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The Relationship between Perceptual First Tendency in Purchase Decision Making and Personality Traits among College Students

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Abstract

Objective To explore the characteristics of perceptual first tendency in purchase decision making, and analyze the relationship between personality traits and perceptual first tendency in purchase decision making among college students. **Methods**: A random sampling was used to select 405 undergraduates from Guangdong Province, China. They were surveyed with Perceptual First Tendency in Purchase Decision Making Scale (PFTPDMS) and Eysenck Personality Questionnaire- Short Form (EPQ-SF). **Results:** (1) The total score of PFTPDMS of this group is (12.82±1.76), with the scores of P and E of EPQ-SF are (5.79 ± 2.95) and (9.34 ± 5.04), respectively, which belong to low scores. The scores of N and L are (10.32 ± 4.58) and (12.48 ± 4.54), respectively, which belong to the average scores. (2) Multiple stepwise linear regression shows that scores of E and N dimensions positively predict the total score of PFTPDMS (β=.322, 419, all P<.001), while the scores of P and L dimensions negatively predict the total score of PFTPDMS (β=-.461, -.344, all P<.001). **Conclusion** College students generally have an obvious perceptual first tendency in purchase decision making, and personality traits may be one of the main influencing factors of this tendency.

Keywords: College Students, Perceptual First Tendency in Purchase Decision Making, Personality Traits

1. Introduction

Purchasing decision-making refers to the process in which consumers carefully evaluate the attributes of products, brands, or services and make choices to purchase products or services that meet a specific need [1]. For a long time, researchers have tended to believe that consumers shop based on rationality. They not only possess rational consciousness but also rational ability. Purchasing products is only for the utilitarian purpose of pragmatism, that is, to maximize individual utility, and can reflect consumers' meticulous logical thinking and stable preferences. Therefore, consumers can clearly express their views on the products or services. However, recent studies have shown that perceptual and emotional impressions are the key factors that influence consumers' purchasing decision-making. Dan Hill [2], the founder of sensory logic, uses advanced cognitive science technologies such as neural feedback and facial expression decoding to measure and record the real psychological reactions consumers make to products and product advertisements. Through the application of world-renowned companies such as Toyota, General Motors, and Canon, it has been confirmed that the process of consumers making purchase decisions includes three steps: perceptual impression, emotional evaluation, and rational verification. Only when the perceptual-emotional connection is successfully established can rationality be verified. That is to say, regardless of whether consumers are aware or not, they always prioritize deciding whether to purchase based on their perceptual and emotional impressions of the products and then rationalize this decision with rational thinking. In 1956, Simon [3], a Nobel laureate in economics in 1978, proposed the "Bounded Rationality" model to replace the Expected Utility Theory. He analyzed the reality that people's decision-making behavior cannot be completely rational and pointed out that bounded rationality is caused by two reasons: First, environmental characteristics referring to insufficient and unclear information required by the human brain; Second, limitation referring to physiological structure

of the human brain, which leads to limited information processing ability. Therefore, decisions are often made not based on mathematical calculations and logical thinking, but on cognition, experience, ideas, and emotions. The Risk (Emotion) Model proposed by Loewenstein et al. [4] further indicates that there are not only expected emotions influenced by cognitive assessment in the decision-making process but also immediate emotions that are not affected by cognitive assessment (Loewenstein et al. [4] believed that immediate emotions are immediate visceral reactions). These emotions can directly affect cognitive assessment and decision-making behavior without being checked by logical thinking. Li Aimei et al.'s empirical research [5] also found that individuals have emotional storage in their brains. When making consumption decisions, they accumulate both positive energy for implementing consumption and negative energy for rejecting consumption. If positive energy exceeds negative energy, people will implement consumption; On the contrary, people will cancel consumption. The above research results all suggest that irrational factors such as perception and emotions play a dominant role in consumption decision-making. Sensory logic refers to this phenomenon as "Perceptual First Tendency in Purchase Decision Making", which means that when people make purchasing decisions, their perception and emotions make decisions first, and rationality further verifies them. Perception and emotion come first, rationality comes later, and perception and emotions dominate the purchasing decision-making process and affect the results of rational review [3]."Perceptual First Tendency in Purchase Decision Making" is unconscious and automatic, making it difficult for individuals to use their willpower.

