The Impact of Social Media Marketing Strategies on the Online Purchase Intention of Guangxi Zhuang Brocade Products

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ABSTRACT:
Digital transformation has positioned social media as a dominant marketing channel; however, empirical evidence regarding its effectiveness in promoting traditional cultural products remains limited. This study investigates the impact of Social Media Marketing (SMM) strategies on consumers' online purchase intention toward Guangxi Zhuang brocade products, a representative form of China's intangible cultural heritage. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) theory, and Cultural Identity Theory, this study proposes a conceptual framework in which Brand Awareness, Brand Trust, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, and Cultural Identity act as mediating variables between SMM and Purchase Intention. A quantitative research approach was employed, and data were collected from 500 active social media users. Structural Equation Modeling using Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) was applied for data analysis. The results indicate that Social Media Marketing has significant positive effects on all mediating variables, which in turn significantly influence purchase intention. Among these factors, Cultural Identity and Electronic Word-of-Mouth emerge as the most influential determinants. The findings suggest that effective social media marketing for traditional cultural products requires not only brand exposure but also culturally authentic communication and peer-based interaction. This study contributes to digital marketing literature by extending social media marketing theory to the context of intangible cultural heritage and provides practical implications for sustainable cultural branding.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing; Brand Awareness; Brand Trust; Electronic Word-of-Mouth; Cultural Identity; Purchase Intention

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed contemporary marketing practices, with social media platforms becoming central channels for communication, information dissemination, and consumer engagement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Social Media Marketing (SMM)

enables firms to interact with consumers in real time, facilitate relationship building, and influence purchase decisions through content sharing and online communities (Seo & Park, 2018). Previous empirical studies have demonstrated that SMM positively affects brand awareness, brand trust, and purchase intention, particularly in the contexts of e-commerce and fast-moving consumer goods (Hutter et al., 2013; Keller, 2013). However, its effectiveness in promoting traditional cultural products remains relatively underexplored.

Guangxi Zhuang brocade is one of China's four renowned traditional brocades and has been officially recognized as a form of national intangible cultural heritage. It embodies distinctive ethnic aesthetics, historical craftsmanship, and cultural symbolism associated with the Zhuang people (Chuanlan et al., 2023). Despite its cultural and artistic value, Guangxi Zhuang brocade faces significant challenges in contemporary markets, including limited brand visibility, insufficient consumer awareness, and heavy reliance on traditional offline distribution channels such as tourism markets and cultural exhibitions (Liu et al., 2023). With the growing popularity of social media platforms such as Douyin, Xiaohongshu, and WeChat Channels, new opportunities have emerged for revitalizing traditional cultural products through digital storytelling, visual presentation, and interactive engagement (Hanaysha, 2022).

Existing literature suggests that social media marketing influences consumer behavior through multiple cognitive and social mechanisms. Brand awareness enhances consumers' ability to recognize and recall brands, thereby increasing the likelihood of purchase (Keller, 1993). Brand trust reduces perceived risk and uncertainty in online purchasing environments, which is particularly important for products that consumers cannot physically evaluate prior to purchase (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In addition, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has become a powerful source of social influence, as consumers increasingly rely on peer reviews, user-generated content, and influencer recommendations when making purchase decisions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

However, for traditional cultural products, functional and brand-related factors alone may not sufficiently explain consumer purchase behavior. Cultural Identity Theory suggests that consumers' sense of belonging, emotional attachment, and identification with cultural values embedded in products play a crucial role in shaping attitudes and behavioral intentions (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Oyserman, 2009). Prior studies have indicated that cultural identity significantly influences consumers' willingness to support heritage products, particularly when cultural meanings are effectively communicated through digital media (Chiciudean et al., 2021; Ting et al., 2022). Nevertheless, empirical research integrating social media marketing, eWOM, brand-related constructs, and cultural identity within a single analytical framework remains limited.

To address this research gap, the present study examines the impact of Social Media Marketing strategies on consumers' online purchase intention toward Guangxi Zhuang brocade products. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), Electronic Word-of-Mouth theory (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), and Cultural Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), this study proposes a comprehensive conceptual model in which Brand Awareness, Brand Trust, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, and Cultural Identity act as mediating variables between SMM and Purchase Intention. By empirically testing this model, the study aims to extend social media marketing and consumer behavior literature to the context of intangible cultural heritage and to provide practical insights for the sustainable digital promotion of traditional cultural products.

