

Research on the Influence of Traditional Cultural Load in Tourism Commodities on Brand Status

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Abstract: As worldwide concern for traditional culture grows, commodities integrated with traditional culture are gaining increasing popularity among tourist consumers. Therefore, it is of practical significance to thoroughly investigate the impact of traditional cultural elements in tourism commodities on brand status. This study incorporates the concept of traditional cultural load into the research on the brand status of tourism commodities. By designing a scenario experiment, it probes into the influence mechanism of the traditional cultural load in tourism commodities on the brand status. The research indicates that the richer the traditional cultural load in tourism commodities, the higher the consumers' evaluation of the brand status. The traditional cultural load affects the brand status of tourism commodities through the mediating role of psychological distance. Meanwhile, the relationship between the traditional cultural load and the brand status in tourism commodities is moderated by the consistency between the traditional cultural load and the locality. This research extends the theoretical research scope of the traditional cultural load in tourism commodities and helps relevant operators and marketers gain a deep understanding of the strategies for shaping and marketing the brand image of tourism commodities, thus possessing practical value.

1. Introduction

Tourism shopping has now become one of the key issues that restricts the "quality improvement" of tourism economic development. The essential problem lies in the content of tourism shopping: there are "dual-quality" problems of "homogeneity" and "inferiority" in tourism commodities^[1]. The serious homogenization and poor quality of tourism commodities are highly likely to cause consumers' aesthetic fatigue. How to boost the quality in terms of design and thereby elevate the brand status of tourism commodities is a challenging issue that urgently needs to be addressed by both the industry and academia. Many tourism commodities choose to incorporate traditional cultural design elements to enhance their traditional cultural connotations and enhance the unique personality and cultural heritage of tourism commodities. With the increasing demand of tourist consumers for spiritual culture and self-expression, the combination of commodities and traditional cultural elements positively affects consumers' attitudes and purchasing behaviors. However, some tourism commodities have problems such as the mismatch between traditional culture and locality and the

unclear influence on brand status, which to some extent hinder the connection between consumers and tourist destinations and lead to the lack of vitality in the development of the tourism commodity industry.

In recent years, the academic community has carried out a large number of studies on tourism commodities with traditional cultural loads^[2-5], but they mainly focus on design and development as well as marketing and promotion. However, how the traditional cultural load in tourism commodities affects consumers' perception of the brand, especially the influence on brand status, still lacks a clear explanation. Therefore, in order to fill the research gap in the influence of traditional cultural load in tourism commodities and help break through the difficulties in the industry, this study innovatively explores the influence of the traditional cultural load of commodities on brand status (rather than the commodities themselves) and its mechanism of action through scenario experiments.

Based on the clarification of the concept of traditional cultural load within tourism commodities, this study takes the psychological distance theory as an entry point to investigate thoroughly the mechanism by which traditional cultural load influences the perception of brand status. This study aims to answer two questions: (1) What is the influence of traditional cultural load in tourism commodities on the brand status? (2) What is the specific influence pathway? Specifically, Experiment 1 aims to explore the relationship between traditional cultural load in tourism commodities and brand status. Experiment 2 focuses on examining the mediating effect of psychological distance. Experiment 3 is designed to assess the moderating effect of the consistency between traditional culture and locality on brand status.

This study offers several significant contributions. Firstly, it quantifies the traditional cultural load in an innovative manner, establishing a connection between it and consumers' perception of the brand status of tourism commodities. This approach not only broadens the research perspective but also furnishes both theoretical and practical support for brand building. Secondly, it delves into the internal influence mechanism and path of traditional cultural load on brand status. In contrast to variables like perceived value^[3] frequently employed in existing research, this study utilizes psychological distance as the mediating variable. As a result, it lays a more in-depth theoretical foundation. Additionally, by validating the hypotheses through scenario experiments designed for different commodities, the universality and practicality of the research are enhanced.

