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From Aesthetics to Purchase: How Dai Brocade Aesthetics Shape Purchase Intention via Perceived Value and Cultural Identity

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Abstract

Background and Aims: Research on intangible cultural heritage products has often focused on design, preservation, and cultural dissemination, while relatively less attention has been given to the consumer psychological mechanisms through which product aesthetics shape market response. Against this background, this study examines how Dai brocade aesthetic characteristics influence consumers' purchase intention and whether perceived value and cultural identity function as key mediating mechanisms within the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework.

Methodology: A quantitative cross-sectional online survey was administered via Wenjuanxing, yielding 428 valid responses. All constructs were measured using 5-point Likert scales. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability and factorability checks, regression, and bootstrap mediation tests.

Results: Dai brocade aesthetics showed a significant positive effect on purchase intention and also positively influenced perceived value and cultural identity. Both perceived value and cultural identity significantly mediated the relationship between aesthetics and purchase intention, with cultural identity showing the stronger indirect effect. These findings indicate that Dai brocade aesthetics affect consumer intention not only through immediate aesthetic appeal but also through value appraisal and identity-related processing.

Conclusion: The study suggests that the market acceptance of Dai brocade depends not only on product aesthetics themselves, but also on how aesthetic cues are translated into multidimensional value and cultural identity. This finding extends the understanding of heritage product consumption by showing that identity-based mechanisms may be more influential than value-based evaluation in shaping purchase intention, while also offering implications for cultural product positioning, value communication, and heritage branding.

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Keywords: Dai Brocade; Intangible Cultural Heritage Products; Product Aesthetics; Perceived Value; Cultural Identity; Purchase Intention; Stimulus–Organism–Response Framework

Introduction

At the macro level, China has explicitly positioned ICH protection and value transformation within the broader agenda of cultural development and high-quality growth. The Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan and the 2035 Vision calls for strengthening systematic protection of important cultural/natural heritage and ICH, while promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of excellent traditional Chinese culture (National Development and Reform Commission, 2022). In parallel, the 14th Five-Year Plan for ICH Protection issued by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2021) emphasizes building a more robust safeguarding and transmission system and expanding dissemination and public engagement, offering an institutional roadmap for transforming ICH resources into sustainable cultural products.

Further policy initiatives have also encouraged the integration of ICH into contemporary life and digital cultural consumption, creating a broader institutional environment for the dissemination and market development of heritage products.

However, policy support and cultural recognition do not automatically translate into stable consumer demand or market acceptance for specific ICH products. At the micro level, whether an ICH product can gain stable market acceptance depends on how consumers translate aesthetic experience into value appraisal and, ultimately, into purchase intention. Perceived value research suggests that intention is shaped by consumers' integrated trade-off between what is received and what is given (Zeithaml, 1988; Sheth et al., 1991), and purchase intention is commonly treated as a proximal predictor of behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). For cultural products, identity-related mechanisms may further strengthen motivation (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Although prior studies on ICH have discussed design, preservation, and cultural communication, less attention has been given to how aesthetic characteristics are translated into consumer purchase intention through specific psychological mechanisms. This gap is particularly important for Dai brocade, whose market appeal depends not only on visual attractiveness but also on cultural meaning and identity resonance. Against this background, the present study examines how Dai brocade aesthetic characteristics influence purchase intention through perceived value and cultural identity, thereby clarifying the consumer psychological mechanisms that connect heritage aesthetics with market response.

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Objectives

The objective of this study is to examine how Dai brocade aesthetic characteristics are associated with consumers' purchase intention and to explain the psychological mechanisms through which perceived value and cultural identity shape this relationship in the context of ethnic ICH consumption. Specifically, the study aims to (1) determine whether and to what extent Dai brocade aesthetic characteristics predict consumers' purchase intention, (2) examine how perceived value and cultural identity mediate the relationship between aesthetic characteristics and purchase intention, and (3) assess the explanatory relevance of the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework for understanding aesthetic-driven purchase behavior in the context of Dai brocade consumption.

