



ISSN: 2288-7709 © 2020 KODISA & ICMA.
JEMM website: <https://acomis.kisti.re.kr/jemm>
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.20482/jemm.2022.10.3.9>

The Influence of Purchase Types on Happiness: A Review

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Received: January 15, 2022. Revised: February 12, 2022. Accepted: June 05, 2022

Abstract

Purpose: Previous studies have shown that consumers feel more happiness when they have experiential purchases than material purchases. This experiential advantage has aroused great concern of researchers in the field of social and consumer psychology. Focusing on this issue, the paper aims to tease out the relevant academic work and to further provide with some significant implications. **Research design, data and methodology:** The paper has divided the review into the following parts. Firstly, the connotation of experiential purchase and material purchase has been simply defined; Secondly, based on the logical framework of pre-factor variables, intermediary variables and regulating boundary conditions, this paper has collated the causal chain of the influence of purchases types on happiness; Finally, this paper has reviewed and summarized the shortcomings of existing studies, and have pointed out specific objectives of future research. **Results:** From the perspective of time utility and space form, this paper has expounded the substantive differences between the two types of purchase, which lays a foundation for the explanation of the follow-up mechanism. Moreover, the paper has mainly interpreted the intermediary mechanism from two aspects, namely, individual elements of consumers and social elements of consumption situations. **Conclusions:** This study expands the scope of previous happiness research and strengthens the negative events adaptation research.

Keywords : Material Purchase, Experiential Purchase, Happiness, Experiential Advantage, Purchase Type

JEL Classification Code: M30, M31, M39

1. Introduction

According to the Report on the Development of China's Consumer Market in 2020, the online consumption of physical commodities from January to October 2020 maintained a double-digit growth, though consumers' material consumption to meet functional needs has never been interrupted. With the continuous improvement of quality of life, however, consumers are increasingly paying more attention to the quality-of-life experience, resulting in the booming of experiential purchases such as consumption in entertainment. According to data from iResearch, the scale of experiential consumption reached 500 billion Yuan in 2020, with an increase of 30% over the previous year. It can be seen that experiential purchases, together with material purchases, has become an important part of consumers' life, as well as an indispensable purchase mode in their life.

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Previous studies on consumer psychology have shown that as one of the decisions of consumer behavior, experiential purchases and material purchases will influence consumers' happiness (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). The comparison between material purchases and experiential purchases originates from a paper titled "To do or to have? That is the question." published on *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* by Van Boven and Gilovich, psychologists. The study has found that compared with material purchases, individual tends to have greater happiness when they conduct experiential purchases. Later, academic circles have discussed this issue. Studies have shown that compared to material purchases, experiential purchases bring individual more happiness (Nicolao, Irwin, & Goodman, 2009; Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012; Chan & Mogilner, 2017; Gilovich & Kumar, 2015; Goodman & Lim, 2018; Kumar & Gilovich, 2015), which is called experience recommendation (Nicolao et al., 2009). Domestic scholars have summarized and collated the results of empirical studies and explained the reasons for the differences in the influence of different purchase types on happiness. Scholar Jiang, Xu, Zeng, and Xu (2014) reviewed and collated literatures mainly published in Western mainstream psychological journals from 2003 to 2014, which demonstrated the influence of material purchase and experiential purchase on happiness by using experimental method. They have interpreted the reasons of "experiential advantage" from the differences of timeliness, self-connection, social comparison, satisfaction of basic needs and sharing features of purchase types. By reviewing the previous empirical studies on the influence of purchase types on happiness, Yu, Jing, and Yang (2019) recently explained the conclusion of experiential advantage from the perspective of hedonic adaptation, expected benefit, asymmetric regret and social benefit at the social level, thus interpreted the existing explanation mechanism in different classification based on the theoretical framework. To sum up, although review studies have collated the internal mechanism of the influence of purchase types on happiness, the following problems existed in previous studies: Firstly, the perspective of literature review was narrow. Previous literature review only collated relevant empirical studies in 10 years, and the literatures were mainly from western mainstream psychological journals. Although domestic scholars Yu Ying et al. (2019) have recently expanded the timeline length of literature review, they still focused on empirical research, and the journals were still mainstream psychology journals from foreign countries. With the increasing importance of this problem, studies in recent years are no longer limited to empirical research on foreign mainstream psychological journals. Therefore, the horizon of literature review needs to be further expanded. Secondly, although existing literature reviews have interpreted "experiential advantage" from the perspective of theoretical mechanism and the essential differences of purchase types, however, the classification and matching of the essential differences of purchase types into different perspectives of the theoretical mechanism have not been involved, which leads to different perspectives in the interpretation of existing mechanisms. Finally, there are limitations of the research paradigm. Existing literatures on this topic mainly focused on empirical research, which was mainly based on experimentation, ignoring research data from real market and paradigms such as theoretical review. Therefore, the review results were biased and partial. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the multi-paradigm results of the topic and prove "experiential advantage" from a more comprehensive and systematic perspective.