2. Theoretical Basis and Research Hypotheses

2.1 Traditional Cultural Load in Tourism Commodities and Brand Status

With the rapid development of the cultural and creative industries, an ever-growing number of commodities have incorporated design elements of traditional culture, thereby increasing the traditional cultural load of the commodities. Based on linguistic research and the definitions of cultural load proposed by scholars such as Yu Wenhuan^[6,7], the traditional cultural load of a product refers to the richness of traditional cultural elements presented in the product and the cultural connotations it carries. In this study, the traditional cultural load in tourism commodities is considered as the degree of richness of traditional cultural elements presented in tourism commodities, as well as the profound cultural connotations underlying these elements. This includes, but is not limited to, the manifestations of traditional art forms, historical allusions, and folk cultures in tourism commodities, which reflects the characteristics of tourism commodities in terms of cultural inheritance and display.

Brand status refers to consumers' perception of a brand's standing, hierarchical level, and social prestige. It directly impacts the brand's value^[8] and exerts a substantial influence on consumers' attitudes and purchasing behaviors. When consumers lack a clear understanding of a brand's status, they usually rely on various marketing indicators, such as commodity quality, price, exclusive

distribution channels, and retailer reputation^[9,10], to infer it. Moreover, commodity design has increasingly become one of the key clues for brand assessment. It can not only influence consumers' attitudes towards commodities but also shape the brand's image^[11]. Consumers evaluate the brand status through both surface - level clues of commodities, like packaging shape, dimensions, and materials, and deep - seated clues such as brand stories^[12]. Therefore, the design elements of commodities play a crucial role in influencing consumers' perception and evaluation of brand status. Existing research has shown that rationally integrating traditional cultural elements into commodity design can significantly enhance consumers' purchase intention and satisfaction^[2]. Additionally, the cultural connotations within commodities can affect consumers' shopping motivation, prompting them to form positive emotional experiences and feedback by engaging with cultural elements^[13]. This, in turn, may potentially improve their evaluation of brand status. Based on these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: A higher level of traditional cultural load in tourism commodities is positively associated with consumers' more favorable evaluation of its brand status.

2.2 The Mediating Role of Psychological Distance

Psychological distance refers to the subjective distance that an individual forms with other things at the psychological level, with the self as a reference. It comprises four dimensions: time, space, society, and probability^[14-16]. Among them, time, space, and probability distances reflect consumers' perception of the time or location where an event occurs, while social distance represents the social gap between consumers and others or the external world^[17]. Given that the traditional cultural load in tourism commodities places more emphasis on the relationship between consumers and commodities, this study will center on the social - distance dimension. In their brand - image research, Zhou Fei and Sha Zhenquan^[18] indicated that psychological distance essentially depicts the state of the psychological connection between consumers and brands. Traditional cultural elements are rich in cultural connotations. These connotations can strengthen consumers' perception of brand authenticity^[19], thereby shortening the psychological distance between brands and consumers. As culture has social attributes, people within the same cultural context, by virtue of sharing values, beliefs, and moral norms, possess common goals and a sense of collective identity^[20]. Cultural stimuli are capable of activating shared cultural attributes, leading to a reduction in the psychological distance. According to the construal-level theory, a closer psychological distance can boost the familiarity between the two parties, spurring individuals to increase their emotional investment. Brands can establish emotional bonds with consumers^[21], creating positive emotional experiences, and consequently enhancing their brand status. Based on this, we put forward Hypothesis 2:

H2: Psychological distance serves as a mediator in the influence of traditional cultural load in tourism commodities on the evaluation of brand status.

2.3 The Moderating Role of the Consistency between Traditional Culture and Locality

Tourism commodities are not merely symbolic depictions of local culture but also bear tourists' place attachment and travel experiences, mirroring consumers' experiences and memories of a place. Tourism commodities encapsulate the unique material culture of a locale and stand as the material embodiments of intangible culture. Locality represents the most salient feature of tourism commodities^[22], frequently capable of evoking people's memories of specific sites and experiences, evoking the recollection of those memorable eras and locales in their imagination.

