

Insights into Commercial Promotion on Social Media Platforms Based on College Students' Usage Habits

Ning Bai

School of Philosophy and Sociology, Jilin University, Changchun, 130000, China

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Abstract: As a unique and influential group, college students' usage habits on social media have a great impact on the commercial promotion on the social media platforms. The present study starts with the usage time and time period, and the usage motivations of the college students to summarize and discuss the possible impact of users' usage habits on social media commercial promotion by sorting out the existing studies. Then, based on the above analysis, the optimization suggestions could be proposed for social media commercial promotion addressing the particularity of the college student users. The study results show that advertisers should appropriately reduce the quantity of advertisements on social media according to the usage time of the college students, and provides more precise delivery of advertisement during specific time periods. In addition, based on the usage motivations and needs of college students, the entertainment and sociability of promotion should be improved.

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the college students have gradually become an important audience group for major social media platforms. Unlike users of other age groups, college student users typically exhibit longer usage time, more regular usage patterns, and motivations that lean more towards entertainment and sociability. As a user group with high activity level and high consumption potential in social media platforms, their unique usage habits have a great impact on the content and format of commercial promotion. Only by starting from the subjective feelings of college student users can advertisers optimize the positive impact of advertising on the college student demographic, improve acceptance, and thus realize the original intention of advertising. Therefore, studying the social media usage habits of college students is an important means to improve the effectiveness and accuracy of promotion. In the existing study discussing the relationship between usage habits and the acceptance of advertisements on social media, few of them focused on the user group of college students. The present study organizes and summarizes recent related research, aiming to analyze the uniqueness of the college student demographic and the impact of their usage habits on commercial promotions within social

media. The goal is to guide the healthy development of social media advertising and enhance the advertising experience for college student users.

2 THE IMPACT OF USAGE HABITS ON THE COMMERCIAL PROMOTION WITHIN SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

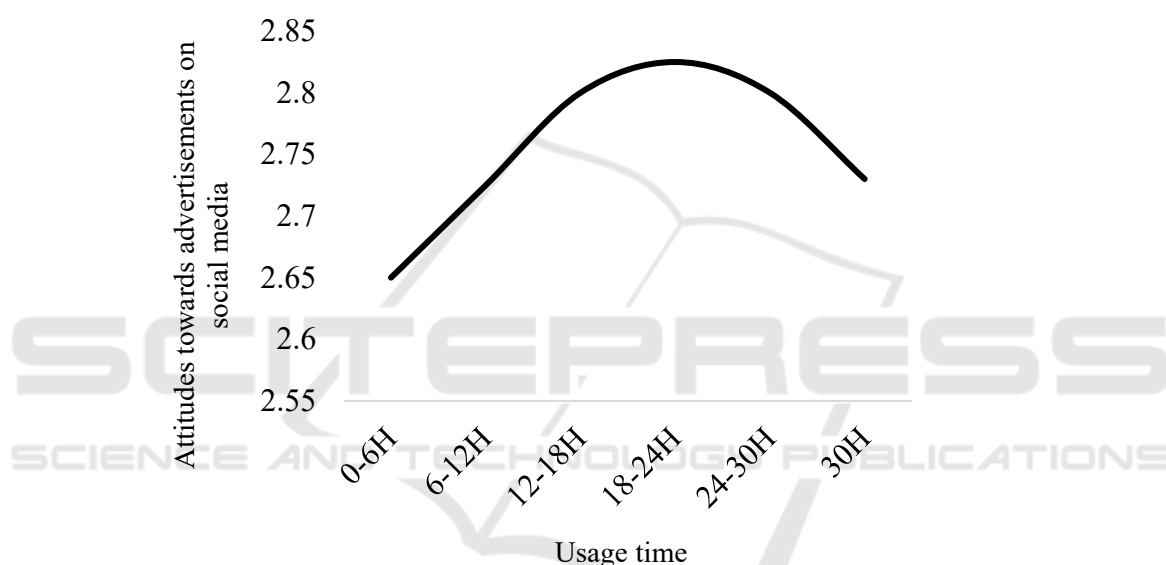
The present study refines social media usage habits into two parts: usage time and time period, usage motivations; at the same time, it breaks down the effectiveness of commercial promotions into advertising acceptance which means consumers' attitudes and behavioral responses to advertising content, and the degree of impact advertisements have on consumer decisions.

2.1 Usage Time and Time Period

In order to study the influence of social media usage time on commercial promotion, the survey data on "The relationship between social media usage time and advertising attitudes" in a certain study was

based on. The survey uses the quota sampling method to sample quotas for three demographic factors, including province, gender and age. At the same time, different regions and age groups are assigned different distribution weights based on regional differences and network user structure differences, which enhances the practical significance of the questionnaire. According to the data of this survey, the relationship between social media usage time and attitudes towards advertising is an inverted U-shaped curve opening downward (Figure 1). This indicates that as social media usage time increases, attitudes towards advertising initially improve gradually, but after reaching a certain point, they begin to decline progressively (Xuan & Lin,

2019). In a duration of proper using, the users' attitudes towards advertisements will become more and more positive with the increase in usage time; while surpassing the inflection point, which is more than 18 hours of usage per week, users' attitudes towards advertisements and usage time become negatively correlated. Attitudes grow increasingly negative as usage time continues to increase (Xuan & Lin, 2019). At the same time, in another study, the writer pointed out a similar opinion, "Facebook activity negatively correlates with mood". This kind of negative mood is also a significant factor influencing people's attitudes towards advertisements (Sagioglou & Greitemeyer, 2014).



