

Analysis of Traditional Kazakh Jewelry in Terms of Cultural Values, Attitudes, and Ethnic Identity Perception

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Abstract: The present study aims to comprehensively evaluate the Kazakh jewelry tradition within the context of cultural values, attitudes, and ethnic identity. The research utilized a comparative correlational survey model with a sample of 401 voluntary participants residing in Kazakhstan. The findings indicate that participants have a high perception of cultural values related to jewelry, while their identity perception is at a moderate level. Female participants demonstrated significantly higher cultural value perceptions and knowledge levels compared to males. Furthermore, postgraduate and university graduates, as well as individuals over 51 years old, showed significantly higher perceptions of cultural values and recognition levels. Analysis by nationality revealed significant differences in favor of participants from Kazakhstan. Regression analysis revealed that both *identity perception and awareness/recognition levels of jewelry* positively and significantly predict *cultural value perception*. These predictor variables collectively account for 22.0% of the variance in the dependent variable (cultural value perception). Future research should explore the cross-cultural transformation of Kazakh jewelry motifs. Longitudinal and mixed-methods research designs could help explain the temporal and causal relationships among *cultural values, identity perception, and awareness*. A more profound analysis of symbolic meanings through qualitative fieldwork and semiotic analysis in rural areas is also suggested. Finally, integrating motif-based content into museum technologies and educational programs, along with digitizing oral narratives from the older generation, could support the intergenerational transfer and preservation of cultural heritage.

Keywords: Traditional Kazakh Jewelry, Cultural Values, Ethnic Identity Perception, Attitude.

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Introduction

Traditional jewelry art, as a tangible manifestation of cultural heritage, lies at the intersection of interdisciplinary research. Kazakh jewelry, in particular, offers a visual record of nomadic life, social structure, and beliefs throughout history. Over the past few years, the impact of jewelry on cultural memory, ethnic identity, and values has become a central research topic. The rapid development of technological production methods has reopened the debate on how to preserve traditional forms and motifs. In the meantime, museum exhibitions, digital archival projects, and design biennials are enriching the research agenda by increasing the international visibility of Kazakh jewelry. However, the pressure of cultural homogenization emerging from globalization threatens local aesthetic motifs.

Kazakh jewelry art is a multifaceted form of cultural expression that transcends mere ornamentation. This art form has historically served as a symbolic tool, reflecting the social structure, belief system, aesthetic sensibilities, and ethnic identity of Kazakh society. Carrying aesthetic, sacred, and social dimensions simultaneously, this tradition also plays a significant role in preserving historical continuity and cultural identity (Abazov & Sultanova, 2015). The history of jewelry in Kazakh culture has a broad chronology, extending from the Altai steppes to the Karakhanid period. Bronze alloy ornaments unearthed in archaeological excavations demonstrate that nomadic communities successfully employed metalworking technology from an early period (Degtyareva et al., 2019). By the 19th century, silver jewelry production was concentrated in regional workshops (Sykhova, 1984). The diversification of jewelry forms evolved in parallel with the nomadic lifestyle and migration routes (Sharmashkeeva, 2018).

The nomadic lifestyle has fundamentally shaped the functional and symbolic significance of jewelry. Lightweight, modular, and portable jewelry forms, adapted to the mobility of nomadic life, serve as a form of portable wealth. The engraving of cosmological symbols on metal surfaces tangibly represented the belief system by integrating the ancestor cult into daily life. Historical documents suggest that the strategic location of jewelry production workshops on caravan routes facilitated the development of robust trade networks (Tleubayeva, 2019). Shared motifs discovered across the Eurasian steppes highlight the cultural interaction and exchange of identity symbols among nomadic communities. Gold-based Saka artifacts created a powerful aesthetic legacy within Kazakh jewelry art. Furthermore, Chinese and Persian cultural influences enriched the motif repertoire, resulting in a vibrant cultural fusion (Gyul & Hejzlarová, 2022).

The three fundamental functions of Kazakh jewelry—social, aesthetic, and sacred—demonstrate the complexity of this art form. The social function enables jewelry to symbolically express an individual's age, gender, and marital status. The aesthetic function shapes societal norms of taste through craftsmanship, motif choice, and material quality. The sacred function is tied to meanings attributed to the jewelry, such as protection from the evil eye and spiritual well-being (Alivizatou, 2011; Zhumabay et al., 2024). In the modern period, the aesthetic function of jewelry has been recontextualized through events like biennials and design weeks, with traditional motifs being integrated into the visual language of contemporary art. In terms of the social function, the use of jewelry as an economic investment has increased in modern weddings, referring to social status and security (De Beukelaer & Koretskaya, 2016).

The Soviet era saw the widespread adoption of industrial production models, which led to the weakening of traditional, handcrafted methods. However, the post-independence period has witnessed a revival in traditional crafts, a development often associated with the strengthening of cultural identity. Today, while modern technologies like laser cutting and 3D printing are used in

jewelry production, the diversity of traditional motifs remains largely preserved (Yespenova, 2021).

The national importance of Kazakh jewelry stems from its potential to foster social cohesion as a visible symbol of cultural identity. In an international context, this jewelry acts as a tool of cultural diplomacy, enhancing Kazakhstan's soft power capacity through exhibitions and biennials. The five-volume compilation of Kazakh art by Abazov and Sultanova comprehensively documents the representative power of jewelry collections in nation-building processes (Abazov & Sultanova, 2015). Moreover, applications to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists seek to integrate jewelry art into the international protection regime. Creative industry reports also indicate that ethno-design brands are increasing foreign trade revenues and contributing to the national economy (De Beukelaer & Koretskaya, 2016).

This study examines the Kazakh jewelry tradition within a holistic framework, in terms of cultural values, attitudes, and ethnic identity. This study analyzes the Kazakh jewelry tradition by focusing on awareness within a holistic framework that includes cultural values, attitudes, and ethnic identity.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is structured around the interconnection of cultural values, attitudes, ethnic identity, semiotics, and nationalism. Cultural values constitute the shared symbolic meanings transmitted through traditional jewelry, whereas attitudes reflect the individual-level orientations and affective responses toward these cultural forms. Ethnic identity operates as a mediating construct that links personal attitudes with collective heritage, thus enabling the transformation of individual meaning-making into broader social belonging. Semiotic analysis provides the interpretive lens for understanding how jewelry motifs materialize these abstract values and identity markers into visible cultural codes. Nationalism situates these semiotic and identity-based processes within a wider socio-political narrative (Sharma & Singh, 2023; Tice, 2018), demonstrating how jewelry functions simultaneously as a personal ornament and as a marker of national belonging. Taken together, these dimensions form a coherent model in which cultural values shape attitudes, attitudes reinforce identity, semiotic processes provide the mechanism for the articulation of meaning, and nationalism anchors these dynamics within historical and political contexts. This integrative approach demonstrates that the symbolic power of jewelry cannot be reduced to isolated concepts but emerges from the dynamic interaction of values, attitudes, identity, semiotic codes, and national narratives.

The variables of this study are not treated in isolation but are anchored in broader theoretical debates within identity theory and cultural sociology. Cultural values are conceptualized as shared symbolic repertoires that align with Alexander's (2003) cultural sociology, in which material artifacts act as carriers of collective meaning. Attitudes represent the individual-level evaluative orientation toward these repertoires, connecting psychological dispositions with socialized cultural codes. Identity perception is grounded in social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) and Phinney's (2013) ethnic identity development model, which explain how individuals negotiate belonging through visible cultural symbols such as jewelry. Awareness and recognition, operationalized through a knowledge test, capture the cognitive dimension of this process, clarifying the extent to which individuals can identify and interpret symbolic motifs. Heritage, therefore, is not employed merely as a descriptive term but as a functional mechanism through which values, attitudes, and identity are transmitted across generations. By situating the variables within these theoretical traditions, the study provides operational clarity: cultural values were measured with a validated Likert scale,

identity perception with an adapted MEIM-based scale, and awareness with a recognition test. Taken together, identity and awareness operate through complementary pathways: the former provides the affective bond, while the latter supplies the cognitive recognition necessary for sustaining meaning. Their joint effect on cultural value perception is therefore not arbitrary but grounded in established theoretical perspectives that emphasize the interdependence of symbolic attachment and conscious knowledge in cultural transmission. This framework demonstrates that jewelry operates at the intersection of cultural sociology and identity theory, where heritage functions both as a symbolic code and as a measurable construct linking individual orientations with collective identity formation.

