

Purchase Intention of Z-Generation Consumers towards Traditional Cultural Products

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Abstract. With the continuous evolution of society and culture, the purchasing inclination of the new generation of consumers towards traditional cultural products has undergone significant changes. Despite in-depth research by domestic scholars on variables such as traditional cultural elements and flow experience, their actual impact in the modern consumer market has not received sufficient attention. This study, aiming to explore the intrinsic connection between traditional cultural elements, flow experience, and purchase intention of Z-generation consumers, takes flow experience as a mediator and purchase intention as the dependent variable. Through in-depth analysis of questionnaire survey data using SPSS 26.0 software, this paper confirms the significant positive impact of traditional cultural elements on purchase intention and reveals the mediating role of flow experience in this process. The research results indicate that as the main force of the new generation of consumers, Z-generation consumers deeply identify with and love traditional cultural elements, preferring to purchase products incorporating these elements and experiencing the joy of flow experience during use. This provides new opportunities for the development and application of traditional cultural element products in modern society. Based on this, this paper proposes a series of strategic recommendations, including integrating traditional cultural elements into product design, enhancing consumer participation, and blending traditional culture with modern consumption trends through innovative means to meet the needs of Z-generation consumers.

Keywords: Z-generation; Traditional Cultural Elements; Consumer Purchase Intention; Flow Experience.

1. Introduction

After more than seventy years of unremitting efforts, the material living conditions of the Chinese people have been significantly improved, indicating a growing demand for spiritual and cultural aspects. This shift signifies that talents in various fields in China will delve deeper into and inherit the essence of traditional culture, thereby promoting the prosperity and innovation of traditional culture. Culture, as the soul of a nation and a symbol of national soft power, is of paramount importance. In recent years, the government has introduced a series of policies to support the development of traditional culture and related industries. In 2018, the central government first proposed the core concept of "cultural confidence," advocating the firm advancement along the path of socialist cultural development with Chinese characteristics, and explicitly stating that inheriting and innovating Chinese traditional culture is the cornerstone of achieving cultural confidence. In 2023, President Xi Jinping proposed the cultural policy of "enhancing cultural confidence and strengthening the influence of traditional civilization dissemination," providing clear direction and policy support for the inheritance of Chinese culture and the development of cultural product industries. Against this policy backdrop, this paper emphasizes that "cultural confidence" implies building pride and identity in one's own culture. Shang Guanghui [1] (2023) pointed out that cultural competence affects the allocation of decision-making roles and cultural identity influences consumer behavior. People's identification with specific cultures actively promotes attitudes towards products carrying that culture,

enhancing cultural belonging. This concept underscores the importance of maintaining confidence in Chinese traditional culture, history, values, etc., not only showcasing the unique charm of Chinese culture on the international stage but also shaping firm cultural identity domestically, promoting the nation's prosperity and strength. Secondly, "enhancing the influence of traditional civilization dissemination" emphasizes the importance of cultural dissemination in shaping national image and international exchanges. Chinese culture adapts to social development through cultural innovation, gaining more attention and presenting more cultural soft power for the country. Therefore, through these cultural policies, this paper is committed to creating a new era of cultural confidence and prosperity, laying a solid foundation for the development of China's cultural industry.

In the era of rapid development of social media, Hou Tingting et al. [2] (2023) believe that the explosive growth of information makes Z-generation consumers not only focus on appearances but also consider the cultural value of consumer products as selection criteria. When choosing goods, they are more inclined to select products with cultural significance and design. Traditional cultural element products, due to their unique historical connotations and consumption concepts, meet the needs of Z-generation consumers under the background of the new era. Additionally, Z-generation consumers attach great importance to personalized experiences when using products, emphasizing emotional resonance and flow experiences. At the same time, Z-generation consumers become the research objects for studying the purchase intention of traditional cultural element products. By delving into the demands and experiences of this emerging consumer group for cultural products, insights can be gained for the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture in modern society. This research is helpful for companies to better grasp market opportunities, enhance the market competitiveness of consumer products, and promote the influence of traditional culture in contemporary society. In order to better understand and address issues in the development of traditional culture and cultural products, this study aims to explore the inheritance of traditional culture and the innovation of traditional cultural element products, providing references for research and practice in related fields.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Traditional Cultural Elements

Traditional cultural elements are cultural achievements created and continued by the Chinese people, reflecting Chinese values, aesthetic concepts, and self-identity [3]. In modern consumer products, traditional cultural elements are no longer merely decorations or symbols but have become important factors driving product innovation and enhancing market competitiveness.

