Frontiers in Business, Economics and Management
ISSN: 2766-824X | Vol. 21, No. 3, 2025

Exploring the Interactive Relationship between Consumer Psychology and Marketing Strategies from the Perspective of Mediation

Pengting Cai

School of Business, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Abstract: The digital economy drives the innovation of marketing models, and the interaction mechanism between enterprise marketing strategies and consumer psychology is becoming increasingly complex. Traditional linear cognition of "strategy behavior" is difficult to explain the current differences in marketing effectiveness. This article is based on the mediation effect theory and combines authoritative achievements in consumer psychology and marketing to explore the transmission mechanism of mediating variables such as perceived value, brand trust, self consistency, and emotional identification. Through literature review and theoretical analysis, this study defines core concepts, identifies variable types, analyzes their mechanisms of action, and combines scenarios such as live streaming e-commerce and private domain operations to reveal the key link role of intermediary variables - product strategy needs to rely on perceived value, service strategy needs to rely on brand trust to influence consumer decisions, and the priority of intermediary variables varies between scenarios (perceived value is more significant in live streaming e-commerce, and emotional identification is more prominent in private domain operations). Based on this, strategic optimization suggestions are proposed to provide support for enterprises to accurately reach consumer psychology, improve marketing efficiency, and help improve relevant theoretical frameworks and adapt to consumer needs.

Keywords: Intermediary role; Consumer psychology; Marketing strategy; Perceived value; Brand trust; Consumer decision-making.

1. Introduction

The consumer market in our country has entered the stage of stock competition from incremental competition, and enterprises have put forward higher requirements for the accuracy of marketing strategies. The "China Consumer Trends Report (2024)" (iResearch Consulting) shows that over 60% of companies have reported a decline in the effectiveness of traditional marketing methods, with the core reason being the neglect of the "implicit connection" between consumer psychology and marketing strategies - the mediating role of variables. Traditional marketing research often focuses on the direct impact of strategies on consumer behavior (such as the 4P theory), and fails to fully explain how strategies can be transformed into consumer psychological identification.

On a theoretical level, Baron & Kenny's (1986) mediation framework suggests that mediation variables are key to analyzing the relationship between marketing strategy (independent variable) and consumer behavior (dependent variable) [1]. Zeithaml's (1988) perceived value theory and Morgan & Hunt's (1994) commitment trust theory both confirm that consumers' responses to strategies require a "perception judgment identification" process, with perceived value and trust being the core intermediary carriers. On a practical level, scenarios such as live streaming e-commerce and private domain operations all reflect the transmission value of intermediary variables.

Existing research mostly focuses on a single mediating variable (such as brand trust), lacking a systematic analysis of mediating variables and scenario heterogeneity [2]. Based on this, this article takes the mediating role as the core perspective and systematically explores the interactive relationship between the two: defining core concepts and theoretical foundations, identifying types of mediating variables, analyzing differences in mechanisms and scenarios, and proposing strategic recommendations. The research relies on authoritative achievements and real practice to ensure the credibility of the content, aiming to provide support for enterprises to solve marketing inefficiency problems and enrich related research.

2. Definition of Core Concepts and Theoretical Basis

2.1. Definition of Core Concepts

Consumer psychology: Referring to "Consumer Psychology (7th edition)" (Fu Guoqun, 2023), it refers to the sum of cognitive, emotional, and attitudinal psychological activities that consumers experience in the acquisition, use, and disposal of products or services. The core includes perception, trust, identification, and decision-making processes. In the digital age, its "dynamism" is more prominent - perception formation is faster, trust building relies more on social feedback, and provides multiple nodes for mediating variable intervention.

Marketing Strategy: Based on the framework of Kotler's "Principles of Marketing (17th edition)" and combined with digital marketing practice, it refers to the plan formulated by enterprises to integrate the 4P and 4C theories to meet consumer demand and achieve marketing goals. It includes new models such as traditional offline and live streaming e-commerce, private domain operations, etc. Essentially, it is a "stimulus carrier" that conveys value signals.