Research Objectives

Based on the research gap and the proposed research questions, the objectives of this study are as follows:

This study aims to analyze the influence of Social Media Marketing (SMM) on Purchase Intention (PI) of Guangxi Zhuang brocade consumers by considering the mediating role of Brand

Awareness (BA), Brand Trust (BT), Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), and Cultural Identity (CI).

By empirically comparing the effectiveness of short videos, livestreaming, and UGC, this study helps marketers tailor their content strategies to different platforms. This supports evidence-based decisions in selecting media formats that best suit brand objectives and consumer preferences in the context of Guangxi Zhuang brocade and other traditional cultural products.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical study, conceptual model, and research gaps that have been identified, the research hypotheses are formulated as follows:

H1 : Social Media Marketing (SMM) has a positive effect on Brand Awareness (BA).

H2 : Social Media Marketing (SMM) has a positive effect on Brand Trust (BT).

H3 : Social Media Marketing (SMM) has a positive effect on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM).

H4 : Social Media Marketing (SMM) has a positive effect on Cultural Identity (CI).

H5: Brand Awareness (BA) has a positive effect on Purchase Intention (PI).

H6: Brand Trust (BT) has a positive effect on Purchase Intention (PI).

H7: Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has a positive effect on Purchase Intention (PI).

H8: Cultural Identity (CI) has a positive effect on Purchase Intention (PI).

Scope of the Study

This study investigates the impact of social media marketing (SMM) strategies on consumers' online purchase intention of Guangxi Zhuang brocade, a representative product of China's intangible cultural heritage (ICH). The research primarily focuses on three dimensions: industry context, theoretical foundation, and the core conceptual boundaries of the variables involved.

1. Industry Scope

The research is situated within China's traditional cultural and creative industries, with a specific emphasis on the textile-based ICH sector. Guangxi Zhuang brocade, as one of China's four great traditional brocades, holds profound cultural, historical, and symbolic significance within the Zhuang ethnic group (Liu et al., 2023). Despite its cultural value, the brocade industry faces serious challenges, including modernization of production, loss of artisan knowledge, and declining consumer attention in contemporary markets (Chuanlan et al., 2023).

In recent years, social media marketing has emerged as a strategic solution for revitalizing ICH products. Platforms such as Douyin, Xiaohongshu, and WeChat Channels allow brands to implement marketing strategies like short-form video, livestreaming commerce, and user-generated content (UGC) to enhance brand visibility and consumer engagement (Hanaysha, 2022). This study explores how such SMM strategies can strengthen brand awareness, brand trust, and cultural identity to ultimately drive purchase intention for Guangxi Zhuang brocade.

2. Theoretical Scope

The study is guided by three interrelated theoretical foundations:

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) – Explains consumer behavioral intention as influenced by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). TPB supports the linkage between SMM and consumers' purchase intention through brand awareness and brand trust.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) Theory – Emphasizes the role of peer-generated information and digital reviews in shaping trust and awareness. This theory is especially relevant for UGC, online reviews, and KOL/KOC content in social commerce (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Yang et al., 2022).

Cultural Identity Theory (CIT) – Suggests that consumer behavior toward cultural products is often shaped by emotional and symbolic identification. CIT explains the mediating role of

cultural identity between SMM and purchase intention (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Chiciudean et al., 2021; Ting et al., 2022).

By synthesizing these theories, the study establishes a multidimensional conceptual framework to analyze how SMM influences consumer decision-making through both cognitive and symbolic-affective paths.

3. Variable Scope

The key research variables include social media marketing strategies, brand awareness, brand trust, cultural identity, and purchase intention. In summary, by defining these parameters, this study ensures scientific rigor and relevance, providing valuable insights for digital marketing strategies in the traditional cultural product sector.

Research Findings

This section presents the key findings of the study in accordance with the research objectives. The results are summarized from the quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted in Chapter IV, with an emphasis on the relationships between social media marketing strategies and consumers' online purchase intention toward Guangxi Zhuang brocade products.

1. Preliminary Data Analysis

The preliminary analysis confirmed that the dataset was suitable for further statistical analysis. All 500 questionnaires were fully completed, with no missing values detected. Outlier analysis using standardized Z-scores indicated that all observations fell within the acceptable range of ±3.29, suggesting the absence of extreme cases. In addition, normality testing showed that skewness and kurtosis values for all variables were within acceptable limits, indicating that the data were approximately normally distributed. These results confirm that the dataset met the assumptions required for subsequent structural equation modeling.

