

A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ON CUSTOMER PURCHASE INTENTION: THE MODERATING EFFECT OF INVOLVEMENT*

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Abstract

With the improvement of education level, the awakening of consumers' consumption awareness, and the transparency of information flow, the importance of corporate social responsibility and the degree of attention by the public and enterprises are increasing day by day, and the research of corporate social responsibility on consumers' purchase intention is also increasing increasingly important. Based on expectation theory and rationality theory, this study constructs a model that CSR affects consumers' purchase intention, in order to explore how consumers' perceptions of corporate social responsibility behaviors and how such perceptions affect their purchase intentions for corporate products. A total of 426 valid questionnaires were collected, and the hypothesis was tested by exploratory factor analysis for reliability analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis. The results showed that corporate social responsibility and the degree of involvement positively affected consumers' purchase intention. The degree of involvement positively moderated the relationship between corporate social responsibility and purchase intention.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility(CSR), Involvement, Purchase Intention

1. Introduction

The development background of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) originated from developed countries in Europe and the United States in the early 20th century. With the deepening of globalization, trade activities between countries gradually became closer, and many business issues centered on CSR. Most scholars believe that the free market mechanism is the origin of the formation of the current social responsibility, but in this process, it also results in many problems, such as the gradual increase of the gap between the rich and the poor, the increasingly prominent disparity between different countries, the serious damage to the environment and ecology, and the gradual weakening of workers' rights (AlSuwaidi, Eid, & Agag, 2021; Saka & Olanipekun, 2021). Therefore, under the guidance of this concept, while enterprises obtain economic benefits, it is inevitable that there will be corresponding impacts and negative information in the aspects of working environment, national economy and human rights protection.

Based on the long-term development perspective, for any enterprise, for social investment returns is to present a certain proportion relations, it is well known that the enterprise only in shaping the image of a responsible society, the public will produce to the enterprise inner identity, to get the favour of consumers (Wang & Zhang, 2020).

It goes without saying that raising their consciousness of social responsibility can properly improve enterprise brand good image in society, yet the construction of a good brand image and improve enterprise to obtain the trust of the consumers and identification of the most important factors, which make consumers have strong purchase intention (Long, Deng, & Yang, 2020). Moreover, consumers will think that such behavior of enterprises is a

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cooperative relationship constructed from the perspective of maintaining long-term interests of both parties (Carrington & Neville, 2015), especially when consumers believe that the behavior of enterprises may make consumers' purchasing decisions bear relatively large risks. The purchase will be carefully considered.

With the continuous advancement of economic globalization, China's economy has made great progress both in terms of size and quality of development. However, many potential problems have been exposed behind the development, among which the lack of corporate social responsibility is particularly obvious. Under the current economic new normal, China's enterprises to fulfill social responsibility is the main trend of The Times, the study of corporate responsibility is the letter of important problems to be solved, it is not only for are beneficial to the promotion enterprise's competitiveness, and help enterprises to establish a positive image, enhance core competitiveness of the enterprise itself have important demonstration effect.

2. Literature review and hypothesis

Corporate social responsibility refers to the commitment of enterprises to carry out business practices voluntarily through their internal policies and resources, so as to maximize long-term community economic and social benefits (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019). CSR activities of enterprises will directly or indirectly affect consumers' purchase intentions (Amatulli, De Angelis, Korschun, & Romani, 2018). When the record of CSR activities performed by enterprises has a positive impact on consumers' evaluation of enterprises, and when consumers' support and recognition of CSR is high, enterprises' CSR activities have a greater impact on consumers' evaluation of enterprises. The influence of corporate CSR activities on the purchasing intention of consumers with high CSR supporters will have a positive impact on the evaluation of enterprises. At the same time, CSR has a positive impact on consumers' purchasing decisions, that is to say, if an enterprise has a good image, customers will increase their purchasing intention. The purchasing intention of consumers is often used to demand for products in the future, to predict future advertising and promotion activities of enterprises, and to evaluate the rationality of a series of activities currently carried out by enterprises. Therefore, for the development of enterprises, it is extremely important to study the purchasing intention of consumers.

Consumers' corporate attitudes and purchase intentions increase as their awareness of CSR increases (Sen, Bhattacharya, & Korschun, 2006). According to the research of Creyer and Ross (1997), when enterprises show some moral behaviors, consumers are more willing to pay relatively large costs to purchase corresponding products. Lichtenstein, Drumwright and Braig (2004) verified based on experimental analysis that CSR behavior has an impact on consumers' thinking perception in terms of corporate product marketing and non-profit donation. Grimmer and Bingham (2013) adopted empirical analysis and took participation in environmental protection as a classic example to study the differentiated responses of different consumer groups to CORPORATE social responsibility. The research results confirmed that enterprises with high environmental performance had stronger purchase intentions.

