

Consumer Behavior on Online Shopping Platforms in China

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Abstract. Amidst the wave of digitization, online shopping has emerged as a pivotal avenue for individuals to purchase goods and services. Diverging from the conventional brick-and-mortar stores, online shopping platforms offer a more convenient and diversified shopping experience. However, despite their widespread popularity among consumers, investigating the variations in consumer behavior and the determinants across these platforms remains a worthy endeavor. This study zooms in on online shopping platforms such as Taobao, TikTok, and Pinduoduo, aiming to scrutinize the behavioral patterns, influencing factors, and improvement requisites of consumers on these platforms. Through conducting surveys, this research offers empirical evidence to deeply comprehend the behavioral models and determinants on various online shopping platforms. Valuable conclusions pertaining to platform selection, shopping preferences, and enhancement needs are drawn. These insights will serve as guiding principles for enterprises to formulate more targeted marketing strategies, while also offering substantial recommendations for platform operators to enhance user experiences and bolster platform competitiveness.

Keywords: Online platforms, consumer shopping behavior, digital transformation.

1. Introduction

In the digital era, online shopping platforms are reshaping the retail landscape and significantly impacting consumer preferences and shopping habits. The shift from traditional brick-and-mortar shopping to online platforms has led consumers to increasingly prefer shopping through online channels. With the widespread adoption of mobile internet and continuous technological innovations, online shopping not only offers greater convenience but also provides a wider range of product choices and personalized shopping experiences. This digital transformation has far-reaching implications, not only for consumers but also for businesses and the economy at large. Online shopping platforms offer businesses a novel sales channel while intensifying market competition. For policymakers and enterprises alike, understanding consumer behavior, shopping habits, and the factors influencing purchasing decisions on these platforms has become crucial. A deep understanding of consumer needs and preferences is essential for adjusting business strategies, delivering high-quality products and services, and gaining a competitive edge in a fiercely competitive market.

With the rise of online shopping platforms, consumer shopping habits have undergone evolutionary changes, exerting profound impacts on businesses and the economy. Gaining a deep understanding of consumer shopping behavior across different platforms and the factors influencing their choices is crucial for businesses to formulate more precise marketing strategies. Moreover, delving into consumer needs and expectations regarding shopping experiences enables platform operators to optimize their services, enhance user satisfaction, and thereby maintain a competitive edge in a fiercely competitive market. In-depth analysis of online shopping behavior can unveil consumer preferences, purchasing motivations, and shopping habits, aiding businesses in better comprehending market demands. Understanding the popularity and unique features of different platforms can assist enterprises in adjusting their product offerings, promotional tactics, and pricing strategies to better cater to consumer needs.

Conversely, exploring consumer demands for shopping experiences benefits platform operators in refining their interface design, user experience, and post-sales services. By increasing interactivity, personalizing recommendations, and streamlining the shopping process, platforms can enhance user engagement, foster loyalty, and consequently boost revenue. In conclusion, this study provides an

opportunity to deeply understand consumer shopping behavior and platform preferences, offering a strong foundation for decision-making and service optimization for businesses and platform operators. This not only aids in enhancing market competitiveness but also addresses the evolving consumer needs, propelling ongoing innovation and development within the e-commerce sector.

2. Literature Review

In the context of previous research, several studies have delved into the intricacies of consumer behavior on various online shopping platforms. Relevant research explored the factors influencing consumers' platform choice and found that convenience and trustworthiness were pivotal factors affecting platform preferences [1]. Building on this, another study investigated the role of social media in shaping consumer decisions on platforms, highlighting the impact of peer recommendations on purchasing behavior [2]. In terms of theoretical perspectives, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) has been a prominent framework employed to comprehend consumers' acceptance and usage of online platforms [3]. This model emphasizes perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness as key determinants of users' intentions to use a particular platform. Regarding methods, one research field developed a mixed-methods approach to investigate online shopping behavior, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding of consumer preferences and motivations [4]. This methodological fusion offered insights into not only what consumers do, but also why they do it. However, despite the existing body of research, there is still a gap in understanding the specific preferences and feedback of consumers on platforms [5], like Taobao, TikTok, and Pinduoduo. This study aims to bridge this gap by analyzing the distinct characteristics of these platforms and uncovering unique consumer behaviors and preferences, while also incorporating suggestions for platform improvements based on user feedback [6].