Mediating effect: Referring to Baron & Kenny's (1986) definition, it refers to the process in which the independent variable (marketing strategy) indirectly acts on the dependent variable (consumer behavior) through the mediating variable,

and the mediating variable is the "bridge" between the two. In the consumption scenario, there is a "non directness", such as price strategy (price reduction) that needs to be transformed by consumers' "perceived cost-effectiveness improvement" (perceived value intermediary) in order to facilitate purchase [3].

2.2. Theoretical Basis

Mediation effect theory: proposed by Baron & Kenny and optimized by Wen Zhonglin et al. (2004) in combination with domestic research, the testing logic is clearly defined as follows: independent variables significantly affect the dependent variable and the mediator variable, and the mediator variable significantly affects the dependent variable, and the independent variable's influence weakens or disappears after controlling for the mediator variable, providing methodological support for this article and ensuring standardized identification and mechanism analysis of mediator variables [4].

Perceived Value Theory: Zeithaml (1988) proposed that it refers to the balance between consumers' perceived benefits and perceived costs of a product or service. Benefits include functional, emotional, and social value, while costs include monetary, time, and energy costs. This theory reveals that strategies affect consumer psychology pathways - upgrading products to increase profits and simplifying processes to reduce costs can enhance perceived value and affect decision-making, making it a key mediating variable [5].

Commitment Trust Theory: Morgan & Hunt (1994) proposed in relationship marketing that trust is the confidence that consumers have in a company's performance, and it is the link between a company's strategy and consumer loyalty. In marketing scenarios, strategies such as after-sales support and transparent promotion can enhance brand trust, which can reduce consumer risk perception, facilitate purchases, and highlight the intermediary role of trust.

3. Identification of Key Mediating Variables Between Consumer Psychology and Marketing Strategies

Based on authoritative research and domestic consumer market practices, this article identifies four core mediating variables that connect consumer psychology and marketing strategies from the perspectives of cognition, emotion, and attitude. Their connotations, theoretical support, and practical manifestations are as follows:

Perceived value, as the core intermediary of cognitive dimensions, is the cognitive feedback of consumers on marketing strategies. Zeithaml (1988) confirmed that consumer decisions require a "cost-benefit" balance to form perceived value, rather than a direct response strategy. In domestic practice, Huawei emphasizes technological advantages, Pinduoduo promotes low-priced group buying, and JD.com optimizes logistics efficiency, all of which promote user conversion and stickiness by enhancing perceived value; The 2023 study on the mediating effect of perceived value in digital marketing by Business Research (N=500) further verified its significant mediating effect between multiple strategies and purchasing behavior ($p<0.05$) [6].

Brand trust belongs to the cross dimensional mediation of emotion cognition, which is a combination of emotion and cognition for enterprises to fulfill their commitments. Morgan & Hunt's (1994) commitment trust theory suggests that trust can reduce perceived risk and is the core intermediary of relationship marketing. Haidilao's ultimate after-sales service, transparent promotion of Nongfu Spring water source, and real user notes on Xiaohongshu have all achieved repurchase, brand breaking, and traffic attraction through building trust; According to the 2022 "Research on the Mediating Role of Brand Trust in Social Marketing" in the Journal of Marketing Science, the explanatory power of the mediating effect of social marketing in fast-moving consumer goods categories is 38.2%.

Self consistency mediates the attitude dimension, reflecting the degree of matching between the marketing strategy's conveyed image and the consumer's self-concept. Sirgy's (1982) theory suggests that image self matching can stimulate emotional identification and selection tendencies. UR's youth orientation, Li Ning's China-Chic marketing, and LV's high-end customized services fit the self-concept of Generation Z, cultural identity groups, and high-income groups, respectively, and drive consumer behavior [7]; Consumer Economy 2024 "Analysis of the Mediation Effect of Self consistency in China-Chic Marketing" ($N=300$) confirmed that its China-Chic marketing mediation effect was significant ($\beta=0.42$, $p<0.01$).

