

## A Comprehensive Review of the influences of digital technology on consumption in China

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### ABSTRACT

Digital technology has revolutionized consumer behavior, influencing consumption through various economic channels. This abstract condenses the impact of digital technology on consumption, highlighting its effects on income, prices, credit, network information effects, and product innovation. Digital advancements have boosted income by enhancing productivity and fostering new job creation, thereby increasing consumer purchasing power. Additionally, digital platforms have driven price competitiveness, making products more affordable and accessible. The fintech industry, fueled by digital technology, has democratized credit, enabling broader consumer participation in the market. Moreover, digital networks facilitate information sharing, shaping consumer preferences and choices through collective intelligence. Lastly, continuous product innovation spurred by digital technology satisfies existing demands and creates new ones, propelling consumption forward. In essence, digital technology acts as a catalyst for consumption, reshaping economic landscapes and market interactions.

**Keywords:** Digital Technology, Consumption, Income, Price, Network Information, Product Innovation

### 1.Introduction

In the theoretical system of economic growth, consumption, as the core driving force in the "Troika" of China's national economy, plays a key role in China's stable growth, safeguarding people's livelihoods, stabilising employment and promoting development, and is also an important hand in promoting the high-quality development of China's economy. (Liu Sheng, 2023). In terms of consumption growth potential, consumer goods such as household appliances, electronic equipment and automobiles, which have been the mainstay of consumption growth since the reform and opening up, have all entered a period of steady growth, making it difficult for them to take on the heavy responsibility of promoting consumption. From both the perspective of changing consumer demand and international experience, service consumption has the greatest potential in China and is the focus of consumption promotion. However, service consumption has its own special characteristics, including information asymmetry, difficulty in matching needs, high requirements for trust mechanisms, and the intertwining of the consumption process with social experiences (Li Yongjian, 2023).

In the future, the digital technology has greater potential and faces certain challenges in promoting the consumption of services. Digital technology tools can effectively bridge the cracks in the service consumption itself, expand the service radius, increase the service capacity, optimise the service experience, improve the service quality, and enable more consumers to generate service consumption. (Jiang, 2020), and thus are likely to have a significant impact on the upgrading of service consumption. Given that China's digital technology still has short boards to be filled in terms of technology research and development, talent support, innovation transformation, digital governance, etc., the space and potential for the development of the digital technology are still very huge. Thus, promoting the healthy development of the digital technology is likely to be an important way to achieve the sustainable upgrade of service consumption, while exploring the basic laws of the digital technology affecting the upgrade of service consumption is a topic worthy of study. (Dai, 2020)

### 2. The digital technology influences consumption through income

Gao & Wang (2022) suggest that, as the core connotation of the digital technology, the development of

industrial digitalisation is directly related to the enhancement of industrial efficiency, industrial organisation, industrial competition and many other aspects of the one, two and three industries, and is an important propelling factor for the development of the three industries, which is conducive to enhancing the income level of the relevant practitioners, promoting the supply and allocation of new types of products, and meeting new types of demand in the consumer market.

The digital technology has ensured income growth by promoting employment. Digital industrialisation and industrial digitisation help to strengthen the resilience of the domestic industrial chain, mitigate the negative impacts of economic fluctuations, enhance the ability of enterprises to survive and develop, and thereby promote full employment in society. The increase of employment rate can guarantee the source of income of workers, especially the income growth of the disadvantaged groups, which will reduce the incentive of precautionary savings (Dijk G V et al, 2007), and enhance the propensity of residents to consume. What is more valuable is that the employment and income-generating effects of the digital technology have a "pro-poor" tendency. Firstly, the platform economy has created a large number of new jobs, promoting flexible employment and raising the incomes of low-skilled workers. Second, Internet penetration reduces the cost of economic activity in remote areas, creating more local entrepreneurial and employment opportunities (Sutherland & Jarrahi, 2018). Finally, digital production contains labour value appreciation and social relations extension (Soh et al, 2006), which is beneficial for workers to accumulate human capital and social resources, and improve the quality of labour supply and income level. Accordingly, Xuan Leng (2022) suggests that the digital technology drives consumption by raising residents' income on the demand side.

