EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF HIDDEN PURCHASING MOTIVES ON CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT AND IMPULSIVE SHOPPING BEHAVIOURS IN CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of hidden purchasing motives on consumer engagement and impulsive shopping behaviours in the context of cross-border e-commerce. It identifies key factors such as aesthetic appeal, trend discovery, and emotional gratification that drive unplanned purchases, emphasizing the role of self-empowerment in these decisions. The research also examines the influence of social cues, including age, gender, and browsing frequency, on shopping behaviours among Chinese consumers. Females and younger individuals are found to browse more frequently, with females showing a higher tendency towards impulsive buying due to hidden purchasing motives, while males are attracted to the convenience and personalization features of the platforms. The study provides actionable insights for entrepreneurs to enhance their e-commerce strategies by leveraging personalized and engaging experiences. It also highlights the need for policy makers to support the growth of cross-border e-commerce through regulations that ensure fair competition and consumer protection. Despite its contributions, the research acknowledges limitations related to sample composition and methodological constraints, suggesting areas for future studies to incorporate diverse samples and qualitative approaches for a more comprehensive understanding of e-commerce dynamics.

Keywords: Cross-border e-commerce, Hidden purchasing motives, Consumer behaviour, Social cues, Impulsive shopping

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of cross-border e-commerce has revolutionized the global retail phenomenon, providing consumers with unprecedented access to international products and brands (Tham et al., 2017; Pambreni et al., 2019; Herath et al., 2023). In China, this growth has been particularly pronounced, driven by a young, tech-savvy demographic that engages extensively with these platforms. According to Aimia (2023), between 57% and 66% of young Chinese consumers spend a significant amount of time browsing cross-border e-commerce sites, indicating high levels of

engagement and interest. Despite this, the conversion rate from browsing to actual purchases remains importantly low, with only about one-third of these consumers completing transactions on these platforms. This discrepancy between browsing and purchasing highlights several critical challenges faced by retailers operating in the cross-border e-commerce space. First, there appears to be a fundamental disconnect between the immersive browsing experience offered by these platforms and their transactional capabilities. While platforms like Tmall Global and JD Worldwide excel in creating engaging environments for product discovery and brand interaction, they often fall short in facilitating seamless and secure transactions (Chen & Zhang, 2022). This shortfall is compounded by consumer concerns over product authenticity, delivery reliability, and payment security, which are essential in influencing purchasing decisions (Zhou, 2023).

Moreover, the overwhelming variety of choices and the fragmented nature of the cross-border e-commerce ecosystem can lead to decision paralysis among consumers. With a plethora of options available, consumers may find it challenging to navigate these platforms and make informed purchasing decisions, ultimately opting for more familiar and trusted sites such as Amazon and Lazada (Li, 2021). This behavior underscores the importance of building consumer trust and enhancing user experience to drive conversions.

To address these challenges, it is crucial for cross-border e-commerce retailers to focus on several key areas. Firstly, enhancing the transactional capabilities of these platforms is essential. This includes the implementation of secure payment gateways, efficient order management systems, and transparent information regarding product sourcing and delivery processes (Wang et al., 2022). By ensuring that consumers feel confident in the security and reliability of their transactions, retailers can significantly improve conversion rates.

Secondly, building trust through robust customer support and clear communication about product authenticity is vital. Many consumers are hesitant to purchase from cross-border platforms due to concerns about counterfeit goods and unreliable delivery times (Jiang & Chen, 2020). Addressing these issues through proactive customer service and stringent quality controls can help alleviate these concerns and encourage more consumers to complete their purchases on cross-border e-commerce sites.