Cultural and Historical Context of Traditional Kazakh Jewelry

The historical origin of Kazakh jewelry serves as a tangible reflection of the nomadic way of life on the Central Asian steppes. Although historical documents remain limited, archaeological findings show that metal craftsmanship has shaped the region's artistic sensibilities since the Early Bronze Age. A typological assessment of copper and bronze vessels by Degtyareva et al. (2019) confirmed that even in early periods, jewelry was crafted to denote social status. In a comprehensive study of Soviet Central Asian collections, Sykhova (1984) noted that the widespread use of silver in the late nineteenth century paved the way for a diversification of aesthetic forms. Furthermore, motif distribution exhibits a geographical pattern that parallels migration routes (Sharmashkeeva, 2018). Symbols such as the "world tree" and "ram's horn" document cross-cultural interaction by mapping the paths of circulation among early Turkic tribes (Tleubergenov et al., 2016). Rather than being merely a technical or aesthetic preference, the variety of jewelry forms demonstrates the materialization of spatial experiences preserved in the social and ethnic memory of nomadic societies (Toibazar et al., 2025).

Recent excavations uncovering traces of Saka and Wusun influences in some gold examples reinforce the idea of a multifaceted early cultural exchange. For instance, Chlachula's (2020) geological analysis of stone ornaments in eastern Kazakhstan shows that the selection of local raw materials is related to the degree of sedentarism. Proximity to regions where metal was extracted from veined rocks also influenced the intergenerational transmission of technical skills. During their nomadic movements, tribal communities secured both economic and cultural capital through the jewelry they carried, which consequently served as a form of portable treasure. Evidence from ritual burials supports this mobility, suggesting that people conceived jewelry as a means of communicating with ancestral spirits. However, differences observed in early grave excavations also reveal that gender roles determined jewelry typology (Yespénova, 2021).

The combination of social, aesthetic, and sacred functions in Kazakh jewelry is a prime example of a multi-layered symbolic structure. Heavy silver belts and bracelets serve as indicators of property and influence when the social hierarchy becomes visible (Samuratova et al., 2015). The aesthetic value, however, extends beyond mere visual appeal; the delicacy of the craftsmanship and the composition of the motifs reflect the wearer's taste and societal role expectations. Furthermore, the sacred function maintains the shamanic origins of protective talismanic pieces, which are believed to provide the individual with spiritual harmony (Islambekov et al., 2023; Kaliyeva, et al., 2025). Although Soviet-era modernization secularized some religious symbols, necklaces with the "koşkar muyız" (ram's horn) pattern—similar to an evil eye talisman—are still sought after for their perceived protective power (Suraganov, 2021).

Ethnic memory is the cornerstone of cultural continuity, acting as a dynamic structure that transmits a society's past experiences, values, and collective identity across generations (Akcan &

Blaha, 2023). This memory is not only shaped and preserved through oral narratives or written documents but also through symbolic objects, particularly cultural items like jewelry that are part of daily life. In Kazakh culture, jewelry transcends mere ornamentation to become a powerful symbolic tool that carries and reproduces ethnic memory. The transmission of mythological and cosmological imagery from one generation to the next plays a central role in the materialization of this memory. Bell's (2003) concept of the "national mythscape" suggested that physical objects function as a locus of collective memory, thereby solidifying the boundaries of identity. Similarly, Smith (1984) noted that ethnic myths, when reinterpreted at historical turning points, contribute to processes of collective resistance and revival. In this context, sun- and moon-centered cosmological motifs in Kazakh jewelry, as demonstrated by Eshbekova (2023), materialize a perception of cosmic balance as a symbolic representation of the celestial order. However, when these mythological images encounter modern cosmology, they hybridize with scientific interpretations, gaining new layers of meaning (Tomašević, 2022). Geometric motifs like spirals and infinity symbols simultaneously allude to both the cyclical nature of the universe and the spiritual presence of ancestors. While the mass replication of these symbols through modern production techniques sparks debates on authenticity, it does not lead to the complete erasure of their symbolic meanings. This ultimately demonstrates how cultural meanings persist in a layered fashion on material objects.

Ethnolinguistic analyses also reveal how ethnic memory is preserved at a linguistic level. In their study, Kozhakhmetova et al. (2024) analyzed the origins of the names on the jewelry in relation to mythic narratives, showing that cultural memory is reinforced through language. Similarly, Tursyn et al. (2013) conducted a semiotic study on Astana's urban symbols, demonstrating that traditional jewelry motifs retain their original meanings while being integrated into the modern city's identity. Porcar's (2011) theory of signs and meaning offers a functional framework for explaining these multi-layered processes. Within the sign-object-interpretant triangle, jewelry motifs constitute the initial link in the chain of interpretation.

In these interpretative processes, ethnic memory is not a fixed structure but functions like a living organism, reconfigured according to changes in social context (Kerimova, 2024). However, as Ulbossyn and Mandal (2019) note in their work on color symbolism, as the meanings of color codes shift in the global market, traditional color categories are also transformed. Conversely, Shaygozova et al.'s (2023) study conducted on the concept of "home" reveals how jewelry motifs establish a semantic relationship with feelings of family, homeland, and belonging, showing how ethnic memory is reflected in daily life.

However, younger generations' inadequate comprehension of these symbols results in the perception of ceremonial jewelry as merely an accessory. Shaygozova and Muzafarov (2023) examined traditional doll figures demonstrating ritual consciousness transmitted at a young age through toy jewelry. Furthermore, Mukhamadeyeva and Akinov (2020) worked on additive manufacturing technologies and argued that traditional objects can be reproduced with modern materials without sacrificing authenticity. These technological approaches support the continuity of cultural ecology and the sustainability of its practices. Workshop activities organized as part of rural tourism initiatives transform jewelry into a source of cultural income without detaching it from its ritual context (Tleubayeva, 2019). The culture industries report by De Beukelaer and Koretskaya (2016) also highlighted the branding potential of such handicrafts within the framework of the creative economy. However, over-commercialization carries the risk of trivializing the meaning of ritual symbols, thereby damaging cultural content. Consequently, Alivizatou (2011) points to the importance of community-based heritage preservation initiatives,

arguing for the documentation of the original contexts of ceremonial jewelry to secure the continuity of its cultural meaning.

Symbolic Meanings and a Semiotic Approach in Kazakh Jewelry

Throughout human history, jewelry has not been merely a tool for adornment but also a visual representative of social identity, belief systems, and cultural belonging. In this context, Kazakh jewelry art emerges as a field where cultural values, social relationships, and symbolic meanings are expressed in a multi-layered way, extending beyond a simple form of aesthetic production. Semiotics offers an effective theoretical framework for analyzing these multi-meaning production processes. Specifically, it enables the analysis of how identity, values, and objects of material culture shape attitudes (Jewitt & Leeuwen, 2000).

Semiotic analyses conducted by Aljanova et al. (2016) on symbols in traditional Kazakh culture, such as the yurt, clothing, and food, show that a similar methodological approach can also be applied to jewelry motifs. Motifs frequently found in Kazakh jewelry, such as the "ram's horn," the cross, and various geometric patterns, are not merely ornamental elements but also cultural codes that carry social memory. According to Suraganov's (2021) analysis, the "koşkar muyiz" (ram's horn) motif is a symbol of cosmic revival and fertility in Turkic mythology. Similarly, archaeological research on totemic animal symbols indicates that these zoomorphic forms are closely related to a shamanic worldview (Sapashev et al., 2024).

