

# Analysis and Governance of the Phenomenon of Consumption Alienation in the Context of E-commerce Festival Creation

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**Abstract:** In modern society, influenced by mass culture and internal alienation, people experience alienation in the consumption field. The impulsive and excessive consumption of consumers not only reflects the changes in consumption culture but is also the result of the combined action of market, technological, and psychological factors. The shopping spree in the context of e-commerce festival creation is due to the hard control of science and technology and the soft penetration of mass culture, which fully invade individuals' work and life, evoke false and excessive demands, and thus generate consumption. The practical path to get rid of consumption alienation and return to rational consumption can start from three aspects: aesthetic awakening, concept guidance, and environmental regulation.

**Keywords:** Consumption alienation; Symbolic consumption; Consumption culture; Internet celebrity economy

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## 1. Introduction

In modern society, which is based on modern technical means and mass communication media, people's alienation is all-pervasive. Influenced by mass culture, digital technology, and internal alienation, people experience alienation in the consumption field. They become alienated from their consumer goods and themselves<sup>[1]</sup>. Consumption, divorced from its creators, becomes a dominant force, comprehensively controlling people's time, aesthetics, and psychology. Modern people gradually lose their subject status in self-satisfying consumption and ultimately become people who lose their critical spirit and identify with the existing consumption order and social reality.

## 2. Why it happens: The triple-driver of market, technology, and psychological mechanisms

From the spontaneous bazaars of ancient traditional festivals to the centralized promotions during the Industrial

Revolution, and then to today's e-commerce festival creation, consumption has undergone tremendous changes in social development and transformation. Online shopping, taking advantage of technological progress and relying on the sales atmosphere of "festivals equal consumption" created by anchors, has always maintained its appeal to consumers. The impulsive and excessive consumption of consumers not only reflects the changes in consumption culture but also embodies the generation logic of consumption alienation. Behind this is the joint action of market, technological, and psychological factors.

### **2.1. The market cycle stimulates high-consumption in society**

In modern market economy, the pursuit of profit is the driving force for the survival and development of enterprises. The desire for wealth possession prompts enterprises to actively hire labor and expand production. Improving efficiency and expanding scale mean an increase in output. Enterprises must find a matching consumer market to ensure that products can be sold smoothly, so as to maintain the cycle of enterprise funds. Therefore, creating various demands to stimulate consumption has become a "business strategy". People's consumption not only satisfies their own desires but also meets the profit goals of enterprises.

The evolution of contemporary shopping festivals is an example of stimulating consumption. The time limit of shopping festivals has expanded from one day to one month, the product categories have covered from home appliances to all fields, and the promotional methods have ranged from pop-up ads to TV galas, with a wide variety of forms. This process confirms the efforts made by enterprises to ensure social consumption. Through event planning, preferential plans, and brand marketing, they convert the purchasing power of customers into enterprise profits.

### **2.2. Digital technology expands the possibilities of intelligent consumption**

"The problem of technical rationality is the core problem of modernity"<sup>[2]</sup>. The deep-level variation of alienated labor and the cultural oppression of modern people are closely related to science and technology, which is also an important cause of consumption alienation.

Firstly, the rise of digital technology provides strong hardware support for the operation of e-commerce platforms. During shopping festivals, merchants push promotional information and cross-platform preferential activities through the platform. A large number of consumers browse products at the same time, and frequent user payments and buying-selling interactions require extremely high network stability of the platform. Secondly, the integration of artificial intelligence and big data provides accurate data sources for inducing consumption. Artificial intelligence, driven by computing power, captures effective elements from a vast number of products by grabbing people's consumption records and browsing history. According to the user portraits fed back by the data, it sends personalized product recommendations, inducing unnecessary consumption under the temptation of a series of calculation formulas. Finally, the addition of new media marketing provides reliable pain points for impulsive consumption. The cultural life of modern people is occupied by various social media. New media placement has become a new B2C marketing model<sup>[3]</sup>. E-commerce enterprises take advantage of the information asymmetry between buyers and sellers to spread product information on different channels. In the all-round and three-dimensional marketing advertisements, they inadvertently induce the impulsive consumption of browsers. In essence, the scale and appeal of e-commerce festival creation not only benefit from its overwhelming marketing on social media but also from the recognition of consumption culture in an alienated society.

