

The Mechanism by Which E-commerce Brands Influence Consumer Willingness: Taking Sichuan Users' Consumption of Sporting Goods As an Example

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ABSTRACT This paper investigates sporting goods consumers in Sichuan Province and examines the mechanism through which ecommerce brand characteristics influence purchase intention. Based on the technology acceptance model and trust theory, a theoretical framework of “e-commerce brand characteristics-consumer trust and perceived value-purchase intention” is constructed. Questionnaire data from 584 consumers with online sporting goods purchasing experience are collected, and structural equation modeling is used for empirical testing. The results show that store reputation, product quality, logistics speed, and customer service significantly affect purchase intention through the mediating effects of consumer trust and perceived value. Store reputation has the most prominent influence on trust, while logistics speed has the strongest effect on perceived value. Trust and perceived value both play partial mediating roles between e-commerce brand characteristics and purchase intention. The study further identifies differentiated regional consumption mechanisms in Sichuan Province: Chengdu shows an innovation-oriented consumption pattern, while cities such as Mianyang and Yibin show stronger trust-risk aversion. The findings provide decision support for regionally differentiated e-commerce marketing strategies.

INDEX TERMS e-commerce brand, sporting goods, purchase intention, consumer trust, perceived value

I. INTRODUCTION

AS a complex concept, an e-commerce brand encompasses both the platform's overall influence and the brand image of sports goods presented on that platform. This synergy highlights how perceived material performance—often signaled through technical branding—interacts with aesthetic digital identity to shape consumer perception. While aesthetic appeal remains a primary driver, e-commerce platforms leverage ‘technical’ narratives to enhance the brand's professional image, thereby influencing the psychological valuation of the sports products. Traditional research often explores the impact of brands on consumer behavior from a single dimension, but how this complex variable of “e-commerce brand” exerts its influence through multiple pathways remains largely unexamined. Particularly at the regional market level, differences in cultural background, consumption habits, and brand awareness among consumers in different regions result in regionally specific mechanisms of influence for e-commerce brands.

Based on this, this paper takes sports goods consumers in Sichuan Province as the research object and focuses on the following core questions: How do e-commerce brand

characteristics affect consumers' willingness to buy? What role do consumer trust and perceived value play in this process? Does sports goods consumption in Sichuan Province exhibit unique regional characteristics? By answering these questions, this study aims to reveal the mechanism by which e-commerce brands influence consumer willingness while providing theoretical support for sports goods companies to formulate regional marketing strategies. This research clarifies how technical performance and brand identity interact within digital platforms to drive consumption across different regional markets.

II. RELATED WORK

E-commerce, based on the Internet and digital technology, has been deeply embedded in the daily consumption scenarios of residents. It has not only reshaped the spatial pattern of urban and rural consumer markets, but also spawned new consumption behavior patterns at the micro level. Liu et al. [1] explored how the increase in e-commerce penetration in rural areas of China affects residents' consumption. Jiang et al. [2] revealed the complex relationship between e-commerce development and consumption inequality. Wu

et al. [3] used the difference-in-differences (DID) method commonly used in policy evaluation to identify the net effect of the policy by comparing the differences in consumption changes of rural households in pilot areas and non-pilot areas before and after the implementation of the policy. Gunawan et al. [4] concluded that during the epidemic, students' e-commerce consumption behavior changed, and their financial literacy level had a significant impact on their consumption decisions, risk perception, and financial health. [5] believes that the change in consumption patterns driven by e-commerce is an important feature of the development of the digital economy. This change has played a positive role in promoting economic growth by stimulating aggregate demand and optimizing resource allocation.

Sama et al. [6] turned their research perspective to the specific field of cross-border e-commerce and explored how consumers' behavior is affected by the leniency of return policies when making cross-border online purchases. Yoşumaz and Gülbaşı [7] explored how hedonistic consumption and impulsive purchases affect consumers' willingness to buy in the e-commerce environment and introduced cybersecurity perception as a mediating variable for examination. Vu and Nguyen [8] focused on the back end of the e-commerce service chain, namely how the quality of e-logistics services affects the attitudes and repeat purchase intentions of Generation Z consumers. Miao et al. [9] explored the key factors affecting consumers' willingness to repeat purchases, focusing on the role of e-customer satisfaction, e-trust and perceived value. Ram et al. [10] combined e-commerce with environmental sustainability issues, aiming to establish a circular economy framework for e-commerce packaging materials. Existing research has not explored the brand transmission mechanism of sporting goods in specific regional markets, and there is still a gap in how the composite variable of "ecommerce brand" plays a role through the mediating path of trust, perceived value and purchase intention. Based on this, this paper takes the consumption of sporting goods by users in Sichuan Province as a starting point and systematically examines the influence mechanism of e-commerce brands on consumer willingness, in order to provide more targeted theoretical support for regional e-commerce marketing strategies.

