

The Psychology of Shopping Addiction in Consumer Behaviour

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This comprehensive article examines the phenomenon of consumer addiction, primarily focusing on shopping addiction and its dimensions, including brand addiction. It delves into the underlying causes, manifestations, and consequences of consumer addiction from both consumer and marketer perspectives, shedding light on the ethical and cultural considerations within today's society.

Consumer addiction is characterized by recurrent, irresistible purchasing behaviors driven by negative emotions such as anxiety and impulsivity. It is recognized as a behavioral addiction closely intertwined with consumerism. The article emphasizes the imperative for ethical marketing practices to mitigate the exacerbation of addictive behaviors while acknowledging the impact of culture on consumer choices.

The article also discusses the crucial role of research in understanding the implications of consumer addiction on the economy, and it suggests that marketers should focus on fostering positive brand addiction rather than exploiting consumerism. It underscores the influence of cultural factors on addictive consumption and calls for responsible marketing practices and governmental regulations.

In conclusion, this article highlights the critical significance of consumer addiction in the field of marketing and its multifaceted implications for both consumers and businesses. It underscores the need for ethical marketing strategies, cultural awareness, and responsible brand management to address this complex phenomenon in contemporary society.

Keywords: Consumer addiction, shopping addiction, ethical marketing, cultural influence, compulsive buying, consumer behavior, marketing strategies.

Introduction

Addiction was originally defined as the intake of drugs or the ingestion of substances (Walker, 1989; Rachlin, 1990). With increased competition in the market and the growing importance of addressing customer needs through the provision of customized services, more and more companies are trying to understand the psychology of consumer behavior (Statista, 2022; Kochhar, 2021). Shopping addiction is a necessary component of consumer buying behavior as it leads to compulsive buying (Nash, 2019). A growing number of psychologists believe that shopping addiction can be considered a mental illness that manifests itself as an obsession with shopping and persistent purchase unwanted items, with an age of onset of 18 to 30 years and a prevalence of approximately

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6%, of which 80% to 90% are women. However, it seems to be considered one of the most prevalent psychological disorders in today's society (Niedermoser et al., 2021).

Brand addiction, an important dimension of shopping addiction, can be described as the addictive behavior of loyal customers of a particular brand (Cui, Mrad, & Hogg, 2018). Based on its benefits, it not only increases customer loyalty to the brand, but also motivates the brand to continue providing high-quality products, maintain a good buying experience, and build brand value (Francioni, Curina, Hegner, & Cioppi, 2021). However, it has also many drawbacks. Many companies take advantage of brand addiction by using poor marketing techniques that play on our negative emotions (such as fear, insecurity, and the need to be accepted by others) to make their products more popular with consumers (Bai et al., 2021). If we are already compulsive shoppers, then the allure of marketing and advertising will play out even more (Le, 2022). Therefore, brands have a responsibility to market sincerely, to persuade rational consumers, and to promote sustainable consumption (Mrad, Majdalani, Cui, & El Khansa, 2020).

Literature Review

The Outline of the Aims and Objectives of the Research

Prior research has shown that the integration of modern technology and the Internet has resulted in an enhanced shopping experience and has aided the conversion of consumers into favorable outcomes (Rose & Dhandayudham, 2014). According to Niedermoser et al. (2021), the conduct in question is often regarded as one of the most socially acceptable forms of addiction in contemporary society. Nevertheless, it is contended by some scholars that the prevalence of compulsive buying behavior, stemming from shopping addiction, has concurrently surged with the advent of the internet. This phenomenon entails a pathological inclination to participate in excessive purchasing and is characterized by individuals exhibiting problematic shopping behavior (Rahman et al., 2018). The factors that contribute to individuals' continued support of addiction may be classified as problematic shopping habits, as identified by Andreassen et al. (2018).

Nevertheless, a significant knowledge deficit exists about the significance of consumer addiction inside the industry. Hence, this essay is structured into three sections, aiming to elucidate a range of consequences associated with consumer addiction in contemporary society, as seen by both consumers and merchants.

The first section of this article provides a comprehensive description of consumption addiction. Drawing upon extensive prior research, it then elucidates the perspectives of several specialists about consumption addiction and the factors contributing to its development. The subsequent analysis examines the influence of consuming addiction on customers and merchants from several angles. It is therefore deduced that merchants must possess strong ethical principles, as elaborated upon in the third section of the moral implications.

