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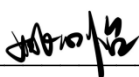
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The qualification work contains the results of independent research.

The use of ideas, results, and texts of other authors is properly referenced.

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ABSTRACT

Yao XinYi. Transformation of the Visual Identity of Traditional Brands under the Influence of Youth Subculture (Case Study of the "Hengshun" Brand). — Manuscript.

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This thesis examines intergenerational dialogue practice among Chinese time-honored brands through design innovation, drawing on existing Generation-Z subculture studies. As the post-1995 and post-2000 cohorts have become the core force of domestic youth consumption, many long-established heritage brands still carry decades-old visual systems and communication logics that no longer match young users' cultural expression habits. Taking the century-old Zhenjiang-based Hengshun Aged Vinegar as its primary case, this work identifies two persistent operational constraints — overused aging visual symbols that fail to gain organic social media attention, and a rigid single-dimensional narrative structure limited to official brewing history introductions — and cross-analyzes these limits with field-collected consumption behaviour data from 217 Gen-Z respondents in Zhenjiang and Changzhou, to clarify the specific mismatch between the brand's existing output and young users' actual aesthetic and emotional expectations. On this basis, the thesis puts forward a targeted "subcultural translation" design strategy in three actionable dimensions: deconstructing intangible heritage craftsmanship details such as aged vinegar's colour gradient, pottery fermentation jar texture and seasonal sun-drying rhythm, then reconfiguring these elements into modular visual assets adapted to short-video and social media viewing logic; introducing context-appropriate internet meme elements that respect the brand's cultural dignity, and developing the serialized daily content

project 365 Days in the Vinegar Brewery to refresh brand identity and redesign offline store interactive experience; building an open user co-creation workflow that invites Gen-Z users to submit scenario-based usage ideas and peripheral design drafts, turning passive audiences into active participants in the brand's contemporary meaning construction. The findings confirm that effective youth-oriented transformation for time-honored brands does not end with superficial logo or packaging facelifts. Its core lies in negotiating a sustainable balance between the brand's inherited "cultural solemnity" and Gen-Z-recognized "expressive playfulness", while non-utilitarian, life-embedded brand narratives trigger far more genuine emotional resonance and voluntary word-of-mouth sharing than forced promotional engagement. The operational design framework developed in this research can be adapted by other time-honored heritage brands facing similar challenges in the modern visual reinterpretation of traditional cultural assets.

Keywords: Generation Z; Subculture; Time-honored Brand; Brand Image; Hengshun Aged Vinegar

INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the research: By analyzing the case of Hengshun Aged Vinegar, this paper intends to provide theoretical foundations and practical references for time-honored brands to realize cultural inheritance and innovative development in the new-consumption era. It also offers implications for similar traditional brands seeking brand upgrading to connect with Generation-Z consumers.

Purpose of the research: Against the wave of intergenerational shifts in the consumer market, Generation Z has gradually emerged as the major consumer force. Its distinctive consumption philosophies and sub-cultural aesthetic characteristics are profoundly reshaping the commercial landscape. As treasures of traditional culture, time-honored brands are generally confronted with the dilemma of disconnection between their conventional images and the youth market. As a Chinese time-honored brand with more than 180 years of history, Hengshun Aged Vinegar boasts

remarkable brand value yet suffers from outdated visual symbols and insufficient technological creativity in its brand image. From the perspective of Generation-Z subculture, this study takes the brand upgrading of Hengshun as a typical case to analyze its current status and practical dilemmas, and explore feasible youth-oriented transformation paths for traditional brands.

To achieve this purpose, the **following objectives** are set:

1. Excavation of Hengshun's Brand Cultural Resources and Construction of Cultural Resource Spectrum.
2. Analysis of Existing Communication Problems of Hengshun Brand and Clarification of Core Demands and Orientation for Brand Image Design
3. Construction of Brand Image Design Principles and Methods Adapted to Hengshun Brand and Generation-Z Subculture
4. Conception of Multi-dimensional Brand Image Design Practice for Hengshun Brand
5. Verification of Communication Effects of Design Achievements and Discussion on Sustainable Optimization Strategies

Object of the research –The object of the research is the brand-image renewal practice of time-honored brands represented by Hengshun Aged Vinegar under the background of Generation-Z consumption. It focuses on the disconnection between traditional time-honored brand images and young consumer groups, as well as the whole process of brand-image design transformation driven by subculture theory.

Subject of the research – The subject of the research is the internal logical relationship between Generation-Z subcultural aesthetic characteristics and the youth-oriented transformation of time-honored-brand images. This study explores how to translate intangible-cultural-heritage symbolic resources of Hengshun into contemporary visual language via “subcultural translation”, and discusses the balance mechanism between “cultural solemnity” and “expressive entertainment” in brand-image design for time-honored brands.

Chronological framework of the research –The research covers the development period of Hengshun brand for more than 180 years from its founding to the present, and focuses on the consumption context of Generation-Z in China from 2020 to 2026, when Generation-Z has gradually become the major consumer force in the new-consumption market.

Territorial framework of the research – The territorial framework centers on Zhenjiang, Jiangsu Province — the origin of Zhenjiang Aged Vinegar and the location of Hengshun brand. It mainly takes Hengshun’s offline experience stores in Xijin Ferry scenic area as the typical research site, and takes Chinese domestic Generation-Z consumer groups as the target research population.

Research methods: This study adopts multiple research methods. Literature research is applied to sort out literatures on time-honored-brand rejuvenation, Generation-Z consumption characteristics and subculture theory. The case-study method takes Hengshun Aged Vinegar as a typical case and conducts field observation and photograph-taking of Hengshun offline stores, packaging products and cultural-creative derivatives. Comparative analysis is carried out by referring to excellent domestic and foreign brand-rejuvenation cases including Holiland × Light and Night, colorgram × The Powerpuff Girls and Longmen Grottoes stamp-collecting brochure for practical experience. Furthermore, theoretical deduction is used to put forward the “subcultural translation” design strategy on the basis of subculture theory and complete the schematic conception of brand-image upgrading.

Practical significance of the research: This research puts forward operable design strategies for Hengshun brand to realize youth-oriented brand-image upgrading. It provides referable ideas for other time-honored brands to carry out contemporary transformation of traditional cultural

symbols and realize intergenerational dialogue with Generation-Z consumers. The proposed “subcultural translation” strategy can guide brand packaging, offline store space design and cultural-creative product development of similar traditional brands.

Publications on the topic (if any): No

Structure and scope of the thesis.

The work consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusions, a list of references (__ items), and an illustration album (__ items). The main body of the research comprises ... pages, the total volume with appendices is ... pages.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE ISSUE. RESEARCH METHODS

1.1. Review of the Literature

1. Research Status in China

Domestic academia has conducted abundant studies on the visual upgrading of time-honored brands. From the perspectives of symbol reconstruction and national-trend design, scholars explore the renewal paths for traditional corporate visual identity systems and pay attention to the influences of Generation-Z consumption preferences on visual design. In the new consumption era, there is a deep integration of the China-Chic revival and the experience economy. Representative cases include the IP visual renewal of White Rabbit candy and the national-trend pop-up stores of Neiliansheng, focusing on IP-driven cultural-creative development and offline-scene innovation respectively. Most existing achievements concentrate on superficial visual transformations such as packaging and IP derivatives, while few studies apply youth-subculture theories to the VI systems of time-honored brands. Literature concerning Hengshun mainly discusses its brand revitalization and packaging innovation, yet rarely analyzes the transformation mechanism of its visual identity system from the aesthetic logic of youth subculture. On the whole, domestic researchers have recognized the shaping effect of youth subculture on traditional brands, but feasible VI optimization strategies based on specific cases remain insufficient, which leaves room for this research.

