

The Influence of WeChat Marketing on Consumers Purchase Intention

Chaoming Guan¹, Manuelita G. Valencia²

¹Student, Graduate School, Angeles University Foundation

²Adviser, Professor, Graduate School, Angeles University Foundation

Abstract

In recent years, with the application of smartphones and the advent of the 5G network era, the competition for network marketing has become increasingly fierce. As a new social software, China's WeChat has been used and relied on by more and more people, and WeChat marketing has become a marketing method that all businesses want to seize (Yin, 2023). However, while WeChat marketing has many advantages, such as efficient information delivery and direct user interaction, it still faces challenges such as information overload, user fatigue difficulty in maintaining an active community, and incomplete laws and regulations. Therefore, the study of WeChat marketing on consumers' purchase intention is of great significance.

Keywords: WeChat, WeChat Marketing, Purchase Intention

1. Introduction

From the initial social and communication tool, WeChat has become an indispensable leading application in China and the world, building a huge digital ecosystem to connect people, services, and organizations through social communication, information, transactions, and infrastructure (Chen, et al., 2018). Almost everyone in China is connected via WeChat, whether with classmates, colleagues, customers, salespeople, fitness trainers, or neighbors. WeChat's ultra-high user stickiness and extensive service coverage make it a major tool to meet users' social and transaction needs, not only limited to individuals but also government and commercial players. This design not only expands the influence of WeChat, but also profoundly changes daily life and social structure (Chen, et al., 2018). With the popularity of WeChat Pay and smartphones in 2013, more and more people choose to conduct business activities and shopping on WeChat (Sara, 2020).

According to Tencent's official "2023 WeChat Annual Data Report", it can be learned that the monthly active users have reached 1.327 billion, becoming the largest social media user in China. Based on its large number of users and continuous development and improvement of functions, the commercial value of WeChat has been continuously explored in the field of marketing. WeChat marketing adopts a "precise and immediate" approach, which is more private and targeted. In the era when consumers pay more and more attention to network security, WeChat, as a new marketing weapon, has the strength to expand the market (Fan, 2015). It did not only simplify transactions and payments but also became one of the main channels for business marketing. WeChat marketing is a new marketing model to promote the company's brand, products, and services through various channels such as WeChat public numbers, circles of friends, groups, and mini-programs (Huang, 2023).

The study of customers' purchase intentions under WeChat marketing can be a necessary way to test whether WeChat marketing is effective. Despite the extensive literature on WeChat marketing, there is still a gap in research focusing on consumer purchase intentions across all four major marketing channels (public accounts, moments, groups, and mini-programs)(Zhu, 2020), and a study on it fill this gap. In addition, this study can also provide a more scientific basis for future WeChat marketing communication practice activities, and provide certain references for enterprises to formulate marketing strategies and improve marketing efficiency in the future.

2. The Main Body of the Review Paper

2.1. The concept of WeChat and WeChat marketing.

WeChat is a mobile app launched by Tencent Holdings in 2011 that includes social media, instant messaging, commerce, and payment services. It is hailed as one of the most innovative and versatile applications in the world, and China regards it as an "App For Everything", integrating multiple functions such as payment, social, service, and shopping, which is equivalent to a collection of multiple applications(Wan, 2023). As a social software, China's WeChat has been used and relied on by more and more people, and WeChat marketing has become a method that all businesses want to seize(Yin, 2023). WeChat marketing refers to a series of marketing strategies that use the WeChat platform for brand publicity, product promotion, and sales activities. Its main forms include but are not limited to public number tweets, circle of friends advertising, WeChat mini-programs, WeChat pay, and other ways. Through these tools, business establishments can interact directly with consumers, enabling precision marketing and brand communication. The characteristics of having a huge user base, low marketing cost, and convenient marketing, led to the popularity of WeChat marketing(Gong, 2020). Compared with traditional network marketing, WeChat marketing has more loopholes, higher risks, lack of appeal channels, and more problems infringing on the rights and interests of consumers (privacy disclosure, difficulty in safeguarding rights, etc.). Therefore, laws and regulations regulating traditional network marketing are not enough to solve the problems existing in WeChat marketing(Xie, 2019).

2.2. WeChat marketing channels

With the popularity of WeChat, marketing with WeChat as the core has become mainstream and is more popular than traditional methods. WeChat marketing has obvious advantages: wide coverage, high trust, no geographical and time restrictions, convenient transactions, and low threshold. There are four main marketing channels.

