
The Impact of Short Video Advertisements on Consumers' Purchase Intention: A Case Study of China

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doi.org/10.51505/IJEBMR.2024.81214 URL: <https://doi.org/10.51505/IJEBMR.2024.81214>

Received: Dec 05, 2024

Accepted: Dec 12, 2024

Online Published: Dec 24, 2024

Abstract

With the widespread adoption of smartphones and the rapid development of the internet, short video platforms have grown rapidly in recent years, attracting significant attention from e-commerce merchants for their advertising potential. The large number of short video advertisements has led to visual fatigue among consumers. This study delves into the impact of short video advertisements on consumer purchase intentions in mainland China using the Critical Incident Technique. The findings reveal that the themes and narratives, moral values, functional orientation, content materials, and cost-performance ratio of short video advertisements significantly influence consumer purchase intentions. Based on the research findings, this study offers targeted suggestions for e-commerce merchants who use short video advertisements as a marketing strategy.

Keywords: short video advertisements, consumer purchase intention, e-commerce, Critical Incident Technique

1. Research Background and Motivation

With the widespread adoption of smartphones and the rapid development of the internet, various short video platforms have emerged. Watching short videos has become an important form of daily leisure and entertainment for people, and its influence is growing. Unlike traditional e-commerce sales models, marketing through short video advertisements can quickly capture consumers' attention and increase their purchase intentions. Short video advertisements, with their short duration and quick spread, have become popular among consumers as a crucial role in e-commerce's foray into short video platforms. However, as the number of short video ads increases, people have developed visual fatigue toward similar types of short video ads. How to capture consumers' purchasing desires has become the focus of short video ad creation. Meanwhile, as consumers' ability to discern short video ads improves, their demand for content quality is also increasing. Therefore, continuously optimizing short video ads to enhance consumer purchase intention is a necessary measure for e-commerce merchants to profit steadily on short video platforms.

In summary, short video advertisements significantly influence consumers' purchase intentions. E-commerce stores adopting short video advertisements as their marketing model must pay attention to and continuously optimize the content quality of short video ads. This study, using short video advertisements and consumers in mainland China as examples, employs the Critical Incident Technique to explore the impact of short video ads on consumer purchase intentions, providing targeted advice for e-commerce stores adopting short video advertisements as a marketing strategy.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Short Video Platforms

Short video platforms are video platforms distributed on the new media of the internet, different from traditional long videos, with limited video duration—from initially not exceeding 60 seconds to now reaching up to 5 minutes (Ruangkanjanases A, et al., 2023). In recent years, with the continuous development of information technology, mobile communication networks have shown significant advantages in data transmission rates, network latency, energy saving and consumption reduction, and traffic density. The level of system coordination and intelligence has greatly improved, creating excellent conditions and foundations for the development of short video platforms (Yang Z., 2023). The rapid advancement of short video platforms has brought immeasurable profit value and rapid popularity expansion, making them effective tools for enterprises to create, acquire, and co-create value with customers (Jin M, et al., 2023). Research has found that value co-creation initiated by enterprises positively affects corporate brand equity, and short video platforms serve as intermediaries for value co-creation between enterprises, consumers, and other stakeholders. Consumers can receive a large amount of brand-related information within the platform, interact with activities initiated by enterprises, enhance their perceived brand value, and thereby increase the brand equity of enterprises (Ruangkanjanases A, et al., 2023). Additionally, short video platforms can use their own big data promotion models to push consumers' favorite short videos and enhance their experience (Roy S K, et al., 2020). This can help e-commerce enterprises efficiently capture qualified consumers in a short time among a large audience, increasing consumer purchase intention and thereby boosting e-commerce enterprise revenue.

2.2 Consumer Purchase Intention

Consumer purchase intention is consumers' preference for buying products or services (Mirabi V, et al., 2015), stemming from their perception of benefits and value acquisition. It is a key factor for e-commerce merchants to predict consumer purchasing behavior and is influenced by various factors. Studies have shown that consumer experience positively and significantly affects consumer purchase intention, including behavioral experience, cognitive experience, emotional experience, sensory experience, and social experience. On short video platforms, e-commerce merchants can create various pleasant experience-satisfaction critical incidents through short video ads to increase consumer purchase intention (Esmaeilpour M & Mohseni Z., 2019).