Alt Text for Graphical Figure[31 words]: A line chart showing attitudes towards advertisements on social media on the y-axis, which first increase and then decrease as usage time (hours) rises on the x-axis, peaking at 18 hours.

Figure 1. Inverted U-shaped curve model

In addition, besides the impact usage time has on attitudes towards advertisements, the usage time period is also a significant factor that advertisers need to consider. According to the latest report on China's internet development, the usage time periods of various social media applications exhibit significant differences and patterns, with peak usage times closely related to users' daily behaviors (CNNIC, 2025). For example, the peak usage time of food delivery apps is pronounced, which has a strong correlation with the users' dining hours.

2.2 Usage Motivations

In order to learn about the consumers' attitudes towards advertisements on social media platforms, advertisers should consider their usage motivations at first (Lin, Chen, Xuan, & Cheng, 2022). According to Statista, by April 2024, the top social media platforms by global usage are Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram (Statista, 2024). Moreover, these three platforms have one thing in common: they combine both entertainment and sociability. So, a preliminary conclusion can be drawn: users primarily use social media platforms to fulfill their entertainment needs and social needs. Most social media users are easier to have positive attitudes towards those platforms that

can satisfy the two needs, and this positive attitude towards social media may translate into same attitudes towards advertisements on social media.

In order to prove the importance of entertainment in social media advertising, according to a paper which explores three cognitive factors influencing users' attitudes towards websites--perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment and perceived irritation, they find out that perceived entertainment is positively related to attitude towards the site through subsequent analysis (Gao & Koufaris, 2006). And being interesting can give a reason for customers to engage with it (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Furthermore, another study demonstrated the importance of fulfilling social needs through the analysis of questionnaire data. The data results reveal that peer influence on social media is positively correlated with attitudes towards social media advertising, that is, the greater the social media peer influence, the more positive and receptive users are to social media advertising (Lin, Chen, Xuan, & Cheng, 2022).

3 INSIGHTS INTO COMMERCIAL PROMOTION BASED ON THE UNIQUENESS OF THE COLLEGE STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC

Based on the above analysis, the present study has preliminarily learned about the impact usage habits have on commercial promotion on social media. Next, the present study aims to conduct a detailed analysis based on the uniqueness of the college student demographic, thereby providing insights for advertisers on how to promote effectively on social media platforms targeting this group.

3.1 Based on the Impact of Usage Time and Time Period

According to Statista, compared with other age groups, the college student demographic have longer usage time on social media platforms weekly (Statista, 2024). The majority of college student users exceed the inflection point of 18 hours per week on the U-shaped curve. According to the above analysis, after surpassing the inflection point, users' attitudes towards advertising and usage time become negatively correlated. Which means that attitudes become increasingly negative as usage time increases

(Xuan & Lin, 2019). Extending from this finding, for the college student demographic, the greater the volume of social media commercial promotions, the stronger the potential negative attitudes they may evoke. Therefore, the advertisers should appropriately reduce the quantity of ineffective advertisements and lower the frequency of their placements in college student demographic.

In the situation of reducing the quantity of advertisements, the advertisers can focus on the impact of usage time period to achieve better promotional outcomes.

The daily routines of college student users are characterized by strong regularity and high repetitiveness, with each time period generally corresponding to specific types of activities. Thus, advertisers can utilize the correlation between specific usage periods and the particular activities of college students, aiming to align commercial promotions with these usage periods for targeted advertising. For example, increase the volume of food delivery advertisement placements during the peak meal times; expand promotions for study and daily life products before the start of the school term, etc.

3.2 Based on the Impact of Usage Motivations

Considering that users from different groups have varying motivations, the impact of fulfilling these motivations on attitudes towards social media advertisements may also differ across groups. So it is necessary to take the heterogeneity of college student social media users into consideration, examining the unique characteristics of social media advertising targeted at this demographic. Among the user bases of the world's top three most popular social media platforms--Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, the 18-30 age group accounts for the highest proportion, indicating that these three platforms are highly popular among the majority of college student users (Statista, 2024). So college student users' needs of entertainment and sociability may even be higher than other age groups. The advertisers should take full advantage of this point, enhance the entertainment and sociability of commercial promotion on social media platforms.

