

Viral but Nameless: How Social Media Commerce Weakens Brand Memory in Impulse-Driven Purchase Paths

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Abstract. With the rapid development of technology, purchasing products through short video platforms has become mainstream. This study uses the case of the “Zhenshiming steam eye mask” to explore whether purchase-driven short video advertising negatively affects brand memory. The research adopts a case study approach, supported by literature review and theoretical discussion. Through detailed analysis and reconstruction of the case, the study finds that consumer behavior under such advertising typically follows two distinct paths and is influenced by three key mechanisms. This perspective highlights the need to connect short-term purchase behavior with long-term brand building. Based on these findings, the research proposes a model of “instant conversion, delayed memory” to explain how promotional content may weaken long-term brand recognition. The study offers both theoretical insights and practical recommendations for brand managers seeking to balance conversion efficiency with sustained brand impact in the age of short video commerce. It also provides a reference point for future studies on digital advertising and consumer-brand interaction.

Keywords: Short video platforms; purchasing-driven advertising strategies; brand recognition and memory.

1. Introduction

This study focuses on how, in the context of the rapid growth of digital technology, consumers' media usage habits and company marketing strategies have changed significantly. With the transition from television to smartphones, platforms like Douyin have become mainstream in China's daily social media life. In this context, traditional advertisements focusing on product functions are being replaced by new marketing approaches driven by emotional resonance and price incentives. However, whether this purchase-oriented advertising truly helps build long-term memory among consumers remains a question worth discussing.

In recent years, academic research has increasingly focused on brand consumer communication, consumer behavior and purchase-driven advertising strategies on mainstream social media platforms. Existing studies suggest that short video platforms can effectively enhance consumers' purchase intentions, and that price incentives play a significant role in influencing decision-making. However, current studies have yet to determine whether purchase-driven advertising truly helps establish lasting brand memory among consumers. Although growing attention has been paid to short video communication mechanisms and user behavior, there remains a lack of systematic theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence regarding how different advertising formats influence brand recognition and memory. This study is therefore of particular significance, as it aims to explore the relationship between purchasing-driven advertising and consumer brand recognition and memory. To date, there remains a lack of systematic inquiry in this field.

To be specific, the research will address the following core questions: In the context of using short videos becoming the dominate mode of communication on social media, are users more likely to make immediate purchases when exposed to advertisements emphasizing promotions or discounts? How does the conversion rate of such advertisements compare with other advertising formats? After completing a purchase through social media platforms, do consumers remember the brand or company behind the product? Is there a common phenomenon of “remembering the product, but not

the brand” How can marketing strategies be adjusted to enhance consumers’ recognition of the brand and strengthen long-term brand memory?

This study adopts a case study approach to examine existing theories and empirical studies related to advertising and brand memory. This method enables a comprehensive understanding of the prior findings, helping to clarify the conceptual mechanisms. This study aims to explore the theoretical relationship between brand memory and advertising formats, and to propose a new research direction that enables the academic community to better systematize contemporary marketing strategies. It will deepen the conceptual analysis of brand memory and relevant theories from marketing and communication studies. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap in existing literature by examining how purchase-driven advertising influences brand recognition and consumer recall.

In practical terms, this study ultimately aims to provide valuable insights for companies active in social media, helping them improve their brand strategies and increase the effectiveness of their advertisements. Especially in the context where short video platforms have already become mainstream communication channels, this study seeks to offer practical guidance for brands to refine their marketing approaches and achieve profit maximization.

2. Literature Review

Existing research on social media advertising largely focuses on its ability to influence consumer behavior, particularly in prompting immediate purchases. One stream of studies has demonstrated the strong mediating role of short video content in bridging consumer attention and purchase intention.

One study found a significant positive correlation between short video marketing and impulse buying behavior, indicating that visually rich and emotionally resonant content can directly accelerate purchasing decisions [1].

A second research strand focuses on how different advertising formats affect brand recognition and memory. Through experimental research on Facebook, showed that video advertisements were more readily identified than static formats, achieving an 83.4% recognition rate. Furthermore, higher recognition was positively linked to consumers’ perceptions of entertainment, credibility, and persuasion, thereby enhancing brand memory [2].

A third stream emphasizes branding strategies in livestream commerce. Using TikTok as a case, we examined how social and telepresence contribute to trust-building in impulsive purchasing contexts. The findings from this study suggest that creating a warm, interactive, and credible environment can not only increase conversion rates but also strengthen brand impressions [3].

Despite the current study, a critical gap still remains. Few studies systematically examine the relationship between purchase-driven advertising and long-term brand memory. Existing literature often separates consumer behavior, advertising effectiveness, and brand recognition into different areas of inquiry. Therefore, the cognitive outcomes of impulse-oriented advertising strategies—particularly whether they contribute to sustained brand recall—are still insufficiently understood. This study seeks to integrate insights from consumer psychology, communication, and marketing in order to fill this gap, aiming to provide a more complete understanding of how purchase-driven advertising may weaken brand memory in the digital era.