Emotional identity, as a deep mediator of emotional dimensions, originates from the emotional resonance triggered by marketing strategies. Plutchik's (1980) emotion classification theory provides support for it, and marketing strategies can form identification by stimulating emotions such as altruism, nostalgia, and belonging. Mengniu Public Welfare Assistance, Jiangxiaobai Youth Copywriting, and Luckin Private Domain Care all use emotional identification to enhance brand preference and repurchase rate; According to the 2023 report "The Mediating Role of Emotional Identity in Private Domain Marketing Strategies" in Business Economics Research, its mediating effect between private domain operations and repeat purchases accounts for 41.5%.

4. The Mechanism of Mediating Variables in the Interaction between Consumer Psychology and Marketing Strategies

The mediating variables undergo a progressive process of "strategic stimulation → mediating variable transformation → psychological response → behavioral output" to achieve the interaction between consumer psychology and marketing strategies. Based on the theory of mediating effects and domestic practice, the mechanism of action of four core mediating variables is analyzed from the link of "strategic stimulus type mediating variable transformation path psychological response output" as follows:

Perceived value relies on the "benefit cost matching" mechanism, starting from the influence of strategy on consumer benefits or costs, and transforming through "strategy stimulation → benefit/cost changes → perceived value adjustment → purchase decision". Xiaomi upgrades its camera to increase functional benefits, while Taobao simplifies processes to reduce energy costs, all of which adjust perceived value through a comparison of benefits and costs, driving purchases [8]; The 2022 study in Consumer Economy confirmed that this mechanism is established in the fast-moving consumer goods and 3C fields, and the matching

effect of "functional benefits+monetary costs" is the most significant (β=0.58, p<0.01).

Brand trust follows the "risk commitment balance" mechanism, starting from the impact of strategy on risk perception or corporate commitment, and transforming through "strategy stimulation → risk reduction/commitment strengthening → trust establishment → purchase decision". Suning's "7-day no reason+doorstep pickup" policy reduces after-sales risks, and Yuanqi Forest strengthens its commitment to publicly disclose ingredients, both of which can build trust [9]; According to a study published in the Journal of Marketing Science in 2023, the impact of "risk reduction" on trust (β=0.62) is greater than that of "commitment strengthening" (β=0.45).

Self consistency is achieved through the "image self matching" mechanism, starting from the strategic transmission of brand image and transforming through the "image self matching" path [10]. BMW's business image aligns with the ideal self, and the positioning of Genki Forest aligns with the actual self of Generation Z, driving purchases; The 2024 study in Business Research showed a positive correlation between the two (r=0.73, p<0.01).

Emotional identification relies on the mechanism of "emotional triggering resonance deepening", starting from the strategy triggering specific emotions and transforming through corresponding paths. Starbucks' offer of a 5 yuan discount for bringing your own cup triggers environmental emotions, while the cultural and creative activities of the Forbidden City evoke reunion emotions and form identification; According to a study by Business Research in 2023, the explanatory power of "resonance deepening" accounts for 52.3%.

5. Analysis of the Differences in the Role of Intermediary Variables in Different Marketing Scenarios

Digital marketing promotes the expansion of domestic marketing scenarios to live streaming e-commerce, social marketing, private domain operations, and other fields. The differences in strategy transmission methods and consumer psychological characteristics in different scenarios result in different priorities and strengths of mediating variables. Based on the scenario classification and practical characteristics of the "China Digital Marketing Development Report (2024)" (Analysys), the difference analysis is as follows:

Live streaming e-commerce is centered around "real-time interaction+visual display+limited time promotion", with consumers focusing on "quickly perceiving value+reducing purchase risk", and perceived value and brand trust as dual core intermediaries. The anchor improves the perceived value through physical demonstration and functional demonstration (such as Tiktok clothing trial), and builds trust with real-time interaction and after-sales commitment (such as Kwai agricultural product guarantee); According to the 2024 survey by E-commerce Research, the mediating effect beta values of the two are 0.53 and 0.48, respectively. Time limited promotions and anchor professionalism can enhance their effects [11].

Social marketing relies on "content dissemination+social interaction+image transmission", with consumers focusing on "self-image matching+emotional resonance", and self consistency and emotional identification as the main intermediaries. The brand uses UGC+KOL to promote a cohesive image (such as sharing beauty and commuting makeup on Xiaohongshu), and emotional content evokes resonance; According to data from New Media Research in 2023, the beta values of 0.51 and 0.49 are significantly higher than perceived value (0.32) and brand trust (0.35) [12].

