



A Study of the Internal Mechanism of Consumer Response to Corporate CSR Behavior

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Abstract. Existing studies mainly study the impact of CSR behavior on consumer response based on questionnaires. However, there are relatively few studies on online consumer response, especially on the intermediate mechanism of impact. From the perspective of grounded theory, this paper takes major CSR events in society since 2021 as the case selection target and selects four enterprises as the research object according to the enterprise scale and business type for the case study. The empirical research results show that (1) It is found that the CSR behavior of enterprises mainly causes changes in three dimensions of public “Feeling-Behavior-Attitude”. (2) The public reaction model caused by the CSR is constructed, which is helpful for the theoretical circle to form a clearer understanding of CSR behavior of enterprises. It lays a good foundation for follow-up research. (3) Enterprises should realize the importance of communication and interaction in public welfare undertakings, use excellent quality and good brand image, and adopt appropriate forms to obtain public recognition, to improve and enhance the image of enterprises in the public mind.

Keywords: CSR · The Ground Theory · Consumer response

1 Introduction

With the advent of the Post-Pandemic, 90% of the world’s economies are experiencing rapid and deep contractions, adding to the already deteriorating global economy [1]. Rising production input prices, sharply shrinking demand, and higher financing costs are in front of almost all companies. Under such challenges, it is particularly valuable for enterprises to assume social responsibility [2]. Along with the rapid development of information technology and networking, social media has given netizens the right to “thumb speaks”, and CSR has become more and more the focus of public attention. As an important component of an enterprise’s external environment, the public’s reaction to CSR is closely related to the image and reputation of an enterprise, and examining the public’s reaction to CSR is an important guide for enterprises to appropriately respond to and handle such incidents.

2 Literature Review

As an important part of entrepreneurs' socially responsible behavior, research on entrepreneurial philanthropic behavior focuses on two aspects: the motivation of philanthropic behavior and the way of philanthropic giving [3]. In terms of philanthropic motives, Western scholars believe that there are two kinds of motives for entrepreneurial philanthropic behavior: self-interest and altruism. Zhang Sifei et al. [4] conducted a more systematic study on the motives of entrepreneurial philanthropic behavior, which is consistent with the findings of Western scholars. They also believe that self-interest motives and altruistic motives exist at the same time, and the former mainly includes acquiring wealth, pursuing prestige, and achieving self-fulfillment, while the latter mainly includes helping people, providing relief and disaster relief, and achieving others. In terms of charitable giving, Roozitalab et al divided charitable behavior into two ways [5]: donating money and donating time, and concluded that donating time would make people feel more moral than donating money. On this basis, some scholars found that consumers' moral identity and self-importance affect their perceptions of corporate spokespersons' charitable behaviors.

With the booming development of the Internet and the rise of social networks, in practice, companies are no longer limited to the traditional offline charitable behaviors in the above study but have also started to conduct online charitable activities through social media such as Weibo [6]. The online charitable activities of companies are realized through deep interaction with their fans and play a unique influence on their corporate culture and charm, which is different from the impact of offline charitable activities on the general public. Because of this, consumers' evaluation of such online charity activities through social media is also different from traditional offline charity activities [7].

In summary, although the existing literature has explored the motives and donation methods of corporate philanthropic behavior, the study of public reactions caused by corporate social responsibility still needs to be further explored to answer the question of constructing the public reaction mechanism to corporate CSR and exploring the factors affecting public reactions, starting from the evaluation process of social public awareness of CSR events [8].

3 Study Design

3.1 Sample Selection

In this paper, major CSR events that occurred in society from 2021 to the present were used as the target for case selection, and four companies were selected for case study according to their size and business type (see Table 1). Among them, Baixiang Food Group, ERKE Industrial Co. LTD and Mixue Ice Cream & Tea Co.LTD. CSR events were selected for theoretical construction and Xtep (CHINA) Co.LTD. CSR events were used for saturation testing.

3.2 Information Collection

In this paper, the comments under the corresponding case trending on Sina Weibo were obtained using Big Data Approach. At the same time, only non-repeated comments within three months of the trending were saved to ensure the temporality and validity of the data. Finally, 1061 original comments were obtained, with a total text word count of 130,000 words.