2. Respondent Profile

The respondents consisted of active social media users in China who were potential consumers of Guangxi Zhuang brocade products. The majority of respondents were aged between 18 and 34 years, representing the most active demographic group on social media platforms. The gender distribution was relatively balanced, with slightly more female than male respondents. Most respondents held a bachelor's degree or higher and reported frequent daily use of social media and long-term familiarity with the internet. This profile suggests that the sample was appropriate for examining the impact of social media marketing strategies in a digital consumption context.

3. Descriptive Overview of Research Variables

Descriptive analysis revealed that respondents held generally positive perceptions toward all key constructs in the research model. Social media marketing activities were perceived as engaging and informative, particularly in relation to short video content, livestreaming, and user-generated content. Brand awareness and brand trust were both rated at high levels, indicating that respondents were familiar with and confident in Guangxi Zhuang brocade products. Electronic word-of-mouth and cultural identity also showed high mean values, reflecting respondents' reliance on online reviews and their strong emotional attachment to cultural heritage products. Overall, purchase intention toward Guangxi Zhuang brocade products was found to be positive.

4. Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis. The results demonstrated that all constructs achieved satisfactory levels of reliability and validity. Cronbach's alpha values for all variables exceeded the recommended threshold, indicating high internal consistency. Convergent validity was confirmed through strong factor loadings, composite reliability values above 0.70, and average variance extracted values above 0.50. In addition, discriminant validity was established, as the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded the correlations with other constructs. These results confirm that the measurement

instruments were appropriate for testing the proposed research model.

5. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model demonstrated a good overall fit with the empirical data, with all goodness-of-fit indices meeting recommended criteria. Hypothesis testing results indicated that social media marketing strategies had significant positive effects on brand awareness, brand trust, electronic word-of-mouth, and cultural identity. Furthermore, all mediating variables were found to have significant positive effects on purchase intention. These findings confirm that social media marketing influences online purchase intention both directly and indirectly through cognitive, social, and cultural mechanisms.

Table 1 Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	Result
H1	SMM → Brand Trust	Supported
H2	SMM → Brand Awareness	Supported
H3	SMM → eWOM	Supported
H4	SMM → Cultural Identity	Supported
H5	Brand Awareness → Purchase Intention	Supported
H6	Brand Trust → Purchase Intention	Supported
H7	eWOM → Purchase Intention	Supported
H8	Cultural Identity → Purchase Intention	Supported

Note. All hypotheses were supported at a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