Literature Review

1. Dai Brocade Aesthetics and Its Modern Translation

Research on Dai brocade largely addresses motif systems, symbolic meanings, weaving craftsmanship, and modern applications, stressing ethnic symbolism and visual distinctiveness and examining translation into fashion, tourism products, and cultural creative development (Chen & Yang, 2009; Gao, 2012; Chen, 2018; Zhao et al., 2023; Zhang & Liang, 2024). This body of work implies that brocade aesthetics is a composite of motif structure, color configuration, and craftsmanship texture: motifs cue cultural meaning, colors drive immediate preference and style recognition, and craftsmanship details are often interpreted as signals of quality and scarcity (Gao, 2012; Chen, 2018). From a consumer and marketing perspective, these three dimensions matter not only as cultural expressions but also as cues of product differentiation, perceived quality, and symbolic value in the marketplace. Thus, operationalizing aesthetics into pattern, color, and craftsmanship dimensions is theoretically grounded and suitable for modeling consumer decision processes. However, previous studies have paid relatively less attention to how these aesthetic dimensions are converted into concrete consumer responses such as purchase intention.

2. The S–O–R Logic for ICH Consumption

The S–O–R framework argues that external stimuli shape internal organismic states, which then generate behavioral responses. In ICH handicraft contexts, aesthetic characteristics can be treated as salient stimuli, while value appraisal and culture-related psychological states serve as organismic mechanisms, culminating in behavioral tendencies such as purchase intention. In the present study, Dai brocade aesthetics are treated as the external stimulus, perceived value and cultural identity as organismic states, and purchase intention as the behavioral response, which provides a clear theoretical structure for explaining how heritage aesthetics are translated into market acceptance.

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3. Perceived Value as a Multidimensional Mechanism

Perceived value is commonly conceptualized as consumers' integrated judgment of price, quality, and overall value, functioning as a key psychological mechanism linking product features to behavioral intention (Zeithaml, 1988). Consumption value theory further argues that choice is driven by multiple value types rather than a single utilitarian motive (Sheth et al., 1991). Measurement work provides classic multidimensional value scales suitable for empirical testing (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). In Chinese empirical studies, perceived value significantly predicts purchase intention and is frequently examined with explicit mechanism considerations (Chen, 2025). In ICH and handicraft contexts, value dimensions are often extended to cultural and experiential components to fit meaning-based consumption motives (Zhang, 2023; Zhu & Liu, 2023; Zhu & Liu, 2024). Therefore, modeling perceived value as multidimensional is appropriate for explaining how aesthetic experience becomes "worth buying." In this sense, perceived value mainly captures the evaluative and trade-off process through which consumers interpret aesthetic cues as benefits worth paying for.

4. Cultural Identity and Symbolic Consumption

Cultural identity concerns belongingness, endorsement, and self-positioning toward a cultural system, providing a psychological basis for symbolic consumption (Cui, 2004; Dong et al., 2014). Social Identity Theory argues that individuals build self-concept through group membership and tend to support objects that symbolize group identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In ICH contexts, ethnic symbols and cultural narratives embedded in brocade can trigger cultural-meaning processing, transforming aesthetic experience into identity-related meaning and thereby strengthening purchase intention. Hence, cultural identity can plausibly exert both direct effects and mediating effects in the aesthetics–intention link (Cui, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Compared with perceived value, cultural identity reflects a more symbolic and affective mechanism, through which consumers interpret Dai brocade not only as a desirable product but also as a meaningful carrier of cultural belonging and support.

5. Purchase Intention and Value/Price Judgments

Purchase intention is often treated as a proximal predictor of behavior, and the attitude–intention–behavior logic provides a foundational explanation for intention formation (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Measurement research further connects intention scales with probability-weighted purchase likelihood (Mullet & Karson, 1985). Price fairness and value judgment studies show that consumers adjust intention based on integrated assessments of price, quality, and value—highly relevant for ICH products characterized by handmade and cultural premiums (Monroe, 2003; Zeithaml, 1988). Chinese review work also summarizes the development of purchase intention research, offering guidance for model specification (Feng et al., 2006). For heritage handicrafts,

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however, purchase intention is unlikely to depend on price–quality judgments alone, because aesthetic appreciation and identity-related meaning may jointly shape consumers' final response.

