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Study on the Impact of Brand Characteristics of Pastry Time-Honored Brands on Consumers' Purchase Intention—A Case Study of Beijing Daoxiangcun Zero Store

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Abstract. The rejuvenation of time-honored brands faces dual challenges of upholding tradition and pursuing innovation. Taking Beijing Daoxiangcun Zero Store as an example, this paper constructs an analytical framework covering four dimensions: brand cultural inheritance, brand fun richness, in-store service and creative activities, based on brand authenticity and customer experience management theories. Empirical tests are conducted using factor analysis and regression analysis with 314 questionnaire data samples. The results show that all four dimensions have a significantly positive impact on purchase intention. The study reveals the synergistic mechanism of original authenticity and constructed authenticity management for time-honored brands, as well as the practical path of customer experience management, providing theoretical support and practical reference for their digital transformation.

Keywords: Time-honored Brands, Brand Characteristics, Brand Authenticity Management, Customer Experience Management, Purchase Intention

1. Introduction

Chinese time-honored brands carry rich cultural connotations and national memories, and are important treasures of Chinese commercial civilization. Since the 21st century, time-honored brands have generally faced severe challenges such as aging brand images, disconnected consumer groups and shrinking market shares. To this end, the state attaches great importance to the development of time-honored brands that uphold tradition and pursue innovation. In 2023, the Ministry of Commerce issued an announcement, clarifying that guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and earnestly implementing the decisions and arrangements of the Party Central Committee and the State Council, it will jointly with relevant departments strive to promote the innovative development of time-honored brands. With policy support, the development vitality of time-honored brands has been enhanced. More than 70% of Chinese time-honored brand enterprises maintained profitability during the pandemic; in 2022, nearly 35% of enterprises achieved annual sales exceeding 100 million yuan, showing an overall stabilized and improved development trend.

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However, the competitive pressure on time-honored brands has not diminished. New-style Chinese pastry brands such as Baosifu and Momo Pastry have emerged rapidly with the innovative strategy of integrating Western production techniques into Chinese pastries. Western baking brands have also seized market share through health-oriented labels, squeezing the living space of traditional time-honored brands from both sides. Against this background, how time-honored brands can uphold tradition, pursue innovation and promote brand rejuvenation has become a key issue of common concern in academia and industry. As a representative time-honored brand in the pastry industry, Beijing Daoxiangcun has explored new store models since 2024, successively launching innovative cultural-themed stores called "Zero Store". Centered on traditional Chinese food culture and integrating interactive experiences, these stores feature national trend style and youth-oriented expression to attract young consumers.

Based on preliminary research and theoretical analysis, this paper proposes four independent variables: brand cultural inheritance, brand fun richness, in-store service and creative activities, to explore their impact degree and mechanism on purchase intention. Integrating the two theories of brand authenticity management and customer experience management, this paper analyzes the characteristics of time-honored brands from three dimensions of inheritance, innovation and experience, enriching the theoretical achievements of time-honored brand innovation. At the practical level, this paper takes Beijing Daoxiangcun Zero Store as a case to refine a replicable transformation model, providing decision-making reference for the transformation and development of similar time-honored brand enterprises.

2. Theoretical basis and research framework

The core contradiction of time-honored brands lies in "upholding tradition" and "pursuing innovation". On the one hand, consumers' perception of authentic, traditional and original products is the foundation of brand value; on the other hand, rejuvenation transformation requires brands to make changes in products, services and communication methods. Therefore, a single theory cannot fully explain the mechanism of how time-honored brand characteristics affect consumers' purchase intention. The author takes brand authenticity management and customer experience management as the research basis, and the two form a complementary relationship. The former defines the essential content of time-honored brand characteristics, such as what to inherit in culture and what to innovate; the latter addresses how these characteristics are effectively perceived by consumers, such as how to design experiences and achieve communication. The integrated use of the two theories aims to reveal the impact path of time-honored brand characteristics on consumers' purchase intention.

2.1. Brand authenticity management

Brand authenticity is a core element of brand identification and brand identity. Based on a case study of Suzhou Daoxiangcun, Yang Guiju et al. systematically constructed the brand authenticity management theory, which divides brand authenticity into two dimensions: original authenticity and constructed authenticity [1].

Original brand authenticity management emphasizes the unchanging originality and purity of a brand, reflected in its adherence to traditional recipes, craftsmanship, styles and brand spirit. Barthel points out that an object is authentic when it is regarded as "original" or "real". For time-honored brands, authentic raw materials, mysterious recipes, inherited craftsmanship and unchanging signboards constitute the core representations of brand original authenticity [2]. This authenticity

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makes customers perceive the brand as authentic and reliable, meeting consumers' expectations of original flavor.

