

A Study on the Impact of Social Media Use on Experiential Consumption Behavior

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Abstract: As an important area in consumer behavior research, experiential consumption is influenced by multiple factors, including personalized push, user-generated multimedia content (UGMC), relationship strength, and fear of missing out (FOMO). The study focuses on travel consumption scenarios and explores how these factors affect consumers' decision-making process and consumption experience. Research shows that personalized push and UGMC can effectively improve information acquisition efficiency and decision-making convenience, and strong relationships enhance consumers' trust in information. However, these factors may also bring about negative problems such as information overload, psychological burdens, and irrational consumption. This study provides an important reference for the theoretical development and practical application of experiential consumption. It not only deeply demonstrates the impact of social media on experiential consumption, but also has guiding significance for practice. By analyzing the characteristics of experiential consumption, the study provides effective strategies for local cultural tourism promotion. At the same time, the study also encourages consumers to look at information and popular trends rationally and pay more attention to in-depth participation in cultural activities to obtain a better experience. These suggestions provide new ideas for promoting the development of experiential consumption and improving the local cultural and tourism economy.

1 INTRODUCTION

With the in-depth development of the Internet, the digital economy has emerged, and social media has gradually become an indispensable part of people's consumption decisions. Whether it is looking for travel guides on social media before daily consumption, or sharing records on social media after consumption, social media is quietly changing traditional consumption patterns. At the same time, as economic development benefits all people and per capita disposable income rises, people's needs have shifted from material and cultural needs to needs for a better life. This change has led to people paying more and more attention to experiential consumption. The rise of experiential consumption has made consumers no longer focus only on the use value of the product itself but on the emotional satisfaction and social identity recognition brought by consumption. The rise of this experiential consumption trend coincides with the digital economy driven by the rise of Internet social media.

2 THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON EXPERIENTIAL CONSUMPTION

This section will analyze the impact of social media on experiential consumption from two perspectives: social media platforms and consumers themselves.

2.1 The Role of Social Media Platform Development in Promoting the e-Economy

2.1.1 Personalized Push Notifications on Social Media Platforms

Online retailers are using personalized push technology to create context-specific stimuli for users to entice shoppers to make impulse purchases. Personalized advertising customizes content based on user personal information such as age, gender, preferences, etc., providing more targeted advertising to improve consumers' perception of products. As social media provides a continuous stream of data on

the likes and preferences of billions of users, personalized advertising has become a common way for digital advertisers to communicate effectively with consumers, driving the growth of commerce on social media (Setyani et al., 2019).

Highly personalized push notifications can better reflect user needs and are considered to have higher information quality and accuracy. Through similarity heuristics (interests are considered credible if they are similar to the content of the advertisement) and auxiliary heuristics (ads are considered credible if they help people find things they like). Consumers can enhance the connection between themselves and brands through perceived personalization, thus developing a favorable impression of the brand. For example, when a consumer who pursues fashion and high-quality life sees an advertisement for a high-end watch, he or she will think that the brand can reflect his or her identity and taste, and thus develop a favorable impression of the brand (De Keyzer et al., 2022). Related research shows that personalized ads can increase click-through rates by 670% compared to non-personalized ads. Therefore, it can be considered that personalized push notifications on social media platforms are a key factor in promoting user purchases (Beales, 2010).

2.2 Impact of User-Generated Multimedia Content (UGMC) on Social Media Platforms

User-generated multimedia content (UGMC) refers to multimedia content created independently by consumers or users. Including but not limited to pictures, audio, video, animation, and interactive content, usually used in social media or other digital platforms and have certain marketing attributes.

UGMC positively influences experiential consumption through multiple dimensions, showing a significant effect, especially in the context of tourism consumption. UGMC can enhance the sensory experience. Through images, videos, or texts shared by users, consumers can indirectly experience the visual, auditory, and even taste experience of the destination, thereby stimulating a positive flow experience. UGMC has had a profound impact on experiential consumption (such as tourism, catering, entertainment, etc.) through authentic and diverse information delivery. UGMC can stimulate emotional experiences. The emotional experiences shared by users about past tourism services, such as pleasant service experiences or wonderful travel stories, can trigger emotional resonance among potential consumers. This emotional connection will

strengthen their positive perception of the new destination during the decision-making process. Social media is often used by tourists to gather information about travel destinations, travel ideas, or inspiration. For example, research data shows that YouTube is a popular media channel that provides travel inspiration for subscribers of all ages. About 50% of subscribers are aged 25-64, and 38% are aged 18-24. For subscribers, video blogs (vlogs) are seen as an important source of inspiration for future travel. In addition, the social interaction engagement of user-generated travel vlogs is four times that of other types of travel on YouTube (Crowel et al., 2014). This shows that most tourists prefer to watch content generated by UGMC and are inspired by it.