(1) Regulations for the Protection of Domestic Time-honored Brands

Numerous domestic policy documents have been issued to guide time-honored brands in pursuing inheritance and innovation, encouraging them to tap traditional cultural resources and carry out brand-visual

revitalization in line with contemporary aesthetic trends. Scholars discuss policy orientations and explore how institutional norms balance the protection of time-honored-brand trademarks and intangible-cultural-heritage craftsmanship with brand visual innovation, defining the compliance boundaries for visual iteration while preserving core cultural connotations. Existing studies mostly focus on policy interpretation and macro-industrial development. Few implement regulatory requirements into concrete design practices of visual identity systems, and researches interpreting policy implementation from the perspective of youth subculture are also scarce.

(2) Renewal Paths of Visual Identity Systems for Traditional Brands

The global retail industry is growing rapidly. To survive in the fierce commercial competition, business owners need to create new ideas and innovative strategies. Creating the first best impression for customers is essential. The physical environment acts as a 'face' of a brand. It plays a vital role in delivering a brand's image to its customers. It is necessary for brands to use their store design as a marketing strategy to promote their unique brand concept and image while enhancing customers' shopping experiences. The findings provide a clue to other similar brands to consider their physical environment to convey a consistent brand image to its customers.

Domestic scholars investigate the iteration paths of visual identity (VI) systems for time-honored brands mainly from the perspectives of symbol reconstruction and national-trend design. They advocate realizing visual renewal through LOGO optimization, redesign of colors and graphics, as well as IP development. Most studies focus on superficial visual transformations such as packaging and cultural-creative products and attach importance to the modern translation of traditional

symbols. Generation Z, as true digital natives who have grown up with smartphones and social media, demonstrate distinct psychological patterns and consumption behaviors that fundamentally determine the success or failure of brand partnerships. yet few conduct systematic research combined with the aesthetic logic of youth subculture. When it comes to the expression of subcultural style, Dick Hebdige, the distinguished British cultural theorist, elaborates on subcultural theory in his seminal work *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. He re-evaluates the processes behind the emergence and incorporation of subcultures, explores the inevitability and persistence of subcultural style, and uncovers its latent value and deconstructive potential. The book also strongly refutes the claim that “subculture is dead”, emphasizing how subcultural style continuously evolves and flourishes. Existing achievements generally fail to incorporate subcultural elements including Generation-Z community culture and meme expression, and thus cannot fully respond to the diverse aesthetic demands of young groups, leaving room for further exploration of relevant design paths.

(3) Analysis of Practical Cases

Existing studies often take White Rabbit and Neiliansheng as typical samples for case analysis. White Rabbit focuses on IP-image reshaping and cultural-creative derivative development, while Neiliansheng realizes offline-scene innovation via national-trend pop-up stores, providing practical references for the visual upgrading of time-honored brands (China Economic Net). Literature related to Hengshun mostly centers on brand revitalization and packaging improvement, yet rarely analyzes the transformation mechanism of its VI system from the dimension of subculture. Overall, most case studies remain at the level of phenomenon summary, lacking reusable and implementable VI optimization strategies constructed on the basis of youth-subculture theory.

Wufangzhai(Brand Image Transformation of Time-honored Brand)

As a century-old time-honored brand, Wufangzhai has carried out systematic brand-image transformation to break the stereotype of a traditional zongzi brand. It reconstructs its visual identity system through IP-image reshaping, cross-border co-branding and interesting online narratives, and updates packaging and cultural-creative products to adapt to Generation-Z aesthetics. Nevertheless, its transformation mainly focuses on marketing communication rather than in-depth reconstruction of the VI system from youth-subculture theory, and symbolic translation remains superficial national-trend-oriented treatment.

Pop-up Store Design of Pechoin

Domestic time-honored brand Pechoin built its themed pop-up store “Pechoin-Blue-and-White Porcelain”. It extracts intangible-cultural-heritage blue-and-white-porcelain patterns as core visual elements, applying the main visuals to spatial installations, limited-edition packages and cultural-creative derivatives to build an immersive consumption scenario suitable for Generation-Z-oriented check-in and social sharing. However, the store design is limited to symbolic display, lacking subcultural-community narratives and intrinsic connections between brand visual system and youth-circle culture.

HEYTEA

Competition in the new-style tea beverage industry has shifted from the functional level to the value and emotional levels, and cross-border cultural and creative co-branding has become a core approach for brands to achieve differentiated competition and enhance brand value. As a benchmark brand in the new-style tea beverage industry, HEYTEA has formed a large-scale layout in cross-border cultural and creative co-branding. HEYTEA’s IP design focuses on transforming traditional cultural elements into contemporary visual symbols, which are deployed

across packaging, derivative merchandise and offline scene experiences. As the core carrier of co-branding communication, IP visual symbols are not only a visual integration of the brand and cultural and creative IPs, but also a crucial bridge connecting user emotions and conveying brand philosophy. Taking HEYTEA's cross-border cultural and creative co-branding practices as the research object, this paper, based on the core characteristics of the new consumption context and combined with relevant theories such as semiotics, emotional design, and brand IPization, systematically explores the reconstruction logic and implementation paths of IP visual symbols, and analyzes the internal correlation between visual symbol reconstruction and user emotional connection. This study provides theoretical support and practical references for time-honored brands and consumer brands to achieve user emotional resonance and enhance core brand competitiveness through IP visual symbol reconstruction, while enriching relevant research on brand cross-border co-branding and IP visual communication in the new consumption context.

2. Foreign Research Status

(1) Relevant Regulations for the Protection of Foreign Time-honored and Heritage Brands

Foreign countries mainly rely on trademark law and design patent systems to protect the intellectual property rights of heritage brands, focusing on the legal confirmation of brand graphic symbols and classic patterns, with few special supporting regulations targeting “time-honored brands”. From the perspective of intellectual property rights, scholars explore the preservation of visual assets of heritage brands and study the modern reuse of traditional symbols within legal frameworks. Nevertheless, most relevant studies concentrate on legal confirmation, seldom combining institutional constraints with VI iterative design driven

by youth subculture, and discussions on the two-way implementation of policies and design are insufficient.

(2) Renewal Paths of Visual Identity Systems for Traditional Brands

Western youth subculture theories originated early, with the Birmingham School laying the foundation for youth-subculture research. Foreign scholars study the VI iteration of heritage brands and attach importance to design strategies such as subcultural symbol appropriation and retro-style reconstruction as well as guerrilla retail. They advocate injecting visual languages of street culture, punk and other subcultures into brand identity systems. Existing researches focus on symbol appropriation and community identity construction yet mostly take fashion brands as research objects. Few systematic discussions are conducted on balancing historical genes and subcultural aesthetics for local heritage consumer brands. Relevant VI renewal paths tend to be marketing-oriented, and summarized design methodologies are relatively fragmented.

According to an investigation and analysis on the brand upgrading of South Korean Makgeolli brands, visual differentiation strategies of container and label design were explored from the dimensions of flavor and raw materials to cater to consumers' segmented preferences. To maintain the consistency of brand visual identity, the shape and base hue of containers remain unified. Within the same product line, the color of containers as well as the form and color of label illustrations are adjusted in accordance with product classification criteria. On this basis, eye-tracking experiments were conducted to analyze consumers' visual responses.

The research results reveal that Gen Z consumers participating in the eye-tracking experiments prioritize the cap color of differentiated container designs and variations in label illustration styles, which serve as intuitive

visual perception advantages. In contrast, design elements with fixed colors and shapes are quickly processed by consumers with short gaze durations. Experimental data verify that illustrations and typography on labels deliver visual information more effectively than container forms. The analysis indicates that when illustrations carry product classification information, consumers comprehend the information faster than they do with plain text. If classification information is absent from illustrations, consumers need additional fixation on textual content, leading to a marked increase in information recognition time.

