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Cultural Identity and Emotional Value: A Study on Consumer Perception and Market Acceptance of Chinese Traditional Cultural Elements in Jewelry Design

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Abstract

Background and Aim: In recent years, the incorporation of traditional Chinese cultural elements into jewelry design has gained momentum, reflecting a growing interest in cultural heritage and emotional expression. This study aims to explore how cultural identity and emotional value influence consumer perception and market acceptance of jewelry that integrates traditional Chinese cultural motifs. By examining these factors, the research seeks to provide insights into the cultural and psychological drivers behind consumer behavior in the contemporary jewelry market. Furthermore, this study delves into how cultural elements are reinterpreted in a commercial context, contributing to discussions on cultural commodification and authenticity within marketing management. In particular, it explores how traditional symbols acquire new meanings in the modern marketplace, providing a dynamic interplay between cultural heritage and contemporary market practices.

Methodology: This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with consumers and jewelry designers, and a quantitative survey targeting a broad demographic of jewelry consumers in China. The qualitative component focuses on emotional and symbolic associations with traditional cultural elements, while the quantitative analysis evaluates consumer attitudes, purchasing intentions, and perceived value. The qualitative inquiry is guided by frameworks related to symbolic interactionism and the cultural meanings of objects, which help explain how consumers attribute meaning to jewelry about their cultural identity. This methodological alignment with cultural studies principles ensures a comprehensive examination of consumer behavior in the context of culturally embedded products.

Results: Findings indicate that cultural identity plays a significant role in shaping consumer preferences, particularly among younger generations who seek meaningful and personalized jewelry. Emotional value—such as nostalgia, pride, and a sense of belonging—emerges as a key factor in consumer decision-making. Products that successfully integrate traditional aesthetics with modern design are more likely to be accepted and valued in the market. Cultural identity acts as a powerful motivator for self-expression and cultural affirmation, particularly among consumers

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who view jewelry not just as an accessory but as a medium through which they assert their cultural belonging. These results align with theories of identity construction and symbolic consumption, emphasizing the importance of emotional branding in consumer decisions.

Conclusion: The integration of Chinese traditional cultural elements in jewelry design enhances emotional resonance and strengthens cultural identity among consumers. Jewelry designs that align with these values through thoughtful design and storytelling are better positioned to gain market traction and long-term customer loyalty. Such designs not only serve as personal adornments but also as cultural artifacts, contributing to cultural continuity and revitalization in contemporary society. Brands that prioritize these aspects are better equipped to foster deeper consumer relationships and differentiate themselves in the competitive jewelry market.

Keywords: Cultural Identity; Emotional Value; Traditional Chinese Culture; Jewelry Design; Chinese Consumer Behavior; Cultural Branding; Symbolic Consumption; Market Acceptance

Introduction

In the age of cultural diversification and the national spirit awakening, many countries focus on how to integrate traditional culture into the product design market. Jewelry design is a means of communication with the public and a carrier of culture. Design elements and crafts can fully express cultural connotations, memory value, and emotional value, and give the wearer an aesthetic experience. China has a rich and profound traditional culture and an ancient civilization with a history of more than 5,000 years, which contains many excellent design elements. With the development of the times, traditional Chinese culture has also gradually penetrated daily life and the fashion market, and is no longer limited to clothing and architectural designs, but has extended to jewelry products. The correct application of these elements in modern jewelry is to express the oriental culture, which can be used as a traditional Chinese element. However, just focusing on the external appearance will not necessarily make the jewelry design more valuable. This study will research the traditional cultural elements in the jewelry industry, especially cultural identity and emotional value. On the one hand, cultural identity means the feeling of belonging to a cultural group or society. Jewelry with Chinese traditional elements can be used to make consumers feel a cultural identity and connection to history and tradition, allowing consumers to stay young. On the other hand, emotional value is a critical factor for consumers when making purchasing decisions. Jewelry is not only used for its shape and physical value but also for expression, beautification, and personalization. Cultural elements and jewelry containing the cultural elements may meet consumers' nostalgia and interest in culture, forming an emotional value. The jewelry product's cultural identity and emotional value become the

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cultural resources of the jewelry and meet the young people's psychological needs, making jewelry more valuable.

In recent years, many pieces of jewelry with traditional Chinese elements have emerged in China's jewelry industry, but no study has looked at the psychological or cultural impact of this type of jewelry on consumers. Research on jewelry design mainly focuses on how to design the cultural elements of jewelry and on overall traditional cultural jewelry marketing or value marketing. In addition, the psychological and cultural dimensions of consumer behavior are also inadequately studied, with most research being on the design or the marketing of traditional cultural products. Although design has received a lot of attention, little attention has been paid to the psychological characteristics of consumers of traditional cultural elements. This paper mainly focuses on consumer psychology in the jewelry industry and jewelry products containing traditional cultural elements, and how traditional Chinese cultural identity and emotional value make consumers feel from the perspective of product design, to further explore traditional cultural elements.

Objectives

This study aims to explore how cultural identity and emotional value shape consumer perception and market acceptance of jewelry designs incorporating traditional Chinese cultural elements. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Analyze consumer cognitive and emotional responses to traditional Chinese motifs, patterns, and narratives in jewelry, and how these vary across demographic groups.

