

Research on Women's Materialization from the Perspective of Consumerism

Take the Sales Strategy of Diamonds in China as an Example

Ge Song^{1,*}

¹ University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK.

* Email: s2129974@ed.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

The formation of female materialization thought is related to consumerism and social culture. Due to the traditional social division of labor, women tend to take care of family and shopping, so women are the main consumers and entertainment objects. At the same time, it has also become the consumption object and main dumping object of merchants. The media public opinion environment under the patriarchal further monopolizes women's aesthetic discourse power, and causes women's aesthetic anxiety through consumption traps. As the subject and object, women are constantly pointed and shaped, and their materialization tendency is deepening. Taking Chinese women's diamond consumption as an example, this paper attempts to analyze the main reasons for women's materialization behind the typical luxury consumption phenomenon. This paper holds that male power and capital are the two main factors causing women's materialization, and women cannot achieve liberation through confrontation alone. Only when women are alert to the trap of consumerism and think rationally and independently can they hope to get rid of the fate shaped and swallowed up and truly master their own destiny and discourse power. This paper will provide some cases and Enlightenment for the study of feminism and luxury consumption.

Keywords: Consumerism, Domestication, Female, Unconscious, Materialization

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the reform and opening-up policy, China has introduced the market economy and embraced the world to achieve stable and high GDP growth, which has also brought unprecedented prosperity to the consumer market. Because of the traditional social division of labor, women tend to take care of their families and shop, so women are the main consumers and entertainments. At the same time, it has become the object of consumption and the main object of dumping by merchants. The founder of Taobao, China's largest e-commerce brand, said in his speech that women are the secret of my success. Listening to female consumers and trying to satisfy women's purchasing desire to the greatest extent is the key to his success in building a business empire [1]. Marketers often describe women with a male gaze, expecting to resonate and create more demand for purchase. Through media, public opinion, and so on, monopolizing the right of aesthetic discourse creates aesthetic anxiety, creates a consumption trap, and links goods with women's value. In this process,

women are constantly pointed and shaped as subjects and objects, and their tendency to be materialized is deepening.

This paper attempts to analyze the consumption phenomenon of diamonds, a typical luxury after the epidemic, to explore the main reasons why women are materialized.

2. ANALYSIS ON THE CAUSES OF WOMEN'S MATERIALIZATION

2.1. Analysis of the marketing performance of diamonds in China in the post-epidemic era

According to the report released by Bain & Company and Tmall Luxury Products in December last year, the global luxury market demand has shrunk by 23% in 2020 after being impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic [2]. However, under such a global background, the luxury market in mainland China has grown by about 48% year on year, which is amazing. Its

share in the global luxury market has almost doubled from 11% in 2019 to 20% [2]. This performance has also made the Chinese market the main battlefield for major luxury brands. Jewelry industry, as the main representative category of luxury goods, experienced a continuous decline in sales from 2016 to 2020, and since July 2020, there has been an obvious growth. From January to September 2021, the total diamond transaction volume of Shanghai Diamond Exchange reached 5.718 billion US dollars, an increase of 81.2% compared with the same period of 2019, which was close to the historical high of 2018. Among them, the import value of finished diamonds reached US\$ 2.316 billion, an increase of 59.3% compared with the same period in 2019 [3].

The huge consumption of luxury goods also means the existence of alienation in China. In Marx's commodity fetishism theory, the value of luxury goods as non-necessities is not important. All the meaning of consumer behavior is in the action of buying a product. People buy goods mechanically and forget what the real purpose of consumption is. As Zizek pointed out, the consumption logic of modern capitalism is no longer "what I (consumer) want" [4], but those businesses and institutions are telling us "what you want/need" [4], they pretend to know us what do we want, and through a variety of exciting publicity, shaping and media advertising, etc., let us internalize this demand, to provide it with the impetus to operate [4]. Simmel believes that fashion, including jewelry, not only unites people of the same class, but also distinguishes people of different classes [5][6]. When consumers buy corresponding symbolized consumer goods with class attributes, they want to gain identity. And the concept of you are what you buy is undoubtedly instilled in us by capitalism. The empty, unhappy consumers have no choice but to consume more products with the hopes of finding fulfillment. This is the driving force behind the capitalist machine [7].

