

A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF PRODUCT AESTHETIC PERCEPTION ON CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION

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Abstract: With the rapid development of the socio-economic landscape, competition among brands and products has become increasingly fierce, leading to phenomena such as product homogenization and brand homogenization. A research report by the China Household Electrical Appliances Association in 2023 proposed that aesthetic design will become one of the important development trends in household appliance products. Therefore, it is essential to explore whether product aesthetic perception affects consumers' purchasing decisions and understand the underlying mechanisms and pathways. However, these questions have not received sufficient attention in theoretical research, especially in the field of marketing. The research objectives of this study are as follows: 1. To determine whether product aesthetic perception influences consumers' purchasing intentions. 2. To explore whether environmental consciousness affects consumers' purchasing intentions. 3. To investigate whether self-affirmation affects consumers' purchasing intentions. 4. To ascertain whether brand awareness influences consumers' purchasing intentions.

Based on the theories of perception and awakening, this study focuses on household electrical appliances as the research subject to explore the impact of product aesthetic perception on consumers' purchasing intentions. Building upon the literature review, research hypotheses were formulated, and a research model was constructed. Quantitative research methods were employed, and data were collected through survey questionnaires. The data were then analyzed using SPSS and AMOS to test the reliability and validate the hypotheses.

The findings of this study are as follows: Firstly, product aesthetic perception significantly influences consumers' purchasing intentions. Secondly, environmental consciousness has a significant impact on consumers' purchasing intentions. Thirdly, self-affirmation significantly affects consumers' purchasing intentions. Fourthly, brand awareness has a significant influence on consumers' purchasing intentions. Suggestions for future research include: Firstly, conducting qualitative research using grounded theory to measure the relationship between product aesthetic perception and consumers' purchasing intentions. Secondly, conducting separate studies on different types of products to explore the influence of product aesthetic perception on consumers' purchasing intentions. Thirdly, further exploring the relationship between product aesthetic perception.



Keywords: Product Aesthetic Perception, Natural Consciousness, Brand Awareness, Purchase Intention

Introduction

The rapid development of the economy has led to increasingly fierce brand competition, and product homogeneity and brand homogeneity have become common marketing phenomena in the market. When consumers step into physical supermarkets or open e-commerce platforms, they are greeted with products that are largely similar in functional positioning and advertising slogans. Most cosmetics brands mention the effects of "whitening" and "anti-aging"; diapers attract consumers with selling points such as "hypoallergenic, absorbent, leak-proof, breathable, and dry"; and shampoo advertising slogans like "anti-dandruff, oil control, and anti-hair loss" are commonplace. The home appliance industry has taken the lead in making changes, as indicated by a 2023 research report from the China Household Electrical Appliances Association, which proposed that aesthetic design has become one of the important trends in the development of home appliance products.

In today's society, people's stress levels are constantly increasing, and there is a need for outlets to relieve and release stress. Beautiful and natural food and environments can help people release stress. Exquisite and natural food can make people perceive the deliciousness and healthiness of food, thereby further generating the desire to purchase; beautiful and natural environments can make people feel comfortable and happy, thereby creating a sense of longing. In addition, the fundamental solution to relieving stress lies in self-affirmation. Having exquisite and unique products can affirm one's personality traits, further reducing doubts about one's abilities and thus reducing stress. Consumers can generate natural awareness and self-affirmation through the appearance of products, which in turn can further generate purchasing intentions.1

Zeki (1999) first elaborated on the concept of neurasthenics. Skov and Vartanian (2009) defined neurasthenics as the study of the psychological and neural processes involved in the creation and appreciation of artworks or non-artworks. Subsequently, domestic scholars began to study the neural mechanisms of the relationship between aesthetic perception and emotions. Huang and Zhang (2012) explored the psychological principles and neural mechanisms of aesthetics through the study of the entire process of aesthetic cognitive processing, and found that brain areas related to consumer aesthetic processing mainly involve sensory perception, movement, emotion, and reward systems. Zeng and Xia (2019) explored the perception, cognition, and emotion interpretation in music aesthetic activities, and found that music aesthetic processing elicited corresponding aesthetic responses, with more attention given to music aesthetic emotions, judgments, and preferences.