Constructed brand authenticity management, from a psychological perspective, emphasizes the dynamic construction process of brand perception. Spiggle et al. found that in brand extension, enterprises should adopt practices such as maintaining brand standards and styles, respecting brand heritage and preserving the essence of the brand, so that customers can associate extended products with the original brand at the cognitive level [3]. Xu Hui et al. point out that when enterprises adopt constructed authenticity, they should retain and inherit core brand elements while innovating product structure, market segments and brand image to adapt to environmental changes [1].

Enterprises adapt to environmental changes while preserving core brand spirit through product innovation, marketing communication innovation and cultural connotation innovation, which provides theoretical support for the innovation of time-honored brands based on inheritance. The author finds in this study that brand fun richness and creative activities are practical carriers of constructed brand authenticity, which reshape young consumers' perception of the brand through novel forms while preserving the core of time-honored brands.

2.2. Customer experience management

With the rise of the experience economy, customer experience has become a key dimension of enterprise competition. Ji Fulin points out that experience demand refers to the market demand where consumers recognize products and decide whether to accept them through personal experience and perception. Consumers' emotional needs and demand for personalized products have increased, and consumption goals have shifted from focusing on products to focusing on feelings [4]. An Hexin and Li Zhe constructed the "Six-Step Circular Model" for customer experience management of Chinese time-honored brands. The model points out that Chinese time-honored brands can analyze customer experience needs, determine experience themes, design experience products and services, create experience atmosphere, conduct experiential communication and manage customer relationships [5].

The author finds in the study that the in-store service dimension corresponds to links such as "design experience products and services" and "create experience atmosphere" in the model. Specifically, efficient service processes, staff recommendations and free tastings, and convenient shopping experience directly affect consumers' sensory and emotional experiences in the store, and thus influence purchase intention. In addition, the creative activity dimension integrates the ideas of experiential communication and customer relationship management. Through social media promotion, online mini-program ordering and interactive consumption, it extends the brand experience from in-store to online to form sustained brand interaction.

2.3. Theoretical integration of brand authenticity management and customer experience management

The logical relationship between the two theories can be summarized as follows: brand authenticity management determines cultural assets and innovation direction, while customer experience management determines experience design and communication methods.

Brand cultural inheritance meets consumers' emotional and functional needs for historical heritage and authentic quality; brand fun richness meets consumers' experience needs for novelty, personalization and social sharing; creative activities stimulate consumers' sense of participation and interaction desire, strengthening brand perception; in-store service enhances the convenience and

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pleasure of shopping, reducing consumption risks. The above four independent variables jointly affect consumers' purchase intention, enabling time-honored brands to achieve transformation by upholding tradition and pursuing innovation.

Based on this, this paper adopts a trinity analytical perspective of inheritance, innovation and experience for time-honored brand characteristics. The core logic of this perspective is that the transformation of time-honored brands is not a subversion of tradition, but a process of meeting young consumers' multi-level needs through product, marketing and cultural innovation while upholding the core spirit of the brand, with customer experience management serving as a practical bridge connecting brands and consumers.

2.4. Research hypotheses

Brand cultural inheritance embodies the original authenticity of time-honored brands. For time-honored brands, consumers' perception of authentic quality and cultural heritage is their core differentiated advantage over emerging brands. Brand fun richness embodies product-level innovation in constructed brand authenticity. Young consumers' demand for novelty, personalization and social sharing is increasingly strong, and brand fun richness responds precisely to this demand. In-store service is a key link in customer experience management. Service quality has a significantly positive impact on customer satisfaction of time-honored brands [6]. Efficient service processes and friendly staff interaction can reduce consumers' purchase risks, enhance shopping pleasure, and thus increase purchase intention. Creative activities are the core embodiment of customer experience management at the marketing level, as well as the direct carrier of action experience and related experience in experiential marketing. By stimulating consumers' sense of participation and sharing desire, creative activities form a word-of-mouth communication effect, thereby strengthening brand perception and purchase intention.

Based on the above theories, this paper proposes the research hypothesis: Brand cultural inheritance, brand fun richness, in-store service and creative activities have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention.

3. Research design

3.1. Research methods

This paper adopts a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Through literature research and interviews, it deeply understands the operation logic and consumer perception of Daoxiangcun Zero Store; through questionnaire surveys to collect data, it uses factor analysis, regression analysis and other methods to test the research hypotheses.

