



Behavioral and Psychological of the Metamorphosis of Hedonistic Consumption in Asian Cultures - With a Focus on Young Consumers (Z Generation)

Wei Chen

Department of Fashion Design, RMIT University, Melbourne, 3000, Australia

WCCHEN4@student.unimelb.edu.au

Abstract. The article is a rigorous review-type article covering the areas of market analysis, consumer behavior, consumer psychology, parts of psychology and sociology. The research focus is to analyze the metamorphosis of hedonistic consumption of Western origin into Asian culture from the perspective of consumer behavior and psychology. This can be interpreted as the meaning of hedonistic consumption among the younger generation in contemporary society, the consumer psychology behind it, the manifestation of this hedonism in consumer behavior, and the possible or actual deformations of this hedonism in the context of Asian culture (both positive and negative), with in-depth analyses to deduce the causes or influencing factors of these deformations. At present, hedonistic consumption is found in both Eastern and Western countries, but due to the differences in the cultural backgrounds of consumers, hedonistic consumption in Asian culture must be different from that of Western in terms of behavioral patterns and psychological activities, and few studies are focusing on the differences and the reasons for the differences. The present study will adopt the method of literature review to read the literature on hedonistic consumption and consumption in the context of Asian culture in terms of behaviors and psychology and integrate the data analysis of the metamorphosis of hedonistic consumption under Asian culture and make a reasonable conjecture on the reasons for the metamorphosis. The article expects to use this research as an entry point for further expansion in the future in order to draw attention to the potential influence of culture on consumer behavior.

Keywords: Hedonistic Consumption, Asian Culture, Consumer Behavior, Consumer Psychology.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 A Subsection Sample

With the development of information technology and media, cultural exchanges between countries have gradually become more frequent, resulting in people better understanding other cultures. At the same time, some unique consumption patterns

originating from Western countries have also impacted the consumption behavior of original consumers in Asian countries [1].

According to the existing research, it is found that in recent years, the young generation of consumers growing up in Asian countries (Asian culture) has gradually embodied the behavior of hedonistic consumption, which is a consumption pattern that originates from the West [2]. The study of hedonism is relatively well-developed in the West, and there are also analyses of the hedonistic consumption behaviors that are slowly emerging in Asia. However, there needs to be more research on how and why hedonistic consumption behavior in the West differs from that in Asia regarding psychology and behavior. This relative "gap" is the purpose of this article.

This article looks at the nature of hedonism, the psychological states behind it, the behavioral patterns it presents, the groups of consumers who embody it, and the regions in which they are located. It analyses the causes and effects of hedonism and elaborates on young consumers' main consumption behaviors, habits, and psychology in Asian culture. Finally, it examines the differences between hedonistic consumption in Asian culture and the West and reasonably deduces the reasons for the differences and the factors that influence them.

Culture and consumer behavior are inextricably linked, and this article aims to study the influence of culture on consumer behavior so as to have a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior. Considering the relatively large amount of professional knowledge in this article, this article adopts a literature review type of research method, integrating materials related to hedonistic consumption, Asian culture, psychology, and so on, to deduce why culture leads to "consumer deformation."

2 Research on Hedonic Consumption and Asian Culture

2.1 A Synthesis of Hedonistic Consumer Behavior

Hedonism was proposed by Aristippus, who believed that hedonism is the most important pursuit of human beings. Hedonism as an ethical ideology has a long history in the West, dating back to the Cyrannian and Epicurean schools that existed in ancient Greece [3].

Hedonism can also be analyzed from the point of view of professional psychology. This doctrine's main manifestation period was from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. During this time, the great psychologist Sigmund Freud created the school of psychoanalysis. The school focused on studying unconscious and subconscious human behavior, which led to the creation of the famous "Iceberg Theory." According to this theory, Freud divided the personality into the id, the ego, and the super-ego. The super-ego is often made up of a person's morals and values; the ego is derived from the law, social morality, as well as the person's perception of social rationality, while the id refers to the primitive self, which contains the primary desires, impulses, and vitality necessary for survival, and is considered to be the source of all psychic energy [4]. The "id" acts on the principle of pleasure, not by the limits of reality. The idea expressed in this section is similar to the primary pursuit of hedonism.

