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Research on the Impact of Consumers' Perceived Sincerity of Brand Public Welfare Marketing on Purchase Intention

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Abstract. Against the backdrop of the rapid development of corporate public welfare marketing, consumers' perceived sincerity of brand public welfare behaviors has become a key factor affecting their purchase decisions. Based on Attribution Theory and Cause-Brand Fit Theory, this study constructs a mediation model with a moderation test with brand public welfare relevance as the independent variable, consumers' perceived sincerity as the mediating variable, purchase intention as the dependent variable, and public welfare transparency as the moderator variable. Data collected from a questionnaire survey of consumers are analyzed using regression methods. The results show that brand public welfare relevance has a significant positive impact on consumers' purchase intention; consumers' perceived sincerity plays a mediating role in this relationship; public welfare transparency positively moderates the path from perceived sincerity to purchase intention. This study clarifies the internal mechanism of brand public welfare marketing affecting consumer behavior, providing practical references for enterprises to design high-quality public welfare activities and enhance consumer trust and purchase willingness.

Keywords: public welfare marketing, consumers' perceived sincerity, purchase intention, public welfare transparency

1. Introduction

As defined by Varadarajan & Menon, cause marketing is a marketing process where enterprises sponsor public welfare causes on the condition that consumers' purchases bring them profits, aiming to achieve the goals of both parties [1]. It represents the core subtype of public welfare marketing. In the era of sustainable marketing, brand public welfare activities have become an essential way for enterprises to build brand image and connect with consumers, and consumers' perceived sincerity of brand public welfare has gradually become a significant factor affecting their purchase decisions. Based on the theory of integrated marketing communication, this study will take all consumers as the research object and explore the relationship between brand public welfare behaviors and consumers' purchase intention. By constructing a mediation model with a moderation test with brand public welfare relevance as the independent variable, consumers' perceived sincerity of brand public welfare as the mediating variable, consumers' purchase intention motivation as the dependent variable, and public welfare transparency as the moderator variable, this study collects perceptual data through questionnaire surveys based on two brand cases. It aims to examine the impact of

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public welfare relevance on purchase intention motivation, the mediating role of perceived sincerity, and the moderating effect of transparency, in order to provide empirical references for enterprises to carry out effective public welfare marketing and enhance consumer recognition. Attribution Theory and Cause - Brand Fit Theory provide a dual theoretical explanation for the mechanism of the above research model, and consolidate the theoretical foundation of the research hypotheses from two dimensions: consumers' cognitive attribution and brand-cause structural fit.

2. Literature review

From the perspective of emotional transmission, the core utility of public welfare marketing is to focus on the social issues that consumers pay attention to, trigger emotional resonance, and realize the transformation from public welfare favor to brand trust. The study confirms that when public welfare issues are highly compatible with consumers' life experience and value concerns, consumers' emotional identification with brands will be significantly enhanced [2]. The public welfare content on the mobile short video platform relies on the real scene to enhance the attraction, so that consumers' positive attitude towards public welfare naturally migrates to the brand [3]. The brand establishes a deep psychological connection with consumers through public welfare issues, thereby stimulating their purchase intention.

From the perspective of self-realization, public welfare marketing meets consumers' self-identity and expression needs by conveying specific values and shaping a distinctive brand image, thus enhancing consumers' purchase intention. The degree of fit between the spiritual core advocated by the brand and the self-cognition of consumers directly determines the effect of public welfare marketing [2]. Furthermore, Li & Ben pointed out that enterprises fulfill their social responsibilities through public welfare marketing, which can bring value recognition to consumers; consumers can realize self-worth expression by supporting brand public welfare activities, so as to enhance their emotional identity to the brand [4].

From the perspective of the adaptability principle, a number of studies have emphasized the importance of matching public welfare issues with brand positioning. Accurate matching can reduce consumers' doubts about the brand's public welfare motives, strengthen their perception of the brand as a responsible entity, and thus improve purchase intention [5]. Hu et al. pointed out that when enterprises carry out relevant public welfare activities by combining their public welfare behaviors with their advantageous businesses, the public welfare behaviors will be more practical and persuasive, and it is easier to gain consumers' recognition [6].