In modern consumer products, traditional cultural elements are widely used in the design field. For example, in clothing design, the flexible application of patterns, colors, and materials highlights ethnic characteristics and cultural connotations. In home design, the use of traditional architectural elements and decorative styles provides inspiration and creative sources for designers, making design works more unique and artistic. In the marketing field, companies integrate traditional cultural elements into products through modern design techniques, successfully creating brand images with unique cultural connotations. Research by Liang Jun [4] (2023) shows that combining traditional cultural elements with products enriches the visual effects and appeal of products, promoting the cultural value and uniqueness of the products. Future research can focus on specific case studies of the application of traditional cultural elements in modern consumer products and consumer purchasing cognition.

2.2. Flow Experience

Flow experience refers to the psychological state experienced by individuals when fully engaged in an activity, including complete immersion in the activity, forgetting oneself, and a sense of time passing, accompanied by a high degree of pleasure and satisfaction. In modern consumption, flow experience has important application value.

In the cultural tourism field, flow experience enables tourists to enjoy the present state. Cheng Ruxia [5] (2022) found through the use of the arousal theory that relational perception and value co-creation behavior have a significant impact on flow experience. In the field of product cognition, flow experience can deepen consumers' cognition of product brands, promoting stable connections between consumers and brands. Zhang Chiwen [6] (2023) pointed out that in an immersive state, consumers are more likely to integrate into emotional information scenes, forming identification and emotional connections with brand products. Comprehensive research shows that flow experience has a positive impact on individual psychological states and brand cognition, providing a basis for companies to enhance consumer participation and product loyalty.

3. Model Hypotheses and Research Design

3.1. Hypothesis Development

Based on the theoretical framework of cultural inheritance and identification, traditional cultural elements, as an important component of culture, carry profound historical and emotional connotations, which can evoke consumers' sense of identification with and inheritance of traditional culture. Therefore, this study posits that when traditional cultural elements are integrated into consumer products, consumers are more likely to resonate with the unique cultural value, thereby enhancing their purchase intention. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Traditional cultural elements positively influence the purchase intention of traditional cultural element products.

In this study, we explore the influence of symbolic cultural elements on the purchase intention of traditional cultural products. Han Xiaoxu [7] (2023) verified that the creation and inheritance of cultural genes rely on cultural symbols as a medium. Therefore, by incorporating symbolic patterns, symbols, or objects with special meanings related to traditional culture, products can evoke consumers' sense of identification and interest in traditional culture. The use of symbolic cultural elements not only makes the product visually appealing but also stimulates consumers' purchase intention.

Additionally, this study considers the impact of scene-based cultural elements on the purchase intention of traditional cultural products. Through exterior design, packaging, and showcasing scenes related to specific cultures, a strong cultural atmosphere can be created, fostering emotional resonance with consumers and integrating this cultural experience into their daily lives.

Furthermore, this study investigates the influence of object-based cultural elements on consumers' purchase intention when integrated into consumer products. These object-based cultural elements not only endow products with unique artistic value but also cleverly enhance the attractiveness of traditional cultural products. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a: Symbolic cultural elements positively influence the purchase intention of traditional cultural element products; H1b: Scene-based cultural elements positively influence the purchase intention of traditional cultural element products; H1c: Object-based cultural elements positively influence the purchase intention of traditional cultural element products.

Consumers undergo a series of flow experiences during the shopping process, including a sense of participation and experiential interaction with products. Different flow experiences have different effects on consumers: positive flow experiences not only deepen consumers' sense of identification with traditional cultural element products, immersing them further in the shopping experience, but also stimulate their desire to purchase. Flow experience acts as a mediator between traditional cultural elements and purchase intention, facilitating the transition of consumers from cultural identification to actual purchase decisions. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: Flow experience positively influences the purchase intention of traditional cultural products; H3: Flow experience mediates the relationship between traditional cultural elements and the purchase

intention of traditional cultural element products; H3a: Flow experience mediates the relationship between symbolic cultural elements and the purchase intention of traditional cultural element products; H3b: Flow experience mediates the relationship between scene-based cultural elements and the purchase intention of traditional cultural element products; H3c: Flow experience mediates the relationship between object-based cultural elements and the purchase intention of traditional cultural element products.

3.2. Theoretical Model Construction

Based on the literature review and theoretical foundation, and through in-depth analysis of the influence of traditional cultural elements on the purchase intention of traditional cultural element products, we have designed a research model aiming to achieve the research objectives. In this theoretical framework, we consider traditional cultural elements as independent variables, consumer purchase intention as the dependent variable, and introduce flow experience as a mediator variable.

