

A study on the relationship between digital marketing, product innovation, and interest e-commerce

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Abstract: As traditional e-commerce faces challenges such as traffic bottlenecks and low conversion rates, merchants find it difficult to maintain long-term profitability by relying solely on low prices and traffic-driven promotions. This paper aims to investigate the underlying factors and mechanisms of interest e-commerce. Through logical deduction based on a literature review and by incorporating theories such as Ego Depletion theory and Interaction Ritual Chains theory, it deconstructs the psychological mechanisms and behavioral patterns of users in interest e-commerce. The study finds that the underlying logic of interest e-commerce is the demand for emotional value, which, as a core mediating variable, mediates the effects of digital marketing and product innovation on interest e-commerce. Furthermore, this paper deconstructs the new construct of emotional value into three dimensions, entertainment, identification, and satisfaction, and finds that consumption upgrading has a positive moderating effect on its promotion of conversions in interest e-commerce. By analyzing digital marketing and product innovation within a unified framework, this study suggests that businesses should prioritize the role of emotional value in commerce.

Keywords: Consumption upgrading, Digital marketing, Emotional value, Interest E-commerce, Product innovation.

1. Introduction

With the deep integration and application of decentralized algorithms in digital media, traditional e-commerce models are facing the dual challenges of traffic bottlenecks and low conversion rates. Meanwhile, interest e-commerce, which leverages high-quality content to stimulate users' latent interests and employs precise algorithmic matching, has quietly emerged, reshaping consumers' decision-making pathways. At the same time, marketing content in the market is plagued by rampant homogenization, and some merchants still rely on sales models based on low prices and traffic bombardment, which struggle to sustain user retention and long-term profitability. This actually reveals a shift in consumer psychology from the consumer end: consumers no longer base their purchasing decisions solely on functional considerations but have shifted toward deeper spiritual and emotional needs. Although academia has gradually begun to focus on this dynamic shift in consumer psychology, existing research in the context of interest e-commerce has insufficiently addressed the phenomenon of irrational consumption among users and lacks a deeper understanding of its underlying mechanisms. Current studies often provide theoretical explanations based on specific models but lack theoretical research on the relationships within interest e-commerce under a unified framework.

To supplement existing research, this paper integrates the theory of self-depletion from a psychological perspective, the theory of the interaction ritual chain from a sociological perspective, and consumer behavior theory to construct a model of interest e-commerce consumption driven by digital marketing and product innovation. It aims to comprehensively analyze and deconstruct the relationships between these two factors and interest e-commerce, revealing their underlying logical pathways. Specifically, this paper uses emotional value as a mediating variable, structured into the three dimensions of entertainment, identity, and psychological fulfillment, to clarify how digital marketing

and product innovation ultimately facilitate interest e-commerce behavior through emotional value. The main contributions of this paper are as follows: first, it introduces multiple theories to provide a theoretical foundation for explaining the relationships within interest e-commerce; second, it defines the boundaries of interest e-commerce; third, it categorizes emotional value into distinct dimensions to clarify consumers' internal psychological logic; and finally, it analyzes digital marketing and product innovation within a unified framework to identify the underlying mechanisms.

2. Theoretical Framework

To elucidate the relationship between digital marketing, product innovation, and interest in e-commerce, this paper introduces Self-Depletion Theory and Interaction Ritual Chain Theory as its theoretical foundation.

2.1. Ego Depletion Theory

The Ego Depletion Theory was proposed by American scholar Baumeister. Its core hypothesis is that an individual's self-control, decision-making, and maintenance of willpower require the consumption of limited and easily depleted mental resources; when these resources are overused without timely replenishment, the individual falls into a state of ego depletion [1]. With the development of e-commerce, the Ego Depletion (ED) theory has been applied to the study of consumer behavior. Under the traditional "shelf" model of e-commerce, consumers face cumbersome search processes and the need to compare vast amounts of product information, making them highly susceptible to decision fatigue, which depletes their limited mental resources. To uncover the underlying mechanisms of irrational consumption under a state of self-depletion, Vohs introduced the self-depletion system into consumer behavior research in 2007 and demonstrated that self-depletion triggers impulsive purchasing behavior among consumers [2]. The underlying mechanism is that, under conditions of self-depletion, individuals place greater value on immediate gratification and allocate their attention more toward specific details rather than broad, abstract goals, thereby facilitating impulsive consumption decisions [3].

From a rigorous theoretical perspective, this study requires a clear definition of the boundaries of ED theory's applicability in digital environments. Inzlicht et al. [4]'s "process model" suggests that the underlying logic of self-depletion is related to shifts in motivation and attention, with individual motivation shifting from desire inhibition to desire fulfillment [4]. This shift in motivation and attention has received strong empirical support in the fields of modern cognitive psychology and neuroscience. Research has found that self-depletion suppresses certain brain regions responsible for rational control, thereby forcing the brain to switch to an intuition-based "heuristic system." At this point, rational defenses are weakened, and emotions play a driving role [5]. Therefore, while self-depletion temporarily weakens an individual's rationality, it activates their emotional sensitivity to external stimuli. In this state, individuals tend toward intuitive, effort-saving decisions [6], and external positive incentives can effectively offset the negative effects of self-depletion [7].

Applying self-depletion theory to this study helps explain the underlying mechanisms by which digital marketing and product innovation drive consumer behavior through emotional value in the context of interest e-commerce. Digital marketing reduces decision-making costs through targeted advertising, aligning with the decision-making inertia characteristic of a self-depleted state, and satisfies the desire needs of individuals in an "ego-depleted" state through e-commerce conversions; product innovation, as an external incentive, not only satisfies individuals' need for instant gratification under self-depletion through its material form but also offsets the negative effects caused by such depletion; emotional value, driven by the decision-making relief provided by digital marketing and the novelty-inducing effects of product innovation, replenishes the emotional deficit resulting from the depletion of users' psychological resources, thereby satisfying their needs through consumption and healing their inner world.

2.2. *The Theory of Interaction Ritual Chains*

The Interaction Ritual Chains theory was proposed by American sociologist Randall Collins. This theory explains the mechanisms of human social interaction and emotional cohesion from a microsociological perspective [8]. Collins argues that the initiation of an interaction ritual requires four essential conditions: physical co-presence, an outsider barrier, shared attention, and a shared emotional experience. When these four elements work in concert, individuals can drive interaction rituals through emotional resonance, generating emotional energy. This emotional energy not only represents the core benefit of individual participation in social interaction but also serves as the fundamental driving force behind social behavior.