In cases where tourism commodities exhibit pronounced local traits, consumers tend to be more perceptive of the authenticity and local - origin nature of the traditional cultural elements within them, thereby acknowledging brand authenticity. This acknowledgment forges an emotional connection

between individuals and the place, fortifying consumers' emotional affinity with local culture and, in turn, diminishing the psychological distance between consumers and the brand. Once the psychological distance is lessened, consumers' sense of unfamiliarity and detachment wanes, rendering it more facile for them to formulate positive appraisals of the brand ^[23] and elevate brand status. Conversely, should tourist souvenirs be bereft of local characteristics and unable to effectively present local culture, consumers are prone to casting doubt on the authenticity of the brand. Such doubt impedes the integration of the sense of place with personal experiences and recollections, potentially impeding the reduction of the psychological distance and dampening the enhancement of brand status. Based on this, we posit Hypothesis 3:

H3: Locality moderates the impact of traditional cultural load in tourism commodities on brand status. When the traditional culture in tourism commodities aligns with locality, it can markedly curtail the psychological distance between consumers and the brand and boost brand status; when the two are discrepant, the effect of enhancing brand status proves to be insignificant.

Based on the above analysis, this study constructs a theoretical model of the influence of traditional cultural load in tourism commodities on brand status (Figure 1). This model explores the mediating role of psychological distance and the moderating role of the congruence with local characteristics, aiming to uncover the influence mechanism and functional path of traditional cultural load in tourism commodities on consumers' evaluation of brand status.

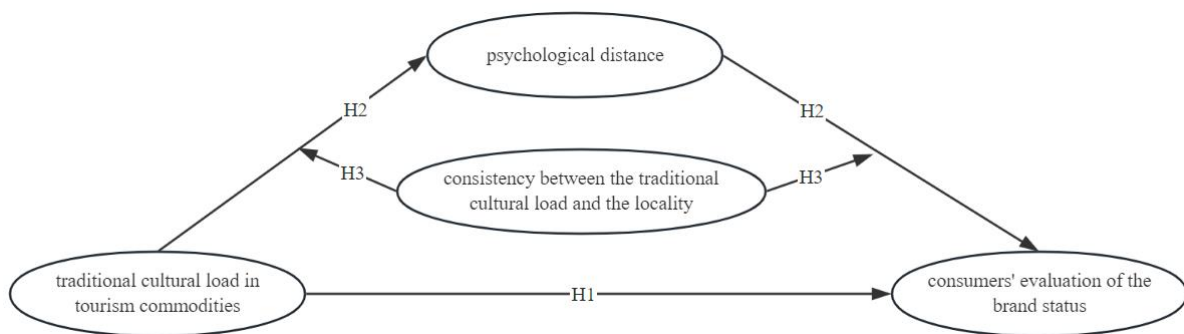


Figure 1 Research Model of the Influence of Traditional Cultural Load in Tourism Commodities on Their Brand Status

3. Research Methods, Procedures and Results

3.1 Experiment 1

(1) Experimental Design and Participants

Experiment 1 employed a one - factor between - subjects design, with the aim of exploring the impact of the degree of traditional cultural load in tourism commodities on brand status. Through the Credamo questionnaire platform, 216 participants were recruited for this experiment. After excluding five participants who did not pass the attention check, 211 individuals remained. Among them, 115 were females, accounting for 54.5%. These 211 participants were randomly assigned to three experimental groups based on their birth months: the control group (n=66), the low-traditional-cultural-load group (n=64), and the high-traditional-cultural-load group (n=81). They filled out the online questionnaire.

(2) Experimental Procedures and Variable Measurement

Initially, we informed the participants that a brand was on the verge of launching a tourism commodity. Aiming to assess the market potential of this commodity, we intended to conduct a market survey. Subsequently, the participants were requested to peruse the textual and visual materials of the commodity carefully and then evaluate it.

