

Chain Mediation of Perceived Value and Brand Attachment: Brand Interaction's Impact on Consumer Behavioral Intentions in Chinese Time-Honored Food Brands

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Abstract: To elucidate how time-honored food brands may maintain long-lasting consumer relationships in the current market by identifying the mechanism by which brand interaction results in behavioral intention. Four latent constructs, consumer brand interaction (CBI), perceived value (PV; functional, emotional, and social), brand attachment (BA), and behavioral intention (BI), were the foundation of a consumer survey based on S-O-R and social-exchange theories. 274 valid responses were obtained using an online survey; the measurement and structural models were estimated using structural equation modeling (SEM), and the mediating and chain-mediating effects were tested using PROCESS bootstrap. The results show that consumers' behavioral intentions are positively impacted by brand interaction between time-honored food brands and customers, with perceived value and brand attachment acting as chain mediators between the two. In order to turn interactive experiences into repurchase, word-of-mouth recommendation, and premium purchase intentions, time-honored food companies should develop interaction tactics that simultaneously promote traditional craftsmanship and culture and improve perceived value and emotional attachment. In the context of Chinese time-honored food, this study is one of the first to confirm that perceived value and brand attachment chain mediation affect the relationship between brand interaction and behavioral intention. This study gives established Chinese time-honored food companies the theoretical foundation they need to create successful brand interaction strategies.

Keywords: Chinese time-honored food brands; Brand interaction; Behavioral intentions; Perceived value; Brand attachment

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1. Introduction

Despite having a strong consumer base and strong cultural and taste memories, many brands struggle to build strong relationships with their customers. The majority of customers' opinions about these brands are still based

on cognitive loyalty, which is based on perceived quality, rather than emotional loyalty, which is based on brand attachment. Consumers are looking for more than just high-quality products from these brands in light of improvements in consumption; they now place a higher value on emotional bonds and engaging interactions with the brand. These time-honored brands are starting more intimate interactions with customers in an effort to strengthen their current customer bases and reach new markets. This communication goes beyond product details to include mutual comprehension and a deeper emotional resonance. Brand interaction refers to this dynamic, two-way relationship between a brand and its customers ^[1]. Customers are more likely to have positive brand intentions as a result of more brand interaction, which may increase their propensity to buy the brand's products ^[2,3]. Additionally, consumers' propensity to suggest a brand through word-of-mouth, intent to make additional purchases, and even readiness to pay a premium can be stimulated by high-quality interactive content and formats ^[1]. The majority of current studies concentrate on contemporary brands or online platforms ^[4]. The causal pathways by which brand interaction influences behavioral intentions (like repeat purchases, word-of-mouth referrals, premium payments) are still poorly understood for time-honored brands, which have both historic roots and contemporary transformation demands. Therefore, utilizing consumers of time-honored food brands as research subjects, this study aims to develop a model that examines the impact of brand interaction on behavioral intentions, mediated by perceived value and brand attachment. By increasing consumers' perceived functional, emotional, and social value as well as brand attachment, the goal is to show how brand engagement eventually drives behavioral intentions like repeat purchases, word-of-mouth recommendations, and willingness to pay a premium. The goal of this study is to offer significant theoretical underpinnings and managerial insights for attaining sustainable development for time-honored brands.

2. Theoretical foundations

2.1. Stimulus-organism-response theory

Mehrabian and Russell introduced the Stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) theory in 1974 from the standpoint of environmental psychology ^[5-7]. Its main goal is to disclose the psychological mechanisms that underlie behavioral intentions by explaining how environmental factors affect an individual's emotional reactions and subsequent behaviors. This theory's central claim is that an individual's behavioral response passes through an internal psychological processing phase rather than being directly activated by external stimulation. The S-O-R theory is widely used in environmental psychology, organizational behavior, tourism management, and particularly consumer behavior studies. It has been used in consumer behavior to investigate situations including food service, sustainable consumption, and livestreaming e-commerce ^[8,9]. Cultural legacy, dependable quality, and emotional connections are traits of time-honored food brands. The S-O-R theory can be used to describe consumer behavior toward these brands. Based on this notion, several researchers have examined how partnerships with time-honored brands affect consumer perceptions, which in turn influences purchasing decisions ^[9]. The impact of time-honored brand on consumer behavior through perceived quality has been examined in the others ^[10]. Using this theory as a foundation, this study investigates how brand interaction affects consumer behavioral intentions through perceived value and brand attachment. This study introduces the S-O-R theory to consumers' behavior of time-honored food brands. It treats brand interaction as an external environmental stimulus, perceived value and brand attachment as the organism, and consumer responses, intentions for repeat purchases, word-of-mouth recommendations, and premium purchases, as response variables. Building on this framework, the research explores the underlying mechanism through which brand

interaction influences consumer behavioral intentions through perceived value and brand attachment.