Building upon the literature review of product aesthetic perception, consumer purchase intention, natural awareness, self-affirmation, and brand awareness, this study innovatively proposes a model on the influence of product aesthetic perception on consumer purchase intention. The following



research problems are posed: 1. Product aesthetic perception influences consumer purchase intention. 2. Natural awareness influences consumer purchase intention. 3. Self-affirmation influences consumer purchase intention. 4. Brand awareness influences consumer purchase intention.

Research Objectives

- 1. To determine whether product aesthetic perception affects consumer purchase intention.
- 2. To explore whether natural awareness influences consumer purchase intention.
- 3. To investigate whether self-affirmation affects consumer purchase intention.
- 4. To ascertain whether brand awareness influences consumer purchase intention.

Literature Review

Product Aesthetic Perception

The term "aesthetics" was first introduced by Baumgarten in the early 18th century (Dickie, 1997), derived from the ancient Greek word "Aisthanesthai" (perception) (Saw & Osborne, 1968). Subsequently, aesthetics was widely applied in architecture, with Kruft (1994) considering beauty as one of the three fundamental requirements of architecture. Sparshott (1963) initially associated beauty with pleasure, suggesting that "beauty is an understanding that pleases." Alberti defined beauty as a whole entity, describing it as "something great and divine" (Johnson, 1994).

Aesthetics and the related content of aesthetics are now regarded as aspects of research in psychology (Berlyne, 1974; Funch, 1997), sociology (Bourdieu, 1986; Grunow, 1997), anthropology (Douglas, 1982; Dissanayake, 1992), and marketing (Holbrook & Zirlin, 1985; Brown & Patterson, 2000). The development of aesthetics in the field of marketing has transitioned from sociology. In the latter half of the 20th century, social sciences began to focus on the influence of art and aesthetics, with many sociologists exploring the social attributes of artworks, focusing on areas such as fashion and handicrafts (Blumer, 1969; Becker, 1978). Advertising is at the core of marketing, making visual imagery particularly important for marketing researchers. Therefore, considerations of aesthetics in marketing mostly focus on products with substantial visual dimensions (Bamossy, Scammon & Johnston, 1982; Schindler, Holbrook & Greenleaf, 1989; Scott, 1994; Schroeder, 2000; Joy & Sherry, 2003).

Natural Consciousness

In Europe and the United States, nature still holds positive connotations, suggesting that natural things are "better" or simply considered "more correct" (Rozin, 2005; Rozin et al., 2004). The term "nature" can be broadly defined as the quality or state of being natural, and it can also describe things that respect conditions or facts consistent with nature, or objects and scenery with unique characteristics of natural occurrence. The Oxford English Dictionary (2011) defines nature as the appearance



unchanged or undisturbed by human intervention. The term "nature" contrasts with processed items (Rozin, 2005; Rozin et al., 2004) and is often associated with nutrition (Fischler, 2010) and ingredients (Evans et al., 2010).

This study defines natural awareness as the internal, positive psychological activity and response arising from perceiving the naturalness, purity, and lack of excessive processing of things.

Self-affirmation

Steele (1988) first proposed the self-affirmation theory, suggesting that the overall goal of the self-system is to protect its integrity, morality, and adaptive self-image. When this sense of self-integrity is threatened, individuals respond by restoring their self-worth. Li et al. (2020) suggest that self-affirmation occurs when individuals, faced with challenging or threatening situations, internally affirm themselves as competent, capable, and fully competent individuals, thus reducing doubts and negative effects on the self in such situations. In essence, self-affirmation theory posits that individuals have a motivation to maintain their self-integrity when facing challenges or threats, and maintaining self-integrity requires individuals to believe in their competence and excellence.

This study defines self-affirmation as the affirmation of certain important aspects of the self, such as personal values, traits, or positive qualities.

