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A Study of New Consumption from the Perspective of Mediatization: Essence, Contributing Factors, and Reinvention of Rules

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Abstract: Most of the existing literature on the emergence of new consumption and its essence is based on the discussion of micro consumption phenomena. This paper takes new consumption phenomena in the digital media-dominated polymedia environment as the object of study to review the theoretical history of "mediatization," and explores new consumption's emergence, essence, and related issues systematically through deductive reasoning. More specifically, this paper is to first interpret the mediatization theory and then analyze two dimensions (i.e., the formation of mediatized consumption and the resultant reinvention of practice rules) from the perspective of media affordances. On this basis, we conclude mediatized consumption's essence, forms, and practice rules. This study indicates that new consumption is essentially mediatized consumption, which concerns "media-shaped consumption" and "consumption-shaped media," and that new consumption has two representations; consumption-oriented media and banal consumption. Media affordances make new consumption fields human-oriented, connecting "people" and "things," and are becoming a major contributor to the formation of mediatized consumption. Thus, the practice rules concerning "people, goods, and fields" in the new consumption sector are reinvented; the social interactions in the "middle region" are highlighted; the imaginative, narrative, and social characteristics of goods are emphasized; and the cross-field integration of consumption is realized.

Keywords: new consumption, mediatization theory, essence, contributing factors, practice rules

Research Questions and Methodology

Digital media-enabled communications have developed into a common practice in our daily lives, and are beginning to shape a "social-constructivist tradition" (Hepp, 2013) for typed, habitual behaviors. Such a tradition involves constructing a new consumer society and redefining consumption. New consumption refers to consumption activities that organically combine physical consumption with virtual consumption and material consumption with cultural consumption. Digital media is emerging as an important driving force of new consumption phenomena for two reasons. First, digital media has become a major source of consumer information and experience. Second, its associative new consumption scenarios connect the digital space to the real world and reconstruct the consumer environment. In the digital space, a diversity of consumption types such as social interaction consumption and pan-entertainment consumption have deeply integrated into our daily lives, breaking through limitations and reshaping the logic of traditional consumption. Digital media now acts as a dynamic social force to influence the trends of consumer society, boosting consumption growth in the new era.

Previous studies of media and consumerism have been conducted from five perspectives. The first perspective regards media technology as a big influence on consumer behaviors and consumption concepts, and even as an important way to facilitate the transformation and upgrading of the industrial economy in the new era (Wu, 2016). The second perspective takes media technology as an important way to present and shape consumer culture and mainly involves the exploration of media's relationships with consumer culture and consumer society (Jiang, 2008; Xu, 2013; Li, 2019). The third perspective associates media communication with consumerism to explore media consumption and public connections (Couldry et al., 2006; Shah et al., 2012). The fourth perspective examines emerging micro consumption forms (live streaming e-commerce, the influencer economy, etc.) to explore the new trends in consumer culture and the new patterns of consumer society behind the new consumption phenomena (Yu & Yang, 2020). The fifth perspective involves the combining of media technology and media consumption into an aesthetic imagination that allows a critical analysis (Pan, 2019). The above-mentioned studies have reviewed the penetration of media technology in economic, political, social, and cultural areas from the era of traditional media to that of digital media, explored the social impact of the media and consumerism in micro-forms, and analyzed their sociological significance at a macro level. Still, there is a lack of a mid-range perspective on the relationships between digital media and consumerism. In view of this, how new consumption has emerged becomes the essential question of this paper. When we explore the social role and discursive construction of digital media in the new consumerism, we must consider the following issues; the role of digital media in the new consumption sector, the interdependence and integration of actors in new consumption fields, and the consumption experiences and feelings of consumers.

This paper has selected the new consumption phenomena in the digital media-dominated polymedia environment as the object of study to review the theoretical history of "mediatization" and explore the above-mentioned issues systematically. More specifically, this paper will first interpret the mediatization theory, and then analyze two dimensions (i.e., the formation of mediatized consumption and the resultant reinvention of practice rules) from the perspective of media affordances. On this basis, this paper offers data that helps explain mediatized consumption's essence, forms, and practice rules to deepen our understanding of the new consumption phenomena.

The Theoretical Turn of Media Studies: From Mediation to Mediatization

Over the past decade, scholars in communication and cultural studies in Europe have attempted to reposition the relationship between media and society by using two key concepts: mediation and mediatization. How does the media influence culture or society? This is a top concern for these scholars. The mediation perspective on media sees the media as an independent mediating variable and highlights the use of media to convey meaning. Thus, the mediation perspective focuses on the process of communication itself, and its impact on individuals and social systems. One outstanding branch of the mediation perspective is technological determinism, which conceptualizes media technology as an external force capable of influencing and changing society. According to Roger Silverstone, a pioneering British scholar in cultural studies:

> Mediation describes the fundamentally, but unevenly, a dialectical process in which institutionalized media of communication (the press, broadcast radio and television, and increasingly the world wide web) are involved in the general circulation of symbols in social life. (Silverstone, 2007, p. 109)

This definition highlights the influence of mediating factors on the transformation of social environments and treats communication as a process that is driven by institutional and technological conditions and embedded in both technological and social conditions. Nick Couldry agrees with Silverstone's definition of mediation as a process in which institutionalized media communications are involved in the general circulation of symbols, trying to illustrate the role of media in shaping the world (Couldry, 2008). Stig Hjarvard (2018, p. 22) holds that "mediation refers to communication via a medium, the intervention of which can affect both the message and the relationship between sender and receiver." According to Hjarvard, the study of mediation has two research traditions: a) the structural functionalism-based "effect-paradigm," which has tended to focus on "what the media do to people;" and b) audience research with a cultural studies orientation, whose primary interest is to study "what people do with the media" (Hjarvard, 2018, pp. 3–4). The above research orientations take an instrumentalist approach to media theory, and therefore their social influence remains subject to functionalism.

In the digital era, media studies as a discipline are gradually shifting to mediatization for

three main reasons. First, at a macro level, media studies have shifted from the functionalist approach to the transformative approach, which primarily concerns the media-driven change of social systems and views the social practice of media as a dynamic process. Second, at a mid-range level, media studies begin to see the media as an independent "social institution" different from political, economic, and cultural institutions. Third, at a micro-level, media studies now tend to associate media users with their practice process rather than simply examining the media as a "communication tool" (Dai, 2018, p. 150). Thus, mediatization has relieved the media from its neutral role as a tool. Some scholars in mediatization studies, led by Hjarvard and Couldry, emphasize the communication practices at a mid-range level, shifting their focus to the interactions between media practices and social fields and exploring the impact of media on the construction of an institutional power process. Through institutional analysis, the study of mediatization explores how a particular social institution, system, or field is influenced by the media and adjusts its actions according to the media logic. Couldry takes a practice approach to media, with a theoretical framework drawing on domestication theory. Couldry holds that "media have meta-capital over the rules of play" and construct a social context, and that mediatization is a realistic process based on substance (Couldry, 2016, p. 146). During the interactions with different aspects of cultural life, media, through long-term interpenetration, have constructed a new context. Such a process is known as "mediatization."

The above discussion shows that mediatization theory can help answer the proposed research question. For this reason, it is an appropriate theoretical perspective. This paper focuses on the interactions between digital media practices and new consumption fields. The institutional analysis, which is enabled by massive materials and data, supports us in discovering changes in social consumption coming along with emerging media technology-driven consumer trends (live streaming e-commerce, short-form video hosting services, etc.). Couldry's practice approach to media offers a new analytical perspective; that is, digital media shapes the social context of new consumption. This analytical perspective, however, does not mean that people will automatically submit to, or fall under the control of media technology. Rather, people are integrating digital media into more consumption scenarios, helping clarify the relationships between individual use of media and the mediatization of consumer life.

The New Consumption Turn: From Mediated Consumption to Mediatized Consumption

Mediated Consumption: Taking Digital Media as a Platform Tool

With the introduction of digital media to consumption fields, traditional scholars tend to describe it as an important consumption channel and tool in their explanation of media technology and new consumption phenomena (Xue & Shi, 2019; Huang, 2021; Lin, 2021). In contrast to

traditional consumption, new consumption is characterized by being network-based, sharable, interactive, individualized, and service-oriented. In particular, "being network-based" has become the defining feature of new consumption. This actually reveals the instrumental and mediating nature of media from the perspective of technological determinism in functionalism. The new consumption phenomena, which have emerged from digital media-enabled consumption fields, are classified as "mediated consumption," in which digital media serves as a platform.

In this regard, the flow of consumer information online is limited by technological and social characteristics, most notably the absence of contextualized consumption and emotional consumption. Such limitation, or absence, is common in shopping via mass media (radios, televisions, portals from personal computers, etc.), which present product information in single texts, pictures, or videos. There are two contributing factors. First, mediated communication, featuring physical absence, filters out conventional social cues such as non-verbal signals and physical environments, resulting in the concealing of social cues helpful for consumption actors to communicate with each other. Second, in the polymedia environment with potential asynchrony, users must adopt a "platform-swinging" strategy (Tandoc et al., 2019) to deal with the possibilities and limits of consumer behaviors from the consumption structures and norms created by different platforms.

The continuous advancement of media technology has given rise to hybrid "affordances." E-commerce players that belong to digital media serve as platforms, and more importantly, take the initiative to integrate into a socio-technical network where people, technology, and institutions are interconnected. "Technology and people alike are considered as interrelated nodes in constantly changing socio-technical networks which constitute the forms and uses of technology differently in different times and places for diverse groups" (Lievrouw, 2006, as cited in Baym, 2020, p. 47). Given that, the concept of mediated consumption inferred from a single perspective, i.e., technological determinism, is rather biased and insufficient to explain how the practice of digital media as a dynamic social force affects new consumption fields in a polymedia environment and what their essence and representational forms are. These questions offer new perspectives on new consumption phenomena and can help explore their essence. It is necessary for us to re-examine the role of digital media in new consumption phenomena. The purpose is to identify what possibilities and constraints are brought by digital media to new consumption phenomena in the making and how people deal with the possibilities and surmount the constraints in their daily life.

