Article

“Drink It or Not”: Soft Drink Anticonsumption Behavior and the Mediating Effect of Behavioral Intentions

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Abstract: Increased health risks and obesity resulting from soft drink consumption have received considerable attention worldwide. The purpose of this empirical study was to explore the antecedents of soft drink anticonsumption behavior in China using structural equation modeling techniques by analysis of moment structures (AMOS). Soft drink anticonsumers think that these drinks are unhealthy, and consumer attitude and behavioral intention towards anticonsumption behavior were found to be significant. Individual and sociocultural factors were also positively associated with anticonsumption of soft drinks in China. Future studies could examine gender differences in anticonsumption behavior. A large sample size would be more reflective in other contexts. Regarding health and obesity-reduction concerns, this study provides useful implications for marketers and policymakers. Soft drink marketers can integrate obesity-reduction efforts through social marketing. This study has put forward a conceptual framework for soft drink anticonsumption behavior focusing on health concerns and the effect of sociocultural factors on anticonsumption.

Keywords: soft drinks; anticonsumption; sustainability; sociocultural factors; individual factors

1. Introduction

Research by the health practitioners has indicated that the recent increase in human obesity is caused by unusual human eating and drinking habits and, in particular, soft drink consumption patterns. Severe health problems resulting from overconsumption have triggered some vascular issues and other serious problems such as tooth and bone damage [1,2], which have attracted global attention [3,4]. A recent WHO report indicated that obesity and overweightness are major risk factors for the chronic disease and can reduce through changes in consumption patterns and diet [1,5]. Hence, addressing these issues requires a change in consumer behavior based on a better understanding of the associated factors [6,7]. Consumer anticonsumption movements have gained considerable interest among marketing practitioners and academics [8]. The increased environmental concerns and flagging quality of life around the world are due to unsustainable consumption [8,9]. A variety of studies are available on anticonsumption and consumer resistance, where consumer action and attitude represent behavioral resistance [10–12]. The past studies have shown that certain individual, environmental, and social factors play a significant role in avoiding food and beverage intake or avoidance behavior [13]. The increased importance of dietary practices and their impact on the environment and consumer health has positively attracted the attention of food marketers to identify the underlying reasons for these behaviors [14]. The past studies have generally focused on exploring food anticonsumption behavior, yet the impact of different intrinsic and extrinsic factors has not been assessed [15]. It is important to investigating this topic for human welfare and environmental sustainability [10]. Moreover, most

previous research efforts have been focused on the factors affecting consumer behavior, so there is limited data available on anticonsumption behavior, the study of which would add value to the existing literature [16]. Preliminary indications show that the increased ethical food consumption behavior in China requires researchers to conduct studies to understand the underlying behaviors of antifeed consumption. Therefore, such research could be extended to include antibuying behavior theories alongside some implications for indigenous theory development and practice [17]. Theories of consumer consumption behavior have been developed and tested, but anticonsumption behavior has largely been ignored [14]. Thus, there is an emerging need to develop and validate anticonsumption theories for consumer welfare and environmental sustainability [8]. During the past few years, in China, consumer research and development has changed its position due to the increased human welfare and environmental sustainability concerns, whereby indigenous research has been encouraged by Chinese higher education commissions in the local universities [18]. The average consumption volume per person in the soft drink market amounts to 14.9 liters in 2019 [19]. This study attempts to fill the above-mentioned gap by testing and validating a proposed model in China and providing some theoretical and practical insights from a local perspective [16,20].

Dietary patterns are changing around the world, and numerous individual, social, and environmental factors play an important role in food consumption and avoidance [20]. Food consumption is a significant aspect of food production and sustainable food supply, whereas poor food choices affect human well-being and society [16]. In this context, food anticonsumption has a two-fold perspective [21].