On this basis, the paper has focused on and explained the internal reasons of "experiential advantage". Through empirical studies from abroad and the collation of literature review, combined with research data from real market, the paper has revealed why experiential purchases bring more happiness to consumers than material purchases from the multi-paradigm system. The specific content was divided into three parts. Firstly, the definition of material and experiential purchase was collated, and the confusing concept similar to the purchase type was defined. Meanwhile, the paper has collated the measurement and research methods of purchase types in previous studies and has expounded the essential differences between the two purchase types based on the different concepts and manipulations of the two purchase types. Secondly, the paper has interpreted the causal chain of the influence of purchase types on happiness, which is also the core part of the paper. Taking purchase type as the core independent variable and happiness as the dependent variable, the paper has expanded the logical conceptual framework, specifically, from the pre-factor of the choice of purchase type to independent variable (purchase type), to intermediary mechanism elements, to happiness and the boundary conditions of the influence of purchase type on happiness. Finally, the study has explored the fields of future research from the perspective of mechanism, expansion of boundary conditions, cultural differences, research methods, external validity of psychological experiments, etc.

2. Concept Definition and Essential Differences of Purchase Types

Based on the perspective of positive psychology, purchase types can be divided into two categories, namely, experiential purchase and material purchase (Van & Gilovich, 2003). Aiming at obtaining material benefits, material purchases finally obtain and own tangible goods; While experiential purchases aim at obtaining life experience, and consumers can obtain corresponding experiences (such as a trip and a movie) through experiential purchase (Van & Gilovich, 2003). Experiential and material purchases are regarded as the two ends of a continuous concept. One end of this continuum is material purchase, which is tangible, and the purpose is to obtain material benefits; The other end is experiential purchase, which is an event experienced by an individual for an experience (Van & Gilovich, 2003). This difference generates significant psychological differences, which are of pivotal value for understanding the mechanism of consumers' time and money expenditure. The essential difference between experiential purchase and material purchase is reflected in the difference of time utility and space form.

From the perspective of time, the difference between material and experiential purchase is that the time utility of consumption is different. Most material consumptions provide less utility in a long period of time, while the utility obtained from experiential purchase can be extracted in a short time (Weidman & Dunn, 2016). This results in a longer duration of utility for most physical products and a shorter one for most experience. This is because experiential purchase is usually done in a tense scenario, and delaying experience requires consumers to psychologically postpone the consumption to a later time. On the contrary, the whole process of material purchase is composed of many tiny fragments, which can effectively span time intervals, making the duration of the time utility of material purchase longer. Therefore, when consumers incorporate the time utility of purchase into their decisions, they are more willing to conduct material purchases (Tully, Hershfield, & Meyvis, 2015). When considering durability, similarly, they are more likely to choose material over experience (Goodman, Malkoc, & Stephenson, 2016). The study believes that the difference between the time utility of material and experiential purchases will result in different influences on the happiness of individuals. Specifically, experiential purchase will lead to less but stronger sense of happiness, while material purchase will lead to more frequent but less intense happiness (Weidman & Dunn, 2016).

From the perspective of space, the key difference between material purchase and experiential purchase is their tangibility (Van & Gilovich, 2003). Material purchase is tangible; goods can be taken from one place to another and take up physical space. Experiential purchase is often intangible, which is a type of experience, and does not take up the physical space of consumers. Material goods can exist for a long time in the material world, while experience is only temporary. Since material is more tangible than experience, undoubtedly, material consumption is more specific than experiential consumption, whether in the form of embodiment (Malkoc & Zauberaman, 2006) or the level of thinking (Malkoc, Zauberaman, & Bettman, 2010).

