

# Mechanisms By Which Implicit Advertising on Short Video Platforms Erodes Consumer Trust

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**Abstract.** With the rapid development of short video platforms, a new form of consumer guidance known as "grass planting" has gradually become an important means for young users to obtain product information and make purchasing decisions. The deepening of the commercialization of new social media platforms has led to the gradual penetration of implicit software and broad, blurring the boundary between bloggers and consumers. This study constructs a three-stage model of "trustlessness" (trust input-dilution-disintegration) to explore the mechanism of implicit advertising eroding trust through content disguise, algorithm reinforcement, and emotional discourse. The study combines literature review, case analysis and user psychology theory, using a mixed qualitative and quantitative method to analyze user recognition ability and trust changes. The results show that users are easily misled by content disguised as "real sharing", and the exposure effect of the platform algorithm deepens the illusion of trust, but once the interest relationship is exposed, the collapse of trust spreads rapidly. The conclusion is that the erosion of trust in implicit advertising is a structural result of the interaction between content design, platform mechanism and user psychology. Governance recommendations include improving algorithm transparency, clarifying advertising labels, and strengthening media literacy, providing theoretical and practical references for platform governance, advertising ethics, and consumer education.

**Keywords:** Short video platform; implicit advertising; erosion of consumer trust; Algorithmic transparency.

## 1. Introduction

With the rise of short-form video platforms like TikTok and Xiaohongshu, questions have arisen about how hidden advertising affects user trust. This study examines. The study analyzes the trust erosion mechanism from three aspects: content packaging strategy, algorithm push logic and emotional rhetoric, and proposes a "three-stage trustlessness model" to reveal the dynamic path and diffusion mechanism of trust from establishment, dilution to collapse. how hidden advertising, along with its algorithmic mechanisms and business logic, contributes to its widespread use. This study focuses on the erosion of consumer trust through hidden advertising within the context of the commercialization of short-form video platforms. In terms of methodology, the literature analysis method is used to systematically sort out domestic and foreign research results, and theoretical application and mechanism analysis are carried out in combination with typical cases. Key viewpoints are extracted from multi-source materials, theoretical support is constructed, and multi-dimensional suggestions such as platform governance, advertising transparency and media literacy improvement are put forward, taking into account both academic value and practical significance.

## 2. Literature Review

In recent years, the rapid development of social e-commerce platforms has led to the prevalence of "grass planting culture", which has become the mainstream way of consumer guidance. The content ecosystem represented by platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu uses algorithms to accurately push information that users are interested in, achieving a close linkage between content recommendation and product conversion. However, as commercial logic penetrates into content, the boundaries between advertising and sharing gradually blur, and hidden advertising emerges in large

numbers, becoming a problem that cannot be ignored. Existing research has explored the relationship between implicit advertising and user trust on short video platforms from different perspectives.

From the perspective of platform mechanisms, algorithm-driven information distribution has improved content reach efficiency, but it also brings the risk of "black box". Some studies have pointed out that the closed and opaque nature of the platform's recommendation logic has exacerbated the concealment of advertising information and weakened users' basic trust in the platform's content [1].

Therefore, establishing a more transparent and responsible algorithm mechanism has become the key to enhancing user trust. In terms of dissemination methods, short video content often uses a combination of emotional discourse and simulated life scenes to enhance the appeal and sense of immersion of the content. For example, slogans such as "OMG, buy it" appear frequently, which can easily lead users to make irrational consumption choices driven by emotions [2]. The emotional packaging of content not only reduces users' vigilance against advertising content, but also quietly changes their judgment criteria for the authenticity of information. In summary, algorithmic mechanisms and communication strategies constitute the dual foundations of implicit advertising trust erosion: the former enhances advertising concealment by making recommendations opaque, while the latter weakens user vigilance by using emotional symbols. Together, the two constitute a synergistic mechanism for trust erosion. However, existing research often focuses on a single mechanism and lacks a systematic framework for analyzing algorithmic transparency and sentiment communication. There is also a lack of in-depth discussion on how to embed such mechanisms into the dynamic model of trust construction, dilution and collapse. This article integrates the opacity of platform algorithms, emotional communication methods, and user psychological reactions into a "three-stage trustlessness model" to systematically describe how hidden advertising erodes trust and propose corresponding governance strategies. This contribution lies in constructing a multi-mechanism, multi-stage interactive perspective on trust erosion engineering, providing a theoretical basis for platform regulation and algorithmic ethics.

*Research on Hidden Advertising Operations on Xiaohongshu Platform*, this study explores how Xiaohongshu's implicit advertising cleverly integrates brand information into content to enhance brand awareness among audiences. The research and analysis demonstrate that emphasizing interactive mechanisms and user-generated content enhances implicit communication [3]. However, this study did not delve into the long-term mechanisms by which hidden advertising erodes user trust. This article will address this gap by focusing on the changing nature of user trust and filling this gap in research on the path of trust erosion.