Mediatized Consumption: Taking Digital Media as a Dynamic Meta-Process

A review of the history of consumer societies shows that the media has always been critical to the communication and practice of consumption. From consumer information published in newspapers to radio and TV shopping programs and even shopping channels, the history of consumer societies demonstrates how the mass media has created a new public platform for the

delivery of consumer information. In the existing literature, however, the concept of mediated consumption from the perspective of technological determinism is biased and one-dimensional. The emergence of new consumption phenomena indicates that the role of digital media in the consumption sector throughout the historical process of communication practices has evolved from mass media, through mediated platforms represented by e-commerce portals to consumption scenario builders (which can directly build consumption scenarios) represented by live streaming e-commerce and short-form video hosting platforms. Digital media has already constructed the "polymedia" for new consumption fields (Madianou & Miller, 2013). In this consumption environment, different media are connected and embedded in each other and provide each other with the context necessary to understand information on media consumption and to promote the formation of consumption activities. The polymedia emphasizes the social, emotional, and moral relationships involved in the user management of consumption activities in new consumption fields through autonomous use of multiple digital media. The polymedia also highlights user initiative in consumption activities and links two major contributors to the emergence of new consumption: a) digital media, and b) actors in new consumption fields.

The emergence of new consumption phenomena lends support to Couldry's practice approach to media in the study of mediatization. Digital media in a polymedia environment has meta-capital to construct a social context. Mediatization as a dynamic process of evolution has developed the model of media logic for consumption. When digital media is combined with practice, it becomes a force that shapes consumer action. Moreover, its unique way and characteristics influence the consumption mechanism, culture, and society, which are increasingly dependent on the resources controlled or provided by the media (Hepp, 2012, as cited in Hjarvard, 2018, p. 21). Thus, this dynamic process of mediatization has become the "meta-process" (Krotz, 2007) of the evolution of consumer society.

The Essence of Mediatized Consumption

Mediatization has extensively penetrated new consumption fields, changing their relational structure in two aspects. First, the penetration of digital media into everyday life has facilitated the convergence of consumer activities. Second, relevant actors, such as brands, consumers, and multi-channel networks (MCNs), must adapt themselves to the assessments, forms, and conventions of digital media in consumption fields. Some scholars try to explain the new micro consumption phenomena such as live streaming e-commerce and the influencer economy from the perspective of mediatization. According to these scholars, live streaming, which is essentially a media-based force for social transformation, reconstructs culture and society by the logic of communications, and promotes social diversity and mobility (Yu & Yang, 2020). Previous studies only focused on individual phenomena of new consumption, and there is no thorough discussion on how digital media influences consumer behavior and shapes culture and society.

For the new consumption sector in China, the discussion on this issue concerns three

conditions. First, media's influence on new consumption is reflected in the presentation of consumption content, voice, and framework, and media itself also profoundly shapes the overall landscape of new consumption by creating new consumption scenarios, influencing consumer behaviors, and reshaping consumer groups. Second, media mechanisms (media form, media system, media culture, etc.) create a new structured consumption space for actors (businesses, consumers, MCNs, etc.) and even give rise to new consumption phenomena, which belong to the so-called "media-shaped consumption." Third, micro consumption phenomena such as short-form video hosting and live streaming e-commerce also exert an impact on the media system. New consumption phenomena are combined to form a driving force that constantly shocks and balances the power relations among varied forms of digital media, maintains a phased co-prosperity, and generates the so-called "consumption-shaped media." The three conditions underpin the concept of mediatized consumption, which is the very focus of this study. Thus, the theoretical basis of mediatized consumption is as follows: As digital media plays a more important role in shaping consumer life, brands become increasingly reliant on digital promotion and on digital recognition from consumers; consequently, consumption phenomena will be further mediatized.

Representational Forms of Mediatized Consumption

One of the three metaphors of media proposed by Meyrowitz (1993) is "conduits." According to Meyrowitz, this metaphorical frame focuses on how media cross different fields and transmit symbols and information from the sender to the receiver. Such a theory could be used to explain the various ways in which the content of digital media influences new consumption fields in mediatized consumption. Digital media, as it is, has become a conveyor of representations of diversified consumption: for example, they convey consumer information, weighing what type of consumer information can be conveyed, what topics should appear on the consumption agenda and how each of the various topics on consumption can gather attention. Media as conduits not only convey all kinds of consumer information, but also present representations of the new consumption, identifying representation types, attitudes, and communication purposes. They even combine all the other elements concerning the consumption mechanism in a new manner and serve as an important source of consumer information and experience for users.

