

Exploring the Characteristics of “New Middle Class” Social Media Consumption in the Development of New Consumption in China: A Case Study of TikTok Social Media

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Abstract

This research aimed to study the influence of the digital economy and lenient financial policies on the growth of the Chinese new middle class, the impact of new consumption pressures and the deepening usage of social media on the consumption intentions of this group, and the factors influencing the consumption decisions of the Chinese new middle class on the "TikTok" social media platform. In this study, 21 subjects were selected, all of whom exemplified the characteristics of China's emerging middle class. The selection was conducted using purposive sampling.

The instrument for collecting data was semi-structured interviews. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and content analysis. The research results were found as follows: The platform's consumption environment significantly influences the consumption decisions of the new middle class; mutual perceptions among users play a key role in shaping their attitudes towards consumption on social media platforms; platform management systems and individual differences are also critical factors affecting their consumption behavior.

Keywords: Chinese New Middle Class; New Consumption; Social Media Platforms; Consumption Intentions; TikTok

Introduction

The development of China's economy and the continuous improvement in living standards have led to significant changes in consumption patterns among Chinese citizens. This shift is particularly evident in the emergence of the "new middle class," a demographic characterized by higher education, increased income, and refined tastes. According to the 53rd China Internet Report (2024 as of June 2023), the number of online shopping users in China is 884 million, accounting for 82.0% of total Internet users, marking a substantial increase from December 2022. This demographic shift is crucial as it reflects broader economic trends and social transformations within China. The new middle class prefers quality and personalization in their consumption choices, and they heavily rely on social media platforms like TikTok to inform their decisions. TikTok's algorithmic recommendations, influencer endorsements, and user-generated content significantly shape the consumption behaviors of this group, making it a vital area of study in understanding contemporary consumer behavior in China.

A literature review reveals several key concepts related to the consumption behaviors of the new middle class. Prior research has established that social media shapes consumer preferences and behaviors. However, there remains a notable gap in understanding how specific platforms, TikTok, influence the consumption intentions of this demographic. While studies have explored the general impact of social media on consumer behavior, few have focused on the unique characteristics of TikTok and its algorithmic influence on the new middle class's consumption. Additionally, existing literature often overlooks the interplay between digital economy factors—such as entrepreneurial opportunities and low-cost information exchange—and their role in facilitating the transition of low- and middle-income groups into the new middle class. This study aims to address these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of TikTok's influence on consumption behavior and the broader implications for the digital economy.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the consumption intentions of the new middle class on social media, specifically focusing on TikTok, and to analyze the underlying reasons for the formation of these consumption characteristics. By conducting in-depth interviews with the new middle class, this research aims to elucidate the logic behind their consumption behavior and explore the distinctive consumption characteristics of this group. The anticipated benefits of this research include a deeper understanding of social media's role in value co-creation within the digital economy and insights into how these consumption behaviors can inform marketing for targeting this demographic. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the broader field of consumption behavior research by addressing unresolved questions regarding the influence of social media on consumer decision-making processes.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the consumption characteristics of the new middle class on the TikTok platform.
2. To provide valuable insights that assist businesses and marketers in effectively targeting this emerging consumer group.

Literature Review

The Chinese "New Middle Class"

Juliang Arithmetics (2020) outlined the characteristics of China's new middle class, providing specific details on their income levels and lifestyle attitudes. This demographic typically includes individuals with an annual personal income exceeding 100,000 RMB or a household income above 200,000 RMB. They enjoy a stable living environment, hold independent values, and embrace an active lifestyle and open-minded consumption habits. Predominantly, this group consists of those born in the 1980s and 1990s. He and Judy (2019) conducted a comparative study between the consumption behaviors, industry attributes, and era-specific issues of the new and traditional middle classes. They concluded that the development of social media on the internet has provided new employment opportunities for the traditional middle-class and lower-income groups.

He and Judy (2019) conducted a comparative study on the consumption behaviors, industry attributes, and historical contexts of the new and traditional middle classes. They concluded that the development of social media has provided new employment opportunities for the traditional middle-class and lower-income groups.

Tian (2024) analyzed the characteristics of China's new middle class, summarizing the evolution of this group from the perspective of digital economic development. Notably, based on the full development of modern social media, Tian provided a rational explanation for the expansion of the new middle class in China.