3.2. Case selection

This study selects the Longfu Treasure Hunt Hall of Beijing Daoxiangcun Zero Store as the case object. Beijing Daoxiangcun is a Chinese time-honored brand recognized by the Ministry of Commerce, with a long history and strong brand influence. The Zero Store model is a landmark practice of Daoxiangcun's brand rejuvenation. As a new store, the Longfu Treasure Hunt Hall adopts a "treasure hunt" theme, launching innovative products such as bronze ware archaeological pastries and national-style tea-making, which are typical and forward-looking in terms of cultural experience and product innovation.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/2026.33886

3.3. Data sources

1. Field Interviews: The research team visited the Longfu Treasure Hunt Hall in April 2025 and conducted in-depth interviews with the store manager, covering store positioning and site selection, visual design, product development, service marketing and other aspects.

2. Consumer Interviews: Random interviews were conducted with in-store consumers to understand their consumption motivation, experience evaluation and improvement suggestions.

3. Questionnaire Survey: Questionnaires were distributed through the Credamo platform, and a total of 314 valid questionnaires were recovered. The sample characteristics are as follows: male consumers account for 40.13% and female consumers account for 59.87%, with a gender ratio of approximately 4:6. In terms of age distribution, respondents are concentrated in the 18-45 age group, of which 18-25 years old account for 41.72%, 26-35 years old account for 21.34%, and 36-45 years old account for 21.02%. In terms of monthly disposable income of respondents, most are concentrated above 3,000 yuan, with 68.15% earning more than 3,000 yuan, including 34.39% earning more than 8,000 yuan. In terms of occupation, students account for the largest proportion at 30.89%, followed by enterprise employees, public institution workers and freelancers at 13.89%, 22.29% and 15.61% respectively.

3.4. Variable measurement and questionnaire design

Based on brand authenticity theory and customer experience management theory, this paper sets four independent variables: brand cultural inheritance, brand fun richness, in-store service and creative activities, and one dependent variable: purchase intention. All variables are measured using a Likert five-point scale, and the scale design refers to mature scales from existing studies.

Table 1. Questionnaire design

Dimension Name	Theoretical Basis	Item	Included Variable
Brand Cultural Inheritance	Original Brand Authenticity	Q17	Brand Cultural Stories
		Q19	Incentive Mechanism of Cultural Element Consumption
Brand Fun Richness	Constructed Brand Authenticity	Q20	Diversified Festival Style Design
		Q22	IP Cooperation, Cross-border Co-branding and Seasonal Limited-edition Products
In-store Service	Customer Experience Management	Q23	Efficient Service Processes
		Q24	Staff Recommendations and Free Tastings
Creative Activities	Customer Experience Management	Q18	Social Media Promotion Activities
		Q21	AR Technology
		Q25	Interactive Consumption (DIY)
Purchase Intention	Dependent Variable	Q26	Intention to Purchase Products
		Q27	Intention to Recommend Products to Others
		Q28	Intention to Spontaneously Recommend Products Online

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/2026.33886

4. Data analysis and results

4.1. Descriptive statistical analysis

1. Consumers' main impression of Daoxiangcun is "a well-known Chinese time-honored brand" (20.7%), followed by "Sanhe logo" (12.2%) and "Beijing souvenir" (11.5%). Regarding product issues, "single taste and insufficient innovation" accounts for the highest proportion (26.7%), followed by "limited consumption scenarios" (18.5%).

2. Regarding attitudes towards Western pastry shops, 46.82% of respondents said they "look forward to it very much and will try it", and 35.99% said they "are interested but depend on specific products", showing an overall high acceptance.

3. Preference ranking for product factors: taste > ingredients > appearance design > nutrition and health; Preference ranking for store factors: service attitude > shopping convenience > decoration style > handmade production scenes > ancient-style immersive experience > photo-worthy spots.

4.2. Reliability and validity tests

Reliability analysis shows that the Cronbach's α coefficient of the overall scale is 0.911, and the α coefficients of each dimension range from 0.691 to 0.779, indicating good internal consistency of the scale. Validity analysis shows that the KMO value is 0.927, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant ($p<0.001$), which is suitable for factor analysis. Five common factors are extracted by principal component analysis, with a cumulative explained variance contribution rate of 75.139%, indicating that the first five factors have good explanatory power for information and are consistent with the preset dimensional structure.