Anqi Huang & Zuraidah Zainol systematically reviewed how algorithm design, content creation, and user interaction on short video platforms affect marketing effectiveness. The analysis also points out that the platform provides marketing opportunities with high interaction and fast dissemination, but the ethics and long-term effectiveness have not been fully discussed [4]. This study lacks attention to the ethical risks of implicit advertising and the trust-influencing mechanism.

This study will focus on how "dark advertising" erodes trust and propose governance paths. Mohamed et al. found that among Indonesia's Generation Z group, short video marketing, influencer affinity, and trust signals significantly impact purchase intention. The study concluded that influencer authenticity and trustworthiness are key to boosting conversions [5]. However, this research lacks an understanding of the mechanisms by which implicit advertising undermines trust.

This article will explore whether trust signals have a counter-effect on trust building in the case of "dark advertising". Mathur et al. analyzed social media influencers and found that disclosure rates were extremely low (approximately 10%), and that brief disclosures hindered user identification [6]. This study did not specifically explore how platform mechanisms contribute to the prevalence of covert advertising. This study will further explore the structural relationship between ad disclosure and identification difficulty, incorporating platform algorithms.

Gui et al. evaluated the cross-platform advertising disclosure compliance of influencers in the Netherlands from a legal perspective. Research analysis shows that disclosure is rare and that

influencer size is not necessarily related to compliance [7]. The research gap is that it “ignores the mechanism of user subjective trust change”. This article will use the user psychology perspective to more comprehensively understand the process of trust disintegration.

Avram et al. mainly studied how social platform interaction indicators (likes, shares) can easily increase users' trust in false information. The analysis showed that interaction volume as a credibility indicator can mislead users' judgment [8]. However, this study did not focus on the misinterpretation of trust in marketing content. This study will simulate how the algorithmic exposure mechanism of “the more you see, the more you believe” erodes rational judgment.

Influencer Cartels mainly studied the possibility of influencers forming “cartels” to increase exposure by inflating the volume. Research analysis indicates that manipulative interactions can affect user judgment and potentially harm consumer interests. However, this research lacks analysis of the long-term impact of trust [9]. As a supplement, this study incorporates this behavior into the category of platform mechanisms as one of the trust dilution factors.

*The research content of “Media Bias Research”* mainly focuses on how social media trust bias affects users' judgment of information credibility. The analysis shows that bias weakens users' judgment and trust in information sources [10]. This study lacks application in short videos and “dark advertising” scenarios. This study incorporates trust bias into the theoretical explanation of the emotion manipulation mechanism.

*“Research on the Mechanism of Short Video Addiction”* reveals short video addiction and “human-intelligence interaction dislocation” from the three dimensions of algorithm, user, and content [11]. The study analyzes how algorithms shape user perception and behavior, weakening autonomous rationality. This study will integrate the trust-building mechanism and gain a deeper understanding of the psychological basis of “passive trust.”

*The main research content of “The Impact Mechanism of Personalized Social Media Advertising”* is to study the perceived intrusion, psychological resistance and advertising avoidance mechanisms caused by personalized advertising. Research analysis shows that excessive personalization may cause anger and negative cognition, which in turn leads to advertising avoidance [12]. This study did not explore the process of trust accumulation and erosion. This study will combine emotional reactions and trust disintegration stages to enrich the model structure. In summary, these studies jointly reveal the double-edged sword nature of short video platform marketing:

It attracts users with strong interactivity and high immersion, but it can also easily reinforce the illusion of trust through algorithm design, interaction indicators and content packaging. “Endorsements...” (Mathur et al.) and the Dutch disclosure study highlight the problem of disclosure deficiencies; Avram et al. reveal that interaction indicators are misleading; Research on “Cartels” and media bias emphasizes how systematic manipulation influences judgment; research on addiction and personalized advertising explains the weakening of user subjectivity and the emotional rebound mechanism, respectively. These studies provide a theoretical foundation for building a “trustless” model. This study will build on this foundation by integrating content disguise, algorithmic enhancement, and emotional manipulation to systematically outline how hidden advertising erodes trust and offer practical recommendations for platform governance and advertising ethics practices.

### **3. Case and Theory Integration Analysis: Trust Erosion Mechanism of Hidden Advertising**

Based on literature review and theoretical model, this study adopts the three-step method of “case restoration-mechanism analysis-theoretical refinement” to conduct an in-depth analysis of the trust erosion path of implicit advertising on short video platforms. The analysis logic follows the three dimensions of “content strategy, platform algorithm, and user psychology” and is verified and corrected in combination with the “three-stage de-trust model.”

