A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF SYMBOLIC VALUE PERCEPTION ON WOMEN'S CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION: A CASE OF LULULEMON

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the era of Consumption 4.0 has quietly arrived, people's consumption level and consumption concepts have changed due to the leap in income level, and consumption of a commodity in the new consumption era is no longer limited to its own use value and exchange value. People write their own identities through consumption - an identity displayed by clothing brands, skin care products, places of consumption, etc. Symbolic consumption has become a kind of 'self-expression' of consumers, in order to reflect the 'self-image' of the consumer. The aim of this study was to examine the impact of symbolic value perception on female consumers' conspicuous consumption.

The subjects of this study were women with certain consumption ability and different age distribution. A total of 207 valid questionnaires were collected through online platform and data analyses were conducted using SPSS and AMOS to explore the impact of symbolic value perception and its combination on female consumers' conspicuous consumption. The study concluded that the combination of symbolic values including reputation, status, taste and personality perceived by female consumers has a facilitating effect on their conspicuous consumption.
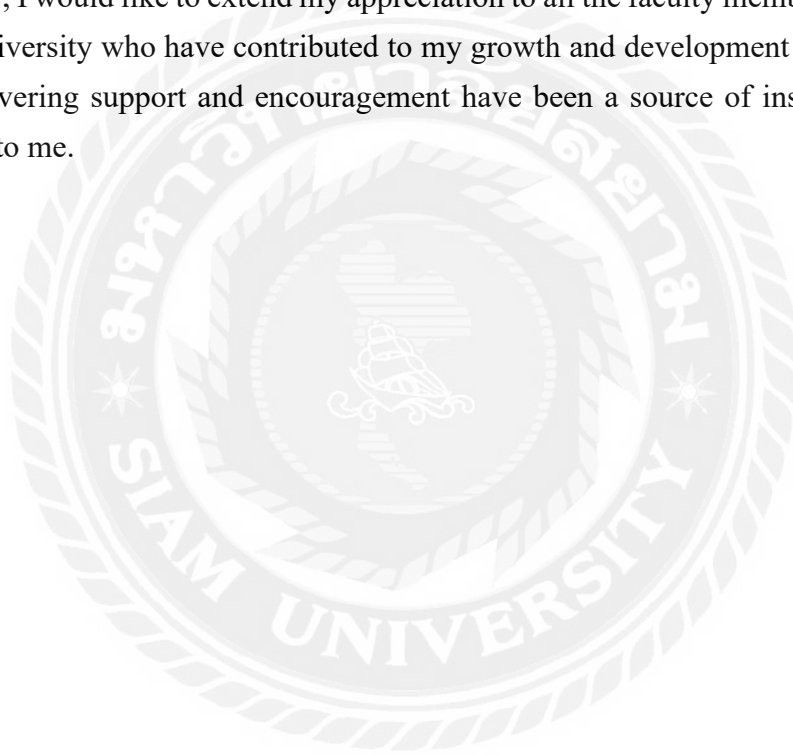
Keywords: symbolic value perception, conspicuous consumption, female consumers, STP theory
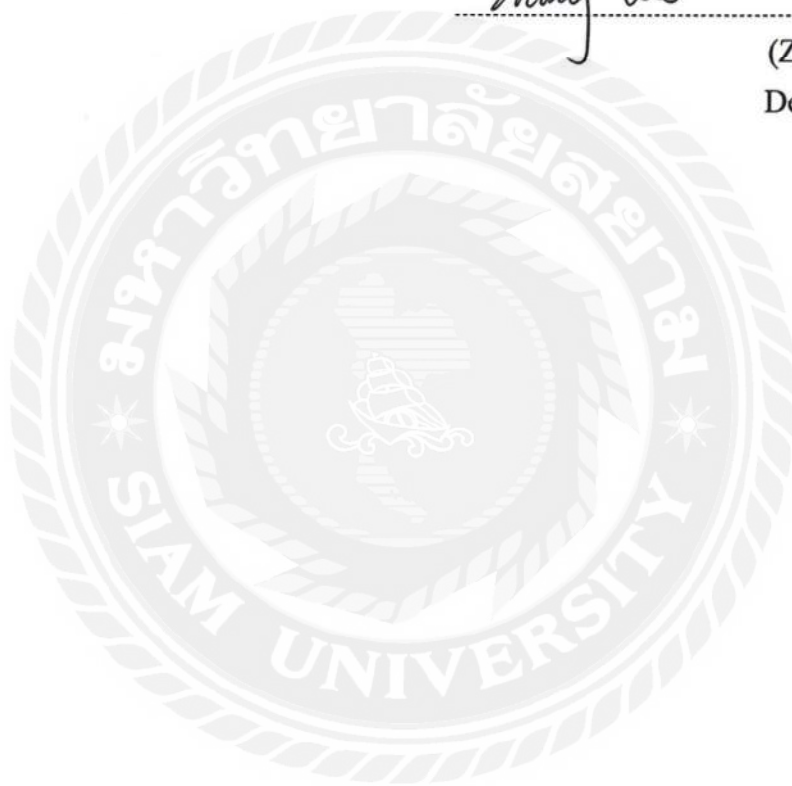
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DECLARATION