There is a dearth of research on the beverage addiction and anticonsumption behavior [22]. Further, while many research studies have been done on food consumption behaviors in different categories of food, no one has covered anticonsumption [16,23]. Testing and understanding this framework in local settings will help managers to improve their understanding of the consumer consumption behaviors. This study provides a novel contribution to the literature by investigating the underlying anticonsumption patterns and exploring the mediating role of the behavioral intentions (BI) which explain their relationship. Meanwhile, it focuses on the reasons for soft drink anticonsumption (SAC) and thus provides a holistic approach for SAC behavior.

In sum, the current literature suggests that attitude and personal and social factors have a strong impact on consumer anticonsumption, but with major limitations in terms of the consumer groups and context. Due to the substantial research gaps in this area, the current study examines the roles of individual and social factors in soft drink anticonsumption.

- How does the consumer attitude towards soft drinks affect the consumer soft drink anticonsumption behavior?
- To what extent do the personal and social factors impact the consumer behavior towards the anticonsumption of soft drinks?
- Do behavioral intentions act as a mediator?

The objective of this study is to determine the impact of consumer attitude on soft drink anticonsumption behavior and the mediating role of consumer behavioral intentions among generation Y consumers. People in China are health conscious. Therefore, the study considers Chinese consumers' anticonsumption behavior regarding soft drink consumption, and explores the effects of personal and social factors on their behaviors. Further, the findings of this study will be helpful to the marketers and practitioners to learn more about the underlying anticonsumption factors.

2. Literature and Hypotheses

Soft drink intake is a risk factor for several noncommunicable diseases [1,7]. Evidence from the literature show that the occurrence of adolescent overweightness and obesity is increasing in many countries around the world [2], and it poses a major public health problem [7]. Diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and psychosocial problems are strongly associated with soft

drinks [4,24]. Several behaviors that promote obesity and overweightness have been identified in adults, such as consumption of energy-dense drinks and lack of physical activity [1]. Moreover, it has been reported that the sugar-sweetened soft drinks may promote obesity in adolescents [7]. There are other consequences of consuming such carbonated drinks, such as dental caries [3,25]. Food consumption significantly contributes to food supply sustainability. Poor food consumption has a substantial effect on society and individual well-being. Dietary patterns are changing around the world [26]. There are many personal, social, and environmental factors that play an important role in food intake and avoidance. As links between health consciousness and dietary practices have emerged, consumer attitudes and personal beliefs have become important factors in consumption decisions [27]. Allen et al. [14] have reported consumer resistance to dairy product consumption. Several reasons might account for dairy product avoidance, such as lactose intolerance or casein allergy, cultural norms, religious connotations, or fat content [8]. Consumer resistance and anticonsumption have been documented in several studies, in which consumer experiences and actions are highlighted and the resistance behavior is explained [28,29]. Although the relationship between anticonsumption behavior and body weight is still debated, reduced carbonated drink intake should increase the consumer health.

2.1. Attitude towards Soft Drink Anticonsumption

To understand anticonsumption behavioral change interventions, insights into behavioral determinants are needed [30]. The theory of planned behavior is widely connected to individual psychosocial traits when designing health behavior research [30]. Moreover, the theory argues that consumer behavior can be determined by behavioral intentions [31], and has been comprehensively used in theorizing and explaining consumer health behavior [32,33].

Studies report that efforts to reduce soft drink consumption have been largely limited to obesity prevention knowledge and changing attitudes, which extensively rely on health behavior [1,34]. However, anticonsumption of these drinks can be determined by the interplay between factors at sociocultural and individual levels which ultimately influence the consumption behavior [35]. An extensive body of literature has emerged which demonstrates a strong association between consumer attitude and poor health behaviors, but scant evidence is available on anticonsumption of soft drinks [7]. This research would help to elucidate the underlying attitudes of anticonsumption and the influence of social and individual behavior on avoidance.

