



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Research on the Application of Ceramic Tableware Design for Young Chinese Consumers

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: May 21, 2024 Accepted: Jul 8, 2024	This study investigates the demographic characteristics, consumption behavior, design preferences, and purchasing patterns of young Chinese consumers towards ceramic tableware. A sample primarily composed of 18-25-year-olds, predominantly female university students with undergraduate education and moderate income levels, was surveyed. Results indicate a strong preference for durable, aesthetically pleasing ceramic tableware, particularly within the price range of under 500 RMB. Consumption patterns reveal a focus on product quality and visual appeal, with online platforms being the preferred purchase channel, underscoring the pivotal role of e-commerce in the market. Design preferences lean towards warm tones and minimalist, practical styles, with a preference for traditional round shapes, especially in bowls. The study identifies significant market gaps, highlighting opportunities for innovation in diversified designs, improved craftsmanship, and multifunctional products. These insights are crucial for manufacturers and marketers aiming to tap into the growing demand among young Chinese consumers for culturally resonant yet modern ceramic tableware.
Keywords	
Young Consumers Ceramic Tableware Demographic Characteristics Consumption Behavior Design Preferences	

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INTRODUCTION

Ceramic tableware in the process of historical change and development, in terms of material, structure, technology and design has made significant progress. From purely functional items evolved into an irreplaceable utensil that makes an important contribution to people's material and spiritual life. This evolution reflects a shift in design philosophy from a focus on function and technology to a human-centered and user-centered approach. The continuous improvement of individuals' living conditions has led to a shift in product preferences from functionality to emotional and spiritual dimensions (Wilkinson & Angeli, 2014). Specifically, in the past, ceramic tableware design was mainly concerned with functionality and practicality, following the concept of "form follows function". However, the tendency of the younger generation towards personalization is becoming more and more obvious, and the design principle has shifted from "form follows function" to "form

follows emotion". In 2021, young consumers under the age of 35 account for 58% of the growth in consumption in China, making them a major consumer force (Figure 1). Young consumers are dissatisfied with the cold industrial look and functionalist style of ceramic tableware and are looking for products that fulfill both practical needs and provide visual pleasure (Kumar et al., 2015). Consequently, contemporary design must prioritize the emotional design features of ceramic tableware to meet the emotional needs and spiritual satisfaction of young consumers (Gu et al., 2022, Ritzer & Miles, 2019).