The essential difference between time and space of purchase types leads to the difference in the process of consumers' evaluation of different purchase types (Mittal, Kapitan, & Silvera, 2019). Consumers will realize that the purchased experience has more variability when they conduct experiential purchases. Therefore, when considering experiential purchases, consumers will be more tolerant and tend to accept uncertainties (Mittal, Kapitan, & Silvera, 2019). This makes it easier for consumers to conduct experiential purchases without knowing all potentially relevant information. This is because they are more tolerant of unforeseen factors in experiential purchases (Gallo, Jampol, Rampullo, & Gilovich, 2019). If people have different tolerance for the uncertainty of material and experiential purchases, they may have different preferences for the information to be consulted before conducting the two purchases. Consumers are less likely to conduct experiential purchases according to the comments of online customers, but more likely to conduct material purchases. They think that these commenters have already proved their experience for the products they have purchased (Dai, Chan, & Mogilner, 2020). Specifically, people tend to refer to the consistent comments when they conduct material purchases and tend to follow suggestions from friends when they conduct experiential purchases (Gallo & Gilovich, 2019). A series of studies have shown that when consumers evaluate their experience, they are more likely to consult someone close to them (such as friends and families) rather than information source from distance (unknown customer comment, suggestions from experts, or information provided by the seller).

To sum up, experiential and material purchases have essential differences in time utility and space form. Compared to material purchase, experiential purchase is more intangible, the time utility is shorter, and it is more difficult to objectively evaluate, which involves a larger set of properties. These characteristics influence consumers' way of dealing with experiential purchases. The evaluation of experiential purchases is often more comprehensive, uncertain, based on narration, more related to impression and emotion, the difference of which results in the difference between experiential purchases and material purchases. The study believes that the difference between time and space of these two types of purchase is the essential reason

that causes consumers to have different evaluation on the two purchases and subsequent process. This difference will also lead to a different happiness of individuals after their purchase (Gilovich, Kumar, & Jampol, 2015).

3. Causal Chain of the Influence of Purchase Type on Happiness

This section has focused on the causal chain of purchase type on happiness, which has established a logical framework of happiness containing pre-factor variable → mechanism of pre-factor variable → core independent variable (purchase type) → adjusting boundary conditions → mediating mechanism → core dependent variable. Compared with previous studies, which merely analyzed the influence of purchase types on happiness from the internal mechanism of intermediary factors, the study has extended and expanded the causal chain, increasing the pre-influence factors and mechanisms of purchase types. More importantly, the previous several literature reviews on the influence of purchase type on happiness were carried out from the perspective of different theoretical mechanisms (Yu et al., 2019) and intermediary transition variable (Jiang et al., 2014). However, these studies only focused on single perspective, which did not combine the intermediary variables and theoretical mechanism to analyze within the system framework. On this basis and previous studies, the study has divided the previous theoretical perspective of the intermediary mechanism into body element and consumption scenario element according to different goals and has classified and supplemented the intermediary variables involved in previous studies according to the classification perspective of this study. The second section is written with the following ideas. Firstly, the different purchase types selected by individuals have been elaborated from four aspects, namely, self-construction, individual orientation (time orientation and happiness orientation), right state and thinking mode in the self-difference of individuals of the pre-factor variable. Secondly, the study has explained the reasons why experiential purchase is happier than material purchase from two aspects, namely, individual element mechanism of consumers and social element mechanism of consumption scenario. Thirdly, the study has explained the adjusting boundary conditions of experiential advantage from individual factor and scenario factor, effectively ensuring the correspondence with the explanatory perspective of the aforementioned intermediary mechanism. Finally, the core dependent variable, happiness, is not a single variable dimension. Therefore, on the logical framework diagram of the whole causal chain, the paper has added the description of the core dependent variable - the representation type of happiness from three aspect, namely, the measurement type, characteristic type and variable type of happiness.

3.1. Pre-Factor Variable

3.1.1. Self-constructed dimension

Individual self-construction can be divided into independent self-construction and dependent self-construction. Generally speaking, consumers in western countries are more likely to form independent self-construction due to their culture. Individuals with independent self-construction rely more on their own experiential judgment and they have the thinking of independent decision-making when making decisions, which is consistent with experiential purchase. Individuals rely on self-independent judgment in experiential purchase, and are less willing to rely on comments from other people in the purchase. Therefore, individuals with independent self-construction may focus on self-enjoyment and experience, thus they prefer experiential products.

On the contrary, dependent self-constructed individuals more care about comments from others during the social contact, thus they may prefer material products that can represent their status. Besides, since experiential consumption can bring individuals more social properties, for independent self-constructed individuals. Therefore, the social contact of experiential purchases can make up for the social experience needs of independent self-constructed individuals. As a contrast, dependent self-constructed individuals are more likely to define themselves through interpersonal connections and environment, thus they do not need to make up their social contact needs through experiential consumption.

