



The Formation Mechanism and Enhancement Strategies of Consumer Brand Identity in the Context of China-Fashion

Xiuhai Li*

Department of Business and Trade, Shandong Vocational College of Light Industry,
Zi'bo, Shandong 255300, China

*lxh912@163.com

Abstract. With the continuous enhancement of national cultural confidence, China-fashion consumption has become the dominant trend in the domestic consumer market, as local domestic brands rapidly rise and profoundly reshape consumers' brand preference choices. The core competitive advantage of China-fashion brands has shifted from product quality and cost-effectiveness to consumer brand identification driven by cultural empowerment. This study employs grounded theory qualitative research methodology, collecting primary data through in-depth interviews and conducting three-level coding analysis to identify the core dimensions and formation pathways of China-fashion brand identification, thereby constructing a comprehensive mechanism model. The findings reveal that cultural perception, product experience, value resonance, and social belonging are the key drivers of brand identification, which interact hierarchically to ultimately foster stable brand loyalty. Based on these conclusions, the study proposes brand identification enhancement strategies across four dimensions—cultural empowerment, product refinement, value cultivation, and scenario-based marketing—providing theoretical insights and practical guidance for the sustainable development of Guochao brands and overcoming short-term traffic challenges.

Keywords: China-fashion; Consumer; Brand identity; Formation mechanism; Grounded theory

1 Introduction

In recent years, driven by the revival of traditional culture and the national strategy to strengthen cultural power, the China-fashion economy has experienced explosive growth, with domestic brands permeating all aspects of mass consumption. China-fashion consumption exhibits distinct cultural and emotional attributes; consumers choose domestic products not only to recognize their functionality but also to affirm national culture and the value of local brands. Under the dual impetus of consumption upgrading and cultural confidence, brand identity has become pivotal for China-fashion brands in

acquiring customers, retaining users, and building core competitiveness. Current academic research on China-fashion and brand identity predominantly relies on quantitative empirical studies, focusing on the impact of individual factors while lacking a systematic exploration of the formation process and underlying mechanisms of brand identity, thereby failing to fully elucidate the behavioral logic from consumer cognition and preference to identification. Moreover, most studies concentrate on macro-level phenomena, offering overly generalized strategies that struggle to address practical challenges such as homogenized competition, transient traffic, and insufficient user engagement among China-fashion brands. Addressing these gaps, this paper employs grounded theory as a research framework, examines authentic China-fashion consumption scenarios, identifies the driving forces and evolutionary pathways of brand identity, constructs a systematic formation mechanism model, and proposes targeted enhancement strategies tailored to current market conditions—thereby addressing existing research shortcomings and providing practical guidance for the sustainable operation of China-fashion brands.

2 Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations

2.1 China-Fashion-Related Research

China-fashion is a consumption trend created by domestic brands that draw on elements of traditional Chinese culture, integrating modern design concepts and consumer demands to combine "national style + domestic brands + contemporary trends." Yan Nai-yan (2023 [1]) noted, the rise of China-fashion results from the combined effects of enhanced national cultural soft power, transformed consumption mindsets, and upgraded quality of domestic products. Pei Tong (2021)[4] argues that China-fashion brands develop unique competitiveness by blending cultural elements with modern products. Unlike traditional brand consumption, China-fashion consumption exhibits distinct symbolic consumption characteristics, as consumers place greater emphasis on the cultural symbols and identity representations embodied by the brands.

2.2 Research on Brand Identity

Brand identity stems from social identity theory, representing consumers' psychological states of recognition, belonging, and loyalty toward a brand based on self-awareness, emotional perception, and value alignment. It serves as the core link between consumers and brands. Guo Jie (2022)[2] noted that traditional brand identity research predominantly focuses on external factors such as product quality and brand image, overlooking the profound influence of cultural context. Chen Yitao et al. (2023)[3] demonstrated, using Huawei as a case study, that local cultural identity has become the primary driver of word-of-mouth promotion and user loyalty for domestic brands. Under the backdrop of China-fashion, brand identity transcends utilitarian dimensions, extending to multifaceted dimensions including culture, emotion, and values, thereby forming a novel logic of identification.