With the development and widespread adoption of mobile internet and short-form video platforms, the theory of the ritual interaction chain has been reconceptualized and expanded in the digital realm. In the traditional IRC model, physical co-presence serves as the starting point for rituals. In the digital realm, however, ritual interactions within online spaces have not diminished; rather, they have been reconfigured and transformed through the virtual co-presence and emotional presence enabled by digital technology, with digital communities breaking the constraints of physical space inherent in IRC theory. Specifically, within the context of interest e-commerce, this study defines the scope of application for the Interaction Ritual Chain Theory as follows: a context of emotional consumption decision-making that uses digital media as a vehicle, algorithmic precision recommendations as a medium, and group identity and emotional fulfillment as driving forces. In interest e-commerce and digital marketing scenarios, high-density digital symbols and audiovisual experiences enable online interactive rituals to achieve or even surpass the cohesive effects of real-world interactions. The interactive rituals within this context follow a closed-loop model of symbolic construction—emotional mobilization, traffic monetization, capital accumulation [9]. Furthermore, traditional socioeconomic status is downplayed within digital communities, giving way to a counter-structural stratification mechanism based on emotional power [10].

By incorporating IRC theory, we can analyze, from sociological and emotional perspectives, how digital marketing and product innovation ultimately drive conversions in interest e-commerce through emotional value. Digital marketing creates an interactive ritual space of virtual co-presence through contextual, immersive content and high-frequency audiovisual stimuli. Within this space, users experience the synergistic interaction between sound and visuals, which could transform viewers' emotions into a sense of collective belonging and emotional energy. By cultivating emotional energy and reinforcing group symbols, this process strengthens cohesion [11], promotes group identity and sensory pleasure, and shapes the entertainment and identity dimensions of emotional value. Taking Generation Z as an example, its members achieve shared presence through community interaction, construct community dynamics through symbolic means, and shape new social relationships through emotional sharing, thereby successfully achieving self-affirmation and social recognition. On this basis, the interests engaged in interest e-commerce serve not only as a means of consumption but also as an interactive ritual through which emotional energy is obtained [10]. Product innovation, serving as the "sacred object" of this interactive ritual, functions as a symbolic emblem within IRC theory that combines collective attention. Product innovation is not only the physical carrier of symbolic meaning but also a totem for self-expression within digital communities. Emotional value serves as both an outlet for emotional energy and a reflection of users' actual psychological experiences. Through the synergistic effects of digital marketing and product innovation, consumers receive a high concentration of emotional energy within the interactive space. At this point, consumers are not merely purchasing for practical functionality but are seeking to solidify this emotional energy and complete the ritual. The exchange and release of emotional energy are manifested on the consumer end as the dimensions of entertainment, identity, and satisfaction, as defined in this paper, thereby achieving immediate conversion to consumption in interest e-commerce.

In summary, Interaction Ritual Chain Theory breaks through the limited perspectives of traditional e-commerce research and redefines interest e-commerce as a social, interactive ritual grounded in the

exchange of emotional energy and symbolic identification. It not only provides theoretical support for digital marketing and product innovation but also rigorously substantiates the validity of emotional value as a core mediating factor.

2.3. Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior is an interdisciplinary field that studies how consumer purchasing behavior arises and is determined. Previous research has primarily drawn upon perspectives from psychology, social behavior, and marketing management [12]. In its evolution, the traditional information-processing approach has focused on consumers' rational decision-making, yet this approach falls short in explaining consumer behavior comprehensively. Holbrook and Hirschman [13] proposed the experiential consumption perspective, noting that consumers' behavioral decisions are driven by the pursuit of subjective experiences such as emotions. In modern consumption contexts, consumer motivations are shifting toward emotional and spiritual needs, aligning with the experiential consumption perspective within consumer behavior. Drawing on this experiential consumption perspective, this study provides a theoretical explanation of how emotional value drives consumption behavior in interest e-commerce. In the interest e-commerce context, consumer decision-making is by no means similar to the traditional model of identifying specific functional needs and conducting searches; rather, it represents the pursuit of emotional fulfillment within experiential consumption, through which consumers can derive a high degree of happiness [14], thereby satisfying their intrinsic need for emotional value.

3. Literature Review

This section reviews recent literature on digital marketing and product innovation. Treating emotional value as a mediating variable, it explores, from a literature analysis perspective, how emotional value influences interest in e-commerce through digital marketing and product innovation. This section also defines the boundaries of interest e-commerce, introduces consumption upgrading as a moderating variable, and provides an in-depth discussion and analysis of its role in the full-funnel logic of interest e-commerce.

3.1. Interest E-Commerce

As the concept of interest e-commerce has become more widespread, its definition has also been clarified; however, academic research has rarely analyzed its intrinsic influencing factors and underlying mechanisms. Based on a review of the literature and theoretical perspectives, this section elucidates the differences between interest e-commerce and other e-commerce models and attempts to deconstruct them, thereby providing measurable dimensions for future research.

3.1.1. The Concept of Interest E-Commerce

Existing research has largely reached a consensus on the definition of interest e-commerce: it is essentially an e-commerce model driven by content and algorithms that enables “products to find people,” thereby triggering users' latent interests and promoting e-commerce conversions. To further clarify the boundaries of interest e-commerce, this section will compare it with traditional e-commerce, social e-commerce, and live-streaming e-commerce to delineate its scope. This comparison will examine differences in terms of core driving forces, matching logic, and decision-making pathways, thereby establishing a logical foundation for subsequent analysis.

Table 1.
Conceptual Definitions of Interest E-commerce and Other E-commerce Models.

