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Branding and Consumption Awareness of Leather Carving Artworks on E-commerce Platforms

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Article

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ABSTRACT

As traditional craftsmanship gains renewed appreciation in modern consumer culture, leather carving artworks are finding a vibrant presence on E-commerce platforms. Focusing on the Chinese mainland market, this study examines leather carving handicrafts sold on leading Chinese e-commerce and social-commerce platforms (Tmall, JD.com, Xiaohongshu). This study explores branding strategies and consumer cognition of leather carving products within digital marketplaces, aiming to guide traditional craft brands in their digital transformation. Using content analysis, a survey of 293 valid responses, and in-depth interviews with 8 consumers, the research examines 18 brands across platforms like Tmall, JD.com, and Xiaohongshu. Specifically, content analysis was applied to 18 brand pages across three platforms, followed by an online questionnaire (n = 293) and semi-structured interviews with 8 purchasers. It identifies three primary branding strategies: unified visual style, compelling brand storytelling, and detailed process presentation. Exploratory factor analysis reveals four key dimensions shaping consumer perception: craftsmanship, cultural identity, aesthetic preference, and trust/recommendation. Consumers were clustered, via K-means analysis, into three groups—design-oriented, culturally driven, and price-sensitive—highlighting varied brand engagement preferences. Regression analysis confirms a significant positive relationship between narrative richness and consumer recommendation intent (0.534, $p < 0.01$). Despite some success, challenges such as content homogenization, superficial storytelling, and weak user engagement persist. The study proposes enhancing cultural depth, leveraging multi-platform content synergy, and fostering interactive brand communities. Ultimately, the research emphasises that emotionally resonant narratives and rich visual communication are vital for branding artisanal products online. This paper contributes to the field by constructing a multi-dimensional framework integrating brand communication, consumer cognition, and platform mechanisms, offering practical strategies for handicraft branding in the digital age.

KEYWORDS

leather carving, branding; E-commerce platform, consumer perception, brand communication

INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of the digital economy, E-commerce platforms have become an important channel for the dissemination and sale of artwork. Especially in the post-epidemic era, consumers' reliance on online shopping has further deepened, providing new development opportunities for traditional handicrafts, including leather carvings [1]. As a unique art form integrating traditional craftsmanship and modern aesthetics, leather carving artefacts have distinct cultural value and

decorative functions and have gradually gained market attention in recent years. However, compared with fast-moving consumer goods or industrial manufacturing products, the brand-building and consumer awareness mechanism of leather carvings on E-commerce platforms is still in the exploratory stage, and related research is still insufficient [2].

Currently, the digital business environment built by E-commerce platforms is reshaping consumers' cognitive paths and brand preferences. As a product type that highly relies on artisanal skills and personality expression, the branding of leather carvings not only needs to convey the excellence of craftsmanship and materials but also needs to arouse consumers' recognition of cultural connotations, design concepts, and emotional values [3]. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the brand construction of leather carving in the E-commerce platform and clarification of the interaction mechanism between it and consumer perception is of great significance in promoting the modern transformation and market-oriented communication of traditional handicrafts. On the other hand, consumers' cognitive process in E-commerce platforms is influenced by a variety of factors, including visual presentation, brand story, user evaluation, platform recommendation mechanism, and so on [4]. These elements work together to build trust in consumers' brand image of leather carving artwork, which ultimately affects their purchase decisions. Therefore, from the perspective of consumers, exploring how they perceive leather carving brands and evaluating their cultural and commercial values in the E-commerce environment can provide powerful support for merchants to optimise their brand communication strategies [5]. Based on the above background, this paper takes leather carvings as the research object, focuses on their branding path and consumer perception characteristics in E-commerce platforms, and reveals the dynamic relationship between brand communication and consumer perception through a combination of literature review and empirical research [6].

The research objectives are: first, to explore the construction logic and key elements of leather carving brands in an E-commerce platform; second, to analyze the psychological mechanism and evaluation dimensions of consumers in the process of recognition of this kind of products; third, to provide strategic suggestions of practical value for the digital transformation and E-commerce development path of traditional handicrafts.

This paper is structured into five sections. The second section presents a literature review on handicraft branding, consumer cognition, and E-commerce communication environments. The third section details the research methodology, including content analysis, surveys, and interviews, supported by tools such as NVivo and SPSS. The fourth section discusses key findings on brand content strategies, consumer perception dimensions, and the correlation between narrative quality and user response. The final part concludes the study by summarising insights and offering strategic recommendations for enhancing brand communication and consumer engagement in the digital landscape.

SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH

With the continuous development of consumer behaviour research and brand communication theory, studies on branding and consumer perception in E-commerce platforms are becoming more and more abundant, and the relevant results provide theoretical support and methodological reference for the exploration of E-commerce of leather carving handicrafts [7]. In this section, we will summarise the existing studies from three dimensions: branding of handicrafts, the mechanism of consumer cognition, and the influence of the communication environment of E-commerce platforms on brand communication.

Progress of research on the branding of handicrafts

As a product type with both materiality and culture, the branding of handicrafts has been given unique significance in traditional branding theory [8]. It has been pointed out that the branding of handicrafts not only relies on the functional value of the product itself but also highly depends on the historical heritage, cultural connotation, and personality expression it conveys. Figure 1 shows the three-layer theoretical model of handicraft branding [9]. Scholars generally believe that artistry, craftsmanship, and scarcity are the three core factors affecting the brand image of handicrafts, among which the construction of the brand story, craftsman image, and cultural symbols are particularly crucial. In terms of specific paths, researchers emphasize that brand building should be carried out progressively from the level of "object-person-culture": firstly, ensure the quality of the products and the characteristics of craftsmanship (object), secondly, strengthen the personal image of the craftsmen and the narrative of their skills (person), and finally, convey the cultural imagery (culture) that has a resonance, and finally, convey the cultural symbols (culture) that have a resonance. The final delivery of resonant cultural imagery (culture) is to realise the differentiation of brand perception.