3.3. Sample and Data Collection

This survey utilized both online and paper-based questionnaires to ensure comprehensive and diverse data collection. The online questionnaire was distributed via the Questionnaire Star platform, along with links sent through social media and email to allow respondents to fill it out directly. Additionally, to enhance response rates and data accuracy, paper-based questionnaires were also provided. Following data collection, we conducted screening to exclude incomplete or irrelevant questionnaires, ensuring data quality and reliability.

The consumer sample for this survey comprised a total of 654 individuals, with 654 questionnaires collected, resulting in a response rate and validity rate of 100%. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: personal demographics, identification with traditional cultural elements, flow experience, and purchase intention. The demographic section primarily collected information such as respondents' age, gender, education level, occupation, income, and income sources. The section on traditional cultural elements investigated respondents' sense of identification with traditional cultural products. The flow experience section explored respondents' experiential feelings when purchasing traditional cultural products. Finally, the purchase intention section aimed to understand respondents' willingness to purchase traditional cultural products.

The above constitutes the structure and measurement items of the questionnaire for this survey, aimed at comprehensively understanding the attitudes and behavioral intentions of Z-generation consumers in Wuhan towards traditional cultural products.

4. Empirical Research and Analysis

4.1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

The total number of valid questionnaires for this study was 654, with scores for each variable ranging from 1.00 to 5.00, meeting the design requirements of our scale without documentation errors. The mean values of each variable ranged from 3.7202 to 3.7948, indicating good discriminative ability of the measurement items in the scale. Through descriptive analysis, we found that consumers are more attentive to and accepting of soft factors such as traditional cultural elements and flow experiences.

Regarding the analysis of sample characteristics, we found a gender ratio close to 1:1, with the majority of respondents aged between 18 and 30, representing the main audience group with contemporary aesthetics and values. Most respondents held a bachelor's degree, indicating their higher susceptibility to traditional cultural products and purchasing power, thus ensuring the validity of the research data. Additionally, disposable incomes were mainly concentrated between 2000 and 6000 yuan, with the majority deriving their main income from wages, indicating that respondents have a certain purchasing power. Overall, the distribution of various indicators among the surveyed subjects was reasonable and generally met expectations.

4.2. Reliability and Validity Analysis

To ensure the consistency and stability of the questionnaire survey data, we conducted reliability analysis. Reliability analysis effectively evaluates whether questionnaire data can truly reflect respondents' inner attitudes. We conducted reliability analysis on the three elements of traditional cultural elements, flow experience, and purchase intention. The results showed that the Cronbach's Alpha values of the scales for symbolic cultural elements, scene-based cultural elements, object-based cultural elements, flow experience, and purchase intention were 0.862, 0.875, 0.874, 0.913, and 0.842, respectively, all exceeding 0.7. Moreover, except for purchase intention, the Cronbach's Alpha values for each dimension were also generally above 0.7. Therefore, the scale demonstrated good reliability, and the obtained data exhibited high credibility.

Regarding overall validity analysis, we found a KMO value of 0.968, and the Bartlett's sphericity test was passed. Specifically, the approximate chi-square distribution for the Bartlett's sphericity test was 2919.978, with 136 degrees of freedom and a P value < 0.05, reaching a significant level. This indicates that the questionnaire for this study has good construct validity and can be used for subsequent data analysis and inference of research conclusions.

4.3. Correlation Analysis

According to the data shown in Table 1, the correlation coefficients between purchase intention and symbolic cultural elements, scene-based cultural elements, object-based cultural elements, and flow experience are 0.853, 0.851, 0.851, and 0.873, respectively. This indicates a strong positive correlation between purchase intention and these variables, with generally high correlation coefficients. Moreover, the correlation coefficients exhibit significance at the 0.01 level, further validating the robustness of these correlations. With positive values ranging from 0.4 to 0.7, it suggests a close relationship between these variables. Specifically, the correlation coefficients between flow experience and symbolic cultural elements, scene-based cultural elements, and object-based cultural elements are 0.873, 0.876, and 0.874, respectively, indicating a strong correlation between flow experience and these three factors.

These results demonstrate that flow experience interacts with traditional cultural elements, collectively enhancing consumers' inner feelings and experiences. This aligns with common understanding and reflects how traditional cultural elements and flow experience directly or indirectly influence consumers' purchase intentions and consumption psychology.

Table 1. Correlation Analysis of Key Variables

	Symbolic Cultural Elements	Scene-based Cultural Elements	Object-based Cultural Elements	Flow Experience	Purchase Intention
Symbolic Cultural Elements	1				
Scene-based Cultural Elements	0.869**	1			
Object-based Cultural Elements	0.874**	0.868**	1		
Flow Experience	0.873**	0.876**	0.874**	1	
Purchase Intention	0.853**	0.851**	0.851**	0.873**	1

Note: **Significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed), correlation is significant.

