

The Influence of Aesthetics on Consumer Behavior: An Exploration

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to explore the intrinsic mechanism of aesthetics affecting consumer behavior, clarify the differential impact of different aesthetic dimensions on consumer decision-making, and make up for the deficiencies of existing studies in the integration of aesthetic theory and consumer behavior practice. The research adopts a mixed research method combining literature review, questionnaire survey and structural equation modeling. First, through systematic sorting of domestic and foreign relevant literatures, the core connotation of aesthetics and the key factors of consumer behavior are defined; then, a questionnaire is designed based on the theoretical framework, and data are collected from consumers of different age groups and consumption levels in three first-tier cities; finally, the research hypothesis is tested and the influence path is analyzed by using structural equation modeling. The results show that product aesthetics, environmental aesthetics and service aesthetics all have significant positive impacts on consumer purchase intention and repurchase behavior, among which aesthetic perception plays an intermediary role. This study enriches the theoretical system of the relationship between aesthetics and consumer behavior, and provides practical guidance for enterprises to carry out aesthetic marketing strategies.

Keywords: Aesthetics; Consumer Behavior; Aesthetic Perception; Consumer Decision-Making

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Significance

With the upgrading of global consumption structure, aesthetic demand has gradually become a core driving force in consumer decision-making. Modern consumers no longer only focus on the functional attributes of

products or services, but pay more attention to the aesthetic experience brought by sensory perception, emotional resonance and cultural identity. The rise of the aesthetic economy has promoted the transformation of enterprises' marketing strategies, and how to integrate aesthetic elements into product design, service process and environmental layout to enhance consumer loyalty has become a key issue faced by industries such as retail, catering and digital services. From the perspective of academic research, exploring the internal mechanism of aesthetics affecting consumer behavior helps to enrich the theoretical system of consumer behavior and provide effective theoretical support for enterprises to practice aesthetic marketing. The research has important practical significance for guiding enterprises to accurately grasp consumer aesthetic needs, optimize product and service design, and improve market competitiveness, as well as theoretical significance for promoting the cross-integration of aesthetics and marketing management disciplines.

1.2 Review of Domestic and Foreign Research Status

Foreign research on the relationship between aesthetics and consumer behavior started earlier. Scholars have carried out in-depth discussions on the definition of aesthetic dimensions, the measurement of aesthetic perception and the impact path on consumer behavior. Some studies have divided product aesthetics into formal aesthetics and expressive aesthetics, and verified that both have significant positive effects on consumer purchase intention through empirical research. Other studies have focused on the role of environmental aesthetics in service scenarios, pointing out that the layout, lighting and color of service places can affect consumer emotional states and further influence consumption decisions. However, most foreign studies focus on single aesthetic dimensions and lack a comprehensive analysis of the synergistic effect

of multi-dimensional aesthetic elements such as products, services and environments. Domestic research on this topic has developed rapidly in recent years, and relevant studies have combined with local consumption characteristics to explore the impact of traditional aesthetic culture on consumer behavior. Some studies have found that consumers' recognition of traditional aesthetic elements can enhance their willingness to pay for products. However, domestic research still has shortcomings such as insufficient depth of theoretical exploration, relatively simple research methods, and lack of systematic verification of the intermediary and regulatory mechanisms in the influence process. In general, existing studies have laid a certain theoretical foundation for the research on the relationship between aesthetics and consumer behavior, but there is still a lack of comprehensive and in-depth exploration of the multi-dimensional aesthetic system and its complex influence mechanism on consumer behavior, which provides a research space for this study.

1.3 Research Ideas and Content

This study takes the influence of aesthetics on consumer behavior as the core research object, and adopts a combination of theoretical analysis and empirical research to carry out in-depth exploration. First, through the collation and analysis of relevant theories and literatures at home and abroad, the core connotation of aesthetics is defined, the dimensions of aesthetics are divided, and the core viewpoints of consumer behavior theory and its key influencing factors are sorted out. On this basis, the correlation mechanism between aesthetics and consumer behavior is constructed, and research hypotheses are put forward. Secondly, a questionnaire survey is designed to collect data from consumers in different consumption scenarios and demographic characteristics. Then, statistical analysis tools are used to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire data, and the research hypotheses are verified through structural equation modeling to clarify the influence path and intermediary role of aesthetics on consumer behavior. Finally, based on the empirical results, the main conclusions of the study are summarized, the theoretical contributions and practical implications are put forward, and the limitations of the study and future research directions are pointed out. The core content of the study includes the division of

aesthetic dimensions, the construction of the influence mechanism model of aesthetics on consumer behavior, and the empirical verification of the model through questionnaire data.

