The Influence of the Soft Ads in Xiaohongshu on the Consuming Intentions of Consumers

An Example of the Notes Uploaded in the Fashion Channel

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Abstract. As one of the most popular UGC platforms in China, more and more e-commerce merchants choose to publish soft advertisements on Xiaohongshu software. This is a covert advertisement that is different from ordinary advertisements. The setting of soft advertisement grasps the psychology of consumers, thereby affecting consumers' purchase intention. This article will take the dressing notes as an example to study the influence of Xiaohongshu soft advertisements on consumers' purchasing decisions.

Keywords: soft advertising; consumer; purchasing decisions; consuming intentions

1   Introduction

In recent years, with the rapid development of the Internet economy and the impact of the epidemic on the real economy, online shopping has gradually become a mainstream shopping method. On major e-commerce platforms, the competition among merchants of similar products is becoming increasingly fierce, and merchants are looking for ways to create traffic and then attract more consumers through traffic. Through KOL (opinion leaders), the method of attracting traffic to products came into being, mainly through the content released by KOL to lead consumption. KOL in marketing refers to people who have more and more accurate product information, and are accepted or trusted by the relevant group, and have a greater influence on the group's purchase behaviour.[1] Information generated by consumers themselves on social business sites, meaning that the UGC provides trusted purchase information for other consumers.[2] UGC has become an important factor influencing the behavior of the platform users, thus bringing business opportunities to the platform and promoting the rapid development of marketing based on user-generated content.[3]Since its establishment in 2013, Xiaohongshu has gradually become one of the most popular UGC platforms in China. Any user can post notes on Xiaohongshu and have the opportunity to be seen by the whole platform. Xiaohongshu is not only a lifestyle platform, but also a consumer decision-making portal. Due to its unique and free sharing method, more and more businesses choose to publish advertisements on

Xiaohongshu. In these notes, in addition to some advertisements marked with promotion signs, there are also many "soft advertisements". User-original content has become an important channel for merchants to communicate with consumers. [4] Nowadays, many people also go to Xiaohongshu to search for relevant evaluations before making purchases, and a large part of these evaluations are actually promoted in the form of soft advertisement. This is an emerging, but has become a common way of promotion, and its influence on consumers' purchasing decisions should not be underestimated.

The content shared by users on Xiaohongshu covers a variety of fields, such as fashion wear, beauty and skin care, sports and fitness, games and entertainment, travel and food, work and study, commodity shopping, life sharing, and star film and television. This article focuses on "fashion". Dressing" field.

At present, there are few academic researches on the influence of Xiaohongshu on consumers' purchasing decisions in China. A total of 380 results have been found on CNKI with the themes of "Xiaohongshu" and "Consumers"; no discussion of Xiaohong has been found yet. This paper studies the influence of Xiaohongshu Soft advertisements on consumers' purchasing decisions by taking dressing notes as an example. Using the theory of planned behavior, put forward five factors that affect consumers' purchasing decisions, collect data through questionnaires and use IBM SPSS Statistics 24 software for data analysis.

2   Related concepts and theories

2.1   The Definition of Soft Advertisement

Soft advertisement, that is not straightforward advertising expression, it is the form of advertising hidden in the carrier and jointly constitutes the information content perceived by the audience.[5] Soft advertisements on Xiaohongshu refers to some pictures, texts and videos that are not reported on the platform and are not designated as advertisements. Generally, merchants cooperate with some "amateur bloggers" to promote products in the tone and form of self-use and sharing. This study collected data of some soft advertisements publishers.

Table 1. Data of Some Soft Advertisements Publishers [Self-Drawn]

Username	ID Number	Followers	Total Likes & Collects	The Number of Views of the Most Exposed Note
unXick	linyunccc	2376	131.1k	299863
Zhangyuxiaoding	Millie414	2535	162.5k	205122
__-Yuki-	493788998	3274	53.8k	35864

Sijinwanzi	958322213	2022	114k	223085
ZhangbudadeCX	szy680717	3881	292.1k	21162

These soft advertisements publishers have a weak fan base, and the form of release will not reflect the traces of promotion. Merchants use the consumer psychology that consumers will believe in amateurs to promote. The conversion rate of this soft advertisements is relatively considerable.