I, ZHANG KE, hereby declare that this Independent Study entitled "A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF SYMBOLIC VALUE PERCEPTION ON WOMEN'S CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION: A CASE OF LULULEMON" is an original work and has never been submitted to any academic institution for a degree.
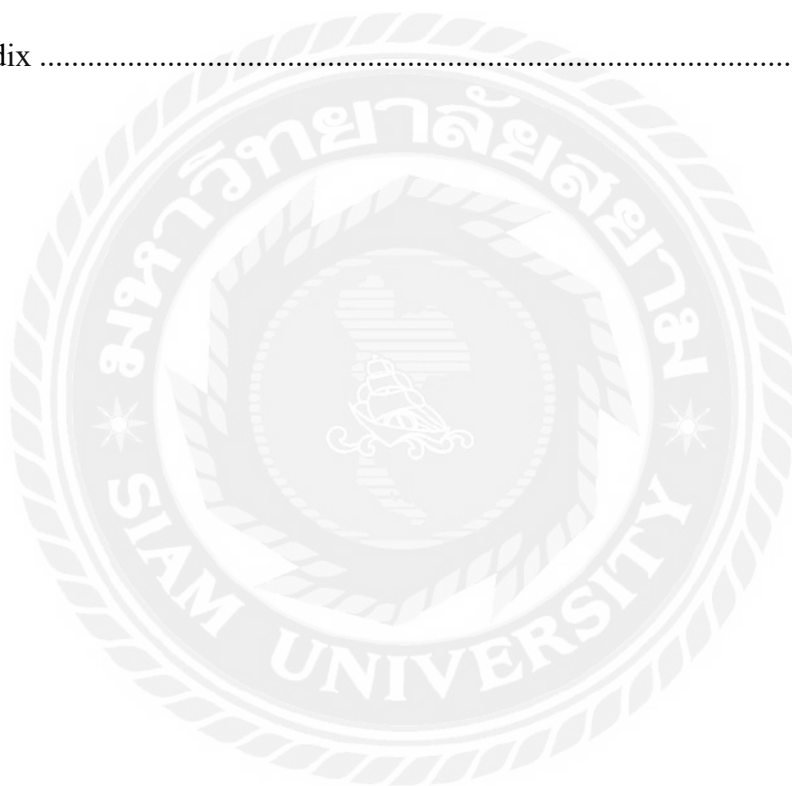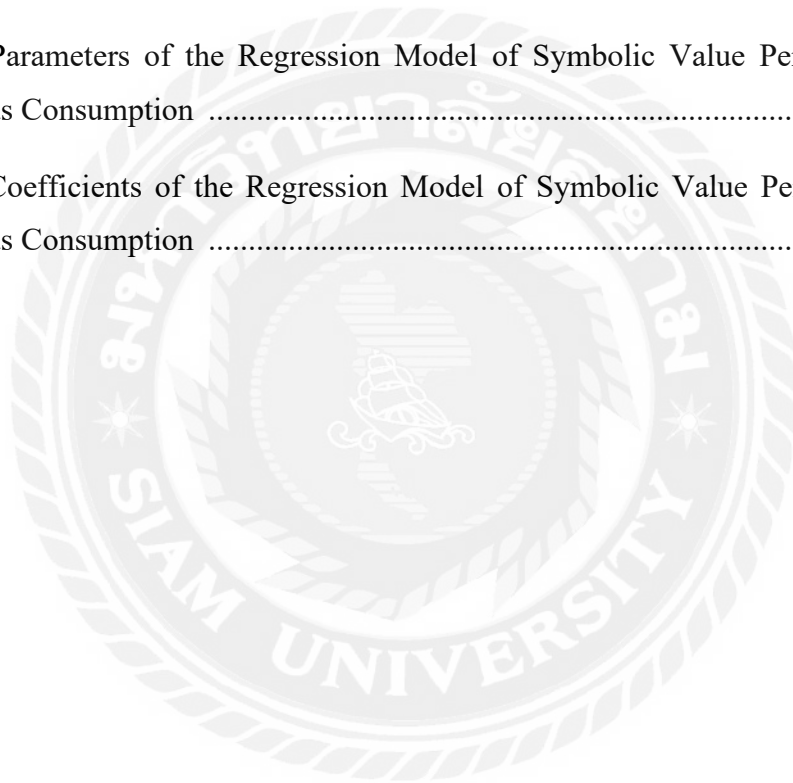
(ZHAGN KE)

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

A new era of consumption has quietly arrived. With rising income levels and profound changes in consumer attitudes, purchasing decisions increasingly emphasize the status, reputation, taste, and individuality that a product can convey. The consumption spotlight has now shifted to Generation Z. As digital natives immersed in globalization and the internet from an early age, this generation is naturally inclined to enjoy life, seek high-quality services, and embrace higher consumption levels. "Symbolic consumption" has become a pervasive cultural phenomenon among Generation Z, who use consumption to define their identity—a narrative expressed through clothing brands, skincare products, and consumption venues.

According to Bain & Company's 2022 report, China's personal luxury goods market grew by 36% in 2021 compared to 2020 and is expected to become the world's largest by 2025, accounting for 45% of the global market share (Bain & Company, 2022). The rapid growth of the luxury market can be attributed to social comparison and conspicuous consumption, as people increasingly purchase non-essential items or products with similar quality and functionality but at higher prices. This aligns with Veblen's concept of conspicuous consumption (Davis, 1944).

The wave of globalization has drawn people into the cycle of symbolic consumption, where elevated living standards and consumption levels are measured through conspicuous consumption (Wei, 2005). Social media platforms such as Xiaohongshu, TikTok, and Dewu amplify this trend, as users showcase newly purchased fashion bags, sneakers, and other items, share their enviable lifestyles, and post about trendy stores they visit. These activities demonstrate identity, economic status, and personal taste, thereby stimulating more consumers to develop a mindset of conspicuous consumption and enter the era of symbolic consumption.

