The Influence of China-Chic Attribute Perception on Purchase Intention among Generation Z: Exploring the Mediating Effect of Brand Well-Being

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Abstract

As globalization deepens, the sense of crisis brought about by cultural homogenization has become increasingly pronounced. A growing number of enterprises advocate for the use of national and local cultural assets to create brand uniqueness and enhance competitiveness. In China, there is a rising trend among brands to integrate Chinese cultural symbols with modern fashion, engaging in marketing activities such as brand image construction, product design, and market communication. This prominent marketing approach is referred to as "China-chic marketing." The main purpose of this study is to construct a comprehensive model based on consumer culture theory to examine how perceptions of China-chic attributes—symbolic local culture, fashion culture orientation, and creativity—affect purchase intention through brand well-being.

This study takes the questionnaire survey method in quantitative research to collect data of Chinese Generation Z and use snowball sampling method to collect 573 valid samples and use SPSS and AMOS statistical software to analyze the data and verify the hypotheses. The research results showed that perceptions of these China-chic attributes positively influence brand well-being, which in turn positively affects purchase intention and mediates the relationship between China-chic attribute perception and purchase intention. This study provides insights for businesses to effectively implement China-chic marketing, offering Generation Z consumers values of nobility and lasting happiness to enhance brand competitiveness.

Keywords: China-chic; Brand Well-being; Purchase Intention; Symbolic Local Culture; Creativity.

Introduction

With the advancement of Chinese manufacturing, domestic brands have experienced rapid growth. In 2018, Li-Ning, a Chinese brand, gained significant attention at New York Fashion Week by merging sports style with traditional Chinese cultural elements, marking the rise of China-chic internationally. Since then, many brands have utilized IP marketing, crossover marketing, and innovative designs to promote Chinese cultural symbols, achieving widespread popularity (Ji et al., 2024). China-chic broadly represents a social trend rooted in local Chinese culture, reflecting cultural identity and a resurgence of Chinese cultural elements in symbolic production and consumption. Specifically, China-chic pertains to domestic brands and products that meet contemporary consumer needs and set trends (Zong & Liu, 2022). It has evolved from a niche interest to a widespread public appeal. Generation Z, born between

1995 and 2009, represents the core consumer base of China-chic, characterized by strong local consciousness and cultural confidence because of rapid economic development. They perceive China-chic as a fashionable trend for avant-garde youth (Huang, 2023).

The popularity of China-chic has prompted extensive discussion in Chinese academia. China-chic is generally believed to reflect mainstream consumers' cultural awareness and recognition of local cultural elements, embodying cultural confidence, emotional needs, value belonging, and community identity (Jiang, 2024). However, existing research is still developing. Although China-chic is a popular topic, research is nascent, with most studies focusing on marketing strategies from an enterprise perspective or exploring specific design elements, rather than empirically examining the effect of China-chic marketing on consumer cognition, emotions, and behavior (Ye et al., 2021; Wu, 2024). Moreover, there is a notable scarcity of research examining the information processing mechanisms underlying China-chic consumption, as well as the mediating mechanisms of self-regulation. Consumer culture theory (CCT) examines consumption phenomena within unique cultural contexts, emphasizing personalized consumption meanings from the "insider" perspective, using consumers' own language based on their experiences and narratives. It suggests that modern consumer society has shifted from "material consumption" to "symbolic consumption." To meet diverse needs and achieve multidimensional value extension, integrating cultural connotations, aesthetic value, social rationality, aesthetic healing, and emotional value into material experiences is essential. This approach helps brands connect psychologically with consumers and gain recognition (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). CCT effectively explains the effect of China-chic marketing on consumer psychology and behavior, serving as the theoretical foundation for this study.

In practice, some brands exploit the popularity of China-chic superficially, which can damage cultural heritage and undermine the authenticity of cultural resources. This leads to difficulties in consumers perceiving unique value (Ozgit et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024) and hampers the establishment of brand loyalty. In an era where consumer-dominant marketing emphasizes cultural and emotional consumption (Chanour, 2022), The question of this research is how consumers perceive the multi-signal clues of local culture and fashion culture symbolization and marketing creativity in China-chic marketing, whether through the brand well-being of the intermediary role to influence the purchase intention. The results of the study hope to guide enterprises to effectively carry out China-chic marketing, strengthen the emotional relationship with consumers, establish brand loyalty.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the impact of Generation Z's perception of the three attributes of the China-chic on brand well-being;

2. To examine the components of brand well-being, including the happiness experiences it provides to individual consumers, the contributions it makes to consumers' interactions with others and their integration into communities, as well as the sense of honor and social contribution perceived by consumers from the brand as a representative and symbol of the nation, and its influence mechanisms on purchase intentions;

3. To investigate the mediating role of brand well-being in the relationship between the perception of China-chic attributes and purchase intentions.

