

A Social Psychology Analysis of Chinese College Students' Excessive Consumption

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Abstract

As a group of special consumer groups with no steady revenue stream, college students are not only in the transition period when they step into the special society, but also in an important stage of forming their consumption concept and value orientation. Therefore, the consumption behavior of college students is obviously different from that of other consumer groups. In recent years, a series of campus and even social problems caused by the increase in irrational spending stimulated by excessive consumption have aroused wide public concern. Based on this premise, this paper focuses on and analyzes the current situation and existing problems of Chinese college students' excessive consumption behavior. Additionally, we try to analyze the behavior of over-consumption from the perspective of social psychology, in hope of offering our students more effective help in the concrete practice process. It is necessary to integrate the existing resources of the current school, and link the cultivation and education of college students' consumption concepts and financial habits with the moral education of their outlook on life, world view and values.

Keywords

Excessive consumption; Social psychological analysis; Psychological features; Educational proposals.

1. Introduction

With the fast development of China's economy and the establishment and popularization of modern credit mode, living within one's means is no longer the only choice for the consumption pattern. In such a consumer society, various convenient payment methods greatly encourage people to meet their material needs with their expected future income.

According to the latest data on registered college students released by the National Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Education in 2017, there are 26.958 million college students in China, accounting for 2.7% of the national population. Meanwhile, with the continuous expansion of college enrollment, college students, as an important part of the contemporary society, play a role in all aspects of social and economic activities.

From the objective point of view of current economic development situation in China, moderate excessive consumption is beneficial. For young people, moderate debt can make them feel the pressure of life and maintain a certain sense of crisis [1]. They will not slacken their work to increase their wealth, so they may gain more growth and income in an invisible way. However, material desire is endless. Excessive consumption can not become a shortcut for college students to enjoy material achievements in advance. Excessive consumption is often counterproductive, so the behavior of college students' excessive consumption is often accompanied by the following problems: For example, the pursuit of pleasure affects personal development, and excessive overdraft causes debt crisis. The essence of all kinds of borrowing means is to overdraw individual consumption potential in the future. Therefore, for some

college students with weak self-control ability, the desire expansion caused by excess consumption is easy to lead to a bigger debt crisis. Failure to repay the debt on time can even damage personal credit and affect their future career development [2].

College students' excessive consumption is not only a phenomenon in today's society, but also a social problem that needs to be paid attention to. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze college students' excessive consumption behavior from the perspective of social psychology, so as to better understand the consumption characteristics of this group and give targeted guidance and help.

2. Background

Excessive consumption refers to a consumption mode in which consumers consume in the form of loan, installment, credit card overdraft when their current income level is insufficient to purchase the products or services they need now.

According to a 2017 released by the National Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Education of college students registered according to the latest figures, the current total of the number of college students is 26.958 million, accounts for the population proportion is as high as 2.7%, and with the continuous enrollment expansion of colleges and universities, college students, as has been an important part of modern society, in all aspects of social economic activity plays a role. From the perspective of consumption, college students have the following particularities:

2.1. Parents or Relatives Are the Main Source of Living Expenses

According to the 2019 Analysis report on college students' consumption and financial management data released by MyCOS, 70% of college students' income is still provided by their parents or relatives. [3] Therefore, in addition to the necessary expenses fixed every month, the remaining amount of expenditure of college students is very limited, which can not meet some higher consumer needs of college students.

2.2. Non-essential Expenses Accounted for A High Proportion

In the monthly average expenditure of college students surveyed by Mycos (a total of 8 items, limited to 3 items), the first two items accounting for a large proportion of the total consumption of college students are: image consumption, accounting for 62%; and social entertainment, 51 percent. However, these two items of consumption expenditure are non-essential expenditure, indicating that many college students' consumption has a certain blindness, not fully considering the real demand.

2.3. Obvious Tendency to Excessive Consumption

The majority of college students are pure consumers with single economic source and limited disposable income. However, only a small proportion of them will give up consumption when high consumption expenditure is required. More than half of college students turn to their parents or relatives for financial support, while about 37 percent choose to spend money in advance on credit or installment plans. At the same time, data show that the rapid growth of college students' consumer credit business has turned them into the innovative response group to the demand of the credit market. [4] In this case, without guidance and education, college students' irrational shopping is likely to lead to debt under the stimulation of excessive consumption.

