

# Research on Conspicuous Consumption in Travel Behaviors of the College Students

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**Abstract.** This paper research the conspicuous consumption behavior of the college students during the travel through analyzing the personal, social, economic and cultural causes. Usually, the college students pursue self-fulfilling and vanity, under the impetus of “face” consciousness, they produce conspicuous consumption behaviors in order to seek sense of belonging and gain recognition of others. Moreover, the continuous improvement of economic development in society is one of the important factors to promote college students' conspicuous consumption, in addition to the impact of consumerism, the promotion of the mass media, information of reference groups, utilitarian and expression of values, etc., they are all factors that cause college students to produce conspicuous consumption behavior in tourism. Reasonably guiding college students to carry out green and healthy tourism activities and establishing positive consumption view is one of the directions of the current cultural connotation construction in campus.

**Keywords:** college student, conspicuous consumption, tourism behavior, tourism consumption.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, College student tourism market is active in China. Tourism has become a supplement to college students' knowledge and social practice outside class. College students' tourism consumption shows many characteristics that are different from mass tourism; their tourism consumption behaviors not only express their own experience in body and mind, but also reflect their unique style, moreover, there are certain conspicuous characteristics. Some surveys have shown that there's been significant change in college students' lifestyle and consumption view in China. By studying and analyzing the causes of conspicuous consumption behaviors during college students' tourism, it not only has positive significance for the development and improvement of college students' tourism market, but also provides references for college campus culture construction. This research perspective has not been studied by scholars at home or abroad, which also provides a new thinking and discussion direction for college students' tourism research.

## 2. Literature References

Trigg pointed out the one of the conspicuous consumption motive is “seeking status”, that means the lower-class people will follow the lifestyle of higher-class people, especially the outward consumption habits that other people could be perceived. In the contemporary China's environment, Jiang Yan studied the conspicuous consumption motives of China's only child generation consumers, and obtained that China's only child generation consumers have three conspicuous consumption motives, including “face” motive, motive of pursuing uniqueness and self-indulgent motives. This paper thinks that the motivation for conspicuous consumption is not only to obtain a higher social status and identity, but also to include many other purposes, such as enhancing personal face and image, gaining more honor, and achieving sustainable friend relationship and so on.

Based on the “discriminatory contrast” and “money contest” proposed by Veblen, Trigg (2001) carried out research on conspicuous consumption motives under the big environment of 21st century. O'cass and Mc Ewen (2004) empirically analyzed the relationship and difference between status consumption and conspicuous consumption, relevant data shows that two consumption behaviors both have consumption motives for obtaining status, the biggest difference between the two motives is whether it is an open consumer behavior, in which conspicuous consumption is expressed as public consumption behavior or display of conspicuous goods to people. Deng Xiaohui and Dai Qiuqiu (2005) thought that conspicuous consumption is a behavior which mainly show wealth rather than

meet actual needs; its consumption motivation is to seek social status, and achieve the mutual influence and effect between people on demand and utility. Zheng Yuxiang, Lu Li and Fan Xiucheng (2006) reviewed the theoretical development of conspicuous consumption from the perspective of marketing, through discussion, they thought that the main reason why consumers prefer to conspicuous consumption is to improve their social status and recognized by others, and pointed out that conspicuous consumption is a manifestation of personalization and unique lifestyle. Xu Wei (2011) analyzed from motivation of conspicuous consumption and concluded that the personal-oriented motivation in China is still the first factor in conspicuous consumption. She thought that conspicuous consumption has the function of maintaining interpersonal relationships and confirmed the social effect of conspicuous consumption, which consumers benefit from.

### **3. Analysis of Causes of Conspicuous Consumption in College Students' Travel Behavior**

#### **3.1 Questionnaire Collection**

The distribution and collection of this questionnaire were made through the wxj website, and electronic questionnaires were used to distribute on social platforms. The questionnaire was issued on September 25, 2018, and the questionnaire was collected on September 30, 2018. A total of 517 questionnaires were collected, and 517 valid questionnaires, the effective rate was 100%.

#### **3.2 Basic Condition of Respondents**

The male-female ratio in this survey was 33.18:66.82, students in juniors (37.33%) and seniors (30.41%) as main; the ratio of freshman (16.13%) and sophomores in the respondents was the same. Students whose monthly living expenses are 1,000-1,500 Yuan account for most in respondents; they are more than 45%. There are also 29% of students who monthly living expenses are more than 1,500 Yuan, and fewer students whose monthly living expenses are less than 500 Yuan is fewer.