(3) Analysis of Practical Cases

Foreign academic researches on subcultural brand upgrading mainly focus on trendy fashion brands, with typical cases centered on subculture-oriented offline retail and visual system reconstruction. These studies prioritize the integration of rebellious, personalized and trendy subcultural aesthetics into brand visual design and spatial scene creation, forming mature brand renewal logic for contemporary youth markets. Nevertheless, relevant research samples are concentrated in the fashion industry, lacking targeted exploration of food heritage brands, with few universal strategies applicable to Eastern time-honored brand VI upgrading.

Comme des Garçons Guerrilla Stores

Comme des Garçons Guerrilla Stores serve as a typical example of subculture intervening in offline spatial design. Abandoning the sophisticated commercial store paradigm, the brand adopts temporary, raw and non-standard spatial visual forms. Through minimalist and dilapidated scene language, it conveys the rebellious and anti-mainstream spiritual core of subculture, breaks the visual norms of traditional retail spaces, and provides pioneering ideas for the youth-oriented and differentiated transformation of brands' offline visual identity.

Heaven by Marc Jacobs

Heaven by Marc Jacobs takes the overall reconstruction of the visual system as its core approach and deeply absorbs Y2K retro trends and punk subcultural elements. The brand reshapes its complete visual system by applying high-saturation color clashes, exaggerated graffiti graphics and retro street symbols. It weakens the stereotyped mature image of the classic brand, connects with Generation-Z consumers with aesthetic language exclusive to youth circles, and realizes the in-depth integration of trendy subculture and the brand's VI system.

Synthesizing existing domestic and foreign studies, domestic research on the visual upgrading of time-honored brands mostly focuses on national-trend symbol reconstruction and practical case analysis, and explores brand revitalization paths in combination with local cases such as White Rabbit and Neiliansheng while attaching importance to the impacts of Generation-Z preferences on VI systems. Nevertheless, researches applying youth-subculture theories to the visual identity renovation of time-honored brands are insufficient, and feasible optimization strategies remain limited. With well-established subculture theories, foreign studies take fashion brands including Comme des Garçons and Heaven by Marc Jacobs as samples to investigate subcultural symbol appropriation and pop-up spatial design, which offers references for brand visual innovation. However, their research subjects are mainly concentrated in the fashion industry with few food-oriented heritage-brand cases, so relevant experience cannot be directly transferred to Eastern traditional brands, leaving research space for this paper.

1.2. Research Methods

(1) Literature Research Method: This paper sorts out domestic and foreign literature concerning protection policies for time-honored brands, the renewal of visual identity systems and youth subculture. It summarizes

existing research achievements and deficiencies, establishes the theoretical foundation of the paper, and clarifies the internal logical relationship between youth subculture and the VI renovation of time-honored brands.

(2) Field-investigation Method: Field investigations are carried out on the offline stores, thematic exhibitions of Hengshun and pop-up spaces of other time-honored brands. The spatial forms and visual presentation of brand symbols are recorded to collect first-hand practical data for the paper and identify the existing problems in brand visual communication intuitively.

(3) Questionnaire-survey Method: Questionnaires are distributed among Generation-Z groups to collect consumers' perceptions, aesthetic preferences and practical demands for Hengshun's brand visual image. It obtains the real attitudes of young groups towards the VI renovation of time-honored brands and provides data support for this research.

(4) Case-analysis Method: Taking Wufangzhai, Pechoin, Comme des Garçons Guerrilla Stores and Heaven by Marc Jacobs as analytical cases, this paper compares and analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of visual transformation and pop-up store design of domestic and foreign brands. By drawing on replicable experience, it explores the transformation path of Hengshun's visual identity system from the perspective of youth subculture and offers references for the innovation of time-honored brands.

Conclusions to Chapter 1

This section systematically sorts out domestic and overseas research on time-honored brand visual upgrading under youth-subculture perspective. Domestic studies discuss policy guarantees, VI renewal approaches and practical cases, focusing on national-trend-driven visual transformation represented by White Rabbit and Neiliansheng. However, most researches stay at superficial visual modification, lacking feasible VI

optimization strategies combined with youth-subculture theories for time-honored brands such as Hengshun. Foreign research benefits from early-developed subculture theories and analyzes typical fashion-oriented cases including Comme des Garçons Guerrilla Stores and Heaven by Marc Jacobs, yet seldom involves food-related heritage brands, making their experience hard to apply to Eastern time-honored brands. On this basis, this paper adopts literature research, field investigation, questionnaire survey and case-analysis methods to carry out further research, filling the gaps in existing studies.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF DESIGN THEORY AND PRACTICE

2.1.The current development status of the Hengshun brand

1. Current Situation of Hengshun’ s Brand Visual Image

When it comes to Zhenjiang, the first impression is the world-famous Zhenjiang Balsamic Vinegar, followed by the timeless folk legend The Flooding of Jinshan Temple. Over thousands of years of vicissitudes, the regional cultures represented by balsamic vinegar and Jinshan Temple have shaped the unique urban heritage and humanistic temperament of Zhenjiang.Zhenjiang Hengshun Vinegar ranks first among China’s Four Famous Vinegars, and Zhenjiang is the first city awarded the title of “China’s Vinegar Capital”. As a historically-classic industry of the city, Hengshun serves as a powerful engine driving Zhenjiang’s economic and social development. Possessing five distinctive characteristics — rich color, aromatic fragrance, sharp sourness, mellow taste and thick texture, Zhenjiang vinegar boasts a long-standing history of more than 1,700 years.

The brand value of Hengshun is remarkable, reaching 45.892 billion RMB, which shines among numerous domestic brands, second only to Moutai.

As a Chinese time-honored brand with a history of over 180 years, Hengshun Vinegar presents its current brand visual image as a scroll integrating historical heritage and modern fashion. Its existing LOGO enjoys certain recognizability, with robust yet primitive-styled font. Hengshun's current official visual identity system builds its core colour palette around restrained, stately hues — primarily dark brown and warm golden yellow. This colour selection directly references two highly recognizable visual traits tied to Zhenjiang aromatic vinegar's production tradition: the deep, translucent tone of well-aged vinegar stored in pottery jars for years, and the warm golden glow of sun-dried vinegar liquid under summer daylight. The palette is deliberately chosen to signal the brand's adherence to time-honoured brewing techniques and consistent, reliable product quality that local consumers in Zhenjiang have trusted for generations. In response to the gradual shift toward youth-focused consumption in the condiment market, Hengshun launched its official brand IP figure "Master Heng" several years ago; the character wears a traditional Chinese cross-collared robe with the lapel folded to the right, and the brand's classic jar and vinegar leaf motifs are subtly embedded in the embroidery on his garment and the tools he carries. A set of short comic-style illustrated scenarios was released alongside the IP, all centred around small, daily moments in the old vinegar brewery, to communicate the brand's long-standing craftsmanship spirit in a more approachable way. This attempt to combine familiar traditional cultural motifs with flat, modern illustration language has already produced visible effects in the brand's offline pop-up activities and campus promotion events, and has

effectively shortened the psychological distance between the century-old brand and younger consumer groups.

Even so, Hengshun still shows noticeable shortcomings in its current-day brand visual presentation. Its current packaging design lacks sufficient distinctiveness and shares striking similarities with those of many other time-honored condiment brands, leading to consumer confusion. Some product packages fail to fully highlight product features. For instance, Zhenjiang aromatic vinegar is Hengshun's flagship product, yet its packaging bears great resemblance to that of Hengshun's aged vinegar, making it difficult for consumers to distinguish between the two varieties. Furthermore, the 1.5-L jar gift box of Hengshun aromatic vinegar and the "Master Heng Hand-brewed Vinegar" series show similarities with packaging of some liquor brands on the market, such as the brown-toned product series of Diaoyutai. Accordingly, the pace of brand-image innovation needs to be accelerated. Conventional packaging can hardly satisfy the pursuit-of-novelty demands of some young consumers, which to some extent restricts further expansion of its market share.





