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Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Consumers' Purchase Behavior in the E-commerce Environment

(Work in Progress)

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ABSTRACT

The development of the Internet has promoted the prosperity of e-commerce, and has a great impact on today's consumers' consumption concepts. For e-commerce platform, this is not only an opportunity, but also a challenge. If we gain advantages in the fierce competition environment, it will become the leader in the e-commerce environment. Corporate social responsibility has a significant impact on the operation and development of enterprises. With the increasing attention of society to corporate social responsibility, social responsibility is gradually becoming an important factor in determining the value of enterprises, which is also the case for e-commerce platforms. In order to provide a new way for the development of e-commerce platform, this paper analyzes the impact of corporate social responsibility on consumer purchasing behavior, and discusses the significance of corporate social responsibility on e-commerce platform.

Keywords: E-commerce, corporate social responsibility, consumer sentiment, consumer behavior.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the continuous development and popularization of the Internet, e-commerce platforms are becoming more and more mature, and the competition between platforms is becoming more and more fierce. How to stand out in this fierce competition is the focus of all platforms. The success of e-commerce platform depends not only on consumers' favor for their products and services, but also on the social responsibility of enterprises for many consumers. Ren is also a point that cannot be ignored, such as Pinduoduo and Taobao to help solve the problem of unsalable agricultural products; Jingdong launched the "Love Charity Sale" activities, which are all examples of e-commerce platforms actively taking social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility can not only enhance the bottom line profitability of e-commerce platform, but also provide competitive advantage.

In this paper, we believe that consumers' perception of corporate social responsibility will have an impact on their emotional bias. In this case, no matter whether consumers are benefited or not, they will think it is beneficial to the society, so they will have a positive emotion, and this feeling will also affect consumers' purchasing behavior, and consumers will purchase more actively with social responsibility. However, consumers' perception of product quality and service experience of e-commerce platform may affect the effect of corporate social responsibility. At present, scholars' research perspective on corporate social responsibility has not focused on the e-commerce platform, and the development of e-commerce is in a new stage. In view of this, this study, starting from consumer perception and experience, explores whether the e-commerce platform can effectively influence consumers' purchasing behavior through social responsibility activities, and in the context of e-commerce, corporate social responsibility will be affected by some factors, the influence of corporate social responsibility on consumers is weakened. The research results will help the e-commerce platform to understand the importance of social responsibility and how social responsibility affects consumers' purchase behavior, and finally provide a new direction in competition.

THEORETICAL BASIS AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

This study examines the impact of corporate social responsibility on consumers' purchase. It examines the relationship between consumers' emotion and purchase intention when e-commerce platforms participate in social activities and undertake social responsibility, and whether consumers' emotion is affected by their whole shopping experience, and whether this shopping experience weakens corporate social responsibility effect. In this study, we focus on consumers' emotion and experience after perceived corporate social responsibility, and the process of behavior change.

Consumers in E-commerce Environment

The competition of e-commerce industry is becoming more and more fierce. The major e-commerce platforms are also gradually focusing on the cities below the third tier. The development speed has also changed from rapid development to stable development. The market share is getting smaller and smaller, and new markets and flows are needed. The development of the Internet has gradually changed the consumer psychology of customers, and quality is no longer the only standard for purchasing. Under this environment, the behavior of consumers can be summarized as follows: 1. Segmentation of the consumer market; 2. Service demand becoming the mainstream; 3. The expansion of the scope of choice and the emotional