As a communication channel, digital media conveys diversified consumer information, which also includes representations of new consumption. Under the theoretical framework for mediatization, judging from the institutional and practical analysis, digital media plays two different types of consumption conveyors in the polymedia environment: consumption-oriented media and banal consumption. Digital media has a significant impact on the consumption field. This impact does not mean that a new consumption field has been established but rather that the definition and practices of the new consumption are changing under new cultural and social circumstances.

Consumption-oriented media.

Our institutional analysis shows that mediatized consumption features one representational form—consumption-oriented media, which refers to consumption behaviors, or media organizations and practices controlled and performed by groups or individuals. In new consumption fields, consumption-oriented media includes comprehensive e-commerce platforms, social content platforms, shopping guide community platforms, and payment platforms through which consumer information is spread among actors. The polymedia environment brings these actors closer to each other, creates a new consumption scenario, and gives the consumers a sense of being and a sense of community: Digital media is more like access to the existing members of the consumption communities, encouraging more personalized consumption among them. In contrast with mediated consumption platforms, digital media acts as a public platform that disseminates ideas about consumption, changes how consumers are involved, and helps with consumer branding. That is because, first, the diversified consumption based on social networking challenges the organized consumption authority; and second, the mass online culture propels personalized consumption as well as new practices and forms for the dissemination of consumer culture.

In essence, mediatized consumption can refer to "consumption-shaped media." Consumption-oriented media is often instrumentalized because it can convey and explain related information about products and services and help establish consumer communities and consumption scenarios. Consumption-oriented media must adapt to the logic of digital media in many aspects to exert an influence on the forms and content of consumer information. For example, to adapt to emerging communication forms such as short-form video hosting and live streaming, popular narratives must be employed, and relationships must be built among intermediary users, product suppliers, and other consumption actors. There is a need to reinvent the practice rules concerning "people, goods, and fields" in the digital space. When entering the public sphere, consumption-oriented media must be evaluated by the same standards as the other media. For example, they also must consider how to use media technologies and different media types, and how to create consumption scenarios and improve consumer experiences.

The "media-shaped consumption" also indicates a process of mediatization, in which media are developed into a half-independent institution. Consumption-oriented media acts as a type of commercial media committed to fulfilling the demand of users and has created a new phenomenon of consumer-oriented consumption, for which reason it can count as such an institution. Consumption actors like product suppliers, brands, advertisers, and consumers make the consumption-oriented media serve their purposes, while at the same time further introducing new consumption to the consumer culture via consumption-oriented media.

Banal consumption.

The study of media practices focuses on the fact that when people are using the media or are involved in related practices, they interact with other social factors and build ties, and thus the

media creates consumption scenarios and integrates people's daily habits and customs. In that sense, the mediatization of consumption-shaped media helps establish people's daily routines. The consumption scenarios they construct even multiply people's consumption habits, and hence banal consumption occurs. Banal consumption means that a new consumption is formed under the new consumption scenarios constructed by the media, and then is maintained by consumption actors' series of daily experiences and consumption representations. The concept of "banal consumption" was derived from Michael Billig's concept of "banal nationalism," according to which, "nationalism and national identity are not only created and maintained through the use of official and explicit symbols of the nation," but are also to a very great extent based on "a whole series of everyday symbols and occurrences" commonly known as "banal national symbols" (Billig, 1995, as cited in Hjarvard, 2018, pp. 91–92). Banal consumption inherits this thought and aims to help people understand how digital media in the polymedia environment constructs new consumption scenarios, enables consumption actors to interact with a range of banal consumption elements, influences daily consumption experiences, and helps form and maintain daily consumption habits. One common example is the human maneuvering and popularization of online shopping festivals, during which motifs and narratives from popular culture are placed in the limelight by commercial advertisements, tastes for fashion are socialized, and daily symbols of consumer culture are thus created, pervading people's daily life. In this manner, the shopping festivals become part of the culture and public memory of the new consumption. These consumption experiences and symbols are also linked to individual life and family events. For example, via the cake platform Panda Never Leave, consumers can order online and enjoy both the product and extra services: a panda person will first bring the birthday cake to the consumer for free, then dance or perform magic tricks for the consumer, all to "make one's birthday more joyful." Therefore, banal consumption channels the new consumption into a new consumer culture. It shows a human-oriented stance in its communication practices, and highlights a person's status as the subject of communication and interaction in new consumption fields. The cyclic activation of banal national symbols and the interpretation of the new consumer culture are thus independent of the consumption-oriented media itself. Digital media's increasingly important role in consumer society also creates more space for the representations of banal consumption.