The following section of this essay elaborates on the significance of compulsive buying disorder within the prevailing economic climate characterized by post-pandemic depression. Not only does it have the potential to stimulate economic growth, but it also has the capacity to alleviate the burden on those with compulsive purchasing tendencies. Marketers have the ability to enhance customer loyalty towards a brand by using judicious marketing techniques. However, it is essential for marketers to adhere to moral restrictions in order to prevent the exacerbation of bad consequences. Finally, based on the aforementioned findings, this section presents a set of moral restrictions, laws, and regulations aimed at restricting the conduct of marketers.

The subsequent section of the study aims to elucidate the ramifications of consumer addiction within contemporary society, specifically focusing on the cultural and ethical implications. From a cultural standpoint, the influence is bidirectional, including both the commercial and consumer realms. The purchasing behavior and psychological tendencies of individuals with addictive tendencies may be significantly influenced by cultural factors. On the other hand, it may also lead to the emergence of new fashion trends. Merchants must effectively adapt to regional cultural shifts that occur within certain timeframes in order to innovate and create new goods. Simultaneously, the diffusion of culture may stimulate the demand and sale of certain items.

Definition of Consumer Addiction and Causes of Its Development

Shopping addiction may be characterized as a pattern of recurrent purchasing behaviors or irresistible and invasive shopping urges that occur unconsciously. The term “addiction” encompasses a range of conditions characterized by the patient’s physical dependency on a substance, as well as the presence of psychological and behavioral components. This phenomenon is characterized by an overwhelming and uncontrolled psychological inclination towards engaging in excessive and costly purchases, as well as devoting significant amounts of time to the act of shopping. Negative psychological traits, such as anxiety, wrath, vanity, and impulsivity, sometimes serve as supporting elements for these issues (Hartney, 2018).

The phenomenon of shopping addiction can be classified as a form of problematic shopping behavior (Andreassen et al., 2018). It is recognized as a behavioral addiction that serves as a means for individuals to alleviate negative emotions and experience positive emotions (Rose & Dhandayudham, 2014). Moreover, shopping addiction typically exhibits similar patterns to other types of addiction. Initially, individuals experience a sense of anticipation related to the act of shopping or engaging in a similar activity. Subsequently, the actual shopping or purchasing experience, frequently characterized as a delightful or even euphoric sensation, serves as a means of alleviating negative feelings. According to findings from the American Psychiatric Association, there is evidence to support the notion that shopping addiction may give rise to compulsive purchasing tendencies, whereby individuals use shopping as a means to alleviate adverse emotional states, including but not limited to despair, anxiety, monotony, self-judgment, and wrath. Shopping addiction, like to other addictive diseases, is often seen within the context of consumerism (Kaur, Maheshwari, & Kumar, 2019). The phenomenon of shopping addiction is becoming increasingly recognized and classified as a compulsive purchasing condition, as shown by the work of Christenson et al. (1994). Compulsive purchase disorders may be classified as patterns of purchasing activity that result in negative consequences or emotional discomfort, as well as beliefs of excessive shopping (Boulos and Aboujaoude, 2011). The majority of instances involving obsessive shopping habits are often rooted in psychological factors (Kyrios et al., 2018). Figure 1, shown below, illustrates the influence of several elements on an individual’s inclination to engage in purchase behavior. Notably, shopping addiction is found to be a consequence of the individual’s eagerness to make purchases, their predisposition to trust, and their level of self-confidence.

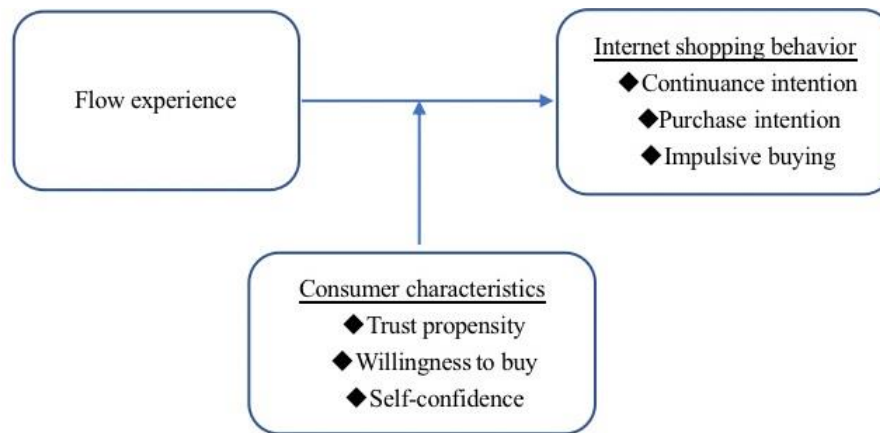


Figure 1. Driver of shopping addiction that leads to consumer purchase decision (Rodrigues et al., 2021).