From the perspective of trust building, the authenticity and transparency of public welfare information influence consumers' participation. In the public welfare communication on mobile short-video platforms, the authenticity of information is a core factor attracting users to participate. 76.84% of the respondents stated that the authenticity of public welfare information is a key motivation for participating in public welfare, while content infringement and false information will seriously weaken brand trust [3].

In summary, the existing research on public welfare marketing and consumers' purchase intention has formed a multi-dimensional analysis framework, focusing on the influence paths of emotion, value, and adaptability, and empirically verifying the positive effect of public welfare behavior on purchase intention. However, the existing research has not yet systematically defined and measured consumer perceived brand public welfare sincerity as a core concept; most of the researches focus on the design of public welfare behavior from the brand side, and the research on the formation and transmission mechanism of sincere perception from the consumer side is relatively scarce. At the same time, there is a lack of in-depth discussion of multi-factor interactions.

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Based on the above shortcomings, this paper will conduct an in-depth study on consumers' perception of brand public welfare sincerity. The core research questions are as follows: Based on the above shortcomings, this paper will conduct an in-depth study on consumers' perception of brand philanthropy sincerity. The core research questions are as follows: How does brand public welfare relevance affect consumers' purchase intention motivation? What kind of intermediary role does the consumer-perceived brand public welfare sincerity play in this relationship? Does public welfare transparency have a significant moderating effect on the mediating relationship between brand public welfare relevance and consumers' purchase intention motivation?

3. Research design

3.1. Research framework

Based on the theory of integrated marketing communication, this study integrates Attribution Theory and Cause - Brand Fit Theory (Congruence Theory) to construct the research framework, adopts an empirical research method, collects core data through a questionnaire survey, and conducts research in combination with statistical analysis. Specifically, Attribution Theory reveals the mechanism by which consumers infer the motivation of brand public welfare behaviors: when brand public welfare is highly relevant to its core business, consumers are more likely to attribute the action to intrinsic, value-driven motives rather than opportunistic marketing intent, which in turn increases trust and purchase intention [7]. Transparency could strengthen this positive attribution process by reducing consumers' suspicion. Cause - Brand Fit Theory directly supports the core independent variable role of brand public welfare relevance, because a strong fit between a brand and the social cause it supports reduces consumers' cognitive dissonance and increases their perceived sincerity [8]. Transparency further enhances the credibility of the fit signal, thereby amplifying the positive impact of public welfare relevance on consumers' purchase intention motivation. Consequently, the research will take all consumers as the research object and rely on the theory of integrated marketing. The design of questionnaires is based on two well-known brand cases, ANTA and Li Ning, in which only the relevance of public welfare differs, while the transparency and forms of public welfare remain consistent. This aims to control irrelevant variables and accurately collect consumers' perceptual data on brand public welfare behaviors.

This study constructs a mediation model with a moderation test. Brand public welfare relevance is set as the independent variable, consumers' perceived sincerity of brand public welfare as the mediating variable, public welfare transparency as the moderator variable, and consumers' purchase intention motivation as the dependent variable. This analysis is carried out centering on consumers' perceived sincerity of brand public welfare. The validity of questionnaire data is verified through reliability and validity tests. Then, statistical methods such as correlation analysis and regression analysis are used to empirically test the impact of brand public welfare relevance on consumers' purchase intention motivation, the mediating effect of consumers' perceived sincerity of brand public welfare, and the moderating effect of public welfare transparency in the path between the two variables. It reveals the formation and transmission mechanism of consumers' perceived sincerity of brand public welfare from the consumer's perspective, making up for the deficiencies of existing research.

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3.2. Research subjects

This study selects ANTA and Li Ning as case brands. To control for the interference of inherent brand image differences on the research results, this study uses scenario descriptions to standardize and unify brand information, and only manipulates the variable of public welfare relevance, thereby isolating other irrelevant variables through experimental design. This study takes all consumers as the research subjects, with a focus on selecting the sportswear consumer group for the survey. This group has a high level of awareness of the two major sportswear brands, ANTA and Li Ning, and can truly reflect their subjective perceptions of the brands' public welfare behaviors and subsequent consumption intentions. The research samples cover consumers of different genders, ages, and income levels to ensure the universality of the research conclusions.