The cultural functions of motifs are not limited to meaning-making, but they also carry the traces of regional interactions. In a study on Turkmen women's jewelry by Noruzi and Kermani (2015), a protective "evil eye" function is gained. This reveals how jewelry motifs reflect ongoing cultural exchange throughout Central Asia. Following the adoption of Islam, some motifs were stylized and gained new layers of meaning, yet the continuity of core cosmological references is noteworthy. The repeated use of numbers like 3 and 7 on jewelry pendants, for example, points to a search for metaphysical balance (Koshymova & Nogaibayeva, 2024).

Symbolic intensity is not confined to sacred or traditional meanings. It also emerges in forms associated with social status. Satpathy (2017) emphasized that jewelry consciously reinforces the display of status through its visual codes, while Jessop (2013) noted that in contemporary jewelry design, the conveyed message is more prominent than the craftsmanship. This conveyance suggests that symbols undergo semantic shifts and begin to generate new layers of interpretation depending on the context. Indeed, the integration of jewelry motifs into landscape architecture projects by Yussupova et al. (2017) reveals that these symbols can also be reproduced in a spatial context. Although some critics might view this as "overuse" of motifs, the re-emergence of traditional patterns in contemporary design contributes to cultural continuity. Calefato's (2023) analysis of luxury jewelry communication also shows that motifs are integrated into brand narratives, becoming tools that trigger consumer desire. However, this commercialization process carries the risk of narrowing the original design space for local artisans.

The Relationship Between Ethnic Identity and Social Meaning

Kazakh jewelry plays a central role in the construction of ethnic identity as a visual reflection of symbolic codes that remain vibrant in social memory, manifested on the body. This function gains meaning within the framework of ethnicity theory, which posits that material culture defines the boundaries of identity (Nagel, 1994; Strayhorn, 2022). The use of ceremonial jewelry, in particular, allows for the updating of ethnic identity through rituals (Wettstein, 2016). In the

Kazakh context, necklaces with the ram's horn motif symbolize lineage, making the ancestral narrative visible on the body. At the same time, younger generations selectively reinterpret traditional motifs under the influence of global fashion, which makes identity narratives more flexible and personal. However, folklore research cites excessive stylization as a threat to cultural authenticity, as it can trivialize the depth of meaning. The intergenerational transfer of jewelry inherited from ancestors ensures the material continuity of identity, while the display of these objects in community rituals contributes to the updating of collective memory. Traditional sets worn by brides at weddings, for example, are considered a public expression of both family honor and ethnic belonging. This process gives rise to a multi-layered identity performance in which mythological references, historical memory, and contemporary aesthetic preferences are intertwined (Yespenova, 2021).

In Kazakh society, social categories such as age, lineage, and marital status are encoded on the body through jewelry, thereby making the hierarchical structure visible. The adornment of jewelry typologies with symbols that mark life stages reveals that these objects were also serving a social control function (Lucy, 2007). The wearing of thin silver bracelets by young, unmarried women is perceived as an indicator of both virginity and suitability for marriage, whereas the jeweled chest ornaments of married women signify the prosperity of the family's economy. In contrast, the bronze-alloy belt buckles of elderly women imply the completion of the productive period and earned respect. In this context, the jewelry repertoire assumes the function of a rite of passage indicator for the individual's life cycle. Although the modern nuclear family structure has pushed some visual codes into the background, they are reactivated during ceremonies.

The use of heavy jewelry as a prestige indicator establishes a direct relationship between economic power and symbolic value (Milovanović, 2018). This dual meaning—both protective and status-enhancing—is clearly observed in family purchasing practices of gold jewelry (Pathy et al., 2021). However, economic uncertainties and rising gold prices are leading younger generations to opt for lighter, alloy materials. While this shift does not diminish symbolic intensity, it does create a change in the physical form of the jewelry, with identity markers being restructured into smaller forms. Furthermore, contemporary jewelry based on wood and leather, used as premarital gifts, expands the layers of social meaning with messages of environmental consciousness. The chronology of jewelry from the twentieth century to the present reveals this transformation in material preferences as a testament to cultural adaptability (Milovanović, 2018).

Concepts of social belonging, power, and prestige are made visible in the public sphere through the concentrated symbols in Kazakh jewelry. Branded jewelry motifs that promise prestige to the consumer are integrated into marketing strategies as a tool to reproduce group belonging (Halter, 2007). Even the production process of jewelry becomes a stage where meanings of status are shaped, turning the design process into not merely an aesthetic act but a social one (Jessop, 2013). Prestige objects worn on the body function as part of practices of individual empowerment and social recognition (Cohn, 2009). While global luxury brands stand out on the world stage, the handcrafted production of local artisans offers an alternative source of prestige for those in search of authenticity. Handcrafted jewelry production creates economic value and assumes a balancing role in community power relations (De Beukelaer & Koretskaya, 2016). Therefore, jewelry circulates as a material symbol of not only individual prosperity but also the collective success of the community.

In ritual performances, the presence of leader figures adorned with ostentatious jewelry serves as visual reinforcement of authority (Wettstein, 2016). However, an excessive emphasis on prestige can create an exclusionary effect in some social groups, allowing jewelry symbolism to become a visual tool for class division. Applied anthropology research reveals that the younger

generation prioritizes experiential prestige over symbolic capital, leading them to prefer lighter designs. As a result, Kazakh jewelry creates a dynamic cultural economy that reinforces both individual and social belonging by modularly structuring the codes of prestige and power.

Ethnic Identity Theories and Identity, Ornamentation, and Material Culture in Central Asian Cultures

Recent studies on the relationship between identity and ornamentation in Central Asian cultures emphasize that jewelry is not merely an aesthetic object but a carrier of social memory, gender performance, and cultural continuity. Analyses of women's clothing and headdress ornaments in the Kazakh context demonstrate that the triad of form, color, and ornamentation, when interpreted alongside nomadic heritage, regional contacts, and modernization experiences, transforms into an identity narrative (Xu, 2022). These findings establish a theoretical link between the everyday use of jewelry and the enactment of identity, grounding the research's "ornamentation-identity" axis with current data.

In terms of representation and symbolism in material culture, the tools and ornamentation repertoire produced by nomadic life practices present a semiotic system that can be interpreted as indicators of identity. Discussions developed through the lens of ancient Eurasian steppe societies reveal that objects (including jewelry) are shaped by mobility, seasonality, and community organization, and that their symbolic meanings are sensitive to the context of use (Meyer, 2024). Color-form symbols (e.g., blue—sky, green—spring) in the Kazakh ornamental language are cultural signifiers embedded within this semiotic framework (Nygmanova, 2021).

Recent ethnolinguistic studies of jewelry names and production techniques across Turkic languages demonstrate that designations such as rings (jüzük), bracelets (biläzük), and earrings (sırğa) are not merely lexical units but also cultural categories interwoven with references to "protective/sacred power," "healing," and "prestige" (Kozhakhmetova, 2024). These findings establish a solid conceptual bridge for connecting the naming and functional world of Kazakh jewelry to consumption motivations and value orientations. Approaches in the art-culture literature arguing that art objects in Central Asia, beyond being mere "representations," emerge as actors in social and political spheres also redefine the role of jewelry in the contemporary exhibition and design ecosystem (de Tiesenhausen, 2021).