Ref.	Author	Year	Concept Definition
Fan and Jiang [15]	Fan and Jiang	2025	Interest e-commerce is a business model that uses high-quality content to spark user interest, encourage users to stay on the platform, and drive consumer conversions
Wu [16]	Wu	2024	Interest e-commerce is a model that leverages product content and integrates multimedia formats to stimulate user interest and demand
Jia, et al. [17]	Jia, et al.	2025	Social e-commerce is a new form of e-commerce that integrates user-generated content, social interaction, and online transactions, breaking away from one-way communication
Xu and Yang [18]	Xu and Yang	2022	Social e-commerce is categorized into live-streaming e-commerce, community e-commerce, social group e-commerce, and group-buying e-commerce
Wang [19]	Wang	2025	Live-streaming e-commerce is an economic model that integrates live streamers, distinctive products, and supply chains, using traffic and data to expand market reach
Xiao, et al. [20]	Xiao, et al.	2025	Live-streaming e-commerce is a sales model in which hosts showcase products, provide shopping guidance, and engage in real-time interaction to enhance the shopping experience
Zhong and Li [21]	Zhong and Li	2025	Traditional e-commerce is a consumption model where the purchasing path consists of demand, search, and purchase

Based on the analysis of various e-commerce concepts in Table 1, this study finds that, although there is some overlap among these models in practice, they exhibit fundamental differences at the underlying mechanism level across three dimensions: core driving forces, matching logic, and decision-making pathways. First, in terms of core driving forces, traditional e-commerce relies on consumer demand, whereas social e-commerce and live-streaming e-commerce primarily rely on trust driven by social networks or hosts; interest e-commerce, however, relies on technological drivers such as decentralized algorithms and diverse media formats to stimulate consumers' intrinsic interest. Second, regarding decision-making pathways, traditional e-commerce follows a simple "demand–search–purchase" process; social e-commerce and live-streaming e-commerce follow a "recommendation–trust–purchase" decision-making process; interest e-commerce, on the other hand, uses multisensory content stimulation to foster an immersive experience for consumers, enabling them to make purchasing decisions quickly. Third, in terms of matching logic, interest e-commerce leverages big data and precision-targeting technology, distinguishing itself from relationship-driven social e-commerce and traditional "consumer-to-product" e-commerce, to identify users' latent purchasing intentions through precise profiling, thereby achieving product-user matching.

In summary, while interest e-commerce has a relatively unified definition, delineating its boundaries and emphasizing its core attributes, content stimulation and algorithmic matching, provides a logical foundation for subsequent mechanism derivation. Furthermore, to ensure the concept's measurability in future research, the author has preliminarily deconstructed the variable "interest e-commerce" into three measurable dimensions: immersion in content scenarios, precision of algorithmic matching, and conversion rate, through definitional derivation and relevant theories. By analyzing the underlying mechanisms of interest e-commerce through theoretical analysis, this study provides a logical foundation for subsequent research on digital marketing, product innovation, and the derivation of mediating variables.

3.1.2. Influencing Factors of Interest E-Commerce

An in-depth analysis of the driving factors influencing interest in e-commerce reveals that its core factors can be divided into external functional factors and internal emotional needs. External factors provide the underlying algorithmic support and serve as the source of stimulation through product innovation; internal emotional needs, meanwhile, form the underlying behavioral logic. This section

integrates the influencing factors of interest e-commerce into external functional factors and internal emotional needs and derives logical conclusions within the framework of theoretical foundations and literature review.

External functional factors are primarily manifested in the precise matching enabled by decentralized algorithms, which drive products to address users' deep-seated needs for personalization. Interest e-commerce is a business model based on products that trigger user demand through high-quality content [15, 16]. Products serve as the focal point of all transactions in interest e-commerce, whereas in traditional e-commerce, their functions are primarily defined by physical attributes. Within the context of interest e-commerce, visual design can break through the aesthetic fatigue caused by a homogeneous market and rapidly attract users in digital media to achieve engagement. The visual stimulation it provides constitutes a unique appeal within the content ecosystem, forming a visual moat. At the same time, decentralized algorithms serve as the core underlying technology for precise matching in interest-based e-commerce. Essentially, this involves capturing and analyzing user behavior to predict future actions through user profiling, thereby identifying specific latent preferences. Building on this foundation, it significantly reduces individual decision-making costs and psychological resources, aligning with the effort-saving decision-making mechanisms adopted by users in states of self-exhaustion [6]. In summary, the product provides the physical foundation and aesthetic stimulation, while the algorithm enables precise targeting and reduces decision-making costs. The two work in synergy on the functional level to build an efficient external reach system for interest e-commerce.

Internal emotional needs are primarily reflected in an individual's emotional motivations, and these emotional needs form the underlying logic of interest e-commerce. In interest e-commerce, emotional needs manifest in two aspects: emotional release and emotional resonance. From the perspective of self-depletion, the motivational shift resulting from the exhaustion of an individual's psychological resources tends to favor the fulfillment of desires [4]. At this point, an individual's primary motivation for consuming content on digital media is often stress relief and emotional relaxation [22], and their underlying need is not necessarily to make a purchase. However, when individuals experience the pleasurable emotions conveyed by content in the external context of interest e-commerce, their emotional needs become linked to specific products. Supported by algorithms and user profiling, this often triggers immediate consumption decisions while they are in a state of self-depletion [2]. Ultimately, users solidify their psychological experiences through consumption behavior, transforming the latent need for emotional release into consumption decisions within interest e-commerce. In terms of emotional resonance, individuals in a digital society inevitably experience feelings of loneliness and social anxiety, while high-quality content in interest e-commerce can create interactive scenarios of virtual co-presence, allowing users to find resonance through these interactions. Through this process, individual consumption is no longer merely about acquiring goods but serves to affirm one's self-identity through interaction.

In summary, the influencing factors of interest e-commerce are driven by the synergy of external functional elements and internal emotional needs. External functional elements provide visual stimulation and precise product matching, while internal emotional needs dictate the direction of interest e-commerce, which must align with users' psychological needs.

3.2. Digital Marketing

While the concept of digital marketing is widely understood, its role and mechanisms within interest e-commerce remain unclear. Based on a review of the literature, this paper analyzes the impact of digital marketing on interest e-commerce from the perspective of short-video-based media marketing and delves into the factors influencing its emotional value.

3.2.1. The Concept of Digital Marketing

The American Marketing Association defines digital marketing as marketing activities conducted using digital technologies. Existing scholars primarily define digital marketing from perspectives such as technology-driven approaches, platforms, relationship building, and data analysis.

Table 2.
Definitions of Digital Marketing.