The role of emotional states and personality traits in decision-making thinking and behavior has been widely confirmed [6-12]. We can foresee that as an inevitable part of purchasing decisions, the emotional state and personality traits should also constrain the perceptual first tendency in purchase decision-making. However, there are not many related research results.

College students are not yet economically independent, and they have unique consumer psychological characteristics and behavior patterns. They have strong consumer demand, pursue novelty, and often have impulsive and irrational consumption [13-16]. Therefore, understanding the characteristics of college students' consumption, clarifying the influencing factors and mechanisms of irrational consumption by college students is conducive to the cultivation of a scientific consumption concept among college students and the guidance of rational consumption behavior.

Based on the above analysis, this study aims to explore the characteristics of perceptual first tendency in purchase decision-making among college students and explore its relationship with personality traits.

2. Objects and Methods

2.1 Objects

A random sampling was used to select 450 college students in Guangdong Province. 405 valid questionnaires were collected, with an effective rate of 81%. Among them, there are 204 males, 201 females, 106 freshmen, 93 sophomores, 96 juniors, and 110 seniors.

2.2 Tools

2.2.1 Eysenck Personality Questionnaire–Short Form, EPQ-SF

Compiled by British psychologist Eisenck et al. (1967) [17], and revised by Qian Mingyi et al. (1999) [18] into the Chinese version. EPQ-SF has 85 items, divided into four subscales: extraversion (E), neuroticism (N), psychoticism (P), and lie detection (L). The two levels of rating "yes" and "no" is used to score, with "yes" indicating "1" and "no" indicating "0". In this study, the Cronbach'a coefficients of the four subscales E, N, P, and L were 0.819, 0.811, 0.705, and 0.849, respectively.

2.2.2 Perceptual First Tendency in Purchase Decision Making Scale, PFTPDMS

Compiled by Dan Hill [2], there are 11 questions divided into two dimensions, namely perception and emotion, with 5 items each. There is also an additional question to understand the subjective understanding of the participants. Likert 5-point scoring method is used to score from 1 to 5 points corresponding to "never" to "always". The higher the total score, the more obvious the perceptual first tendency in purchase decision-making.

2.3 Data processing

SPSS 20.0 is used for statistical analysis. The average score and standard deviation of each scale are calculated by descriptive statistics; Pearson product-moment correlation is used to explore the correlation between variables; Linear regression analysis is used to analyze the influences of personality traits on the perceptual first tendency in purchase decision making.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive statistics

As it can be seen from Table 1, the total score of PFTPDMS in this group is (12.32 ± 1.630), indicating that college students generally have an obvious perceptual first tendency in purchase decision-making. The scores of P and E subscales are considered low, and the scores of N and L are considered medium.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Scores of Each scale (n=405)

Dimension	M	SD	Min	Max
PFTPDMS	12.82	1.76	6	16
P	5.79	2.95	0	15
E	9.34	5.04	0	19
N	10.32	4.58	1	22
L	12.48	4.54	1	23

3.2 The correlation between personality traits and perceptual first tendency in purchase decision-making among college students

From Table 2, it can be seen that the perceptual first tendency in purchase decision-making among college students is significantly positively correlated with the scores of E and N subscales (r=.322, .419; all P<0.01); and it is significantly negatively correlated with scores of P and L subscales (r=-.461, -. 344; all P<0.01).

Table 2 Correlation analysis of scores of various scales (n=405)

	E	N	P	L
perceptual first tendency in purchase decision-making	.322**	.419**	-.461**	-.344**

3.3 The predictive effect of personality traits on the perceptual first tendency in purchase decision-making

Multiple stepwise linear regression analysis is performed with the total score of PFTPDMS as the dependent variable and the scores of the four subscales of EPQ-SF as the independent variables. Within a 95% confidence interval, the results are shown in Table 3.

