

# Consumption Traps in the Context of Digital Economy

## -- Taking Online Shopping Platforms as An Example

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### Abstract

Since the reform and opening up, with the development of China's economy, people's living standards have been greatly improved. The great enrichment of material life not only stimulates the growth of people's consumption demand, but also marks the arrival of a consumer society. The theory of consumer society is put forward by Baudrillard on the basis of Marx's political economy theory. Although different scholars have different attitudes towards consumer society, this article takes the online shopping platform as an example on the basis of Baudrillard's negative and critical views on consumer society. This paper analyzes the consumption characteristics of contemporary society and how people gradually fall into the consumption trap of the consumption era, and aims to provide personal reference opinions for standardizing the online shopping platform and improving personal consumption prudence.

### Keywords

Consumer society; Symbolic symbol; Consumption trap; Network platform.

### 1. The Advent of the Consumer Society

In 1970, Baudrillard published the book "Consumer Society", which made an almost sharp and profound criticism of the Western capitalist society at that time, which made the theory of "consumer society" spread in the West. Baudrillard divides society into pre-industrial society and post-industrial society. Pre-industrial society is in the period of capitalist accumulation, in which production plays a dominant role, while in post-industrial society, consumption plays a dominant role. Baudrillard was born in Reims, northeastern France in 1929. He was deeply influenced by Marx's critical theory of capitalism in his early years. After World War II, Western countries focused on economic development and recovery, the rapid economic development and the variety of material products. The increase has transformed the traditional "production-consumption" model into a "consumption-pleasure-production" model. It is under the guidance of the consumerist values that stimulate consumption and drive production, the masses step by step into the environment set by consumerism. In the wrapping, problems such as traditional breakage, waste of resources, environmental degradation, and disappearance of subjectivity are caused.

As a late developing country, China's modernization started much later than those developed countries that developed first. In the 1860s and 1870s, the capitalist world economic and political system was established on a global scale. Reform and opening up has created the miracle of China's economic take-off. According to the analysis of relevant data from the National Bureau of Statistics, since the reform and opening up 40 years ago, my country's consumer goods market has maintained an average annual growth rate of 14.25%, and consumption has become the first driving force for my country's positive economic growth.

Before my country's supply-side structural reform, my country's economy can usually maintain a medium-to-high growth rate, and consumption is also considered to be one of the three carriages driving economic growth. Therefore, for a long time, the Chinese government is encouraging people to Consumption in order to stimulate economic growth, especially when the economy is frustrated and stagnant. For example, in the middle of 2020, when the situation of the new crown epidemic has improved, under the promotion of the central government, issued and promoted by the local government, local consumers can receive consumer coupons of corresponding specifications or denominations through major Internet platforms, triggering a post-epidemic crisis. A wave of "consumption tide", of course, this wave of consumption is also related to the retaliatory consumption psychology of consumers themselves due to the isolation and isolation of the epidemic for too long. In addition, with the growth of my country's middle-class group, the consumption feat is even more promising. According to Xinhua News Agency, during the seven-day National Day holiday in 2021, due to the impact of foreign epidemics, tourism revenue in China alone will be 389.061 billion yuan. , recovered to 59.9% of the same period before the epidemic.

## 2. Consumption Traps Under Consumerism

What is consumerism? Consumerism is a universally popular social moral phenomenon, which is a general term for the principles, thoughts, desires, emotions and corresponding practices that guide and regulate people's actions and relationships in consumption. Most of the behavior of the majority of people in its society is to pursue decent consumption, crave uncontrolled material enjoyment and recreation, and regard these as the purpose of life and the value of life. The consumption mentioned here is not the demand and satisfaction of objects in the traditional sense, but the relationship between people and objects.