2.2. Social exchange theory

One of the fundamental theories of psychology and sociology is Social Exchange Theory (SET) ^[11,12]. Its main premise is that human social interactions are essentially cost-benefit-based, rational trading processes. People often seek to maximize benefits and minimize costs, using exchange to build and preserve social bonds. When deciding whether to continue or end a relationship, people balance the benefits (such as financial advantages, emotional support, and social recognition) against the drawbacks (such as time, money, and psychological strain). Consumers may view brands as partners in social exchange. In return for consumer attention, trust, purchases, and loyalty, brands provide cultural significance, emotional worth, and social recognition ^[13]. Consumers gain emotional fulfillment and social recognition by participating in brand activities and perceiving brand cultural connotations, these constitute their perceived “gains”. Simultaneously, they incur “costs” like time, attention, and even purchasing behavior. Positive brand attitudes develop when customers believe that the advantages of brand contact outweigh the drawbacks, which motivates behavioral intentions like repeat purchases and word-of-mouth referrals. Social exchange theory is often used in marketing research to understand customer behavior and psychology ^[14]. In service marketing, for example, customers assess the psychological and functional advantages of service experiences in order to decide whether to advocate for the brand or make additional purchases ^[15].

By telling company histories and emphasizing the importance of traditional craftsmanship, time-honored food brands can satiate consumers’ emotional demand for cultural identity and eventually encourage brand-favorable behaviors ^[16,17]. Consumer contacts with time-honored food brands are seen in this study as a form of social exchange. Brands provide consumers emotional support, individualized services, and product information. Based on their perception of the “cost-benefit” ratio, consumers assess the brand. Customers may respond with loyal purchases, word-of-mouth referrals, and premium spending by improving their perceptions of the brand’s functional, emotional, and social value and establishing a long-term exchange connection.

3. Research hypotheses

3.1. Brand interaction and behavioral intentions

The term “consumer brand interaction” (CBI) describes a sequence of two-way conversations about a specific consumption behavior that take place between customers and brands over a variety of channels with the goal of fostering emotional bonds and strengthening brand loyalty. Foster claims that there are two types of brand interaction: transactional and social. Activities and communication necessary to complete transactions, like making purchases or supplying transaction-related information, are included in transactional interaction. Beyond the actual transaction, social contact includes non-transactional information sharing and activities like routinely conversing with brand sales staff, getting birthday wishes as a member, or taking part in brand community events ^[18].

Behavioral Intention (BI), which continues to be a central focus in marketing research, is a crucial variable in consumer behavior studies that connects consumer attitudes to actual actions. According to conventional theory, BI indicates the subjective likelihood that customers will take particular future actions. Its concept has been further developed and broadened in the context of social media and brand relationship research. The term “BI” in this study refers to the intention or behavioral tendency to continue interacting with a brand after

making a purchase. Furthermore, research shows that positive interactions have a beneficial impact on customer satisfaction, intents to encourage positive word-of-mouth transmission, and readiness to repeat contacts ^[19,20]. As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Brand interactions among consumers of time-honored food brands positively influence consumer behavioral intentions.

3.2. The mediating role of perceived value

Purchase intent is significantly influenced by perceived value (PV), which is a consumer's subjective assessment based on personal traits and cognitive abilities ^[21]. Scholars have proposed a variety of dimensional frameworks in various circumstances as a result of extensive research on perceived value. Perceived functional value, perceived emotional value, and perceived social value are the three dimensions of the commonly used classification used in this study. The usefulness that consumers derive from expected quality, practicality, and physical attributes is known as perceived functional value.