6. Synthesis and Research Proposition

Prior research converges on a coherent inference: Dai brocade aesthetic cues in motifs, colors, and craftsmanship are likely to strengthen purchase intention by enhancing multidimensional perceived value and activating cultural identity (Zeithaml, 1988; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Nevertheless, existing studies have more often examined Dai brocade aesthetics, cultural meaning, or consumer value in isolation, while fewer studies have tested how these elements operate together within a unified consumer behavior framework to explain purchase intention. Accordingly, this study develops a model that captures both the direct influence of aesthetic appeal and the indirect influence operating through perceived value and cultural identity, thereby offering a more explicit explanation of how heritage aesthetics are translated into market response.

Conceptual Framework

This study develops a conceptual framework to explain how the aesthetic characteristics of Dai brocade influence consumers' purchase intention through psychological mechanisms. As an intangible cultural heritage product, Dai brocade is both a cultural symbol and a market offering; therefore, aesthetics function as salient cues that shape consumers' evaluations and identity-related meanings. The framework positions Dai brocade aesthetic characteristics as the stimulus, purchase intention as the behavioral response, and perceived value and cultural identity as two organismic mechanisms linking heritage aesthetics to consumer response.

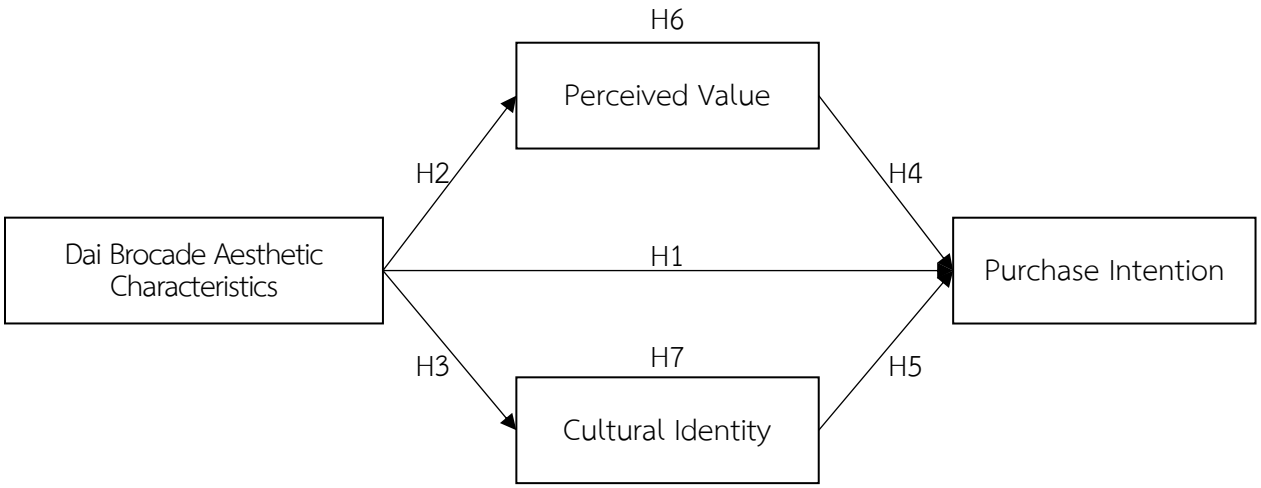


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

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Grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) paradigm, aesthetic characteristics are conceptualized as the stimulus (S) that activates organismic states (O)—perceived value and cultural identity—leading to the response (R), purchase intention. Aesthetic characteristics are operationalized as a multidimensional construct comprising pattern aesthetics, color aesthetics, and craft/texture aesthetics, reflecting the view that Dai brocade aesthetics are conveyed through motif design, visual color appeal, and craftsmanship-related texture cues.

Perceived value captures consumers' overall benefit–cost appraisal in heritage consumption, typically encompassing functional, emotional, social, and cultural value. Stronger aesthetic perceptions are expected to raise perceived value by signaling quality, generating aesthetic pleasure, supporting symbolic self-presentation, and conveying cultural meaning. Cultural identity reflects consumers' recognition and emotional connection to the cultural meanings embedded in Dai brocade; distinctive and meaningful aesthetics can strengthen cultural affiliation and make purchasing an act of cultural engagement.

The framework includes both direct and indirect effects. The direct path represents an immediate preference route driven by aesthetic appeal. In parallel, perceived value and cultural identity mediate the effect of aesthetic characteristics on purchase intention.

Research Hypotheses

H1: Dai brocade aesthetic characteristics positively influence purchase intention.

