

Study on the Consumption Behavior of Generation Z Buying China-Chic Products

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Abstract. The rise of the China-Chic culture has injected new vitality into Chinese clothing brands, with "New Chinese Style" clothing continuing to gain popularity. By innovatively exploring and recreating traditional Chinese culture, clothing brands have formed a unique, relatable, and resonant fashion consumption trend among the masses. Meanwhile, with the growth of Generation Z, their consumption attitudes and behaviors have influenced the development of the Chinese market. Taking China-Chic clothing as an example, this paper studies the factors influencing Generation Z's consumption behavior based on the theory of consumer value perception.

Keywords: Generation Z, Consumer behavior, China-Chic.

1. Introduction

In the early 1990s, the American magazine Time first introduced the concept of "Generation X," and subsequently, the terminology of "a certain generation" gradually gained popularity. "Generation Z" refers to individuals born between 1995 and 2009 [1]. Generation Z is the first generation of "digital natives," born in an era of highly developed information and the Internet, and have been significantly influenced by digital information technology and smart products.

Generation Z was born during a period of rapid economic development and rising comprehensive national strength in China, fostering a strong sense of cultural and national confidence in Chinese culture. The development of internet technology and the digital economy has shaped the unique group characteristics and consumption behaviors of Generation Z. They possess a strong sense of self, pursuing individuality and independence. The virtual world and social media have become the primary social platforms for Generation Z, with virtual social relationships replacing real-life social relationships. [2] They enjoy gathering information, expressing themselves, shaping their personal images, and engaging in social interactions on online social media. Through sharing and discussing topics of interest within communities, they generate emotional resonance and form "circles" of highly aligned values. They value experiences and data, possessing strong abilities in information gathering and processing.

Changes in group characteristics inevitably lead to changes in consumption characteristics. The consumption behavior of Generation Z exhibits characteristics of community-based, experiential, and stylized consumption. They pursue economic value and accept multiple lifestyles without adhering to specific tastes or lifestyles. Scholars have used the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model to study the consumer behavior characteristics of Generation Z and found that perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, and perceived value all influence the attitudes and word-of-mouth of Generation Z consumers [3]. Evidently, Generation Z consumers value product utility, enjoy the pleasure of experiences and personalized services, are interested in products that align with their values, and are willing to pay for their interests. Generation Z consumers seek freshness in consumption, which has fueled the rapid development of niche cultures and localized consumption, driving the vigorous growth of China-Chic products. In 2023, the market size of "New Chinese Style" clothing reached 1 billion yuan, and the market size of the China-Chic economy was 2,051.74 billion yuan, with a year-on-year increase of 9.44% [4]. China-Chic has ushered in a golden period of development. It is estimated that the global potential spending power of Generation Z exceeds \$450 billion, demonstrating their significant economic impact and purchasing power as they gradually become the main force in consumption [5]. They have unique and specific requirements for products,

pursuing quality while remaining highly sensitive to prices. Therefore, in-depth research into the factors influencing the consumption behavior of Generation Z is crucial for enterprise development. Based on this research, enterprises can improve the quality of China-Chic products and optimize marketing strategies.

2. Theory and Research Status

Originating in 2000, China-Chic refers to a clothing brand with trends and fashion concepts created by Chinese local designers. It takes the trend of China-Chic brands as its development origin, but in its initial stages of development, its audience reach was relatively small [6]. In 2018, China Li Ning as the representative of the China-Chic brand cultural narrative flourished, and was quickly sought after in the fashion circle and the consumer circle. Scholars hold many different views on the concept and connotation of China-Chic. Zhang Yaru (2011) believes that China-Chic is a fashion brand created by Chinese local designers and managers [7]. Li Hongyan and Du Chaofan (2019) defined the China-Chic as the trend of The Times led by local brands and their products [8]. Zong Zupan (2022) believes that China-Chic refers to the trend products with Chinese cultural elements and the consumption trends led by domestic brands designed and produced in response to the needs of The Times [9]. In this paper, the definition of national tide focuses on the physical carrier, adopts Zhang Yaru's definition of China-Chic, and takes national tide clothing as the research object. Using a questionnaire survey and empirical analysis, this paper studies the influencing factors of buying domestic fashion by Generation Z consumers.