Perceived value is frequently considered a crucial mediating element in research on consumer purchase intention. Its fundamental premise is that consumers' propensity to buy something or a service that is almost never directly influenced by outside factors; instead, it goes via a value evaluation process. Numerous studies support perceived value's mediating function. In the relationship between product descriptions and repurchase intent, for example, thorough product descriptions improve perceived value by elevating consumers' emotional and cognitive experiences, which in turn positively influences repurchase intent ^[22]. In order to eventually convert into buy intent, customers' views of product quality must also be improved through perceived value in studies of private label goods ^[23,24]. All of these research show that, whether through social influence, quality cognition, or product information, the paths of these elements usually require perceived value as a mediator to successfully drive consumer purchase intent. As a result, the following theory is put forth:

H2: Perceived value mediates the effect of interactions with time-honored food brands on consumer behavioral intentions.

3.3. The mediating role of brand attachment

The psychological and emotional bonds that consumers develop with brands are represented by brand attachment. The reason why customer impressions or external marketing stimuli convert into actual purchasing intent is explained by this strong emotional connection. For example, studies show that purchasing decisions are frequently not directly influenced by antecedent characteristics such as brand experience and personality of the brand. Rather, they foster brand attachment to increase purchase intent. Therefore, correlations between brand interaction and purchase intent, as well as between brand image and loyalty, are significantly mediated by brand attachment ^[25,26]. In the pathway where brand interactions impact behavioral intentions, its mediating effect is most noticeable. Customers' sense of involvement and belonging can be increased through brand interactions, but in order to effectively inspire behavioral intentions, such engagement must develop into deeper emotional connections. By increasing brand attachment, brand interactions have a favorable impact on consumer behavioral intentions. For example, studies on mobile music apps show that for users' interactive experiences to increase their purchase intent, brand attachment must operate as a mediator ^[27]. This demonstrates the underlying logic of "interaction-affinity-behavior": favorable brand interactions are essential for fostering an attachment to the brand, which is the primary psychological mechanism influencing ensuing behavioral intentions. Furthermore, studies show that consumers who have a high level of brand affinity are prepared to

pay a premium in order to sustain persistent ties with a brand even as its items become more expensive ^[28]. As a result, the following theory is put forth:

H3: The impact of brand interaction with classic food brands on consumer behavioral intentions is mediated by brand attachment.

3.4. The chain mediation effect of perceived value and brand attachment

The S-O-R theory states that brand interactions, including participatory experiences or two-way communication between time-honored brands and consumers, work as external stimuli that cause cognitive and emotional processing. This improves consumers' understanding of time-honored brands' social, emotional, and functional value. Based on the perceived value of the given goods and services, consumers subsequently develop brand cognition and trust. Positive emotional reactions are produced when customers believe a brand offers substantial functional, emotional, or social value. This leads to the gradual development of brand identification, dependency, and emotional attachment. This pathway is supported by an empirical research: in the hospitality sector, for example, brand attachment is favorably influenced by perceived functional, symbolic, and hedonic value, with emotional value acting as a mediator ^[29]. Purchase intention is indirectly influenced by perceived brand value through brand attachment, according to another study on luxury items ^[30]. This indicates that the crucial cognitive and affective basis of brand attachment is perceived value. As a result, when customers find value in a brand's goods and services, they are more likely to have favorable opinions of the brand and trust it, which leads to reliance and trust and, ultimately, brand attachment. Customer intention is accurately predicted by brand attachment ^[31]. As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Perceived value and brand attachment exert a chain-mediated effect on the influence of brand interaction with time-honored food brands on consumer behavioral intentions.

As seen in **Figure 1**, this study expands on the S-O-R theory to create a chain-mediated model for time-honored food brands: "Brand Interaction → Perceived Value → Brand Attachment → Behavioral Intentions."

