

The Influence of Social Media Influencers Recommendation on Consumers' Impulsive Buying Behavior

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Abstract. Depending on the widespread use of short-form mobile video and the Internet, social media influencers recommendation has brought consumers a new way to learn about products. It has gradually become an important part of marketing with its advantages of large viewership and good marketing results. However, consumers are influenced by social media influencer, impulse buying behavior continues to emerge. Based on SOR model and identity theory, this paper investigates the influence of social media influencers recommendation on consumers' impulse buying behavior. This paper constructs a theoretical model, including four variables: consumers' favoritism towards social media influencers, social media influencers' fit with the products it recommends, consumers' sense of identity, and impulse buying. The empirical data were obtained by means of a questionnaire, and multiple regression analysis, mediation effect tests were conducted. This paper examined the positive and significant effects of consumers' affection for social media influencers, the fit between social media influencers and the products they recommend, the sense of consumer identity and consumer impulse buying behavior. This paper also examined the partially mediating role of the sense of consumer identity between social media influencers recommendation marketing and consumer impulse buying.

Keywords: SOR model; impulse buying; Consumer identity; social media influencer's recommendation marketing.

1. Introduction

Depending on the development and popularization of the Internet, social media marketing has become an important channel for many brands to promote their products [1]. Influencer marketing, especially based on social media, has become an important factor in consumer decision-making [2]. By the beginning of 2022, approximately 4.62 billion people were using social media globally. Because of the significant impact this usage has had on how customers engage with one another, social media influencers across a range of industries have emerged and are now a means for marketers to reach out to consumers [3]. As a newly marketing method, social media influencer stimulates consumers' desire to shop by sharing experiences of using a certain product [4]. With their expertise in a certain field, social media influencers are able to win over a sizable number of customers' interest and confidence, which bring a lot of attention to brand [5]. And social media influencers can effectively spread information about new products, promote new trends, and increase sales volume [6]. However, with the development of the social media influencers marketing, some consumers are beginning to experience impulse spending [7]. Impulse buying refers to the impulsive buying behavior of consumers who buy goods without thinking about it [8]. The current literature on impulse consumption and social media influencers are more comprehensive, but there is comparatively little research on the connection between social media influencers and impulsive consumer purchasing. Therefore, this paper will take advantage of the "S-O-R" model, identity theory, obtain data through questionnaires, conduct empirical analysis, and examine how recommendations from social media influencers affect consumers' impulsive purchasing behavior. Also, this paper will provide suggestions for improving the efficiency of social media influencers marketing and consumers' purchasing behavior.

2. Model Construction and Research Assumptions

According to the SOR model, stimuli in the external environment will affect the subsequent behaviors and reactions of individuals by affecting their internal emotional and cognitive states, that is, the "stimuli-organism-response" process [9]. Consumer identity is derived from their social identity and is a crucial tool for expressing their social status and sense of community. Through consumption, consumers convey their identity and how they differ from other people or social groupings [10]. Impulse consumption refers to the spontaneous purchase behavior of consumers on recommended products when they watch videos without prior purchase intention. Compared with physical shopping, consumers are more likely to have impulse buying during online shopping [11].

Based on SOR model, consumer identity theory and the characteristics of impulse consumption, this study explores how social media influencers recommendation affects consumers' impulse buying behavior and proposes the following hypotheses.

2.1. Social Media Influencers Recommendation Marketing and Impulse Buying

Studies have shown that when the attributes of a celebrity closely align with the ideal self of the consumer, the likelihood of the consumer making a purchase will increase [12]. The satisfaction degree of shopping will be different due to the influence of stars, and the influence of stars will make people who have no desire to buy irrational shopping behavior due to the recommendation of stars [13]. The credibility, interactivity and mobile convenience of influencers will lead to the real purchasing patterns in the context of influencer marketing [14]. Therefore, online influencer, as social media celebrities and opinion leaders in a certain aspect, will also have an impact on consumer behavior due to their public influence [6].

Drawing from extant literature, the ensuing conjecture is put forth about the stimulating effect of consumers' affection for online influencers and the fit between social media influencers and the products it recommends and consumer impulse buying behavior.

H1: Consumers' affection for social media influencers has a significant positive impact on consumer impulse buying behavior.

H2: The fit between social media influencers and the products they recommend has a significant positive impact on consumer impulse buying behavior.

