

PERCEPTUAL CONSUMPTION AND BRAND ATMOSPHERE START FROM FEMALE CONSUMER'S FANCY BAGS

Chang, Wei-Chen^a, Hwang, Shyh-Huei^b

^{a,b} *Graduate School of Design, National Yunlin University of
Science & Technology, Taiwan R.O.C*

ABSTRACT

The research is mainly focusing on women's affections, personalities and joyfulness to be placed on while they are doing their shopping; especially their consumption behaviors to be corresponded to those fancy bags. Then further discuss the relationship among perceptual consumption, brand atmosphere and women's intentions towards purchasing fancy bags.

The research finds out the following factors are shown in perceptual consumption when female consumers are purchasing fancy bags.

1. The affection identification towards the brand and its logo also means the recognition of expressing herself.
2. The percentage of impulsive consumption is increased since they tend to identify with the type called "informative".
3. Perceptual consumption, same as impulsive consumption, can be happened easily when special offers are provided.

As for the factors of brand atmosphere, it includes thereafter,

1. Purchasing products means they're pursuing a feeling and dreams that is created in particular to be enjoyed.
2. Paying attention to certain favorite brands also reflects the representation of loyalty and the confidence towards the quality of the brands.
3. Buying the products at certain boutiques reveals the faith in their serving qualities instead of the features of environments and atmosphere.

The order of female consumers' preference to buy fancy bags can be summed up as loyalty, awareness, quality, attitude, atmosphere and promotion; simultaneously, the value of the products' logos that comes with the brands has also been focused. Therefore, The research provides enterprises reference to deciding the target market of consumer and setting up marketing strategies.

Keywords: *Female Consumers, Emotional Consumption, Atmosphere*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Text Research Background and Motives

Living in such globally social trends is the coming of the era of perceptual consumption. Since the production cost of commodities rapidly reduces, and the capability for industrial design and manufacture generally increases, the key to value added products does not lie in functional values but the symbolic values of creativity, imagination, and culture. Creating the symbolic values of a commodity to integrate with the procedures of physical products' design, manufacture, sales, and marketing is the only approach to increase the value added of a product, and it is the only effective way to penetrate consumers.

Consumers' perceptual needs are the consequential outcome of market development because the speedy development of modern economy makes people's life become fast rhythmical, variable, and over tense. Living in such a social environment, people's psychological stress increases, and the spiritual life becomes relatively deficient, so the emotional needs become gradually stronger, which, in the consumption territory, directly shows as the perceptual trend of consumer, in which by means of products, people fulfill the consignment of emotion, the display of personality, and communication.

In addition, brand marketing needs perceptual thinking. In particular, when the era of consumption comes, it is more necessary for enterprises to stimulate consumers' consumption desire through constructing one kind of perceptual atmosphere and space.

Through analyzing the brand atmosphere of trendy and fancy bags, this study interpreted the psychological factors corresponding to the perceptual consumption of females as well as the meaning of the value symbol represented by the product. By means of systematic analyses, induction, and comparisons, it investigated the consumption factors and behavioral expressions of females while buying bags and the responses in terms of New Marketing Study and New Commodity Study. These were exactly the topics of this study.

1.2. Research Purpose

From the changes of the overall social economy, it is not difficult to find that the significant consumption changes of females, from which it is found that in terms of desire, females tend to prefer their own feelings, to be influenced by the consumption environment and atmosphere more easily, and to become impulsive easily to thus generate consumption behavior. Therefore, the factor of environment influence is considerably influential in the decision making of consumption. Furthermore, the other factor is brand influence. Through perceptual marketing, boutique brands capture female consumers; based on the mentality of TPO (Time Place and Occasion) in which females place importance on encountering particular commodities, they make efforts to develop stores which can create an atmosphere or satisfy needs and to produce commodities various in variety but limited in quantity. The techniques employed by them in order to correspond to the consumption behavior of females are worth our attention to further understand the fields relevant to social environment, human behavior, and product needs, namely the maximum purpose of this study.

1. To understand the inseparable deep correlation between the purchasing power of females and the culture of perceptual consumption by analyzing the consumption of fancy bags.

2. To investigate either the dimension of perceptual consumption or the dimension of brand atmosphere has more influence on the consumption behavior of female consumers.