3.1.2. Individual-oriented dimension

Based on previous studies, the study has divided the individual-oriented dimensions influencing purchase types into two categories, namely, time-oriented and happiness-oriented. In terms of time-oriented individual-oriented dimension, consumers in Asian countries with oriental culture tend to more focus on the future trend of development, thus are more likely to form future orientation; On the contrary, individuals in western countries such as Europe or America more focus on present, who advocate present orientation (Yu, Jing, & Yang, 2019). According to the difference in the time utility of purchase types, if consumers care about the long-term utility of events or products, they are more likely to choose material purchases. The utility of experiential purchase is reflected in the present, thus, individuals who pursue the present orientation are more likely to

choose experiential purchase. In addition to time orientation, there are also differences in the orientation and definition of individual's happiness. Happiness orientation can be divided into hedonism orientation and realism orientation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Individuals with realism orientation stress that life will become more meaningful only through the improvement of self-potential and the realization of goals, thus effectively improving individual's happiness. Therefore, individuals with realism orientation are more willing to invest their resources into functional attributes that can improve themselves, not likely to spend a lot of time and energy in enjoyment, and thus are more likely to conduct material consumption. On the contrary, individuals with hedonism orientation reckon that the key point to improve happiness is to enhance their positive emotions and get rid of negative emotions. They want to enjoy the present and more focus on the hedonist attributes, thus are more likely to choose experiential purchases to satisfy their present positive emotions (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000).

3.1.3. Status of rights

Agentic-Communal Model has pointed out that the status of rights of individual leads to the difference between individual and social preference orientation, which is, the individuals with less rights will show stronger social orientation, while individuals with more rights will show higher personal orientation. Since experiential purchase involves social processes (such as word of mouth and sharing), it has stronger social attributes than material purchase. For individuals with less rights, the social value brought by experiential purchases just fits the orientation of their social preference, thus they are more likely to choose experiential purchases. Individuals with more rights more focus on their target-related consumptions. Therefore, they do not need to increase social contact with others through experiential purchases. Moreover, the status of rights for the selection of purchase type will be influenced by the types of individual self-construction and the interference of social attribute of experiential purchase.

3.1.4. Thinking mode

Many studies related to material purchases have shown that when consumers decide which product to purchase, they are likely to arrange the different choices and compare the choices one by one. This comparison of each characteristic of choices is the symbol of rational decision, as well as one of the differences with intuitive choice (Inbar, Cone, & Gilovich, 2010). Moreover, compared to experiential purchases, material purchases have more characteristics to evaluate the tangible and intangible products (Gallo, Sood, Mann, & Gilovich, 2017), which may enhance consumers' ability of comparing one by one. Therefore, it can be predicted that when consumers are choosing material products, they will more rely on rational analysis; while they are choosing experiential products, intuition will be more relied on. Meanwhile, previous studies have shown that consumers like to choose the experience intuitively, while choosing material products rationally (Gallo, Sood, Mann, & Gilovich 2017). When choosing experience rather than material, consumers are more willing to see that the product information is composed of more alternatives (which facilitate holistic and intuitive processing) than attribute characteristics (which facilitate analysis of each characteristic) (Gallo et al., 2017). Moreover, those participants who were induced to intuitively think showed more preference in experiential purchases, and were willing to pay more money for the experiential purchases judged by intuition (Gallo et al., 2017).

3.2. Intermediary Variable Mechanism

The study believes that there are mainly two elements of consumers when conducting different purchase types, which are consumer and consumption scenario. Consumers mainly measure the influence of purchase type on happiness from the angle of subjective experience caused by consumer element, while consumption mainly refers to the influence of the contact between consumers in their purchase process with social elements on happiness. Among them, consumer element was mainly analyzed from four aspects, namely, formation of self-consciousness, satisfaction of relationship demand, asymmetric purchase motivation and consumption adaptation degree; while consumption scenario was analyzed from three angles, namely, social relevance, value and comparison.

3.2.1. Consumer element

The formation of self-consciousness. One of the explanations that individuals obtain more happiness from experiential purchases is that experience is more helpful in the formation of self-consciousness than material consumption. There are three reasons for this. Firstly, the close relationship between experiential purchases and the self-concept may make people think that they have more unique evaluation on experiential purchases than material purchases. Therefore, consumers often exhibit their uniqueness by the decision of experiential consumption (Berger & Heath, 2007), thus highlighting their unique self-consciousness. Secondly, the intangible and subjective properties of experience make it easier to obtain a positive evaluation

dimension. The memory of experiential purchases may be beautified, which is similar to the selfish prejudice that allows people to maintain positive self-assessment (Dunning, 2005). As time goes by, people tend to be positive for experience, even the actual experiential consumption is full of disappointment (Sutton, 1992). Individuals more hope to associate positive consumption experience with self-consciousness. Compared to material consumption, therefore, the experiential consumption of individuals may more promote the association with self-consciousness. Finally, studies have pointed out that experiential purchase has greater endowment effect than material purchase. With the increase of endowment effect, individuals are willing to give up more possessed things to pay for things that belong to others (Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1990). This effectively increased the possibility of individuals contacting others. If their experience can better associate us with others than material wealth, experience will constitute a larger part of self-consciousness.

