Critical Review on Consumer Behavior Research

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Abstract. Consumer behavior research is the foundation of marketing management subject system. The current research methodology and theoretical model have a series of problems: a complete consumer hypothesis for each element of body and mind is the simple combination of local process; the lack of overall research methodology across the various levels of system; static and partial phenomenon instead of overall psychological behaviors. To break through the research problems, we must integrate the intrinsic quality and external environment of consumers based on holographic theory system, and build the whole system theory model of consumer behavior concept, to improve the consumer system structure and the function of spatio-temporal variation rules of body and mind.

1. Introduction

With the emergence of consumer oriented marketing concept in 1950th century, consumer behavior has been developed for half a century from production to rapid development, and has formed a relatively stable academic school and research model in the western academic circles. At present China’s consumer behavior research is still in the stage of introduction of western theoretical model, both in theory system construction and empirical research is very scarce. How to sum up the current academic circles in the field of study? How to analyze the current research and forecast the future research direction? This is an important proposition in the field of consumer behavior research.

2. Consumer Behavior Research Model

Western consumer behavior research of the theoretical model of main there are three.

2.1 The rational decision consumer behavior patterns

Popular model of the theory in the 20th century and eighties followed the positivism research method, assuming that consumers were rational decision-maker, consumer behavior is a pure reason for consumers to solve the problem solving process, including consumers’ temperament, motivation, emotion, mood, personality psychology, focusing on consumer decision-making process and influencing factors. Under the assumptions of rational decision maker, the two disciplines of economics and cognitive psychology researchers put forward different consumer behavior patterns: economics, consumption is as consumers of “economic man” in fully complete information under the market environment of competition and the process of selecting the goods in accordance with the principle of utility maximization. In cognitive psychology school researchers eyes, consumption is as “cognitive” consumer goods and services in order to satisfy the need in search of information processing: first aware of the problem, and then collect information, on the basis of the evaluation, comparison and selection, the final purchase decision [1]. The relationship between cognition and perception, learning and memory, beliefs and attitudes, cognitive processes and consumer decision-making behavior is a research topic.

2.2 The emotional experience consumption behavior patterns

Think of this model, the consumer is the “emotion”, consumer behavior is a consumer driven by intrinsic motivation and seeking individual mood experience emotional experience process. This
pattern is rooted in personality psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology and other disciplines theory, follow the interpretation of the research methodology, mainly from the perspective of individual psychological feelings of consumers understand inner according to consumer behavior, research is focused on needs, motivation, life form, self concept and symbol consumer personality psychology and the relationship between consumer buying behavior. The institute with individual mental psychological scale test method originated in clinical medicine, is lack of definition of consumer personality, the types of consumer behavior science, also does not have a about the person’s personality and consumer behavior model of the relationship between theory construction, so the scholar research institute had a plenty of is not scattered conclusion. Kassarijian pointed out that the character was not empty scene change, the constant at any time, should be a dynamic concept, and the habit of the individual to adapt to changes in time and space environment [2]. As a result, the western study of relationship between personality and consumer behavior failure is rooted in its research methodology myth. From the perspective of the whole system, we should redefine the relationship between the personality and temperament, the temperament and the consumer behavior of the consumer, and construct the theoretical hypothesis of the consumer.

2.3 Behaviorism consumer behavior patterns

The model since the 1990 s gradually popular, it regards consumers as respond to environmental stimuli in a particular behavior patterns of “robot”, consumption is a conditioned reflex due to environmental factors affect behavior, is not necessarily through rational decision-making process, does not necessarily rely on has been developed certain emotions. Contribute to spending a lot of environmental factors, such as, strong financial incentive, the influence of cultural norms, and the physical environment or economic pressure, and the manufacturer’s marketing activities, etc, research learning under the influence of the consumers in these environments, attitudes, and behavior reaction model is the main content of this research model, the researchers used is to control the experimental method, observational method, sampling survey, such as positivism method, theoretical basis from the behaviorism psychology and social psychology research conclusion, including S & R (stimulate and response) research model, behavior, learning theory, culture and subculture, effect of relevant groups and opinion leaders, etc. Rational consumption behavior patterns emphasize the laboratory experiments of decision-makers and determine the quantitative research, to promote environmental determinism, completely negate the inner psychological process and subjective experience, consumers this from the realistic social life of consumer theory model, cannot resolve many consumer behavior phenomenon, it is difficult to give marketing practice to provide a meaningful conclusion.

3. The Methodology of Consumer Behavior Research

According to the hypothesis of consumer theory of different academic schools, the methodology of consumer behavior research is different, which can be divided into two methods: positivism and interpretation.