Baudrillard believes that the consumer society is a "rich" society, which does not refer to the absolute abundance of things, but to the abundance of symbols. People endow commodities with a certain symbolic value, and what people consume is not the commodity, but a series of symbol systems behind the commodity. The reason why some famous luxury goods are popular in the consumer market is not their practicality and durability, but their brand value. A precious Chanel dress cannot be washed or rubbed, otherwise it will be deformed, and even a pair of expensive high-heeled shoes cannot rub against the ground, otherwise it will wear out and cause dragging. These precious shoes can only be used on red carpets, etc. So why are there still consumers flocking to it? In the final analysis, it is the symbolic value behind the clothes and shoes. When consumers wear these brand products, they will label themselves "rich", "upper society", etc. Labels, and others will also label you from the symbolic value of commodities. In this sense, consumption has the function of distinguishing social groups and marking social rank. Capital and merchants have firmly grasped the public psychology of consumers' comparison and vanity, and will skillfully deploy their own traps, waiting for consumers to enter it step by step.

Baudrillard also mentioned in the book "Consumer Society" that the consumer society will become the illusion of equality. In the era of economic globalization, in the era of cross-material flow, countries in the world can accumulate wealth by participating in international division of labor and cooperation. Factory workers and bosses may drive the same brand of cars, migrant workers may wear the same brand of clothes as movie stars on the screen, farmers' children may receive the same education at the same university as the children of a wealthy family , in a consumer society, different countries, different nationalities, and different groups may consume the same commodity, which is precisely the illusion of equality created by the consumer society. Although marginalized groups in society have participated in the production of social wealth, they have not been able to fully participate in and enjoy the accumulation of

wealth. They delusionally label themselves as "rich" or "high-class" by consuming the same commodities as the upper class. Therefore, it is unrealistic to break away from the class to which one belongs. There are countless examples of this in real life. For example, various online e-commerce platforms try to advertise that their products are the same as a certain celebrity, and ask celebrities to speak for themselves. On major social platforms, Internet celebrities bring goods and entertainment stars. Selling goods on live broadcasts, by declaring that "I often use a certain product", "I have used a lot of empty bottles myself", "This year's favorite" and other words to narrow the distance between themselves and consumers, so as to persuade consumers. Buy.

In a consumer society, the body consumes itself. The body is an important element that constitutes the social identity of a social individual. On the one hand, the body is operated as capital, and on the other hand, it is consumed as the object of consumption. Baudrillard also specifically mentioned the female body when discussing the most beautiful, precious and dazzling body in the complete set of equipment for consumption. In the consumer society, the female body is an important element of consumer culture, the most important carrier to stimulate desire and consumption, and the most valuable and attractive commodity. With the development of society and the progress of the times, women's consciousness has been awakened, and the rise of feminism requires equal sharing of men's power in society. Women believe that their bodies are their own possessions, not men's appendages. Because they should pursue their inner wishes, for example, women can wear handsome male workwear, or they can wear revealing sexy dresses. But in a consumer society, under the influence of hedonism, women's physical liberation is actually based on the pursuit of interests. In a patriarchal society, women's makeup is to echo the aesthetic bias of men, and now, Under slogans such as "Women dress to please themselves" and "Show an independent and self-improving female image", some merchants and brands have aggressively promoted their products, encouraging women to consume their own bodies under the banner of "feminism". On the other hand, with the important value of the body in the consumer society, bad social psychology such as "appearance anxiety" and "body anxiety" flooded our minds. According to relevant statistics, China, as the world's medical beauty market, has grown One of the fastest countries, surpassing the United States as the world's second largest medical beauty market as early as 2017, and is expected to surpass the United States in 2021. Therefore, in the consumer society, the body is the object of consumption, and in a sense, it can be said to be a special kind of consumer goods. Even in the modern society where the awareness of gender equality is gradually awakening, capital can still actively "stand right" and publicize anxiety, etc. The way makes consumers (especially female consumers) fall into the consumption trap.

The consumer society makes our daily life completely commercialized. In the consumer society, both the object of consumption and the activity of consumption have a mandatory universality. November 11, which was originally Singles' Day, has become an annual shopping carnival under commercial marketing. Since the establishment of the "Double Eleven" shopping carnival on the e-commerce platform for the first time in 2013, the "Double Eleven" shopping carnival every year thereafter. "One" has set off round after round of sales and shopping miracles. "Tmall's sales exceeded 100 million in minutes and 100 million in minutes", "Alipay's turnover exceeded 10 billion per hour", "Double Eleven is far more than the US online shopping carnival network Monday", "all netizens stay up all night shopping" and so on are enough to show the fiery degree of this shopping carnival. The festivals established under the commercial marketing of capital followed one after another. People's daily life has been completely "colonized" by commerce. Consumers do not say that they really lack a certain commodity, but are controlled by marketing methods such as "discount" and "low price", especially when people are driven by herd mentality. Consumers are always afraid of "missing" something or losing out to others, so people's lifestyle, whether it is a "small cycle" from morning to night, or