2.3 Short Video Advertisements

Pleasant experiences keep consumers motivated, and the existence of positive emotions can enhance consumers' purchase intention during shopping; the higher the positive emotion, the higher the purchase intention (Rahadhini M D, Wibowo E, Lukiyanto K., 2020). Short video platform-based ads appear in the form of native content. E-commerce merchants place ads and attach shopping carts in short videos, utilizing the traffic effects of short videos to showcase products. The advertising information is expressed in a more vivid and stimulating manner through short video ads, providing consumers with a source of positive emotions, deepening their impressions, reducing their aversion to ads, and increasing their purchase intention (Cheng, et al., 2022). However, in today's information explosion era, consumers' attention is dispersed. How can e-commerce merchants create high-quality short video ads that stand out among a large amount of homogeneous content, efficiently and accurately attract potential consumers' attention, and focus consumers' attention on short video ads? This is a critical step to increase consumer purchase intention (Zeng, N., 2021). Therefore, when pushing content through short video ads, e-commerce merchants should better understand consumers' preferences and create short video ads favored by consumers to achieve the goal of increasing consumer purchase intention. Studies have shown that entertainment perception, interactive perception, perceived convenience, and richness of entertainment in short video ads can increase consumer attention and enhance their sense of presence. Enhancing consumers' sense of experience can increase consumer purchase intention (Yu, Zhang, Zheng, et al., 2024). At the same time, short video influencers, as intermediaries in consumer perception and interaction, play an important role in enhancing the sense of presence and favorability. They use their characteristics to enhance consumers' sense of presence and, through multiple repeated short video ad content, subtly change consumers' views to increase consumer purchase intention (Dou & Zhang., 2023). Therefore, merchants adopting short video advertisements as a marketing model cannot ignore the importance of short video influencers.

In conclusion, short video advertisements influence consumers' purchase intention. Producing high-quality short video ads is essential for the sustainable development of e-commerce on short video platforms. Although many studies have explored short video advertisements and consumers' purchase intentions, most focus on quantitative research, with a lack of in-depth qualitative analysis. This study will collect critical incidents of Chinese consumers watching short video advertisement content and use the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) research method to deeply explore the impact of different short video advertisements on consumers' purchase intentions. This will provide targeted suggestions for e-commerce businesses adopting short video advertisement marketing models.

The following figure 1 shows the relationship between short video advertisements, consumers, and e-commerce merchants.

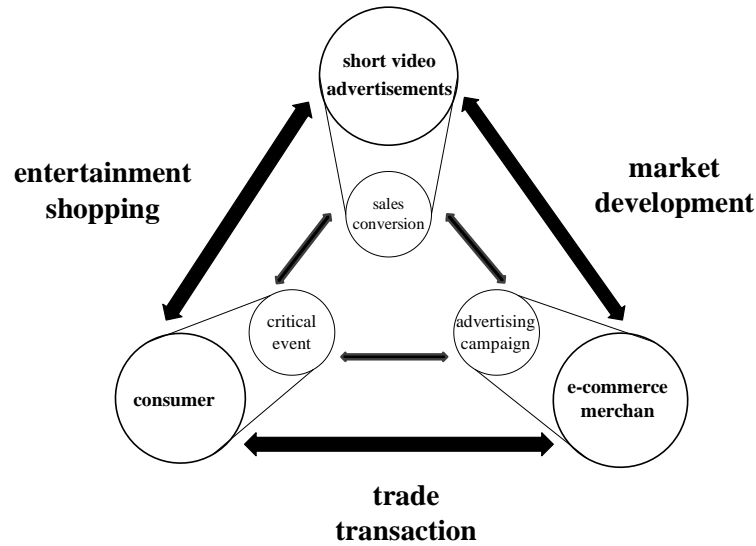


Figure 1: Interactive Relationship Diagram

3. Research Methods

3.1 Critical Incident Technique

The Critical Incident Technique (CIT) originated from research in the US Army Air Forces' aviation psychology program during World War II and was proposed by American scholar Flanagan in 1954. CIT is a research method that employs objective evaluations. It involves researchers being in an optimal position to record specific behaviors, dividing them into most satisfactory and most unsatisfactory parts to facilitate necessary observation and evaluation and understand consumer psychology (Flanagan, 1954).