2.3 Research Review

Existing research has confirmed a positive correlation between the popularity of Guochao (Chinese cultural trend) and brand loyalty, yet it exhibits notable limitations: first, most studies focus on static factors without examining the dynamic formation process of brand loyalty; second, they predominantly employ quantitative regression methods, making it difficult to uncover consumers' deeper psychological motivations; third, strategic research lacks empirical support, resulting in insufficient relevance and practical applicability. Foreign scholars such as Rodrigues & Sousa (2026)[5], Ugwanyi et al. (2026)[6] have provided theoretical frameworks from perspectives like brand authenticity and social media empowerment, but collectively fail to systematically dissect the complete dynamic mechanism of brand loyalty among Guochao consumers. This study, grounded in qualitative research, identifies core dimensions through grounded coding and systematically analyzes the formation mechanism of brand loyalty, effectively addressing the shortcomings of existing research.

3 Research Design and Data Processing

3.1 Research Technique

This study employs grounded theory for qualitative research. This method does not require predefined research hypotheses and can extract core categories and theoretical frameworks from raw data, making it suitable for "formation mechanism" type studies. It enables precise exploration of the intrinsic logic of consumer brand identification in the China-fashion context.

3.2 Data Collection

The raw data were collected using a semi-structured in-depth interview method. The interviewees were core demographic groups aged 18–45 with regular consumption experiences of Chinese-style fashion trends, including students, working professionals, and freelancers. A total of 30 respondents were interviewed, with each session lasting 20–30 minutes. The interviews focused on key issues such as consumption motivations for China-fashion, brand perception, and reasons for brand identification. Ultimately, over 50,000 words of valid interview transcripts were compiled.

3.3 Code Analysis

Open coding: The interview materials were analyzed sentence by sentence, concepts were extracted, and invalid information was eliminated, resulting in an initial set of 42 concepts that were later consolidated into 14 primary categories.

Main axis coding: By exploring the inherent relationships within the initial conceptual framework, four primary categories were identified—cultural perception, product experience, value resonance, and social belonging—which comprehensively encompass the core driving factors of brand identity.

Selective Coding: Identifying the "mechanism of consumer brand identity formation" as the core category, and mapping the operational pathways: Consumers' exposure to China-fashion brands fosters foundational cultural perceptions; combined with product usage experiences, they develop preliminary cognitions; these cognitions resonate with the brand's philosophy and cultural essence; ultimately, social belonging is achieved through social contexts, progressively forming stable brand identity. The integrated coding results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Grounded Theory Coding Categories

fundamental category	Initial Category	Core Content
Cultural Sensitivity	Cultural appeal, empowerment through traditional culture, China-fashion aesthetics, cultural national confidence, and cultural novelty	Consumers' exposure to the cultural elements of China-fashion brands fosters a foundational psychological perception of cultural appreciation and cultural identification.
Product Experience	Product texture, cost-performance ratio, design innovation, functional practicality, after-sales service, quality stability	The comprehensive experience and evaluation of consumers after purchasing, using China-fashion products, and receiving brand services
Value Resonance	A passion for domestic brands, alignment with brand philosophies, recognition of cultural heritage, acknowledgment of social responsibility, and alignment with personal values.	The emotional resonance formed between consumers' personal values, national sentiments, the core identity of the China-fashion brand, and contemporary philosophies
Social Belonging	Layered social interactions, trend tags, social sharing, group identity, and identity expression	Consumers integrate into social circles through China-fashion consumption, gaining social recognition and a sense of belonging.

4 Analysis of the Mechanism Behind the Formation of Consumer Brand Identity

4.1 Basic Drive: Cultural Perception

Cultural perception serves as the fundamental prerequisite for the formation of China-fashion brand identity and constitutes its core distinguishing feature from traditional brand identities. China-fashion brands integrate elements such as traditional patterns, intangible cultural heritage crafts, and classical culture into product design, packaging, and marketing, bridging the gap between traditional culture and modern consumption. Consumers gain an immediate appreciation of the charm of traditional culture, awakening national cultural confidence and a sense of pride in domestic brands. This breaks down the entrenched prejudice against domestic products as "low-end and inferior," fostering initial positive perceptions and laying the groundwork for subsequent brand recognition.