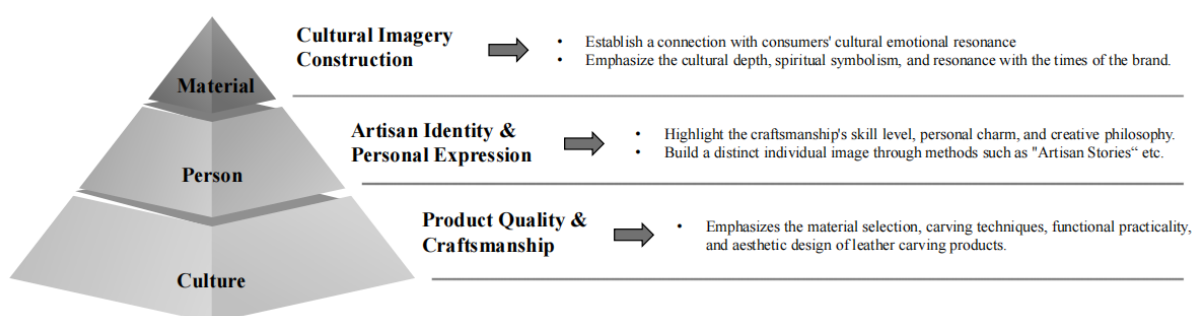


Figure 1. The three-layer model diagram of handicrafts brand constructs

However, existing research has focused more on traditional categories such as ceramics, embroidery, and wood carving, and less on leather carving, which is a relatively niche but distinctive category [10].

Leather carvings, due to the uniqueness of their material, craftsmanship, and visual style, face both challenges and potential in branding, which provides an entry point for this study.

Relevant studies on consumer cognition mechanisms

Consumer cognition theory has gone through the development of multiple disciplines such as cognitive psychology, behavioural economics, and marketing communication, and its core lies in revealing how consumers perceive, understand, and evaluate brand information [11]. In the E-commerce environment, this cognitive process is deeply influenced by digital media, forming a different perception path from offline scenes. Existing literature shows that visual information, user evaluation, brand narrative, and social communication are the four key factors influencing consumer perception. Among them, the visual presentation is the first point of contact, directly affecting users' first impression and emotional response; the user evaluation system provides "social validation", enhancing or weakening consumers' trust in the brand; and the brand narrative gives context and meaning to the product and enhances consumers' value resonance [12]. In the field of handicrafts, consumers' perception of brands is often accompanied by the triple dimension of "culture, aesthetics, and emotion". Table 1 shows the main influencing factors and their paths to consumers' cognition of handicraft brands. From the above table, it can be seen that consumers' cognition of handicraft brands on E-commerce platforms is affected by multi-dimensional factors, which not only constitute the starting point of the cognitive path but also play a continuous role in promoting the deepening process of cognition. Visual information, as the first contact point of the cognitive chain, is the key factor influencing the "first impression" of a brand [13]. User evaluation assumes the role of "verification of other people's experience", assisting consumers to form risk assessment and purchase decisions through star ratings and textual lists, especially in the absence of physical contact; its reference value is particularly prominent. Brand narrative is an important means to establish deep cognitive and emotional connections [14]. By telling the story of the production process, craftsmanship, and cultural origins, handicraft brands can make their products gain symbolic significance beyond the functional level, to enhance the value resonance of users. This factor is particularly prominent in the brand communication of leather carving artefacts. The social communication mechanism enables brand awareness to move from individual perception to group consensus [15]. Through KOL recommendations, user sharing, and platform recommendation algorithms, brand visibility and trust can be rapidly amplified in the social field. The conclusion is that in leather carving art, consumers are more likely to be attracted by the personalised design and cultural attributes of the product rather than the single functional attributes, which requires the brand to pay more attention to the construction of the symbolic system and emotional communication in the process of shaping.

Table 1 Major influences on consumer perception of handicraft brands and their paths (Source: Original, 2025)

Factor	Subfactor	Path description	Manifestations in E-commerce platforms
Visual information	Page design, product images, colour style	Forms first impressions and stimulates emotional responses; influences brand professionalism and aesthetic identity	Unified page layout, high-resolution images, stylised master visuals
User reviews	Star ratings, text reviews, and graphic tans	Provides social validation and influences trust building and willingness to buy	Content richness and frequency of interaction in user comment sections
Brand narrative	Brand story, process storytelling, cultural context	Enhance the sense of meaning and emotional resonance of the brand, and shape the brand temperature and cultural identity.	Brand introduction module, video narration, process detail explanation
Social communication	KOL recommendation, user sharing, platform algorithm recommendation	Diffuse brand influence and enhance brand visibility and identity	Short video distribution, blogger linkage, and platform content recommendation mechanism