H2: Dai brocade aesthetic characteristics positively influence perceived value.

H3: Dai brocade aesthetic characteristics positively influence cultural identity.

H4: Perceived value positively influences purchase intention.

H5: Cultural identity positively influences purchase intention.

H6: Perceived value mediates the relationship between aesthetic characteristics and purchase intention.

H7: Cultural identity mediates the relationship between aesthetic characteristics and purchase intention.

Methodology

1. Research design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to test the proposed relationships among Dai brocade aesthetic characteristics, perceived value, cultural identity, and purchase intention. Given the cross-sectional design, the estimated paths should be interpreted as associations/predictive relationships rather than strict causal effects. Hypotheses were examined using reliability/validity assessments and inferential statistical analyses, including correlation, regression, and mediation tests.

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2. Data collection and sample

Data were collected via an online questionnaire administered through the Wenjuanxing platform. The target respondents were consumers who were able to view and evaluate Dai brocade-related products in an online survey setting. Given the exploratory and theory-testing purpose of the study, a non-probability online sampling approach was adopted. Wenjuanxing was considered suitable because it allowed broad access to potential respondents and efficient collection of consumer perception data for cultural products. After data screening, 428 valid responses were retained for subsequent analyses. This sample size was considered adequate for correlation, regression, and mediation testing in the present model.

3. Measures

All constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire included scales for Dai brocade aesthetic characteristics (pattern, color, and craft/texture aesthetics) as well as perceived value (functional, emotional, social, and cultural value), cultural identity, and purchase intention. The measurement items were developed with reference to the relevant literature and were adapted to fit the Dai brocade consumption context. In particular, the aesthetic characteristics items were organized around pattern, color, and craft/texture dimensions, while the perceived value items reflected functional, emotional, social, and cultural value. Before the formal survey, the questionnaire was refined through expert review and pilot testing to improve item clarity and contextual appropriateness. Where necessary, item wording was adjusted to ensure clarity and suitability for Chinese respondents in the ICH consumption context.

4. Data analysis procedures

Quantitative analyses were conducted using SPSS/SPSSAU. The analysis followed four steps:

Descriptive statistics to summarize sample characteristics and variable distributions;

Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency (reported as acceptable across dimensions);

Validity and factorability checks, including KMO and Bartlett's test (KMO = 0.766; Bartlett $p < 0.001$), supporting suitability for factor analysis;

Hypothesis testing, including correlation and regression analyses and mediation effect tests to evaluate direct and indirect effects among key constructs.

Results

1. Descriptive Statistics

A total of 428 valid questionnaires were collected. The sample is predominantly female (65.19%), with the largest age group being 18–25 (35.75%). Most respondents hold a bachelor's

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degree or above (89.25%). Monthly income is mainly 5,000–10,000 RMB (38.08%) and 1,000–3,000 RMB (34.81%); students (35.98%) and public-sector employees (34.35%) are the major occupational groups. Awareness of Dai brocade is reported by 62.38%, and 49.30% have purchased related products; the acceptable price is concentrated at 100–200 RMB (36.21%). These characteristics suggest that the sample is relatively concentrated among younger, well-educated consumers with some prior awareness of Dai brocade, which should be considered when interpreting the pattern of subsequent results.

Table 1 Sample frequency (n=428)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	149	34.81
	Female	279	65.19
Age	<18	8	1.87
	18–25	153	35.75
	26–30	33	7.71
	31–40	84	19.63
	41–50	63	14.72
	51–60	82	19.16
	>60	5	1.17
Education	≤Junior high	2	0.47
	High school	15	3.50
	College	29	6.78
	Bachelor	307	71.73
	≥Graduate	75	17.52
Monthly income	1000–3000 RMB	149	34.81
	3001–5000 RMB	64	14.95
	5001–10000 RMB	163	38.08
	>10001 RMB	52	12.15
Occupation	Public sector	147	34.35
	Company employee	45	10.51
	Freelance	48	11.21
	Student	154	35.98
	Retired	8	1.87
	Others	26	6.07

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Variable	Category	n	%
Awareness	Yes	267	62.38
	No	161	37.62
Purchased	Yes	211	49.30
	No	217	50.70
Acceptable price	<100	78	18.22
	101–200 RMB	155	36.21
	201–500 RMB	102	23.83
	501–1000 RMB	71	16.59
	1001–10000 RMB	17	3.97
	>10001 RMB	5	1.17

All items span 1–5, with means generally between 3.9 and 4.1, indicating overall positive evaluations. Distributional indices (negative skewness and acceptable kurtosis) supported subsequent analyses, and the relatively higher mean ranges for cultural identity and purchase intention suggest that respondents showed not only favorable aesthetic evaluations but also comparatively strong cultural resonance and buying tendency.