Based on the theoretical research in the above literature, it can be found that when enterprises start to actively fulfill their social responsibilities, consumers' own active purchase intention presents an upward trend, which generates a benign supporting force. According to expectation theory, rationality theory and rational behavior theory, consumers' social expectations of enterprises will influence enterprises' sense of identity to a certain

extent, and then change consumers' attitude towards enterprises, forming a positive effect and affecting consumers' purchase intention. At the same time, This purchase intention will be affected by the opinions of external groups and attitudes of consumers themselves. Therefore, based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Corporate social responsibility helps to improve consumers' purchase intention.

Consumers' evaluations of enterprises come from corporate associations (Berens, Riel, & Van Rekom, 2007), which are composed of corporate capabilities and ethical behaviors (Marin, Ruiz, & Rubio, 2009). The purchasing behavior of consumers will be influenced by his association with enterprises (Deng, Tian, Liu & Chen, 2011). Good corporate social responsibility image and information can help enterprises win the trust and recognition of consumers, so that consumers can develop loyalty to enterprises and their products (Oeberseder, Schlegelmilch, Murphy, & Gruber, 2014).

However, if consumers have a deep understanding of an enterprise's products and doubt the product or the behavior of the enterprise, such doubt will lead to negative word of mouth (Skarmeas, Leonidou, Saridakis, & Musarra, 2020). Therefore, consumers will be deeply involved in the product information and actively collect information by means of collecting consultation and understanding product information before purchasing products. If the product or brand information can make consumers feel satisfied, satisfied and moved, consumers will be motivated to buy.

Based on the theoretical research in the above literature, it can be found that when consumers have a strong interest in a product, their own active purchase intention presents a rising trend, which generates a benign supporting force. The degree of involvement will lead to consumers' stronger cognition of the attribute differences between different products. Meanwhile, consumers will strongly believe that products are important and become more loyal to brands. Therefore, based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: The degree of consumer involvement helps to improve the purchase intention of consumers.

The degree of product involvement significantly affects consumers' responses to many marketing or advertising stimuli; Alternatively, the degree of involvement can significantly affect the degree of mental and physical effort invested by consumers in the purchase process (Kapferer & Laurent, 1986; Michaelidou & Dibb, 2008; Behe et al., 2015). When consumers want to meet the needs of a product or a brand, they will invest more in the product or the source of the brand, and different competitive product attributes will make consumers have different levels of involvement. With the increase of consumers' demand for a product, the degree of involvement will also increase, which usually has a positive influence. The difference in the degree of involvement will affect consumers' purchase intention and the difference in the purchase decision process (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2001).

Comparatively speaking, customer value refers to the relative evaluation by customers on the company's performance and effectiveness in terms of its competitive position in the whole industry, while customer satisfaction refers to a person's belief and hope to achieve emotional pleasure. For consumers, satisfaction is a process of psychological comparison. When the service value is consistent with the expectation or the consumers are satisfied with the fair treatment (Hong Shiquan, 1995), it means that customer satisfaction should be the value that the customers get equal to the expectation.

H3: The degree of involvement has a interfering effect on the relationship between CSR and purchase intention.

This research model is based on the attribution theory and stakeholder theory. From the perspective of consumer involvement degree, the correlation between corporate social responsibility and consumer purchase intention is discussed. Then, according to the degree of involvement as a moderating variable, it discusses what factors affect why and how consumers choose socially responsible behaviors. Accordingly, the following research framework is proposed, as shown in figure 1.

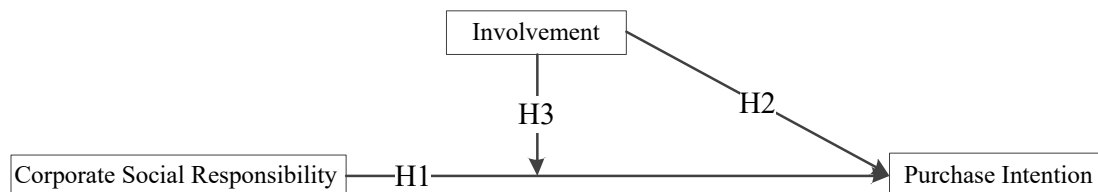


Figure 1 Research framework

3. Objectives of the study

On the basis of expectation theory and rational behavior theory, as well as by summarizing the deficiency of existing research, this study summarizes three research objectives for discussion, which are described as follows:

- 1) The relationship between corporate social responsibility and consumers' purchase intention.
- 2) The relationship between consumer involvement degree and consumer purchase intention.
- 3) The moderating relationship between the degree of consumer involvement in corporate social responsibility and consumer purchasing intention.