2. Relevant Theoretical Basis

2.1 Core Connotation and Dimension Division of Aesthetic Theory

Aesthetics, as a discipline studying the laws of beauty and aesthetic experience, its core connotation lies in the subjective perception and evaluation of objective things by human beings based on sensory experience and emotional needs. In the context of consumer behavior research, aesthetics refers to the comprehensive perception and evaluation of consumers on the aesthetic elements contained in products, services and consumption environments. Combined with existing research results and practical consumption scenarios, this study divides aesthetics into three core dimensions: product aesthetics, service aesthetics and environmental aesthetics. Product aesthetics refers to the formal and connotative aesthetic characteristics of products, including product appearance design, material selection, color matching and cultural connotation. Service aesthetics focuses on the aesthetic experience brought by the service process, including the professional image of service personnel, service attitude, service process design and interactive experience. Environmental aesthetics refers to the aesthetic characteristics of the consumption environment, including the layout of the consumption site, lighting design, decoration style, sound and smell coordination.

2.2 Core Views and Influencing Factors of Consumer Behavior Theory

Consumer behavior theory focuses on exploring the decision-making process and influencing factors of consumers in the process of purchasing and using products or services. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) points out that consumer behavior is jointly determined by behavioral attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control. Behavioral attitude refers to the positive or negative evaluation of consumers on a specific consumption behavior; subjective norm refers to the influence of social groups or important others on consumer behavior; perceived behavioral control refers to

the difficulty perception of consumers in performing specific consumption behaviors. In addition to the factors proposed by TPB, consumer behavior is also affected by personal characteristics, emotional factors, cultural background and situational factors. Personal characteristics such as age, gender, income level and aesthetic preference directly affect consumers' perception and choice of aesthetic elements; emotional factors such as pleasure and satisfaction generated in the consumption process can enhance consumers' repurchase intention; cultural background determines consumers' aesthetic orientation and value judgment, and further affects consumption decision-making; situational factors such as consumption occasions and environmental atmosphere also have an important impact on the relationship between aesthetics and consumer behavior.

2.3 Collation of Correlation Theories between Aesthetics and Consumer Behavior

The correlation between aesthetics and consumer behavior can be explained by multiple theories such as the Aesthetic Response Theory, Emotional Response Theory and Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). The Aesthetic Response Theory points out that consumers will generate positive psychological responses when they come into contact with aesthetic objects, and this response will further affect their behavioral decisions. The Emotional Response Theory holds that aesthetic elements can stimulate consumers' positive emotions such as pleasure and preference, and positive emotions can promote the generation of purchase intention and repurchase behavior. The Elaboration Likelihood Model divides consumer information processing into central path and peripheral path. Aesthetic elements, as peripheral cues, can affect consumer attitudes and behaviors through the peripheral path when consumers have low involvement in products or services. These theories provide a theoretical basis for exploring the influence mechanism of aesthetics on consumer behavior, and clarify that aesthetic elements can affect consumer behavior through psychological processes such as perception, emotion and attitude.

3. Research Design and Methods

3.1 Proposal of Research Hypotheses

Based on the relevant theoretical basis and literature review, this study puts forward the following research hypotheses by constructing the influence mechanism model of aesthetics on consumer behavior: H1: Product aesthetics has a significant positive impact on consumer purchase intention; H2: Service aesthetics has a significant positive impact on consumer purchase intention; H3: Environmental aesthetics has a significant positive impact on consumer purchase intention; H4: Product aesthetics has a significant positive impact on consumer repurchase behavior; H5: Service aesthetics has a significant positive impact on consumer repurchase behavior; H6: Environmental aesthetics has a significant positive impact on consumer repurchase behavior; H7: Aesthetic perception plays an intermediary role in the influence of product aesthetics on consumer purchase intention and repurchase behavior; H8: Aesthetic perception plays an intermediary role in the influence of service aesthetics on consumer purchase intention and repurchase behavior; H9: Aesthetic perception plays an intermediary role in the influence of environmental aesthetics on consumer purchase intention and repurchase behavior.

3.2 Questionnaire Design and Sample Selection

The questionnaire designed in this study is divided into four parts: demographic characteristics, aesthetic dimension measurement, aesthetic perception measurement and consumer behavior measurement. The measurement items of each variable are based on mature scales in existing studies and adjusted appropriately according to the research context. All measurement items adopt a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree". The demographic characteristics part includes gender, age, education level and monthly income. The product aesthetics measurement includes 4 items, such as "The product's appearance design is in line with my aesthetic taste"; the service aesthetics measurement includes 4 items, such as "The service process makes me feel a pleasant aesthetic experience"; the environmental aesthetics measurement includes 4 items, such as "The consumption environment's decoration style is attractive to me"; the aesthetic perception measurement includes 3 items, such as "The

product/service/environment makes me generate positive aesthetic feelings"; the consumer behavior measurement includes purchase intention (3 items) and repurchase behavior (3 items), such as "I am willing to purchase this product/service" and "I will recommend this product/service to others". In terms of sample selection, this study adopts the method of convenient sampling and snowball sampling, selecting consumers who have experience in aesthetic-related consumption (such as purchasing beautifully designed products, consuming in themed restaurants, etc.) as the survey objects. The survey covers multiple cities and different age groups to ensure the representativeness of the sample.

