

An analysis of Chinese female sports consumption fever from the perspective of behavioral economics

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Abstract:

This paper interprets and analyzes the trends and causes of the Chinese female sports consumption craze from the perspective of behavioral economics and corresponding scientific theories through the literature review method and puts forward relevant suggestions to guide female sports consumption. The analysis results show that female sports consumption is on the rise because of the psychology of reference dependence, with the promotion of women's status, higher pursuit of appearance, and emotional or psychological satisfaction. Therefore, the marketing of the consumer market needs to use more emotion to impress women, carry out more promotional activities, improve the quality of goods and aesthetics, and highlight the characteristics of goods.

Keywords: Sports consumption fever; Female; Reference dependence

1 Introduction

In recent years, China's economy has developed rapidly, people's lives have become more affluent, and their forms of consumption have become more diverse. Among them, the rising trend of sports consumption is fierce and widely concerned. Sports consumption can stimulate domestic demand, provide a market for relevant industrial departments, and promote China's economic development. With the rise of women's status in society, they gradually become the main body of sports consumption. Overall, female sports consumption is rising and still has great potential. Therefore, conducting in-depth research on female sports consumption is necessary to encourage and guide females to carry out scientific and reasonable consumption. Although the academic and social attention to sports consumption is very high, the research on female sports consumption only accounts for a small part. In the literature on female sports consumption, there are many studies on the trend, characteristics, influencing factors, and existing problems of female sports consumption. Still, there is generally a lack of detailed analysis and interpretation of modern sports brand marketing methods.

This paper hopes to analyze the current situation of contemporary female sports consumption, such as the trend and characteristics, and further explore the influential factors of Chinese female sports consumption. It uses brand case analysis to infer the reasons for rising consumption. It summarizes effective strategies to encourage

sports brands to learn and improve to attract more female customers to participate in sports activities through consumption. It also analyzes the consumption choices and decision-making behaviors of female consumer groups and provides suggestions for the sustainable development of sports consumption in China. It is expected that the research of this paper can provide theoretical inspiration for academic circles and practical experience for expanding domestic demand.

2 Literature Review

With the improvement of women's social and economic status, Chinese women's sports consumption has been on the rise in recent years, promoting the development of the sports industry. There is a lot of research on the problem of Chinese female sports consumption. For example, Zhong Yujing et al. (2009), using literature and interview methods based on scientific theories such as sociology, psychology, and consumer behavior, pointed out that the influencing factors of their consumption are economy, gender, sports consumption concept, and consciousness, leisure time, and sports market. Although female sports consumption has increased, the overall level is low, and the structure is single. Due to the early release time of the literature, it is different from the contemporary status quo and data and lacks the analysis of current practical cases. Liu Dongsheng (2016) adopted the literature data method, and the theory of consumer society and lifestyle as an analytical tool to show that modern women have a stronger

subjectivity in the way of sports consumption, and the purpose of sports consumption is to obtain the characteristics of social and individual recognition. Therefore, to guide female consumption, it is necessary to use emotional marketing to continuously attract and meet the needs of women's emotional value. Although the literature divides the sports consumption pattern into several categories for discussion, uses multiple data as support, and summarizes the reality of some brands, it is relatively general, without detailed examples and in-depth analysis of the marketing strategies of contemporary sports brands. Gao Qi Xia Chengqian (2020) studied the characteristics, existing problems, and development prospects of the female sports consumption market from the perspective of the "She economy" by using the method of literature and field investigation and pointed out that the female consumption structure was unreasonable, the consumption market had an imbalance between supply and demand, lack of convenience and other problems. It is suggested that a convenient and diversified sports consumption market be created and women be encouraged to form good consumption habits. This paper puts forward the aspects that can be improved in multiple sports consumption markets and use relevant brands for examples. Still, there are few successful brand cases for examples, and it is difficult to present more concrete, effective, and different characteristics.

To make up for the shortcomings of existing literature and enhance the comprehensiveness of the research, this paper will comprehensively analyze the trend, characteristics, and influencing factors of female sports consumption by combining existing literature and materials, adding modern representative brand cases for detailed exploration, summing up effective, successful strategies, and advocating more sports brands to make reference and improvement to attract female customers for sports consumption.

3 Current Situation Analysis

Women's interest in sports has grown significantly in recent years, with higher participation in sports activities and a dominant position in all types of sports-related consumption. For example, in 2021, the ratio of male-to-female participants in ice-and-snow sports was 6:4, compared to less than 30 percent of female participants in 2017. Because of the Beijing Winter Olympics, the ice and snow support policy is more perfect, steadily promotes the growth of the industry, and through various media reports, enhances the national people's love for ice-and-snow sports, and women are more likely to want to punch the interest in the competition venue. Due to the influence of the Winter Olympics, women use ski resorts and ice-skating rinks as the destination for punching photos, resulting

in sports consumption brought about by sports experience. Regarding sports consumption, the World Sporting Goods Federation report stated that in 2023, Chinese women spent about 15% to 20% more on sports and fitness activities than Chinese men. In every sports market, women have shown a high willingness to consume. Because they want to improve their image and physical quality through exercise and fitness, the number and amount of consumption of women in the purchase of fitness classes, sports clothing, etc., have increased significantly. Through advertising promotion in the media, the brand designs comfortable and slim clothes to stimulate women's pursuit of physical beauty. Many are attracted to buy novel designs of dynamic clothes to show their bodies.