Hwang et al. [11] explained consumer motivations towards resistance and anticonsumption, and found that avoidance behavior was linked with complaining practices. Tosun and Yanar [8] studied meat anticonsumption behavior and found lifestyle and sustainability to be strongly associated with anticonsumption, but the prevalence of these factors was considerably lower than that of health and economic concerns. Taufique and Vaithianathan [13] categorized anticonsumers into two distinct categories, one based on the exploitation of humans and one on the exploitation of the ecosystem, and the ecology concerns are significant in both forms and affect anticonsumption for social reasons. There are several different scales of anticonsumption, which categorize anticonsumers into groups. Like ecological concerns, consumers reduce their consumption for the sake of social welfare [36]. Galvagno [37] argued that the disloyal consumers rejected a product because of perceived inferiority. Tosun and Yanar [8] explored the ethical anticonsumption attitudes of individuals and found that ethical consumers displayed ethical concerns towards society in terms of consumption patterns [38].

2.2. Behavioral Intentions

Behavioral intention refers to an individual's degree of determination and willingness to perform a specific behavior, which is often determined by attitudes and subjective norms [39–41]. Behavioral intentions are a true predictor of attitude and endorse a specific behavior. In the context of consumption, a strong association was found between attitudes and behavioral intentions [6,21]. Agnoli et al. [42] found that a favorable attitude towards the avoidance behavior, such as in the case of dairy products, was a strong predictor of anticonsumption. The theory of planned behavior has been used at length to

predict the positive attitudes towards purchasing behavior, but Sudbury-Riley and Kohlbacher [20] found that consumer avoidance behavior is also linked with attitude.

Research suggests that the health risks and obesity levels associated with buying soft drinks affect consumers' attitudes towards soft drink consumption.

We, therefore, propose that:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Consumers' attitudes towards soft drink anticonsumption positively affect behavioral intention.*

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Consumer behavioral intentions have a positive effect on soft drink anticonsumption behavior.*

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *The relationship between the attitudes and behaviors towards soft drink anticonsumption is mediated by behavioral intention.*

2.3. Individual Factors and Soft Drink Anticonsumption Behavior

Individual factors may include consumer personality, which could be described as "internal factors such as dispositions and interpersonal strategies that explain individuals' behaviors and the unique and relatively stable patterns of behaviors, thoughts, and emotions shown by individuals" [34,43]. Adapa [30] described how consumer anticonsumption is associated with health consciousness and environmental sustainability, and other authors believe that avoidance of soft drink consumption might benefit society [44]. Soft drink anticonsumption and health consciousness have long been discussed as concepts that reflect a person's readiness to do something for his or her health [45]. Studies have found that consumers are constantly focusing on healthy behaviors to increase their quality of life [3]. Past studies have shown that a greater level of soft drink consumption is positively associated with obsession and has increased with the number of chronic diseases [5]. Therefore, individual factors play an important role in the consumption of these drinks. Thus, we propose that:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Consumer opinions regarding soft drinks are positively related to their anticonsumption behavior.*

2.4. Sociocultural Factors and Soft Drink Anticonsumption Behavior

A social group can be defined as a collection of individuals who have similar values and interact with each other to form a similar lifestyle [46]. In line with the social role theory, men and women have different roles in social groups of which the family is a strong part [47]. Consumers' decision-making process in social groups is not only affected by their motivations, but also by other group members in the socialization process [48]. Consumer social groups consist of family social groups, reference groups, and perceived friends [49]. All of these groups reveal more about consumption patterns and their perceived values. Consumer consumption behavior is widely affected by social group members [49]. Past studies have revealed that social demonstrations are predictors of consumer behavior [50,51]. A wide range of studies have documented the effect of social groups on avoidance behavior, such as social influence, and body image representation is a driver of anticonsumption in young consumers. A family parental approach has been found to be persuasive regarding avoidance of soft drink consumption [52–54]. Wang et al. [55] highlighted that the role of these social groups in anticonsumption behavior is still debated in cultures such as China [4].

