

# A Comprehensive Review on Time-honoured Chinese Medicine Brands of Visual Identity

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## Abstract

As the consumer demographic shifts towards a younger audience, the traditional visual identities of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands are facing challenges in keeping up with the evolving trends. To enhance consumer attitudes and perceptions, it has become imperative to rejuvenate the visual identities of these venerable brands. This study primarily aims to categorise the established time-honoured Chinese medicine brands along with their respective visual identities. By assessing the present status and significance of these historic brands, the research endeavours to investigate how key visual identity components such as symbols or logos, brand colours, typography, and brand names impact consumer attitudes. Through an in-depth exploration of these foundational visual identity elements, the study aspires to augment the consumers' positive brand perceptions towards time-honoured Chinese medicine brands. Moreover, the research aims to construct a comprehensive conceptual framework that not only contributes to the current understanding of consumer attitudes but also lays the groundwork for future research by offering valuable insights into these attitudes and related dimensions.

**Keywords:** Time-honoured Chinese Medicine Brand, Visual Identity, Consumer Perception, Consumer Attitudes

## Introduction

### ***Sharp Decline and the Aging Image of Time-honoured Chinese medicine brand***

With the development of economic globalisation and regional economic integration, China's consumer market is in line with the international market. Chinese brands are also facing competition with foreign brands, and many domestic brands are facing a severe test, among which the decline of 'old' brands is particularly obvious (Ji, 2017). According to statistics, there were about 16,100 old brands during the Republican period. However, in the early years of New China, there were about 8,000 recognised Chinese old brands, and after the elimination of the market and the transformation of private ownership, there were around 1,600 \*(to

1900 / out of 1900) that were left (Wang, 2009; Zhao, 2009). As early as 2006, the Ministry of Commerce issued the "Revitalisation of Old Chinese Brand Project" program, which identified 432 Chinese old brands by the Ministry of Commerce (Wang, 2015). "The medicine and health industry is a unique industry, the oldest 'medical family inheritance old number' totals to 44, hence, accounting for a proportion of 9.68%." In order to promote the development of old brands, the Ministry of Commerce expanded the number of old brands to 1,128 in 2011 (Xu & Tang, 2020). Among them, there are 92 Time-honoured Chinese medicine brands. However, the development of these long-established brands is not optimistic, of which 75% are barely maintained, 15% have long-term losses, and less than 10% of the long-established brands have some brand effect (Wei, 2015). Time-honoured Chinese medicine brand gives consumers the visual and psychological association of 'old-fashioned' perception, and the lack of innovation in the image. Creating a positive brand visual identity that is recognisable, as recognisable is critical to brand revitalisation (Ye, 2012).

### ***The government introduced a series of policies to protect Time-honoured Chinese medicine brands***

In 2011, the Ministry of Commerce, under the slogan of "Promoting Traditional Culture and Revitalising National Brands", established a network of information management specifically for Chinese old brands ([https://zhzh.mofcom.gov.cn/acronyms "Network"](https://zhzh.mofcom.gov.cn/acronyms/Network)) (Ma, 2020). The public can also understand and experience the old brands more accurately, quickly and efficiently (Yang, 2021). In 2011, the "Notice on Further Improving the Protection and Promotion of China's Time-honored Brands" (Fei, 2017), and in 2017, 16 departments jointly issued the "Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Reform, Innovation and Development of Time-honored Brands"; both aim to promote the reform and innovation of old brand names, carry forward the spirit of the culture of the old brands, and optimise the environment for the development of old brands. In 2022, General Secretary Xi Jinping strongly promoted the development of traditional Chinese medicine inheritance and innovation, emphasising "one brand, one support" and strengthening the research and dissemination of Chinese medicine culture. According to the "Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Cultural Construction of Traditional Chinese Medicine", as an important part of China's outstanding traditional culture (Wang & Huang, 2011) the time-honoured Chinese medicine brands enterprises have played a pivotal role in the revitalisation of the national industry and the protection of traditional culture (Zhang & Sun, 2010). The introduction of these policies has effectively safeguarded the development of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands, and provided a better development environment and opportunities for enterprises (Qi Ming et al., 2021).