As shown in Table 3, the scores of E and N positively predict the total score of PFTPDMS (β=.322, .419, all P<. 001); The scores of P and L negatively predict the total score of PFTPDMS (β=-.461, -.344, all P<.001).

Table 4 Multiple Linear Stepwise Regression Analysis of the Impact of EPQ-SF Scores on the Total Score of PFTPDMS

Dependent variable	Independent variables	B	SE	β	t	P	R^2	R_{adj}^2
PFTPDMS	E	.481	.079	.322	6.719	<.001	.496	.499
	N	.604	.096	.419	10.228	<.001		
	P	-.565	.059	-.461	-5.404	<.001		
	L	-.289	.016	-.344	-7.350	<.001		

4. Discussion

The total score of PFTPDMS in this group is (12.82 ± 1.76), with P and E scores of (5.79 ± 2.95) and (9.34 ± 5.04), respectively, belonging to low scores; N and L scores of (10.32 ± 4.58) and (12.48 ± 4.54), respectively, belonging to the medium scores. The results of this study are consistent with those of previous studies [17-19], indicating that college students generally have an obvious perceptual first tendency in purchase decision-making; Their mental state is normal, their introversion is high, their concealment is low, and their emotional stability needs to be strengthened; It also indicates that our group answered honestly, and the results of this survey are valid.

The result of multiple linear stepwise regression analysis shows that scores of the subscales E and N positively predict the total score of PFTPDMS, while scores of the subscales P and L negatively predict the total score of PFTPDMS.

Extraversion positively predicts the perceptual first tendency in purchase decision-making. Previous studies [19-20] have pointed out that the extraversion dimension is significantly correlated with experiential, emotional, and functional goals of consumer value goals, and the results of this study are consistent with them. The reason is that extroverted people love socializing, enjoy participating in various social activities, and tend to highlight their strengths and personalities in social interactions. For this reason, they are willing to use novel and fashionable items to increase their added value, but their focus is on external things, and they are not good at paying attention to their own situation and understanding their own needs. They often worry that shopping, comparing goods with other stores, and other practices will delay their social interaction time. In this way, extroverts often make purchasing decisions based on their first impression (perception) of the products or services or their inner likes and dislikes (immediate emotions) in a short period of time. On the contrary, introverted individuals are not good at expressing themselves and enjoy being alone. They are good at observation, enjoy thinking and researching, and can explore and understand their own situation more deeply, clarifying their needs. For this reason, they tend to make rational shopping decisions carefully based on their own needs after careful consideration, and develop more comprehensive plans, living within their means. That is to say, they are better able to overcome the influence of the perceptual first tendency.

Emotional stability (N) positively predicts the perceptual first tendency in purchase decision-making, which is consistent with the results of previous studies [6-8, 12]. Good emotional stability (low N score) means that emotions are calm and there are no obvious highs or lows. This kind of emotions (moods) is beneficial for individuals to think deeply and meticulously about problems, overcome the interference of emotional factors, and make more rational purchasing decisions. On the contrary, poor emotional stability (high N score) indicates emotions often showing obviously high and low. This kind of emotions (moods) causes individuals to focus on their own emotional state and its causes, hindering them from thinking deeply and meticulously about consumption issues, making purchasing decisions more susceptible to the influence of the perceptual first tendency.

Psychosis (P) negatively predicts the perceptual first tendency in purchasing decision-making. People with high scores on the subscale P tend to be indifferent and hostile towards others, feeling sluggish, but have clear and firm behavioral principles, focusing on their own needs and ignoring environmental requirements. Due to the lack of guidance from sensory cues, individuals with high P-scores have a weakened tendency towards perceptual first in their purchasing decision-making, as their purchasing decisions are mainly made by their strong behavioral principles.

The score of subscale L negatively predicts the perceptual first tendency in purchasing decision-making. An excessive L score indicates unreliable test results. People with high L score tend to use concealment and lying to deal with the outside world. They are meticulous and hesitant. Even if they think repeatedly, they are not easy to make decisions. This style is also reflected in their purchasing decision-making. It can be seen that the purchasing decisions of those with high L scores are dominated by rigorous logical thinking rather than the perceptual first tendency.

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