Communication Environment Characteristics of E-commerce Platforms Impact

The rise of E-commerce platforms has not only changed product sales channels but also reconfigured the logic of brand communication [16]. The "decentralised" communication of digital platforms has made the active generation of brand content (UGC), social interaction, and algorithmic recommendation key nodes for brands to reach consumers. Research shows that the platform mechanism strengthens the frequency of interaction between brands and consumers, but also exacerbates the problems of information homogenization and distraction [17]. In this context, brands need to differentiate themselves in terms of content expression, visual symbols, and cultural positioning to stand out. In addition, some studies have proposed a triangular relationship model of "platform-brand-user", emphasising that brand communication is no longer a one-way output, but a dynamic, multi-party collaborative process [18]. For leather carvings, the impact of the platform communication environment is reflected in two aspects: firstly, the trend of visualization and video has promoted the real display of product details, providing a stage for branding; secondly, the user participation mechanism has amplified the feedback of consumers on the brand's story and values, which has prompted the brand to continuously iterate its image and connotation in the communication. To summarise, although current research has provided a rich theoretical foundation in the construction of handicraft brands, consumer cognition mechanisms, and the communication

environment of E-commerce platforms, there is a lack of systematic discussion on the branding and consumer cognition of leather carvings on E-commerce platforms [19]. Therefore, based on previous studies, this paper will combine the category characteristics of leather carvings and the communication context of E-commerce platforms to further explore the interaction logic and communication strategy between the two.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To comprehensively explore the branding path and consumer cognition mechanism of leather carvings on E-commerce platforms, this paper adopts a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods to ensure that the research conclusions have systematic and practical guidance value [20]. Specific methods include the content analysis method, questionnaire survey method, and case study method, combined with SPSS NVivo and other analytical tools for data processing and text coding, to restore the dynamic process of branding and consumer perception of leather carving artefacts from multiple dimensions.

Framework Design

This study builds an analytical framework from the perspectives of both brand communicators and consumers, which is divided into three major dimensions, namely, brand side, consumer side, and platform intermediary [21]. The brand side analyzes how leather carving art brands build their brands in E-commerce platforms through visual presentation, brand narrative, content operation, etc.; the consumer side explores consumers' cognitive paths, evaluation dimensions, and their influencing factors on leather carving art brands; and the platform intermediary focuses on the role of the platform mechanism (e.g., recommendation algorithms, user evaluation systems, and graphic/short-video dissemination modes) in bridging the gap between the brand and the consumer. The platform mediator focuses on the role of platform mechanisms (such as recommendation algorithms, user evaluation systems, and graphic/short video communication modes) in the bridge between brands and consumers. On this basis, this paper constructs a three-dimensional analysis model of "brand construction-platform mechanism-consumer perception" (Figure 2), which makes it clear that the brand communication effect is not determined by a single subject, but by the interaction between the brand's content, platform mechanism and consumer perception [22]. It is determined by the interaction between brand content, platform mechanism, and consumer perception, which has high explanatory power and application value [23]. The model provides theoretical guidance for subsequent data collection and analysis.

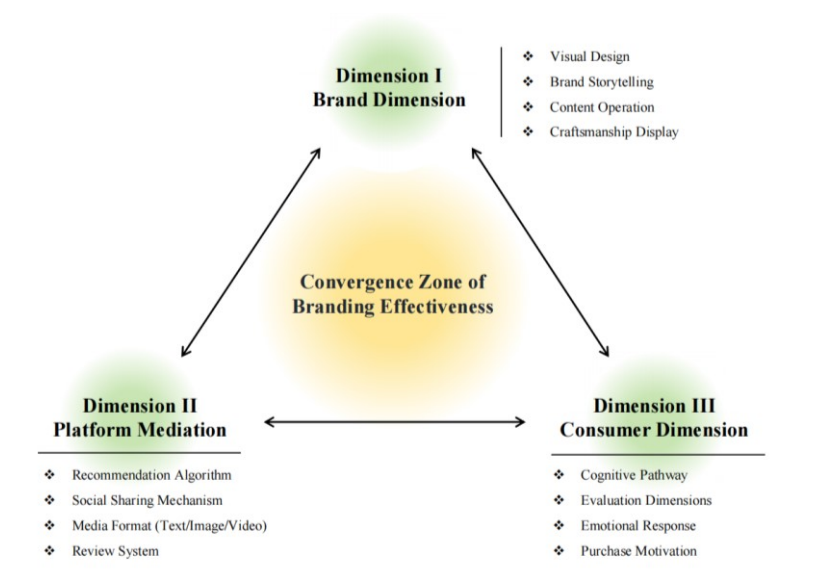


Figure 2. Three-dimensional analysis model diagram of brand communication of leather carving artwork E-commerce

Data Collection Methods

E-commerce Platform Content Collection

To deeply analyse the branding path, this paper selects three representative E-commerce/social E-commerce platforms, Tmall, Jingdong, and Xiaohongshu, which represent traditional comprehensive E-commerce, high-quality shopping platforms, and grass-roots type content communities, respectively. The collection scope includes the following:

- (1) Brand flagship store page (home page design, product detail page, brand storyboard)
- (2) User comments (selection of valid comments with text content)
- (3) Graphic and short video content (limited to public content on the platform)
- (4) Brand-related topics or notes (with special attention to the hashtags, leather carving, crafts, and customised leather)

A total of 18 brand samples were collected, including independent brands and art studio-type brands with "handmade leather carving" as their main business direction. The data collected from each platform reaches more than 30 content units to ensure that the sample size is sufficient for analysis. Table 2 shows the distribution of brands and platforms collected. It can be seen that the total sample of brands with leather carving as the core product collected in this study covers the mainstream E-commerce platforms, forming an all-platform observation perspective covering traditional E-commerce [24]. These brands include both flagship E-commerce brands operating on a large scale and independent craft studios with niche positioning and emphasis on personalisation and cultural value expression, ensuring the diversity and representativeness of the sample

