

Exploring the Trends and Reasons for Chinese Mainland Consumers' Extra Consumption of Western Festivals

—Take Christmas in Shanghai as an Example

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Abstract: This study focuses on the consumption patterns of Chinese mainland consumers during Western festivals, using the Christmas shopping habits of Shanghai residents as a case study. The aim is to explore the impact of Western festivals on consumer spending trends and habits and identify the factors driving these changes. Drawing on a comprehensive review of relevant literature and employing a questionnaire analysis method, the findings reveal that some Shanghai consumers significantly increase their spending in comparison to everyday life during Western holidays, exemplified by Christmas. However, a considerable number of consumers choose to allocate minimal or no funds for expenditures during the holiday season, with no significant difference between the two groups. Consumers are more willing to allocate their funds towards cultural products, including holiday-related items. In the context of cultural exchange, the influence of new cultural elements and commercial marketing strategies play a crucial role in shaping the consumption trends associated with Christmas.

Keywords: Christmas, Shanghai, consumer, extra consumption, marketing

1. Introduction

With the progress of time and the development of the economy, the consumption of Chinese consumers is constantly improving and expanding [1]. With the deepening exchange between Chinese and Western cultures, various cultural symbols have gradually penetrated people's daily lives, and the festival is one of them. Therefore, this study has big significance in the influence of Western festivals on China. Just as the merry Chinese New Year celebrations flash on the streets of major cities in Europe and the United States, various Western festivals have gradually been introduced to China. These "foreign festivals" appear in China, but most of them lose the original cultural meaning, such as religious connotation, more in the consumer field, especially under the hot promotion of commercial marketing, become a new economic consumption growth point. During these Western festivals, such as Christmas, domestic consumers will choose to spend extra money on festival-related goods or services, which is similar to the ritual consumption of traditional Chinese festivals. Through questionnaire surveys and other methods, this paper tries to show the extra consumption trend of Shanghai consumers during Christmas and analyzes the reasons behind it. A total of 78 valid questionnaires were received from a wide range of sources, including people of different ages,

different social classes, and different income groups, which is helpful to the conduct of the research. The ultimate purpose of this study is to explore the willingness and reasons of Chinese local consumers to consume under Western festivals, as well as the marketing methods and functions of businesses using Western festivals.

2. Background

2.1. Festival Marketing

A Festival is a kind of folk culture created by people to meet the needs of production and life and is an important part of the world folk culture. The origin and development of festivals is a process of gradual formation, imperceptible improvement, and slowly infiltration into social life. All ethnic groups and regions in the world have their festivals, which are diverse in content and rich in forms, full of the inheritance and cohesion of the magnificent traditional culture and national spirit. Some festivals originate from primitive folk beliefs, such as the Chinese Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, Tomb Sweeping Day, Double Ninth Festival, and so on. Some holidays have religious origins, such as Christmas in Christian countries. Some festivals originate from commemorating someone or an event, such as National Day, Youth Day, and so on. Other international organizations promote sports-designated days, such as Labor Day, Women's Day, and Mother's Day.

As time passes by, the meaning of the holiday and the way it is celebrated has changed. In addition to cultural value and recreational functions, its commercial value is rising. With the increasingly fierce market competition, holiday promotion is becoming an important means for commercial retail enterprises to attract customers' attention and rapidly increase sales. From a business perspective, the following festivals are great opportunities to boost sales: traditional festivals such as the Mid-Autumn Festival, the Spring Festival, the Lantern Festival, and the Dragon Boat Festival; Western festivals, such as Valentine's Day, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Mother's Day, etc.; Modern festivals, such as "March 8th" Women's Day, "June 1st" International Children's Day, Teachers' Day, National Day, etc.; World Cup, Olympic Games, and other large-scale events; It even includes "festivals" created by commercial retail enterprises, such as corporate anniversary celebrations, "Double Eleven", "Double twelve" and so on. Businesses, especially retail enterprises, make full use of these festivals to create business opportunities through various promotional activities.

2.2. The Impact of Christmas on Chinese Mainland

China's opening-up policy and the trend of globalization provide a breakthrough for Western festivals to enter China. The introduction of foreign culture into China began with the Opium War, and then with the introduction of China's reform and opening-up policy, global integration, and China's accession to the WTO, "foreign festivals" with Western culture as the carrier gradually became popular in China. The policy of attracting foreign investment brought many foreigners to China; More and more attention is paid to foreign language learning in domestic education, and more and more returnees who have received Western education and have lived and worked abroad are going back to China. Computers and the Internet are becoming more and more popular. The combination of the above factors makes Western culture enter China smoothly and also makes Western festivals enter the Chinese market, Christmas is one of the most successful festivals in Chinese life.