1.2 Questions of the Study

In the context of the growing prominence of symbolic consumption in modern consumer behavior, understanding how symbolic value perception drives conspicuous consumption, particularly among female consumers, is crucial. Symbolic value encompasses various dimensions, including reputation, status, taste, and personality, each contributing uniquely to consumer decision-making. To explore these dynamics, this study seeks to address the following research questions: How does symbolic value perception influence female consumers' conspicuous consumption?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to examine the influence of symbolic value perception on female consumers' conspicuous consumption. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. To examine the overall impact of symbolic value perception on female consumers' conspicuous consumption.

2. To investigate the effect of reputation perception on female consumers' conspicuous consumption.

3. To investigate the effect of status perception on female consumers' conspicuous consumption.

4. To investigate the effect of taste perception on female consumers' conspicuous consumption.

5. To investigate the effect of personality perception on female consumers' conspicuous consumption.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on young female consumers who are more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption behaviour. The effect of perceived symbolic value and its combination on the conspicuous consumption of female consumers was examined.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Theoretical significance: Although there is some research on conspicuous consumption, there is little research focusing on female consumers to explore the influence of their specific behavioural motives. In the new era of symbolic consumption, female consumers have a greater say in economic status, and more and more women have achieved economic freedom and invested in this consumerism-driven consumption wave. It is of great significance to study women's conspicuous consumption behaviour. Therefore, this study explores the behavioural logic behind conspicuous consumption, and investigates whether the reasons for women's conspicuous behaviour are based on the perceived symbolic nature of goods.

Relevance significance: Conspicuous consumption has a large market share in China's consumer market, and this study selects the international brand lululemon to study the mechanism and influencing factors of women's conspicuous consumption behaviour, with the aim of helping enterprises to better understand the logic behind women's conspicuous consumption, so as to capture the Chinese women's market.

When consumers perceive its symbolic meaning and choose to accept it, it will have a great impact on consumption behaviour.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Symbolic Value Perception: In a certain consumerist cultural environment, commodities possess symbolic meanings beyond their original attributes, and the status, reputation, taste and personality that people perceive from the substantive symbols such as brand, price and endorsement are the values of commodities as symbols.

Reputation: Consumers buy commodities to show off their reputation and to raise their own experience and standards of honour.

Status: The position, or hierarchical difference, that a person or group occupies in a social relationship or organisation.

Taste: The result of consumption choices and practices that determine people's level in society and the type of person they are in the eyes of others. It is a culturally based standard of quality control and assessment.

Personality: The unique unifying pattern of thoughts, feelings, attitudes values and motives, and behaviours that are formed in the course of a person's socialisation and that constitute a person's thoughts, feelings, attitudes values and motives, and behaviours.

Conspicuous Consumption: In order to satisfy their needs (e.g. to show off their social status and beautify their image), consumers buy non-essential products at a higher price or buy products with similar quality and functions at a higher price.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter explores the impact of symbolic value perception on women's conspicuous consumption by reviewing the relevant literature on symbolic value perception and conspicuous consumption, and constructs a conceptual framework of the study.

2.1 Symbolic Value Perception

2.1.1 Symbols

Early semiotics defined symbols as the unity of the "signifier" form and the "signified" content. The "signifier" refers to the imagery or the material object form, while the "signified" refers to the concept extended by the symbol. Semiotics gradually evolved into a theory of perception (Zhang, 2013). Peirce, a prominent semiotician, asserted that a symbol conveys the exact concept of a subject in a specific manner (Hawkes, 1987). In essence, a symbol refers to something and serves as a carrier of meaning. Today, symbols have developed into a triadic relational theory, viewing a symbol as composed of a representamen (the sign itself), an object (the thing it represents), and an interpretant (the meaning it conveys). For brand symbols, the representamen includes features such as the brand's logo, name, and other elements; the object refers to the tangible goods represented by the brand; and the interpretant encompasses the brand's conveyed value, culture, and identity, which differentiate it from other products.

"As an object of consumption, a product must first construct its own symbolic meaning, possessing the function of symbolic significance—the meaning of the symbol originates from an abstract yet systematic relationship between the concept it denotes and the substantive object" (Kong, 2002). Therefore, objects (products) have both functional and non-functional aspects, with the latter referring to their symbolic meaning. Research on the concept of symbols has been widely applied across various fields, including advertising media studies, linguistics, luxury consumption studies, and conspicuous consumption. In China, contemporary research on semiotics largely draws upon Baudrillard's perspective, interpreting the "symbol" in consumer goods as a semiotic symbol, a psychoanalytic sign, and a signal of social status (Baudrillard, 2001).

2.1.2 Symbolic Value Perception

Symbolic value focuses on the construction of meaning in symbols, specifically the process by which the meaning represented by a symbol is transmitted to and perceived by consumers. This concept was first introduced by Baudrillard in his explanation of transformations within consumer society. Baudrillard argued that with

the aid of modern advertising and branding, products acquire a system of object ×
symbol, which transcends their use value and exchange value to obtain symbolic value.
This symbolic value encapsulates the uniqueness and differentiation of goods
(Baudrillard, 2014).

Technological advancements have led to an increasingly homogeneous market,
where products are difficult to distinguish based solely on use value. Thus, only through
"symbolization" can consumers more strongly perceive the presence of products.
Symbolic value is shaped by elements such as brand culture, iconic logos, sophisticated
packaging, and marketing advertisements, creating a unique image for a product that
resonates with consumers on an emotional level (Ju, 2001). As Wang (2011) noted, the
construction of symbolic value refers to the process through which goods are imbued
with specific meanings after being symbolized, involving the interaction among
enterprises, consumers, and products.

