

The Influence of Self-Construction on Consumers' Self-Improvement Product Preferences

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Abstract: This study focuses on the impact of self-construction on consumers' purchase intention for self-improvement products. Through in-depth analysis of the preference differences between independent and dependent self-construction in different product categories, it is found that self-construction significantly affects consumers' intention to buy self-improvement products. Independent self-constructed consumers pay more attention to the realization of personal achievement and self-value, and tend to buy products that can enhance personal ability and highlight their unique style, dependent self-constructed consumers pay more attention to interpersonal relationship and social role, and prefer products that can promote interpersonal interaction and enhance collective belonging. The study further explores the psychological mechanism of consumers of different self-construction types in the purchase decision-making process, which provides a theoretical basis for enterprises to formulate precision marketing strategies. The results show that enterprises should provide products and services that meet their needs according to the type of consumer self-construction, so as to effectively improve the purchase intention of consumers.

Keywords: Independent self-construction, Dependent self-construction, Self-improvement products.

1. Introduction

In today's consumer market, consumers' purchasing behavior is influenced by many factors. As an important psychological cognition mode, self-construction plays a key role in the process when consumers purchase self-improvement products. Self-construction is a self-cognition mode formed by individuals in the social environment, which reflects the individual's understanding and positioning of their relationship with others and social relations. This cognitive pattern affects consumers' purchasing decision to a large extent. With the development of society, consumers' demand for self-improvement products is growing continuously. The pursuit of knowledge and skills, the improvement of physical and mental health, and the shaping of personal image and temperament, are closely related to self-construction. From the theoretical level, self-construction mainly includes two types: independent self-construction and dependent self-construction. Independent self-construction emphasizes individual autonomy, independence, uniqueness, achievement and self-realization, the interdependence between others and social groups, and the positioning of individuals in social role and the interaction with others. These two types of self-construction show different preferences in consumer purchasing behavior.

In real life, consumers with different types of self-construction also have different demands for self-improvement products. Independent self-constructed consumers are more inclined to buy products that can enhance personal ability and highlight unique style to meet their needs; dependent self-constructed consumers pay more attention to the emotional value and social influence of products, and prefer products that can promote interpersonal interaction and enhance collective belonging. Therefore, in-depth study of the impact of self-construction on consumers' willingness to buy self-improvement products can not only help enterprises better understand the needs of consumers, formulate targeted marketing strategies, but also provide consumers with better products and services to meet the personalized needs of

consumers.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Self-construal

Self-construction is a self-cognition mode formed by individuals in the social environment, which reflects the individual's understanding and positioning of their relationship with others and social relations. This cognitive pattern has important implications in the field of consumer behavior research. The self-construction (self-construal) theory first appeared in the early 1990s and is a branch of self-schema theory, which focuses on how individuals in different cultural environments perceive the relationship between self and others. The concept of self-construction was proposed by Markus and Kitayama in 1991. According to the individual viewing the relationship between self and others, self-construction is divided into independent self-construction (independent self-construal) and dependent self-construction (interdependent self-construal). The former is more common in western culture, individual psychology has the tendency to separate self and social environment, focusing on the pursuit of thought and emotion, and value their own ability; the latter is more common in eastern culture, the tendency of self and social environment, the connection between self and others, high empathy and is good at considering the feelings and needs of others. It should be noted that the above two types of self-construction can exist in the same single individual, but the dominant and latent self-construction will occur in daily life. Therefore, the commonly independent self-builder or the dependent self-builder generally refers to the individual with a more prominent degree of construction.

2.1.1. Independent self-construction

Emphasize individual autonomy, independence, and uniqueness. Consumers with independent self-construction tend to pay more attention to their personal goals, achievements and self-actualization when buying products. They pursue products that can show their own ability and unique style, such as high-end electronics and personalized

clothing. Such consumers have a clear understanding of their own value and ability, and tend to rely on their own judgment in the decision-making process. Their consumption behavior usually shows highly self-orientation and are willing to make effort to meet their needs.

2.1.2. Dependent self-construction

Pay attention to the interdependence between individuals and others and social groups. Dependent self-constructed consumers pay more attention to individual positioning in the social role and interaction with others when purchasing products. They prefer products that can promote interpersonal interaction and enhance the sense of collective belonging, such as social activities and teamwork products. Such consumers often have strong social awareness and emotional needs, and will consider the opinions and feelings of others in the purchase decision-making process.

