Intention

After the initial conclusion of the model that social media sharing behavior will have an impact on consumers, the research will start from the three channels of social media sharing to further construct the results of its impact on consumers' purchase intention.

4.1. Word-of-mouth among Acquaintances

Acquaintance word-of-mouth is publicity based on strong relationships, which is based on trust and recognition of each other's tastes over time. A strong relationship implies a high level of emotional connection and familiarity [5]. When an acquaintance shares his or her feelings about a product, the attitude of the acquaintance largely determines the consumer's final decision, as if a quality screening is done for the consumer, and trust in the acquaintance makes the consumer accept the results of the screening. At the same time, word-of-mouth also helps to promote interpersonal communication and maintain emotional relationships, thus ensuring the next reciprocal sharing.

4.2. Key Opinion Leader (KOL)

Key opinion leaders are intermediaries between mass communication and the final audience who serve as filters and disseminate information. They filter and reorganize the large amount of information they collect and selectively disseminate it to their audience. Key leaders' advice is recognized by the audience because they have a certain degree of professionalism, are more active in social activities, create new content and express a certain level of subjective opinions. Individuals compare themselves to ideal people and move up to accept and learn from their attitudes, behaviors, etc [5]. Therefore, consumers are attracted by the persona of key opinion leaders and imitate their lifestyles, consumption habits and aesthetic preferences for the sake of their ideal lives.

4.3. Online Communities

With the continuous development of social media, users gradually become clearer about their own positioning and target needs, and have clear consumer preferences. The sense of belonging to a group is a powerful source of communication for online communities, where users can gain identity and share certain consumer preferences or trust in a fixed community. For example, the word-of-mouth database established by Xiaohongshu, where community members have the ability to disseminate and receive at the same time under this UGC creation mode, can stimulate members' desire to express and create, thus establishing a net-like intertwined community relationship and triggering the community economy.

5. Consumer Purchase Intention Influenced by Sharing Behavior

5.1. Positive Impact on Perceived Risk

Consumers often use social media to search for relevant information before making a purchase decision [5]. The virtual nature of the Internet determines the uncertainty of consumers' purchasing behavior, and the riskiness of purchasing has an impact on consumers' final decisions. There is a partial mediating effect of the two dimensions of consumer perception (effect value and hedonic value), which means that the content (images, short videos, online comments) and the form of sharing (tagging, retweeting) shared by the user have an indirect effect on the purchase, but also directly affect the user's willingness to purchase [6]. Thus, user sharing behavior gives consumers a platform to be

able to evaluate products more intuitively and clearly, thus positively influencing perceived risk and reducing the low trust associated with purchase risk.

5.2. Quality and Authenticity of Shared Content

When consumers receive information shared by other users, their assessment of the quality and authenticity of the shared content is also an important factor influencing their purchase intention. The quality of shared content can be interpreted as whether the content is comprehensive, whether it has real graphics, whether it is comparable horizontally, and whether it has an intuitive visual experience. The authenticity of the shared content can be understood as: whether the identity of the sharer is credible, whether the purpose of the sharer is commercial advertising, the degree of recognition of the sharing by others, the flow of the shared content, etc. When consumers have access to as much detailed information as possible, they will make an 'Action' based on the actual situation and generate an intuitive feeling about the sharer.

5.3. Pop Culture Drives the Effectiveness of Sharing

Online pop culture is an emerging culture developed on the basis of the Internet and social media as a platform, with strong timeliness and hotness, allowing each independent circle to establish a short-lived connection through this culture. Research shows that entertainment and social value increase the likelihood that users will share commercial videos [7]. When the expression of the shared content contains such popular culture that can trigger discussion and attention, the sharing effect will be twice as effective. The three features of fun, simplicity, and emotionality help drive shared content to engage consumers during the 'Attention' and 'Interest' process and allow consumers to create emotional resonance and gain entertainment value.