### ***People pay more attention to the visual image of the brand***

According to academics, luxury brands (Phan et al., 2011), light luxury brands (Giovannini et al., 2015), and established brands (Wang et al., 2022) are constantly updating their brand's visual image to cater to young people's preferences. The era of personalisation, fashion and branding is reflected in young consumers (Li et al., 2021). Consumers tend to buy brands or products that make them feel young during consumption, forcing old brands to visually upgrade (Guo & Kwon, 2018). The new generation of young consumers is generally more demanding and pays more attention to product design and visual symbolism (Li et al., 2021). They show more emphasis on the visual experience of the brand (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). It is also important to bring a good brand experience to consumers for the brand of Laozi's Chinese medicine. The development of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands has also

gradually received more attention from scholars. Although punk health care is a hot Internet term, it does reflect the new demand of the people for health care, and "simple, fast, and no burden" is their pursuit (Netease, 2022). Riding on the health craze, time-honoured Chinese medicine brands have made strategic adjustments, going beyond the pharmacy to embrace the young audience and launching a series of circle-breaking activities to try to reach emerging young consumers.

### **Literature Review (theoretical framework)**

#### ***Status for time-honoured Chinese medicine brand***

The time-honoured Chinese medicine brand name is the best brand preserved in the century-old commercial and handicraft competition, representing immeasurable brand value, economic value and cultural value (Wang, 2019). Time-honoured brands in China refer to brands or enterprises with a long history of local ethnic heritage and commercial characteristics (Zhao, 2009). In 2006, the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China has clearly defined the definition of China's time-honoured brands in the "Regulations for the Identification of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands (Trial)" (Long, 2021). 434 time-honoured Chinese brands have been identified (Wang, 2015). In 2010, the Ministry of Commerce expanded the number of time-honoured brands to 1,128 (Xu & Tang, 2020). At present, there are about 92 TCM brands that are related to traditional Chinese medicine (due to some errors in the size of the statistical calibre) (Meng, 2021). According to the summary, time-honoured Chinese medicine brands are those with a long history as certified by the state, medicines or pharmaceutical products, skills and services that are passed down from generation to generation, the profound cultural heritage and good reputation of the Chinese nation and are widely recognised by the society. Pharmaceutical companies or brands (Zeng, 2019); domestic research on time-honoured Chinese medicine brands can be roughly divided into three categories, all of which have mentioned brand inheritance and innovation.

The first is to sort out the historical development of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands from the perspective of history and culture, focusing on records and descriptions (Long, 2021). Liu (2008) sorted out the process and reasons for the rise and fall of Chinese medicine brands from the Qin and Han Dynasties to the Song, Jin and Yuan Dynasties, as well as the economic, political, and cultural aspects of modern design countries, and conducted case studies on Tong Ren Tang Wang (2021), Hu Qingyu Tang, Chen Liji, Lei Yunshang and other time-honoured brands. By declaring the development of advertisements, pure text advertisements, graphic advertisements, comic advertisements, and celebrity endorsement advertisements of time-honoured brand advertisements, and the reasons for their evolution were analysed (Zhou, 2015). The time-honoured Chinese medicine brand culture of inheriting Laozi is more about maintenance than breakthrough and development (Wang, 2014).

The second is to put forward relevant suggestions on how to revive, transform, revive, and sustain the time-honoured Chinese medicine brands from the perspectives of marketing management Zeng (2019), brand communication (Wang, 2009), and brand extension (Xu, 2014). The most important problem facing time-honoured Chinese medicine brand is inheritance or innovation, the dilemma of 'change' or 'unchanged' (He et al., 2007; Wiedmann et al., 2011). Brand ageing is the primary problem that is faced by many time-honoured brands today, and how to activate and reshape time-honoured brands has attracted frequent attention from academia and business circles.

The third category is research on the design field of time-honoured Chinese medicine brand, mainly from the brand visual design in different geographical backgrounds, including

packaging design, brand logo design, and advertising design. Design strategies and methods are to promote the rejuvenation of the brand image of Chinese time-honoured brands (Long, 2021). Most of the research discusses the problems of brand image design including ageing and homogenisation of logo images, as well as the lack of innovation in product packaging. And put forward the strategy of inheriting traditional elements, focusing on the integration of traditional aesthetics and modern design, embodying characteristics, and enriching cultural connotation (Zhang, 2009).

However, most of these studies stay at the level of visual design. time-honoured Chinese medicine brands have yet to pay much attention to the design and application of visual identity, resulting in consumers being familiar with generic names of drugs, while trademarks have been ignored (Sun, 2013).