3.3 Determination of Data Collection and Analysis Methods

This study collects data through online and offline questionnaire surveys. The online survey is conducted through professional questionnaire platforms, and the offline survey is carried out in shopping malls, restaurants and other consumption scenes. Before the formal survey, a pre-survey was conducted with 50 samples to test the rationality and clarity of the questionnaire items, and the questionnaire was revised and improved according to the pre-survey results. A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed in the formal survey, and 321 valid questionnaires were recovered after excluding invalid questionnaires such as incomplete answers and regular answers, with an effective recovery rate of 91.71%. In terms of data analysis methods, this study uses SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 24.0 statistical software for data

processing. First, descriptive statistical analysis is performed on the sample demographic characteristics to understand the basic situation of the sample. Then, reliability and validity tests are conducted to verify the reliability and validity of the scale. Finally, structural equation modeling is used to test the research hypotheses and analyze the influence mechanism of aesthetics on consumer behavior.

4. Empirical Results and Analysis

4.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Samples

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted on the demographic characteristics of 321 valid samples, and the results are shown in Table 1. It can be seen from Table 1 that in terms of gender, the number of male samples is 158, accounting for 49.22%, and the number of female samples is 163, accounting for 50.78%, with a relatively balanced gender ratio. In terms of age, the samples are mainly concentrated in 18-35 years old, accounting for 68.22%, which is consistent with the characteristics of modern aesthetic consumption main groups. In terms of education level, the number of samples with bachelor's degree or above is 215, accounting for 66.98%, indicating that the sample has a relatively high education level and can better understand and respond to the questionnaire items. In terms of monthly income, the samples with monthly income of 5000-10000 yuan account for the largest proportion, reaching 42.37%, followed by 3000-5000-yuan, accounting for 28.66%, which is in line with the income level of the main aesthetic consumption groups.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Sample Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics	Categories	Number of Samples	Proportion (%)
Gender	Male	158	49.22
	Female	163	50.78
Age	18-25 years old	126	39.25
	26-35 years old	83	25.86
	36-45 years old	62	19.31
	Over 45 years old	50	15.58
Education Level	Below bachelor's degree	106	33.02
	Bachelor's degree	152	47.35
	Master's degree and above	63	19.63
Monthly Income	Below 3000 yuan	48	14.95
	3000-5000 yuan	92	28.66
	5000-10000 yuan	136	42.37
	Over 10000 yuan	45	14.02

4.2 Reliability and Validity Test Results

Reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's α coefficient. The results show that the

Cronbach's α coefficients of product aesthetics, service aesthetics, environmental aesthetics, aesthetic perception, purchase intention and repurchase behavior are 0.862, 0.875, 0.858,

0.836, 0.843 and 0.851 respectively, all higher than 0.8, indicating that the scale has good internal consistency reliability. In terms of validity test, this study first conducts content validity test. The questionnaire items are based on mature scales and revised by relevant experts, so the content validity is guaranteed. Then, confirmatory factor analysis is used for convergent validity and discriminant validity test. The results show that the factor loadings of all

measurement items are between 0.723 and 0.896, higher than 0.7; the average variance extracted (AVE) values of each variable are between 0.586 and 0.692, higher than 0.5, indicating that the scale has good convergent validity. The square root of AVE of each variable is greater than the correlation coefficient between the variable and other variables, indicating that the scale has good discriminant validity. The specific results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Test Results

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's α Coefficient	Factor Loading Range	AVE	Square Root of AVE
Product Aesthetics (PA)	4	0.862	0.756-0.882	0.653	0.808
Service Aesthetics (SA)	4	0.875	0.763-0.896	0.678	0.823
Environmental Aesthetics (EA)	4	0.858	0.723-0.875	0.632	0.795
Aesthetic Perception (AP)	3	0.836	0.745-0.861	0.586	0.765
Purchase Intention (PI)	3	0.843	0.738-0.872	0.615	0.784
Repurchase Behavior (RB)	3	0.851	0.742-0.868	0.624	0.790