### **2.3. Escape psychology generates the initiative of individual consumption**

Marx revealed four forms of labor alienation in “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844”<sup>[4]</sup>. By the 20th century, alienation had penetrated into all aspects of society and became “the inevitable and direct reality of all people living in capitalist society”<sup>[5]</sup>. Consumption is a compensatory way for people who suffer from the pain of alienated labor.

Firstly, alienation triggers an escape-from-reality psychology. Technical rationality brings the confirmation of self-power. While transcending nature, people also lose the shelter of nature. This separation, along with individual growth and group development, evolves into the pursuit of competitiveness, dreams, and wealth, turning into a survival pressure. Modern people feel a sense of powerlessness in both work and life. To escape the uneasiness and burden brought by technical freedom, people begin to consciously seek substitutes for nature (here, nature refers to the original nature that can provide natural shelter and is constantly transcended by human practice), “to overcome the feeling of loneliness and powerlessness”<sup>[6]</sup>. Secondly, the escape psychology leads to the recognition of consumption value. Under the influence of the escape psychology, people become more and more dependent on any individual or institution other than themselves. People’s self-identification needs to be obtained from the confirmation of the power of others. Catalyzed invisibly by mass culture and online marketing, individuals in self-doubt increasingly identify with the values advertised. Finally, the recognition leads to compensatory consumption. In an industrial society, people have no way to escape. They have to choose a way to relieve fatigue after a busy day. Under the constraints of the cultural industry, consumption becomes the best way to escape. “Modern workers are happy to drive a new car or have a relaxing night out after a tiring day at work”<sup>[7]</sup>. Only in consumption can people feel stress-free happiness.

## **3. How it continues: The dual manipulation of science and technology and mass culture**

The operation logic of e-commerce festival creation is that it can continuously stimulate consumption and ensure the smooth flow of the economic cycle. The key to this stimulation lies in the hard control of science and technology and the soft penetration of mass culture, which fully invade individuals’ work and life, evoke false and excessive demands, and thus generate consumption.

### **3.1. Alienation**

In modern society, science and technology and their development have a dual nature. On the one hand, the progress of science and technology has greatly improved production efficiency and changed the lifestyle and living standards of human beings. On the other hand, science and technology have changed from an auxiliary tool to a dominant position, and the degree of people’s alienation has become more serious, making them fall into a cultural and consumption whirlpool.

Firstly, it continuously enriches individual consumption methods. From the two-sided nature of science and technology, it can be seen that Internet technology has brought new business models and consumption mechanisms. First, installment payments and credit-based shopping constantly encourage consumers to over-consume. Second, the trade-in shopping policy constantly creates new consumption demands. Third, time-limited flash sales and pre-sale marketing induce consumers to make impulsive choices. As a result, consumers begin to ignore their internal needs and make impulsive purchases under the influence of hunger marketing.

On the other hand, science and technology break the time-space limitations of traditional consumption

and promote the diversification of consumption channels. Consumers can open product live-streams, exclusive links, and social vertical accounts for consumption at any time and place. In addition, community group-buying, through the “social + consumption” model, indirectly stimulates consumption in the social-interaction link by taking advantage of the herd mentality. Eventually, the controlling power of technology goes to the extreme. Consumption behavior no longer reflects the labor exchange between people. Consumers continuously pursue material consumption in the emotionally fabricated “warm bed” of technology and finally forget their true emotions and values.

Secondly, it comprehensively controls individuals’ free time. Industrial culture penetrates into consumers’ minds through mass media such as advertisements. Consumers are even influenced by advertisements when choosing the color of a product. On the one hand, the commercialization of cultural products makes people violate their own personalities when consuming them, turning them into target users selected by enterprises and passive recipients of the cultural industry. On the other hand, people’s vision, hearing, and touch in their free time are almost occupied by mass-produced art products. Their consumption orientation is guided by industrial culture, and they gradually identify with consumption culture in the process of being influenced, ultimately eliminating people’s self-awareness and “critical and negative ability and political consciousness”<sup>[8]</sup>.