Shopping Addiction From Different Perspectives of Managers and Consumers

From the standpoint of the marketing manager, it seems that there is a psychological condition that facilitates the promotion and sale of products, without causing any detrimental effects. This necessitates business professionals to possess strong ethical principles and encourage customers to engage in logical consumption practices, rather than relying on consumer psychology tactics. The phenomenon of shopping addiction, referred to as oniomania in academic literature, is widely acknowledged as a socially acceptable kind of addiction (Niedermoser et al., 2021). It is characterized by the compulsive and repetitive act of purchasing, which is driven by underlying psychological issues (Daniel Zarate et al., 2022). In reality, the primary goals of merchants' marketing endeavors encompass two key objectives. Firstly, they aim to augment the customer base, as an expansion in the consumer pool directly correlates with heightened sales figures. Secondly, they strive to enhance the frequency of consumption. In scenarios where the consumer base cannot be expanded further, merchants seek to encourage existing consumers to increase their consumption frequency, thereby fostering repeat patronage. The primary factor in fostering recurrent consumption is to establish a sense of consumer reliance on the brand or product, leading to the development of a shopping addiction and subsequent brand loyalty. This phenomenon, referred to as brand addiction, is one of the elements of shopping addiction.

Nevertheless, when considering the perspective of consumers, it is certain that shopping addiction is a phenomena that is not conducive to positive outcomes. However, it is important to acknowledge that it does possess some advantages. An increasing body of psychologists holds the belief that shopping addiction may be classified as a mental disorder characterized by an intense preoccupation with shopping and the compulsive acquisition of unnecessary products. Certain studies have also shown that shopping addiction might potentially be a symptom of neurological deterioration.

The advantage of consumer addiction lies in its perceived significance among consumers as a means of alleviating stress; nevertheless, it should be noted that other methods also exist. According to Kearney and Stevens (2012), individuals experiencing feelings of depression or loneliness may engage in excessive shopping as a means of alleviating stress. According to Georgiadou et al. (2021), individuals who exhibit job addiction tendencies engage in compulsive buying behavior as a means of obtaining momentary alleviation from the stress and worry they may encounter. According to the depiction in Figure 2, Maslow introduced the concept of the hierarchy of needs, whereby human needs are categorized into five distinct levels. These levels include physiological requirements, security needs, social and love needs, respect needs, and self-actualization needs.

Once the basic requirements of individuals are adequately met, they will naturally want to fulfill higher-level needs. In order to motivate individuals to seek these higher-level needs, an incentive method known as "where to fill the lack of where" might be used. According to Maslow (1943), consumers need this product in order to fulfill their requirements and provide a psychological motivation to enhance their overall satisfaction in life.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that there are some limitations associated with this phenomenon. In light of our current state as a post-epidemic society, the enduring nature of the economic decline has resulted in adverse consequences for a subset of individuals within the workforce. These repercussions manifest in the form of diminished remuneration and, in some cases, even termination of employment. Individuals often face significant challenges in achieving financial stability due to limited resources after excessive spending patterns resulting from consumer addiction.