Ref.	Author	Year	Concept Definition
Qiao, et al. [23]	Qiao, et al.	2024	Digital marketing is a new marketing model driven by digital technology, utilizing digital platforms as marketing channels, and leveraging digital media to create marketing content
Wang, et al. [24]	Wang, et al.	2023	Digital marketing is an interdisciplinary concept that uses digital technology to strengthen interactions between enterprises and their customers or partners, generate and deliver value, and thereby maintain relationships
Krishen, et al. [25]	Krishen, et al.	2021	Digital marketing is a marketing approach that uses data analysis and digital platforms to improve customer relationships
Jia-yin, et al. [26]	Jia-yin, et al.	2020	Digital marketing is a process that uses data and technology to transform the consumer environment and market behavior
Kannan [27]	Kannan	2017	Digital marketing aims to attract potential target users, increase exposure, and boost sales

A review of the definitions in Table 2 reveals that, although scholars' perspectives differ slightly, there is a high degree of consensus within the academic community regarding the definition of digital marketing. It emphasizes the driving force of digital technology and the enabling power of data, achieving commercial value through information transmission and interaction via digital platforms. Based on this, within the business context of interest, e-commerce, this study conceptualizes digital marketing as marketing content centered on digital media such as short videos. The rationale for this approach is threefold: First, marketing content in short videos is not indiscriminate advertising but rather precise, big-data-driven push notifications designed to reach users and trigger consumer behavior [28], which aligns with the underlying logic of interest e-commerce's algorithm-driven model; second, short videos possess a high capacity to authentically recreate real-life scenarios, creating a sense of virtual presence that enhances purchase intent [29]; third, since interest e-commerce itself is a business model that leverages media such as short videos and live streaming to attract consumers through high-quality content [15], it is appropriate to examine the mechanisms through which digital marketing influences interest e-commerce by starting from digital media such as short videos. Therefore, examining digital marketing at the micro level from the perspective of digital media such as short videos aligns with current mainstream business practices and lays the foundation for subsequent logical deductions regarding interest e-commerce and emotional value.

3.2.2. Research on the Impact of Digital Marketing on Interest E-commerce

First, based on ED theory, modern consumers, under the constant pressure of self-control in a complex information environment, are highly susceptible to decision fatigue and the depletion of self-regulatory resources. Digital marketing through digital media formats such as short videos can effectively highlight a product's core functions in a highly concentrated manner, recreate real-life scenarios [29, 30], and convey useful product information via short videos [31]. This highly efficient information delivery mechanism reduces consumers' information search and evaluation costs, aligning with the psychological mechanisms of intuitive and effort-saving decision-making under states of self-exhaustion [6]. By emphasizing utility, it significantly facilitates consumers' purchasing decisions and helps enhance the efficiency of consumer decision-making [31].

Digital marketing enhances consumers' willingness to purchase by creating immersive experiences and promoting perceived value, thereby driving consumption in interest e-commerce. Empowered by

big data algorithms, diverse content scenarios flow and align within digital media, and digital marketing positively influences consumers' purchase intent by creating immersive experiences [32]. The recreation of real-life scenarios is a key factor influencing purchase intent [33] and determines the conversion efficiency of interest e-commerce. Furthermore, in the short-video domain of interest e-commerce, users' consumption decisions are often linked to perceived value, which acts as a mediating factor in the relationship with purchase intent [29]. This dual mechanism, based on perceived value and immersive experiences, transforms users' unconscious browsing in their digital lives into heightened purchase intent, thereby driving consumption behavior in interest e-commerce.

3.2.3. Research on the Impact of Digital Marketing on Emotional Value

The impact of digital marketing on emotional value manifests within the consumer's psyche. Within the consumer's internal world, digital marketing constructs an interactive space of virtual co-presence through interactive rituals, and users derive emotional energy from these rituals [10]. Within this space, emotional relaxation and stress relief are often the primary motivations for user engagement [22], while media such as short videos promote flow experiences through high-level emotional expression in their content [34] and influence consumers' emotional arousal through their intrinsic attributes [31]. This emotional arousal then triggers empathy [35], ultimately realizing an emotional engagement pathway that begins with the goal of emotional relaxation, progresses through the process of flow experiences and emotional arousal, and culminates in the outcome of empathy. Within this pathway, digital marketing serves a dual role as both a driving force and a mediating medium.

3.3. Product Innovation

This section examines product innovation based on a literature review, elucidates the mainstream research directions in academia, and identifies the focus of this study. Finally, this section explores the impact of interest e-commerce on product innovation and attempts to explain the mechanisms through which it influences emotional value.

3.3.1. The Concept of Product Innovation

Product innovation is the fundamental driver for enterprises to maintain their core competitiveness in dynamic markets, and it is also the driving force behind the interest e-commerce model. Under this model, product innovation is not merely an iterative upgrade of physical features; rather, it serves as the foundation for connecting consumer interests with emotions. Since interest e-commerce relies on the experiences provided by content-driven scenarios, products lacking innovation are highly likely to lead to consumer fatigue and subsequent churn; conversely, innovative and visually appealing products that feature unique, symbolic imagery can rapidly capture and retain user attention, thereby establishing the material foundation and symbolic vehicle that drive conversions in interest e-commerce. Table 3 below summarizes the academic definitions of product innovation proposed by scholars in recent years.

Table 3.
Conceptual Definitions of Product Innovation.

Ref.	Author	Year	Concept Definition
Lijia, et al. [36]	Lijia et al.	2026	Product Innovation Is a Core Component of Business Operations
Wu, et al. [37]	Wu et al.	2025	Product innovation satisfies emotional needs through three mechanisms: scenario-based experiences, real-time feedback and interaction, and embodied interaction
Ma and Gu [38]	Ma and Gu	2025	Product innovation is a process involving the collaboration of multiple elements with two conflicting orientations: the user experience orientation focuses on precisely meeting user needs, while the business orientation focuses on functionally meeting market needs
Fu, et al. [39]	Fu et al.	2025	The fundamental purpose of product innovation is to transform people's circumstances
Guo and Wang [40]	Guo and Wang	2025	Product innovation is a dynamic process through which organizations respond to external pressures by continuously evaluating them
Wang and He [11]	Wang and He	2024	Product innovation is key to enhancing a company's core competitiveness
Liu, et al. [41]	Liu et al.	2023	Design factors such as product shape, tactile feel, and usage methods can influence consumers' purchasing decisions and emotional experiences through interaction with their bodies
Chen, et al. [42]	Chen et al.	2022	Product innovation is a means for companies to adjust their product strategies on time and meet market demand through the development of new products
Kotler, et al. [43]	Kotler et al.	2022	Products can evoke strong emotional responses, which can be regarded as psychological states arising from human interactions
Levitt [44]	Levitt	1980	The core objective of a product is to provide value and thereby satisfy consumer needs

Based on recent academic research on product innovation and the relevant studies cited in Table 3, it is evident that the research focus in this field is constantly shifting. In traditional management and marketing research, scholars typically classify product innovation according to the degree of innovation or technological change, dividing it into incremental innovation and disruptive innovation, or design innovation and experiential innovation.

