



Research on the Influence of Social Identity on Impulsive Consumption Behavior

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Abstract. With the constant change of consumption environment and the popularization of social media, impulsive consumption behavior has become an important issue in the study of modern consumer behavior. Based on the theory of social identity, combined with the relevant theories of psychology and behavioral economics, this paper analyzes how social identity prompts consumers to produce impulse buying behavior through group pressure and social media influence channels. The results show that the stronger an individual's sense of social identity is, the more likely he is to be influenced by the group behavior pattern, and the more inclined he is to make impulsive consumption decisions. Especially under the influence of social media, consumers tend to ignore rational consumption decisions in the process of pursuing group identity, which leads to the intensification of impulsive consumption behavior.

Keywords: social identity, impulsive consumption behavior, social media group influence

1 Introduction

In modern society, consumer behavior is affected by a variety of factors, among which social identity, as a key psychological and social factor, has gradually become the focus of researchers. Social identity refers to the sense of belonging and identity experienced by individuals in a specific social group, which can significantly affect individuals' emotions, attitudes and behavioral decisions. In the field of consumption, consumers often make purchase decisions not only based on their own needs and rational judgment, but also influenced by social environment, group pressure, cultural background and other factors. Therefore, the role of social identity in consumer behavior cannot be ignored.

In recent years, with the rise of social media and digital platforms, the way consumers interact with others and obtain information has undergone fundamental changes, and social networks have gradually become an important platform influencing consumer behavior. Through social media, individuals are more likely to get opinions and feedback from friends, relatives and even strangers, and are more likely to be affected by group behavior patterns and popular trends. Such group influence based on

social identity tends to drive consumers to make impulsive purchase decisions rather than decisions based on rational and actual needs.

Impulse spending is an unplanned, immediate purchase that is usually driven by external factors such as internal emotions, environmental stimuli or social pressure. Although impulse spending is not a new phenomenon, its frequency and influence are increasing as the modern consumption environment becomes more complex. The study shows that social identity has a particularly prominent impact on impulsive consumption behavior, especially in consumption scenarios where individuals are often significantly influenced by the behavior of the group of people around them. Social identity, group norms, and collective trends in virtual communities often drive consumers to make immediate rather than deliberate purchase decisions.

Therefore, an in-depth discussion on the mechanism of social identification on impulsive consumption behavior can not only enrich the connotation of consumer behavior theory, but also have important practical significance. For merchants, understanding how social identification affects consumers' impulse buying behavior can help them formulate more accurate marketing strategies and advertising, and enhance brand attractiveness and market competitiveness. At the same time, consumers themselves can make more rational and sustainable consumption choices by better understanding the impact of social identity on impulse spending^[1-2].

To sum up, the role of social identity in impulsive consumption behavior has not been fully studied and explained, especially in the new social media environment, this topic is particularly important and urgent. Therefore, from the perspective of social identity, this paper will explore its influencing mechanism on consumers' impulsive consumption behavior, providing valuable reference for relevant theories and practices.

2 Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

The impact of social approval on impulsive spending behavior has been widely discussed in the literature. Chen *et al.* (2021)^[3] found that consumer interaction on social platforms can prompt individuals to make impulsive purchase decisions under the pressure of social identity. Peer groups or celebrity effects in social networks can often increase consumers' sense of social identity, thus triggering impulsive consumption behaviors. Similarly, Lunardo *et al.* (2019)^[4] also pointed out that on social media or online shopping platforms, group interaction and group recommendation can enhance consumers' sense of identity with products, thus increasing their tendency to impulsive consumption. Lin & Lu (2010)^[5]'s research shows that an individual's sense of social identity will affect their interaction pattern with the group and further affect their consumption behavior. To sum up, the enhancement of social identity tends to promote individuals' dependence on group opinions, which in turn makes it easier to make impulse buying decisions. Propose hypotheses(See Figure 1):

Hypothesis 1: The stronger the sense of social identity, the more obvious the impulsive consumption behavior.

According to a study by Hu *et al.* (2019)^[6], social interactions and group trends in social media have a significant impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. Especially

on social media, consumers are often influenced by others' opinions and collective behavior patterns, and the enhancement of social identity will significantly promote impulsive consumption behaviors. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Group influence on social media enhances the effect of social identity on impulsive consumption behavior.

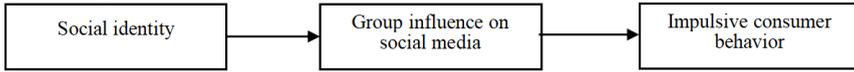


Fig. 1. Model diagram of this article

3 Research Design

3.1 Sample Selection and Data Collection

The sample group of this study is mainly young consumers aged 18-35, because this age group is generally active in social media platforms and has a high tendency of impulse consumption. Through the questionnaire survey, the relevant data of consumers' social identity, impulsive consumption behavior, group influence and so on in the process of using social media are obtained, and the consumption and use of social media are investigated in the questionnaire. According to the statistical requirements, the samples will be distributed through Credamo. A total of 500 valid questionnaires were returned. See Table 1 for details.