Literature Review

This section discusses the main variables and hypotheses related to China-chic, brand well-being, and purchase intention.

1. China-chic and Brand Well-being

China-chic is an evolving concept. Drawing on perspectives from scholars (Ye et al., 2021; Zong & Liu, 2022; Chen et al., 2024), this study defines China-chic as a trend where brands integrate Chinese cultural elements with modern trends, giving products a new aesthetic and meaning. This has led to a consumer trend of "Chinese design, Chinese products, and Chinese culture." Consequently, China-chic marketing is described as a new cultural marketing model where brands creatively incorporate Chinese local cultural elements into product design, brand image, and communication, blending these elements with modern trends to foster consumer identification and resonance, thus promoting sales.

China-chic marketing and retro marketing both involve combining old and new elements to enhance brand image with historical and cultural significance. However, retro marketing replicates the past to evoke memories, whereas China-chic marketing explores and reinterprets Chinese culture to express individual differences and foster identity and belonging through different mechanisms (Dam et al., 2024).

Although China-chic and patriotic marketing use national elements to endorse brands and boost national confidence and pride, they differ in their approaches. Patriotic marketing is often linked to major national events or incidents to enhance corporate image and sales. It can easily lead to consumer backlash if perceived as morally coercive. In contrast, China-chic, despite displaying strong patriotic elements, is not an organized social movement but rather a spontaneous cultural consciousness and confidence in response to contemporary developments (Pekkanen & Penttilä, 2021).

In summary, the value realization path of China-chic marketing involves creatively blending Chinese elements and traditional culture with current trends using postmodernist techniques like collage, irony, metaphor, and crossover. This approach meets consumers' practical needs while awakening their collective memory, identity, and sense of belonging. It constructs positive, lasting, and noble brand value perceptions, promoting purchasing behavior and loyalty (Ye et al., 2021). Consumers evaluate the well-being value provided by China-chic brands based on perceptions of symbolic local culture, fashion culture orientation, and creativity, which influence their purchasing decisions. Shu et al. (2020) introduced the concept of brand well-being within the context of Chinese culture, defining it as the positive, lasting, and noble happiness and value experience offered by a brand. Brand well-being is categorized into individual, Social, and national levels based on self-construction theories. individual well-being includes functional value and emotional pleasure, referring to the practical utility and intrinsic enjoyment a product or service provides (Chakraborty & Sadachar, 2023). Social well-being pertains to improvements in interpersonal relationships, social recognition, self-expression, and sense of belonging through brand consumption (Cucato et al., 2023). National well-being refers to the pride consumers feel from supporting products that represent the nation and collective identity.

China-chic, reflecting traditional culture and fashion aesthetics, leads fashion trends and mirrors the advancement of the nation's economy and strength. It showcases national cultural confidence and pride. At the national level, China-chic enhances the symbolic creation and fashion communication abilities of local industries, promoting cultural aggregation. Its

material creation, symbolic diffusion, and sanctification become key to symbolizing the national image, constructing soft power, and shaping an innovative national identity (Skivko, 2016). Thus, brands implementing China-chic marketing, marked by "patriotism" and "collective honor," can enhance "individual well-being" and "social harmony" (Li et al., 2024).

Hypothesis 1: The perception of China-chic attributes positively influences brand well-being.

1.1 Symbolic Local Culture and Brand Well-being

Symbolic local culture is a core attribute of China-chic, representing the extent to which a brand associates with and signifies Chinese local culture. A brand's alignment with the values, culture, and needs of local consumers can evoke a sense of place or home (Yang & Guo, 2021). Consumers often perceive that brands embodying symbolic local culture better understand the specific demands and quality requirements of the local market (Steenkamp et al., 2003). By adjusting products to local consumer preferences, these brands meet functional needs and enhance individual well-being.