The repeated technological revolutions have drastically improved production
efficiency, resulting in heightened product homogenization. This phenomenon has
rendered traditional product life cycle theories insufficient for explaining current
market trends. Often, new products are quickly imitated and replaced before they reach
the growth stage. Consequently, as material goods have shifted from scarcity to surplus
in consumer society, marketers must transcend the functional attributes of products and
transform them into items with symbolic significance and cultural value (Wang, 2011).
Williams (2000) highlighted that in a cultural society, only by associating products with
specific social and interpersonal meanings can marketing achieve its goals, as
individuals are more perceptive of these meanings within their cultural context.
Consumption of goods, therefore, is primarily based on their perceived symbolic value.

A defining characteristic of symbolic consumption is the encoding of symbolic
value according to established rules and its subsequent decoding by the public.
Businesses leverage advertisements, media, and other tools to communicate symbolic
value, enabling consumers to perceive and accept the meanings conveyed, thereby
fostering mutual understanding between enterprises and consumers (Li & Zeng, 2004).
For example, in the past century, wearing ripped jeans signified poverty, but today,
ripped jeans are a symbol of fashion. Consumers' primary motivation for purchasing
ripped jeans is no longer their functional utility but the expressive, symbolic value they
perceive, such as individuality and boldness (Wang, 2003). This illustrates that a
product's symbolic meaning is composed of elements like logos, shapes, and advertising,
but its true value as a symbol lies in the taste, personality, and social status perceived
by individuals.

2.2.3 Construction of Brand Symbolic Value

Symbolic consumption refers to the consumption of the symbolic value of goods (Baudrillard, 2014). As representative products in a symbolic consumption society, brands require a high degree of integration between visual, linguistic, and behavioral symbols, as well as consistent recognition of their material carriers and symbolic value by interacting entities (Xing, 2007). Constructing the symbolic value of a brand is a prerequisite for consumer behavior. For instance, while Pepsi and Coca-Cola are materially indistinguishable, their symbolic values allow them to achieve success in their respective target markets through distinct brand constructs.

McCracken (1988) proposed that companies must transfer the concepts of a culturally constituted world to consumer goods, and from there to individual consumers, thereby completing the transfer and construction of symbolic value. Building on this, Wang (2011) expanded the theory by dividing the marketing path into two primary entities: the enterprise (initial transmitter) and the consumer (receiver). From a symbolic construction perspective, the process is divided into two pathways: (1) marketing processing, which involves the production and dissemination of symbolic value, and (2) interaction with consumers, which entails the assimilation of symbolic value.

In this construction pathway, the focus shifts to the identity, social status, cultural refinement, and lifestyle that a product symbolizes. Marketers emphasize the symbolic value of products and brands, such as their cultural connotations, to express individuality and taste (Zhang & Li, 2006). Li and Zeng (2004) observed that consumers who purchase "Left Bank Coffee" associate it with an attitude-driven lifestyle, signifying social status and identity. As a result, consumers increasingly value the symbolic significance conveyed by symbolic value. Xing (2007) asserted that successful brand building lies in its representation of affluence, power, status, personality, and taste. Liu (2018) posited that constructing symbolic value is essentially about shaping an image that highlights individual identity and social distinction.

Li (2019), using Louis Vuitton as an example, identified four factors—product, setting, image, and emotion—that contribute to constructing the symbolic value of luxury brands. He (2020) further analyzed symbolic value in modern society, stating that every act of symbolic consumption unconsciously reflects one's taste, individuality, and the construction of social identity and status.

Building on the analyses of these scholars, Wang (2011) delineated symbolic value into two dimensions: social status (reputation and status) and personal taste (taste and individuality). This framework integrates previous theories while addressing the

realities of a rapidly evolving society, providing a comprehensive tool for analyzing symbolic value in contemporary brand consumption contexts. This study adopts Wang's framework to guide its analysis.

2.2 Conspicuous Consumption

Economist Veblen's The Theory of the Leisure Class, published in 1899, is considered a classic in the field of socio-economics. The book explicitly introduced the concept of "conspicuous consumption," which Veblen defined as consuming goods to display wealth and differentiate one's status, identity, and social class from others (Veblen, 2007).

As research progressed, Belk (1988) suggested that conspicuous consumption is a form of self-extension in which consumers purchase items to influence others' perceptions of them according to their desires. Li (1995) argued that conspicuous consumption is not merely extravagant or wasteful; everyone engages in it to some extent to highlight their personal identity. Deng and Dai (2005) further elaborated that conspicuous consumption is driven by the desire to display wealth and seek status rather than satisfy functional needs. Li (2015) defined conspicuous consumption as purchasing luxury goods at high prices, exceeding basic life needs, to display status and gain admiration and recognition.

Synthesizing these perspectives, this study defines conspicuous consumption as consumers' behavior of purchasing non-essential goods or products with similar functionality at a higher price to fulfill needs such as displaying social status or enhancing personal image.

Research on the effects of conspicuous consumption originates with Veblen, who proposed that the motivations for such behavior lie in status-based comparisons and material competition (Veblen, 2007). Scholars later conducted empirical analyses from a micro perspective. Marcoux (1997) identified five dimensions influencing conspicuous consumption—status display, material enjoyment, in-group communication, relational adjustment, and showing off—through a scale of consumer attitudes toward products. O'Cass and Frost (2002) analyzed the symbolic meaning of brands and empirically investigated the motives of consumers choosing status-representative conspicuous products and brands.