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness refers to the ability of a purchaser to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category (Aaker, 1991; Yoo & Donthu, 2001), and is conceptualized as brand recognition and brand recall (Keller, 1993; Pappu et al., 2005; Rossiter & Percy, 1987; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Brand recognition refers to the consumer's ability to recall which brand certain features belong to when encountering them again in daily life. Brand recall, on the other hand, refers to the ability of consumers to remember a brand when there is a need for a relevant product (Yang Yanqun, 2013). Subsequently, Aaker (1996) identified four levels of brand awareness: brand recognition, brand recall, top-of-mind brand, and dominant brand. Brand recognition is correlated with the consumer's familiarity with the brand, while brand recall is the brand that comes to mind first when a series of products is launched (Farjam & Hongyi, 2015). The top-of-mind brand is the first brand that comes to mind, and the dominant brand is the most well-known brand in a product category (Aaker, 1996). Hellofs and Jacobson (1999) suggested that brand awareness refers to the degree of name recognition irrespective of product category but based on perceived frequency. Brand awareness is further understood as the extent to which consumers recognize, accept, and recall a brand in any situation (Percy & Rossiter, 1992; Perreault et al., 2013). Keller (2009) stated that brand awareness is the trail or mass strength of memory in consumers' minds, reflecting their ability to remember or recognize a brand under different conditions. Brand awareness has always been regarded as a tool for individuals to realize, become familiar with, and remember a brand (Djakeli & Tshumburidze, 2012; Barreda et al.,



2015). Domestic scholars have pointed out that brand awareness refers to the extent to which a brand is known, remembered, and understood by consumers in the market, and it is an important component of brand assets (Zhuang Guijun, Zhou Nan, & Zhou Lianxi, 2007).

This study, brand awareness refers to the likelihood and ease with which brand elements can be recalled or recognized by consumers in different situations and environments.

Purchase Intention

The concept of intention originates from the field of psychology, referring to the subjective probability that an individual will engage in certain behaviors, indicating the intention to take or carry out a certain action. Purchase intention refers to the likelihood that consumers, under certain income levels, are willing to purchase a certain product based on various subjective factors such as their impression of a brand, attitude, and related psychological activities, as well as various personal information (Cao et al., 2021). Purchase intention is considered a measure of the probability that consumers will purchase a particular item and can be used as an indicator for predicting purchasing behavior. Dodds et al. (1991) proposed that purchase intention is the subjective probability or likelihood of consumers purchasing a specific product or brand. Following literature analysis, Huang and Lao (2013) suggested that purchase intention is the subjective tendency of consumers to choose and purchase a certain product.

This study defines consumer purchase intention as the subjective probability of consumers purchasing a product or service after considering various factors, or simply put, the inclination of consumers to make a purchase.

Conceptual Framework

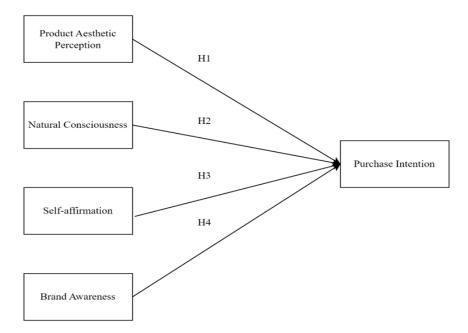
Based on the review and analysis of the literature above, this study considers product aesthetic perception, environmental consciousness, self-affirmation, and brand recognition as independent variables. The following conceptual framework is proposed ():

In this conceptual framework, product aesthetic perception, environmental consciousness, selfaffirmation, and brand recognition are the independent variables, while consumer purchasing intention is the dependent variable. This model aims to explore the relationships between these variables and consumer purchasing intention.

Research Hypothesis

- H1: Product aesthetic perception has a significant impact on consumer purchase intention.
- H2: Natural consciousness has a significant impact on consumer purchase intention.
- H3: Self-affirmation has a significant impact on consumer purchase intention.
- H4: Brand awareness has a significant impact on consumer purchase intention.

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Picture 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

The variables to be measured in this study include product aesthetic perception, consumer purchase intention, environmental consciousness, self-affirmation, and brand recognition. Mature scales previously used in scholarly research have been adopted for measurement, with adjustments made to suit the specific context of this study. Measurement is conducted using a Likert seven-point scale, ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 represents "completely disagree," 2 represents "somewhat disagree," 3 represents "tend to disagree," 4 represents "neutral," 5 represents "tend to agree," 6 represents "somewhat agree," and 7 represents "completely agree."

The subjects of this study are consumers exposed to advertising of household appliances. At the beginning of the questionnaire, it is explicitly stated that the purpose of the survey is solely for academic research purposes, and respondents' information will not be disclosed publicly. Respondents are informed that the questionnaire is anonymous, ensuring the accuracy of data collection without concerns about privacy breaches.