Utilizing symbols of unique geographical and cultural heritage helps consumers assimilate specific local identities and distinguish themselves from other identities. This integration into the self-concept involves both individual and 'collective self' (Usborne & Taylor, 2012). The culture of interest groups, rooted in a love for Chinese culture, aligns with exclusive language and community interactions. This convergence through consumption forms a community identity, creating an internal-external distinction (Lau et al., 2023), thereby enhancing social well-being.

China-chic brand strategies transfer the prestige of national cultural advantages to specific brands, improving consumer evaluations (Bai & Jamil, 2022). Zhang and Lu (2022) found that Generation Z believes consuming China-chic products boosts their confidence in the revival of Chinese culture and national pride, linking this to the national level of brand well-being.

Hypothesis 1a: Symbolic local culture positively influences individual well-being.
Hypothesis 1b: Symbolic local culture positively influences social well-being.
Hypothesis 1c: Symbolic local culture positively influences national well-being.

1.2 Fashion Culture Orientation and Brand Well-being

Fashion culture orientation refers to the trend created by China-chic marketing, characterized by aesthetics that are pleasing, emotionally evocative, cognitively novel, and behaviorally avant-garde. With Generation Z's changing aesthetics and trends, brands often align with contemporary styles such as Chinese, artistic, ACG (which stands for anime, comics, and games), and street fashion to appeal to young consumers. This alignment offers high-quality, fashionable, and personalized products and services, fulfilling consumers' desires for coolness and trendiness, which enhances individual well-being by satisfying their need for differentiation and expressing their lifestyle and attitude (Wolny & Mueller, 2013).

Consumers use the symbolic attributes of fashion consumption for self-expression and self-design, signaling their belonging to social groups like the fashion community. Through various fashion activities, they build relationships, communicate information, and exchange emotions, which strengthens consistent values and enhances social brand well-being through empathy (Oak & Petrov, 2020).

Xing (2021) found that Generation Z views China-chic products as fashionable items. Their love for and consumption of these products reflect rebellious, individualistic symbolic meanings and emotional resonance among group members. Motivations such as "expressing cultural identity and national confidence" and "inheriting and promoting traditional culture," related to national well-being, are significant in their consumption of China-chic fashion.

Hypothesis 1d: Fashion culture orientation positively influences individual well-being.

Hypothesis 1e: Fashion culture orientation positively influences social well-being.

Hypothesis 1f: Fashion culture orientation positively influences national well-being.

1.3 Creativity and Brand Well-being

Creativity involves generating novel and useful ideas, insights, or solutions in marketing, such as product design, pricing strategies, channel strategies, and promotion strategies. China-chic is characterized by originality and novelty, which meet consumers' desire for "newness": an unconventional visual and auditory effect and profound emotional stimulation that enhances individual well-being.

Wang and Jin (2021) highlighted that the creativity in China-chic marketing is evident in its bold and unique approaches. These approaches help create new brand images, define consumer social circles, and set lifestyle standards. New China-chic brands offer products with both functionality and social attributes, fostering emotional connections and spiritual sharing between consumers and brands, and among consumers themselves (Rosengren et al., 2020). This aligns with social needs and expectations, enhancing social well-being.

Creativity also benefits from the growth of "China-chic technology," which merges national spirit and collective value recognition with major national technologies, blending Chinese culture with technology. In the China-chic 3.0 era, this concept expands beyond goods to include national culture, wisdom, lifestyle, and spiritual connotations, boosting Generation Z's admiration and confidence in their culture.

Hypothesis 1g: Creativity positively influences individual well-being.

Hypothesis 1h: Creativity positively influences social well-being.

Hypothesis 1i: Creativity positively influences national well-being.

2. Brand Well-being and Purchase Intention

Shu et al. (2020) established that brand well-being factors predict customer word-of-mouth, brand loyalty, and consumer life satisfaction, all of which positively influence purchase intention (Qin et al., 2021). This suggests that higher perceived brand well-being leads to stronger purchase intention.