Ethnic identity theories are important in understanding adornment practices in Central Asian cultures. Tajfel (1978) emphasized that individuals turn to symbolic practices to strengthen their sense of belonging to their groups. In this context, Kazakh jewelry is not only aesthetic but also a tool for clarifying group boundaries. Phinney's (2013) three-stage model of ethnic identity development can help explain the role jewelry plays in processes of identity discovery, participation, and belonging. Shils's (1981) discussions of the concept of tradition explain how jewelry continues to function as a link to the past even in modern societies. Current studies in Central Asia suggest that objects such as silver rings, belt buckles, and necklaces function as cultural capital. These are directly associated with family origin, social status, and religious beliefs.

The impact of globalization and modernization processes on adornment practices in Central Asia is also noteworthy. Appadurai's (1996) theory of cultural flows suggests that jewelry has become a part of not only local but also transnational identities. Indeed, recent studies show that Kazakh youth blend both modern design elements and traditional motifs, thus creating a form of "hybrid identity" (Mukhamadeyeva & Akinov, 2020). This demonstrates that ethnic identity is not fixed but a dynamic and negotiated process, and jewelry serves as a powerful symbolic tool in this process.

Gaps in the Literature and the Significance of the Research

Although a rich body of global scholarship has examined jewelry, material culture, and identity in anthropology and sociology (e.g., Hoskins, 2013; Miller, 2020), specific empirical studies on Kazakh jewelry remain scarce. While international research highlights the symbolic, biographical, and material dimensions of jewelry across diverse cultures, most of these works do not provide scale-based or quantitative analyses of cultural values, identity perceptions, and awareness in the Kazakh context. Thus, the present study does not claim a complete absence of research on jewelry and identity but rather identifies a contextual and methodological gap: the need to adapt and apply broader theoretical insights to the specific case of Kazakhstan's traditional jewelry and its role in cultural value transmission and ethnic identity formation.

When examining existing studies in the field of Kazakh jewelry culture, four fundamental, mutually reinforcing limitations stand out. First, in terms of methodological approach, the studies have largely remained one-dimensional. Studies by researchers such as Tleubergenov et al. (2016) and Sharmashkeeva (2018) have been limited to aesthetic typology or iconographic analysis, failing to address the social and cultural contexts of jewelry holistically. This limitation has led to jewelry being considered solely as art objects, overlooking its role in identity construction and cultural transmission. Another significant limitation stems from a lack of theoretical foundation. While the national myth theories of Bell (2003) and Smith (1984) theoretically explain the role of jewelry in identity construction, the lack of support for these theoretical frameworks with field data creates a significant gap in the literature. Furthermore, due to a lack of interdisciplinary theoretical integration, jewelry research appears disconnected from the fields of sociology, anthropology, design, and cultural economics (Loulanski, 2006).

Another significant shortcoming concerns data collection and analysis methods. As Kulsarieva et al. (2018) noted, while quantitative survey-based studies provide representativeness, studies that examine in detail the interaction of cultural values with sociodemographic variables and individuals' knowledge levels are extremely limited. Finally, in terms of thematic scope, existing studies have neglected important areas. While most studies focus on women's jewelry, topics such as men's jewelry practices, the political symbolism of nomadic belt buckles, and the use of traditional motifs in modern design practices have not been adequately examined (Mkrtchyan, 2014; Milovanović, 2018).

When specific gaps identified as a result of the literature review are examined, it is clear that comprehensive survey studies examining jewelry use practices by age and gender within a cultural context have not been published. This hinders understanding the intergenerational transmission mechanisms of jewelry culture. Similarly, field studies examining the impact of nomadic lifestyles on jewelry attitudes among today's urban Kazakh youth are limited, and the transformation of traditional jewelry culture in modern living conditions has not been systematically examined.

Although diaspora literature addresses identity performance, the specific role of jewelry motifs in it has not been elaborated. Furthermore, psychological scales measuring the extent of sacred use in a modern secular context have not been developed, leaving the interaction between faith and jewelry unclear. The cultural factors influencing young designers' choices of traditional motifs have not been systematically analyzed, and studies modeling the impact of preservation policies on cultural attitudes do not exist in the literature. These shortcomings hinder understanding the transformation processes of Kazakh jewelry culture in the contemporary context.

In theories of ethnic identity formation, Tajfel's (1978) social identity theory and Phinney's (1990) multicultural ethnic identity model are useful in explaining how visible symbols such as

jewelry serve as markers of "ingroup affiliation." Post-2020 psychometric research demonstrates that Phinney-based MEIM-R scales provide a high degree of measurement invariance across different ethnic groups and developmental stages (Fisher et al., 2020; Choquette et al., 2024). Studies conducted with regional samples (e.g., in the Iranian context) have shown strong reliability and validity indicators for the short forms of the MEIM. However, studies on culturally sensitive adaptation and measurement equivalence in the context of Kazakhstan remain limited (Habibi et al., 2021). This deficiency necessitates context-specific scale adaptations that jointly model ethnic identity dimensions with jewelry attitudes and perceptions of symbolic meaning.

Current research on Kazakh cultural symbolism reveals that visual indicators centered on horse/animal motifs and cosmogony reinforce the performance of ethnic identity in cinema and design, while in contemporary jewelry practices, traditional motifs are redefined through discourses of "resistance" and "belonging" (Atanova, 2022; Matkerim, 2023). These findings strengthen the theoretical justification for examining the relationship between motif preferences and identity commitment/exploration dimensions in our study. Furthermore, recent studies examining ethno-linguistic identity dynamics among multilingual and multi-ethnic young people emphasize that interpretations remain incomplete when identity indicators (language, symbols, motifs) are not considered together (Zharkynbekova et al., 2025).

The present research offers three key contributions to filling these gaps. Methodologically, it systematically examines the impact of sociodemographic variables on cultural value perception, identity perception, and knowledge level using a survey-based data collection method. Furthermore, it demonstrates how cultural values shape jewelry preferences through quantitative data, using scales developed around social status, prestige, and beliefs about the evil eye. In terms of theoretical contribution, it conceptually clarifies the interaction between cultural value systems and jewelry preferences by examining the mediating role of jewelry in ethnic identity construction through a multi-method design. The study offers a systematic approach to understanding the role of Kazakh jewelry culture in identity construction, cultural transmission, and social status determination, transcending the scope of aesthetic objects. Thus, it contributes to an interdisciplinary perspective on jewelry research and to the establishment of a solid theoretical foundation for future studies.

This study is a holistic analysis of the Kazakh jewelry tradition in terms of cultural values, attitudes, and awareness in the context of ethnic identity. The study sought to answer the following questions:

- What is the level of participants' perceptions of cultural value and identity, as well as their knowledge and recognition of Kazakh jewelry?
- Do participants' perceptions of cultural value and identity, and their knowledge and recognition of Kazakh jewelry, differ according to gender, educational status and age groups?
- Do participants' perceptions of identity and their knowledge and recognition of Kazakh jewelry significantly affect their perceptions of cultural value?

Method

This research employed a comparative correlational survey model, a form of quantitative research design. This model aims to comparatively examine the relationships between specific variables across two or more groups. It analyzes the correlations between the scores of individuals from different groups on particular variables to determine if these relationships are similar or

different. It is particularly preferred in research that seeks to reveal non-causal relationships between variables (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Creswell & Creswell (2018) defined correlational research as "designs that determine the degree of relationship between two or more variables," emphasizing that comparative correlational models are an important method for understanding how these relationships change across different groups.

This model was chosen because the study's primary objective was to reveal how Kazakh jewelry acquires meaning across different sociodemographic groups within the context of cultural values, attitudes, and perceptions of ethnic identity. The comparative correlational survey model was chosen as the method for addressing the research questions because it allows for the determination of the strength of the relationships between variables and the examination of whether these relationships vary across different groups. In this context, the comparative perspective provided by the model is crucial for revealing how cultural values and perceptions of identity interact with sociodemographic factors.