### ***The value of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands***

Traditional Chinese medicine culture is a significant part of the Chinese nation's traditional industry Liu (2008), with its rich history and cultural heritage being a cultural treasure. It has been incorporated into modern industries, with time-honoured Chinese medicine brands being the best carrier of medical culture. These brands integrate culture and commercial value, reflecting the deep, mature, and systematic traditional Chinese business culture resources. Time-honoured brand quality assurance is crucial for the success of traditional and time-honoured enterprises. These enterprises have a development history of over 50 years Cao (2022), sophisticated craftsmanship and technology, good product quality, reflecting local characteristics, and a high product brand reputation. They have attracted unique consumer groups with decades and hundreds of years of historical brands and well-known business reputations. Traditional Chinese medicine has been a vital tool in the health care of Chinese people for thousands of years before Western medicine were introduced into China (Leung, 2007). It has proven to be a valuable tool in the prevention and treatment of diseases, with Chinese herbal medicine playing a vital role in the health care of Chinese people for thousands of years. Traditional Chinese medicine has been accepted and used by billions of people worldwide, with its long history of clinical application and extensive therapeutic effects on many diseases, especially chronic diseases (Cha et al., 2007). In conclusion, traditional Chinese medicine culture is a significant part of the Chinese nation's traditional industry, with its unique medical value contributing to the nation's prosperity. By ensuring the safety, purity, and efficacy of products, traditional Chinese medicine brands can contribute to the overall development of the Chinese nation (Zhu & Cui, 2012).

### ***Visual Identity of Time-honoured Traditional Chinese Medicine Brands***

The author selected 92 time-honoured Chinese medicine brands from the 1128 time-honoured brands that had been approved by the Ministry of Commerce in 2010. And have organised and analysed the graphics, colours, text, and names of the currently used visual identity elements.

### ***Time-honoured Traditional Chinese Medicine brand Graphics***

The visual shape of a logo has a unique meaning, but when similar shapes are used by many organisations, the meaning may become more pronounced or lessened (Henderson et al., 2003). Logo design may be challenging to store or access in memory, and may not be flattering or meaningful. Familiar stimuli are more easily perceived and processed, making logos crucial. Time-honoured Chinese medicine brand graphics feature auspicious patterns (Wang, 2015).

Chinese logo design has a long history of utilising traditional patterns, often indicating auspiciousness and happiness. These patterns reflect the public's pursuit of happiness and symbolise local characteristics, making the logo both local and symbolic. This affinity and use of traditional Chinese patterns contribute to the overall appeal of time-honoured brands (Wang, 2022). It is richer in humanistic connotation and brings greater benefits to the brand. In terms of graphic modelling, most time-honoured Chinese medicine brand use tuanzi-shaped patterns, where there are minimal differences (Xu, 2018). For example, the formation of the dragon pattern in Tongrentang includes the patterns of "Scrolling Grass Pattern" in "Rising Dragon", "Grass Dragon" and "Double Dragons Playing with Pearls" (Wang, 2015).

### ***Time-honoured traditional Chinese medicine brand colour***

According to the survey, colours are symbolic, and different colours have different meanings (Jin et al., 2019). In a brand's visual identity, colour is a key element of visual communication (Jin et al., 2019; Bottomley & Doyle, 2006). Colour has the ability to directly trigger various associations, without prior adjustments, to convey the desired image of the brand in the minds of its consumers (Madden et al., 2000). Red is the colour of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands with the highest proportion, i.e., 64, including Tongrentang, Hu Qingyutang, Jiuzhitang and a series of other well-known time-honoured Chinese medicine brands. There are 48 brands that use black, most of which are matched with red, but some time-honoured Chinese medicine brands have even directly used black calligraphy as their logo without any modern designs. There are eight yellow ones, including the brands Derentang and Fulintang, which are often matched with red; ten green ones, including the logos of modern pharmacies such as Jianmin and Liqun; seven in blue, including Minsheng Pharmaceutical and Volkswagen. Notable, blue and green are mostly prescriptions for modern designs, and they are also a way of modern transformation. Among the eight time-honoured Chinese medicine brands in Yunnan Province, six are in red and black.

### ***Time-honoured Chinese medicine brand typography***

Time-honoured Chinese medicine brands have always believed that brand quality and reputation are enough. More than 90% of time-honoured Chinese medicine brand use plaques as the external image logo of their stores, generally horizontal plaques and vertical plaques (Wang, 2022). As a representative of Chinese commercial culture, a plaque is a typical cultural symbol that integrates sculpture, painting, and architecture. It is a unique commercial symbol of TCM enterprises, and it is also a symbol of reputation in the minds of the consumers (Xu, 2018). As a unique visual symbol of time-honoured brands, plaques not only have typical traditional cultural characteristics but also reflect national business ideas. In addition, it is matched with signboards that are inscribed by famous artists, traditional decorations, calligraphy, and paintings, which are placed in the store to reflect the characteristics of China's commercialisation that directly relate to the traditional Chinese concept of "prospering business with literature" and reflects the cultural heritage of time-honoured brands. Most of the golden calligraphy on these plaques is still in use today and has become the standard font of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands (Ji, 2017). For example, in Wuhu Zhanghengchun Pharmacy, the lack of standard fonts led to inconsistent fonts on the signboard. The time-honoured brand in Wuhu needs to effectively integrate and sort out the graphics, colours and text of the packaging to improve the visual system of the time-honoured brand (Dong, 2023). Such fonts encountered many obstacles in the standardised design and production process. The design of logo fonts is more modern and fashionable, highlighting the connotation of local

culture, and is more in line with modern aesthetic needs (Yu, 2018). Time-honoured brands do not pay much attention to brand image upgrading, and thus it is difficult to get rid of the old atmosphere visually.