3. To investigate the correlation between the consumption behavior of female consumers and the value symbols of products, and, according to the analysis result, to bring up marketing strategies and suggestions for products in order to provide enterprises reference to deciding the target market of consumer and setting up marketing strategies.

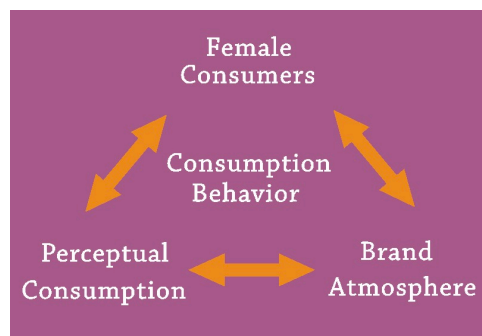


Figure 1: This study correlation

1.3. Research Scope

According to the compiling result of literature, this study investigated female consumers' consumption behavior on fancy bag brands in terms of the following four dimensions and further probed into the correlation between perceptual consumption and brand atmosphere.

1. To investigate through perceptual consumption: the three dimensions of impulse, affection, and emotion were taken as the research scope.

2. To investigate by aiming at the atmosphere of famous brands, including decoration, environment, mood, personalized services, the attitudes of management and clerks, and all the elements creating actual intimacy.

3. To investigate the factors of spiritual perception and brand recognition influencing consumption behavior by means of qualitative interview with people and to understand females' user perception in terms of four consumption levels, namely psychological, physical, perceptual, and emotional levels.

4. Through literature review, to construct and explore the correlation between female, bag, and consumption environment, that is, human being, object, and environment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Perceptual Consumption

Perceptual consumption is complicated consumption which is of three-dimensional and multilateral correlation. Perceptual consumption is mainly based on business.

more consideration will be given to the consumed product' elements, including contemporaneity, aesthetic feeling and modeling, and atmospheric harmony. Consumers gradually change from the pursuit of object in the past to mainly the pursuit of business.

2.1.1. Perceptual consumption is irrational, and it is particular about psychological experience

Perceptual emphasizes the value added of commodity. Consumers are irrational, they are particular about impulsive consumption and scene consumption, and they value the personality of product as well as the immaterial elements, such as subjective mentality and emotional experience, in use. In the stage of perceptual consumption, the products which can satisfy consumers' values and bring them experience in emotion and mentality will have enormous space for existence. Product values develop from the comparison between price and utility to that if a proposal made by manufacturers, marketing experts, etc. for consumers is welcomed by consumers.

2.1.2. Perceptual consumption is more advanced consumption

Consumers under the condition of perceptual consumption are not only survivors but also enjoyers. If rational consumption which evaluates and selects products in terms of the rational standard of economy is one kind of lower-level consumption, perceptual consumption is one kind of higher-level consumption. According to the hierarchy of needs, after the basic physiological needs are satisfied, consumers will certainly move toward high-level spiritual and psychological needs, such as social need, the need of belonging, and the need of self-esteem.

As implied by the name, perceptual consumption is the consumption of mood and emotion. The elements which can influence consumers' moods and emotions are multilateral: there are not only the elements of perceptual product but also the elements of hardware facilities, personnel service, marketing strategies, etc. The perceptual consumption of females mainly results in the expressions as follows:

impulsive Consumption:

It indicates the consumption generated due to the influence of market atmospheres, such as discounts, promotions, and advertisements. Among female groups, people usually tend to pass more information about discounts. Generally, when they know which store offers more discounts, they will swarm into the store. To analyze in terms of sociopsychology, this kind of consumption behavior tends to be driven by the benefit of pursuing performance, and it is consumption guided by wrong instincts. The object or input of the central process has the important relation about stimulus versus responses/experience(Moors 、 Agnes 、 2009).

Affected Consumption:

It indicates the consumption influenced easily by artificial atmospheres, which includes nonautonomous consumption resulted from the coaxing of sales clerks as well as the originally unwanted or unnecessary products or services purchased due to the influence of friends while going shopping with them. Since the role positioning that females have for themselves is different from that of males, and the flexibility in being influenced or affected is more extensive. Thus, group interactions and conformity will be generated more easily, which may further result in affected consumption.