3. Survey Design

This study aims to explore the variations in consumer behavior across different online shopping platforms and the influencing factors. Specifically, the study focuses on three major platforms: Taobao, TikTok, and Pinduoduo. Following the literature [7-10], the study analyzes the shopping behavior patterns of consumers on these platforms and examine how factors such as gender, age, and income levels influence platform preferences. To delve into consumers' behaviors, preferences, and feedback on different online shopping platforms, the questionnaire was crafted to ensure the collection of accurate and valuable data. Specific questions are asked for collecting information on the shopping preference and top categories purchase.

The study also investigates consumers' suggestions for improvements on these platforms, in order to provide valuable insights to platform operators for enhancing user experiences and boosting platform competitiveness. By addressing these questions, the examination aims to gain a better understanding of consumer behavior on online shopping platforms and provide valuable insights for research and practice in related fields.

The research opted for a combination of single-choice and open-ended questions to gather data, ensuring that the questions were clear and unbiased in guiding respondents' answers.

4. Data Collection

This study primarily employed data collection through WeChat Mini Program and offline distribution of questionnaires. This study employed an online WeChat Mini Program for convenient and digital data collection. Participants could directly access the survey questionnaire through the Mini Program link. This approach allowed participants to complete the survey effortlessly at their convenience [11].

In addition to the online approach, a subset of participants was reached through offline distribution of printed questionnaires. Multiple offline locations were selected, including shopping malls,

community events, and educational institutions. Participants were informed about the research objectives prior to distributing the questionnaire and were invited to participate. Subsequently, printed questionnaires were distributed to interested individuals. Assistance was provided during the questionnaire completion process to ensure smooth progress. Completed questionnaires were collected, reviewed for completeness and accuracy, and followed up in cases of missing or unclear information to ensure data reliability.

5. Data Analysis

The survey results are shown below in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Demographic Information

| Items | | Proportion |
|------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 56.19% |
| | Female | 43.81% |
| Age | 2000s | 15.24% |
| | 1990s | 50.48% |
| | 1980s | 26.19% |
| | 1970s | 8.10% |
| Partner | Steady Partner | 84.29% |
| | No Steady Partner | 15.71% |
| Monthly Income (yuan) | Below 3000 | 6.19% |
| | 3000-5000 | 26.19% |
| | 5000-8000 | 67.62% |
| Educational Background | High School | 7.62% |
| | Junior High School | 3.33% |
| | College | 20.95% |
| | Bachelor's Degree | 58.57% |
| | Graduate Degree | 9.52% |

As shown in Table 1, there are slightly more male users than female users. The age distribution shows that most of the online platform users are among the 1990s and 1980s, which takes more than three quarters of all respondents. Majority of the respondents are in steady relationship, and their monthly income are mostly distributed between 3,000 to 8,000 yuan. The majority of respondents exhibit relatively higher income levels and a significant proportion possess Bachelor's degrees. This implies that the surveyed population has comparatively greater purchasing power and education. This factor might impact their purchasing decisions, buying habits, and expectations for shopping experiences. The differences in platform preferences and improvement suggestions among respondents reflect the diversity of user experiences and expectations. Individuals may differ in platform selection and improvement preferences based on personal preferences, usage needs, or satisfaction levels. This underscores the necessity for online shopping platforms to flexibly cater to varying user demands.

The designed survey reveals that the vast majority of respondents (95.24%) engage in online shopping on Taobao, indicating that online shopping has become a prevalent consumer behavior. Especially in today's digital age, people are inclined to purchase goods and services through the internet, aligning with the rise of e-commerce. Additionally, as a social media platform, TikTok has emerged as a significant channel for online shopping. This reflects the trend of social commerce, where interactions with consumers through social media platforms enhance the shopping experience attractively. This may be attributed to short videos and live streaming functions from TikTok, which enable brands and products to be showcased more effectively through visual and interactive means.