a "big cycle" day after day, is completely following the general environment of business operation, people are rushing to buy whatever is popular in the society, especially the development of leisure activities, which links daily life with sales. Consumers do not have their own self-consciousness in this environment, and they willingly place orders and pay with the "omg! In addition, Baudrillard believes that the prosperity of "industrial culture" makes culture more and more commercialized and falls into "deepness", and daily life has more and more characteristics of popular culture. The cabinets in the metropolis are not only the "museum" of the current popular culture, but also the public demonstration place leading the social consumption trend, and also the "barometer" that characterizes the changes of daily life.

### **3. New Thinking from the Perspective of Consumer Society**

#### **3.1. Deepen Supply-side Structural Reform, Vigorously Develop Productivity, and Solve Consumption Problems in Production**

Where does consumerism come from? The emergence of consumerism is inseparable from the development of Western capitalism. After the war, Western countries pursued Keynesianism in the economy and vigorously developed and constructed the economy, which led to the rapid accumulation of social wealth, and many people had the illusion that social resources were useless. As a result, the trend of consumerism spread to the world. In essence, consumerism is also the product of the development of productive forces. With the development of our society and the improvement of social productive forces, consumerism has gradually become popular in China, and China's consumption problems have arisen in the process of development, and will also develop. resolved in. Today we are discussing consumption, consumerism, and consumer society. The ultimate goal is to make consumption better serve people and society. Consumption, as a way and means of people's survival, is a necessary condition for the comprehensive development of people and society. The economic base determines the superstructure, and the productive forces determine the relations of production. This is the eternal law of social development. The emergence of consumer society and consumerism is not only the result of the development of social productive forces, but also the result of underdeveloped productive forces. However, we can find from the history of my country's development that with the deepening of comprehensive reform and the further improvement of social productivity, people have experienced gratifying changes in the field of consumption. People not only pay attention to material consumption, but also pay more attention to consumption content. More and more attention is paid to spiritual consumption; in terms of consumption patterns, the one-time consumption culture of "disposal after use" is decreasing, and the efficiency of commodity use is improving. People's attitude towards luxury goods is also changing, from "only buying expensive ones, not the right ones" to "only buying the right ones and not expensive ones"; in terms of consumption lifestyle, the trend of excessive consumption and irrational consumption is weakening. Many consumers can think rationally and consume in moderation; in consumer culture, conspicuous consumption is rejected by society, and the phenomenon of "showing off wealth" and "fighting for wealth" is generally criticized and denied by society, and so on. China's positive development in the field of consumption shows that Chinese consumers pay more and more attention to consumption reflection, and more and more need to establish their own consumption needs, rather than blindly "following the trend". Therefore, it is necessary to thoroughly implement the supply-side structural reform, start from the supply side, and limit consumption inflation and consumption traps brought about by consumerism while optimizing and meeting people's growing needs, so as to promote the benign operation and coordinated development of society.

### **3.2. Strengthen Norms and Guidance to Create A Good Consumption Environment**

Consumption environment refers to the external and objective factors that consumers face in the process of survival and development, which have a certain influence on consumers, including natural environment and social environment. the latter. In the consumer society, with the advent of the Internet era of big data, the Internet, television, advertisements, news and other mass media have become the carriers of information transmission. As the newest form of human community, the online community has anonymity and inconsistency in information exchange. Equality is a typical feature of it. This is why when we open the app on our mobile phone, we will always be greeted by "the per capita rich woman and rich second generation on Xiaohongshu", "the annual salary of less than 200,000 belongs to poverty", "the per capita 985 and 211 on Zhihu" and "people in The United States, just got off the plane" and other words are confusing. This is a typical survivor bias in the Internet. It is inaccurate to rely on a certain group of people to understand the actual situation, and these Internet groups are mainly concentrated in China. The economically developed Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen areas have a much higher density of "rich people", "985, 211", etc. than other areas in China.