4.2 Core Support: Product Experience

Product experience serves as the core foundation for forming brand loyalty, determining its stability and sustainability. Cultural empowerment acts as the traffic entry point for China-fashion brands, yet product quality remains the cornerstone of a brand's existence. Consumers often try products driven by cultural trends, but their ultimate recognition and repurchase decisions hinge entirely on the product experience. Premium texture, innovative design, strategic positioning, and cost-effectiveness can transform cultural affinity into genuine brand loyalty; conversely, excessive reliance on cultural marketing while neglecting product refinement will rapidly erode consumer goodwill, making it difficult to establish lasting brand recognition.

4.3 Deep Empowerment: Value Resonance

Value resonance serves as the pivotal core in forming brand identity and represents the key transition point where consumers shift from passive awareness to active recognition. Mainstream China-fashion consumers exhibit strong national pride and a deep sense of local cultural identity. High-quality China-fashion brands typically embody concepts such as cultural heritage preservation, revitalization of domestic brands, and youthful innovation. When a brand's philosophy and cultural essence align closely with consumers' self-perception, value pursuits, and patriotic sentiments, intense emotional resonance emerges, facilitating the elevation from "product recognition" to "brand recognition" and fostering profound emotional and psychological identification.

4.4 Final solidification: Social belonging

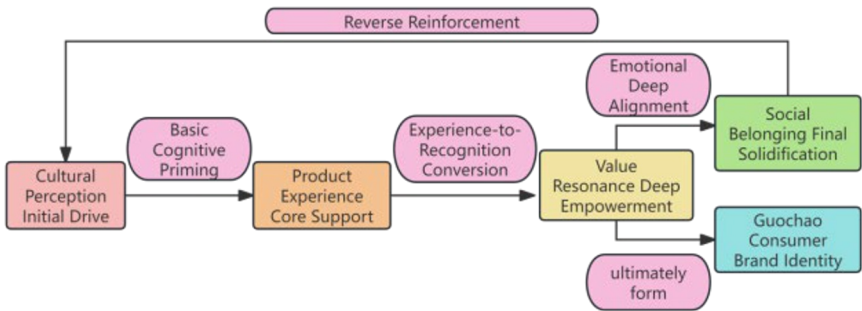


Fig. 1. Model of Consumer Brand Identity Formation Mechanism in the Context of China-fashion

Social belonging is the final stage in the solidification of brand identity, driving the transformation of individual identification into stable brand loyalty. In the era of social media, China-fashion consumption has become a social symbol and trend label, serving

as a crucial means for consumers to integrate into younger circles, convey cultural attitudes, and express their personal identities. By sharing products, participating in topic discussions, and attending brand events, consumers gain peer recognition and a sense of social belonging. This positive feedback continuously reinforces personal brand awareness, converting brand identity into enduring consumer beliefs and completing the closed loop of identity formation. The hierarchical formation path of "cultural perception → product experience → value resonance → social belonging" constitutes the complete formation mechanism model of consumer brand identity in the China-fashion context, as shown in Figure 1.

5 Strategies for Enhancing Consumer Brand Identity in the China-fashion Context

5.1 Deepen Cultural Innovation and Enhance Consumers' Cultural Perception

The China-fashion brand should abandon the mere accumulation of simplistic cultural elements and achieve a deep integration of traditional culture with modern trends. It should thoroughly explore cultural resources such as intangible cultural heritage, historical anecdotes, and folk customs, innovate and adapt them to contemporary needs, and create distinctive cultural identities. By employing youth-oriented approaches like short videos, live streaming, and cross-brand collaborations, it can lower the barrier to cultural engagement. Adhering to its cultural originality, the brand must avoid vulgar marketing practices, establish a positive cultural image, and continuously foster consumers' cultural identification.