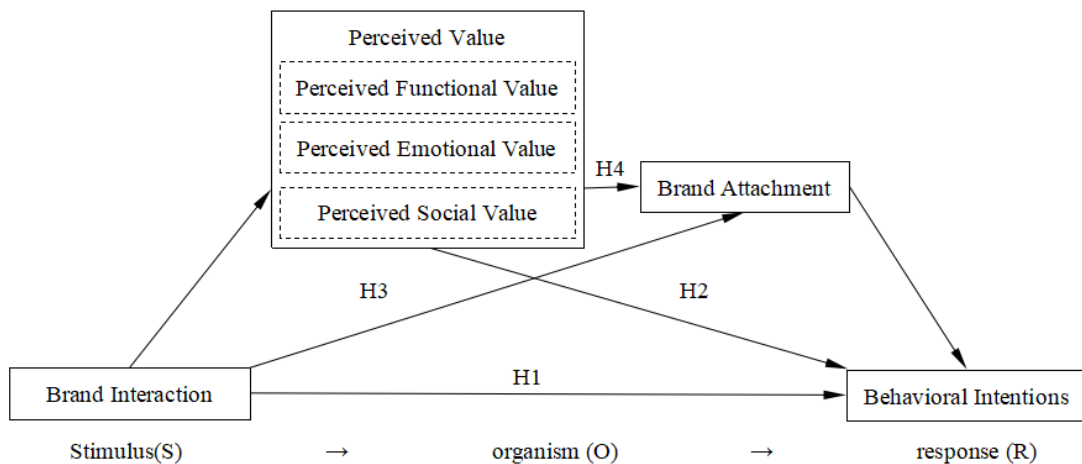


Figure 1. Relationship model of brand interaction, perceived value, brand attachment, and consumer behavioral intentions for time-honored food brands.

4. Research methodology

4.1. Questionnaire design

There are three sections to the questionnaire: The first section asks about the purchasing channel (online, offline, or both) and verifies if the brand the respondent bought is a reputable time-honored Chinese food brands, removing products that were incorrectly stated. The purpose of this is to elicit pertinent memories from respondents related to time-honored food brands. The second part of the questionnaire, which consists of 28 items, measures four constructs: brand interaction, behavioral intention, three dimensions of perceived value, and brand attachment. Gender, age, income, and educational attainment are among the demographic data gathered in the third segment.

4.2. Variable measurement

Four domains were examined by the questionnaire: brand interaction, three aspects of perceived value (perceived social, emotional, and functional value), brand attachment, and behavioral intention. This study modified established scales to measure each construct based on previous academic research. In order to better accommodate consumer interactions with traditional food brands, items were altered from their original scales. All measurements employ a five-point Likert scale, where “1” indicates strongly disagree and “5” indicates strongly agree. Higher scores indicate greater endorsement. The results are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Scale of each variable

| Variables | | Item |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Brand Interaction | | CBI1: During interactions, I feel fully engaged with this time-honored food brand. |
| | | CBI2: During interactions, I feel connected to this time-honored food brand. |
| | | CBI3: I find the content of interactions with this time-honored food brand comprehensive. |
| | | CBI4: During interactions, this time-honored food brand gives me a sense of “fighting side by side and working together”. |
| | | CBI5: I feel my interaction with this time-honored food brand is continuously. |
| Perceived Functional Value | | PFV1: This time-honored food brand consistently maintains high quality. |
| | | PFV2: The time-honored food brand has retained its traditional flavor and characteristics. |
| | | PFV3: This time-honored food brand maintains fair pricing across generations. |
| | | PFV4: Compared to new brands in the same price range, this time-honored food brand has unique production techniques. |
| Perceived Value | Perceived Emotional Value | PEV1: Tasting this time-honored brand's food brings me enjoy. |
| | | PEV2: This time-honored food brand's products make me want to purchase them. |
| | | PEV3: Every bite of this time-honored brand's food is a delightful experience. |
| | | PEV4: I think I like this time-honored food brand's products. |
| Perceived Social Value | | PSV1: When sharing this time-honored brand, I feel like a messenger of traditional culture. |
| | | PSV2: Consuming this time-honored brand's products makes me feel acceptable. |
| | | TPSV3: his time-honored brand leaves a favorable impression on others. |
| | | PSV4: This time-honored brand's products align with culinary culture and tradition. |

| Variables | | Item |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Brand Attachment | | BA1: I rely on this time-honored brand when I have relevant needs. |
| | | BA2: I feel a sense of familiarity toward this time-honored brand. |
| | | BA3: If this time-honored food brand were to disappear, I would feel regret. |
| | | BA4: I feel happy when others recognize this time-honored food brand. |
| | | BA5: I feel that purchasing or tasting this time-honored food connects me to the brand. |
| | | BA6: This time-honored food brand brings me happiness. |
| Behavioral Intention | repurchase intention | BI1: I would choose this time-honored food brand as my first choice among similar products. BI2: When needing such products, I will continue patronizing this time-honored food brand. |
| | word-of-mouth recommendation intention | BI3: I am willing to recommend this time-honored food brand to others. BI4: I am willing to praise this time-honored food brand in front of others. |
| | premium purchase intention | BI5: Compared to other brands, I am willing to pay a higher price for this time-honored food brand. |

4.3. Samples

The final survey questionnaire was created by making small changes to some items based on the pre-survey results. The formal survey used the questionnaire survey platform Sojump to distribute online questionnaires in order to guarantee participant randomization. 274 valid responses were collected, resulting in a 70.80% response rate, after customers of erroneous food-related time-honored Chinese brands and invalid questionnaires were eliminated. The questionnaire completion rate was satisfactory.