Researchers have conducted numerous studies on the factors influencing consumer behavior. Feng Jianying (2006) summarized five influencing factors based on domestic and foreign scholars' research on purchase intention, namely consumer personality traits, internal product cues, external product cues, consumption situational factors, and socio-economic factors [10]. In 1988, Zaithaml first introduced the concept of consumer perceived value from the customer's perspective, representing the psychological feeling of consumers when they weigh the difference between gains and losses and make consumption decisions accordingly [11]. Through compilation, it is found that the influencing factors of consumer behavior can be broadly classified into: (1) Customer behavioral characteristics, such as demographic indicators including consumer gender, age, income, education level, leisure time. (2) Product attribute characteristics, such as product-inherent features like price, quality, use value, brand, appearance, and functionality. (3) Consumption situational factors, mainly referring to other influencing factors beyond the product itself, such as the consumption environment, service, word-of-mouth, special emotions, and surrounding reference groups.

Scholars have studied consumer behavior toward China-Chic products from various perspectives. Shi Mengmeng (2020) found that China-Chic is a product of the upgrading of social consumption structures, and consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced by the spiritual implications of China-Chic products [12]. Liu Jiayi (2021) believes that consumers have dual motives for purchasing China-Chic brands: cultural motives and material motives. Cultural motives refer to consumers' attachment to their national culture, while material motives relate to the continuously improving product quality of domestic goods and their advantageous pricing compared to foreign trendy brands [13]. Wang Xuefei (2023), based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, studied consumers' purchasing behavior of China-Chic products in the context of live streaming. The results showed that live streaming users' attitudes towards purchasing China-Chic products, purchase trust, perceived benefits, perceived usefulness, and inclination toward China-Chic culture all positively influence their purchase intention [14].

In summary, the consumption driving factors of China-Chic products include social factors, consumer factors, enterprise brand factors, cultural factors, and technological factors, such as the proliferation of 5G, mobile payments, and live streaming sales. By reviewing the literature, this paper finds that few scholars have studied customer perceived value and purchase preferences for China-Chic apparel products. However, customer perceived value significantly influences both initial

purchases and repurchases of products. Therefore, based on the theoretical foundation of customer perceived value, this paper examines the consumption behavior of Generation Z consumers in purchasing China-Chic apparel.

3. Research Design and Practice

3.1. Customer Perceived Value Theory

In 1954, Drucker proposed that consumers do not purchase the product itself, but rather the perceived value of the product. In 1988, Zaithaml introduced the concept of customer perceived value, which represents the subjective cognitive evaluation formed by consumers as they weigh the difference between gains and losses associated with a product or service. Academics generally agree that perceived value is composed of multiple dimensions. Sheth et al. (1991) classified customer perceived value into five dimensions: functional, social, emotional, cognitive, and situational, laying the foundation for the categorization of customer perceived value dimensions [15]. Sweeney modified Sheth's five-dimensional model and proposed a four-dimensional model of customer perceived value that includes functional, price, emotional, and social value [16]. Jin Dongmei and Lu Fudong (2023), in studying the influence mechanism of satisfaction with domestic trend brands, divided the perceived value of these brands into cultural value, social value, and emotional value [17]. Ruan Yarong (2021) conducted an empirical study on the cultural and creative products of the Forbidden City from seven dimensions: functional value, emotional value, social value, sentimental value, aesthetic value, service value, brand value, and perceived cost [18].

Table 1. Dimensions of questionnaire design

Dimensionality	Definition	Reference source
Functional Value	The utility derived by consumers from the perceived quality and expected performance of a product.	
Price Value	The utility generated by consumers due to the reduction in short-term or long-term costs of the product.	
Emotional Value	The emotional experience and satisfaction felt by consumers during the process of purchasing and wearing clothing.	Sweeney and Soutar (2001)
Social Value	Consumers enhance their interpersonal interactions during the process of purchasing and wearing clothing.	
Cultural Value	Consumers gain a sense of national cultural identity and cultural confidence through the process of purchasing and wearing clothing.	
Innovative Value	Consumers gain a sense of fashion, creativity, and unique personalized experiences through the process of purchasing and wearing clothing.	Shu Shujin and Shao Jun (2021)