In summary, previous academic research has generally fallen into three mainstream categories: first, the direct impact of product innovation on corporate performance and market outcomes; second, the mechanisms of organizational R&D and supply chain collaboration in product innovation; and third, the impact of product innovation on consumer purchase intent or perception. Under the new business model of interest e-commerce, the scope of product innovation has been significantly expanded to include not only improvements in physical functionality and design but also the integration of contextual interactions and symbolic elements. Based on this, rather than focusing on the production side or internal organizational dynamics, this paper adopts a consumer-centric approach. It examines how product innovation promotes e-commerce conversions by directly enhancing consumer purchase intent and investigates how emotional value acts as a mediating factor that influences user psychology, thereby driving consumption conversions.

3.3.2. Research on the Impact of Product Innovation on Interest E-commerce

Existing research indicates that product innovation is a key variable driving consumer purchasing decisions; innovations in both functional and aesthetic dimensions can enhance consumers' purchase intent [45, 46]. In the context of interest e-commerce, the role of product innovation is further amplified. The core of interest e-commerce lies in stimulating users' latent needs through high-quality content and algorithms to facilitate immediate conversions [15]. However, homogeneous products are

highly likely to cause aesthetic and cognitive fatigue among consumers, whereas innovative products that are novel, well-designed, or feature unique symbols can align well with the content scenarios in interest e-commerce. Through the synergistic effect of product innovation and these content scenarios, consumers' latent purchase intentions are converted into actual consumption behavior. Therefore, product innovation directly promotes conversions in interest e-commerce.

3.3.3. Research on the Impact of Product Innovation on Emotional Value

As consumer needs evolve, product innovation manifests not only as functional improvements but also as a vehicle for emotional expression and a source of psychological stimulation, capable of influencing consumers' emotional experiences through interaction [41]. Product innovation satisfies emotional needs through three mechanisms: contextualized experiences, real-time interactive feedback, and embodied interaction [37]. Combining self-exhaustion theory with the theory of interactive ritual chains within the context of interest e-commerce, product innovation no longer refers solely to functional or design improvements; rather, it enhances user decision-making efficiency through external incentives and serves as a symbolic "sacred object" within interactive rituals. The visual aesthetics and symbolic attributes of innovative products, on the one hand, provide spiritual replenishment and relief from fatigue for consumers experiencing self-depletion while also enhancing decision-making efficiency through their innovative nature; on the other hand, as totems of social group identity and self-expression, innovative products can evoke emotional resonance among consumers. This stimulation directly endows consumers with experiences across emotional value dimensions such as entertainment, identity, and psychological satisfaction, significantly enhancing the perceived emotional value for consumers.

3.4. The Mediating Role of Emotional Value

This section provides an in-depth analysis of the mediating role of emotional value and reviews existing literature. At the same time, it clarifies, from a theoretical perspective, the relationship between emotional value and interest in e-commerce in the contexts of digital marketing and product innovation.

3.4.1. Concept and Dimensions of Emotional Value

A review of the literature based on Table 4 reveals that, in recent years, the academic community has tended to define emotional value in terms of its psychological utility dimension. Overall, existing research primarily explains the connotations of emotional value from perspectives such as psychological perception and utility, providing a theoretical foundation for this paper's examination of emotional value as a latent need within the interest e-commerce context. However, much of the existing literature employs emotional value descriptively, lacking a systematic analysis of its internal dimensions and its specific manifestations within interest e-commerce. Based on this, this paper attempts to define emotional value and deconstruct it into three dimensions: entertainment, identification, and fulfillment.

Table 4.
Definitions of Emotional Value.

Ref.	Author	Year	Concept Definition
Chen, et al. [47]	Chen et al.	2026	Emotional value is an individual's assessment of the extent to which a subject satisfies their emotions
Wang and Huang [48]	Wang and Huang	2026	Emotional value is a form of consumer culture
He and Li [49]	He and Li	2026	Emotional Value Can Be Embodied in Material Products
Tang and Gu [50]	Tang and Gu	2026	Emotional Value Reflects Better Service
Yang and Wang [51]	Yan and Wang	2025	Emotional Value Is a Stronger Consumer Aspiration
Wang and Jin [52]	Wang and Jin	2025	Emotional Value Is the Difference Between Emotional Benefits and Emotional Costs
Guan [53]	Guan	2024	Emotional value is a key factor in youth consumption
Pi and Fu [54]	Pi and Fu	2024	Emotional Value Is the Value That Products and Services Bring in Terms of Mental Pleasure

With the development of the interest e-commerce model, consumers' psychological and emotional needs in purchasing decisions have garnered significant attention. However, it must be clarified that the "emotional value" examined in this study differs logically and in research perspective from the macro-level "emotional economy," the micro-level "emotional consumption," and "emotional labor" in organizational behavior. First, from a macro- and micro-level perspective, the "emotional economy" emphasizes macro-level business trends, focusing on the overall development of an emotion-driven economy; "emotional consumption" emphasizes micro-level consumer behavior, focusing on consumption behaviors undertaken by consumers to achieve psychological satisfaction. The emotional value explored in this paper refers to the benefits perceived by consumers, resulting from the influence of digital marketing content and product innovation within the specific context of interest e-commerce; it is a concrete variable that serves as a mediating factor. Second, regarding the subject-object relationship, "emotional labor" is a classic concept in organizational behavior, understood as the work process through which individuals provide emotional value, whereas emotional value is defined as the difference between the emotional benefits and emotional costs experienced after consumption [55], focusing on the subject at the production end. In contrast, the emotional value discussed in this paper focuses on the object-side experience of consumers at the consumption end, specifically, the psychological rewards consumers receive when exposed to product innovation and digital marketing. Third, from the perspective of Marxist philosophy, value arises from people's relationship with external objects that satisfy their needs [56]. Based on this understanding of value, emotional value is clearly formed through social practice and constitutes an emotional experience that enables the subject to feel positive emotions. In summary, given that existing research has paid relatively little attention to emotional value in the field of interest e-commerce, this paper attempts to define it and clarify its boundaries. By analyzing emotional value and dividing it into three dimensions entertainment, identification, and satisfaction, we interpret the stress relief, emotional resonance, and psychological satisfaction that consumers experience when encountering digital marketing content, experiencing innovative products, and during the purchasing process. This approach reveals how digital marketing and product innovation ultimately drive conversions in interest e-commerce through the pathway of emotional value.

3.4.2. Research on the Mediating Role of Emotional Value Between Digital Marketing and Interest E-commerce

In exploring how digital marketing drives interest in e-commerce, emotional value plays a key mediating role. The underlying transmission pathways can be derived and validated from a dual perspective: the theory of self-exhaustion in psychology and the theory of the ritual chain of interaction in sociology.

