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Psychology of Personality: Real and Virtual Context

THE INTERCONNECTION OF CONSUMPTION EMOTIONS AND GENERAL EMOTIONAL STATE OF YOUTH

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Abstract

Despite researcher's interest of connection between consumer behaviour and emotions, the problem of the consumption place in the general emotional state remains not covered. This study was conducted on young people who for several days filled in an online diary. There were significant differences in the emotional state in the presence (Me = 16) and absence of expenses (Me = 11.50), and between consumer emotions (joy (Me = 24), surprise (Me = 15.5), sadness (Me = 0)). The consumer emotion of joy relates to social norms and approval by the reference group, satisfaction with spending and their price. The surprise is associated with the payment for goods and services that are not yet normative for their reference group or with monetary replenishment. Sadness is associated with the lower cost of our chosen products, the feeling of overpayment, disappointment, as well as a complete lack of spending, poor physical health and, as we assume, a negative attitude to consumerism. Connections between consumer activity, consumer emotions and the general emotional state are found out. In the future, it is planned to establish causal relations for these phenomena.

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1. Introduction

In the context of consumerism researchers are more often trying to conceptualize the consumer experience. Connections between consumption and emotions do not make us doubt, but the lack of empirical research is still existing. New empirical research will help us to understand the place that consumption occupies in the modern world (Song & Qu, 2019). In this case, emotions are an extremely important indicator both for experiencing subject and for the observing researcher as nothing else, allows us to understand it.

The main part of the existing research is focused on the study of consumer satisfaction and the factors that play the most important role in the consumption (Lee et al., 2015; Mishra et al., 2016; Song & Qu, 2019). If discuss it more specifically, more often studied characteristics of products that contribute to greater satisfaction (Hartwell et al., 2013) and the role of emotional self-regulation of the subject in consumption (Suzuki et al., 2018) to achieve the greatest personal satisfaction. These issues are finding out the way of sales increasing and offer the most successful strategies to cope with modern reality.

We try to find out the emotion's property wider – to include at least basic emotions, which are more comprehensive when plus or minus of consumer's state. Then we told about basic emotions we mean P. Ekman, because it is one the most popular and easier model, in which are just few selected emotions and minimum intersection between each of state.

2. Problem Statement

Prior characteristics of emotions spreaded in economic behaviour: gender differences of emotions experienced and social nature of that differences (Anderson et al., 2014; Cavanaugh et al., 2015; Godefroit-Winkel et al., 2019). But beyond that, certain phenomena are known as a result of consumption and emotion intersection and at the moment don't have a transfer to other areas. So, it is known that positive emotions contribute consumption increase (Evers et al., 2018) and more likelihood of making an impulsive purchase (Mariani et al., 2017) and negative emotions become the reason of our overpayments (Garg et al., 2018) or the purchase driver to reduce us negative emotions even in difficult extreme situations (Kemp et al., 2014). But these results are fragmentary and can lead to cognitive errors: these phenomena show us only increase in consumer demand and the influence of bright emotional states as determinants. But daily routine consumption is much wider, and our emotions are not always so straightforward.

3. Research Questions

In our research we try to find some behavioral patterns in the different emotional state. We have a two task at the same time: to see the real economical behavior of our respondent and at the same time give them some reference point so that as a result we get more heterogenous data. For those goal we choose diary method.

We gave to all our participants the link to the electronic diary. We refresh link everyday (it was a notification) and ask them to tell us about their comes to end day. In free form they describe a few topics, which interested us (more detailed about our topics in *methods*).

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to supplement the existing data on consumer emotions and their relationship with the general emotional state mainly by analysing our daily consumption and considering a wider range of emotions or their absence.

5. Research Methods

Participants of our study are young people from 17 to 24 years (N = 108, M=19.61, sd = 1.46, 59 females, 49 males). Almost all of them live with their parents or in a dormitory (only 7 of them live independently and were separated from their parents). We used the diary method, so our respondents filled out an online diary throughout the week from 1st to 9th of March (that period included every day, weekend, and festive consumption).

Based on the pilot study, we created a diary in which young people every evening contribute data about:

- General emotional state that was operationalized as subjective assessment by the respondent of his day (min = -50, max = 50).
- Text comment to describe their emotional status
- Subjective assessment of their economic behaviour (7 basic emotions: joy, surprise, sadness, anger, disgust, contempt, fear)
- Total daily income and expenses
- Category of expenses (restaurants and cafes, supermarkets, travel, bars/clubs/discos, cosmetics, gifts, cigarettes/alcohol, movies/theatre/concerts, and open field for 'another')
- Type of payment (cash or card)
- For whom the purchase was made (for myself, for my parents, for friends, for someone else)
- With whom they made a purchase
- Typicality of spending for the respondent, his family and friends, favour of family and friends
- Subjective satisfaction with spending and its price
- Income and its source.

As a result we collected 998 records and 1220 behavioural acts, which were analysed with stage of content analysis and statistical analysis after that.