2.2. Consumer Identity and Impulse Buying

People's identity is a reaction to gaining an understanding of their own cognition. As a result, the essence or features of the identified event become a part of the individual's psychological structure, causing them to experience the event as though it were their own [15]. In the social media influencer economy, consumers' feelings with regard to Internet superstars is mostly indicative of their sense of identity, which also acts a pre-influencing role in shaping their buy intentions. When customers have a stronger sense of identification with their fan group, they are more inclined to display a feeling of connectedness or belongingness, ultimately enhancing their emotional engagement and prompting stronger purchase intentions [16]. Consumers may use purchasing behaviors to obtain and maintain the desired social identity [17]. Moreover, studies have shown that among the influences of service contact on impulse buying, sense of identity significantly affects impulse buying [18]. This study puts out the following hypothesis based on the research that has already been done.

H3: Consumer identity has a significant positive impact on impulse buying behavior.

2.3. The Mediating Role of Consumer Identity in the Relationship between Social Media Influencers Recommendation and Impulse Buying

It has been proved that the intensity and ability of online celebrities to broadcast live have a positive impact on the cognitive and emotional changes of consumers, and consumers will be satisfied and happy with products, and such emotional changes will increase consumers' purchase intention [19]. Other studies have found that college students' consumer recognition plays a part in moderating

the link between celebrities who stream live content and the product image they recommend, the interactivity of live broadcasting, the professionalism of online celebrities and college students' herd consumption behavior [20]. Furthermore, the more customers feel that there is a positive association between a celebrity's attributes and a product's attributes, the more effective celebrity endorsement advertising is [21]. Based on SOR theory and existing research, the following hypotheses have been put forth.

H4: Consumer identity plays a mediating role between consumers' affection for social media influencers and impulse buying behavior.

H5: Consumer identity plays a mediating role between the fit between social media influencers and the products they recommends and impulse buying behavior.

This paper constructs the following model, as illustrated in figure 1, based on the previous presumptions and SOR theory. It regards consumers' attachment to social media influencers and the fit between these influencers and the products they recommend as stimulus S, consumer identity as organism O, and impulse buying behavior as response R.

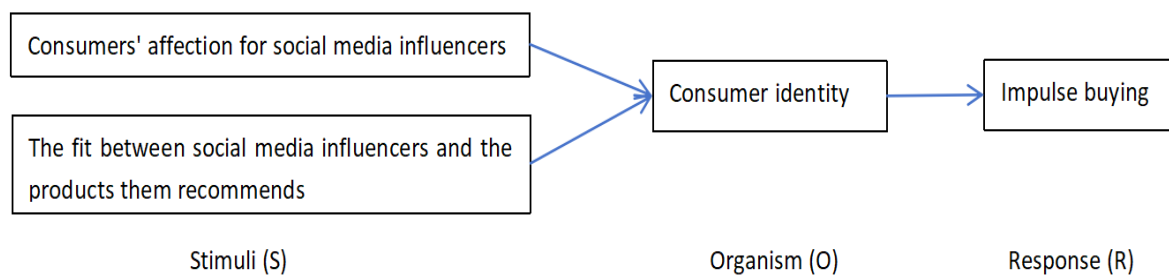


Fig 1. Theoretical model.

3. Research Design

3.1. Questionnaire Design

In the paper, four latent variables were set up according to the model and hypothesis, and three to four measurement indicators were designed for each latent variable. Values were assigned using a 5-level Likert scale, where scores varied from 1 to 5. Score 1 means strongly disagree, while score 5 means strongly agree. The measurement of consumers' affection for social media influencers refers to the scale of Meng Lu et al. The fit between social media influencers and recommended products refers to Che Siyu et al. scale [22]. Consumer identity refers to the measurement scale of Nambisan [23]. Impulse buying refers to the measurement scale of Rook, Dennis W. and Fisher, Robert J [24]. There are two components to this questionnaire: gathering respondents' personal data in the first part and measuring latent variables in the second.

3.2. Data Collection and Sample Descriptive Statistics

In this study, 226 questionnaires were collected. Those who chose no in the question "Have you watched videos about products recommended by social media influencers?" and those who answered in less than 40 seconds were excluded. Ultimately, 209 valid surveys were collected, yielding an effective recovery percentage of 92.48%. The statistics obtained are shown in Table 1.