Based on the existing literature, this study introduces the Elaboration Likelihood Model as a theoretical framework. When consumers browse short videos, they mainly rely on external cues such as price discounts, visual attraction, and celebrity endorsements. They usually make quick decisions through these cues rather than engaging in deep thinking about the product’s brand. This low-effort decision path may lead to high conversion rates, but weak brand memory. This pattern closely aligns with the “brand memory dilution” phenomenon observed in promotion-driven advertising and provides a useful foundation for the mechanism analysis in the following chapters [4].

3. Case Study

3.1. Zhenshiming's Steam Eye Mask: A Price-Driven Promotion Case Study

In recent years, as social media marketing has become increasingly mainstream, Zhenshiming, a well-established Chinese eye-care brand, has actively followed this trend by launching and promoting its e-commerce stores on platforms such as Douyin [5]. Its flagship product, the *steam eye mask*, ranked No.1 on Douyin's "sleep and eye-care" product chart for several consecutive days. With total sales reaching several hundred thousand units, the product reflects both high search volume and strong sales performance across the platform.

In terms of communication strategy, Zhenshiming emphasizes key selling points such as "scientifically formulated eye-care," "relief for eye fatigue" and "nationally certified nutritional layer," in its product messaging. To further boost visibility and engagement, the brand has partnered with popular IPs such as *Little Yellow Duck* and *Crayon Shinchan*, leveraging emotional resonance and fan-based purchasing power. These collaborations not only attract IP followers but also enhance the product's visual recognition and emotional appeal [6].

On the product page, tags such as "recommended by influencers" are prominently displayed, and many celebrities and TikTok creators with substantial fan bases have participated in the promotion. "Recommended by influencers" is a clear marketing strategy that indicates the product has been endorsed by a content creator with a large fan base. This label serves as a form of social proof, suggesting that the product is trusted or approved by others, which can effectively stimulate consumers' willingness to purchase—particularly in emotionally driven or impulse-based shopping scenarios [6].

The typical promotional video follows a three-step narrative structure: it begins with a relatable moment of exhaustion often experienced by young people, transitions into a personal testimonial—"I tried this myself, and it really works"—and concludes with a time-limited discount offer. Viewers are directed to the purchase link in the comment section, forming a complete emotional-to-purchase conversion loop.

However, upon examining the comment sections, we observed that while users frequently leave positive feedback—such as "slept very well," "a must-have for business trips", or "love the scent"—very few comments explicitly mention the brand name Zhenshiming. Further research into user-generated content related to "Zhenshiming steam eye mask" reveals that most of the posts are sponsored promotions rather than organic recommendations.

Moreover, Zhenshiming's communication strategy seems to mainly focus on product functions, user experience, and discount-driven stimulus strategies, while weakening direct brand exposure in both visual display and language expression. This approach represents a market orientation that emphasizes conversion rates rather than long-term brand memory.

Therefore, the case of Zhenshiming serves as a strong illustration of the core research question: when marketing strategies are predominantly price-driven, does the brand itself become marginalized, ultimately weakening brand retention in consumers' memory? This phenomenon will be further analyzed in the following section from a mechanistic perspective.

3.2. The Dilution of Attention: Product-Centered Content Overshadows Brand Recognition

The advertising strategy of Zhenshiming mainly focuses on three user-centered scenarios: sleep assistance, relaxation, and portability. The advertisement videos usually begin with familiar lifestyle triggers, such as eye fatigue after staying up late or difficulty sleeping during business trips, which can immediately attract consumers' attention to the product's instant comfort.

Typical slogans such as "constant warmth", "soothing lavender scent", and "use it every night" create a vivid sensory association with the product. These descriptions succeed in embedding a strong impression of the product experience in the viewer's mind.

However, in both the verbal messaging and visual composition, Zhenshiming's brand identity is rarely highlighted. The brand name is seldom mentioned explicitly, and the logo typically appears

only in a corner of the screen—lacking any visual emphasis or narrative integration. The advertising narrative revolves entirely around the product’s function, rather than reinforcing its brand origin [7]. As a result, the user’s attention is fully occupied by the sensory appeal of the product, while the brand itself fades into the background. This dynamic frequently leads to a familiar outcome: “It feels great—but I don’t remember what it’s called.”

3.3. Lack of Anchor Points: The Brand Fails to Establish Deep Multi-Scene Connections

From the first short video to the final checkout, Zhenshiming gives users very few chances to reconnect with the brand. Most people click on the purchase link below the influencer’s video and quickly place their order. But the whole process does not include any links to a brand homepage, brand story, or detailed brand introduction [8].