4. Materials and methods

4.1 This study adopts the following two methods :

1) Literature research method: Literature research is an important method to make use of existing literature to conduct in-depth research. It achieves the research goal through data arrangement, material synthesis and content analysis. This paper takes the consumers who have purchased Erke products as the research object to explore the mechanism of corporate social responsibility influencing consumers' purchase intention, including the moderating effect of the degree of involvement. Therefore, on the basis of literature processing on the influencing factors of consumers' purchase intention, corporate social responsibility and its impact on consumers, this paper analyzes the deficiencies of existing research, finds out the problems and research contents, and provides research basis.

2) Questionnaire survey: According to the scheduled plan, the respondents were directly surveyed, and relevant research materials were collected through questionnaires and other forms. In this paper, the research content involves the degree of corporate social responsibility, involvement and purchase intention. The authoritative scale in authoritative journals is selected through literature research, and the questionnaire design is revised and improved to meet the requirements according to the actual situation of this study. After collecting the questionnaire, input the data and provide the data for the follow-up study.

4.2 Corporate social responsibility was measured based on the CSR scale proposed by Yeo, Lee and Carter (2018), which is divided into five dimensions: economic, legal, moral, charity and environmental protection. There are five items in each dimension. It is compiled

with Likert five-scale. KMO is 0.963 and Cronbach's α is 0.956. Consumers' purchase intention was measured by a 5-item scale, which is compiled with Likert five-scale, mainly referring to the scale modified from Yeo et al. (2018) and Shabib and Ganguli (2017). KMO is 0.945 and Cronbach's α is 0.832. Involvement questionnaire was designed with reference to the current mature scale of product involvement (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2001), with a total of 10 questions and Likert five-scale. KMO is 0.886 and Cronbach's α is 0.901. Therefore, the scales used this time have reliability and validity.

4.3 For the samples recovered from this survey, in terms of gender, the women and men ratio is similar, 46.63% of women and 53.37% of men. In terms of age, 18-25 years old (52.58%) and 26-35 years old accounted for the largest proportion (24.18%), among which, the youngest was 18 years old, and the oldest was over 61 years old. In terms of educational background, 43.19% of students have college or junior college education, 27.46% of students have postgraduate education, and 26.53% of students have high school/technical secondary school education. In terms of occupation, students account for 29.58%, businessmen for 20.66%, factories/manufacturing for 14.32%, and consulting for 10.33%, which is similar to the occupation structure of current Chinese social groups. In terms of monthly income, wages generally range from 7,001 yuan to 9,000 yuan, accounting for 40.14%, followed by 5,001 yuan to 7,000 yuan, accounting for 31.69%, which is similar to the current income structure in China. Among the reasons attracting consumers to buy Erke, 43.19% of the subjects bought it because of the donation behavior, and 27.23% of the subjects bought it because of the introduction of relatives and friends, indicating that the positive effect brought by Erke's donation behavior attracted many consumers. 77.70% of the consumers bought Erke for the first time, indicating that Erke's influence and marketing ability in modern times is really weak. The demographic structure of the survey is in line with reality, The results of this survey are representative.

5. Results and discussion

The average value of corporate social responsibility is 4.083, the average value of purchase intention is 3.936, and the average value of involvement is 3.846. The correlation analysis is shown in Table 1, and the correlation preliminarily verifies the hypothesis.

Table 1 Correlation analysis

	M	SD	1	2	3
1 Corporate Social Responsibility	4.083	0.885	-		
2 Involvement	3.846	1.043	.148**	-	
3 Purchase Intention	3.936	0.896	.343**	.335**	-

Table 2 presents three models, all of which choose consumers' purchase intention as the dependent variable and Model 1 as the control variable, introducing various demographic background variables. Based on model 1, independent variables and moderating variables were added in Model 2 to test the main effect. In Model 3, in addition to the variables examined in the previous two models, the interaction terms of independent variables and moderating variables in this study were put into the regression formula of each table respectively, and the hypotheses were tested in this model.

In the main effect of model 2, corporate social responsibility ($\beta=0.324$, $p < 0.05$) and involvement degree ($\beta=0.222$, $p < 0.05$) both positively affect consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, H1 and H2 are supported.