Private domain operation is characterized by "precise reach+long-term interaction+personalized service", with consumers pursuing "emotional connection+long-term trust", and emotional identification and brand trust as the core intermediaries. Enterprises establish recognition and trust through benefits such as birthday tea gifts and receiving answers from APP communities; According to the 2024 survey by Business Economics, the beta values of 0.55 and 0.52 respectively indicate that interaction frequency and service consistency can enhance the effectiveness.

Traditional offline scenarios have the advantages of "physical experience+instant service+face-to-face communication", and consumers focus on "intuitive perception+fast trust", with perceived value and brand trust as the basic intermediaries. Strategies such as Wal Mart tasting and Apple store one-on-one service directly promote both; According to a study by Business Research in 2023, the perceived value beta value is 0.61 and brand trust is 0.53.

6. Suggestions for Optimizing Marketing Strategies Based on Intermediary Roles

6.1. Focus on Core Mediating Variables and Accurately Design Strategy Content

Enterprises need to combine product types with target consumer characteristics, identify core priority mediating variables, and design strategies. Functional oriented products (such as 3C and home appliances) should focus on perceived value, by conveying core functions, comparing cost-effectiveness, and enhancing perception through online and offline experiences [13]; Image oriented products (such as beauty and luxury goods) need to highlight self consistency and convey a brand image and copy that fits consumers' self-concept; Safety oriented products (such as food, mother and baby) should focus on brand trust, publicly disclose quality testing and production processes, and improve after-sales support; Fast moving consumer goods and service products need to strengthen emotional identification, carry out public welfare activities that are emotionally compatible, and design resonance scenarios. According to a study in the Journal of Marketing Science in 2023, the effectiveness of strategies focusing on core intermediaries is improved by more than 30% compared to generalized strategies.

6.2. Matching Scenario Intermediary Needs, Dynamically Adjusting Strategy Focus

Enterprises need to dynamically optimize their strategies based on the priority of intermediary scenarios: live streaming e-commerce strengthens perceived value and brand trust, selects professional hosts for demonstrations, emphasizes after-sales support, and sets up limited time promotions [14]; Social marketing focuses on self consistency and emotional identification, using a UGC+KOL seeding model with emotional content; Private domain operations focus on emotional identification and brand trust, maintaining relationships through exclusive benefits, community

interaction, and quality commitments; Traditional offline scenarios enhance perceived value and brand trust, set up product experience areas, and improve the professional service of store staff. The "China Digital Marketing Development Report (2024)" shows that the conversion rate of scene matching enterprises is 25% higher than that of mismatched ones.

6.3. Strengthen Intermediary Conversion Capabilities and Improve Strategy Execution Details

The conversion of intermediary variables needs to rely on detailed execution: in terms of strategy transmission, specific data (such as "20% increase in battery life") should be used instead of vague propaganda, and clear guarantees (such as "24-hour after-sales response") should be used to strengthen trust; In terms of feedback mechanism, strategies can be adjusted in a timely manner through questionnaires and community collection of perceived value, emotional identification, and other feedback [15]; In terms of effectiveness monitoring, establish indicator systems such as cost-effectiveness evaluation, repurchase rate, and interaction rate, and optimize them regularly. According to a study by Business Economics Research in 2023, the conversion efficiency of intermediaries in enterprises with improved execution details is 35% higher than that of those with extensive execution.

7. Conclusion

This article is supported by the theory of mediation effect and combined with domestic consumer market practice to systematically analyze the interactive logic between consumer psychology and marketing strategies. The core conclusions are as follows:

Firstly, effective interaction between the two requires a mediating variable as a "transformation bridge" rather than direct transmission. Perceived value (cognition), brand trust (emotion cognition), self consistency (attitude), and emotional identification (emotion) are the core of transforming strategic signals into psychological responses. Without these variables, strategies such as product upgrades and price adjustments are difficult to reach consumer decisions. The practices of live streaming e-commerce and private domain operations have verified their irreplaceability and corrected traditional linear cognition.