Research Population and Sample

Convenience sampling, a non-probability but purposive sampling method, was used in the sample selection process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participants were recruited through universities, cultural centers, and non-governmental organizations in different cities, and voluntary participation was encouraged through announcements shared on online platforms. In terms of regional distribution, the sample included participants from the northern, southern, eastern, and western regions of Kazakhstan, ensuring geographic diversity. Care was taken to include diverse age, gender, educational, and ethnic background groups in the sample, which increased the generalizability of the findings to a broader social segment. Research data were collected face-to-face in May and June 2025 at cultural centers and shopping malls.

Instruments

The data collection tools used were the *Cultural Values Scale for Traditional Kazakh Jewelry*, the *Identity Perception Scale for Traditional Jewelry*, and the *Traditional Kazakh Jewelry Awareness and Recognition Test*. All tools were administered in Kazakh.

Cultural Values Scale for Traditional Kazakh Jewelry

The researchers developed the Cultural Values Scale for Traditional Kazakh Jewelry to measure the cultural value perceptions of participants. The construction of this 5-point Likert-type scale, which ranges from 1 to 5 and includes items from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, adhered to a three-stage approach. Strongly Disagree is represented by 1, whereas Strongly Agree is represented by 5.

In the first stage, the theoretical and conceptual framework for the scale was established by reviewing the literature and examining the items of existing scales. Following this, 15 items were drafted and presented to three field experts for feedback. Based on their input, five items that were either redundant or lacked clarity were removed from the pilot form.

In the third stage, a pilot study was carried out, and the required preliminary analyses, including Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), were completed. The analysis was conducted after confirming that the KMO value was 0.91 and that Bartlett's test was statistically significant. As noted by Hair et al. (2010), the total explained variance should be at least 30% for a single-factor

scale and at least 40% for multi-factor scales. The results of the factor analysis demonstrated that the single-factor structure of the scale accounted for 49.45% of the total variance. All items in the scale were found to have factor loadings of .40 and above. Finally, reliability analyses were conducted. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated to be 0.86. Based on these validity and reliability analyses, it was concluded that the 10-item, 5-point Likert scale was sufficient to measure perceptions of cultural value related to traditional Kazakh jewelry. Table 1 provides the scale items.

Table 1

Items of the Cultural Value Perception Scale for Traditional Kazakh Jewelry

Item	Statement
1.	I believe that traditional Kazakh jewelry motifs should be used in modern jewelry and fashion designs.
2.	Traditional Kazakh jewelry motifs have spiritual meanings for me.
3.	Traditional Kazakh jewelry always interests me.
4.	I would like to learn about Kazakh traditional jewelry.
5.	I enjoy wearing Kazakh traditional jewelry.
6.	I believe that Kazakh traditional jewelry is important in transmitting our cultural values.
7.	I believe that the use of this type of jewelry helps preserve cultural identity.
8.	I believe that the symbolic meanings of traditional jewelry are culturally significant.
9.	I would recommend traditional jewelry to my friends.
10.	I believe that traditional Kazakh jewelry motifs should be used in modern jewelry and fashion designs.

Identity Perception Scale Regarding Traditional Jewelry

To measure the identity perception of participants regarding traditional jewelry, the researchers developed a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly Agree. During the scale development process, the literature was first reviewed on a theoretical and conceptual basis. Following this review, 12 items were drafted and presented to three field experts. After receiving feedback, two items were removed from the initial instrument due to issues such as not serving the scale's purpose, redundancy, or insufficient wording. Subsequently, a pilot study was conducted, and the initial necessary analyses of the scale (exploratory factor analysis) and reliability analyses were performed.

As a result of the pilot study, the KMO value was 0.85, and Bartlett's test was found to be significant, permitting further analyses. Factor analysis of the 10-item scale revealed that its single-factor structure accounted for 42.03% of the explained variance. All items demonstrated factor loadings of .40 or higher. Subsequently, the scale's structure was confirmed, and reliability analyses were conducted. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated as 0.84. Based on these findings, it was concluded that the 5-point Likert-type scale possesses sufficient validity and reliability for measuring students' perceptions of identity related to traditional Kazakh jewelry. The scale items are provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Items of the Identity Perception Scale for Traditional Kazakh Jewelry

Item	Statement
1.	I believe the symbolic meanings of traditional jewelry are ethnically significant.
2.	For me, traditional Kazakh jewelry is a sign of commitment to cultural identity.
3.	I consider jewelry a manifestation of cultural identity.
4.	I believe that traditional jewelry contributes to the preservation of cultural and ethnic identity.
5.	I prefer to wear jewelry that reflects my cultural and ethnic identity.
6.	My ethnic identity is a priority when purchasing jewelry.
7.	I believe that traditional jewelry significantly contributes to the formation of ethnic identity in Kazakhs.
8.	I enjoy reading resources on the relationship between Kazakh ethnic identity and traditional jewelry.
9.	I would like to research jewelry that represents Kazakh ethnic identity.
10.	Traditional jewelry is an essential element of ethnic identity.

Although identity is a multidimensional construct encompassing exploration, commitment, and negotiation processes (Phinney, 2013; Tajfel, 1978), the present study operationalizes “identity perception” in a more specific and contextual manner. The items used in the scale do not aim to capture the full theoretical depth of identity formation but rather to measure how individuals perceive and express their ethnic belonging through jewelry. For example, the statement “I prefer to wear jewelry that reflects my cultural identity” reflects the symbolic and behavioral dimension of identity as visible through material culture, consistent with approaches in cultural sociology that view artifacts as carriers of meaning (Alexander, 2003). Thus, the construct is not simplified but deliberately contextualized: identity perception here is treated as the individual’s evaluative orientation toward jewelry as a medium of ethnic belonging. This clarification demonstrates that the study does not attempt to reduce identity to a single dimension but instead focuses on its symbolic articulation in the specific cultural domain of traditional Kazakh jewelry.

Traditional Kazakh Jewelry Awareness and Recognition Test

The *Traditional Kazakh Jewelry Awareness and Recognition Test* is a 10-item, 5-option multiple-choice measurement instrument designed for application in the study. The researchers developed this instrument after obtaining expert opinions and conducting a reliability analysis (KR-20 value: 0.88). It was created by reviewing sources related to traditional Kazakh jewelry. The measurement instrument consists of closed- and open-ended questions about jewelry and visuals related to figures such as the ram's horn, sun motif, crescent, horse, and eagle. In developing this test, the opinions of three experts were consulted: two faculty members from the field of Kazakh jewelry and design and one faculty member from the field of assessment and evaluation. The test was revised based on their feedback; the number of questions remained the same, but their cognitive characteristics were modified. In the answers to these test questions, correct answers were coded as 1, and incorrect answers were coded as 0. The administration of this measurement instrument takes approximately 5 to 7 minutes.

Ethical Procedures

Participants took part voluntarily and were informed of their rights. Prior to participation, they were provided with detailed information regarding the study's purpose, ethical and confidentiality principles, and data usage conditions through an informed consent form, which they signed.

Data Analysis Techniques

IBM SPSS Statistics 27 was used to analyze the collected data, and descriptive statistics related to the tests and scales were calculated, including the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values. The normality of the data for the measurement instruments used was determined by examining the skewness and kurtosis values. Since the data from the tests and scales were normally distributed, parametric tests were employed to test the research questions. The independent samples *t*-test was used to compare participants' cultural value and identity perceptions, as well as their knowledge levels, based on gender. The One-Way Analysis of Variance was used for comparisons based on the variables of age, educational status, and nationality. Finally, multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the relationships between perceptions of cultural value and identity and knowledge about Kazakh jewelry.