behavior of consumers (Liu, 2015). However, it is more and more difficult to develop the market and optimize the service, so the sensibility of consumers has become a direction of our thinking. Through the literature, we find that consumers pay more and more attention to social problems, such as environmental pollution, unsalable agricultural products, etc. However, in order to attract consumers' attention through these contents, the social responsibility of enterprises becomes more and more important. On the one hand, such a theme will attract consumers. On the other hand, it will also affect consumers' purchase behavior to a great extent. This paper focuses on the latter, mainly on the impact on consumer behavior. The era of e-commerce is known as the "customer-centered era" because it requires us to carry out various activities around this center. We should take into account any factors related to customers. Sometimes, some subtle factors will determine success or failure.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility refers to that enterprises should be responsible for the whole society while creating profits. It can make consumers have positive evaluation of enterprises and then turn into positive evaluation of products, which will naturally affect their purchase intention and behavior. In the past, scholars have carried out a lot of research on this, and found and discussed the factors affecting corporate social responsibility and the impact of practicing corporate social responsibility. For example, if enterprises undertake social responsibility, consumers will feel grateful (Kim & Park, 2020). At present, corporate social responsibility is also regarded as a strategic goal to achieve. At the same time, the strategy of changing the world requires enterprises to change the idea of taking profit as the only goal, emphasizing the attention to human value in the production process, and the contribution to the environment, consumers and society. Some scholars take the concept of corporate social responsibility rooted in the theory of sustainable development, so as to bring social, economic and environmental issues into the operation of enterprises (Hardjono & Marrewijk, 2001). Some scholars review the relevant literature on consumer behavior of corporate social responsibility and find that the relationship between them is not a simple indication (Green & Pelozo, 2015), that is to say, some variables can play a mediating and regulating role. Consumer integrity reduces the impact of corporate social responsibility on the degree of admiration. Therefore, for consumers with higher integrity, the relationship is stronger, while consumers with lower integrity are weaker (Castro-González, Bande & Fernández-Ferrín, 2019). For example, launching a corporate social responsibility campaign will generate more favorable consumer attitudes towards the company and its products, leading to higher willingness to buy (Sen, Du & Bhattacharya, 2016). Therefore, the hypothesis is put forward:

H1: corporate social responsibility has a positive relationship with consumers' purchase behavior.

Gratitude Inspired by Corporate Social Responsibility

Consumers' gratitude

As a form of emotion, emotion is an important factor affecting consumers' purchase intention. Through the literature, we know that emotions are divided into positive and negative, and even contradictory emotions (Williams, Bannister, & Arribas-Ayllon, 2015). Positive and positive emotions have attracted the attention of psychologists. The enthusiasm in corporate social responsibility activities can make consumers have a positive view of the companies that implement these behaviors. Extensive research shows that CSR efforts of companies can lead to various positive consumer reactions. A large number of literature studies has found that corporate social responsibility has a specific impact on consumer cognition (Park, Kim, & Kwon, 2017), such as loyalty and satisfaction. In this paper, the practice of corporate social responsibility organizations aims to improve social, environmental or economic conditions. We believe that when enterprises carry out corporate social responsibility activities, they will reflect the corporate ethics, and attract the attention of consumers. Consumers will think that corporate social responsibility activities are positive, and will produce a positive emotion, and this emotion is actually coming from the recognition of enterprises, when consumers perceive that the social responsibility activities participated by enterprises are beneficial to the society, even if they have no actual benefits to themselves, they will support and thank them for making the society better (Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2013). In this paper, we call this positive emotion "gratitude", which not only reflects the consumer's sense of identity, but also reflects that the consumer's response to corporate social responsibility is related to certain values and orientations. Combing the literature, we find that in the current e-commerce environment, through a series of social responsibility activities, each e-commerce platform can get good comments and word-of-mouth from consumers and the influence of emotion is the most important. Therefore, the hypothesis is put forward:

H2: when enterprises practice social responsibility, consumers will feel grateful.