4 Analysis of The Causes of Female Sports Consumption Fever From the Perspective of Behavioral Economics

The rising trend of modern Chinese women's sports consumption is largely attributed to mutual influence within the group, which creates reference dependence. It is common for people in groups to compare themselves with others and judge their state by the conditions of others. And people usually want to put themselves in a higher position and get better treatment than others. Similarly, women will refer to and compare themselves to other women around them, especially regarding physical appearance, such as figure, makeup, and clothing. Based on the change in the status of women brought about by social development and the business strategy of sports brands, reference dependence has become the dominant factor in producing female sports consumption.

(1) Female consumers

Modern Chinese women's social and economic status has gradually improved, giving women stronger consumption power and more freedom in consumption. In 2019, Chinese women earned 23.5 percent less than men in monthly salary, which dropped to about 12 percent in 2023, according to the survey report on the status of Chinese Women in the Workplace 2023. The figures show that women are gaining more recognition in the workplace and are gradually approaching men's earnings. Higher-income levels have empowered women to consume more than just the necessities of daily life. Female consumption upgrades: Female consumers pay more attention to the practicality and functionality of commodity technology, the emotional value provided by goods, and the self-subjective feelings of obtaining satisfaction in consumption. Women are improving themselves through commodities and gaining recognition and respect from others by displaying commodities.

Modern women have more self-arranged time to engage in suitable recreational activities. Women are more willing than men to go shopping in the mall, spend time browsing, and try on clothing store products. With the diversification of clothing, women are often attracted to beautiful, slim-fitting clothing out of psychological needs. Due to the comfort, convenience, and beauty of sports clothing provides women with clothing suitable for many occasions and attracts many women's consumption. To fit in their favorite clothes or wear newly purchased sports clothes, women will generate motivation for sports, from clothing consumption to sports consumption.

At the same time, because of more developed social software and more social activities, women will carefully dress up and share their outfits, reflecting their stature and beauty. Women are more concerned about the eyes of others and are more easily influenced by the outside world, so they will be stimulated to pursue a good body shape when they see other women's perfect shapes on the Internet or when comparing them in life. Due to multiple motivations, the modern woman will start to exercise to lose weight. When they see their transformation, they will be determined to keep going. In this process, there will be more consumption in the purchase of equipment or for the gym card, resulting in women being interested in more new equipment and new clothing and continually increasing women's consumption in sports.

(2) Sports brand

Due to the development of modern scientific and technological products, sports brands can carry out marketing promotions on different platforms to improve brand awareness. Brand parties often use mobile phone software to display product pictures on the screen, release videos on short video platforms or contact "Internet celebrities" for cooperation and promotion and join cooperation in film and television programs to constantly show the brand in front of the public, leaving a deep impression, and when in demand, they will first think of the brand and be more inclined to consume. On modern networks, live broadcasting is popular, and the anchors will attract viewers and fans with special presentation methods, or there are models wearing clothes to show the upper body effect or the fitness effect of sports products. Because of women's sensibility and the pursuit of beauty, they are very easily moved by video or live broadcasts and driven to consume. At the same time, the brand will also create brand software, provide consumers with online channels to connect with the brand, push the brand's new activities or new products to the market in real-time, and set up specific activities to attract consumers to interact or share to obtain corresponding benefits. The brand also often creates fan groups or circles for reasons such as premium

activities to establish user reference dependence and drive sustained consumption.

The brand will also take advantage of women's love of shopping through the physical store showroom, providing experience activities or building communities to attract offline female consumers. Take the recently popular *Lululemon* brand as an example. The athleisure brand, best known for making women's yoga pants, has recently opened physical stores in China and quickly attracted many female consumers. *Lululemon* connects with the local yoga and fitness community through experience activities such as product showrooms and regular free yoga classes, creating a unique community culture, and finding yoga lovers and potential consumer groups. Moreover, due to *Lululemon*'s luxury-like positioning in the competition among fitness wear, female consumers will establish an emotional connection, making consumers feel superior and part of a larger social community when they buy the brand's products, thus improving consumers' recognition of the brand and their willingness to consume again in the future.

In addition, many modern sports brands will find stars as spokespersons. Because the star already has a fan base, and most of them are composed of women, the brand will use the flow of the star to reach a wider group, attract a large number of fans, and introduce a large number of customers. Due to the fan base's attention to the star, the fans will have a deep impression of the brand. Under the influence of stars, female consumers will be more emotional, will have trust and preference for the brand because of the endorsement of stars, will have an emotional connection to the advertising of stars, and will have a strong willingness to buy "the same type of star" products.

To sum up, an important reason for the current popularity of female sports consumption is that sports brands enhance their purchase demand based on the reference dependence on the sense of physical beauty.

5 Suggestions for Sustainable Development of Chinese Sports Consumption Based on Female Sports Consumption

(1) Sports brands should cater to the psychological needs of female consumers, highlighting the convenience and aesthetic improvements their products bring to women's lives. The brand should give consumers psychological support, enhance their self-confidence, and use reference dependence to help female consumers establish a stronger personal charm to impress female consumers, thereby further establishing long-term trust among consumers.

(2) Set up more promotional activities. Female consumers will be interested in "cheap and good" products. When

the price they pay is lower than the expected price in their mental account, they think that they can buy high-quality goods at a low price, and they will have a good impression of the brand and are willing to recommend it to their friends and wider groups.

(3) Pay attention to quality, efficiency, and appearance design. Female consumers have higher requirements for beauty and will have higher psychological expectations and higher requirements for brands, while women's evaluation of products mainly comes from quality, efficacy, and appearance. Therefore, the brand needs to strengthen and show more novel and prominent aspects compared with other brands, as well as show the unique nature and message of the products, to get the attention and recognition of consumers in the market and attract more consumers.

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