Furthermore, leveraging data analytics to gain deeper insights into consumer preferences and behaviors can enable retailers to tailor their offerings and marketing strategies more effectively. By understanding the motivations and expectations of their target audience, retailers can create personalized shopping experiences that resonate with consumers and drive higher conversion rates (Zhao & Wang, 2023). This data-driven approach can also help in segmenting the market and targeting specific consumer groups with relevant product recommendations and promotions. In addition to these strategic initiatives, enhancing collaboration between industry stakeholders and academic researchers can play a significant role in addressing the challenges of cross-border e-commerce. Academic research can provide valuable insights into consumer behavior, platform capabilities, and market trends, which can inform the development of more user-centric e-commerce platforms (Lu et al., 2021). Collaborative research efforts can also facilitate knowledge sharing and innovation, helping retailers to stay ahead of emerging trends and evolving consumer expectations. The importance of academic research extends to informing policy decisions and regulatory frameworks related to cross-border e-commerce. Empirical studies and evidence-based recommendations can help policymakers understand the broader economic and social impacts of e-commerce, leading to the development of policies that support sustainable growth while addressing potential challenges such as consumer protection and data security (Sun & Lee, 2023).

Finally, the cross-border e-commerce phenomenon in China presents both significant opportunities and considerable challenges for retailers. While high levels of consumer engagement indicate strong interest in these platforms, the low conversion rates highlight the need for strategic improvements in transactional capabilities, trust-building measures, and user experience. By addressing these issues through targeted initiatives and leveraging academic insights, retailers can unlock the full potential of cross-border e-commerce and capitalize on the growing demand for international products among Chinese consumers. Continued research and collaboration between academia and industry will be

crucial in driving innovation and ensuring the long-term success of cross-border e-commerce in the global economy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides an in-depth examination of consumer behaviour on cross-border e-commerce platforms, highlighting the persuasive power of various features that influence purchasing decisions. It builds on strong scientific theories to explore the psychology and behaviour of consumers in this context, tracing their impact on the evolution of e-commerce. The Theoretical Review lays the foundational framework by drawing on established psychological theories, while the Empirical Review offers insights into current consumer behavioural patterns. The section concludes with a summary of key findings and implications.

Theoretical Review

The Theoretical Review section explores established psychological theories that help understand consumer behaviour on cross-border e-commerce platforms. This includes social comparison theory, social presence theory, and theories related to hidden purchasing motives.

Social Comparison Theory

Social comparison theory, introduced by Festinger (1954), posits that individuals evaluate themselves by comparing their abilities and opinions to those of others. In cross-border e-commerce, this theory suggests that consumers engage in social comparisons when making purchasing decisions. They seek validation from their peers by comparing product choices, prices, and reviews. Positive comparisons may reinforce purchase intentions, while negative comparisons can lead to decision paralysis or avoidance (Chan & Lee, 2019). Understanding the role of social comparison provides insights into the importance of social influence and peer validation in driving purchasing decisions.

Social Presence Theory

Developed by Short, Williams, and Christie (1976) and later expanded by Walther (1992), social presence theory focuses on the sense of being together and interacting with others in mediated communication environments. In cross-border e-commerce, this theory suggests that the degree of social interaction within online platforms influences consumer behaviour. Platforms that facilitate real-time communication and user-generated content enhance the sense of social presence, leading to increased trust, satisfaction, and purchase intention (Gefen & Straub, 2004). Creating a vibrant online community can enhance the sense of belonging and motivate consumers to engage and transact.

Hidden Purchasing Motives

Theories related to hidden purchasing motives explore the underlying psychological drivers influencing consumer behaviour. These theories suggest that consumers are motivated by desires beyond rational needs, such as fun, excitement, and status (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). In cross-border e-commerce, hidden purchasing motives may manifest as the desire for novel experiences, the thrill of discovering unique products, or the aspiration to project a certain lifestyle. By tapping into these motives and leveraging experiential marketing techniques, retailers can create compelling narratives that resonate with consumers on an emotional level (Schmitt, 1999).

Empirical Review

The Empirical Review section examines real-world happenings (Azam et al., 2021; Azam et al., 2023); such as consumer behaviour patterns on cross-border e-commerce platforms, etc. for this case that draws on empirical studies and research findings.

Consumer Browsing Behaviour

Research has shown that consumers engage in extensive product browsing and comparison before making purchasing decisions on cross-border e-commerce platforms. For instance, a study by Liu et

al. (2020) found that the average Chinese consumer spends significant time comparing products across multiple platforms before finalizing a purchase. This highlights the importance of optimizing platform layout, search functionality, and product recommendations to enhance the browsing experience and facilitate informed decision-making.