### ***Time-honoured Chinese medicine brand name***

The names of time-honoured brands that make people admire their 'name' have undoubtedly become considerable intangible assets. Ordinary people pay attention to the concept of 'authentic'. With a brand name, it is like having something to identify authenticity and falsehood, and it has a function that is 'difficult to imitate' for other businesses. From the perspective of naming methods, words and phrases related to personal names, place names, product appearance and raw materials, blessings and auspiciousness, poetry allusions, etc. are common naming methods for time-honoured brands (Wu et al., 2010). The preference for auspicious words in the naming of time-honoured Chinese medicine brand is a concrete reflection of the country's traditional culture and social psychology in commercial culture. 93.1% of the names of time-honoured brands in traditional Chinese medicine contain commendatory words, such as *Tongrentang* in Beijing, *Hongrentang* and *Lerentang* in Tianjin, *Fulintang* in Kunming etcetera. From the point of view of the number of words in the name, it is divided into 2 words, 3 words, 4 words, etcetera. Among them, 3 characters are the main characters, accounting for 87%.

In the naming of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands (Tavassoli, 2001), auspicious words are generally used in the following ways: auspicious words conjoin with generic names. The naming method of auspicious characters conjoins with common names is more common in time-honoured Chinese medicine brands. Among them, the time-honoured brands use common names such as Tang, Yuan, and She. "Tong Ren Tang" means "Tong Cultivation of Benevolence"; the founder's (partial) name conjoins with auspicious characters. Such as the birth of the word sincerity, Chen Liji co-organised by the Chen and Li families. At the same time, there are various forms such as the target audience combined with the use of homonyms, and auspicious characters in auspicious language combined with allusions with beautiful meanings (Bao et al., 2008). The 'brand name' is composed of a person's name, place name, etcetera. The names of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands have become the emotional and story-based essence of their brand symbols. The study of brand names involves the pronunciation of different words. Phonological symbolism can shape perceptions, preferences, and attitudes (Chao & Lin, 2017). To respond to English brand names that are translated into Chinese by phonetics, phonetic meaning, and allusion, is to understand the perceived brand name translation hunger correlations." Correspondingly, Keller (2003) provides suggestions for brand name selection. He believes that a brand name should be easy to pronounce, familiar and meaningful, unique and have a clear message to convey the underlying meaning.

## **Literature Review on Visual Identity**

### **Related theories of Visual Identity**

From the consumer's perspective, visual identity exists at every possible touchpoint with the consumer (Bottomley & Doyle, 2006; Henderson & Cote, 1998). Many research articles emphasise the importance of processing fluency. Processing fluency refers to the individual's perception and cognitive process of visual recognition, and the impact of this process on the enterprise (Mandler et al., 1987; Zajonc, 1968). Repeated exposure to a stimulus result in memory representation, leading to processing fluency. This subjective experience of

information processing is influenced by associative learning, which can explain the unique meanings of colours and shapes in different cultures. Many researchers believe that fluency can take many forms and affect human judgment and decision-making in various situations. Importantly, when individuals experience processing fluency, they tend to form favourable attitudes and evaluate goals positively (Bornstein & D'Agostino, 1994). Of the several forms of processing fluency, two specific forms are of interest in the context of visual recognition perception- namely, perceptual, and conceptual fluency (Shapiro, 1999). Harmon-Kizer (2019) research indicates that the adjustment of the brand's logo colour, in terms of processing fluency, can improve the ease with which consumers recognise and process brand elements as well as wider cause-related marketing activities.

For example, when individuals are exposed to the McDonald's logo multiple times, they become familiar with its visual features (e.g., the shape of the golden arches) that are associated with the brand name (McDonald's), thereby, easily identifying the brand later (Park et al., 2013). When an individual begins to associate multiple meanings with the McDonald's logo ("McDonald's serves fast and delicious fast food"), the logo, when it is seen later, reminds the individual of the associated meaning (fast, and delicious), creating conceptual fluency (Walsh et al., 2010). This fluid experience makes it easier for consumers to associate McDonald's with its positive brand image and products.