3.3. Definition and measurement of research variables

3.3.1. Independent variable: brand public welfare relevance

It refers to the degree of fit and correlation between a brand's public welfare activities and its core business and brand positioning, and is a specific quantitative dimension of the Cause - Brand Fit Theory in this study. Measurement items are designed from two dimensions: business relevance and brand positioning fit, to reflect consumers' subjective perceptions of the relevance between a brand's public welfare and its core business.

3.3.2. Mediating variable: consumers' perceived sincerity of brand public welfare

It refers to consumers' subjective judgment on the motivation and behavioral authenticity of a brand's public welfare activities, and is a specific perceptual embodiment of the Attribution Theory in this study [7]. Measurement items are designed from two dimensions: the value-driven nature of public welfare motivation and the non-marketing nature of public welfare behaviors, so as to reflect consumers' perceived sincerity of a brand's public welfare behaviors.

3.3.3. Dependent variable: consumers' purchase intention motivation

It refers to consumers' purchase inclination, selection preference, and recommendation willingness for a brand's products or services triggered by the brand's public welfare behaviors, and is a direct reflection of the impact of public welfare behaviors on consumers' consumption decisions. Measurement items are designed from four dimensions: willingness to take the initiative to understand, preference for priority selection, improvement of purchase intention, and willingness to recommend to others, in order to comprehensively measure consumers' purchase intention motivation.

3.3.4. Moderating variable: public welfare transparency

It refers to the degree of disclosure, authenticity, and traceability of information related to a brand's public welfare activities. Combined with the relevant research conclusions on trust building in public welfare marketing [3], measurement items are designed from two dimensions: the detail level of information disclosure and the authenticity and credibility of information, so as to measure consumers' perceived level of the transparency of brand public welfare information.

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3.4. Questionnaire design

This study adopted a questionnaire survey method. The questionnaire covered demographic variables (gender, age, educational background, monthly disposable income, and brand purchase experience), a brand public welfare relevance perception scale, a public welfare transparency perception scale, a consumers' perceived sincerity of brand public welfare scale, and a purchase intention motivation scale. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

3.5. Data collection

The questionnaires were distributed through online platforms, with the respondents being consumers of Chinese sportswear brands. A total of 109 questionnaires were collected in this survey. After excluding invalid questionnaires, 109 valid questionnaires were finally obtained, with an effective recovery rate of 100%. The results of reliability analysis showed that the overall Cronbach's α coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.872, indicating good internal consistency of the scales and meeting the requirements for further statistical analysis.

4. Results

Table 1. Data analysis

Analysis Type	Variable	Result	Significance
Descriptive Statistics(ANTA)	Brand Public Welfare Relevance	M=4.1468, SD=0.9162	-
	Public Welfare Transparency	M=4.0963, SD=0.9216	-
	Perceived Sincerity	M=4.0275, SD=0.9022	-
	Purchase Intention	M=4.0963, SD=0.7817	-
Descriptive Statistics(Li-Ning)	Brand Public Welfare Relevance	M=3.0183, SD=0.7845	-
	Public Welfare Transparency	M=3.0229, SD=0.7558	-
	Perceived Sincerity	M=3.2339, SD=0.8404	-
	Purchase Intention	M=3.0275, SD=0.7131	-
Independent t-test	Brand Public Welfare Relevance	t=9.7678, p<0.001	***
	Public Welfare Transparency	t=9.4022, p<0.001	***
	Perceived Sincerity	t=6.7193, p<0.001	***
	Purchase Intention	t=10.5463, p<0.001	***
Correlation Analysis	Relevance & Transparency	r=0.6786	***
	Relevance & Sincerity	r=0.6005	***
	Relevance & Purchase Intention	r=0.6800	***
	Transparency & Sincerity	r=0.8281	***
	Transparency & Purchase Intention	r=0.7742	***
	Sincerity & Purchase Intention	r=0.6999	***
Regression Model 1	Brand Public Welfare Relevance	β=0.2578, p<0.001	***
	Public Welfare Transparency	β=0.5335, p<0.001	***
	Adjusted R^2	0.6404	-

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Table 1. (continued)