2. Examine the mediating role of cultural identity in shaping symbolic interpretation and valuation of such designs.

3. Investigate the emotional meanings—such as nostalgia, pride, and reverence—associated with traditional elements in jewelry.

4. Assess market acceptance and purchasing behavior, identifying factors that enhance or limit receptivity to tradition-infused designs.

5. Provide strategic recommendations for integrating traditional Chinese cultural aesthetics into contemporary jewelry in ways that meet consumer expectations and align with cultural values.

Literature review

The review process revealed a conspicuous emphasis in the literature on the role of cultural identity and emotional value in consumer preferences, particularly about luxury goods like jewelry. Consistent with the intended aim of this research, previous studies have delved into the

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incorporation of traditional Chinese art, motifs, and craftsmanship into contemporary jewelry design (Yang, 2025; Fu, Zhang, and Deng, 2025; Xu, 2025; Wang, 2025). These studies largely agree on the increasing consumer demand for products that not only have aesthetic value but also possess emotional depth and cultural significance, a trend that aligns with the study's focus on the impact of cultural elements on consumer behavior in jewelry.

Yang (2025) provides an analysis of Chinese visual culture, discussing how Chinese-style art and design have historically integrated with the nation's cultural evolution. The author argues that a truly Chinese aesthetic in jewelry design should be grounded in an understanding of the culture's unique logic, symbols, and worldviews. This study emphasizes that the traditional forms, motifs, and aesthetics in Chinese design should not be seen as mere ornamental features but as the manifestation and rearticulation of the culture's spiritual core. By embedding these elements into modern design practices, jewelry transcends its decorative purpose and becomes a cultural artifact that resonates with consumers on a deeper, more personal level.

Building on the symbolic aspect of traditional elements, Fu, Zhang, and Deng (2025) discuss the psychological and aesthetic implications of using cultural motifs in jewelry. The authors posit that contemporary jewelry pieces often function as both forms of self-expression and therapeutic artifacts, providing emotional and psychological value. Drawing on concepts from consumer psychology and aesthetics, they show how traditional motifs can be deconstructed and recontextualized to align with modern aesthetic values while preserving cultural authenticity. This discussion is directly related to the paper's core ideas, as it underscores the notion that emotional value (e.g., nostalgia, belonging, pride) and cultural identity are essential components of consumer preference and behavior. The capacity of a jewelry piece to evoke such emotions can turn it from a mere commodity into a sentimentally charged artifact, thereby enhancing its appeal to consumers.

Xu (2025) and Wang (2025) address both the practical and theoretical applications of integrating Chinese traditional arts, including ornamental motifs and philosophical aesthetics, into product design. The studies emphasize that when traditional design elements are skillfully adapted and contextualized within contemporary design frameworks, they can significantly enhance the visual and narrative appeal of modern jewelry pieces. Xu (2025) specifically outlines practical approaches to modernizing traditional shapes, color palettes, and material uses in jewelry design, suggesting ways to reinterpret these elements for contemporary aesthetics. This reimagining, according to the authors, should not be a mere replication but an innovative cultural dialogue that breathes new life into traditional designs.

The research by Wu (2025) is another example of visual narrative and symbolic content transmission through jewelry. The author explores the incorporation of traditional elements from

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Song dynasty landscape paintings into jewelry design. The study shows how the abstract lines, ink tones, and compositional elements of Song paintings can be translated into jewelry pieces, creating a sense of poetic nostalgia and painterly aesthetics. The research by Liu (2025) and Cheng (2025) also underscores jewelry's dual function as both a wearable accessory and a symbolic object. The authors argue that by encoding symbolic meanings and visual narratives, jewelry pieces mediate between individual identity and collective cultural memory, which shows their cultural value beyond the decorative function. These studies directly support this study's thesis and conclusions, adding further evidence of jewelry's symbolic role as a vehicle for cultural and emotional expression.

Zhang and Song (2024), as well as Ma (2024), explore the role of traditional elements in the design of modern jewelry from an aesthetic and communicative perspective. The authors discuss how specific cultural symbols, motifs, or colors should be selectively integrated into jewelry design to create a coherent and expressive design language. The research emphasizes that the cultural elements should not only be visible in the form of symbols or patterns but should also be reflected in the narratives, values, and even the ritualistic aspects embedded in traditional cultural practices. The authors argue that such a multifaceted integration of cultural elements can make the jewelry pieces more meaningful and appealing to consumers.

In addition, the works of Shen (2024) and Li (2024) elaborate on the conceptual dialogue between Confucian, Daoist, and other traditional philosophical schools and the design of contemporary jewelry. The authors explore the idea that jewelry design can be a medium for expressing and materializing the philosophical ideals and aesthetics of these traditions. For example, a jewelry piece might be crafted to embody the concept of harmony with nature (Daoism) or filial piety (Confucianism), thereby imbuing a luxury item with a deeper sense of purpose and cultural narrative. This study expands the view on the role of jewelry beyond the aesthetics or craftsmanship, recognizing it as a cultural text that the consumer actively engages with in a reflective and interpretive manner.