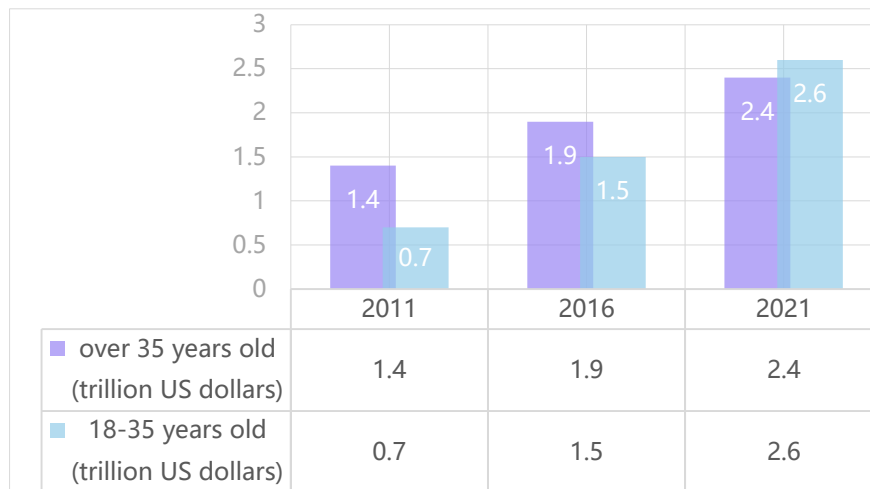


Figure1: 2011-2021 Chinese consumer consumption

Source by BCG, Alibaba Research Institute, 2022

In order to ensure that young people can enjoy the comfort and convenience of contemporary design while also being emotionally nourished by the stylistic elements of ceramic tableware, designers need to understand young people's demographic characteristics, tastes, and emotional responses to design elements. By conducting this study, we aim to explore young Chinese consumers' design preferences for ceramic tableware.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, the trend of young consumers' use of ceramic tableware for daily use has shown several characteristics. First, they prefer simplified modular tableware sets due to their busy lifestyles and habit of eating out. These sets are simple yet comprehensive, easy to mix and match and store, reflecting society's pursuit of efficiency and simplification in daily life (Liu & Chen, 2021; Martin, 2022). Second, functional versatility and practicality became key. China's diverse cooking styles require tableware with different quantities, sizes, and forms, and young people gradually prefer green, healthy, and easy-to-prepare meals. As a result, tableware sets that incorporate elements from both Eastern and Western cultures are popular to meet a variety of culinary needs. As family size shrinks, these flexible cutlery sets also reflect young people's pragmatic, romantic, free and diverse lifestyles (Mu & Oude, 2019; Wang et al., 2018). Finally, personalized aesthetic appeal is an important factor. Young consumers pursue a refined and elegant lifestyle, value the practicality and high quality of products, and tend to choose ceramic tableware that meets their aesthetic preferences. The rise of personalized customization has expanded the tableware design possibilities, so that it can meet the unique aesthetic needs of young consumers. As a result, products with high utility, minimalist aesthetics, romanticism, and the ability to offer personalization are expected to dominate the daily ceramic tableware market in the future (Hong et al., 2020). This trend not only reflects young consumers' pursuit of high quality of life, but also their comprehensive consideration of functionality, convenience, and aesthetics when choosing tableware.

According to Batra and Ahtola (1991), consumers purchase goods and services for two main reasons: to obtain sensory pleasure and emotional fulfillment (aesthetics) and to achieve practical and functional goals (utilitarian motivation). Voss et al. (2003) stated that hedonic factors stem from the emotional experience of using the product, while the utilitarian variable stems from the function that the product actually performs. Studies have found that the main design aspects that influence consumer attitudes towards goods are aesthetic and functionalist factors (Babin et al, 1994; Batra & Ahtola, 1991; Chitturi et al, 2008; Dhar & Wertebroch, 2000; Voss et al, 2003).

Several studies have identified specific design elements that influence consumer response, including aesthetics, utility, and symbolic concepts (Benaissa & Kobayashi, 2022; Brunner et al. 2016; Candi et al. 2017; Creusen & Schoormans, 2005; Eisenman, 2013; Homburg et al, 2015; Noble & Kumar, 2010; Rafaeli & VilnaiYavetz, 2004). Holbrook (1980) defined consumer aesthetics as the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses of buyers to media, entertainment, and art, and defined aesthetic value as the overall pleasantness that a product brings. Kumar and Noble (2016) also argue that the aesthetic value of product design lies in its visual appeal and pleasure. Functional value refers to the ability of a product to fulfill the actual needs of consumers, including functionality, performance, efficiency, and ergonomics (Crilly et al., 2004). Symbolic value relates to the message conveyed by a product and its social and personal meaning (Crilly et al., 2004).

Ceramic design elements have been evaluated in the past in terms of shape and form, color, decoration, and texture. Specifically, the shape of ceramics is a concept expressed in two-dimensional form and is a critical part of the design process (Quinn, 2007). Designers often emphasize organic and mathematical shapes in their designs with classic, elegant, and vintage styles influenced by artistic experience and design passion (Yasin et al., 2018). Geometric shapes such as straight lines, circles, parabolas, S-curves and ovals are widely used (Ishardita, 2015). The definition of shape includes the interplay of structure, function, decoration, and proportions that form the overall size and character of ceramics (Ching, 2023).

Color enhances the aesthetic appeal of ceramics, making them more expressive of personality and attention grabbing. Ceramic colors originate from colorants such as cobalt, copper, and chromium, and glaze colors vary depending on the atmospheric conditions of the kiln firing process. Ishardita (2015) used perceptual engineering and the Kano model to study customer perceptions of color to categorize ceramic colors into warm, cool, and neutral and natural tones. A wide range of attractive glaze colors are created through a variety of production methods and tools.

Ceramic decoration achieves specific designs through a variety of materials and techniques such as painted clay, ceramic dyes, colored clay, appliqués, and hand painting (Robin, 2004; Quinn, 2007; Norhasliyana et al., 2018). Decoration and production patterns reflect the cultural history of a country, and designers need to consider cultural heritage, traditions, and social norms to create decorations for multicultural needs (Dehua, 2015).

Texture refers to the tactile and surface characteristics of a material or product, which has a psychological impact on the customer (Ocvirk, 2002). Ishardita (2015) suggests three texture categories: glazed, matte and porous. Manufacturers control the firing temperature to achieve the desired texture effect. Textural features help products convey messages, promote interaction and communicate with consumers, and displaying food on ceramic tableware can enhance the dining experience and stimulate appetite.