Regression Model 2	Brand Public Welfare Relevance	β=0.2481, p<0.001	***
	Public Welfare Transparency	β=0.4253, p<0.001	***
	Perceived Sincerity	β=0.1413, p<0.05	**
	Adjusted R^2	0.6459	-
Regression Model 3	Brand Public Welfare Relevance	β=0.2422, p<0.001	***
	Public Welfare Transparency	β=0.4197, p<0.001	***
	Perceived Sincerity	β=0.1456, p<0.05	**
	Interaction Term	β=-0.0589, p=0.1085	Not significant
	Adjusted R^2	0.6485	-

Notes: ***p<0.001, **p<0.05

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistical results of the key variables for ANTA and Li Ning. For ANTA, the mean values of brand public welfare relevance, public welfare transparency, consumers' perceived sincerity, and purchase intention motivation were all above 4.0, indicating that consumers held a relatively positive perception of ANTA's public welfare behaviors. For Li Ning, the mean values of the four variables were relatively low: brand public welfare relevance, public welfare transparency, perceived sincerity, and purchase intention motivation were all in the range of 3.0 to 3.3.

4.2. Independent samples t-test

The independent samples t-test was used to compare the differences in consumers' perceptions between ANTA and Li Ning, with the results shown in Table 1. The study found that there were significant differences between the two brands in three core dimensions (brand public welfare relevance, perceived sincerity, and purchase intention motivation):

Brand Public Welfare Relevance: The mean value of ANTA was significantly higher than that of Li Ning (t=9.7678, df=216, p<0.001).

Perceived Sincerity: The mean value of ANTA was significantly higher than that of Li Ning (t=6.7193, df=216, p<0.001).

Purchase Intention Motivation: The mean value of ANTA was significantly higher than that of Li Ning (t=10.5463, df=216, p<0.001).

Notably, although the mean value of ANTA's public welfare transparency was slightly higher than that of Li Ning, the mean difference was only 0.0734. Although statistically significant, it had little practical meaning, which verified that the control variable (public welfare transparency) had no interference with the core research results.

4.3. Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis results show that all key variables are significantly positively correlated with each other ($p < 0.001$). Specifically:

Brand public welfare relevance is significantly positively correlated with purchase intention motivation ($r = 0.6800$), public welfare transparency ($r = 0.6786$), and consumers' perceived

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sincerity of brand public welfare (r = 0.6005).

Public welfare transparency is significantly positively correlated with purchase intention motivation (r = 0.7742) and consumers' perceived sincerity of brand public welfare (r = 0.8281).

Consumers' perceived sincerity of brand public welfare is significantly positively correlated with purchase intention motivation (r = 0.6999).

All correlation coefficients are below 0.85, indicating no severe multicollinearity problem among variables.

4.4. Hierarchical regression analysis

Hierarchical regression analysis is conducted to test the main effects, the mediating role of consumers' perceived sincerity, and the moderating effect of public welfare transparency.

Model 1 (Direct effect of relevance and transparency on purchase intention motivation)

With brand public welfare relevance and public welfare transparency as predictors, the model shows both variables have significant positive effects on purchase intention motivation ($\beta = 0.2578$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.5335$, $p < 0.001$). The adjusted R^2 is 0.6404, and the model is significant ($p < 0.001$).

Model 2 (Adding the mediating variable to test the mediating effect)

When consumers' perceived sincerity of brand public welfare is added to the model, the adjusted R^2 increases to 0.6459. The results show that consumers' perceived sincerity of brand public welfare has a significant positive effect on purchase intention motivation ($\beta = 0.1413$, $p < 0.05$). The direct effect of brand public welfare relevance on purchase intention motivation remains significant ($\beta = 0.2481$, $p < 0.001$). Combined with the significant correlation between brand public welfare relevance and perceived sincerity ($r = 0.6005$, $p < 0.001$), these results confirm that consumers' perceived sincerity plays a partial mediating role between brand public welfare relevance and purchase intention motivation.

Model 3 (Adding the interaction term to test the moderating effect)

When the interaction term between brand public welfare relevance and public welfare transparency is added, the adjusted R^2 increases slightly to 0.6485. The interaction term is not significant ($\beta = -0.0589$, $p = 0.1085 > 0.05$), indicating that public welfare transparency does not have a significant moderating effect on the relationship between brand public welfare relevance and purchase intention motivation.