5. Results

5.1. Description of the sample

This study performed a descriptive statistical analysis of the fundamental data in order to clearly depict the sample's demographic features. **Table 2** displays the results:

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of basic information

| Variable | Category | Number | Percentage |
|-----------|---|--------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 111 | 40.5 |
| | Female | 163 | 59.5 |
| Age | 18 years old and below | 21 | 7.7 |
| | 19–25 years old | 22 | 8.0 |
| | 26–30 years old | 46 | 16.8 |
| | 31–35 years old | 51 | 18.6 |
| | 36–40 years old | 49 | 17.9 |
| | 41–45 years old | 53 | 19.3 |
| | 46 years old and above | 32 | 11.7 |
| Education | Junior high school and below | 7 | 2.6 |
| | Senior high school or secondary vocational school | 18 | 6.6 |
| | Undergraduate or junior college | 201 | 73.4 |
| | Postgraduate | 48 | 17.5 |

| Variable | Category | Number | Percentage |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|--------|------------|
| Occupation | Student | 21 | 7.7 |
| | Staff of enterprises and institutions | 133 | 48.5 |
| | Freelancer | 113 | 41.2 |
| | Retired | 7 | 2.6 |
| Monthly income | Below 3500 yuan | 23 | 8.4 |
| | 3501–6000 yuan | 82 | 29.9 |
| | 6001–10000yuan | 97 | 35.4 |
| | Above 10000 yuan | 72 | 26.3 |
| Purchase channel | Offline | 67 | 24.5 |
| | Online | 120 | 43.8 |
| | Both | 87 | 31.8 |

Among the 274 valid respondents, female participants constituted the majority, accounting for 59.5% of the survey sample, compared to 40.5% male participants. The sample's age distribution was wide, encompassing all age groups 18 years of age and above. The 18–25 age group had a comparatively lower proportion than the 31–45 age group, which had the greatest percentage at 55.8%. With 73.4% of respondents having bachelor's or associate's degrees and 17.5% having master's degrees, the sample's educational background was relatively high. In terms of occupation, over 90% of workers were freelancers and employees of businesses and institutions; lesser percentages were made up of students and retirees. Over 91% of the sample had monthly incomes between 6,001 and 10,000 RMB, 3,501 and 6,000 RMB, and over 10,000 RMB, with those making less than 3,500 RMB being comparatively low. Online channels accounted for 43.8% of purchases, followed by offline channels alone at 24.5% and combined online and offline channels at 31.8%. In terms of gender, age, income, occupation, education level, and purchase channels, the study sample generally showed a variety of traits, offering a strong data base for further empirical investigation.

5.2. Reliability & validity

The reliability of each variable was tested by Cronbach's α coefficient in SPSS 27.0 software; the findings are displayed in **Table 3**. High reliability was shown by Cronbach's α coefficients over 0.800 for consumer brand interaction, perceived value, brand attachment, and behavioral intention. The questionnaire's total Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.927. In conclusion, the questionnaire's overall reliability coefficient and each dimension above 0.8, suggesting that the questionnaire used in this study had good reliability. The obtained questionnaires were subjected to validity assessment using AMOS 28.0. Every variable factor loading was greater than 0.600, as **Table 4** illustrates. The four variables in the chained model, Brand Interaction (0.599), Perceived Value (0.592), Brand Attachment (0.656), and Behavioral Intention (0.647), all had the values of average variance extracted (AVE) higher than 0.5. Every Critical Ratio (CR) value was more than 0.8. These results show that the factors in the questionnaire were successfully retrieved and that all variables have strong convergent validity. Each of the four variables' root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) values was substantially higher than the residual factors' Pearson correlation coefficients, as **Table 5** illustrates. This indicates that the questionnaire employed in this study has strong discriminant validity since, although the variables are associated, they also show clear differences.