Emotional Consumption:

Some females suddenly consume because they have just received their salaries, that is to say, their incomes have increased. Usually, they suddenly feel they have more money when they receive their salaries. Then, they will want to go shopping and to buy something, or they are used to buy a set of new clothes for themselves after receiving the salaries. It is one kind of emotional consumption caused by the illusion under certain emotions. Moreover, another kind of emotional consumption manifests consumption behavior with a different mood from the usual ones. There are considerably a lot of females shopping and consuming in an extreme mood. From their aspect, when things did not happen according to their wishes, willful consumption becomes a method for relieving stress, balancing emotions, and venting helplessness. On the contrary, consumption is sometimes a model for them to express happiness.

2.2. Brand Atmosphere

What is “atmosphere”? According to *Collection of Words*, it indicated a special ambiance or mood enveloping a particular occasion. “Atmosphere” also indicated an important constructing element for all the stores. If “atmosphere” could be interpreted as the sum of both tangible facilities and intangible elements constructing special store experiences, “atmosphere” might be the most critical element that boutiques are distinguishing from other types of stores.

The models of consumption behavior are all established on a perceptual basis, from which the reasons making consumers perceptual can be dug out — **novelty**, touchingness, benefit, atmosphere, and trust.

Novelty Driven:

One is novel, so it is perceptual; novelty driven is to develop products or service concepts which are novel and without market comparability or to apply strategies which are novel and seldom used in the said industry to achieve the sales of product by means of consumers' curiosity and preference. This approach is most suitable for the consumers of perception type and preference type. Holbrook (1994) consumer value as an interactive relativistic preference experience.

Spirit Driven:

Touch one's heart by feelings because feelings can move all things under the sun. Spirit driven indicates that psychological offense is the best of tactics. The key is to establish contact between a brand and the consumers to make the brand become the carrier for the consumers to express the perceptual thoughts, which thus breaks the rational hedge of consumption and achieve the product sales. The approach of spirit driven is to be bestowed on a brand unique image and personality to satisfy consumers' spiritual needs, stimulate their temperament and interest, cultural complex, emotional sympathy, and personality recognition, and hence help materialize consumers' consumption.

Benefit Driven:

Make one understand by benefit. Every consumer is willing to exchange maximum and best products with minimum money, especially female consumers. Therefore, promotions, such as price reduction, discount, and consumption gift, make benefiting behavior infinitely attractive to consumers, make consumers more perceptual, and thus form enormous thrust.

Atmosphere Driven:

When one is personally on the scene, s/he has no command over his or her own heart. When consumers are located at different atmospheres, the rational and perceptual degrees vary. If a brand can create a perceptual atmosphere to make rational consumers become perceptual, there will be a gigantic influence on the sales. The fairly prevailing marketing models, such as meeting marketing and experience marketing, at present stimulate consumers' perceptual understanding to achieve the sales exactly by means of constructing unique consumption atmosphere. Atmosphere driven is effective for diversified consumers.

2.3. The Gradually Important Development of the Value Symbol of Products

Products possess a double value. One is "article value," the value formed by a product's quality and functions; the other can be called "symbol value," a brand's "symbol value" constructed by product image and consumers' perceptual appreciation. Philip Kotler brought up the concept of entire product, in which the most fundamental level was core product, what consumers really demanded when purchasing. Product planners had to turn core products into tangible goods. Tangible products had five features: quality standard, functional features, model, brand, and packaging (Philip Kotler, 1996).

Worth-value consumption mainly gives thought to the quality and functions of product. It is necessary for consumers from the perspective of rationality to profoundly investigate if a product is suitable, useful, etc. However, the consumption of the symbol value of a brand is subjective perceptual consumption in which consumers consider mainly from the perspectives of vogue, fashion, implied meaning, etc.

2.4. The Differences between Perceptual Consumption and Rational Consumption

The consumption attitude which decided consumption based on perception, namely emotions resulted from atmosphere and impressions, was regarded as perceptual consumption. On the contrary, the attitude which did not decide according to what was seen

objectively but careful calculation and consideration was regarded as rational consumption. (Lee, 1989). In addition, the preliminaries of perceptual consumption and rational consumption are respectively:

Perceptual theme:

1. Choosing according to atmosphere or appearance; 2. choosing according to if a product is still fashionable currently; 3. choosing according to if a product corresponds to one's feeling.

Rational theme:

1. Choosing products as cheap as possible; 2 choosing according to a company's reliability; 3. choosing after comparing and reviewing one product's functions, quality, and easiness in use.