### **3.2. Cultural manipulation makes the consumption subject lose its subjectivity**

Advanced technical means, with the help of mass media, infiltrate consumption culture, making people willingly accept the existing social order and consumption logic. Therefore, it is necessary to reveal the essence of the cultural manipulation of e-commerce festival creation, so that people can deeply understand the prevalence of cultural and consumption alienation in modern society, and promote the awakening of people’s subjectivity, “to return consumption to its true nature”<sup>[9]</sup>.

Firstly, it standardizes people’s consumption aesthetics. Before the development of science and technology and mass media, art products were people’s expressions of transcendence over freedom and reality. Nowadays, art products have become commodities and are no longer expressions of true personalities. Consumption aesthetics tend to be unified. It is no longer the manifestation of true will but an artificially-shaped shopping standard. The art products that people can choose independently are essentially screened commodities. The more people are faced with the same cultural commodities, the more they will fall into the identification of consumption values, and the more difficult it is for their aesthetics to break out of the consumption range defined by capital.

The “Internet celebrity economy” benefits from its standardization of consumers’ aesthetics. Internet celebrities use their influence to guide aesthetics and use the herd mentality to standardize consumers’ aesthetics to be consistent with industrially-produced commodities. At the same time, they win emotional trust. In this trust, consumers lose their thinking ability and the essence of transcendence, and the “Internet celebrity economy” continues to establish its dominance by taking advantage of mass culture.

Secondly, it creates people’s false needs. In the one-dimensional theory, Marcuse distinguished between “true needs” and “false needs”<sup>[10]</sup>. True needs are those based on people’s instincts, while false needs are imposed on people by society. False needs are not people’s true inner desires. The weak critical consciousness of individuals and the erosion of social culture jointly obscure people’s ability to distinguish needs, leading to continuous consumption.

On the one hand, the real needs of people in real life are always limited, and enterprises need to create false needs to stimulate consumption. On the other hand, the production system constantly magnifies the pain of modern



people at work, which will inevitably lead to people's reflection on the status quo. Therefore, the consumer society must guide people to transform their pursuit of freedom and liberation into sensory satisfaction, use the satisfaction of false needs to eliminate people's doubts about false needs, and then fill people's free time with mass culture, stifle people's transcendental consciousness of the existing situation, and thus defuse the rebellious emotions of modern people.

Finally, it caters to people's consumption psychology. Modern people regard the number of commodities they own as a measure of success, forming a production mode that emphasizes possession and a psychological tendency to rely on authority. This character structure makes modern people unconsciously cater to the consumption world.

Rational spirit makes people believe that they can conquer nature and achieve material and spiritual freedom through scientific and technological progress. In reality, the promise of industrial rationality has not been fulfilled. The pursuit of wealth freedom has evolved into the "possession is happiness" psychology of modern people. People regard the possession of property as an inalienable right<sup>[11]</sup>. The purpose of people's possession is not hoarding but consumption. The things they have consumed represent their existence. People lose their essential nature in labor and have to seek proof of their existence through continuous consumption. The more prevalent the alienation phenomenon is, the more consumption is separated from people's needs and becomes symbolic consumption.

#### **4. How to regulate: The tripartite force of aesthetic awakening, concept guidance, and environmental regulation**

Modern society, based on the principle of rationality, frantically expands production, resulting in a hedonistic tendency among modern people who rely on high consumption to obtain "spiritual comfort". Sensory enjoyment makes people fall into the abyss of over-consumption. The use value of goods is ignored, and luxury products with brand premiums are favored instead. Things are no longer valued for their practicality but for their "face value". To change the society of high production and high consumption, it is necessary to call for the return of rational consumption, which can start from three aspects: aesthetic awakening, concept guidance, and environmental regulation.

##### **4.1. Awakening aesthetics in daily life**

Mass culture is closely related to people's daily lives. To avoid the alienation of mass culture, it is necessary to highlight people's creative position in culture, enhance people's ability to distinguish and appreciate popular culture, and explore the compatibility between mass culture and traditional culture.