Object

This study aims to explore young Chinese consumers' design preferences for ceramic tableware with the following specific objectives:

1. Identify demographic characteristics and preferences of young Chinese consumers for ceramic tableware design
2. Analyze the consumption behavior and purchasing patterns of young Chinese consumers for ceramic tableware
3. Understanding young Chinese consumers' design and aesthetic preferences for ceramic tableware
4. Assessing the channels and brand preferences of young Chinese consumers for ceramic tableware purchasing
5. Identify market gaps and opportunities for innovation in ceramic tableware.

METHODOLOGY

Population

This study will target young consumers in Shanxi Province, focusing on a select group between the ages of 18 and 45, covering different occupational backgrounds such as students, white-collar workers and freelancers. The sample will be distributed in Shanxi Province, the center of China's ceramic tableware production and rich cultural heritage. This dual identity allows us to comprehensively analyze how traditional craftsmanship and modern design intersect to influence young people's emotions towards ceramic tableware. To ensure the diversity of educational backgrounds and income levels in the sample, it will include all types of educational levels from high school students to graduate students, and all types of income levels from low to high income. The study will utilize a convenience sampling method for data collection through online questionnaires and offline distribution.

Online survey: conducted through social media platforms (e.g. WeChat, Weibo) and online questionnaire platforms (e.g. Questionnaire Star, SurveyMonkey). This method allows for quick access to a large amount of data and covers young people of different education and income levels.

Campus questionnaire survey: On-site questionnaire surveys are conducted in major universities such as North Central University, covering students of different majors and grades. Colleges and universities are one of the main places where young people gather, making it easy to centralize sampling.

In-house survey: In office buildings and enterprises in downtown Taiyuan, data on the white-collar group is obtained through internal company emails or online surveys. This method facilitates the acquisition of samples from different occupational backgrounds and income levels.

Community survey: In major shopping centers and residential communities in Taiyuan, freelancers and other groups are covered through random questionnaires or online surveys. Shopping centers and communities are frequented by young people, making it easy to sample.

Through these steps, the representativeness and diversity of the samples are ensured to provide reliable data support for the study of the relationship between the design elements of ceramic tableware and the emotions of young consumers.

Sample size

The researchers chose the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sample calculations confidence level of 95%. After substituting the values, the sample size was 258 people. But setting the sample to be larger than the minimum sample will result in the stability of the analysis results because some of the collected questionnaires may be incomplete. the researcher then increased the sample size to 349 samples. non-probability sampling methods adopted in this study, namely, judgmental sampling and snowball sampling.

Instrument

A well-designed questionnaire was used as a data collection tool for this study, aiming to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between design elements and emotional responses to ceramic tableware among young consumers in Shanxi Province. The questionnaire was designed with reference to a number of existing studies and expert opinions to ensure the scientific validity of its content. The main components of the questionnaire included basic information, use of ceramic tableware, design element preference, emotional response, purchase behavior and open-ended questions.

The design element preference section investigated respondents' preferences for different design elements of ceramic tableware, including shape, color, decoration and texture. Specific questions addressed respondents' preferences for different shapes (e.g., round, square, irregular shapes), colors (e.g., warm, cool, neutral tones), decorations (e.g., hand-painted, appliquéd, carved), and textures (e.g., glazed, matte, porous). The Emotional Response section assesses the respondents' emotional responses to different ceramic tableware design elements, including their emotional experiences, such as pleasure, satisfaction and comfort, when using ceramic tableware with different design elements.

The purchasing behavior section aims to understand respondents' purchasing behaviors and preferences, and to explore the factors that influence their purchasing decisions. The questions cover the frequency of purchase, purchase channels (e.g., online, offline), and the main factors considered when purchasing (e.g., price, brand, design). The open-ended question section collects respondents' suggestions and opinions on ceramic tableware design to obtain more in-depth qualitative data, including opinions on current ceramic tableware design in the market, expectations and suggestions for future design, and so on.

The collected data will be analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS to explore the relationship between ceramic tableware design elements and young consumers' emotional responses. The results of the analysis will provide a theoretical basis and practical guidance for ceramic tableware design.