The digital technology may cause a wider income gap and thus have an impact on the diversification of consumer behaviour. Elena et al. (2017) argued that the digital technology increases the return on capital compensation by raising the demand for capital factors in production, which reduces the real wage of labour and makes wealth gather towards groups of new products, services, and businesses with high innovation capacity, which in turn exacerbates the income inequality between factors and between workers. Liu & Zhang (2022) analysed the income distribution effect of digital technology, in the short term, due to the existence of technological bias in the digital technology, which makes the owners of factors such as data, capital, technology and high-skilled labour preferentially benefited, relatively harming the interests of others, and exacerbating income inequality to a certain extent; however, in the long term, the productivity effect and the job creation effect of the digital technology outweighs the substitution effect of low-skilled labour, and will to a However, in the long run, the productivity effect and job creation effect of the digital technology exceeds the substitution effect on low-skilled labour, which will moderate the income gap to a certain extent. Zhong & Zeng(2022) use China's national and provincial data from 2001-2016 to measure the productivity effect and job replacement effect of the digital technology on the distribution of income, and find that the digital technology will make the income gap of different technological sectors widen by 0.75% per annum on average, and exacerbate the inequality of income.

1. The digital technology affects the level of consumption of the population by influencing their wage income.

By virtue of its strong permeability, the digital technology has brought about profound changes to the labour employment market in China through the reshaping of application scenarios. The digital technology has a dual effect on the employment market, namely, a destructive effect and a creative effect. In the short term, the industrial changes brought about by the digital technology will cause certain "pain" to the labour market. Among them, from the industrial point of view, the impact is mainly concentrated in the labour-intensive industries in the manufacturing field; from the group point of view, the impact is mainly engaged in repetitive rules of low-skilled workers, and for the mastery of technology not only the impact is not big but also increase the demand for labour (Liu Wenbin, 2000). At the same time, it should also be seen that the intelligence brought by the digital technology improves the efficiency of output, which in turn increases the demand for labour after driving economic growth. From another point of view, the digital technology has spawned a new business will directly or indirectly create a large number of jobs. Marx mentioned in Capital that "although the machine is bound to crowd out the workers in the branch of labour to which it is applied, it can cause an increase in employment in other branches of labour". In fact, the McKinsey Global Institute, after researching 4,800 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), found that with the popularity of Internet technology, for every job lost, 2.6 new jobs will be created. In the medium to long term, on the one hand, the digital technology continues to cultivate new businesses and create a considerable number of new jobs, and on the other hand, low-skilled workers, after realising the risk of unemployment brought about by the intelligentisation of the digital technology, will, due to the need for survival, upgrade their human capital through skills training and other means in order to adapt to the emerging demand for jobs. The job creation effect of the digital technology will not only offset its substitution effect on employment, but will also result in a net increase in jobs. A report by the Boston Consulting Group points out that the activating effect of digital technology on the job market will be greater than the eliminating effect, and estimates that China's digital technology will create a total of 415 million jobs by 2035. PricewaterhouseCoopers estimates that the substitution effect of artificial intelligence in China will be 26 per cent, much lower than the income effect of 38 per cent, and will thus lead to a net increase in employment.

2. The digital technology affects the level of consumption of the population by influencing its business

income and thus its level of consumption

In the process of transforming application scenarios, digital technology has fostered a multitude of new businesses and models. Among them, the platform economy and the sharing economy are the most typical, with a wide range of applications and a profound impact on residents' business income.