6. Structural Model of the Study

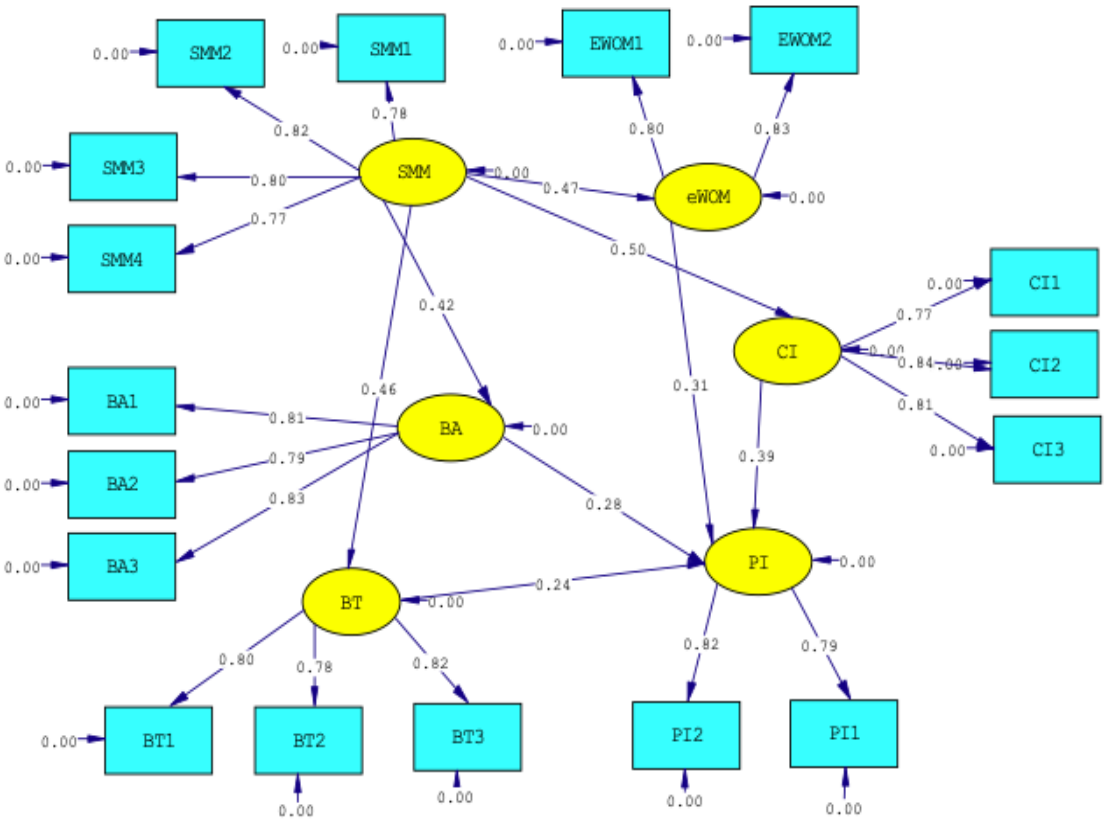

Figure 1. Structural Model of the Impact of Social Media Marketing on Online Purchase Intention

Figure 1 illustrates the final structural equation model examining the relationships between social media marketing (SMM), brand awareness (BA), brand trust (BT), electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), cultural identity (CI), and purchase intention (PI) toward Guangxi Zhuang brocade products. The model demonstrates that social media marketing exerts both direct and indirect influences on consumers' purchase intention through multiple mediating mechanisms.

As shown in the model, SMM has significant positive effects on brand awareness, brand trust, electronic word-of-mouth, and cultural identity, indicating that social media activities such as short videos, livestreaming, and user-generated content effectively enhance consumers' cognitive, affective, and social responses. These mediating variables subsequently exert positive influences on purchase intention, confirming their central role in shaping consumer decision-making.

Among the mediators, cultural identity and electronic word-of-mouth exhibit relatively stronger paths to purchase intention, suggesting that emotional attachment to cultural heritage and peer-generated information play particularly important roles in the consumption of traditional cultural products. Overall, the structural model supports the proposed research framework and confirms that social media marketing influences online purchase intention through an integrated process involving brand-related and cultural factors.

7. Summary of Research Findings

In summary, the findings demonstrate that social media marketing strategies play a significant role in influencing consumers' online purchase intention toward Guangxi Zhuang brocade products. The results highlight the importance of brand-related and cultural factors, particularly cultural identity and electronic word-of-mouth, as key mechanisms through which social media marketing exerts its influence. These findings provide a strong empirical foundation for the discussion and implications presented in the following section.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumers' online purchase intention toward Guangxi Zhuang brocade products, with brand awareness, brand trust, electronic word-of-mouth, and cultural identity acting as mediating variables. The findings provide empirical support for the proposed conceptual framework and offer important insights into how digital marketing mechanisms operate in the context of traditional cultural products.

First, the results confirm that social media marketing has a significant influence on brand awareness, brand trust, electronic word-of-mouth, and cultural identity. This finding supports prior studies suggesting that interactive digital content, such as short videos, livestreaming, and user-generated content, enhances consumers' engagement and perceptions of brands (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In the context of Guangxi Zhuang brocade, social media platforms serve not only as promotional channels but also as spaces for cultural storytelling and value communication, enabling consumers to better understand the symbolic and historical meaning of the products.

Second, the findings demonstrate that brand awareness and brand trust significantly influence purchase intention, indicating that cognitive and evaluative mechanisms remain essential even for culturally embedded products. This result is consistent with brand equity theory, which emphasizes that familiarity and trust reduce perceived risk and increase consumers' confidence in online purchasing decisions (Keller, 1993; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). For traditional cultural products, clear brand recognition and credibility appear to function as prerequisites for translating cultural appreciation into actual purchase intention.

