



Empirical Study on Consuming Psychology and Consuming Behavior of Contemporary University Students Taking Shandong Province as an Example

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Abstract

As a sort of knowledge, emotion and disposition in the social living conditions, consuming psychology and behavior is not only a wind vane for social development to a certain extent, but also a barometer of the spirit of the time. Therefore, study on consuming psychology and the consuming behavior it affects becomes a significant and unique perspective to analyze state of development of the society and orientation of behaviors of its social members. University students are the vanguard of the mass culture and consumption, so study and analysis in their consuming psychology and behavior is helpful to come to know the consumer trends of contemporary young people, and even the whole society. In this article, the author adopts the research method with combination of questionnaire survey and interview, and conducts a sample survey on university students in several colleges and universities in Shandong Province. The survey indicates the following characteristics of consumption among university students: prominent trend of consumption diversification, obvious disequilibrium of consumption, co-existence of consumption individuation and belongingness, practical consumption being the main stream, increasing consumption of intercourse and entertainment. Enlightenment and recommendations: To cultivate and strengthen the Financial Quotient of university students, to establish scientific consumption value and to advocate green consumption.

Keywords: University students, Consuming psychology, Consuming behavior, Empirical study

1. Introduction

As a sort of knowledge, emotion and disposition in the social living conditions, consuming psychology and behavior is not only a wind vane for social development to a certain extent, but also a barometer of the spirit of the time. Therefore, study on consuming psychology and the consuming behavior it affects becomes a significant and unique perspective to analyze state of development of the society and orientation of behaviors of its social members. University students are the vanguard of the mass culture and consumption and are propagator and practitioner of consumption in the society in future, so study and analysis in their consuming psychology and behavior is helpful to come to know the consumer trends of contemporary young people, and even the whole society. The golden stage of their physical and mental development determines their huge consumer demands and sensitive consumption idea. The stage of learning development endows them with a major task of study, so they are unable to realize economic independence, which constrains their consumption desire and consumption choice in a certain degree. Study on their consuming psychology and behavior has important social significance to conducting necessary consumption education, improving their ability of scientific consumption and optimizing the social consumption mode.

2. Summary of sample survey and introduction to the sample

In order to understand actual condition of university students' consumption, the author selects respectively several colleges and universities from the east, middle and west of Shandong Province, and chooses testees with the method of stratified cluster sampling. She altogether sends out 1600 questionnaires, and takes back 1457 questionnaires, with a coefficient of recovery of 91.06%. Among the testees, there are 739 urban university students, 718 rural university students, including 707 male students and 750 female students. There are 300 freshmen, 380 sophomores, 390 juniors and 387 seniors, their ages ranging between 18 and 25, with an average age of 21.80.

3. Family background of contemporary university students and sources of their expense

Expense of contemporary university students is the realistic foundation for study on consumption, whereas sources of expense affect their consumption manners and habits. This survey commences with the two major sources of family support and personal income. Considering the diversity of family backgrounds, the author selects urban development level and monthly family income as the research data which are closely interrelated with contemporary university students' personal consumption. According to the data, among all university students investigated, there are 50.7% rural university students, 10.2% county and town university students, and 39.1% university students from large cities. There are 25.2% university students whose monthly family average income is below 1000 Yuan, 35.7% between 1000 and 3000 Yuan, 28.7% between 3000 and 5000 Yuan, 9.8% between 5000 and 10000 Yuan, and 0.6% above 10000 Yuan.

In reply to the question "In the past one year, how much altogether you have got from your family and your friends and relatives?", it is indicated, 74.3% of university students get an amount of more than 6000 Yuan from their family, and a vast majority of the cost of living for university students comes from financial support from their family and friends and relatives. (See Table 1)

Insert Table 1 Here

In reply to the question "How much you have earned by means of part-time jobs or other channels in the past one year?", it is indicated, 79.4% of university students earn an amount below 1000 Yuan, and only 16.3% of young students earn an amount between 1001 Yuan and 3000 Yuan (See Table 2), which corresponds with the above data that indicate expense of most university students comes from their family support.

Insert Table 2 Here

4. Articles of consumption among contemporary university students and influential factors

For convenience of research, the author classifies daily consumption of university students into five types: living necessities (including expenses on food and articles for daily use), learning (mainly including expenses on certificate examination, purchase of books, and training, etc), amusement and leisure (including expenses on sports, tourism, games, Karaoke, etc), social intercourse (including expenses on amoueux, intercourse with classmates and friends) and fashion (including expenses on top quality costumes, makeup, mp3, CD, and computers which are fashions chased after). The statistical data indicate that, living necessities account for an absolute proportion of daily consumption among university students, and the other four categories of average consumption are mainly concentrated within the range of 70 to 100 Yuan. The category of learning accounts for a proportion of 11.6% of the total consumption, amusement and leisure 13.5%, intercourse 13.8%, and fashion accounts for 14%. It can be seen from Table 3 that, average consumption amount of learning is lower than the other four categories. The proportion of social intercourse and fashion is larger.