2.2   The Discern of the Soft Advertisement

Due to the concealment of soft advertisements, there is no exact standard to measure whether a user shared content is soft advertisement or not. But it can be judged by the personal homepage of the note publisher. If a dressing note made in a sharing tone contains the drainage of one or more products, such as the store name, purchase screenshot, link, WeChat account, etc., go to the publisher's homepage. If the homepage has only one or a few such notes, it can be judged that it is not a soft advertisement; if more than 80% of the home page contains such notes, it can be judged as a soft advertisement.

2.3   Theory of Planned Behavior

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) evolved from Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which holds that human behavior is influenced by Attitude, Subjective Norm, and perception. The influence of three factors of Perceived Behavioral Control.

3   Characteristics of Xiaohongshu users

1. Every user in Xiaohongshu can be a sharer. No matter what the fan base is, the notes posted can be seen by users of the whole platform. Once they have a certain amount of page views, they may be invited by merchants to cooperate and publish soft advertisements.

2. The consumption decisions of Xiaohongshu users are deeply influenced by the content of the Xiaohongshu platform. According to the 2022 Xiaohongshu Business Ecology Conference, Xiaohongshu has monthly active 200 million users, more than 43 million users, and nearly 100 million searches per day, which is becoming an irreplaceable consumption decision entrance for young users.[6]

4   Theoretical models and research assumptions

The consumption behavior of Xiaohongshu users is a rational behavior, so TPB can be used to sort out the factors on consumers' purchase intention. [7] This paper adopts

the theory of planned behavior to study the factors that affect consumers' purchase intentions in Xiaohongshu's dressing notes. Referring to the three factors that affect people's behavior in the theory of planned behavior, this paper mainly studies attitude and perceived behavior control. Attitude can be measured by "demand" and "authenticity", and perceived behavioral control can be measured by "professionalism", "reliability" and "entertainment". The theoretical model is constructed as shown in the figure, and five research hypotheses are proposed.

According to the constructed theoretical model, we propose five factors that influence consumers' purchase intentions in Xiaohongshu's dressing notes.

H1: The user's commodity demand has a significant impact on the consumer's purchase intention;

H2: The authenticity of the note content has a significant impact on consumers' purchase intention;

H3: The reliability of the drainage platform in Soft advertisements Notes has a significant impact on consumers' purchase intention;

H4: The entertainment of note content has a significant impact on consumers' purchase intention;

H5: The professionalism of notes has a significant impact on consumers' purchase intention.

5 Research methods

The research method of this study is the questionnaire survey method, the questionnaire consists of 24 questions, and the questionnaire questions are divided into three parts. The first part is a survey of the respondents' basic information and online consumption status, such as gender, age, education, online shopping frequency, disposable monthly income, etc.; The investigation of the attention in the field, including the length of use, whether there is any consumption experience through the sharing of Xiaohongshu clothing bloggers, etc.; the third part is the investigation on what factors affect consumers' willingness to consume, including the degree of commodity demand , content authenticity, platform reliability, content entertainment, etc. The questions in the third part use a five-point Likert scale, with options set to collect data on consumers' perceptions of the hypothetical question.

6 Data analysis and hypothesis testing

The questionnaires of this study were produced through the "Questionnaire Star" platform, and the questionnaires were published in WeChat groups, Moments, QQ groups, Weibo and other online channels. A total of 230 questionnaires were received, of which 218 were valid questionnaires, with an effective rate of 95%.

6.1   Reliability Test

The data of this study were analyzed by IBM SPSS Statistics 24 software for reliability and validity of 218 valid questionnaires. Through reliability analysis, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the five variables were all greater than 0.7, indicating that the reliability of the questionnaire was high.

6.2   Hypothesis Verification

Through the correlation analysis of the questionnaire data, the user's commodity demand, the authenticity of the note content, the reliability of the drainage platform in Soft advertisements Notes, the entertainment of the note content, and the professionalism of the note are presented with consumers' purchase intention. significant positive correlation. According to the data analysis of the regression model, as shown in Table 1, the results show that: in the research hypothesis, the user's commodity demand, the authenticity of the note content, the reliability of the drainage platform in Soft advertisements Notes, and the entertainment of the note content are all significant. If it is less than 0.05, it means that the null hypothesis is rejected, which shows that the above factors have a significant positive impact on consumer purchasing behavior, indicating that the four hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H4 have been verified. The significance of the professionalism of notes is greater than 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis is not rejected, and this variable has no significant positive impact on consumer purchasing behavior.