3.2. Questionnaire Design

Based on the consumption behavior of Generation Z and the characteristics of China-Chic clothing, this paper divides customer value perception into functional value, price value, emotional value, social value, cultural value and innovative value. The dimensions are defined in Table 1. The first part of the questionnaire is the basic information of the consumer, such as gender, education, age, monthly disposable income, etc. The second part is the consumption behavior of China-Chic clothing, such as the purchase frequency of China-Chic clothing, the influence of China-Chic style on the choice of clothing, and the cost of buying China-Chic clothing. The third part uses the attitude scale to investigate the various dimensions of consumer perceived value.

3.3. Sending and Retrieving Questionnaires

A total of 230 questionnaires were distributed, 225 questionnaires were recovered, and 5 invalid questionnaires were excluded. A total of 220 valid questionnaires were received, and the effective rate was 95.7%.

4. Empirical analysis of Factors Influencing the Behavior of Generation Z consumers to Buy China-Chic Clothing

SPSS 26.0 software was used to analyze the sample data. Firstly, demographic characteristics are analyzed.

4.1. Demographic Analysis

As shown in Table 2, the proportion of men and women in the sample is relatively balanced, with females accounting for slightly more than males. Regarding age distribution, people aged 23-25 account for the largest proportion of 40%, followed by people aged 18-22, accounting for 30%. Regarding educational composition, the proportion of undergraduate students is 45.5%, and the proportion of junior college students and master's students is 25% and 20%. According to the age distribution and educational background distribution, it can be shown that a large number of students in school are the main consumer group of "Generation Z". Regarding monthly disposable income, 1,000 to 3,000 yuan accounted for 50.5%. It can be seen that Generation Z consumers have higher education and disposable income from their parents.

Table 2. Demographic Analysis

Descriptive Index	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male	47.7%
	Female	52.3%
Age	14-17 years old	17.7%
	18-22 years old	30%
	23-25 years old	40%
	26-30 years old	12.3%
Educational background	College Degree or below	25%
	Bachelor Degree	45.5%
	Master Degree Candidate	20%
	Doctoral Degree	9.5%
Monthly disposable income	Less than 1000 yuan	9%
	1000-3000 yuan	50.5%
	3000-5000Yuan	30.5%
	5000Yuan	10%

As shown in Table 3, the frequency, channels, and prices of purchasing China-Chic clothing by Generation Z consumers, as well as the degree of influence that China-Chic elements have on these consumers, were investigated. Firstly, regarding the frequency of purchasing clothing, 44% of individuals buy clothes once a month, while 30% purchase them every two weeks. This indicates that clothing is a consumable item in people's lives, with a relatively high number of purchases. China-Chic elements serve as a significant reference for Generation Z consumers, with 54.8% of them believing that these elements influence their choice of clothing. In terms of purchase channels, only 20% of consumers choose to buy exclusively offline, 45% choose for online purchases, and 35% choose to buy either online or offline. While Generation Z consumers primarily purchase China-chic clothing online, their choices of purchase channels are relatively diverse. Therefore, China-chic clothing brands need to prioritize marketing both online and in offline physical stores. As for purchase

prices, more than half of consumers select clothing within the price range of 100-300 yuan. Considering the frequency of purchasing China-chic clothing, this paper conjectures that Generation Z consumers have a mindset of frequently renewing their wardrobe with China-chic styles. They enjoy experimenting with different China-chic outfits. Consequently, the lower selling prices cater to Generation Z consumers' desire to try out various China-chic styles.