In China, research on conspicuous consumption primarily focuses on identity, influencing factors, and individual behavioral motivations. Yuan (2009), using a framework of status, self-esteem, and conspicuous consumption, conducted experiments and found that status positively affects conspicuous consumption, with

self-esteem serving as a mediator. Wang (2011) explored factors influencing conspicuous consumption in the Chinese context, considering the impact of emerging and traditional values. Du and Xu (2014) demonstrated that "face consciousness" mediates the relationship between power and the consumption of conspicuous products. Xie et al. (2020), based on compensatory theory, showed that lower-class university students exhibit stronger tendencies for conspicuous consumption when goods have status-symbolic value compared to higher-class students. Ding and Yang (2021) found that social crowding influences conspicuous consumption through the mediating effect of self-expression needs.

2.3 STP Theory

When a brand reaches a certain stage of development and seeks to expand into larger markets, it often opts for international operations. This is especially true for luxury brands. In the business systems of luxury brands, selecting a market entry mode is the first and most critical step in brand marketing (Lu, 2012).

The selection of international brand market entry modes and strategies is based on the STP theory, which emphasizes systematic analysis of three elements: segmentation, targeting, and positioning (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). According to the STP theory, when an international brand enters a new market, it must consider factors such as geography, cultural characteristics, and consumer habits to differentiate varying consumer needs. These differentiated needs are then categorized into sub-markets based on similar customer groups.

Once the market is segmented, the company identifies a target market that aligns with its strategic goals and exhibits significant growth potential. After selecting the target market, the company matches its products to the preferences and characteristics of the target consumer group. Through appropriate marketing strategies, the company enhances brand awareness among the target consumers, thereby completing the market positioning process (Yuan, 2020).

Lululemon, an international brand studied in this research, sought to enter the Chinese market and capitalize on its potential. After opening showrooms in China, the brand identified a group of consumers within the athleisure market who value high-end products. Recognizing the cultural traits of Chinese consumers—emphasis on "face," status, and high brand quality—lululemon targeted high-quality women aged 23–45. The company focused on women's athleisure and yoga apparel, thus completing the STP process in the Chinese market.
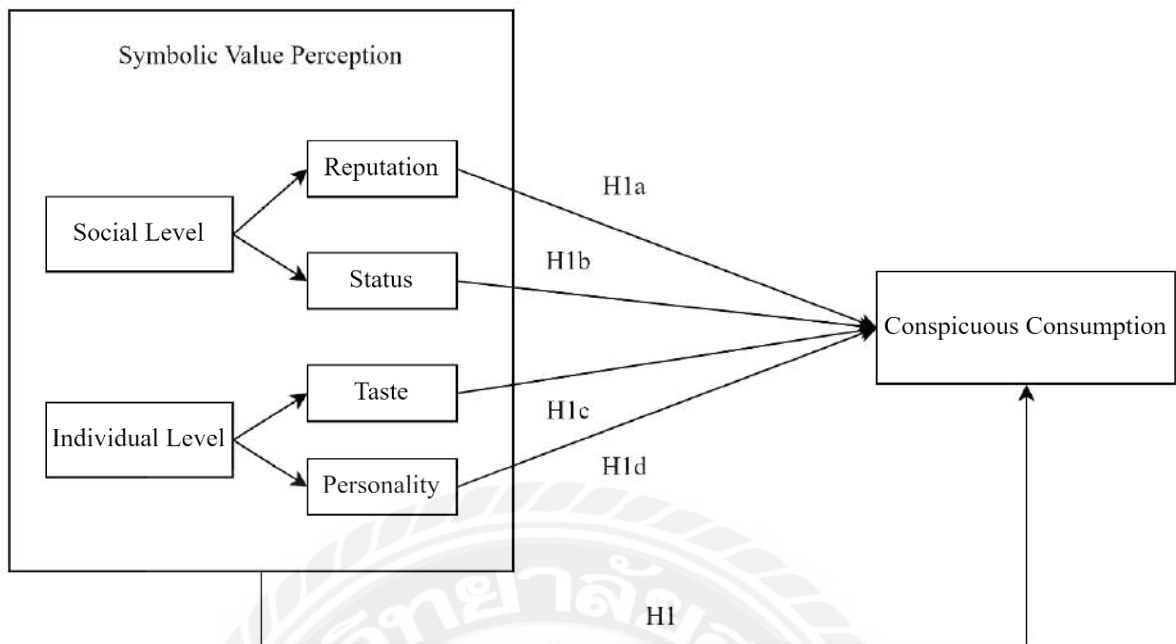
2.4 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research method to examine women's perception of symbolic value and their motivation for conspicuous consumption. This study targeted female consumers in the Chinese market, and in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the measurements, the scale designs for the four dimensions of the symbolic value perception are derived from mature scales.