Table 2 Key item-level descriptive range

Construct	Mean range	Min	Max
Aesthetics (WY/SC/GY)	3.944–4.049	1	5
Perceived value (FV/EV/SV/CV)	3.893–4.000	1	5
Cultural identity (CI)	4.026–4.131	1	5
Purchase intention (PI)	4.040–4.091	1	5

2. Reliability and Validity

In particular, the extracted factor structures were consistent with the conceptual distinctions proposed for aesthetics, perceived value, cultural identity, and purchase intention. Cronbach's α ranges from 0.758 to 0.836. KMO values exceed 0.70, and Bartlett's tests are significant ($p<0.001$). EFA supports a three-factor structure for aesthetics (70.640%), a four-factor structure for perceived value (73.328%), and one-factor structures for cultural identity (72.709%) and purchase intention (73.599%), with generally high loadings.

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Table 3 Measurement quality summary

Construct	Cronbach's α	KMO	Structure	Cum. variance
Aesthetics	0.758–0.805	0.797	3 factors	70.640%
Perceived value	0.791–0.836	0.847	4 factors	73.328%
Cultural identity	0.812	0.711	1 factor	72.709%
Purchase intention	0.820	0.719	1 factor	73.599%

3. Hypothesis Testing

Correlation results show significant positive relationships among aesthetics, perceived value, cultural identity, and purchase intention ($p<0.01$), with the strongest association between cultural identity and purchase intention ($r=0.598$). This pattern provides an initial indication that identity-related meaning may play a particularly important role in shaping consumers' intention to purchase Dai brocade. Regression analysis further confirms that aesthetics has a significant positive effect on purchase intention ($B = 0.754$, $\beta = 0.581$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.364$), indicating that more favorable aesthetic evaluations are associated with stronger buying intention and supporting H1. Aesthetics significantly predicts perceived value dimensions ($a=0.685–0.708$, $p<0.001$), and perceived value dimensions significantly predict purchase intention ($b=0.149–0.204$, $p<0.001$), supporting H2 and H4.

Bootstrap mediation tests show significant indirect effects via the four perceived value dimensions, ranging from 0.104 to 0.144, with confidence intervals excluding zero. Because the direct effect remained significant, perceived value was identified as a partial mediator rather than a full mediator, thereby supporting H6.

Aesthetics significantly predicts cultural identity ($B=0.707$, $p<0.01$), and cultural identity predicts purchase intention ($B=0.404$, $p<0.01$), supporting H3 and H5. The indirect effect via cultural identity is 0.286 (95% BootCI: 0.151–0.298) with a significant direct effect (0.469), indicating partial mediation and supporting H7. Compared with the indirect effects observed through perceived value, the larger indirect effect through cultural identity suggests that identity-related processing constitutes the more influential mediating pathway in this model.

Table 4 Hypothesis testing summary (H1–H7)

Hypothesis	Path	Key evidence	Decision
H1	Aesthetics ⟶ PI	$B=0.754$, $\beta=0.581$, $p<0.001$; $R^2=0.364$	Supported
H2	Aesthetics ⟶ PV	$a=0.685–0.708$, $p<0.001$	Supported
H3	Aesthetics ⟶ CI	$B=0.707$, $p<0.01$	Supported

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Hypothesis	Path	Key evidence	Decision
H4	PV ⟶ PI	b=0.149–0.204, p<0.001	Supported
H5	CI ⟶ PI	B=0.404, p<0.01; (model R^2=0.448)	Supported
H6	PV mediates	Indirect=0.104–0.144; BootCI excludes 0; direct still sig.	Supported (partial)
H7	CI mediates	Indirect=0.286; BootCI 0.151–0.298; direct=0.469**	Supported (partial)

Overall, the hypothesis-testing results support all proposed direct and mediating relationships, with both perceived value and cultural identity functioning as partial mediators and cultural identity showing the stronger indirect effect.

