

Analysis of Emotional Consumption Phenomenon: Behavioral Characteristics, Influences, and Trends of the Youth Group

Yiting Liang , Dongda Cai*

NingboTech University, Ningbo,315100, China

*Corresponding author:cynthiac@nbt.edu.cn

Abstract: *The phenomenon of emotional consumption is rooted in the multidimensional context of contemporary society, with the youth group (especially individuals aged 18-25) being the main demographic engaged in emotional consumption. Through empirical analysis, it is found that positive emotions and self-satisfaction significantly influence the willingness of the youth group to engage in emotional consumption, while negative emotions have no significant impact. Emotional consumption reflects the youth group's pursuit of emotional experience and spiritual satisfaction, influenced by factors such as social media and psychological stress. Emotional consumption not only helps to regulate life pressure but also promotes economic development and self-identity; however, it should be approached rationally to avoid impulsive and excessive consumption. This article will use SPSS analysis to better understand and analyze the emotional consumption behavior of part of the youth group. Due to the limited research sample, the results may contain certain errors.*

Keywords: *Emotional consumption, consumption behavior, consumption psychology*

Introduction

In today's society, the rapid development of the economy and the evolution of consumption patterns have led to an increasing influence of emotional factors on consumer purchasing behavior. Among the youth group, emotional consumption is particularly significant, reflecting the pursuit of quality of life and changes in social culture. Emotional consumption refers to seeking emotional fulfillment and experiences during the purchase process, becoming an important component of modern consumer culture. As the main force of consumption, the youth group's behavior and preferences affect market trends. They not only pursue the practicality and functionality of goods but also emphasize emotional experiences and emotional value. This has changed the traditional supply and demand relationship in the market, giving rise to new consumption scenarios and formats such as blind boxes, small cards, and DIY crafts. This article will use SPSS to analyze the characteristics, influences, and trends of youth emotional consumption.

1.The Social Context of Emotional Consumption

The phenomenon of emotional consumption is deeply rooted in the multidimensional context of contemporary society, with its emergence attributed to the intertwining influence of multiple factors.

First, the fast-paced life and high levels of stress in modern society drive individuals to seek immediate emotional relief, making consumption a common method for emotional regulation. People tend to purchase specific goods or services, such as emotionally valuable handmade crafts or relaxation experiences, to alleviate stress and enhance their mood.

Second, the widespread dissemination of materialistic values further strengthens the close connection between consumption and emotions. Material pursuits are viewed as an important means of achieving self-value and social recognition, leading people to rely more on consumption as a tool for emotional regulation during emotional fluctuations^[1].

Third, the rapid development of social media not only provides a platform for showcasing and sharing consumption experiences but also stimulates consumers' purchasing impulses through advertising and marketing strategies, intensifying emotion-driven consumption behaviors. The

comparison and imitation effects on social media also encourage more people to engage in emotional consumption.

Furthermore, the changes in consumer psychological needs cannot be ignored. Compared to the past, when the focus was primarily on practicality and cost-effectiveness, modern individuals pay more attention to the emotional experiences and spiritual satisfaction that consumption brings. This has provided fertile ground for the prosperity of the emotional consumption market.

Lastly, the market's and businesses' keen observation and active response to emotional consumption trends have effectively met consumers' deeper needs by offering personalized and emotionally-driven products and services, further promoting the popularity and development of emotional consumption.

In summary, the social context of emotional consumption is complex and multifaceted, including aspects such as life stress, cultural values, the influence of social media, changes in consumer psychology, and market strategy adjustments. These factors jointly shape the current state and future direction of this consumption phenomenon.

2. Characteristics of the Mainstream Groups of Emotional Consumption

Psychology indicates that emotions are situational and transient, while feelings are enduring and profound. In recent years, the consumption behaviors that satisfy emotional and sentimental needs have been widely summarized as "emotional consumption."

