Research on the Influence of Content Features of Short Video Marketing on Consumer purchase intentions

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Abstract. The short video industry is in the hotspot which favored by more and more users and advertisers. The length of short video is usually less than 5 minutes. The content is refined and rich, adapting to the fast-paced life, and the mode of vertical screen is also in line with the habits of mobile users. The interaction is more active, and the maturity of artificial intelligence technologies such as face recognition makes short videos more interesting and entertaining. The rapid development of short videos gives rise to short video marketing. This article will combine the content characteristics of short video marketing model with the relevant theories of purchase intention, and establish the research model. By delivering questionnaires and analyzing the data, the three hypotheses proposed are going to be validated: perceived usefulness, playfulness and the involvement of influencers will have a positive impact on consumers' intention to purchase. Through the analysis of the data, the above assumptions are all true. Among them, the influence of influencers is the most significant. Finally, based on the conclusions drawn from the empirical analysis, the article will combine with the actual situation then make some suggestion to the short video marketing of companies.

1. Overview of short video and short video marketing

This chapter details the development of short video, as well as the huge marketing potential due to its unparalleled advantages.

1.1 Definition and development of short video marketing

1.1.1 Definition of short video marketing
Short video is an emerging form of video that is usually played by viewers who are on the move. The duration of short video is vaguely defined. In general, videos from five seconds to five minutes can be classified as short videos. The production is relatively easy and the cost is low. While the content is usually rich and refined, and it adapts to the fast-paced life. Also, the mode of vertical screen is in line with the habits of mobile users and the application of artificial intelligence technology such as face recognition makes the short video more entertaining and interactive. According to data from Ai Media, the number of short video users in China has reached 501 million in 2018, and this number is still rising.

With the rapid development of the short video industry, short video marketing is increasingly favored by advertisers. Generally speaking, short video marketing, in a narrow sense, refers to all marketing activities on the specialized short video platform, while this article is mainly aimed at short video marketing in a broad sense, that is, all the short-video-based marketing activities, which exist in various kinds of the Internet platform not only includes specialized short video platforms (such as TikTok, Kuaishou, Volcano Videos, Meipai, etc.), but also other extensive content platforms (such as Weibo, WeChat, Zhihu, Tencent Video, etc.), e-commerce platforms (such as Taobao), and others.[1]

1.1.2 Development of short video marketing

The domestic development of short video mainly started in 2012-2013. During this period, mobile Internet technology developed rapidly, and the mobile client short video application such as kuaishou and Miaopai was founded. In 2014, the gradual development of the short video industry attracted the attention of capital and the influx of short video content creators. Hot topics such as "ice bucket challenge" and "Chinese New Year" were used by some short video applications such as kuaishou and Xiaokaxiu actively to attract audience and finally propelled the short video market to a new level. During this period, their selling points mainly were those popular celebrities or influencers and their product recommendations became the most important means of increasing sales in short video marketing.

2016 is generally considered to be the most important year for short video marketing, and Tiktok, today's most influential short video platform, was created in September this year. With further development of the Internet, artificial intelligence technology and the rapid influx of short video content creators, the influence of short video marketing is increasing. It is obvious that the short video will occupy more and more leisure time of users and greatly affect all aspects of their lives. [2][3]

1.2 Characteristics of short video marketing and its value

Short video spread quickly and widely, which can attract consumers to understand brands, goods and services, etc. As a result, it gradually becomes a popular marketing method. Short video marketing generally has the following characteristics:

1.2.1 Form fragmentation

Short videos are mainly played on the mobile devices, and are suitable for viewing during the time of people moving, resting, etc., which determines the content of short video presents a fast-food style and fragmented tendency. Compared with the graphics and text, the form of the video is easier to understand, especially in a rapid pace of life, people are more inclined to respond to short but explosive content and, therefore more and more short video applications come up, they are easy to operate. In most cases, after entering the applications where the short video vertically occupies the entire screen, people only need to scroll down to enter the next video and click to give LIKE. As a result, this kind of simple and easy operation has prompted consumers to use the short video applications during their fragmented leisure time.[4]

1.2.2 Distribution personalization

Based on big data and artificial intelligence, short video platforms constantly collect user using data to digest, so that platforms can select the content users are interested in for accurate and personalized distribution. This makes users to be more immersed in the short video environment, increase their curiosity about the next video and finally enhance user stickiness. More importantly, the personalized distribution of short videos makes marketing more precise. This is because the back-end has already labeled each user according to their most frequent visited video types, so merchants can send content to the most interested users through the platform's distribution mechanism.