III. METHODS

A. RESEARCH MODEL CONSTRUCTION

This study proposes a model of this influence mechanism of brand characteristics of e-commerce on the purchase intention of consumers, which is based on the technology acceptance model and trust theory. The technology acceptance model focuses on the perceived usefulness and ease of use in acceptance of new technologies by individuals, this framework can be applied to the acceptance of e-commerce brands consumption process. Trust theory indicates that in the online shopping environment due to information asymmetry and transaction uncertainties, consumer's trust on sellers becomes an important determinant of their decision

on purchase [11,12].

The brand characteristics of e-commerce are divided into four dimensions store reputation, product quality, logistics speed, and customer service levels according to the research model. These four-dimensions include both platform-level and brand-level characteristics so that the complex concept of "e-commerce brand" can be reflected fully. The model takes the trust and perceived value of consumers as mediating variables and purchase intention as the dependent variable. Consumer trust is defined as the consumer's confidence in the reliability, integrity, and benevolent intentions of e-commerce brands within the digital marketplace, while perceived value referred to the general consumer's assessment about what they get and don't get in the shopping process. The four dimensions of e-commerce brand characteristics hypothesized in this research are its impact on consumer trust and perceived value, which will influence their purchase intention.

B. QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN AND VARIABLE MEASUREMENT

The questionnaire design adhered to the principles of scientific rigor, systematic approach, and operability. Measurement items for each variable were based on existing, well-established scales, with appropriate adjustments made to suit the e-commerce consumption context of sporting goods and the regional characteristics of Sichuan Province. All items used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 point for "completely disagree" to 5 points for "completely agree."

The measurement of store reputation includes three items: the e-commerce brand enjoys a good reputation in the industry; the e-commerce brand's overall user reviews are good; and the e-commerce brand has a lot of positive discussions on social media platforms. The measurement of product quality includes three items: the e-commerce brand's sporting goods are made of reliable materials and workmanship; the technical specifications of the materials (such as breathability and durability) meet the performance benchmarks claimed; and the product's physical attributes align with the objective material standards advertised in the digital storefront. The measurement of logistics speed includes three items: the e-commerce brand's order processing speed is fast; the e-commerce brand's delivery time meets its promises; and the e-commerce brand's logistics information updates are timely and accurate. The measurement of customer service includes three items: the e-commerce brand's customer service responds promptly; the e-commerce brand's customer service is able to answer questions professionally; and the e-commerce brand's after-sales problem handling is satisfactory [13].

The measurement of consumer trust includes three items: I believe the e-commerce brand will fulfill its promises; I believe the e-commerce brand maintains ethical integrity in its transaction processes; I trust the brand's long-term commitment to consumer welfare beyond the individual product purchase. The measurement of perceived value

includes three items: Shopping at the e-commerce brand is good value for money; Shopping at the e-commerce brand provides a good experience; Considering both price and service, I believe choosing the e-commerce brand is a wise decision. The measurement of purchase intention includes three items: I am willing to buy sporting goods from the e-commerce brand; I would prioritize the e-commerce brand; I would recommend the e-commerce brand to others.

The questionnaire also included demographic variables and consumer behavior characteristics. Demographic variables included gender, age, income level, and education level; consumer behavior characteristics included online shopping frequency, average annual spending on sporting goods, frequently used e-commerce platforms, and preferred categories of sporting goods. Considering the regional characteristics of Sichuan Province, the questionnaire also included questions on regional distribution, differentiating Chengdu from other cities and prefectures to examine intra-regional differences.

C. DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

This study surveyed consumers in Sichuan Province who had experience purchasing sporting goods online. Data collection employed a combination of online and offline methods. Online channels involved distributing questionnaire links through the Wenjuanxing platform and spreading them in social groups in major cities of Sichuan Province. Offline channels involved intercepting and interviewing consumers with e-commerce shopping experience at sports venues, gyms, and physical sporting goods stores in Chengdu, Mianyang, Yibin, and other cities, inviting them to scan a QR code to complete the questionnaire [14,15]. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. No personally identifiable information was stored.

