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The Impact of Short Video Platform Marketing Strategies on the Acceleration of the Consumer Decision-Making Cycle

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Abstract

This paper explores how short video platform marketing strategies influence the acceleration of the consumer decision-making cycle. It integrates classical decision-making models with modern frameworks such as the Information Adoption Model (IAM), the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, and heuristic processing theory to analyze the mechanisms of decision compression. Through an examination of influencer persuasion, emotional content design, algorithmic personalization, and social proof, the study identifies how short video platforms create emotionally engaging, trust-based, and algorithmically targeted environments that encourage fast consumer responses. This research contributes to updated theoretical models of consumer behavior and provides actionable strategies for marketers seeking to optimize short video campaigns.

Keywords

short video platforms, consumer decision-making, digital marketing, influencer strategy, algorithmic targeting

1. Introduction

In the era of digital transformation, short video platforms such as TikTok, Douyin, and Kuaishou have rapidly evolved from mere entertainment tools into powerful engines of marketing and consumer influence. With their dynamic content formats, algorithm-driven recommendations, and immersive user experiences, these platforms have significantly reshaped how brands interact with consumers and how consumers make purchase decisions.

Traditionally, the consumer decision-making cycle follows a linear, staged process: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 1995). This model assumes a rational, step-by-step approach to decision-making, particularly in high-involvement purchases. However, the emergence of short-form video content has begun to challenge this assumption. The highly visual, emotionally engaging, and contextually personalized nature of short video marketing accelerates consumer exposure, emotional resonance, and behavioral response—often collapsing several stages of the decision process into a single moment of impulse.

For example, a user scrolling through TikTok may encounter a 15-second product demonstration from a key opinion leader (KOL), accompanied by thousands of positive comments, before being directly redirected to a purchase page—all within a span of less than a minute. In such scenarios, the traditional "evaluation of alternatives" stage is effectively bypassed, as social proof and

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emotional impact replace rational comparison. This transformation signifies a shift from a deliberative process to a reactive, affective-driven mechanism.

From a strategic standpoint, brands are increasingly designing their marketing content to suit the affordances of short video platforms: concise storytelling, influencer collaboration, social interactivity, and algorithmic optimization. These tactics are not merely about gaining exposure—they are about compressing time, shortening the path from awareness to conversion, and creating "micro-moments" where buying decisions are made in real time.

Despite this trend, academic research on how these strategies specifically alter the structure and duration of the consumer decision-making cycle remains limited. Most studies focus on digital marketing effectiveness in general or explore social media engagement metrics, rather than analyzing the temporal compression of decision-making paths.

Therefore, this paper aims to fill that gap by investigating how marketing strategies deployed on short video platforms contribute to the acceleration of the consumer decision-making cycle. We examine the mechanisms by which platform features, content formats, and user interactions facilitate a faster transition from initial exposure to purchase intent or action. By doing so, we seek to contribute both to the theoretical understanding of consumer behavior in the digital age and to the practical optimization of marketing strategies in the context of short-form video ecosystems.

Theoretical Background

This chapter provides a conceptual foundation for understanding how short video platform marketing strategies influence and accelerate the consumer decision-making process. It first revisits classical models of consumer behavior, then explores the unique strategic affordances of short video platforms, and finally discusses theoretical mechanisms through which these affordances compress the decision cycle.

1.1. Classical Models of Consumer Decision-Making

The consumer decision-making process has traditionally been viewed as a rational, sequential progression through five stages: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 1995). This model assumes that consumers actively and deliberately gather information and compare options before reaching a purchasing decision. While useful in stable, low-pressure contexts, this framework has been increasingly challenged in fast-paced digital environments.

Alternative models, such as Bettman, Luce, and Payne's (1998) adaptive decision-making framework, emphasize that consumers often rely on heuristics and mental shortcuts in situations characterized by time pressure, emotional stimuli, and information overload. These characteristics are particularly relevant in the context of short-form video platforms, where consumers are frequently exposed to emotionally engaging content in rapid succession, leaving little time or motivation for deliberation.

1.2. Strategic Affordances of Short Video Platforms

Short video platforms fundamentally differ from traditional media in how content is produced, delivered, and consumed. Their strategic affordances create an ecosystem optimized for rapid attention capture and conversion.

First, the brevity of short videos encourages passive consumption and quick comprehension. With content typically lasting under one minute, users can view numerous messages in a short span, increasing exposure frequency while minimizing cognitive effort.

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Second, algorithmic personalization tailors the content feed to each user's preferences, eliminating the need for manual information search. This makes discovery of new products or brands effortless and contextually relevant.

Third, the emotionally immersive nature of short video content—through storytelling, music, humor, or drama—amplifies affective engagement, which can shortcut the traditional evaluation process. Content that triggers joy, curiosity, or trust may drive action more effectively than rational persuasion.

Lastly, short video platforms support in-app commerce tools that facilitate immediate action. Viewers can transition from exposure to purchase without leaving the app, creating a frictionless path from interest to transaction.

