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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Role of Media Convergence in Consumer Perception: Insights from China's Digital Marketing Landscape

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ABSTRACT

Media convergence has emerged as the sole digital marketing strategy, yet to people understanding, few studies to date employ a brand-level method relying on bases of measures such as ad reach and campaign efficiency. In China's cross-media marketplace in which social and e-commerce become integrated into the offline market whether end-users handle converged messages in a similar way is to be discovered. This qualitative study investigates the influence of media conglomeration on consumer interpretation, involvement of trust. This research employed in-depth interviews of eight Huawei, Li-Ning, Perfect Diary, and BlueFocus marketing participants and eight end-users and participatory tracking of cross-platform communication (WeChat, Weibo, Douyin). Research finds cross-platform consistency wins consumer trust and emotional connection, and over-spending and incoherent communication lead to confusion, distrust, and web fatigue. Platform-specific needs of consumers for content and reactions to more fun and interesting aspects of tailor-made and enjoyable material are found. Results indicate the meaning of narrative in brands that advance consumer interests through the other medias. In the direction of a more consumer-oriented conceptualization of media convergences are built from the work of creating how consumer trustworthiness, emotional involvement, and content relevance affect attitudes towards brands. Contributions are made to practical guidelines for brands that would like to converge traditional and digital medias in ways that build more connections with consumers within China's digital competitive market.

1. Introduction

The rapid development of digital technologies has triggered a revolution in the way brands interact with consumers. Media convergence, where traditional and digital media

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platforms converge, has allowed brands to expand their reach through a variety of channels, thus enhancing the participatory experience for consumers (Lang & Jing-Schmidt, 2024). The increasing use of social media, mobile apps, and digital advertising has accelerated this process, making media convergence a critical component of modern brand communication strategies (Jia & Lu, 2023). In China, where digital platforms are the primary means of consumer interaction, a convergence involving social media, e-commerce, and digital marketing has become a hallmark of the media environment. Brands now interact with their consumers via a multitude of touchpoints, including WeChat, Weibo, Douyin, and Xiaohongshu. They leverage multimedia content, influencer marketing, and immersive storytelling to create strong bonds with their brands (Zhang, 2025).

Even as dependence on media convergence is growing steadily, its impact on consumer perception is still underexplored. With brands increasingly adopting multi-channel strategies, challenges concerning split brand messaging, information overload, and content saturation can have a negative impact on consumer trust and engagement (Zhao & Wang, 2023). It should also be recognized that media convergence strategies adopted by different brands have varying outcomes; some brands struggle with unifying their messages across platforms, resulting in an incongruous brand experience (Yin & Liu, 2024). With China's market being driven by highly integrated digital ecosystems and fast-changing consumer expectations, a better understanding of consumers' responses to converged brand communication is currently imperative (Jia & Lu, 2023). Hence, this study aims to fill the gap by focusing on consumers' experience, trust, and engagement with media convergence initiatives undertaken by China-based brands.

This research attempts to explore the effects on consumers' perception and levels of engagement by examining how Chinese brands integrate traditional and digital media into one brand narrative. It examines consumers' responses toward strategies involving media convergence, focusing on engagement, purchasing behaviors, and perceived confidence, as well as identifying best practices and challenges for brands seeking to optimize media convergence in China's digital landscape. The findings will contribute to theoretical frameworks around media convergence and consumer behavior, having important implications for industry stakeholders as well as academics. By moving the focus away from a brand perspective to consumerism, this study will facilitate greater insight into consumer engagement with and reaction to multi-channel brand communication. This study also provides managerial recommendations to brand managers and marketers for creating more effective cross-channel campaigns. Even as the digital economy continues to expand with consumer-driven distraction and greater competition to be heard, media convergence optimization can become the deciding factor for brands to make long-term connections with consumers.

1.1. Research Objectives

i. To explore how brands in China integrate traditional and digital media to shape consumer perception.
ii. To understand consumer engagement and interaction with media convergence from a brand communications perspective
iii. To identify challenges and successful approaches in media convergence initiatives to build consumer trust and interaction.