The three groups of commodities differentiate the degree of traditional cultural load through the pattern design on the scarves. We explain the inspiration source of the pattern design in the text description part, with the rest of the written materials remaining the same. The basic - style scarf seen by the control group has no pattern, and its product description reads: "This scarf features a beige color scheme, with a simple and elegant design style. The gray border around it not only enhances the visual effect of the pattern but also elevates the overall sense of sophistication." The modern checker - patterned scarf seen by the low - traditional - cultural - load group has the description: "This scarf has a beige base color. The pattern design is inspired by the black pieces in the checkerboard, simple yet stylish. The checkerboard element derives from chess, consisting of 64 black - and - white 8×8 grids, symbolizing rules, order, and contrast. The gray border around it not only enhances the visual effect of the pattern but also elevates the overall sense of sophistication." The high - traditional - cultural - load group sees a classical scarf with camellia - pattern. Its description is: "This scarf has a beige base color. The pattern design is inspired by the Dunhuang camellia pattern, a traditional Chinese pattern, simple yet elegant. The Dunhuang camellia pattern originated from the Dunhuang region along the ancient Silk Road, symbolizing prosperity and good luck. The gray border around it not only enhances the visual effect of the pattern but also elevates the overall sense of sophistication." Subsequently, the participants rate the market level of the commodity they see (1 = low - end market, 5 = high - end market), brand status (1 = low - end brand, 5 = high - end brand), and the price they are willing to pay. They are also required to rate the degree of traditional cultural load of the commodity (1 = very low, 5 = very high) as a manipulation check item. Finally, basic personal information, such as gender, age, monthly income, and educational attainment, is collected.

(3) Experimental Results

As presented in Table 1, the correlation analysis indicated no significant relationship between age, educational attainment, income, and brand status. However, a significant relationship was detected between gender and brand status. By analyzing the results of the independent - samples T-test (Table 2), we found that the participants' scores for the traditional cultural load of tourism commodities in the high - traditional - cultural - load group were significantly higher than those in the low - traditional - cultural - load group ($M_{low} = 1.78$, $SD = 0.82$; $M_{high} = 4.53$, $SD = 0.63$; $t(145) = -22.64$, $p < 0.05$, Cohen's $d = 0.72$). Meanwhile, the influence of the traditional cultural load inherent to the scarves themselves could be excluded ($M_{control} = 2.09$, $SD = 1.06$), indicating that the manipulation of the traditional - cultural - load variable in the experiment was successful. Moreover, the brand status of the high - traditional - cultural - load group was significantly higher than that of the low - traditional - cultural - load group ($M_{low} = 1.79$, $SD = 0.76$; $M_{high} = 4.01$, $SD = 0.82$; $t(145) = -16.64$, $p < 0.05$, Cohen's $d = 0.79$). Additionally, the participants were asked to state the price they were willing to pay for the commodities. The results demonstrated that participants were willing to pay a higher price for commodities with a high traditional cultural load ($M_{low} = 1.27$, $SD = 0.67$; $M_{high} = 2.56$, $SD = 1.03$; $t(145) = -8.70$, $p < 0.05$, Cohen's $d = 0.89$). This further confirmed that the traditional cultural load promotes brand status, thereby enriching the research conclusions and value implications of the experiment.

Table 1 Correlation Analysis

Variables	Brand Status	Gender	Age	Educational Attainment	Monthly Income
Brand Status	1				
Gender	0.078	1			
Age	0.25**	0.17*	1		
Educational Attainment	0.17*	0.10	0.03	1	
Monthly Income	0.29**	0.21**	0.55**	0.14*	1
Note: * $p < 0.05$ (two - tailed), ** $p < 0.01$ (two - tailed)					

Table 2 Independent T-test

Dimensions	Control Group		Low Traditional -Cultural-Load Group		High Traditiona-Cultural-Load Group		t	p	Cohen'sd
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Degree of Traditional Cultural Load	2.09	1.06	1.80	0.82	4.53	0.63	-22.64	0.00	0.72
Brand Status			1.79	0.76	4.01	0.82	-16.64	0.00	0.79
Willingness to Pay Price			1.27	0.67	2.56	1.03	-8.70	0.00	0.89

(4) Discussion of Results

Experiment 1 preliminarily demonstrated that the richer the traditional cultural load in tourism commodities, the higher consumers' evaluation of the brand status. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was verified.