Findings

The sample of this study included individuals from different age groups and educational levels living throughout Kazakhstan. The study sample consisted of 401 individuals residing in Kazakhstan who volunteered to participate in it. An examination of the demographic characteristics of the participants reveals a sample comprised of 66.8% females and 33.2% males. In terms of educational level, 57.6% of the participants had a secondary education, 30.2% had a university degree, and 12.2% had a postgraduate education. Regarding age distribution, 36.9% of the participants were under 30 years old, 36.2% were in the 31–50 age range, and 26.9% were 51 years and older. In terms of ethnic origin, 62.8% were Kazakhs, while 29.2% were Russian, and 8% belonged to other ethnic groups. The total number of participants was 401. These data indicate that the research had a balanced sample structure that covers different demographic groups. See Table 3.

Table 3
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variable	Gender	f	%
Gender	Female	268	66.8
	Male	133	33.2
Educational Level	Secondary Education	231	57.6
	University	121	30.2
	Graduate	49	12.2
Age	Under 30	148	36.9
	31–50	145	36.2
	51 and Over	108	26.9
Ethnicity	Kazakh	252	62.8
	Russian	117	29.2
	Other	32	8.0
Total		401	100.0

Table 4 presents the descriptive analysis of participants' scores on cultural values, identity perceptions, and their recognition and knowledge of jewelry. An examination of Table 3 shows that the mean score for participants on the cultural value perception scale was 3.91. This finding indicates that the participants had a high level of cultural value perception regarding jewelry. The mean score for the identity perception scale was 3.22, which suggests that participants' identity perception regarding jewelry was at a moderate level. Finally, the mean score for participants' awareness and recognition of jewelry was 6.32. This value indicates that participants' knowledge and recognition of jewelry are above a moderate level.

Table 4
Descriptive Analysis of Participants' Cultural Values, Identity Perceptions, and Familiarity and Knowledge Scores Regarding Jewelry

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Sd
Perception of Cultural Values Regarding Jewelry	401	1.80	5.00	3.91	0.68
Perception of Identity Regarding Jewelry	401	1.18	5.00	3.22	0.61
Awareness and recognition of jewelry	401	0.00	10.00	6.32	2.26

In the cultural value perception scale, female participants had a mean score of $M = 3.80$, while male participants had a mean score of $M = 3.06$. The result of the t-test to determine the difference between the means was significant ($p < 0.05$). According to the findings, female participants were found to have a significantly higher cultural value perception regarding jewelry compared to males. In the identity perception scale, female participants had a mean score of $M = 3.24$, and male participants had a mean score of $M = 3.18$. The t-test result showed that there was no significant difference between the groups ($p > 0.05$). Finally, in the awareness and recognition test, female participants' mean score was $M = 6.59$, while males' was $M = 5.77$. Based on the mean

scores, female participants were found to have higher levels of knowledge and recognition of jewelry compared to their male peers.

Table 5

Comparison by Gender of Participants' Cultural Value and Identity Perceptions, and their Knowledge and Recognition of Jewelry

	Gender	N	Mean	Sd	t	p
Perception of Cultural Values	Female	268	3.96	0.66	2.291	0.022*
	Male	133	3.80	0.69		
Perception of Identity Regarding Jewelry	Female	268	3.24	0.61	1.032	0.302
	Male	133	3.18	0.62		
Awareness and recognition of jewelry	Female	268	6.59	2.14	3.453	0.001*
	Male	133	5.77	2.39		

* $p < 0,05$

Table 6 presents the results of the comparison of the research sample's scale and test scores by educational status. The performed one-way ANOVA found the calculated *F values* to be *significant* for all three measures: the cultural identity perception scale ($p < 0.05$), the identity perception scale ($p < 0.05$), and the jewelry awareness and recognition test ($p < 0.05$).

According to the post-hoc analyses performed with Scheffe's test, participants with postgraduate and university degrees were found to have higher levels of cultural value perception, identity perception, and awareness and recognition of jewelry compared to participants with a secondary education.

Table 6

Comparison of Participants' Cultural Value and Identity Perceptions, and their Knowledge and Recognition of Jewelry, by Educational Status

	Education Level	N	Mean	Sd	F	p
Perception of Cultural Values	Secondary Education	231	3.83	0.65	4.116	0.017*
	University	121	3.97	0.69		
	Graduate	49	4.11	0.72		
	Total	401	3.91	0.68		
Perception of Identity Regarding Jewelry	Secondary Education	231	3.16	0.62	7.320	0.001*
	University	121	3.22	0.56		
	Graduate	49	3.52	0.61		
	Total	401	3.22	0.61		
Awareness and recognition of jewelry	Secondary Education	231	6.08	2.17	3.835	0.022*
	University	121	6.50	2.42		
	Graduate	49	6.98	2.09		
	Total	401	6.32	2.26		

* $p < 0.05$

Table 7 presents the results of comparing the research sample's scale and test scores by age group. The F-test analyses revealed that the F values calculated for the cultural value perception scale ($p < 0.05$) and the jewelry awareness and recognition test ($p < 0.05$) were significant based on the age groups of the participants. According to post-hoc analyses conducted with Scheffe's test, it was observed that participants over the age of 51 had high levels of cultural value perception, recognition, and jewelry knowledge. However, no significant difference was found in the identity perception scale ($p > 0.05$) based on age groups.

Table 7

Comparison of Participants' Cultural Value and Identity Perceptions, and their Knowledge and Recognition of Jewelry, by Age Group

	Age	N	Mean	Sd	F	p
Perception of Cultural Values	Under 30	148	3.75	0.58	7.698	0.001*
	31-50 years	145	3.95	0.75		
	51 years and over	108	4.07	0.66		
	Total	401	3.91	0.68		
Perception of Identity Regarding Jewelry	Under 30	148	3.14	0.57	2.569	0.078
	31-50 years	145	3.30	0.68		
	51 years and over	108	3.24	0.57		
	Total	401	3.22	0.61		
Awareness and recognition of jewelry	Under 30	148	5.95	2.40	4.644	0.010*
	31-50 years	145	6.32	2.12		
	51 years and over	108	6.81	2.14		
	Total	401	6.32	2.26		

* $p < 0,05$

An examination of Table 8 reveals the results of the comparison of the participants' scale and test scores by nationality. The F-test analyses revealed that the calculated F values for the cultural value perception scale ($p < 0.05$) and the jewelry awareness and recognition test ($p < 0.05$) were significant, based on the participants' nationalities. According to post-hoc analyses conducted using Scheffe's test, participants from Kazakhstan were found to have higher levels of cultural value perception, awareness, and recognition of jewelry compared to participants from other nationalities. However, no significant difference was found in the identity perception scale ($p > 0.05$) based on the participants' nationalities.

Table 8

Comparison of Participants' Cultural Value and Identity Perceptions, and their Knowledge and Recognition of Jewelry, by Nationality Group

			N	Mean	Sd	F	p
Perception of Cultural Values	Kazakh		252	4.00	0.67	5.998	0.003*
	Russian		117	3.76	0.65		
	Other		32	3.74	0.68		
	Total		401	3.91	0.68		
Perception of Identity Regarding Jewelry	Kazakh		252	3.28	0.65	2.772	0.064
	Russian		117	3.12	0.56		
	Other		32	3.15	0.46		
	Total		401	3.22	0.61		
Awareness and recognition of jewelry	Kazakh		252	6.52	2.27	3.314	0.037*
	Russian		117	6.07	2.12		
	Other		32	5.63	2.43		
	Total		401	6.32	2.26		

* $p < 0,05$

Model I, which included scores from the identity perception and knowledge and recognition scales as independent variables and cultural value perception as the dependent variable, was tested using multiple regression analysis. According to the research findings, Model I appears to be statistically significant ($R^2=0.22$; $p<0.05$). The model's predictor variables—identity perception and the level of knowledge and recognition regarding jewelry—account for 22.0% of the variance in the dependent variable (cultural value perception). Further analyses show that both identity perception ($\beta=0.366$; $p<0.05$) and knowledge and recognition ($\beta=0.301$; $p<0.05$) have a significant and positive effect on the perception of cultural value regarding jewelry. See Table 9.