3. Social Psychology Analysis of College Students' Excessive Consumption Behavior

College students, as an important part of social and economic life, are more likely to be influenced by cultural environment and others in the process of consumption activities due to some of their own restrictions, so as to change their consumption behavior. There are mainly three influencing factors as follows.

3.1. The Influence of Herd Mentality

Conformity refers to the phenomenon that individuals in a group often unknowingly suffer from pressure from the group, so that in perception, judgment, belief and behavior, they tend to be consistent with the majority of people in the group. Everyone wants approval and acceptance. Therefore, in social life, the practice of changing personal opinions or behaviors under such pressure is a universal phenomenon of social psychology and behavior. Since college students have not formed independent and complete values and mature world outlook, and lack social life communication experience, in order to better integrate into the collective life of the university, they are more inclined to keep consistent with the majority of people around them in behavior or attitude [5]. Therefore, it is easy to be induced or temporarily affected by other people's emotions when consuming. According to relevant consumption data, if there are many friends or classmates holding a certain product, the psychological pressure brought by it will make a considerable number of interviewed college students tend to buy the same or similar products to maintain group identity. This kind of group shopping can make college students feel connected or sympathetic to the people around them.

Although the commodities that most people choose to buy must have their advantages from a certain point of view, what should not be advocated is that college students blindly consume and consume excessively in pursuit of just having the same things as others without fully considering their actual needs. Especially because of their blind adherence to the social trend of extravagant consumption and consumption to compare with the Joneses, college students, regardless of their current economic conditions, carry out excessive consumption in the way of credit, which is not only detrimental to their healthy consumption concept, but also hinders the development of their correct values and independent thinking ability.

3.2. The Interference of Commercial Popular Culture

Popular culture is a daily cultural form that aims to make a large number of ordinary citizens get emotional pleasure by means of mass communication media and operating according to the rules of commodity market. The rise of popular culture in China was in the 1980s, but its development has profoundly changed people's social life. While promoting the diversified development of social and cultural life, there is a natural affinity relationship between the utilitarian purpose of popular culture and the market, which makes the commercial mass culture permeate every aspect of people's life [6].

After Jack Ma created the Double 11 shopping Festival, shopping festivals such as Double 12 Shopping Festival and Mid-Year Promotion have become popular on major e-commerce platforms in China. At the same time, under the impact of consumerism, modern advertising as one of the main output forms of mass culture, in order to create greater corporate profits, takes advantage of the psychological weakness of college students who like to compare and show off in consumption, and the pursuit of individual fashion characteristics and continues to indoctrinate college students with advanced life attitude and the value of pursuing enjoyment [7].

Turning to the mainstream social apps, ads pepper the landscape with the slogan of a sophisticated lifestyle necessity, and with shopping website phase chimed in all kinds of

payment such as ous, installment and small loan etc, it is easy to mislead college students to disregard their limited living expenses and regard enjoying excessive consumption as a way to highlight their identity and characteristics. This kind of commercial mass culture not only has a great impact on the consumption concept of contemporary college students, but also has a great consumption of their precious learning time and energy to a certain extent.

3.3. Meet the Needs of Individual Identity and Self-actualization

French sociologist Jean Baudrillard believes that in addition to the use value and exchange value, commodities also have the function of highlighting social class and social differentiation, namely, the symbolic value of commodities [8]. In today's society, consumers' choice of commodities is no longer limited to their use value, while college students, as a group with higher knowledge level in the society, pay more attention to the social information and personal taste conveyed by commodities. In a survey of this study, nearly 33% of college students have bought the same style as a certain star. The essence of star worship is a kind of affirmation of human's own value. Therefore, to some extent, college students' pursuit of the same style as stars is to obtain an alternative self-realization by buying the same products as their idols [9]. However, as a group of high income in society, a piece of clothing or bag often costs over thousands of yuan, which is far beyond the reach of ordinary college students. Constrained by limited disposable funds, more and more college students tend to build their self-identified social hierarchy by means of over-consumption.