When the measurement model was tested using confirmatory factor analysis in AMOS 28.0 software, the

absolute fit indices (CMIN/DF = 1.229 < 3, GFI = 0.937 > 0.9, AGFI = 0.918 > 0.9, RMSEA = 0.029 < 0.08) and relative fit indices (NFI = 0.943, IFI = 0.989, CFI = 0.989 > 0.9) all satisfied the acceptance criteria. The results are shown in **Table 6**.

Table 3. Reliability analysis results

| Variable | Cronbach's α coefficient | Total Cronbach's α coefficient |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Brand Interaction | 0.881 | 0.927 |
| Perceived Value | 0.918 | |
| Brand Attachment | 0.919 | |
| Behavioral Intention | 0.901 | |

Table 4. Convergent validity test results

| Variable | Code | Factor loading | AVE | CR |
|----------------------|------|----------------|-------|-------|
| Brand Interaction | CBI1 | 0.755 | 0.599 | 0.882 |
| | CBI2 | 0.777 | | |
| | CBI3 | 0.783 | | |
| | CBI4 | 0.741 | | |
| | CBI5 | 0.811 | | |
| Perceived Value | PFV | 0.676 | 0.592 | 0.812 |
| | PEV | 0.756 | | |
| | PSV | 0.865 | | |
| Brand Attachment | BA1 | 0.836 | 0.656 | 0.920 |
| | BA2 | 0.791 | | |
| | BA3 | 0.818 | | |
| | BA4 | 0.785 | | |
| | BA5 | 0.835 | | |
| | BA6 | 0.794 | | |
| Behavioral Intention | BI1 | 0.832 | 0.647 | 0.902 |
| | BI2 | 0.841 | | |
| | BI3 | 0.784 | | |
| | BI4 | 0.748 | | |
| | BI5 | 0.814 | | |

Table 5. Results of discriminant validity test

| Variables | Brand Interaction | Perceived Value | Brand Attachment | Behavioral Intention |
|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Brand Interaction | 0.774 | | | |
| Perceived Value | 0.343** | 0.769 | | |
| Brand Attachment | 0.342** | 0.476** | 0.810 | |
| Behavioral Intention | 0.418** | 0.415** | 0.390** | 0.804 |

Table 6. Model overall fitting coefficient table

| Aspects | Results | Recommended Level |
|--|---------|-------------------|
| Chi-square/Degree of Freedom (CMIN/DF) | 1.229 | ≤ 3.00 |
| Normed Fit Index (NFI) | 0.943 | ≥ 0.90 |
| Incremental Fit Index (IFI) | 0.989 | ≥ 0.90 |
| Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) | 0.987 | ≥ 0.90 |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | 0.989 | ≥ 0.90 |
| Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.029 | ≤ 0.08 |

5.3. First hypothesis

This study used a linear regression model with brand interaction as the independent variable and behavioral intention as the dependent variable in order to investigate the impact of consumer brand interaction on behavioral intention. **Table 7** displays the findings of the regression analysis.

According to regression analysis, brand interaction strongly and favorably predicts behavioral intention, with a regression coefficient of 0.386 ($p < 0.001$) on behavioral intention. 13.9% of the variation across variables is explained by the model ($R^2 = 0.139$). The model has statistical significance, as indicated by the significant F-test result ($F = 43.899$, $p < 0.001$). This demonstrates that brand interaction is a crucial factor in determining behavioral intention. A variance inflation factor (VIF) of $1.000 < 5$ for brand interaction was found by multicollinearity analysis, suggesting that there is no significant multicollinearity among independent variables and that the model estimation is reliable. In conclusion, the main effects analysis validates Hypothesis H1 by demonstrating the beneficial impact of customer brand interaction on behavioral intention.

Table 7. Test of main effects

| Variables | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | VIF | F |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|--------|----------|-------|------------|
| | B | Standard Error | Beta | | | | |
| Constant | 2.146 | 0.211 | - | 10.182 | 0.000*** | - | F=43.899 |
| Brand Interaction | 0.386 | 0.058 | 0.373 | 6.626 | 0.000*** | 1.000 | P=0.000*** |

5.4. Mediation test

In order to verify the mediating effect more accurately, model 4 of AMOS 28.0 plug-in Process was used, and the Bootstrap method was used to sample 5000 times, and the confidence interval level was set to 95% for the mediating test. The results of the mediation effect test show that perceived value and brand attachment both play a partial mediating role in the influence of consumer brand interaction on behavioral intention.