First, based on the theory of self-exhaustion, modern consumers often face psychological resource depletion and decision fatigue when exercising self-control over decision-making amid the flood of information in their work and online lives. At this point, digital marketing conveys detailed, useful information through digital media such as short videos or live streams, and recreates real-life scenarios to enhance virtual presence [31, 33], thereby reducing consumers' information acquisition costs and rational defenses, which aligns with the psychological mechanisms of intuitive and effort-saving decision-making under a state of self-exhaustion [6]. In this process, digital marketing promotes flow experiences through high levels of emotional expression in the media [34] and enhances emotional resonance by increasing emotional arousal through multisensory stimulation [57], enabling users to achieve emotional relaxation and stress relief [22]. Ultimately, these emotional experiences rooted in emotional value serve as the specific needs driving consumers' purchases on e-commerce platforms [58], thereby driving consumption conversions in interest e-commerce through emotional value. Based on the concept of self-exhaustion, this establishes a conversion mechanism for interest e-commerce driven by digital marketing and mediated by emotional value.

Under the theory of the interactive ritual chain, digital marketing, through digital media such as short videos, breaks through the physical constraints of traditional perspectives and establishes a

mechanism for virtual co-presence in interactive spaces [10]. Digital marketing serves as an agent of emotional arousal, triggering such arousal through sensory stimulation and emotional expression. Users then participate in interactive rituals during digital interactions [57], transforming individual emotions into collective meaning to achieve emotional exchange [35]. During this interactive process, consumers experience a high degree of emotional and cognitive resonance within the community, building a sense of group identity and belonging. This drives them to purchase standardized products infused with emotional value created by capital, thereby channeling complex emotions through consumption behavior [59]. Interest e-commerce, serving as the platform for this consumption, facilitates a process driven by digital marketing, mediated by emotional value, and carried out through interactive rituals.

3.4.3. Research on the Mediating Role of Emotional Value Between Product Innovation and Interest E-commerce

Product innovation stimulates emotional value to satisfy consumers' emotional needs; this emotional value, as a mediator of core needs, drives interest e-commerce. Under conditions of Ego Depletion, individual motivation shifts from inhibition to desire fulfillment [4], weakening rationality and leading individuals to place greater value on immediate gratification [3]. Furthermore, within the interactive rituals of digital media, products can be crafted into "sacred objects," as defined by Collins [8], serving as collective symbols that satisfy emotional needs and generate emotional energy through these rituals [10]. The fundamental purpose of product innovation is to transform people's circumstances [39]. Whether viewed from the perspective of motivation under Ego Depletion or from the perspective of emotional needs and behavior within interactive rituals, individuals increasingly seek to obtain emotional value from external sources. Furthermore, products can influence individuals' emotional experiences and responses through physical interaction [41, 43], and product innovation can satisfy emotional needs through embodied interaction [37]. Therefore, product innovation can effectively influence an individual's emotional state, thereby generating emotional value. From the perspective of self-exhaustion, product innovation stimulates emotional value in the realm of entertainment, promoting stress relief and a state of relaxation; from the perspective of interactive rituals, product innovation delivers emotional value through the identity dimension, enabling users to gain a sense of belonging via digital communities and achieve identity affirmation and emotional resonance through community identification. When engaging in consumption within the interest e-commerce ecosystem, users' desires are fulfilled after purchase, thereby satisfying the fulfillment dimension of emotional value. In summary, emotional value, as a latent mediating need of users, is triggered by product innovation and serves as a driving force for interest e-commerce.

3.5. The Moderating Role of Consumption Upgrading

This section treats consumption upgrading as a moderating variable and, based on a review of the literature, analyzes its moderating role in the relationships among digital marketing, product innovation, and interest in e-commerce, examining the underlying mechanisms under conditions of both sufficient and insufficient consumption upgrading.

3.5.1. Concept and Dimensions of Consumption Upgrading

Consumption upgrading represents the improvement in the living standards of Chinese residents. In academia, consumption is typically defined as either hedonic consumption or developmental consumption [60]. Consumption upgrading brings about a shift in consumption attitudes, with consumers placing increasing importance on product quality and nonfunctional factors. The following summarizes recent literature on the concept of consumption upgrading.

Table 5.
Definitions of Consumption Upgrading.

Ref.	Author	Year	Concept Definition
Liu, et al. [61]	Liu et al.	2025	Upgrading of consumption refers to an improvement in the structure of consumption, manifested by an increase in the proportion of service-oriented consumption aimed at satisfying and enhancing enjoyment
Hu, et al. [62]	Hu et al.	2025	Consumption upgrading refers to the expansion of consumption boundaries and a shift in consumption attitudes
Yu, et al. [63]	Yu et al.	2025	Upgraded Consumption Reflects the Market's Growing Demand for Personalization and Digitalization
Sun, et al. [64]	Sun et al.	2022	Consumption upgrading refers to the upgrading of consumption structure, concepts, and patterns
Zhang, et al. [65]	Zhang et al.	2022	Consumption upgrading is characterized by a growing demand among consumers for high-quality products
Shen, et al. [66]	Shen et al.	2021	Consumption upgrading aims to unleash consumption potential and expand the scale of consumption

Based on the table, existing literature indicates that consumption upgrading involves not only the expansion of consumption boundaries but also an increase in market demand and a shift in consumer attitudes [61, 62]. This paper categorizes consumption upgrading into two aspects: upgrading of consumption capacity and upgrading of consumption motivation. Upgrading of consumption capacity refers to the expansion of the scope of consumption, with an increasing proportion of service-oriented spending aimed at enjoyment amid changes in consumption structure. Upgrading of consumption motivation refers to consumers' growing demand for high-quality products [65].

3.5.2. Research on the Moderating Role of Consumption Upgrading

Consumption upgrading plays a positive moderating role in the emotional value-driven consumption behavior of interest e-commerce. When consumption upgrading is sufficiently advanced, consumers' basic needs have been met, and their consumption motives shift toward high-quality services and products with strong emotional attributes [65]. On this basis, they become more sensitive to the emotional value conveyed by digital marketing and product innovation and exhibit greater acceptance of prices and willingness to consume. Therefore, consumption upgrading can enhance the driving and conversion effects of emotional value on interest e-commerce. However, when the level of consumption upgrading is insufficient, consumers' financial capacity is limited; constrained by product cost-effectiveness and basic functional needs, their price sensitivity in consumption decisions increases. Consequently, consumers find it difficult to translate emotional needs into consumption decisions, hindering the conversion efficiency of emotional value in interest e-commerce.