Hedonism is a kind of human attitude that reveres and pursues sensual pleasure. It regards "seeking pleasure and avoiding pain" as the nature of human beings [5]. It regards enjoyment as life's supreme and sole purpose and strives to maximize the difference between pleasure and pain. When this concept appears in consumption behavior, it will reflect as consumer behavior with the sole purpose of personal needs, enjoyment, and pleasure, without considering a series of realistic factors such as the so-called "affordable" or cost-effective and unthinkingly pursuing personal preferences, which belongs to a more extreme consumption concept.

According to the research, hedonism is more likely to appear in the consumption pattern of young consumers. Its specific performance is that consuming more is on the part of their pleasure, the pursuit of spiritual enjoyment [6]. The original desire of human beings drives hedonism, and desire is inseparable from impulse; in essence, hedonistic consumption also belongs to a kind of impulsive consumption; compared with more experienced and older consumers, the young group is more prone to impulsive purchasing behavior when consuming. At the same time, due to the promotion of "individualism" in Western countries, "no man for himself, heaven and earth" seems to have become the mainstream idea. The young generation who accept this idea, coupled with impulsive personality traits, believe that consumer behavior should satisfy their sense of pleasure as the primary goal, and this is one of the reasons why "hedonistic" consumer behavior is more common in the West than in Asia.

2.2 Causes and Factors Influencing the Development of Hedonism

This chapter will focus on an in-depth analysis of the reasons for the formation of hedonism and the factors that influence it to deduce what factors may be responsible for its metamorphosis in the Asian culture.

Human behavior is controlled by the conscious mind, most of which is the subconscious mind, which contains the original desires of human beings, which is also one of the instincts of human beings [7]. However, from the perspective of the psychoanalytic school of professional psychology, there is also a part of the "id" in the composition of the personality. It is precisely because of the constraints imposed by the law and social morality that people's behavior does not lead to the disruption of the social order due to pure desire instincts. When this theory is applied to consumer behavior, it becomes clear that people's consumption behavior is governed by reason while pleasing themselves. However, the hedonistic consumption model chooses to ignore practical considerations and focuses entirely on fulfilling one's desires. There are several reasons why this consumption pattern has expanded in recent years.

Firstly, it comes from the development of Western culture. Due to the rise and spread of "individualism," people gradually put their needs first, putting the individual before the collective and consuming mainly to satisfy their preferences.

Secondly, the market economy is essentially a consumer economy, the development of which is based on the supremacy of human demand for various products [5]. Such a supply and demand relationship determines the development of the economy, and after the Second World War, the industrialized countries completed the market economy processor; with the development of the economy and scientific and technological

progress, capitalism entered a period of general affluence. Most contemporary Western economists believe that human desire drives economic development [3]. At the same time, an increase in impulsive consumption will bring growth to the market economy. Therefore, stimulating consumption becomes the primary goal of the capitalists in the market, and "de-moralized" consumption patterns such as "luxury" and "hedonism" become gradually "popular".

In order to make this kind of consumption behavior relatively "universal," with the improvement of information technology and the development of the media industry, advertisements, magazines, and other entertainment information began to enter people's eyes. By extracting the "good" side of hedonistic consumption, such as the "luxury" consumption for self-pleasure, people feel as if they are living a "class-crossing" life. The news is disseminated through the media, arousing people's primitive desire for money, fame, and fortune to stimulate consumption.

Along with advertisements, there is also the "celebrity culture." The lifestyle and consumption of those celebrities and big spenders have become the "vanguard" of hedonistic living, and this lifestyle and the values it conveys are undoubtedly attractive to other members of society [8].

As consumers gradually accepted the hedonistic brainwashing brought about by "capital," marketing programs began to change accordingly. From the product's original value and the marketing tools' function to the most important spiritual enjoyment, purchasing a particular commodity to meet their "spiritual pursuit" is "valuing yourself."