### **Elements of Visual Identity**

VI has three levels- strategy, operation, and design, and researchers focus on the design level of VI. Identifying the corporate visual identity encompasses the name, logo and or symbols, typography, colours and tagline (Dowling, 1995; Melewar & Saunders, 1998; Melewar, 2001). However, each time-honoured Chinese medicine brand has many slogans, as such slogans are not the focus of this research.

### **Brand Symbol**

Brand symbols can incorporate a variety of graphic or graphical typographical elements, from word-driven wordmarks or stylised lettermarks to image-driven graphic marks. (Melewar, 2001) stated that the corporate visual identity is its core graphic design. It is easier and more quickly to be recognised than text, and it is especially important for short-lived communication information. An important advantage of logos is their visual identity, which may make them less vulnerable to international barriers (Pittard et al., 2007). As the most prominent visual identity element of a brand, the brand logo plays an important role in promoting brand recognition and differentiation (Janiszewski & Meyvis, 2001), and it is also the main visual expression of brand image and meaning. Sign perception can influence liking or aesthetic response. A logo should be recognisable, familiar, and have a consistent meaning in the target market (Melewar, 2001). A strong corporate visual identity increases visibility and gains an advantage over competitors. High VI standardisation is effective in projecting a unified and consistent corporate visual identity.

The research on signs also includes other dimensions. First, some scholars have studied how subtle contextual changes in the placement of logos in advertising (Shapiro & Nielsen, 2013) and packaging (Sundar & Noseworthy, 2014) affect consumers' perceived fluency, brand preference, and brand choice. Research has shown that strong brands have their logos positioned high and prominently, accentuating their brand visual identity. In addition to the use of logos in web or mobile applications Foo (2003), the study simultaneously measures how consumers perceive different types of logos on electronic devices. Second, the arrival of

the new media era and the multimediaisation of equipment have brought about historic changes in the brand communication of time-honoured brands in terms of time, space, content, and methods (Wang, 2019). Compared with static forms, playful, dynamic, and intimate designs elicit an unprecedentedly strong sense of novelty among their recipients. The dynamic design of visual identity Roediger & Craik (2014) such as animation design and virtual reality (VR) visual experience has been studied in consumer digital media platform touchpoints. Brand energy (momentum, power, and drive) in dynamic brand logo design can enhance brand attitude (Baxter & Ilicic, 2018). Due to the anthropomorphic living body characteristics, the emotional communicative power of the logo is enhanced, giving the logo a certain affinity. Interactive and multi-dimensional logos are very common in the IT industry. Many software and websites, such as QQ and Maopu, have expanded their logos into electronic pets with vivid expressions (Liu & Jiaqing, 2009).

### ***Brand Colour***

In brand visual identity, colour is a key element of visual communication (Jin et al., 2019; Bottomley & Doyle, 2006). Colour has the ability to directly trigger various associations, without prior adjustments, to convey the desired image of the brand in the minds of the consumers (Madden et al., 2000). Colour is an important tool to convey a brand's image, which is more persuasive than shape, and it appeals to emotion rather than reason (Jin et al., 2019). Color has the function (of communicating psychologically) and can convey information and meaning of the enterprise to consumers in the most direct and effective way.

Colour, as a visual language, informs the sensory modality with the highest information content among the five human senses-vision (Bottomley & Doyle, 2006; Panigyrakis & Kyrousi, 2015). Different colours are associated with different emotions and feelings. Using the image association and memory effect of colour can leave a brand impression on customers. Knowing the meaning behind each colour is very important for brand design. In brand design, various forms such as single colour, analogous colour, complementary colour, three-colour, four-colour, and multi-colour appear (Lelis, 2019). Brands that have a particular colour in the minds of consumers are often better able to achieve awareness within their category. Consumers associate certain brands with certain colours, such as Marlboro with red, Guinness with black, Cadbury with purple, Coca-Cola with red, McDonald's with yellow, etcetera (Grimes & Doole, 1998). While Shell and McDonald's both use red and yellow, they are combined in different proportions (Morriss & Dunlap, 1987). Brand colour palettes are best paired with 1 to 3 colours, including colour names, CMYK swatches, and hex codes (HTML versions of colour names). Thereby, affecting consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Few studies have explored the relationship between visual identity and brand attitudes (Walsh et al., 2010). According to (Bellizzi & Hite, 1992), colour plays a vital role in recognition and memory, thus the colour selection of the visual identity of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands is very critical. Colour can effectively convey information, create a lasting brand identity, and suggest symbolic and imagery values.

### ***Typography Design***

A brand's standard typeface, or typefaces, is a set of glyphs with common design characteristics such as weight, style, density, width, slope, ornamentation, and design (Sarmiento & Quelhas-Brito, 2022). Each typeface evokes a specific emotion, that is determined by its structured form, weight, and width. For branding, adopting a unique typeface is the best option to ensure a stable perception of brand emotion. Typography, on

the other hand, is derived from handwriting and incorporates structure, aesthetic formal qualities, and attributes such as proportion, contrast, and rhythm. Adopting a unique font is the best option for brands to maintain brand recognisability.

