

Study on the Influence of Singleness on The Preference of Self-Improvement Products

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Abstract: As China's economy shifts from high-speed development to high-quality development, people pay more and more attention to their own improvement in all aspects. Judging from the current consumption trend of China's people compared with the consumption development process of developed countries, self-improvement products have a broad market space in China. At the same time, with the continuous development of China's economy and the continuous improvement of people's living standards, demographic problems such as late marriage and late childbearing, unmarried and infertile have gradually become prominent, resulting in an increasing number of single groups. Therefore, in recent years, merchants have begun to focus on markets such as healthy eating, kitchen furniture, and single packages for single groups. In contrast, self-improvement products can increase the single group to change their self-identity and obtain substantial and long-term benefits. However, there are few studies that have explored the impact of singles on self-improvement products. Therefore, this paper studies the influencing mechanism of single groups on self-improvement product preferences from an empirical perspective, collects data from young people in Chongqing by combining online and offline methods, analyzes the influencing factors and consumer group characteristics by using relevant models, and puts forward corresponding suggestions for the marketing strategies of government, enterprises and self-improvement products.

Keywords: Single category, Self-identity threats, Self-improvement products, Consumption preferences.

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the change of people's living environment and marriage concept, the single group has maintained rapid growth. In recent years, I Media Consulting has released the "2021 China Single Group Consumption Behavior Survey and Single Economic Trend Analysis Report", which analyzes and interprets the driving force of China's single economic development, the research on the life and consumption of single groups, and the prospects and trends of single economic development. According to the data, in 2021, 73.01% of singles in China have been single for more than 3 years, of which 43.60% have been single for more than 3 years; 7.1% have no experience of being in a relationship. There are two main reasons why individuals remain single: active and passively single. Active singleness is mainly due to the continuous improvement of educational resources in modern society, the increase in tolerance for sexual behavior, and the strengthening of values such as individualism, independence, career success, and self-realization in society as a whole. Therefore, in the trade-off between "self" and family investment under limited time and energy, singleness has also become the active choice of a considerable number of people. In addition, passive singleness caused by "interpersonal relationship difficulties" has caused obvious problems for contemporary young people to choose a mate, and similar low self-esteem, introversion, and low mate selection effort can predict the difficulty of mate selection. According to the China Self-improvement Products and Services Industry Market Research Report, it covers the statistics of historical market data in the past five years and the forecast of future market capacity growth trends. In 2022, the global market size of self-improvement products and services will reach 283.75 billion yuan (RMB), and the market size of China's self-improvement products and services will reach 51.586 billion yuan. The report predicts

that the global self-improvement products and services market will reach 383.085 billion yuan by 2028, and the compound annual growth rate of the self-improvement products and services market is estimated to be 5.13% during the forecast period. In the context of the new era and new journey, the people's yearning for a better life and the general requirements of economic and social development for improving quality and efficiency have brought many uncertainties to individual survival and development, which inspire individuals to improve themselves. As a result, a broad market space for self-improvement consumption has also been born. According to a survey by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), as China's consumer demand level rises, self-improvement consumption is on the rise. After the society has entered a new stage of rapid development, people are facing greater competitive pressure, eager to improve themselves at the level of knowledge and spirit, and at the same time, in order to pursue a higher quality of life, they have products or services such as knowledge payment, financial management, fitness and beauty higher attention. To sum up, from the perspective of national consumption trends and the development process of consumption in developed countries, self-improvement products have considerable market prospects in China.

2. Literature Research

2.1. Self-improvement of Product Preferences

Thomas and Katherine first came up with the concept of self-improvement products in 2015 [1]. Self-improvement products include not only products that can improve an individual's physical and financial aspects, but also products that can improve an individual's mental and spiritual aspects [2]. There are four main categories, namely products that improve physical fitness, products that improve mental ability, products that improve economic ability, and products that

improve mental strength [3].

Previous research has shown that when self-improvement motivation is active, that is, when they are trying to pursue self-improvement outcomes in some way, consumers tend to choose to buy products with self-improvement properties. Self-improvement motivation often appears in personal attributes or important areas related to the self, indicating that consumers are most likely to be interested in self-improvement products that target intellectual, moral, social, or physical aspects of their selves because these aspects are important to them. Research on when consumers choose self-improvement products has identified the benefits and costs associated with them. While the motivation for self-improvement can motivate consumers to strive to improve themselves, this may lead to a better and more positive situation. However, the pursuit of self-improvement is not without cost, as self-improvement often requires the investment of resources [4] and can lead to emotional stress [5]. So, even though self-promotion products are intuitively appealing, consumers may not always choose them.

