

Analysis of the Knowledge Payment Phenomenon of Chinese Women (Age 25-49)

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Abstract. China's Internet penetration rate continues to rise, and the scale of smartphone users continues to expand, providing the soil for the development of the knowledge payment industry. Among the industry's consumer groups, female Chinese consumers play an important but rarely discussed the role. The article will use Jean Baudrillard's consumer society theory to discuss the payment motivation of Chinese female consumers. Baudrillard believes that in a consumer society, women become the group with the most consumption power. The article will use a specific female-target app, Jane's academy, as an example to analyze the reasons for the knowledge payment in China from the four perspectives. First, women in society pay for knowledge products to ease their anxiety about facing all types of work and family problems. After they pay for the products, they would have the illusion that the problem in their life has been fixed already. Second, women, as an individual nowadays, focus on self-improvement, and they are willing to invest in themselves. Third, the influence of Chinese traditional culture creates an atmosphere in Chinese society that learning is the most effective way to promote people's social status. Fourth, paying for knowledge is a consequence of the common anxiety of human beings in the Information Age. In a nutshell, an attempt to relieve anxiety lies behind the phenomenon of knowledge payment.

Keywords: Knowledge Payment, information age, anxiety, female.

1. Introduction

With the improvement of people's income level, more and more consumption expenditure is required at the spiritual level. In the face of huge competitive pressure from society, people are eager to improve themselves through learning. There are various ways to acquire knowledge in the Internet era. However, users are often at a loss in the face of massive and complicated information [1].

Nearly 27.6 percent of people often want to get information but have no way to do so, according to the Penguin Intelligence Tank report [2]. For the phenomenon of cognitive anxiety prevalent among contemporary users, some we-media first saw the business opportunity and took the lead in grabbing the traffic dividend by introducing high-quality, in-depth content to attract users. People's demand for payment for knowledge promotes the rise of pay for knowledge clients.

According to the Research Report on the Development of China's Paid-Knowledge Industry in 2020 by iMedia Consulting, the number of paid-knowledge users in China has maintained a steady growth trend for a long time and will grow to 430 million in 2022 [3]. At the beginning of 2020, WeChat public number also opened the gray test of payment mode. Relevant data showed that in the three months after the model opened, a total of 14,000 public accounts opened the paid reading function.

In addition to the layout of the vertical field of knowledge payment, such as Dedao, and Fan Deng, in recent years, the major Internet platforms are also salivating over the field of knowledge payment. According to a related report released by Jukuan.com, the market size of the pan-knowledge payment industry has maintained a growth rate of more than 40%, with more than 70% of users learning through short videos.

The current academic research on knowledge payment mainly includes research on knowledge payment models and knowledge payment products. The research on the knowledge payment model mainly involves business models, user behavior, pricing and more. The research on paid-for knowledge products mainly involves the birth, current situation, value and use value of paid-for

knowledge products, combined with the current situation of several major paid-for knowledge platforms case studies [4].

The academic community generally understands the reasons for the rise of knowledge payment as follows: in the era of cognitive surplus, massive information makes it difficult for users to make choices while generating knowledge anxiety. The free but inefficient traditional knowledge-sharing model has been unable to meet people's current knowledge needs. At this time, knowledge payment emerged as a new mode of knowledge sharing. The knowledge payment platform dedicated to eliminating the symptoms of users' knowledge anxiety attracted great attention from users and capital because it aimed at the needs of users' self-improvement [5].

There are a lot of paid-for knowledge studies for specific age groups, such as college students and those over 35. However, there are few articles that focus on paying for knowledge in terms of gender. Moreover, there is still little research on the causes of female knowledge payment from the perspective of sociological theory. In this case, based on Baudrillard's theory of consumer society, this paper will discuss the phenomenon and causes of Chinese women's knowledge payment and put forward suggestions for female knowledge consumption.