Table 3. Analysis of Purchasing Behavior of China-Chic Clothing

Descriptive Index	Category	Percentage
Clothing Purchase Frequency	Once a week	4.5%
	Every two weeks	30%
	Once a month	44%
	Once a quarter	19%
	Other	2.5%
The influence of China-Chic elements on the choice of clothing	Very important	2.5%
	Important	52.3%
	Normal	20.2%%
	Not very important	15%
	Make no difference	10%
The way to buy China-Chic clothes	Buy primarily online	45%
	Offline physical store purchase mainly	20%
	Buy online or offline	35%
The price range for buying China-Chic clothing	50 to 100 yuan pieces	10%
	101 yuan -300 yuan pieces	35%
	301 yuan to 500 yuan pieces	30%
	500 yuan to 800 yuan pieces	22.5%
	Over 800 yuan pieces	2.5%

4.2. Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis is used to examine the stability and reliability of the questionnaire. In this paper, SPSS is employed to conduct the reliability analysis on the data, with the results presented in Table 4. According to the Cronbach's Alpha criterion, reliability is considered acceptable when Cronbach's Alpha>0.70. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the variables in this paper are all above 0.7. Therefore, the questionnaire has a high level of reliability.

Table 4. Reliability Analysis

Descriptive Index	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient
Functional value	0.907
Price value	0.815
Emotional value	0.929
Social value	0.913
Cultural value	0.886
Innovative value	0.823
Purchase intention	0.959

4.3. Validity analysis

Validity analysis evaluates the correctness of the results obtained from a measurement. The higher the validity, the more accurately the results reflect the true characteristics of the measured object. In this paper, the content and structural validity of the designed scale are measured through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The KMO value ranges from 0 to 1. Factor analysis can only be conducted when the KMO>0.7. A KMO value closer to 1 indicates stronger correlations among variables. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity checks whether the variables are

independent. Therefore, factor analysis can only be performed when Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant and the KMO value is greater than 0.7.

Table 5. KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

		.871
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Approximate Chi-squared value	891.983
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	degree of freedom sig	240
		.000

As shown in Table 5, KMO value in this paper is 0.871, greater than 0.7, and $P < 0.01$ in Bartlett significance test. This indicates that the sample data in this paper can be factor analyzed.

Table 6. Factor Analysis

Entry	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7
GN1				0.917			
GN2				0.909			
GN3				0.734			
GN4				0.819			
GN5				0.915			
JG1	0.826						
JG2	0.884						
JG3	0.937						
JG4	0.718						
QG1					0.774		
QG2					0.719		
QG3					0.841		
QG4					0.765		
QG5					0.911		
QG6					0.729		
QG7					0.851		
SJ1						0.816	
SJ2						0.972	
SJ3						0.873	
SJ4						0.825	
SJ5						0.761	
SJ6						0.836	
WH1		0.937					
WH2		0.925					
WH3		0.814					
WH4		0.823					
CX1							0.879
CX2							0.914
CX3							0.869
CX4							0.772
GM1			0.739				
GM2			0.726				
GM3			0.818				
GM4			0.875				

4.4. Exploratory factor analysis

In this paper, principal component analysis was used for factor extraction, and seven factors with characteristic roots greater than 1 were identified. The rotation method employed was the Varimax-

with-Kaiser-Normalization. The Cumulative Variance Contribution Rate by these seven factors reached 80.56%. Furthermore, all factor loadings were greater than 0.5, and the factor components obtained after rotation were generally consistent with the variables proposed in this paper. The variables exhibited good discrimination among themselves. Therefore, the variable measurement items in this paper are relatively ideal, including functional value, price value, emotional value, social value, cultural value, innovative value, and purchase intention (as shown in Table 6).

4.5. Correlation Analysis

Lastly, this paper conducted a Pearson correlation analysis to examine the correlations among functional value, price value, emotional value, social value, cultural value, innovative value, and purchase intention. The results, as shown in Table 7, indicate that at a significance level of 0.01, there are correlations between the independent variables (functional value, price value, emotional value, social value, cultural value, and innovative value) and the dependent variable (purchase intention). Purchase intention is significantly and positively influenced by the six dimensions of consumer perceived value.