Satisfaction of relation demand. Self-determination theory (SDT) has pointed out that the satisfaction of relation brings individuals positive outcomes such as mental health and happiness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Thus, the premise of the enhancement of individuals' happiness is to effectively satisfy the relation demand of individuals. Why does experiential purchase bring more happiness than material purchase then? The reason is that experiential purchase can increase the intimacy between individuals, thus effectively satisfy the relation demand of individuals, and further increase the vitality of individuals and effectively increase their happiness (Howell & Hill, 2009; Van Boven, Campbell, & Gilovich, 2010). Previous studies have proved that experiential purchases can bring more happiness, because the purchase process has effectively satisfied three types of relation demand in psychological needs, which is beneficial to the whole psychological need satisfaction, thus increase individual's happiness (Howell, Pchelin, & Iyer, 2012).

Asymmetric purchase motive. Kousi and Kokkinaki (2016) found that even after experienced the same purchase, the happiness of consumers was different, because different individuals have different motives when they conducted the purchase. They pointed out in their study that individuals had different initial motive when they conduct material purchases and experiential purchases. In other words, the motive of experiential purchase has two different modes. Firstly, to expand the vision desire through unique life experience; Secondly, the desire to relax or entertain. The initial motive of material purchase is to satisfy the functional or status needs of consumers through purchased products. Based on the different initial motives of consumers, the author reckoned that experiential purchase is better than material purchase, because consumers have stronger motive in seeking happiness and significance when they conduct experiential purchases than material purchases. The difference in the motive of seeking happiness and significance in different purchase types has resulted in different happiness perception. Therefore, the difference of purchase type has resulted in the asymmetric purchase motive of individuals (including the motive of seeking happiness and significance), thus leading to different subsequent happiness experience.

Consumption adaption degree. The earliest study on the comparison between experiential purchases and material purchases have pointed out that the generation of experiential advantage attributed to the slow adaptation of experiential purchases, which made individuals more positively interpret the experiential purchases (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). In addition, Nicolao et al. (2009) have simulated the real purchase scenario in the laboratory, and taken the measurement of different time intervals after the purchase as the indicator of dependent variable to examine the difference of individual's happiness in different purchase types. The results have shown that respondents have significant slower adaption speed in experiential purchases than material purchases, which enable the happiness caused by experiential purchases to fade away more slowly. Under the same scenario, therefore, experiential purchases bring more happiness. Certainly, the premise of this relationship is that the consumption can bring positive results to consumers. If not, then the adaption of experiential purchases is slower, causing the purchase not superior to material purchases in the same condition.

3.2.2. The social element of consumption scenario

Social relevance. Howell and Hill (2009) let participants score their happiness in the purchase, and found that part of the reason the individuals obtain more happiness in the experiential purchases was that the purchase has higher relevance with other people. Similarly, Caprariello and Reis (2013) found that experiential purchases were more social than material purchases, which connected others more easily. This enhanced social relevance was always enhanced by individuals, the reason was that material purchases were more likely to be conducted independently than experiential purchases (Kumar, Mann, & Gilovich, 2014). Therefore, when individuals think or conduct experiential purchases, they will feel more closed to others and have a closer intimacy with others (Kumar, Mann, & Gilovich, 2014; Kumar, Killingsworth, & Gilovich, 2014). In addition, experiential purchase can promote social contact, because it promotes more dialogues and stories (Gallo, Escalas, & Sood, 2019). In these dialogues and story narrations, individuals like to discuss on experiential consumption rather than material consumption (Bastos & Brucks, 2017; Escalas, 2004). In this interaction, people tend to release more images and other information about their experiential purchases rather than material purchases (Duan & Dholakia, 2018). Since people related to experience are more popular than those related to material, therefore, talking about their experience (compared to

material) more corresponds to the desire that people hope to be positively treated (Wojnicki & Godes, 2008).

