

Exploratory Study on the Consumption Motives of Generation Z Non-Heritage Products Based on MEC Model

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Abstract: Chinese intangible cultural heritage is a treasure of Chinese culture and an important part of human civilization, and public participation is an important part of our efforts to carefully guard intangible cultural heritage and pass on the historical lineage. This generation has a relatively easy and comfortable life due to inter-generational relationships and has strong consumption power. Therefore, it is crucial to study the values and paths by which ICH products influence young people. This paper intends to conduct step-by-step interviews with Generation Z youth through Photo-elicitation Interviews to explore the values and paths by which the ICH attributes of products influence the consumption motives of Generation Z youth. Finally, the researcher concluded that the motives of Gen Z youths for consuming NRM products include seeking cultural identity, self-actualization, healing, and unique experiences. From the study, we also found that the process of consuming NRM products among Gen Z youth reflects their sense of responsibility and self-efficacy, the importance of NRM purity to Gen Z youth, and the added value of the "NRM" label.

1. Introduction

In May 2021, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism released the "14th Five-Year Plan" for the protection of intangible cultural heritage (hereinafter referred to as "ICH"), proposing: "Intangible cultural heritage (hereinafter referred to as "ICH" is an important part of the excellent Chinese traditional culture. Protect, inherit and promote the non-heritage, for the continuation of the historical lineage, firm cultural confidence, promote the exchange and mutual understanding of civilizations, the construction of a strong socialist cultural state is of great significance."^[1]

Due to the rapid changes and development of the social environment, the protection and development of ICH are facing difficulties: some NRMs have insufficient vitality and difficulties in inheritance; people's recognition of ICH culture and willingness to take the initiative to protect it are

weak; the dissemination of ICH culture is limited and social participation is low. There are many reasons for the low level of social participation in the protection of ICH: the lack of information asymmetry leads to the low visibility of many folk NRMs; the lack of ICH bearers and the aging of NRMs will lead to the lack of "contemporary temperament" in the creation and promotion of ICH products, and many ICH products remain in the "past" and do not keep pace with the fast-paced world. Many ICH products remain in the "past" and are not in line with the fast-paced society, leading to the difficulties faced by ICH. Based on its more "serious" cultural attributes, ICH cannot fully replicate the successful path of current "Netflix" products, and the creation of ICH products should focus on retaining their "purity". In order to ensure that the products are not "hollowed out", we should take into account both the "entertainment" nature of rapid dissemination and promotion and the "informal educational attributes" of the products. The "soul" of the products can be ignited by the "fire" of the cultural connotation and historical precipitation of ICH.

In the past, scholars' research on ICH has mostly been conducted from the perspectives of the development model of ICH products, revitalization of ICH resources, and the combination of ICH and tourism development on its problems and ways to improve them, but few scholars have explored the consumer motives of ICH products. Consumers can be regarded as the end point and the end point of recirculation in the chain of ICH tourism stakeholders, and consumer participation provides the possibility for the continued transmission and development of ICH. Therefore, consumer behavior towards ICH culture plays a huge role in the whole ICH conservation system.

Generation Z youth group, known as the "aborigines" of the digital age, is deeply influenced by the media environment and the marketing of the Internet era, and due to the influence of intergenerational relationships, this generation lives a relatively easy and comfortable life and has strong consumption power. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the size of China's Generation Z population is now about 264 million, accounting for about 20% of the total population, but the scale of consumption contributed by them already accounts for 40%. And according to the big data forecast, the overall consumption scale of China's Generation Z will increase four times to 16 trillion by 2035, which is the core element of the future growth of the entire consumer market, including the cultural market. Therefore, exploring the consumption motives of Generation Z for ICH products becomes an important factor in answering the question of how to integrate the "taste" of Generation Z youth with the attributes of ICH. Moreover, Generation Z is the most educated generation in China's history, so it is crucial to explore the "bond" between Generation Z youth and non-heritage products.