The survey questionnaire was distributed and collected through an online platform. After analysis and inspection, a total of 326 responses were collected through the online platform. Two screening questions were included in the questionnaire to filter the target population and identify valid responses. Responses with excessively short or long completion times, as well as those that did not pass the screening questions, were excluded. Consequently, 301 valid responses were obtained, resulting in an effective response rate of 92.3%.



Results

This study employs SPSS to conduct reliability tests on five component scales: product aesthetic perception, natural consciousness, self-affirmation, brand awareness, and consumer purchase intention. The results, as shown in Table 1, indicate that the Cronbach's Alpha values for all component scales exceed 0.8, CITC values for all items exceed 0.6, and Cronbach's Alpha values after item deletion are lower than the original Cronbach's Alpha values. Therefore, the scale demonstrates good reliability, and all items should be retained.

Variable	No.	CITC	Cronbach's a if Item Deleted	Cronbach 's Alpha
Product Aesthetic	1	0.745	0.939	0.943
Perception	2	0.792	0.936	
	3	0.864	0.932	
	4	0.784	0.937	
	5	0.716	0.940	
	6	0.812	0.935	
Natural Consciousness	7	0.775	0.884	0.907
	8	0.74	0.892	
	9	0.761	0.887	
	10	0.818	0.874	
	11	0.742	0.891	
Self-affirmation	12	0.765	0.866	0.894
	13	0.783	0.857	
	14	0.787	0.858	
	15	0.741	0.873	
Brand Awareness	16	0.824	0.912	0.930
	17	0.840	0.909	
	18	0.811	0.914	
	19	0.751	0.925	
	20	0.848	0.907	
Purchase Intention	21	0.816	0.883	0.911
	22	0.767	0.894	
	23	0.806	0.886	
	24	0.813	0.884	
	25	0.691	0.909	

Table 1: Reliability analysis of each scale

Based on the analysis of data collected from the survey questionnaires, statistical analysis was conducted on four survey data items: respondents' basic personal information and average monthly expenditure. The results are presented in Table 2. Analyzing sample information allows for an understanding of the respondents' basic backgrounds.

From Table 2, it can be seen that there are 145 males, accounting for 48.2%, and 156 females, accounting for 51.8% of the surveyed individuals. The gender ratio between males and females is relatively close, indicating a balanced distribution in gender selection among the surveyed population.



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In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents are below 30 years old, accounting for 49.1%. The distribution of respondents across other age groups is relatively even, which aligns with the fact that consumers under 30 years old constitute the main consumer force. The distribution across various age groups is also relatively balanced. According to the data on the educational background of the respondents, over half of them have at least a bachelor's degree, accounting for 56.8% specifically. The data indicates that the surveyed individuals generally have a higher level of education, which enables them to better understand and select viewpoints that align with their own ideas, thus enhancing the accuracy and authenticity of the research.

Variable	Group	Ν	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	145	48.2
	Female	156	51.8
Age	20 years and below	76	25.2
	21-30 years	72	23.9
	31-40 years	43	14.3
	41-50 years	40	13.3
	Above 50 years	70	23.3
Education Level	High school and below	81	26.9
	Associate degree	49	16.3
	Bachelor's degree	140	46.5
	Master's degree and above	31	10.3
Monthly Personal	2000 yuan and below	80	26.6
Expenditure	2001-4000 yuan	75	24.9
	4001-6000 yuan	58	19.3
	6001-8000 yuan	45	15.0
	Above 8000 yuan	43	14.3

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Analysis of Valid Sample Information

Based on the survey data, the monthly personal expenditure of the respondents is relatively evenly distributed. For the household appliances selected in this study, consumers are not heavily influenced by prices when considering purchases, thereby ensuring the accuracy of the data.

The sample description of this study mainly includes statistics on the maximum value, minimum value, mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of the measurement items. From Table 3, it can be observed that the minimum value for all measurement items is 1, and the maximum value is 7. The mean values of each measurement item are concentrated between 3.797 and 4.402, while the standard deviations are concentrated between 1.816 and 2.121. The absolute values of skewness for the sample data are all less than 1, and the absolute values of kurtosis are all less than 2. This conforms to the criterion that when the absolute value of skewness is less than 3 and the absolute value of kurtosis is less than 8, the sample data meet the criteria for a normal distribution. Therefore, the sample data of this study comply with a normal distribution.