China-chic marketing emphasizes brand culture differentiation, blending Eastern classical aesthetics with modern fashion in its visual expression. By incorporating local ethnic culture and contemporary trends, and using positive nationalistic promotional language, it enhances consumers' perception of brand well-being when purchasing China-chic products. Brands with distinctive cultural elements can better reflect individual personalities, creating social atmospheres aligned with consumer identities and preferences. This psychological satisfaction and happiness positively influence purchase intention (Zhang & Sun, 2019). Schnebelen and Bruhn (2018) found that brand well-being increases consumers' willingness to

pay a premium, their intention to repurchase, and their brand endorsement, error forgiveness, and word-of-mouth behaviors.

Hypothesis 2: Brand well-being positively influences purchase intention.

3. Mediating Role of Brand Well-being

Recently, brands embracing the "China-chic" trend have moved away from outdated stereotypes. Chinese consumers now perceive domestic products as original and cost-effective rather than low quality (Huang, 2023). Unique brand and product images increase consumer attitude intensity and emotional commitment, leading to repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth behaviors such as recommendations and interactions (Wang, 2013).

The signaling effect of symbolic local culture has been validated because it can enhance brand trust and emotion by improving consumers' perceptions of brand quality, reputation, and expressiveness, which in turn positively affects purchase intention (Xie et al., 2015). Moreover, combining Chinese and fashion cultures in product design and brand image helps foster consumer identity with the product, triggering purchase behavior that reflects personal pride and group belonging (Chen et al., 2022).

Hypothesis 3: Brand well-being mediates the relationship between the perception of China-chic attributes and purchase intention.

Research Methodology

1. Population and Sample

This study takes the questionnaire survey method in quantitative research to collect data of Chinese Generation Z and use snowball sampling method to collect 573 valid samples and use SPSS and AMOS statistical software to analyze the data and verify the hypotheses. All variables were measured using validated scales. The final version of the questionnaire was refined through semantic adjustments and modifications based on feedback from three marketing experts, and it was subsequently tested with a small pre-test sample. The survey was designed using WJX.CN, distributed via links on social media platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, forums, and QQ, where Generation Z gathers, employing a snowball sampling method for online dissemination (Yang & Areerungruang, 2023).

The report "Baidu China-Chic Pride Search Big Data" indicates that the electronics and digital sector ranks first in China-chic topics. Chinese brands such as Huawei and Xiaomi have not only led technology iterations but have also used traditional culture to highlight Chinese aesthetics, becoming representatives and leaders of the "China-chic wave" (Chen & Yuang, 2023). Therefore, this study selected brands from the electronics and digital industry to validate the research model. Furthermore, this study targets Generation Z in China to understand the primary consumers of China-chic products. Digital products like mobile phones and wearable technology have deeply penetrated the Generation Z demographic. This group values professional functionality and novel technological experiences, possesses distinct brand perceptions, and places emphasis on a sense of belonging and emotional value (Zou et al., 2023).

2. Research Tools

All variables were assessed on a five-point Likert scale. The scale for symbolic local culture referenced Steenkamp et al. (2003), consisting of three items. The scale for fashion culture orientation referenced Tian (2014), consisting of twelve items. The scale for creativity referenced Im and Workman (2004), consisting of seven items. The scale for brand well-being referenced Shu et al. (2020), consisting of eleven items. The scale for purchase intention

referenced Chen and Chang (2008), consisting of four items. Gender, age, education level, and monthly income were chosen as control variables (Xie et al., 2024).

        3. Data Analysis

        This study conducted correlation, common method bias, reliability and validity analyses on the effective sample data using SPSS and AMOS. Hierarchical regression and bootstrap analysis were adopted to verify the causation between variables and dimensions.

