How can I help elderly people make better decisions when they buy pharmaceutical products on social media in China?

Interview

Users who purchased through social media in China

a cancer patient

I interviewed a friend of mine from college who was a student of good health. She was diagnosed with cervical cancer when she was 23 years old. I saw her go from being a lively and active girl to being blinded and struggling with her illness. In the early stages of treatment, she was very optimistic about her condition and was hopeful that her body began to show various symptoms, such as vomiting, hair loss, and body aches. After half a year of treatment, the condition did not improve, and she was in a state of despair. Her parents were worried that only people's bodies but also people's wills. Later, she saw on the Internet that someone was selling a panacea and promising a cure for cancer. Although she knew that it was a fake product, she was both highly educated students, and you should know that it is useless. You should continue to listen to the doctor. What she said touched me deeply. She said, "I know that this medicine is fake, but if I may but it has never improved, I can't see any hope, I want to live."

an old person | my grandmother |

Interviewed my grandmother, and she told me about her experience ten years ago. At that time, the Internet was not as widespread in China as it is now, and people's lives were relatively simple. The main entertainment for the elderly at that time, telemarketing, leaflet distribution, and newspaper publicity became the main means of publicity for these health supplement companies'. My grandmother was also a victim of these health supplement companies' deceptive, and she found the source of information in the newspapers to be very reliable. Subsequently, she got in touch with the 'health supplement company' by phone and was sent a free trial product. Because the product was sent by the factory, she saw a flattering mouse in a page who had eaten their health supplement and immediately became alive. Unsurprisingly, she bought the pills, and her mood improved for a few days after taking the pills. Unfortunately, all their actions were not illegal and that they could not be detained because they had a qualified sales certificate and there was no coercion. Their behavior is to use the elderly people's desire for a cure, to deceive several dollars and to lobby and persuade their target customers to gain their trust. Now, instead of being advertised in newspapers and flyers, 'health product companies' have moved to the Internet and social media, but they still use the same lobbying tactics as they did in the past, taking advantage of loopholes in the law to seek benefits.

the family of a buyer

I interviewed a women from Sichuan Province, China, whose parents are both from Sichuan Province and have been married for more than this year. Below is a transcript of my interview along with photos.

Question 1: When did you notice that your parents bought a lot of medicines and health supplements from Chinese TikTok?

Three years ago, I downloaded Chinese TikTok and Toutiao to my parents' phones so that they could watch videos and read. They enjoy using both apps to read things like current news and recipes. Later, I slowly found that there were many more ads on their phones, and I thought that at that time, they didn't have the opportunity to go out, and I buy daily necessities and fruits and vegetables at home regularly. When I first asked them, they said that they had seen many advertisements online. Finally, I looked through their phone and found that there were purchase records on Chinese TikTok.

Q2: How much do your parents spend on medicines and supplements on Chinese TikTok every month?

My parents used to be ordinary workers, and after retirement, they received a pension of about 3,000 yuan. My father has 5,000 a month, and my mother had a retirement salary of about RMB 1,600 (about $100) a month. I usually pay for the daily expenses of my parents, so I understand their income. I don't expect them to spend most of their money on health supplements. Last month, the couple bought nearly 2,000 yuan worth of health supplements and medicines. I felt that they did not need to use the money to buy something, and it really ate off.

Question 3: What is your view of this behavior of your parents?

I always disagreed. In fact, this is not their first time. As early as about a decade ago, offline health talks for the elderly were popular, and there were many people who took buses to take the elderly to buy their health products. Since then, I have been strongly against it and have tried to keep them out as little as possible. I believe that the elderly are deceived and brainwashed by them again, but I didn't expect that now they have moved the same trick to Chinese TikTok, which is really hateful.

Question 4: Have you expressed your opinion to your parents?

Hey, I've tried to persuade them, and I've lost my temper with them. I'm afraid that they will be deceived by the propaganda of these factories, but they were anxious with me, not to say that I was not their biological daughter, and to prevent them from living a long life. It's really chilling.