Digital media brings about changes to the consumption mechanisms, influences the relationships between consumption practices and mechanisms, and finally propels the formation of the core of the new consumer society, namely, mediatized consumption. The two major forms of the "mediatized consumption" indicate both "digital media in the consumption" and "consumption in the media environment." Mediatization has become a meta-process for the new consumption. This historical, continual process is gradually reshaping the public's consumption habits and ways of consumption practices. This shift, combined with the influence of the logic of digital media, leads to a new consumer society and culture, where the new consumption practices are already transformed: the digital space expands the factual shopping area; in terms of person-

to-person communication during consumption, the once pure seller-buyer relationship is mixed with social networking and relationships; product suppliers and brands revolve around digital media to produce and launch products; daily consumption becomes ritualized. And digital media itself is turning into the most important narrator of consumption.

Media Affordances as a Contributor to the Formation of Mediatized Consumption

Banal consumption helps integrate the consumption habits of "people" in consumption fields, based on the premise that mediatized practices help consumption actors understand each other in daily life. "What are widely known as technologies' affordances shape users' shared understandings" (Couldry, 2016, p. 45). Mediatized consumption explores the multi-directional relationship between people and technology from an affordance perspective, attaching importance to user initiative driven by technology, taking a human-oriented approach, and cutting across the dichotomy between technological determinism and social constructivism (Faraj & Azad, 2012). The concept of affordances focuses on relational actions that occur among people and technologies (Gibson, 1979). The concept of affordances has been iterated by many scholars, some of whom argued that "affordances can provide a useful tool for user-centered analyses of technologies" (Gaver, 1991, p. 79) and that the concept is applicable to "the study of the symbiotic relationship between people and technology" (Ahuja et al., 2018, p. 2204). An examination of the representational forms of mediatized consumption from an affordance perspective indicates that mediatized consumption is a combination of three major forces, which respectively are: a) mode of information production and path of information dissemination set by media technology, b) consumer demand and experience, and c) the logic of consumer culture. Under the framework of social media affordances, we must identify the functional support of relevant media before choosing from different functional shopping platforms according to our needs and user experiences. Karahanna et al. (2018) have concluded from previous studies that media affordances in the new consumption sector are mainly reflected in four aspects.

First, digital media features are displayable and shareable, which can help transform commodity displays. Brands are supposed to display their goods and post promotional texts on social networks to reach a wider user base. They need to create content that is displayable and shareable to promote products and persuade users to buy their products. In terms of display, by using communication forms such as textual and pictorial presentations, short-form video hosting services, and live streaming e-commerce, brands can create an intuitive consumption scenario as an important channel for the visual display of goods in the digital space. Moreover, by using real-time locating systems, tracking users' browsing history on e-commerce platforms, and listing user tags, brands can instantly increase location-specific traffic, show consumer information nearby, and create consumer profiles to send product information to targeted consumers. In terms of

sharing, in the boundless digital space, the top priority for product promotion and sales is to make sure that product information is "catchy and sharable." Take luxury brand Gucci as an example. Gucci uses the "gift card" function to boost customer acquisition and increase store visits, and it also offers fun games, quizzes, and personality tests, along with a "quick share" feature to attract new customers. It is important to note that regardless of the promotion strategy, to boost sales in the digital space, one must follow the mobile e-commerce principle of being displayable and sharable.

Second, digital media, which can function as an online community, offers shopping guidance and influences consumer mentality through highly interactive activities. By virtue of its communal atmosphere, digital media allows people to form groups and communities online. Such media affordances provide users with shared practices, shared resources, and support (Baym, 2019, p. 86). Consumption-oriented media (e-commerce platforms, social content platforms, shopping guide community platforms, etc.) are increasingly focused on developing category-specific consumption communities. And a special e-commerce language has taken shape. For example, it has become the norm for live streaming hosts to call consumers "babe" or "love." This is also a shared practice for effective communications based on group identities as similar users understand and use the same language pattern to support and reproduce the awareness of new consumer culture and interact with others in the same space. Moreover, consumption communities have emerged, striving for the exchange of bridging social capital, particularly the exchange of consumer information between heterogeneous individuals for informational and emotional support. The purpose is to increase users' willingness to buy. Take the shopping guide app MOGU as an example. MOGU is committed to building a diverse group of hosts and bringing together tens of thousands of key opinion leaders (KOLs) to attract users with different interests and from various circles and thus be able to send product information to target consumers. Through multiple forms such as live streaming e-commerce, short-form video hosting service, and textual and pictorial presentation, MOGU gives personalized product recommendations and fashion tips by user category and takes the initiative to create a short-video hosting community to enrich its content matrix and enable the exchange of consumer information between groups. Also, MOGU attaches great importance to the retention of live streaming hosts, providing its hosts with resources from its own supply chains, funds, and image-building capacities. Step by step, a strong link between the hosts and the platform is developed, which is conducive to the building and maintenance of customer loyalty. In the live streaming e-commerce sector, hosts tend to create emotional resonance with users to generate impulse purchases. For an e-commerce platform, a stable group of live streaming hosts can help maximize customer loyalty and KOL marketing impact, and thereby increase users' willingness to buy.