6. Findings

Based on the data obtained using frequency analysis it was possible to make statistical analysis.

Comparing the mood in the diary entries, where were expenses (Me = 16, n = 371) and where they were not (Me = 11.50, n = 172), we obtained significant differences (U = 28698.5, Z = -1.89, p = 0.05). Thus, we were able to see that between the groups where there was or was no spending mood significantly differed and, in the group, where there was consumption the emotions were more positive.

Some respondents showed economic passivity and did not make any spending during our study, but someone was active (5 spending per day – the maximum value), so our further analysis we have carried out

on spending. We compared the general emotional state of the respondents with different assessments of their economic activity. The Kruskal-Wallis test showed significant differences ($X^2(6) = 53.73, p = 0.000$), but 4 categories of emotions were chosen very rarely (anger, disgust, contempt, fear) and were excluded from further analysis. Pairwise comparing the remaining three emotions of economic behaviour by the general emotional mood associated with them, we obtained significant differences (table 1): joy (Me = 24, n = 856), surprise (Me = 15.5, n = 190), sadness (Me = 0, n = 174). Thus, we can see that all emotions are in a positive pole, and "surprise" in this case is still closer to a joyful experience.

Table 01. Results of pairwise comparisons of the general emotional state for three groups of emotional assessments of economic activity

	Joy	Surprise
Surprise	U = 10519, Z = -2.13, p = 0.03	-
Sadness	U = 6798, Z = -5.210, p = 0.000	U = 1772.5, Z = -3.146, p = 0.002

For each of the emotions were diary entries without spending: 31.03% for sadness, 23.83% for joy, 16.84% for surprise ($X^2(2) = 10.11, p = 0.006$). Based on this, we can conclude that sadness, contrary to theoretical ideas about the coping function of consumption (Kemp et al., 2014) are least associated with active consumption as opposed to joy ($p = 0.04$) and surprise ($p = 0.001$).

Further, for the three emotions that marked the assessment of their own economic behaviour (joy, surprise, sadness) we compared all the available characteristics of spending. Criterion Kruskal-Wallis showed a significant difference in the following characteristics (table 2): the emotional state ($X^2(2) = 84.82, p = 0.000$), the cost of purchase ($X^2(2) = 8.79, p = 0.01$), typical for the family ($X^2(2) = 8.7, p = 0.01$), the approval of family members ($X^2(2) = 17.57, p = 0.000$), approval among friends ($X^2(2) = 20.77, p = 0.000$), subjective satisfaction of waste ($X^2(2) = 51.05, p = 0.000$) and satisfaction of purchase price ($X^2(2) = 11.71, p = 0.003$).

Social desirability has proven to be an extremely important factor for consumer decisions and most of their spending is often done in their family or among friends/peers and is approved by them (with the exception of categories such as alcohol, cigarettes, bars/clubs). Significantly different from the other two groups is the one that estimated its economic activity as "surprise": 52.5% indicated that this is typical for their family (against 63.6% and 68.3% for joy and sadness, respectively). Similarly, to approve their spending among friends, they were more doubtful that their friends would approve of the spending (53.2% versus 74.4% and 71.7%). We can assume that these expenses were taken over from the family, not yet interiorized and not characteristic of their generation.

Table 02. Comparison economic factors in different emotional states

		Joy	Surprised	Sadness	X ²
General emotional state		Me = 24 21,72	Me = 15,5 20,4	Me = 0 23,13	84,82**
Surprised	U, Z	66704.5, -3.62**	-	-	
Sadness	U, Z	42913.5, -8.84**	11472.5, -5.05**	-	
The cost of purchase		Me = 340 1230,48	Me = 250 2154,34	Me = 265	8,79*

				1725,82	
<i>Surprised Sadness</i>	<i>U, Z</i> <i>U, Z</i>	44573, -2.62** 35114.5, -1.78	- 9023.5, 0.68	- -	
Typical for the family		63,6% Me = 1 0,48	52,5% Me = 1 0,5	68,3% Me = 1 0,46	8,7*
<i>Surprised Sadness</i>	<i>U, Z</i> <i>U, Z</i>	45901.5, -2.55* 37307, -1.00	- 7982, -2.65*	- -	
Approval among family members	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)	66,3% 13,6% 14,1% 3,7% 0,3%	46,6% 33,5% 15,8% 3,2% 1,9%	55% 15,8% 17,5% 4,2% 7,5%	17,57**
<i>Surprised Sadness</i>	<i>U, Z</i> <i>U, Z</i>	43012, -3.74** 34131, -2.63**	- 9306, -0.28	- -	
Approval among friends	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)	74,4% 16,3% 12,4% 1,2% 0,3%	53,2% 30,4% 15,2% 0,6% 0,6%	71,7% 9,2% 19,2% 0% 0%	20,77**
<i>Surprised Sadness</i>	<i>U, Z</i> <i>U, Z</i>	41851, -4.58** 37840.5, -0.77	- 8112, -2.36*	- -	
Subjective satisfaction of waste	(1) Satisfied (2) Neutral (3) Disappointed	65,4% 33,1% 1,5%	44,3% 53,2% 3,5%	38,3% 50,8% 10,8%	51,05**
<i>Surprised Sadness</i>	<i>U, Z</i> <i>U, Z</i>	40697, -4.86** 27480, -6.11**	- 8490, -1.68	- -	
Satisfaction of purchase price	(1) Overpaid (2) (3) Normal price (4) (5) Profitable	4,3% 15,3% 54,2% 13,3% 12,9%	5,1% 25,9% 48,7% 10,8% 9,5%	10% 20,8% 48,3% 10% 10,8%	11,71**
<i>Surprised Sadness</i>	<i>U, Z</i> <i>U, Z</i>	44893.5, -2.76** 34057, -2.48*	- 9406, -0.12	- -	