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2. Literature Review

2.1. Digital Marketing in the Context of Media Convergence

Digital marketing consists of digital technology and web-based applications—like social networking sites, mobile applications, stores, and store-based applications—on Internet-based platforms to promote services, products, and brands (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Digital marketing changed the patterns of communicating brands in the past few years with two-way communications, immediate feedbacks, and precisely defined content. In China, digital platform particularly is highly mature and controlled with super-apps like WeChat, short videos like Douyin, and integrated-commerce platforms like Xiaohongshu and Taobao (Li & Zhao, 2022).

With more advanced digital marketing initiatives, content convergence across platforms comes into play—beyond trend to a strategy imperative (Zhang, 2025). Those companies that pair together digital marketing initiatives with cross-platform communications more effectively develop consistent storytelling to the brand, emotionally entrenched users, and trust with the consumer (Wang et al., 2023). But with more algorithmic feeds and oversaturated content, digital marketing faces the mode of information overload and user alienation (Chen, 2024). This research situates digital marketing not merely in background context but in that of an operating medium through which convergence within the medium is achieved. More in-depth understanding of the ways in which digital marketing efforts build consumer perception within a converged medium context therefore comes at a particularly good moment and is justified in research terms.

2.2. Media and Brand Communication Convergence

Media convergence has, at its core, revolutionized brand communication strategies, allowing for a holistic marketing approach that maximizes offline as well as digital media outlets. Current research has shown that a well-planned convergence strategy enhances consumer-brand relationships through providing relevant and useful experiences (Wang et al., 2023). In China, successful media convergence is exemplified through a multi-channel strategy that incorporates short video advertising (Douyin), influencer collaborations (Weibo, Xiaohongshu), and personalized AI-driven suggestions (WeChat Mini Programs) (Li & Zhao, 2022; Zhang et al., 2025). On the contrary, brands that spread conflicting messages on several platforms put their brand reputation at risk and face issues with building consumer confidence (Lee & Kim, 2022; Zhao & Wang, 2023).

2.3. Consumer Perception in an Environment of Converged Media

Consumer perception amidst a converged media system is influenced by factors including relevance of content, engagement quality, and brand messaging consistency (X. Wang et al., 2024; Kong et al., 2024). Empirical evidence indicates that integrated coordination among diverse media channels plays a part in increasing consumer confidence and brand loyalty (Schivinski et al., 2019; Julaeha, 2024). In China, there is increased sensitivity among consumers towards interactive and experiential types of content, such as live-streaming business (Taobao Live) and user-activated campaigns (Douyin Challenges), which create a deeper sense of connection with brands (Jing, 2024; Mei, 2024). However, overposting on various platforms may create a state of fatigue on

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consumers, subsequently lowering engagement levels (Chen, 2024; Firmansyah, 2023). Therefore, understanding how Chinese consumers perceive and engage with converged brand communications is important for improving marketing strategy effectiveness (Kumar, 2024).