1.2.3 Content decentralization

Being different from Weibo and Twitter, short video platforms usually adopt the decentralized mechanism of content production. Without setting any privilege, Short video platforms constantly look for new and interesting content, and the popularity is the king. Whoever can produce the hottest video will win the most views. The content production mode of PGC+UGC, that is, a combination of the Professional Generated Content and the User Generated Content means users are encouraged to create while watching the video. By this way, user engagement is increased, which helps maintain the enthusiasm and activity of users, and also ensures high-quality outputs. Apart from that, the production of short videos costs little time and requires only simple shooting props, which greatly reduces the threshold of making short video. As long as there are good ideas, everyone can make content that is favor by users.[5][6]

2. Related concepts and theory analysis

The burst of short video is mainly launched in recent years, and many domestic and foreign studies have studied this field. This article focuses on the impact of short video marketing, especially its relationship with consumer buying behavior.

2.1 Analysis of consumer purchase decision model

Philip Kotler divides the process of consumer purchasing decisions into five phases: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase action, and post-purchase evaluation, as shown in Figure 1.
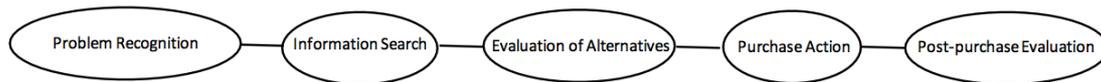

Figure 1 consumer purchase decision model

Kotler highlighted the importance of information gathering and evaluation to a purchase decision. The collection of commodity service information is the basis of evaluation, in which people will gain beliefs and attitudes. Purchasing intention is generally defined as the possibility of consumers taking a certain purchase action. Fishbein and Ajzen believe that it is the attitudes, beliefs, and evaluations of consumers that constitute the willingness to purchase, and the willingness can help predict the final purchase behavior of consumers.

In the consumer purchasing decision process, the intervention of short video has revolutionized the stages of information search and evaluation of alternatives. Compared with traditional video marketing, the information of goods or services can be more effectively conveyed to the consumer in short video because its content is more refined and incisive. The mode of vertical play is more likely to draw users' attention and communicate brand or product information to them smoothly. In this case, short videos successfully change the way of customer understanding and evaluating goods or services.

2.2 Analysis of technology acceptance model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is actually based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). TRA points out that attitude is the most important factor affecting the final behavior of an individual. Attitude determines willingness, that is the intention of people to take specific actions, and willingness determines behavior. When people have a positive attitude towards certain behaviors, which means they believe those behaviors can yield a positive result, they are more inclined to support such behaviors; on the contrary, if people think that such behaviors will have a negative impact, they usually Will refuse to implement this behavior.

Davis expanded the rational behavior theory to the technology acceptance model. He defined two key elements that affect attitude --- perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. The technology acceptance model is shown in Figure 2.
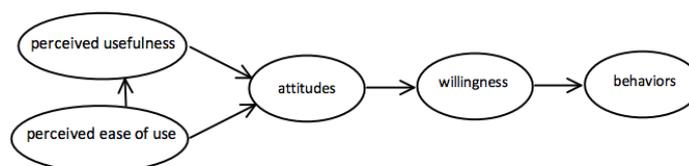

Figure 2 Technology Acceptance Model

Perceived usefulness refers to whether a new technology or system can improve users' work efficiency; and perceived ease of use reflects the user's belief in its difficulty level.

These two factors have a critical influence on the individual's attitude. When one feels that the technology or system can improve the efficiency of his work (perceive usefulness) and thinks that the process of using it is relatively simple and does not require too much effort to achieve purposes (perceived ease of use), he is more likely to accept this technology or system.

As customers also have problems in the acceptance and processing of information in the face of numerous new way of shopping and marketing, more and more research has applied TAM to study users' acceptance of business information technology. In the context of this article, we can also use the TAM to study whether an emerging marketing form such as short video marketing can be accepted by users.[7]

2.3 Analysis of selective exposure theory

Selective exposure theory indicates that people usually intentionally or unintentionally ignore the opposite of their own opinions when they face the mass media information, and tend to accept the information that is consistent with their own tendency, in order to consolidate their inherent value system and get comfort from it.