2. The Definition of Knowledge Payment

Knowledge payment is the consumption behavior of Internet users on knowledge products and services [6]. Today, knowledge payment is usually completed by using apps and websites on phones. Customers could find all types of channels, which are classes that are recorded or live-streamed by so-called "masters" in that fields, on certain apps, and pay for these channels by online payments.

Since 2016, the scale of knowledge-paying users in China has shown a rapid growth trend, reaching 477 million in 2021 and is expected to exceed 500 million in 2022. According to public data, the annual growth rate of China's paid knowledge market once reached 202% in 2018, the market scale exceeded 39 billion yuan in 2020, and the market scale exceeded 67.5 billion yuan in 2021, with nearly 500 million users, and the growth rate maintained at over 40% for a long time. China's paid knowledge market is expected to reach 112.65 billion yuan in 2022 and 280.88 billion yuan in 2025.

Women have an important place in the consumer group of this industry. With 35 million users at Ten O'clock Reading and 150 million users at Litchi Micro Class, more than 70 percent of the platforms' users are female. According to a survey of major knowledge payment platforms conducted by Jiguang in 2018, women accounted for 50.5% and 51% of Himalayan FM and Fentah, respectively [7].

The contents of knowledge payment are different from the complex online education, rigorous science, or other entertainment content, say, gossip, film and television. It is more like a combination of intermediate, both to output a volume of knowledge in a short time and it also avoids the traditional long immersion education mode of learning; the content involves culture, parenthood, finance and economics, skills, business, workplace, art and other aspects. For women, especially, there are multiple women-oriented apps concentrating on helping women in their social life, regulation of emotions, parenting methods and marriage issues.

3. Women in the Consumer Society Theory by Jean Baudrillard and the Commercialization of Knowledge

The author of the concept of consumer society is Baudrillard, who starts from the relationship between humans and things and makes a detailed analysis of society from the perspective of semiotic criticism [8]. Baudrillard believes that in a consumer society, women become the group with the most consumption power [9]. Female consumption is an important part of symbol consumption.

Baudrillard proposed that modern society has changed from a production-oriented society to a consumption-oriented society, which is typically characterized by the symbolization of consumption, the status of daily necessities in the consumer market is gradually sinking, and people are consuming

more and more simulacrum cultural products [10]. The mass consumption behavior is restricted by the logic of consumption, which Baudrillard defined as the manipulation of symbols and believed that consumption is a structure of exchange and difference. "The function of things is often just an excuse for the function of difference, or even produced as an excuse"[11]. People's demand for the objects of consumption is based on the logic of the difference of symbols. Symbolic difference logic guides people to buy, thus promoting the production of consumer goods. People use consumption to demonstrate uniqueness and social status.

Facing the rapidly developing society and constantly innovating of new things, people are easy to be in a state of "ignorance", and it is difficult to escape, and consumption is exactly the most convenient way to satisfy their own sense of security. It is significant for knowledge consumption to purchase authoritative, short and easily available knowledge courses and try to fill up the deficiency of one's own ability and knowledge. Therefore, the knowledge products that people consume are not only the material function of the course but also the symbolic value behind the course.

4. The Commercialization of Knowledge

Knowledge payment is the product of the specific historical stage of knowledge consumption in the Internet era. So far, the Internet connection makes the flow of information more convenient than ever before, and it has become an important role in society. At the same time, in the information society, information is as widely traded as commodities. The high speed of information flow and much redundancy make the information market unceasing.

The purpose of knowledge consumption is to purchase authoritative, short and easily accessible knowledge courses, trying to fill their own ability and knowledge deficiency. Because of the existence of this specific demand, it also leads to the industrial production of knowledge payment, which fits into the scene of People's Daily life in a specific form. In this process, knowledge consumption is a process in which people take the initiative to establish a relationship with knowledge, and it only becomes a part of knowledge production factors. Unfortunately, (Baudrillard) under the value order actively constructed by consumption, people's consumption behavior can be easily predicted. Due to the inertia of conforming to the social reality, people can only pursue to be recognized by the value of things and become the supporters of things unconsciously and the puppets of machine-like consumption. The frightening growth of the paid-for knowledge industry is an example. People fervently pursue the symbolic meaning brought by knowledge payment in order to gain recognition and attention from others and become dependent on knowledge payment unconsciously.