Table 7. Pearson Correlation Analysis

	Functional value	Price value	emotional value	social value	cultural value	innovative value	purchase intention
Functional value	1						
Price value	0.459 **	1					
emotional value	0.517 **	0.574**	1				
social value	0.659**	0.434**	0.629**	1			
cultural value	0.311**	0.613**	0.610**	0.583**	1		
innovative value	0.471**	0.497**	0.359**	0.618**	0.549**	1	
purchase intention	0.648**	0.311**	0.679**	0.581**	0.439**	0.573**	1

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As the number of China-Chic clothing increases in the market, consumers' enthusiasm for these garments has gradually cooled down. Generation Z consumers attach great importance to the quality of clothing, the comfort of fabrics, and the overall design sense of the garments. They compare various brands and pursue cost-effectiveness. The impact of price value on purchase intention is relatively weak, indicating that consumers consider price factors but do not prioritize them when purchasing China-Chic clothing. When buying China-Chic clothing, they tend to choose brands that align with their personal economic strength and select the types they prefer within this range. Emotional value and social value have a relatively strong influence on purchase intention. With the rise of social media platforms, domestic trends have become social symbols. Generation Z consumers share their purchasing experiences, wearing experiences, outfit combinations, and communicate with other consumers who have similar purchasing experiences on various social media platforms, forming a topic of conversation centered on China-Chic clothing and creating a social circle centered on China-Chic clothing through interaction, which strengthens consumers' identity and triggers perceptions and resonance among more segmented groups. In terms of emotional value, China-Chic clothing presents Chinese aesthetics and culture to consumers. Generation Z consumers are moved by the emotions, spirit, and era value contained in domestic trend clothing, leading them to purchase these garments. Fashionable and trendy clothing brings them a pleasing sensation. This also demonstrates that Generation Z consumers have a strong attachment to Chinese culture and their

homeland. China-Chic elements are derived from traditional culture, and the design of these elements also exhibits broadness, diversity, and creativity. China-Chic clothing connects with new IPs such as "the Forbidden City," "intangible cultural heritage," and "Han Dynasty costume," and their clothing design styles, brand concepts, and advertising marketing combine China-Chic brand stories with traditional culture, traditional crafts, and fashion trends, making them creative and highly recognizable. Therefore, the innovative value of China-Chic clothing attracts a large number of Generation Z consumers. When Generation Z consumers receive more profound cultural information, their cultural confidence becomes stronger, and their willingness to purchase China-Chic products increases. Thus, innovative value and cultural value can influence consumers' purchase intention.

5. Summary

The education level and income stability of Generation Z are gradually increasing, leading to a rising demand for products with a China-Chic at various levels. Generation Z yearns for a sense of "novelty" and "collision." Therefore, China-Chic clothing brands should be adept at discovering emerging consumption hotspots and implementing differentiated competition strategies. By conducting market research and tracking trends on application software, these brands can understand the focus points of consumers from different circles, combine products with audience preferences, and gradually align products with consumers' new demands in the midst of dynamic changes, offering differentiated products. China-Chic clothing brands are essential daily necessities with a large user base, high repurchase rates, and intense competition, often leading to mutual imitation and a market saturated with similar products. However, the dividend of simply relying on terms like "China-Chic" and "Chinese style," to build brands has vanished. Therefore, China-Chic clothing brands need to strengthen emerging products with high intelligence and a strong technological sense, emphasize research and development of new technologies, and perfectly integrate technology with culture. On the other hand, China-Chic brands should focus on innovative design, enhancing product uniqueness and attractiveness by deeply exploring traditional cultural elements and values associated with the China-Chic brand. By incorporating a unique design style and expression, these brands can integrate their culture into their products. Meanwhile, by integrating modern fashion elements into the design, they can create a China-Chic brand image that inherits traditional culture while possessing a contemporary feel. Combining practicality with aesthetics, these brands should focus on product quality, comfort, and practicality. Consumers of Generation Z value product quality and price rationality. China-Chic brands need to select high-quality fabrics and materials, improve the refinement of manufacturing processes, and ensure that product designs conform to ergonomics principles, thereby enhancing product usage experience and durability. By providing competitive prices to Generation Z consumers, these brands can attract them to make purchases.

In the process of establishing brand culture, it is important to introduce social attributes. Consumption is an expression of identity and, to a certain extent, a way for consumers to establish subculture. Generation Z tends to support and purchase China-Chic brands that represent their preferred culture. They enjoy sharing their China-Chic consumption experiences on social platforms to seek a sense of belonging. Therefore, China-Chic clothing brands should cultivate the awareness that products are social and marketing is interactive, making products a "social symbol." This is conducive to building a reputation for China-Chic brands within the community.

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