In a case study, Pan (2025) uses an example of Quanzhou stone carving, a region-specific form of intangible cultural heritage, to illustrate how traditional art forms can be adapted and reinterpreted through jewelry design. The study describes how elements of the local stone carving style were incorporated into jewelry pieces, allowing them to serve as cultural artifacts that communicate the region's unique identity. This localization of cultural elements, the author suggests, helps to preserve local cultural identity while also making the pieces marketable to wider audiences. This is a particularly relevant study for the paper, showing the examples of how the local traditional cultural elements might be adapted to contemporary market conditions.

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In conclusion, the literature affirms the research hypothesis that the inclusion of traditional Chinese cultural elements into jewelry design goes beyond mere aesthetics and serves symbolic, emotional, and ideological purposes. However, in this pool of studies, there are relatively few empirical attempts to understand how consumers perceive and what behavioral changes they experience in contact with such jewelry designs. Many studies examine design aesthetics or more global concepts, like general cultural marketing tactics. Thus, this research gap justifies the relevance of the present study, which can provide empirical evidence of how cultural identity and emotional value impact the consumers' behavior in the jewelry purchasing and consumption process. This review also suggests that the study can be strengthened by including some established theories from, for example, consumer culture theory, semiotics in marketing, or brand identity theory, which will help to create a clearer theoretical background for the cultural identity and emotional value roles in the behavior of consumers.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual foundation of this study is built at the intersection of cultural identity theory, emotional value theory, and consumer behavior models, particularly within the context of culturally embedded product design. This framework posits that traditional Chinese cultural elements in jewelry are not merely aesthetic embellishments but semiotic carriers of identity, emotion, and social meaning. These elements are interpreted and evaluated by consumers through culturally and emotionally mediated cognitive processes, which shape their perception, preference, and market acceptance. By linking cultural elements to identity and emotional resonance, this framework underscores the importance of understanding how consumers engage with and respond to jewelry designs that integrate traditional cultural symbols.

At the core of this framework lies the concept of cultural identity, as articulated by Hall (1990) and later extended by consumer culture theorists. Cultural identity is defined as a dynamic process of self-recognition and group affiliation, rooted in shared historical symbols, narratives, and value systems. Jewelry designs that incorporate traditional Chinese motifs—such as dragon-phoenix imagery, cloud patterns, or calligraphic strokes—serve as visual cues that activate a sense of "Chineseness." For consumers, particularly within a post-globalization and postmodern cultural landscape, engaging with these symbols satisfies both individualistic needs for self-expression and collective needs for cultural continuity. This conceptualization aligns with the broader cultural context, where jewelry not only fulfills a personal role but also connects individuals to their heritage, reinforcing the importance of cultural identification in consumer behavior.

Parallel to cultural identity, the framework introduces emotional value, derived from Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) experiential consumption model, which emphasizes that

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consumption is not solely rational or utilitarian but also affective, symbolic, and hedonic. In the context of culturally inspired jewelry, emotional value may emerge through sentiments such as nostalgia, reverence, national pride, or spiritual resonance. These emotional responses are intensified when cultural artifacts are internalized as extensions of the self (Belk, 1988), thereby increasing the perceived value of the jewelry beyond its material composition. This emotional connection deepens the consumer's engagement with the product, transforming it from a mere object into a source of personal meaning.

These dual constructs—cultural identity and emotional value—jointly influence consumer perception, which encompasses both cognitive evaluations (e.g., authenticity, design quality, craftsmanship) and affective impressions (e.g., emotional attachment, symbolic fit). The relationship between cultural identity and emotional value is complex, with each construct reinforcing the other. For instance, the emotional value elicited by a design may further activate cultural identity, and vice versa. Consumer perception, in turn, mediates market acceptance, operationalized here as the likelihood of purchase, willingness to pay a premium, and brand loyalty. The strength of these relationships may vary depending on demographic and psychographic factors, such as age, cultural exposure, and design literacy, which can moderate how consumers interpret and value jewelry that incorporates traditional cultural elements.

To visualize these theoretical relationships, the framework is represented as follows:

Traditional Cultural Elements in Jewelry Design

↓

Cultural Identity Activation + Emotional Value Elicitation

↓

Consumer Perception (cognitive and affective)

↓

Market Acceptance (purchase intention, brand loyalty, perceived value)

Additionally, moderating variables such as consumer cultural orientation, design familiarity, and aesthetic literacy are acknowledged as important factors that can influence these relationships. These variables suggest that cultural consumption is not a linear process but one that is interpretive and shaped by various personal and contextual factors. For example, consumers with greater cultural exposure may respond differently to traditional motifs than those with less exposure, impacting their perception of authenticity and symbolic fit. Feedback loops—such as the reinterpretation of cultural meanings by consumers over time—are also included in the framework, recognizing the dynamic nature of cultural consumption.

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This conceptual framework serves as both an analytical lens and a structural guide for empirical inquiry. It informs the formulation of research hypotheses, the design of survey instruments, and the interpretation of findings. By adopting a multi-layered and interdisciplinary perspective, the framework enables a nuanced understanding of how traditional culture operates in the symbolic economy of jewelry. It highlights how these cultural elements, when thoughtfully integrated into contemporary designs, can activate a complex set of identity-driven and emotional responses, ultimately influencing consumer behavior and market acceptance. In doing so, it contributes to both academic discourse and practical design innovation, providing valuable insights for designers and marketers who seek to align cultural authenticity with contemporary consumer preferences.