2.2. Diamond promotion strategy for female consumer groups

In the middle and late 19th century, a large number of original diamonds were discovered. The famous De Beers Company was founded in 1888 by British businessmen in Rhodes. Since then, diamond marketing has opened its century curtain. In the advertisement, De Beers used the phrase "A diamond is forever" to bind the diamonds with eternal love [8]. Since then, this kind of commodity has been endowed with all the beautiful meanings related to love and loyalty, in addition to its limited decorative effect, and has become a necessity in a marriage relationship. The reason for the great success of advertising is nothing more than that it conforms to the psychology of most people, especially women. Because the ring is of great significance to every

woman, if a woman has never got a ring in her life, it is a kind of sadness for her [8]. In addition to being bound to the concept of love, diamonds also serve as a symbol of female identity and class. They associate them with eternity and elevated status. Chinese women aspire for highly visible diamond jewelry, preferring necklaces, rings, and pendants [9]. In many cultures, gemstones owned and worn by people are often given significant meaning. In different cultures, historical periods, economic forms, and political backgrounds, the value connotations carried by various jewellery are different [10]. In contemporary China, diamonds have become the darling of the new middle class with unique tastes due to their rare and precious product characteristics and their status as upstarts different from traditional metals.

Up to now, under the social background that the income of contemporary women in China has increased significantly, and the marriage rate has decreased and the divorce rate has increased, the propaganda content of diamonds has quietly changed. Due to the change of population structure, the married population declined as a whole. In the report released in October 2016, it is predicted that the marriage rate will drop by 1% in the next two years due to the decrease of the number of millennial women. At the same time, the divorce rate in China is rising. According to the data released by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of China in July, in 2015, 3.84 million couples divorced nationwide, an increase of 5.6% compared with the previous year. The national divorce rate is 2.8%, compared with 0.9% in 2002 [11]. Therefore, in the new diamond advertisements, women's images no longer appear as those who love first, they begin to become the protagonists of the advertisements, and the role image of men in the advertisements is gradually weakening. More and more girls have become the leader and spiritual core of advertising [8]. This also means that the marketing target of diamond products has expanded from the decreasing number of married people to the economically independent single women who are eager to be appreciated and tasted independently. The proportion of this group in Chinese society is constantly expanding, which brings new growth points to diamond sales.

Based on the above changes in marketing strategies, we can draw a conclusion that the consumer group of diamonds has always targeted women. After capital directly linked the buyer's value to the commodity, whether it was traditional women who puts married first, or single women who longed for identity and wanted to achieve independence and showed their taste in the new era, they were all told that diamonds are magical props for self-realization. Users who pay attention to diamonds and diamond jewelry are often advocates of beautiful things and beautiful life. They pursue spiritual pleasure and pay attention to glamorous life. They are fashionistas, selfie masters and may have their own self-media and live broadcast platforms. They

love gossip, are familiar with entertainment circles and are senior entertainment observers. Things related to fashion, entertainment and beauty are their hot spots. From the perspective of the diamond field zoomed into the entire luxury goods industry, the same is true. Big data from JD.COM shows that the growth rate of female users in all cities in 2020 will be much higher than that of male users. The more the market sinks, the greater the growth rate of female users. In the process of consumer alienation, Chinese women, as a huge target group, are inevitably more affected than men. Their positioning and consumption needs are accurately captured by big data, and even continuously created by the media, ultimately making women become loyal consumers and followers of media culture.

2.3. The conspiracy of consumerism and patriarchy

As Baudrillard said, In the complete set of consumer equipment, there is an item that is more beautiful, precious, and more dazzling than everything else. This is the body [12]. Under the penetration of consumer culture, women's self-expression is often dominated by consumption logic. The mass media makes great use of female consumers' mentality in pursuing spiritual needs, and therefore makes full use of the symbolic meaning of brand effect and taste in commercial advertisements. It is virtually impossible to buy any product not embedded with certain symbols of identity acquired by the buyer knowingly or otherwise. Recognizing this, it is possible to draw the conclusion that consumption functions as a way to create a sense of self [7]. Female Naturally, their choices began to be closely related to the products they purchased.

If consumerism is a tool brought by the commodity society to materialize female groups with concepts, then the male gaze uses this tool and truly injects the role of values and aesthetic standards. The inferiority of men to women is a mainstream value concept that has been practiced in China for thousands of years, and women have only been truly liberated for 70 years. In the contemporary society where women's social status is rising and the mind is emancipated, the female body is still the object of the male gaze, and women do not have their own aesthetic power. Even, it is an illusion of vanity for women to think that they can flaunt their unique taste by purchasing high-priced luxury goods. Because this is also drafted by capitalism dominated by male voice-expensive and rare means noble. In a consumer society, under the control of capital and the male gaze, the transformation and persecution of female bodies by consumer culture have further deepened. The mainstream aesthetic concept of advertising is always under the control of patriarchal discourse. Under the patriarchal "male gaze" and the creation of global capitalism, the beauty myth has become a tool for

manipulating women [13]. "Beauty" is the basic point of market promotion. They "love yourself more" in their advertisements, constantly promote the concept of "beauty", create a "beauty" template, and guide women to indulge in beauty, Plastic surgery, and other industries, through consumer behavior to achieve the standard of beauty defined by the outside world, women's purchase behavior in this context has invisibly strengthened the materialization of women in the consumer society [14].