Table 1. Distribution of sample brands and platforms

Brand name	Platform Distribution	Main Product Types	Number of contents (articles)
Muzai Workshop	Tmall, Xiaohongshu	Leather Carved Wallet, Keychain	45
Handmade by artisans	Jingdong, Tmall	Handmade Leather Carved Belt, Backpack	39
Notes from the Wilderness	Little Red Book, Tmall	Customised booklets, card cases	51
Original leather manufacturing	Tmall, Jingdong	Vintage crossbody bag, money clip	44
Desert Craft	Little Red Book (social networking website)	Ethnic-style pendants and charms	36
Pidgin	Tmall, Xiaohongshu	Totem Leather Carving Decorative Painting	48
Sunken Wood Handicrafts	Jingdong, Xiaohongshu	Customised Name Card Holder	42
Book of Three Craftsmen	Tmall, Jingdong, Xiaohongshu	Full Leather Carving Series Portfolio	60
Blacksmith's leatherwork	Tmall (brand)	Business leather bag, leather engraved cover	38
Ironwood genuine leatherwork	Xiaohongshu, Jingdong	Mongolian Style Handmade Leather Jewellery	40
Windmark Leather	Little Red Book (social networking website)	Pet Leather Collar	33
Handmade under the Moon	Tmall, Xiaohongshu	Women's Leather Jewellery	50
Interlocutor	Jingdong, Xiaohongshu	Cultural and Creative Series: Leather carving	46
Creek Mountain Handicrafts	Tmall, Jingdong	Landscape Leather Carving	41
Sukihara Leather Goods	Tmall, Xiaohongshu	Customised passport holders, card cases	49
Desert Wild Handmade	Little Red Book (social networking website)	Outdoor Style Leather Carved Jewellery	34
Mission Wood Workshop	Jingdong, Xiaohongshu	Restoration of old leather carvings	35
Zimu Customization	Tmall, Jingdong, Xiaohongshu	Couple's customised leather carving	58

Questionnaire Design and Recovery

To explore the cognitive logic and behavioural preferences of consumers, a set of structured questionnaires was designed in this paper (Figure 3). The questionnaire covers the following four major sections: basic information, which involves key elements such as gender, age, occupation, and consumption ability; consumption behaviour, which asks respondents whether they have purchased leather carvings, as well as their main purchasing channels and frequency of purchases; brand perception, which focuses on the source of the respondent's perception of the leather carving brand, the depth of their memories, and the associations that arise from it; and evaluation dimensions, which centres on important dimensions such as the level of craftsmanship, design style, cultural value, trust, and willingness to recommend the brand. The evaluation dimension section is centred on the brand's craftsmanship, design style, cultural value, trust and willingness to recommend, and other important dimensions to carry out scoring and ranking [25]. The questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert Scale, with multiple matrix questions and open-ended questions to obtain supplementary cognitive information. The questionnaire was distributed online, mainly through the community of leather carving enthusiasts, the E-commerce shopping community, and art consumer-related public number channels. A total of 310 questionnaires were distributed, and 293 valid questionnaires were recovered, with a validity rate of 94.5%.

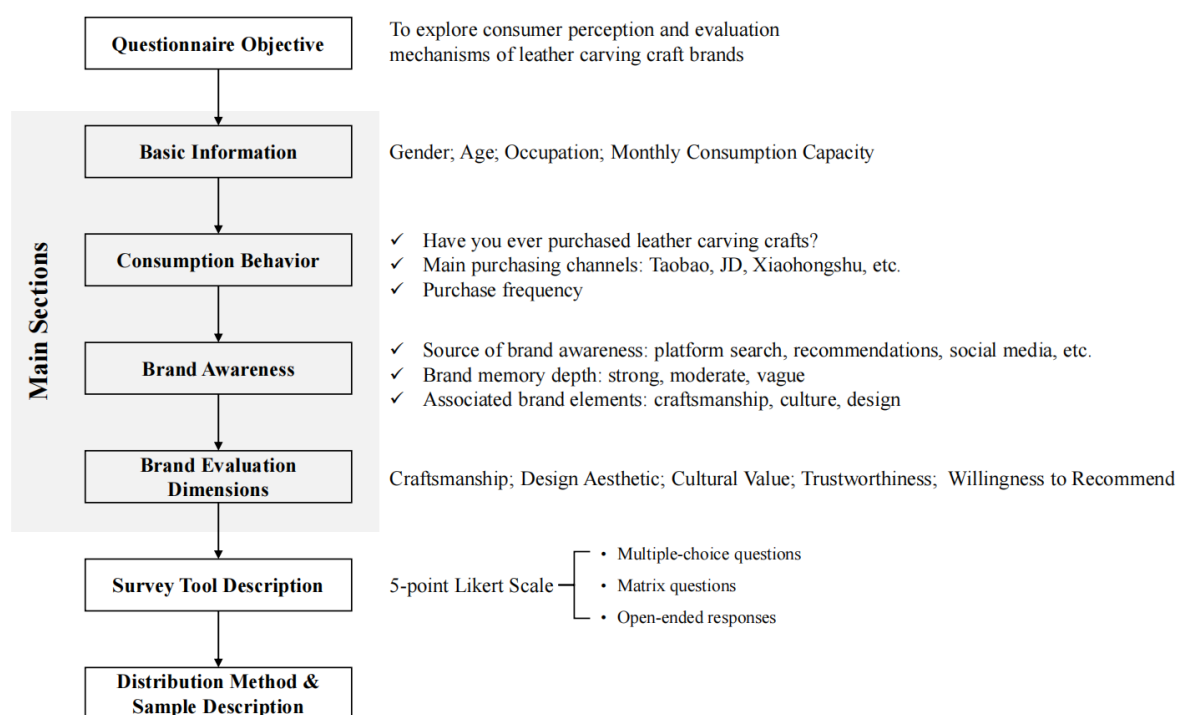


Figure 3. Flowchart of the questionnaire structure

In-depth Interviews and Case Selection

To enrich the qualitative dimension of the study, this paper also selected three leather carving art brand managers and five consumers with experience in purchasing leather carvings to conduct semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interviews focused on the following themes:

- (1) Brand owners: brand positioning, content strategy, target user profiling, and response to platform mechanisms;
- (2) Consumers: sources of awareness, purchase motivation, understanding, and feedback on brand culture and design style.