Third, digital media's interactions with the environment bring about the "presencing" and "archiving" of consumption actors. The term "presencing" concerns user space management, which allows individuals or collectives to move, adjust, or change the virtual consumption

scenario they are in at any time, and to constantly manage their relationships with others in the consumption space through "presencing." The term "archiving" concerns user time management, which brings users together in certain time slots. Such affordances shape and consolidate new consumption scenarios, highlighting the marked features of consumption subjects, namely their public participation, improvement of digital consumption space, and maintenance of their presence in the space. For example, live streaming e-commerce links the digital consumption space to the real world and helps increase and retain customers. Also, integrated human-machine intelligence-related technologies such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and metaverse attracts users through immersive customer experiences. Consumption actors' conception of consumption space and time is being reconstructed by media technology.

Fourth, the whole-chain mobile payment service upgrades consumption experiences, facilitates multi-scenario evolution, and transforms patterns of business operation and consumption. Payments are the foundation of consumer services, and all transactional activities end with payments. Mobile payment service has three advantages. The first advantage is its full coverage of both online and offline consumption. This full-coverage enables mobile payment services to offer users whole-scenario smart experiences and change user consumption and lifestyles. The second advantage is a diversity of payment scenarios. Mobile payment services have provided diverse scenarios now indispensable to everyday life and have completed deep integration with various consumption scenarios. Third, mobile payment services make the best of transaction data to empower businesses and transform corresponding patterns of operations and consumption.

In summary, the affordances of digital media contextualize the consumption-shaped media, help consumerize the media environment, make new consumption fields human-oriented, connect "people" and "things," shape the purchase intentions of both individual and collective consumers, and contribute to the formation of direct mediatized consumption. This is also the answer to the essential question of this paper on how new consumption has emerged.

Mediatized Consumption as an Influence on the Reinvention of Practice Rules

The above analysis reveals that new consumption phenomena are essentially mediatized consumption, which has two characteristics. First, different forms of digital media (particularly consumption-oriented media), which are semi-independent, create and expand the new consumption scope. New consumption phenomena gradually develop into banal consumption when the scenes of life are covered extensively through media practices. Second, actors in this new consumption field must observe and rely more on the digital media mechanism to expand, substitute, integrate, and adapt to the interactions and communications in the new consumption sector. Mediatized consumption contributes to the diversification of "people, goods, and fields" in new consumption phenomena, expands the value boundary of these phenomena, and reinvents the practice rules in the new consumption sector.

Practice Rules Concerning the "People"

It is imperative to increase brands' social interactions in the "middle region," emphasize the parallel influence of KOLs' personalized and hybrid roles and make targeted recommendations to new core consumers to socialize the lifestyle. The new consumption actors mainly comprise brands, KOLs, and consumers. Affected by mediatized consumption, these three actors have interlinked and interacted relations of consumption behaviors.

First, increase brands' social interactions in the "middle region." Joshua Meyrowitz (1986) proposed the "middle region," a concept of mediated scenario, or a half public and half private form of interaction, which specifies a hybrid role for public and private behaviors. The collapse of a diverse social context in the digital media environment also makes it necessary for users to change their identities for interaction and communication in presenting and managing roles (Marwick & Boyd, 2010, p. 123), so that the "middle region" behaviors can balance the half public and half private features of the interactive space. In the digital media environment, new consumption actors can communicate more directly and adopt a smooth and pleasant mode of interaction in the "middle region." In new consumption fields, brands make full use of different digital media and increase interactions among new consumption actors to achieve deep social interactions. Social interactivity, synchronous communications, and interactions among individuals or groups are facilitated through texts, pictures, communities, short-form videos, live streams, and applets, establishing a pleasant interaction and communication channel which is half public and half private. In terms of technical interactivity, consumption-oriented media provides users with more interface-based functions such as VR makeup and virtual fitting rooms to increase consumption more directly. In terms of textual interactivity, brands create more creative and interpretive interactions between consumers and text, such as combining marketing texts with current social issues and popular sports events and leveraging the traffic and creativity of variety shows. In this way, the marketing effect of combining channels with content is achieved, and the circle of consumers is expanded.