Emotional consumption has a long history. As early as ancient times, people used shopping behaviors to express and fulfill their inner emotional and sentimental needs. With the passage of time, the evolution of commercial society further promoted the development of emotional consumption. In the 19th century, the rise of mass media led to advertisements incorporating emotional and sentimental elements, such as warmth and romance, to promote products. This emotional marketing strategy gradually established its place in commercial activities^[2].

By the 20th century, with the advancement of psychological research, people gained a deeper understanding of consumers' emotions and feelings. Businesses began applying psychological principles to design products and develop marketing strategies that better catered to consumers' emotional needs. For example, by studying consumers' emotional responses, businesses discovered that emotional factors play an important role in purchasing decisions, prompting them to use emotional language and imagery to attract customers.

In contemporary society, emotional consumption has become a widespread phenomenon. With the improvement of living standards and the reform of shopping concepts, shopping behaviors continue to evolve. Sensory enjoyment shopping, focused on "self-satisfaction," is increasingly gaining attention as the public places more emphasis on freedom and beauty. When shopping, consumers consider not only the functionality and price of products but also whether they meet their emotional needs. Furthermore, the rapid development of social media and big data technologies has brought emotional consumption into a new phase. Consumers can now share shopping experiences and emotional feelings via social media, while businesses use big data technologies to analyze consumers' emotional needs and behavior patterns. This emotion-driven commercial activity has become a key part of modern business competition.

Within the consumer base, the younger demographic constitutes the core of emotional product consumption. They emphasize personal expression, pursue high-quality living, and place great importance on emotional fulfillment. Therefore, they demonstrate a strong willingness to purchase emotional products that meet their needs. According to the "China National Mental Health Report (2021-2022)," anxiety levels among individuals aged 18 to 34 are significantly higher than those in other adult age groups. Faced with pressures from work, studies, and other factors, many young people are exploring ways to relieve stress and are willing to spend money seeking "healing."

At the same time, female consumers also play an important role in the emotional product market. They not only seek emotional fulfillment but also value health and beauty, showing a higher purchasing inclination toward emotional products that align with their needs. It is worth noting that a "gold fever" has emerged among young people. Compared to investing in funds, they are more inclined to invest in gold. On social media, various fashionable and exquisitely crafted gold jewelry pieces are widely recommended by influencers, garnering enthusiastic support from young people. As gold prices rise, young people's attitudes have shifted from previously viewing it as "tacky" to now finding it

"irresistibly appealing." The "2023 Jewelry and Accessories Industry Trend White Paper" indicates that the jewelry industry continues to expand in scale and consumption upgrading. Notably, young people's enthusiasm for gold has surged, with the proportion of young individuals purchasing gold rising from 16% to 59% over the past five years^[3].

Based on the above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The consumption purpose associated with positive emotions influences the emotional consumption willingness of young people.

H2: The consumption purpose associated with negative emotions influences the emotional consumption willingness of young people.

H3: The psychological need for self-fulfillment influences the emotional consumption willingness of young people.

3.Data Selection and Empirical Analysis

3.1 Data Selection

The research sample for studying the impact of emotional consumption on the youth group primarily comes from an online self-conducted survey. This study analyzes the influence of emotional consumption on consumption goals using 240 valid questionnaires (out of a total of 300 distributed) with SPSS.

3.2 Empirical Analysis

3.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistical analysis shows that there are 240 respondents in the sample, with 54 males, accounting for 22.5% of the total, and 186 females, accounting for 77.5%. This indicates that more females participated in the survey than males.

Regarding age distribution, the respondents' ages are mainly concentrated around 18-25 years, with 216 people, accounting for 90%. The next largest group is those aged 26 and above, with 18 people, accounting for 7.5%, followed by those under 18, with 6 people, accounting for 2.5%. These data help us understand the basic characteristics of the respondents, and they align with the primary age group of the youth demographic—18-25 years—relevant to this study. This also aids in further analyzing the emotional consumption behaviors of this group. Regarding emotional consumption, 205 people in this survey are willing to engage in emotional consumption, purchasing products related to emotional consumption, accounting for 85.4%. Among them, 73 people are very willing to engage in emotional consumption, accounting for 30.4%. These data also indicate that most of the youth group is willing to pay for their emotions and engage in emotional consumption^[4].