Third, electronic word-of-mouth was found to have a strong positive effect on purchase intention. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the importance of peer-generated information in reducing uncertainty in

online environments (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Cheung & Thadani, 2012). In the case of Guangxi Zhuang brocade, eWOM plays a particularly important role because many consumers lack prior knowledge of the product. Reviews, recommendations, and shared experiences on social media provide practical cues that complement official marketing messages and strengthen consumers' confidence in their purchasing decisions.

Most notably, cultural identity emerged as one of the most influential mediating variables in the model. This finding extends existing digital marketing literature by demonstrating that emotional attachment and cultural identification are critical drivers of purchase intention for intangible cultural heritage products. Consistent with Cultural Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), consumers who perceive a strong connection between the product and their cultural values are more likely to view purchasing behavior as a form of cultural participation rather than mere consumption. This helps explain why social media content that emphasizes authenticity, tradition, and cultural narratives is particularly effective in influencing consumer behavior. Taken together, the findings suggest that the influence of social media marketing on purchase intention operates through an integrated process involving cognitive (brand awareness), affective (brand trust), social (electronic word-of-mouth), and cultural (cultural identity) mechanisms. The structural model confirms that social media marketing is most effective when it goes beyond functional promotion and actively incorporates cultural meaning and community engagement. This integrated perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of consumer decision-making in the digital promotion of traditional cultural products.

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumers' online purchase intention toward Guangxi Zhuang brocade products by integrating brand awareness, brand trust, electronic word-of-mouth, and cultural identity into a single conceptual framework. The findings confirm that social media marketing plays a significant role in shaping consumer purchase intention through both brand-related and cultural mechanisms.

The results demonstrate that social media marketing not only enhances brand awareness and brand trust but also stimulates electronic word-of-mouth and strengthens consumers' cultural identity. Among these factors, cultural identity and electronic word-of-mouth emerged as particularly influential in driving purchase intention, highlighting the importance of emotional attachment and peer-generated information in the consumption of traditional cultural products. This suggests that consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced not only by rational evaluations of brand credibility but also by their sense of cultural belonging and social endorsement.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends existing digital marketing literature by incorporating cultural identity as a key mediating variable in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention. The findings support the view that the effectiveness of social media marketing in the context of intangible cultural heritage products depends on its ability to convey cultural meaning and authenticity, rather than relying solely on promotional or functional attributes. Overall, the study concludes that social media marketing strategies are most effective when they integrate cognitive, social, and cultural dimensions. By leveraging digital platforms to communicate authentic cultural narratives and encourage community interaction, marketers can enhance consumers' engagement and translate cultural appreciation into actual purchase intention. These conclusions provide a solid foundation for practical recommendations and future research directions.

Recommendations

1. Strategic use of cultural storytelling in social media marketing

Marketers of Guangxi Zhuang brocade products should prioritize the communication of authentic cultural narratives through social media

platforms. As cultural identity was found to be a key driver of purchase intention, marketing content should emphasize historical background, symbolic meanings, craftsmanship, and the cultural significance of brocade products. Storytelling that highlights artisans, weaving processes, and traditional values can strengthen consumers' emotional attachment and enhance their willingness to purchase.

2. Enhancement of electronic word-of-mouth through community engagement

Given the strong influence of electronic word-of-mouth on purchase intention, marketers should actively encourage user-generated content and peer-to-peer interaction. Creating online communities, encouraging reviews and recommendations, and collaborating with culturally credible influencers can amplify trust and perceived authenticity. Such strategies help transform consumers into brand advocates and extend the reach of social media marketing efforts.

3 . Strengthening transparency and brand trust

Transparency should be a central component of social media marketing strategies. Providing clear, detailed, and verifiable information regarding product quality, materials, and production processes can enhance brand trust and reduce perceived risk in online purchasing. Tools such as livestreaming, behind-the-scenes content, and interactive Q&A sessions can further reinforce credibility and consumer confidence.

4 . Support from cultural institutions and policy stakeholders

Cultural institutions and local authorities are encouraged to support digital marketing initiatives aimed at promoting intangible cultural heritage products. Training programs in digital branding and social media storytelling for artisans and small cultural enterprises may help expand market reach while preserving cultural authenticity and heritage value.

5. Directions for future research

Future studies may extend this research by incorporating additional variables, such as perceived value, emotional engagement, or consumer ethnocentrism, to further explain purchase intention toward cultural products. Comparative or cross-cultural studies involving different types of intangible cultural heritage may also provide broader insights into the role of social media marketing in diverse cultural contexts.

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