The interviews lasted about 40 minutes on average, and the recordings were transcribed and coded with NVivo to summarise the themes. In addition, this paper selects two brand cases (Brand A is craft-led and Brand B is culture-narrative-led) for tracking and analysis and analyses them in terms of brand communication paths, user interaction, feedback, and sales performance, aiming at comparing the differences between different branding strategies in terms of consumer perceptions and market performance.

Data Processing and Analysis Methods

Content analysis method

The content analysis method was used to code the brand pages and user comments collected from the E-commerce platform, establish a keyword thesaurus, and categorise and frequency statistics for the following contents:

- (1) Types of visual elements: e.g. "vintage", "natural colours", "fine carvings", etc.
- (2) Frequency of brand terms: e.g. "handmade", "artisanal", "limited edition", "original design", etc.
- (3) The user's emotional attitude words: such as "like", "very texture", "cultural flavour" and so on.

Through text coding, we extracted the cross-relation between the main brand communication elements and users' concerns and further analysed the degree of match between brand content and users' perceptions. Specific data are shown in Table 3. The use of communication language on E-commerce platforms by different leather carving brands has a distinct, differentiated positioning, and the keywords not only reflect their respective brand tone but also reveal the direction of the match between their content construction strategy and the target consumer group [26]. From the table, we can see that the six brands have constructed their clear content language matrix through differentiated keywords, and this communication language not only reflects the brand positioning but also invisibly influences the users' perception of the tone and value of the products. The choice of keywords and frequency of use directly reflect the focus of the brand's strategic orientation on the E-commerce platform.

Table 3. Brand Keyword Frequency Distribution

Brand name	High Frequency Keywords 1	Frequency	High Frequency Keywords 2	Frequency	High Frequency Keywords 3	Frequency
Shanchuan						
Leatherworker's Shop	craftsmanship	45	retro style	39	hand-carved	36
Murray Leather Goods	original design	41	It's a story.	35	temperature sensation	32
Wooden Words Handmade	craft	44	Natural leather	38	Craft heritage	31
Gleaner's Workshop	pesticide	40	slow living	33	cultural flavour	29
Pyrotechnic leather carving	artistic expression	38	craftsmanship	34	lit. one needle and one thread (idiom); fig. every stitch counts	30
Weed Manufacturing	boldness	36	original leather and colour	30	natural texture	28

Statistical Analysis

Quantitative analysis of the questionnaire data was conducted using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were employed to understand the demographic attributes and basic purchasing habits of the sample. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was carried out to extract the primary dimensions of consumer brand perception, yielding four factors: perceived craftsmanship, cultural identity, aesthetic preference, and trust. K-Means Clustering classified the sample into three distinct consumer segments—design-oriented, cultural-identity-oriented, and price-sensitive—based on their evaluation dimensions. Regression analysis was used to test the relationship between brand presentation elements (e.g., brand story richness, product image-text quality) and consumers' purchase intentions. The results indicate that brand narrative has a significant positive effect on consumers' willingness to recommend ($p < 0.01$).

A multiple linear regression was performed to examine the effect of brand narrative quality on consumers' willingness to recommend (WTR). The independent variable "narrative quality" was computed as a composite index (mean of three 5-point Likert items: story richness, emotional depth, and plot coherence; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$). Control variables included visual presentation quality ($\alpha = 0.79$) and the number of user reviews (log-transformed). The model satisfied the underlying

assumptions: (1) Shapiro – Wilk test of residuals, $p = 0.114 (> 0.05)$; (2) Durbin-Watson = 1.94 (≈ 2), indicating no autocorrelation; (3) VIF values ranged 1.12 – 1.35 (< 5), confirming no multicollinearity.

NVivo Qualitative Coding

For the in-depth interview text, NVivo was used for open coding, and according to the three-level coding path of "brand communication elements-consumer feedback content-cognitive feelings", the theme nodes were extracted, and a cross matrix was constructed to summarise the following key findings:

(1) The brand elements that are most memorable to consumers are: personalised motifs (e.g., dragons, phoenixes, totems, etc.), usage scenarios (e.g., cultural creations, gifts), and narratives related to artisans;

(2) Users who identify with the brand narrative are more likely to develop sustained attention behaviour;

(3) Users are lukewarm to "homogenised design" and "lack of emotional resonance" brand expression. The results of these interviews provide evidence for the questionnaire analysis at the level of behavioural motivation and also provide a more temperate humanistic perspective on branding.

Description of Methodological Validity and Limitations

To improve the scientificity and data reliability of the study, this paper conducted pre-testing in the questionnaire design stage and pre-tested the problem of multiple heavy covariances between indicators; in terms of platform content collection, it tried to control the impact of time and platform changes to ensure the comparability of data at the time nodes [27]. However, this study still has the following limitations: first, the sample brands are concentrated in specific regions (e.g., Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Sichuan and Chongqing), which may be geographically biased; second, the consumer questionnaire mainly relies on online community dissemination, and the sample structure is limited in its representativeness to offline consumer populations; and third, there are a limited number of brand principals, which can't yet fully represent the overall voice of the industry [28]. Nevertheless, through the combination of multi-method cross-validation and empirical paths, the findings of this paper have strong reference value in terms of logical consistency and practical relevance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on three types of data: platform content analysis, questionnaire survey, and in-depth interviews, this part systematically analyses the brand-building characteristics and consumer perception mechanism of leather carving artwork on E-commerce platforms. Through the empirical interpretation

of content communication strategies, statistical analysis of consumer evaluation dimensions, and the integration of brand communication logic, it reveals the opportunities and challenges of leather carving art brands in the E-commerce communication environment.