The influence of gratitude on consumers' purchase intention

Gratitude is a kind of prosocial emotion, because people who experience gratitude think that they are the beneficiaries of other people's praiseworthy behavior (Duprey, McKee, & O'Neal, 2020), so gratitude can transform other positive emotions into other forms of prosocial behavior (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006). Therefore, when the e-commerce platform is doing something beneficial to the society, consumers may appreciate their contributions to the society, and support and reward them in some other ways, such as purchasing products with relevant social responsibility or producing positive evaluation, and such gratitude will affect consumers' perception of negative information of the e-commerce platform. Gratitude can not only bring consumers a good impression on the e-commerce platform, but also promote the transformation of this goodwill into behavioral impulse. For example, if the platform holds an activity related to social responsibility, consumers will feel grateful for this kind of activity which is beneficial to the society, and then this gratitude will extend to consumers' cognition of the whole corporate image, products and services. As a positive positive emotion, gratitude will also make consumers have a more positive cognition of the enterprise, thus arousing consumers' purchase willingness. Experience shows that the judgment of consumers'

dislike is accompanied by the judgment process of liking, otherwise, it is not. This shows that people should consider the reason of liking a thing when considering whether they like it or not (Xie, Bagozzi & Grønhaug, 2018). That is to say, for the e-commerce platform, the gratitude of consumers aroused by their implementation of corporate social responsibility plan may become an important factor for consumers to evaluate them, and the love for an e-commerce platform will naturally lead to the promotion of purchase intention. Therefore, the hypothesis is put forward:

H3: consumers' gratitude positively influences purchase intention.

Customer Experience

Customer experience has always been an important research content in the field of marketing, because it can let consumers feel the value of products and services most directly (Novak, Hoffman, & Yung, 2000). In today's e-commerce platform, customer experience is affected by a variety of factors, such as the interaction of cross-border e-commerce websites, category diversity and convenience, which will affect customers' online shopping experience (Kwak & Yoo, 2014), but at the same time, these factors are also important factors to increase the income of e-commerce platforms. In this paper, customer experience is simply interpreted as platform experience and product experience. The form of experience is often divided into five types: sensory experience, emotional experience, thinking experience, action experience and related experience (Hoyer, Kroschke, & Schmitt, 2020). In addition, the participation of corporate social responsibility will enhance consumers' trust in enterprises, and the quality of platform experience and product experience will affect consumers' trust in enterprises (Castro-González, Bande, & Fernández-Ferrín, 2019). The quality of customer experience will affect gratitude, good experience will strengthen the emotion of "gratitude" and improve the influence of "gratitude" on purchase intention, while bad experience will weaken the influence of positive emotion of gratitude on purchase intention, and ultimately improve or reduce the purchase intention of consumers. For example, when customers get a good experience, their sense of identity will be strengthened, they will recognize the value concept and orientation of the enterprise, recognize the behavior of the enterprise, and will feel that the enterprise is beneficial to the society. This emotion gratitude will also be stimulated to a greater extent, so the impact on the purchase intention will be more profound. On the contrary, if the customer experience is poor, it will affect consumers' recognition of enterprises from many aspects, such as reducing trust, thus weakening the "gratitude" of consumers caused by enterprises in the practice of social responsibility, which will naturally have an impact on the purchase intention. Here, the main purpose of this paper is to express that the quality of customer experience will affect the degree of consumers' gratitude to purchase intention. Therefore, the hypothesis is put forward:

H4: customer experience plays a moderating role in consumer gratitude and purchase intention

Purchase Intention

Willingness represents the degree to which an individual intends to perform a specific behavior. In Information Systems Science, the significant effect of willingness on behavior has long been proposed and confirmed. We believe that in the e-commerce environment, consumers' purchase intention will have a positive impact on subsequent purchase behavior. Therefore, the hypothesis is put forward:

H5: purchase intention positively affects purchase behavior

RESEARCH MODEL

Through literature review, this study proposes a conceptual model based on social identity theory and attribution theory. Social identity theory was first proposed by Tajfel, mainly used to explain group behavior. Social theory is established by classification, identification and comparison. In the field of consumers, social identity theory is also widely used. In the process of consumption, consumers need to meet the needs of self-definition. With the development and progress of society, when consumers purchase products, they not only pay attention to whether the products can meet their actual needs, but also pay attention to the characteristics of enterprises. Corporate social responsibility has gradually become an important way for consumers to understand corporate culture and values. As a form of moral norms, it can also represent a positive corporate image. When consumers perceive that the enterprise is practicing social responsibility, good corporate image is also perceived, and their sense of identity with the enterprise is strengthened. Therefore, they will have a stronger desire to purchase the products of the enterprise. According to attribution theory, people usually try to explain social behavior consciously or unconsciously. When consumers evaluate corporate social responsibility behavior, they will infer the motivation behind their behavior. However, corporate social responsibility behavior belongs to a kind of behavior in the moral category, and consumers often think it is positive. Therefore, they will perceive that corporate social responsibility is beneficial to the society. They will recognize this behavior and form a positive emotion - "gratitude". The model of this paper is shown in Figure 1.

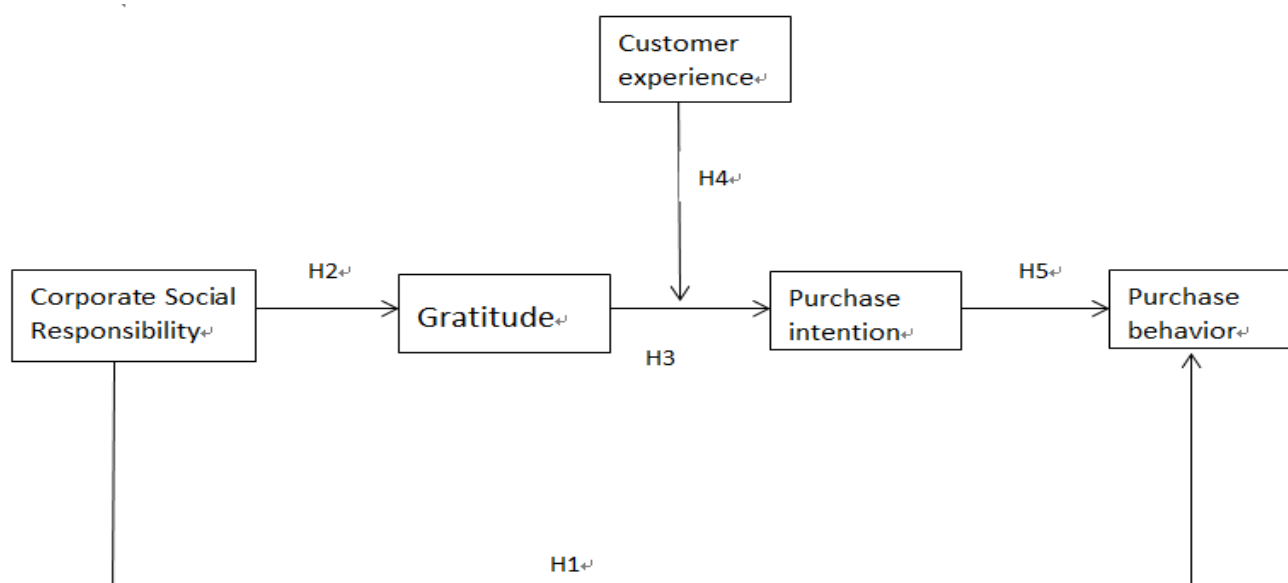


Figure 1: Research Model.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study explores the impact of corporate social responsibility on consumer behavior from the perspective of e-commerce environment. Therefore, this paper adopts the way of questionnaire to conduct a series of research. The questionnaire includes two parts: the questionnaire and the questionnaire. The questionnaire was produced and distributed through the "questionnaire star" platform.