Consumer Decision-Making Processes
Studies also investigate factors influencing consumers' evaluation and selection of products. Factors such as price, product reviews, brand reputation, and social proof play critical roles (Chen & Dholakia, 2018). Research by Huang and Benyoucef (2013) demonstrated the persuasive impact of user-generated content and peer recommendations on consumer decision-making in cross-border e-commerce. These findings suggest that social proof and credible reviews can significantly influence purchasing decisions.

Consumer Purchasing Behaviours
Empirical studies explore the factors motivating consumers to complete transactions, including perceived value, convenience, trust, and perceived risk (Pappas et al., 2014). Research by Wang et al. (2019) indicates that marketing interventions such as discounts, promotions, and personalized recommendations drive conversion rates and increase sales. Understanding these drivers helps retailers design targeted marketing strategies that resonate with consumers and encourage purchases.

Effectiveness of Marketing Strategies
Research evaluates the impact of various marketing strategies on consumer engagement and conversion rates. For example, Kim and Lennon (2008) found that visually appealing website design, engaging advertising content, and positive customer reviews enhance consumer engagement. By testing different marketing interventions, researchers can identify best practices that maximize retailers' return on investment and business performance.

The literature review underscores the complex interplay of psychological theories and empirical findings in understanding consumer behaviour on cross-border e-commerce platforms. Theoretical insights from social comparison theory, social presence theory, and hidden purchasing motives provide a comprehensive framework for analysing consumer decision-making processes. Empirical studies complement these theories by offering real-world insights into browsing, decision-making, and purchasing behaviours. By leveraging these insights, retailers can optimize their platforms and marketing efforts to enhance the shopping experience, drive sales, and achieve sustainable growth in the competitive cross-border e-commerce phenomenon. The literature review highlights several key factors influencing consumer cross-border engagement in e-commerce. A prominent factor is the real-time responsiveness of e-commerce platforms, which allows businesses to interact with consumers instantaneously. This real-time interaction enables businesses to address consumer inquiries, concerns, and feedback promptly, enhancing positive cues and facilitating real-time word-of-mouth recommendations (Hudson et al., 2016).

Real-Time Responsiveness
The immediacy of digital communication is a significant driver of consumer satisfaction in cross-border e-commerce. Studies show that timely responses from brands can significantly influence consumer perceptions and trust. According to Hudson et al. (2016), real-time engagement can lead to increased consumer satisfaction and loyalty, as it reduces the uncertainty associated with online transactions and enhances the overall customer experience. Furthermore, real-time interaction enhances a sense of connection between consumers and brands, which is crucial for building long-term relationships in the digital marketplace (Kumar & Pansari, 2016).

Social Interactions and Group Influence
The social nature of e-commerce platforms facilitates group interactions and buying, allowing consumers to identify with like-minded groups. Group influence can significantly impact consumer

behaviour and purchase decisions, as individuals are often influenced by the opinions and actions of others within their social circles (Andre, 2021). Peer influence and the sense of community play critical roles in shaping consumer decisions, especially in the context of cross-border e-commerce, where trust and credibility are huge (Simon et al., 2016; Udriyah et al., 2019; Horani et al., 2023).

Personalization

Personalization is another critical factor that shapes consumer behaviour in e-commerce. By tailoring product recommendations, content, and experiences to individual preferences and needs, businesses can enhance consumer satisfaction and facilitate impulse buying behaviour (Sheng & Nah, 2008). Personalized experiences make consumers feel valued and understood, increasing their likelihood of repeat purchases, and enhancing brand loyalty. Research by Sheng and Nah (2008) indicates that personalized marketing strategies can significantly enhance consumer engagement and conversion rates in cross-border e-commerce.

Gratification and Impulse Buying

Gratification, particularly hedonic gratification, plays a significant role in driving impulse buying behaviour among consumers. The enjoyment and pleasure derived from the shopping experience can lead consumers to make spontaneous purchase decisions, contributing to increased cross-border engagement with brands and products (Hollebeek et al., 2020). Hedonic gratification is associated with the emotional and experiential aspects of shopping, such as enjoyment, excitement, and sensory pleasure. Hollebeek et al. (2020) found that consumers who derive high levels of hedonic gratification from their shopping experiences are more likely to engage in impulse buying, enhancing overall sales and customer satisfaction.