The short video distribution recommendation mechanism is based on the selective exposure theory. Taking Tiktok as an example, as the most popular short video APP platform, the distribution mechanism can not only label different users according to their interests, but after the mechanism learns the user's interest, they can also continuously push similar videos to users. Besides, considering that the interest tags identified by the mechanism are not necessarily matched with the users' needs, the mechanism pushes videos to the user in a batch-by-batch way. First, the back-end of Tiktok measures the amount of interaction, that is, the video playback completion rate, the number of LIKES, the number of comments, the number of sharing and forwarding, of which the number of LIKES is usually the most critical indicator. Second, the system pushes the content to a small number of users. If 10% of the interactions are completed, the push can be determined to be accurate. After that, the system will automatically expand the range of push. If there is still more than 10% interaction, it will be continued to expand the range.[8][9]

In this way, the more video viewer watch, the more accurate the content they can get. By constantly watching the short video that they are interested in, the audience will also gain a sense of pleasure, and the user's stickiness will be strengthened.

2.4 Analysis of weak ties theory

American sociologist Mark Granovetter divides the relationship between people into two types, strong ties and weak ties. Strong ties usually exist in intimate relationships with frequent interactions, such as family, friends, colleagues, etc. Conversely, weak ties indicate relationships with low cohesion and intimacy, such as a person occasionally found on Weibo.

However, after Granovetter explored a series of phenomena on the Internet, it was found that weak ties are actually more powerful than people think. Although weak ties are not as firm as strong ties, they have extremely fast, possibly low-cost and high-efficiency transmissions effectiveness. People usually keep the information in sync with their family, but the information from those weak relationships is relatively unfamiliar to them. The power of weak connections is exactly in these uncommon and non-repetitive messages. We can use information as a medium. Users who have a common interest in certain information are connected and gradually form a specific circle. For example, a short video platform with certain social attributes is full of weak ties. From this perspective, short videos emphasize the transmission of information, consumers can get as much information as possible in a short time by watching short videos.[10]

At the same time, however, the content characteristics of short videos make the transmission of information have the advantage of strong ties. In short videos, influencers are usually the protagonists, and short videos can involve users more deeply due to its characteristics. In that case, the interactions between influencers and audiences are more intimate and active, making customers more susceptible to influencers and likely to purchase the products they recommend.

3. Research variables design: based on perspectives of different theories

Faced with today's increasingly complex and rapidly changing consumption environment and marketing methods, consumers' willingness to purchase will inevitably be affected by various factors. Referring to previous research achievements and the current marketing situation of short videos, this chapter finally proposes an empirical model.[7][8]

3.1 Building the model

Combining the previous research about the relationship between new marketing methods and consumers' willingness to purchase, related theories and the actual situation of short video marketing, this paper comes up with three independent variables, that is perceived usefulness, playfulness and the involvement of influencers, and the customer's willingness to purchase as the dependent variable. The theoretical model of this paper is shown in Figure 3.
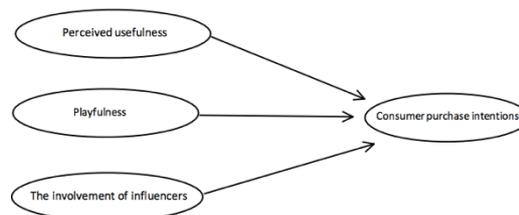

Figure 3 Theoretical model of this paper

3.2 Research variables

3.2.1 Perceived usefulness

According to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) mentioned above, when a system or new technology is sufficiently convenient and useful to improve the user's work efficiency, they are more likely to accept the model. Displaying a lot of information in a very short period of time, short video ads are usually succinct and to the point. They are not only used by major e-commerce platforms, but also generally show considerable marketing and promotion abilities on other non-commercial platforms. When customers think that short videos can help them to understand and evaluate products without taking much effort and time in the process of purchasing decisions, they tend to accept the short video marketing method.

The research by Pan Chi and Guo Zhida (2019) shows that the perceived usefulness is the key to increasing consumer intentions to purchase green packaging products. Sha Zhenquan, Jiang Yuwei and Wen Fei (2010) find there is a significant positive correlation between users' brand identity and perceived usefulness of virtual brand communities.[11][12]

Based on the above analysis, this paper proposes the following assumptions:

H1: perceived usefulness, one of the short video marketing content features, has a positive impact on customer purchase intention.

3.2.2 Playfulness

The technology acceptance model (TAM) actually mentions another important factor affecting purchase intention: perceived ease of use, but this paper does not consider it as an element that has an impact on customers' willingness to buy. This is because short videos are usually spread by mobile devices whose users no doubt have mastered the basic operational abilities, so users can easily understand all the features of short video. As a result, this research leaves perceived ease of use out of account.