A total of 826 questionnaires were collected in this survey. After screening and removing invalid questionnaires, 584 valid questionnaires were obtained, with a valid response rate of 70.7%. The criteria for removing invalid questionnaires included: the time taken to complete the questionnaire was exceptionally short (less than 45 seconds), a threshold determined by pre-test averages to ensure cognitive engagement while retaining responses from efficient, experienced digital consumers; the answers showed obvious regularity (such as all answers selecting the same option); there were logical contradictions; the IP address was not from Sichuan Province or the permanent residence was not in Sichuan.

The sample structure shows that males make up 52.4% and females make up 47.6% of the population, so that there is a fairly even split between the two genders. In terms of age distribution, 28.6% are 18-25 years old, 41.3% are 26-35 years old, 20.5% are 36-45 years old, and 9.6% are 46 years old and above, which reflects that it has a youthful trend according to the age structure of the main consumer group of e-commerce consumers. Regarding income level,

31.2% have monthly income under 5000 yuan, 35.4% have 5001~8000 yuan, 21.9% have 8001~12000 yuan, and 11.5% have income more than 12000 yuan, which covers different income level. In terms of the distribution of regions, 48.3% of the sample is from Chengdu, and 51.7% is from cities and prefectures, which reflects the distribution of the population in Sichuan Province.

In terms of the consumer behavior characteristics, the highest percentage of the consumers (47.6%) shop online 1 to 3 times per week (when compared with heavy consumers, 18.3%) which shop online 4 times per week or more. Consumers with an average annual consumption expenditure of 1001-3000 yuan on sports goods are 38.5%, 3001-5000yuan is 24.7%, 5000yuan above is 13.2%, it shows that the sample has relatively rich experience of consumption on sports goods. Among the favorite products of the sporting goods sector, sportswear represented the highest growth percentage (76.4%), followed by fitness equipment (32.8%) and equipment for outdoor walks (28.9%), which is in line with the current trend in the consumption of sports goods.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY TESTING

The reading reliability and validity of the measurement scale was tested prior to the testing of the hypotheses. Reliability was assessed with Cronbach's alpha coefficient while validity was assessed with the inclusion of content validity, convergent validity, and the discriminant validity. As for content validity, the measurement items in this study were all based on a mature scale and this was revised and improved based on a small-scale pre-test prior to the study against the sporting goods consumer and showed good content validity. Table 1 displays the results of reliability test and confirmatory factor analysis for each scale. As can be seen from the table, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of all the latent variables are above the threshold of 0.8 that ranges from 0.812 to 0.874, which has been interpreted as high internal consistency reliability. The combined reliability (CR) values fall between 0.815-0.882, which are all greater than the recommended standard of 0.7, further confirming the reliability level of the scales. The mean variance extracted (AVE) vary from 0.596 to 0.653, which are all greater than the critical value of 0.5, and thus demonstrate good convergent validity, which indicates that the measurement items associated with a single latent variable effectively account for a substantial proportion of that variable's variance.

Discriminant validity was examined by comparing the square root of the AVE of each latent variable to the correlation values of these latent variables with other variables. The mean, standard deviation, correlation coefficient, and the square root of AVE are obtained for each latent variable presented in Table 2. The bold values down the diagonal are the square root of AVE, are all greater than 0.77. The maximum absolute value of the correlation coefficient of the variables was 0.612 which is less than the square root of the AVE. This shows that the common variance between

TABLE 1. Results of the scale's reliability and convergent validity tests

Latent variables	Number of measurement items	Cronbach's α	Combined reliability (CR)	Mean variance extracted (AVE)
Shop reputation	3	0.843	0.849	0.612
Product quality	3	0.826	0.832	0.603
Logistics speed	3	0.812	0.815	0.596
Customer Service	3	0.838	0.841	0.621
Consumer trust	3	0.862	0.868	0.638
Perceived Value	3	0.847	0.851	0.625
Purchase intention	3	0.874	0.882	0.653

each latent variable and its respective measurement items is higher than the common variance between the latent variable and other variables, which provides evidence of good discriminant validity of the scale.