Over the past 70 years, CIT has been widely used in various research fields and has become highly mature. Here are a few examples from numerous studies: Noor and Andrew used CIT in the field of hotel services, demonstrating that by strictly identifying the types and causes of failures, service providers could better predict failures, thus eliminating unsatisfactory encounters in advance and creating memorable positive experiences to ensure consistently high-quality service (2014). Hove used CIT in the construction industry to summarize seven major problems, including general contractors' payment delays and the inability of engineering contracting companies to manage cash flow properly. They proposed five recommendations for the South African government, such as enacting policies to ensure emerging contractors (ECs) have the right to receive payments and establishing banks to support ECs' businesses, contributing to performance solutions for South African emerging contractors (2016). Eleni and Ph used CIT in the field of sociology to reveal the multifaceted and contextual nature of social work values and ethics learning during field internships, clearly showing that positive workplace learning experiences during internships are strong motivating factors for students to use and expand their ethical theoretical knowledge, build ethical skills, and develop their identities as ethical professionals (2016). J Rashid-Radha et al. used CIT in the field of tourism services,

showing that using physical cues such as layout, design and signage, external environment, cleanliness, staff characteristics, and animal welfare to create a competitive advantage for animal attractions allows for the sustainable and steady development of the zoo tourism industry (2021).

3.2 Research Design

This study focuses on the impact of short video advertisements on consumer purchase intentions. Considering that consumers watch short video ads and make purchases multiple times, it is essential to understand their deeper feelings about these ads. Therefore, this study employs the Critical Incident Technique, a qualitative research method, to collect consumers' most satisfactory and most unsatisfactory critical incidents while watching short video ads from their perspective. The study also references the questionnaire designed by Bitner et al. (1990), asking the following questions: 1. Please describe what key events in the short video ads you have watched would lead you to make a purchase. 2. Please describe what key events in the short video ads you have watched would lead you to firmly not make a purchase.

3.3 Data Collection

To ensure convenience and efficiency in data collection, this study employs an online questionnaire method, utilizing an online platform for data collection. Additionally, to guarantee the accuracy and usefulness of the research data, the study designs questionnaire items to screen respondents who watch short video advertisements at least once every three days on average as the survey participants. Participants fill out the questionnaire based on their own experiences, recording their most satisfactory and most unsatisfactory critical incidents when watching short video ads. This provides real and effective data for the study. The data collection period lasts for two weeks, after which the collected data will be organized to support the research on the impact of short video ads on consumer purchase intentions.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Basic Information

The study collected a total of 84 questionnaires, excluding 9 questionnaires that were off-topic or not answered properly, resulting in 75 valid questionnaires for data analysis. There were 67 valid satisfactory incidents and 71 valid unsatisfactory critical incidents, totaling 138 incidents. Flanagan's CIT literature states that if the activity can be simply defined, only 50 to 100 incident analyses are needed; if it is a more complex activity, thousands of incidents are required for analysis. Given the simplicity and clarity of the interview subjects and activity attributes in this study, the sample size meets the requirements of this research method (Flanagan, 1954). In this survey, among the respondents, males accounted for 45% and females for 55%, showing a relatively balanced gender distribution. Regarding age, 12% were 18 years old or younger, 19% were aged 19-24, 37% were 25-34, 24% were 35-44, and 8% were 45 years old or older. As for educational background, 11% had a high school education or lower, 24% had an associate degree, 42% held a bachelor's degree, and 23% had a master's degree or higher. In terms of occupational types, 16% were students, 49% were employed, 16% were unemployed or job seekers, and 19%

were retired individuals. There were 38 satisfactory incidents for females and 29 for males, while there were 39 unsatisfactory incidents for females and 32 for males. It was found that the number of both satisfactory and unsatisfactory incidents was higher for females, indicating that females are more likely to feel satisfied when watching short video ads.