2. Current Situation of Hengshun' s Offline Store Visual Design

At present, the visual design of Hengshun's offline stores reflects the integration of traditional and trendy styles. Store facades adopt grey-brick foundations paired with orange-yellow floral decorations to build a national-trend ambiance. Glass windows are printed with youth-oriented slogans such as "Travel across mountains and rivers, Hengshun is well-worth it".

Paired with red vinegar-barrel exhibits and figurine decorations, these visual components deliver striking sensory impressions and prompt visitors to take photos for social-media sharing. Available cultural-creative merchandise includes vinegar-themed fridge magnets and cartoon-style Master Heng plush dolls. Interactive stamp-collecting facilities have also been introduced to satisfy young visitors' demand for experience-oriented consumption. That said, the physical store layout still reveals tangible drawbacks. Cultural references are implemented mostly at a surface level. Auxiliary cultural-creative products suffer from serious homogenization, and experiential settings remain rather plain, lacking in-depth interactive content for visitors.



2.2.The developmental challenges facing the Hengshun brand

1.At this stage, many domestic time-honored brands are confronted with aging brand images and outdated visual identity systems, which can hardly meet the aesthetic preferences of contemporary youth groups. Against this backdrop, to realize brand revitalization and long-term development, time-honored brands need to cope with fierce market competition and address the practical dilemma of disconnection from young consumer groups.

(1) Brand-protection Dilemmas and Serious Counterfeiting and Infringement Issues.

Time-honored brands carry profound cultural memories and commercial traditions. However, with generational shifts among consumers and the digital transformation of sales channels, most time-honored brands are trapped in dilemmas including brand aging, shrinking customer groups and ineffective marketing. Finding a dynamic balance between "upholding fundamentals" and "pursuing innovation" has become the key issue for their marketing transformation. According to incomplete statistics, the total output value of counterfeit and shoddy products manufactured and sold in China ranges from 200 billion to 300 billion RMB each year, and China's time-honored brands also suffer from the impact of such counterfeits. Some time-honored enterprises attach insufficient importance to brand-related intellectual property rights and lack adequate awareness of integrity. Coupled with inadequate administrative law-enforcement measures and insufficient enforcement intensity, counterfeiting remains prominent and difficult to curb. In many cities, dozens of unauthorized stores selling Tianjin Goubuli steamed buns and Guifaxiang 18th-Street Fried Dough Twists have emerged, which seriously damages brand reputation and consumers' legitimate rights and interests.

(2) Difficulties in Brand Image Building, Inadequate Brand Communication and Insufficient Cultural Innovation.

Some Chinese time-honored brands lack sufficient awareness of brand promotion. They are incompetent at integrating promotional resources via new-media platforms such as social media, and rely excessively on word-of-mouth. Adhering to the traditional business notion that "good wine needs no bush", these brands struggle to attract consumers continuously. In practice, most time-honored brands define their

brand-cultural connotations merely based on cultural traditions and living habits of their original target markets, resulting in converged brand spirits. They tend to highlight traits such as “benevolence and harmony” and “long-standing history”. From the perspective of material culture, new-emerging well-known brands outperform them in terms of product functions, categories, appearance design and added value. Consequently, the overall brand-cultural image appears old-fashioned, lacking vitality and convenience-oriented features. Severe homogenization occurs, and the gap between these brands and consumer demands as well as contemporary trends keeps widening.

(3) Dilemmas in Brand Operation and Rigid Institutional Mechanisms of Time-honored Enterprises.

Some state-owned enterprises fail to attach adequate importance to the profound penetration and productive value of the Internet and stay alienated from the digital-economy wave. They still adopt the management modes inherited from the planned-economy era, accompanied by cumbersome internal procedures and slow market response, which gives rise to insufficient corporate vitality and restricted brand influence. State-owned time-honored enterprises represented by Hengshun are further confronted with aging brand images, weak product innovation capacity, and disconnection from the demands of young consumers. Such brands hold limited appeal for Generation-Z users, and the cognitive gap between the brands and new-generation consumer groups continues to widen. Moreover, numerous time-honored brands suffer from high homogenization in store-design elements and can hardly highlight their own distinctive features, failing to build differentiated competitive advantages. Accordingly, time-honored brands need to break the shackles of conventional business mindsets. While upholding core product quality, they should advance the youth-oriented transformation and digital

upgrading of brands and physical stores so as to rebuild market competitiveness and achieve sustainable development within the new-consumption era.

2.3. Hengshun Brand Image Analysis

As a time-honored Chinese brand with more than 180 years of development, Hengshun has built a deep-rooted cultural image among consumers relying on its core product Zhenjiang Vinegar, and has gained solid public recognition within the condiment market. Its LOGO integrates fan-shaped patterns with calligraphic characters of “Hengshun”. Simple and elegant in overall style, it takes the brand name as the core visual element, strengthening audience memory of the brand symbol and reflecting the stature of a well-established enterprise. The brand’s core philosophy “Following All Living Beings” originates from the Buddhist text Avatamsaka Sutra, which means complying with the virtuous needs of all people. Running through Hengshun’s century-long development, this value has become the essence and soul of its corporate culture, and provides internal guidance for product development and cultural communication.

Hengshun holds a long-standing solid market base and deep, generational consumer recognition across the Yangtze River Delta, but the brand faces concrete risks of gradual visual and conceptual backwardness amid the current rapid consumption upgrading wave. On one side, the group’s multi-brand expansion strategy over the past decade has diversified its overall product portfolio, but it has also created obvious communication dilution for the core flagship brand “Hengshun”. Brand building resources are scattered across dozens of sub-lines and extended product lines, which steadily erodes the main brand’s concentrated market influence. Most of its segmented product series do not develop or present distinct, scenario-specific brand identities, making it difficult for individual

SKUs to gain visual prominence among hundreds of competing condiment goods on ordinary supermarket shelves. On the other side, the brand's overall image construction still lacks sufficient tech-savvy perception for young users, and its creative output remains largely conservative within a fixed formal framework. This leaves the brand's intangible cultural value rooted in Zhenjiang's vinegar-making heritage far from fully explored and converted into market-recognizable added value. A typical example can be found in the packaging and promotion of Hengshun's fruit vinegar and medlar health vinegar series, whose visual presentation clearly fails to match their intended light, casual, youth-focused market positioning. The outer packaging of the fruit vinegar line adopts a tall, narrow box shape and colour scheme commonly seen in oral liquid health products, which immediately forms a rigid medicinal stereotype in consumers' first visual impression. Although these products follow Hengshun's consistent mature design language, they come across as outdated and tedious to young shoppers, and never deliver a convincing modern reinterpretation of the brand's core craftsmanship values. If this mismatch between product visual presentation and the brand's evolving connotation continues over the long term, it will push the brand into a visible unbalanced state that can be observed in many heritage brand cases: the brand can hardly maintain a stable balance between its traditional cultural heritage and the diversified demands of the youth market, and this structural gap will further restrict its penetration and influence among new-generation consumer groups.



Conclusions to Chapter 2

This chapter systematically sorts out the current development status and on-site operational challenges of the Hengshun brand, based on field visits to the brand's Zhenjiang heritage museum, offline retail stores and shelf observation in local supermarkets. As a representative time-honored Chinese enterprise deeply tied to Zhenjiang aromatic vinegar, Hengshun's accumulated historical heritage and considerable brand value are all rooted in the local intangible vinegar-making craftsmanship. Its existing brand visual system integrates traditional calligraphic logotypes, the classic brown-and-gold colour palette, and the self-developed "Master Heng" IP character. The brand has already launched preliminary youth-oriented attempts, including national-trend style packaging updates, experiential renovation of offline stores, photo-friendly check-in areas and interactive stamp-collecting installations.