Table 3.1 Symbolic Value Perception Measurement Scale

Variable	No	Item	Source
Reputation	1	Purchasing a certain product can obtain good evaluations from others	Wang (2011)
	2	Buying a certain product enables me to build up a good image in the minds of others	
	3	Friends, colleagues and neighbours around me have a certain product and buying it makes me feel successful and prestigious	
Status	4	Owning a certain product is a symbol of social status	Yuan (2009); Wang (2011)
	5	Being interested in a particular product because owning it enhances my social status	
	6	I am willing to pay more money to consume in order to enhance my social status	
Taste	7	I attach great importance to the grade of the product and the style of the consumption environment	Xing (2007); Wang (2011)
	8	I buy certain products because they can interpret a lifestyle	

Variable		No	Item	Source
		9	I attach great importance to the meaning and story behind the product when shopping	
Personality		10	I buy distinctive products to create a distinctive personal image	Wang (2011); He (2020)
		11	I lose interest in buying a product when it is very popular and popular	
		12	I like to buy products or services that are customised according to my style	

With the increasing prevalence of conspicuous consumption behaviour, research on this behaviour in China has become more and more in-depth. Early on, this study mainly drew on the conspicuous consumption measurement scale developed by Marcoux, which includes material happiness, highlighting richness, displaying status, interpersonal mediation, and vanity, and now China has also refined the design of the conspicuous consumption scale for the Chinese context, on which the present study builds the questionnaire design of the scale.

Table 3.2 Conspicuous Consumption Measurement Scale

Variable	No	Item	Source
Conspicuous Consumption	13	I will buy a certain product as often as I can afford it	Marcoux (1997); Yuan (2009); Wang (2011)
	14	I will buy a certain product even if it has the same function as other goods	
	15	I am willing to spend more money to get a better product	
	16	I am willing to buy a good product if my financial condition allows me to do so	

3.2 Hypothesis

H1: Symbolic value perception promotes female consumers' conspicuous consumption.

H1a: The reputation perception of female consumers has a positive effect on their conspicuous consumption.

H1b: The status perception of female consumers has a positive effect on their conspicuous consumption.

H1c: The taste perception of female consumers has a positive effect on their conspicuous consumption.

H1d: The personality perception of female consumers has a positive effect on their conspicuous consumption.

3.3 Population and Sample

Given that female consumers are increasingly becoming the main purchasing force in the Consumption 4.0 era, and that the female market has become a new economic breakthrough and growth point for many brands, the main research target of this study were women with a certain consumption ability and different age distribution.

3.4 Data Collection

A total of 252 questionnaires were returned through the online platform, and after excluding male samples, inconsistencies and 45 invalid questionnaires that were too short or too long, a total of 207 valid questionnaires were screened and collated. Descriptive statistics, reliability, validity, correlation and regression analyses of the variables in the theoretical model were conducted using SPSS and AMOS.

3.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis: Descriptive statistics of the sample to better understand the basic situation of the respondents.

Reliability and validity analysis: Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the level of reliability of the scale data. KMO value was used to ensure that the independent variables designed in the questionnaire have connection with each other and the questionnaire is valid.

Correlation analysis: This study used Pearson correlation analysis to examine the correlation between the dimensions of symbolic value perception and conspicuous consumption.

Multiple linear regression analysis: Multiple linear regression analysis was used to investigate the causal relationship between reputation, status, taste, personality and conspicuous consumption.

3.6 Reliability and Validity Analysis of the Scale
3.6.1 Reliability Analysis

This study used Cronbach alpha coefficient to measure the reliability level of the scale data, and the alpha coefficient value of 0.6 or above is reliable.

Table 3.3 Results of Reliability Analysis for Each Variable

Variable	Number of questions	Cronbach 's α	
Reputation	3	0.910	
Status	3	0.914	
Taste	3	0.858	0.951
Personality	3	0.765	
Conspicuous Consumption	4	0.887	

As can be seen from Table 3.3, alpha coefficient values for all dimensions in this study are above 0.7, with a minimum of 0.765, indicating that the reliability of the scales in this study are in the good and very high range. The reliability of the overall scale of this questionnaire is 0.951, which indicates that the level of reliability quality of the data in this case is very good, and the data of the study are reliable, and pass the consistency test.

3.6.2 Validity Analysis

The sphere test significance level p-value of the scale in this study is 0.000 and the KMO value is 0.932, the structural validity of the scale is very good and can be further analysed.

Table 3.4 KMO and Bartlett's Test[a]

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.932
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4163.567
	df	325
	Sig.	0.000

Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Variable	Option	Frequency	%
Age	Under 18 years	-	-
	18-25 years	86	41.5
	26-30 years	60	29
	31-40 years	50	24.2
	Above 40 years	11	5.3
Educational level	Specialist and below	12	5.8
	Bachelor's degree	97	46.9
	Master's degree	90	43.5
	PhD	8	3.9
Monthly disposable income	3,000 yuan and below	44	21.3
	3001-5000 Yuan	46	22.2
	5001-10000 Yuan	61	29.5
	10001-30000 yuan	52	25.1
	30001 yuan and above	4	1.9
Evaluation of their own body type	Thin	40	19.3
	Fat	103	49.8
	Just right	64	30.9
Will buy lululemon	Yes	171	82.6
	No	36	17.4
Whether you have ever spent money in a flashy way	Yes	176	85
	No	31	15

The age of female consumers in the survey mainly focuses on 18-30 years old, accounting for 70.5% of the total, which also excludes underage female consumers, so that the study is more objective and meets the requirements of the research population in this paper. In terms of education level, the overall education level of the sample is

relatively high, focusing on bachelor's and master's degrees. The distribution of monthly disposable income is relatively even, covering people at every income stage, and in general, consumers with above RMB 3,000 account for the majority of the sample, who have a certain spending power. From the assessment of their own body shape, it can be found that 69.1% of women are not satisfied with their own body shape, of which those who think they are fat are significantly more than those who think they are thin. After evaluating their own body shape, when the respondents were asked whether they would buy professional sportswear such as the international brand lululemon, 82.6% of female consumers had the intention to buy. This shows that most of the respondents are able to accept international brands such as lululemon and are willing to try high-quality brands with high prices. When asked if they have ever had any showy consumption behaviour, 85% of the female consumers chose yes. By understanding the views of these female consumers who have had showy consumption behaviour, it is possible to conduct a better study, which shows that the respondents have a better representation.