RESULTS

A total of 349 valid questionnaires were collected, covering a wide range of information such as gender, age, monthly income, education level, marital status, occupation and housing type, which provided valuable insight into the analysis of the target group's ceramic tableware preferences and behavior. The data showed that 67.3% of the respondents were female, the age distribution was 21 years old as the median with a standard deviation of 7.76 years old, the minimum age was 18 years old and the maximum age was 44 years old, of which 77.1% of the respondents were between the

ages of 18 and 25 years old, and only 2.6% of the respondents were over the age of 36 years old. The median monthly income is RMB 3,162.5, with a standard deviation of RMB 2,744.7. 40.4% of the respondents have a monthly income between RMB 1001 and RMB 3,000, while those with an income in the ranges of RMB 0 to RMB 1,000 and RMB 3,001 to RMB 5,000 accounted for 22.9% and 23.2% respectively, and the highest income was RMB 15,000. Respondents had a high level of education, with 75.4% holding a bachelor's degree, 17.5% having a master's degree, 4.9% obtaining a doctorate degree, and 2.3% completing secondary school, reflecting the high academic achievement of the survey respondents. Regarding marital status, 87.1% of the respondents were single, 12.0% were married, and 0.9% were divorced, indicating a high proportion of singles among the younger group. Occupational distribution was diverse, with 2.3% being government officials, 62.8% students, and 34.9% private sector employees, reflecting the young population's diverse participation in occupations, with a larger proportion of students. Respondents' dwelling types were diverse, with 50.4% living in lofts, 25.5% in apartments, 16.9% in bungalows, and 7.2% in villas, showing the diversity of socio-economic backgrounds in the sample. The survey reveals the distribution characteristics of young consumers in Shanxi Province in terms of gender, age, income, education, marriage, occupation and housing, which provides data support for further research on the impact of ceramic tableware design elements on young people's emotions. shown as Table 1.

Table 1: Social-demographic for youth user in china on ceramic tableware.

Item	N	Percentage (%)	Median (\pm S.D)	Minimum	Maximum
Gender					
Men	114	32.7			
female	235	67.3			
Age			21.0(7.76)	18	44
18>25	269	77.1			
26>35	71	20.3			
36>45	9	2.6			
Monthly Income			3162.5(2744.7)	0	15000
0>1000	80	22.9			
1001>3000	141	40.4			
3001>5000	81	23.2			
5001>7000	18	5.2			
7001>9000	14	4.0			
9001>	15	4.3			
Educational level					
Secondary school	8	2.3			
Bachelor's degree	263	75.4			
Master's degree	61	17.5			
PhD	17	4.9			
marital status					
Married	42	12.0			
Single	304	87.1			
Divorced	3	0.9			
Occupation					

Government official	8	2.3			
Student	219	62.8			
Private sector	122	34.9			
Type of House					
Villa	25	7.2			
Apartment	89	25.5			
Bungalow	59	16.9			
Loft	176	50.4			

N: 349

Comprehensive analysis of young consumers' preferences and behaviors in purchasing and using ceramic tableware

Family dining habits:

A discerning examination of family dining habits reveals a prevalence of smaller family units, with 78.5% of respondents indicating family sizes ranging from 3 to 5 members. Only 6.1% of respondents' family size are over six members. This finding underscores an inclination toward more intimate dining settings, providing a foundational understanding of familial dining dynamics.

Table 2: Family dining habits

Item	N	Percentage (%)
Family Members Eat Together		
1>2	54	15.5
3>5	274	78.5
6>8	11	3.2
9 >	10	2.9

N: 349

Frequency of tableware replacement:

A thorough examination of tableware replacement frequency reveals a significant pattern, with 37.2% of participants choosing to replace their tableware solely when it breaks. This practical strategy for maintaining tableware highlights both an economical and functional viewpoint.

Table 3: Frequency of tableware replacement

Item	N	Percentage (%)
Frequency of tableware replacement		
1-6 months	79	22.6
6 months-1 year	99	28.4
1 year-3 years	41	11.7
Replace when it breaks	130	37.2

N:349

Material preferences and purchase patterns:

The study highlights a clear preference for ceramic tableware, with 55.9% of participants showing a strong inclination towards this material. Purchasing behaviors exhibit diversity; 46.4% prefer buying tableware sets, while 23.5% favor individual items. These detailed patterns reflect varied consumer approaches to acquiring ceramic tableware. Additionally, there is a notable interest in

multifunctional ceramic tableware that can be combined, with 75.9% of respondents expressing enthusiasm for these adaptable products.

Table 4: Material preferences and purchase patterns

Item	N	Percentage (%)
Whether you like ceramic products		
I will choose ceramic tableware	195	55.9
Other materials can also be used	139	39.8
Not considering ceramic tableware	15	4.3
Buy individual one or the set		
individually	82	23.5
set	105	30.1
All available	162	46.4
Interested in multifunctional ceramic tableware that can be combined		
Interested	265	75.9
Not interested	84	24.1

N: 349

Purpose for buying ceramic tableware:

A significant 79.7% of respondents indicated that their main reason for purchasing ceramic tableware is for personal use. In contrast, 13.5% buy these items as gifts, and 6.9% for collection purposes. These findings shed light on the various roles ceramic tableware holds in consumers' lives.