2.2. Self-improvement Products

The concept of self-improvement products was formally proposed by Allard and White (2015), who defined self-improvement as the individual's motivation to help improve some relevant aspects of the self, including personal attributes or performance in domains that are important to the self. In a consumer environment, products that enable individuals to perform better in or improve themselves in a task are part of the category of self-improvement products, such as books, language courses and exercise programs. From the perspective of market positioning theory, all the products that highlight the demand of self-improvement belong to self-improvement products (Zhao Jianbin, 2017). In recent years, marketing scholars have shown increasing interest in self-improvement products, and some scholars predict the adaptive strategies and intentions of self-improvement through the research of self-compassion (Chwyl et al., 2021). However, the existing studies pay more attention to the predisposing factors affecting the selection tendency or preference of self-improvement products, which can be roughly classified into four aspects: consumption situation, self-deficiency (Self-Deficits), individual perception and individual emotion. First of all, in terms of consumption situation, some studies have found that time start (Xiao et al., 2023), social crowding (Ding Ying, et al., 2020), economic downturn and consumption upgrading (Yang Jing, 2019), and the popularity of face recognition technology (Li Jingyi, et al., 2022) have all increased consumers' preference for self-improvement products.

Secondly, in terms of perceived self-insufficiency, Song, et al. (2021) explored the contradictory phenomenon that individuals are reluctant to buy self-improvement products despite knowing their self-deficiency. In terms of personal perception, studies have shown that high awareness of God reduces consumer interest in self-improvement products (Grewal et al., 2022), while expression of gratitude leads people to strive to improve themselves by increasing connections, promotion, humility and specific negative states (including debt) (Armenta et al., 2017). Finally, in terms of individual emotions, studies have shown that guilt (Allard et al., 2015), awe (Zhao Jianbin et al., 2017), and jealousy (Salerno et al., 2019) will increase consumers' preference for self-improvement products.

3. Independent Self-Construction of The Preference for Self-Improvement Products

In today's diversified consumer market, consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced by many factors, and self-construction, as a key psychological and cognitive dimension, profoundly shapes consumers' preference tendency for self-improvement products. Independent and self-constructed consumers show distinct product preference characteristics with their strong pursuit of autonomy, uniqueness and personal achievement.

3.1. Knowledge and Skill Improvement Areas

Independent and self-constructed consumers regard knowledge and skills as the cornerstone of personal strength demonstration and future development. In the selection of professional books, they are keen to read cutting-edge academic works, in-depth business analysis works, or niche but highly enlightening skills guides. Taking the field of artificial intelligence as an example, such consumers will not be satisfied with popular science books, but will actively explore advanced materials such as detailed explanation of professional algorithms and the latest application case sets in the industry, hoping to deeply master the core technical knowledge and make a figure in relevant fields. In online courses, they prefer advanced projects taught by industry leaders or leading experts, such as digital marketing strategy courses taught by executives of well-known Internet companies, or creative design workshops led by international design masters. These courses not only impart systematic knowledge, but also provide unique insights and high-end network resources to help them build a unique competitive advantage. For training lectures, independent consumers prefer theme focused, professional and forward-looking activities. Such as technology entrepreneurship trend research and practical training of emerging financial tools can enable them to obtain high-density information in a short period of time and quickly update their knowledge system to cope with the rapidly changing needs of the workplace and society.

3.2. Physical and Mental Health Promotion Category

In the field of fitness, independent self-builders pursue personalized exercise experience. Professional strength training equipment has become a powerful tool for them to create an ideal body shape, such as the combination of multifunctional dumbbells and barbells that can accurately adjust the weight and training mode, to meet the needs of their special training for different muscle groups. Intelligent fitness equipment is also favored, such as the sports watch with built-in personalized training plan generation function, which can adjust the exercise plan in real time according to personal physical data to ensure the maximum training effect and show its accurate control of self-body management. In the nutritional supplement link, they accurately customize nutrition intake according to their own fitness and work intensity, and are keen to purchase high-quality and accurate protein powder, vitamin and mineral compounds and other products. At the same time, maintain a keen sense of emerging healthy ingredients, and be willing to pay for organic, low-sugar, rich in super-nutrient niche foods to support high-intensity mental and physical consumption. In terms of mental health maintenance, independent consumers tend to

provide one-to-one professional psychological counseling services, have in-depth dialogue with experienced psychological experts, tap their inner potential and overcome personal growth bottlenecks, such as career transformation anxiety and interpersonal relationship difficulties. Self-help psychological growth courses with innovative therapy or based on cutting-edge psychological research, can also attract them, help them to explore their inner world independently, and create tenacious psychological qualities.