Variable Measurement

The scales used in this study are all based on the developed scales and modified appropriately on the existing ones. The specific scales used are as follows: (1) the scale of corporate social responsibility mainly refers to the scale developed by Kim and Park (2020) and their related scales. In this paper, the specific measurement is modified according to the required content, and finally, four measurement items are sorted out. For example, "the role of enterprises in our society has gone beyond just a generation.". (2) Gratitude refers to Ohanian's scale (1990), which has been widely used. Finally, three measurement items are sorted out, such as "I am grateful for the efforts made by the platform to contribute to society." (3) Purchase intention refers to the scale of Chen (2020), etc., which is sorted out and modified, and finally gives four items, such as "I am more willing to try to buy new products and services launched by the platform", "the platform is my first choice to purchase such products". (4) The purchase behavior was based on the scale of Zheng (2020). There are three items in total, such as "I will participate in product purchase under social responsibility activities" (5) Finally, customer experience is based on Lu's (2018) scale, and then according to the needs of this paper to select and change, and finally give six items. The questionnaire used Five-level Likert scale to score the questions of the questionnaire. 1 means very disagreed, 5 means very agree, and finally there are five variables

Sample Description

This study mainly takes the public consumers on the Internet as the survey sample. The questionnaire was published online, and 232 copies were finally received. Except some invalid questionnaires, 207 valid questionnaires were finally recovered, with a recovery rate of 89%. In the valid samples: (1) the gender distribution is as follows: 90 males, accounting for 43.5% of the total, and 117 females, accounting for 56.5% of the total. (2) Age distribution: most of them are 18-28 years old, accounting for 52% of the total number, while a small number of them are 29-44 years old and above 45 years old, accounting for 27% and 21% of the total. (3) Distribution of education level: there are 101 students with bachelor's degree, accounting for 48% of the total, while the proportion of junior high school and below, senior high school, junior college, master's degree and above are 12, 24, 37 and 33 respectively, accounting for 6%, 12%, 18% and 16% of the total. (4) Monthly income: there are 31 respondents with monthly income below 1000 Yuan, accounting for 15% of the total; 84 respondents with monthly income of 1000-2000 account for 41%; 52 respondents with monthly income of 2000-3000 account for 25% of the total; 40 respondents with monthly income above 3000 account for 19% of the total. Sample statistics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample demographic information.

Demographics	Project breakdown	Number of people	percentage
Gender	Man	90	43.5%
	Woman	117	56.5%
Age	≤17	0	0
	18-28	108	52%
	29-44	55	27%

education	≥45	44	21%
	Less than Junior high school	12	6%
	High school	24	12%
	Training school	37	18%
	Undergraduate	101	48%
Monthly income	Master degree or above	33	16%
	≤1000	31	15%
	1000-2000yuan	84	41%
	2000-3000yuan	52	25%
	≥3000yuan	40	19%

Reliability and Validity Analysis of Questionnaire

Before testing the hypothesis, we should analyze the reliability and validity of our questionnaire data.

According to the previous literature and research, internal consistency is often used as the test method, and then Cronbach's α value is used as the test index. In this study, SPSS 22.0 was used as a tool to test the variables and the whole questionnaire. 4.4 empirical analysis based on structural equation model. Table 2 shows the values of Cronbach's α .

Table 2: The Cronbach's α value of variable.

variable	Corporate Social Responsibility	Gratitude	Purchase intention	Customer experience	Purchasing behavior
Cronbach's α	0.893	0.911	0.859	0.932	0.876

It can be seen from the above table that the Cronbach's α values of the five variables are all greater than 0.85, and the Cronbach's α values are greater than 0.7, which can meet the requirements of internal consistency and high data reliability.

The validity test is mainly to test the validity of the questionnaire, which is measured by Amos. 22.0. It can be seen from the table below that the item factor load in the scale is greater than 0.5, which indicates that the items are valid. The combination reliability C.R of each dimension in the scale is higher than 0.7, and the average extraction variance of the five dimensions ave is higher than 0.5, which means that the following five dimensions have good aggregate validity. We can see the relevant indicators by observing Table 3 and Table 4. To sum up, we can judge that the scale has good validity.