4.1.2 Correlation Analysis

In this study, Pearson correlation analysis was used to analyse the correlation between the dimensions of the symbolic value perception and conspicuous consumption, as shown in Table 4.2.

The variables of symbolic value perception and conspicuous consumption are significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed), and the values of correlation coefficients are positive, and most of the values of correlation coefficients are greater than 0.4, which shows a closer mutual influence relationship, so regression analysis can be used to further analyse the relationship between the dimensions.

Table 4.2 Correlation Analysis

	Mean Value	Standard Deviation	Reputation	Status	Taste	Personality	Conspicuous Consumption
Reputation	3.6409	0.9701	1				
Status	3.5346	1.0133	.686**	1			
Taste	3.9452	0.7746	.520**	.565**	1		
Personality	3.8422	0.7603	.501**	.450**	.410**	1	
Conspicuous Consumption	3.9070	0.7625	.562**	.601**	.623**	.457**	1
Note: Sample size = 207; ** Significant correlation at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).							

4.1.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to investigate the causal relationship between reputation, status, taste, personality and conspicuous consumption. The multiple linear regression model of the independent variable and the dependent variable was constructed, and the fitting results are shown in Table 4.3, which proves that there is a significant linear relationship in this model (F-test is significant, p<0.005), in which the R-square is very close to the adjusted R-square, which indicates that the data are stable, and the adjusted R-square is 0.499, i.e. the degree of interpretability of the independent variable on the dependent variable is 49.9%. When the D-W value is near 2 (between 1.7 and 2.3), it means that there is no autocorrelation and the model is well constructed, and the D-W value of this study is 1.967, the model residuals are independent of each other, there is no autocorrelation, and it fully meets the standard.

Table 4.3 Parameters of the Regression Model of Symbolic Value Perception and Conspicuous Consumption

R	R²	Adjusted R²	F	sig.	D-W
0.713	0.509	0.499	52.276	0.000	1.967

Table 4.4 Coefficients of the Regression Model of Symbolic Value Perception and Conspicuous Consumption

Model	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t	Significance	Covariance statistic	
	B	Standard Error				Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.961	0.231		4.167	0		
Reputation	0.116	0.057	0.147	2.044	0.042	0.469	2.131
Status	0.180	0.054	0.240	3.310	0.001	0.465	2.153
Taste	0.352	0.061	0.358	5.767	0.000	0.631	1.584
Personality	0.130	0.059	0.129	2.206	0.028	0.710	1.409

Corresponding analysis of the coefficients of the regression model reveals that the t-tests of symbolic value perception combinations are all significant (P<0.05), and the regression coefficients of reputation, status, taste and personality are all positive, indicating that symbolic value perception combinations promote female consumers' conspicuous consumption, specifically the reputation, status, taste and personality perceived by female consumers have a positive influence on their conspicuous consumption. So H1a, H1b, H1c, H1d are valid, the model formula can be interpreted as follows:

Conspicuous Consumption =

0.961+0.116*reputation+0.18*status+0.352*taste+0.13*personality

Among them, the taste perceived by female consumers contributes the most to showy consumption behaviour, with an unstandardised coefficient B of 0.352, indicating that women's consumption concepts are now more upgraded, and more attention is paid to the taste represented by commodities. As can be seen from the covariance statistics in Table 4.4, the capacity differences of the independent variables are small, and the VIFs are all less than 5, indicating that there is no problem of multicollinearity between the respective variables.

4.2 Discussion

This study investigates the influence of symbolic value perception on female consumers' conspicuous consumption behaviour, with a detailed explanation of the questionnaire structure and scale design, and a validation using data analysis methods, which leads to the findings of this study:

When female consumers perceive the symbolic value of commodities, whether it is reputation, status, taste, or personality (Beta coefficient 0.116, 0.18, 0.352, 0.13, respectively, $P<0.05$), it promotes their tendency to showy consumption behaviour. When they consume brands such as lululemon, it's mainly because they perceive the brand as having this kind of symbolic value. H1 is verified.

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Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

In the background of economic globalisation, Western attitudes and consumption concepts have subtly influenced the daily life of Chinese consumers, and Western brands continue to come in and take root and grow on Chinese soil. Chinese consumption has risen from the usability of physical commodities to the level of symbolic value, which is even more so in the case of female consumers, who achieve the ultimate goal of showing off during the process of looking for differences.

Both the symbolic value at the social level and the personal level significantly affect female consumers' conspicuous consumption, in which the regression coefficient of the significance of taste in symbolic value is higher than that of the other three dimensions, indicating that in the modern society with a highly developed consumer economy, the pursuit of symbolic value of commodities has gone from the pursuit of reputation and status to the pursuit of taste in the last century. In the symbolic consumption society, even though many people's cognition of taste stays in the initial ignorance stage, the consumption behaviour will deliberately emphasize their own taste, especially through conspicuous consumption to achieve the purpose. Therefore, whether it is for the analysis and research of women's conspicuous consumption behaviour, or for corporate marketing communication, or for the construction of corporate brand symbolic value, it is very necessary to cultivate the correct aesthetic perception of female consumers and to enhance the cultural connotation of the brand in the new consumer era and consumer situation.