Christmas was originally a major Christian festival to celebrate the birth of Jesus, and its spread and development in China are very different from its birthplace. In the mainstream celebration of Christmas in society, its religious color has been diluted, and religious celebrations only account for a small proportion, while the group of consumers in Christmas is increasing, and related commercial activities are growing. In particular, for young people with strong cultural plasticity and easy-to-

accept foreign cultural elements, Christmas is comparable to the annual carnival, and one of its forms is Christmas holiday consumption.

3. Questionnaire and Analysis

3.1. Sample Analysis

A total of 78 responses were received, and the validity of the responses was 100%. Among them, men accounted for 30.7%, and women accounted for 62.8%, fully indicating that women are still the main consumer group in the holiday consumer market. (Because the survey did not break down the age group, it is estimated that most of the children's holiday spending will be attributed to female consumption.) The proportion of occupations in the sample, from highest to lowest, was 60% employed, 17.9% students, 11.5% retired, 3.8% unemployed, and 7.7% other. It can be seen that more than half of the sample of this questionnaire is employed people with stable incomes, which is sufficient to prove the effectiveness of this questionnaire.

3.2. Consumption Intention Analysis

As can be seen from Figure 1, there are indeed significant differences in consumers' intention to spend at Christmas, but no one intention can be overwhelming, and all kinds of consumption intentions can be considered as a uniform distribution.

If the intention to consume is roughly divided into positive and negative categories, it can be found that the respondents who are "willing" to consume account for 47.43% of the total, while the respondents who are "unwilling" or do not consume account for 46.15%, which is the same.

The positive attitude of "very willing" and "relatively willing" accounted for 26.92% of the total number of questionnaires, and the negative attitude of "unwilling" and "very unwilling" accounted for 30.77% of the total number of questionnaires, the difference between the two is not significant, and the negative attitude is only slightly higher than the negative attitude.

In the middle, "willing" and "rarely" accounted for 20.51% and 15.38% of the total, respectively, and the gap between the two was almost the same as the previous comparison.

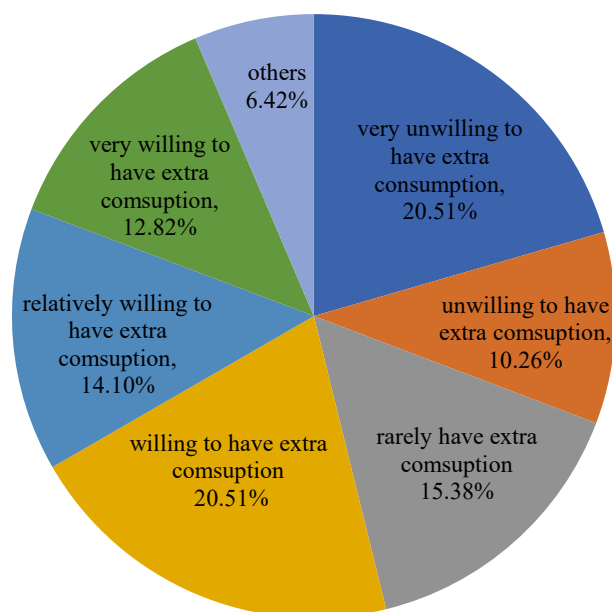


Figure 1: Intention of extra consumption at Christmas.

It can be seen that Christmas has indeed penetrated the consumption power of Chinese consumers, and the consumers who intend to buy things because of the festival account for almost 40% of the total consumer group. Christmas can be a great marketing opportunity.

3.3. Additional Consumption Content Analysis

As shown in Figure 2, food, entertainment, and festival-related items (such as Christmas trees, lights, Christmas gifts, etc.) rank in the top three of the additional Christmas spending, which is related to the income and consumption structure of individuals and society as a whole, and it is expected that these data structures will vary in different economic levels. According to the survey data, more than 75% of the respondents chose to spend extra money on food at Christmas. According to psychological theory, extra food is a simple and effective self-reward, especially for low-income people. At the same time, more than 50% of respondents choose entertainment, new clothes, travel, luxury goods, and other reward mechanisms, which can effectively adjust the psychological fatigue brought by heavy work and study tasks on weekdays [1]. In addition, 29.49% of respondents chose to buy Christmas festival-related products, such as Christmas trees, mistletoe, and other goods, to celebrate the holiday. This reflects the spiritual value that traditional festivals bring to people in modern times [2]. Christmas is more than just a holiday but is also a kind of spiritual sustenance for people with a heavy life, which is why people choose to spend extra money on holidays.