Note: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.001

But economic activity, which caused the assessment of "joy", significantly more often self-rated as approved by the family (66.3% vs. 46.6% for surprise and 55% for sadness).

7. Conclusion

The obvious result is that economic activity, assessed as joy, is significantly more often associated with a sense of satisfaction with their spending (65.4%), as opposed to surprise and sadness, which is more characterized by a neutral assessment. And sadness is more often associated with disappointment with their spending (10.8%).

The young student-consumer it is possible to note his passivity and extremely low activity: almost a third of diary entries did not contain expenses, small volumes of expenses and the income. It is possible to note some austerity and utility of the selected categories of expenses (only the most necessary: travel and

food covers 68% of the total costs). These expenses are routine, they are regularly consumed and do not cause them any emotions (neutral assessment). A rare holiday consumption associated with leisure (gifts, movies/theatre, bars/clubs) cause a bright emotional colour and it becomes interesting, it is due to the nature of spending or an important criterion is their rarity and exclusivity of the moment. Young people are still actively using real money and buying in offline stores, which may be due to copying patterns of behaviour of parents, a small amount of money that they get it in cash or a low degree of financial literacy.

Contrary to theoretical ideas about the coping function of consumption, which in a bad mood pushes us to spend more (Garg et al., 2018) and acts as a regulator of our emotional state, reducing negative emotions. In our case, people in a good mood, being satisfied with their spending, gave large sums. Perhaps sadness in assessing their own economic behaviour is an indicator of a pronounced negative attitude to the world of consumerism and consumption. The need to spend causes negative emotions.

We understand that the format of the study sets some priming and respondents unwittingly begin to more actively reflect their economic behaviour and take it into account in assessing their general condition, but only respondents who mark their economic activity as causing sadness in the comments about how their day went, noted their dissatisfaction with the irrationality of spending and their ineffectiveness.

For the subjective feeling of joy from your own economic behaviour, it is enough to feel that you have paid the usual price. And even if the service provided is extremely expensive, it is important to feel that it is legally conditioned, and you pay as well as all (faith in a fair world). Feeling best buy brings us a greater pleasure. While the higher price (and no matter whether you have overpaid several times or for a few rubles), it is immediately perceived as a reason to be upset.

In their consumption, young people, even though they have already passed the primary socialization, mainly based on the standards set by their reference groups. Moreover, friends of the same age at this stage are more important figure than family members. Evaluation of their economic activity as "surprise" is associated with some experiments, when they sometimes try something new and are not even always ready to immediately give it some assessment (positive or negative).

The joy of their economic activity is linked from the meet the perfect you spend, and their social favour, primarily peers, and the higher price. And it relates to our general emotional state very positively.

The surprise is mainly due to atypical spending for themselves, which has not yet become a social norm and has either been taken over from parents or is experimental in nature and does not have any support in the environment and there is no assumption how it will be evaluated by them. In addition, we often must pay for our curiosity and make a waste, which in our subjective opinion is an overpayment, which does not even affect our satisfaction. And this assessment of their own economic activity is associated with a moderate positive assessment of their own emotional state.

Sadness from their own economic behaviour is associated with a general neutral emotional state or simply a lack of experiences and sensations. This condition is associated with typical family patterns of behaviour, low satisfaction from spending and a higher probability of disappointment and overpayment. Also, 31% of the records with this consumer emotion was accompanied by the absence of any expenditure, as well as poor health and illness.

In these arguments, we cannot exclude the personal factor, because the phenomenon of emotional state is extremely heterogeneous and comparable between different people with only some assumptions.

Young people who took part in our study, can adhere to different economic strategies, be able to different levels of financial literacy and material security, and for some purchases are a form of leisure, opportunities to have a good and pleasant time with family or friends, for someone it is a way of coping with difficulties, and someone, being a staunch opponent of consumerism, experiences it as a challenge and transcends for themselves to meet their utilitarian needs.

In this study, we were able to consider a number of connections that accompany our emotional state and the purchases we make, but in further research, we have plan to establish the direction of cause-and-effect relationships for these two phenomena, and to consider this in relation to personal characteristics.

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