To further strengthen this framework, future studies may explore the specific mechanisms through which traditional cultural elements in jewelry lead to cultural identity activation and emotional value elicitation. A semiotic analysis, for example, could deconstruct how particular motifs or design choices trigger these responses, enhancing the theoretical grounding of this framework. Furthermore, narrative theory could be applied to deepen the understanding of how cultural elements within jewelry are "read" by consumers, as jewelry can be considered a form of cultural text that tells a story and evokes emotional and symbolic meanings.

In terms of marketing management, this framework could provide actionable insights for product positioning, communication strategies, and branding. Understanding how cultural identity activation informs consumer preferences can guide designers in aligning their products with cultural narratives, while the elicitation of emotional value can influence promotional campaigns, making them more resonant with consumers' emotional needs. For example, brands could emphasize the personal and emotional stories behind their jewelry pieces, fostering deeper consumer connections. Additionally, understanding the role of moderating variables will allow designers and marketers to fine-tune their approach based on demographic and psychographic factors. For instance, consumers with higher design literacy may respond more strongly to culturally rich jewelry designs, whereas those with less exposure may require more guidance or education regarding the cultural significance of the product.

Methodology

The proposed mixed-method research design aligns seamlessly with the study’s objectives, offering a comprehensive approach to examining the impact of cultural identity and emotional value on consumer perception and market acceptance of traditional Chinese elements in jewelry design. By blending qualitative and quantitative methods, the study is poised to capitalize on the rich exploratory depth of qualitative data while also achieving the empirical rigor and

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generalizability inherent in quantitative analysis. This methodological synergy allows for a holistic understanding of consumer behavior in the context of culturally infused product design, providing nuanced insights into how traditional cultural elements resonate with consumers at both an emotional and symbolic level.

Research Design

The study adopts a two-phase research design, comprising a qualitative exploratory phase followed by a quantitative confirmatory phase. The qualitative phase is designed to unearth latent perceptions, emotional associations, and cultural interpretations through in-depth participant engagement. In contrast, the quantitative phase, informed by the qualitative insights, aims to test the hypothesized relationships and validate the conceptual framework through statistical analysis. This sequential mixed-method approach facilitates a comprehensive exploration of rich, narrative-driven insights in the qualitative phase, which subsequently informs and transitions into the more generalizable, quantitatively-driven findings.

Qualitative Phase

Objectives and Rationale

The qualitative phase is centered around several key objectives, including the identification and articulation of symbolic meanings and emotional narratives that consumers associate with Chinese traditional elements in jewelry. This phase also aims to explore how cultural identity is manifested in aesthetic preferences and product evaluations and to understand the emotional engagement of consumers with jewelry that incorporates traditional motifs. The qualitative research design is in keeping with the study's exploratory nature, providing a deep, culturally and emotionally contextual understanding of consumer perceptions.

Data Collection

In the qualitative phase, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 jewelry consumers, 5 independent designers, and 3 brand strategists. A purposive sampling strategy was utilized, with careful attention paid to ensuring diversity in terms of age, cultural background, and design literacy, thus capturing perspectives from both the demand and supply sides of the jewelry market. This multi-stakeholder approach allows for a rich and comprehensive exploration of the subject matter from various vantage points.

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's six-step method. Codes were inductively derived, allowing for themes to emerge with the focus on identifying patterns and recurring elements pertinent to cultural symbolism, emotional value articulation, and design interpretation. To ensure coding consistency and traceability, NVivo software was used to support the analysis process.

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Quantitative Phase

Research Model and Hypotheses

Drawing on the insights from the qualitative phase and the overarching conceptual framework, a structural model was formulated for the quantitative phase, purposed to test relationships among key constructs including cultural identity, emotional value, consumer perception, and market acceptance. Hypotheses were posited to assess direct effects as well as potential mediating effects between these constructs, thereby guiding the quantitative analysis and providing the means by which the conceptual framework could be empirically validated.

Instrument Design

A structured questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale to measure the following constructs:

Perceived cultural identity salience, adapted from established cultural identity scales.

Perceived emotional value, including but not limited to nostalgia, pride, and symbolic self-expression.

Consumer perception of product quality, authenticity, and aesthetics.

Market acceptance, as indicated by purchase intention, willingness to pay a premium, and likelihood of word-of-mouth endorsement.

The questionnaire underwent a pre-test (n=30) to evaluate reliability and face validity. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all constructs exceeded the threshold of 0.80, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. This pre-testing phase ensured the robustness of the instrument before full-scale deployment.

Sampling and Data Collection

Data collection for the quantitative phase was conducted via an online survey, targeting a sample of 500 respondents from the major metropolitan regions of China, including but not limited to Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Chengdu. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representativeness in terms of demographic diversity, including age, gender, education, and income. This sampling approach adds rigor to the study by enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis was carried out using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted first to assess the construct validity of the measurement model. Following this, path analysis was performed to evaluate the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. Mediation and moderation analyses were subsequently conducted to understand the roles of emotional value and cultural identity in

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shaping consumer responses. These advanced statistical methods allowed for a nuanced understanding of the intricate relationships between the study constructs.

Ethical Considerations

In all phases of the research, all participants were provided with informed consent forms that outlined the study's purpose, ensured anonymity, and emphasized the voluntary nature of participation. The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the institutional ethics committee before the initiation of data collection.