Mainstream Strategies and Characteristics of Branded Content Construction

According to the results of content analysis of 18 leather carving brand pages on the Tmall, Jingdong, and Xiaohongshu platforms, the current content construction of brands on E-commerce platforms mainly centres on the following three core dimensions: visual style unification, brand storytelling, and presentation of craftsmanship. Table 4 provides a statistical analysis of the main content construction elements of leather carving brands, and it can be seen that the current content construction of leather carving brands on E-commerce platforms is highly concentrated on three dimensions: process display, brand narrative, and visual style enhancement, and forms a clear distribution of content tendency and platform strategy through high-frequency keywords [29]. In terms of visual style, most brands use natural colour tones, vintage backgrounds, and macro photography techniques to strengthen the performance of leather texture and craftsmanship details. For example, the brand "Shanchuan Leatherworker Shop" has formed a unique visual identity through the unified colour tone and the display of local details in multiple pictures. In terms of brand storytelling, about 72.2% of the brands added modules such as "founder's story", "craftsmen's concept" and "inherited craft" to the homepage or product detail page, enhancing the humanistic temperature of the brand through narrative text. Through narrative text, the humanistic temperature of the brand is enhanced. Regarding the presentation of craft processes, on content platforms such as Xiaohongshu, more than 60% of brands show the details of the process of carving, dyeing, sewing, etc., through short videos or graphic notes, which effectively stimulates the resonance of the user's perception of the value of handmade labour. These content construction methods are highly consistent with the three-layer logic of "object - people - culture" in the theory of handicraft brand construction, indicating that the current leather carving brand has initially mastered the visual and narrative logic of the E-commerce platform.

Table 2. Statistics of key content building blocks for leather carving branding

Content Keywords	Frequency of occurrence (bars)	Distribution of major platforms
Craftsmanship Details	74	Little Red Book, Tmall
Founder's Story	52	Tmall, Jingdong
Handmade process	69	Little Red Book, Tmall
Brand Concept	47	Tmall, Jingdong, Xiaohongshu
Material Description	45	Jingdong, Tmall
Cultural inheritance	38	Little Red Book, Tmall
Customized services	40	Tmall, Jingdong

Content Keywords	Frequency of occurrence (bars)	Distribution of major platforms
Retro style	61	Little Red Book, Tmall
Craftsmanship	44	Tmall, Jingdong
Affective expression	36	Little Red Book, Tmall

Consumer Perception Structure and Group Segmentation

By statistically analysing 293 valid questionnaires, this paper quantitatively models consumers' brand perception dimensions and consumption psychology.

Brand Perception Factor Structure

After exploratory factor analysis, four core factors were extracted that cumulatively explained 76.3% of the total variance. The specifics of the four factors are listed below:

F1: Perceived craftsmanship dimension (high-loaded items include "fine workmanship", "authenticity of materials", and "unique carving");

F2: Cultural identity dimension (high-loaded items include "the brand story moves me" and "it has a national cultural flavour");

F3: Aesthetic preference dimension (high loadings include "the exterior design appeals to me" and "the overall style is to my liking");

F4: Trust and Recommendation Dimension (high loadings include "would recommend to a friend" and "find the brand trustworthy").

This structure shows that consumers' perception of leather carving brands is not limited to appearance or functionality, but includes a high proportion of emotional and cultural value assessment, confirming the existence of "contextualised value perception" in the consumption of handicraft products.

Exploratory Factor Analysis diagnostics

Before extraction, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified sampling adequacy ($KMO = 0.88$), and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 1,247.63$, $df = 66$, $p < 0.001$). Four factors were extracted using principal axis factoring with Promax rotation ($\kappa = 4$), as eigenvalues > 1 and the scree plot jointly suggested a four-factor solution. The four factors collectively explained 76.3 % of the total variance. All items exhibited factor loadings ≥ 0.65 on their respective factors and < 0.35 on cross-loadings. Cronbach's α for each factor ranged from 0.81–0.89, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

Cluster Analysis of Consumer Groups

Based on the results of the K-means clustering analysis of the above factor scores, consumers are divided into three significant groups: Design-Oriented: high demand for product appearance, style, and personality expression, focusing on design differences; Cultural-Identity-Oriented: preference for products with cultural narratives and national symbols, value-driven obviously; Price-Sensitive: more sensitive to price, followed by brand culture and design aesthetics; Price-Sensitive: more sensitive to price, followed by brand culture and design aesthetics [30]. Cultural-Identity-Oriented: preferring products with cultural narratives and national symbols, with obvious value-driven; Price-Sensitive: more sensitive to price, followed by brand culture and design aesthetics. Specific data visualisation is shown in Figure 4, which shows the clustering radar chart of consumer cognitive factors. In the figure, green is design-oriented, purple is cultural identity, and orange is price-sensitive. It can be seen that the scores of each group in different dimensions differ significantly, reflecting their unique consumer preferences and cognitive characteristics [31]. The design-oriented group scored the highest on aesthetic preference, while the cultural identity group scored the highest on cultural identity [32]. The clustering results suggest that brands should differentiate their content and product design according to group preferences if they want to accurately reach their target consumers. For example, brands targeting the "cultural identity" group can strengthen the use of traditional totems and non-heritage elements, as well as the cultural stories behind the crafts.