6. Suggestions

6.1. Form a Partnership with Key Opinion Leaders

In the process of competing for the same level of products, public opinion warfare is also a very important concern for businesses. When consumers compare different brands at the same level and price point, word of mouth will become a decisive factor. Businesses should be aware of their role in facilitating or hindering the effectiveness of communication and should pay attention to the presence of key opinion leaders if they want to achieve good communication results. Paul F. Lazarsfeld, a famous American sociologist and experimental psychologist, proposed that key opinion leaders have a wide social range, high frequency of contact and large contact with mass communication. Forming a partnership with key opinion leaders is undoubtedly important in the process of increasing the audience, gaining exposure and at the same time attracting the part of the consumer group that has a high bond to that opinion leader.

The successful marketing of the brand Perfect Diary from 2018 to 2019 is the best example of the influence of KOL on consumer buying behavior. Perfect Diary's KOL placement strategy is focused. Perfect Diary concentrates its product launch, promotion and KOL placement at the same time to create explosive products, and thus quickly sprint sales. Instead of pursuing big-name celebrity endorsements, Perfect Diary is widely invested in waist-level celebrities (50,000 - 500,000 followers), junior celebrities (5,000 - 50,000 followers), and amateur and ordinary consumers. This approach is based on the "follow the crowd" mentality of consumers. Creating a situation in front of consumers where everyone is using the brand, it leads them to follow the trend and show their own notes. When the average user is driven to buy, the number of spontaneous posts on the platform will increase dramatically. This is how Perfect Diary achieves its marketing objectives [8].

6.2. User Sharing Incentives

User sharing incentives are mostly material and spiritual incentives, i.e. rewarding users for their contributions through material means, or increasing user exposure and interaction through high traffic push. Studies show that consumers' willingness to join sharing communities' increases when companies offer them benefits such as coupons [9]. For example, when a video is posted on bilibili, the video site will offer material incentives of varying amounts after reaching a certain number of views, and publishers will be motivated to create new videos and the platform will produce more videos to attract users. In Xiaohongshu, a social sharing platform, the platform provides large traffic exposure and recommends more users' homepages, so the sharers will get more interactions and satisfy their spiritual needs, and thus will be motivated to create new sharing content. When businesses grasp this point, they can establish cooperation with the platform and give material or spiritual incentives to the shares of high-quality sharing content, thus promoting users' sharing behavior.

6.3. Sensitivity to Pop Culture

Official marketing content shared by merchants needs to keep up with popular trends, and the backward and generic copy is hard to catch consumers' eyes at once. As mass communication continues to create new buzzwords and popular topics, merchants' advertising and marketing campaigns should also plan new symbols and new meanings in a timely manner, using new concepts in pop culture as an important means to open up the market for their products, giving their brands vitality and vitality and actively catering to market trends.

Brands should pay attention to the rise of niche culture. In this era of rapid information flow, niche culture can become a phenomenal mass topic at any time. For example, niche topics will be noticed by marketing companies and subsequently sent to Weibo hot search. As the number of popular clicks increases, the discussion of the topic rises. Therefore, brands should lay out early by digging deeper and innovating the relationship between products and trends to guide the rhythm and wind direction of the network.

7. Conclusion

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that users' sharing behaviors have a direct impact on consumers' decision-making behaviors. The three channels of social media sharing have a mediating effect on consumers' purchase behavior, and consumers' purchase intention is also positively influenced by the sharing behavior. This finding has a positive contribution to merchants' marketing strategies on social media platforms. The significance of this study is to suggest how merchants can make good use of social media platforms, establish a sound sharing mechanism, and use it to promote their products. For example, enterprises should attach importance to the cooperative relationship with Kols, specify specific marketing plans, and expand their marketing scope through their network influence.

This paper contributes to the field of marketing by presenting a summary review based on the more recent previous research theories. The AISAS model is used to establish a more complete relationship of the influence of user sharing behavior on consumer's decision-making behavior. By analyzing the interplay of the two factors, the conclusions are made clearer for practical application by companies.

This study also has the shortcoming of not having enough data and research samples to support the content of the theoretical review. It is hoped that future research in this area will be continued and the relationship of its variables will be studied through a large amount of data to make up for the lack of data. Meanwhile, there are still many uncertainties due to the obvious trend of complex changes in the market environment in the context of the Internet. And the authors themselves may not have a comprehensive grasp of the theory, resulting in a research analysis that is not necessarily very comprehensive. This is a point that can be explored in depth in the next research in this field.

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