Culture is another part of the consumer socialization process, and it has a variety of definitions. In some contexts, it is the individual approach of a person which arises out of the best outcome. It can also be a civilization of certain nations. Culture also emerges from the development and improvement of the mind by education or training [56]. Technology has redefined the boundaries of culture and has resulted in the emergence of e-culture [57]. Some studies have shown a limited effect of cultural

differences on product consumption or avoidance. In [47], it was found that groups have a significant effect on consumer motivation regarding certain products. Social comparison theory argues that consumer emotions and cognition set grounds by which people compare themselves with others over certain kinds of consumer products [58,59]. Studies on culture and consumer anticonsumption are limited and should be pursued to reveal new insights into anticonsumption behavior [46].

Based on the literature, we have put forward the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5 (H5). *Consumers' sociocultural groups significantly influence soft drink anticonsumption behavior.*

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The present study incorporated the theory of planned behavior and further extended the theory by adding individual and sociocultural factors. The new proposed model (see Figure 1) aimed to increase the analytical power and consistency of the existing theory. The figure illustrates all the developed hypotheses (H1–H5) between each of the variables: attitude, individual factors, sociocultural factors, soft drink anticonsumption behavior, and the relationship between anticonsumption behavior and attitude mediated by behavioral intentions.

Figure 1. Conceptual model of anticonsumption.

3. Method

3.1. Measures

The increasing level of obesity has raised the need for this research, for which the primary objective is to understand the attitude of soft drink anticonsumption. Instruments were adapted from previous studies to ensure the content validity of the scales used in this study [8]. Items were concisely written. The questionnaire was also redesigned in the Chinese language to remove ambiguity and redundancy and to provide clarity for Chinese consumers. The back-translation method was followed, whereby respondents were asked to either respond to the English survey questionnaire or the version translated into Chinese. We used a quantitative questionnaire to accurately measure the impact of the various behavioral and social factors on consumer soft drink anticonsumption behavior. The experiential survey employed a series of multi-item scales to measure each variable and assess the interrelationships between the factors. To maintain content validity, all survey scales were

adapted from academically validated scales. The first question assessed anticonsumption behavior and incorporated an 11-item scale devised from a scale adapted from seven items from [8] and six items from [12]. The scale used in [8] is highly regarded by researchers and considered one of the most updated measures used for anticonsumption. A three-item scale measuring consumer attitude towards anticonsumption and another three-item scale to measure behavioral intention was adapted from [13]. It utilizes a seven-point Likert scale with endpoints of one (strongly disagree) and seven (strongly agree). We measured sociocultural factors by employing a ten-item scale derived from [47]. Respondents indicate their agreement with each statement on a seven-point Likert scale.

3.2. Sample and Data Collection

Personal administration of the questionnaire was accomplished with an online survey to collect data [8]. Online consumer tracking was performed using “WeChat” [55]. A pilot study of 25 consumers was first performed. At the pretest stage, respondents reacted well to the length and format of the questionnaire. The sample was drawn on the basis of convenience sampling [13]. “Convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling where members of the target population that meet certain criteria, such as easy accessibility, availability, are included for the purpose of the study”. Data collection was carried out by sending online questionnaire links to WeChat groups and inviting them to participate in the survey. Five hundred and ten respondents were approached and we guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality of their participation [3]. Overall, 482 responses were received, and the survey report showed that most of the respondents were from Chengdu (219), a number of respondents were from Xian (76), and the remaining were from Shenyang, Beijing, and Chongqing, ensuring the generalizability of the questionnaire. Of all the respondents, 59.1% were female, 90% were between 20 and 40 years old, 28% had a graduate degree, and 42% had an undergraduate degree (see Table 1).