Lin (1989) addressed that bags tended to be products which expressed one's own magnificent type, indicating that they could provide happy, gorgeous, and abundant feelings, and they were products expected to bring luxurious and plentiful perception. The common characteristics of the marketing strategies were:

1. The emphasis ranged from young people to middle-age people and the elderly, among which males and females from the 20s to the 30s were regarded as the central objects; 2. The concepts should take account of being fashionable, novel, and avant-garde; 3. The quality should give thought to the features of being functional and high-class; 4. For represent ability, they were expected as the exchange commodities of banquets, ceremonies, etc. as well as international commodities; 5. For being symbolic, novel commodities, personal tailor-made commodities, and new luxurious images should be applied in order to achieve differentiation.

Barletta (2006) pointed out that 85% of consumption decisions were made by females, and they had a process of consumption decision making widely different from that of males. They had their own unique priority sequence, preferences, and attitudes. Therefore, if one knew how to skillfully apply the differentiation in gender marketing, one would create greater market predominance. Furthermore, most of the consumers in the commodity group were career women, young salary-receiving class, young ladies, etc. They had more incomes, and they were the class with the greatest consumption power, who would never grudge spending money in order to obtain their own happiness.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This study investigated the influences of the factors of material, psychology, cognition, emotion, etc. on the consumption behavior of females under perceptual atmosphere. It was carried out in terms of two directions. First, data and literature relevant to perceptual consumption and brand atmosphere were collected. Then, a text paragraph in the document was encoded, and the paragraphs with the same code were collected and displayed (Maclaran & Miriam, 2002) to further analyze and interpret the social meaning showed by female consumption. Since three principal discussion emphases were placed on females,

namely, perceptual consumption, brand atmosphere, and consumption behavior, the theories employed were from the three discussion dimensions constructed by these three emphases respectively.

3.1. Content Analysis

In addition to the explanations for the definitions of the terms, the mutual influences of perceptual consumption and brand atmosphere were investigated, and females' consumption factors in perceptual consumption, brand atmosphere, and consumption behavior were sorted out in order to understand and illustrate the perceptual factors resulted from consumption behavior, and how these various environmental factors caused consumption changes. Moreover, NVivo was used to bestow attributes upon documents and key words and to find out the correlations to interpret the meanings.

3.2. Qualitative Interview

The research objects of this study were the females strongly interested in the brands of quality goods or even generating consumption behavior. Consequently, these female consumers were interviewed in order from the interview information to understand females' consumption in perceptual atmosphere, the changing process of quality goods consumption, the psychological process in the female consumption, and the spatial features that the atmosphere of quality goods intended to construct.

This study adopted the approach of semi-structured interview, and Winmax was applied to the analysis of the interview data of the twenty interviewees, in which a great quantity of qualitative data were saved first, "code" was then used to help figure out topics, text paragraphs to which different topics corresponded were collected and analyzed, the interviewers initially asked the interviewees a series of open questions and codes, and the correlation was profoundly investigated in hopes of obtaining more complete data.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSES

4.1. Perceptual Consumption

The interviewees' recognition emotions for a brand and the recognition degree for the symbols indicated by the brand were all the major factors influencing impulsive consumption. That is, the identification of "expressing oneself" significantly influenced perceptual consumption.

The more consumers tended to be of the style of informative recognition, the higher the ratio of impulsive consumption would be, namely that the more frequently the behavior of impulsive consumption would happen.

The interviewees would ordinarily spend more time on collecting data about particular brands. Therefore, their knowledge about the particular brands would be more than that of others, and their consumption decisions were made in the store, which belonged to perceptual consumption.

If encountering promotions relevant to price, it was very easy for the interviewees to have perceptual consumption, namely impulsive consumption.

4.2. Brand Atmospher

The interviewees thought fancy bag boutiques could provide the reality of dream, and the arrangements by means of product categories and series inside the stores brought consumers into contextual consumption. This reflects that by consumption, modern people purchase not only products but also dreams. In other words, what they purchase is a feeling, so if a brand does not create this kind of atmosphere, it will be difficult to sell the products. Furthermore, the huge independent space inside the boutique is exactly beneficial for this kind of effect, and it is greatly helpful to brand packaging.

The interviewees extremely centered on their particular favorite brands, indicating the loyalty. They mainly thought the brands to which they were loyal reflected their dressing styles; they were confident of the quality of the brands; they fairly valued the fame of the brands in the market.