2.2.1. WeChat public number channel

Since the launch of the WeChat public platform, enterprises have gradually begun to create their WeChat public accounts. Fans can directly search or scan the QR code bar to find the official accounts of enterprises. Enterprises can interact with users, collect relevant data, understand user preferences, build their reputation according to their preferences, and increase their sense of enterprise consumption. To enhance their corporate influence(Wu, 2021). With the dissemination and development of self-media information, the WeChat public account platform has become one of the important ways for people to obtain information. In terms of accurate and efficient information service provision, technical means are adopted to improve the platform information redundancy and other deficiencies, bringing convenience to users' actual needs(Cheng, et al., 2022). Touching, interesting, and valuable information supply can enhance the dissemination of WeChat public accounts, and the improvement of independent innovation

ability can enhance the credibility of WeChat public accounts. At the same time, reasonable strengthening of the above two points has a positive impact on the improvement of emergencies(Li, 2022). But some problems in the public number channel need to be improved. At present, most enterprises' WeChat public accounts use the robot customer service model, so they can't meet the personalized needs of users. Even if there is a corresponding manual customer service, its number is relatively small, and lack of professionalism, it is difficult to accurately answer customers' questions (Wang, 2023).

2.2.2. WeChat circle of friends

From the perspective of a WeChat marketing circle of friends, it is easier to win the trust of marketing objects and has the characteristics of strong privacy, high efficiency of transmission, good interaction, and accurate push information(Gong, 2023). The higher the quality of the information the seller sends to the circle of friends, the stronger the purchase intention of the target user can be. When target users have a high degree of trust and demand for sellers, their purchase intention can be strengthened accordingly (Geng, 2021). In the WeChat circle of friends, people have a sense of community by communicating with their relatives and friends." "Conformity" psychology is an important indicator that affects purchasing behavior. In the process of purchasing decision-making, consumers tend to conform to the crowd, and relatives and friends play a key role in this aspect(Fan, 2015). Circle of friends must first add friends, and then you can see and receive information, there are some shortcomings, 1) micro shop owners are easy to ignore the needs of users; The user can only accept passively. 2) The frequency of push in the circle of friends is too much, and the content is repeated. It's easy to turn people off. 3) After-sales service is not in place, not timely. Without third-party supervision, it is difficult to control after-sales(He, et al., 2017).

2.2.3. WeChat group approach

Third, from the perspective of WeChat marketing groups, opinion leaders with professional and active interaction in WeChat groups can often gain the trust of more customers in the group, and trust has a positive impact on purchase intention. Therefore, sellers can actively cultivate opinion leaders in WeChat groups, or strive to become opinion leaders in WeChat groups. Complete the marketing promotion of their products or services(Xiao, et al., 2021). WeChat information can be transmitted not only to WeChat friends, but also to specific users through specific functions, thus ensuring the pertinence and purpose of WeChat transmission, improving the specificity of push objects, and improving the efficiency of product information transmission(Sun, et al., 2023). There are several major problems in the implementation process of WeChat group marketing: first, information overload and user fatigue, a large number of group messages may cause users to lose interest and attention to information. Secondly, it is difficult to maintain the activity and quality of the group, because the group members may lack interaction or just be passive users. Finally, due to the limited time and energy of group owners in managing and maintaining the group, it is easy for the group to be poorly managed or unable to effectively deal with complaints and disputes(Li, et al., 2023).

2.2.4. WeChat mini-program approach

WeChat mini program through its light and fast characteristics, become a win-win choice for users and developers. These small programs do not occupy the storage space of the user device, load quickly, and provide convenient access to various super application services. Small programs created by developers within the WeChat ecosystem must follow strict regulations and be approved, and the number of programs has exceeded 1 million, owned by domestic enterprises and international brands such as Tesla, McDonald's, and others(Natalie, 2019). WeChat mini-programs cover multiple fields such as transportation, shopping, entertainment, medical care, public services, and wealth management, providing functions comparable to

traditional apps, while users do not need to log in or register to enjoy these services(Lu, 2019). The Chinese government promotes smart cities and "Internet plus governance" through the WeChat ecosystem, further strengthening the position of WeChat mini-programs as a comprehensive service platform(Hui, 2019). The biggest problem in WeChat marketing mini-programs is that users can not interact with each other, and can not discuss, leave messages, compare and evaluate goods or services of common interest.

2.3. Influencing factors of purchase intention

Many scholars have conducted in-depth research and exploration of the factors that affect purchase intention. Purchase intention refers to the probability, possibility, or intention of a consumer's purchase decision(Zhu, 2020).