Table 5: Purpose for buying ceramic tableware

Item	N	Percentage (%)
Purpose for buying ceramic tableware		
For your own use	278	79.7
As a gift for others	47	13.5
Collection	24	6.9

N: 349

Price range preferences:

Examining price range preferences reveals a strong tendency, with 69.3% of respondents favoring ceramic tableware sets priced under 500 RMB. This financial threshold offers significant insights into market segmentation and highlights the price sensitivity of the surveyed group.

Table 6: Price range preferences

Item	N	Percentage (%)
Price range for a set of ceramic tableware (RMB)		
< 500	242	69.3
500>1000	79	22.6
1000>3000	15	4.3
3000 >	13	3.7

N: 349

Satisfaction and design preferences:

The analysis of respondents' satisfaction with existing ceramic tableware and their preferences in color and style reveals diverse consumer inclinations. Satisfaction levels are notably high, with 92.3% of respondents feeling content or essentially satisfied with their current ceramic tableware, while only 7.7% express dissatisfaction. This indicates a predominantly positive sentiment, highlighting the overall success of current products in meeting consumer expectations.

Regarding color preferences, "Warm Tone" is the most favored, with 47.9% of respondents preferring this palette. In contrast, "Single Color" is the least preferred, attracting only 13.8% of respondents. This significant preference for warmer tones suggests a strong inclination towards vibrant and inviting colors in ceramic tableware.

When it comes to style preferences, "Minimalist Neutral Tones" are the most popular, with 24.9% of respondents favoring simple and understated color schemes. Conversely, "Vibrant Fashionable Colors" are the least preferred, with only 5.7% of respondents choosing this bold style. This indicates a prevailing preference for subdued and timeless palettes, aligning with minimalist design trends in ceramic tableware.

Table 7: Satisfaction and design preferences

Item	N	Percentage (%)
Satisfaction with existing ceramic tableware		
Satisfy	113	32.4
Basically satisfied	209	59.9
Not satisfied	27	7.7
Preferred color for ceramic tableware		
Warm tone	167	47.9
Cool tone	134	38.4
Single color	48	13.8
Preferred ceramic tableware color style		
Traditional Chinese cultural tone	138	39.5
Vibrant fashionable colors	20	5.7
Natural tones	69	19.8
Contemporary trendy colors	35	10.0
Minimalist neutral tones	87	24.9

N: 349

Type of ceramic tableware preferences

Respondents show a preference for ceramic tableware with diverse aesthetic styles. The majority, 50.7% of participants, favor "Simple and Practical" designs, reflecting a strong consumer desire for functionality and straightforward elegance in their tableware choices. Conversely, the least favored style is "Technological and Futuristic" designs, with only 0.9% of respondents expressing a preference for this avant-garde approach. This minimal interest indicates a limited market appeal for tableware incorporating advanced technological elements.

Table 8: Type of ceramic tableware preferences

Item	N	Percentage (%)
Preference type of ceramic tableware		
Simple and practical	177	50.7
Gorgeous and exquisite	39	11.2
Vintage and traditional	29	8.3
Exotic style	8	2.3
Unique shape	9	2.6
Creative and personalized designs	51	14.6
Multi-functional and practical	14	4.0
Eco-friendly	15	4.3

Technological and futuristic	3	0.9
Sporty and leisurely	4	1.1

N: 349

Ceramic tableware decoration and design style preferences:

Respondents' preferences for ceramic tableware decoration exhibit varied aesthetic tastes. "Traditional Chinese Cultural Patterns" are the most favored, with 44.2% of participants choosing this style. In contrast, "Trendy Cartoon Pattern" is the least preferred, with only 6.9% of respondents favoring it. This significant preference for culturally influenced designs highlights a strong appreciation for traditional aesthetics in ceramic tableware, while the minimal interest in cartoon patterns suggests a lower demand for whimsical or playful decorations.

When analyzing design style preferences for ceramic tableware, "Contemporary Style" emerges as the most popular, with 21.4% of respondents favoring modern and current aesthetics. This indicates a prevalent inclination towards sleek and up-to-date designs in the ceramic tableware market. On the other hand, "Eco-friendly Style" is the least favored, with only 3.7% of respondents expressing a preference for tableware designs that emphasize environmental sustainability. This suggests a lower demand for explicitly eco-friendly designs among the surveyed group.