According to Baker & Balmer (1997), typefaces can also signal an organisation's visual identity, well-known examples are Cadbury, Coca-Cola, and Kellogg's. Sometimes they are so unique that they appear alone without a logo. Melewar et al (2005) state that fonts can mark the company's corporate visual image, such as Coca-Cola, which conveys a relaxed and pleasant corporate philosophy. France Telecom's font isn't really as distinctive as this one, giving the designer room to change it into one design. (Henderson et al., 2003) provide guidelines for managers to choose fonts that impact strategic value impressions. They discuss trade-offs between impressions and six design dimensions: Delicacy, Harmony, Naturalness, Exuberance, Weight, and Compression. Complexity encompasses beauty, depth, uniqueness, meaning, and negatives, while harmony ensures balance and smoothness. The results align with Henderson & Cote (1998) findings, using different design features as specified by practitioners (Hagtvedt, 2011). Divides font design features into general and specific. Common features are subjective descriptions such as symmetry, vibrancy, and complexity. Specific characteristics are graphic descriptions such as height, serifs, and compression. Universal design dimensions include refinement, naturalness, and harmony (Henderson & Cote, 1998), while specific design dimensions cover ornate, thickness, and compression. Natural script fonts have a reassuring and pleasing effect. Kokula (1994) optimises parametric curves using new criteria for typeface design to create natural script fonts. Analysing these fonts enhances brand creativity, clarity, and playfulness. Choosing a font that fits the brand creates an approved font set with names, preferred sizes, and use cases.

### ***Brand Name***

Brand names provide symbolic meaning to customers to assist in the customer identification and decision-making process. According to (Keller, 2003), among a set of brand elements, the logo may be located after the brand name- this is the most important and stable carrier of the brand image. Brand names are the primary way brands are remembered and discussed (Lelis, 2019). In the context of the brand, typography reinforces the message of the text. Thus, font choices can reflect a brand's values, whereby even subtle differences can convey entity-specific perceptions and attitudes (Lelis, 2019; Jean-Noël Kapferer, 1992). (Baker & Balmer, 1997) have noted that when a business chooses a brand name, it is laying the foundation of its brand image. Choosing the right brand name is one of the most important marketing decisions a business makes, as it often becomes the centrepiece of the marketing strategy by introducing it.

A brand name plays an integral role in an organisation, but its exact contribution is often difficult to quantify. While organisations are often confused by brand names to understand the incremental utility or added value of a product, the underlying power of brand names is undeniable. As John Stewart, the former chairman of Quaker Oats Ltd. said, "If the business were to be split up, I'd take the brand, the logo, the goodwill and you could keep all the bricks and sand- I'd be better off than you" (Childers & Jass, 2002). This sentence vividly illustrates the importance of a brand name to the success of a company, which can provide intangible but powerful competitive advantage and value. Bao et al (2008) confirmed Lee and Childers' point of view that brand names are critical to communicating a product's identity and value. It differentiates the product from competitors and increases the demand for the product.

### **Research Purpose and Research Gap**

There is a need to improve the time-honoured Chinese medicine brand's visual identity in order to help brand designers increase time-honoured Chinese medicine brand for customer attitudes.

### **Most of the Time-honoured Chinese medicine brands study old brands from the perspective of brand management and communication, and the visual aspect is less involved**

The ageing problem of old brands and the 'paradox' of their inheritance and innovation are mostly studied from the perspective of enterprise or brand management. The theoretical model of brand image that has been proposed by (Lu & Gao, 2007) and others is the most widely cited and influential model in brand image research (Aaker, 1997) The humanisation dimension assigns anthropomorphic characteristics to brands, focusing on the 'Big Five' dimensions of brand personality. Aaker's humanisation dimension suggests an established pharmaceutical brand that resembles a slow, old-fashioned man, an experienced Chinese medicine practitioner, and a wise recluse. A brand value evaluation model is created for old brands based on their unique characteristics (Wang, 2014). From the original authenticity, other scholars have respectively constructed authenticity and self-authenticity of the authenticity of the brand based on the old brand (Xu & Tang, 2020), from the cross-border marketing and cultural regulation (Li Peng et al., 2021), brand co-branding (Zhang & Guo, 2023) the heritage and innovation of the culture of traditional Chinese medicine (Ju, 2021). Time-honoured Chinese medicine brands have further materialised the once academic medical trend of Chinese medicine and most brand images are facing the problem of ageing (Hsu, 2008). The use of nostalgia, also known as 'retro marketing' (Brown et al., 2003; Holbrook, 1993) attempts to evoke nostalgia and remember the "good old days" (Aaker, 1997).