For the path “brand interaction → perceived value → behavioral intention”, when perceived value is used as the mediating variable, the total effect value is 0.386, and the confidence interval that does not contain 0 is [0.271, 0.500]; brand interaction can positively affect perceived value ($\beta = 0.343$, $p < 0.001$), perceived value has a significant promoting effect on consumers’ behavioral intention ($\beta = 0.232$, $p < 0.001$), perceived value plays a partial mediating role in this model, the effect value is 0.067, and the confidence interval that does not contain 0 is [0.025, 0.121], indicating that this path is more significant, hypothesis H2 is verified, and brand interaction enhances consumers’ behavioral intention by improving their multi-dimensional perceived value of

time-honored brands in terms of function, emotion and society.

For the path “brand interaction → brand attachment → behavioral intention”, when brand attachment is used as the mediating variable, the total effect value is 0.386, and the confidence interval that does not contain 0 is [0.271, 0.500]. Brand interaction can positively affect brand attachment ($\beta = 0.202, p < 0.001$), and brand attachment has a significant promoting effect on consumers’ behavioral intention ($\beta = 0.186, p < 0.001$). Brand attachment plays a partial mediating role in this model, and the indirect effect value is 0.063. The confidence interval that does not contain 0 is [0.020, 0.119], indicating that this path is more significant, and the hypothesis H3 is verified. The more in-depth the interaction between consumers and the brand, the easier it is to form an emotional connection and attachment, thereby promoting their behavioral tendencies such as repeat purchase, word-of-mouth recommendation and premium payment (**Figure 2**).

In summary, perceived value and brand attachment jointly constitute the important psychological mechanism of brand interaction affecting behavioral intention, supporting the establishment of the chain mediation path.

The chain mediation effect was tested by using model 6 of the AMOS 28.0 plug-in Process. For the path “brand interaction → perceived value → brand attachment → behavioral intention”, the consumer brand interaction had a significant indirect effect on behavioral intention through “perceived value → brand attachment”. Specifically, the chain mediation effect value of brand interaction transmitted to brand attachment through perceived value and finally affecting behavioral intention was 0.023 (SE = 0.009), and the 95% confidence interval was [0.007,0.043]. The confidence interval did not contain 0, indicating that perceived value could not only mediate independently, but also enhance consumers’ attachment to time-honored brands, forming a progressive mechanism of “cognition-emotion-behavior”, which verified the establishment of hypothesis H4 (**Table 8** and **Table 9**).

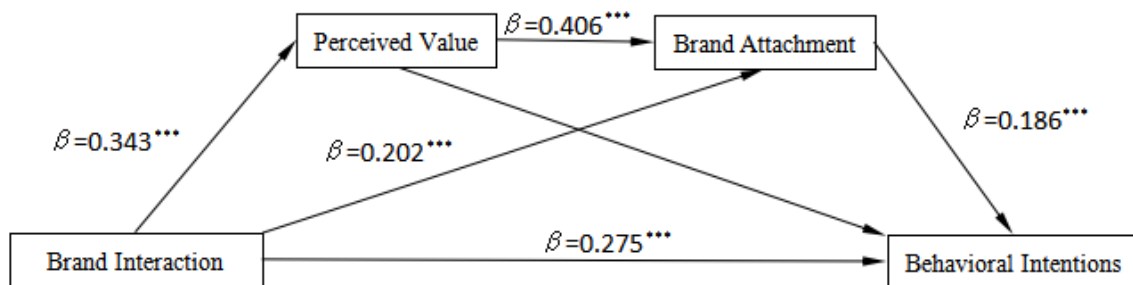


Figure 2. The path of the effect of brand interaction on consumer behavioral intention of time-honored food brands.

Table 8. Test of mediating effect

| Mediator | Total effect | | | Indirect effect | | |
|------------------|--------------|-------|-------|-----------------|-------|-------|
| | Effect value | LLCI | ULCI | Effect value | LLCI | ULCI |
| Perceived value | 0.386 | 0.271 | 0.500 | 0.067 | 0.025 | 0.121 |
| Brand attachment | | | | 0.063 | 0.020 | 0.119 |