Table 1. Sample distribution

Sample characteristics		Number of people	Ratio
Gender	male	225	45%
	female	275	55%
Age	18-24	210	42%
	25-30	190	38%
	31-35	100	20%
Education	Bachelor's degree or above	425	85%
	Junior college	50	10%
	Other	25	5%
Online shopping frequency	1-2 times per month	250	50%
	3-5 times a month	150	30%
	More than 5 times a month	100	20%

3.2 Measurement of Variables

Social identity refers to an individual's sense of belonging and identity in a group, including two dimensions of group member identity and self-identity. This study will measure an individual's social identity by adapting the social identity scale proposed by Tajfel & Turner (1979)^[7]. The scale includes the dimensions of group identity, peer

influence and self-identity, and is scored using the Likert five-point scale. Impulse consumption behavior refers to the purchase behavior that consumers make without careful consideration, out of emotion, immediate stimulation or external environment influence. According to the impulsive consumption behavior scale proposed by Yu *et al* (2022)^[8], this study will measure the impulse consumption tendency of consumers through a series of questions, such as the abruptness of purchase decision, purchase regret, and irrational purchase motivation. Mediating variable: Group influence in social media means that consumers are influenced by the opinions, behaviors or feedbacks of friends, family members, network celebrities and other group members on social media platforms. Wechat, as one of the most used apps in China, is representative in social media. When people use wechat, they are often influenced by friends, family and circle of friends, and these groups have a great impact on people's consumption. Therefore, wechat is chosen as the social media for this article. The measurement in this paper borrows from Hu *et al.* (2019)^[6] scale on the influence of social media, including the dimensions of group recommendation, group feedback, and conformity effect in social networks.

4 Empirical Analysis

4.1 Reliability and Validity Check

To ensure the reliability and validity of the measurement tool, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on each measurement dimension using SPSS23. The core variables of this study include social identity, impulsive consumption behavior, social media group influence, etc. Each variable is measured using the existing scale. The correlation analysis results of each measurement dimension are as follows.

The social identity scale adopts the self-classification theory (SCT)^[7] proposed by Tajfel & Turner (1979), which includes group identity, belonging and self-identity. Measures include: "I consider myself to belong to the same group as my friends", "I am proud of my social group", etc. Reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$) and validity (AVE = 0.63) both performed well. Impulse consumption behavior: Yu *et al* (2022)^[8] impulse consumption scale was adopted. The measurement dimensions included abruptness of purchase decision and emotional drive. Reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.90$) and validity (AVE = 0.72) also passed the test. Based on Hu *et al.* (2019)^[6] Social Media Impact Scale, the measurement dimensions include conformity effect, group recommendation and group feedback, etc. Reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$) and validity (AVE = 0.70) also reached the standard.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing and Regression Analysis

4.2.1 Hypothesis 1: The Stronger the Sense of Social Identity, the More Obvious the Impulsive Consumption Behavior of Consumers.

In order to test this hypothesis, this paper adopts multiple regression analysis, with social identity as the independent variable and impulsive consumption behavior as the dependent variable. The regression model is as follows:

$$\text{Impulsive consumer behavior} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Social identity}) + \epsilon$$

The review results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Review the results

Variables	Regression coefficient (β)	Standard error	T-value	p-value
social identity	0.43	0.05	8.60	0.005
Intercept term	1.32	0.06	22.00	0.004

The regression coefficient was significant ($p < 0.01$), indicating that social identity had a significant positive effect on impulsive consumption behavior. In other words, the stronger the sense of social identity, the more likely consumers are to have impulsive consumption behaviors, which supports hypothesis 1.

4.2.2 Hypothesis 2: Group Influence in Social Media Enhances the Effect of Social Identity on Impulsive Consumption Behavior.

In order to examine the mediating effect of social media group influence on social identity and impulsive consumption behavior, the structural equation model (SEM) was used for analysis. In the model, social media group influence is used as the mediating variable, and the relationship between social identity and impulsive consumption behavior is modeled as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Social identity} &\rightarrow \text{Group influence on social media} \\ &\rightarrow \text{Impulsive consumer behavior} \end{aligned}$$

The results of SEM analysis are as follows: The path coefficient of the influence of social identity on social media groups ($\beta = 0.50, p < 0.01$) indicates that social identity has a significant positive impact on the influence of social media groups. The path coefficient of social media group influence on impulsive consumption behavior ($\beta = 0.45, p < 0.01$) indicated that social media group influence also had a significant positive impact on impulsive consumption behavior. The direct path coefficient of social identity on impulsive consumption behavior was also significant ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.01$). Meanwhile, through Bootstrap mediation effect test, the indirect effect obtained ($\beta = 0.22, p < 0.01$) indicates that social media group influence plays a partial mediating role between social identity and impulsive consumption behavior. The results showed that the influence of social media groups strengthened the effect of social identity on impulsive consumption behavior, thus supporting hypothesis 2.

5 Results Analysis and Discussion

First, the influence of social identity on impulsive consumption behavior. The empirical results show that the sense of social identity has a significant positive impact on consumers' impulsive consumption behavior. When consumers feel a strong sense of social identity, they are more inclined to be influenced by group behavior patterns, so as to make impulsive purchase decisions. This finding validates the important role of social identity in consumer behavior and conforms to the theoretical framework of existing studies (Liu & Li, 2020)^[9].

Second, the mediating role of social media group influence. Social media group influence plays a partial mediating role between social identity and impulsive consumption behavior. Especially on social media, individual social identity strengthens impulsive consumption behavior through group feedback, recommendation and other mechanisms. With the increasing influence of social media on consumer behavior, the role of group pressure in promoting impulsive consumption becomes more and more obvious, which is consistent with the findings of Hu et al. (2019)^[6].

6 Conclusion

Through empirical analysis, this paper verifies the impact of social identity on consumers' impulsive spending behavior and reveals the mediating effect of social media group influence. The research results provide a theoretical basis for merchants to formulate personalized marketing strategies and guide consumers to rational consumption, and also provide practical guidance for consumer education and behavior intervention.

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