Insert Table 3 Here

In order to understand factors which influence selection and judgment of consumption, the author of this article conducts a depth interview with several university students, and comes to have an idea about factors that affect their consumption. The author designs the questionnaire and conducts the survey according to the five major influential factors summarized, and adopts the method of five-level hierarchy judgment. The survey results are as follows in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 Here

It can be seen from Table 4, there are several factors that affect university students' daily consuming behavior. The proportion of university students who regard influence of "living necessity" on their consumption propensity as common, large and tremendous is respectively 24.1%, 40.1% & 26.1%; the proportion of those who regard influence of "family condition" on their consumption propensity as common, large and tremendous is respectively 28.1%, 34.5% & 29.8%; the proportion of those who regard influence of "personal likes" on their consumption propensity as common, large and tremendous is respectively 34.2%, 37.0% & 13.4%; these are influential factors which rank the first three factors. Such a choice by university students reflects that family condition is the foundation, satisfaction of personal needs is the principal part, and personal preference is the primary influential factor of choice. Although advertising and opinions of others are also factors affecting decision-making of consumption, they are not decisive. It can be said that, consumption of university students mostly commences from reality, and starts with rationality.

5. Analysis in characteristics of consuming psychology and behavior of contemporary university students

From the above data, it can be seen that, cost of living of university students mainly comes from their families. Restricted by objective conditions and their own situation, a large majority of university students cannot resolve their economic problems, and only a minority of them depend upon themselves to obtain economic independence. In terms of items of consumption, survival consumption of university students accounts for an increasingly declining proportion, consumption of development occupies a predominant position, and consumption of entertainment becomes more and

more outstanding. University students can no longer be satisfied with basic living consumption, and the products of their consumption are varied. Among factors which affect consumption of university students, constraint of family background and income is still the major one. The consciousness of "I make the decision" in daily consumption is on the increase, and the degree of influences by the environment and the social group becomes increasingly obvious. Consuming psychology and consuming behavior of university students manifest a brand-new concept.

5.1 Outstanding tendency of diversification of consumption

With development of social economy, living conditions of human being is continually improved and a large majority of families provide necessary economic support for their children. Almost 80 percent of university students acquire an economic support exceeding 6000 Yuan from their families each year. That is to say, the basic necessity of their learning and living is satisfied. Living necessities of university students account for 47.1%, and the proportion of such sorts of consumption as study, amusement and leisure, fashion and intercourse, etc, exceeds 50%. Daily consumption of university students is rich and varied, and entertainment, sports, mobile phone, computer and new types of IT products become the hot spot of their consumption. Such consumption as amativeness consumption, tourism consumption, online consumption and beauty consumption, etc, becomes the new favorite of contemporary university students.

5.2 Obvious disequilibrium of consumption

Since university students come from different areas and different families, the disequilibrium of regional economic development and disequilibrium of industries result in disequilibrium of family income. In addition, the structures of their families are different. Therefore, disequilibrium and diversity of consumption exists among university students. It is indicated from the data, the least that a university student spends each year is only 2988 Yuan, whereas the most expense is as high as 35000 Yuan each year, with a difference over ten times. Part of university students are not moderate in consumption, whereas it is already very difficult for some university students to meet basic living necessities, and they can hardly pursue a better material life. The reality of great gap between the rich and the poor determines the tendency of great difference between their consumption.

5.3 Co-existence of individuality and belongingness of consumption

In the current diversified society, people are more inclined to choosing goods and services based on their interest and hobby, aesthetic standard and delight of life. As a particular young and forward group, university students bring more emphasis to their individuality in the process of consumption, and show their stuff. From the investigation data, influence of "personal likes" upon daily consumption of university students is just second to living necessity and family condition, ranking the third. At the time when university students pursue individuality of consumption, they also wish to obtain recognition from the surrounding, which, if reflected in the pattern of consumption, is to listen to opinions of others and to select the goods considered fine by most of people. This survey also reflects such a feature that, the proportion of common influence and large influence of others' opinion on consumption is respectively 41.2% and 13.9%. Belongingness of consumption can maintain the feeling of satisfaction to a greater extent when manifesting individuality so as to avoid more contradiction and conflict in psychology.

5.4 Practical consumption is still the main stream.

Because most university students cannot depend on themselves to burden their expense, and the desire of consumption is confined, they are usually quite prudent when spending money. They tend to make a rational and appropriate consumption according to the economic conditions of their own families. Price, quality and fashion are the major factors to attract university students to consume. From the results of the survey, it can be seen that, more than 70% of university students regard living necessity and family condition as the major factors considered in their daily consumption, and to be particular about practical and rational consumption is still the main consumption concept of contemporary university students. The "Post-80s" generation of university students takes a realistic attitude towards the society, and they tend to regard interest as the main part. They look upon consumption from the perspective of practicalness and utility, so that practical consumption heads the list of successful candidates among university students.