Model 3 is a moderating regression model, in which the two-factor interaction term between CSR and involvement degree assumed in this study is added, and the result shows that R^2 increases to 33.1% ($p < 0.001$). The results showed that corporate social responsibility \times involvement degree ($\beta = .348$, $p < 0.05$) had a significant interaction effect. This indicates that the degree of involvement has a moderating effect between CSR and consumers' purchase intention, which is consistent with H3. Therefore, H3 is supported.

Table 2 Regression table of moderating effects of involvement

	DV: Purchase Intention		
	M1	M2	M3
	β	β	β
Control Variable			
Gender	-0.044	-0.001	0.003
Age	0.086	0.039	0.048
Education	0.103	0.043	0.031
Occupation	-0.017	-0.035	-0.047
Monthly Salary	-0.020	-0.049	-0.070
Reasons to attract consumption	-0.036	-0.086	-0.090
Whether it is the first purchase	-0.004	-0.017	-0.026
Main effect			
Corporate Social Responsibility		.324***	.188**
Involvement		.222***	.147**
Interaction Effect			
Corporate Social Responsibility \times Involvement			.348***
R^2	0.050	0.244	0.331
Adj R^2	0.013	0.188	0.279
F	0.792	4.369***	6.405***

Notes: ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

6. Conclusions

6.1 Conclusions

This study explores the relationship between the three variables. Through literature review, it creates an association model between explanatory variables and explained variables, and then uses the degree of involvement as the connection between the two variables. The relationship between the three variables was tested by using the network questionnaire data, and the hypothesis was tested. With the help of SPSS 24.0, the relationship between the three was analyzed to verify the hypothesis and the following conclusions with practical significance and reference were obtained. Corporate social responsibility can help improve consumers' purchasing intention, similar to Amatulli et al.'s (2018), Sen et al.'s (2006) and Grimmer et al.'s (2013) results. When the record of CSR activities performed by enterprises has a positive impact on consumers' evaluation of enterprises, and when consumers' support and recognition of CSR is high, enterprises' CSR activities have a greater impact on consumers' evaluation of enterprises. The influence of corporate CSR activities on the purchasing intention of consumers with high CSR supporters will have a positive impact on the evaluation of enterprises. At the same time, CSR has a positive impact on consumers' purchasing decisions, that is to say, if an enterprise has a good image, customers will increase their purchasing intention.

Through empirical analysis, this paper proves that the degree of involvement helps to improve consumers' purchase intention, which is similar to the research results of Scholars Oeberseder et al. (2014), Deng et al. (2016) and Skarmas et al. (2020). Consumers' evaluation of enterprises comes from enterprise association, which is composed of enterprise ability and enterprise moral behavior. And consumers' purchasing behavior will be affected by his association to the enterprise. Good corporate social responsibility image and information can win consumers' trust and recognition of the enterprise, so that consumers can create loyalty to the enterprise and its products, and then improve the purchase intention.

Through empirical analysis, this paper shows that the degree of involvement positively moderates the relationship between CORPORATE social responsibility and purchase intention. The results are similar to those of Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999), Sen and Bhattacharya (2001), And Vlachos et al. (2010). Consumers pay attention to the behavior of enterprises, but this is not the primary reason for consumers to purchase behavior. Good corporate social responsibility image and information can win consumers' trust and recognition of the enterprise, so that consumers can have loyalty to the enterprise and its products, and also affect consumers' purchase intention and recommendation intention.

6.2 Recommendations for future research

1) Enhancing consumers' expectations of corporate behavior and corporate social responsibility can promote positive responses to internal social responsibility (thoughts) and positive external responses (purchase intentions). Business participants need to properly allocate marketing resources, balance market interests and short-term sales performance, and balance all stakeholders to establish a good social image and ensure the sound development of the company.

2) Companies need to provide CSR information in a timely manner in order to have a positive impact on social responsibility behavior and customer purchase behavior, and successfully gain corporate responsibility trust. Social responsibility improves the efficiency and effectiveness of information dissemination. The results of this study hope that more and more companies will realize that CSR information can attract the attention of expanding customers in a timely manner and improve the visibility and purpose of the company. For example, if a company in the industry association can provide customers with accurate information about corporate social responsibility, it will help increase the impact of corporate social responsibility on customers' daily purchasing behavior.

3) Brand image is the impression of customers on enterprise products, brand image is very important for the development of the company. A good brand image means that the company's products are of high added value, and if the company's service is guaranteed, it will gain a good reputation. In the consumer group, maintaining such an excellent brand image should be an important goal of enterprise management. As a company, it can vigorously strengthen its publicity activities to improve its reputation and inform customers of the advantages of its brand as much as possible. Companies can use social media to create corporate videos or sponsor events to participate in marketing campaigns to grab customers' attention.

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