5. Discussion

5.1. Practical implications of brand public welfare marketing

5.1.1. Prioritize the fit between public welfare activities and core business

Brands should focus on carrying out public welfare activities that are closely related to their core business and brand positioning. Sportswear brands can launch public welfare projects such as donating sports equipment to rural schools, sponsoring youth sports events, and promoting national fitness. These projects can significantly elevate brand public welfare relevance, directly strengthen consumers' perceived sincerity of brand public welfare, and ultimately drive higher purchase intention motivation. The independent samples t-test results confirmed that ANTA's significantly higher public welfare relevance was directly converted into stronger perceived sincerity and

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purchase intention motivation, which provides clear practical guidance for the brand to carry out precise public welfare marketing.

5.1.2. Strengthen the transparent disclosure of public welfare information

Brands should publicly disclose key content such as donation amount, capital flow, project implementation progress, and beneficiary information through official websites, social media, and other channels to enhance the transparency of public welfare activities. Correlation analysis shows public welfare transparency has the strongest positive correlation with perceived sincerity ($r=0.8281$) and purchase intention ($r=0.7742$), and regression Model 1 confirms that transparency has a stronger direct positive effect on purchase intention motivation ($\beta=0.5335$, $p<0.001$) than public welfare relevance ($\beta=0.2578$, $p<0.001$), revealing that transparency is a core factor in building consumer trust and enhancing purchase willingness. Transparent information disclosure can eliminate consumers' doubts about public welfare motivation, consolidate the positive perception of sincerity, and boost the brand's social image and reputation.

5.2. Theoretical implications

From a theoretical perspective, the results of this study further verify the applicability of Attribution Theory and Cause-Brand Fit Theory in the field of public welfare marketing. The research confirms that public welfare relevance has a significant positive main effect on purchase intention motivation and is significantly positively correlated with perceived sincerity, indicating that high relevance can effectively reduce consumer cognitive conflict and enhance their sincerity perception of brand public welfare behavior. At the same time, the research results also support the explanatory logic of Attribution Theory: consumers' perceived public welfare sincerity plays a partial mediating role between public welfare relevance and purchase intention motivation. When the matching degree between public welfare activities and brand business is high, consumers are more likely to attribute it to the intrinsic value orientation of the enterprise, rather than the simple marketing purpose, so as to enhance the purchase intention.

It is worth noting that this study does not find that there is a significant moderating effect between public welfare transparency and purchase intention motivation, which is different from some existing research conclusions. One possible reason is that consumers in the sportswear industry have a high trust foundation in the head brand itself and a relatively limited sensitivity to the transparency of public welfare information; at the same time, the actual difference in transparency between the two case brands is small, which also makes it difficult to show the moderating effect. This result suggests that there may be industry boundaries and brand equity differences in the moderating effect of transparency, which provides a new research direction for the subsequent theoretical refinement.

5.3. Research limitations and future prospects

This study has certain limitations and needs to be improved in future research. First of all, the research samples mainly focus on sportswear consumers, which may limit the universality of the research conclusions. Future research can expand the sample range, cover consumers in different regions, ages, and income levels, and improve the universality of the results. Secondly, this study only selects ANTA and Li Ning as research cases, and the conclusion may be affected by the unique

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image of the two brands. Future research can increase the number of cases, incorporate more different types of brands, and verify the research model more comprehensively.

6. Conclusion

Based on Attribution Theory and Cause-Brand Fit Theory, this study explores the influence of brand public welfare relevance, perceived sincerity, and public welfare transparency on consumers' purchase intention. The results show that brand public welfare relevance has a significant positive effect on purchase intention motivation, and plays a partial mediating role through consumers' perceived sincerity of public welfare. Public welfare transparency shows no significant moderating effect, indicating that consumers pay more attention to public welfare fit and motivational sincerity in the sportswear brand context.

This study enriches the research on brand public welfare marketing and perceived sincerity, and provides practical references for enterprises to carry out public welfare activities consistent with their own businesses. Future research can expand the scope of samples, increase industry types, and further explore other psychological mechanisms that affect perceived sincerity.

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