



A Study on Experiential Marketing of Luhe Leicha Tea and Consumption Intention: Mediating Effect of Perceived Value and Brand Attitude

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Abstract. Hakka Leicha Tea is one of the representative tea culture projects included in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) intangible cultural heritage (ICH) list. Luhe Leicha Tea, originating from the Chaoshan region in Guangdong Province, China, inherits the essence of Hakka Leicha and is selected as a provincial production skill-type ICH project. However, Luhe Leicha, which is only developed locally at present, has not fully transitioned into a commercial model, posing challenges to the preservation of its cultural heritage. With Luhe Leicha as a case, the relationships of ICH experiential marketing, perceived value, and brand attitude with consumption intention were explored in this study. Out of the 390 questionnaires collected, 374 were deemed valid, indicating an effective sample rate of 95.90%. The empirical analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS 22.0. The results show that the five dimensions of experiential marketing—product experience, scene experience, service experience, emotional experience, and action experience—positively influence perceived value, brand attitude, and consumption intention. Among them, the perceived values, including product value, service value, and image value, play a partial mediating role between experiential marketing and consumption intention. Additionally, brand attitude also has some mediating effects on the relationship between experiential marketing and consumption intention, as well as between perceived value and consumption intention.

Keywords: Experiential Marketing; Consumption Intention; Perceived Value; Brand Attitude; Intangible Cultural Heritage

1 Introduction

Leicha, also known as grinding tea, is a branch of the tea culture that has been recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) as one of the representative projects of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). The name "Leicha" is derived from its distinctive production technique and ingredients. In China, Leicha is generally categorized by region, with Hunan Leicha and Hakka Leicha being two of the most well-known varieties. As one of the provincial-level ICH projects, Luhe Leicha inherits the cultural development and essence of Hakka Leicha Tea and embodies the local cultural characteristics of Chaoshan region. Luhe Leicha Tea is a special drink of Hakka in Cantonese cuisine, and a three-meal diet for local residents. In general, Leicha is prepared by grinding tea leaves, cooked peanuts and sesame seeds together in a mortar and pestle. Additional ingredients such as cooked pork and vegetables can be added and ground into a paste. The resulting paste is then mixed with hot water and salt. Leicha not only has the benefits of promoting fluid production to quench thirst, and relieving summer heat but also meets the needs of modern people in pursuing a healthy diet and green health maintenance.

Luhe County is a relatively impoverished area in Guangdong Province, the development of Luhe Leicha remains localized. Although having been introduced in the market, the relevant products have not reached the multi-ingredient and fresh quality that the existing tea can achieve. However, the existing Hakka Leicha Tea physical stores are small in scale, so there are fewer places that tourists can experience. Heritage tourism is an important part of global tourism industries, and 869 cultural heritage sites are included in the over 1,200 world heritage sites of 167 countries. As highlighted in the agenda of sustainable development in 2030, proposed by UNESCO, it is necessary to strengthen the protection of world heritages [1]. Therefore, the protection and inheritance of ICH are also beneficial to the sustainable development of Luhe Leicha Tea. The existing studies on Luhe Leicha Tea focus on the types, production methods, and dietary customs, while its transformation into the commercial mode has been rarely discussed. In some studies, it has been found that the total attention of Guangdong Province to world cultural heritages is the highest across China, but the per capita attention is partially low [2]. Under the background of vigorous promotion of rural revitalization in China, questions like "Can Luhe Leicha and other ICH projects learn from other mature tourist attractions to deliver value through experiential marketing?" and "What experiential marketing methods or values are conducive to shaping local brands and promoting consumption intentions?" require further discussion. In view of this, this study intends to explore the influence relationship model of ICH experiential marketing, perceived value, and brand attitude with consumption intention. Taking Luhe Leicha as an example, this study enriches relevant empirical studies. Moreover, it is expected to generate countermeasures so as to boost local cultural tourism and economic development and create opportunities to create sustainable competitive advantages, with theoretical and realistic significance.

2 Literature review

2.1 ICH experiential marketing, perceived value, brand attitude and consumption intention

Experience is an advantage that affects consumers' purchasing decisions and creates differentiation [3]. Experiential marketing is a dynamic response of perception, emotion, and behaviour, which will store the current experience memory in hearts [4]. The emphasis is on the customers' experience process and the unique and unforgettable experience conveyed by the accompanying products and services [5]. Referring to the classification of experiential marketing in Ref. [6] and combining with the characteristics of ICH, ICH experiential marketing was divided into five types: product experience, scene experience, service experience, emotional experience, and action experience. As pointed out in Ref. [4], the stimulus received by consumers' personal experience activities will lead to the next behaviour, reflecting that experience is a product that adds value to products or services, thus generating a recognition attitude towards brands and promoting purchase intentions and decision-making. To sum up, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: Consumption intention is positively affected by (a) product experience, (b) scene experience, (c) service experience, (d) emotional experience, and (e) action experience of ICH experiential marketing.