In conclusion, the research on the Chinese "New Middle Class" underscores the significance of income levels, lifestyle attitudes, and social media's influence on shaping demographics. Understanding these factors is essential for comprehending the broader implications of China's consumer behavior and economic trends.

New Consumption Patterns in China

Zhongshen Zhonghuan Certified Public Accountants LLP (2021) explored shifts in lifestyle consumption among Chinese consumers, mainly focusing on changes before and after the pandemic. The report highlighted that approximately 75% of respondents indicated that their lifestyle consumption had changed after the pandemic. Post-pandemic consumption patterns primarily included experiential consumption, wellness and health, luxury goods, further education, and cultural activities.

The National Development and Reform Commission of China (2023) reported that in 2022, the total national online retail sales reached 13.79 trillion RMB, reflecting a 4% year-on-year increase. By June 2022, the number of online shopping users in China reached 841 million, underscoring the growing significance of online consumption in overall consumer behavior.

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasized the critical role of consumption as the "ballast" for economic growth, while also proposing new strategies to identify and expand key areas of resident consumption. This underscores the urgency of developing new consumption patterns.

The 53rd China Internet Report (2023) provided an in-depth analysis of China's internet, digital economy, and social media sectors in 2023. The report indicated that by June 2023, the number of online shopping users in China had reached 884 million, marking an increase of 38.8 million compared to December 2022, accounting for 82.0% of total internet users. Additionally, new sales models have driven the development of cross-border e-commerce and have bolstered the logistics infrastructure of rural e-commerce. The concept of internet consumption has become deeply ingrained in the public consciousness, extending its influence across diverse demographic groups.

Social Media and Social Media Consumption

Boyd and Ellison (2007) describe social media as an internet-based social service platform where users can create public or semi-public personal profiles within a networked system. Users can view information about their contacts and non-contacts, facilitating a high level of interactivity. The modes of interaction may vary slightly depending on the specific website's system.

Juliang Arithmetics (2020) conducted a data-driven analysis of the social behaviors of China's new middle class. The report suggests that this group emphasizes self-value, a trend expected to become increasingly prominent. Therefore, service providers need to consider how to deeply embed brand culture into their offerings as the consumption potential of the new middle class continues to rise.

Mazars (2021) notes that the number of middle-income individuals in China currently exceeds 300 million and is expected to continue growing, potentially surpassing 500 million by 2025. This group covers over half of China's urban population, with a total disposable income reaching 13.3 trillion RMB. In this context, the scale of the new middle class is anticipated to expand correspondingly. Consequently, the consumption behaviors of the middle-income group, including the evolved new middle class, are expected to significantly shape the trajectory of China's economic development.

In summary, the interplay between social media and consumption behaviors among the new middle class highlights the importance of understanding how digital platforms influence consumer preferences and values. As this demographic continues to grow, businesses and marketers must adapt their strategies to effectively with this evolving consumer base.

The review of existing literature on social media and consumption behaviors provides a theoretical framework that can guide this study in understanding the dynamics of the new middle class in China. By utilizing insights from Boyd and Ellison (2007) on the interactive nature of social media platforms and Juliang Arithmetics (2020) on the emphasis this demographic places on self-value, the study can explore how these factors influence consumption patterns. Additionally, the projections from Mazars (2021) regarding the middle-income group and its impact on economic development highlight the importance of examining the evolving consumption behaviors within this demographic. This theoretical foundation will enable the research to investigate the interplay between social media engagement and consumer

decision-making processes, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of how digital platforms shape the consumption landscape for the new middle-class China.

Research Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative approach to investigate the consumption behaviors of the new middle class within the TikTok user base. The research captures diverse perspectives across different regions of China by conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 24 participants selected through snowball sampling. The study's methodology includes axial coding to identify consumption patterns, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of this group's social media usage. The interview process was meticulously designed and refined based on existing literature, with all participants fully informed and their privacy protected throughout.

Content Scope

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the consumption logic and behaviors of the new middle class within the TikTok user base. Through semi-structured in-depth interviews, the research aims to comprehensively understand this group's consumption concepts and attitudes on social media (Creevey et al., 2022). The use of axial coding following open data analysis allows for the identification and summarization of consumption behavior patterns of the new middle class on social media (Molenaar et al., 2021).