From an age standpoint, the majority of respondents (69.86%) to the questionnaire fell into the 20–30 age range and the 41–45 age range. This shows that part of the participants in live shopping are relatively young people who have a strong ability to accept new shopping methods, and part of the participants are middle-aged people who have formed stable shopping concepts and consumption methods. In terms of their occupations, they are mainly students, government workers and employees of enterprises and institutions. The time of these professions is relatively abundant, and there is relatively free time to watch the recommended product video. From the perspective of income, it is

mainly concentrated in the below 8,000 yuan, accounting for 88.04%, which matches the occupation of the main participating groups. In terms of educational background, bachelor's degree or above accounted for 51.67%, indicating that the educational background covered by the questionnaire is not biased towards the group of highly educated people, and has a good universality in the consumer group, which can increase the questionnaire accuracy.

Table 1. Questionnaire sample analysis.

Options	Option range	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	100	47.85%
	Female	109	52.15%
Age	under 20 years old	15	7.28%
	20-30 years old	92	44.02%
	31-40 years old	32	15.31%
	41-50 years old	54	25.84%
	over 50 years old	16	7.66%
Educational background	Below high school	16	7.66%
	Senior high school	37	17.7%
	Junior college	48	22.97%
	Undergraduate	96	45.93%
	Postgraduate and above	12	5.74%
Income	Less than 2000 yuan	41	19.62%
	2000-4000 yuan	56	26.79%
	4000-6000 yuan	39	18.66%
	6000-8000 yuan	48	22.97%
	Over 8000 yuan	25	11.96%
Occupation	Technical professional	21	10.05%
	Personnel of enterprises and institutions	31	14.83%
	Company staff	19	9.09%
	Student	47	22.49%
	Government personnel	75	35.89%
	Soldier	8	3.83%
	Retire	0	0%
	Wait for employment	0	0%
	Other	8	3.83%

4. Research Design

4.1. Reliability Test

The data dependability was tested using SPSSAU, and the measurement index was the α coefficient with high recognition. Table 2 shows that the total Cronbach's α coefficient is 0.938, suggesting that the reliability of this questionnaire is good. The α coefficients of the three latent variables are above 0.7, the coefficient of one latent variable is around 0.7, and so on.

4.2. Validity Test

Table 2 presents the findings. Bartlett's test of sphericity has reached a significant level, all factor load coefficients are greater than 0.7, the cumulative percentage of variance is greater than 60%, the KMO values of the four latent variables are greater than 0.6, and these findings suggest that the information contained in the research items can be effectively extracted.

Table 2. Questionnaire analysis.

Latent variable	Observed variable	Factor loading	KMO	Bartlett's test of sphericity P-value	Cumulative % of Variance	Cronbach's Alpha
Consumers' affection for social media influencers	A1	0.877	0.796	0.000	69.142%	0.848
	A2	0.783				
	A3	0.793				
	A4	0.869				
The fit between social media influencers and the products they recommends	B1	0.797	0.647	0.000	61.125%	0.678
	B2	0.722				
	B3	0.823				
Consumer identity	C1	0.754	0.648	0.000	65.966%	0.739
	C2	0.810				
	C3	0.869				
impulse buying behavior	D1	0.753	0.656	0.000	64.977%	0.725
	D2	0.807				
	D3	0.855				

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

4.3.1. Multiple Regression Analysis

In this research, multiple regression analysis is used to examine the relationship between the key variables. From Table 3, it is evident that according to model 2, consumers' affection for social media influencers had a substantial effect on impulse buying behavior, because $\beta=0.565$ and $p<0.01$ confirming the validity of hypothesis 1. According to model 3, the fit between social media influencers and recommended products on impulse buying behavior reached a significant level ($\beta=0.793$, $p<0.01$), confirming the validity of hypothesis 2. According to model 5, the influence of consumer identity on impulse buying behavior reached a significant level, because $\beta=0.854$ and $p<0.01$, confirming the validity of hypothesis 3.

Table 3. Multiple regression analysis.