Methodological Contribution

The proposed integrated qualitative-quantitative method provides depth and rigor to the study, leveraging the subjective richness of qualitative data and the empirical robustness of quantitative analysis to provide a multi-dimensional understanding of the market and consumer response. The qualitative phase offers a culturally nuanced, in-depth exploration of the emotional and symbolic meaning-making processes of consumers, while the quantitative phase provides the empirical backing needed to test and validate these insights, thereby situating them within the larger patterns of market behavior. The dual phases complement each other to create a comprehensive and empirically grounded methodology that can effectively explore how traditional Chinese elements are consumed, reinterpreted, and valued in jewelry design.

Enhancements to Methodology

To further enhance the methodology, the qualitative phase could be expanded by including a semiotic lens (originating from cultural studies) to guide the analysis and interpretation of participant responses. This might involve looking for recurring "signs" or "codes" within the interview data that represent cultural identity and emotional value, and analyzing how these "signs" are "read" or interpreted by consumers. Narrative theory could also be used to deepen the qualitative inquiry by exploring how consumers "tell stories" about their connections to culturally infused jewelry, thereby providing a more detailed picture of how jewelry functions as a cultural "text" and how its "narratives" influence emotional engagement.

The theoretical basis for the scales measuring cultural identity salience and emotional value could also be further discussed, including an explanation of how these scales were adapted for a cross-cultural context, and how they relate specifically to Chinese cultural identity and emotional values (e.g., "national pride" or "reverence"). This would enhance the construct validity and provide confidence that the scales are accurately capturing the nuanced emotional experiences of the consumers.

Results

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This chapter includes the results of the qualitative and quantitative parts of the empirical study and relates them to the conceptual framework, which predicted cultural identity and emotional value as influential factors on consumer perception and market acceptance of jewelry design that integrates traditional Chinese cultural elements. The results enrich the theoretical discussion on cultural identity, emotional value, and consumer behavior, extending established theories with practical insights on consumer responses to cultural products.

Qualitative Results

The thematic analysis of the interview data identified three key themes: (1) symbolic resonance of cultural motifs, (2) emotional engagement through heritage narrative, and (3) authenticity vs. innovation tension.

Symbolic Resonance of Cultural Motifs

Many participants noted a deep recognition of certain traditional elements like cloud patterns (yunwen), the ruyi scepter shape, and Song-style floral motifs, viewing them as symbols of cultural memory. They were described as “deeply Chinese” or “emotionally evocative” by many participants, especially those between 25–40 years old. This finding resonates with Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, as these motifs are cultural assets that consumers possess, which provide them with social status. The recognition of these symbols reflects cultural literacy that affects consumer perception. However, it adds a layer of depth to our understanding of how consumers might interpret traditional elements and their embedded meanings.

Emotional Engagement through Heritage Narrative

Respondents highlighted the affective impact of jewelry that channels a sense of tradition. Emotional value was most commonly expressed through words like nostalgia, cultural pride, and aesthetic intimacy. The participants reported that traditional design elements evoked feelings of being “anchored,” “emotionally moved,” or “seen” (acknowledged) culturally. Jewelry was often perceived as not just an ornament, but also as a personal relic of cultural continuity. This emotional engagement may also be indicative of the role of collective memory in shaping individual consumer emotions, as per cultural theories. Collective memory is socially constructed and often linked to shared experiences. From a marketing perspective, the integration of heritage narratives can be seen as a form of brand storytelling, which is posited to create a more durable emotional bond between the consumer and the product.

Tension Between Authenticity and Innovation

There was some concern among the respondents about the superficial appropriation of traditional symbols without a solid grounding in their original cultural context. The recurrent phrase “authentic reinterpretation” signals a desire for innovation in design while maintaining cultural integrity. This is in line with certain debates in cultural studies around cultural

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commodification and glocalization. The consumers, as active cultural participants, are navigating the tension between tradition and modernity in a sophisticated manner that reflects a high degree of cultural understanding. The call for authenticity underscores the challenges brands face in globalized markets, where traditional motifs are frequently recontextualized, sometimes to the point of hybridization to suit wider, more diverse audiences.

Quantitative Results

Sample Characteristics

We received 487 valid responses to the survey (female respondents = 52% or 253, male respondents = 48% or 234). The age of the respondents varied from 18 to 55 years old. Most of them had a university degree or higher (over 70%). Moreover, the survey has shown that the average respondent had already heard of traditional Chinese motifs being used in jewelry design or purchase (around 65%).

Measurement Model Assessment

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed good construct validity of the measurement model. All standardized factor loadings were above the required level of 0.7. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were above 0.5, and Composite Reliability (CR) values were above 0.8. Fit indices were also excellent (χ^2/df = 1.93, CFI = 0.957, RMSEA = 0.041). Thus, we have enough evidence for the good reliability and validity of our model. However, to make it clear how strong the relationships are in our model, we need to add R^2 values of the endogenous variables (market acceptance). This will help to show what proportion of its variance can be explained by the variable consumer perception.

Structural Model Results

The structural model results from Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) are given in Fig. 12. As can be seen from the table, all the hypothesized relationships are supported.

Cultural identity has a statistically significant positive effect on consumer perception (β = 0.48, $p < 0.001$).

Emotional value also has a statistically significant effect on consumer perception (β = 0.53, $p < 0.001$).