4.3 Research Hypothesis Test and Influence Mechanism Analysis

This study uses AMOS 24.0 to establish a structural equation model to test the research hypotheses. The fitting results of the model show that $\chi^2/df = 2.365$, RMSEA = 0.065, GFI = 0.912, AGFI = 0.885, NFI = 0.923, CFI = 0.946, all meeting the standard of good model fitting, indicating that the model has a good fitting degree with the data. The results of hypothesis testing are shown in Table 3. It can be seen from Table 3 that product aesthetics, service aesthetics and environmental aesthetics all have significant positive impacts on consumer purchase intention

and repurchase behavior ($p < 0.01$), so hypotheses H1-H6 are supported. Specifically, the path coefficients of product aesthetics, service aesthetics and environmental aesthetics on purchase intention are 0.286, 0.324 and 0.253 respectively; the path coefficients on repurchase behavior are 0.245, 0.298 and 0.217 respectively. In addition, aesthetic perception plays a significant intermediary role in the influence of product aesthetics, service aesthetics and environmental aesthetics on purchase intention and repurchase behavior ($p < 0.01$), so hypotheses H7-H9 are supported. The influence mechanism of aesthetics on consumer behavior is shown in Figure 1.

Table 3. Research Hypothesis Test Results

Hypotheses	Path	Path Coefficient	CR Value	p Value	Result
H1	PA \rightarrow PI	0.286	4.523	< 0.001	Supported
H2	SA \rightarrow PI	0.324	5.136	< 0.001	Supported
H3	EA \rightarrow PI	0.253	4.015	< 0.001	Supported
H4	PA \rightarrow RB	0.245	3.872	< 0.001	Supported
H5	SA \rightarrow RB	0.298	4.765	< 0.001	Supported
H6	EA \rightarrow RB	0.217	3.542	< 0.001	Supported
H7	PA \rightarrow AP \rightarrow PI/RB	0.213/0.186	3.678/3.245	< 0.001/< 0.001	Supported
H8	SA \rightarrow AP \rightarrow PI/RB	0.256/0.224	4.231/3.897	< 0.001/< 0.001	Supported
H9	EA \rightarrow AP \rightarrow PI/RB	0.195/0.168	3.456/3.012	< 0.001/< 0.01	Supported

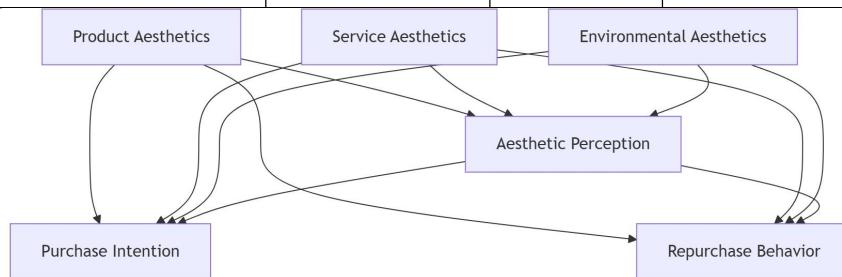


Figure 1. Influence Mechanism Model of Aesthetics on Consumer Behavior

5. Conclusion

This study explores the influence mechanism of aesthetics on consumer behavior through theoretical analysis and empirical research, and draws the following main conclusions: First, aesthetics has a significant positive impact on consumer behavior, and product aesthetics, service aesthetics and environmental aesthetics can all promote the generation of consumer purchase intention and repurchase behavior. Among them, service aesthetics has the strongest impact on consumer behavior, followed by product aesthetics, and environmental aesthetics has a relatively weak impact. Second, aesthetic perception plays an intermediary role in the influence of aesthetics on consumer behavior. Aesthetic elements such as products, services and environments can stimulate consumers' positive aesthetic perception, and then affect their purchase intention and repurchase behavior. The theoretical contributions of this study are as follows: it enriches the dimension division of aesthetics in the context of consumer behavior research, constructs a comprehensive influence mechanism model of multi-dimensional aesthetics on consumer behavior, and verifies the intermediary role of aesthetic perception, which supplements the deficiencies of existing studies. In terms of practical implications, this study provides guidance for enterprises to carry out aesthetic marketing. Enterprises should pay attention to the comprehensive construction of multi-dimensional aesthetic elements, optimize product appearance design and cultural connotation to enhance product aesthetics; improve the professional quality and service skills of service personnel, and design a pleasant service process to enhance service aesthetics; create a comfortable and attractive consumption environment to enhance environmental aesthetics. At the same time, enterprises should pay attention to stimulating consumers' positive aesthetic perception and strengthen the emotional connection between consumers and products or services through aesthetic elements. The limitations of this study are as follows: the sample selection adopts convenient sampling, which may have certain selection bias; the research context is relatively general, and the influence of aesthetics on consumer behavior in specific industries may have differences. Future research can expand the sample scope, adopt random sampling to improve the

representativeness of the sample; carry out targeted research for specific industries, and explore the industry differences in the influence of aesthetics on consumer behavior; in addition, future research can also explore the regulatory role of variables such as consumer aesthetic preference and cultural background to further enrich the research on the influence mechanism.

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