2.4. Unconsciously disciplined

In 2020, a female aesthetic called Chayifeng has swept Chinese social media. This style refers to young women who dress sexy and look innocent. Their movements often have a kind of sexual suggestion and have a strong tendency to be attractive to men. It first became popular among a female Internet celebrity who exposed many taints in her private life and was sought after for her outstanding photography style. Although netizens on mainstream media platforms tend to ridicule and spurn the actions of the protagonist and the third party in this incident, as of September 2021, search for "Chayifeng" in RED, China's largest female online community. There are still more than 6,200 related posts, most of which are photos imitating this style, and more than 100 related products are on sale. More than 30,000 people voted on the male social media HUPU, and 52.3% of users prefer the appearance of the protagonist of the scandal.

In a consumer society, male discourse hegemony, social media, and mainstream aesthetics discipline and imply women to achieve the purpose of monopolizing the rule-making power. As Foucault said, the gaze is a gentle power [15]. This method is often not as perceptible as direct violence. Instead, it transforms the gaze of the "other" into a female self-gaze in a way of silent penetration, so that women voluntarily obey a certain will and expectation. Men use their votes to set aesthetic standards and use attitudes to reward women who are willing to obey the discipline. This kind of gaze deprives women of their subjectivity and sense of value as a person, and then gives women recognition and sense of value through male gaze full of sexual desire and power. Since then, the male gaze has become the only point of view for the female self-gaze. But the situation is still, the more beautiful a woman is dressed, the more she is respected. The more she needs to work, the better her appearance will be. Good looks are a weapon, a flag, a defense and a letter of recommendation [16]. In the above network wonders. Although women are often victims of immoral behaviors, they still choose to follow the aesthetic goals of the perpetrator and shape themselves toward the template in order to gain a sense of existence. The female body has always been under the gaze of the

other, the purpose is to discipline a body that can be accepted by the other. They were domesticated and deceived without any burden, and eventually became accomplices. Finally, even without the presence and participation of men, women still objectify themselves and discipline themselves according to this set of standards. Therefore, it can be said that it is women who have become accomplices of men's gaze and completed the shaping and education of women in the patriarchal society.

The aesthetic paradigm under the male gaze and consumerist advertising are overwhelmingly smashing into female consumers. In the process, they are attracted and begin to obey and consume. Their identities are not just as simple as victims but as a huge crowd. As Gustave Le Bon said, the crowd is anonymous, so they don't have to take responsibility [17]. This explains why when everyone should condemn such unethical behavior, there are still a large number of women who follow the trend and imitate this style. Under the protection of anonymity, they unconsciously abandon the subjectivity that women should adhere to. The symbiosis between the perpetrator and the victim makes women more powerless to challenge this patriarchal control. In order to establish self-worth, they strive to pursue and cater to each other, even at the expense of each other, jealousy and vicious competition. Therefore, women who are unconsciously victimized by the patriarchal aesthetic monopoly are definitely not innocent victims. The victim's innocence theory is also a molded and objective self-cognition. When women give up their subjectivity, they have already become conspirators.

Capital is a tool that depends on the master's ideological release orders to determine the direction of development, while male power always uses capital as a tool to continuously control women's values in an imperceptible way, shape women's aesthetic concepts, and harvest women's Economic Value. From this perspective, capital and male power are interdependent and inseparable communities, and women's liberation cannot be achieved by confronting one of them. Maybe as Beauvoir said, the misfortune of a woman lies in being surrounded by almost irresistible temptation; everything is tempting her to take an easy path; she is not asked to work hard and go her own way, but to hear that as long as she slips down, she is You can reach the paradise of bliss [16].

3. CONCLUSION

Taking Chinese women's diamond consumption as an example, this paper makes an in-depth analysis of women's materialization under the background of consumerism and patriarchy by analyzing China's diamond marketing performance in the post pop era and the diamond promotion strategy of women's consumer

groups. This paper holds that male power and capital are interdependent and indivisible communities, which jointly control and affect women's values and are important factors to promote women's materialization. In this process, women can not achieve liberation through confrontation alone. In the foreseeable future, consumerism will not disappear. The fait accompli of society cannot be changed overnight, but women should understand that the definition of women by culture is not objective, absolute and unshakable. Maybe you cannot change other people's ideas and attitudes towards you, but you are a powerful subject, and you can choose independently, liberate yourself and define yourself. Only when women are alert to the traps of consumerism and think rationally and independently, can they hope to get out of the fate of being shaped and engulfed and truly control their own destiny and right to speak. One day, women will stop worrying about their unique beauty that doesn't meet the so-called standards, and stop treating themselves badly in order to win condescending praise from the opposite sex. By then, women can stop quietly and enjoy it simply because of the bright and pure light of a diamond.

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