Previous work has identified factors influencing an individual's interest in self-improvement products. For example, motivation for self-improvement can be implicated by situational variables, including past shortcomings or failures [6], upcoming challenges [7], and feelings of guilt [1], as well as reminders of resource scarcity [8]. The choice to pursue self-improvement is also influenced by factors within consumers, such as the availability of psychological resources [9-10], self-construction, and culture [11]. In our current work, we expand this literature in a novel way, examining how two different levels of singleness affect consumers' preference for self-improvement products.

2.2. Self-identity Threat

Self-identity is an individual's perception of whether he or she has certain traits, attributes, abilities, or belonging to a group [12]. What is expressed is the process and result of constructing and searching for self-meaning in various fields with the self as the main identity, which is a psychological representation of the individual's view of himself. Aspects of a person's self-identity can be activated differently, and the activation of a particular aspect makes a person's subsequent response more likely to be consistent with that aspect [13-14]. For example, channeling consumers' ethnicity can lead them to respond more favorably to speakers of the same race [15], while channeling related outgroups can cause people to deviate from that group's behavioral norms [16].

In general, an individual's sense of self-identity is relatively stable, but self-identity is also staged and situational, and with the change of the social situation, the individual will form a fluctuating and immediate self-identity with its stable self-identity as the benchmark value. After receiving the stimulus of self-information, individuals will compare their current self-identity with their baseline self-identity (or ideal self-identity) in the immediate situation, and the difference in comparison leads to fluctuating self-identity [17].

When receiving negative external self-information feedback, individuals will feel threatened by negative self-differences, which is a situation of self-identity threat. The threat of self-identity may come from

internal factors or external stimuli, and is formed by individuals in certain situations, and this negative self-perception is immediate. This paper focuses on the sense of self-identity threat formed by external stimuli. Based on the

current prevailing single economy, this paper takes young singles as the research object to explore consumers' preferences for self-improvement products in different single situations.

3. Research Hypothesis

Based on the above analysis, the following hypothesis tests are proposed:

H1: There is a significant difference in preference for self-improvement products in single states (active vs. passive).

H2: Passive singles (vs. active singles) have a higher willingness to purchase self-improvement products.

H3: The threat of self-identity plays a mediating role in the consumption of self-improvement products by single groups.

4. Data Analysis

In this survey, 1177 questionnaires were distributed offline, 998 valid questionnaires were recovered, 650 questionnaires were released online, and 591 valid questionnaires were recovered, with a total of 1589 valid questionnaires, with an effective rate of 86.97%.

4.1. Analysis of the Differences in the Preference of Subjective/Passive Singles for Different Types of Self-Improvement Products

Through the above research, we found that the average value of the purchase intention of active singles and passive singles for self improvement products is greater than 4, which means that active singles will also buy self-improvement products. There are different types of self improvement products, one focuses more on ability improvement, and the other pays more attention to hedonistic improvement. This paper predicts that participants who are actively single will be more inclined to hedonistic self-improvement products, while passively single subjects will be more inclined to functional self-improvement products. According to the Bootstrap method proposed by Hayes, Model1 in the PROCESS program in SPSS was used to analyze the moderating effect with active/passive singleness as the independent variable, self-improvement product type as the moderating variable, and purchase intention as the dependent variable.

According to the analysis of the results of PROCESS Model1, the P value of the test is much less than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that the master passive single has a significant impact on the purchase intention of self-improvement products, and the above derivation is verified again. At the same time, it was found that the self-improvement product type had no significant direct impact on their purchase intention, but the self-improvement product type was related to the master/passive single. The P value of the effect of the interaction item on its purchase intention was less than the significance level of 0.05, and the confidence interval was CI: [1.7736, 2.4430], excluding 0, indicating that the master/passive was single. There are differences in the purchase intention of different types of self-improvement products.