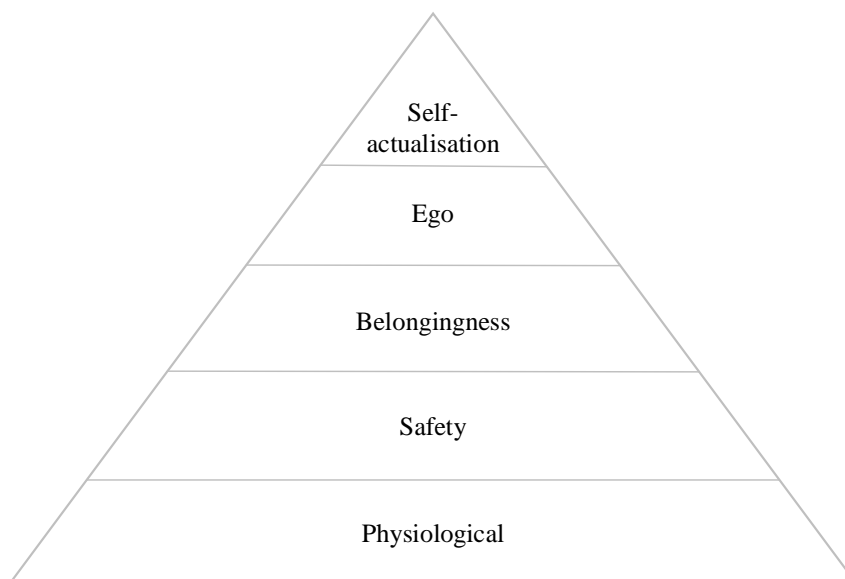


Figure 2. Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943).

In essence, this necessitates business professionals to possess strong ethical principles and encourage customers to engage in sensible purchasing decisions, rather than capitalizing on their consumeristic mindset to drive more product sales. The subsequent discussion will go into the influence of ethics and culture on consumer addiction.

Brand Addiction Is an Important Dimension of Shopping Addiction

Brand addiction is a facet of shopping addiction that pertains to a customer's compulsive consumption patterns specifically related to a certain brand. The concept of "materialism" is a significant sociological trait that contributes to the development of addictive behaviors towards brands and obsessive purchasing. Social comparison has a significant role in shaping customers' inclination to engage in addictive shopping behaviors, as it facilitates self-enhancement and aids in the mitigation of negative consequences. The relationship between materialism and social comparison is elucidated by the phenomenon of brand addiction, as explored by Mrad and Cui. One might posit that brand addiction constitutes a significant element within the realm of shopping addiction, hence augmenting consumers' propensity to engage in purchases due to the presence of a "compulsive buying impulse" (Rodrigues et al., 2021).

The Importance of Research in Marketing

The phenomenon of shopping addiction significantly influences the current state of the devastated economic market. According to Rose and Dhandayudham (2014), online shopping serves as an essential mechanism for fostering economic growth, while also providing those with shopping addiction an outlet to alleviate stress. This article primarily examines the correlation between brand addiction and increased brand loyalty within the market, as seen in Figure 3. According to Blackwell, Miniard, and Engel (2006), customer purchase choices and behaviors are mostly influenced by personal variables, including attitudes towards various aspects and individual lifestyles.

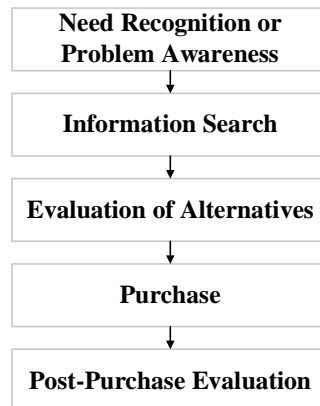


Figure 3. Typical psychological theory (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2001).

The Importance of Shopping Addiction at the Marketing

At the marketing level, brand development plays a significant role in fostering consumer understanding of the brand connection and eliciting deep cognitive and emotional responses towards the brand (Maraz, Griffiths, & Demetrovics, 2016). Brand addiction is a significant contributing component to the phenomenon of shopping addiction, since it has the potential to enhance consumers' inclination to make purchases.

Nevertheless, a comprehensive examination of existing research reveals that marketing tactics and methods have the potential to reinforce and facilitate consumers' buying choices, hence augmenting brand loyalty. Marketing has a social obligation to implement marketing tactics and initiatives aimed at mitigating dysfunctional consumer behavior among consumers. According to Popa Sârghie (2021), the act of purchasing requires a certain level of motivation. This paper examines the relationship between brand addiction and compulsive purchase behavior. According to Mrad and Cui (2019), neurophysiological research has shown that the activation of a specific brain area, known as the insulating layer, is associated with the development of addiction. Additionally, the establishment of a strong "customer-brand relationship" has been shown to be linked to the activation of the insula, a brain region that plays a pivotal part in the decision-making process regarding product purchases. According to Maraz et al. (2016), marketers have the opportunity to use brand addiction as a means to induce compulsive purchasing behavior among customers, hence enhancing the effectiveness of marketing strategies.

The aspects that significantly influence customers' buying choices include the improvement of visual perception, heightened arousal and excitement, tactile sensations, auditory experiences, and the sense of being favored. When considering the retail environment, it is noteworthy that customer perception, promotional mix, product attributes, and monetary value play significant roles in influencing the purchase choices of consumers who are highly attracted to traffic (Tarka, Kukar-Kinney, & Harnish, 2022).