5.2 Focus on Deep Product Development to Strengthen the Foundation of Brand Experience

Brands must adhere to the core principle of "product supremacy," balancing cultural marketing with product quality. They should increase R&D investment, optimize manufacturing processes, and enhance quality to address the shortcomings of domestic brands through technological innovation; accurately target user needs while balancing aesthetics, practicality, and cost-effectiveness; and improve pre-sales consultation, after-sales support, and user feedback mechanisms to comprehensively elevate the consumer experience, transforming market popularity into positive product reputation.

5.3 Build Positive Brand Value and Deepen Emotional Resonance with Users

The China-fashion brand should establish a distinct and positive value system to align with consumer values. By integrating themes such as the revitalization of domestic brands and cultural heritage, it should develop an emotionally resonant brand philosophy, moving beyond mere product marketing strategies. The brand should actively ful-

fill its social responsibilities by participating in charitable initiatives and cultural preservation efforts, cultivating an image that is warm-hearted and accountable. Through sustained value delivery, it can awaken national sentiment and value recognition, encouraging consumers to proactively embrace the brand.

5.4 Create Social Scenarios to Solidify Users' Brand Loyalty

Leveraging the social media ecosystem, we create diversified user social scenarios. By strategically positioning on platforms such as TikTok, Xiaohongshu, and Weibo, we establish brand-exclusive topics to encourage users to spontaneously share their experiences; build private brand communities and organize fan interactions, offline salons, and other events to enhance user engagement; collaborate with influencers and KOLs for positive dissemination to foster a China-fashion consumption atmosphere, making China-fashion a mainstream social hashtag and solidifying brand recognition and loyalty.

6 Conclusion and Prospects

This study employs grounded theory as its research methodology, analyzing 30 in-depth consumer interviews to systematically examine the mechanisms of consumer brand identity formation within the China-fashion context and construct a progressive formation model. The research reveals that consumer brand identity emerges through a layered, synergistic interaction of multiple factors: cultural perception serves as the initial driver, product experience provides the core support, value resonance constitutes the deep-seated foundation, and social belonging offers the ultimate reinforcement—all collectively forming a complete closed loop. China-fashion brand identity embodies cultural, emotional, and social dimensions, resulting from the combined influence of cultural confidence, product excellence, and social attributes.

Based on the research findings, this paper proposes targeted strategies from four dimensions—cultural innovation, product specialization, value creation, and scenario-based social engagement—to provide practical insights for Guochao brands in overcoming traffic bottlenecks and building sustainable competitiveness. The study has certain limitations, as it solely employs qualitative methods for mechanism analysis without incorporating quantitative data for empirical validation. Future research could adopt a mixed qualitative-quantitative approach, utilizing questionnaire data to verify the influence weights of each factor and further refine the research framework for China-fashion brand identity.

References

1. Yan Naiyan. Research on Co-branded Marketing Strategies for National Brands Against the Background of the Rise of China-fashion [D]. Huaqiao University, 2023..DOI:10.27155/d.cnki.ghqiu.2023.000575.

2. Guo Jie. Research on Marketing Strategies of Domestic Sports Brands under the Back ground of "China-fashion" [D]. Heilongjiang University, 2022.DOI:10.27123/d.cnki.ghlj u.2022.000742
3. Chen Yitao, Yuan Shengjun. Local Identity and Word-of-Mouth Communication of National Brands in the Context of China-Fashion: A Case Study of Huawei [J]. Enterprise Economics, 2023,42(05):50-61.DOI:10.13529/j.cnki.enterprise.economy.2023.05.005.
4. Pei Tong. Research on Image Construction of Domestic Brands in the Context of China-Fashion [D]. Henan University, 2021.DOI:10.27114/d.cnki.ghnau.2021.001606.
5. Rodrigues P,Sousa A.The Role of Authenticity in Shaping Consumer-Brand Relationships[J].Journal of International Consumer Marketing,2026,38(3):215-229.DOI:10.1080/08961530.2025.2556400.
6. Ugwuanyi C C ,Sarker P ,Jaffari A A .From clicks to carts: the impact of consumer brand engagement on fashion brand expected value, attitude, and purchase intention[J].Journal of Marketing Analytics,2026,(prepublish):1-17.DOI:10.1057/S41270-026-00479-X.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