3.3 Research Methodology

The Grounded Theory research method is a research method developed by Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser at Columbia University [9]. It is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic procedure to develop and inductively lead to The Grounded Theory for a phenomenon. The study is based on the Grounded Theory, supplemented by the qualitative analysis software NVivo20 to code the content of Weibo comments in three levels, that is open coding, axial coding, and selective login, and finally to build a model of the public response caused by CSR.

4 Data Analysis

4.1 Open Coding (Level 1 Code)

Open logging is a process of extracting concepts and categories. To better encode the Weibo comments and make them more accurate in responding to the implied information, this paper treats the raw data as follows: firstly, all personal factors and existing theories related to corporate CRS behavior are thrown out, no theoretical assumptions are made, and the Weibo comments required for theory construction are broken up, and the concept categories are named with short and concise statements or words to obtain the raw concepts; then the raw concepts are filtered and classified, and the raw concepts with similar concept attributes are grouped into one category; finally the classified raw concepts are abstracted and named, that is, categorization [10]. The original concepts are named with short and concise statements or words to obtain the original concepts; then the original concepts are filtered and classified, and the original concepts with similar conceptual attributes are grouped into one category; finally, the classified original concepts are abstracted and named, that is categorization. After the above step processing, a total of 16 preliminary categorizations are obtained in this study, which are: product price, product quality, product demand, emotional transmission, purchase intention, bullish enterprise, behavioral discussion, conscientious enterprise, national enterprise, warm-hearted enterprise, brand comparison, enterprise marketing, brand loyalty, brand discussion, taking responsibility, and consumer spontaneous propaganda. Due to the overwhelming amount of text, only the coding process of an initial category in the first-level coding is briefly demonstrated in this paper (Table 2).

Table 1. List of CSR cases

Serial number	Events	Types of CSR	Specific enterprises	Industry type
1	Rejected Japanese companies into the stock, 1/3 of the staff are disabled, Donate money and materials for the first time in Henan Province's rainstorm	Combined liability	Baixiang Food Group	Food
2	Donated RMB 50 million to heavy rain disaster areas in Henan Province	Community public welfare Responsibility	ERKE Industrial Co.	Clothing
3	Donated a total of 22 million RMB and delivered water, milk, etc. to the people in the hard-hit areas of Henan Province with full force	Community public welfare Responsibility	Mixue Ice Cream & Tea Co.	Dining
4	Donated 30 million RMB to Henan for footwear and apparel equipment	Community public welfare Responsibility	Xtep (CHINA) Co.LTD.	Clothing

4.2 Axial Coding (Secondary Code)

The first-level coding process yields 16 initial categories, and since the meaning of the initial categories is broader and the logical relationship between the categories is unclear, it is necessary to continue with the second-level coding to explore the inner logical relationship between different categories according to the nature of the initial categories and the conceptual level where they are located, to recombine the original commentary content, to group the initial categories with the inner logical connection into one category and to abstract. The six main categories were finally obtained by regrouping the original commentary content, grouping the initial categories with internal logical connections into one category and abstracting them. The process of forming the main categories is shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Axial coding

Comments	Conceptualization	Preliminary categorization
More delicious flavors, please!!!	New Taste	Product Requirements
I hope Baixiang Food Group will strengthen the research and development of flavors and varieties, while the price is not too outrageous. These are done well, I believe that most Chinese will support Baixiang.	R&D of flavors and varieties	
Although it is to support Chinese products, indeed the style is not popular, Learn from other brand experiences.	Improved Styles	

4.3 Selective Coding (Three-Level Coding)

To extract the core categories from the six main categories, study the relationship between the core categories, the main categories, and the initial categories, and refine the core themes based on the correlation coding, the core theme of “public reaction caused by corporate social responsibility” was always the core theme, and the relationship between the main categories was repeatedly In this process, the core theme of “public reaction caused by corporate social responsibility” is always the core theme, and the relationship between the main categories is repeatedly discussed and compared, and the main categories of similar or similar concepts are brought together, and important ideas are written down in memos during the analysis process. The core categories and the main categories are shown in Table 4.