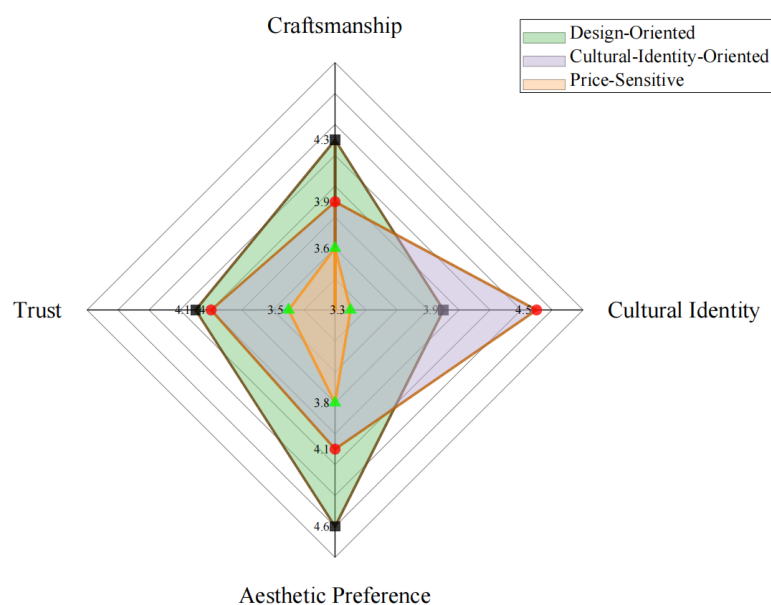


Figure 4. Radar chart of clustering of consumer perception factors

K-means diagnostics

Before clustering, the four factor scores were standardised (z-scores). The elbow-criterion plot indicated a clear bend at $k = 3$, explaining 71.4 % of the variance (between-group SS / total SS). The final solution was obtained after 12 iterations with convergence at ≤ 0.0001 change in cluster centres. Silhouette coefficient = 0.57 (> 0.5), confirming adequate cohesion and separation. Cluster sizes were 119 (design-oriented, 40.6 %), 108 (cultural-identity-oriented, 36.9 %), and 66 (price-sensitive, 22.5 %). All analyses were run in SPSS v29 with squared Euclidean distance and 10 random starts to avoid local minima.

Interaction Between Brand Strategy Effectiveness and User Response

By integrating the NVivo coding results with SPSS regression analyses, this paper further explores the intrinsic associations between brand communication strategies and consumer responses.

Match Between Content Elements and Consumer Emotional Feedback

NVivo coding reveals that the most frequently occurring keywords in users' positive feedback toward the brand include "heart-warming," "storytelling," "very special," and "sense of craftsmanship." These expressions align closely with the narrative elements highlighted on the brand pages. Table 5 presents the results of matching brand-content components with user comments. A high degree of consistency and emotional resonance is evident between the key content elements constructed by leather-carving brands on e-commerce platforms and users' positive responses. In particular, the dimensions of "brand story" and "craftsmanship demonstration" elicited pronounced keywords such as "heart-warming," "storytelling," "very special," and "attentive," clearly demonstrating that narrative and craft-focused content effectively trigger emotional reactions among users.

Table 5: Matching branded content elements with user feedback

Content elements	User response keywords (word frequency)
Brand Story	Temperature (83), storytelling (76)
Process demonstration	Very special (68), attentive (59)
craftsmanship	Feeling of craftsmanship (72), persistence (51)
visual style	Good looking (63), textured (48)
Material Description	Genuine leather (40), thick (36)
Customized services	Very sweet (42), sincere (35)

The brand narrative strategy has, to a certain extent, succeeded in stimulating the emotional resonance of users, especially in the "brand story" and "process" show, and consumers show a high degree of acceptance and recognition.

Positive Impact of Brand Narrative on Recommendation Intention

In the multiple linear regression analysis, using brand narrative quality (including brand story length, plot richness, degree of emotionality of narrative language, etc.) as the independent variable, and the behavioural variable of consumers' willingness to recommend as the dependent variable, the following significant relationship was obtained (Figure 5). The regression coefficients of the influence of different brand content elements on consumers' willingness to recommend are shown. Among them, the coefficient of influence of brand narrative quality on willingness to recommend is 0.534 ($p < 0.01$), indicating that it has the greatest influence on consumers' willingness to recommend; compared with it, the coefficient of visual presentation quality is 0.311, and the influence of the number of user evaluations is relatively small, which is 0.278. It can be seen that, in the content dissemination environment of E-commerce platforms, narrative expression has become a core variable that influences brand cognition and consumer behaviour. Core variables of consumer behaviour. This is an important signal of a strategy upgrade for leather carving brands that traditionally rely on physical display.