Actual market observation and user feedback show clear operational weaknesses. Hengshun's product packaging lacks distinct visual differentiation, and shares obvious stylistic similarities with packaging designs widely used by other domestic condiment and liquor brands. Most ordinary consumers cannot tell different Hengshun vinegar product lines apart only through their outer packaging. Inside the brand's physical stores, cultural content presentation mostly stays at a superficial display level: cultural and creative derivatives follow highly homogenized development paths, on-site experiential activities barely provide deep participatory experience, and the brand's weak daily operation on youth-focused social platforms blocks stable, continuous connection with Generation-Z audiences. From a broader industry perspective, these issues are not unique to Hengshun. Many Chinese time-honored brands face overlapping common dilemmas: aging brand imagery and outdated visual identity

systems, rampant counterfeiting and intellectual property risks, insufficient new media communication capabilities, shallow cultural innovation output, rigid internal corporate structures and slow digital transformation progress.

For Hengshun itself, its long-standing core corporate philosophy “Following All Living Beings” forms the fundamental foundation of the brand’s rich cultural connotations. The group’s multi-brand expansion strategy disperses public communication resources that should be concentrated on the flagship “Hengshun” brand. Several of its mainstream product lines still retain overly conservative packaging design, which fails to translate the brand’s centuries-old craftsmanship spirit into accessible modern visual language. New innovative product lines such as fruit vinegar and medlar health vinegar carry visual outputs that clearly mismatch their light, health-focused target market positioning. This structural mismatch may push the brand into the unbalanced “brand-seesaw” state, creating persistent tension between the preservation of traditional heritage and the adaptation to new-generation consumers’ aesthetic preferences. These first-hand practical observations and on-site records provide solid empirical support for the subsequent exploration of Hengshun’s visual identity optimization strategies under the youth subculture theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN PROPOSAL

The third chapter substantiates the design proposal, outlines the prerequisites for practical implementation, etc. The title of this chapter should reflect the specific task, for example:

3.1.Idea. Concept

1.Subcultures Empower Hengshun' s Visual Upgrade

Subculture functions as a distinct cultural form within the broader sociocultural system, operating outside the dominant logic of mainstream culture. It reflects the shared set of specific values, behavioural preferences and everyday lifestyles held by clearly defined social groups. The concept first took shape in the early 20th century through the Chicago School's ethnographic studies of marginal urban communities, and has since evolved into a widely adopted analytical framework for interpreting layered, diverse social structures. These niche cultural systems carry obvious group-oriented expressive traits: young participants construct and reinforce their sense of in-group belonging through collectively recognized visual styles, shared aesthetic tastes and mutually identifiable symbolic language. Many of the subcultural trends that have gained massive popularity among Chinese Generation-Z users show natural conceptual overlap and adaptive compatibility with the inherent cultural attributes of Hengshun, the time-honored vinegar enterprise rooted in Zhenjiang. Two mutually supportive design approaches, cultural deconstruction and visual reconstruction, can be deployed to unlock the unique aesthetic potential embedded in Hengshun's existing brand symbols. As the official custodian

of the national intangible heritage of Zhenjiang aromatic vinegar brewing techniques, Hengshun cannot carry out any brand innovation that breaks away from its traditional cultural roots. The brand can advance modern-oriented visual innovation on the premise that its stable product quality and core ancient brewing craftsmanship remain completely unchanged. Designers can extract tangible visual resources from the accumulated century-old vinegar culture system and carry out secondary creative development based on these inherited materials. This type of targeted design practice directly helps narrow the long-standing perceptual gap between the century-old brand and young consumer groups.

2.Digital Reconstruction of Brand Visual Symbols

(1) Subcultural Translation Design of Colors and Regional Symbols

Targeted practical visual design work can reshape traditional cultural elements into youth-friendly subcultural outputs, through three concrete operational paths: adjusted colour matching, localized cultural symbol re-interpretation, and immersive digital interactive presentation. For the colour system, the deep, rich natural brown tone that Zhenjiang aromatic vinegar presents after years of jar storage can be paired with highly recognizable fluorescent accent shades, alongside subculture-associated colour selections including soft pink and muted lavender. This specific colour combination builds a direct visual link between the time-honoured slow brewing craftsmanship and the cyber-inspired aesthetic that Gen-Z audiences widely accept, and can be smoothly applied to construct differentiated themed scenes and interactive experience zones inside Hengshun's physical retail spaces. Visitors who step into these areas can immediately perceive the sharp but harmonious visual contrast formed by traditional heritage texture and contemporary youth trends.

Zhenjiang's local folk cultural resources provide abundant original source material for further visual adaptation. The Tale of Flooding Jinshan Temple, one of the most well-known local oral legends in the region, follows the White Snake spirit who collects precious medicinal herbs to save her mortal husband, and eventually gets drawn into the well-documented dramatic conflict with Monk Fahai at Jinshan Temple, a landmark site located right in Zhenjiang. Deeply rooted in the city's specific regional cultural background, this narrative carries strong dramatic tension and distinct romantic undertones, and retains massive untapped narrative space for subsequent creative visual reinterpretation that fits the brand's vinegar-making context.

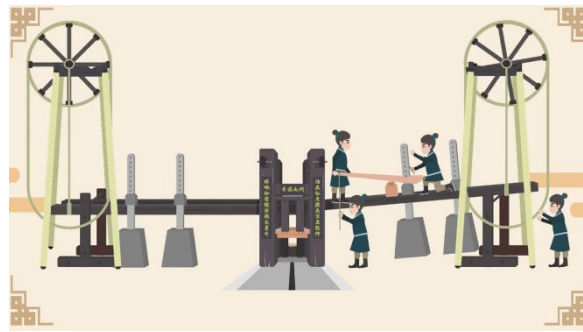
Designers can apply geometric and pixelated deconstruction to local landmark symbols including Jinshan Temple and Xijin Ferry. These reworked symbols may then be developed into patterns for IP character costumes and product packaging. Stories such as the White Snake flooding Jinshan Temple and Liu Bei's Marriage offer further creative materials. Such design choices preserve continuous cultural heritage while catering to Generation Z's aesthetic preference for tech-infused national trend styles.

(2) Digital Remodeling of Brewing Tools and Craft Symbols

Relevant design exploration can focus on the digital transformation of traditional vinegar brewing techniques and the subcultural reshaping of antique brewing tools. Digital technology empowering the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage has become one of the current research hotspots, and how to better apply virtual reality technology to the communication of intangible heritage is the key. With the rapid development of tourism, the brand image of a place is becoming an important factor to attract tourists, and the importance of public design experience as the main way of interaction between tourists and places is

becoming more and more prominent. Interactive experience design has gradually become a core trend in store space design. Against the backdrop of rapid technological development, the digital transformation of intangible cultural heritage crafts carries great significance. It not only facilitates the protection and inheritance of such crafts, but also attracts broader audiences through innovative approaches. Intangible cultural heritage handicrafts, with their unique cultural characteristics, also need to be integrated with interactive experience. Statistics show that adopting VR for ICH display helps stimulate users' positive emotions, and more than 63.64% of users agree that this method delivers a satisfying experience. Sense of realism, visual aesthetics, comfort and interactivity are the primary elements users value most in VR display. As a vital part of the intangible cultural heritage system of Zhenjiang aromatic vinegar, ancient brewing workflows contain abundant tacit knowledge that cannot be fully conveyed by written texts. Digital visual approaches help break down such barriers to information transmission. However, the digital visual presentation method of VR helps break through this limitation. Designers may create digital line drawings of intangible-heritage brewing equipment such as wooden screw presses, to precisely restore structural details, material textures and operating logic of these tools. Meanwhile, data visualization charts of brewing procedures can be generated to quantify core craft indicators including fermentation cycles and ambient temperature and humidity. Hidden brewing timelines such as solid-state layered fermentation and natural exposure under sun and dew can be converted into dynamic visual graphics and displayed on large interactive digital screens. Visitors can touch the screen to observe state changes in each fermentation phase and immerse themselves in the whole vinegar manufacturing process, witnessing the gradual evolution of vinegar color and flavor over time. This interactive digital presentation turns abstract

craftsmanship into tangible visual content and deepens audiences' understanding of the "aesthetics of time". Antique brewing tools step out of their original practical positioning. Redesigned with subcultural visual languages such as cyber and pixel styles, they become trendy visual symbols popular among young people. The reimagined visual images of these tools can be further applied to brand cultural and creative products, IP costumes and store decorations to expand communication scenarios. This process enables re-dissemination and regeneration of traditional brand symbols within youth subcultural circles. It helps Hengshun bridge the aesthetic gap between generations and maintains the vitality of intangible brewing culture among new consumers.