#### **3.3 Personal Cause Analysis**

##### **3.3.1 Consumption Habits**

College students' rational consumption sense is weak, lacking independent value judgments, and do not form a healthy consumption view. In the survey, 19.35% of the college students said that they never made a strategy or a consumption budget, 53% occasionally had a strategy or a consumption budget; 82% of the respondents had impulsive consumption and following consumption in tourism activities; 55.76% of college students approved "take leave without delay" travel. The data shows that some surveyed college students do not have elaborate tourism consumption planning, they are very arbitrarily, and often cannot control their habit of wasting money. What they show is that there is no plan, random consumption habits, and it is easy to lead to irrational impulse consumption. According to the survey data, 34.56% of college students' one travel expenses are more than 2,500 Yuan, and 1,500-2,500 Yuan and 500-1,500 Yuan account for 33.64% and 26.27%, respectively, it can be seen that college students' tourism consumption is generally high.

##### **3.3.2 Analysis of Consumption Psychology**

Conspicuous travel consumption behaviors due to college students' own consumption view and psychology. With the abundance of consumer goods and the change of consumption view, college students realize the purpose of showing off through travel this intangible goods and service. College student travel consumers reflect the need to pursue self-concept, self-esteem and self-realization. According to the survey, college students have high consumption in transportation, accommodation and entertainment, up to 70.97% of college students spend most in purchasing branded costume, they think that "good brands are the most popular, nice and easy to use." As college students recognize and praise highly consumer culture, famous brand consumption has become a prominent performance of college students. Through these aspects of conspicuous consumption, students enhance satisfaction of self-image and self-esteem. The college students' consumption view generally tends to be leading,

and the self-consumption psychology causes college students' consumption to have autonomy and blindness. Up to 80.18% of college students said that they don't care to spend more money to meet their travel needs, and 48.85% of the students thought that they must balance the benefits and meet the high standards of travel demand. It can be seen that college students strongly pursue consumption view of self-pursuit and enjoyment, and gain self-respect and respect of others by consuming conspicuous products with symbolic value. When they carrying out tourism activities, the most important thing is to realize their tourism needs as much as possible, and they are willing to spend more time and money to obtain physical and mental satisfaction.

College travel consumers pay great attention to the personalized design of tourism products and the emotional experience gained through travel. In the process of tourism, college students pay great attention to others' views on their own consumption behaviors, emotionally protect each other's feelings and give each other gifts, and strengthen social interaction. College students pay attention to emotional and symbolic consumption, and hope to display their tastes by purchasing symbolic tourism products, such as brand shoes, clothing and bags, as well as local distinctive specialties and souvenirs. They think that the purchase of these conspicuous travel products can meet the needs respected by people, and enhances self-image and convey self-concept.

### **3.4 Analysis of Social Causes**

#### **3.4.1 Influence of Social Environment**

The social class and environment in which college students are located affect their consumption behaviors, and the social environment has a subtle influence on college students' consumption. Studies have shown that conspicuous consumption is not only the consumption behavior of elite groups, but almost exist in all social members and their families. College students are generally personalized and unique, but in fact, they have to pay more money and time to imitate or become successful people. Under the influence of various aspects of the reference groups, such as the information, utilitarian and value expression of the reference groups, which affect the consumption behaviors of college students. The overall consumption expectations and preferences of the class of college students not only affect the consumption patterns of themselves and others, but also urge them to imitate the consumption patterns of the reference groups to feel pride. College students in order to obtain the praise and identity of others, the satisfaction of the individual's vanity and recognition come from the others have contributed to the conspicuous consumption of college students in tourism.

#### **3.4.2 Influence of Consumerism Thought**

The conspicuous consumption behaviors of college students are influenced by the consumerism thought. Consumerism thought emphasizes unscrupulous consumption and self-fulfillment, which can title more value for a better life. During the period of social transformation, consumerism thought is prevalent in college students, under this environment, college students are unconsciously influenced. Except for material over-consumption, however, the entertainment and tourism are also regarded as the embodiment of a better life, the consumed tourism products are also regarded as an important basis for identity authentication and a form of self-expression. Therefore, the conspicuous consumption in tourism behaviors has been arise.