2.3 Consumer Behaviour and Psychological Analysis of the Younger Generation of Consumers in the Context of Asian Cultures

Different from Western countries, Asian countries are more focused on a "collective culture," where the collective is placed before the individual due to how society is structured and educated [9,10], and this is more pronounced in China, Japan, and South Korea, where people live in families, and their lifestyles and consumption patterns are based on the family as a unit. A family is not made up of individual people but of people living together in a "bundle." Under these circumstances, it is challenging to prioritize individual needs over everything else.

In addition to the difference in education patterns from the West, consumption patterns are naturally affected. In Asia, the emphasis is more on "exam-based education" [11,12]. In China, for example, due to the large population base and limited job opportunities, the younger generation must go through several exams before getting a job and compete to get into a better university to get a better job [13]. The overabundance of competitors makes the younger generation focus almost exclusively on exams and lack social connections, internships, or work experience before entering society, which leads to the primary source of income for the younger generation of consumers in Asia being mainly from their parents (relatives). The economic control and lack of freedom make it challenging to engage in hedonistic spending on a practical level.

Based on the significant lifestyle patterns shown above and the research on the consumption habits of Chinese university students this paper can extend that the main expenses are necessities, followed by education and skill acquisition (see Figure 1) [14].

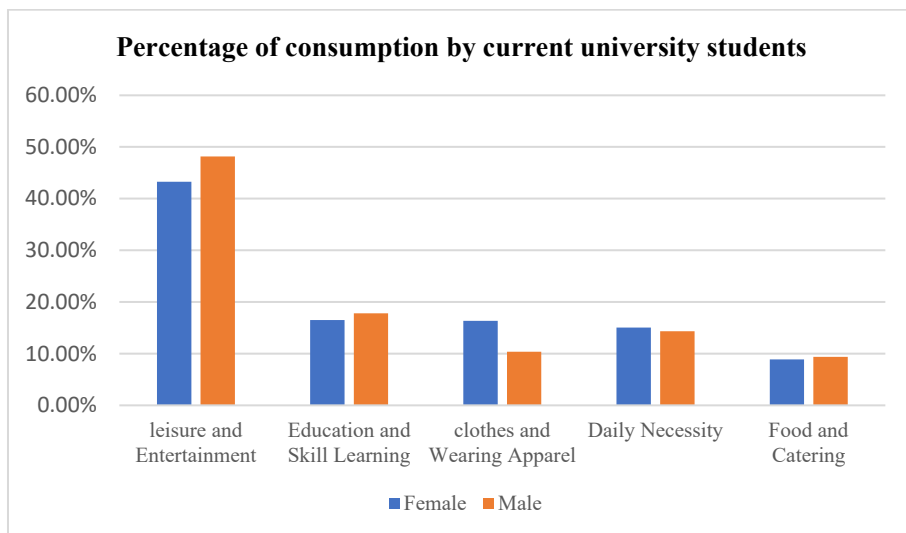


Fig. 1. Percentage of consumption by current university students structured by gender

Cram schools are commonplace due to the pressure of schooling, and even entering the workforce requires spending money on various skills training. In contrast to hedonism, which prioritizes satisfying one's needs, Asian consumers are more pragmatic, with value for money, affordability, and whether or not the rewards are proportional to the cost being the main factors that Asian consumers consider when spending.

Because of the uncertainty of future economic trends, many consumers choose to buy real estate to ensure that they will not be overly affected by the economic turmoil of the market or choose to make financial investments (stocks) to ensure that their savings grow positively. This behavior also stems from historical and cultural influences. Historical references such as "live in fear, die in peace and happiness" have instilled in the public that they need to keep a "fallback" plan for themselves. Therefore, they will unconsciously control their spending and save money by limiting their consumption.

3 METAMORPHOSIS AND CAUSES OF HEDONISTIC CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN ASIAN CULTURE

So, is hedonistic consumer behavior completely absent in Asia? Not really. Before the idea of hedonism was introduced to Asia, the book "Lie Zi - Yang Zhu", written during the Wei and Jin Dynasties in China, was a vital celebration of sensual gratification and indulgence, which is one of the few cases of hedonism in Chinese history [15].