Christmas is completely foreign in the sense that many consumers may not fully understand its true origin. In China, these Western festivals were endowed with new ideas and gradually evolved into local Western festivals in China. The public participates in the meaning-making of the festival and endows it with new uses and understandings. To this extent, the re-making of the public is more important than the historical tradition to the meaning of the festival itself. Therefore, "imported festivals" such as Christmas and Valentine's Day have adapted to the new environment and become opportunities for young people to relax, vent their inner depression, and express the relationship between individuals. Such a way of performance, cannot be separated from consumption, all kinds of data in recent years show that Christmas not only in the traditional stores occupies a growing proportion, but in the virtual network platform is also rising year by year.

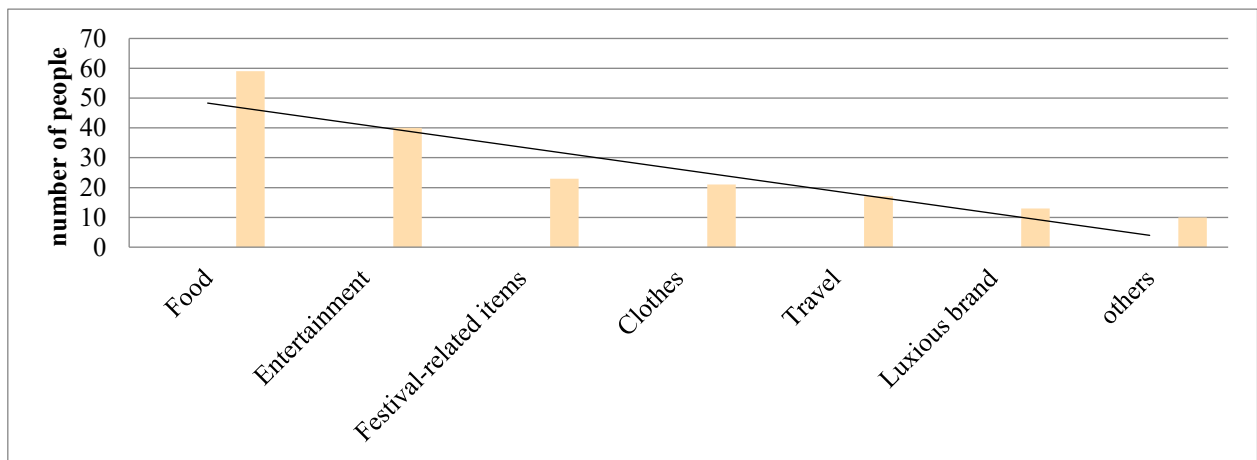


Figure 2: Additional consumption content analysis.

3.4. Analysis of Reasons and Levels of Extra Consumption

Respondents who chose "willing" or above will spend extra money during the Christmas season. When asked about the reasons for consumption, most respondents filled in the words "ritual" and "happiness". There is a close relationship between consumption behavior and happiness, which

indicates that consumers are significantly influenced by Christmas ritual culture and holiday marketing [3,4]. Not only in the traditional retail formats but also in the new retail formats (Internet shopping, etc.), Christmas consumption and business opportunities are on the constant rise [5].

Concerning those respondents who chose "no consumption", "unwilling" or above, compared with their income level and usual consumption structure, it can be found that some of the respondents' monthly consumption level is relatively low, but some people with higher income choose not to consume or consume less during this period (see Figure 3). In other words, the level of extra Christmas spending is not proportional to personal income and normal consumption levels. The author believes that in addition to economic ability, the reasons may also be related to the cognitive differences formed by the cultural differences between Chinese and Western traditional festivals, or the differences in the implicit structure of mental accounts and other factors [6]. It also suggests that the relationship between consumption and happiness depends largely on individual choices [7].

Since the reform and opening up, China's market economy has become increasingly mature, and the rapid economic development has brought a substantial increase in residents' income, and the consumption desire of Chinese urban residents has greatly increased, and their purchasing power has far exceeded that of the past. This is fully confirmed by the global shopping spree that Chinese people have set off in recent years. It has to be said that the influence of consumerism culture on Chinese people's consumption concept can also be reflected in Christmas consumption.