4.2 Classification Principles

From the effective questionnaires collected, there were 67 satisfactory critical incidents and 71 unsatisfactory critical incidents. Researchers initially browsed each critical incident and then categorized them. Since the attributes related to satisfactory and unsatisfactory critical incidents were consistent, they were given identical names and divided into five categories: themes and narratives, moral values, functional orientation, content materials, and cost-performance ratio. Table 1 clearly shows the classification names and detailed descriptions of satisfactory and unsatisfactory critical incidents.

Table 1: Classification of Critical Incidents and Descriptions

Classification	Description
Themes and Narratives	Thematic ideas and narrative structure, showcasing the theme through plot development
Moral Values	Standards of goodness, justice, corruption, etc., reflected in behaviors and thoughts
Functional Orientation	Centered on the functions of the product or service, meeting consumer needs
Content Materials	Basic materials, including text, images, characters, music, etc.
Cost-Performance Ratio	The ratio of the performance to the price of the product or service, reflecting the buyability of the product

From Table 2, we can clearly understand the background information of the three classifiers. All three classifiers are engaged in the e-commerce industry and have extensive experience watching short video advertisements. They are quite interested in the marketing model of short video ads. Therefore, this study specifically invited these three classifiers to categorize the satisfactory and unsatisfactory critical incidents affecting consumer purchase intentions from short video ads, ensuring there is no deviation from the theme. Once all three classifiers agree on the categorization of satisfactory and unsatisfactory critical incidents, the subsequent classification will proceed.

Table:2 Classifier Background Information

Classifier	Job Position	Work Experience
Classifier 1	Operation Manager at an E-commerce Company	Has many years of experience in e-commerce operations, with extensive industry experience; proficient in market analysis, account operations, and marketing strategy development
Classifier 2	E-commerce Lecturer at a University	Has served as an e-commerce lecturer for many years, with rich theoretical knowledge in e-commerce
Classifier 3	Short Video Sales Influencer	Familiar with the rules of short video platforms in mainland China, has been engaged in short video sales for five years, and understands consumer needs

4.3 Reliability and Validity Analysis

4.3.1 Reliability Analysis

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency in the results obtained from repeated measurements of the same variable using the same measurement method. The reliability analysis in Critical Incident Technique (CIT) generally includes "intra-rater reliability" and "inter-rater reliability" (Flanagan, 1954). Intra-rater reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the classification results when a classifier performs the classification task. When the Fleiss' Kappa value ranges from -1 to 1, the closer the value is to 1, the better the consistency; the closer the value is to 0 or -1, the worse the consistency. Generally, a consistency level of above 0.2 is considered acceptable, and above 0.8 is considered very good. Inter-rater reliability refers to the degree of consistency in the classification results when different classifiers categorize the same set of data during the classification task.

In this study, after the three classifiers agreed on the categorization of satisfactory and unsatisfactory critical incidents, the first classification task was carried out. After a 30-day interval, the three classifiers were asked to perform the second classification task. Upon collecting and integrating the classification data from both tasks, this study compared the classification results from the three classifiers to derive the number of inter-rater agreements for satisfactory incidents in Table 3 and the number of inter-rater agreements for unsatisfactory incidents in Table 4.

Table 3: Number of Inter-Rater Agreements - Satisfactory Incidents

Number of Agreements	Classifier 1	Classifier 2	Classifier 1
Classifier 1	61	—	—
Classifier 2	48	53	—
Classifier 3	51	45	54

Table 4: Number of Inter-Rater Agreement

Number of Agreements	Classifier 1	Classifier 2	Classifier 3
Classifier 1	68	—	—
Classifier 2	53	59	—
Classifier 3	47	48	58

Based on the data from Tables 3 and 4, this study verifies the inter-rater reliability among the three classifiers. The formula is as follows:

$$A = \frac{2M_{12} + 2M_{23} + 2M_{13}}{n_1+n_2 \quad n_2+n_3 \quad n_1+n_3} \div N$$

$$R = \frac{(N \times A)}{1 + [(N-1) \times A]}$$

Where:, R = Reliability

N = Number of judges

A = Average interjudge agreement

M = Number of agreements between judges (e.g., M₁₂ is the number of samples classified the same by the first and second judges)

n = Number of samples classified by each judge (e.g., n₁ is the number of samples classified by the first judge)

Using the above formula for calculations, we obtained Table 5, the reliability classification table.