Table 2. Results of Regression Analysis

Coefficient [a]

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		standardized coefficients		
	B	standard error	Beta	t	significance
1 (constant)	5.380	.227		23.707	.000
H1: The user's commodity demand degree	-.200	.081	-.177	-2.482	.014
H2: Authenticity of the notes	-.203	.090	-.166	-2.262	.025
H3: Reliability of the drainage platform	-.299	.090	-.248	-3.330	.001
H4: Entertainment of the notes	-.345	.086	-.264	-4.038	.000
H5：The professionalism of notes	.121	.072	.082	1.676	.095

7   Results analysis and discussion

According to the results obtained by hypothesis testing, this paper analyzes and discusses the research results from each variable.

7.1   The influence of the user's commodity demand on the consumer's purchase intention

Although the purchase intention of Xiaohongshu users is affected by soft advertisements, it is still a rational behavior based on their own conditions and their own needs. According to the data obtained by the questionnaire survey, the monthly disposable income is roughly proportional to the frequency of online shopping, and most of the respondents believe that only the products recommended in the Soft advertisements Notes are what they need, and then consumers will have the willingness to spend. . Referring to the theory of planned behavior, human behavior is the result of deliberate planning.

From this, we can conclude that even if Soft advertisements Notes can stimulate consumers to a great extent, only when such stimulation is based on consumers' de-

mand for commodities can such stimulation have the opportunity to be converted into consumption willingness.

7.2   The influence of the authenticity of note content on consumers' purchase intention

The authenticity of the content of the notes includes sharing the real use experience, and the pictures do not use excessive filters, etc. (The determination of "authenticity" here is explained in the questionnaire questions to avoid ambiguity). From the survey results, it can be concluded that the authenticity is high. The content of the notes is more likely to stimulate consumers' willingness to consume. Only real words and pictures can restore the style and function of the product itself to the maximum extent. Such note content not only allows consumers to better understand the whole picture of the product, but also stimulates the goodwill of consumers.

7.3   The influence of the reliability of the traffic drainage platform in Soft advertisements Notes on consumers' purchase intention

Merchants divert consumers to various e-commerce platforms through the soft advertising notes on Xiaohongshu. These e-commerce platforms include the Xiaohongshu app mall, as well as Taobao, Alibaba, JD.com and other well-known trading platforms. These platforms are more reliable in the minds of consumers, they are more likely to gain the trust of consumers, and consumers are more likely to generate purchase intentions. There are still some Soft advertisements Notes that try to divert consumers to some lesser-known apps. At this time, consumers may distrust these unknown apps and discourage them from purchasing.

7.4   The influence of the professionalism of notes on consumers' purchase intention

This research hypothesizes that the professionalism of notes has an impact on consumers' purchase intentions, but the data from the survey does not support this hypothesis. The reason for the analysis is that the user's ability to discriminate the professionalism of the note content is weak, and most respondents do not have the ability to judge the professionalism of the content from the data of the likes, favorites, and comments of the notes.

7.5   The influence of the entertainment of note content on consumers' purchase intention

According to the results of hypothesis testing, most users are more interested in more entertaining note content. There are a large number of various notes on Xiaohongshu. In similar notes, when the amount of information described is basically the same, entertainment Stronger and more personalized note content is easier to get more clicks

and read. Sufficient exposure, the so-called "traffic", is the basic condition for using Xiaohongshu Soft advertisements to drain traffic.

8   Conclusion

Xiaohongshu is one of the most popular e-commerce platforms in China at the moment. The way of promoting products through Xiaohongshu has become a popular way of attracting traffic. Through the conclusions drawn from this study, consumers will be stimulated by multiple factors in Soft advertisements Notes, and will generate purchase intentions. Therefore, it is suggested that merchants and KOLs should pay attention to publishing real content, choosing reliable platforms, and strengthening the entertainment of content when Xiaohongshu publishes soft advertisements, so as to achieve more effective realization of traffic monetization.

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