3.2 Experiment 2

(1) Experimental Design and Participants

In Experiment 2, the variable of psychological distance was incorporated to test its mediating effect. 220 participants were recruited through paid recruitment on the Credamo platform. Having eliminated 15 invalid questionnaires, a total of 205 valid questionnaires were finally obtained (132 females, accounting for 64.3%).

(2) Experimental Procedures and Variable Measurement

The experimental procedures of Experiment 2 were the same as those of Experiment 1. Participants were randomly assigned to three experimental groups: the control group ($n = 61$), the low - traditional - cultural - load group ($n = 74$), and the high - traditional - cultural - load group ($n = 70$). Before the start of the experiment, participants first read a set of graphic and textual materials introducing a gaiwan (covered bowl). We manipulated the traditional - cultural - load of the pattern design of the gaiwan. The control group had no pattern, and only the traditional - cultural - load of the gaiwan itself was examined, with the relevant description being: "There are no patterns on the front of the gaiwan." In the low - traditional - cultural - load group, the description of the pattern was: "A small deer pattern is printed on the front of the gaiwan, and its design inspiration derives from the common cartoon - like deer image in the forest." While in the high - traditional - cultural - load group, the description was: "A small deer pattern is printed on the front of the gaiwan, and its design inspiration derives from the image of the nine - colored deer in the mural 'The Jataka of the Deer King' in Cave 257 of the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang." After reading the materials, participants were required to rate brand status, the degree of traditional - cultural - load, and psychological distance. The specific items for psychological distance included: "Do you think the brand's characteristics are very approachable or..."; "Do you think the brand is very close to your life or...". They also needed to fill in basic personal information (gender, age, monthly income, and educational attainment).

(3) Experimental Results

In light of the ANOVA results, significant differences emerged in the traditional - cultural - load scores among the three groups of materials. Specifically, with $F(2, 65.462)$ and $p < 0.05$, the traditional - cultural - load score of the control group ($M_{\text{control}} = 2.30$, $SD = 1.19$) was notably lower compared to that of the low - traditional - cultural - load group ($M_{\text{low}} = 2.70$, $SD = 1.18$) and was even more markedly lower than that of the high - traditional - cultural - load group ($M_{\text{high}} = 4.33$, $SD = 0.90$). Moreover, the score of the low - traditional - cultural - load group was considerably lower than that of the high - traditional - cultural - load group. Although the gaiwan itself might possess a relatively high level of traditional - cultural - load, this still verified that the manipulation of

traditional - cultural - load in Experiment 2 was successful.

In this study, Model 4 in the SPSS macro developed by Hayes (2012) was utilized to test the mediating effect. Regarding the low - traditional - cultural - load group, the total effect, direct effect, and indirect effect were all non - significant (90% CI: [-0.02, 0.02]). The specific data are presented in Table 3. Conversely, for the high - traditional - cultural - load group, the total effect, direct effect, and indirect effect were significant (90% CI: [0.01, 0.15]). This result indicates that psychological distance plays a partial mediating role between high traditional - cultural - load and brand status, thus verifying Hypothesis 2. The specific data are shown in Table 4.

Table 3 The Mediating Effect of Psychological Distance in the Low - Traditional - Cultural - Load Group

Category	Effect Size	Standard Error	t	p	Bootstrap90%CI	
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Total Effect	0.14	0.10	1.36	0.18	-0.03	0.32
Direct Effect	0.14	0.11	1.35	0.18	-0.03	0.32
Indirect Effect	0.00	0.01			-0.02	0.02

Table 4 The Mediating Effect of Psychological Distance in the High - Traditional - Cultural - Load Group

Category	Effect Size	Standard Error	t	p	Bootstrap90%CI	
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Total Effect	0.16	0.07	2.42	0.02	0.05	0.27
Direct Effect	0.11	0.07	1.67	0.10	0.01	0.22
Indirect Effect	0.05	0.05			0.01	0.15

(4) Discussion of Results

Experiment 2 further validated Hypothesis 1, providing robust evidence for the conclusion of Experiment 1. Additionally, it verified the mediating effect of psychological distance, thus validating Hypothesis 2.