Research Conceptual Framework

        Based on the above literature review and hypotheses, the conceptual framework for this study is illustrated in Figure 1.
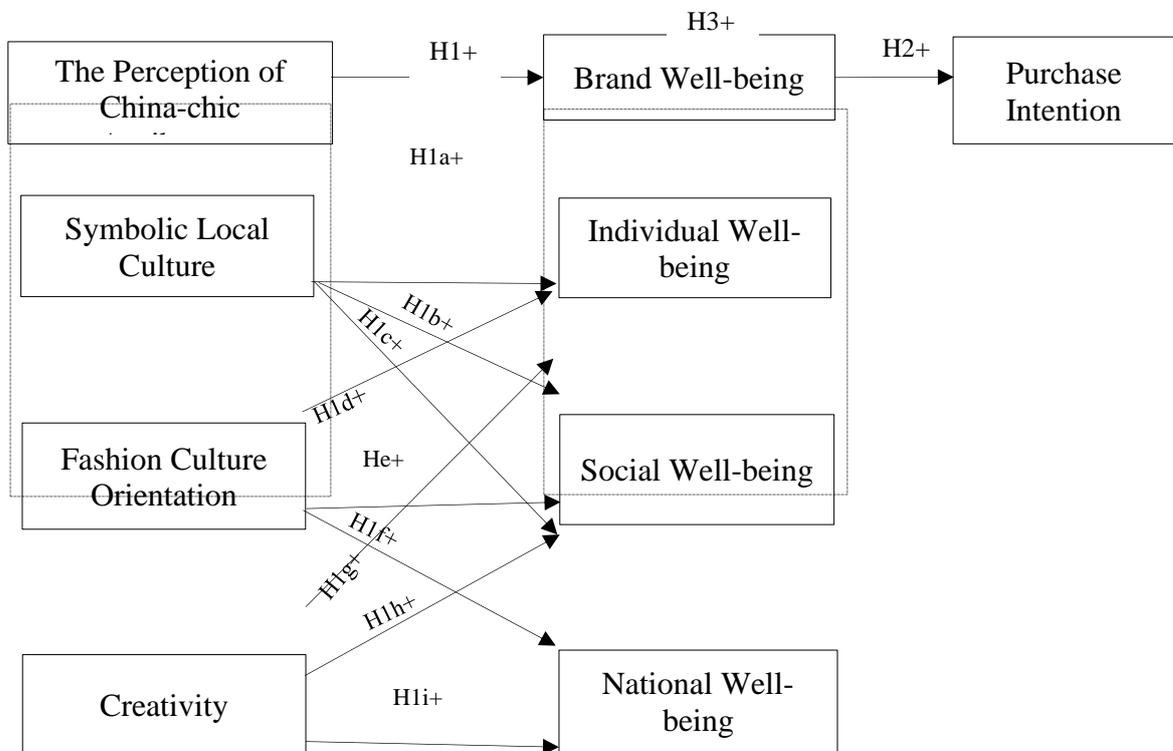
Note: + means has a positive effect

Figure 1 Research Conceptual Framework

Research Results

1. Sample Description

A total of 972 questionnaires were collected, with 573 valid samples remaining after excluding those with duplicate answers, excessive continuity in responses, overly short response times, non-adult respondents, and non-Generation Z respondents, resulting in an effective sample rate of 58.95%. The sample included 259 males (45.2%) and 314 females (54.8%). The majority were aged 26–30 (421 individuals, 73.5%), with 152 individuals aged 20–25 (26.5%). Respondents predominantly held an associate degree (26.7%) or a bachelor's degree (60.7%), with monthly incomes mostly ranging from 3001–5000 and 5001–8000, accounting for 35.4% and 44.9%, respectively. The most common occupations were students (17.6%) and service industry personnel (11%).

2. Reliability, Validity, Common Method Bias, and Correlation Analysis

To ensure the accuracy of the survey and the reliability of the analytical results, reliability and validity tests were conducted on the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha values for all variables exceeded 0.8, indicating good reliability. Construct reliabilities for the variables were 0.809, 0.941, 0.912, 0.899, 0.830, 0.886, and 0.875, all above the 0.7 threshold, indicating high construct reliability. Average variance extracted (AVE) values for the variables were 0.587, 0.570, 0.541, 0.690, 0.620, 0.661, and 0.638, all above 0.5, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. The correlation coefficients between the variables were all less than the square roots of their respective AVEs, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The Harman (1976) single-factor test was used to detect common method bias. The results indicate that the first principal component explains 23.763% of the variance, which is less than the 40% threshold, suggesting that common method bias is not significant.

Pearson correlation coefficients were used to measure the strength and direction of linear relationships between variables. Table 1 shows significant correlations between the variables ($p<0.05$), and all correlation coefficients were below 0.7, indicating no multi-collinearity and allowing for further regression analysis to verify the relationships between variables.