Second, emphasize the parallel influence of KOLs' personalized and hybrid roles on consumer mentality. The influence of social interactions in the "middle region" gives rise to and emphasizes the parallel influence of the personalized and hybrid roles of KOLs. In terms of KOLs' personalized role as a consumer, KOLs' authority in mediatized consumption is largely constructed through personal identity. That is, KOLs act as an individual to recommend products and influences the consumption trend in the digital media environment. KOLs highlight private and personal life in their product recommending texts and live streaming operations. Such sharing of their personal lives and entertainment content creation is booming, and brands are using them for marketing. This mixes KOLs' social role as a consumer and individual role in private life. By influencing consumer mentality through concept marketing, KOLs can obtain a harmonious identity in the "middle region," thus improving a return on investment (ROI). In terms of KOLs'

hybrid role, KOLs' authority in the digital media environment also relies on their fulfillment of multiple tasks. Traditionally, KOLs play a single role of product recommender. However, one of the results of mediatized consumption is that a data-driven cycle has been formed among content, KOLs, brands, and platforms in the new consumption sector. As such, KOLs have assumed the roles of product suppliers, brands, advertisers, and consumers in the "production-consumption" chain of the new consumption sector. Role boundaries are generally blurred. This blurring is reflected in the increased communication and interactions between KOLs and their followers, as well as in the emergence and improvement of a practice-oriented cross-platform KOL eco-industry chain. A stable economic ecology has gradually developed from a platform traffic-based cashing method, forming an improved upstream and downstream industry chain. Intensified competition is seen in the production mechanism driven by KOL studios, media companies, and MCNs.

Third, make targeted recommendations to new core consumers such as the middle class and Generation Z to socialize their lifestyles by increasing the number of target consumers and studying their consumption habits. First, new consumption scenarios invite individuals to become interactive on social media and consumption platforms. When new consumption behaviors are noted, mediatization will shape, expand, and strengthen their consumption habits. Meanwhile, users have also come under the spotlight of consumption-oriented media. The research on consumers has been extended to an accurate portrait of the consumption habits of the target group, including gender, age, education, income, lifestyle, and consumption choices. Companies tend to choose the production process and distribution channels of their products according to the lifestyles of different consumer groups. Second, attention is paid to other-directed personalities, fully releasing the social feature of the mediatized consumption process, and expanding the breadth of and increasing the intensity of marketing. Other-directed personality focuses on peers as the source of individual consumption orientation, which internalizes and socializes as people's concept of life. In new consumption phenomena, other-directed personality advocates enjoying consumption can give reasons for their consumption choices. This can be reflected in the live streaming sales pitch, which can describe product usage scenarios and use strategies such as festive promotion and user usage feedback, to expand the breadth and increase the intensity of social marketing. Third, consumption-oriented media is constantly influenced by fashion which continues to innovate on users' lifestyles, and the process of mediatized consumption also socializes lifestyle. Driven by consumption-oriented media, brands continue to update their forms and content based on user feedback, so they are ahead of user perceptions in promoting lifestyles. At the same time, consumption-oriented media also provides individual users with guidance and advice on their lives, and updates consumer information for different groups according to their specific lifestyles, to realize banal consumption. Therefore, mediatized consumption not only reflects but also forms the life pattern, cultivates the special lifestyles of consumers, and reorganizes and replaces the lifestyle through the process of shaping, expansion, enforcement, and

recognition. Ultimately, the lifestyle is socialized.

Practice Rules Concerning the "Goods"

There is a need to make the most of user data to emphasize the imaginative, narrative, and social characteristics of goods. Digital media has started to be integrated as part of the product line, offering a crucial function of image exhibition for the presentation of goods; the logic of digital media, concerning the affordances of media technology, symbolic content, and communication functions continues to affect the functional positioning of goods, so the goods and the media are gradually combined. Under the influence of mediatized consumption, goods suppliers make the most of available user data, consumption-oriented media, technology affordances, and product storytelling, thus creating and enhancing their imaginative, narrative, and social characteristics. In recent years, Pop Mart, which is popular among young groups, has quickly become a widely known brand of art toys through the digital media environment.

First, they added mystery to goods. In 2017, Pop Mart combined the blind box with the action "shaking" and encouraged users to upload the experience of shaking and opening the blind box on social media, making it a popular meme online. The marketing of blind boxes adds mystery to goods, expands users' imagination, and creates a certain expectation when users buy a blind box. Opening the blind box is accompanied by feelings of satisfaction, surprise, or disappointment, and makes people anticipate an unknown surprise in the blind box; fixed + hidden models are designed to meet people's demands for imaginative surprise goods. Those who get a "hidden model" in their blind boxes with premium potential are likely to share this news on social media to show off. An art toy community becomes a representation of a certain imaginary world. For these reasons, fans of blind boxes are increasingly willing to bet on this game for ultra-high premiums.

Second, enhance the function of the pop culture narrative for goods. In combination with the current popular culture, using the "intellectual property (IP) empowerment model," Pop Mart creates stories for its goods to maintain a fresh image to users. For example, through cooperation with brands such as Minions, Harry Potter, and Snow White, Pop Mart has created figures represented by animated characters. This narrative feature has attracted many consumers and expanded the target consumer group of the company. Pop Mart gives these features character traits to refine their stories. Basically, the company creates features based on the scenes in a particular cartoon, and presents possible actions based on these scenes so that users can adopt these narrative patterns on their own when playing with the features.