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Variable Name	No.	Sample Size	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Product	1	301	1	7	4.156	1.816	-0.059	-1.123
Aesthetic	2	301	1	7	4.153	1.830	-0.024	-1.093
Perception	3	301	1	7	4.166	1.847	-0.009	-1.114
	4	301	1	7	4.166	2.000	-0.095	-1.248
	5	301	1	7	4.037	2.074	-0.004	-1.353
	6	301	1	7	4.040	2.038	-0.004	-1.321
Natural	7	301	1	7	4.302	2.021	-0.206	-1.269
Consciousness	8	301	1	7	4.233	1.985	-0.181	-1.235
	9	301	1	7	4.302	2.041	-0.244	-1.239
	10	301	1	7	4.309	2.022	-0.245	-1.240
	11	301	1	7	4.352	2.082	-0.229	-1.338
Self-affirmation	12	301	1	7	4.339	1.923	-0.212	-1.126
	13	301	1	7	4.306	1.897	-0.221	-1.142
	14	301	1	7	4.402	1.920	-0.269	-1.106
	15	301	1	7	4.312	1.898	-0.187	-1.092
Brand	16	301	1	7	4.219	2.113	-0.125	-1.364
Awareness	17	301	1	7	4.017	2.121	0.020	-1.424
	18	301	1	7	3.847	2.086	0.083	-1.386
	19	301	1	7	3.967	2.054	0.017	-1.349
	20	301	1	7	4.066	2.098	0.008	-1.361
Purchase	21	301	1	7	3.877	2.012	0.046	-1.265
Intention	22	301	1	7	4.040	2.026	0.001	-1.295
	23	301	1	7	4.017	2.050	-0.051	-1.280
	24	301	1	7	3.947	2.086	0.073	-1.324
	25	301	1	7	3.797	2.112	0.109	-1.352

Table 3: Descrip	ptive Statistics	of Variables in	the Valid Sample
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This study incorporates five constructs, namely, product aesthetic perception, environmental consciousness, self-affirmation, brand awareness, and purchase intention, into a structural equation model for confirmatory factor analysis. The model fit results are presented in Table 4. According to the output from AMOS, the χ^2 /df value is 1.371, which is less than 3. The RMSEA value is 0.035, which is less than 0.08. Moreover, the NFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI values are all greater than 0.9. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model fits well.

Table 4: Confirmatory Factor Analysis-Fit Results

Fit indices	χ2/df	RMSEA	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
Evaluation criteria	<3	≦0.08	≧0.09	≧0.09	≧0.09	≧0.09
Model Fit values	1.371	0.035	0.951	0.9986	0.984	0.986

The results of confirmatory factor analysis, as shown in Table 5, indicate that all standardized factor loadings of the items are greater than 0.5. Moreover, the CR values of the five variables are all greater than 0.8, and the AVE values are all greater than 0.5, demonstrating good convergent validity of the measurement variables.



Table 5: Convergent Validity Test Results

Variable	No.	Factor Loading (λ)	AVE	CR
Product Aesthetic	1	0.985	0.9231	0.9863
Perception	2	0.988		
	3	0.984		
	4	0.966		
	5	0.920		
	6	0.919		
Natural	7	0.768	0.6274	0.8938
Consciousness	8	0.806		
	9	0.769		
	10	0.821		
	11	0.795		
Self-affirmation	12	0.905	0.8769	0.9661
	13	0.953		
	14	0.948		
	15	0.939		
Brand Awareness	16	0.737	0.5071	0.8372
	17	0.703		
	18	0.701		
	19	0.710		
	20	0.709		
Purchase Intention	21	0.803	0.6272	0.8936
	22	0.828		
	23	0.765		
	24	0.814		
	25	0.747		

Table 6: Correlations

	Product Aesthetic	Self-affirmation	Natural	Purchase	Brand
	Perception		Consciousness	Intention	Awareness
Product Aesthetic	0.9231				
Perception					
Self-affirmation	0.816	0.8769			
Natural	0.605	0.567	0.6274		
Consciousness					
Purchase Intention	0.712	0.577	0.575	0.6272	
Brand Awareness	-0.238	-0.102	-0.067	-0.278	0.5071
AVE Square Root	0.9608	0.9364	0.7921	0.7920	07121

To assess discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE for each variable is computed and compared with the corresponding inter-factor correlations, as presented in Table 6. The pairwise correlations between variables are all smaller than the square root of the AVE for the respective variables, indicating good discriminant validity between the variables.