2.4. Challenges and Best Practices for Media Convergence

Though media convergence offers a number of benefits, brands face a number of challenges, ranging from oversaturation of content, consistency across media outlets, and a rise in skepticism among consumers (Bakulev, 2021; Martinoli & Vuković, 2024). Among Chinese brands, there have been challenges in finding a balance point for persistent visibility and audience fatigue, especially among fashion and beauty brands, where a constant stream of information is expected (Guo et al., 2021; Tarmawan, 2020). Recommended strategies include leveraging AI analytics for customized information, cross-media storytelling for maintaining consumer interest, and having clear brand positioning on multiple digital media (Zeng, 2024; Hu, 2022). Examples involving successful Chinese brands, such as the effective integration of Xiaohongshu, Douyin, and WeChat for brand storytelling development by Perfect Diary, highlight how effective strategies have a notable impact on consumer perception within a converged media landscape (Sang & Qu, 2023). This research lays a foundation for understanding media convergence effects on consumer beliefs and brand engagement. On a solid foundation of existing research, this research attempts to reinforce previous research findings as well as explore new ideas for media convergence strategies for China's fast-growing digital marketplace (Jia & Lu, 2023; Y.-Y. Wang et al., 2024).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The current research utilized a qualitative method, taking a phenomenological stance to analyze the impact of media convergence on consumer behavior and interaction in the context of digital marketing in China (Rater & Balkhaya, 2023; Mukti, 2023). The chosen qualitative research design was appropriate as it allowed for the collection of in-depth and detailed stories from both consumers and professionals in the field using techniques like interviews and observations (Srihirun et al., 2024). The major aim of this research was to understand the lived experiences and meanings related to media convergence from the perspectives of individuals who are actually engaged in both digital and traditional brand communication fields (Solorzano Zambrano et al., 2024). This research methodology proved effective in capturing meanings, patterns, and consumer-brand relationships, which would not be well reflected through quantitative measures (Nurcahyadi et al., 2024).

Figure 1 presents the overall research framework adopted in this study. It illustrates how the qualitative research design, grounded in a phenomenological approach, guided the sampling strategy, data collection methods (in-depth interviews and participatory observation), and data analysis procedures (thematic analysis supported by NVivo software). This framework provides a structured overview of the methodological process.

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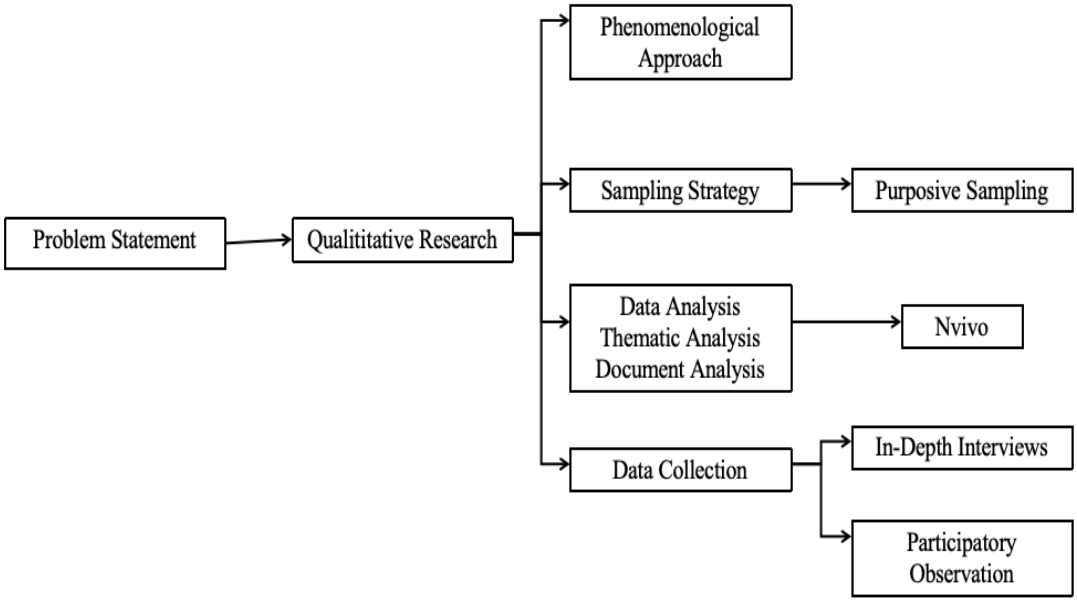
Figure 1: Research Design Framework



3.2. Research Location

The targeted location is a representative site of urban areas in China where digital technology is highly embedded, indicating an amalgamation of the old and new media environments (Peng, 2019).

d from digital sites enabling consumer-brand interactions and corporate headquarters where marketing experts devise and implement plans for media convergence (Li, Liu, & Su, 2024). The nature of the digital sites and the dynamics of consumer behavior in this setting make it a suitable location to study the influence of media convergence on consumer attitudes (Dai, 2023).