Consumer perception has a statistically significant positive effect on market acceptance (β = 0.59, $p < 0.001$).

The mediated effect of consumer perception between cultural identity and emotional value, and market acceptance is also statistically significant (bootstrapped CI does not include zero).

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However, it would be more interesting to have an interpretation of these results in the text. For example, the β of 0.48 for cultural identity on consumer perception is moderate, meaning that, all else being equal, the variable cultural identity does play an important role in predicting consumers' ratings of the new products. In other words, if a brand wants to improve consumer perception, then it would benefit from focusing on cultural identity in design decisions.

Moderating Effects

The results of the multi-group analysis showed that design literacy (understood as an awareness of design principles and traditional art) moderates the effect of emotional value on consumer perception. This means that consumers with higher design literacy show stronger emotional (affective) responses to symbolic jewelry and, consequently, a higher willingness to buy it. Thus, consumer expertise, which could be seen as cultural competence, enables them to appreciate the traditional artistry and symbolism, which in turn increases emotional response to the product and, potentially, its purchasing intention. Marketers could then use this information to better educate consumers about the cultural and design value of the jewelry they sell, in order to improve their emotional connection and appreciation of it.

Synthesis of Results

The findings from the qualitative and quantitative research, when triangulated, point to the pivotal role of cultural identity and emotional value in consumer perceptions of jewelry that weaves in traditional Chinese cultural elements. Consumers are active agents who interpret, feel, and judge the cultural meaning infused in design. These insights confirm the theoretical position that aesthetic choices are not independent of cultural knowledge. A successful market acceptance is thus dependent on a product's capacity to align with consumer emotional memory and cultural authenticity, mediated through consumer perception that is affective and evaluative.

At the same time, the data suggest that factors such as age, cultural exposure, and design literacy are significant in how consumers engage with and interpret culturally charged jewelry. Subgroup analysis (ANOVA or moderation analysis) could be conducted to demonstrate how these variables moderate key constructs like cultural identity salience and emotional value. This would provide further insights into the variability of consumer groups' responses to jewelry designs that incorporate traditional cultural elements.

Practical Implications and Further Research

These results help to form a more complete and multi-layered picture of consumer behavior, with an emphasis on the challenges associated with the integration of traditional cultural elements in product design. They could also be used by designers and marketers to more effectively add cultural elements to their products and do it in a way that is coherent with consumers' self-perception and emotional needs. Further studies could address other potential

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moderating variables or investigate the perception of culturally infused jewelry from a cross-cultural perspective.

Discussion

Cultural Identity as a Cognitive and Symbolic Driver of Perception

The present study supports and expands upon the proposition that cultural identity, as a powerful cognitive and symbolic force, can significantly influence consumer perception. This directly aligns with the literature on identity-based consumer behavior, including Stuart Hall's (1990) work on the construction of identity through engagement with shared cultural symbols and codes. The findings presented in this study emphasize the active role individuals play in seeking out products that align with and reinforce their cultural self-concept.

Examining this phenomenon within the context of jewelry, the study offers insight into a specific form of identity performance. As with other material artifacts, this consumption act, which centers around a significant component of cultural self-expression, can be seen as a communication with others and with oneself. Consumers may not only project aspects of their cultural identity outward but also confirm, reflect, and shape their identity by engaging with cultural heritage-inspired jewelry.

The focus on national heritage, which the research identified as a relevant cultural trend, gains new layers of meaning in light of this. Jewelry emerges as an important tool for younger consumers to express pride in their cultural identity, engage in heritage preservation, and assert their unique place in an increasingly globalized cultural market. The overall socio-cultural context of this study, therefore, enriches the contemporary conversation about cultural revivalism and roots-seeking in a rapidly globalizing and internationalizing world.

Emotional Value as an Inherent Affective Component of Consumer Response

On the other hand, the findings about emotional value illuminate the role of this often underappreciated affective dimension of consumer response. Jewelry, rather than being a luxury good, an art object, or an aesthetic accessory, becomes a means of embedding personalized emotional meaning for the customer. Eliciting specific feelings (nostalgia, reverence, pride, and intergenerational connection) that go far beyond simple hedonic consumption pleasure, traditional jewelry with cultural references can create specific symbolic, emotional value for the consumer.

On this basis, the unique qualities of this specific jewelry design and marketing strategy find confirmation in Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) experiential model of consumption. According to their view, symbolic and emotional gratifications, in addition to aesthetic and sensory gratifications, form an essential component of consumer satisfaction with consumption objects,

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particularly hedonic ones, like jewelry. The emotional value that traditional jewelry brings to the consumer also goes beyond the immediate personal meaning and experience, as it is built upon and evokes a collective memory. Collective memory is formed through shared cultural experiences and historical narratives. In other words, jewelry connects consumers not only to their family history or personal experience but to their cultural group.

The heritage part, which the study identified as significant for the brand's USP, gains additional complexity in this interpretation, as the traditional elements and references embedded in jewelry become emotionally meaningful and sacred for the consumer. This, in turn, is due to the overall sacralization of heritage and history in society and is, again, part of the overall consumer context for culturally-loaded products, like the one at the center of this study.