Table 9

The Effect of Identity Perception, Knowledge, and Recognition of Jewelry on Cultural Value Perception

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	2.041	0.178			11.449	0.000**
	Perception of Identity Regarding Jewelry	0.403	0.049	0.366		8.308	0.000**
	Awareness and recognition of jewelry	0.090	0.013	0.301		6.828	0.000**

a. Dependent Variable: Perception of Cultural Values $R=0.478$; $R^2=0.224$; $F=58.880$

** $p<0,001$.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the relational dimensions of meaning associated with Kazakh jewelry—specifically cultural values, awareness, and ethnic identity perception—were analyzed from multiple perspectives. The first research question aimed to reveal participants' levels of cultural

value, identity perception, and recognition of Kazakh jewelry. The findings indicate that participants view traditional motifs as high-level representatives of cultural value, while also adopting a moderate degree of emphasis on ethnic belonging. Furthermore, the findings showing a widespread capacity for knowledge and recognition of the jewelry among participants revealed the level of the cognitive dimension of this cultural heritage. This situation illustrates that jewelry is perceived not only as an aesthetic object but also as a carrier of social memory. The cultural context is especially strengthened by the participants' forging of connections to ancestors, nomadic life narratives, and mythological representations through the jewelry. These results support the validity of the ethnic worldview model of Tleubergenov et al. (2016) in the case of jewelry. Similarly, the emphasis on symbolic intensity expressed in the modern visual culture analysis of Kulsarieva et al. (2018) aligns with these findings. Participants evaluate jewelry not just as aesthetic objects but as meaningful symbols connected to family memories and reflecting social norms. This symbolism demonstrates that jewelry has transformed beyond individual adornment into a visual communication tool that reflects social memory (Samuratova et al., 2015). Belief-based functions of jewelry, such as protection and warding off the evil eye, still maintain their validity. This continuing validity reveals that traditional beliefs are sustained at a perceptual level in modern life and that the cultural functions of jewelry remain vibrant in a contemporary context (Gyul and Hejzlarová, 2022).

The research results show that when the symbolic values of jewelry are ranked, the cultural dimension is more dominant than the identity dimension (Hindle et al., 2016). It is understood that jewelry is often positioned as a vehicle for cultural continuity rather than a means of identity. However, this does not entirely exclude the identity dimension. On the contrary, the jewelry shows that ethnic symbols are being reinterpreted in more flexible forms today and adapted to modern identity constructions (Mkrtchyan, 2014).

The second sub-problem of the study examines whether perceptions of jewelry differ by gender. The findings show that female participants have a higher level of cultural value perception and knowledge regarding jewelry compared to males. While females view jewelry as both an aesthetic and emotional investment, the meaning males assign to these symbols is shaped more by the context of status and prestige. However, the absence of a significant gender difference in the identity perception dimension suggests that jewelry is considered a gender-neutral symbol of ethnic belonging (Hindle et al., 2016). This gender difference should not be interpreted solely as a demographic variation. Rather, it reflects the role of gendered socialization, where women's closer involvement in family rituals and intergenerational heritage practices enhances their cultural value perception. At the same time, the absence of significant gender differences in identity perception suggests that jewelry functions as a shared ethnic symbol, transcending gender boundaries.

The higher level of knowledge about jewelry among women is related mainly to in-home socialization and cultural transmission processes. Specifically, traditional knowledge passed from mother to child guides both the use and the interpretation of jewelry (Milovanović, 2018). The determinative nature of gender roles on jewelry production and use can explain the relatively limited knowledge level of male participants. Milovanović (2018) observed that jewelry is blended with more intense emotional and cultural codes in females' experiences, whereas for males, these functions are balanced by prestige-based meanings. Women are also more active agents in the family regarding jewelry choices and have decisive roles in gifting and transmission processes (Pathy et al., 2021). These differences indicate that jewelry serves as a carrier of emotional and cultural value intertwined with gender roles. The gender equality in identity perception, on the other hand, suggests that jewelry functions as a common symbolic capital within the national

mythos (Bell, 2003). In this context, it is understood that cultural heritage is preserved not as a value exclusive to women but as a collective narrative belonging to the entire society.

The third research question investigates whether there is a significant difference in participants' perceptions of jewelry based on their educational level. The findings indicate that participants with higher education and postgraduate degrees exhibit a higher profile than secondary school graduates in terms of their cultural value perception, identity perception, and knowledge of jewelry. This situation suggests that formal education reinforces cultural heritage sensitivity at both cognitive and emotional levels (Piriyeva and Məmmədova, 2024).

Therefore, it is understood that cultural studies courses and museum visits offered in university settings create awareness about jewelry symbolism. In her work on the contemporary craft revival, Yespenova (2021) showed that art and design programs in higher education update knowledge of traditional motifs. The current results confirm this claim and show that educational environments are socialization spaces that reinforce the perception of cultural value. The integration of ethnolinguistic analysis into curricula increases students' symbolic consciousness as they learn the historical origins of motif names (Kozhakhmetova et al., 2024). Consequently, the high level of jewelry knowledge and cultural value perception among educated participants is linked to the learning process's function of strengthening symbolic capital, as noted in the literature.

However, the fact that the tendency for an increase in identity perception remains more limited compared to the cultural value dimension suggests that formal education does not entirely determine a sense of belonging. This finding supports Nagel's (1994) thesis, which emphasizes that socio-political layers work in conjunction with educational experience in the identity construction model. The research reveals that educational level increases jewelry knowledge, thereby enhancing the capacity for reflective thinking on cultural values. A deeper interpretation of symbolic meaning by the postgraduate group, in particular, indicates that interdisciplinary methodologies foster a critical perspective. Although awareness of traditional motifs was observed in the secondary school group, the limited depth of their interpretation highlights the importance of extracurricular learning opportunities for the transmission of cultural values. Thus, educational level directly contributes to cultural heritage sensitivity and strengthens jewelry symbolism with academic knowledge.

The fourth research question evaluates whether participants exhibit different patterns in their perceptions and knowledge of jewelry based on their age groups. The findings reveal that participants aged 50 and over were in a stronger position regarding cultural value perception and knowledge of jewelry compared to younger groups. However, the lack of a significant difference in identity perception among age groups suggests that ethnic symbols provide a common narrative ground across generations. Therefore, the age factor raises sensitivity to cultural values but does not affect identity consciousness. Findings on the richness of the motif memory in older generations support these results (Yılmaz & Ay, 2015). The finding that older participants show higher cultural value perception should not be read as a simple restatement of demographic variation. Instead, it reflects what Smith (1984) described as the role of elders as carriers of ethnic myths and collective memory. However, this difference is also shaped by broader structural factors: younger generations are socialized in digitalized consumer cultures where traditional motifs appear fragmented and commodified (Alexander, 2003). Thus, the age effect highlights not only intergenerational continuity but also the risk of weakened symbolic intensity under modern conditions, pointing to the need for experiential programs that actively engage youth in cultural transmission.

Furthermore, the moderate level of cultural value perception among the younger generation points to the effect of a digitalized consumer culture in reducing symbolic intensity. Despite this, the presence of some level of jewelry knowledge among young participants indicates that cultural knowledge is still sustained through in-home transmission. In this context, the high value placed

on experience by the older generation necessitates experience-based transmission programs for cultural heritage policy. The moderate perception of the younger generation highlights the need to blend traditional motifs with digital pedagogical content (Hutson & Olsen, 2021; Özdemir, 2022). Therefore, age variation reflects the time-dependent development of cultural value sensitivity, emphasizing the intergenerational communication function of jewelry symbolism. This result is in line with the dynamic transmission requirement defined in Loulanski's (2006) functional cultural heritage framework.

