

Psychological Factors Influencing Consumer Purchases in the Sports Goods Market: Insights and Strategies

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Abstract. With the improvement of people's health awareness and the popularity of sports activities, the sports goods market has expanded rapidly. It is of great significance for merchants to develop effective marketing strategies to understand the influence of consumer psychology on sports merchandise sales. The purpose of this study is to explore the psychological factors that affect consumers' purchase of sports goods, including brand cognition, social influence, personal values and consumption experience, and analyze how these factors affect consumers' purchase decisions. By searching the relevant data in the past five years, the impact of different dimensions on consumers can be judged. It is found that brand cognition and social influence are important psychological factors for consumers to buy sports goods. Specifically, high brand perception significantly increases consumers' willingness to buy, while social impact is particularly important, especially among younger consumers. In addition, the individual's personal values are also positively correlated with the purchase behavior, which can promote consumers' loyalty to sports goods and repeat purchase intention. This study shows that understanding consumer psychology is crucial to improving sports merchandise sales. Merchants should pay attention to the shaping of brand image and the construction of social influence, and meet the psychological needs of consumers through accurate market positioning and marketing strategies, so as to enhance the purchase intention and brand loyalty of consumers. This provides empirical support and theoretical guidance for the marketing of sports goods.

Keywords: Purchase decision; Purchase motivation; Social media influence; Purchase intention; Impact of the epidemic.

1. Introduction

In today's society, with the promotion of healthy lifestyle and the enhancement of people's sports consciousness, the vigorous development of sports commodity market has become a phenomenon that cannot be ignored. The research shows that the consumption of sports goods is not only closely related to the function and quality of the goods themselves, but also deeply affected by the psychological factors of consumers. These include brand perception, the influence of family and friends, personal values, and attitudes towards exercise and health. Therefore, an in-depth understanding of the impact of these psychological factors on consumer purchasing behavior can not only help merchants develop more effective marketing strategies, but also provide a theoretical basis for the sustainable development of the overall market.

In recent years, the research on the consumption psychology of sports goods has gradually increased, and scholars have discussed this complicated issue from different perspectives. Although there have been some research results, systematic and comprehensive empirical research is still lacking, especially in the rapidly growing field of the Chinese market. Therefore, this study aims to fill this theoretical gap, deeply explore the psychological motivations of consumers when buying sports goods, and explore the potential opportunities in the market.

The theme of this study is Sports merchandise sales and consumer psychology. The main objectives of the study include analyzing the specific effects of brand perception and social influence on consumers' purchasing decisions, and providing data support for merchants to formulate targeted marketing strategies. In addition, this study will start with the methodology of demonstration data analysis to systematically evaluate various factors affecting consumer behavior, with a view to providing references for future related research and practice.

2. Case Description

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in late 2019, it has had a profound impact on the global economy, and sports product sales have inevitably taken a hit. With the implementation of lockdown and social distancing measures, the suspension of sports events and the closure of public sports venues, the opportunity for people to participate in sports activities has been significantly reduced, which has directly led to a decline in the demand for sports equipment, clothing and footwear, and the global sports goods market sales have fallen by more than 20% [1]. Nike, for example, has long relied on strong brand influence and innovative products to stabilize the market, its first revenue decline in the second quarter of fiscal 2020, especially in the North American and Chinese markets face trading restrictions. Although Nike's online sales have increased, but overall sales are still hit hard. In response to the crisis, Nike quickly adjusted its business model, paid attention to digital transformation, launched more online shopping and virtual fitness services, and increased online sales by 84% in 2021 [2]. The impact of the epidemic has varied in different regions, with the Chinese market gradually picking up, while the recovery in Europe and North America has been slower, especially in the United States, where sales have remained low due to a prolonged lockdown, and many brands have faced financial difficulties. In addition, changes in consumer health behaviors and changes in long-term leisure needs may lead to changes in the market landscape. Therefore, to solve this problem is not only related to the normal operation of enterprises, but also to promote the healthy development of the entire sports industry, which requires the joint efforts of enterprises, governments and all sectors of society to restore consumer confidence and promote the recovery of the market through policy support, innovation-driven and industry collaboration. Now the impact of the epidemic has been basically completely resolved, and the situation of the entire sports commodity market is slowly getting better.

3. Analysis on the Problems

Consumers' perception of different brand images significantly impacts their purchasing decisions, as brand image shapes their preference and perception of product quality and value. Social factors such as family, friends, and social media also play a crucial role in influencing purchasing decisions, as these factors can sway consumer choices through word-of-mouth and social validation. Additionally, consumer purchasing psychology has evolved before and after the pandemic. During the pandemic, there was a heightened focus on health, safety, and convenience, leading consumers to prioritize the practicality and reliability of products. Post-pandemic, there has been a renewed emphasis on brand value, social responsibility, and personalized experiences.