Table 1. Respondents’ demographic characteristics.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender (n = 482)		
Male	197	40.9
Female	285	59.1
Marital Status		
Married	76	15.4
Unmarried	406	84.6
Employment		
Employed	146	30
Unemployed	336	70
Age		
20–40	441	90
41 and above	41	10
Education		
Undergraduate Degree	202	42
Graduate Degree	134	28
Doctoral Degree	144	30
City		
Chengdu	219	45.6
Shenyang	77	16
Beijing	53	10.9
Chongqing	133	27.5

4. Analysis and Results

4.1. Measurement Model: Reliability and Validity

To test the hypotheses, structural equation modeling techniques using the analysis of moment structures (AMOS) method were performed, as they are the most recommended approach for covariance structural equation modeling. To ensure the fitness of the measurement model and before proceeding with the analysis of the structural model, reliability and validity tests were performed [60]. Table 2 presents the final measurement model's results. Before designing the measurement model, a structural model was developed and analyzed. Many previous studies have used this method to test underlying relationships. To ensure data correctness, the indices used included the comparative fit index (CFI), relative χ^2 (CMIN/df), root-mean-square residual (RMR), and goodness of fit (GFI). The results of these indices (AGFI = 0.832, CFI = 0.87, GFI = 0.88, CMIN/df = 1.324, RMSEA = 0.049, RMR = 0.032, and TLI = 0.872) demonstrated data correctness and model fitness. Constructs were also tested to confirm the convergent validity and discriminant validity. For convergent validity, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values were considered. To accept the convergent validity of all variables, the cut-off value of CR for all variables must be above 0.60 and the AVE values should be above 0.50 [61–63].

The composite reliabilities of the constructs are shown in Table 2, which met the minimum requirements of 0.70, and the convergent validity (average variance extracted, AVE) was greater than the 0.50 minimum value [60]. The loading of all items shown in Table 2 were above the threshold of 0.708 [60], and *t*-test values were statically significant.

Table 2. Convergent validity results.

Measures	Factor loading	Cronbach's α	Composite reliability (CR)	AVE
Anticonsumption		0.872	0.931	0.823
I am reluctant to drink soft drinks				
SAC1 I am not used to consuming soft drinks (it is not my habit to drink it)	0.846			
SAC2 I cannot find soft drinks while shopping	0.623			
SAC3 I do not like their taste	0.812			
SAC4 They are not available in markets/the restaurants I go to	0.576			
SAC5 My friends/family do not drink them	0.811			
SAC6 Being slim and fit, maintaining bodyweight	0.821			
SAC7 Controlling the quantity of soft drink intake and replacing it with fruit and vegetables to avoid diseases associated with soft drink consumption	0.733			
Measures	Factor loading	Cronbach's α	Composite reliability (CR)	AVE
Attitude Towards Anticonsumption		0.811	0.901	0.638
ATT1 In my view, it is very important to raise health concerns among our people in China	0.813			
ATT2 In my view, more obesity/disease protection works are needed in China	0.839			
ATT3 In my view, it is essential to promote healthy living in China	0.737			
Measures	Factor loading	Cronbach's α	Composite reliability (CR)	AVE
Behavioral Intention		0.803	0.806	0.598
BI1 I would be willing to support health causes	0.801			
BI2 I would consider joining a group or club which is concerned with health-related causes	0.763			
BI3 I would be willing to pay more taxes to support greater government control of obesity reduction	0.839			

Table 2. Cont.

Measures	Factor loading	Cronbach's α	Composite reliability (CR)	AVE
Individual Factors		0.831	0.876	0.608
IF1 I saw some articles about soft drink health risks and stopped consuming soft drinks after that	0.793			
IF2 Soft drinks can increase the risk of heart disease	0.822			
IF3 Soft drinks are not healthy	0.876			
IF4 Doctor recommended me to stop consuming soft drinks	0.812			
IF4 I try to avoid soft drinks as much as I can	0.858			
IF5 We must all do our part to stop consuming soft drinks	0.712			
Measures	Factor loading	Cronbach's α	Composite reliability (CR)	AVE
Sociocultural Factors		0.857	0.926	0.618
SC1 In my culture, it is more suitable not to consume soft drinks	0.912			
SC2 My tradition supports not consuming soft drinks	0.811			
SC3 I do not consume soft drinks because my family members do not drink them	0.829			
SC4 I do not consume soft drinks because my friends do not drink them	0.761			
SC5 I do not consume soft drinks because my colleagues do not drink them	0.717			
SC6 I talked with my peers about these products in social media	0.573			
SC7 I talked with my peers about buying these products on the Internet	0.663			
SC8 I asked my peers for advice about these products	0.823			
SC9 I obtained product information from my peers	0.873			
SC10 My peers encouraged me not to buy these products	0.853			