Table 9: Ceramic tableware decoration and design style preferences

Item	N	Percentage (%)
Ceramic tableware decoration preferences		
Traditional Chinese Cultural Patterns	154	44.2
Trendy cartoon pattern	24	6.9
Hand drawn creativity	50	14.3
Minimalist geometric pattern	45	12.9
Carving decoration	19	5.4
Single color without pattern	20	5.7
Natural texture pattern	37	10.6
Design style preferences		
Contemporary style	75	21.4
Classical style	64	18.3
Modern combined with traditional	68	19.5
Minimalist style	68	19.5
Pragmatic Style	20	5.7
Eco-friendly style	13	3.7
Unique style and creativity	41	11.7

N: 349

Purchasing channels and brand preferences:

The data on consumers' preferred purchasing methods for ceramic tableware shows a strong inclination towards online shopping, with "Internet Shopping Platforms" being the top choice at

49.3%. This highlights the significant role of e-commerce in the ceramic tableware market, underscoring the convenience and accessibility online shopping offers. Conversely, "Specialty Stores" are the least preferred, with only 12.9% of respondents favoring this traditional retail option. "Ceramic Markets" and "Department Stores" receive moderate preferences, indicating a balanced interest in various purchasing channels.

When examining consumers' requirements for ceramic brands, 53.0% express no specific brand preference, suggesting a market segment driven more by product features than brand loyalty. In contrast, "Domestic Well-Known Ceramic Brand" is the most favored, with 20.3% of respondents valuing the reputation and familiarity of local brands. "World-Famous Ceramic Brand" is the least preferred, with just 7.7% showing interest, indicating a lower emphasis on international brand recognition. Additionally, there are moderate preferences for "Designer Brands" and "Local Personal Studios," reflecting an interest in unique and personalized ceramic offerings.

Table 10: Purchasing channels and brand preferences

Item	N	Percentage (%)
The way to buy ceramic tableware		
Internet shopping platform	172	49.3
Specialty stores	45	12.9
Ceramic market	74	21.2
Department store	58	16.6
Requirements for ceramic brand		
World-famous ceramic brand	27	7.7
Domestic well-known ceramic brand	71	20.3
Designer brand	44	12.6
Local personal studio	22	6.3
None	185	53.0

N: 349

Factors influencing purchasing decisions and significance of ceramic tableware:

Analysis of the key factors influencing consumers when purchasing ceramic tableware reveals that "Quality" is the top priority at 28.9%, highlighting the critical importance placed on product durability and craftsmanship. "Appearance" is a close second at 23.8%, indicating that aesthetic appeal is a significant consideration. In contrast, "Brand" holds the least importance at 2.0%, suggesting that brand recognition has a relatively minor influence on purchasing decisions. The limited emphasis on "Design Creativity" at 3.7% shows that while design matters, it is not the primary factor for most consumers.

When evaluating the significance of ceramic tableware in respondents' lives, the majority, at 40.4%, see it mainly as a "Vessel to Serve Food," underscoring its functional and utilitarian role in daily life. Conversely, "Sustainability and Environmental Friendliness" and "Emotional Connections and Attachment" are the least prioritized at 2.3%, indicating these aspects are less significant in the overall perception of ceramic tableware. Notably, "A Symbol of Exquisite Quality of Life" and

"Increase the Fun of Dining" are valued by 24.4% and 14.9% of respondents, respectively, emphasizing the role of tableware in enhancing lifestyle and dining experiences.

Table 11: Factors influencing purchasing decisions and significance of ceramic tableware:

Item	N	Percentage (%)
Important factors in buying ceramic tableware		
Appearance	83	23.8
Function	65	18.6
Price	33	9.5
Brand	7	2.0
Quality	101	28.9
Cultural connotation	42	12.0
Design creativity	13	3.7
Significance of ceramic tableware to your life		
A vessel to serve food	141	40.4
Home decoration	36	10.3
A symbol of exquisite quality of life	85	24.4
Increase the fun of dining	52	14.9
Tradition culture expression and heritage	19	5.4
Emotional connections and attachment	8	2.3
Sustainability and environmental friendliness	8	2.3

N: 349

Consumer preferences in ceramic tableware: from shapes to daily use:

An analysis of respondents' preferences for tableware shapes reveals a strong inclination towards "Traditional Round" shapes, with 64.8% indicating this as their favorite option. This significant majority underscores the enduring popularity and timeless appeal of classic round tableware. In contrast, "Square" shapes are the least favored, with only 6.9% showing a preference, suggesting a lower demand for geometrically angular designs. "Irregular Shape" and "Bionic Type" garner intermediate preferences, indicating a moderate interest in more eclectic and innovative shapes.