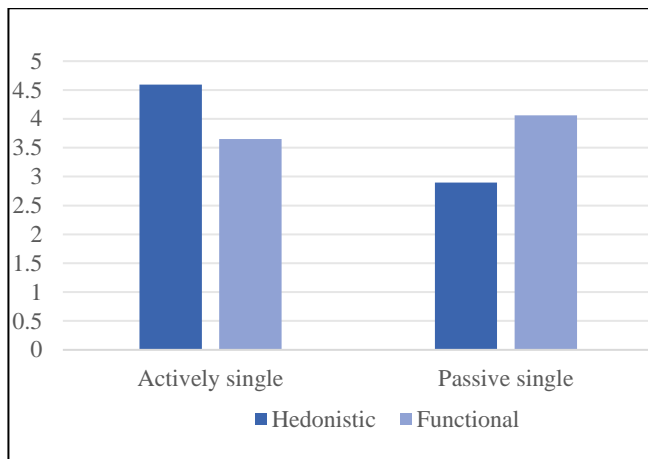


Figure 1. Descriptive Statistics Graph

According to the above chart, it is clear that there is a difference in the purchase intention of the main and passive singles for different types of self-improvement products. The participants who were actively single ($M_{\text{hedonistic}}=4.59$; $M_{\text{functional}}=3.65$) were more willing to buy hedonistic self-improvement products, while the passively single subjects ($M_{\text{hedonistic}}=2.90$; $M_{\text{functional}}=4.06$) were more willing to buy functional self-improvement products.

4.2. Research on the Influence Mechanism of Active/Passive Singleness on The Purchase Intention of Self-Improvement Products

4.2.1. Analysis of the influence mechanism of active/passive singleness on the purchase intention of self-improvement products

The above study has found that the active/passive singleness of the participants has a significant impact on their purchase intention of self-improvement products. But we only know what it is, but we don't know why. Therefore, this paper will further explore the influence mechanism of active/passive singleness on the purchase intention of self-improvement products. Through the research and derivation of the existing literature, this paper proposes the mediating effect of self-identity threat. That is, the subjects were passively single, and their sense of self-identity threat was higher, and they had a higher willingness to purchase self-improvement products.

In this paper, according to the Bootstrap method proposed by Hayes, the PROCESS program in SPSS is used to test the mediating effect, and the sample sizes of Model 14 and 5000 are selected, with active/passive singleness as the independent variable, self-identity threat as the mediating variable, and self-improvement products. The results showed that self-identity threat had a significant impact on the purchase intention of self-improvement products ($B=0.2552$, $SE=0.0192$, $p<0.05$); The indirect effect of active/passive singleness on the purchase intention of self-improvement products was 0.4146, with 95% confidence interval $CI=[0.3346, 0.5014]$ does not contain 0, indicating that the indirect effect is significant; The direct connection effect is 0.4981, 95% $CI=[0.3741, 0.6222]$ does not contain 0, indicating that the direct effect is significant (see figure below for details). Therefore, the threat of self-identity plays a mediating role in the influence of active/passive singleness on the purchase intention of self-improvement products.

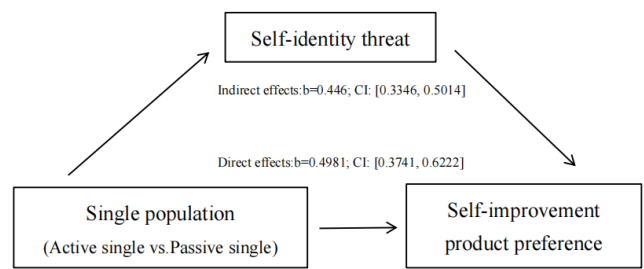


Figure 2. The mediating role of threat to self-identity

4.2.2. Mechanism analysis of the influence of active/passive singleness on the differences of different types of self-improvement products

Based on the above, we already know that the influence of active/passive singleness on the purchase intention of self-improvement products is due to the difference in the sense of self-identity threat of single individuals. However, we don't know if these effects are present for different types of self-improvement products. The self-improvement product type is a variable that can be actually manipulated by enterprises, which has huge practical value, so this paper decides to deeply explore the impact of self-improvement product type on single individual self-improvement products the influence of preferences.

In this paper, the Bootstrap method is used to test the post-moderating effect of self-improvement product types by using the PROCESS program in SPSS software, and the sample sizes of Model 14 and 5000 are selected, with active/passive singleness as the independent variable and self-identity threat as the mediating variable. The purchase intention of self-improvement products was the dependent variable and the self-improvement product type was post-moderate.

according to the results of PROCESS model 14 are analyzed and found that Self-improvement products type with Self-identity threats. The P value of the effect of the interaction item on its purchase intention was less than the significance level of 0.05, and the confidence interval was $CI:[0.1646, 0.3478]$, which does not contain 0, indicate Self-improvement

Products type in Self-identity threats to Self-improvement products The influence of purchase intention has played a significant role in the process. At the same time, there was a significant mediating effect in model 14 ($b=0.4162$; $CI=[0.2486, 0.5930]$), Verified again Self-identified as a threat mediating role. Specifically, Passive single (vs. Actively single Consumers, its Self-identity is more threatening and therefore preferred function type self-improvement products); Actively single (vs. Passive single Consumers, its Self-identity is less threatening and therefore preferred Pleasure type Self-improvement products).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

In the contemporary youth group, singleness has become a common state of life, late marriage and late childbearing or even non-marriage and infertility have also become a common social phenomenon, most of which young people are not voluntary, but due to various objective reasons it is difficult to get rid of the single state. Young people who are single try to alleviate the negative feelings of being single by spending money and making close connections with friends and family.