The discriminant validity results presented in Table 3 show that the square root of the AVE values of all the reflective constructs was higher than the interconstruct correlations [64]. Also, the loading of all the indicators was higher than their respective cross loading.

Table 3. Discriminant validity results.

Factor	1	2	3	4	5
Attitude	1 (0.819)				
Behavioral Intentions	0.521	1 (0.768)			
Individual Factors	0.448	0.555	1 (0.719)		
Sociocultural Factors	0.537	0.521	0.401	1 (0.813)	
Soft Drink Anticonsumption	0.433	0.421	0.496	0.519	1 (0.852)

Notes: All correlations are significant at $p = 0.01$. Square root AVE scores are displayed in parentheses. BI = behavioral intentions, IF = individual factors, SCF = sociocultural factors, SAC = soft drink anticonsumption.

4.2. Structural Model: Hypotheses Testing

Chin [65] provided the criteria to test the structural model, which is based on testing the path coefficients along with the values of the *t*-statistics. The bootstrapping technique was used to test the hypotheses with a confidence interval of $\alpha = 0.05$ (see Table 4).

The reported R^2 values in Table 4 for both SAC (0.634) and BI (0.414) indicate the fitness of the proposed model with the predictive accuracy [60] of all the hypothesized relationships. The results of all the direct relationships were supported. One's attitude towards soft drink anticonsumption has a positive influence on soft drink anticonsumption (H1: $\beta = 0.312$, $p = 0.000$), and this attitude has a direct positive effect on behavioral intentions (H2: $\beta = 0.273$, $p = 0.000$). Hair et al. [60] laid the foundation for testing mediation paths; after that, Bagozzi and Yi [61] put forward new insights into direct and indirect paths.

Table 4. Structural equation model estimates.

PATH				
From	To	Hypotheses	Indirect Effect	Standardized Estimate (CR)
Attitude	Soft Drink Anticonsumption	H1		0.312 (3.983)
Attitude	Behavioral Intentions	H2		0.273 (4.173)
Behavioral Intentions	Soft Drink Anticonsumption	H3	0.114	(3.283)
Individual Factors	Soft Drink Anticonsumption	H4		0.328 (5.657)
Sociocultural Factors	Soft Drink Anticonsumption	H5		0.173 (2.783)
CR = 1.96 ($\alpha = 0.05$ level)				

The indirect effect of attitudes on anticonsumption behavior through behavioral intention was supported (H3). Individual factors are positively related to soft drink anticonsumption (H4: $\beta = 0.328$, $p = 0.000$), and sociocultural factors are also significantly associated with anticonsumption behavior (H1: $\beta = 0.173$, $p = 0.000$) (see Table 4). So, on the basis of these results, the effect of consumer sociocultural groups on soft drink anticonsumption behavior is significant. These results are in line with previous studies in which consumer sociocultural variables were shown to have a strong effect on consumer behavior [66].

5. Findings and Implications

To achieve the aim of this study, an effort was made to test the proposed hypotheses, which are discussed below.