However, it is worth noting that Moon and Kim reinvented the original TAM in 2001. They proposed playfulness, that is, the degree of enjoyment that people get when they use new technologies such as the Internet. With the rise of information technology such as World-Wide-Web at the time, playfulness has proven to be an important indicator of whether users can accept these emerging technological behaviors.

Li Tingting (2016) found that a glad e-commerce shopping experience will bring a positive attitude and then urge people to purchase. Yan Lei (2019) found that playfulness is the second most important factor affecting users' willingness to use the short-term rental platform.

People usually watch short videos in mobile such as during commuting hours. It is the rich and eye-catching content that greatly attract users. This means whether short video ads can get the attention of customers in a brief period of time often depends on whether they are entertaining.

Therefore, based on the above analysis, this paper proposes the following assumptions:

H2: Playfulness of short video marketing has a positive impact on customer purchase intention.

3.2.3 The involvement of influencers

The concept of influencers was first proposed by the famous sociologist, one of the four founders of communication sciences, Paul·F·Lazarsfeld. In short video industry, influencers who start from scratch attract a certain degree of attention and then will join the professional MCN (Multi-Channel Network), which has assembled a large number of professional content producers. For example, Li Jiaqi, the famous "lipstick prince" on the short video platform, got 4.3 million fans in a makeup video of trying new lipsticks only in a month. Then he started to cooperate with other beauty products, as long as it is the product he recommended in the short video, it will be out of stock.

Similarly, on the one hand, the short video content distribution mechanism makes the public basically only contact with the content that they are interested in. There is a strong relationship between them, and the public will become more and more trusting in a certain type of influencers. Influencers generally adopt all kinds of methods to introduce products through video after the fans have gathered, guiding customers to appreciate those products and enhance their purchase intention. On the other hand, the high-frequency push notification service of short video allows people to receive all kinds of information efficiently. At this time, the advantage of weak ties has emerged.

Meng Fei (2012) found that influencers are a typical way of word-of-mouth advertising, in which their professionalism and interaction with audience have a significant impact on customers' purchase intention. While Yang Anna (2017) studied the impact of influencers in social media on the purchase intention of college students, and come to a conclusion that the professionalism and popularity of influencers in social media have a significant positive correlation with the purchase intention of customers.

Therefore, based on the above analysis, this study proposes the following assumptions:

H3: The participation of influencers in short video marketing has obvious and positive effect on customer purchase intention.

4. Marketing implications

More and more companies are beginning to dig into the dividends in short video era. From results of the research, the above three content features of short video marketing can promote customers' intention to purchase, and the model proposed in this paper has a certain guidance meaning for actual short video marketing of enterprises.

Enterprises should pay attention to the key role of influencers in short videos.

How to win the trust of consumers is vitally important. However, due to the particularity of the Internet environment, consumers are unable to directly experience real-life goods or services. In that case, a suitable and trustworthy influencer not only directly helps products with exposure, but also increase the reliability of products information in short videos. According to the results of the survey, most people believe that the participation of influencers can increase the value of short video advertising, which strengthens their willingness to purchase. Therefore, in the actual marketing circumstances, for different marketing target groups, the company should conduct an in-depth investigation of its interest preferences, and select a suitable person who is an authoritative and appealing influencer to act as the protagonist in video, which is bound to attract the attention of consumers.

2. In short video marketing, enterprises should guarantee its entertainment experience.

Due to the relatively casual and easy playback environment of short videos, companies should consider that consumers usually expect a more enjoyable watching experience. It is worth noting that

most people watch short videos just for entertainment, not for shopping. Therefore, if the content of short videos is Lack of entertainment, marketing effect will be greatly reduced. Enterprises should enhance the entertaining features such as adopting some unique stickers and fun games in the short video platform to improve interactions. From the perspective of the content of short videos, it is necessary to design stories or make use of some camera angles or fancy footwork to better present commercial. Keeping up with new trends like popular music, dance steps, film and television dramas can also make short video more interesting from all aspects.

3. Optimize the functional design in short videos

On the one hand, enterprises should pay attention to the full introduction of product functionality when promoting a certain product in short videos. Many short video platforms have introduced the function of shopping carts, that is, customers can simply click a button as soon as they feel interested in short videos to go to purchase page and buy them instantly, which can absolutely improve their efficiency of shopping.

Acknowledgement

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