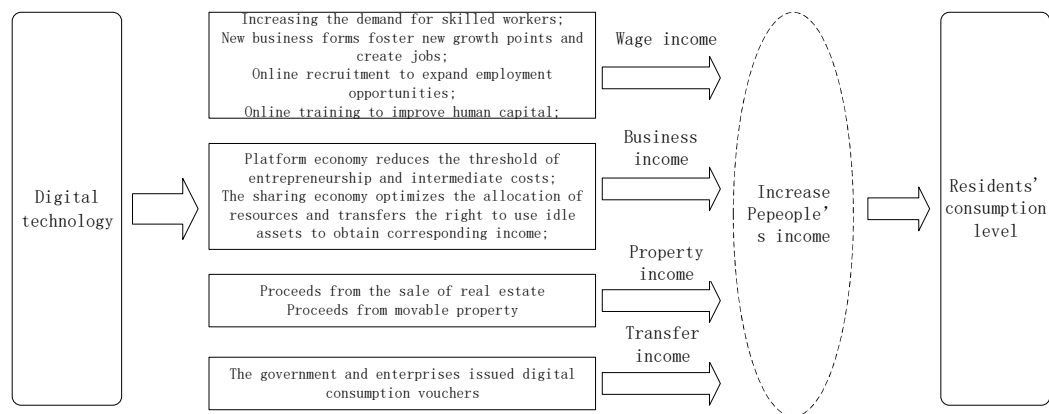
3. The digital technology affects the level of consumption by influencing the property income of the population and thus the level of consumption of the population

The impact of the digital technology on residents' property income is mainly manifested in two aspects: firstly, the digital technology has increased the frequency of the transfer of the right to use real estate, such as B&Bs, which has increased residents' income; secondly, the digital technology has broadened the channels for residents to use movable assets for investment and finance, providing residents with a variety of choices (Liu & Zhang, 2022).

Transferring the right to use real estate for rent. In traditional economic societies, there are certain obstacles to the transfer of the right to use resources, such as residents' unused houses and cars, due to the limitations of time, geographic factors and the relative isolation of information, among other factors. The development of digital technology has accelerated the speed of information transmission among groups, and in addition, with the improvement of residents' living standards, consumers are more in pursuit of personalised and high-quality consumption content, which has given rise to the demand for resources such as B&Bs. In the case of B&Bs, for example, the head of the household can directly obtain property income by transferring both the right to use and the right to operate the unused house, or simply transferring the right to use and operating the house by himself to obtain both business and property income. In addition, some households can rent out their unused cars through the platform and obtain income. The existence of this model, on the one hand, to meet the personalised needs of consumers, on the other hand, through the transfer of the right to use the head of household, improve the resource utilisation rate, increase revenue, and provide protection for their own consumption.

4. The digital technology affects the level of consumption of the population by influencing the transfer income of the population and thus the level of consumption of the population

In addition to the three types of income mentioned above, the digital technology also affects residents' consumption expenditure through transfer income. In times of economic downturn, local governments and enterprises issue a certain amount of digital consumption vouchers to society in order to promote consumption and maintain growth (Hu & Shen, 2022). By offsetting part of the consumption expenditure, it is equivalent to increasing the transfer income of residents in the form of "price subsidy", which in turn stimulates consumption. The leverage effect of digital consumption vouchers is obvious and can achieve a win-win situation for all parties. For example, with a 60-minus-20 digital consumption voucher, the government only needs to pay \$20 to enable the shop to increase its revenue by \$60, while at the same time benefiting consumers. The \$20 saved is equivalent to the price subsidy given by the government in the form of transfer payments for residents' consumption behaviour. In addition, compared with traditional paper consumption coupons, digital consumption coupons are more convenient to account for. The latter can be issued to residents in a timely manner and cover a wide range of areas, relying on a digital platform, which has a more significant effect in stimulating consumption. In Hangzhou, for example, data show that the marginal propensity to consume of the latter is 3.5-3.8 times, which is much higher than that of the former. It should also be noted that digital consumption vouchers have a more pronounced impact on residents' consumption than cash handouts.



Influence of digital technology on income

### 3. Digital technology influences consumption through prices

1) The digital technology affects the level of consumption of the population through prices