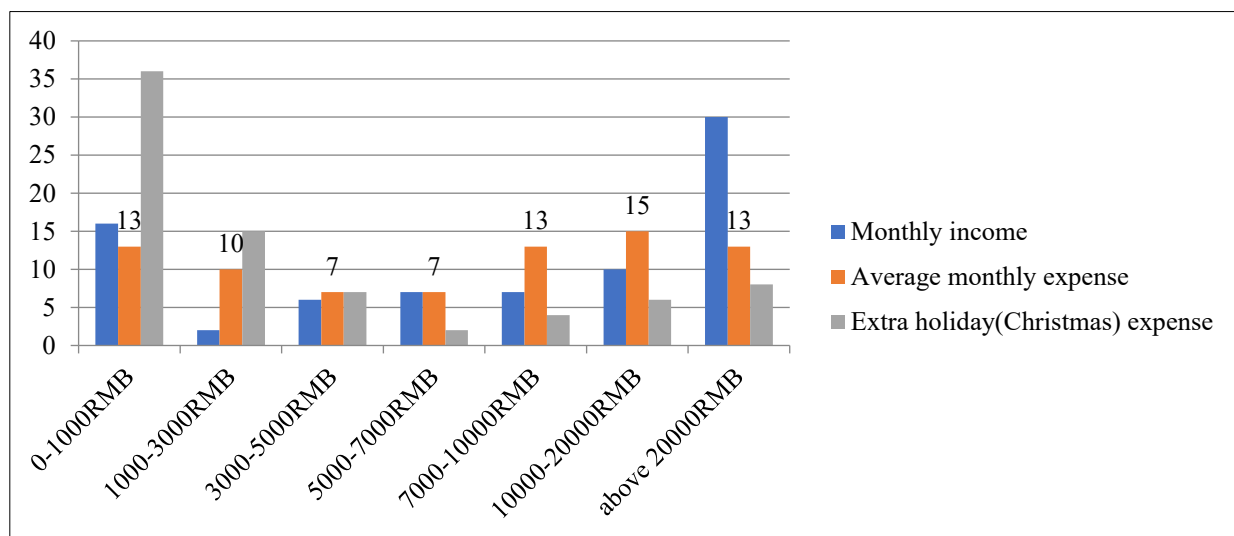


Figure 3: Income and consumption.

4. Background in Consumer Marketing

Where there is demand, there will be supply. Businesses sensitive to capturing the "foreign festival" has a strong market, began to find ways to make every effort to launch a variety of promotional discount information, and carefully create a variety of holiday themes to meet people's needs: On Christmas Day, in front of major shopping malls, supermarkets, restaurants, hotels and office buildings, a gorgeous Christmas tree is erected, and the tree is covered with snowflake gifts; On Valentine's Day, roses and chocolates can be seen everywhere. The consumption of consumers not only has subjective motives but also includes the packaging and marketing means of Christmas. In the questionnaire received by this paper, many respondents mentioned the words "discount" and "activity" when filling in the reasons for consumption. Nowadays, through the Internet, e-commerce, and other ways, various advertisements and activities are published in endless streams. As an opportunity for people to relax, Christmas has naturally become the best gimmick and reason for

major businesses to promote their products. Businesses marketing through festivals can play a very good effect [8]. With the infinite rendering of the festive atmosphere, huge commercial profits also flow into the pockets of various businesses.

Common marketing promotion methods include discounts, coupons, gifts, etc. These sales methods, whether online or offline, are highly attractive to consumers. The price discount of major festivals is consistent with the psychological expectations of consumers, and customers will think that it is more affordable and real, and get psychological satisfaction; Coupon return is beneficial to calm customers, increase customer retention time, and produce the effect of linkage sales; Giving gifts can stimulate consumers' desire to buy, and make people feel more lucky and happy, which fully cater to consumer psychology.

5. Conclusion

Under the background of globalization, Western festivals such as Christmas flow into China, and are endowed with new ideas and gradually evolve into localized Western festivals in China. Driven by rising incomes, consumerism, individual psychological needs, and commercial incentives, Western holiday spending such as Christmas is on the rise in China.

The data of this study fully show that the number of people who spend extra on Christmas and do not spend extra on Christmas accounts for almost the same proportion, and the type and level of consumption are not directly related to personal income, but more related to personal preferences. The ceremony of the festival, effective commercial promotion, psychological reward mechanism, etc., are the direct factors that prompt consumers to pay.

Consumption in Western festivals, like consumption in traditional Chinese festivals, can stimulate the growth of the market economy and promote the healthy development of the social economy. At the same time, the author believes that consumers must reward themselves and others regularly. The goods and services, such as food and entertainment, obtained during appropriate consumption during festivals can indeed help relieve the accumulated psychological and physical fatigue in daily life so that they can get a moment's rest from their boring life. However, it should be noted that excessive consumption will waste their money and time, and even have a sense of emptiness, so the gain is not worth the loss. Young people in particular need to be alert to the negative effects of consumerism.

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