3.3. Population and Sample

The research centers on two principal populations: digital consumers and China-based marketing practitioners with active roles in the process of convergence in the media function. These populations were used to help attain user-side and industry-side insights into how converged strategies in the function of the media function to deal with consumer attitude and interaction. To make the research useful and to develop in-depth insights, purposive sampling was undertaken. This practice made efforts to involve participants with first-hand experience in consuming or with conceiving converged content in the media. Sixteen participants participated in the research: eight consumers and eight China-based marketing practitioners in four successful brands—Huawei, Li-Ning, Perfect Diary, and BlueFocus, successful marketing consultancy company in China. These practitioners were with roles in digital strategy, in communications within a brand, and in social networking management.

The consumer panel was chosen through their active interactions with branded content in digital and traditional platforms like WeChat, Weibo, Douyin, and Xiaohongshu. Extra efforts were also undertaken to make participants of various age categories, professions, and sexes in order to ensure maximum variability in points of viewpoints. While the

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number of samples might look small to the first glance, it was in qualitative research practice where depth in theme dominates in comparison with statistical generalizability in number of samples. Sampling stopped once data saturation was reached—i.e., where no additional themes and results are produced with additional interviews (Irsad et al., 2022). This practice made the output rich enough to attain goals of this research but remained defensible in its approach.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select research participants who had direct experience with media convergence practices either as digital consumers or marketing professionals. This approach ensured that participants possessed relevant knowledge and experience aligned with the research objectives. Sampling continued until data saturation was reached, meaning no new themes emerged from additional interviews.

3.4. Instrumentation

The research used a semi-structured interview protocol and an observational checklist as its main tools for qualitative data collection (Mashuri et al., 2022; Kakilla, 2021). The interview questions were derived from key themes in the literature—such as consumer confidence, message consistency across media platforms, digital fatigue, emotional engagement, and personalization. The interview guide maintained a flexible format, enabling participants to elaborate on their individual experiences while ensuring that all necessary research areas were covered (Bearman, 2019). The complete list of interview questions, corresponding themes, and supporting literature is provided in table 1.

In addition to interviews, participatory observation was conducted to record real-time brand communication practices on platforms such as Weibo, Douyin, and brand-specific websites. Systematic field notes were generated and involved platform activity, narrative strategy, interactive process, and user response (Aharoni, 2019). Interviews were conducted both face-to-face and via online video conferencing platforms, depending on participants' availability and location. Each interview lasted approximately 40 to 60 minutes.

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent to ensure accuracy and reliability. The recordings were transcribed verbatim prior to analysis. Observational items and criteria are outlined in Appendix B. Interviews were recorded using audio and then transcribed, and upon translation to English, they were analyzed. Although qualitative research isn't based on standardized assessment instruments, application of a standardized interview protocol and observation checklist served to introduce methodological reliability and data richness to be analyzed across participants (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

Table 1: Interview Protocol

No.	Interview Question	Theme	Supporting Literature
1	Which media platforms do you usually use to access brand-related content (e.g., WeChat, Douyin, Weibo)?	Platform Preference	Kong et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2025
2	Do you follow the same brand across multiple platforms? Why or why not?	Cross-Platform Engagement	Lee & Kim, 2022; Wang et al., 2023

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No.	Interview Question	Theme	Supporting Literature
3	Have you ever noticed different messages from the same brand on different platforms?	Message Consistency	Jenkins, 2006; Zhao & Wang, 2023
4	How do repeated brand messages across platforms make you feel?	Digital Fatigue / Overexposure	Chen, 2024; Firmansyah, 2023
5	What kind of content makes you feel emotionally connected to a brand?	Emotional Engagement	Sang & Qu, 2023; Mei, 2024
6	Can you recall an instance when media content influenced your buying decision or loyalty?	Behavioral Impact	Wang et al., 2023; Zhang, 2025
7	Do you prefer personalized brand content? Why or why not?	Personalization & Relevance	Zeng, 2024; Hu, 2022
8	What types of interactive brand content do you enjoy most (e.g., polls, contests, live Q&A)?	Interactivity	Jing, 2024; Sang & Qu, 2023
9	Which platform do you trust most for brand information, and why?	Trust & Credibility	Schivinski et al., 2019; Zhao & Wang, 2023
10	What would make you stop following or engaging with a brand on digital platforms?	Negative Triggers / Exit Behavior	Bakulev, 2021; Martinoli & Vuković, 2024