5.5 Increasing consumption of intercourse and entertainment

Intercourse and entertainment consumption is on the increase day by day, which reflects the results of development of the times and individuals. Firstly, consumption hot spot pursued in the society is in succession, patterns of consumption are rapidly upgraded, and the spending spree of entertainment spreads over university students. Secondly, multiple channels of capital sources also speed up change of consumption structure. Contemporary university students have gone out of the situation of "busying themselves in the classics" in the past, and the wave of part-time jobs and earning money has become an unevadable phenomenon among university students. Multiple channels of capital sources guarantee more seed money for university students to spend, and their consumption of entertainment becomes more and more. Thirdly, from the perspective of psychological condition of university students, they are faced up with larger pressure than those university students at any time before. In face with such pressure difficult to get away from, to seek for psychological balance becomes necessary. "Emotional consumption" and "humane consumption" can bring relief and spice, which decides that increase in expense of intercourse becomes necessary.

6. Enlightenments and recommendations

6.1 Cultivation and intensification of Financial Quotient of university students

Financial Quotient refers to intelligence of one in terms of finance, namely, rational recognition and utilization of money. According to experts, the concept of Financial Quotient, together with Intelligence Quotient and Emotion Quotient, are three indispensable qualities in the modern society, and is also a subject in modern education that cannot be ignored or avoided. It can be understood that, Intelligence Quotient reflects the survival capacity of human being as common creature, whereas Emotion Quotient reflects the survival capacity of human being as social creature, and Financial Quotient reflects the survival capacity of human being as an economic man in the economic society. Financial Quotient mainly contains the following two aspects: firstly, the capacity of correct recognition of money and the rule of money; secondly, the capacity of correct use of money and the rule of money. We should focus on the content of these two aspects. Specifically, we should design vivid and vigorous teaching patterns in teaching activities of consuming psychology classes and moral education classes, and lead students to be consumers with commercial mind, to learn to manage financial matters, to be particular about consumption ethics and to adapt themselves to requirements of the economic society.

6.2 Establishment of scientific consumption value

Considering the characteristics of diversity and disequilibrium of consumption among contemporary university students, a moderate education should be conducted upon them with different levels. The so-called moderate education refers to correspondence of consumption with development of production capacity and family income, which includes the two meanings of not restricting consumption and non pre-mature consumption. The education of “thriftiness with limit and rational consumption” for the consumption idea among university students is aimed at enabling them to come to realize, consumption should not only avoid excessive constraint, but should also avoid excessive consumption. University students should have independent consciousness and the concept of rational consumption, and should assume the responsibility towards the society, towards others and towards themselves.

6.3 Advocation of green consumption

University students are endowed with higher cultural quality, and they will play a significant role in the social life in the future. They are not only the practitioners of green consumption, but also best propagators and advocates. To establish the idea of green consumption, one should not only come to realize the inseparable relations between individual consumption and social sustainable development, ecological balance and environmental protection, but should also be aware of the significance of ecological civilization and environmental protection. Besides, they should practice consumption of environmental protection, insist on appropriate consumption, object to pre-mature consumption, Bandwagon consumption, persist in rational consumption, and oppose to blind consumption and “face-saving” consumption.

References

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Table 1. Proportion of the amount of money obtained from their families by contemporary university students

Amount	Basically none	Below 1000 Yuan	1001-3000 Yuan	3001-6000 Yuan	6001-9000 Yuan	9001-12000 Yuan	12001-15000 Yuan	Above 15001 Yuan
Proportion (%)	3.0	4.3	8.1	10.3	17.3	24.1	15.4	17.5

Table 2. Proportion of the amount of money earned by contemporary university students themselves

Amount earned	Basically none	Below 1000 Yuan	1001-3000 Yuan	3001-6000 Yuan	6001-9000 Yuan	9001-12000 Yuan	Above 12001 Yuan
Proportion (%)	48.3	31.1	16.3	2.3	1.4	0.4	0.2

Table 3. Average monthly consumption amount for various consumption activities by contemporary university students

	Study	Amusement and leisure	Intercourse	Fashion	Living necessity
Average consumption amount (Yuan/month)	76.94	89.95	91.46	93.03	312.89
Proportion of the total consumption (%)	11.6	13.5	13.8	14	47.1

Table 4. Proportion (%) of factors that affect daily consumption trend of contemporary university students

Factors affecting trend of consumption	slight	minor	common	large	tremendous
Living needs	2.8	6.9	24.1	40.1	26.1
Family conditions	1.9	5.7	28.1	34.5	29.8
Personal likes	6.8	8.6	34.2	37.0	13.4
Advertising	20.5	31.4	29.3	10.5	8.3
Opinions of others	13.7	28.9	41.2	13.9	2.3