Table 5: Reliability Classification Table

BBT Classification	Average Interjudge Agreement (A)	Reliability (R)
Satisfactory	0.856	0.947
Unsatisfactory	0.800	0.923

From Table 5, it can be observed that in this study, the average interjudge agreement is higher than 0.8, indicating good consistency and stability in the classifiers' results. The reliability is also above 0.8, suggesting a high level of agreement among the three classifiers. Therefore, the

questionnaire used in this study has passed the reliability test, providing a solid data foundation and reliable classification basis for subsequent research. This ensures the study can continue to develop rigorously and systematically.

4.3.3 Validity Analysis

Validity refers to the degree to which a measurement tool or method accurately measures the desired item, reflecting the effectiveness or accuracy of the measurement method. Validity is mainly divided into content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity. The validity analysis values in this study are relatively high, accurately reflecting the actual level or state of the three classifiers, providing accurate data for subsequent research, and promoting scientific decision-making in the study.

4.4 Classification Results

After categorizing and counting the collected critical incidents according to classification names, this study selects two typical critical incidents from each of the five categories of satisfactory and unsatisfactory critical incidents for in-depth analysis to further understand the factors influencing consumer purchase intentions through short video advertisements. Examples of satisfactory critical incidents are shown in Table 6, and examples of unsatisfactory critical incidents are shown in Table 7.

Table 6: Examples of Satisfactory Critical Incidents

Incident Category	Typical Critical Incidents
Themes and Narratives	The product is shown being used in the video with before and after comparisons.
	Extremely exciting plot, making me eager to know the subsequent development.
Moral Values	A teacher teaches students to treat everyone equally
	A superhero punishes the miscreants and retrieves the wallet for a pretty girl.
Functional Orientation	Demonstrates the product's efficacy and shows that it performs better compared to similar products from other brands.
	Showcases the multifunctionality and practicality of the bread machine.
Content Materials	Detailed explanation preferably backed by institutional reports.
	Features my favorite blogger and plays my favorite music.
Cost-Performance Ratio	Compares their products with similar ones on the market, highlighting that their products are cheaper at the same price point.
	Currently on promotion, making it the most affordable time to purchase now.

Table 7: Examples of Unsatisfactory Critical Incidents

Incident Category	Typical Critical Incidents
Themes and Narratives	Advertisement information is inserted into the video very abruptly.
	The storyline is overly exaggerated and purely boastful.
Moral Values	Publicly insulting women, saying women should stay at home.
	Mocking workers, implying that his product is unaffordable for ordinary workers.
Functional Orientation	Talking a lot about the lipstick's outer packaging but not showing its moisturizing effect or color.
	Keeps showing the ingredients of the health soup pack without explaining its benefits.
Content Materials	Contains very frightening and gory images.
	It is obvious that the bags shown are fake.
Cost-Performance Ratio	Discounts are only available for bulk purchases.
	Demonstrated products are rarely used in everyday life and are very expensive.

Subsequent analysis of the classified satisfactory and unsatisfactory critical incidents Following the classification of satisfactory and unsatisfactory critical incident data, further statistical analysis was conducted. It was found that in the satisfactory critical incidents, the average number of incidents related to functional orientation was 23.7, accounting for 35% of the total; the average number of incidents related to themes and narratives was 15, accounting for 22% of the total; and the average number of incidents related to cost-performance ratio was 14.3, accounting for 21% of the total. This indicates that short video advertisements with excellent themes, adequate product presentation, and a high cost-performance ratio are favored by consumers and significantly increase their purchase intentions. In the unsatisfactory critical incidents, the average number of incidents related to themes and narratives was 30, accounting for 42% of the total; the average number of incidents related to moral values was 15, accounting for 21% of the total; and the average number of incidents related to content materials was 14.6, accounting for 21% of the total. This suggests that poor themes, crossing the moral value line, and unattractive or low-quality content materials lead to consumer dissatisfaction and rapidly decreasing purchase intentions.