Study variable	Impulse buying behavior				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Gender	0.364	0.506*	0.350	0.443*	0.429*
Age	0.332*	-0.027	0.042	-0.046	0.114
Educational background	-0.655**	-0.095	-0.263*	-0.099	-0.207*
Income	0.960**	0.201	0.294**	0.133	0.127
Occupation	-0.144	-0.087	-0.067	-0.066	-0.106
Consumers' affection for social media influencers		0.565**		0.342**	
The fit between social media influencers and the recommended products			0.793**	0.438**	
Consumer identity					0.854**
R ²	0.341	0.709	0.760	0.696	0.773
Adjusted R ²	0.325	0.700	0.751	0.687	0.766

4.3.2. The Mediating Role of Consumer Identity

According to Table 4, the regression analysis was conducted. Consumers' affection for social media influencers is the independent variable. Impulsive buying is the dependent variable, while customer identity is the intermediary variable. According to Model 1, consumers' fondness for social media influencers significantly increases their propensity to make impulsive purchases. According to Model 2, consumers' positive perception of social media influencers has a major beneficial effect on their identity. When consumer identity is added to Model 3, consumers' fondness for social media

influencers significantly increases the likelihood of impulsive purchases, but the regression coefficient decreases compared with model 1, and the consumer identity still has a significant impact on impulse buying behavior. Similarly, according to Model 3 in Table 5, the fit between social media influencers and recommended products still has a positive and significant impact on impulse buying when consumer identity is included. However, the regression coefficient decreases compared with model 1. Consumer identity still has a significant impact on impulse buying behavior. Hence, consumer identity can only produce part of the mediating effect. The influence may be weakened after adding the mediating variables.

Table 4. Intermediate effect test.

Model	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Impulse buying	Consumer identity	Impulse buying
Consumers' affection for social media influencers	0.605**	0.565**	0.264**
Consumer identity			0.603**
F	466.642	443.601	400.125
R ²	0.693	0.682	0.793

Table 5. Intermediate effect test.

Model	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Impulse buying	Consumer identity	Impulse buying
The fit between social media influencers and the recommended products	0.902**	0.888**	0.311**
Consumer identity			0.665**
F	418.971	564.730	353.969
R ²	0.669	0.732	0.775

Therefore, hypothesis H1, H2 and H3 in this paper have been verified, hypothesis H4 and H5 cannot be fully verified, and the mediating effect of consumer identity can only be partially established.

5. Conclusion

According to SOR model and identity theory, this paper established an empirical framework of influencing factors of online influencers recommendation on consumers' impulse buying behavior, including four variables: consumers' affection for online influencers, the fit between online influencers and the recommended products, consumer identity and impulse buying behavior. By issuing questionnaires and using SPSSAU to conduct empirical analysis of survey data, this study draws the following conclusions: Consumers' affection for social media influencers has a significant positive impact on consumer impulse buying behavior. The fit between online influencers and the products they recommend has a significant positive impact on consumer impulse buying behavior. Impulsive purchasing behavior is significantly positively impacted by consumer identity. The match between social media influencers' recommended products and impulse purchase behavior is somewhat mediated by consumer identity. Consumer identity has a partial mediating effect between the fit between social media influencers and the recommended products and impulse buying behavior. Depending on the above research conclusions, the following suggestions are put forward.

Consumers should rationally evaluate the products that social media influencers recommend. Especially when affected by social media influencers, consumers should first evaluate, understand the performance of the product, price, etc., and do not blindly follow the trend just because they like social media influencers. Consumers should pay more attention to product quality rather than Internet celebrity effect. Customers can choose reputable brands and retailers, focus more on the usefulness and quality of the products, and make sure their purchases are worthwhile. Customers ought to form

consumption patterns. For example, before purchasing, consumers can clarify their needs, set a shopping budget, avoid buying unnecessary products due to impulse, and can also adopt a "delay purchase" strategy, considering a period of time before deciding whether to buy.

Social media influencers should enhance their personal charm and strive to project a positive image. Influencers can promote products more effectively by increasing fan affection and engagement through genuine interactions, fun content sharing, and positive social influence. Social media influencers can choose products with high compatibility for cooperation. Influencers should ensure that the product is highly aligned with their personal style, audience needs, and areas of expertise. By accurately matching products, Internet celebrities can attract target consumers more effectively and improve the conversion rate of purchases. Influencers should look for ways to strengthen consumer identity. For example, influencers can enhance interaction with fans, understand their needs and expectations, and emphasize shared values and points of interest in content creation, thereby enhancing consumer identity and thereby promoting consumer behavior.

Although this paper has some contributions, but at the same time there are some limitations. This paper only analyzes part of the mediating role of consumer identity, but there may be other mechanisms of the impact of recommendations from social media influencers on customers' impulsive purchases, which can be further explored. All the indicators in this paper are general indicators, and future studies can reach more detailed conclusions by refining the variable dimensions, such as considering more dimensions of Consumers' affection for social media influencers and considering both cognitive and emotional aspects of Consumer identity.

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