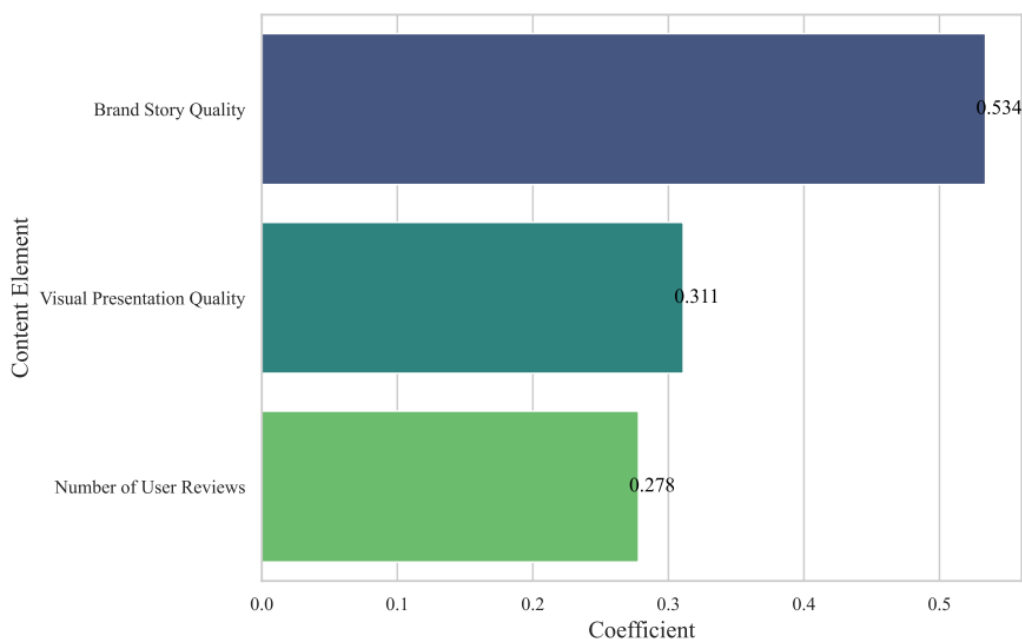


Figure 5. Regression coefficient plot of brand content elements and consumer recommendation intention

Problems and Optimisation Paths in Brand Communication

Although some brands have shown good communication ability on the platform, they are still facing some general problems: homogenization of expression content: many brands have copied and imitated copywriting and image styles and lack of uniqueness; lack of depth in brand narrative: some

brands only stay in the narrative template of "artisan + handmade" and fail to build brand cultural imagery effectively; weak user participation mechanism: although the E-commerce platform has interactive functions, most brands fail to systematically operate user feedback and re-communication paths [33]. The brand narrative lacks depth: some brands only stay in the narrative template of "artisan + handmade", failing to effectively build the brand's cultural imagery; weak user participation mechanism: although the E-commerce platform has an interactive function, most of the brands fail to systematize the operation of the user feedback and re-communication path [34]. Therefore, this paper suggests that leather carving art brands should focus on the following optimization directions in the subsequent communication practice: digging deep into the brand's cultural genes: from the regional culture, non-heritage elements, personal experience, and other directions to strengthen the brand's narrative foundation; multi-media integration of communication paths: combined with short videos, live broadcasts and user UGC content, to achieve multi-channel three-dimensional brand communication; build a sense of community for the brand users: to enhance the participation and feedback mechanism of the user's community of fans in the comment area. The participation and feedback mechanism of the fan community enhances the brand's emotional identity. In summary, the results of this part of the study not only verify the importance of building cultural narratives and visual styles for leather carving brands on E-commerce platforms but also reveal the multidimensional structure of consumers' cognitive mechanisms and differences in preferences, which lay a solid empirical foundation for the next conclusions and strategic recommendations.

CONCLUSION

This paper takes leather carving as the research object, focuses on its branding strategy and consumer cognition mechanism on the E-commerce platform, and, through the empirical research method combining content analysis, questionnaire survey, and in-depth interview, systematically reveals the construction logic and user response mode of the contemporary handicrafts brand in the context of digital communication. The main conclusions of the study are as follows: firstly, the communication content of the current leather carving brand on the E-commerce platform has gradually gotten rid of the single product display mode and shifted to a multi-dimensional brand expression path. The study shows that brands generally adopt the three core strategies of unifying visual style, strengthening brand story expression, and displaying craftsmanship on the page content, which effectively enhances brand recognition and consumers' emotional connection. Among them, the "brand story" module plays a key role in enhancing brand temperature and cultural connotation. Secondly, consumers' cognitive structure of leather carving brands is multidimensional and complex. Through the factor analysis of the questionnaire data, this paper identifies four key cognitive dimensions: craftsmanship

perception, cultural identity, aesthetic preference, and trust recommendation. The consumer group shows obvious segmentation characteristics, including three categories: design-oriented, cultural identity, and price-sensitive. This division of perception and preference provides the basis for precise positioning and differentiated communication. Again, from the interactive relationship between content strategy and user behaviour, the quality of brand narrative has a significant positive impact on consumers' willingness to recommend, and high-quality cultural expression and craftsmanship can effectively enhance users' trust and loyalty. In addition, there is a significant synergistic effect between user-generated content (UGC) and branded original content, indicating that in the platform ecology, a two-way interactive communication mechanism is particularly crucial for the construction of craft brands. Finally, the study also points out the salient problems that exist in the current communication practice of leather craft brands on E-commerce platforms: the convergence of content expression, the lack of narrative depth, and the weak mechanism of user participation, which limit the further deepening of the brand image and the enhancement of user stickiness. Therefore, in the future, brand building should pay more attention to the construction of content differentiation, in-depth shaping of cultural imagery, and the systematic operation of platform user relations, to adapt to the evolving communication logic and consumer psychology under the E-commerce ecology.

Although this study has constructed a relatively complete analytical framework through multi-source data, there are still some limitations. First, the research sample mainly focuses on active brands on mainstream E-commerce platforms and does not yet cover the communication practices of marginal or start-up handicraft brands. Future research can further expand the sample scope and increase the comparative analysis of multi-level brand ecology. Secondly, the consumer data is based on questionnaires, which are representative but lack longitudinal tracking research on the subsequent impact of consumer behaviour. The dynamic process of the formation mechanism of brand influence can be explored in depth through user behaviour data and long-term tracking surveys. Meanwhile, the differences in content dissemination mechanisms and algorithmic logic of different E-commerce platforms are also worth further comparison, to improve the systematic strategy model of leather carving artwork brands in multi-platform communication scenarios.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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