The following table outlines the specific questions and flow of the interview process, focusing on the consumption experiences of the new middle class on the TikTok social media platform. The semi-structured interview approach ensures that all participants can share their views as comprehensively as possible. These questions are organized in a sequence that first explores participants' consumption habits on social media platforms, followed by their feelings and experiences during the consumption process (Kitchens et al., 2020). The questions also cover perceptions of advertising and marketing on social media platforms. The final question aims to uncover the differences in user experiences between traditional e-commerce and new social media-based e-commerce, identifying the reasons for the new middle class's dependence on and acceptance of social e-commerce. This semi-structured interview method facilitates the collection of qualitative data, and conducting interviews online is particularly compelling given the wide geographical distribution of participants.

Table 1. Interview Outline for Understanding the Consumption Tendencies of the New Middle Class on the TikTok Social Platform

| No. | Interview Outline |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Essential Personal Characteristics (income level, education, consumption channels, age) |
| 2 | Social Media Consumption Habits (frequency, preferred content categories, daily spending allocation) |
| 3 | Perspectives on Impulse Buying (attitudes towards impulse buying in online shopping) |
| 4 | Factors Affecting Emotional Response During Purchase (product factors, pre-, during, and post-purchase services) |
| 5 | Challenges Encountered in Social Media Shopping (including but not limited to the impact of cultural differences on information access) |
| 6 | Opinions on Current Social Media Platform Consumption Models |

This table presents the key topics and questions aimed at understanding the consumption tendencies of the new middle class on the TikTok social platform.

This study adheres to ethical research standards, ensuring that participants' personal privacy, including their names, income, and employment details, is protected. Before obtaining consent from the interviewees, they were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Only after ensuring that all participants were fully informed and had provided their consent were the one-on-one interviews conducted according to the process outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Interview Process on Social Media Consumption Attitudes of the New Middle Class

| No. | Interview Sub-Questions |
|-----|--|
| 1 | What types of products do you purchase most frequently on the TikTok social platform? |
| 2 | Which promotional methods on the TikTok platform most effectively trigger your desire to purchase? |
| 3 | Which part of the purchasing process (before, during, or after) do you value the most, and why? |
| 4 | What are the common reasons that deter you from making a purchase? |
| 5 | Compared to traditional e-commerce, what challenges have you encountered during your consumption experience on TikTok? Do you feel anxious, tense, or pressured? |
| 6 | How do you perceive TikTok's product promotion methods compared to traditional e-commerce? What are your feelings about them? |
| 7 | What factors influence your decision to purchase on the TikTok social platform rather than traditional e-commerce platforms? |

This table outlines the specific questions used in the interview process to explore the attitudes of the new middle class regarding social media consumption, focusing on their experiences with TikTok compared to traditional e-commerce platforms.

Population and Sample Scope

The study employs a snowball sampling technique to select 24 participants, most of whom are professionals in the education, finance, insurance, and manufacturing industries and

freelancers. These participants have a personal annual income of over 100,000 RMB or a household annual income of over 200,000 RMB and are aged between 20 and 40. The snowball sampling method facilitated the researchers' access to the social networks of the Chinese new middle class, enabling a deeper understanding of their characteristics (Noy, 2008).

Table 3 presents the basic information of the participants. This study involved 8 participants who are frequent consumers of the TikTok social platform and meet the characteristics of the new middle class. They come from various industries and differ in gender, age, and educational background. Below is a detailed description of the participants' statistics:

The participants' ages range from 28 to 37 years, with an average age of approximately 33 years. This age group is generally characterized by mature mental development and a certain level of cognitive ability. Among the 8 participants, the gender ratio is balanced; most come from different industries and occupations. Although their educational levels and personal incomes differ, all participants align with the user profile analysis of this demographic. The sample's diversity in these personal characteristics enhances the investigation of social media platform consumption traits. The participants have been using TikTok for an average of 3 to 4 years, are familiar with the basic operations of the TikTok social media platform, and have made multiple purchases on TikTok.