5. Case Introduction

Jane's Academy app is a knowledge payment platform for female content specifically targeted at women. Xie Guanpeng, the founder of Jane's Academy, once mentioned that the main user group of Jane's Academy is ordinary women aged 25-45. Most of these groups are married or even have children and will be distressed by mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, childcare, marriage and other family issues. They are anxious and willing to seek outside advice, so they are more willing to pay.

Through market research, Xie found that more than 60% of the people who pay for knowledge are women. In December last year, the team launched a 180-day online "Women's Growth Plan" in "Jane's Academy", priced at 199 yuan. The plan has gained more than 100,000 paying users, with a revenue of more than 20 million and an average monthly flow of about 5 million.

Through a 15-minute course every day, the platform dissolves books and uses a systematic process of small group interaction, clocking, review and examination to analyze a book every week and reconstruct the ideas in the book with easy-to-understand examples so that readers can better apply them to their daily life. Customers acquire knowledge by listening to books online. One of the tutorials in the software is called the "Legendary Women's Book Project", which focuses on "reading the wisdom of legendary women, avoiding detours, and becoming a smart and graceful woman".

The focus is on women facing various difficulties, such as facing layoffs in the workplace, seeing the gap between their husbands and them in life and feeling inferior, the relationship with their husbands has become weak, and the children do not listen to the discipline. The course, which costs 99 yuan and lasts 180 days, takes just 15 minutes a day to "improve relationships at work, in your neighborhood, and at home; Realize network management, impression bonus points; Overcome inferiority, introversion, insecurity; Improve yourself from the inside out and be a woman of measured temperament."

6. Four Aspects of the Knowledge Payment Phenomenon of Chinese Women

6.1. Women in Society

Women are buying knowledge products such as anxiety and pain relievers instead of taking them as serious classes to learn. For men, solving the confusion of the workplace solves 80 percent of the problem, but for a woman, it may only account for 10 percent. For women aged 25-45, they have generally started to set up a family. In addition to the workplace, they begin to encounter new needs and problems in marriage affairs, children's education, parents' pension and other aspects, which all revolve around the core concept of "family". In the face of career, money, family, health and other obstacles, obtaining information and methods by knowledge payment eases their anxiety psychologically. Female users prefer mentoring and companionship classes. Jane's academy is like a life counselor, helping women solve various problems and providing guidance to women. This increases female customers' dependence on the platform.

6.2. Women as Individuals

When individuals consume knowledge, it is also a personalized self-consumption behavior. The purchase of knowledge courses is actually an attempt to enrich the inner storage and thinking concepts of the self. On the surface, it is the purchase of knowledge courses, but also the purchase of this knowledge and concepts. She is consuming knowledge, but at the same time, she is also shifting the focus of consumption to herself, forming symbolic consumption of herself and transforming from external fetishism to internal narcissism. Jane's Academy saw this trend, and as their slogan goes: it hopes that everyone can have the opportunity and convenience to study, find strength in knowledge, and become a better self.

6.3. Influence of Chinese Traditional Culture

Knowledge consumption cannot escape the relationship between people and knowledge symbols, that is, highlighting self-differences and a sense of value. In the era of entertainment consumption, the consumption of knowledge will bring people the self-impression and label of seeking knowledge and making progress, which is more in line with the value bias of the current society and makes it easy to achieve self-identity. Through the paid learning of different knowledge products, it reflects its own efforts in a certain field, forms a difference with others, and also establishes the communication relationship with the corresponding field groups.