From this data analysis, it can be observed that, for both satisfactory and unsatisfactory critical incidents, the percentage of incidents related to themes and narratives is high, especially in the unsatisfactory critical incidents. Therefore, e-commerce merchants should pay particular attention to the themes and narratives when creating short video advertisements, ensuring careful selection before deployment.

5. Summary

5.1 Results and Recommendations

The current short video advertising marketing model is approaching perfection but still requires further refinement. This study explores the impact of short video advertisements on consumer purchase intentions, collecting data from several regions in China using the Critical Incident Technique. The research findings indicate that themes and narratives, moral values, functional orientation, content materials, and cost-performance ratio significantly influence consumer purchase intentions. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made for e-commerce merchants adopting short video advertisements as a marketing model:

5.1.1 Distinctive Themes and Contrasting Narratives

When creating short video advertisements, e-commerce merchants should carefully select and establish distinctive themes and incorporate contrasting narratives. A distinctive theme is the soul of a short video ad, determining its core content and emotional tone. A strong theme makes the ad more recognizable, helping it stand out in the sea of information. Contrast is a key technique to enhance the impact of short video ads. Using strong contrasts in visuals, sounds, scenes, or emotions can leave a lasting impression on consumers. Short video ads combining distinctive themes with contrasting narratives can resonate emotionally with consumers and create a powerful mental impact, thus increasing purchase intentions.

5.1.2 Adhering to Moral Value Lines

E-commerce merchants must remember not to cross moral value lines when creating short video advertisements. Survey results show that consumers will firmly reject short video ads containing offensive content against women, men, or lower-class laborers. Information in short video ads that violates moral values can quickly provoke consumer anger and lead to severe corporate crises. Therefore, e-commerce merchants should uphold high moral values and avoid crossing these lines in their short video advertisements.

5.1.3 Showcasing Product Features

When creating short video advertisements, e-commerce merchants should emphasize the functional characteristics of their products or services. Short video ads that demonstrate, explain, and showcase products help consumers better understand the product's features, functions, and usage. Studies indicate that appropriate presentation of product features can enhance consumers' perception of the product's usefulness, thereby increasing purchase intentions (Zeng, N., 2021). E-commerce merchants should avoid including too much irrelevant information and focus on highlighting the functional characteristics of their products or services.

5.1.4 Influencer Endorsements

E-commerce merchants can use influencers or celebrities to endorse their short video advertisements. Survey results reveal that when consumers see their favorite influencers or

celebrities in short video ads, their purchase intentions significantly increase. Studies also show that short video ads featuring endorsements from internet celebrities or stars promote impulsive purchases (Moslehpour M., 2024). Therefore, based on their brand image and budget, e-commerce merchants can choose influencers or celebrities to appear in their videos. They should avoid including gory or terrifying content in their short video ads.

5.1.5 Highlighting Cost-Performance Ratio

E-commerce merchants should highlight the cost-performance ratio of their products or services in short video advertisements. As the economy develops and consumers become more rational, they often choose the most cost-effective products based on their needs and budget. Highlighting the high cost-performance ratio and affordability of products or services in short video ads can attract consumers' attention and increase purchase intentions.

5.2 Research Limitations

This study examines the impact of short video advertisements on consumer purchase intentions, providing targeted recommendations for e-commerce merchants adopting short video advertising as a marketing model to improve the quality of their short video ads. However, the study only surveyed the impact of short video ads on consumer purchase intentions in mainland China, with a limited sample size. Additionally, the study employed a qualitative research method using the Critical Incident Technique, which cannot explore causal relationships between short video ads and consumer purchase intentions but provides an in-depth understanding of the impact. Future research could employ quantitative research methods for further exploration.

Acknowledgements

This research work was funded by the grant from the Guangdong Science and Technology Program (China) under Grant No. 2024A0505050036. We deeply appreciate their financial support and encouragement.

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