Table 1 Correlation Analysis

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
SLC	-						
FCO	.043	-					
C	-.082*	.107*	-				
IWB	.224**	.395***	.334***	-			
SWB	.227**	.468***	.342***	.433***	-		
NWB	.186**	.102*	.404***	.203**	.154**	-	
PI	.110**	.293***	.321***	.425***	.402***	.348***	-

Note 1: $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$.
Note 2: SLC = 1, FCO = 2, C = 3, IWB = 4, SWB = 5, NWB = 6, PI = 7,
Note 3: SLC: Symbolic Local Culture, FCO: Fashion Culture Orientation, C: Creativity, IWB: Individual Well-being, SWB: Social Well-being, NWB: National Well-being, PI: Purchase Intention.

3. Hypothesis Testing- Main Effect

Hierarchical regression was used to test the hypothesized relationships in the study. Table 2 shows a significant positive effect of China-chic attribute perception on brand well-being ($\beta = 0.685$, $p < .001$), with an Adj-R² of 0.470, indicating that Model 2 explains 47% of the variance in the dependent variable. The F-value is 102.277 ($p < .001$), supporting H1.

Table 2 Effects of China-chic Attribute Perception on Brand Well-being

| Variables | Dependent variables: Brand Well-being | | | |
	M1		M2	
	β	VIF	β	VIF
Gender	-.064	1.006	-.035	1.008
Age	.024	1.029	.015	1.029
Education	-.042	1.029	-.074	1.031
Monthly income	.034	1.007	.058	1.008
China-chic Attribute Perception			.685***	1.005
R^2	.008		.474	
Adj-R^2	.001		.470	
F	1.080		102.277***	

*Note: *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$*

As shown in Table 3, symbolic local culture has a significant positive effect on individual well-being ($\beta = .226$, $p < .001$), with an Adj-R² of 0.049. Model 2 explains 4.9% of the variance in the dependent variable, with an F-value of 6.907 ($p < .001$). Fashion culture orientation also has a significant positive effect on individual well-being ($\beta = .396$, $p < .001$), with an Adj-R² of 0.154. Model 3 explains 15.4% of the variance, with an F-value of 21.768 ($p < .001$). Moreover, creativity has a significant positive effect on individual well-being ($\beta = .334$, $p < .001$), with an Adj-R² of 0.118. Model 4 explains 11.8% of the variance, with an F-value of 15.202 ($p < .001$). Therefore, H1a, H1b, and H1c are all supported.

Table 3 Effects of China-chic Attribute Perception on Individual Well-being

| Variables | Dependent variables: Individual Well-being | | | | | | | |
	M1		M2		M3		M4	
	β	VIF	β	VIF	β	VIF	β	VIF
Gender	-.077	1.006	-.082	1.006	-.047	1.012	-.080	1.006
Age	.025	1.029	.020	1.030	.026	1.029	.020	1.029
Education	.001	1.029	-.008	1.031	-.032	1.036	.012	1.030
Monthly income	.005	1.007	.010	1.007	.030	1.011	-.003	1.007
Symbolic Local Culture			.226***	1.004				

Variables								
Fashion Culture Orientation					.396***	1.016		
Creativity							.334***	1.002
R^2	.007		.057		.161		.118	
Adj-R^2	.000		.049		.154		.110	
F	.940		6.907***		21.768***		15.202***	

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 4 shows a significant positive effect of symbolic local culture on social well-being (β = .230, p < .001), with an Adj-R^2 of .049. Model 2 explains 4.9% of the variance in the dependent variable, with an F-value of 6.867 (p < .001). Fashion culture orientation has a significant positive effect on social well-being (β = .475, p < .001), with an Adj-R^2 of .219. Model 3 explains 21.9% of the variance, with an F-value of 33.099 (p < 0.001). Moreover, creativity has a significant positive effect on social well-being (β = .341, p < .001), with an Adj-R^2 of .113, indicating that Model 4 explains 11.3% of the variance, with an F-value of 15.554 (p < .001). Therefore, H1d, H1e, and H1f are all supported.

