An Empirical Study on the Factors Influencing Purchase Intention of Brand Podcast Consumers of Generation Z

Shupeng Ge(✉)

Communication University of China, Beijing, China
876414517@qq.com

Abstract. 2020 is known as the 'Year of Chinese Podcasts'. With the development of online cultural content and the boom of the 'ear economy', the once niche Chinese podcast industry has entered a new stage of explosive growth. Major internet companies are deeply involved in the audio platform, and more brands are entering the podcast marketing arena as an important way to reach customers. At present, research mainly focuses on exploring the content creation and dissemination strategies of Chinese podcasts, but there is a lack of research on the factors that influence consumer purchase intention in brand podcasts. This study integrates the L&S theory research model and introduces sensory stimulation and perceived value into the research field of consumer purchase intention in brand podcasts. By combining the characteristics of Chinese podcasts, a research model of the factors that influence consumer purchase intention in brand podcasts was constructed. The study conducted an online survey of Generation Z consumers and performed statistical analysis on the questionnaire to explore the factors that influence consumer purchase intention in brand podcasts and provide guidance for brand podcast marketing. The research results confirm that sensory stimulation and perceived value have a positive impact on consumer purchase intention. This indicates that the higher the sensory stimulation and perceived value of brand podcasts, the more positive the consumer's perception and evaluation of the brand, thereby increasing their purchase intention.

Keywords: Brand podcast · Generation Z · sensory stimulation · perceived value · purchasing intention

1 Introduction

As data from iiMedia Report shows that the number of online audio users in China is expected to reach 690 million in 2022, and the market size of the voice economy industry is anticipated to exceed ¥510 billion in 2023. The online audio industry in China is experiencing a period of rapid development, driven by the diversification of 'ear-based economy' scenarios. Currently, 81.3% of online audio users in China have listened to podcasts, indicating a high level of penetration of this medium among users and laying the foundation for the development of the 'ear-based economy'. As podcasts

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are a new form of media communication in the internet age and are still in the blue ocean market, there is a gap in research on users' willingness to use podcast marketing. This survey uses a user-centric approach and applies sensory stimulation preference theory, perceived value theory, and the L&S model (reach-cognition-attitude-behavior) to explore the factors influencing the impact of auditory sensory stimulation and perceived value on consumer purchasing intent in branded podcasts.

2 Literature Review

In 2004, The Guardian, a British newspaper, formally introduced the concept of podcasting in an article titled 'An auditory revolution: Online broadcasting is everywhere'. Berry (2015) believes that the distribution system and technology of podcasting belong to the public domain, allowing producers and consumers to bend and define the podcasting space to meet their own needs [1]. Initially, Huang Guiping and Wu Wenhu (2006) conducted a more in-depth textual interpretation of the rapidly growing phenomenon of podcasting in China and abroad from the perspectives of semiotics and communication studies, suggesting that the textual significance of podcasting mainly lies in highlighting the self and integrating into society [2]. In recent years, Tang Leshui and Nian Aozhuo (2022) have proposed some organizational and branding awareness from the initiator's perspective, recognizing the unique significance of audio media in content marketing. These podcasts initiated by organizational entities can be classified as 'brand podcasts'. Research on brand podcasts in academia has yielded rich results in the field of marketing. While Zhao Hang (2021) analyzed the advantages and development direction of podcast marketing from the four principles of fun, interest, interaction, and personality based on the 4I theory model [3]. Research has also focused on the factors that influence consumers' willingness to consume brand podcasts, such as analyzing the impact of brand podcasts on consumers' purchasing intentions from a sensory stimulation perspective. Krishna (2012) believes that sensory marketing is a marketing strategy that utilizes the five sensory experiences generated by consumers to influence their perception, judgment, and behavior [4]. Bertil Hultén (2013) argues that sensory marketing is a sensory experience marketing strategy created and perceived jointly by companies and consumers. The focus of sensory marketing is on how to use the five sensory experiences generated by the human body to establish brands for businesses and attract customers to purchase [5]. Some studies have also analyzed the impact of brand podcasts on consumers' purchasing intentions from the perspective of perceived value. Perceived value is the overall evaluation of the benefits that consumers subjectively perceive and the utility of products or services after they incur costs. (Zeithaml, 1988) [6]. Sun Jiaojiao and Sun Yongbo (2017) delved into the influence of perceived value on consumers' willingness to purchase fresh products from various sub-dimensions such as perceived cost, perceived entertainment, and perceived functionality.