Table 2. Factor analysis

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.080	50.667	50.667	6.08	50.667	50.667	2.169	18.071	18.071
2	0.818	6.815	57.481	0.818	6.815	57.481	2.134	17.781	35.852
3	0.756	6.303	63.784	0.756	6.303	63.784	2.053	17.106	52.958
4	0.730	6.085	69.869	0.73	6.085	69.869	1.554	12.954	65.912
5	0.632	5.269	75.139	0.632	5.269	75.139	1.107	9.227	75.139

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

4.3. Regression analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis is conducted with purchase intention as the dependent variable and brand cultural inheritance, brand fun richness, in-store service and creative activities as independent variables. The model summary shows that the adjusted R-squared is 0.522, and the F value is 86.465 ($p<0.001$), indicating a good model fit.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/2026.33886

Table 3. Regression analysis—regression coefficients

Coefficient[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	0.575	0.170	-	3.382	.001	-	-
	Brand Cultural Inheritance	0.180	0.051	0.197	3.523	.000	.487	2.054
	Brand Fun Richness	0.165	0.055	0.181	3.019	.003	.427	2.343
	In-store Service	0.152	0.055	0.157	2.752	.006	.471	2.123
	Creative Activities	0.328	0.062	0.312	5.319	.000	.444	2.252

a. Dependent Variable: Mean5

All four independent variables have a significantly positive impact on purchase intention ($p<0.01$), ranked by impact degree as follows: Creative Activities (Beta=0.312) > Brand Cultural Inheritance (Beta=0.197) > Brand Fun Richness (Beta=0.181) > In-store Service (Beta=0.157). The VIF values are all less than 3, indicating no serious multicollinearity. The research hypothesis that brand cultural inheritance, brand fun richness, in-store service and creative activities have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention is verified.

4.4. Analysis of factors influencing purchase intention

Regression analysis results show that creative activities have the most significant impact on purchase intention (Beta=0.312). This finding is consistent with field observations. DIY experiences, cross-border co-branding and other creative activities can effectively stimulate young consumers' enthusiasm for participation and sharing, forming a word-of-mouth communication effect. Brand cultural inheritance (Beta=0.197) and brand fun richness (Beta=0.181) also have prominent impacts, indicating that consumers value both the cultural heritage of time-honored brands and the fun and novelty of products. The impact of in-store service is also significant (Beta=0.157). Efficient service processes and free tasting recommendations reduce purchase risks and enhance shopping experience.

This result verifies the theoretical framework of this paper: brand authenticity management and customer experience management jointly affect consumers' purchase intention, and experiential innovation activities have a greater influence.

5. Research conclusions

Based on brand authenticity management and customer experience management theories, this paper takes the Longfu Treasure Hunt Hall of Beijing Daoxiangcun Zero Store as a case and constructs an analytical framework for time-honored brand characteristics covering four dimensions: brand cultural inheritance, brand fun richness, in-store service and creative activities. Through empirical analysis of 314 valid samples, the following conclusions are drawn.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/2026.33886

First, all four brand characteristic dimensions have a significantly positive impact on consumers' purchase intention. Empirical research shows that brand cultural inheritance, brand fun richness, in-store service and creative activities all have a significantly positive impact on consumers' purchase intention. This finding verifies the theoretical framework constructed in this paper, indicating that in the rejuvenation transformation process, time-honored brands need to make comprehensive efforts from four dimensions: cultural inheritance, product fun, service experience and creative marketing to effectively enhance consumers' purchase intention.

Second, creative activities are the strongest factor driving purchase intention. Among the four dimensions, creative activities have the highest standardized coefficient of 0.312, exerting the most prominent impact on purchase intention. This finding indicates that for new stores targeting young consumers such as Beijing Daoxiangcun Zero Store, creative activities such as DIY experiences and social media communication can most effectively stimulate consumers' enthusiasm for participation and sharing.

Third, brand cultural inheritance is an important support for purchase intention. The standardized coefficient of brand cultural inheritance is 0.197, ranking second among all dimensions. This shows that while pursuing trendy experiences, consumers still value the historical heritage and cultural value of time-honored brands, meeting consumers' psychological needs for authentic quality and enhancing purchase confidence.

Fourth, brand fun richness and in-store service form the basic support for purchase intention. Both brand fun richness and in-store service have a significant impact on purchase intention. The former indicates that creative shapes, IP co-branding and seasonal limited-edition products can meet young consumers' demand for novelty and social currency; the latter shows that efficient service processes, staff recommendations and free tastings can reduce consumers' purchase risks and enhance shopping pleasure.