The relationships between variables were examined using AMOS software in this study. The model fit results are presented in Table 7, where the χ^2/df value is 2.016, which is less than 3.



Additionally, the RMSEA value is 0.058, less than 0.08, and the NFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI values are all greater than 0.9. Therefore, the structural equation model demonstrates a good fit.

Table 7: Correlations

Fit indices	χ2/df	RMSEA	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
Evaluation criteria	<3	≦0.08	≧0.09	≧0.09	≧0.09	≧0.09
Model Fit values	2.016	0.058	0.979	0.989	0.985	0.989

Further analysis of the path test results is presented in Table 8. The standardized path coefficient for the effect of product aesthetic perception on consumer purchase intention is 0.56, and it is significant. This indicates that product aesthetic perception has a significant positive impact on consumer purchase intention. The standardized path coefficient for the effect of natural awareness on consumer purchase intention is 0.32, and it is significant, suggesting that natural awareness significantly influences consumer purchase intention positively. The standardized path coefficient for the effect of self-affirmation on consumer purchase intention is 0.27, and it is significant, indicating that self-affirmation has a significant positive impact on consumer purchase intention. The standardized path coefficient for the effect of brand awareness on consumer purchase intention is 0.43, and it is significant, suggesting that brand awareness significantly influences consumer purchase significantly influences consumer purchase intention positively. Therefore, hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H4 are confirmed.

			Estimate	significant
Purchase Intention	<	Product Aesthetic Perception	0.56	significantly
Purchase Intention	<	Natural Consciousness	0.32	significantly
Purchase Intention	<	Self-affirmation	0.27	significantly
Purchase Intention	<	Brand Awareness	0.43	significantly

Table 8: Model Path	Coefficients and	Significance
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Discussion

The establishment of H1 implies that consumers' perception of product aesthetics will influence their purchasing decisions. Aesthetic design and visual appeal of products may enhance consumers' purchase intentions.

The confirmation of H2 suggests that consumers' environmental consciousness, their concern for sustainability and environmental issues, may affect their purchasing decisions. Consumers may be more inclined to purchase products they perceive as environmentally friendly or aligned with natural principles.

The validation of H3 implies that consumers' self-affirmation, their positive self-evaluation and self-esteem, may influence their purchasing decisions. Consumers may prefer to purchase products that enhance their self-image and self-esteem.



The confirmation of H4 indicates that consumers' awareness and familiarity with a brand may influence their purchasing decisions. Consumers may be more inclined to purchase products from brands they are familiar with and trust.

Conclusions

This study, based on the theories of visual perception and arousal, delved into the mechanisms through which product aesthetics perception, environmental consciousness, self-affirmation, and brand familiarity influence consumer purchase intentions. Utilizing SPSS and AMOS software, the study examined the effects of these four independent variables on consumer purchase intentions. The specific conclusions are as follows:

The study indicates that consumers' aesthetic evaluation of products significantly influences their purchasing decisions. Aesthetic elements such as design, color, shape, and overall appearance can evoke visual enjoyment and emotional connections in consumers, thereby enhancing purchase intentions.

Increased environmental consciousness helps consumers recognize the harmonious relationship between products and the natural environment. When products are perceived as environmentally friendly or integrated with natural elements, consumers are more inclined to purchase them because it aligns with their pursuit of a sustainable lifestyle.

Consumers with a strong sense of self-affirmation are more confident in their purchasing decisions. They tend to choose products that reflect their personal values and identity. The image and market positioning of the brand play a crucial role in attracting these consumers.

Brand familiarity has a direct positive impact on consumers' purchase intentions. Well-known brands are often associated with high quality, reliability, and social status, making consumers more willing to choose products from these brands.

Through these analyses, the study reveals the complex psychological mechanisms behind consumer purchase intentions, providing valuable insights for marketing and product design.

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