Social value. Bastos and Brucks (2017) have demonstrated that experiential purchases have higher session value, thus are more beneficial to interpersonal communication than material purchases. This is also the reason that experiential purchases bring more happiness than material purchases (Van & Gilovich, 2003). The higher session value of experience is at least partially from the cognition of consumers, which is, experience has promoted self-disclose and is more likely to receive social cognition (Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012). Besides, experiential purchase is closer to and represent the true self (Carter & Gilovich, 2012), enabling individuals to have particular judgement for the speaker, and is more suitable for self-narration. Experiential consumption may encourage verbal sharing, because one of the major functions of conversation is to allow the speaker to convey to others more information of him/her as an individual (Dunbar, Marriott, & Duncan, 1997). Moreover, the uniqueness of experience (Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012) may enable it to become a more attractive topic, thus attract the interest of audiences (Berger & Schwartz, 2011).

Social comparison. When involving experiential purchase, people more tend to satisfactory decisive strategies. When involving material purchase, people more tend to maximum decisive strategies (Carter & Gilovich, 2010). This results in the fact that people are not likely to compare different experiential purchase strategies with others, thus not likely to associate experiential purchases with money expenses. The reason is that consumers conduct experiential purchases in their own ways, rather than comparing to other experiential purchases (Carter & Gilovich, 2010). Meanwhile, since material products can be measured by monetary value, individuals can compare material purchases more easily. Van's study has proved this view, which showed that experiences are more difficult to be compared than materials. And social comparison has smaller influence on experience. Carter and Gilovich (2010) have revealed the consequences brought by this comparison. People are more likely to compare to other material when purchasing material products. This means that it will be more difficult for them to find expected products, thus making this comparison process antagonize consumers. Compared to material purchases, people are not likely to reflect on abandoned choice or better choice, while these choices become available in subsequent experiential purchase (Carter & Gilovich, 2010). Besides, though experience is viewed as a more unique and single choice, material properties are viewed as exchangeable and substitutable choices (Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012). Considering that the comparison of experiences between different choices is not easier than material products, the comparison of experiences between consumers may not be easier than material products.

3.3. Adjusting Boundary Variable

Although previous studies have explained the reasons why experiential purchases were superior to material purchases in the improvement of happiness from different perspectives, this relationship is not always true. Although many studies have proved that experiential purchases can bring more happiness than material purchases, material purchases, in some specific conditions, can bring happiness to consumers. Based on the summary and classification of aforementioned intermediary mechanisms, the paper has divided the adjusting boundary variables into individual factor and scenario factor, so as to match the consumer element of intermediary value, and the social element of consumption scenario. Among them, the elaboration of the adjusting boundary of individual factor was carried out from four aspects, namely, individual differences, materialism, economic status, and purchasing tendencies, while the scenario factor mainly focused on the matching between personality and purchase, valence of purchase event effect and difference in purchase objects.

3.3.1. Boundary conditions based on individual factors

Self-difference. The cause of self-difference is the conflict or inconformity of the real self and ideal self. When self-difference is generated, individuals will take relevant measures to relieve the negative emotions caused by the difference, such as reach the state of ideal self through constant self-improvement, or properly lower the goal of ideal self to enable the real self to be consistent with the ideal self (Higgins, Shah, & Friedman, 1997). Taking self-difference as the fundamental theory, Yu et al. (2016) has examined how the difference of the level of self-difference influences the happiness perception of individual's purchase. It was found that when self-difference of individuals is low, they will get more happiness when conducting experiential purchases; On the contrary, when individuals have high self-difference, material purchases can bring more happiness to consumers, because for different self-difference, individuals have different goals. It is worth noting that the stimulant product in the study was status product, which was, it could not only satisfy the needs of individuals on normal functions. More importantly, it can satisfy the spiritual needs of individuals, thus, status product is more beneficial to the self-improvement of individuals.

Materialism. Nicolao et al. (2009) has explored the mediating role of materialism in the relationship of satisfaction of purchase types. The results have shown that individuals acquire more happiness from experiential purchases than material

purchases when they are in the state of immaterialism. When the individual is a materialist, the two purchase types have no obvious difference in the improvement of individual's happiness. However, the premise of the conclusion is that the result of consumer's purchase is positive. Millar and Thomas (2009) have proved that the influence of purchase types on happiness was mediated by the materialism of individuals. Specifically, materialistic consumers will acquire more happiness from material purchases, while non-materialistic individuals will acquire more happiness from experiential purchases than material purchases, which is consistent with the study of Nicolao et al. (2009). The reason materialism influences purchase types on happiness is that materialists are more likely to be anxious and disappointing (Richins, 1994). Therefore, when the purchase causes negative result, materialist will adapt to the negative emotion caused by material purchases more slowly, while non-materialist will adapt to those caused by experiential purchases more slowly (Nicolao et al., 2009).