Demographic Considerations

Demographic factors such as age and gender also influence consumer behaviour and purchase decisions in e-commerce. Younger consumers, for example, may exhibit different browsing behaviours and attitudes compared to older consumers (San, Omar & Thurasamy, 2021). Gender differences in e-commerce behaviour are observed, with men and women often displaying distinct browsing patterns and attitudes towards online shopping (Joiner et al., 2022). Understanding these demographic variations is essential for businesses to tailor their marketing strategies and optimize consumer engagement on e-commerce platforms.

External Social Forces

External social forces, including cultural norms, social influences, and peer recommendations, play a significant role in shaping customer attitudes and behaviours in cross-border e-commerce (Simon et al., 2016). Customers are influenced by their social networks, online communities, and cultural contexts when making purchasing decisions. Brands that understand these external dynamics can tailor their marketing strategies and communication efforts to resonate effectively with their target audience. According to Simon et al. (2016), social forces can significantly enhance the effectiveness of cross-border engagement strategies, as consumers often rely on peer recommendations and social validation when choosing products from international markets.

The Four Gratification Framework

The Four Gratification Framework, consisting of functional, hedonic, co-creation, and social value, serves as a comprehensive model for understanding customers' brand engagement and purchase intentions in the context of cross-border e-commerce (Simon et al., 2016). Each dimension of this framework plays a crucial role in influencing customer behaviour and shaping their interactions with brands on cross-border e-commerce platforms.

1. Functional Value: Refers to the practical benefits customers derive from a brand or product. In cross-border e-commerce, this includes features like product quality, reliability, and convenience of

purchase. Customers seek functional value to fulfil specific needs and preferences, such as finding the right product at the best price or receiving efficient customer service. Brands that effectively deliver functional value can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, driving repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

2. Hedonic Value: Pertains to the emotional enjoyment and pleasure that customers experience through their interactions with a brand. This dimension encompasses elements such as entertainment, novelty, and sensory appeal. In cross-border e-commerce, brands leverage hedonic value by offering engaging and immersive experiences, such as interactive product demos, virtual try-on features, and visually appealing content. By tapping into customers' emotional desires for fun, excitement, and fantasy, brands can create memorable experiences that deepen brand engagement and enhance positive associations.

3. Co-Creation Value: Emphasizes the collaborative nature of brand-consumer interactions, where customers actively participate in the creation and customization of brand experiences. Cross-border e-commerce platforms enable co-creation through user-generated content, crowd-sourced product feedback, and participatory marketing campaigns. Brands that embrace co-creation empower customers to shape their own brand experiences, enhancing a sense of ownership and community involvement. This active engagement strengthens brand loyalty and advocacy, as customers feel valued and connected to the brand's evolution.

4. Social Value: Focuses on the relational aspects of brand engagement, highlighting the role of social connections and community dynamics in shaping customer perceptions and behaviours. Cross-border e-commerce platforms serve as social hubs where customers can connect with like-minded individuals, share experiences, and seek validation from their peers. Brands that enhance a sense of belonging and camaraderie among customers build strong communities around their products and services. By encouraging user interactions, facilitating conversations, and recognizing customer contributions, brands can cultivate a loyal following and amplify their reach through word-of-mouth and social sharing.

Hidden Purchasing Motives
Hidden purchasing motives, driven by emotions, desires for fun and fantasy, and customer satisfaction, further contribute to brand loyalty and cross-border engagement (Kuika, 2022). Customers may be motivated by unconscious factors such as the need for self-expression, social status, or emotional fulfilment when engaging with brands on cross-border e-commerce platforms. By uncovering these hidden motives and addressing them through targeted marketing initiatives, brands can strengthen their emotional connection with customers and enhance long-term relationships.

Technological Innovations
Technological innovations also play a crucial role in enhancing cross-border engagement. Features such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) are increasingly used to provide immersive shopping experiences, allowing consumers to visualize products in a more interactive manner (Bonetti et al., 2018). These technologies help bridge the gap between physical and online shopping experiences, making it easier for consumers to engage with international brands and products.