Through the collation of relevant literature on factors affecting purchase intention, researchers can find that the internal and external factors that affect consumers' purchase intention on WeChat include six factors, marketing channels, commodity price, commodity quality, commodity promotion, transaction risk, and social factors. These six factors affect consumers' purchase intention through psychological activities such as consumers' perception, cognition, imagination, and comparison(Wang, et al., 2020). Tang(2019) believes that consumers' purchasing behaviors are related to consumer personal factors, consumer perception factors, word-of-mouth evaluation factors, store service factors, commodity price factors, and commodity characteristics factors, but are not significantly related to transaction factors. Jin(2020) believes that the influencing factors of enterprises' WeChat marketing on consumers' purchase intention are as follows: promotional activities, interactivity, publicity of opinion leaders, information attraction, and WeChat community marketing. The five influencing factors have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention through the two intermediate variables of perceived usefulness and trust respectively, and interaction, opinion leader propaganda, information attraction, and WeChat community marketing can directly have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention. Chen, et al.(2019) demonstrated the impact of WeChat online reviews on consumers' purchase intention or behavior in their studies. The reliability and quality of information on the WeChat platform also have a significant impact on consumers' purchase intention. Consumers receive push information from merchants through the WeChat platform, and the immediacy and reliability of information have an impact on consumers' basic impression of merchants. Especially in today's complicated WeChat advertisements, reasonable and high-quality information push can not only reduce consumers' aversion to merchants' advertisements but also reduce consumers' aversion to merchants' advertisements. It can also increase consumers' favorable impression of merchants, thereby potentially enhancing their purchase intention(Yu, et al.,2022).

2.4. Research countermeasures to improve consumers' purchase intention

Xie(2021) believes that through data analysis and personalized recommendation algorithms, consumers can be provided with product recommendations that meet their preferences and needs, and at the same time, consumers can be encouraged to make purchases through attractive preferential activities, discounts, and rewards points. Use social networks and user word-of-mouth to enhance brand trust and identity and enhance consumer confidence in purchasing decisions. Ensure the smooth shopping process and provide timely and effective after-sales service to enhance the overall satisfaction and loyalty of consumers. Wan(2023) believes that transparent and open product information and trading conditions can help build consumer trust and reduce purchase risks. Regularly update and interact with consumers to maintain brand activity and attention, and continue to stimulate purchase intentions.

Yan(2023) suggested standardizing the registration system of WeChat marketers in the legislation, including the privacy and security of consumers into legal protection, and formulating and improving corresponding laws and regulations. The WeChat platform should also strengthen the construction of industry self-discipline, and the government should strengthen supervision. Supervise the transaction process and punish illegal merchants, ensure that the WeChat shopping platform operates under the protection of laws and regulations, and safeguard the rights and interests of consumers.

3. Conclusion

WeChat marketing, as a multi-functional and highly innovative marketing means, uses a variety of tools and functions of the WeChat platform to achieve direct interaction and precision marketing between enterprises and consumers. This paper mainly discusses and sorts out the four channels of WeChat marketing (WeChat public number, circle of friends, WeChat group, and WeChat mini program). Each channel has its advantages and challenges, which can effectively cover a wide range of user groups. Consumers' purchase intention is influenced by a variety of factors, such as the effectiveness of marketing channels, product characteristics, transaction risks, and social factors, which directly affect consumers' purchase decisions by influencing their perception and cognitive activities. From the perspective of the four channels, effective strategies to enhance consumers' purchase intention include personalized recommendations, promotional activities, and rewards points, trust-building on social networks, and smooth after-sales service. These measures can significantly enhance consumers' trust in brands and confidence in purchasing decisions. With the popularization and development of WeChat marketing, it is necessary to strengthen the construction and supervision measures of laws and regulations to protect the privacy and rights of consumers, ensure the healthy operation of the WeChat platform, and safeguard the interests of consumers from infringement.

4. Future research prospects

Based on the existing conclusions, researchers can further study the integration effect of different WeChat marketing channels and its comprehensive impact on consumers' purchase intention in the future. For example, how to optimize marketing strategy and improve the overall marketing effect through the synergy of WeChat public number, circle of friends, WeChat group, and small program. With the increasing attention paid to data privacy and security, future research can delve into the impact of privacy protection mechanisms in WeChat marketing on consumers' purchase intention. Research can explore consumers' preferences for personalized marketing and transparency in data use, and how these factors affect their sense of trust and purchasing decisions. Finally, future research could also explore the influence of cultural, social, and psychological factors on the effectiveness of WeChat marketing. For example, consumers' acceptance of WeChat marketing information in different cultural backgrounds, as well as the shaping effect of group influence on purchase intention in social networks. These outlooks can help researchers and practitioners better understand and respond to the challenges and opportunities facing WeChat marketing in the future, to improve the marketing effectiveness of enterprises and the purchasing experience of consumers.

5. References

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