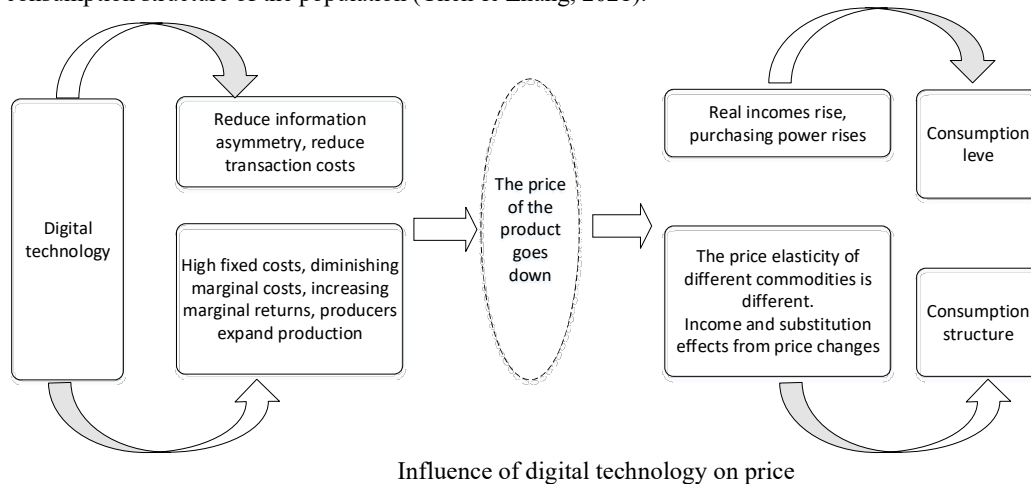
Considered from the producer's perspective, Internet development can improve the operational efficiency of

enterprises. The application of digital technology allows enterprises to adopt ICT to replace labour and non-ICT costs, automate part of the work, and directly reduce the manufacturing costs of goods; in addition, the Internet enables enterprises to implement real-time inventory and supply chain management systems, which help operators to better manage their laborers and reduce the management costs of enterprises. Moreover, from the perspective of market transactions, the Internet-based network trading mode can directly face consumers, bypassing the multi-layer wholesale distribution platform, i.e., the supply and demand of products and services no longer need intermediaries, and this interconnection effectively reduces the cost of sales. Therefore, from the point of view of enterprise factors affecting product pricing, the development of the Internet will reduce the enterprise's manufacturing costs, management costs and selling costs, etc., which means that the reduction of production costs, the most important part of the composition of commodity prices, will have a direct impact on the price of consumer goods (Liang Huijun, 2022).

From the point of view of the characteristics of the digital technology, the digital technology uses data as the key production factor, and its products are characterised by high fixed costs, diminishing marginal costs and increasing marginal returns. Under the premise assumption of market clearing, as a rational producer, in order to maximise profits, he will expand production to reduce the average cost of production, and then chase higher returns.

#### 2) The digital technology affects the consumption structure of the population through

According to the theory of price elasticity of demand, it is known that price reductions have an inconsistent impact on the quantity demanded of different types of goods and services. For the necessities of life, their price elasticity is relatively small, and a fall in the price of a product makes the increase in the quantity consumed by residents of that product fluctuate little. However, for high-grade durable goods such as cars and home appliances, as well as luxury goods, they are elastic, and a small drop in product prices can lead to a large increase in the quantity of goods consumed by residents. Therefore, changes in the price of products brought about by digital technology will lead to changes in the demand for different types of products, which in turn will affect the consumption structure of the population (Chen & Zhang, 2021).