3.2. Project Description

1.Integrated Upgrade Design of Hengshun Stores and Cultural and Creative Products

(1) Structural Design

The upgrade of Hengshun's cultural and creative products and brand stores takes cultural translation and social reconstruction as core strategies to achieve deep integration of traditional craft narratives and youth-oriented consumption scenarios. In this context, the design of cultural and creative products, as a key link connecting local culture with tourist needs, has received increasing attention. From the perspective of spatial narrative reconstruction, store design needs to break the functional spatial

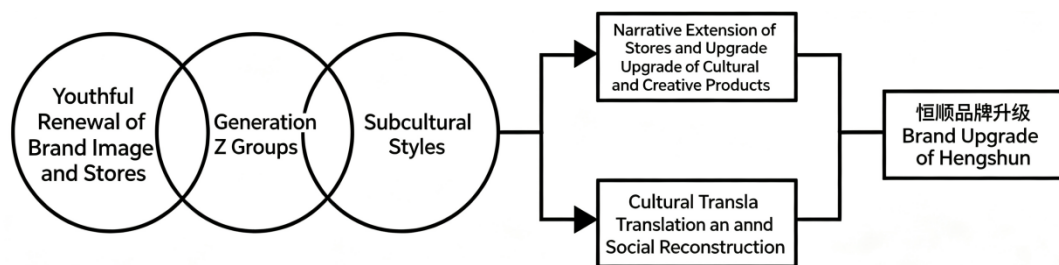
stereotypes prevalent within the condiment industry and deconstruct the intangible cultural heritage genes of Zhenjiang aromatic vinegar into a visually interactive subcultural symbol system. The overall spatial structure abandons the single layout logic of conventional condiment shops, which prioritize product shelves and treat cultural display as secondary content. Functional zones are laid out in progressive order guided by narrative threads, creating an unbroken visiting route for guests. This route unfolds alongside the chronological sequence of vinegar-making: starting from raw-material sourcing, moving through fermentation processes and ending with ageing and storage. Following the spatial rhythm, visitors gradually grasp the extended time-based logic behind vinegar production.

Designers can recreate time-honoured Zhenjiang aromatic vinegar brewing procedures using subcultural-style illustrations. Dynamic digital screens reveal the subtle aesthetic details behind bacterial fermentation. The IP figure “Vinegar Workshop Fairy” appears across the entire store environment. Her cyberpunk-themed costume patterns draw on architectural details of Jinshan Temple and story motifs taken from The Tale of Flooding Jinshan Temple. Gradient neon lighting lends these motifs fresh expressive power for traditional craft heritage.

An AR-driven brewing workshop area can be incorporated within the layout. Visitors scan QR codes to trigger simulated virtual vinegar-making sequences and gain hands-on understanding of the well-known ageing principle “sun exposure in summer and ice harvesting in winter” via interactive game tasks. The design prioritises embodied sensory perception instead of one-sided cultural instruction. Spatial layout accounts for overlapping visitor needs: sightseeing, hands-on experience and social-media check-in activities. Zones maintain visual links with one

another. Partitions and adjusted lighting establish spatial distinction and avoid excessive visual noise.

Applied digital design technology helps convert the intangible craftsmanship of Zhenjiang vinegar heritage into tangible, shareable cultural capital that young users are willing to spread across social platforms, and builds a new brand recognition framework that reinterprets traditional heritage through contemporary visual and interactive forms. The redesigned multi-layered spatial layout of Hengshun's offline brand store deliberately lowers the priority of direct product sales, and allocates more display and experience space to deliver continuous, consistent cultural storytelling. In this setup, the physical store no longer functions only as a retail point, but acts as a three-dimensional immersive medium that conveys the full, unbroken narrative of local vinegar-making culture.



(2) Visual and Graphical Solutions

When integrating different on-site functional scenes, Hengshun's renovated brick-and-mortar store spaces can operate as dedicated venues that generate subculture-oriented social content for young visitors. Following the Generation-Z consumption logic that defines "experience itself as effective communication", the design team develops a set of highly recognizable installations tailored for social media sharing. These works include a full-size matrix wall assembled from glowing translucent vinegar jars, and a dedicated holographic projection zone themed around the brand's new "Vinegar Workshop Fairy" IP. VR interactive modules are

also introduced in this zone to support real-time playful exchanges between visitors and the virtual IP character. A series of colloquial, meme-compatible catchphrases, including “Take your time — good vinegar takes 180 days to brew!” and “Vinegar brewing anti-involution expert”, are developed under the unified IP framework, to lower the threshold for visitors to produce spontaneous user-generated content and drive organic word-of-mouth communication.

For product development, limited-edition co-branded vinegar-flavored ice cream with national comic IP can be launched. The design taps deeply into Zhenjiang’s local cultural heritage and integrates the folk tale of the Flooding of Jinshan Mountain, a core regional memory of Zhenjiang, into the visual system of the exclusive “Vinegar Workshop Fairy” IP. In constructing this IP visual system, systematic subcultural stylization is carried out for the “Vinegar Workshop Fairy”. Rooted in both the Flooding of Jinshan Mountain legend and the intangible heritage of Hengshun aromatic vinegar, the design abandons the stereotyped gentle aesthetic of traditional Chinese figures. Subcultural visual languages such as cyberpunk and pixel deconstruction are introduced. Architectural silhouettes of Jinshan Temple and ripples of river water are abstracted and reconstructed into costume patterns, accessories and exclusive visual symbols for the character. Combined with the core trait of vinegar — flavor formation through long-term aging, the IP builds a distinctive youth-oriented persona with trendy contrasting neon colors, echoing the cyber visual system of the store.



Instead of a single illustration, the complete IP visual system forms an extendable and reusable graphic library adaptable to product packaging, spatial installations, stamp-collecting brochures and cultural derivatives. It helps realize the youth-oriented visual translation of local traditional culture by combining Zhenjiang myths and Hengshun vinegar culture in subcultural aesthetic forms. Architectural patterns of Jinshan Temple and narrative elements of the legend are interwoven with vinegar brewing

culture, turning traditional condiments into cultural co-branded carriers. Subcultural illustrations depicting ancient tales and brewing techniques are printed on packaging materials. Blind boxes, digital stickers and other digital derivatives themed around the IP persona are also developed. Drawing on colorgram's IP co-branding case with The Powerpuff Girls, visual symbols combining the Flooding of Jinshan Mountain story are applied to bottle bodies and outer packaging, breaking the dull and old-fashioned visual impression of conventional vinegar packaging.



For the development of the stamp-collecting booklet, this study draws on the story-driven check-in concept from Luoyang Travel Book: Longmen Grottoes and develops a custom-made publication: Zhenjiang Aromatic Vinegar Brewing Tour Stamp Booklet. Centered on the complete chronological sequence of traditional Hengshun vinegar production, the booklet translates each brewing step — raw-material handling, yeast starter preparation, fermentation and ageing storage — into themed illustrations and bespoke stamp motifs. As visitors follow the store circulation route and experience each craft scene, they may stamp the corresponding seal. The inner pages are decorated with subcultural illustrations, depicting the Flooding of Jinshan Mountain tale alongside explanations of vinegar craftsmanship, and visually linking local legends with intangible heritage techniques. Combined with the mechanism of “stamp collection and UGC content solicitation”, consumption behavior becomes the accumulation of

community identity markers. This operation model of “scenario-based products and socialized scenes” reaches young consumers within subcultural circles. The user co-creation mechanism strengthens brand recognition and upgrades stores from sales terminals into cultural communities. Ultimately, it achieves the reconstruction of brand value with “innovation rooted in tradition”. While preserving the cultural solemnity of intangible heritage craftsmanship, the brand successfully attracts Generation Z consumers.