3.3. Personal Image and Temperament Shaping Level

In terms of fashion wear, independent self-construction consumers are trend pioneers and personality expressions. They are keen to explore niche designer brands, which often combine unique creative elements and pioneering tailoring techniques to make them stand out from the crowd. Customized clothing is an excellent choice to show taste and unique identity. From the fabric texture, style details to decorative accessories can be deployed according to personal preferences, whether it is a delicate suit for business occasions, or personalized clothing in leisure time, all highlight the distinctive style. In the field of beauty and skin care, high-tech, remarkable effects and natural ingredients can capture their hearts. For example, new biotechnology is used to extract active ingredients, essence with precise anti-aging or repair skin barrier function, and beauty instruments equipped with intelligent skin care auxiliary function to meet their pursuit of fine skin care and unique skin care experience, and help to create a confident and outstanding external image.

3.4. Quality of Life Upgrading Dimension

When choosing smart home products, independent consumers focus on devices that improve the efficiency and comfort of being alone. The intelligent lighting system can change the light and shadow atmosphere according to personal schedule and emotional state to create exclusive quiet or dynamic space. The high-end noise-canceling headphones and immersive home theater device allow them to immerse in the music and film art world in their spare time, isolate external disturbances and enjoy pure personal time. On the selection of home decorations, the unique artistic sense, contains the cultural heritage of the single products become the first choice. Limited edition art paintings and hand-carved retro ornaments are not only space ornaments, but also the external mapping of personal aesthetic and spiritual world, giving the living environment with rich personalized colors and improving the overall texture of life.

To sum up, independent self-construction consumers, with their dedication to self-realization and uniqueness, make precise efforts in the selection of various self-improvement products, and strive to carve themselves in an all-round way and open up exclusive personal growth path, which also provides a highly valuable guidance for precision marketing and product innovation in related industries.

4. Dependent Self-Construct the Preference for Self-Improvement Products

In the current booming consumer market, consumers show different consumption preferences based on different self-construction patterns. Dependent self-construction emphasizes the close relationship between individuals and

others and social groups. Such consumers show a distinct and unique tendency when choosing self-improvement products, focusing on interpersonal interaction, social integration and the strengthening of collective belonging.

4.1. Knowledge and Skill Improvement Areas

Dependent and self-constructed consumers understand the importance of a good pool of knowledge and skills in social and collective activities. In terms of book selection, they tend to buy books related to social skills and communication art, such as the *Power of Talk* and the *weakness of Human Nature*, which have always been popular with classics. These books provide them with practical ways to express themselves, resolve conflicts, and close the distance from each other, helping them become a lubricant in social situations and ensure that they get along well with others. For online courses, teamwork and project management courses are popular options. For example, the cross-department cooperation special training camp organized by the enterprise teaches students how to accurately position their roles in the team, and cooperate with others efficiently, and give full play to the synergistic advantages to promote the progress of the project. Such courses not only improve the work efficiency in their team in the workplace, but also deepen the tacit interaction with their colleagues, making them have a greater sense of presence and value in the group. In terms of training lectures, topics such as workplace interpersonal relationship handling and public expression ability improvement attract a large number of dependent consumers. Such lectures often invite experienced lecturers to share how to navigate complex relationships in the workplace, and how to be confident and attracting attention in public, to help them build a good personal image and win recognition and support from others.

4.2. Physical and Mental Health Promotion Category

In terms of the preference of fitness activities, group fitness courses have become the favorite of dependent consumers. Yoga classes, aerobics group classes, square dance teams and other places are full of laughter and mutual encouragement. Here, they can sweat and exercise, communicate with their peers and share their feelings and feelings. With the common sports goal, they can shorten the distance between each other, and the fitness process evolves into a social gathering to meet the dual needs of physical and mental nourishment. When purchasing fitness equipment, they will give priority to products that are suitable for their family or friends. Badminton racket, table tennis racket, jumping rope skipping and other equipment are often used to organize family sports meetings and leisure competitions among friends, and become a bond to enhance family affection and friendship. In leisure time, a lively sports event not only improves the physical quality, but also strengthens the emotional bond between each other. At the level of mental health maintenance, dependent consumers are keen to participate in psychological counseling activities involving families and groups. For example, husband and wife relationship adjustment workshop, parent-child communication growth camp, etc., under the guidance of professional psychological counselors, family members or close friends jointly analyze the problems in getting along, learn understanding, tolerance and effective communication skills, repair the relationship cracks, build a solid emotional foundation, and ensure the harmony and stability of their own interpersonal network.