#### 4. Digital technology influences consumption through credit

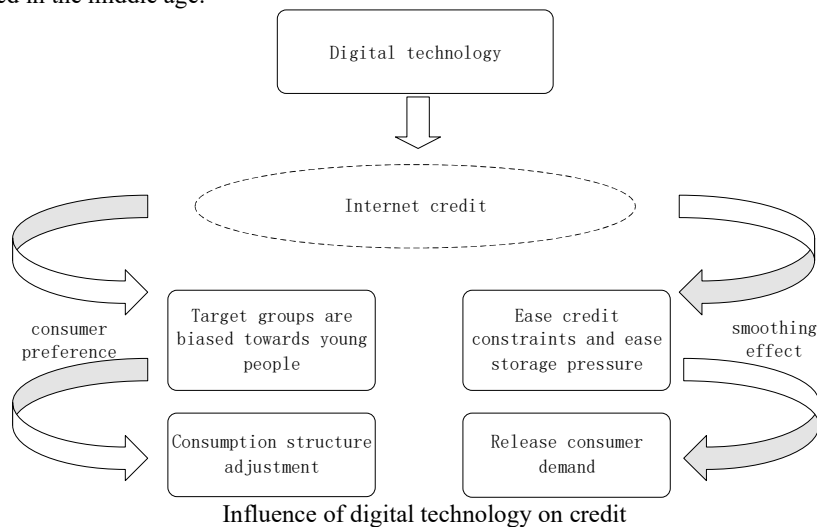
Credit constraints have an important impact on residential consumption and inhibit intertemporal smoothing of consumption, and one of the reasons for credit constraints is underdeveloped credit markets. Internet consumer credit refers to the short-term, small-credit consumer loan services provided by financial institutions, financial-like organisations and Internet enterprises, etc., relying on digital technology, to consumers for the purpose of personal consumption. Compared with traditional credit services, Internet finance, which provides consumers with new financing channels, is a favourable supplement to the traditional financial market, and due to the borderless nature of the network, breaking the geographical constraints of financial services, can real-time understanding of the supply and demand information of the credit market, reduce financial transaction costs, and provide borrowing and lending. The two sides provide convenient and fast financial services, promote the two sides to reach a deal, and improve the convenience of financing (Zhang Xun et al., 2020) alleviate the credit constraints of the residents, smooth the consumption of each period, and change the consumer behaviour. The whole process of Internet consumer credit from application to repayment is completed through the platform. It has a wide coverage, higher approval efficiency, and can further reduce information asymmetry with the help of big data and financial technology. It can effectively alleviate the budget constraints of residents and play a timely role in inter-period smoothing when income is insufficient, thus releasing potential consumption demand.

#### 1) The digital technology affects the level of consumption of the population through credit

The impact of Internet consumer credit on the level of consumption of the population is manifested in two aspects: first, Internet consumer credit expands the budget constraints on the consumption income of the population; second, Internet consumer credit eases the pressure on the savings of the population, and reduces the monetary holdings of the population for preventive motives.

2) The digital technology affects the structure of consumption of the population through credit

The life-cycle hypothesis suggests that consumers plan their individual consumption over a considerable span of time, thereby achieving the optimal allocation of consumption over the life cycle. In addition, he divides a person's life into three phases: in the first phase, youth, income is low but the desire to consume is high, and consumption will exceed individual income; in the second phase, middle age, income increases and is greater than consumption, resulting in a difference between income and expenditure that is used to repay the previous period's borrowings on the one hand, and save on the other; and in the third phase, after retirement, income decreases and consumption is greater than income, but the population can make use of the middle-aged period's The third stage, after retirement, income decreases and consumption is greater than income, but residents can make use of the funds accumulated in the middle age.



##### 5. Digital technology influences consumption through network information effects

The development of digital information technology can alleviate the problem of information asymmetry, optimise residents' consumption decision-making, and thus enhance the level of consumption. At the same time, the popularity of mobile Internet expands the access to information channels, which helps to improve the consumption habits of residents and improve the quality of consumption, and stimulate the generation of new consumer demand (Zhong & Zeng, 2022). The development of the digital technology can take the Internet shopping as a platform, online shopping provides consumers with a new way of shopping, allowing consumers to search for the goods and services they want to buy at anytime and anywhere, reducing the search cost, promoting the improvement of the quality of consumption and service level, and optimising and upgrading the consumption structure. Therefore, the development of the digital technology can indirectly have a positive effect on the level and structure of consumption through online shopping (Zhan Yunqiu et al, 2023). The reduction of transaction costs caused by the development of the digital technology has a significant information effect on service consumption. With the further optimisation of digital information technology embedded in consumption activities, the costs of search, bargaining and decision-making in the transaction process have been significantly reduced, which will have a significant information spillover effect on consumption activities. At the same time, the information spillover effect is conducive to meeting customers' demand for more personalised, diversified and customised consumption to a certain extent, thus providing a new impetus to promote the upgrading of the consumption structure (Liu & Lin, 2023).