The observational items and criteria used during participatory observation are presented in Table 2. The checklist was developed to systematically record brand communication activities, message consistency, personalization practices, audience interaction, and promotional frequency across multiple digital platforms.

Table 2: Observational Checklist

Observation Item	Platform	Notes to Record
Brand's cross-platform message consistency	Weibo, Douyin, Xiaohongshu	Compare headlines, visuals, tone
Presence of emotional storytelling	WeChat articles, Douyin videos	Is it narrative-driven or product-based?
Use of personalization (e.g., AI recommendations)	WeChat Mini Program, Taobao	Personalized offers/content?
User interaction metrics (likes, shares, comments)	All platforms	Note user feedback and sentiment
Promotional overload / frequency	Any	Count repetitions or daily exposure volume

3.5. Gathering and Evaluation of Information

Data collection took place over a three-month period (from March to June 2025). Individual interviews were conducted with each respondent, lasting between 40 to 60 minutes. Observational data were also gathered during this period through close monitoring of digital marketing campaigns and selected offline promotional events. All participants provided informed consent, and measures for anonymity and confidentiality were strictly observed (Wang et al., 2024).

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Thematic analysis was used to evaluate both interview transcripts and observational data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). All qualitative data were transcribed and then processed using NVivo software to facilitate systematic coding and theme development. The analysis followed the six-step approach proposed by Braun and Clarke: familiarization with the data, initial coding, generation of themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and final reporting (Mortelmans, 2019).

Emerging themes included message consistency, emotional engagement, platform trustworthiness, content fatigue, and platform synergy (Basri, 2023). Notably, observational data played a critical role in validating participant claims and contextualizing their experiences (Lindheim, 2022). For instance, field notes from platforms such as Weibo, Douyin, and Xiaohongshu were analyzed to identify the frequency of brand messaging, visual storytelling techniques, audience interaction styles, and the alignment between brand narratives and platform dynamics.

By triangulating insights from interview data and observational records, the study achieved a more robust and context-sensitive understanding of how media convergence influences consumer perception in China's highly digitized marketplace. This dual-source approach enhanced both the reliability and ecological validity of the findings (Elliott-Mainwaring, 2021; Bakla, 2021).

Table 3 below presents a sample NVivo output illustrating theme frequency across both interview and observation data.

Table 3: Sample NVivo Coding Output – Theme Frequency Matrix

Theme	Interview References	Observation References
Message Consistency	26	19
Emotional Engagement	21	13
Platform Trustworthiness	17	12
Content Fatigue	14	18
Platform Synergy	20	22

This NVivo-coded matrix reflects the cross-validation between what participants expressed and what was actually observed in brand content deployment across digital platforms. It demonstrates how interviews and observational data contributed jointly to theme construction and interpretation.

3.5.1 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The researchers used purposive sampling in recruiting individuals who had personal experience of practicing media convergence, whether through their use of digital media or as marketing experts. The appropriateness of this sampling technique is because it allows the researcher to choose information-rich cases that will provide useful data related to the research problem.

Interviews and observations were used to collect primary data. Interviewing took place either face-to-face or online through video conferencing depending on the participant's geographical location. Each interview session lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. All interviews conducted were audio-taped with permission from the participants for

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purposes of documentation and preservation. Audio taping was adopted because it provides an opportunity to capture the full story while minimizing the loss of data during interviewing. Furthermore, brand communication through digital media such as WeChat, Weibo, Douyin, and Xiaohongshu was observed.