Discussion

1. Key Findings

The results show a significant total effect of Dai brocade aesthetics on purchase intention (B = 0.754, β = 0.581, R^2 = 0.364, p < 0.001). This finding suggests that Dai brocade aesthetics do not operate merely as surface-level visual attraction; rather, they function as culturally meaningful market cues that can influence intention through both immediate preference and deeper psychological processing. This aligns with the S–O–R paradigm, where aesthetic cues function as stimuli that shape organismic states (perceived value and cultural identity), which then lead to behavioral response (purchase intention).

2. Value Mediation

Mediation tests indicate significant indirect effects across all four perceived value dimensions, with effect sizes ranging from 0.104 to 0.144 and a remaining significant direct effect, indicating partial mediation. This pattern is consistent with perceived value theory: consumers integrate cues into a price–quality–overall value judgment and adjust intention based on the received-versus-given trade-off (Zeithaml, 1988; Monroe, 2003). It also matches consumption value theory, which argues that choice is driven by multiple value types rather than a single utilitarian motive (Sheth et al., 1991). A contextual explanation may also be relevant here. As an ethnic heritage handicraft, Dai brocade is not merely a decorative product but a visible carrier of minority cultural symbolism, which may make identity-based interpretation especially salient in consumer response. In addition, the sample in this study was relatively concentrated among younger and highly educated respondents, who may be more responsive to cultural symbolism,

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heritage narratives, and value-laden forms of consumption than to purely utilitarian product evaluation alone.

3. Identity Mediation Dominates

Compared with perceived value, cultural identity exhibits a larger mediation effect (indirect = 0.286; 95% BootCI: 0.151–0.298), with a remaining significant direct effect (0.469), indicating partial mediation with a relatively larger indirect effect size. This pattern is also consistent with the bivariate correlation showing the largest association between cultural identity and purchase intention (r = 0.598) and with the model explanatory power reported in the hypothesis summary. This is theoretically coherent with Social Identity Theory: when products embody group symbols and cultural narratives, purchasing can be interpreted as identity-consistent support rather than a purely functional transaction (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Hence, the motif, color, and craftsmanship of Dai brocade may trigger cultural-meaning processing, converting aesthetic pleasure into identity-related meaning and strengthening intention (Cui, 2004; Dong et al., 2014).

4. Mechanism Closure

Purchase intention is widely treated as a proximal predictor of behavior, and the attitude–intention logic explains why value appraisal and identity meaning can amplify intention strength (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Taken together, the partial mediation results indicate that the S–O–R process in this study is neither purely direct nor fully mediated; instead, heritage aesthetics influence purchase intention through a mixed mechanism in which immediate aesthetic preference coexists with evaluative and identity-based processing.

5. Key Implication

These findings imply that the market development of ICH products should not rely on aesthetic attractiveness alone, because consumers appear to respond more strongly when aesthetic cues are connected to multidimensional value appraisal and cultural identity. (Zeithaml, 1988; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Accordingly, the practical significance of Dai brocade aesthetics lies not only in visual differentiation, but also in their capacity to communicate quality, cultural meaning, and symbolic support within contemporary consumer markets (Gao, 2012; Chen, 2018).

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, recommendations for the market development of Dai brocade should follow an integrated “aesthetics–value–identity” logic. First, because aesthetic characteristics showed a significant positive effect on purchase intention, product development and presentation should preserve and strengthen the visibility of motif, color, and craftsmanship features as key sources of consumer attraction. Second, because perceived value functioned as

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a significant partial mediator, communication and market positioning should not rely on visual beauty alone, but should help consumers recognize the functional, emotional, social, and cultural value embedded in Dai brocade products. Third, because cultural identity showed the stronger indirect effect, greater emphasis should be placed on communicating the cultural meanings, symbolic significance, and heritage-related belonging associated with Dai brocade, so that purchase can be understood not only as product acquisition but also as a form of cultural support and identity expression. Overall, the findings suggest that the sustainable commercialization of Dai brocade is more likely to be strengthened when aesthetic appeal is translated into multidimensional value and identity-based meaning rather than being treated as a purely decorative attribute.

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