3.6. Research Gaps and Study Rationale

Overall, existing research has examined the impact of digital marketing and product innovation on consumers from multiple perspectives, providing a theoretical foundation for elucidating the mediating mechanism of emotional value. This framework is further explained in the context of consumption upgrading, thereby offering a theoretical basis for revealing the conversion mechanisms of interest e-commerce. However, research on interest e-commerce still has several shortcomings. First, existing literature is scarce, resulting in a lack of robust explanations for the psychological mechanisms of consumers within the interest e-commerce model. Second, research perspectives are fragmented, with a lack of studies that synthesize and analyze digital marketing and product innovation from a unified theoretical framework. Third, the boundaries of the mediating mechanism of emotional value are unclear; positive consumer experiences are often broadly categorized as emotional value, and the concept is frequently adopted without in-depth analysis of its underlying logic. Based on this, this paper examines the mechanisms through which digital marketing and product innovation influence interest in e-commerce from the perspectives of Ego Depletion theory, Interaction Ritual Chain Theory, and

consumer behavior. It introduces emotional value and consumption upgrading as mediating and moderating variables, respectively, to supplement existing research.

4. Mechanism of Action

This paper focuses on the impact of digital marketing and product innovation on interest in e-commerce, incorporating the mediating mechanism of emotional value and the moderating effect of consumption upgrading. The specific mechanisms of action are as follows.

4.1. Direct Mechanisms Through Which Digital Marketing and Product Innovation Influence Interest E-commerce

The direct impact of digital marketing on interest-based e-commerce is primarily reflected in altering users' consumption decisions and experiences. Digital marketing can reduce decision-making costs through efficient information transmission, thereby shortening the decision-making path and stimulating latent demand for interest e-commerce. At the same time, by recreating real-life scenarios and providing audiovisual experiences, digital marketing directly fosters an immersive experience within the interest-based e-commerce context, which in turn enhances purchase intent and perceived value.

The direct impact of product innovation on interest e-commerce is primarily reflected in breaking through the aesthetic fatigue caused by product homogeneity. In the interest e-commerce model, homogeneous products easily lead to a loss of attention, resulting in a decline in conversion rates. Product innovation encompasses not only functional innovations but also improvements in aesthetic design. In interest e-commerce, aesthetically pleasing products stimulate users' senses, directly enhancing consumers' willingness to purchase and converting their latent intent into actual consumption within the interest e-commerce ecosystem.

4.2. The Indirect Mechanism of Emotional Value in Interest E-commerce

Emotional value plays a mediating role in the process by which digital marketing and product innovation influence interest in e-commerce. Whether through digital marketing or product innovation, at the consumer's emotional and psychological level, these factors indirectly drive interest in e-commerce by facilitating the acquisition of emotional value. In interest e-commerce, beyond basic functional needs, all deeper, latent, interest-driven needs are, at their core, expressions of the pursuit of emotional value. The following diagram illustrates the mechanism through which emotional value mediates the relationship between digital marketing, product innovation, and interest-based e-commerce.

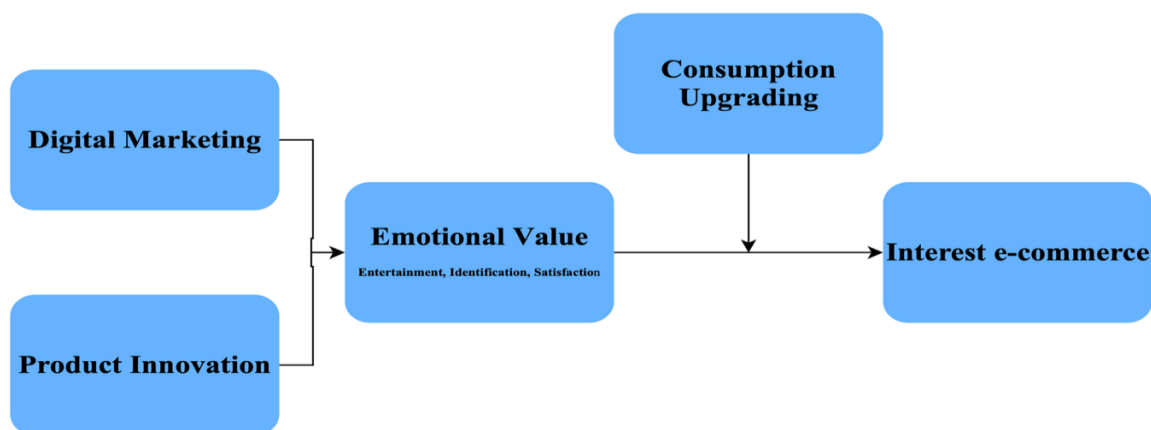


Figure 1.
Mechanism Diagram of Interest E-commerce.

As illustrated, emotional value plays a mediating role in the impact of digital marketing on interest e-commerce. First, the consumer base, primarily composed of young people, has psychological needs for emotional comfort and a sense of belonging and identity. Digital marketing uses big data to precisely align with users' psychological profiles, allowing users to derive emotional value from their interactions. Additionally, short-video digital marketing, through vivid scenarios and interactive experiences, satisfies consumers' needs for stress relief and emotional resonance, directly enhancing emotional value. Meanwhile, capital operations transform emotional value into standardized commodities by using algorithms to match emotional feedback within digital scenarios and then converting abstract emotions into digital products via symbolic coding to facilitate user consumption. After receiving a high concentration of emotional value, consumers develop a strong emotional attachment and willingness to reciprocate, translating psychological satisfaction into immediate purchasing behavior for specific products and platforms. Therefore, emotional value plays a significant mediating role in the influence of digital marketing on interest e-commerce.

In the process by which product innovation drives interest e-commerce, emotional value plays a central mediating role. First, today's consumers have shifted their choices from functional needs to emotional needs, such as mental pleasure and emotional fulfillment, indicating that emotions have become a key factor influencing consumer decision-making. Against this backdrop, product innovation undergoes a structural transformation driven by innovation, focusing on innovations in appearance design and symbolism. Product innovation endows products with unique symbolic attributes, allowing consumer groups to construct a sense of social identity and collective belonging using these symbols in digital activities. This, in turn, helps users derive emotional value and drives their immediate conversion to consumption in interest e-commerce scenarios. Therefore, emotional value serves as a mediator in the influence of product innovation on interest e-commerce.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, this paper analyzes the mechanisms through which digital marketing and product innovation influence interest in e-commerce based on Self-Depletion Theory, Ritual Chain Theory, and consumer behavior theory, and further examines the mediating role of emotional value and the moderating role of consumption upgrading. Based on the logical reasoning and theoretical research throughout the paper, this section draws five core conclusions and proposes five recommendations for enterprises in their market development.