Question 5: Would you like to receive some help from the government or society?

To be honest, I feel like they're brainwashed. I wish there was an authority or a doctor to try to persuade them.

police

海淀区公安局的检查报告

问题1: 你多少人向你们报警？

有很多多，主要是年龄较大的人的子女来报警。

他们的主要目标，都是年龄较大的长辈，所以他们的受害人，他们是不是因此成家长，子女，主要受害？

问题2: 你们是如何处理的？

问题3: 你们有什么理论上的结构？

relevant agency

agency or government

I interviewed a Chinese TikTok staff responsible for dealing with the officials or companies that sell items on Chinese TikTok.

Q1: What is your day-to-day job?

I'm a colleague in the product department of TikTok in China, and I'm mainly responsible for overseeing the products sold on the platform.

Q2: What qualifications or certifications do I need to provide if I want to sell on TikTok?

It is necessary to apply for 5 qualification certificates, namely business license, ICP business license (value-added telecommunications business license), food business operation license, including live broadcast, commercial performance license, and radio and television program production license.

Q3: Does TikTok have any special requirements for the sale of medicines and health supplements?

In addition to the above-mentioned certificates, food and health products also need to provide commodity registration certificate, food production license, food circulation license, and food inspection and quarantine report. The sale of drugs needs to be in accordance with the relevant regulations of the country or drug sales. Drugs can only be sold in pharmacies and pharmacy stocks. And very few users buy medicines on our platform, and they generally need to go to hospitals or clinics to prescribe medicines.

Q4:Does TikTok have strict regulations on the sale of health supplements?

Yes, first of all, you need to choose formal channels to purchase health care products to ensure product quality. Secondly, it is necessary to comply with relevant laws and regulations, and the product should indicate ingredients, use, dosage and other information, and not to exaggerate or falsely advertise to improve consumer trust, and to provide good customer evaluations and providing after-sales service.

Q5: What does TikTok think about false advertising, exaggerated sales and other sales methods that mislead people to buy?

In fact, we have very clear rules that do not allow exaggeration and false publicity in the sales process. We pursue its responsibility to supervise. Once verified, we will punish the streamer.

interview with a reporter

I spoke to Chen, a medical columnist who had infiltrated a telemarketing company selling "Chinese" medicine in 2019 under the guise of a prospective partner and quietly recorded key video evidence. He later wrote a report on the experience, which was seen by over 100 million people on Douyin. "I felt some concern in my safety," Chen said during the interview, "especially after the incident fermented, and I was afraid that they would retaliate against me and my family members. At the end of the 315 gala, my report is also highly discussed on the Internet, and people's opinions are not consistent. The overly sharp language and explicit tone of the report have also attracted criticism from people with different points of view, and I think it is also important to convey the message to people subtly."

videos on Chinese social media

The Kuaishou certification information of "Dr. Li Mao" is "Doctor of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine in a hospital in Beijing." Although he is a "doctor", he spends most of his time in broadcast room and saw that Dr. Li was wearing a blue medical gown with a small whiteboard behind him, and was introducing the symptoms of "Ginseng Qui Jiaban Cream" to the audience, such as "insomnia, excessive gas, stomach distension and indigestion, dare not eat cold ....." In order to show medical professionalism, Dr. Li also talked about medical knowledge, such as "Ginseng can be used to treat tongue coatings, tooth marks, cracks, etc., she also patiently drew pictures on the small whiteboard to explain. After some explanation, Dr. Li began to teach the audience how to place an order: "First open the product link of "Ginseng Qui Jiaban Cream" below, and then select the quantity package and pay the corresponding amount. Finally, fill in the address and wait for the goods to be delivered." In the end, he also said, "Friends, remember to take the No. 10 line to leave a sweet aroma and cheeks, remember to take the No. 10 line to leave a sweet aroma and cheeks, remember to take the No. 10 line to leave a sweet aroma and cheeks