4.4. Regression Analysis

Using SPSS 26.0, this study conducted regression analysis to examine the relationship between consumer traditional cultural elements, flow experience, and purchase intention. As shown in Table 2, traditional cultural elements and flow experience were used as independent variables, while purchase intention was the dependent variable, analyzed through multiple linear regression. From the table, it can be observed that the t-values for each factor were 8.497, 5.095, 4.708, and 4.632,

respectively. Since their significance probability $P < 0.05$, rejecting the null hypothesis, it indicates that the regression effects are highly significant, and the regression equation is statistically significant. In other words, traditional cultural elements and flow experience can significantly predict purchase intention and positively impact it.

Table 2. Regression Analysis Results for Factors Influencing Purchase Intention

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Significance	Collinearity Statistics		
	B	Standard Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
4	(Constant)	0.171	0.069		2.461	0.014		
	Flow Experience	0.359	0.042	0.355	8.497	0.000	0.164	6.111
	Object-based Cultural Elements	0.209	0.041	0.210	5.095	0.000	0.169	5.930
	Symbolic Cultural Elements	0.193	0.041	0.194	4.708	0.000	0.166	5.928
	Scene-based Cultural Elements	0.186	0.040	0.189	4.632	0.000	.171	5.848

4.5. Mediation Analysis

Table 3. Mediation Analysis

Path	Model 1		Model 2		Collinearity Statistics		T	P
	Unstandardized Value		Unstandardized Value		Tolerance	VIF		
	Coefficient B	Standard Error SE	Coefficient B	Standard Error SE	Coefficient B	Standard Error SE		
Symbolic Cultural Elements → Flow Experience	0.862	0.019					45.628	.000
Symbolic Cultural Elements → Purchase Intention	0.383	0.036					10.619	.000
Flow Experience → Purchase Intention	0.544	0.037					14.886	.000
Scene-based Cultural Elements → Flow Experience			0.851	0.018			46.358	.000
Scene-based Cultural Elements → Purchase Intention			0.363	0.036			10.012	.000
Purchase Intention → Flow Experience			0.556	0.037			14.896	.000
Object-based Cultural Elements → Flow Experience					0.860	0.019	45.899	.000
Object-based Cultural Elements → Purchase Intention					0.373	0.036	10.281	.000
Flow Experience → Purchase Intention					0.552	0.037	14.948	.000

According to Baron and Kenny's causal method, the analysis results in Table 3 show that the impact of symbolic cultural elements on flow experience ($B = 0.862$, $SE = 0.019$, $t = 45.628$, $P < 0.001$) and

on purchase intention ($B = 0.383$, $SE = 0.036$, $t = 10.619$, $P < 0.001$) are both significant. Following Baron and Kenny's suggestions, we found that the impact of symbolic cultural elements on flow experience and purchase intention are both significant, indicating the presence of mediation effects.

Similarly, the impact of scene-based cultural elements on flow experience ($B = 0.851$, $SE = 0.018$, $t = 46.358$, $P < 0.001$) and on purchase intention ($B = 0.363$, $SE = 0.036$, $t = 10.012$, $P < 0.001$) are also significant. The impact of object-based cultural elements on flow experience ($B = 0.860$, $SE = 0.019$, $t = 45.899$, $P < 0.001$) and on purchase intention ($B = 0.552$, $SE = 0.037$, $t = 14.948$, $P < 0.001$) is likewise significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that scene-based cultural elements and object-based cultural elements have significant impacts on flow experience and purchase intention, confirming the existence of mediation effects. Hence, all three mediation effects in the model are established.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Hypothesis Testing

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Results

Research Hypothesis	Hypothesis Testing Content	Verification Results
H1	Positive influence of traditional cultural elements on purchase intention of traditional cultural products	Supported
H1a	Positive influence of symbolic cultural elements on purchase intention of traditional cultural products	Supported
H1b	Positive influence of scene-based cultural elements on purchase intention of traditional cultural products	Supported
H1c	Positive influence of object-based cultural elements on purchase intention of traditional cultural products	Supported
H2	Positive influence of flow experience on purchase intention of traditional cultural products	Supported
H3	Mediating effect of flow experience on the relationship between traditional cultural elements and purchase intention of traditional cultural products	Supported
H3a	Mediating effect of flow experience on the relationship between symbolic cultural elements and purchase intention of traditional cultural products	Supported
H3b	Mediating effect of flow experience on the relationship between scene-based cultural elements and purchase intention of traditional cultural products	Supported
H3c	Mediating effect of flow experience on the relationship between object-based cultural elements and purchase intention of traditional cultural products	Supported

This study conducted analyses using SPSS software to examine the collected data, including reliability analysis, correlation regression analysis, and mediation effect analysis. These analyses aimed to deepen the understanding of the relationships between variables, validate the reliability and validity of measurement tools, and explore the roles of dependent and mediating variables. The summary of the results of these analyses is provided in Table 4.