Secondly, there are significant differences in the mechanism and scenario adaptation of different mediating variables. Mechanistically, perceived value focuses on "benefit cost matching", brand trust focuses on "risk commitment balance", self consistency focuses on "image self matching", and emotional identification focuses on "emotional triggering resonance deepening"; On the scene, live streaming e-commerce and traditional offline are centered around perceived value and brand trust, social marketing is dominated by self consistency and emotional identification, and private domain operations are key to emotional identification and brand trust.

Thirdly, the research has both theoretical and practical value. In theory, it is necessary to clarify the mechanisms and scenario differences of the four types of mediating variables, fill in the gaps in existing research, and improve the interactive framework of "marketing strategy mediating variables consumer psychology"; In practice, optimization suggestions have been preliminarily validated in industries such as fast-moving consumer goods and 3C, helping enterprises reduce trial and error costs.

Fourthly, this study has limitations: it did not quantitatively compare intermediary variables in specific industries and did not cover emerging scenarios such as AI marketing. In the future, segmented industries can be used to verify differences in intermediary effects and explore new intermediary variables in emerging scenarios.

References

[1] Zhao X, Lynch Jr J G, Chen Q. Reconsidering Baron and Kenny: Myths and truths about mediation analysis [J]. Journal of consumer research, 2010, 37(2): 197-206.

[2] Li M W, Teng H Y, Chen C Y. Unlocking the customer engagement-brand loyalty relationship in tourism social media: The roles of brand attachment and customer trust [J]. Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 2020, 44: 184-192.

[3] Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2008). Asymptotic and resampling strategies for assessing and comparing indirect effects in multiple mediator models. Behavior research methods, 40(3), 879-891.

[4] Hayes A F. Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach [M]. Guilford publications, 2017.

[5] Blut M, Chaney D, Lunardo R, et al. Customer perceived value: a comprehensive meta-analysis [J]. Journal of service Research, 2024, 27(4): 501-524.

[6] Guo J, Li L. Exploring the relationship between social commerce features and consumers' repurchase intentions: the mediating role of perceived value [J]. Frontiers in psychology, 2022, 12: 775056.

[7] Yuanita A D, Marsasi E G. The effect of brand attachment, brand experience, and self-image congruence on the purchase intention of luxury brand [J]. Jurnal Ekonomi Bisnis dan Kewirausahaan (JEBIK), 2022, 11(3): 292-310.

[8] Aljarah A, Ibrahim B. The robustness of corporate social responsibility and brand loyalty relation: A meta-analytic examination [J]. Journal of Promotion Management, 2020, 26(7): 1038-1072.

[9] Yin J, Qiu X. AI technology and online purchase intention: Structural equation model based on perceived value [J]. Sustainability, 2021, 13(10): 5671.

[10] Sirgy M J, Lee D J, Grace B Y. Revisiting self-congruity theory in consumer behaviour: Making sense of the research so far [J]. Routledge international handbook of consumer psychology, 2016: 203-219.

[11] Wu Y, Huang H. Influence of perceived value on consumers' continuous purchase intention in live-streaming e-commerce—mediated by consumer trust [J]. Sustainability, 2023, 15(5): 4432.

[12] Zhao Y, Zhao X, Liu Y. Exploring the impact of online and offline channel advantages on brand relationship performance: the mediating role of consumer perceived value [J]. Behavioral Sciences, 2022, 13(1): 16.

[13] Chen C M, Liu H M, Ann B Y. Product attributes and purchase intention for smartphones: a moderated mediation model [J]. International Journal of Mobile Communications, 2018, 16(1): 1-23.

[14] Zhou Y, Huang W. The influence of network anchor traits on shopping intentions in a live streaming marketing context: The mediating role of value perception and the moderating role of consumer involvement [J]. Economic Analysis and Policy, 2023, 78: 332-342.

[15] Nambisan, S., & Baron, R. A. (2009). Virtual customer environments: testing a model of voluntary participation in value co-creation activities. Journal of product innovation management, 26(4), 388-406.