Empirical studies from the natural science methods, is made up of experiment, survey and observation. Under the guidance of the positivism method, the researchers consider consumers are able to operate the objective system of anatomy, the means of using simulated experiment or sampling survey method, get a lot of quantitative data about consumer response and statistical analysis to get general conclusion, to predict the behavior of the consumers as a whole [3]. This is the basic idea of this anatomical analysis methodology, the role of consumer behavior is limited by several factor variable results (most theoretical assumptions for linear relationship), the research direction is to use controlled experiment or investigate the consumers’ psychological black box into a white box system. The methods of cognitive psychology, behavioral psychology and personality trait school are used in the research of consumer behavior. Different from positivism and postmodernism hermeneutics method that does not exist a single objective entity, consumption is the unique experience of each behavior, researchers and respondents interaction affect the results of the study, research conclusions cannot be generalized to a larger group. So the researchers could
only try to understand the consumer psychological motivation, subjective explanation for their behavior, and cannot do logic analysis, according to the laws of the abstract and predict the future behavior changes.

4. The Defects of the Current Consumer Behavior Research

Because the research train of thought on the nature of errors, lead to the existing theory of consumer behavior patterns exist a series of defects:

4.1 Research the defect: the consumer assumption for each element of body and mind and the simple combination of local process

The academic research of current consumer thought is cut into three separate parts: consumer personality, consumption psychology and consumption behavior to be analyzed. This approach ignores and denies the fact that consumers are an organic whole as the basic premise of the system. Behaviorism consumer behavior pattern is environmental determinism; emotional experience consumption behavior pattern is individual determinism; Rational policymakers tried to consumer behavior consumer behavior patterns of internal and external factors, study on the model of all of these assumptions are against such a fact that consumers’ psychological behavior and the external environment is a system as a whole, the whole is not a simple sum of each entity module, component but the elements of a widespread contact of organic process. There is no any meaningful environmental impact to discuss the function of the system as a whole process various psychological elements [4]. The various aspects of consumer characteristics and dismantling the also, it is not true sense of the people, and in this illusory sense of “fictitious consumers” based on the analysis of its living habits, consumer behavior and brand behavior is meaningless.

4.2 The research methodology of defects: lack of across different levels of overall system research methodology

The methodology of academic research is now widely used in element analysis. It separates the process of isolated things from extensive general contact, so don’t think of them as living things in motion, or inanimate objects, rather than things that change in nature, as eternal things. Atomic theory is generally recognized by the consumer behavior researchers’ view of the world. They argue that motivation, emotion, personality belongs to the unconscious aspects of temperament characteristics, feeling, perception, learning, attitude, decision making, such as acquired cognitive psychological phenomenon, and the lifestyle, product use, brand loyalty and other acts are independent of each other elements, they do not belong to a complete person (consumers) who have different degrees of local information; the interaction of the false factors, the psychology and the behavior of these personality determine the behavior of the consumer psychology, rather than the overall state of the local information expression.

4.3 The results of defects: static, local phenomenon instead of whole psychological behaviors

Existing research conclusion is static, local image description of consumer psychological behavior, rather than the change law of consumer psychological behavior. This is the premise and method of this paper. The current consumer behavior research often with some sort of product consumption, such as durable consumer goods, consumer products, entertainment, etc.), some behavior (price behavior, media habits and cognitive behavior, etc.) as the object, with local fragment research conclusion to infer that all the general law of psychology of consumers, and to a certain point of time and space the statistics prove it. Actually, this study only forever is a sign of local cannot grasp the consumer behavior changing inner psychological phenomenon of law [5]. This study denied such a fact that all the classes, all psychological behavior from the viewpoint of the consumer a whole person implement internal coordination of process; consumer is all activities within its (refers to the physical and mental environment; social and natural environment) contact corresponding environmental conditions.
5. Thinking and Enlightenment

The research method is dividing the empirical method, skewer the law of each subject in common it is difficult. According to the current research ideas and methods can’t reveal the laws of consumer psychology behavior. To break the myth of academic research, and must choose a new research perspective and philosophical methodology. The system of “harmony between man and nature” philosophy in ancient China, consumer is a heaven and earth natural and social cultural environment, natural physical and mental qualities and psychological behavior changes the day after tomorrow holographic organic system [6]. Its overall holographic characteristics embodied in:

1) Consumers as a whole, rather than purely cognitive, agent, emotional reaction, mechanical behavior, social, also is not the simple addition. Every consumer activity contains the emotional experience of consumers’ preferences, economic rationality, cognitive decision-making, social role, unconscious motivation, habits and other kinds of information, which is the result of the information of organic process.

2) The psychology of consumer behavior is an organic whole process, rather than cognitive perception, learning, emotion, thinking and decision-making behavior such as mechanical combination of local process. All of these psychological behavior process unity is controlled by the personality of consumer, is the person’s temperament system this innate abstract information of body and mind of different dynamic natural social environment in the day after tomorrow.

3) Consumer’s personality is a unified system as a whole, rather than purely biological instinct of personality, social, cognitive personality, if not thousands of personality traits, or a simple combination of self concept. Congenital temperament of energy information is through all aspects of the acquired physical and mental behavior, and the specific psychological characteristics of consumers in some aspects have certain significance in the overall temperament.

Congenital temperament and consumer psychology and behavior is a whole system, the day after tomorrow the price of consumer psychology, cognitive, expected benefits, purchase decision, brand advertising habits are consumers and the whole system such as the different aspects of information, with their consumers innate temperament overall corresponding relation between the sampling information.

References