The conclusion of this study mainly focuses on two aspects: the relationship between traditional cultural elements, flow experience, and purchase intention, and the mediating moderating effect of flow experience.

5.2. Research Discussion

Through reliability, correlation, regression, and mediation effect analyses, this study thoroughly investigated the relationship between traditional cultural elements, flow experience, and purchase intention of Generation Z consumers, and validated the research hypotheses.

Firstly, reliability analysis demonstrated that the questionnaire used in the study exhibited good internal consistency and stability, with Cronbach's Alpha values for each dimension exceeding 0.7,

indicating high reliability of the scale. The results of validity analysis indicated good construct validity of the questionnaire, providing a reliable basis for subsequent correlation and regression analyses.

Secondly, correlation analysis revealed significant correlations between symbolic, scene-based, and object-based cultural elements and purchase intention as well as flow experience, suggesting a close relationship between consumers' continuous purchase intention for traditional cultural products and flow experience.

Thirdly, regression analysis validated the positive influence of traditional cultural elements and flow experience on purchase intention. The regression effects of symbolic, scene-based, and object-based cultural elements, as well as flow experience, on purchase intention were all significant, confirming the close connection between consumers' identification with and enjoyable experience of traditional cultural elements and purchase intention.

Mediation analysis demonstrated that flow experience had a significant mediating effect on the relationship between traditional cultural elements and purchase intention, further supporting the research hypotheses. Symbolic, scene-based, and object-based cultural elements indirectly influenced consumers' purchase intention by affecting flow experience, providing practical guidance for product innovation and marketing.

Finally, this study not only deepened the understanding of cultural heritage but also provided practical guidance for enterprises in product design, marketing, and market promotion. The cultural product industry can more targetedly tap into traditional cultural elements, integrate them with consumers' flow experience, create a more attractive shopping environment, and promote the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture in contemporary society.

5.3. Recommendations and Strategies

5.3.1. Identify the Z Generation's Characteristics in Target Consumer Groups

The pursuit of cultural inheritance and flow experience by Generation Z consumers is increasingly strong, expecting traditional cultural elements to be presented in innovative ways in products, reflecting the inheritance and development of culture. Flow experience becomes crucial, and companies should create experiences that immerse consumers in shopping and cultural influence. To achieve this goal, companies need to deeply understand the cultural background of Generation Z consumers, cleverly integrate traditional elements into products and services, while maintaining a pursuit of innovation to meet the aesthetic and practical needs of modern consumers. Such practices can not only establish deep emotional connections but also inject new vitality into the inheritance and development of culture.

5.3.2. Strengthen the Expression of Symbolic Cultural Elements

Dig deep into the expression of symbolic cultural elements in products, forming profound product loyalty and unique cultural charm. Companies should integrate traditional cultural elements into products, endowing them with profound connotations and emotional value, such as incorporating historical legends, cultural symbols, and traditional symbols. When products carry rich cultural connotations, symbolic elements can evoke emotional resonance among consumers, establish deep connections, and enhance cultural confidence.

5.3.3. Create Shopping Experiences with Scene-based Cultural Elements

By creating traditional cultural scenes, enhance consumers' awareness and emotional connection with products, and strengthen purchase intention. Companies can integrate traditional cultural elements into sales scenes, providing consumers with unique shopping experiences, enhancing product awareness and perception, evoking resonance and emotional connection, and spiritually nurturing consumers.

5.3.4. Emphasize the Design of Object-based Cultural Elements in Products

Design attractive and identifiable object-based cultural elements, create unique visual effects, and meet consumers' needs for novelty and uniqueness. Companies should focus on exploring object-based cultural elements, making products not only commodities but also mediums for cultural inheritance and expression.

5.3.5. Enhance the Real-time Flow Experience in Consumer Scenes

Providing positive flow experiences, enhancing consumers' trust in products, and increasing purchase intention. Through high-quality products, unique brand experiences, and digital technology, trigger consumers' immersive shopping experiences, ensure a perfect after-sales service system, enhance product satisfaction, build trust and brand awareness.

These strategies aim to guide companies in effectively leveraging traditional cultural elements and flow experience to enhance consumer engagement and purchase intention, thus contributing to the promotion of traditional culture in contemporary society and the sustainable development of cultural industries.

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