As the book "Desire and Anxiety" points out, the Chinese desire for education often causes intense anxiety, which is determined by the social concept that "knowledge changes destiny" [12]. The knowledge anxiety of knowledge-paying users is their "stratum anxiety"; that is, "accumulating cultural capital" is one of the motives of knowledge-paying users [13].

6.4. Common Anxiety of Human Beings in the Information Age

Today, the whole society has been highly rationalized, and with the gradual end of political utopia, people's sense of powerlessness and anxiety cannot be fundamentally eliminated. Therefore, using money, time, and more, to put their good vision in the real, other, accessible Otto around them seems to be a feasible way to get rid of anxiety. In order to relieve anxiety and obtain a sense of stability in

the future world, effective knowledge support and rapid and accurate knowledge screening are indispensable. The knowledge payment platform provides this opportunity and becomes a way to help relieve inner anxiety [14].

Although the original intention of knowledge payment is good, it is indeed unsatisfactory from the perspective of people's learning effect. According to the statistics of Jane's academy, the average completion rate of all paid courses is less than 35%, and that of courses in the natural sciences is only 8%. Many users have not finished or even opened the courses after buying them, which indicates that they are not really buying the service but paying to relieve the constant knowledge anxiety in their hearts. "Buying is equal to knowing".

7. Suggestion

Objectively speaking, the popularity and maturity of the knowledge payment business model itself are conducive to knowledge transmission. In today's society, where competition is increasingly incandescent, more and more people see the value of knowledge; However, limited by time and energy, people expect that they can quickly master a certain field of knowledge or a certain skill through knowledge payment products, shorten the time of self-exploration and reduce inner anxiety and pressure. However, there are a significant number of users who have bought and opened the paid knowledge product a few times and then put it aside, thinking that the purchase is equal to the mastery of knowledge.

Paid platforms for women's knowledge, such as Jane's academy, combine video and photo presentations to make it easy for users to learn knowledge in fragmented time. It aims at the junction between formal education and self-study: unlike school education, which has a structured classroom, homework and assessment mechanism, it also has more links of guidance and interaction than self-study, saving people from the worry of self-study with less effort. With the convenience of the mobile Internet, it can also help people to make use of their spare time, the sand into a tower of learning throughout life, and this is exactly the meaning of lifelong learning.

However, many platforms that pay for women's knowledge repeat the problem in their courses, increasing women's anxiety without offering practical solutions. In this regard, women consumers should keep their eyes open, look at it rationally, and not be trapped by consumerism.

8. Conclusions

The above research finds that with the rapid development of the Internet today, people's demand for knowledge is growing, and the knowledge payment industry is growing continuously. According to Baudelia's theory of consumer society, this paper analyzes the symbolic features of female consumption in consumer society. Modern society has changed from a production-oriented society to a consumption-oriented society, and its typical characteristic is consumption symbolization. In the consumer society, women have become the group with the most consumption power. People's demand for consumption objects is based on the logic of symbol difference. Facing the rapidly developing society and constantly innovating new things, it is of great significance for knowledge consumption to buy authoritative, short and easily accessible knowledge courses and try to fill up the deficiency of one's own ability and knowledge. Therefore, the knowledge products people consume are not only the material function of the course, but also the symbolic value behind the course.

Knowledge payment is the product of the specific historical stage of knowledge consumption in Internet era. The frightening growth of the paid knowledge industry is one example. In order to gain the recognition and attention of others, people fanatically pursue the symbolic meaning brought by the payment of knowledge, and unconsciously become the slaves of the payment of knowledge. Through the example of simple knowledge operation strategy, this paper analyzes the motivation of Chinese women's knowledge payment from four perspectives: women in society, women as a single individual, Chinese social characteristics and people in the Internet era. When Chinese women face

special social pressure and social role, they show extremely anxious state of mind. Therefore, the existence of paid knowledge products represented by audio books and online classes as a unique mentor has temporarily relieved women's anxiety at the spiritual level. But today's knowledge paid products still exist the status quo of good and bad is also noteworthy for female consumers.

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