Examining the most frequently used ceramic tableware at home, "Bowl" emerges as the preferred item, with 73.7% of respondents indicating frequent use. This highlights the versatile and practical nature of bowls in various dining scenarios. Conversely, "Sauce Dish" is the least frequently used item at 0.3%, suggesting a limited role for specialized dishware in daily use. The low utilization of the "Small Soup Tureen" at 0.6% indicates a niche preference for specific serving vessels. Notably, "Dish" and "Mug" show moderate usage, reflecting balanced incorporation of these items in everyday dining routines.

Table 12: Consumer preferences in ceramic tableware: from shapes to daily use

Item	N	Percentage (%)
Good shape for tableware		
Traditional round	257	73.7

Square	24	6.9
Irregular shape	46	13.2
Bionic type	22	6.3
Most frequently used ceramic tableware at home		
Bowl	212	60.7
Dish	74	21.2
Mug	32	9.2
Large soup pot	9	2.6
Small soup tureen	2	0.6
Fruit plate	4	1.1
Fish plate	5	1.4
Sauce dish	1	0.3
Tea pot	10	2.9

N: 349

Main problems of ceramic tableware sold in the existing market

An analysis of the primary issues with ceramic tableware in the current market revealed several key insights. The most notable issue is the perception of poor craft quality, which concerns 43% of respondents, highlighting serious consumer concerns about the overall construction and quality of existing ceramic tableware. This is followed by concerns about product uniqueness and similarity, affecting 39.3% of respondents, suggesting a perceived need for more diverse and unique ceramic tableware products. On the other hand, the least concerning issue is the need for cultural connotation, with only 20.3% of respondents indicating this as a concern, indicating a relatively low importance placed on cultural elements in ceramic tableware evaluation. High pricing is the second lowest concern at 24.1%, suggesting that while cost is a consideration, it is not the most significant issue for consumers when evaluating ceramic tableware.

Additionally, lack of innovation is a concern for approximately 39.0% of respondents, and poor durability affects 34.4%, emphasizing the importance of introducing creative designs and ensuring lasting quality in ceramic tableware development. The survey results also indicate relatively low concern about the health risks associated with ceramic tableware, with only 30.4% of respondents identifying this as a problem.

Table 13: Main problems of ceramic tableware sold in the existing market

Problem	N	Percentage (%)
Product single and similar		
Yes	137	39.3
no	212	60.7
Poor quality of craftsmanship		
Yes	150	43
no	199	57
Lack of innovation		
Yes	136	39
no	213	61

Poor durability		
Yes	120	34.4
no	229	65.6
Health risks		
Yes	106	30.4
no	243	69.6
High price		
Yes	84	24.1
no	265	75.9
Lack of cultural connotation		
Yes	71	20.3
no	278	79.7

N: 349

DISCUSSION

According to the survey results, female participants make up more than half of the respondents, predominantly falling within the 18 to 25 age range. Most of these respondents have a monthly income below 3,000 RMB, indicating a demographic with high price sensitivity. The majority possess an undergraduate educational background, reflecting a certain level of academic attainment. Socially, most participants are single students, influencing their consumption habits and lifestyle choices (Shen, 2017).

In terms of tableware material preference, ceramics are the top choice among young consumers due to their durability, aesthetic appeal, and environmental friendliness. Typically, these items are used in dining settings of 3 to 5 people, which aligns with their social lifestyles. Respondents generally express satisfaction with existing ceramic tableware products, yet a pragmatic approach to consumption is evident, with replacements considered only when items break (Zhang et al., 2021).

The survey highlights a strong interest among young people in modular ceramic tableware, driven by a desire for individualization and self-expression. However, their inclination to purchase complete tableware sets is relatively low, reflecting a trend toward personalized selections. When acquiring ceramic tableware, the primary motivation for most young individuals is personal use, with a preference for products priced below 500 RMB, aligning with their financial capabilities and practical needs.

In terms of color preferences, although warm-toned tableware is generally favored, a gender-specific analysis reveals that males prefer cooler tones, as shown in Table 14. Additionally, there is a preference for simple and practical types of tableware, with a notable interest in pieces featuring traditional Chinese cultural colors and patterns. Contemporary aesthetics are widely favored in design styles, yet a subset of the male demographic prefers traditional and classic styles, as indicated in Table 15 (Leidy, 2015).

Young consumers predominantly purchase ceramic tableware through online channels, reflecting the convenience and ubiquity of e-commerce. Brand loyalty is not a significant factor for them (Bilgihan, 2016); instead, they prioritize product quality, appearance, and functionality. For those with higher education levels, ceramic tableware serves both as a vessel for food and as a symbol of

refined living standards, as shown in Table 16. Traditional round tableware, particularly bowls, remains the most commonly used type.