The interviewees chose to purchase in certain boutiques they frequently visited due to the service quality of the personnel they trusted, which was more important than the environmental and atmospheric quality. It was also correlated to the recognition of the intimacy with the service personnel as well as to the satisfaction with the brands.

If the interviewees thought purchasing a brand would bring themselves the feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and excitement, namely having stronger feeling about the brand, it would be easier for them to have perceptual consumption. Moreover, in terms of emotion, feeling about perceptual consumption would be stimulated due to people, time, and places, especially when there were surprises, which sometimes were influenced by the atmospheres, including the comfort constructed by the store decoration and service personnel's friendly attitude, instead of the product. The interviewees thus had desire for consumption, namely affected consumption.

4.3. The Value Symbol of Commodity

Commodities are demanded for not only the practical functions of quality but also informative functions, such as symbols and emblems. The domination of this kind of informative values, such as brand, design, will be an innovative perspective on which marketing strategies have to stress:

The unceasing increase of consumers' desire standard is considered, and emotional changes and perceptual content are also satisfied.

Since the quality of commodities is increased, considerable satisfaction has already obtained, and the desire has started to transfer to the emotions attached to commodities, namely values added, such as design, atmosphere, and brand image.

Except practical values, consumers demand commodities for the impressions and atmospheres of happiness, delight, ego, and splendor.

The “symbol value” consumption of a brand is one kind of subjective perceptual consumption, in which consumers chiefly give thought to the aspects of vogue, fashion, and implied meaning. Hence, different from making products well worth the value, the management of the “symbol value” of a brand has to apply culture, creativity, technology, etc. to create a unique humanized image for the products and further to make the unique characteristics vivid in the brand and commodities in order to go deeply into consumers’ heart, generate the loyalty to the “symbol value” of the brand, and thus create a greater consumption market.

4.4. Female Behavior of Bag Consumption

Females purchase bags in terms of the mood to experience splendor. Through possessing the bags they purchased, they obtain not only satisfaction but also happiness, which they value the most. It is also self-investment or life investment in their favorite items.

For scene consumption, the key to decide commodity consumption lies in consumers’ perception of scene or atmosphere. In a place where a great quantity of diversified commodities are displayed, females purchase the commodities which correspond to their perception, express their charm, and make them feel they can create the scenes they wish. Consequently, according to the investigation on the perceptual consumption of females and the brand atmosphere when they purchase fancy bags, it was found: loyalty > awareness > product quality > the attitude of service personnel > environmental atmosphere > promotion.

In the era in which information prevails, importance is attached to not only commodities’ practical values but also the informative values, and commodities are requested to be equipped with the impressions and atmospheres, such as happiness, sentiment, memory, delight, ease, ego, and splendor.

In the stylish world with the basic aesthetic demands and atmosphere in modern life, it is easy to find that people pursue extreme demands for quality, strong style binding, spontaneous consumption style, and they impulsively follow new fashion or vogue. This indicates that female consumers have high preference for consumption in clothes, accessories, etc. because they aim at enjoying delights of wonderful life, splendor, ease, and service satisfaction. Therefore, the research provides enterprises reference to deciding the target market of consumer and setting up marketing strategies.

REFERENCES

- Barletta., *Marketing to Women: How to Increase Your Share of the World’s Largest Market*. Dearborn Trade Pub, 2006.
- Moors & Agnes., *Cognition and Emotion : Theories of emotion causation: A review*. Psychology Press, part of the Taylor & Francis Group. v23, no.4, 625-662(38),2009.
- Lee, M. S., *Perceptual Consumption and Rational Consumption*. Taipei: Shu-chuan Publishing House, 1989.
- Lin, J. S., *Highly Effective Sales Techniques*. Ching-hua Business Management Center, 1989.
- Maclaran,P.,&Miriam,C., *Analysing qualitative data : Computer software and market research practitioner*.Qualitative Market Research:An International Journal,5(1),28-39, 2002.

Philip Kotler, Gary Armstrong, Veronica Wong., *Principles of Marketing*. European Edition, 1996.

Holbrook (1994). *The Nature of Customer Value: An Axiology of Services in the Consumption Experience*, in Service Quality: New Directions in Theory and Practice. R.T. Rust and R.L. Oliver.eds., Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage Publications, 21-71.