Trust and Security
Trust and security are critical factors influencing consumer behaviour in cross-border e-commerce. Concerns about payment security, data privacy, and product authenticity can hinder consumer engagement (Chiu et al., 2014; Wulandari et al., 2023; Ranawaka et al., 2023). Brands that prioritize robust security measures and transparent communication can alleviate these concerns, enhancing a secure shopping environment that encourages consumer participation and loyalty. The empirical review highlights the multifaceted nature of consumer cross-border engagement in e-commerce.

Factors such as real-time responsiveness, social interactions, personalization, gratification, demographic considerations, external social forces, and hidden purchasing motives play significant roles in shaping consumer behaviour. By leveraging these factors effectively, businesses can enhance consumer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and drive positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Understanding these diverse influences allows brands to tailor their strategies to meet the needs and preferences of their international customer base, ultimately contributing to their success in the competitive cross-border e-commerce phenomenon.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS
The findings of this research have far-reaching implications for small businesses engaged in cross-border e-commerce, as well as for academia, entrepreneurs, policy makers, and regulators. By examining consumer behaviour and the social cues that influence purchasing decisions, this study offers valuable insights for various stakeholders.

Theoretical Contributions
Advancement of Knowledge:
This research significantly contributes to the theoretical understanding of cross-border e-commerce by identifying and exploring the social cues that influence consumer behaviour. The study explores variables such as consumer emotion, hidden purchasing motives, natural self-interest, and tangible engagements, thereby enhancing our understanding of the underlying mechanisms driving consumer behaviour in cross-border e-commerce contexts (Hudson et al., 2016; Zheng et al., 2023; Sudha et al., 2023).

Conceptual Framework Development:
The study develops a conceptual framework integrating multiple theoretical perspectives, including socialization theory, social presence theory, and social exchange theory, to explain the relationship between social cues and consumer behaviour in cross-border e-commerce. This framework provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing consumer engagement and purchasing decisions in online shopping environments (Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Zhou & Azam, 2024).

Validation of Existing Theories:
Through empirical analysis, the research validates and extends existing theories related to consumer behaviour and e-commerce. For instance, the findings regarding hidden purchasing motives align with theories of hedonic consumption and experiential marketing, validating these theories' relevance in cross-border e-commerce (Sheng & Nah, 2008).

Application of Multiple Theories:
Drawing on the Theory of Hidden Purchasing Motives, the study explains the role of emotional and social gratification in driving impulsive shopping behaviours (Andersen et al., 2020). The research also explores the Theory of Social Comparison, highlighting how consumers engage in self-evaluation and self-enhancement through comparisons with others in virtual shopping environments (Festinger, 2021). Additionally, Social Presence Theory underscores the importance of social interactions and community feelings in shaping online shopping experiences (Corcoran, 2021). Influencer Theory examines the impact of opinion leaders and peers on consumer preferences and decision-making processes (Kozinet et al., 2020). Social Identity Theory explores how consumers express their self-identity through their online shopping behaviours and associations with virtual communities (Shao et al., 2020). Finally, Social Exchange Theory emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between consumers and brands, highlighting the role of brand promotions and rewards in enhancing trust and loyalty (Alexandrov et al., 2022).

Methodological Contributions

Research Design and Methodology:
The study employs a deductive approach to quantitative data analysis, supported by primary data collection through surveys. Utilizing established research methods such as regression analysis, independent sample t-tests, and partial correlation analysis, the research demonstrates rigorous methodology in exploring the relationships between variables and testing research hypotheses (San et al., 2021).

Sample Representation:
Focusing on Chinese young consumers, the research provides insights specific to this demographic group within the context of cross-border e-commerce. By selecting a targeted sample population and conducting a pilot study to validate survey instruments, the research ensures the reliability and validity of the collected data (Simon et al., 2016).

Statistical Analysis Techniques:
The study employs advanced statistical techniques such as partial correlation analysis and moderation analysis to examine complex relationships between variables. These techniques provide nuanced insights into the moderating effects of variables such as gender, age, and browsing frequency on the relationship between social cues and consumer behaviour (Chiu et al., 2014).