Table 4 Effects of China-chic Attribute Perception on Social Well-being

Variables	Dependent variables: Social Well-being							
	M1		M2		M3		M4	
	β	VIF	β	VIF	β	VIF	β	VIF
Gender	-.055	1.006	-.060	1.006	-.019	1.012	-.058	1.006
Age	.015	1.029	.009	1.030	.016	1.029	.010	1.029
Education	-.030	1.029	-.039	1.031	-.069	1.036	-.019	1.030
Monthly income	.010	1.007	.015	1.007	.041	1.011	.002	1.007
Symbolic Local Culture			.230***	1.004				
Fashion Culture Orientation					.475***	1.016		
Creativity							.341***	1.002
R^2	.004		.057		.226		.121	
Adj-R^2	.000		.049		.219		.113	
F	.605		6.867***		33.099***		15.554***	

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

As shown in Table 5, symbolic local culture has a significant positive effect on national well-being (β = .191, p < .001), with an F-value of 5.069 (p < .001), and an Adj-R^2 of .034. Model 2 explains 3.4% of the variance in the dependent variable. Fashion culture orientation also has a significant positive effect on national well-being (β = .111, p < .01), with an Adj-R^2 of .010. Model 3 explains 1% of the variance, with an F-value of 2.160. Moreover, creativity has a significant positive effect on national well-being (β = .401, p < .001), with an

Adj- R^2 of .160. Model 4 explains 16% of the variance, with an F-value of 22.807 (p < .001). Therefore, H1g, H1h, and H1i are all supported.

Table 5 Effects of China-chic Attribute Perception on National Well-being

Variables	Dependent variables: National Well-being							
	M1		M2		M3		M4	
			β	VIF	β	VIF	β	VIF
Gender	-.007	1.006	-.011	1.006	.002	1.012	-.010	1.006
Age	.011	1.029	.006	1.030	.011	1.029	.005	1.029
Education	-.062	1.029	-.070	1.031	-.071	1.036	-.050	1.030
Monthly income	.054	1.007	.058	1.007	.061	1.011	.045	1.007
Symbolic Local Culture			.191***	1.004				
Fashion Culture Orientation					.111**	1.016		
Creativity							.401***	1.002
R^2	.007		.043		.019		.167	
Adj-R^2	.000		.034		.010		.160	
F	.947		5.069***		2.160		22.807***	

*Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001*

Table 6 shows a significant positive effect of brand well-being on purchase intention (β = 0.549, p < .001), with an Adj-R^2 of .296. Model 2 explains 29.6% of the variance in the dependent variable, supporting H2.

Table 6 Effects of Brand Well-being on Purchase Intention

Variables	Dependent variables: Purchase Intention			
	M1		M2	
	β	VIF	β	VIF
Gender	-.022	1.006	.014	1.010
Age	-.029	1.029	-.042	1.030
Education	-.039	1.029	-.016	1.031
Monthly income	.013	1.007	-.005	1.008
Brand Well-being			.549***	1.008
R^2	.003		.302	
Adj-R^2	.001		.296	
F	0.489		49.142***	

*Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001*

4. Hypothesis Testing- Mediating Effect

The bootstrap method with 5000 resampling iterations was used to test the mediating effect (Meng et al., 2021). The results showed that the indirect effect, direct effect, and total effect did not contain 0 within the 95% confidence interval, and all p-values were significant (Table 7). This finding indicates that brand well-being mediates the relationship between the perception of China-chic attributes and purchase intention, supporting H3.

Table 7 Mediating Effect Analysis

	Effect Value	Boot SE	Boot CI Lower limit (95%)	Boot CI Upper limit (95%)	Significance	Effect Proportion
Indirect Effect	.632	.068	.505	.767	.000	75.8%
Direct effect	.202	.093	.021	.386	.031	24.2%
Total effect	.834	.067	.706	.969	.000	

Conclusion and Discussion

The results confirm the influence of consumer perceptions of brand symbolic local culture, fashion culture orientation, and creativity in China-chic marketing on brand well-being and purchase intention. The main conclusions are as follows:

The object 1：To investigate the impact of Generation Z's perception of the three attributes of China-chic on brand well-being，found that China-chic marketing constructs and conveys fashion themes by integrating Chinese cultural texts, images, and discourses. The meanings generated and enhanced are more capable of relating to and elevating specific identity myths, allowing consumers to perceive the profound well-being value of the brand. The results also show that the perception of symbolic local culture had the highest average score, confirming it as a decisive factor for China-chic, whereas creativity had the lowest average score. This may be due to the general emphasis on innovation across various brands, where creativity has not yet reached higher public standards. Additionally, many digital brands in China-chic marketing merely use traditional cultural elements to package brands and products without deeply engaging in their cultural value, attempting to bypass the product's practical value and continuously infuse it with complex mythical meanings. This makes the audience passive consumers, resulting in homogenized forms and content that gradually make the brand lose its distinctiveness, leading to aesthetic fatigue among consumers. Consequently, this weakens Generation Z's impression of innovation in China-chic marketing to some extent, which is a pitfall that needs to be avoided (Yang & Lei, 2022).