Therefore, this paper intends to conduct a step-by-step interview with Generation Z youth through the photo-elicitation method, summarize and conclude the interview intention based on the MEC means-ends chain model, and thus explore what values and paths the non-heritage attributes of the product take to influence the consumption motives of Generation Z youth.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Intangible Cultural Heritage

The research on intangible cultural heritage has focused on three aspects: first, the theoretical exploration of intangible heritage as an independent discipline; second, the discussion on the concepts and relationships among intangible heritage, protection mechanisms and concepts, as well as methods and paths of inheritance; third, the research on the dissemination and promotion of intangible heritage from an interdisciplinary perspective. Thirdly, through an interdisciplinary perspective, we focus on the dissemination and promotion of NRMs, using different modes of dissemination for different categories of NRMs, reflecting the trend of exploring universal laws with case studies and pushing the "surface" with "points". Among these studies, most of them

explore the rejuvenation of ICH communication from the perspective of communication science and new media, but few scholars consider the main market groups behind the rejuvenation. There are ten categories of ICH in China, including folk literature, traditional music, traditional dance, traditional opera, operatic art, traditional sports, amusement and acrobatics, traditional art, traditional arts, traditional medicine, and folklore, and there are diverse ways for its consumption, such as handcraft experience, ICH food, watching performances, and buying peripherals, so the dissemination of ICH presents a thousand "heritage Therefore, the dissemination of ICH has a status quo of a thousand "legacy" and a thousand "faces".

2.2. Photo-elicitation Interviews

Photo-elicitation Interviews is an interview method based on the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET). The Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) is a patented research technique developed by Professor Gerald Zaltman of Harvard Business School in the 1990s, "a new approach to consumer research that combines non-literal language (images) with literal language (in-depth interviews). ZMET is a patented research technique developed by Professor Gerald Zaltman of Harvard Business School in the 1990s, "a new approach to consumer research that combines non-textual language (images) with textual language (in-depth interviews),"^[2] to get to the heart of consumers' needs.

This technique suggests that because people are not actively aware of their inner thoughts, which are often not expressed in words, Professor Saltman believes that people need a way to extract those inner thoughts that cannot be expressed in words. The ZMET technique uses metaphors to explore the hidden meanings, thoughts, feelings, and expectations behind consumer mental models.

"Metaphor extraction techniques on an interdisciplinary theoretical basis will include the best of various disciplines such as cognition, art and design, literary criticism, sociology, psychology and semiotics." The technique builds on theories and techniques such as semiotic metaphor theory, means-end chain theory and Kelly's square interview technique, which help to understand consumers, brand image positioning, product design, product concept, product use, buying experience, life experience, emotional needs, consumer environment and attitudes toward business.

The main idea of ZMET technique is that human's primitive thinking is mainly in the form of images, so images are considered as cueing tools and combined with in-depth interviews to explore the hidden meaning behind the images. Similarly, in the study of consumer behavior, some scholars have also used images as stimuli with the aim of guiding the subconscious thinking process of consumers.

In China, the research method of Photo-elicitation Interviews is still in the initial stage of development, and it is generally used in interviews and research with children, such as the research on children's park recreation experience in Guangzhou from children's perspective^[3], cruise experience research^[4], kindergarten classroom environment^[5], etc.

2.3. Consumption behavior of young people in Generation Z

In recent years, there have been numerous studies on the consumption behavior of Generation Z and its causes, and Generation Z has become a popular object of research because of its unique circle culture and subculture that has prompted scholars to think about it. The research on the consumption behavior of young people of Generation Z is mainly focused on three aspects: firstly, the exploration of the logic and causes of the formation of the circle culture and subculture around Generation Z, secondly, the exploration of the consumption demand of young people of Generation Z, and thirdly, the marketing strategies of brands and products based on the consumption demand of young people of Generation Z, but there are few studies linking the consumption behavior of

Generation Z with non-heritage culture. This paper will make up for this lack of research.

3. Research Process and Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 respondents using the photo elicited talk method, and axial coding was performed based on the content of the interviews as well as the MEC model.

3.2. Interview design and implementation

Table 1: Interview Design.