Table 3: Related indicators of validity test.

variable	Item	Standard load	C.R	AVE
Corporate Social Responsibility	Q1.1	0.869	0.8940	0.6804
	Q1.2	0.918		
	Q1.3	0.797		
	Q1.4	0.699		
Gratitude	Q2.1	0.867	0.9138	0.7802
	Q2.2	0.965		
	Q2.3	0.811		
Purchase intention	Q3.1	0.720	0.8643	0.6154
	Q3.2	0.746		
	Q3.3	0.847		
	Q3.4	0.818		
Customer experience	Q5.1	0.849	0.8763	0.7025
	Q5.2	0.851		
	Q5.3	0.814		
Purchasing behavior	Q5.1	0.845	0.9324	0.6972
	Q5.2	0.809		
	Q5.3	0.871		
	Q5.4	0.841		
	Q5.5	0.776		
	Q5.6	0.864		

Table 4: Correlation analysis.

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Corporate Social Responsibility	0.8249				
2 Gratitude	0.660	0.8833			
3 Purchase intention	0.604	0.604	0.7845		

4 Purchasing behavior	0.548	0.579	0.688	0.8382	
5 Customer experience	0.458	0.491	0.483	0.545	0.8349

Empirical Analysis Based on Structural Equation Model

After testing the reliability and validity, this study uses AMOS 22.0 software to draw theoretical graphics and import the questionnaire data to test the above hypotheses. We use Cmin / DF, GFI, AGFI, NFI, IFI, CFI, RMSEA and other seven indicators to verify the fitting of the model. The results showed that Cmin / DF was 2.553, which was less than 3, indicating that it was acceptable; RMSEA was 0.087, less than 1, and the model fitness was acceptable. The following table is the model fitting value, the indexes in the table are acceptable if within the range of 0.7-0.9, and above 0.9 is ideal.

Table 5: Model fit index.

index	Model fitting value	evaluate
GFI	0.885	acceptable
AGFI	0.834	acceptable
NFI	0.915	ideal.
IFI	0.946	ideal.
CFI	0.946	ideal.

After the reliability and validity test and the model fitting results are good, it can be used to test the research hypothesis. Using Amos software, the final results show that all hypotheses are confirmed. The path coefficients are shown in the Table 6, and the model of test results is shown in Figure 2.

Table 6: Path analysis.

Research hypothesis	Path coefficient
H1 There is a positive relationship between corporate social responsibility and consumers' purchase behavior.	0.14*
H2 When enterprises practice social responsibility, consumers will feel grateful.	0.71***
H3 Consumers' gratitude positively influences purchase intention.	0.70***
H5 Purchase intention positively affects purchase behavior.	0.74***

Note: ***It means significant at 0.01 level, * represents significant at 0.05 level

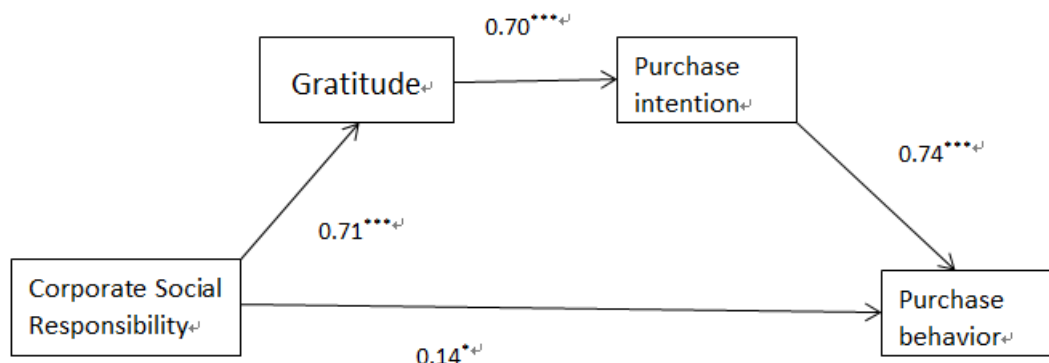


Figure 2: Model test results.