As analyzed earlier in the article, hedonism has naturally influenced the consumer behavior of the younger generation of consumers growing up in modern Asian culture due to the development of the media, national cultures, and the exchange of information. Considering the young generation's cluttered and rapid reception of information, hedonism is more evident among young consumers. As young consumers, the

hedonistic consumerism of the Asian culture is no different from that of the West in that it prioritizes the satisfaction of one's desires and needs [16]. They buy according to their preferences, ignoring the constraints of reality (lack of money, products that are not cost-effective, and so on.). At the same time, this consumer behavior is also impulsive, and the consequences of briefly satisfying one's hedonistic desires may lead to emotions such as regret.

However, the behavior of hedonistic consumption differs between the West and Asia. Whereas hedonistic consumption in the West is based on investing all of one's money in one's favorite products, consumers growing up in Asian culture spend hedonistically only after they have secured the basics of life and have a certain amount of savings. There is a certain amount of "restraint" in this kind of consumption (not being able to completely ignore the value of money).

Psychologically, young people in the West are more independent in their hedonistic consumption, and they are in control of their own money. The young people under the Asian culture, on the other hand, because of excessive focus on study, lack of contact with society, and at the same time living in a family unit, it is more difficult to regard themselves as entirely independent individuals, and need to pay attention to other members of the family, which leads to the hedonism under the Asian culture cannot do for their desires for the consumption of behavior.

So, what factors lead to the differences in behavior and thinking between Asian culture and the West regarding hedonistic consumption? First, from a cultural perspective, based on the development of individualism and capitalism in the West, young people growing up in Western cultures clearly understand themselves as independent individuals at a very early age. In contrast, in Asia, due to the "group living culture," people live in a family unit. It is difficult to separate the individual from the family entirely, and the "family" can not be separated. The lack of "individual consciousness" makes it difficult for young people to act with their pleasure as their primary goal in life.

From the educational perspective, Western culture encourages the young generation to contact society actively, and there is no stereotypical requirement for "learning." In contrast, learning occupies a critical position in the education of Asian culture. The young generation devotes all their energy to learning, which is not entirely in line with the development of society, and at the same time, does not have the total production capacity, so they cannot achieve the free disposal of funds and are inevitably unable to spend money. They will inevitably receive many restrictions on their consumption, which makes it relatively difficult to achieve the goal of hedonistic consumption.

From a market perspective, Asian countries, except Japan, are still at a stage of economic development where the demand for consumption is not very high. Therefore, hedonistic and other "luxury" consumption behaviors are uncommon.

Finally, from the perspective of the entertainment media, when the hedonism from the West came to Asia, due to the development of the entertainment industry, the lives of "celebrities" and "big spenders" on the Internet were beautiful to other classes. However, due to a lack of judgment, including a lack of self-esteem, the younger generation's consumerism and values are not fully developed, and it is easy for them to equate hedonistic consumption with "luxury" consumption, thus generating erroneous consumption ideas.

At the same time, there is a widespread phenomenon in a Asian culture - Herd Behavior [17,18]. In addition, in recent years, because of the development of the media, the live broadcast culture began to rise; a large number of consumers' consumption behavior began to be associated with live broadcast goods, and some people's purchasing behavior is to want to "follow the trends," they have no understanding of their own needs and primitive desires, although in the product appears to be similar to the category of hedonistic purchases. However, the motivation for purchase is very different.

Based on the above analysis of the behavioral and psychological aspects of hedonistic consumption in Eastern and Western hedonistic consumption and a variety of factors, this article can reasonably deduce that Asian culture have an influence on Western hedonistic consumption behavior and that this influence is both positive. Although compared with Western hedonism, the hedonism in Eastern cannot wholly focus on their own spiritual needs and thus cannot achieve a high sense of satisfaction through purchasing behavior. However, hedonism under Asian culture does not wholly abandon reality and reason, and young consumers have a high obsession with storage, which allows them to meet their needs and have a relatively safe "guarantee" even in the face of adverse changes in the economic system.