3.2.2 Reliability Test

The Alpha coefficient is used to assess the internal consistency of a questionnaire or scale, i.e., its reliability. The Alpha coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating better internal consistency. An analysis of the survey scale in this study shows that the Alpha coefficient is 0.841, indicating good reliability, with a relatively strong consistency between the questionnaire items, which allows for a reliable measurement of the factors influencing emotional consumption among the youth group. The specific details are shown in the table below.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.841	15

3.2.3 Factor Correlation Analysis

The KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) measure of sampling adequacy is used to assess the suitability of data for factor analysis. The value range is from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating better suitability for factor analysis^[5].

The results show that the KMO value is 0.801, suggesting that the sample data are moderately suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity is used to test whether the correlation matrix of variables is an identity matrix. In the table, the significance level is 0.000, which is less than the usual significance level of 0.05, indicating that the data matrix is not an identity matrix. This means there is a correlation among the variables, making the data suitable for factor analysis.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.801
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	646.289
	df	45
	Sig.	0

In the total variance explanation table, we can further determine the number of factors to be selected. There are three components with initial eigenvalues greater than 1. The eigenvalues of these three components are 3.62, 1.394, and 1.263, respectively, accounting for a cumulative total variance explanation of 62.765%, which is greater than 60%. The information loss from the original questionnaire items is minimal, indicating that the factor analysis is relatively effective. The percentage of variance of the extracted loadings squared is consistent with the variance percentage of the rotated loadings squared, suggesting that the principal components extracted after factor analysis are stable and can effectively explain the relationships between the variables.

The data for the factor analysis is shown in the table below:

Rotated Component Matrixa				
		Component		
		1	2	3
A1	Positive emotional factors	0.795		
A2		0.806		
A3	Negative emotional factors		0.77	
A4			0.793	
A5			0.757	
A6	Self satisfied psychology			0.511
A7				0.815
A8				0.784
A9				0.707
A10				0.545
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.aa. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.				

We obtained that A1 and A2 form Factor 1, which represents positive emotional factors; A3, A4, and A5 form Factor 2, which represents negative emotional factors; and A6, A7, A8, A9, and A10 form Factor 3, which represents self-satisfaction psychology^[6].

3.2.4 Regression Analysis

According to the ANOVA table, the F-value is 5.128, which is greater than 3.86, indicating that the regression equation has a significant influence. The significance value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating that the independent variable (consumption purpose) has a statistically significant impact on the dependent variables (purchase intention, repurchase intention, and sharing intention).

ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24.275	11	2.207	5.128	.000b
	Residual	98.121	228	0.43		
	Total	122.396	239			
a. Dependent Variable: Purchase intention again						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Consumption purpose, Sharing willingness						

From the coefficient table, it can be seen that the sig value of positive emotional factors is <0.001 , which is less than the significance level. Therefore, H1 is accepted, meaning that the consumption purpose with positive emotions has a significant impact on the emotional consumption willingness of the youth group. The sig value of negative emotional factors is >0.05 , so H2 is rejected, meaning that the consumption purpose with negative emotions does not significantly affect the emotional consumption willingness of the youth group. The sig value of self-satisfaction psychology is <0.001 , which is less than the significance level, meaning that self-satisfaction psychology affects the emotional consumption willingness of the youth group^[7].