Advice for Marketers

In the post-epidemic period, marketers have a challenging task of enabling customers with shopping addiction to alleviate their tension via buying. It is essential for marketers to comprehend the significance of cultivating positive brand addiction, since the occurrence of negative brand addiction may initially elicit “positive reinforcement”. However, this phenomenon has the potential to result in enduring adverse reinforcement. According to Roberts, Manolis, and Pullig (2014), empirical studies have shown that consumers develop a unified state of identification with a brand, referred to as a “brand-customer identity”. This phenomenon is attributed to the social advantages offered by the brand, the perception of resemblance between the customer and the brand, as well as memorable events linked with the brand. This is an examination of how negative reinforcement influences individuals with compulsive buying tendencies, leading them to reduce their frequency of obsessive purchases as a means of avoiding adverse outcomes. This highlights the need of addressing these concerns, since marketers have the ability to provide adverse reinforcement for consumers, which may have harmful effects on their well-being. Conversely, the establishment of a favorable brand experience has the potential to facilitate consumers’ creativity and foster stronger connections with the brand. The iterative nature of the purchasing process has the capacity to contribute to the development of compulsive shopping behaviors, hence fostering brand loyalty.

According to Lo and Harvey (2012), there is a consensus among experts that the comprehension of consumer purchasing choices and the willingness to pay may be achieved by examining a range of underlying components that manifest in different cognitive pathways and display diverse behaviors. For instance, individuals who do not possess highly obsessive buying tendencies may exhibit symptoms of shopping addiction due to several factors, including materialistic tendencies and anxiety. According to Rose and Dhandayudham (2014), the immediate advantages that a client may experience as a result of this addiction might potentially have more significant implications for long-term negative consequences. According to Tarka et al. (2022), consumers have the potential to perceive various advantages associated with brands, including functional, hedonic, and symbolic benefits. These benefits might contribute to the fulfillment of “self-related goals” for customers.

Numerous studies have shown that diverse marketing methods have the potential to leverage shopping addiction in order to effectively impact customers’ purchase behavior. According to Zarate et al. (2022), marketers have the ability to enhance earnings and sales by using efficient segmentation strategies that take into account obsessive behaviors, gender-based factors, and buying propensities. Additionally, Kaur et al. (2019) suggest that marketers should also consider implementing varying markup strategies for various visible locations.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that excessive engagement in shopping activities may also result in adverse consequences via the process of negative reinforcement. Marketers are obligated to refrain from exploiting customers’ trust and instead should actively promote responsible spending habits. To do this, they should develop advertisements that accurately depict notions of prestige and social standing, while using assertive sales tactics and effective in-store strategies. It is essential for marketers to use these strategies with a strong sense of responsibility. According to Zhao (2019), hence, it is essential for marketers to guarantee the ethicality of the marketing methods they use.

Cultural and Ethical Implications

Cultural Implication

Culture refers to the collective body of righteousness, rituals, norms, and traditions that are commonly embraced by individuals within a particular organization or society. It encompasses the acquired beliefs, values,

and customs that serve as guiding principles for consumer behavior within a specific national market (Doole et al., 2016). Furthermore, culture plays a defining role in shaping human communities, individuals, and social organizations. The bidirectional nature of the relationship between culture and addictive consumption is evident. According to Terpstra and Sarathy (1994), Figure 4 illustrates many components of a culture. These components include not just well recognized features like education and social structure, but also era-specific aspects such as technology and material culture.