Overall, this research contributes to academic literature by advancing theoretical knowledge, developing a conceptual framework, validating existing theories, and employing rigorous methodologies. The insights gained from this study enhance our understanding of consumer behaviour in cross-border e-commerce and provide valuable implications for future research.

Implications for Entrepreneurs

This study underscores the critical importance of leveraging social cues to drive conversion rates and increase sales on cross-border e-commerce platforms. Unlike other online retail channels, cross-border e-commerce often struggles to achieve full conversions, as users primarily perceive it as a social meeting platform rather than a venue for social shopping (Dessart et al., 2021). By identifying and understanding these social cues, entrepreneurs can effectively convert cross-border e-commerce enthusiasts into active social shoppers, thereby enhancing their profitability (Rasheed et al., 2024).

Tailored Strategies:
Understanding the browsing habits and preferences of different age and gender groups is essential for entrepreneurs to tailor their strategies accordingly. Analysing these factors enables businesses to differentiate between casual users, obsessive visitors, and occasional browsers, allowing for more targeted and effective engagement (Andre, 2021). Maximizing conversions and cultivating a loyal customer base is crucial for the long-term profitability of cross-border e-commerce ventures.

Business Model Implementation:
The research highlights the importance of implementing strategies that directly influence purchase behaviour on e-commerce platforms. Adopting an effective business model is fundamental for driving profitability in the competitive phenomenon of cross-border e-commerce. Businesses that leverage insights from this study can enhance their marketing strategies, improve customer engagement, and increase conversion rates, ultimately achieving sustained growth and success (Brodie et al., 2022; Nordin et al., 2022).

Implications for Policy Makers and Regulators

This study holds significant implications for policy makers and regulators, particularly in China, where the government actively promotes the growth of e-commerce. Understanding consumer

purchasing behaviour nuances can prompt policy makers to enact new regulations and policies that protect the interests of both consumers and sellers.

Enhancing Online Payment Security:
One area for policy focus is enhancing the security of online payment gateways. Currently, many reputable payment gateways are provided by international companies, leaving few options for local businesses. This study could encourage policy makers to develop regulations supporting the growth of local payment gateways, thereby increasing consumer trust, and facilitating more transactions within the domestic market (Hudson et al., 2016).

Regulating Marketing Practices:
Given the utilization of hidden purchasing motives in marketing tactics, policy makers may feel compelled to introduce stricter regulations on cross-border e-commerce platforms. These regulations could encompass measures such as fair pricing, quality control standards, transparent return policies, and penalties for unfair trade practices. By implementing such regulations, policy makers can ensure that marketing practices remain within ethical boundaries, protecting consumers from potential exploitation (Chiu et al., 2014).

Supporting Local Services:
This study may encourage policy makers to support and promote the growth of local online supporting services, such as e-fulfillment and e-payment systems. Nurturing local players in these sectors can enhance competition, innovation, and job creation within the domestic e-commerce ecosystem, ultimately contributing to the overall growth and sustainability of the industry (Dessart et al., 2021; Rajapakse, et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
This study reveals that hidden purchasing motives significantly drive consumer engagement and impulsive shopping behaviours on cross-border e-commerce platforms. Factors such as aesthetic appeal, trend discovery, and emotional gratification play crucial roles in persuading shoppers to make unplanned purchases, often driven by a sense of self-empowerment. While consumer emotion tends to inversely relate to impulsive buying, it positively correlates with cross-border engagement, suggesting that empowered shoppers are more likely to make planned purchases influenced by self-image and participation (Hudson et al., 2016).

Moreover, tangible engagements, natural self-interest, and positive perception also influence consumer behaviour, though to a lesser extent. Age, gender, and browsing frequency are notable social cues that shape shopping behaviours on cross-border e-commerce platforms in China. The research indicates that females and younger individuals exhibit higher browsing frequency compared to their counterparts. Female shoppers, influenced by hidden purchasing motives, demonstrate a higher propensity for impulsive buying, whereas male shoppers are more attracted to the convenience and personalization features offered by these platforms. Increased browsing time correlates with heightened consumer behaviours, particularly among female users, suggesting a link between frequent browsing and impulsive shopping tendencies (San et al., 2021).