### **Studies on time-honoured Chinese medicine brand visual aspects that focus on overall brand image, packaging design, and product design, neglecting visual identity as a core element.**

The study of brand image design of old brands has been a popular topic of more attention in the academic world (Sun, 2013). Most of the studies are aimed at the study of the overall visual image of the brand of old brands (Liu, 2014), the function of corporate visual identity is to highlight the corporate personality to shape the corporate image, the difference between the ethnic and cultural characteristics of China's Suzhou-Hangzhou region, the southwestern region, and the central belt is obvious, and according to the different regional characteristics of the brand of the old brands of the visual image re-design (Yang, 2016). Studies have shown that it is important to break the visual 'rusticity' of Time-honoured Chinese medicine brands to satisfy consumers' needs for sensory aesthetics and visual three-dimensional experience of external image beauty. According to (Wu, 2018) and other time-honoured Chinese medicine brands, part of the brand's visual image in the design is through the logo, brand colour, packaging design, facade design, advertising design and other elements. The other part summarises the methods and strategies that are suitable for the visual image of the time-honoured Chinese medicine brand (Yu et al., 2023) by analysing the basic and applied elements of visual identity (Zuo, 2017).

Most of the studies on long-established time-honoured Chinese medicine brands have explored the perspective of overall brand visual identity (Yingyi Xu, 2018), packaging design

(Shen, 2021), and interior design (Chen, 2010). But it is more explored from single elements of visual identities, such as logo design, brand colour, font design, and brand name. However, there are relatively very few in-depth studies on the whole visual identity of old brands as a core element. (Dong, 2023), thus, examines and explores the new development direction of brand image design with a new perspective (Yao, 2017).

**Most of the research on established brands is from the perspective of the company and the brand, and there is relatively little research on the consumer's acceptance from the consumer's perspective**

Most of the existing research on established brands focus on the level of corporate management or cultural elements (Yi, 2020). (Gregersen & Johansen, 2021) have combed visual identity from the corporate and organisational levels and emphasised that visual consistency and authenticity can strengthen corporate image. Meanwhile, scholars have taken a nostalgic cultural perspective Lin & Zheng (2016) to symbolise brand image and a communication perspective (Zhao, 2011). Brand extension perspective (Aaker & Keller, 1990) emphasised the importance of old brands. Most of them explored the relationship between the brand and consumers of old Chinese medicine (Xu & Tang, 2020). However, studies on the visual identity of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands rarely emphasise the stakeholders (Gregersen & Johansen, 2021). Consumer acceptance of brands is mostly explored in terms of brand extensions (Xie, 2008), mobile advertising (Megehee, 2009), and celebrity endorsements, but the overall users, usage, acceptance, and effectiveness of brands have received little attention from academics and international market research organisations. How consumers perceive a brand's VI and, more importantly, how they potentially change it through their own visual practices, and how agency strategists and creatives maintain good communication with consumers through VI design (Gregersen & Johansen, 2021).

**Conceptual Framework**

Based on the literature synthesis on time-honoured Chinese medicine brand characteristics, visual identity and consumer attitudes, the following conceptual framework is proposed (See Figure 3-1). With its unique medical, cultural, and economic value, time-honoured Chinese medicine brands can encourage consumers to re-understand and accept Chinese medicine culture through the development of Chinese medicine brands. Establishing a recognised and recognisable image in the market depends on the improvement of visual literacy so that consumers can establish a close connection with the brand on the emotional and cognitive levels.

In order to promote the renewal and development of the visual identity of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands, it is necessary to synthesise the existing research and summarise the key standards of each element of the visual identity. In terms of signs or symbols, they are required to be natural, simple and easy to identify; the brand colours must meet consistency, are easy to memorised and have cultural association; the brand typography needs to strike a balance between readability, style positioning and overall harmony; the brand name should have legibility, style positioning. and overall harmony. Together, these factors affect the ease of the consumers' recognition of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands. When the cognitive process of the consumers is easy, it helps to improve their overall attitude towards time-honoured Chinese medicine brands.

Many previous studies have proven that visual stimuli can improve the consumers' perceived fluency and conceptual fluency of brands, thereby, encouraging consumers to form positive attitudes towards companies (Park et al., 2013). Brands should consider how to increase the consumers' fluency in processing visual identity, so that visual identity can play a full role in brand building. Numerous studies such as Phillips et al (2014); Harmon-Kizer (2019) have demonstrated that advertisements with consistent (familiar) visual elements may lead to processing fluency and liking.