A 2019 survey by the Campus News agency of China Youth Network found that 89.77% of students have used installment payments to spend more than they should. In the type of over-consumption, shopping is the main consumption, accounting for 85.98%, followed by food and entertainment, accounting for 65.16% and 30.30% respectively. French sociologist Bouchia believed that the symbolic value of goods consumed by individuals is actually a kind of self-realization of consumers, or consumption to reflect their self-value. College students are still in the period of value formation. Under the improper publicity of the current prevailing concept of advanced consumption by merchants, they are easy to confuse the essence of realizing self-value and pay for blind consumption.

4. Discussion and Implications

College students, as a relatively special consumer group in China's economic life, although most of them do not have complete economic ability, they have received higher education and have higher ideological consciousness and learning ability. At the same time, families and schools should also bear the corresponding educational blame. For the problem of excessive consumption of college students, it can be improved from the following three aspects.

4.1. Improve Personal Awareness of Correct Consumption

College students should pay attention to reasonable planning of personal consumption. Some college students have weak sense of rationality, subjectivity and arbitrariness when consuming. Additionally they lack the necessary awareness of risk prevention. Therefore, it is likely for them to be affected by others' incorrect consumption concept in interpersonal communication, which leads to problems such as impulse consumption and excessive consumption. Therefore, college students should first start from themselves, improve their rational consumption awareness and ability to distinguish right from wrong, adhere to personal actual needs, pay attention to improve their connotation of consumption and ability in financial management. In addition, college students should strengthen the study of modern financial knowledge, and gradually establish a correct sense of consumption and scientific concept of financial management.

4.2. Attach Great Importance to the Education and Guidance of Family

Compared with their parents, contemporary college students enjoy a richer material life in the process of growing up, and their consumption needs are often well met by their families.[10] Therefore, quite a number of college students have not developed good consumption habits in the early stage, and it is difficult to effectively restrain their consumption desires, so they are easy to overdraw their consumption under the influence of bad consumerism culture in the market. Parents as the first teachers of their children, the family has a great influence on the concept of personal consumption. It is the responsibility of parents to help their children develop a correct view of money and values. Parents should attach importance to the power of teaching by word of mouth and example, starting from family life, improve the awareness of saving and advocate green consumption concept. In addition, parents can communicate with their children to timely understand the puzzles encountered by college students in consumption activities and give appropriate guidance and help, which will help guide their children to improve their financial awareness while reasonable consumption.

4.3. Construction of Excellent Campus Culture and Curriculum Perfection in Colleges and Universities

The value orientation of campus atmosphere is also a kind of educational resource, which has a strong guiding function for the growth of students. Therefore, schools should attach importance to the power of environmental education, and strengthen the education and publicity of students' consumption consciousness and financial management concept through the advantageous position of campus culture construction. The construction of excellent campus culture not only gives correct guidance to the establishment of college students' value concept of money, but also has a positive impact on their psychological health.

In addition, colleges and universities can actively integrate relevant educational resources and adjust the Settings according to the actual needs of students, such as opening general courses related to financial management and consumer credit, introducing the selection methods of financial products and popularizing financial knowledge, so as to improve the subjective initiative of students in learning scientific financial knowledge. These practices will help improve the knowledge structure of students, improve the ability of personal finance and help students establish and practice the correct and scientific concept of financial management.

5. Conclusion

With the development of modern finance, the credit consumption mode of consumption first and repayment later has penetrated into every aspect of people's life. It is undeniable that personal consumption credit can stimulate residents' consumption and promote economic growth by stimulating domestic demand. However, for most college students without economic income, excessive consumption and debt consumption cause various problems not only bring burdens to individuals and families, but also cause social problems that are not conducive to the long-term and orderly development of the economy.

In the era of rich material life, college students need more rational and healthy consumption concept and behavior. Not only should individuals consciously plan for finance and learn financial knowledge, but parents and schools should also pay attention to the cultivation and education of students' values and financial management ability, which is not only the demand for the development of modern talents, but also conducive to the continuous prosperity of the overall consumer market.

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