Consumer Perception as an Interpretive Process

The presence of consumer perception as a mediating variable supports the hypothesis that the translation of cultural and emotional meanings into observable outcomes is not immediate or deterministic. Instead, it depends on the consumers' interpretive process. Perception in this context is both evaluative and creative, as consumers judge the authenticity, coherence, and temporal relevance of the traditional elements being cited. This raises the question of whether consumer perception is affected by their semiotic competence in cultural studies, i.e., how well they decode the sign system presented by the jewelry designs based on their cultural literacy and references.

From the data, it can be inferred that consumers with different levels of cultural literacy will approach and perceive the same jewelry design differently. This insight provides an explanation for the variability in consumer perception and response and refines the understanding of how symbolic citation interacts with consumer attitudes. On a practical level, this could mean that designers and marketers need to consider the cultural knowledge and interpretive frameworks of their target audiences when citing traditional elements, as these will impact the consumers' perception of authenticity and symbolic fit.

To design with cultural elements is to engage in a dialogic process that involves not just the designer's voice, but also the voices of the cultures and contexts that the design speaks to. The need for a dialogic approach with traditional elements calls for a shift from mere symbolic citation to cultural curation. This involves a more contextualized and empathetic design practice that reimagines traditional elements in ways that are relevant and respectful to the contemporary cultural context. Dialogic design also necessitates a collaborative approach to meaning-making, where the designer and the cultural context co-create the narrative and symbolism being expressed by the jewelry. This approach questions and redefines the boundaries between cultural

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appropriation and cultural appreciation, pushing designers to be more accountable, ethical, and informed in their engagement with traditional elements.

Design Literacy as a Moderating Variable

The identification of design literacy as a moderating factor introduces a nuanced perspective on audience segmentation. This variable provides a unique lens to understand why certain consumer segments responded more positively to the symbolic jewelry in terms of emotional response and purchase intent. Those with higher design literacy expressed significantly more positive emotions towards symbolic jewelry and a greater willingness to purchase. This finding not only highlights the impact of cultural competence on consumer engagement but also underlines the importance of consumers' ability to decode and appreciate the subtleties of design in influencing their perceptions of symbolic relevance and craftsmanship.

This research opens up an opportunity to consider the role of design literacy in consumers' emotional response to jewelry. Consumers with higher design literacy may have a more nuanced appreciation of the craftsmanship and symbolic intent behind the jewelry, leading to a stronger emotional connection and perceived value. On the other hand, those with lower design literacy may not fully grasp these nuances, which could lead to a weaker emotional response. This observation points to the potential of targeted consumer education as a marketing strategy, where efforts can be made to increase consumers' understanding and appreciation of design elements, symbolism, and cultural significance.

The finding also speaks to the concept of cultural capital as proposed by Pierre Bourdieu. Cultural capital refers to the accumulation of knowledge, behaviors, and skills that one can tap into to demonstrate cultural competence. Consumers with higher cultural and design literacy engage more deeply with the cultural narrative and symbolism embedded in the jewelry, leading to higher product attachment.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

The presented findings work together to bridge the theory of identity-based consumption with the framework of emotional value to account for consumer engagement with culturally-inflected product categories. The discovery of a previously unknown dimension in the jewelry design response process reveals the need for a more interdisciplinary model of design evaluation and consumer engagement that extends beyond the sociocultural and cognitive. This expansion of the theoretical scope of a pre-existing model allows for a better understanding of how cultural identity, emotional value, and consumer affect are different but interdependent factors of consumer behavior.

Theoretically, this study has expanded and enriched the existing research on consumer response to products with cultural significance. This is primarily done through highlighting an

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important component of emotional engagement with cultural products. Practically, these findings have several implications for the jewelry industry, as well as the cultural and creative sectors more broadly. On one hand, the a need for design innovation that is both culturally authentic and emotionally resonant to foster consumer attachment, brand loyalty, and unique value creation in the market. On the other hand, designers and marketers must approach tradition not as a mere repertoire of design elements and symbols, but as a living resource that needs to be interpreted, curated, and reimagined with care. It is only through cultural curation rather than mere replication that designers will be able to bridge the past and present, creating jewelry that modern consumers will recognize as both familiar and novel.

The success of jewelry products, especially those that incorporate traditional cultural elements, depends not only on the surface aesthetics but also on the depth of cultural resonance they achieve with their audience. By facilitating a more meaningful cultural engagement and emotional connection, such jewelry products can not only improve consumer perception and market acceptance but also contribute to the elevation of jewelry as a cultural artifact in the modern world. As designers and marketers of such products continue to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the increasingly globalized and competitive market, it is crucial to ensure that traditional cultural elements are not only visible but also thoughtfully reinterpreted and presented to offer modern consumers a true connection to their heritage while also meeting their design expectations. Future research could also be done to further the present study by exploring the cross-cultural dynamics of consumer engagement with culturally traditional products.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the empirical results have yielded significant findings, validating the model used in this research, which has led to the conclusions presented above. The study highlighted the importance of cultural factors in the perception of jewelry pieces with traditional cultural elements. Moreover, the customer's cultural identity plays an important role in perceiving the symbolic image of cultural jewelry, while the emotional value becomes the link between this symbolic representation and consumers' purchase intentions. These conclusions were supported by the expert opinion and the importance of cultural factors in product design. In summary, the emotional response of consumers to culturally inspired products is intricately linked with both personal emotional experiences and the wider cultural narrative beyond aesthetic appreciation.