Survey data shows that 71% of consumers have already

purchased products or services with self-improvement performance in their daily lives. Among them, single young people are more willing to consume self-improvement products or services, and they pay more attention to the function and quality of such products. Different categories of singles have different preferences for different categories of self-improvement products. Young people who are actively single prefer to consume products that can improve their quality of life and enhance their spiritual world, that is, hedonistic self-improvement products; Young people who are passively single prefer to consume products that can improve their abilities and make up for their own shortcomings, that is, functional self-improvement products.

5.2. Countermeasures and Suggestions

The government needs to pay more attention to the single youth group, analyze the most fundamental reasons why contemporary young people choose to be single, marry later and have children later, or even not marry and have children, and pay attention to their psychological state. Survey data shows that only 37% of singles "think it's good to be single and are relatively free", so they voluntarily choose to be single. The remaining 63% of people are passively single due to objective reasons such as narrow social circles, introverts, and financial burdens. It's not that they don't want to get rid of being single, but it's difficult to find a suitable other half, and groups in this state for a long time will inevitably have doubts about themselves, have an inferiority complex about their abilities, appearance, and personality, and reduce their self-confidence. Therefore, the government should first pay attention to the mental health of young people, especially passive single groups, and actively guide citizens to establish a correct concept of singleness, and accept and get rid of singleness by enriching themselves and improving themselves. Passive singleness is mainly caused by various objective factors; therefore, the government should pay special attention to the proposal of solutions to objective factors, and increase the investment in livelihood projects such as improving citizens' happiness and quality of life.

Enterprises can first vigorously develop the emerging market of the "single economy". Singles have their own unique characteristics. First of all, they have more time and energy, which can be used more on themselves, whether it is to improve their quality of life, spiritual realm, or to improve their material level and ability. In other words, they are more willing to invest in themselves, as evidenced by the fact that 70% of singles are willing to buy self-improvement products. The resulting "single economy" is a consumer market with great potential, so this paper argues that companies can develop and emphasize different functions of self-improvement products for the different reasons why this particular group is single. For example, for consumers who are passively single, emphasis can be placed on improving the functional attributes of the product, and for consumers who are actively single, emphasis can be placed on improving the hedonistic attributes of the product. Secondly, relevant industry studies can be developed suitable for different single groups, and the research shows that the evolutionary mismatch of mate selection mechanism does have a significant negative impact on the mate selection of young people in China, and the reason is that their own weakness is most closely related to passive singleness. According to the basic information of the questionnaire respondents, it can be seen that the single group is mainly concentrated in ordinary

employees aged 26-35, with a monthly salary of 3001-6000 and a bachelor's degree. Companies can investigate in detail the main characteristics of this group and the commonalities that exist. For active single groups, they place more emphasis on the quality of life, so companies can create more single economy-related industries that can improve the spiritual world and improve the quality of life. For passive singles, businesses can create industries to alleviate their negative emotions or encourage the group to work hard to improve themselves. For example, it provides a single group of people to accompany the shopping object rental; pet rearing counseling; emotional grooming; The music sector can avoid pushing love-related songs for passive single consumers.

6. Management Implications

First of all, the relationship between active/passive singleness and self-improvement product preference has not been deeply explored by scholars, therefore, the existing research is not clear about the influence mechanism of active/passive singleness on self-improvement products. Secondly, in the field of consumer behavior, there is no research on the relationship between single people and self-improvement product preference, which also broadens the research on the impact of self-improvement product preference. Finally, after consulting and collecting a large number of literature materials and conducting online surveys, we have a comprehensive basic understanding of the current situation of single groups, and through the design and release of questionnaires, we can comprehensively and deeply understand the preferences of young people in Chongqing for self-improvement products, and then expand to the single youth groups across the country. The questionnaire data were extracted, sorted, mined, tested for reliability and validity, and the corresponding mathematical model was established for analysis.

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