Young consumers typically view a lack of diversity and innovation in product design as well as the need for higher levels of workmanship quality as the primary problems facing the ceramic tableware sector. This is indicative of the younger generation's desire for novelty and variation and serves as a key path for market expansion going forward (Sifre, 2023).

Table 14: Preferred colors of ceramic tableware for different genders

Preferred color for ceramic tableware	Warm tone	Cool tone	Single color
Male	47	50	17
Female	120	84	31

N: 349

Table 15: Gender-specific design style preferences

Design style preferences	Contemporary style	Classical style	Modern combined with traditional	Minimalist style	Pragmatic Style	Eco-friendly style	Unique style and creativity
Male	22	32	24	19	4	4	9
Female	53	32	44	49	16	9	32

N: 349

Table 16: The Significance of different educational levels on ceramic tableware to life

Significance of ceramic tableware to your life	Secondary school	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	PhD
A vessel to serve food	4	114	18	5
Home decoration	1	26	6	3
A symbol of exquisite quality of life	0	59	19	7
Increase the fun of dining	2	36	13	1
Tradition culture expression and heritage	1	16	1	1
Emotional connections and attachment	0	4	4	0
Sustainability and environmental friendliness	0	8	0	0

N: 349

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the demographic characteristics, consumption behavior, design preferences, and purchasing patterns of young Chinese consumers regarding ceramic tableware. The primary demographic comprises individual's aged 18 to 25, predominantly female students with bachelor's degrees and low incomes. These consumers exhibit a marked preference for durable, aesthetically pleasing, and practical ceramic tableware, with a favored price range below 500 RMB, underscoring affordability as a critical consideration.

The analysis of consumption behavior and purchasing patterns reveals a significant reliance on online shopping platforms, indicating the vital role of e-commerce in this market segment. Product quality and visual appeal are the most influential factors in purchasing decisions, with brand loyalty remaining relatively low. This suggests that young consumers prioritize the inherent qualities of the ceramic tableware over brand reputation.

Design and aesthetic preferences among young Chinese consumers show a strong inclination towards warm tones and simple, practical designs. Traditional round shapes, especially in bowls, are preferred, along with designs that blend modern and traditional elements. This reflects a desire for products that are both culturally resonant and contemporary.

In assessing the channels and brand preferences, the study highlights a preference for e-commerce platforms due to their convenience and variety. The observed low brand loyalty presents an opportunity for brands to capture market share by focusing on quality and innovative design rather than relying solely on brand recognition.

The study identifies significant market gaps and opportunities for innovation in ceramic tableware. There is a demand for more diverse and innovative designs, improved craftsmanship, and multifunctional products. These insights can guide manufacturers and marketers in developing and promoting ceramic tableware that aligns with the evolving preferences of young Chinese consumers, thus unlocking growth potential in this segment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, manufacturers should focus on creating ceramic tableware that combines durability, aesthetic appeal, and practicality. Emphasizing innovative designs that blend modern and traditional elements will cater to young consumers' aesthetic preferences, while the development of multifunctional and ergonomically designed products will meet the demand for practicality and enhanced user experience.

Second, maintaining affordability is crucial. Targeting the preferred price range below 500 RMB will attract cost-sensitive young consumers. Additionally, offering tiered pricing options can cater to different budget levels while maintaining quality, ensuring a broader market appeal.

Third, optimizing e-commerce platforms is essential. Strengthening presence on major e-commerce platforms and enhancing online shopping experiences through detailed product descriptions, high-quality images, and customer reviews will drive sales. Leveraging social media and digital marketing, including influencer collaborations and targeted advertisements, will further engage young consumers and build brand awareness.

Fourth, focusing on brand positioning and loyalty programs is recommended. Building brand reputation through quality assurance and innovative design, rather than relying solely on brand name, will resonate with young consumers. Developing loyalty programs and personalized marketing strategies will enhance brand loyalty and customer retention, creating a loyal customer base.

Finally, ongoing market research and adaptation are necessary. Conducting regular market research to stay abreast of changing consumer preferences and emerging trends will ensure product offerings remain relevant. Exploring regional and cultural variations within the young consumer demographic will allow for tailored products and marketing strategies, maximizing market penetration and consumer satisfaction.

Future research should extend these findings by examining consumer preferences across different regions and cultural contexts, providing a more comprehensive understanding of global market

demands and opportunities for innovation in ceramic tableware. This approach will ensure that manufacturers and marketers can effectively cater to a diverse and dynamic consumer base.

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