Externally, residents' consumption behaviours, habits and consumption decisions are influenced by the external environment, i.e. the demonstration effect; internally, current consumption behaviours, habits and consumption decisions depend on historical consumption levels and consumption habits, i.e. the ratchet effect. Under the digital technology, both urban and rural residents' consumption shows a more obvious demonstration effect, solid consumption habits are challenged, residents' consumption concepts and consumption tendency are easily influenced by their neighbourhood network, and the advancement of Internet technology and big data technology improves the convenience of information cascade transmission, which strengthens the demonstration effect of residents' consumption (Pugacheva, 2021). Cross-period consumption and over-consumption is giving rise to its new concept of online consumption, residents' new consumption behaviours, habits are being developed,

consumption decision-making is more rational, the cycle of consumption habit formation is significantly shorter, and the psychological preventive motivation of residents' online consumer goods has increased. With the increase of disposable income in the digital technology, the high consumption or luxury consumption behaviours and habits of residents in developed regions are also being developed (Sorescu, 2021). In the digital technology, residents' consumption is not only influenced by their own factors, but also susceptible to other people's use behaviour and evaluation of products. Nowadays, platforms such as Xiaohongshu and Jieyin often have bloggers sharing goodies thereby increasing product heat and influencing consumer product choices. At the same time, the advancement of Internet technology and big data technology has improved the convenience of information transmission of various commodities, which has strengthened the demonstration effect of residents' consumption.

#### **6. Digital technology influences consumption through product innovation**

From the supply side, the industrial Internet, industrial Internet, enterprises on the cloud and other digital technology forms have greatly improved the resource allocation efficiency of enterprises and industries, promoted the innovation and upgrading of production modes and products, and continuously created new consumer demand to stimulate the release of residents' consumption potential (Zhong & Zeng, 2022).

The digital technology promotes supply-side structural reform and enriches the supply of products and services. The digital technology enables the supply side to obtain demand information efficiently, thus promoting the reverse traction of consumer demand for production change. In the industrial sector, the Fordism of traditional mass production tends to disintegrate, and manufacturers rely on digital transformation to build a collaborative innovation ecosystem, effectively shortening the product development cycle, accelerating product renewal and iteration, and promoting a substantial breakthrough in flexible production and intelligent production. In the field of agriculture, the application of digital technology in the production chain has promoted the innovation and improvement of agricultural products and the extension of the product chain, and expanded the variety of agricultural and sideline products. In the service sector, the combination of digital means with traditional medical care, education, culture and entertainment has given rise to new services, such as cloud-based consultation, distance education, interactive entertainment and other new models. Diversified products and services have responded to the trend of consumption upgrading, forming a new growth point for residents' consumption (Yang Fang et al, 2023).

The development of the digital technology is closely related to the updating and iteration of emerging digital information general technology such as the Internet, big data, cloud computing, the Internet of Things and artificial intelligence, which can not only improve the production of products and increase the effective supply, but also improve the quality of products, expand product variety, and provide domestic consumers with rich and diverse choices (Xiao Biyan, 2020). The mechanism of the digital technology to promote residents' consumption upgrading through product innovation is the new demand effect, that is, due to the supply of products and services to a certain extent, the bottleneck problem of sustained growth in consumption begins to highlight, at this time only to provide new products to stimulate consumer demand, and then give rise to new consumption hotspots, and the integration and development of the digital technology and the traditional industry has produced many high-quality innovative new products and new inventions (Alfaro et al, 2010), the supply of these new products to meet the demand of residents for high-level consumer goods, improve the degree of product supply and residents' consumption demand, from the "quantity" and "quality" dimensions of the two-pronged approach, together to promote China's The two-pronged approach of "quantity" and "quality" will jointly promote the upgrading of China's consumption structure.

#### **7. Conclusion**

Digital technology has a profound and multifaceted impact on consumer behavior and consumption patterns. It influences consumption through various channels, each playing a critical role in shaping economic activities and market dynamics. Digital technology is a powerful force that shapes consumption in various ways, from altering income levels to influencing prices, credit access, network information effects, and product innovation. As digital technology continues to evolve, its impact on consumption will remain a dynamic area of interest for economists, businesses, and policymakers alike. Understanding these influences is crucial for navigating the modern economy and harnessing the potential of digital technology to drive sustainable and inclusive growth.

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