Upon collecting data, all audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and where necessary, translated to English. Thematic analysis, which involved six steps according to Braun and Clarke (2021), was performed to analyze data. These six steps include familiarizing oneself with the data, conducting initial coding, generating themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes, and writing up of findings. NVivo was used to facilitate the management, coding, and theme generation among other functions of qualitative data analysis.

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee at the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). At the beginning of the research process, all participants were briefed about the research and gave their informed consent.

4. Findings

4.1. Thematic Analysis Results

Thematic analysis was utilized to transfer to interview data from 16 participants, made up of 8 consumer and 8 practitioner participants to marketing. Eight top-level themes were gleaned that encapsulate major findings into consumer experience and industry strategy within a converged media system. They are cross-platform consistency (Arntzen et al., 2024), consumer faith in converged media (Singh et al., 2023), emotional bond with brands (Silva, 2020), digital content fatigue (Zhang & Yu, 2020), platform-specificity (Kong et al., 2024), interactive engagement (Heo & Lee, 2025), issues with brand overexposure (Diehl et al., 2022), and personalisation needs (Vij & Kaur, 2024). These are not only respondent experience-based but also concurrent with latest empirical work, and so validate their transferability and applicability within China's converged digital media system. Table 4 depicts the frequency with which each cited theme occurred among consumers and marketing experts.

Table 4: Theme Frequencies from Interview Participants

Theme	Frequency (Consumers)	Frequency (Professionals)
Cross-platform Consistency	6	8
Consumer Trust in Integrated Media	7	6
Emotional Connection with Brand	5	3
Digital Content Fatigue	6	5
Platform-Specific Preferences	7	6
Interactive Engagement	5	6
Brand Overexposure Concerns	4	5
Value of Personalization	6	7

The findings reveal that, although consumers and experts alike recognize the importance of integrated media as well as individualization, there exist differences among their views on emotional involvement and fear regarding brand overexposure.

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4.2. Cross-platform Consistency

End-users as well as industry players have also pointed out the importance of coordinating offline and online media. End-users have shown that disparate messages across channels create confusion and erode their confidence. Marketing players acknowledged that unification of messages across campaigns on WeChat, Weibo, Douyin, and outdoor billboards is a crucial strategic priority. One Huawei marketing manager described, "It's not just a matter of getting visible（Participant 5 – Marketing Professional）, it's having one messaging thread over a duration and channels."(Participant 5 – Marketing Professional). Research confirms that cross-platform consistency significantly influences consumer perception and strengthens brand credibility in converged digital environments (Li & Liang, 2021).

4.3. Consumer Confidence in Converged Media

A vast majority of consumers, precisely seventy percent or seven in eight, highlighted the need for trust in their converged media interactions. It was found that high trust levels existed especially when brands used official and familiar channels in combination with message consistency. Marketing practitioners confirmed that brand authenticity increases when multiple media platforms reinforce each other. For instance, consumers pointed out that integrated promotional activities across e-commerce and social media websites helped create impressions of authenticity and credibility. Studies demonstrate that effective media convergence increases perceived transparency and enhances audience trust, particularly in hybrid media ecosystems like China's (Wang et al., 2024). One participant stated:

> *"The more consistent the information on brands is across WeChat, Douyin, and the official site of a particular brand, the more professional the brand looks to me." (Consumer Participant 3#)*

Another consumer said:

> *"With consistency in information provided by different platforms, I'm more confident that the brand is genuine and trustworthy."* (Consumer Participant 6#)

Additionally, one of the marketing participants said:

> *"Consumers check information on several platforms. Consistency increases credibility." (Marketing Professional Participant 4#)*

4.4. Emotional Connection and Brand Connection

The theme of emotional connection appeared especially strong with those consumers who associated storytelling, specifically through short videos and influencer stories, with an even higher level of engagement. Several respondents reported that storytelling involving emotional elements increased the strength of the connection to brands and made them more engaged in interacting with materials linked to certain brands.