4.3. Personal Image and Temperament Shaping Field

In the field of beauty, skin care and wear, consumers who rely on self-construction put public recognition in the first place. Well-known brands, well-known and popular cosmetics and skin care products series, such as the classic lipstick of international beauty makeup brands, moisturizing face cream, are regular customers on the makeup table. These products have been widely verified by the market, using them into the group aesthetic trend, avoid the independence and causing social alienation, and confidently show a decent face in social occasions. In terms of wearing, closely follow the popular trend of the season, the style of versatile clothing is highly sought after. Simple style of basic shirts, jeans, with popular elements accessories, both in line with the public eye and lose a sense of fashion, convenient in, all kinds of social parties, daily work scene wear, to ensure that their own image and the environment atmosphere complement each other, seamlessly into the pace of collective life.

4.4. Quality of Life Upgrading Dimension

In the purchase of smart home and home decoration, dependent consumers focus on creating a warm and sharing atmosphere. Large smart TV, multi-functional family game console and other products, provide entertainment sharing for family gatherings, friends visit, platform, people sit together to watch the event, play games, laughter echoed in the house, strengthen the warmth and cohesion of home. Home decorations tend to choose objects with a good meaning and can cause a common topic. The Chinese big round table meaning reunion and the photo wall recording the beautiful moments of the family not only beautify the living space, but also become the emotional touch point to recall the past and look forward to the future when friends and relatives get together, sublimate the collective emotional memory and improve the happiness of life. By self-construction, consumers find a unique way in self-improvement product choice, weave close interpersonal bonds in an all-round way, integrate into the society with products as the media, warm others, and outline a new blueprint for interpersonal interaction for related product research and development and marketing.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

5.1. Conclusion

This study deeply explores the influence of self-construction on consumers' purchase intention of self-improvement products, and clearly reveals that the type of self-construction plays a key role in the consumer purchase decision-making process.

Independent and self-constructed consumers, oriented by the pursuit of personal achievement and self-value realization, show a strong preference for products that can improve their personal ability and highlight their unique style in the selection of self-improvement products. Whether it is professional cutting-edge knowledge and skills, personalized fitness equipment and skin care beauty products, or smart home and decorations that help create exclusive living space, they strive to carve a unique self through these products and highlight their excellent ability and unique taste in various fields.

In contrast, dependent self-constructed consumers see

interpersonal relationships and social roles as core concerns, and buy self-improvement products prefer categories that promote interpersonal interaction and enhance collective belonging. From courses and group fitness activities to improve teamwork ability, to beauty, skin care and wear products that fit the public aesthetic, and to household products that create a warm and sharing atmosphere, all focus around strengthening the connection with others and integrating into the collective life. It can be seen that different types of self-construction make consumers present completely different demand preferences based on their cognition of self, others and social relations when facing self-improvement products, and this difference has a decisive impact on the formation and orientation of consumers' purchase intention.

5.2. Suggestion

5.2.1. Precision product development and marketing

Enterprises should keenly capture the differences in consumers' self-construction types, and increase the R & D investment in personalized, high-quality and functional innovative products for independent consumers. Product promotion highlights personal achievements, such as high-end electronic products emphasize excellent performance to help personal work efficiently, and niche fashion brands promote unique design to show personality charm. For dependent consumers, focus on developing products with social attributes and emotional connection function. Take the team training course as an example to highlight the role of the course in optimizing workplace interpersonal relationship and improving team cohesion; the publicity of beauty makeup and skin care products focuses on public reputation and social adaptability, and accurately reaches the pain points of target groups.

5.2.2. Brand-building and communication strategies

At the level of brand building, for independent consumers, the professional, innovative and trend-leading brand image is shaped. Through cooperation with industry pioneers, the high-end experience activities can convey the high-end tone of the brand. For example, technology brands hold private tasting meetings of new products and invite professionals to communicate cutting-edge trends. In the face of dependent consumers, we create a warm, friendly and socially responsible brand image, actively participate in public welfare activities and family theme promotion. For example, home furnishing brand launched the "Warm Family Transformation Plan" to enhance the emotional resonance of the brand in the hearts of consumers, and enhance brand identity and loyalty.

5.3. Service Optimization and Experience Upgrade

Pre-sale service provides professional consultation for independent consumers to accurately match personal needs; dependent consumers focus on providing social scene suggestions, such as recommending fitness equipment and gifts suitable for parties. In the sale, the shopping process of independent consumers is convenient and efficient, and dependent consumers enjoy intimate accompanying services, such as organizing group buying and family purchasing staff. After-sales provide personalized maintenance guidance for independent type, rely on user community to share use experience, enhance users' emotional communication, all-round optimization of purchase experience, improve

consumer satisfaction, and then promote the prosperity and development of self-improvement product market.

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