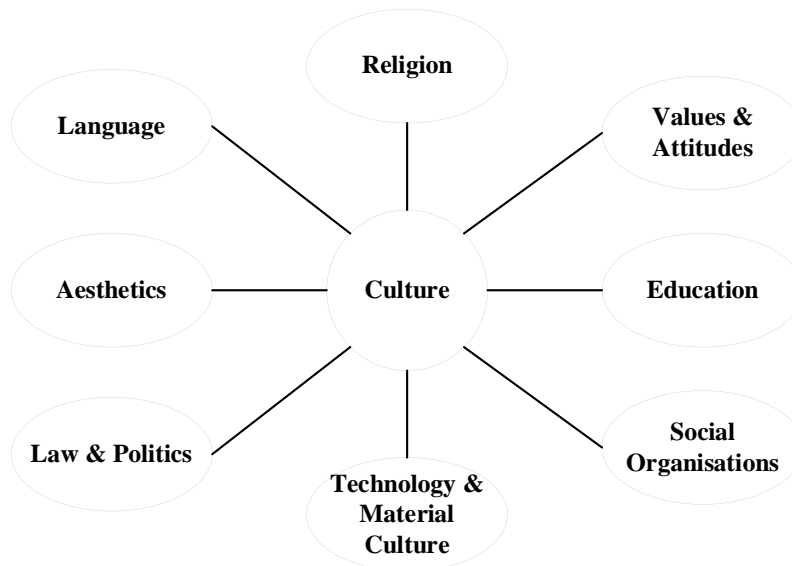


Figure 4. The cultural framework (Terpstra & Sarathy, 2000).

In contemporary society, customers find themselves in a period characterized by the widespread prevalence of consumerism. Furthermore, in the age of extensive data availability, marketing efforts by prominent apps revolve on the introduction of diverse new items (Le, 2020). Simultaneously, due to its significant role in the consumer purchase choice process, culture has an impact on consumer behavior, hence shaping the items that customers choose to acquire. Consumers that exhibit addictive tendencies are susceptible to external stimuli that significantly impact their consumer psychology.

It is important for merchants to recognize the significant impact of culture on local and global marketing endeavors. This recognition is particularly crucial in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of diverse cultural values, beliefs, and interpretations. By demonstrating cultural sensitivity, marketers can enhance the effectiveness of their strategies, resulting in heightened brand loyalty and a sustained consumer affinity towards the brand. Short-term societies may choose for commodities depending on prevailing fashion trends, sometimes referred to as fast fashion. Long-term societies may exhibit a preference for fashion items that serve several purposes. Fashion items provide increased durability and versatility.

Ethical Implication

The field of ethics encompasses a wide range of considerations pertaining to the manner in which people or organizations perceive, adopt attitudes towards, and embody their beliefs, actions, and self-perception. Drawing from the preceding studies, it can be argued that consumer addiction has advantageous implications for firms, hence necessitating a primary focus on the ethical dimension within the corporate context. Merchants use consumer user information with the intention of fostering brand addiction and cultivating brand loyalty. However,

the improper handling of such information may significantly erode confidence in a brand. Consequently, safeguarding consumer information emerges as a crucial ethical responsibility for merchants. Furthermore, the use of worry, fear, and comparative psychology by firms to foster customer addiction is deemed immoral. For ethical considerations, it is imperative to abolish this particular kind of marketing. Ultimately, it is essential for firms to actively encourage customers to engage in rational consumption practices and cultivate a positive moral reputation. It is essential for businesses to prioritize the enhancement of product quality and effectively use advanced technology to enable customers to make informed purchasing decisions.

Conclusion

This article examines the significant significance of shopping addiction within the realm of marketing and its impact on customers' purchase requirements from the perspective of consumer psychology. The emergence of online shopping and e-commerce has provided firms with novel opportunities to exploit brand loyalty and customer addiction, therefore influencing consumers' purchasing patterns in a favorable manner.

Based on theoretical considerations, the present study shows that consuming addiction has a notable stress-relieving impact among office employees experiencing high levels of stress. In order to cultivate brand loyalty among customers while avoiding potential skepticism towards the brand, marketers must develop innovative marketing methods. In light of the empirical considerations, it is essential for the brand to emphasize its own quality rather than resorting to unethical tactics that exploit consumer concern and addiction to consuming, all with the aim of boosting brand sales.

The buying requirements and psychology of addicted customers are reciprocally influenced by cultural factors. Additionally, it will serve as a catalyst for the emergence of new fashion trends. Merchants are required to adhere to prevailing market trends, adapt their product offerings accordingly, and make diverse items that align with varying cultural contexts. From an ethical standpoint, it is essential for marketers to give precedence to product quality, comprehend the psychological aspects of consumers, and refrain from using deceptive tactics. By doing so, customers may make reasonable purchase decisions with reduced levels of stress.

Simultaneously, it is essential for the national authorities to enact relevant legislation and regulations in order to effectively govern the market. This article lacks a comprehensive discussion of the specific limitations associated with the formulation and implementation of marketing policies. In the aftermath of the pandemic, the challenges surrounding economic growth and GDP enhancement have become more complex. However, it is important to recognize that the national happiness index has similar significance.

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