In terms of entertainment, given the recent popularity of TikTok, Snapchat and other short video platforms among college students, the commercial promotion on social media can also draw inspiration from the format of short videos. Advertisers can design concise and fast-paced content, utilize rapidly changing scenes and music to meet users' needs for

quickly accessible entertainment information. In the purpose of capturing the attraction of college student users, what cannot be ignored is the need to integrate content that relevant to college students. Advertisers should listen to them and find out what they might find interesting and enjoyable. For example, Apple's short video advertisement *Behind the Mac – University* showcases real-life scenarios of college students using Macs, recreating the chaotic scenes of college life (such as staying up late, rushing to complete assignments), enhances the humorous effect. At the same time, with the help of lively background music and profound emotional resonance, it successfully captures the attention of the college students.

In terms of sociability, the above analysis shows that the greater the peer influence on social media, the more positive users' attitudes towards social media advertisements and the higher their acceptance. Obviously, so do the college student users. Due to the limitations in age and experience, etc., college students may be even more easier to be influenced by peers and external factors. Meanwhile, compared with traditional promotion methods, firms can achieve more efficient and cost-effective direct engagement with end consumers by using social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The speed of dissemination has increased, and the level of mutual influence among users has achieved a qualitative leap. In view of the characteristics of the demographic and the era, advertisers should enhance the interactivity and engagement of advertisements, encouraging college student users to create and share content more actively. An engagement of one user is highly likely to trigger the involvement of their peers, thereby creating a ripple effect that drives mutual engagement. So the key discussion points become ways to enhance college student users' engagement with advertising interactions and to generate broader discussions about promotions within college students.

From the perspective of content design, content that closely relates to daily campus life and resonates emotionally with college students is more likely to inspire their sense of identification and desire to share. For example, incorporate campus culture and trending topics into advertising content by appropriately integrating popular campus memes. In 2020, Burger King launched a "Student Whopper". The advertisement depicted college students during finals week, burning the midnight oil to complete assignments, who then revive after eating the "Student Whopper". Or the advertisers can choose to be a storyteller. A study has proved through experiments that narrative in storytelling advertising

improves branding and promotional efforts. The main character's experiences resonate deeply with the audience, as they see reflections of their own lives in the character's experiences--a phenomenon best explained by the concept of perceived similarity in identification (Kang, Hong, & Hubbard, 2020). So telling some stories about the campus life may provide valuable insights. From the perspective of presentation format, to enhance the dissemination and engagement within the college student demographic, advertisers should utilize the key role of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs)--an influential peer figure. While the reach of individual ordinary users is limited, the influence radius of KOLs carries significant weight and yields greater impact. Based on a study about the advertising effectiveness, KOL has a larger follower base which amplify the reach of commercial messages, thereby harnessing the scalable potential of word-of-mouth (WOM) communication (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). Also, KOL can enhance electronic word-of-mouth and increase purchase intentions (Eelen, Özturan, & Verlegh, 2017). The practice of personally testing products and promoting them to the public substantially bolsters the credibility of advertising (Sokolova, & Kefi, 2019). Moreover, according to the emerging adulthood theory, college students which are between 18 to 25 are in the crucial phase of identity exploration, and the rebellious psychology serves as a manifestation of their self-discovery and challenge to social norms (Arnett, 2000). That is why one-way communication modes in advertising diminish audience receptivity, while user-generated content and word-of-mouth can generate significant sales impact without the high costs (Stephen & Galak, 2012). It is necessary to engage with the college student demographic and foster two-way interaction. Translate from giving users the "answers" to asking for "answers" from the users. Recent years, numerous advertising campaigns have successfully facilitated two-way interaction. The app "Nike Run Club" launched by Nike serves as an exemplary case in point. It can keep track of running data, and enables users to share run live and keep their friends and family running alongside them. Rather than using one-way communication, Nike expands brand influence through social sharing and peer-to-peer influence on social media.

4 CONCLUSION

The present study reveals that, the usage time of college student users on social media is longer than

other age groups, which may cause stronger resistance and lower acceptance towards social media advertisements. Thus, focusing on college student demographic, the advertisers should reduce the quantity of advertisements appropriately and conduct targeted placements based on specific usage periods to optimize promotional effectiveness. Furthermore, the present study finds that college students exhibit stronger usage motivations rooted in entertainment and sociability, and demonstrate higher acceptance and engagement levels towards social media advertisements that fulfill their needs for recreation and interpersonal interaction. So the advertisers ought to take prompt action to enhance the entertainment value of advertisements and utilize the mutual peer effects within college student demographic to attract greater engagement. The present study focuses on college students as the target user group. By recognizing their pivotal role in social media ecosystems and substantial consumption potential, it reveals how these factors can enhance social media advertising's influence on purchasing decisions, thereby demonstrating considerable commercial value. However, the present study does not cover all potential variables that may affect usage habits, such as family background and personal interests, which may cause the risk of one-sided analysis. In addition, usage habits of college students on social media are in a state of dynamic change, so the present study may exhibit lag effects. Future studies should comprehensively incorporate various usage habit influences, conduct phased dynamic monitoring, and ensure data timeliness.

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