Introduction of the research topic	Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this interview. The question I would like to study is "What attracts you to non-heritage products? Here I do not limit the type of non-heritage products, they can be handicrafts, food, experience services, etc.
Explain the reasons for using the Photo-elicitation Interviews method	Since this interview method is not popular in the country, a brief introduction was given to the interviewees to relieve them of any doubts in their minds and to provide some interview requirements based on the four hypotheses followed by this ZMET technique: ①People tend to think in the form of images Answer: Why do I need a photo from the respondent? ②Sensory images are the bridge between sensory stimulation and metaphor ③ Deep structures and ideas in thinking are reachable Answer: Why can photo-led interviews be better? ④Mindfulness model is represented as a story Requirement: The interviewees should express themselves in a story-telling style as much as possible.
Respondents described the reasons for choosing this photo & this post	Before the interview, the interviewees were asked to provide 1-3 photos of "when consuming ICH products" or "the physical ICH products they purchased" or posts of ICH products that impressed them. The interviewees were asked why they provided these photos and explained their significance, and they were also asked to introduce the NRMs they had chosen to the interviewer. Q: ①Can you tell me why you chose these photos/ posts? ②Can you introduce me to this non-heritage product that you experienced/consumed?
Respondents tell stories based on images	The interviewees are asked to recall the story of the day based on the photos, recalling the impressive episodes in the form of short stories. Q: Can you recall and share what happened during the photo shoot?
Respondents describe the significance of non-heritage products to themselves	The concept extraction based on the MEC model consists of three layers: product attributes-results-personal values; therefore, the interview was guided to stimulate the interviewees to tell the meaning of the non-heritage products to themselves. Q: ①Would you decide whether to consume a product because it has the label "non-heritage" on it? ② Do non-heritage products have any different meaning for you compared to other ordinary products? ③What do you think is the most important part of non-heritage products?
Respondents added	Organize the content of the interviews based on the recording of the interview sessions, confirm correctness and any omissions, and ask the interviewees if they need to add anything.
Formation of important idea table	The researcher organized and analyzed the constructs proposed by the respondents, and extracted and arranged the repeated constructs mentioned by three or more of them.
Build consensus model	Based on the results of the interviews, the constructs mentioned by three or more respondents in each interview, and the relationship between the constructs and the constructs can be included in the consensus model of the feelings and thoughts of the subjects studied by the interviewees.

This study is based on the literature related to the ZMET technique (Photo-elicitation Interviews method), and the steps and general outline were developed, which are divided into the following steps and can be concluded in Table 1.

3.3. Interviewer Screening

The researcher recruited respondents through a questionnaire and selected 14 young people of Generation Z who had consumed non-heritage products to inform the subject of the interview and the requirements for collecting images.

3.3.1. Respondent Composition

The composition of the respondents is shown in the following Table 2:

Table 2: Respondent Composition.

Respondent No.	Gender	Age	Career	Types of consumption of non-heritage products
P01PYT	Female	22	Tourism Management Students	Wuyi Rock Tea
P02GXY	Female	21	Journalism and Communication Students	Tianjin Clayman Zhang Colorful Sculpture
P03XY	Male	19	Preschool Education Students	Sugar Blower
P04WYF	Female	19	Industrial design students	Jingdezhen porcelain
P05LXX	Female	22	Tourism management students	Guangdong herbal tea
P07LRY	Female	20	Tourism management students	Shunde Buttermilk Tablet Production
P08HHL	Male	20	Mechanical engineering students	Lion Dance Performance
P09ZYY	Female	20	Tourism management students	Ancient incense making experience
P10LY	Female	21	MICE management students	Lacquer beads
P11HL	Male	20	E-commerce students	Batik
P12WSJB	Male	21	Business English students	Ancient incense making experience
P13ZJ	Male	23	Finance students	Shadow play
P14ZMW	Male	24	Music performance students	Acupuncture in Chinese Medicine

3.3.2. Axial coding

Table 3 shows only one attribute hierarchy, other attributes are omitted:

Table 3: Axial coding.

Attribute level	Consequences level	Value Levels	Interview Content
Exquisite	Collection Desire	Cultural Identity	That exquisite porcelain (Jingdezhen porcelain) is very exquisite, because I was in the park began to introduce me to the process of making that porcelain, I know that its process is very tedious, understand the culture and folklore behind it, I think it is worth collecting, will feel like taking one back as a souvenir. --P04
	Novelty		I have not done this kind of handicraft before, I think it is quite amazing to be able to personally to the process of making incense and candles in the past; it feels like understanding the labor wisdom of the people who lived here in the past, and that feeling is very real. --P09
	Study		I feel that it is grounded and can reflect the local humanities; it makes me feel that what I am holding is not only a commodity, but also a cultural accumulation. --P02

4. Study results

In summary, this paper summarizes the respondents' mental models based on the MEC model. As shown in the Figure 1:

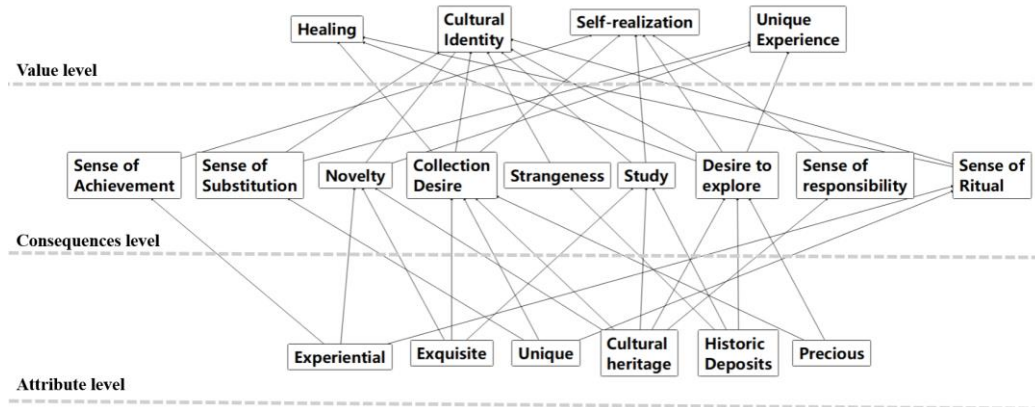


Figure 1: MEC value hierarchy of Generation Z for non-heritage products.

4.1. Attribute level

Table 4: Keywords of Attribute level.

Specific Properties	Abstract Properties
-Fine -Unique -Precious -Experiential	-Cultural heritage - Historic Deposits

According to the interviews, respondents believe that ICH products have the above attributes that appeal to Gen Z youth, including the specific attributes of "exquisite", "unique" and "experiential", as well as the abstract attributes of "cultural heritage" and "historical heritage". Attributes "cultural heritage" and "historical precipitation"(Table 4).

Ten of the respondents believe that cultural attributes and historical deposits are the two most important attributes that distinguish ICH products from other ordinary products, and that these two attributes bring high added value to the products, and consumers are willing to pay higher prices for their "cultural heritage" and "historical deposits Consumers are willing to pay a higher price for their "cultural heritage" and "historical deposits", and will have lower expectations of the usefulness of the products.

4.2. Consequences level

Table 5: Keywords of Consequences level.

Functional results	Psychosocial outcomes
-Collection -Learning -Strangeness	Meet the users: -Desire for exploration -Sense of ritual -Sense of accomplishment -Novelty -Sense of substitution -Sense of responsibility

According to the interviews, Gen Z respondents believe that non-heritage products can lead to two outcomes, namely functional outcomes and socio-psychological outcomes. Non-heritage products can be collected, learned and, due to their historically steeped attributes, generate a sense

of strangeness different from the characteristics of this era among consumers; socio-psychological outcomes include satisfying consumers' desire for exploration, rituals, sense of accomplishment, novelty and sense of substitution (Table 5).

Even though the core need of some respondents is not "learning", they can still feel the "informal education" in the process of consuming non-heritage products. Even if the core need of some respondents is not "learning", they can still feel the "informal education" in the process of consuming ICH products.

4.3. Value level

Table 6: Keywords of Value level.

Instrumental Values	Ultimate Sexual Values
-Unique experience -Cure	-Cultural Identity -Self-Realization

As for the value hierarchy of ICH products for consumers, ICH products satisfy two types of values for consumers, namely, instrumental values and ultimate values. The instrumental values include "unique experience" and "inner healing", while the ultimate values include "cultural identity" and "self-actualization". The ultimate values include "cultural identity" and "self-actualization" (Table 6).

In terms of the impact of non-heritage products on consumers' value hierarchy, all 13 respondents mentioned the concept of unique experience, and their user needs include: fun, not experienced in daily life, satisfying the desire for exploration, etc. When consuming non-heritage products, Gen Z consumers want to get such unique experiences; and they want to get from the experience to non-heritage products (ancient incense making experience, batik, Shunde cow milk film making, etc.) Healing, which includes: escape from anxious life, gaining inner peace, returning to the feeling of being a child, etc. They believe they can free themselves from the tension of reality and gain inner peace.

All seven interviewees mentioned the concept of "cultural identity", saying that buying ICH products and participating in the process helped them learn about ICH culture and understand local folklore, which enabled them to better integrate into the folklore and develop a respect for China's long-standing traditional culture and the artisanal spirit of ICH culture. They were also able to develop a sense of respect for China's long-standing traditional culture and the spirit of the craftsmen.

Eight respondents mentioned the value concept of "self-fulfillment", saying that although they did not inherit the ICH, their consumption and experience was a way to participate in the preservation of ICH culture. This is a way to release their sense of social responsibility and care for traditional culture.