Third, treat goods as "social currency." Social currency is used to gain the recognition of people. When young people start to collect products in a "tribe" to meet their social needs, these goods are considered social currency. The group becomes the most effective connecting platform between brands and fans, meeting the social needs of the new generation of consumers. And the community established based on goods also carries the needs and hobbies of the "tribe." To attract more users to join the community and better serve valued users, brands increasingly highlight

their products' social and friend-making functions and see them as an indispensable part of their business system.

Practice Rules Concerning the "Fields"

Mediatized consumption reflects the symbiotic relations of spaces, scenario-based services embrace a new mode of delivery, and the cross-field integration of consumption is realized. As the mobile Internet technology conforms to the concept of space-biased media, anyone in the real world can enter cyberspace at will, while information flows freely between the two spaces, which become part of people's daily lives. In the new consumption sector, consumption-oriented media plays this role, and banal consumption also regards digital media as a consumption environment, influencing consumer behavior.

First, mediatized consumption combines digital media with consumption, which reflects the symbiotic relations of spaces. Sida Liu (2021) believed that social spaces can be symbiotic, that is, "social spaces with different rules and structures can form symbiotic relations in which each space is constituted by the exchange of resources, information, power, and actors with the other spaces." In this context, the discussion of symbiosis is limited to those non-conflictual and mutually beneficial relations. In new consumption phenomena, these relations are reflected in the combination of digital media and consumption, and symbiotic relations have been formed in these spaces. Digital media and consumption are considered to be two social spaces that are interdependent, and neither of them can function without the other. One of the impacts of digital media on consumption is the digital transformation of authority (including consumption actors' authority) in consumption fields. For example, brands autonomously follow the live streaming logic to make consumer information flow freely in the digital space; consumption-oriented media attract both brands and consumers and increase traffic through online promotion strategies; they also collect user data and use them to create consumer profiles to send product information to target consumers. Although digital media and consumption have completely different internal structures and functioning logic, the combination of these two social spaces forms mediatized consumption. For this reason, the evolvement of the two social spaces relies on their symbiotic relations. And how to constantly enlarge the symbiotic space becomes the next common challenge faced by all actors.

Second, scenario-based services embrace a new mode of delivery. Driven by intelligent technology and user behavior data, the smart device industry has begun to promote the 3D scenario-based services for smart terminals; and major terminal manufacturers have gradually improved their own mobile shopping ecological service systems. For example, app stores, photo albums, aggregated video apps, online reading, online payment, and other services have been available in smart terminal devices represented by Huawei; some e-commerce platforms with scenario functions have gradually increased their layout of ecological channels to meet the scenario-based service needs of users from WeChat applets, thus realizing the cross-dimensional

delivery of application services. Some well-performed e-commerce communities increase their sales volume by maximizing the traffic from WeChat applets and realizing user growth through social fission. For payment terminals, consumption is stimulated through bank apps with "Wallet" functions, in addition to e-commerce payment terminals, which are used in scenes such as personal payment, wealth management, and daily life support.

Third, the cross-field integration of consumption is realized step by step. Cross-field effects—actors interact with each other—are generated from digital media and consumption as symbiotic social spaces. Such effects not only balance relations of social spaces, but also achieve deep integration of consumption. Take the Double 11 shopping festival in 2021 as an example. Consumption actors followed the promotional logic of shopping festivals. E-commerce platform Tmall extended the pre-sale period to boost consumption and used strategies such as the interactive game *Miao Tang Zong Dongyuan [Red Packet Competition]* and live streaming promotions to realize user fission and maintain the festival appeal. By contrast, JD.com increased traffic through a celebrity party and JD.com-branded variety shows, rescheduled the shopping festival to an earlier date, and offered fast delivery services to increase traffic. Many brands use live streaming to recommend products in advance for better marketing. This was particularly the case for brands in the beauty industry and the food and beverage industry, which used both social media and online videos to recommend products, attract potential buyers, and increase brand exposure in a short time to persuade users to buy their products.

Conclusion

New consumption phenomena, which are under the influence of mediatization, affect and change the patterns of new consumption. In this sense, new consumption is essentially mediatized consumption, which concerns "media-shaped consumption" and "consumption-shaped media." The new consumption has two representations: consumption-oriented media and banal consumption. Media affordances make new consumption fields human-oriented, connecting "people" and "things" and becoming a major contributor to the formation of mediatized consumption. Thus, the practice rules concerning "people, goods, and fields" in the new consumption sector are reinvented; the social interactions in the "middle region" are highlighted; the imaginative, narrative and social characteristics of goods are emphasized; and the cross-field integration of consumption is realized. This paper focuses on the essence, contributing factors, and practical results of new consumption phenomena in the digital media environment. In future studies, we should explore the following issues on mediatized consumption as the norm at a mid-range level: how mediatized consumption shapes consumer behavior, how consumer behavior is related to the new consumer culture, and how product suppliers rely on the digital media environment. Mediatization is one feasible approach to the study of new consumption, related social practices, and cultural interactions.

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