5.2 Recommendation

Under the symbolic consumption society, commodities interact with individuals through symbolic value, therefore, 'symbolic' consumption has exceeded the commodity entity, and this phenomenon is fully reflected in the female group's showy consumption behaviour. These symbolic meanings can then be conveyed to the tangible products in the form of advertisements, and ultimately the symbolic value of the products shaped by this mature marketing path has a strong influence on female consumers.

5.3 Further Study

Future research could explore the extension of female consumers' conspicuous consumption behavior from an individual perspective to a family-oriented context. In

real-life or actual consumption scenarios, women often make purchasing decisions not only for themselves but also on behalf of their families. Investigating conspicuous consumption at the family level could uncover valuable insights, such as the circumstances under which women engage in conspicuous consumption for the benefit of the family, how their motivations might shift in this context, and the implications for marketing strategies. Understanding how companies can adapt their approaches to better meet the needs of female consumers acting as family decision-makers would be a compelling and meaningful direction for future studies.

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Appendix

Research Questionnaire on the Influence of Symbolic Value Perception on Women's Conspicuous Consumption

Dear Madam,

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to participate in this survey! This is a research survey on consumer behavior. All responses will remain strictly anonymous, and no personal information will be disclosed. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. There are no right or wrong answers, so please feel free to respond honestly. Thank you again!

[Part I]

1. Your Gender [Single-choice question] *
- ○ Male (Please skip to the end of the questionnaire and submit your response)
- ○ Female

2. Your Age [Single-choice question] *
- ○ Under 18
- ○ 18–25
- ○ 26–30
- ○ 31–40
- ○ Over 40

3. Your Educational Level [Single-choice question] *
- ○ Associate degree or below
- ○ Bachelor's degree
- ○ Master's degree
- ○ Doctorate

4. Your Monthly Disposable Income [Single-choice question] *
- ○ 3,000 CNY or below
- ○ 3,001–5,000 CNY
- ○ 5,001–10,000 CNY
- ○ 10,001–30,000 CNY
- ○ Over 30,000 CNY

[Part II]

1. How do you perceive your body type? (Consider the gap between your actual height/weight and ideal height/weight. For example, if your actual data is 160

cm/47 kg, and your ideal is 165 cm/45 kg, select "Overweight.") [Single-choice question] *

- ○ Underweight
- ○ Overweight
- ○ Just right

2. When wearing a swimsuit or tight yoga outfit in public, I often feel uncomfortable because I worry about my body not looking good. [Single-choice question] *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

3. When in the presence of someone with a better physique than mine, I usually feel anxious and worried. [Single-choice question] *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

4. When at venues like gyms, fitness centers, or swimming pools, I feel uneasy due to fear of others' negative judgments. [Single-choice question] *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

5. When at venues like gyms, fitness centers, or swimming pools, I feel uncomfortable because my physique is inferior to others. [Single-choice question] *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

6. If you had extra disposable income, would you be willing to buy Lululemon? [Single-choice question] *

- ○ Yes

- ○ No (Please provide the reason for not purchasing) _____ *(Skip to Question 12)*

7. What reasons motivate you to purchase Lululemon? [Multiple-choice question] *

- □ Recommendations from peers; buying it can build a good image

- □ Wearing Lululemon boosts my confidence

- □ Attracted by its "Hermès of yoga" marketing

- □ Lululemon symbolizes a high-status brand

- □ Identifying with Lululemon's brand culture

- □ As a pioneer in functional yoga apparel, it represents high quality

- □ Aligns with my non-conformist personal image

- □ Better showcases my physique

- □ Other reasons _____

[Part III]

Spending disposable income on high-quality, highly regarded unique products that one likes is a common behavior among consumers. Such consumption needs to be objectively and rationally addressed. Please answer honestly to better understand your own thoughts.

Have you or your family ever spent part of your disposable income on non-essential items or on higher-priced products with similar quality and functionality to cheaper alternatives? (e.g., Lululemon, LV, Chanel, Apple products, premium sneakers, Estée Lauder, Lancôme, Swarovski, Chow Tai Fook, Starbucks coffee, Häagen-Dazs, etc.) [Single-choice question] *

- ○ Yes

- ○ No

- ○ Other brands _____

In the previous question, replace the product you purchased with "a specific product" and choose the appropriate answer. [Matrix scale question]

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Purchasing a certain product can obtain good evaluations from others	○	○	○	○	○

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
2. Buying a certain product enables me to build up a good image in the minds of others	○	○	○	○	○
3. Friends, colleagues and neighbours around me have a certain product and buying it makes me feel successful and prestigious	○	○	○	○	○
4. Owning a certain product is a symbol of social status	○	○	○	○	○
5. Being interested in a particular product because owning it enhances my social status	○	○	○	○	○
6. I am willing to pay more money to consume in order to enhance my social status	○	○	○	○	○
7. I attach great importance to the grade of the product and the style of the consumption environment	○	○	○	○	○
8. I buy certain products because they can interpret a lifestyle	○	○	○	○	○
9. I attach great importance to the meaning and story behind the product when shopping	○	○	○	○	○
10. I buy distinctive products to create a distinctive personal image	○	○	○	○	○
11. I lose interest in buying a product when it is very popular and popular	○	○	○	○	○
12. I like to buy products or services that are customised according to my style	○	○	○	○	○
13. I will buy a certain product as often as I can afford it	○	○	○	○	○

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
14. I will buy a certain product even if it has the same function as other goods	○	○	○	○	○
15. I am willing to spend more money to get a better product	○	○	○	○	○
16. I am willing to buy a good product if my financial condition allows me to do so	○	○	○	○	○