In addition, the moderating role of the design literacy of the customers in the relationship between the symbolic image of the jewelry and its emotional value and purchase intentions needs to be considered. This is an important factor that can help design experts find new avenues for infusing cultural factors in jewelry products to meet the expectations of the consumer. The

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importance of design literacy as a variable that influences the behavior of consumers about the cultural element was described by the experts as an important finding. It has been shown that a higher level of design literacy allows customers to experience the emotional response to symbolic jewelry, which in turn promotes purchase intention.

The results of the statistical and qualitative analysis used to test the model have proven the appropriateness of the concept. It also shows that the use of cultural factors for the development of jewelry products needs to be based not on a superficial attachment to tradition but on the "dialogue with the tradition". Designers and cultural entrepreneurs need to reinterpret and reinvent traditional elements of cultural heritage that are placed in new circumstances. In other words, it was not an exact copy but the re-creation of the traditional style in which the past is filled with the present. In this way, the connection with tradition and the emotional value of consumers was maintained, and this method of cultural representation met with their approval. Based on the findings, it is argued that cultural design requires innovative communication between the cultural heritage expert, cultural communities, and consumers to understand what consumers want about the traditional culture. This will also allow cultural factors to be more effectively used in jewelry products to increase their attractiveness for consumers.

In the future, it is necessary to check whether the presence of cultural value will promote a positive emotional response to such jewelry and increase brand loyalty to this product. In addition, a cross-cultural analysis of the application of traditional cultural jewelry in other cultures will help to more fully understand this phenomenon.

Recommendation

Informed by the results of this study, the following are several recommended strategies that may be adopted by practitioners, designers, and cultural entrepreneurs in the field of contemporary jewelry and cultural revitalization.

Conduct Culturally-Informed Design Research

Designers are recommended to conduct a thorough and culturally-informed design research before ideating new concepts. By understanding the historical, philosophical, and aesthetic underpinnings of the Chinese cultural motifs, their reinterpretation in contemporary settings will be more contextually meaningful and culturally authentic. This will reduce the risks of cultural appropriation and ensure that the reinterpretations are not just meaningful but also respectful. This will also help them to avoid commodifying the cultural heritage, which is of ethical concern in many cultural studies, and aligns with best design practices that advocate for authentic cultural representation in design processes.

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Practice Narrative-Based Design Strategies

Businesses and brands are recommended to practice a narrative-based design strategy by telling the story of the cultural symbols, motifs, and designs they use in their products. By harnessing the emotional and symbolic meanings of their jewelry, companies can engage in brand storytelling—a common and effective contemporary marketing practice that can build brand equity that is deeply rooted in cultural meanings. Carefully-crafted narratives around the jewelry will also encourage cultural dialogue and cultural identity affirmation. These narratives will deepen the relationship between consumers and brands by giving them emotional points of attachment, turning the jewelry into cultural artifacts that they will personally identify with.

Educate Consumers and Raise Design Literacy

Acknowledging the role of design literacy as a moderating factor, businesses and educators are encouraged to launch educational or marketing initiatives to raise consumer cultural fluency. These initiatives, which can take the form of curated exhibitions, interactive media, or digital campaigns, explain the origin and meanings of the motifs and design logic of the jewelry pieces. The educational component will act as a form of cultural mediation, to some degree, as it will inform and empower consumers to be more discerning and appreciative of the cultural stories behind the products they purchase. The ability to meaningfully connect with a piece will also cultivate a deeper appreciation for the more traditional designs and transform the more passive consumers into more active and engaged cultural patrons. This initiative has the potential to expand the market by creating and cultivating an audience that appreciates not just the aesthetics of jewelry but also the rich cultural content it may offer.

Practice Segmented Design and Communication Strategy

Businesses are recommended to experiment with a segmented design and communication strategy and target specific consumer profiles segmented by age, cultural orientation, and aesthetic preferences. This approach could be theoretically based on the creation of consumer market segments based on cultural values or psychographics. For example, for the same design brand, different marketing and product communication campaigns can be developed to reach different market segments more effectively. By having a deep understanding of how different cultural cohorts, such as younger consumers who see jewelry as a source of national pride or older consumers who value tradition and continuity, engage with their jewelry designs, a much more precise and effective cultural targeting can be implemented. This will greatly help in expanding the overall market size by better aligning products and the cultural values of specific consumer groups, and increasing the market acceptance of the jewelry designs.

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Institutionalize Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration for Long-Term Sustainability

To ensure the long-term sustainability of innovation in their design practices, we also recommend that businesses institutionalize cross-disciplinary collaborations among jewelry designers, historians, traditional artisans, and even technologists. This practice will help ensure cultural innovation through the synergy of knowledge between multiple disciplines. It also enables them to practice cultural innovation with cultural authenticity, as their products will continuously be informed by domain experts. By conceptualizing a form of living heritage that allows the tradition to evolve through culturally and historically informed contemporary design practice. By collaborating with experts from different disciplines, designers can be empowered to create products that not only respect traditional craftsmanship but also introduce innovative elements that are highly desirable and sought after by the modern consumer. This idea of cultural curation will ensure that the reinterpretation of traditional elements is dynamic, with a long-term contribution to the mission of cultural revitalization through material design.

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