In summary, the rejuvenation of time-honored brands is a dialectical unity of inheritance and innovation. Original brand authenticity management ensures the inheritance of core values, achieving "upholding tradition"; constructed brand authenticity management drives product and experience innovation, achieving "pursuing innovation". Customer experience management provides an operational implementation framework for this process. The "Six-Step Circular Model" effectively guides the product development, scenario creation and communication strategies of Zero Store from demand analysis to relationship management.

6. Optimization suggestions for pastry time-honored brands to attract consumers

Based on the research results of Daoxiangcun Zero Store and the transformation experience of Beijing Daoxiangcun, the following optimization suggestions are put forward for pastry time-honored brands.

6.1. Strengthen creative activities and fun products to create participatory and shareable consumption experiences

This study finds that creative activities have the most significant impact on purchase intention, and brand fun richness also has a significantly positive impact. Pastry time-honored brands should prioritize creative activities and fun products as strategies to attract young consumers. Specific practices can refer to Daoxiangcun Zero Store, which launches a national-style tea-making package priced at only 68 yuan with matching ancient-style costumes; lion dance performances are held in non-sale display windows. The store's bronze ware archaeological pastries come in four shapes: gui,

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he, ding and zun. Consumers need to peel off the crispy crust to dig out hidden pastries, greatly increasing the fun of eating. It also launches creative products such as dragon head crisp and Beijing Hutong series, effectively stimulating consumers' enthusiasm for participation.

Other pastry time-honored brands can develop experience projects related to their own brand culture [7]. For example, mooncake brands can offer handmade mooncake making classes; brands can introduce AR technology interaction, allowing consumers to watch animated demonstrations of pastry production processes by scanning product packaging. Brands can also develop creative shaped products combining local cultural elements. For instance, Hangzhou pastry brands can launch Ten Scenes of West Lake series pastries; they can conduct cross-border co-branding with popular film, game and animation IPs to launch limited-edition products, but attention should be paid to ensuring co-branding partners are consistent with brand tone to avoid forced integration. Meanwhile, they can focus on traditional festivals and launch corresponding seasonal limited-edition products. Time-honored brands should design social fission forms that allow check-in, sharing and rewards. Consumers who share experiences on social media can receive limited-edition product coupons or discounts for their next purchase, forming sustained word-of-mouth communication.

6.2. Deepen brand cultural inheritance and in-store service to consolidate brand heritage and consumer loyalty

Nowadays, consumers still value the authentic heritage of time-honored brands, and pastry time-honored brands must not abandon tradition during innovation. Although the impact of in-store service on purchase intention is relatively small, it remains an important factor affecting consumers' repeat purchases. Daoxiangcun Zero Store's practices are highly referential: it sells traditional nostalgic pastries such as jujube flower crisp, small ox tongue cake and rose fortune cake using traditional recipes and craftsmanship, with ancient-style decoration and multiple inscriptions inside the store to highlight historical depth. Zero Store has developed a pre-order mini-program, allowing consumers to scan QR codes to place orders and reduce queuing time; staff provide free tasting and recommendation services to help consumers make purchase decisions.

When transforming, other pastry time-honored brands need to clearly distinguish between traditional and innovative product lines. Traditional product lines should retain classic recipes and shapes, while innovative product lines are used to test new tastes and shapes. Brands can strengthen cultural narratives in product packaging and in-store displays. For example, each traditional pastry can be equipped with a story card, and consumers can scan QR codes to watch short videos of production processes. If budget permits, regular time-honored brand cultural lectures can be held with inheritors giving on-site explanations to enhance consumers' cultural identity. Brands can also develop or optimize online pre-order systems supporting in-store pickup or store delivery, and set up free tasting and recommendation zones in stores to increase purchase rates, changing the passive sales model of waiting for customers.

6.3. Build a four-dimension coordinated operation system to accurately grasp changes in consumer demand

Brand culture provides depth, fun richness provides breadth, in-store service provides warmth, and creative activities provide popularity. The four dimensions are mutually reinforcing and indispensable. During transformation, pastry time-honored brands should avoid focusing only on innovation while neglecting cultural inheritance, or focusing only on products while neglecting

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service experience. Time-honored brands can establish rejuvenation teams with professionals to evaluate resource allocation across the four dimensions and make dynamic adjustments to ensure coordinated promotion.

Nowadays, consumers increasingly pursue shopping experience. Pastry time-honored brands should establish consumer research mechanisms to continuously understand young consumers' preferences for taste, packaging aesthetics, price expectations and other aspects through social media monitoring, online questionnaires and in-store interviews, avoiding isolated innovation.

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