Social factors such as family, friends and social media are strongly influencing how consumers perceive different brand images and the impact that image has on their purchasing decisions. Brand image is consumers' overall impression and cognition of the brand, including brand awareness, trust, values, and product quality and user experience. First of all, brand awareness and trust are the cornerstone of purchase intention formation. Consumers tend to choose brands that they are familiar with and have a good reputation, because a strong brand image usually means high-quality products and excellent services, which can effectively enhance consumer confidence when shopping.

Secondly, the consistency between the communication of brand values and the individual values of consumers also affects the purchasing choice. For example, when consumers find that a brand emphasizes sustainability or environmental protection, especially with modern environmental awareness, they will be more inclined to choose these socially responsible brands. This resonance of values not only leads to a direct sales boost, but also creates an emotional connection between the brand and consumers, thereby increasing brand loyalty [3].

In addition, brands interact with consumers through channels such as social media, which not only helps them shape their brand image, but also brings the brand closer to the needs of consumers. In this process, the influence of family members and friends should not be underestimated. Family purchasing experience and friends' recommendation will greatly affect personal brand choice,

especially in children's products. Parents' choice will affect children's brand cognition, and this influence may continue into adulthood.

In the context of the growing popularity of social media, the way consumers' access information has fundamentally changed. Consumers use social platforms to learn about product reviews and experiences that influence their purchasing decisions [4]. Brands are able to use social media to effectively build their image and engage with consumers, helping to increase brand awareness and trust.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated these changes in consumer psychology, profoundly affecting consumer buying behavior. During the epidemic, consumers' awareness of health and safety has increased significantly, leading them to pay more attention to health and safety when choosing products, for example, when buying fitness equipment, they will consider the environmental protection and easy cleaning of product materials. At the same time, online shopping has taken off as the pandemic has limited access to physical stores [5]. Consumers increasingly rely on e-commerce platforms and pay more attention to user reviews, product presentations and convenient shopping processes on these platforms, which directly influence their purchasing decisions.

On the other hand, isolation and social restrictions have left most consumers with a heightened psychological need for emotional experiences and social interactions. In this context, it is important for brands to convey emotional and social values. Consumers not only pay attention to the quality of goods, but also hope to participate in more social activities through sports products, which has changed the marketing strategy of brands to a certain extent.

Finally, after the epidemic, consumers pay more attention to the quality of life, and they pay more attention to the pursuit of health and psychological balance. For example, demand for fitness equipment and fitness trackers has risen, while sales of environmentally friendly brands have also been boosted by increased concerns about sustainability and social responsibility. In general, consumers' views on brand image, the impact of social factors and the transformation of consumer psychology after the epidemic have jointly shaped the sales pattern of the modern consumer market. Therefore, understanding these factors will help brands communicate more effectively with consumers and develop marketing strategies that are more in line with market needs. Through in-depth analysis of consumer psychology and social impact, the impact are able to better grasp the market dynamics, thereby improving the market competitiveness of brands.

4. Conclusion

The far-reaching impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on the global sports goods sales market has prompted significant changes and evolution in consumers' purchasing psychology and behavior. During the pandemic, consumers' perception of brands underwent a transformation, which influenced their purchasing decisions. Specifically, brand awareness, trust and social responsibility awareness have become important factors affecting consumer choice. Especially in the special period of the epidemic, consumers' attention to health, safety and product reliability has reached an unprecedented high. This trend makes brands not only work hard on product quality and user experience, but also pay attention to the emotional connection and value resonance between consumers, and actively respond to and meet the growing expectations of consumers.

To achieve this, brands need to enhance brand awareness and consumer loyalty through enhanced social media interaction and communication. In this process, it is necessary for brands to use social platforms to connect more closely with consumers, understand their needs and feedback, and create products and services that are more relevant to the market. In addition, the epidemic has accelerated the popularity of online shopping, making e-commerce platforms play an increasingly important role in the sale of sports goods. Therefore, brands should adapt to this trend and accelerate the pace of digital transformation in order to adapt to the new consumer environment.

Looking to the future, as consumers pay more attention to healthy lifestyles and sustainable development, the sports goods market is expected to gradually recover. However, the challenges

brands face in this process cannot be ignored, and they must constantly adapt and innovate to meet ever-changing market demands. To achieve this, collaboration between business, government and all sectors of society is essential. Policy support, industry cooperation and resource sharing can jointly promote the healthy development of the entire sports industry, so as to enhance the brand's anti-risk ability and influence in the future market competition.

In short, to gain a firm foothold in the future competition, brands need to deeply understand consumer psychology, strengthen brand value, and actively respond to rapid changes in the market. This will not only help brands remain invincible in the market, but also create more and better choices for consumers, which in turn will promote the sustainable development of the sports goods market.

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