Therefore, in order to avoid the impact of consumption traps on consumers, it is necessary to regulate and supervise the mass media vigorously. First, improve the supervision mechanism of mass media. Strengthen the censorship of various media information, prohibit the broadcast of advertisements, TV programs, etc. with obvious consumerist tendencies, and issue serious warnings to relevant production units, and even formulate some punitive measures. Second, strengthen the professional ethics education of media staff. As a media worker, you should have a certain sense of social responsibility, actively publicize the concept of healthy consumption that is beneficial to the society, and avoid violating your conscience and professional ethics in order to gain attention, and publicize some vulgar, violent and other bad information. Strengthen the professional ethics education of product producers, as businesses should have a certain sense of social responsibility, actively publicize the concept of healthy consumption that is beneficial to the society, and put an end to violating conscience and professional ethics in order to obtain benefits, and publicizing some vulgar, violent and other bad information. Reasonable use of the advantages of the mass media, grasp the initiative, and guide the public to accept and agree with the socialist core value system. Mass media has the characteristics and advantages of fast dissemination and wide audience. If the advantages of mass media can be reasonably utilized, the socialist core value system can be integrated into advertisements, film and television works, and the Internet to create a positive society for consumers. Public opinion. The mass media is characterized by a large number of intensive propaganda and reports, which can implicitly imply and educate the public, so that they can accept the content of the socialist core value system subtly and consciously use the socialist core value system to guide. own practice. The purpose of resisting the trend of consumerism is achieved through the positive propaganda of the socialist core value system by the media.

### **3.3. Establish A Correct Concept of Consumption**

In the consumer society with cross-material flow, the cultural awareness of consumerism has subtly affected the consumption concept of most people, and those people who do not have high consumption also have a certain consumerism tendency in the consumption concept of commercial "colonization". According to the "2018 Big Data Report on China's Internet Consumption Ecology" released by Yicai Data Center, the online per capita consumption of the post-90s generation continues to rise, becoming the backbone of consumption. More relevant research has found that in 2021, the consumption of urban population will be Of the 100 yuan, more than 70 yuan will be spent by young people. Due to the special national conditions, China implemented the family planning policy nationwide in 1973, so most of the young people born

in the 1990s are only children. It is because he is favored by his parents and born in the era of rapid economic development in China, coupled with little social practice experience and immature psychological development, it is easy to be "brainwashed" by the capitalized business environment, blind, conformist, Buy products irrationally and fall into the consumption trap of the consumption era. Relevant data shows that the return rate of daily online shopping is only about 10%, while the return rate during the "Double Eleven" period is as high as 30%, and even the amount of refunds for Double Eleven in 2015 ends on November 16, 2015 It is as high as 54.7 billion, and the reason why the refund amount is so huge is because the fake rate reaches 63%. Consumers, especially young people, are influenced by the festive atmosphere and their own vanity and comparison psychology on the Internet, and they "rush for points" to buy. For the symbolic value of status, identity, etc., perhaps after this period of "crazy period", I realize that I don't need these products at all, and I just fell into the trap of consumption. As a consumer, you must first learn to consume rationally, establish a correct consumption concept, and expose the consumption trap under the trend of consumerism. Consumerism is to establish a connection between consumers and the symbolic value of commodities through consumption activities, so as to realize the transformation of symbolic value of commodities from commodities to consumers. Consumers only know the symbolic value of commodities and their own social status in consumption. Differences and boundaries can lead to rational consumption.

#### 4. Summary

In the consumer society, "consumption" is endowed with dual meanings. On the one hand, consumption stimulates demand, drives economic development, and meets people's growing material and cultural needs; Driven by the irrational consumption concept, it is easy to form the trend of consumerism, which makes it easy for consumers to fall into the consumption trap of the consumption era. This paper mainly analyzes the consumption characteristics of our current society and the reasons for the formation of consumption traps on the basis of the consumer society theory established by French sociologist Baudrillard, and finally proposes policies for the main consumption problems in China's consumer society. suggestion. In a word, the consumption traps under consumerism are ubiquitous and always present, and the government, society and individuals need to increase their vigilance at the same time, in order to prevent consumption inflation and promote healthy consumption.

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