Table 3. Basic Information of Participants

| No. | Age | Gender | Industry | Education | Income (10,000 RMB) | TikTok Usage Duration |
|-----|-----|--------|--------------------------|------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| P1 | 28 | Female | E-commerce | Bachelor's | 20-24 | Over 3 years |
| P2 | 33 | Female | Finance & Insurance | Bachelor's | 25-29 | Over 4 years |
| P3 | 35 | Male | Education | Master's | 20-24 | Over 4 years |
| P4 | 33 | Female | Corporate Employee | Bachelor's | 25-29 | Over 4 years |
| P5 | 34 | Male | Automotive Manufacturing | Master's | 25-29 | Over 4 years |
| P6 | 34 | Female | Self-employed | Bachelor's | 25-29 | Over 4 years |
| P7 | 37 | Male | Education | PhD | 30-34 | Over 3 years |
| P8 | 36 | Male | Self-employed | Master's | 30-34 | Over 5 years |
| P9 | 34 | Female | Freelance | Bachelor's | 15-20 | Over 5 years |
| P10 | 35 | Male | Education | PhD | 20-24 | Over 4 years |
| P11 | 32 | Female | Education | Master's | 25-29 | Over 4 years |
| P12 | 29 | Male | Automotive Manufacturing | Master's | 20-23 | Over 4 years |
| P13 | 28 | Male | Freelance | Bachelor's | 15-20 | Over 3 years |
| P14 | 32 | Male | Media | Bachelor's | 18-20 | Over 3 years |
| P15 | 27 | Female | Freelance | Bachelor's | 15-20 | Over 5 years |
| P16 | 29 | Male | Automotive Manufacturing | Bachelor's | 25-29 | Over 4 years |
| P17 | 28 | Male | Education | Master's | 15-20 | Over 3 years |
| P18 | 28 | Male | Media | Master's | 15-24 | Over 5 years |
| P19 | 28 | Female | Media | Bachelor's | 20-25 | Over 5 years |
| P20 | 30 | Female | Media | Master's | 12-15 | Over 4 years |
| P21 | 33 | Male | Freelance | Master's | 25-29 | Over 5 years |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|----|------|--------------------------|------------|-------|--------------|
| P22 | 35 | Male | Media | Master's | 18-24 | Over 4 years |
| P23 | 35 | Male | Automotive Manufacturing | PhD | 30-35 | Over 5 years |
| P24 | 28 | Male | Finance & Insurance | Bachelor's | 10-15 | Over 4 years |

This table summarizes the essential demographic and professional characteristics of the 24 participants involved in the study, highlighting their diverse backgrounds and extensive experience with the TikTok platform.

Area Scope

Given the wide geographical distribution of the interviewees, the study utilizes digital media channels, such as online video conferences and voice calls, to conduct the interviews. This approach ensures that the research captures the diverse perspectives of the new middle class across different regions of China.

Time Scope

Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was recorded to facilitate subsequent data analysis. The interviews were conducted over a designated period to ensure the consistency and reliability of the data collected.

Document Study

Based on existing research findings and the characteristics of TikTok's social media marketing, the study developed an interview outline, further refined as the research progressed. The interview process was designed with reference to the structure outlined in Jiang et al. (2024) research report, ensuring that the interview questions were aligned with the study's objectives. Prior to the interviews, participants were thoroughly informed about the study's background, the concepts of social media, and consumption behavior. Consent was obtained from all participants, and their privacy was rigorously protected throughout the research process.

Research Results

After thoroughly understanding the content of all participants' interviews, the data was organized and analyzed using the thematic analysis method (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This technique is commonly used in qualitative research and is particularly effective for identifying and analyzing open data and summarizing content related to specific themes. By reviewing the interview content and organizing the materials, deeper insights into the participants' experiences and perspectives can be gained (Qiu & Lou, 2012).

This analysis applied coding by summarizing and categorizing the frequent mentions of specific keywords or concepts. For instance, when a participant mentioned "watching influencer videos makes me want to buy," it was coded as "influencer effect." Similarly, when a participant mentioned "easily accessing more products," it was coded as "customer satisfaction influences shopping frequency." All opinions shared by participants were screened and coded in sequence, ensuring that multiple participants' perspectives supported each theme. Finally, a theoretical analysis was conducted around the extracted themes, incorporating support from referenced literature and data analysis. This approach ensures that the analysis is comprehensive and grounded in empirical evidence.