2.Subcultural Translation from Cultural and Academic Dimensions

(1) Structural Design

The structural design for the integrated upgrade of Hengshun’s stores and cultural and creative products centers on constructing subcultural scenarios and breaks the inherent paradigms of exhibition spaces for time-honored brands. Different from conventional shops focusing on commodity display and sales, the design integrates cultural narration, social communication and youth experience logic to restructure the spatial order and functional hierarchy of stores. Abandoning flat single display layouts, it adopts a layered and progressive experience framework. The intangible heritage brewing system of Zhenjiang aromatic vinegar is divided into interconnected experience units, forming a closed loop of “cultural introduction — immersive experience — interactive participation — social output”.

From the academic perspective of subcultural translation, spatial structure is not merely a carrier for visual decorations but a structural medium for cultural translation. The space is partitioned into cultural exhibition, digital interaction, IP check-in and cultural creation zones. It adapts to Generation Z’s fragmented and scenario-based cultural reception, transforming solemn intangible heritage narratives into participatory and

shareable experience segments and reducing the didactic nature of cultural communication.

The store circulation route matches young visitors' check-in habits. Brewing knowledge and Zhenjiang local legends are embedded into visiting paths, enabling visitors to perceive Hengshun vinegar culture actively during touring, interaction and social photography. This structural innovation transforms the space from a sales venue into a subcultural social field. It offers spatial support for the implementation of IP graphics and cultural and creative design, and establishes a fundamental framework for intangible heritage to integrate into youth circles.

(2) Visual and Graphical Solutions

Subcultural translation at the visual and graphic level focuses on the extraction, deconstruction and recreation of cultural symbols. This study extracts core visual elements from Hengshun's brewing techniques and Zhenjiang Jinshan culture, and recodes them according to the aesthetic features of youth subculture to build a visually symbolic system with subcultural recognizability. The "Vinegar Workshop Fairy" IP draws character imagery from the legend of the Flooding of Jinshan Mountain. It integrates subcultural visual languages including cyberpunk and trendy graffiti to form memorable graphic figures, which are applied to packaging, cultural and creative products and in-store visual installations. Meanwhile, a stamp-collecting booklet is developed along the timeline of brewing procedures. Craft knowledge is converted into a series of graphic stamps and narrative illustrations. Relying on circle communication mechanisms such as check-in activities and UGC sharing, the design encourages young groups to participate in cultural reproduction. Lightweight visual narratives ultimately realize the contemporary translation of traditional culture.

3.3. Practical Implementation

Software Design: Use Photoshop for graphic design of IP images and packaging, Illustrator for subcultural illustration and stamp pattern creation, After Effects for dynamic display of brewing process and IP animation, and Adobe XD for constructing interactive prototype of the vinegar-brewing stamp-collecting booklet.

Data Processing: Use Excel to sort and count questionnaire data of Generation Z consumers and literature research materials, and use Tableau to generate quantitative analysis charts including respondent demographic distribution and preference comparison of visual styles.

Presentation Form: Output static visual works (for packaging printing, store wall installations and printed stamp-collecting brochures), dynamic animation (for store holographic projection, VR interaction and online social media communication), and interactive prototypes (for AR experience of Hengshun offline stores and cultural and creative derivative preview).

Testing and Optimization

Two groups of professional representatives — scholars engaged in long-term research on Zhenjiang vinegar intangible heritage, and frontline visual communication design practitioners — review the complete project through three fixed evaluation dimensions: cultural authenticity, visual design reasonableness, and subcultural expression delivery effect. They provide targeted adjustment suggestions covering the appropriateness of subcultural element integration, and the factual accuracy of visual interpretation for different stages of the traditional brewing workflow. Experience-based usability trials are then carried out with three participant groups: young on-site visitors at Hengshun's physical outlets, local Generation-Z condiment consumers, and undergraduate and graduate students majoring in cultural and creative design. Structured questionnaires and short semi-structured interviews collect first-hand feedback on

potential comprehension barriers in the design, overall visual appeal, and users' actual willingness to share related content on their personal social media accounts. The collected data shows that young tourist participants show obvious preference for the IP-themed photo check-in zones, while design-major student participants focus more on the internal logical consistency of the entire graphic symbol system.

Feedback and conclusions collected from expert reviews and user trials are directly used to guide targeted revisions to the visual details of the “Vinegar Workshop Fairy” IP and product packaging motifs. The store's internal spatial narrative route is adjusted and optimized to deliver a smoother, more logical visiting experience for users, and the illustration content and scenario coverage inside the on-site stamp-collecting booklet is also expanded accordingly. All these revisions strictly preserve the solemn and respectful nature of intangible heritage culture, while making the final design output better align with Generation-Z's daily aesthetic tastes and actual social communication expectations.

Conclusions to Chapter 3

This chapter lays out the design thinking, project framework, practical workflows and testing setup for the subcultural-translation-driven integrated upgrade of Hengshun's retail spaces and cultural-creative outputs. Grounded in youth-subculture theories and semiotic symbol-deconstruction thinking, this work explores how subculture can revitalise the visual identity of time-honored brands. It advocates two complementary working methods: cultural deconstruction and visual reconstruction. Local Zhenjiang cultural assets and vinegar-brewing intangible-heritage materials are repurposed for digital secondary creation, narrowing the aesthetic divide between Hengshun's established brand image and Generation-Z audiences.

Under the project framework, the research builds a full-fledged design system covering spatial-structure planning and visual-graphic outputs. Spatial-structure planning re-envision the physical store as a social space shaped by subcultural values. Moving past sales-centred layouts typical for condiment retailers, it sets up tiered, step-by-step visitor routes mapped onto the vinegar-making chronological sequence. Divided into diverse interactive functional areas, the space delivers a complete experience cycle of “cultural introduction — immersive experience — interactive participation — social output”, shifting rigid one-sided cultural instruction toward visitor-centred embodied experience. Visual-graphic work conducts subcultural reinterpretation of cultural symbols; drawing on The Tale of Flooding Jinshan Mountain, the “Vinegar Workshop Fairy” IP is shaped with cyberpunk and pixel-based stylistic features. This adaptable graphic system applies to packaging, in-site installations and cultural-creative derivatives, while a purpose-built stamp-collecting booklet transforms brewing craft knowledge into sequential illustrations and stamp motifs. Backed by user-generated content and check-in mechanisms, the design invites young audiences to take part in cultural reproduction and realises brand-value reshaping guided by the ethos of “innovation rooted in tradition”.

This practical implementation section clearly defines the specific software tools, data processing workflows and diversified presentation formats for all final design outputs. Static graphic posters, short looped dynamic animations, and functional interactive experience prototypes are produced in parallel, to construct multi-sensory cultural experiences that cover visual, auditory and participatory dimensions. The full design process also reserves space for multiple rounds of usability testing and targeted iterative optimization. Expert evaluation sessions verify the cultural authenticity of the scheme’s heritage-related content and the

overall visual rationality of the design system, while user testing sessions systematically collect first-hand usage feedback from the Generation-Z target consumer groups. Based on the evaluation results, details of IP graphics, packaging patterns and spatial circulation logic can be revised continuously. In general, this chapter forms a complete design logic chain from theoretical conception, scheme construction to practical production and testing. It explores a feasible path for time-honored brands to activate intangible heritage culture and achieve intergenerational dialogue through subculture-oriented visual design.