5.1. Effect of Attitude on Anticonsumption Behavior

This study attempted to understand the motives and behaviors of soft drink anticonsumption behavior in China and focused on the effect of individual perceptions and the role of sociocultural variables among anticonsumers. There are some inadequacies concerning the theoretical robustness and generalizability of the related research. Most of the previous studies have considered the importance of consumption behaviors by providing a theoretical foundation of theory of planned behavior (TPB) [13]. In this study, TPB was applied to understand the avoidance behavior or resistance towards unhealthy products such as soft drinks. To offset these deficiencies [1], this study has attempted to understand the antecedents of soft drink anticonsumption behavior in the context of Chinese consumers [4]. The study

relied on the theory of planned behavior [39] and the theory of reasoned action [67] to empirically test the effects of different antecedents on anticonsumption. Our research recognizes that consumer anticonsumption behavior is driven by health-conscious attitudes towards soft drinks more so than conditioning due to other important factors, such as hedonic aspects [47].

According to the results, attitudes towards soft drink anticonsumption lead to intentions to avoid consuming soft drinks. This study confirmed that one's attitude towards anticonsumption is a positive significant predictor of actual behavior, whereby a consumer is more likely to stop consuming soft drinks if obesity and health risks are high (H1). This is due to consumer health consciousness and disease avoidance behavior [40]. Interestingly, results have shown that attitude is a strong predictor of anticonsumption behavior. According to Gupta et al. [6], consumer health beliefs regarding soft drinks are the foundation of self-motivation, which builds a positive attitude towards anticonsumption. Considerations of obesity risks are a main driver of avoidance behavior. As a result, consumers tend to reduce and eventually eliminate soft drink consumption since they believe such drinks have negative health outcomes when compared with others [40].

5.2. Effect of Attitude on Behavioral Intentions

In the factorial analysis, we found that two perceived benefit factors, namely, health and obesity reduction, were responsible for positively affecting consumer attitudes towards soft drink anticonsumption. Our results also showed that health issues associated with drinking soft drinks and obesity levels due to binge consumption drive anticonsumption behavior. These results suggest that attitudes towards soft drink anticonsumption have a significantly positive influence on behavioral intention (H2). The results demonstrate that consumption behavior is not necessarily reversed in avoidance behavior. Our study results are consistent with the theory of planned behavior, which argues that attitude is an important antecedent to behavioral intention and actual consumer behavior [6]. These results are also in line with previous studies on anticonsumption behavior in other settings, suggesting attitude as a strong predictor of anticonsumption behavior [54].

5.3. Effect of Attitude on Anticonsumption Behavior through Behavioral Intentions

Moreover, attitude towards anticonsumption through behavioral intention influences avoidance behavior in more or less the same way as in consumption behavior among Chinese consumers [4]. These results are also consistent with two very recent studies on meat and dairy anticonsumption behavior [8,14,27]. This has possible policy implications since attitudes towards soft drink anticonsumption are positively related to managing health and obesity risks [1,5,7], and local and global marketers would do well to consider favorable attitude changes towards unnatural drink consumption. This could only be done by designing and communicating health-related product information and showing how the consumption of fewer carbonated drinks can help to limit obesity and chronic diseases. The general perception before this study was that avoidance of carbonated drinks would positively enhance attitudes towards favorable healthy consumption. Our study results indicate an indirect positive effect of attitude on soft drink anticonsumption behavior via behavioral intention (H3).

5.4. Effect of Individual Factors

Our findings also demonstrate that individual factors are positive predictors of soft drink anticonsumption behavior (H4). Individual factors are the “internal standards concerning a particular behavior [39], which is also often experienced as the feeling of moral obligation or norm as well”. Consumers' personal beliefs about health concerns as well as their moral obligations are positively associated with anticonsumption behavior [33]. For instance, the concerns of meat anticonsumers are associated with lifestyle and sustainability [8]. This study found that consumer individual factors, which involve consumer personality, thoughts, and emotions, were more influential than the sociocultural factors in forming anticonsumption behavior. The strong positive influence of personal factors suggests

that Chinese consumers' obesity-reduction efforts can contribute to healthy living. Marketers could decrease the acceptability of carbonated drinks by incorporating facts about health risks.