The object 2：To explore the impact of brand well-being on purchase intention，found that endowing brands with more desirable aspirations and symbolic meanings, providing consumers with a more pleasurable sensory experience, offering more value co-creation networks, and using modern technological means to innovatively showcase the collision between Chinese culture and fashion trends can help Generation Z find resonance points with their identity and values in the brand. Consequently, the higher the brand well-being, the stronger the purchase intention. The results also show that satisfying individual well-being is

more stimulating to purchase intention than social or national well-being. Given the complexity of digital product functions and the diversity of brands, this may be because Generation Z consumers are rational in their consumption mentality. Although they value a sense of belonging and emotional value, they are more rational, comprehensive, price-conscious, service-experience-focused, and aesthetically discerning consumers (Varma et al., 2024).

The object 3：To explore brand well-being mediates the relationship between the perception of China-chic attributes and purchase intention, found that China-chic marketing emphasizes understanding user needs, balancing design, quality control, brand, and value from the perspective of product texture, craftsmanship, practical function, and value philosophy. It focuses on cultural themes, value significance, and aesthetic tastes, upholding the vision of creating national cultural brands, continuously enhancing the brand's creative cultural image and innovative technology. By developing culturally and socially attributed products in creative ways, transforming tradition into trends, and making products cultural carriers that blend culture and creativity, it uses social media platforms to broadly convey the uniqueness of China-chic to consumers. This deeply associates the brand with the functional, social, and national emotional needs fulfillment, enhancing brand trust and affection, thereby positively influencing purchase intention (Huang et al., 2024).

Recommendation

1. Theoretical Significance

First, based on consumer culture theory, it constructs a research model to explore the impact mechanism of China-chic marketing on consumer purchase intention, targeting new consumer groups and marketing models in the internet era. It also attempts to explore new connotations and representations of consumer culture theory, further verifying the explanatory mechanism of cultural element effectiveness from another perspective. This provides a theoretical basis for enterprises to creatively explore cultural factors in marketing.

Second, from the perspective of localized Chinese research, the study proposes a new concept of brand value—brand well-being—which reflects social responsibility and patriotic spirit. This concept acts as a mediator to explore the effect of China-chic marketing on consumer-brand relationships and purchase intention. This approach supplements the incremental research on China-chic while verifying that consumer perceptions and expectations of brand value vary in different social systems.

2. Practical Significance

First, this study constructs and verifies the functional model of culture and consumer behavior in the context of "China-chic", consumers' perception of brand culture value and fashion temperament, originality and novelty formed in their contact with brands has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, among them, the well-being brought by the brand plays an intermediary role, which is of great guiding significance for the effective implementation of China-chic marketing and occupying the mind of consumers.

Second, the study discusses how developing countries can maintain cultural independence amidst economic globalization. The practical model of China-chic marketing offers developing country enterprises a cultural advantage by showcasing cultural authenticity, overcoming negative country-of-origin effects, and providing an international marketing strategy for the "cultural resource route".

Suggestions

1. Recommendation for practical application

This study confirms the positive impact of consumers' perceptions of symbolic local culture, fashion culture orientation, and creativity in China-chic on emotional and behavioral responses. To cope with the new era's challenges, brands need to emphasize creativity and the ability to decode culture itself (Das et al., 2023). By using traditional Chinese culture as a foundation, selecting culturally congruent elements, and leveraging the internet, social media, and smart technologies for social and shared marketing, brands can create China-chic products with contemporary elements and real significance. This approach enhances brand value and builds competitive advantages (Zhou et al., 2024).

2. Recommendation for Further Research

This study utilized online questionnaires and non-random snowball sampling to verify the conceptual model, resulting in limited sample representativeness. Future research could employ experimental designs to examine how China-chic elements influence purchase intention. Moreover, this study only considered the mediating variable perspective. Future research could introduce consumer-level moderating variables, such as consumer ethnocentrism and cultural identity, to create a more comprehensive model.

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