Therefore, time-honoured Chinese medicine brands must optimise and upgrade their visual identity systems to gain a more positive visual experience and attitude from young consumers. Based on the integration of medical, cultural and market-level values, this conceptual framework emphasises the key role of visual identity elements, providing practical guidance for brand designers and researchers to achieve the success of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands in contemporary markets to reshape and evolve.

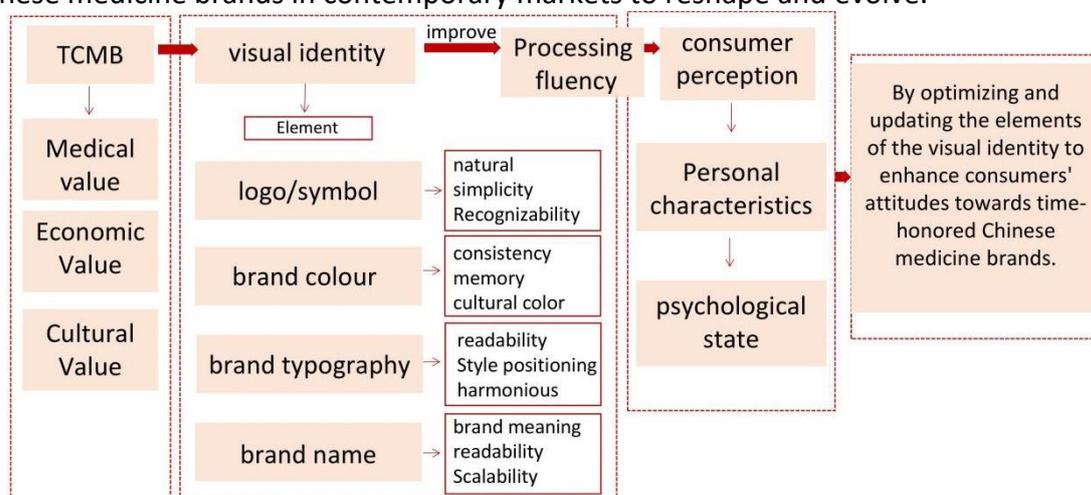


Figure 3-1 conceptual framework

## Conclusion & Recommendations For Future Research

### **Knowledge Contributions**

The researchers realise during the in-depth study that the brand value and visual identity status of time-honoured Chinese medicine can be understood through the literature review. First of all, time-honoured brands mainly focus on the impact of brand marketing, brand cross-border, brand image, brand equity, and brand experience, on consumer satisfaction, loyalty, and other attitudes. These studies did not address modern visual identity as a core element. Secondly, part of the visual design involves brand image design at the macro level, as well as micro design such as packaging design, image design, and store design (Xu, 2018). There are relatively few in-depth studies on elements such as logos, characters, colours, and names of visual identity.

*A proposed conceptual framework indicates that updating the visual identity design of time-honoured traditional Chinese medicine brands can improve consumer attitudes. The study will also complement existing literature gaps in the field of marketing and brand design, the study will provide new insights and valuable data on the topic through an in-depth analysis. Interpretation of the collected data by the researchers and the proposed conceptual framework is a comprehensive knowledge system and an opportunity to prepare for the future development of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands, ensuring the modernisation and refinement of visual identity and the best brand visual experience.*

### ***Significance and Benefits of Study***

This study introduces a theoretical framework for enhancing consumer attitudes by optimising the visual identity of time-honoured traditional Chinese medicine brands. It integrates three areas, which are relatively unexplored in current literature. The framework serves as a reference point for future studies and serves as a structured knowledge base for research across traditions, brand visual design, and consumer attitudes. It also holds practical implications for designers, as it constructs a comprehensive conceptual framework for the visual identity of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands, aiding in enhancing consumer perceptions. Visual identity design effectively communicates corporate culture and values to consumers, augmenting consumer awareness and acceptance. This framework plays a crucial role in transmitting Chinese medicine heritage by establishing touchpoints between time-honoured brands and the younger generation, perpetuating the values and wisdom of Chinese medicine across generations. This research contributes innovative intellectual insights to the realms of time-honoured Chinese medicine brands, visual representation, and consumer perceptions, fostering positive impacts on the evolution and innovation of related industries.

Future research, on the one hand, further explores the relationship between brand experience and visual identity. Study how brand image and visual design influence the consumers' experience in the process of purchasing, using, and interacting with brands, and how to enhance the overall brand experience by optimising visual identity design. On the other hand, study how to balance the modernisation and traditional inheritance of the brand in the visual identity design. Discuss how to preserve historical and cultural value while making the brand more attractive and competitive through modern design elements.

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