Table 9. Results of chain mediation effect test

| Effect | Effect Value | Standard Error | 95% confidence interval | | Conclusion |
|---|--------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------|------------|
| | | | LLCI | ULCI | |
| Brand interaction → behavioral intention (total indirect) | 0.131 | 0.030 | 0.077 | 0.193 | Support |
| Brand interaction → perceived value → behavioral intention | 0.067 | 0.024 | 0.024 | 0.118 | Support |
| Brand interaction → brand attachment → behavioral intention | 0.041 | 0.020 | 0.009 | 0.086 | Support |
| Brand interaction → perceived value → brand attachment → behavioral intention | 0.023 | 0.009 | 0.007 | 0.043 | Support |

6. Discussion

6.1. Findings

Important psychological factors for consumer brand interaction to affect behavioral intentions are perceived value and brand attachment. This study builds a chain mediation model of “brand interaction → perceived value → brand attachment → behavioral intention” based on the S-O-R theory, and it thoroughly investigates how consumers of time-honored food brands’ brand interactions affect their behavioral intentions. The following conclusions are reached by this study based on the data analysis of 274 genuine questionnaires:

Consumers’ behavioral intentions are significantly improved by brand interaction. Perceived value is a key mediating factor between brand interaction and behavioral intentions. Moreover, brand attachment is a mediating variable of brand interaction affecting behavioral intention. The impact of brand interaction on behavioral intention is mediated by perceived value and brand attachment. “Brand interaction → perceived value → brand attachment → behavioral intention” is the precise route.

6.2. Recommendation

Time-honored food businesses should aim to create a whole impact chain from “cognition” to “emotion” and finally to “behavior” rather than just transmitting information. They ought to expand the types of high-quality interaction and content, like exclusive member communities, offline traditional craft experience activities, and online brand narrative sharing. Customers’ perceptions of the brand’s social, emotional, and functional values are initially improved through these encounters. Based on this, businesses use consistent, friendly engagement to further enhance this value perception into consumers’ emotional attachment and identity recognition to the brand. Lastly, this strong emotional bond will encourage customers to make intentions like premium payments, word-of-mouth referrals, and repeat purchases.

Time-honored food businesses should create distinctive interactive strategies for various aspects of perceived value: at the functional value level, they can enhance interactive techniques that can offer extremely useful and reliable information, such as live broadcasts of transparent production processes, authoritative product testing reports, etc., so that consumers can intuitively sense the high quality and safety of the products; at the emotional value level, they can thoroughly investigate the brand’s historical stories and cultural connotations and host activities with cultural heritage and emotional resonance to encourage consumers’ emotional identity and sense of brand; In order to satisfy their social needs and sense of identity, they can actively engage in time-honored brand inheritance activities, invite customers to participate collectively through

interactive platforms, and encourage customers to share their favorite foods and time-honored brand products. They can also host cultural exhibitions or community events. In order to create a strong cognitive basis for developing brand attachment, customers' overall perceived value to the brand is methodically enhanced through all-around and multi-level contact.

Transform the “transactional relationship” into a “partnership” and foster brand attachment. According to studies, the fundamental psychological process that propels enduring customer loyalty is brand attachment. Rather than viewing customers as passive consumers, traditional food businesses should view them as co-builders and inheritors of brand stories. In order to create a strong emotional bond, they can, for instance, encourage customers to actively participate in brand events and give them the impression that they are an essential component of the brand by organizing brand member days, collaborating with customers on product development, and allowing customers to take part in brand decision-making.

In order to transform the first “transactional relationship” into a close “partnership,” businesses must also pay attention to emotional communication with customers and allow them to sense the warmth and sincerity of the brand through individualized care and tailored services. Customers' loyalty and behavioral intentions will be significantly increased by this strong brand attachment, which will also provide a strong basis for the long-term growth of venerable food companies.

6.3. Recommendation for future research

Despite some theoretical advancements, this study still has the following drawbacks: (1) Data was only gathered using the online questionnaire platform. The sample had higher levels of wealth and education than the social average, notwithstanding the high recovery rate. In order to test the robustness of the research conclusions, future research can broaden the scope of the study from food time-honored brands to other industries. Additionally, the sample can be expanded to include different regions, age groups, and types of food time-honored brands. reputable brands, such those in the medical field, business, etc., to investigate how the brand engagement mechanism may be applied across industries. (2) In order to thoroughly examine the particular mechanism of brand interaction influencing perceived value and brand attachment, future study can use a more rigorous experimental design. For instance, how various brand interactions, such as social and informational interactions, affect the perceived value dimensions; or look at the moderating influence of individual customer characteristics.

Disclosure statement

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