H2: Brand attitude is positively influenced by (a) product experience, (b) scene experience, (c) service experience, (d) emotional experience, and (e) action experience of ICH experiential marketing.

H3: Perceived value is positively affected by (a) product experience, (b) scene experience, (c) service experience, (d) emotional experience, and (e) action experience of ICH experiential marketing.

2.2 The mediating effect of perceived value and brand attitude

Previous studies have highlighted that consumer experiences encompass multiple dimensions, such as sense, feel, think, act, and relate [4], not every experience dimension can promote perceived value, while the overall experience exerts a significantly positive effect on both perceived value and consumption intention. Therein, perceived value not only directly affects consumption intention [8] but also plays an important mediating role in the aforementioned relationship [6-7]. In addition, perceived value also contains many dimensions, such as functional value, emotional value, social value, epistemic value, and conditional value [8], and consumers' perceived value also functions differently under different contexts. By reference to the classification of perceived value in Ref. [8] and combining the characteristics of ICH, perceived value was divided into product value, service value, and image value in this study. It was found in Ref. [9] regarding intangible heritage tourism that tourists' perceived value will affect their attitude so as to promote tourism intention. In a consumption study (Ref. [10]), customer experience is found to affect their attitude and purchasing intention. As revealed by a tourism study (Ref. [11-13]), the attitude and tourism in-

tention of tourists will be influenced by their perceived value of tourism, and attitude plays a mediating role between tourist experience and tourism intention. In other words, experiential marketing can enhance consumers’ understanding of ICH, further strengthen their value perception, and positively influence their attitude and consumption intention. In this study, therefore, the following hypotheses were put forward:

H4: (a) Product value, (b) service value, and (c) image value of perceived value play mediating roles in the relationship between experiential marketing of Leicha Tea and consumption intention.

H5: (a) Product value, (b) service value, and (c) image value of perceived value play mediating roles in the relationship between experiential marketing of Leicha Tea and brand attitude.

H6: Brand attitude exerts a mediating effect in the relationships of consumption intention with (a) product experience, (b) scene experience, (c) service experience, (d) emotional experience, and (e) action experience of experiential marketing.

To sum up, it is believed in this study that the experience perceived by consumers in ICH activities can improve their perceived value and brand attitude and generate a positive effect on consumption intention. Therein, perceived value and brand attitude play mediating roles in the aforesaid relationship. The research architecture is displayed in Fig. 1.

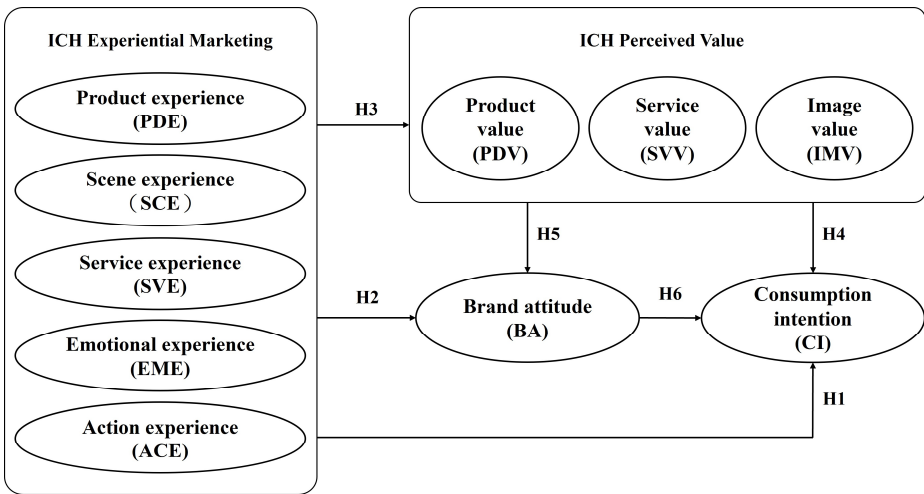


Fig. 1. Research framework

3 Methodology

3.1 Measurement

Experiential marketing contained 19 items, which were divided into product experience (PDE), scene experience (SCE), service experience (SVE), emotional experience (EME), and action experience (ACE) by reference to Ref. [6] and combining the characteristics of ICH. In this study, product experience was defined as consumers’