Together, these affordances foster an environment where marketing messages can rapidly influence consumer attitudes and behaviors, significantly accelerating the decision-making timeline.

1.3. Theoretical Mechanisms of Acceleration

The acceleration of the consumer decision-making cycle on short video platforms can be better understood by drawing on interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks that highlight how individuals process information and respond to stimuli under digital conditions. Rather than following a deliberate, step-by-step evaluation process, consumers in these environments are more likely to engage in affect-driven and heuristic-based behaviors triggered by carefully engineered content and interface design.

One useful perspective is offered by the Information Adoption Model (IAM), which posits that the perceived quality of information and the credibility of its source significantly influence whether an individual will adopt that information as a basis for judgment or action. In short video contexts, these elements are amplified through visually vivid content and the endorsement of key opinion leaders (KOLs), who function as credible, relatable figures. When a product is demonstrated by an influencer in a visually compelling and trustworthy manner, users are more inclined to accept the message without seeking out competing alternatives or additional verification.

Complementing this is the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, which explains how external environmental stimuli influence an individual's internal emotional and cognitive states, ultimately leading to behavioral responses. Short video content, with its rapid pacing, high emotional load, and immersive format, serves as an intense stimulus that elicits immediate affective reactions—excitement, joy, curiosity, or even urgency. These internal states often bypass rational evaluation and directly influence decisions such as clicking, saving, or purchasing.

Moreover, users' reliance on heuristic cues—simple decision rules based on superficial signals—is heightened in such fast-paced media environments. The theory of social proof, for instance, explains that individuals tend to follow the behavior of others, especially when they observe a large number of people engaging with or endorsing a product. On short video platforms, visible metrics like likes, shares, and comments serve as persuasive cues that a product is popular or trustworthy, prompting consumers to conform to perceived group norms and make quick, intuitive choices.

Taken together, these theoretical mechanisms demonstrate that short video platforms cultivate a decision-making environment driven less by cognitive deliberation and more by emotional stimulation, social influence, and source-based trust. As a result, the consumer journey is no

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longer characterized by a sequential and reflective process but by a fluid and compressed interaction between exposure and action.

2. Pathways to Acceleration: Strategic Mechanisms of Short Video Marketing

Building upon the theoretical foundations established in the previous chapter, this section investigates how specific marketing strategies employed on short video platforms functionally accelerate each stage of the consumer decision-making cycle. While classical models conceptualize decision-making as a multi-stage journey—from awareness to interest, evaluation, and finally action—short video platforms often condense these stages or eliminate them entirely. This chapter explores four key strategic mechanisms through which this compression occurs: influencer-driven persuasion, emotional content design, algorithmic exposure, and socially reinforced heuristics.

2.1. Influencer-Driven Persuasion

One of the most powerful drivers of accelerated decision-making on short video platforms is the use of influencers, or Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs). These individuals possess high levels of audience trust, and their endorsements often substitute for traditional evaluations of product credibility and quality. When influencers showcase or demonstrate products in brief, engaging videos—often framed as authentic, real-life experiences—they trigger viewers' trust-based shortcuts, thereby expediting the decision process.

Unlike traditional celebrity endorsements, influencer marketing on platforms like TikTok or Douyin operates within parasocial relationships, where viewers feel a sense of closeness or emotional attachment to the creator. This perceived intimacy enhances credibility and allows product recommendations to bypass cognitive scrutiny. In many cases, consumers make purchase decisions without comparing alternatives simply because the influencer said, "This works for me, and it will work for you too."

2.2. Emotional Content Design

Short video marketing relies heavily on affective storytelling and emotional triggers. Content creators strategically design videos to evoke curiosity, humor, surprise, or empathy—all of which stimulate viewers' emotional arousal and reduce the likelihood of critical analysis. Emotional content can serve as a catalyst for impulsive behavior by shifting consumer attention away from rational evaluation and toward immediate reaction.

For example, a short narrative about someone's transformation after using a skincare product, enhanced by music, facial expressions, and before-and-after visuals, appeals to viewers' desire for quick solutions. When emotional engagement is high, the consumer's focus is redirected from comparing products to visualizing similar outcomes for themselves, leading to spontaneous purchases.

2.3. Algorithmic Personalization and Continuous Exposure

Short video platforms are highly personalized content ecosystems driven by recommendation algorithms. These algorithms analyze user preferences, behaviors, watch times, and interaction histories to deliver relevant content with increasing precision. As a result, consumers are continuously exposed to products or brands aligned with their implicit interests, often without active search behavior.

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This passive exposure substitutes for the information search phase in traditional models. Over time, repeated encounters with similar product categories create a sense of familiarity and preference, known as the "mere exposure effect." Even if a consumer did not intend to shop, algorithmic reinforcement can plant a seed of interest that later transforms into action with minimal resistance.