This analytical method greatly aids in exploring the consumption characteristics of the Chinese new middle class on the TikTok social media platform. The open data coding analysis formed four dimensions: platform consumption environment characteristics, mutual perception behaviors, platform management systems, and individual consumer differences. Each dimension will be analyzed and explained, focusing on the consumption behaviors of the new middle class on the TikTok social platform.

Objective 1. The results of the research were as follows: The consumption intentions of the new middle class are influenced by the platform's consumption environment, which includes the influencer effect, platform management, the quality of video content, and the dominance of lifestyle service consumption.

Objective 2. The research results were as follows: Practitioners must strictly adhere to the platform's transaction guidelines, enhance the quality of advertising production, leverage the traffic economy generated by Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs), and focus on scenario-based marketing.

Platform Consumption Environment

In the responses from participants, most mentioned the importance of the platform's consumption environment, with particular emphasis on price differences, which aligns with market economics and the typical consumer behavior logic. Additionally, the impact of interactive design was highlighted. The social media consumption model differs from traditional sales models. For instance, in the context of live-stream marketing, the effectiveness of the live-stream significantly influences fan retention. The key stages that affect fans' purchasing decisions are attention, interest arousal, and search. High-quality content, incentive mechanisms, and the influence of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs), along with positive interaction and trust, can significantly and positively impact fans' purchasing decisions (Chen, 2022).

Additionally, during the coding process, four instances were recorded with the theme of "exaggerated promotion." TikTok uses advertisements to guide users' consumption, with diverse content and formats of these ads. As production capabilities have advanced and AI-driven creative software has been increasingly utilized, there have been instances where product promotion videos are overly packaged. This has, to some extent, increased the pressure on participants to make purchases, as shown in Figure 1.

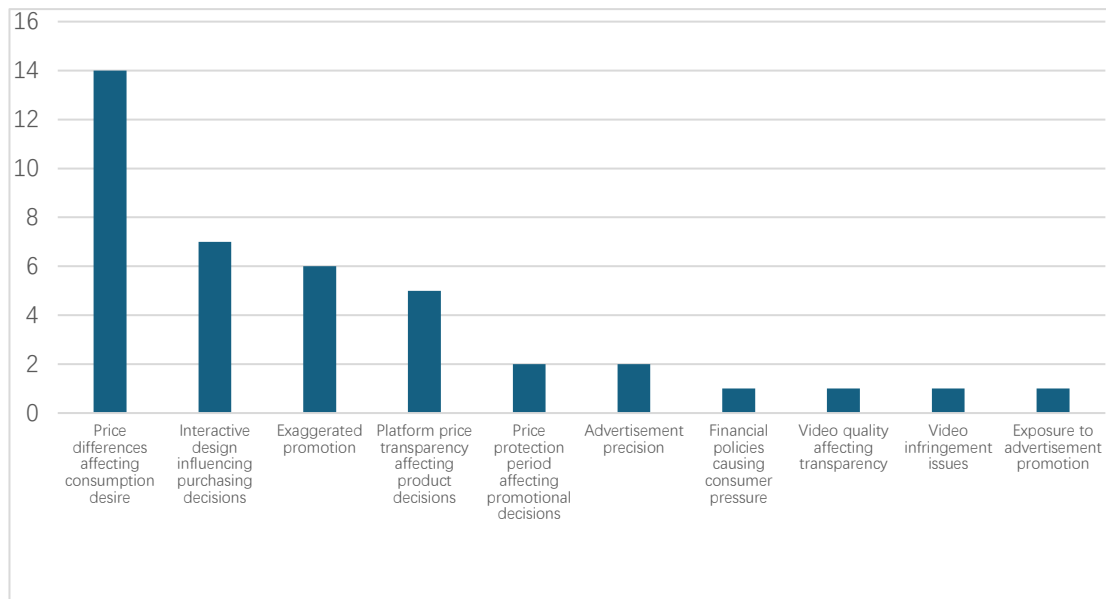


Figure 1. Platform Consumption Environment

Mutual Perception Behaviors

The consumption logic on the TikTok social platform is based on the AISAS model (Xue et al., 2021), a new consumption model that differs from traditional user consumption logic. While the core of marketing remains advertising, there is a greater emphasis on the interactive relationship with users, highlighting the active role of consumers (Krishen et al., 2021). The thematic analysis of participants' views revealed that they highly value the mutual perception attributes of the TikTok social platform, which aligns well with TikTok's inherent "social" nature.