Coefficientsa					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.532	0.382		1.392	0.165
Positive emotional factors	0.427	0.084	0.335	5.091	0.000
	0.280	0.074	0.242	3.790	0.000
Negative emotional factors	-0.012	0.065	-0.012	-0.179	0.858
	0.098	0.067	0.102	1.469	0.143
	0.031	0.060	0.034	0.508	0.612
Self satisfied psychology	-0.148	0.050	-0.192	-2.934	0.004
	0.069	0.055	0.092	1.263	0.208
	0.005	0.054	0.006	0.089	0.929
	0.023	0.057	0.029	0.407	0.685
	0.054	0.052	0.066	1.040	0.300

Based on the data analysis above, it can be seen that whether or not products can provide emotional value plays an important role in the consumption behavior of the youth group. Both positive emotional factors and consumers' self-satisfaction psychology directly influence the emotional consumption willingness of the youth group, as well as their willingness to repurchase and share. At the same time, promotional activities conducted by businesses also have a certain impact on the emotional consumption willingness of the youth group. However, due to the fact that the number of females participating in the survey is significantly larger than that of males, and the total number of valid questionnaires is only 300, which is a relatively small sample size and cannot fully represent the emotional consumption behavior of the entire youth group, the data analysis results may have some errors^[8].

4.Conclusion

With the rapid development of the economy and the shift in the consumption concept of the youth group, the emotional consumption behavior of the youth has shifted from traditional material needs to emotional experiences and spiritual satisfaction. This consumption behavior not only reflects the youth

group's pursuit of quality of life but also highlights their emphasis on emotional value.

There are three main reasons why the youth group is willing to engage in emotional consumption:

First, emotional consumption relieves psychological pressure and satisfies emotional needs. In today's fast-paced and high-pressure life, the youth group often faces various pressures and feels anxious, so they pay more attention to emotional release and psychological comfort. Emotional consumption has become an important way for them to relieve stress and seek mental relaxation. By purchasing emotional products, they can find an outlet for emotional release and gain temporary pleasure and psychological comfort.

Second, the youth group pursues novelty and experience. The youth group is curious and adventurous; they enjoy trying new things and pursue unique consumption experiences. Their consumption interests are highly random. Emotional consumption products attract a large number of young consumers with their novelty and fun.

Finally, the influence of social media. The widespread use of social media has enabled emotional consumption products to spread quickly and has made the youth group more focused on personalization and self-expression. Young people share their purchasing experiences on social media, displaying the emotional consumption products they have bought to express their emotions and values, thereby gaining more recognition. Social media has also become an important channel for young people to showcase their personality, self-expression, and pursuit of self-identity.

The rise of emotional consumption reflects the changes in the mindset and behavioral patterns of the youth group. Emotional consumption is not just the purchase of material goods, but the pursuit of emotional value. It reflects the youth group's pursuit of quality of life and happiness, as well as the changes in social culture and consumption concepts. Emotional consumption has become central to the youth group's self-expression, pursuit of differentiation, and focus on inner values.

Emotional consumption has also had an impact on economic development and the consumer market. As the youth group becomes more willing to pay for emotional value and pays more attention to emotional consumption, new consumption hotspots and business opportunities have emerged in the consumer market, bringing more vitality and energy. This consumption trend has also forced companies to consider consumers' emotional needs and experiences more when designing and producing products and services. While focusing on "cost-effectiveness," companies are also paying attention to "quality-price ratio," creating new emotional consumption scenarios, and forming a unique emotional economy. This has stimulated consumption potential and promoted economic development.

Emotional consumption is also an important way for the youth group to identify with their own identity and cultural identity. Through emotional consumption, the youth group can build shared value symbols and achieve emotional and mental healing. This consumption behavior is not only a pursuit of individuality and differentiation but also a reflection of their internal emotional needs. Emotional consumption provides the youth group with unique value meanings and has become an important way for them to express themselves and identify with their culture.

In conclusion, the emotional consumption behavior of the youth group is reshaping China's consumption structure, consumption concepts, and consumer market. Compared with material needs, they care more about emotional satisfaction. Emotional consumption not only serves as the "emotional regulator" for the youth group but also satisfies their longing for a better life, providing new growth points for economic growth. However, we should also view the emotional consumption behavior of the youth group rationally, recognizing both its positive aspects in regulating life pressure, promoting economic development, and fostering self-identity, while also being aware of the capital traps behind it, so as to avoid impulsive and excessive consumption.

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