3.3 Experiment 3

(1) Experimental Design and Participants

Experiment 3 further explored the moderating effect of the congruence between traditional culture and locality. In Experiment 3, a 2 (Traditional Cultural Load: Low vs. High) * 2 (Congruence between Traditional Culture and Locality: Congruent vs. Incongruent) between - subjects design was employed. We recruited 230 participants via paid means on the Credamo platform. After eliminating 13 invalid questionnaires, a total of 217 valid questionnaires were ultimately collected (149 females, accounting for 68.6%).

(2) Experimental Procedures and Variable Measurement

The procedures of Experiment 3 were similar to those of Experiments 1 and 2. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four between - subjects groups: the High Traditional Cultural Load * Congruent group (n = 63), the High Traditional Cultural Load * Incongruent group (n = 49), the Low Traditional Cultural Load * Congruent group (n = 57), and the Low Traditional Cultural Load * Incongruent group (n = 48). The treatment of experimental materials was as shown in Table 5. Participants first, before the experiment, read the graphic and textual materials. Then, they rated traditional cultural load, brand status, psychological distance, and congruence with locality. Specifically, they were asked questions like "To what extent do you believe that the pattern design inspiration of this product comes from Yunnan local culture?" as well as "To what extent is the

traditional culture in this product consistent with its locality?" They also filled in basic personal information (gender, age, monthly income, and educational attainment).

Table 5 Experimental Materials for Experiment 3

Experimental Groups	Textual materials
High Traditional Cultural Load * Congruent Group	Product 1: Earthenware Plate with Grass - Phoenix Pattern This earthenware plate is light beige in color. Its pattern design is inspired by the traditional pattern of the Bai ethnic group in Yunnan: the Grass - Phoenix Pattern. Made of Yunnan earthenware, it exudes a sense of retro and artistic charm. It is sold locally in Yunnan.
High Traditional Cultural Load * Incongruent Group	Product 2: Earthenware Plate with Pomegranate Pattern This earthenware plate is light beige in color. Its pattern design is inspired by the traditional pattern of the Uyghur ethnic group: the Pomegranate Pattern. Made of common earthenware, it exudes a sense of retro and artistic charm. It is sold locally in Yunnan.
Low Traditional Cultural Load * Congruent Group	Product 3: Earthenware Plate with Color - Cloud Pattern This earthenware plate is light beige in color. Its pattern design is inspired by one of the representative elements of Yunnan: the Color - Cloud. Made of Yunnan earthenware, it exudes a sense of modern and artistic charm. It is sold locally in Yunnan.
Low Traditional Cultural Load * Incongruent Group	Product 4: Basic Earthenware Plate This earthenware plate is light beige in color and has no pattern. Made of common earthenware, it exudes a sense of simplicity and plainness. It is sold locally in Yunnan.

(3) Experimental Results

The ANOVA results revealed significant differences in the scores of traditional - cultural - load and congruence among the four groups of materials, $F_{\text{high (vs\low)}} = 3138.53, p < 0.05$; $F_{\text{locality (vs\incongruence)}} = 3189.44, p < 0.05$.

For traditional - cultural - load scores, those in the High Traditional Cultural Load * Congruent group ($M = 4.24, SD = 0.756$) and the High Traditional Cultural Load * Incongruent group ($M = 4.04, SD = 1.10$) were substantially higher compared to those in the Low Traditional Cultural Load * Congruent group ($M = 1.63, SD = 0.67$) and the Low Traditional Cultural Load * Incongruent group ($M = 1.92, SD = 0.94$). Regarding congruence scores, the High Traditional Cultural Load * Congruent group ($M = 4.19, SD = 0.81$) and the Low Traditional Cultural Load * Congruent group ($M = 4.12, SD = 0.72$) exhibited significantly higher values than the High Traditional Cultural Load * Incongruent group ($M = 1.62, SD = 0.54$) and the Low Traditional Cultural Load * Incongruent group ($M = 2.05, SD = 0.77$). These findings indicate that the regulation of traditional cultural load and congruence in the experimental materials was successful.