Based on the discussion of various scholars' opinions on the sub-indices of sensory stimulation and perceptual value, as well as related conclusions, we found that the current research is not yet sufficient in terms of subdividing the influencing factors. This article aims to address this gap by selecting three dimensions: sensory stimulation, perceptual quality value, and perceptual emotional value, and further expanding the indices of

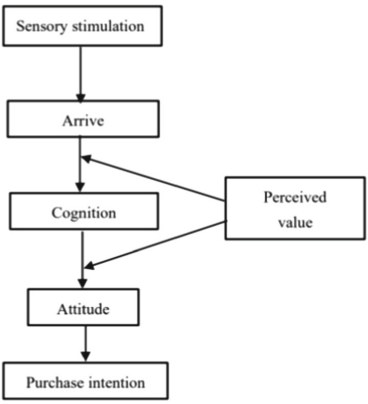

Fig. 1. Research model diagram

these three dimensions. Through this, we aim to study the impact of brand podcasts on consumer purchase intentions.

3 Research Design

3.1 Research Subjects

This study focuses on the Generation Z as the key observation target. The reason for selecting this demographic is that the Generation Z population is 342 million in China, accounting for 23% of the total population but contributing to over 40% of the overall consumption. By 2022, the Generation Z is expected to drive over 5 trillion yuan of consumption. Youth of the Generation Z have unique consumption habits and a trend-following group characteristic, and the user group of podcast platforms is also concentrated in young people in first tier and new first-tier cities.

3.2 Research Model

Levitt and Steiner (1961) believed that consumers' responses to advertising consisted of three parts: cognitive response, attitude response, and behavioral response. Cognitive response includes awareness and knowledge, attitude response includes liking and preference, and behavioral response includes persuasion and purchase [7]. The research team conducted a survey on the factors influencing consumers' willingness to purchase based on sensory stimulation theory, perceived value theory, and the L&S model. The following is a new model designed by the research team based on the original theory (Fig. 1).

3.3 Research Hypothesis

Based on the above model and related theories, this study makes the following hypotheses about the relationship between sensory stimuli, perceived quality value, and perceived emotional value in terms of their influence on purchase intention: The sensory

pleasure, satisfaction, relaxation, happiness, and discomfort of Generation Z consumers have a significant positive impact on their willingness to purchase. Their perception of high-quality product value also has a significant positive impact on their willingness to purchase. Additionally, their perception of novelty, belonging, identification, trust, and companionship also have a significant positive impact on their willingness to purchase.

3.4 Questionnaire Design

The measurement of variables is mainly based on mature scales from previous research by Davis et al. (1989), Sweeney et al. (2001), and Venkatesh et al. (2012), combined with the characteristics of Chinese brand podcasts' products and services, to form measurement scales suitable for this study.

Questionnaire items are divided into two parts. The first part is a survey of basic demographic characteristics, including gender, age, occupation, monthly disposable income, and place of residence. The second part is a survey of factors that influence consumer purchasing behavior during the use of Chinese podcast platforms. This includes exploring the experiences of respondents purchasing products due to podcast marketing and the influence of sensory stimulation and perceived value on consumer purchasing decisions. Through the Likert five-level scale, including two dimensions of sensory stimulation and perceived quality, the study further investigates the influence of podcast marketing on consumer purchasing decisions.

4 Data Analysis

The study used a non-probability snowball sampling method and collected survey questionnaires online. In the formal sampling process, a total of 263 valid questionnaires were obtained. For the needs of the research questions and hypothesis testing, this study used SPSS 25.0 software for data processing and analysis.

Reliability Analysis
The reliability coefficient value of this survey is 0.861, which is greater than 0.8, indicating that the research data has good reliability and can be further analyzed.

Validity Analysis
The KMO value of this survey is 0.864, which is greater than 0.8, indicating that the validity of this questionnaire is good.

Regression Analysis
Using sensory pleasure, sensory satisfaction, sensory relaxation, sensory happiness, sensory discomfort, perceptual novelty, perceptual belongingness, perceptual identification, perceptual trust, perceptual companionship, and perceived high-quality product value as independent variables, linear regression analysis was conducted with purchase intention as the dependent variable. It can be seen from Table 1 that the model's R-squared value is 0.620, which suggests that the established regression model can explain 62.0% of the variation in purchase intention. When conducting an F-test on the model, it was found

that the model passed the F-test (F = 20.882, p = 0.000 < 0.05), indicating that the established regression model is significant.