In addition to the significant influence of the "influencer effect" on participants' purchase intentions, the interactive behaviors between users also enhance their sense of participation and user stickiness, making them more likely to engage in purchasing while browsing TikTok content (Wang, 2015). Therefore, within the theme of mutual perception, participants are influenced by other users. These influences are derived from other users' multidimensional evaluations of products, including personal usage experiences and the sense of peer pressure when "someone around them is using or buying" a product. This social pressure can affect participants' consumption decisions, making them more inclined to purchase popular or trendy products and services, as illustrated in Figure 2.

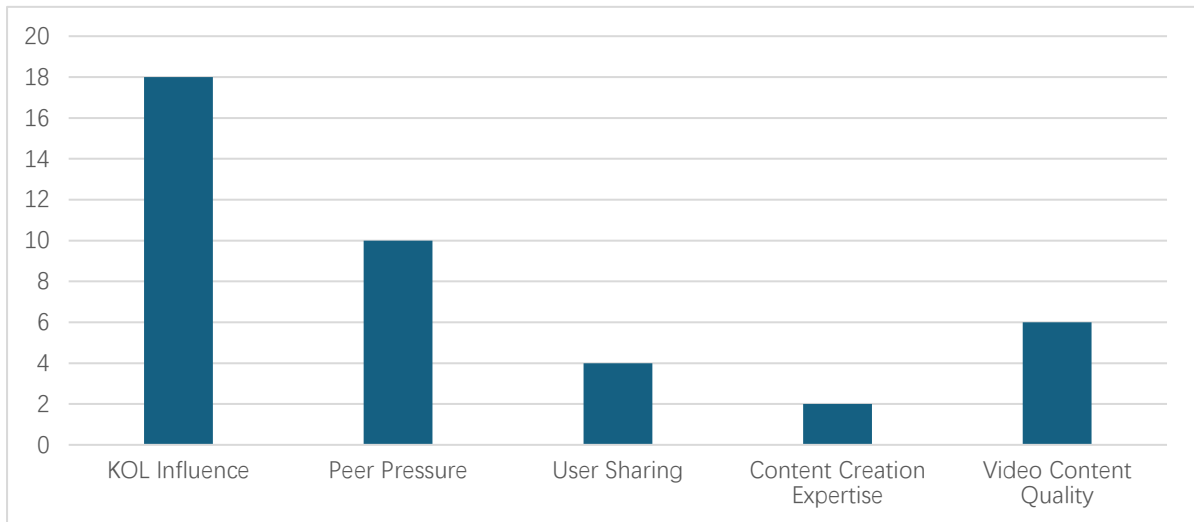


Figure 2. Mutual Perception Behaviors

Platform Management Systems

Regarding the importance of the consumption process, participants generally expressed that they place significant emphasis on the after-sales aspect of their purchases. The after-sales service and the platform's management policies toward merchants greatly influence participants' purchasing decisions. During the coding process, issues related to after-sales problems that were not resolved were recorded five times. These included concerns such as "product not matching description," "loopholes in merchant management," "difficulty in providing evidence for rights protection," and "inconsistencies in product information." This indicates that participants are particularly concerned about after-sales issues on the TikTok social platform, as illustrated in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Platform Management System

Individual Consumer Differences

In the social environment of TikTok, individual differences significantly influence users' reading habits and the content they engage with. This is largely due to TikTok's content recommendation algorithm, which delivers relevant content based on users' language, behavior, and preferences. This personalized recommendation mechanism more easily stimulates consumer interest, helping them discover products or services they are interested in, thereby triggering their desire to purchase. In interviews with the 8 participants, the majority expressed recognition and acceptance of this recommendation mechanism, though they also clearly indicated a preference for rational consumption.