For the test of the mediating effect of psychological distance, Model 4 was still utilized. The results demonstrated that the mediating path of psychological distance between traditional - cultural - load and brand status was significant (indirect path effect $SE = 0.022, 90\% \text{ CI: } [0.022, 0.107]$), thereby verifying Hypothesis 2 once more.

Regarding the test of the moderating effect of congruence with locality, Model 58 in the SPSS macro developed by Hayes (2012) was utilized. The results are presented in Tables 6 and 7. Table 6 displays the outcomes of the first - half path of the moderated - mediation model concerning the congruence of traditional culture and locality. Table 7 shows the results of the second - half path of

the same model. The interaction between traditional culture and congruence with locality exerted a significant positive influence on psychological distance ($F=25.68$, $P<0.05$, 95% CI = [0.01, 0.11]). This finding indicates that the congruence between traditional culture and locality played a positive moderating role between traditional - cultural - load and psychological distance ($F=45.09$, $P>0.05$, 95% CI = [-0.07, 0.14]). As a result, the first - half path of the moderated - mediation model was successfully validated. Conversely, the interaction effect of psychological distance * congruence with locality had no significant influence on brand status. This indicates that the congruence between traditional culture and locality did not serve as a moderator between psychological distance and brand status, and thus, the second - half path of the moderated - mediation model was not validated.

Table 6: Dependent Variable (Psychological Distance) in the Test of Moderated - Mediation Effect

Variable	Equation 1: Dependent Variable (Psychological Distance)				
	β	se	t	p	95%CI
Control Variable	1.66	0.30	5.53	0.00	[1.07,2.24]
Traditional Cultural Load	0.46	0.08	5.55	0.00	[0.30,0.63]
Congruence with Locality	0.34	0.09	3.87	0.00	[0.17,0.52]
Traditional Cultural Load * Congruence with Locality	0.06	0.03	2.52	0.01	[0.01,0.11]
R^2	0.27				
F	25.68				

Table 7: Dependent Variable (Brand Status) in the Test of Moderated - Mediation Effect

Variable	Equation 2: Dependent Variable (Brand Status)				
	β	se	t	p	95%CI
Control Variable	0.77	0.58	1.32	0.19	[-0.38,1.92]
Traditional Cultural Load	0.44	0.04	10.10	0.00	[0.35,0.52]
Psychological Distance	0.11	0.17	0.65	0.51	[-0.22,0.43]
Congruence with Locality	0.01	0.20	0.07	0.94	[-0.38,0.41]
Psychological Distance * Congruence with Locality	0.03	0.05	0.61	0.54	[-0.07,0.14]
R^2	0.46				
F	45.09				

(4) Discussion of Results

Experiment 3 further confirmed Hypothesis 2. Specifically, the congruence between traditional culture and locality was found to play a positive moderating role between traditional - cultural - load and psychological distance. Nevertheless, it exhibited no moderating effect between psychological distance and brand status. As a result, the first - half path of Hypothesis 3 was successfully confirmed.

4. Research Conclusions and Contributions

4.1 Conclusions

In the face of the "dual - quality problem" of tourism commodities^[1], this study grounds on the psychological - distance theory, with tourism commodities as the research subject, and applies the experimental approach to conduct an in - depth investigation into the impact and pathway of traditional cultural load in tourism commodities on brand status. Firstly, the richer the traditional cultural load in tourism commodities, the higher the price consumers are willing to pay for them and

the more favorable their evaluation of the brand status. Secondly, psychological distance serves as a mediator in the process of traditional cultural load influencing the evaluation of the brand status of tourism commodities. The traditional cultural load can shorten the psychological distance between consumers and the brand (this study focuses on the social - distance dimension), thereby exerting a positive influence on enhancing brand status. Thirdly, this study puts forward and validates that the congruence between traditional culture and locality in tourism commodities plays a positive moderating role between traditional cultural load and psychological distance. However, there is no such moderating effect between psychological distance and brand status.