4 CONCLUSION

Through the research and analysis of hedonism, Asian culture, and the consumption behavior and psychology of the young generation under the Asian culture, under the influence of Asian culture, the hedonistic consumption pattern originated from the West will change in both behavior and consumption psychology.

Under the influence of culture, education, and media entertainment, many young people in Asian countries still have differences in their hedonistic consumption thinking from the West, and they are unable to ignore reality and reason and pay for their preferences when they engage in hedonistic consumption. Different cultures significantly impact consumer behavior, from the behavior itself to the psychology of consumption.

As the article focuses on hedonistic consumption and Asian culture, which are smaller parts of consumer behavior and culture, the inferences drawn from the article cannot be perfectly applied to all cultural influences on consumer behavior and the distortions that can occur in consumer behavior. Meanwhile, because there are fewer studies on the deformation of consumer behavior under the influence of culture, the article advocates further and more detailed research in this direction to understand consumer behavior better.

REFERENCES

1. Xie, L.: Cultural analyses of differences in consumer attitudes between China and the West in the financial turmoil. *Career Times* 7(05), 148-149 (2011).
2. Tarka, P., Kukar, K. M., Richard J. Harnish, R. J.: Consumers' personality and compulsive buying behavior: The role of hedonistic shopping experiences and gender in mediating-moderating relationships. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* Volume 64 (2022).

3. Lu, F.: Hedonism, Economism and Spiritual Civilisation. *Journal of Social Sciences of Hunan Normal University* (01), 6-11 (1997).
4. Wegman, C.: *Psychoanalysis and Cognitive Psychology: A Formalization of Freud's Earliest Theory* (1985).
5. Li, Y. R.: Market Economy and Hedonism. *Journal of Yibin Teachers' College* (04), 20-21 (1996).
6. Hamzah, S. R., Suandi, T., Hamzah, A., Tamam, E.: The Influence of Religiosity, Parental and Peer Attachment on Hedonistic Behavior among Malaysian Youth, *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, pp 393 – 397. (2014).
7. Hoffman, L., Rice, T.: Psychoanalysis. In: *Encyclopedia of Mental Health*, pp. 819-828. Friedman, H. S., Markey, C. H. (2023).
8. Liu, F. Z.: Analysis of Hedonism Phenomenon. *Journal of Zhejiang Wanli University* (04), 9-12 (2004).
9. Liu, H. W.: Developmental Characteristics of Moral Education in Asia. *Jilin Educational Science* (06), 29-31 (1999).
10. Yang, S. G.: Educational Reflection on Collectivism and Individualism Moral Culture. *Journal of Education* 7(05), 35-40 (2011).
11. Huang, Y. F., Bie, D. R.: The Asian model of higher education development in the context of universalisation. *Jiangsu Higher Education* (07), 1-8 (2023).
12. Wang, X. Z.: Competitive advantages of Asian higher education highlighted. *China Social Science Journal* (2021).
13. Chen, X. Q.: Collectivism: Cultural Confidence and Educational Self-Consciousness in Chinese Education. *Research in Education Science* (01), 30-37 (2023).
14. Deng, Y. S., Zhou, Y.: Trend of change in consumption structure of college students and characterisation of new era. *China Business and Trade* (09), 94-96 (2015).
15. Cheng, L. T.: Commentary on "New Hedonism". *Theory Guide* (01), 52-55 (2014).
16. Zheng, H. E.: A new type of consumption pattern brought about by the consumption of pleasing oneself. *People's forum* (18), 30-35 (2023).
17. Denton, K. K., Liberman, Feldman, M.W.: On random conformity bias in cultural transmission of polychotomous traits, *Theoretical Population Biology* (2023).
18. Zhang, W., Brandes, U.: Conformity versus credibility: A coupled rumor-belief model, *Chaos, Solitons & Fractals*, Volume 176 (2023).

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