Economic condition. Compared to experiential purchases, individuals restricted by economy or finance are more willing to choose material purchases, the reason is that consumers who are restricted by finance will mainly consider in their purchase decision whether the time utility of this purchase can last long enough. Since material purchases have longer time utility than experiential purchases, then individuals are restricted in finance, they will prefer material purchases, thus have more happiness from material purchases. On the contrary, experiential purchases have shorter time utility, and are not tangible and preservable compared to material purchases. Therefore, it is not consistent with the needs of individuals restricted by finance (Tully, Hershfield, & Meyvis, 2015). Thus, consumers will have less happiness when they conduct experiential consumption. Moreover, individual economic status can be further reflected by their socioeconomic status. Previous studies have shown that the influence of purchase type on happiness can also be adjusted by the socioeconomic status of individuals. Specifically, for consumers who have lower economic status, material purchases will bring more happiness to them than experiential purchases. On the contrary, for individuals with higher socioeconomic status, purchases types have no obvious difference in the improvement of their happiness (Thomas & Miller, 2013).

Purchases tendency. The purchase tendency of consumers refers to the behavioral tendency when they purchase experiential or material products, which is a behavioral preference of consumer's experiential purchases or material purchases. Howell, Pchelin and Lyer (2012) prepared the Experiential Buying Tendency Scale for experiential purchases, in which low score meant consumer preferred material purchases, while high scores represented the preference of experiential purchases. Zhang, Howell, Caprariello and Guevarra (2014) named buyers who preferred to buy material products material buyer, who preferred to buy experience experiential buyer. And they pointed out that material buyers obtained the same level of happiness from experiential purchases and material purchases, while experiential buyers obtained more happiness from experiential purchases.

3.3.2. Boundary conditions based on scenario factor

The matching between personality and purchase. Through field investigation and laboratory experiment, Matz et al. (2016) revealed that individual personality played a mediating role in the influence of purchase types on happiness. Firstly, the author conducted a field investigation on the credit card consumption records of 7,600 consumers. The results showed that when they spent money on products matching their personality, they had higher satisfaction and greater happiness perception. Secondly, through the field investigation, the study has proved that the reason of this was because the process of buying products that matched one's personality could obviously enhance his positive emotion. The study has also pointed out that experiential purchase involved strong social contact. Therefore, introvert consumers are more matched with material purchases, while extraverted consumers are more matched with experiential purchases. This matching between personality and purchase types is the key factor of improving happiness.

Valence of purchase event. Nicolao et al. (2009) have demonstrated that although previous believed that if consumers spent money on experiences such as trips rather than material wealth such as vehicles, they tended to be happier. However, that study might have misleading effect in common condition. Studies have shown that the valence of results obviously relieved the difference in happiness reported by respondents for their material purchases and experiential purchases. For those purchases proved to be positive, experiential purchase can bring more happiness than material purchases, like the results in previous studies. However, for those negative consumptions, experiences have not brought more benefits than material wealth. The study has further proved that this price interactive purchase type was driven by a fact that consumer adapted to experiential purchases more slowly than material purchases, which led to less happiness for experiential purchases.

Difference in purchase objects. Through dividing purchase objects into self and others, the role the difference in purchase objects played in the influence of purchase type on happiness. The results have shown that the influence of purchase types on happiness was mediated by the difference in purchase objects. Specifically, the fact that experiential purchases brought more happiness than material purchases was based on consumers buying for themselves; On the contrary, if consumers purchased for others, then material purchases would bring greater happiness. This was because conducting material purchases for other

could satisfy more ability demands than experiential purchases, which could further bring happiness to individuals.

To sum up, this section has focused on the causal chain of purchase type on happiness, which has established a logical framework of happiness containing pre-factor variable → mechanism of pre-factor variable → core independent variable (purchase type) → adjusting boundary conditions → mediating mechanism → core dependent variable, the causal chain frame is shown in Fig. 1.