4.2 Theoretical Contributions

Firstly, the present study defines the concept of traditional cultural load in tourism commodities. By comprehensively reviewing prior research on traditional cultural load^[6,7] and introducing it into the tourism domain, the scope of research on traditional cultural load is broadened. Secondly, it quantifies traditional cultural load. Previous scholars predominantly concentrated on the application of traditional culture in the design and development of tourism commodities^[24,25], with few directing their attention to the matter of measuring traditional cultural load. In contrast, this study employs three scenario experiments to offer a research methodology for measuring traditional cultural load. Finally, while numerous scholars have recognized the influence of traditional culture on consumers' psychology and behavior within the tourism field^[24], few investigations have systematically probed into the impact of traditional cultural load in tourism commodities on brand status and its underlying mechanism of action^[26]. With psychological distance serving as the mediating variable, this research delves into the relationship between traditional cultural load and consumers' social distance. Additionally, by taking into account the moderating role of the congruence between traditional culture and locality, the exploration of the relationship between traditional cultural load and the status of tourism commodities is further deepened.

4.3 Practical Implications

With the increasing attention paid to traditional culture in both academic and business circles, numerous commodities have been integrated with traditional culture, winning widespread favor among tourism consumers^[27]. However, driven by economic interests, a large number of tourism commodity operators have flocked to the market, yet lacking innovative measures, which has led to a "dual - quality" dilemma of severe homogenization and inferior quality of tourism commodities^[1]. To some extent, this has dampened the development vitality of the tourism industry. This study focuses on the traditional cultural load in tourism commodities, explores its positive impact on brand status, and derives the following practical implications:

Firstly, as a pivotal driver of economic growth, tourism must transition from "quantity expansion" to "quality enhancement." By deeply integrating tourism commodities with local traditional culture, thereby creating tourism commodities with distinct local features, we can not only tackle the issue of tourism commodity homogenization and boost the local brand image and competitiveness^[28], but also enrich their cultural connotations^[29]. This approach can not only satisfy consumers' emotional requirements and cultural identity^[30], increase consumers' attractiveness and willingness to purchase^[31], but also raise the proportion of tourism shopping consumption within the total tourism consumption, stimulate consumption potential, and ultimately propel the sustainable growth of the local tourism economy and even the entire tourism industry.

Secondly, the exploration in this study of the impact and path of the influence of traditional cultural load in tourism commodities on brand benefits offers robust theoretical support to tourism commodity brand operators during the design - production phase. By crafting high - quality tourism

commodities that blend uniqueness with local cultural connotations^[32], tourism commodity brand operators can deepen consumers' comprehension of the brand and its status, thus facilitating the establishment of a premium brand image for tourism commodities.

Thirdly, this study paves the way for marketing approaches of tourism commodity brand operators. Traditional culture abounds with narrative elements. By enhancing the traditional cultural load of tourism commodities, tourism commodity brand operators can carry out story - based marketing^[33]. Moreover, it can prompt them to consider how to shorten the psychological distance between consumers and the brand, thus enhancing consumers' recognition and trust in the brand status and cultivating consumers' high - level loyalty and consumption stickiness.

4.4 Research Limitations and Further Research Directions

This study has numerous limitations and calls for in - depth exploration. Firstly, all experiments in this study were carried out online, without undertaking on - site or field experiments. Consequently, the research outcomes are limited in capturing the complex real - world environment and unknown factors. Follow - up research should comprehensively utilize experimental methodologies and field trials to acquire more comprehensive and authentic data, thereby enhancing the external validity of the research. Secondly, the experimental materials were predominantly practical items such as scarves, ceramic mugs, and earthenware plates. The applicability of our findings to non - practical tourism commodities like fridge magnets remains to be further verified.

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