The regression coefficient value for sensory satisfaction is 0.218 (t = 2.404, p = 0.017 < 0.05), for perceived trust is 0.180 (t = 2.002, p = 0.046 < 0.05), for perceived identification is 0.234 (t = 2.379, p = 0.018 < 0.05), and for perceived value of high-quality products is 0.285 (t = 6.453, p = 0.000 < 0.01). Thus, sensory satisfaction, perceived trust, perceived identification, and perceived value of high-quality products have a significant positive impact on purchase intentions.

The regression coefficient value for sensory pleasure is 0.161 (t = 1.702, p = 0.090 > 0.05), for sensory relaxation is 0.102 (t = 1.135, p = 0.257 > 0.05), for sensory happiness is 0.084 (t = 0.929, p = 0.354 > 0.05), for sensory discomfort is 0.092 (t = 0.483, p = 0.629 > 0.05), and for perceived novelty is -0.105 (t = -1.078, p = 0.282 >

Table 1. Multiple linear regression

	Non-standardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	*t*	*p*	VIF
	B	Standard Error	*Beta*			
Constants	-0.087	0.260	-	-0.334	0.739	-
Sensory pleasure	0.161	0.095	0.077	1.702	0.090	1.313
Sensory satisfaction	0.218	0.091	0.110	2.404	0.017*	1.335
Sensory relaxation	0.102	0.090	0.051	1.135	0.257	1.288
Sensory happiness	0.084	0.091	0.042	0.929	0.354	1.290
Sensory discomfort	0.092	0.190	0.021	0.483	0.629	1.194
Perceived trust	0.180	0.090	0.088	2.002	0.046*	1.240
Perceived novelty	-0.105	0.098	-0.053	-1.078	0.282	1.551
Perceived sense of belonging	-0.094	0.096	-0.047	-0.977	0.330	1.483
Perceived companionship	-0.038	0.096	-0.018	-0.392	0.695	1.409
Perceived sense of identity	0.234	0.098	0.111	2.379	0.018*	1.402
Perceived value of high-quality products	0.285	0.044	0.325	6.453	0.000**	1.623
Dependent variable: Purchase intention						

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

0.05). Therefore, the regression coefficient value for perceived belongingness is -0.094 ($t = -0.977$, $p = 0.330 > 0.05$). Thus, sensory pleasure, sensory relaxation, sensory happiness, sensory discomfort, perceived novelty, and perceived belongingness do not have an impact on purchase intentions.

5 Conclusions and Discussions

According to the regression analysis results, the main factors influencing consumers' purchase intention through brand podcasts are sensory stimulation and perceived value. In other words, whether Generation Z consumers are willing to purchase mainly depends on their own ability to receive auditory stimulation and satisfaction from podcast, whether they trust and identify with the brand concept conveyed by the podcast program, and whether they perceive the value of high-quality products.

Auditory stimulation can influence consumer behavior. Lindstrom (2005) argues that music can also provide individuals with a sense of belonging to a group [8]. Sweeney and Wyber (2002) found that in service situations, music can increase consumers' staying time and spending [9]. In studies on the influence of perceived value, many scholars, such as Zeithaml (1998) [10], focus on user behavior research and believe that perceived value is one of the important antecedent variables influencing users' purchase intention behavior, and plays an intermediary role between the various dimensions of perceived value and willingness to use.

This study brings sensory stimulation and perceived value into brand podcasts, exploring the effects of sensory stimulation and perceived value on the purchasing intention of Generation Z consumers. It is verified from the result that sensory stimulation and perceived value can positively affect consumers' purchasing intention. Based on the results of this study, for future brand podcasts to have a dual function of opinion output and product promotion, customized content creation is necessary. Hosts tailor-made for products, discuss products through their mouths, output brand value concepts, and strongly bind emotional content with brand concepts to make consumers perceive trust, recognition, and high-quality product values. Through the subtle transmission of brand culture, values, and beliefs to listeners through auditory perception, the process of transitioning from brand recognition to brand acceptance is achieved, focusing on the long tail effect of data, making the brand effect deeply ingrained in people's hearts.

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