Firstly, awaken people's aesthetics in daily life. Encourage people's free expression in art creation, respect originality, and protect art creators. Restore the essence of freedom and transcendence contained in art products, and create a social atmosphere that can accommodate diverse aesthetics. Secondly, enhance people's discrimination ability in the consumer market. Advertising culture is deceptive and inductive. With the rise of short-video platforms, new business forms such as live-streaming e-commerce and digital marketing have emerged, making product promotion more covert. It is necessary to strengthen the popular science education of consumers, improve their ability to distinguish true and false needs, and reduce the possibility of impulsive consumption. Finally, strengthen the connection between traditional culture and the times. Chinese culture has a long history and left behind many cultural traditions. The compatibility between popular culture and traditional Chinese culture needs

to be explored, organically combine the two, and use well-known mass culture to spread the profound heritage of traditional culture.

## **4.2. Guiding the return of the subject status**

Although the 21st century has achieved digital intelligence in technology, people's alienation has not disappeared. Instead, people have lost their subject status in consumption and willingly cater to the technological and consumption worlds <sup>[11]</sup>. Therefore, it is necessary to start from people's inner selves, promote a fundamental change in consumption concepts, focus on restoring people's transcendental and critical spirits, and thus re-establish people's dominant position in consumption.

Firstly, guide the consumption concepts of teenagers. Teenagers are the main group in the future consumer market, and their consumption concepts will have a significant impact on China's domestic-demand market. It is necessary to do a good job in school education and family education to help them establish correct consumption concepts. Secondly, create a "practical is better" consumption atmosphere. As young consumers gradually become the main force driving consumption, they are willing to spend a large amount of money on global travel for the pursuit of "poetry and distance" and are also willing to compare prices through multiple channels during shopping festivals <sup>[12]</sup>. It is both possible and necessary to create a "practical is better" consumption atmosphere. Finally, promote the value concept that "people are consumption subjects with a critical spirit". In an alienated society, consumption cannot be a tool for people to escape the hardships of work. Instead, it will trap people in new shackles. The full play of individuality and potential is the real way to improve the alienated situation. Modern people should realize that they are the masters of their lives and actively stimulate their inner strength to transcend themselves, becoming modern people with a critical spirit.

## **4.3. Regulating the order of the consumer society**

In the contemporary era, where online shopping has become the mainstream consumption method, chaos such as false propaganda and price fraud has spread from offline to online. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the order of the consumer society, create a market of honest producers, and build a fair and reasonable shopping environment.

Firstly, improve laws and regulations, standardize the sales behavior of operators, and ensure the rights and interests of consumers. Secondly, social media platforms should strengthen background monitoring and use multiple means to ensure the implementation of e-commerce management systems, creating a rational-consumption online shopping platform. Standardize the market order of shopping festivals with high traffic and frequent transactions, such as "Double Eleven" and "New Year Shopping Festival", and monitor the "lowest price in the whole network" fabricated by live-streaming rooms or Internet celebrities across the platform to ensure clear and reasonable prices.

In addition, advocating rational consumption is also in line with the proposition of "Ecological Marxism" <sup>[13]</sup>. The capitalist system with expanding production and consumption is the root cause of the ecological crisis. Compared with the high-consumption society of capitalism, ecological rationality advocates "consume less, live better", emphasizing rationality in the consumption process, and choosing more durable and practical products, so as to reduce unnecessary product production and workers' labor and ultimately reduce the use of natural resources and achieve harmonious coexistence between man and nature <sup>[14]</sup>.

## 5. Conclusion

In the context of e-commerce festival creation, consumption alienation has become an increasingly pervasive phenomenon driven by the intertwined forces of market logic, technological advancement, and psychological manipulation. The modern consumer is no longer an autonomous subject but a passive participant shaped by symbolic consumption and mass cultural influence. The dual manipulation of digital technology and mass media has obscured authentic needs, standardized aesthetic values, and distorted the purpose of consumption into a means of existential validation. To counter this, a multi-dimensional governance strategy is necessary—one that awakens aesthetic consciousness, reclaims individual subjectivity, and enforces environmental and regulatory standards. Only by promoting rational consumption, restoring critical thinking, and reestablishing the consumer as a self-aware subject can society break free from the cycle of overconsumption and move toward a more sustainable and human-centered economic order.

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