As one respondent put it:

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> *"I will be able to remember the brand better when there are actual stories behind it and not only product promotion." (Participant 10)*

Meanwhile, another respondent highlighted:

> *"Stories about the influencer make it easier to engage with the brand." (Participant 13)*

A marketer further supported this viewpoint stating that emotional storytelling was important for creating loyalty:

> *"One viral campaign is not enough; emotional touchpoints are needed over time." (Participant 6)*

Overall, this suggests that emotional storytelling plays a crucial role in enhancing connections between brands and consumers. As per previous studies, emotions-based and consumer-oriented narratives are essential for creating customer loyalty in converged media campaigns (Li et al., 2020).

4.5. Digital Content Saturation and Brand Overexposure

Many consumers reported feeling overwhelmed by repeated brand exposure across multiple digital platforms. Participants frequently described experiences of content saturation and advertising fatigue when the same promotional messages appeared repeatedly within a short period.

One consumer explained:

> *"It's as if one ad is following me from Weibo through Douyin onto Taobao." (Participant 11)*

Another participant noted:

> *"Sometimes I see the same advertisement so many times that I start ignoring it completely." (Participant 4)*

Similarly, another consumer commented:

> *"Too many promotional messages can be frustrating and make me lose interest in the brand." (Participant 15)*

Marketing professionals also acknowledged this challenge. One participant explained that excessive exposure could negatively affect engagement and brand perception.

These findings indicate that while media convergence increases brand visibility, excessive repetition may contribute to digital fatigue and reduced consumer engagement. Existing studies similarly suggest that overexposure across converged platforms contributes to content fatigue, particularly among younger consumers (Tianyue, 2024).

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4.6. Platform-Specific Preferences

Consumers had distinct preferences for content types on different platforms. Douyin became the favorite for short, entertaining content, but WeChat for informative texts. Practitioners reported that they adjusted their strategy accordingly. For example, Li-Ning's social team created sports tutorials tailored especially for Douyin, but kept messages for brand heritage on WeChat official accounts. These platform-specific expectations align with research showing that user preferences in China vary significantly by platform type and cultural norms (Kong et al., 2024).

Consumer Participant 2# said, *"I like seeing product demonstration videos on Douyin because they are short and fun to watch."*

Consumer Participant 5# said, *"When I want to get into more detail, I always refer to WeChat articles because they offer more extensive explanations."*

Marketing Professional Participant 7# said,

> *"The platforms differ in their purpose. We need to adjust our content marketing strategy to the needs of people using each platform."*

4.7. Engagement through Interactivity and Personalization

Audience members received a welcoming attitude toward interactive modes including polls, contests, and Q&A, because these formats created a stronger sense of engagement as brands "listened as well as responded." Marketing consultants pointed out that using consumers' data coupled with artificial intelligence recommendation tools, especially through WeChat mini-programs, further increased relevance. According to a representative for BlueFocus, "Personalized interaction is the future of consumer-brand communication in China." These findings are echoed by media convergence strategies in China's entertainment sector, where AI-driven personalization and two-way engagement have become central to consumer retention (Zeng, 2024).

5. Discussion and Recommendations

This chapter breaks down and positions the findings within the parameters of research objectives as well as the wider academic debate around media convergence and consumer behavior. The findings from this research provide important insights into how integrated media strategies affect consumers' perceptions, levels of confidence, and behavior in China's fast-changing digital era (Kong et al., 2024; Qureshi et al., 2019).

First, the issue of cross-platform homogeneity is inherent with the main research quest, which questioned how brands in Southern City develop traditional and digital media and how they sustain congruent messages. The participants pointed out that inconsistencies in brand messages on various platforms create confusion, thus substantiating Jenkins' (2006) contention that consumers expect narrative consistency within a converged media environment. The finding is consistent with previous research that highlights how consistent and converged brand messaging across platforms contributes to increased brand trust, perception, and purchase intention in China's digital media landscape (Jing, 2024; Wong et al., 2024).