Table 2. Distribution of Shopping Behavior across Platforms

| Items | Platform | | Proportion | |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------|--------|
| Use the Platform | Taobao | Yes | 95.24% | |
| | | No | 4.76% | |
| | TikTok | Yes | 83.33% | |
| | | No | 16.67% | |
| | Pinduoduo | Yes | 85.71% | |
| | | No | 14.29% | |
| Categories Shopped | Taobao | Clothing | 31.90% | |
| | | Skincare | 22.86% | |
| | | Daily Necessity | 20.95% | |
| | TikTok | Clothing | 29.52% | |
| | | Skincare | 20% | |
| | | Daily Necessity | 34.76% | |
| | Pinduoduo | Clothing | 22.86% | |
| | | Skincare | 17.62% | |
| | | Daily Necessity | 46.19% | |
| | Live Streaming | Taobao | | 85.71% |
| | | | | 14.29% |
| | | TikTok | Yes | 86.67% |
| No | | | 13.33% | |
| Pinduoduo | | Yes | 84.76% | |
| | | No | 15.24% | |
| Shared Link | Taobao | Yes | 92.86% | |
| | | No | 7.14% | |
| | TikTok | Yes | 85.71% | |
| | | No | 14.29% | |
| | Pinduoduo | Yes | 82.26% | |
| | | No | 17.14% | |
| Frequently Used | Taobao | Yes | 54.29% | |
| | TikTok | No | 27.14% | |
| | Pinduoduo | | 18.57% | |
| Improvement | Taobao | | 26.67% | |
| | TikTok | | 32.86% | |
| | Pinduoduo | | 40.48% | |

Furthermore, in Table 2, 85.71% of respondents make purchases on Taobao’s live streaming shopping channels, underscoring the effectiveness of live streaming in driving purchases. Live streaming shopping creates a more vivid and personalized shopping experience through real-time interactions, product displays, and sales explanations, thereby reinforcing the impetus for purchase decisions. With 92.86% of respondents indicating purchases through shared or recommended links, the significance of social networks and personal recommendations in purchase decisions is evident. This emphasizes the influence of word-of-mouth and trust in consumers’ buying behaviors, as consumers tend to place more trust in advice from friends and family.

To sum up, the survey findings shed light on the prevalent trends in online shopping behavior, highlighting the role of different platforms, social influences, and user expectations. These insights contribute to understanding consumer preferences and can inform strategies for the e-commerce industry’s continued development.

6. Conclusion

This paper is based on a survey study that analyzes trends and characteristics of online shopping behavior and platform preferences. The survey results reveal that among the respondents, there is a relatively balanced proportion of male and female participants. The majority of shoppers belong to the group born in the 1990s, have steady partners, and fall within the income range of 5,000 to 8,000. The survey indicates that Taobao is the most popular shopping platform, followed by TikTok and Pinduoduo. Live streaming shopping and social recommendations play significant roles in shopping behavior, while improvement needs vary across platforms. These survey findings uncover the ubiquity of online shopping behavior and consumers' reliance on social interactions, live streaming shopping, and personal recommendations. These insights hold importance for the development and enhancement of e-commerce platforms.

This study conducted a survey analysis to examine the current trends and characteristics of online shopping behavior, offering valuable insights into consumer shopping preferences, social influences, and platform selection. Notably, the research highlighted the popularity of platforms such as Taobao and TikTok, as well as the significant roles played by live streaming shopping and social recommendations. These findings contribute to informed decision-making and strategic planning within the e-commerce domain.

While this study provides useful information about online shopping behavior, it also has certain limitations. Firstly, the survey sample might exhibit some bias and might not entirely represent the characteristics of the entire population. Secondly, the methods used in the survey could be influenced by respondents' subjective memory and answering preferences. Additionally, since survey data relies on self-reporting, there could be some inaccuracies in the gathered information.

For future research, it is advisable to consider larger and more diverse sample sizes, as well as varied data sources, to comprehensively explore the dynamics of online shopping behavior and platform preferences. Furthermore, it could be valuable to delve into the impact of different age groups, genders, and educational backgrounds on shopping behavior, as well as the varying popularity of different shopping platforms among diverse consumer segments. Moreover, the study could delve into specific consumer suggestions and expectations for platform improvements to guide optimization and development efforts for these platforms.

In conclusion, the study gains a profound understanding of the current trends and characteristics of online shopping behavior, revealing significant factors related to consumer shopping preferences, social influences, and platform selection. These findings serve as robust foundations for decision-making and strategic planning within the e-commerce domain. Online shopping has become an integral part of modern life, and the rise of platforms like Taobao and TikTok has further diversified shopping methods, leading the wave of social commerce. Emerging formats such as live streaming shopping and social recommendations provide consumers with more interactive and personalized shopping experiences, while also creating enhanced sales opportunities for businesses.

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