feelings about the packaging, types, and quality of Leicha ingredients provided by practitioners. Scene experience refers to the sensory stimulation and experience of the bowl, wooden rolling stick, tea soup appliances, experience hall, and its surrounding environment used in Leicha making. Service experience refers to waiters' explanation, demonstration, assistance, and Q&A interactions regarding Leicha ingredient selection, grinding, brewing, and tasting. Emotional experience was denoted as the emotional and psychological feelings of consumers on Luhe culture during their participation in tea-making and tasting experiences. Action experience was defined as the overall experience of the Luhe tea-making process, such as ingredients selection, grinding, and Leicha tea tasting. Perceived value included 11 items, which were divided into product value (PDV), service value (SVV), and image value (IMV) by reference to Ref. [8] and combining the characteristics of ICH. In this study, product value was defined as consumers' overall evaluation of ingredient use, price, and food safety of Leicha Tea products in experiential activities. Service value refers to the professionalism, friendliness, and timeliness of Leicha tea-making service in experiential activities. Image value refers to the word-of-mouth, trust, and image shaped by Leicha experiential activities among consumers. According to Ref. [9], brand attitude (BA) and consumption intention (CI) included 3 and 4 items, respectively, as seen in Table 1. All items were assessed using a Likert 5-point scale, wherein scores of 1–5 corresponded to "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," respectively.

3.2 Sampling and data collection

In order to test the validity of the scale, a total of 31 valid samples were pre-surveyed and obtained. The pre-test results showed that the Cronbach's α of all variables reached 0.70, indicating that the survey tool has good reliability and can be formally applied to the survey. The formal survey was launched in January 2021, questionnaires were distributed in the Chaoshan area and online survey platform, respectively, and a total of 390 questionnaires were collected; after excluding 16 samples with omissions and unreasonable answering speed (over 30% faster than that of researchers), 374 samples were valid, and the effective recovery rate was 95.90%. According to the analysis via IBM SPSS 22.0, 51.87% of the respondents were men and 48.13% were women. Among them, 55.62% thought that the traditional Leicha culture should be carried forward, and 60.69% believed that Leicha tea has the effect of clearing away heat and toxic materials and facilitates health maintenance.

4 Empirical results

4.1 Reliability and validity

The reliability and validity of the research scale were analyzed by IBM SPSS 22.0, and the results are listed in Table 1. It could be seen that the Cronbach's α of 10 constructs such as experiential marketing, perceived value, brand attitude and consumption intention fell into the range of 0.802–0.902. In addition, the factor loading of the 10 constructs was 0.755–0.913, composite reliability was 0.887–0.932 (> 0.80), aver-

age variable extraction was 0.664–0.793 (> 0.50), indicating the good internal consistency and convergent validity of the scale.

Table 1. Reliability and validity

Construct & Item		Cronbach's α	Factor loading
PDE	PDE1 Leicha package is delicate	0.802	0.794
	PDE2 Leicha tea has a variety of flavors		0.879
	PDE3 Leicha ingredients are rich		0.865
SCE	SCE1 Environment is beautiful	0.834	0.846
	SCE2 Environment is hygienic		0.792
	SCE3 Environment is relaxing		0.842
	SCE4 Convenient location		0.787
SVE	SVE1 Tea-making experience is demonstrated	0.859	0.868
	SVE2 Tea-making experience is assisted		0.847
	SVE3 Tea-making experience is explained		0.811
	SVE4 Tea-making experience is interactive		0.829
EME	EME1 In good mood	0.853	0.810
	EME2 Know more about Leicha tea culture		0.785
	EME3 Enhance the emotional tie with Luhe		0.866
	EME4 Love Leicha tea more deeply		0.868
ACE	ACE1 The tea-making practice is standard	0.856	0.796
	ACE2 The tea-making experience is interesting		0.829
	ACE3 The tea-making experience is attractive		0.865
	ACE4 The experiential activity is impressive		0.852
PDV	PDV1 Strict ingredient selection	0.829	0.833
	PDV2 Cheap and fine		0.755
	PDV3 Rich cultural deposits		0.846
	PDV4 Food safety is trustworthy		0.823
SVV	SVV1 Professional services	0.902	0.880
	SVV2 Friendly services		0.861
	SVV3 Timely services		0.885
	SVV4 Thorough and satisfactory services		0.893
IMV	IMV1 Good word of mouth	0.838	0.873
	IMV2 Be trusted by the public		0.899
	IMV3 Ahead of peers		0.840
BA	BA1 Well-known	0.870	0.905
	BA2 Positive social image		0.913
	BA3 High-quality services		0.853
CI	CI1 I will consider experiencing	0.902	0.848
	CI2 I will try to experience		0.837
	CI3 I want to experience		0.874
	CI4 I am willing to experience		0.899
	CI5 I am willing to recommend		0.802

4.2 Hypothesis test

To test the effects of experiential marketing of Luhe Leicha Tea on consumers' perceived value, brand attitude, and consumption intention, hypothesis testing was performed by means of regression analysis.