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The findings for consumer confidence and interactive involvement align with the second and third research objectives, highlighting media convergence's impact on consumer responses. It is proven through the research that confidence was highly influenced by professionalism in delivery of content as well as dependability on the communications platform, which supports previous research showing that consistency of messages on various media increases perception levels for transparency (Zeng, 2024; Miah, 2024). Interactive content formats including surveys, forums, and mini-applications played a pivotal role in evoking emotional and behavioral engagement, thereby validating Jenkins' (2006) push for participatory culture as well as Blumler and Katz's (1974) articulated theory on the Uses and Gratifications, where people use media for specific needs such as social connectedness as well as expression of identity.

Thirdly, specific preferences for platforms, coupled with the importance of personalization, highlight the complexity of media consumption among Chinese consumers. Consumers showed diverse responses to content on WeChat, Douyin, and Weibo, thus supporting recent evidence highlighting the importance of having brand strategies personalized according to each platform's norms and audience expectations (Martinoli & Vuković, 2024). The function of personalization, particularly through AI and data-driven content, has been proven to have a double impact: increasing relevance and user engagement as well as raising privacy and over-saturation concerns on content—a trend also documented on earlier studies (Hu, 2022).

Another important contribution of this work is its focus on digital fatigue and brand inover-saturation, particularly among youth users, as they are most exposed to media. These findings are well-supported by concerns raised by media effects theorists, which argue that over-exposure was able to cause avoidance behavior or bring about negative effects. It highlights the crucial necessity for brands to implement humble, people-first strategies, with a focus on quality over quantity.

This research marks a fundamental turn toward a new path, one from a branding framework into one centered on consumers—a necessary turn for modern communications research. What emerges here are revelations that successful media convergence calls for something beyond technical unification among platforms: a deeper understanding of consumer behavior, social dynamics among platforms, and suitability of what is being offered. Furthermore, these findings bring important contributions to scholarly debates on media convergence, especially on China's distinctive media ecology. What defines this specific media ecology is features such as hybridization among platforms, personalized, algorithm-driven programming, and a highly active audience.

5.1. Recommendations

Research reveals that a consistent messaging approach across platforms requires investment through centralized content strategy teams for a cohesive blend of traditional and digital media. Messages, however, also have to be expertly customized according to individuals' native preferences; for example, short videos on Douyin will engage customers effectively, but longer, multi-element storytelling on WeChat will create greater relevance and engagement (Sang & Qu, 2023). Balancing frequency with relevance is a challenge, as greater frequency will cause digital fatigue (Khairifa, 2024). Therefore, brands have to monitor engagement levels religiously and steer clear of over-exposure through data-driven scheduling and segmentation (Martinoli & Vuković, 2024).

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Utilizing real-time interactive tools such as Q&A and surveys, coupled with AI-driven personalized engagement, there is real potential for increasing participation—subject, however, to transparent explanations on data utilization (Bhattacharya et al., 2025). At the end of the day, emotional storytelling based on human experience holds the potential for empathy and for forming lasting relationships with a brand, especially with younger consumers (Sang & Qu, 2023).

6. Conclusion

This current research focuses on exploring media convergence's impact on consumer perceptions and interactions through multi-channel brand communication strategies framed within China. Based on extensive interviews conducted with consumers as well as marketing experts, there have emerged a number of important themes, such as cross-channel consistency, trust, individualization, fatigue with content, and emotional connection. The results highlight the importance of a consumer-centered digital brand strategy, one that demands not just a unified integration of content but also an underlying foundation of empathy, considered attentiveness, and finesse. In China, a country experiencing rapid evolution in its media ecology, those brands that are able to orchestrate their messaging across all platforms—while being open and respectful to each one's distinctive dynamics—will engender long-term consumer loyalty.

Future research can extend this research by integrating demographic information related to rural consumers, prioritizing convergence strategies for individual sectors, or adopting a multilateral methodological framework for better understanding. While this research is focused on a specific urban context and includes 16 participants, the outcomes generated form a solid foundation for scholars and practitioners seeking to foster media convergence in China's dynamic digital landscape.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and written informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the research process.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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