Regulatory Effect Test

In this study, H4 is the customer experience, which plays a moderating role in consumer gratitude and purchase intention. Here, we use SPSS hierarchical regression to test the significance of R2 change. If it reaches the preset significance level, it can prove the moderating effect. The final result shows that the value of SIG f change is greater than 0.05, which proves that customer experience does not play a significant moderating role in consumer gratitude and purchase intention.

Table 7: Model summary.

Model	R	R squared	Adjusted R square	Adjusted R square	Change statistics				
					R square change	F value change	Df1	Df2	Significant f-value change
1	0.640a	0.410	0.404	0.57727	0.410	70.816	2	204	0.000
2	0.641b	0.411	0.402	0.57822	0.001	0.333	1	203	0.565

Table 8: The results of coefficient test.

Model		Coefficient of non-standardization		Standardization coefficient	T	Significance
		B	Standard error	Beta		
1	constant	0.828	0.254		3.262	0.001
	Consumer experience	0.395	0.064	0.372	6.155	0.000
	CSR	0.363	0.058	0.377	6.233	0.000
2	constant	1.139	0.596		1.910	0.058
	Consumer experience	0.316	0.152	0.298	2.084	0.038
	CSR	0.260	0.187	0.271	1.394	0.165
	JHX	0.025	0.044	0.159	0.577	0.565

Note: Customer Experience is the adjustment variable, CSR is the independent variable, JHX is the interaction term between customer experience and CSR

Results Discussion

The final experimental results show that corporate social responsibility has a significant impact on consumers' purchase behavior (0.14*), and it also has a significant impact on consumers' gratitude (0.71**). Gratitude has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention (0.70**), and consumer purchase intention has a significant impact on consumer purchase behavior (0.74**). Finally, the moderating effect of customer experience on consumers' gratitude and purchase intention was not found to be significant (0.565 > 0.05). It may be that when customers are inspired by gratitude, product experience and platform service are not the most important factors for them, and psychological identification may be the core factor influencing their purchase.

RESEARCH SUMMARY AND PROSPECT

Research Significance

First of all, although there are not a few literatures on social corporate responsibility and consumer behaviors in the literature, few authors put forward the concept of "consumer gratitude", and then discuss the impact of gratitude aroused by corporate social responsibility on consumer behavior. Our research fills up the gap in e-commerce research, and we provide research ideas for this important but lack of representative consumer purchase scenarios.

In addition, in a practical sense, it is a good way for major e-commerce platforms to attract consumers' attention by practicing social responsibility activities. Moreover, the effect does not only stay at the level of attracting consumers, but also has an important impact on consumers' purchase. Therefore, the platform should pay attention to the influence of corporate social responsibility, correctly perform its own social responsibility, pay attention to the social responsibility activities in the society, and be responsible for the whole society in order to bring better development for platform itself.

Insufficient Research

The deficiency lies in the fact that there is no segmentation of customer experience, such as product experience and platform service experience, but simply categorizing these experiences into one category, without discussing to what extent these different experience methods will weaken the effect of corporate social responsibility, which may also be the reason why the final result is not significant. In addition, consumers' purchase behavior has not been further considered under different circumstances. For example, the impact of corporate social responsibility on consumers' purchase behavior is different between products with normal price and products with premium. Finally, the depth of gratitude research on purchase intention is not enough, and the relationship between them should be more specific.

Research Prospects

Future research should be more in-depth analysis of customer experience, mining the different effects of different experiences and considering some preconditions of consumer purchase behavior. On the other hand, we should strengthen the research on consumer psychology and emotion, conduct a deeper research on consumer gratitude, grasp the difference between the impact of consumer gratitude on consumer purchasing behavior and traditional factors, and find out whether the influence of this emotion will be affected by some external factors.

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