Descriptive statistics shows that the value of each variables ranging in mean value from 3.87 to 4.12, which are all larger than the theoretical median of 3 points, indicating that the attitude of each of the 4 in Sichuan consumers are generally good for e-commerce brands on sporting goods. Among these, store reputation

had the highest mean (4.12), which suggests that consumers have a high level of trust of the reputation of e-commerce brands. Customer service had a relatively lower mean (3.87) which is an indication that the ecommerce brands still have some room for improvement when it comes to after-sales service. The average purchase intention was found to be 4.06 that indicates the consumers have strong intention of purchasing sporting goods through e-commerce channels.

B. STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL ANALYSIS

The path coefficients test results of structural equation model are presented in Table 3. Analysis of the structural model reveals a significant positive association between store reputation and consumer trust ($\beta = 0.384$, $p < 0.001$); specifically, higher levels of perceived store reputation are strongly correlated with increased consumer trust in the e-commerce brand. Product quality is also significant on the level of consumer trust ($\beta = 0.276$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that product quality is an important basis for building consumer trust. Logistics speed has the most significant impact on the perceived value ($\beta = 0.362$, $p < 0.001$) and therefore in the case of e-commerce consumption of sporting goods, the efficiency of logistics is directly related and perceived by the consumers in terms of the shopping value. Customer service also influences perceived value to a large extent ($\beta = 0.283$, $p < 0.001$), which can be interpreted as that customer service in a professional and timely way can increase the consumer's experience of value.

Consumer trust has a significant positive impact of purchase intention ($\beta = 0.347$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived value also has a significant impact of purchase intention ($\beta = 0.329$, $p < 0.001$). These two mediating variables have explained a total of 49.6% variance in purchase intention, which suggests that trust and perceived value are important bridges between e-commerce brand characteristics and pur-

chase intention. The persistence of significant direct effects (e.g., store reputation to purchase intention, $\beta = 0.254$) suggests that while trust and value are vital bridges, the brand itself exerts a 'halo effect' that bypasses these mediators. This indicates that other unobserved factors, such as regional brand loyalty or social influence in Sichuan's sports communities, may also play a critical role in direct intention formation.

In order to further explore the importance of the mediation effect, the Bootstrap method was adopted for analysis of the mediation effect. Table 4 shows the decomposition results of the indirect effect, direct effect and total effect. From the view of the total effect, store reputation has the most significant impact on purchase intention (total effect 0.412), followed by logistics speed (total effect 0.398) and product quality (total effect 0.376), whereas the total effect of customer service is rather low (0.312). This ranking shows that in the decision-making process of the sporting goods consumer in Sichuan Province the brand reputation of e-commerce and the efficiency of logistics delivery are more important considerations.

Mediation analysis showed that consumer trust had an indirect effect of 0.158 on the relationship between store reputation and purchase intention, which accounted for 38.3% of the total effect of store reputation; perceived value had an indirect effect of 0.119 on the relationship between logistics speed and purchase intention, which accounted for 29.9% of the total effect of logistics speed. The bootstrap confidence intervals for all indirect effects did not span 0 and therefore significant mediation effects were estimated. To sum up, all four dimensions of e-commerce brand characteristics had an influence on purchase intention via the partial mediation of consumer trust and perceived value, which confirms the theoretical framework of this study.

TABLE 2. Descriptive statistics, correlation coefficient matrix, and discriminant validity test

variable	mean	Standard deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Store reputation	4.12	0.68	0.782						
2. Product quality	4.08	0.72	0.524	0.777					
3. Logistics speed	3.95	0.81	0.463	0.436	0.772				
4. Customer Service	3.87	0.85	0.487	0.452	0.528	0.788			
5. Consumer trust	4.03	0.75	0.603	0.548	0.497	0.512	0.799		
6. Perceived Value	3.98	0.78	0.526	0.539	0.589	0.543	0.612	0.791	
7. Purchase Intent	4.06	0.73	0.571	0.553	0.528	0.516	0.608	0.601	0.808

Note: All correlation coefficients are significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.