CONCLUSIONS

This research focuses on the youth-oriented visual identity transformation of the time-honored brand Hengshun under the influence of Generation Z subculture, aiming to resolve the disconnection between its traditional brand image and young-group aesthetic demands, and realize intangible-heritage inheritance, youth-group communication and brand commercial upgrading via subcultural translation design.

The study adopts five research methods: literature review, field investigation, questionnaire survey, case analysis and design practice. It systematically sorts out Hengshun's brand resources including Zhenjiang-vinegar-brewing intangible heritage craftsmanship and local Zhenjiang folk-legend culture, integrates youth subculture theory, semiotic symbol-deconstruction theory and brand-rejuvenation theories for time-honored enterprises, and puts forward core design principles balancing “cultural solemnity” and “expressive entertainingness”.

In practical terms, multi-dimensional integrated upgrading solutions for Hengshun's offline stores and cultural-creative products are

accomplished. At the structural-design level, the offline store is reconstructed as a subcultural social field, constructing a layered progressive visiting circulation following the vinegar-brewing timeline and forming the closed-loop experience of “cultural introduction-immersive experience-interactive participation-social output”. At the visual-graphic level, the IP character “Vinegar Workshop Fairy” is created by integrating the Legend of Flooding Jinshan Mountain with cyber-punk and pixel-deconstruction subcultural visual languages. A reusable graphic symbol library is built and applied to packaging, store installations and derivatives. Moreover, the themed stamp-collecting travel booklet for vinegar-brewing is developed. By means of differentiated color collocation (traditional vinegar dark-brown matched with fluorescent neon sub-cultural tones) and innovative interactive structures (AR experience zone, dynamic digital-screen demonstration, UGC check-in mechanism), the research completes the conversion of vinegar-culture inheritance from “one-way indoctrination” to “participatory visual subcultural translation”.

The research outcomes possess multi-layered values: culturally, it inherits and revitalizes the intangible-heritage value of Zhenjiang aromatic-vinegar brewing craftsmanship and the regional cultural connotation of Zhenjiang folk legends; academically, it provides a transferable design methodology for youth-oriented visual renewal of food-related Chinese time-honored brands based on subcultural theories; economically, it facilitates Hengshun’s offline-store transformation and cultural-creative-industry development. It optimizes long-term brand communication efficiency and promotes Hengshun’s evolution from a traditional condiment manufacturer to a contemporary cultural-brand IP oriented toward Generation-Z consumers.

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APPENDIX A

Ключовой эталонный проект/Key Reference Projects

Visual outcome(s):

1. Other brands' IP image design
2. Analysis on the brand image design upgrading of other time-honored brands
3. Derivative Design of Other Food Brands

Design [historical figure]using software such as

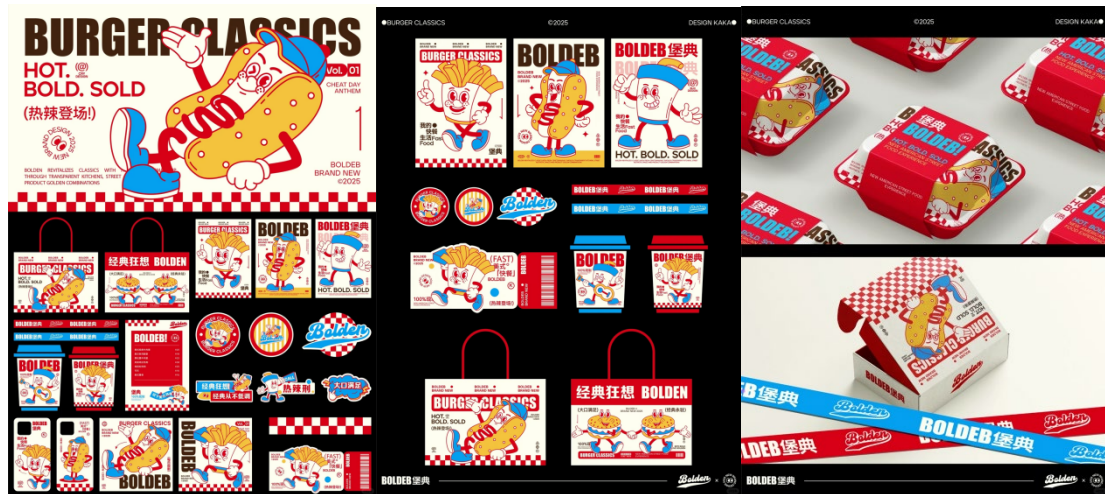
PS,AI,XD,AE,etc



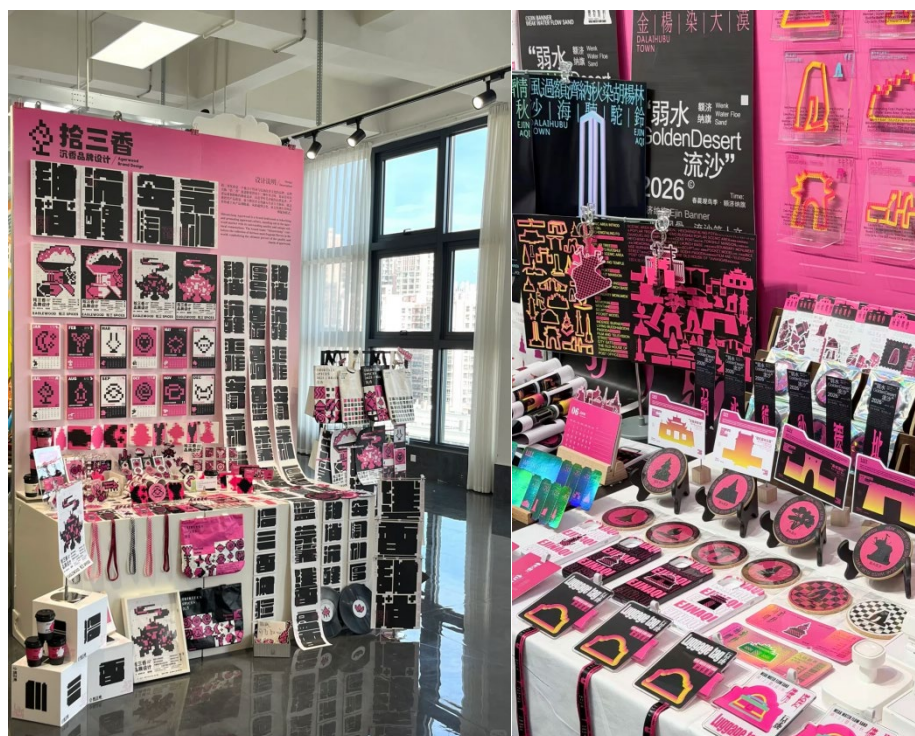
Brand Image Design of Other Brands



Derivative product design



Physical Display Design



APPENDIX B





镇江香醋

ZHENJIANG VINEGAR

百年传承 · 醋香不止
A CENTURY OF CRAFTSMANSHIP

IP BLIND BOX SERIES
— ZHENJIANG —

TRADITION × CULTURE × YOUTH





醋白白 · 初遇
WHITE SNAKE · FIRST MEETING



醋青青 · 灵蛇
GREEN SNAKE · SPIRIT SNAKE

❖ WHITE SNAKE 醋白白



01
CLASSIC ATTIRE
初遇



02
TRAVEL STYLE
游历



03
MODERN STYLE
都市



04
NIGHT STYLE
夜赏

❖ GREEN SNAKE 醋青青



01
CLASSIC ATTIRE
初遇



02
TRAVEL STYLE
游历



03
MODERN STYLE
都市



04
NIGHT STYLE
夜赏

❖ DETAILS



精致发饰 / EXQUISITE DETAILS



角色表情 / EXPRESSIONS



Q版小蛇 / SNAKE ACCESSORY



亚克力底座 / ACRYLIC BASE

BLIND BOX

8 STYLES · 2 CHARACTERS
RANDOM



INCLUDES
HIDDEN
VERSION





[illegible]