After the three-level coding, the two core categories obtained from the study have basically covered the necessary elements of “the study of public reaction caused by corporate social responsibility”, and the new Weibo commentary content is no longer too meaningful for the construction of the theoretical model of this study, so we start to analyze the relationship between the core categories, the main categories and the initial categories, and We try to show the relationship between the core categories and other categories clearly in the form of a “storyline”, and finally construct a new theoretical framework. After comparing and analyzing the coded categories, it is found that the CSR behavior of enterprises can cause two-way promotion between enterprises and consumers, so this study establishes a theoretical model of public response to corporate social responsibility formed by the three dimensions of “enterprise-public” [11]. The model is shown in Fig. 1. Xtep (CHINA) Co., LTD. and the comments on CSR events were taken to test the saturation of the theoretical model, and it was found that the two core categories in the model had already covered all the contents of Weibo comments, so the model of public reaction to corporate social responsibility had reached saturation.

Table 3. Axial coding

Main Categories	Initial category	Connotation
Product Requirements	Product Price	Product price is the expression of the product value in the goods market
	Product Quality	The quality of a product produced by a manufacturer
	Product Requirements	Customer goals, demands, desires, and expectations
Public Sentiment	Emotional transmission	The public is impressed by the CSR behavior of the company, and the feelings are further extended
	Consumer Sentiment	Consumers rely more on emotions in making shopping decisions
Public behavior	Willingness to buy	The high probability that the public is willing to take a specific purchase behavior
	Spontaneous promotion	The public recommends other consumers buy based on experience
Enterprise Value	Bullish companies	Believes that companies have better prospects for the future
Motivated Perception	Behavior Discussion	Discussion on corporate CSR behavior
	Social Responsibility	Consider that companies take responsibility for their initiative
	Corporate Marketing	Consider the CSR behavior of companies as marketing behavior
Brand awareness	Conscientious Company	Companies have the integrity to uphold the value
	Ethnic Enterprises	A company whose actions are always subordinate to the overall interests of the country
	Warm Hearted Enterprise	Consider the company caring
	Brand Comparison	Cross-sectional comparison with other brands of the same type
	Brand Reviews	The public's new ideas about corporate branding

Table 4. Selective coding

Core Scope	Main Category	Connotation of the relationship
Feeling	Brand awareness	Evaluation of corporate brand image
	Public sentiment	Public perceptions on the emotional level affected by the event
Behavior	Public behavior	Choices made by the public influenced by the event
Attitude	Motivated Perception	Corporate CSR behavior motivation discussion
	Enterprise Value	The view of the future development of the enterprise
	Product Requirements	Requirements for public enterprise products

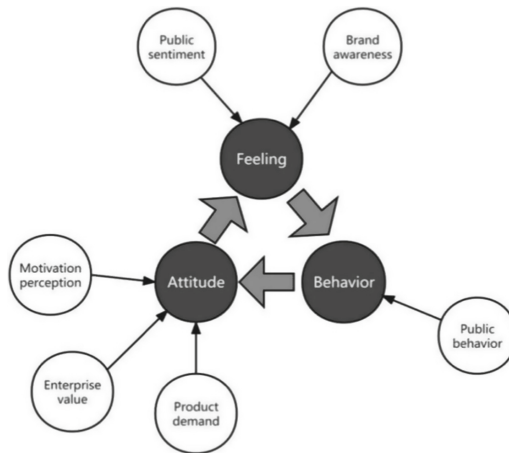


Fig. 1. Model of public reaction caused by CSR

5 Conclusions

This paper uses qualitative research methods to explore the impact caused by corporate social responsibility based on Grounded Theory and opens the black box of the public response mechanism. The results of the study: (1) it is found that corporate social responsibility behavior will attract public attention mainly in three areas, Attitude-Feeling-Behavior; (2) a model of public reaction caused by corporate social responsibility is constructed, which helps the theoretical community to form a clearer understanding of corporate social responsibility behavior and lays a good foundation for subsequent research; (3) enterprises should recognize the importance of communication and interaction in public welfare, and make use of the strong communication and interaction in public service. (3) Enterprises should recognize the importance of communication and interaction in public welfare, make use of superior quality and good brand image, and adopt appropriate forms to gain public recognition, to improve and enhance the image of enterprises in the public mind.

Theoretical contributions: (1) Previous studies mainly used questionnaires to reveal their impact on the public, but this paper uses online social media comments to explore corporate CSR behavior, extending and expanding the study of corporate social responsibility in traditional contexts; (2) It broadens the theoretical study of the impact of corporate public welfare messages on the public, presents corporate social responsibility in a more diversified way, and shows a more comprehensive and three-dimensional image of corporate social responsibility for the public. It presents a more comprehensive and three-dimensional corporate image for the public.

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