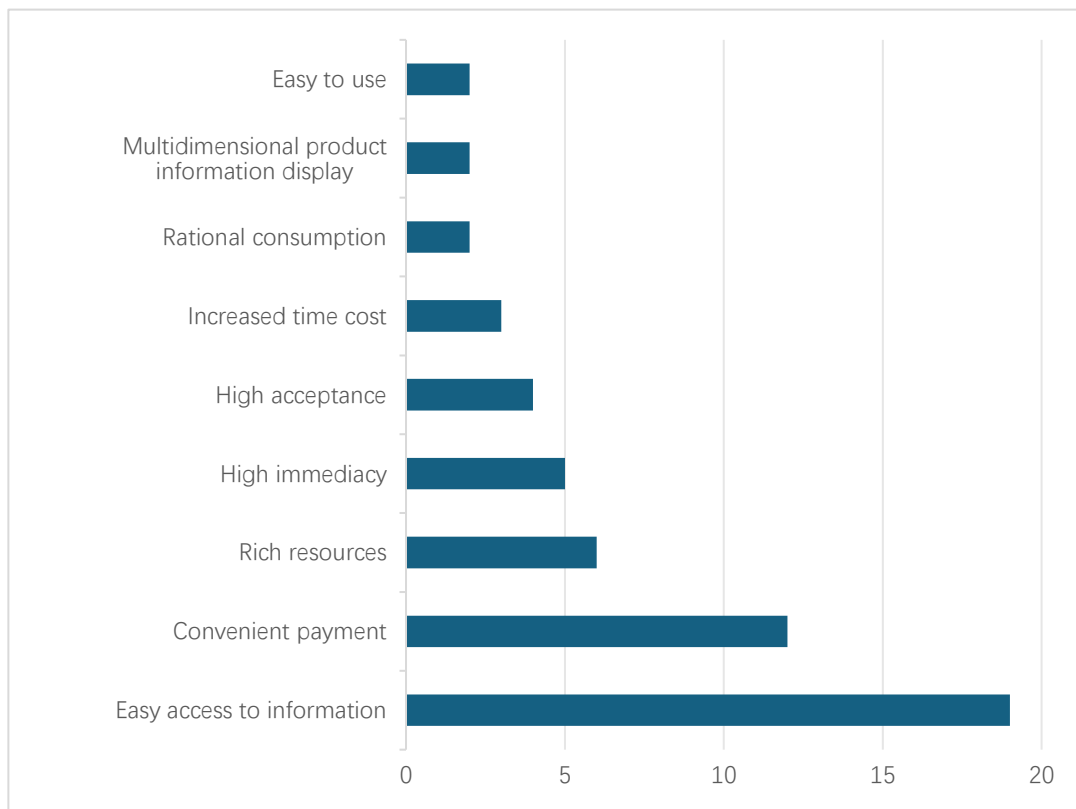


Figure 4. Individual Consumer Differences

Conclusion

The research findings reveal several key characteristics of consumption behaviors among the new middle class on social media, particularly on the TikTok platform. Platform Consumption Characteristics indicate this demographic effectively adapts to TikTok's mechanisms, demonstrating a notable acceptance of advertisement promotions. Their consumption behavior is characterized by planned and rational decision-making, reflecting a thoughtful approach to purchasing.

Mutual Perception Behaviors suggest that the new middle class perceives TikTok as a highly usable platform and values social attributes. They possess a solid understanding of the platform's promotional mechanisms and content production, which leads them to actively

engage with the opinions and attitudes of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and the promotional content presented. Regarding shopping philosophy, they prioritize product practicality and prefer video content that showcases product features from different perspectives. These videos, often produced by KOLs focusing on internet marketing, significantly amplify the influencer effect.

Furthermore, Platform Management Systems highlight the importance of the after-sales process in their consumption experiences on TikTok. While they appreciate promotional content, the quality of after-sales service plays a crucial role in purchasing decisions. Lastly, Individual Consumer Differences reveal that the consumption habits of the new middle class primarily focus on local services, emphasizing contemporary lifestyle needs. Their consumption categories predominantly include food, beauty services, 3C electronics, skincare products, and other daily necessities. This group demonstrates considerable purchasing power and shows strong consumption facilitated by social media.