First, the results show that CI was significantly positively affected by the five dimensions of experiential marketing: PDE ($\beta = 0.510, t = 11.436, p \leq 0.001$), SCE ($\beta = 0.618, t = 15.156, p \leq 0.001$), SVE ($\beta = 0.642, t = 16.152, p \leq 0.001$), EME ($\beta = 0.679, t = 17.846, p \leq 0.001$), and ACE ($\beta = 0.658, t = 16.869, p \leq 0.001$), indicating that the better the ICH experiential marketing perceived by consumers, the higher the consumption intention that could be predicted, so **H1** was supported. Similarly, the five dimensions of experiential marketing exerted significantly positive effects on brand attitude as well as PDV, SVV, and IMV of perceived value, reflecting that the better the ICH experiential marketing perceived by consumers, the more positive the brand attitude, and the higher the three types of perceived value, so **H2** and **H3** were supported.

Second, PDV, SVV, and IMV presented significantly positive effects on both CI and BA, indicating that the higher the three types of perceived value of consumers, the higher the consumption intention, and the more positive the brand attitude. In addition, after PDV, SVV, and IMV were added to the relationship between PDE and CI respectively, the influence coefficient of PDE on CI decreased but remained significant, so it was judged that perceived value had a partial mediating effect in the relationship between PDE and CI. In the same way, after adding three types of perceived value to the relationship between CI and other four dimensions of experiential marketing, such as SCE, SVE, EME, and ACE, the influence coefficients of four dimensions of experiential marketing on CI decreased but remained significant, so it was judged that perceived value also played a partial mediating role in the effects of SCE, SVE, EME, and ACE on CI. In other words, the better the ICH experiential marketing perceived by consumers, the higher the perceived value, and thus consumption intention was positively enhanced, so **H4** was supported.

Third, after adding three types of perceived value into the relationship between five dimensions of experiential marketing, namely PDE, SCE, SVE, EME, and ACE, and BA, the influence coefficient of the five dimensions on BA decreased, but remained significant, so it was thought that perceived value played a partial mediating role in the effect of perceived value on the five types of experiential marketing. In other words, the better the ICH experiential marketing perceived by consumers, the higher the perceived value, and thus brand attitude was positively affected, namely, **H5** was supported.

Finally, after adding BA in the relationship between five types of experiential marketing and BA, the influence coefficient of the five dimensions on CI showed a declining trend, but remained significant, so it was judged that BA exerted a partial mediating effect in the influence of the five dimensions of experiential marketing on CI. In other words, the better the ICH experiential marketing perceived by consumers, the more positive their brand attitude, and thus consumption intention was positively enhanced. Similarly, after adding BA into the relationship between the three types of

perceived value and CI, the influence coefficient of the three types of perceived value on CI declined but remained significant, so BA was considered to exert a partial mediating effect in the influence of three types of perceived value on CI. In other words, the higher the ICH value perceived by consumers was, the more positive the brand attitude was, and thus consumption intention was positively enhanced, namely, **H6** was verified.

5 Conclusions

In this study, the effects of ICH experiential marketing were explored through the case of Luhe Leicha tea. The results reveal that experiential marketing (product experience, scene experience, service experience, emotional experience, and action experience) will positively influence perceived value (product value, service value and image value), brand attitude, and consumption intention, and perceived value plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between experiential marketing and brand attitude and that between experiential marketing and consumption intention. Moreover, brand attitude also plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between experiential marketing and consumption intention and that between perceived value and consumption intention. This study result coincides with the tourism research findings in Ref. [9] and Ref. [11-13]. This study focused on the consumption intention in the experience of an ICH folk activity and used Hakka Leicha as a case study, which has received limited empirical attention, thereby holding both theoretical and practical significance.

Given the above results, three suggestions were provided: first, relevant ICH management units should make good use of new media publicity to increase the global public's awareness and information understanding of ICH, and then enhance their willingness to experience it; second, efforts should be made to improve the ICH experiential marketing mode so that consumers can achieve good experience in aspects of product, scene, service, emotion, and action. Alternatively, consumers' experience can be improved from the levels of sense, think, and relate by reference to Ref. [6-7], so as to enhance perceived value and consumption intention; third, ICH brand building and management should be strengthened to set up a good brand attitude in consumers, form positive word-of-mouth, and promote consumption intention.

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