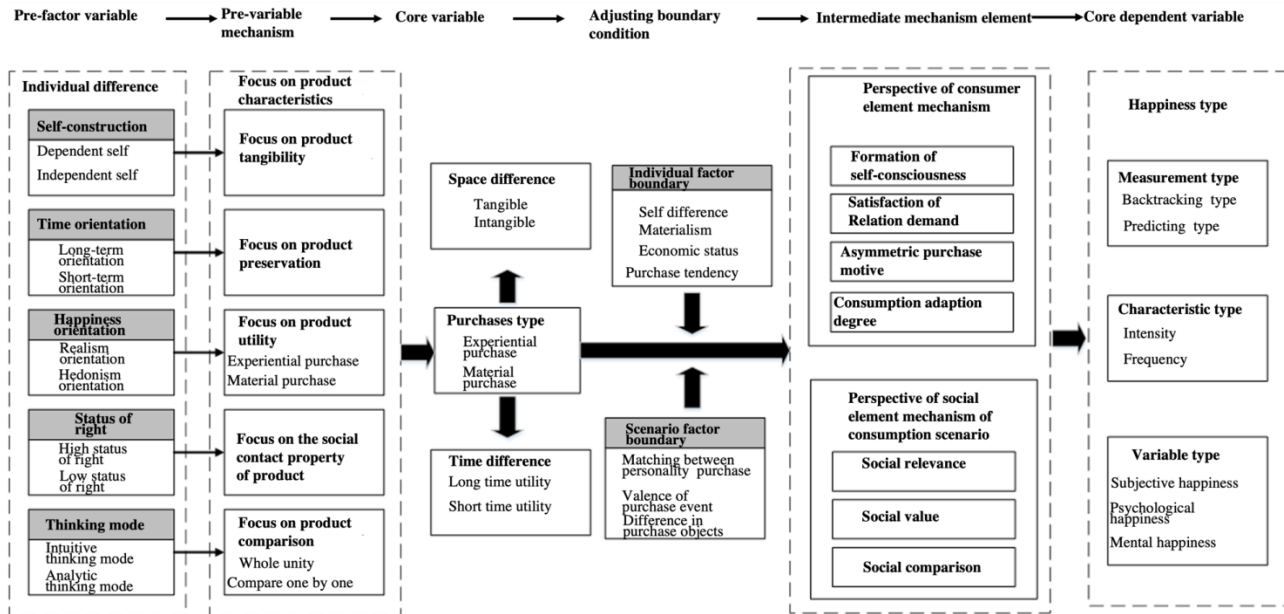


Figure 1: The block diagram of the causal chain of the influence of purchase types on happiness

4. Study Field in the Future

The paper has systematically reviewed the different influences of material purchases and experiential purchases on consumers, which further helps individuals to understand the inner difference mechanism of different purchase types. Through the comparison of the difference mechanism, the paper has explained the reasons why experiential purchases can bring more happiness than material purchases. It can be seen from the review that previous studies on purchase types mainly focused on how they influence consumers' happiness. Although this topic has become the focus of many scholars, studies related to this topic still need to be further carried out in the following aspects.

Firstly, other possible mechanisms that can explain the influence of purchase type on happiness. Although the paper has, based on the review and summary of previous studies, elaborated the mechanism of experiential purchase is better than material purchase from two aspects, namely, the individual element of consumers and social elements of consumption scenario, other systematic differences of the purchase types rather than the two aspects may exist. These differences may lead to a different experience in the subsequent decision, thus lead to different happiness. Future studies can be carried out in the exploration of other inner mechanism of the influence of purchase type on happiness, thus improve the theoretical frame that experiential purchases can bring more happiness than material purchases.

Secondly, cross-cultural studies. Different countries have different definitions of happiness. Current studies were mainly based on western respondents, in which it was found that experiential purchases can bring more happiness than material purchases. However, whether this conclusion is suitable for Asian consumers need to be further explored. Although the study has mentioned that self-construal in culture has an influence on consumers' choice of different purchase types, except for the self-construal, however, there are other cultural dimensions such as right distance belief, global/local thinking, etc. Future studies can further explore the explanation principle of different cultural dimensions for experiential advantage.

Thirdly, will the difference of the happiness types disprove the results of existing studies? Happiness is an important research topic in positive psychology, and has evolved into two research paradigms: subjective well-being (SWB) and

psychological well-being (PWB). With constant development, Xu and other scholars (2017) increased spiritual happiness based on the above types of happiness. Future studies can further subdivide the types of happiness to explore whether different purchase types have different influences on happiness.

5. Conclusions

This study expands the scope of previous happiness research, which is of great significance not only for rational development, but also for the formulation of consumers, enterprises and social public policies from the practical level. The universality of hedonic adaptation will attract the attention of more disciplines and fields, such as consumer behavior, advertising, public policy-making, sports management, learning management, etc. Secondly, it will strengthen the negative events adaptation research. Compared with the application research of hedonic adaptation based on positive events, fewer studies are found based on negative events. However, in addition to having a greater impact on individuals, the frequency of negative events is no less than that of positive events, those including health problems with individuals and their families, food safety problems for consumers, product injuries, service errors, etc., and unfair treatment and resignation of employees. How individuals adapt to the negative emotions brought by these negative events, or how manufacturers and enterprises help mentally injured individuals to adapt to negative emotions to reduce negative effects, are the direction that hedonic adaptation theory researchers can work for in the future.

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