Moreover, platform design facilitates seamless transitions from interest to action. Embedded shopping links, "buy now" buttons, and third-party integrations allow users to complete purchases without leaving the video environment, further condensing the decision cycle.

2.4. Social Proof and Heuristic Reinforcement

Social cues embedded within short video content play a critical role in accelerating consumer behavior. Metrics such as the number of likes, comments, reposts, and the virality of a video act as social validation signals that influence perception of product value and trustworthiness. This aligns with the psychological principle of social proof: when people see others engaging in a behavior, they are more likely to follow.

For instance, a product video with millions of views and thousands of positive comments subtly communicates, "everyone is buying this," which can override a consumer's personal doubts or hesitation. These heuristic shortcuts are especially powerful in low-involvement or emotionally driven decisions, enabling consumers to skip the evaluation phase altogether.

2.5. Summary of Strategic Mechanisms

The table below summarizes how each strategic mechanism corresponds to specific decision-making stages and illustrates the ways in which short video marketing compresses or eliminates traditional steps.

Strategic Mechanism	Affected Stage(s)	Acceleration Effect	Example
Influencer Persuasion	Evaluation → Purchase	Replaces critical assessment with trust-based decisions	"TikTok made me buy it" trend
Emotional Content Design	Awareness → Action	Emotional arousal triggers impulsive decisions	Viral "before/after" transformation videos
Algorithmic Personalization	Information Search → Interest	Replaces active search with passive, relevant exposure	Continuous appearance of skincare videos in feed
Social Proof/Heuristics	Evaluation → Action	Peer engagement substitutes for rational deliberation	Comment section reinforces perceived product credibility

This chapter demonstrates that short video platforms not only change how marketing messages are delivered, but also how consumers cognitively and emotionally process those messages. Through a combination of trust-based communication, affective engagement, algorithmic targeting, and social validation, these platforms enable marketers to bypass or collapse the traditional decision stages, thus creating a condensed, emotionally charged, and socially reinforced consumer journey.

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3. Conclusion

3.1. Summary

This study examined how marketing strategies employed on short video platforms accelerate the consumer decision-making cycle by disrupting the traditional linear models of consumer behavior. Drawing upon foundational theories such as the Information Adoption Model (IAM), the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, and heuristic-based decision-making, the research demonstrated that platforms like TikTok and Douyin have introduced new dynamics where exposure, emotional engagement, and immediate action are tightly integrated. Short video content, by virtue of its brevity, immersive design, and algorithmic personalization, enables consumers to bypass stages such as information search and alternative evaluation. Instead, decisions are often made based on affective responses, influencer endorsements, or visible social cues, leading to a compressed and impulsive decision-making process. The identification and analysis of four strategic mechanisms—namely influencer-driven persuasion, emotional content design, algorithmic exposure, and social proof—revealed how each contributes to the shortening of the consumer journey from awareness to action. These findings not only highlight the functional role of short video platforms in shaping consumer behavior but also call attention to the need for updated theoretical frameworks that reflect the evolving nature of digital consumption.

3.2. Implications

The findings of this study hold important implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, the research challenges the adequacy of traditional consumer decision-making models and underscores the relevance of emotion-driven and heuristic-based approaches in contemporary digital environments. It expands the application of IAM and S-O-R models by illustrating how they operate within short-form video contexts, where trust, emotional resonance, and social validation often outweigh rational evaluation. Practically, the study provides marketers with strategic insights into how to effectively leverage the affordances of short video platforms. Creating emotionally charged and visually engaging content, collaborating with credible influencers, optimizing content for algorithmic recommendation, and incorporating clear calls-to-action can significantly enhance the speed and efficiency of consumer decision-making. In doing so, brands can not only increase conversion rates but also cultivate more immediate and emotionally resonant relationships with their target audiences. However, the acceleration of decisions also raises ethical concerns, such as the potential for impulsive purchases, consumer regret, or manipulation through emotional over-stimulation, which practitioners must carefully navigate as part of responsible digital marketing.

3.3. Future Research Directions

Although this study presents an integrated conceptual understanding of how short video marketing accelerates the consumer decision-making cycle, several limitations provide fertile ground for future research. Empirical studies are needed to validate the proposed mechanisms using behavioral data such as click-through rates, dwell time, or purchase conversion tracking in real-time short video settings. Longitudinal research could also examine the downstream effects of rapid decision-making on customer satisfaction, repeat purchase behavior, and brand loyalty to determine whether acceleration leads to sustainable brand engagement. Cross-cultural studies may explore how digital consumer behavior differs across regions, particularly in terms of trust in influencers, responsiveness to emotional stimuli, or receptivity to social proof. Furthermore,

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with the increasing use of AI-generated content (AIGC) in marketing, future research should investigate how consumer perceptions differ between human-created and machine-generated short video content in terms of credibility, engagement, and conversion effectiveness. Finally, interdisciplinary research combining marketing, psychology, and human-computer interaction may offer more robust models that capture the complex and evolving nature of consumer decision-making in algorithmic media environments

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