5.1. Conclusions

First, digital marketing and product innovation have a direct driving effect on interest in e-commerce. Digital marketing reduces decision-making costs and recreates real-life scenarios, while product innovation breaks through aesthetic homogenization and fatigue; together, they enhance potential purchase intent and convert it into consumer behavior.

Second, emotional value serves as a mediating mechanism driving the relationship among digital marketing, product innovation, and interest e-commerce. Whether it is the immersive experience created by digital marketing through interactive rituals or the emotional symbolic attributes conferred by product innovation, both essentially satisfy consumers' emotional needs and solidify that emotional value through interest e-commerce consumption behavior.

Third, emotional value can be structured into three micro-dimensions, entertainment, identity, and psychological fulfillment, which constitute the underlying needs of interest e-commerce. Within the interest e-commerce context, the underlying interest need is the need for emotional value; these three dimensions respectively facilitate consumers' emotional release and stress relief, self-identity and a sense of belonging, and ultimate emotional fulfillment.

Fourth, drawing on self-exhaustion theory, Interaction Ritual Chain Theory, and consumer behavior studies, this analysis deconstructs the mechanisms of user psychology and social interaction. In a state of self-exhaustion, individuals tend toward effort-saving, intuitive decision-making; interactive

rituals endow products with symbolic attributes; and consumer behavior studies reveal that emotions drive consumer decision-making. Together, these insights uncover the internal logic by which consumers progress from accepting a product's evocation of emotional value to ultimately engaging in interest-based e-commerce consumption.

Fifth, consumption upgrading can play a positive moderating role in the process by which emotional value drives conversions in interest e-commerce. When the level of consumption upgrading is sufficient, it enhances the role of emotional value in driving conversions for interest e-commerce; conversely, when the level of consumption upgrading is insufficient, the opposite is true.

5.2. Research Contributions

In response to the challenges in traditional e-commerce and the rise of interest e-commerce, and addressing the lack of research on the intrinsic mechanisms of interest e-commerce, this study explores the interactive relationship between digital marketing and product innovation. It conducts a theoretical analysis using emotional value as a mediator and consumption upgrading as a moderator. The specific contributions are reflected in the following five points.

First, it incorporates digital marketing and product innovation into a unified analytical framework to systematically examine their driving effects on interest e-commerce. Based on a review of the literature and theoretical perspectives, this study integrates both elements into a unified framework, thereby addressing the gap in theoretical research regarding the unified analysis of marketing and product innovation. Second, by treating emotional value as the core mediator, it identifies the underlying logic of interest e-commerce as the stimulation of deep-seated needs represented by emotional value. Third, it refines the internal structure of emotional value to reveal the psychological mechanisms at work among consumers. By precisely delineating the internal dimensions of emotional value, this paper addresses the tendency toward overgeneralization in its definition and explains the internal psychological logic of consumers in the interest e-commerce context through three dimensions: entertainment, identification, and satisfaction. Fourth, it introduces multiple theoretical perspectives to broaden the boundaries of theoretical research on interest e-commerce. This paper integrates Self-Depletion Theory and Interaction Ritual Chain Theory and, through consumer behavior studies, concludes that decision-making in interest e-commerce is driven by emotional experiences. This provides a rigorous theoretical foundation for the relational research on interest e-commerce in this paper. Fifth, by introducing consumption upgrading as a moderating variable, this paper defines the boundaries of emotional value transformation based on the degree of consumption upgrading. Through an in-depth analysis of differences in interest e-commerce across varying levels of consumption upgrading, this paper supplements and refines the scope of emotional value's influence.

5.3. Recommendations

To help enterprises better adapt to internal and external challenges arising from market competition, this paper offers five recommendations to serve as a reference for businesses navigating intense and complex markets. First, in constructing digital marketing scenarios, enterprises should align with decision-making mechanisms shaped by self-exhaustion; in highly homogenized market competition, products must move beyond a focus solely on functional improvements and instead emphasize their emotional attributes. First, in a fragmented communication environment, consumption is likely to fall under the "self-exhaustion" framework, where consumers will be guided by intuition and emotional details rather than complex comparisons. Therefore, companies must evaluate the appropriateness of lengthy promotional messages and complex discount rules in digital marketing, shifting their focus toward contextual and intuitive marketing expressions. By presenting the core elements of products and services through high-quality content, companies can align with consumers' habits. Furthermore, drawing inspiration from the theory of interactive ritual chains, products can serve as symbolic totems that embody individual expression and group identity. During the R&D process, companies should enhance product design and symbolic construction to endow products with the

potential to function as group symbols. Second, emotional value serves as the bridge connecting marketing, innovation, and purchasing behavior. Therefore, companies must adopt the perspective of onlookers and leverage the synergistic effects of the three dimensions of emotional value. In the entertainment dimension, they should use lighthearted and humorous marketing content to alleviate users' daily stress; in the identity dimension, they should build digital communities, guide conversations through official brand channels, and foster a sense of belonging and group identity; in the fulfillment dimension, they should use algorithms to match consumers and use content to evoke a sense of fulfillment after purchase. Third, companies must focus on key areas within the e-commerce sector and recognize the practical significance of emotional value. This article categorizes emotional value into distinct dimensions; companies can use these dimensions as a reference for vertical penetration, identifying specific entry points to address consumers' emotional needs. Fourth, while companies set quarterly profit targets, they must also value the reference value of theoretical frameworks. This article analyzes the relevant mechanisms driving user behavior based on theory, guiding corporate marketing and R&D activities. Furthermore, companies can proactively monitor and follow developments in academic research to gain a competitive edge in the market and enhance their theoretical framework. Fifth, companies should acknowledge the objective reality that upgrading leads to diverse consumer behaviors. This implies that different consumer groups have varying capacities to capture emotional value, necessitating differentiated pricing for products and services. For groups experiencing high levels of upgrading, marketing efforts should focus on emotional resonance and cultural attributes; conversely, for groups with lower levels of upgrading, attention should be directed toward basic functionality and price.

Transparency:

The author confirms that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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