The fifth research question examined whether there was a difference in participants' perceptions and knowledge levels of jewelry based on their nationality. The findings showed that Kazakh participants had a higher sensitivity to cultural value perception and jewelry knowledge compared to other nationalities. The absence of a significant difference in identity perception suggests that jewelry also offered a common symbolic language in cross-national ethnic exchanges. This revealed that jewelry is a powerful tool for transmitting local cultural values while also contributing to cross-border identity narratives (Bell, 2003). The high cultural value perception of Kazakh participants indicated that the national heritage narrative is felt more strongly at the local level (Abazov & Sultanova, 2015). Participants from other nationalities, however, seem to operate with a more limited experience of the cultural meanings of jewelry. This difference suggests that diaspora communities were more dependent on visual media for cultural transmission (Yussupova et al., 2017). In this context, while jewelry carries a depth of meaning for local communities, it is re-coded in an international context more as an aesthetic and touristic object (De Beukelaer & Koretskaya, 2016).

The similarity in identity perception across nationalities suggests that jewelry symbols provide a universal visual language that can be interpreted similarly across different communities (Lucy, 2007). However, the differences in cultural value perception show that media and education policies are influential in preserving national heritage (Lichman & Doroshenko, 2016). As a result, jewelry stands out as a tool that supports cultural status and heritage consciousness in the Kazakh community, while in other communities, the perception is more based on aesthetic values. This distinction highlights the need for informative content and participatory workshop programs in tourism and cultural heritage policies. Jewelry serves as a bridge in international cultural communication. However, the preservation of local meaning is only possible by supporting community narratives. The nationality-based findings indicate that jewelry has a strong potential to serve both as a means of reinforcing national identity and as a tool for cultural diplomacy. Nationality-based differences highlight the dual role of jewelry: while it serves as a medium of cultural continuity within the Kazakh community, in other groups it is often reinterpreted in aesthetic or cosmopolitan terms. This finding resonates with debates in cultural sociology on the tension between local authenticity and global commodification, suggesting that jewelry simultaneously supports national identity and functions as a tool of cultural diplomacy.

The sixth research question tests the study's conceptual model by analyzing the effect of participants' identity perception and jewelry knowledge levels on their perception of cultural value. The findings reveal that these two variables together significantly explain cultural value perception. This suggests that the cognitive and emotional connection individuals form with jewelry plays a crucial role in shaping cultural values. Moreover, the fact that the knowledge and identity components jointly shape cultural value suggests a multidimensional structure of cultural transmission (Jewitt & Leeuwen, 2004). The effect of the identity component in this process supports the emotional bond individuals form with national symbols (Bell, 2003). The contribution of the knowledge level reveals the importance of consciously preserving cultural heritage (Alivizatou, 2011). Although some studies emphasize the role of economic factors in jewelry

preferences, the findings of this study show that cultural value perception is more nourished by knowledge and identity components (Pathy et al., 2021). The combined influence of identity and knowledge suggests that cultural value perception emerges through the interaction of affective and cognitive dimensions. This multidimensionality supports theoretical models that emphasize the interdependence of symbolic attachment and conscious knowledge in sustaining heritage. From the perspective of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Phinney, 1990), identity strengthens the emotional and symbolic bond individuals form with cultural objects, thereby elevating their perceived value. At the same time, cultural sociology highlights that awareness and recognition provide the cognitive mechanism through which symbols retain their meaning (Alexander, 2003; Hoskins, 2013). The model therefore demonstrates that cultural value perception is not a spontaneous attitude but the outcome of an interplay between emotional attachment and conscious recognition. This theoretical grounding justifies the inclusion of identity and awareness as predictors and indicates that policies focusing only on emotional identification or only on informational transmission are insufficient; effective cultural transmission requires integrating both. This finding reveals an interactive and complementary relationship between the tangible nature of jewelry and its abstract cultural meanings. Belief-based identity bonds, in turn, reinforce the meaning and trust assigned to the object (Gyul & Hejzlarová, 2022). In this context, it is observed that experience-based approaches in cultural heritage education create a stronger perception of cultural value by supporting both the knowledge and identity components (Chen, 2018). However, the risk of economic pressures weakening symbolic values shows that cultural heritage is vulnerable to the threat of commercialization (Calefato, 2023).

Overall, cultural value perception has a strong potential to bring together knowledge acquisition processes and social identity structures. This potential contributes to the sustainability of abstract values through tangible cultural elements like jewelry. Furthermore, while the emotional intensity of symbols transforms in different ways in the digitalized world, increased access to information brings new opportunities to this process. The findings reveal the structure of cultural value perception and indicate the need for coordinated interventions in the fields of design, education, and policy to sustain this perception effectively. In this context, the developed model necessitates a holistic approach to managing the meaning of jewelry (Lucy, 2007). In conclusion, the effect of identity and knowledge components on cultural value perception reinforces the central role of jewelry symbols within the social structure.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, the research findings reveal that the components of cultural value, identity perception, and cognitive knowledge come together to form a holistic interaction model within the context of jewelry symbolism. This model expands Bell's (2003) theory of national myths through concrete objects, deepening the function of material culture in identity construction. The research also adds a cognitive dimension to Nagel's (1994) approach to the reproduction of identity, contributing to a holistic theoretical consideration of the synergy between knowledge and identity. The functional cultural heritage approach of Loulanski (2006) is supported by the data obtained, allowing for the expansion of the conceptual framework on the social functionality of cultural objects. The determinative effect of the identity component on cultural value perception supports Smith's (1984) theoretical approach, which emphasizes the central role of emotional bonds in ethnic mythologies. The results show that cultural value perception is not

limited to emotional belonging alone but is a shared structure shaped in conjunction with cognitive knowledge processes. Therefore, the study fills a significant theoretical gap in the theory of material culture by centering the components of knowledge, identity, and value.

Practical Implications

The research's practical findings also provide a basis for policy and practice recommendations across various disciplines. Cultural heritage education programs must integrate jewelry symbolism into curricula through experience-based learning modules. For museum and exhibition curators, reorganizing jewelry collections from a narrative perspective is crucial for increasing visitor interaction.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The first limitation of this study is that the sample consisted only of volunteers from a specific region of Kazakhstan. The concentration of the data collection process in city centers does not adequately reflect jewelry practices in rural areas. Second, the self-report data collection approach increases the risk of social desirability bias, especially raising the possibility of exaggeration in cultural value perception. Third, the cross-sectional design may also be insufficient to determine the causal direction among the components of cultural value, identity perception, and knowledge. Finally, the study's failure to collect detailed socioeconomic status data prevents a complete evaluation of the effect of economic conditions on cultural value perception. These limitations restrict the generalizability of the findings and necessitate more comprehensive methodological designs for future research.

Recommendations

Future research could examine the cross-national transformation of jewelry motifs by using multi-centric samples that include diaspora communities. Longitudinal designs should be used to track the causal relationships among cultural values, identity perceptions, and knowledge components over time, thereby explaining dynamic changes. In a qualitative research context, the combined application of interviews and visual ethnography methods could analyze the layers of symbolic meaning in detail. Furthermore, field studies conducted in rural areas would provide a perspective from which data can be evaluated from multiple angles. Mixed-methods designs that incorporate a socioeconomic status variable can provide a comprehensive understanding of the effect of economic conditions on cultural value perception. The combination of semiotic analysis and experimental design workshops could more clearly demonstrate the effect of modern interpretations of motifs on a sense of identity.

Jewelry motif analysis modules integrated into educational curricula would strengthen the intergenerational transfer of knowledge by increasing the cultural heritage sensitivity of younger generations. Museum technology research could support the role of augmented reality-supported exhibitions in strengthening visitors' connections to their identity. The digital archiving of the narratives of the older generation could ensure the permanence of the oral history of motifs. In this context, these recommendations will play a pioneering role in the implementation of research and applications related to the cultural values, awareness, and ethnic identity perception of Kazakh jewelry.

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