Recommendations

Theoretical Recommendations

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the consumption characteristics of the Chinese class on the TikTok social platform. Three key factors were identified that influence their consumption behaviors:

Impact of Platform Consumption Environment and Management Systems: The new middle class demonstrates strong purchasing intent and capability on social media platforms, characterized by a distinctly planned approach to consumption. This behavior can be attributed to the display of product attributes and price comparison features available on these platforms, which enable consumers to effectively compare prices before making purchases. TikTok's B2C (Business-to-Consumer) sales model further enhances the shopping experience by emphasizing consumer satisfaction. The platform implements stricter merchant oversight, such as requiring product price protection periods, which stimulates consumer decision-making, reduces return rates, and encourages multidimensional user reviews. This theoretical framework can guide future research on consumer behavior in social commerce environments.

Impact of Mutual Perception on Purchase Intentions: Li (2021) defines social commerce as a business model that utilizes social media platform sales through interactions between consumers and businesses. On TikTok, this model has evolved with Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) acting as intermediaries between businesses and users. The positive influence of KOLs enhances the effectiveness of corporate advertising promotions. For the new middle class, the TikTok influencer effect and the creation of quality OL content significantly impact their purchasing decisions. Future research should explore the dynamics of KOL influence in shaping consumer behavior on social media platforms.

Impact of Individual Differences on Purchase Intentions: Jin et al. (2021) and other researchers categorize the dimensions of social media marketing that influence consumer purchasing behavior into embedded experiential marketing, event marketing, and interactivity. In the context of evolving consumption patterns, the purchasing decisions of the new middle class are influenced not only by these objective factors but also by their perceived value.

Individual differences manifest in consumption motives, habits, behaviors, and psychology. This demographic emphasizes quality, purs, and customization and adeptly utilizes online shopping platforms to meet their needs while maintaining a rational and cautious attitude throughout consumption. Future studies should consider these individual differences to understand consumer behavior in social media contexts better.

Practical Recommendations

Based on the findings, several practical recommendations can be made for businesses and marketers targeting the middle class on TikTok:

Enhance User Experience: Businesses should focus on improving the overall shopping experience on TikTok by leveraging the platform's features, such as interactive content and user-friendly interfaces. This can include optimizing product displays and facilitating easy price comparisons to cater to the demographic's planned consumption behavior.

Leverage KOL Partnerships: Brands should collaborate with KOLs to create engaging, high-quality content that resonates with the new middle class. By utilizing KOLs as trusted sources of information, businesses can enhance their advertising effectiveness and influence purchasing decisions.

Focus on After-Sales: Given the importance of after-sales processes highlighted in the research, businesses should prioritize customer service and support. Implementing robust after-sales policies can enhance consumer satisfaction and foster brand loyalty among the new middle class.

Personalization and Customization: Companies should consider offering personalized and customizable products to meet the unique needs of the new middle class. This approach can enhance perceived value and drive purchasing intentions.

By implementing these recommendations, businesses can effectively engage with the new middle class on TikTok and adapt to their evolving consumption behaviors.

New Knowledge

This research has revealed significant insights into the differences between social media development and management models and those abroad. These differences arise from various factors, including China's cybersecurity management regulations, substantial individual differences among users, regional cultural variations, and divergent consumption philosophies on social media.

New consumption patterns are crucial in driving regional economic growth. Understanding patterns is essential for promoting consumption, particularly considering the Chinese new middle class as the most significant consumer group.

This study elucidates the consumption habits, purchasing power, and user feedback of the Chinese new middle class on the TikTok platform. The findings indicate that this holds considerable consumption potential, but challenges remain in encouraging them to make more purchasing decisions.

The new middle class exhibits strong personal feelings regarding advertising promotion methods. They demonstrate a high willingness to accept Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs)

promotions and show significant acceptance of soft advertisements embedded in produced short videos (Niu et al., 2023).

As profit-driven entities within social media, businesses should optimize product advertisements and engage in diverse collaboration strategies with KOLs. This includes but is not limited to, IP incubation and commercial partnerships.

Finally, leveraging video platforms' traffic dividends can further enhance the consumption intentions of the new middle class.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study offers valuable insights and addresses some theoretical gaps, it also has limitations, such as sample size, research methods, and timeliness. Future research can address these limitations by expanding the sample size, incorporating qualitative research, and updating literature and data sources. These approaches can enhance the comprehensiveness of the study in this area.

Finally, this research has identified the factors influencing the consumption decisions of the Chinese new middle class on the TikTok social media platform, providing useful references for businesses to better understand this group's consumption intentions.

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