

Characteristics of public relations strategies for health foods targeting the elderly: Catchphrases that distort scientific implementation

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Abstract

【Background】

Japanese elderly people often purchase so-called health foods. Companies often use catchphrases (CFs) in sales advertisements that overly mislead people about their functionality. In fact, health damage and consumption troubles among the elderly due to the intake of health foods are increasing. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to clarify the characteristics of the behavioral psychological effects of public relations strategies that distort the scientific thinking of the elderly.

【Methods】

A keyword search of Yahoo! internet search engines, which have many Japanese consumers, was conducted from November 23, 2023 to December 10, 2023. The keywords were "anti-aging", "supplement", and "ranking", and the top five advertising information sites (organizing the ranking of supplements) were adopted.

CFs (key phrases used for public relations) about the concepts of the company products in each ranking were extracted. If there were similar phrases, they were combined. After data cleaning the phrases, quantitative text analysis was performed. The decomposition from text data into words was analyzed by computer programs, which decomposed the phrases into meaningful minimum units and determine parts of speech.

In addition, co-occurrence network analysis was performed on the high ranking, frequently spoken words. This is an analysis method that groups and illustrates the group of words from their simultaneous appearance (co-happening) in relation to the extracted word. Furthermore, categorization was performed based on the groups identified by co-occurrence network analysis, and a category was interpreted and named while checking the catch phrase itself and centering on the co-occurrence words. The Jaccard coefficient was performed to determine the relevance of each occurrence pattern of the word. The KH Coder 3 was used for analysis.

Furthermore, we identify CFs that were expected to have behavioral psychological effects that increased consumers' purchase intentions.

【Results】

Many companies have focused on the message that anti-aging supplements for the elderly will help consumers become healthier, younger, and more beautiful. It has become clear that many catchphrases such as "obedience to authority figures," "snoop effect," "bandwagon effect," and "*Charpentier effect*" were adopted as behavioral psychological public relations strategies to promote product purchases.

【Discussion】

In order for consumers to make smart purchasing decisions, it is necessary for academic researchers and the Consumer Affairs Agency to educate consumers about the functionality and safety of products, as well as to provide information that prevents CF from distorting scientific thinking. In addition, it is strongly recommended that risk communication related to health foods be disseminated to consumers.

Key words: Health food, Elderly people, Anti-aging, Publicity strategy