TABLE 3. Path coefficient test results for structural equation model

Path Relationship	Standardized path coefficient	Standard error	critical ratio	Significance
Store reputation → Consumer trust	0.384	0.056	6.857	$p < 0.001$
Product quality → Consumer trust	0.276	0.049	5.633	$p < 0.001$
Logistics speed → Consumer trust	0.183	0.052	3.519	$p < 0.001$
Customer service → Consumer trust	0.165	0.055	3.000	$p < 0.01$
Store reputation → Perceived value	0.158	0.058	2.724	$p < 0.01$
Product quality → Perceived value	0.225	0.053	4.245	$p < 0.001$
Logistics speed → Perceived value	0.362	0.059	6.136	$p < 0.001$
Customer service → Perceived value	0.283	0.057	4.965	$p < 0.001$
Consumer trust → Purchase intention	0.347	0.062	5.597	$p < 0.001$
Perceived value → Purchase intention	0.329	0.060	5.483	$p < 0.001$

TABLE 4. Results of Bootstrap Analysis of Mediation Effect

path	direct effects	Indirect effects	Total effect	Mediating effect proportion	95% confidence interval
Store reputation → Purchase intention	0.254	0.158	0.412	38.3%	[0.087, 0.231]
Product quality → Purchase intention	0.231	0.145	0.376	38.6%	[0.076, 0.218]
Logistics speed → Purchase intention	0.279	0.119	0.398	29.9%	[0.052, 0.187]
Customer service → Purchase intention	0.214	0.098	0.312	31.4%	[0.038, 0.162]

V. CONCLUSION

This paper investigates consumers of sports goods in Sichuan Province as the primary research object, utilizing the Technology Acceptance Model and trust theory to construct a mechanism of influence regarding e-commerce brand characteristics. By evaluating how material innovation and digital brand credibility interact, the study models the specific factors that drive consumer purchase intentions within the modern sports market. Through empirical analysis, the following major conclusions are drawn:

First, the characteristics of e-commerce brands play an important role in influencing the purchasing intention of consumers. Store reputation, product quality, logistics speed and customer service all have a positive influence, through the mediating role of consumer trust and perceived value, on purchase intentions. Among these, store reputation has the greatest effect on the overall purchase intention, which indicates that in the e-commerce environment where information is asymmetric, brand reputation is the main reference for consumer decision-making. Logistics speed has the greatest visible impact on perceived value that reflects the importance of “last-mile” delivery efficiency in the consumer e-commerce shopping experience.

Second, consumer trust and perceived value mediate, to a certain extent, the relationship between the brand characteristics on e-commerce Internet and purchase intention. E-Commerce Brand characteristics directly influence the pur-

chase intention and indirectly promote them by increasing the level of trust and value perceived by the consumer. The trust mechanism is highly focused on the importance of e-commerce brand reliability, while the value mechanism is more concerned with the process of weighing gains and losses by the consumer during the shopping process. These two paths run parallel to each other and reinforce each other together to account for the formation of purchase intention.

Based on the above conclusions, this study proposes a number of suggestions to e-commerce companies for selling sporting goods: first, to establish the market brand reputation continuously through true user reviews, professional community operations, and information disclosure, it is necessary to enhance consumer trust;

second, to guarantee product quality consistency; that is, to guarantee the quality of products sold online is comparable to that of products sold offline, and not to trigger trust crises caused by the differences in the two channels; third, to optimize the logistics and distribution system, especially the non-central urban area, improve the timeliness of delivery and information disclosure; finally, to strengthen

This study has the following limitations: First, the research method of cross-section makes it difficult to fully infer the cause and effect between variables, and further research can be conducted in the longitudinal design or through experimental means to verify. Second, although the

sample includes major cities in Sichuan Province, it does not represent rural consumers and the characteristics of rural e-commerce consumption need to be further studied. Third, the research emphasizes the characteristics of the e-commerce brands and does not pay sufficient attention to the moderating effect of individual differences of consumers; some future studies can further introduce some variables related to the e-commerce brand, such as consumer innovativeness and product involvement, to constitute a more complete model of the moderating mechanism. Despite these limitations, this study still offers valuable empirical evidence in understanding the mechanism by which e-commerce brands influence consumption willingness for sports goods, while providing a theoretical reference for formulating regional marketing strategies. By examining how material innovation and digital brand identity drive consumer behavior, this research offers a refined framework for optimizing market positioning in the sports industry.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Li Lai designed, collected and analyzed the data, and drafted the manuscript. Li Lai conducted the study, critically revised the manuscript for important intellectual content, and gave final approval of the version to be published. Li Lai participated fully in the work, take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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