### 3.1. Case Restoration

In 2023, Douyin beauty blogger @Life Orange frequently recommended a certain "Internet celebrity essence water" with slogans such as "personally tested and effective" and "countless repurchases". Through daily content packaging such as bare-faced trials and home scene photography, she quickly accumulated millions of fans and achieved hot sales of the product. As users received "three-no" products and found evidence that bloggers were charging promotion fees, accusations such as "selling trust" and "making money without a bottom line" quickly appeared in the comment section, and public opinion spread exponentially. Despite the subsequent announcement by the Douyin platform to strengthen audits and limit the flow of the accounts involved, users' dissatisfaction with the algorithm push mechanism continues to ferment, believing that the platform condones false propaganda. The incident ultimately caused the blogger to lose 300,000 followers, triggering a crisis of trust among fans in the "grass-planting bloggers" group. Some users even declared that they "no longer believe in any short video recommendations", forming a widespread collapse of trust from individuals to the group.

### 3.2. Case Analysis

Bloggers often share products with traffic titles such as "amateur" and "personally tested", and build a sense of intimacy through life-like scenes (such as trying them out without makeup or in front of the dressing table). This way of expression can easily lead users to mistakenly believe that it is a sincere recommendation without any vested interests, thus building trust. Now, users' homepages form a psychological illusion that "the more they see, the more they believe", which erodes users' rational judgment.

The platform recommends relevant "grass-planting content" based on user interaction data, making it easier for covert advertising to use "emotional manipulation" in interactive rhetoric. High-frequency emotional slogans (such as "buy is earn") and "review resonance" in the comment section create a false sense of community and exacerbate irrational dependence on trust.

### 3.3. Theoretical Refinement

Based on the platform's initial positioning of "recording real life", users assume that daily interactions with bloggers are non-commercial behaviors. Through interactive behaviors such as likes and comments, they continuously strengthen the psychological presupposition that "sharing is real", completing the original accumulation of trust relationships.

When "ad-like but not-advertising" content appears frequently, users begin to face a dilemma in judgment: algorithms continue to push similar content based on interaction data, creating an "exposure effect" to enhance credibility; Bloggers use rhetoric such as "try it without makeup" and "recommendation from friends" to create the illusion that the product is not an advertisement, and use the "tap water" style of posting reviews in the comment section to gradually eliminate users' awareness of advertising recognition.

This study, through the combination of case analysis and theoretical model, verifies that the feeling of being deceived by "distrust" produces a sharp backlash. This individual sense of betrayal spreads rapidly through social networks, triggering a collective trust crisis. Users no longer distinguish between blogger types and generalize the "eating rice" behavior as a platform ecological problem, which ultimately leads to the overall denial of the "grass planting model". Trust erosion is a structural process that is the result of the combined effects of platform mechanisms, content logic, and user psychology. It needs to be governed from multiple dimensions, including algorithm transparency, advertising labeling, and user education.

The erosion of trust in implicit advertising is not an isolated incident. It reveals how implicit advertising, driven by content packaging, platform algorithms, and emotional manipulation, erodes consumer trust and accelerates a systematic process of trust collapse. This process is not just a simple act of individual betrayal, but also the result of the interaction between platform mechanism, content logic and user psychology. The governance path should improve the transparency of platform

algorithms, clarify advertising labels, and enhance user media literacy in order to achieve a healthier content ecosystem.

## 4. Conclusion

The research results show that hidden advertisements on short video platforms gradually erode consumer trust through content disguise, algorithm reinforcement and emotional rhetoric, and the collapse of trust has a spreading effect from individuals to groups. Specifically, lifestyle content packaging reduces users' commercial vigilance, high-frequency algorithm push reinforces the illusion of trust, and emotional interaction prompts users to make quick decisions. However, once the commercial relationship is exposed, trust quickly collapses, verifying the applicability of the "three-stage trustlessness model" in actual cases.

From the perspective of research impact, this study deepens the understanding of the trust mechanism in the short video marketing environment and reveals that implicit advertising is not only a communication strategy issue, but also a manifestation of structural trust risk. The research results provide theoretical support for platform governance, advertising supervision, and user education: platforms need to improve algorithm transparency and advertising labeling standards to reduce the gray areas of advertising disclosure; strengthen advertising supervision and formulate special regulations for hidden advertising in short videos; Businesses should focus on long-term reputation building; improve media literacy education, strengthen the public's ability to identify hidden advertisements, and avoid blindly following consumption trends.

This study mainly relies on literature analysis and typical cases, and lacks large-scale empirical data support. Future research can quantify the impact of each link in the trust erosion mechanism through questionnaire surveys and experimental design, and further combine multi-platform comparisons with long-term user tracking to explore the differences in trust changes under different content types, cultural backgrounds, and user characteristics. In addition, there may be differences in trust dynamics in different cultural and platform environments. Cross-cultural comparative studies will provide more evidence for the universal verification of the model, provide more operational references for policy making, algorithm optimization and advertising ethics, and provide continuous guidance for the healthy development of the short video ecosystem.

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