UGMC also has an important impact on cognitive experience. Consumers can obtain detailed information about the destination through UGMC, including social culture, environmental characteristics, or consumption values, which can help provide a reference for future decision-making. UGMC can shape the intentional experience, that is, through the motivational content shared by others, consumers are more eager to participate in it (Gardan et al., 2022). Whether it is a travel challenge, recommended route, or special event, UGMC can effectively stimulate the potential consumers' desire to act. UGMC also strengthens the relationship experience. Users establish connections with content producers or other consumers through sharing and interaction. This relationship further enhances the credibility and spread of information, making potential tourists more inclined to refer to this content for decision-making. UGMC (user-generated marketing content) provides other users with real and reliable information, thereby invisibly helping tourists reduce the risks in their experiential consumption decisions.

2.3 The Impact of Consumers' Psychology on Experiential Consumption

2.3.1 Strength of the Relationship Between Consumers and Content Producers on Social Platforms

Tie strength is a core concept in social network analysis. Granovetter first proposed the concept of "tie strength" and defined it as a force that links members of a social network together. He believed that the strength of a tie can be divided into strong and weak ties based on the frequency of contact. Ties with

less than two contacts per week are considered weak ties, and vice versa.

Based on the theory and research of social network analysis, the relationship strength between consumers and platform content producers is redefined here as: the multi-dimensional connection strength between consumers and content producers in terms of interaction frequency, emotional connection, degree of trust, and depth of collaboration, which reflects the close interaction between the two in the process of content consumption, dissemination and co-creation.

Research by Sweeney et al. shows that the strength of the relationship between the communicator and the receiver significantly affects the acceptance of word-of-mouth communication. Strong relationships usually mean deeper emotional connections and higher levels of trust; therefore, consumers are more likely to accept information conveyed by strong relationships (Koo, 2016). Relevant research results show that when recipients browse brand or product information released by content producers with whom they have a strong relationship, they have a higher perception of the practicality, authenticity, fun, and value of the content, thereby increasing their willingness to purchase. As the strength of the relationship increases, the impact of user-generated content on the recipient's purchase intention further increases.

This suggests that when consumers' information sources involve different relationship strengths during the decision-making process, strong relationships are more helpful in promoting information exchange between individuals, and this effect is particularly significant when the interaction frequency is high (Zhang, 2020). Users frequently interact with producers through browsing, liking, commenting, collecting, or forwarding. The accumulation of this interaction frequency gradually strengthens the strength of the relationship between the two parties and makes users form a sense of dependence. For example, if users like a blogger's video every day, they will gradually establish a stronger relationship.

Therefore, relationship strength can, to a certain extent, improve the receiver's willingness to accept information, increase perception at a psychological level, and tend to use this information as a reference for their own purchasing decisions.

2.4 Consumers' Fear of Missing out (FOMO)

The most commonly used definition of FOMO comes from Przybylski, who defines FOMO as "a pervasive concern that others may be having rewarding experiences that one lacks characterized by a desire to continually connect with what others are doing" (Przybylski et al., 2013). J. Walter Thompson (JWT) Worldwide defines FOMO as "an uneasy, sometimes all-consuming feeling that you are missing out on something that your peers are doing, knowing, or having more or better than you." Both definitions of FOMO describe a feeling of "missing something" caused by comparing one's current situation to that of others.

Millennials have characteristics of being socially driven (tending to stay connected and follow the society they belong to, and focusing on social achievements) and socioeconomically introverted (tending to participate in personal activities and not spend money for self-satisfaction), which leads them to have higher FOMO characteristics. Fear of missing out causes them to consume products similar to those consumed by the rest of society (Yaputri et al., 2022).

Marketers use this psychology to design advertisements, using strategies such as "limited time offer" and "only this time" to trigger consumers' sense of urgency, prompting them to invest more resources in participating in activities or purchasing products. In addition, FOMO has become an important tool to attract consumers in the fields of tourism, entertainment, social activities, etc. For example, in tourism marketing, KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders) showing travel photos or videos can stimulate the audience's FOMO, thereby prompting them to take action (Lee et al., 2023).

In experiential consumption, FOMO can motivate consumers to participate in more social activities and try new experiences, thereby enriching their lives and improving their sense of happiness. It may also help consumers establish deeper connections with close relationship groups, especially in social networks with strong relationships (such as family and close friends), where FOMO is more likely to prompt individuals to prioritize activities with social significance.