Based on observation, more product information can only be seen by scrolling to the very bottom of the page. Even there, the brand is not clearly highlighted. After the purchase, there is no reminder to follow the official account, no product guide, and no brand story included in the package.

This kind of fast and simple buying process may help increase short-term sales. But it also means the user has no chance to remember the brand, leading to a gap: the product is bought, but the brand is forgotten.

3.4. Content Homogenization: IP Collaborations Obscure Brand Differentiation

Although Zhenshiming actively engages in IP collaborations—with popular characters like *Little Yellow Duck* and *Crayon Shinchan*—to increase product recognition and emotional appeal, such strategies have become highly common across social media platforms. As a result, they may weaken the brand’s own unique identity.

Further observation shows that Zhenshiming’s promotional videos share very similar formats and language with those of competing brands. Typical expressions include “personally tested and super comfortable,” “I use it every night,” “must-have for business trips,” and “limited-time offer, don’t miss it.” These repetitive structures make it harder for consumers to distinguish one brand from another [9].

Many users end up remembering the product based on IP or sensory cues, such as “that Little Yellow Duck eye mask” or “the one that smells like lavender,” rather than the brand name Zhenshiming itself. When content becomes overly standardized, brand symbols are gradually replaced by generic product impressions, making it difficult to build emotional attachment or brand-specific associations.

4. Theoretical Framework: A Brand Memory Dilution Model in Instant Conversion Paths

Based on the previous case analysis of Zhenshiming’s steam eye mask and considering the features of consumer behavior flow and short video content structure, this chapter proposes a model of brand memory dilution under instant conversion paths. The model aims to explain how price-driven advertising on short video platforms may help boost sales in the short term, but at the same time weaken the long-term memory of the brand in the minds of consumers [10].

4.1. Dual Consumption Paths: A Comparative Model

In the context of short video marketing, consumer behavior usually follows two typical conversion paths. The first path is promotion-driven, relying on discounts, limited-time sales, and persuasive sales language. This approach can encourage consumers to act quickly but often results in low brand awareness. Consumers usually remember the product itself rather than the brand behind it.

The second is a symbol-driven path, which emphasizes long-term brand building through brand stories, visual anchors, and structured brand exposure. This path supports gradual recognition and

emotional connection. While it may convert at a slower pace, it helps consumers form a clearer and longer-lasting memory of the brand [11].

4.2. Three Mechanisms of Brand Memory Dilution

In promotion-driven short video marketing, the weakening of brand memory is not a coincidence. It is the result of several structural factors within the communication process. This section summarizes the problem into three core mechanisms:

The first is the attention occupation mechanism. Many short video ads rely heavily on price-focused language, such as “limited-time offer,” “buy one, get more,” or “hot sale.” These messages take up most of the user’s attention, both visually and verbally. As a result, the brand name and logo are pushed to the background and become part of the noise. They are not effectively processed or remembered by the viewer [12].

The second is the lack of anchor points. When users move from a short video to a product page and quickly place an order, there are few chances for brand reinforcement. The process rarely includes a link to the brand homepage, brand story, or any content that builds brand value. This “fast and direct” purchase path increases conversion but removes the opportunity for repeated brand exposure. Without secondary contact points, users are less likely to form a stable connection with the brand [13].

The third is the influence of platform algorithms. Most platforms tend to recommend content that follows fixed formats—similar video structures, repeated phrases, and unified visual styles. Creators are encouraged to follow these “viral templates,” making it harder for brands to express themselves in a unique way. In this uniform content environment, brand identity gets flattened. Consumers begin to recognize products based on generic content rather than distinct brand features.

5. Conclusion

This study examined a representative case of short video marketing and identified three key mechanisms behind the loss of brand memory in promotion-driven advertising. Based on this, it proposed the “instant conversion, delayed memory” model, aiming to fill a gap in current research on brand management in the context of social media.

To balance conversion efficiency with long-term brand recognition, brands on short video platforms should adjust their communication strategies accordingly. First, placing brand logos or signature colors within the first three seconds of each video can improve early-stage visual recognition. Second, adding secondary contact points—such as links to brand homepages, official accounts, or private channels—helps reinforce memory beyond the moment of purchase. Lastly, brands should work with content creators to develop differentiated formats, avoiding over-reliance on algorithm-friendly templates that reduce brand distinctiveness.

This study focused primarily on Douyin as the main platform for case selection. Future research could expand to other platforms such as Kuaishou or Rednote to compare whether the proposed mechanisms apply across different platform environments. In addition, this research did not incorporate experimental methods. Future studies may consider using tools such as eye-tracking or event-related potential (ERP) to explore the causal relationship between advertising attention and brand memory from a cognitive or neurological perspective, thereby strengthening the scientific validity of the proposed model.

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