5.5. Effect of Social Factors

The social factors, referring to the “perceived social demand to perform any specific behavior”, were found to be significant with soft drink anticonsumption behavior among Chinese consumers (H5). These results were expected as the role of family and friends is significant in collective cultures such as China. These results suggest a new addition to the anticonsumption literature, where the role of family and friends in avoidance behavior is important. This study has provided important implications for TPB regarding anticonsumption behavior in the context of Chinese consumers.

The outcomes further showed that the role of sociocultural factors is very important in acceptance or rejection of certain products/services. Overall, this study revealed that, along with personal beliefs about soft drink avoidance behavior, social factors also play a significant role when approval is dependent upon social groups [36].

These results are consistent with previous studies where avoidance behavior is positively linked to individual and sociocultural factors suggesting consumer anticonsumption behavior [66]. There is support in the literature for the relationship between individual factors and avoidance behavior; for example, dairy anticonsumers reported that weight gain had a positive effect on anticonsumption behavior [45].

Consumer individual and sociocultural factors are strong predictors of anticonsumption behavior in a collective culture such as China. Individual factors refer to behaviors where consumers think subjectively about consuming or not consuming a product [39]. Sociocultural factors reflect imposed directions, for example, obesity-reduction behaviors and parental styles [2,24]. In the context of Chinese consumers, health consciousness is the most prominent factor of soft drink anticonsumption, and consumers believe their actions help reduce obesity. Most of the previous studies have found supporting evidence for obesity reduction and health consciousness [4]. The results here clearly show the impact of sociocultural factors on anticonsumption behavior.

Despite the partial generalizability of the sample, these results may not be suitable across all collective societies, such as Pakistan, where socialization is seen to positively influence soft drink consumption [47]. On the contrary, the results indicate that individual characteristics play a strong role in anticonsumption behavior [45]. Thus, marketers and policymakers may target individual rather than societal perspectives when designing strategies for product anticonsumption.

6. Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Research

This study revealed that soft drink anticonsumption is largely associated with consumer personal and social factors, and the results are consistent with some of the previous studies [15]. Given the association of obesity and chronic diseases with soft drink consumption, it can also be argued that consumer individual beliefs and social pressure affect intake patterns. Consumers perceive that the negative effects of soft drinks can harm their welfare in the long run. Our results have shown that health consciousness evokes an intention to avoid soft drinks. This study also confirmed that consumer individual and sociocultural factors are more likely to positively impact soft drink anticonsumption behavior. This study offers several theoretical and practical contributions to the field of anticonsumption studies. First, this study identifies the underlying consumer attitudes towards the negative health effects of soft drinks. It also confirms that behavioral intentions play an important role in avoidance behavior [14], whereas Ajzen [39] argued that avoiding such specific behavior is not necessarily reversed. Considering the evidence, personal beliefs, such as those about obesity reduction, are positively associated with anticonsumption behavior. Also, consumer social groups such as family, friends, and other reference groups play a vital role in avoidance behavior [15]. In relation to previous studies, the present study is one the first to attempt recognizing soft drink anticonsumption behavior using the theory of planned behavior framework with the support of the theory of reasoned action in

the Chinese context. The study has reported some new insights into anticonsumption, specifically, the significant effect of sociocultural factors on soft drink anticonsumption behavior in the Chinese context.

There are some limitations of this study, such as the small sample size, which prompt further research. Thus, more geographical coverage would be helpful. Further, more constructs, such as subjective norms, need to be incorporated into the model in future studies. Previous studies have revealed an insignificant effect of subjective norms on green consumption behavior in collective cultures such as India [13], but in the case of anticonsumption, the behavioral effects of subjective norms are unknown. Additional studies should examine gender differences in anticonsumption behavior since previous studies suggest that females are more health conscious [47]. Future studies could investigate other important associations, such as product knowledge and anticonsumption behavior, and how functional knowledge affects attitudes towards anticonsumption [6]. Additional considerations include anticonsumption attitudes towards other food categories such as dairy and meat products [8]. There are many opportunities for researchers to investigate other anticonsumption-related behaviors.

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