These findings provide valuable insights for entrepreneurs aiming to optimize their cross-border e-commerce strategies. Understanding the nuanced browsing behaviours and preferences of users allows businesses to tailor their offerings to meet customer needs more effectively. Implementing personalized and engaging experiences, informed by social cues such as hidden purchasing motives, can enhance customer engagement and drive sales. Leveraging innovative elements to enhance the e-commerce model will benefit small entrepreneurs and contribute to the growth of the cross-border e-commerce industry (Brodie et al., 2022).

Additionally, this study underscores the importance of understanding social cues and consumer behaviours in the context of cross-border e-commerce. By recognizing the influence of factors such as hidden purchasing motives, gender, age, and browsing frequency, entrepreneurs can develop

targeted strategies to attract and retain customers. Continued research in this area will further refine our understanding of e-commerce dynamics and pave the way for innovative business models that cater to evolving consumer preferences (Sheng & Nah, 2008).

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations are proposed for both entrepreneurs and policy makers to capitalize on the potential of cross-border e-commerce and enhance its commercial viability:

Professional Commercialization:

Entrepreneurs should focus on professionalizing their online stores by introducing more e-commerce features. Enhancing the user experience and providing a seamless shopping experience can attract and retain more customers, thereby increasing sales and profitability (Dessart et al., 2021; Abeywardana, et al., 2023).

Customer Engagement:

Entrepreneurs must proactively engage with their customers on cross-border e-commerce platforms. Actively monitoring customer feedback and activities allows businesses to tailor their marketing strategies to better meet the needs and preferences of their target audience. This may involve implementing customer-driven marketing activities and initiatives that enhance positive word-of-mouth and build customer loyalty (Simon et al., 2016).

Understanding Social Cues:

Businesses should pay close attention to the social cues that influence consumer behaviour. Understanding the hidden purchasing motives that drive unplanned purchases enables entrepreneurs to develop targeted marketing campaigns that appeal to the emotional and social needs of their customers (Kumar & Pansari, 2016).

Empowering Customers:

Entrepreneurs should empower their customers by providing them with the tools and resources needed to make informed purchasing decisions. This may include offering detailed product information, customer reviews, and user-generated content that helps customers feel more confident in their buying decisions (Corcoran, 2021).

Policy Support:

Policy makers should support the growth of cross-border e-commerce by enacting regulations and policies that promote fair competition, consumer protection, and innovation. Measures to enhance the security of online payment gateways, support the development of local e-commerce infrastructure, and regulate marketing practices to ensure ethical standards are maintained are crucial (Hudson et al., 2016).

By implementing these recommendations, both entrepreneurs and policy makers can capitalize on the potential of cross-border e-commerce and contribute to its continued growth and success in the global marketplace (Chiu et al., 2014).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This research has several limitations that should be acknowledged to ensure a comprehensive understanding of its implications:

Sample Composition:

The study's sample is limited to Chinese consumers who are already avid users of e-commerce platforms, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to a broader population of cross-border e-commerce users worldwide. Future research should consider diversifying the sample to include participants from various geographic regions to capture a more comprehensive understanding of cross-border e-commerce dynamics (Andre, 2021).

Methodological Constraints:

The study primarily relies on quantitative methods for data analysis, which may overlook nuanced aspects of consumer behaviour that could be better understood through qualitative approaches. Incorporating qualitative methods in future research would provide richer insights into the psychological and sensory elements that influence cross-border e-commerce users' behaviour (Sheng & Nah, 2008).

Ethical Considerations:

While the study addresses the interests of consumers and businesses, it overlooks the importance of policy makers and regulators in ensuring ethical business practices in the e-commerce sector. Future research should explore the ethical implications of cross-border e-commerce and consider the perspectives of policy makers and regulators to develop frameworks that promote fair trade practices and consumer protection (Shao et al., 2020).

To address these limitations, future research should aim to employ diverse methodological approaches, incorporate broader and more diverse samples, and consider the ethical implications of cross-border e-commerce practices. By addressing these limitations, researchers can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of cross-border e-commerce dynamics and facilitate the development of policies and practices that promote ethical, inclusive, and sustainable growth in the e-commerce sector (Hudson et al., 2016).

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