5. Results and Discussion

Based on this study, the researchers deciphered the keys to the consumption of non-heritage products by Generation Z youth:

5.1. Responsibility and self-efficacy

During the interviews, most of the interviewees showed a contradictory state of mind: they clearly understood the dilemma facing the heritage, but they did not know how to improve the situation personally. They believe that "consumption of ICH products" can bring financial support to the heritage and satisfy their inner sense of accomplishment in undertaking their mission and

responsibility, which is an important act of cultural responsibility. Self-efficacy is a concept based on social cognitive theory and developed by psychologist Bandura. It refers to an individual's subjective judgment and confidence in his or her ability to perform a certain job and the degree to which he or she is likely to achieve it.^[6] Generation Z youth engage themselves in the process of consuming ICH products and learning about ICH culture out of the expectation of their social responsibility to reach their self-fulfillment goals.

At the same time, Gen Z youth fill their "guilt" by consuming non-heritage products. This "guilt" comes from a certain lack of responsibility on the part of Generation Z: for example, they believe that although they acknowledge that the heritage is in crisis, they do not have a strong motivation to actually participate in its inheritance, for example, by becoming the bearer of the heritage and participating in the inheritance of the craft.

5.2. The Purity of Non-Foreign Heritage

During the interviews, when asked about the commercialization of ICH, the interviewees said that they did not want ICH to lose its "noble quality" and fall into the "worldly" category. "They said that the purity of ICH is a crucial factor in their awe and desire to consume ICH products. While previous studies have confirmed the function of production in promoting cultural development, they have also emphasized the protection of culture and proposed specific cultural protection measures amid the concern that production may destroy cultural heritage.^[7] The output of productive conservation is cultural products, and consumers' recognition of cultural values leads to the consumption of cultural products, and accordingly, consumers' consumption of cultural products is the result of their recognition of cultural values.^[8]

The interviewees believe that a certain amount of commercialization is possible to provide economic support for the main body of ICH inheritance and help achieve sustainable inheritance of ICH, because it is not enough to rely on the government's support alone, and those craftspeople can only be truly valuable when they participate in economic life. However, NRMs should not give up the solemnity of ICH culture in order to gain better economic returns, and NRMs should not give up public respect. Excessive use of entertainment-based marketing to gain traffic and attention will create a bizarre sense of alienation of the nature of ICH culture among consumers and create a feeling of falling off the altar. "Out of selfishness, I tend to want it to stay the way it is now, and to over-commercialize it in order to pass it on, I think that's a very sad thing." --P01PPYT

Therefore, the inheritors of ICH should pay attention to maintaining the purity of ICH, so as to realize the "revitalized inheritance" of ICH culture and maintain the living state of the cultural essence, so that the achievements of civilization in the agrarian era can find a living space and inject viability in the industrial era.

5.3. The added value and credibility of the "non-heritage" label

Through this study, the researcher found that the label of "non-heritage" as a product can achieve a high added value of the product, and the respondents were willing to pay a higher price for non-heritage products and consider the practicality of the product to a lesser extent, "I think the practicality is another story, but the most important thing is I don't drink herbal tea so that it can really cure me" - P05LXX; and compared with other products, consumers pay more attention to the experience process of non-heritage products and the value of their collection.

Some respondents also said that the label of "non-heritage" plays the role of "quality control" and has a certain credibility.

People would like to believe that the products of ICH have a more special meaning: for example, higher value, deeper cultural connotation, more exquisite design, and more valuable labor.

Therefore, non-genetic inheritors can emphasize to a certain extent the non-heritage attributes of their products to attract consumers, but at the same time, they should focus on safeguarding the quality of their products and services to maintain their cultural value and credibility and protect their feathers.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the motives of Generation Z youth for consuming NRM products include seeking cultural identity, self-actualization, healing, and unique experiences. From the study, we also found that the process of consuming non-heritage products by Generation Z youth reflects their sense of responsibility and self-efficacy, the importance of the purity of non-heritage to Generation Z youth, and the added value of the "non-heritage" label. Therefore, it is suggested that NCHs should protect the purity of NCH culture when launching NCHs, and should not blindly commercialize and entertain NCHs, as this will cause the backlash of entertainment on NCH products; secondly, NCHs should focus on exploring the cultural attributes of NCH products and enhancing their experience, which will help NCH products reap better economic benefits and cater to the consumption needs of Generation Z consumers for NCH products.

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