#### **3.4.3 Influence of Mass Media**

The conspicuous consumption of college students in tourism are also inextricably linked to the spread mass media. Up to 48.85% of surveyed college students said that seeing friends' photos in the WeChat would stimulate and enhance their desire to travel out; 84.79% of college students' possibility of generating travel motivation through social media (Weibo, WeChat, etc.) rise; most college students thinks that the travel information on the WeChat will promote their own travel motivation, and then make travel decisions. According to relevant survey results, most college students obtain tourism information through the Internet, online travel agencies, and travel APPs. At present, college students dependent on the Internet and mobile phones too much, tourism merchants take advantage of college students' characteristics to pursue personality and celebrity effects during consumption, make college students lose their original consumption intentions and purchase products that do not

meet the journey. The sharing of family and friends' travel experiences, the promotion of tourism products, and the influence of celebrity effects provide an idealized consumption model for college students, which push college students willing to purchase things and consumption ways for imitating from the social celebrities, even if it is over their own consumption ability.

### **3.5 Economic Causes**

The social and economic development level affects the consumption behaviors of college students. In recent years, China's comprehensive national strength has continued to grow, economic development has grown rapidly, and people's living standards and consumption ability have also improved. College students have not yet become independent economies, and their consumption level is positively correlated with family economic conditions. While the family's economic level is improving, it will also improve the consumption level and ability of college students. According to the survey, the monthly living expenses of college students are mainly 1000-1500 Yuan, and the source of living expenses is mainly given by parents. Basic and practical necessities can no longer meet the daily consumption needs of college students; they begin to pursue high-grade and personalized products and spiritual enjoyment, which encourages the emergence of college students' conspicuous consumption behavior, moreover, there is also conspicuous status in the travel consumption behaviors of college students.

### **3.6 Cultural Cause Analysis**

Under the influence of Confucian culture, the consumption values of Chinese are obviously influenced by two factors: interpersonal relationship and social orientation. The Chinese pay great attention to the "face" consciousness, and the face they have is directly related to their social status, wealth and glory. Under this cultural shock, conspicuous consumer behaviors appear in the group of college students. The travel consumption behaviors of college students are externally displayed out and open, the tourism activities make the conspicuous consumption problem happened due to its open characteristics. According to the survey results, up to 91.7% of college students share their travel experiences through WeChat moment, and display their travel photos or gains on personal social platforms such as Weibo and WeChat, it shows that college students use and consume conspicuous travel products in tourism activities, they convey their status to others through public consumption, enhance their self-image, and gain appreciation and praise from others, and it is one of the performance behaviors which college students paying attention to face. Moreover, 32.72% of college students think that this behavior is to get recognition from their peers; the surveyed students basically think that this can show their status and identity and get praise and appreciation from others; only 25.81% of college students publish travel photos to share the tourism harvest to others. This shows that college students pay great attention to the "face" consciousness, and conspicuous consumption behaviors have a certain impact on the interpersonal relationship adjustment and group belonging sense of college students. College students' consumption pays special attention to the views of friends and classmates, the comparison of tourism consumption and blind conspicuous consumption behaviors are the actual performance of seeking belonging sense and obtaining recognition from others. College students like to show their travel experiences in the moment, which is also a manifestation of college students' conspicuous consumption, and gradually become universal.

## **4. Conclusion**

In the social transitional period, college students are influenced by conspicuous consumerism thoughts, some daily consumption behaviors are characteristic of conspicuousness in social interaction and entertainment activities, their manifestations are obvious in tourism especially. The concrete manifestations are as follows: the consumption level is continuously improved; the shopping motivation is obvious; the emotional and symbolic consumption are emphasized; the conspicuous consumption of collective and strong conformity behavior; and the open tourism consumption behaviors. College students prefer to travel with classmates and friends, and purchase conspicuous

tourism products to obtain a sense of belonging and identity. They display their travel gains publicly through Weibo and WeChat, use explicit consumption to convey their status to others, shape their self-image, and receive appreciation and praise from others. In order to enable college students to form green and healthy travel consumption behaviors, on the one hand, college students need to correct their own consumption concepts in the travel process, control personal consumption needs, and experience the true meaning of travel. On the other hand, necessarily, social groups, families and schools need strengthen the education of college students to promote the healthy development of their travel and enrich college life by incorporated positive consumption view into the campus culture construction.

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