3 DISCUSSION

Personalized push notifications, UGMC (user-generated content), relationship strength, and FOMO (fear of missing out) are key drivers of experiential

consumption and show strong potential in promoting consumer experience and behavior. However, while these factors drive consumption, they may also generate a series of potential problems that hurt consumer behavior and mental health.

3.1 Problem Analysis

First of all, although personalized push notifications can improve the efficiency and accuracy of information dissemination, they can also easily lead to "information overload" for consumers. Too frequent or precise push notifications may raise privacy concerns and undermine consumers' trust in the platform. In addition, personalized push notifications often induce unplanned consumption, causing consumers to regret impulse purchases, thereby reducing overall consumer satisfaction.

Secondly, although UGMC uses authenticity as its selling point, its reliability is not absolute. Some users may post false or exaggerated information, misleading other consumers to make consumption decisions that are inconsistent with the actual situation. When UGMC presents overly embellished content, it may inadvertently exacerbate social pressure, cause consumers to feel psychologically unbalanced, and even generate consumption anxiety.

Furthermore, in the strong relationship between consumers and content producers, over-reliance on recommended content may lead to cognitive bias and ignoring personal actual needs. Some content producers may recommend inappropriate products or services in pursuit of commercial interests, which not only harms the interests of consumers but also undermines consumers' trust in producers.

Finally, FOMO, as an important psychological driving factor for experiential consumption, can stimulate consumer behavior, but its side effects cannot be ignored. FOMO may prompt consumers to over-participate in activities with high social value, leading to financial pressure and psychological burdens. In the long run, FOMO may also increase consumers' dependence on social media, affect mental health, and cause difficulty in decision-making.

3.2 Implications

3.2.1 Implications for Local Cultural Tourism Promotion

These factors provide multi-dimensional inspiration for local cultural and tourism promotion. By accurately targeting potential tourists through

personalized push notifications, cultural and tourism departments can more efficiently improve the promotion effect. At the same time, using UGMC to enhance the authenticity and appeal of the destination image and cooperating with credible content producers can further enhance trust in communication. In addition, clever use of the FOMO effect can stimulate tourists' enthusiasm for participation and create a unique attraction for the destination.

However, cultural tourism promotions must also be wary of the risk of over-marketing. While pursuing attractiveness, the content must be authentic and sustainable to avoid damaging tourists' trust and mental health due to misleading information.

3.2.2 Thinking from the Consumer's Perspective

Consumers need to enhance their self-awareness in experiential consumption. While enjoying personalized push notifications and the convenience of UGMC, one should improve the ability to discern the reliability of information and be wary of false content and blind obedience. Especially when facing FOMO, consumers need to adjust their psychological expectations to avoid unnecessary emotional pressure and financial burden caused by chasing trends.

3.2.3 Suggestions for Platforms and Enterprises

As providers of technology and content, platforms and enterprises must assume corresponding social responsibilities. On the technical level, personalized push algorithms should be optimized to ensure the appropriateness of content push while protecting user privacy. In the management of UGMC, the review mechanism for content authenticity should be strengthened, and cooperation with credible content producers should be carried out to eliminate false propaganda. In addition, companies should avoid simply using FOMO to create consumer anxiety, but instead improve consumers' long-term satisfaction by providing truly valuable products and services and promoting the development of a healthy consumer ecosystem.

Personalized push, UGMC, relationship strength, and FOMO together constitute the ecosystem of experiential consumption, which can not only promote consumer experience but also bring a series of challenges. Local cultural and tourism promotion, consumers, and enterprises need to find a balance in this ecosystem, rationally utilize technology and psychological mechanisms, and jointly build a

sustainable and healthy experiential consumption environment to achieve a win-win situation for all parties.

4 CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the role of personalized push, UGMC, relationship strength, and FOMO in experiential consumption, and reveals their positive impact and potential problems on consumer behavior. Research shows that these factors can improve consumer decision-making efficiency and experience satisfaction, but they can also lead to information overload, consumer anxiety, and irrational behavior. The research provides important reference for the theoretical development and practical application of experiential consumption and puts forward specific suggestions for local cultural and tourism promotion, platform optimization, and consumers.

However, this study focuses on the field of experiential consumption and emphasizes the importance of multi-party collaboration. In the future, the relevant conclusions can be further verified in other consumption scenarios. With the continuous advancement of technology, it can also explore in depth the profound impact of emerging technologies (such as artificial intelligence recommendations) on consumer psychology and behavior.

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