Dean&Francis
ISSN 2959-6130

Reconstruction and Inheritance of Old Brand Stories in the New Media Environment

Keli Zhao

[1]Jiangsu Tianyi High School, Wuxi, 214000, China
*Corresponding author: qinbaichuan320@gmail.com

Abstract:

Driven by technologies such as 5G networks and social media, new media has established a "many-to-many" interactive communication landscape, becoming a vital medium for brand dissemination. However, most time-honored brand narratives remain confined to the singular theme of "centuries-old heritage," struggling to resonate emotionally with contemporary consumers and thus facing brand obsolescence. This study explores strategies for reimagining and preserving brand narratives of time-honored brands in the new media landscape. Employing literature review methods, it synthesizes theories on new media, brand storytelling, and heritage brands. Through case analysis of the Quanjude heritage brand, it examines how short-video storytelling, IP-based cartoon expressions, and multi-to-multi communication strategies effectively convey brand history and values. Based on this, three core strategies are distilled: content reimagining, narrative mode reimagining, and medium reimagining. This study fills a gap in the intersection of new media and brand storytelling, offering fresh strategies and perspectives for communicating the narratives of time-honored brands.

Keywords: Old brand; new media environment; brand story.

1. Introduction

With the proliferation of 5G networks, social media, and artificial intelligence technologies, new media has gradually become an indispensable part of people's lives. Through the precision and accuracy of digital information dissemination, coupled with the flexibility and variability of its diversified communication channels, new media has transformed the traditional "sender-receiver" unidirectional communication model into a "many-to-many" interactive communication landscape [1], becoming a crucial medium for brand communication across multiple industries. Facing the fiercely competitive environment of new media digital marketing, effectively connecting with consumer psychology, enhancing user loyalty, and executing brand communication have become particularly crucial[2] Under this situation, brand stories, conveying the history, values, and culture of the

ISSN 2959-6130

brand, has become a vital tool in establishing brand values, narrative, and emotional attachment. However, many time-honored brands are struggling to convey their stories in an effective way. They often get stuck in the narrative of "centuries of history", which is hollow and narrow. It fails to resonate emotionally with contemporary younger consumers, leading to issues such as brand aging. [3]

Addressing the unique characteristics of time-honored brands, this study offers practical strategies for their communication, enhancing brand communication efficiency while providing new perspectives on applying brand stories in traditional cultural brand communication.

This research offers a reference direction for the rebranding of time-honored brands. .

2. Literature Review

2.1 New Media Environment

In a classificatory aspect, new media refers to a diverse array of digital media platforms derived from the internet, characterized primarily by digital and networked dissemination [4]. Alternatively, it can be understood as the "emerging media" within the contemporary media ecosystem. Media forms in the new media environment primarily manifest in three categories: online media, mobile media, and digital television products, exhibiting diversity, precision, and timeliness. New media serves as "medium" a communication enabling real-time, interactive transmission of personalized digital composite information from all individuals to the masses, operating through "person-to-person" —that is, "many-to-many"—communication[5]. It has thus become a vital medium for information dissemination and sharing in modern society [6] .

2.2 Brand Story

Brand stories serve as a crucial way to convey a brand's development journey and value orientation to the consumers. Through their distinctive emotional attachment to the consumers and narrative, they effectively foster brand recognition, becoming an essential tool in shaping and reinforcing brand identity. By sharing the stories behind the brand, companies can connect with consumer emotions and evoke resonance, thereby enhancing consumer loyalty to achieve marketing objectives.

2.3 Key Elements of Brand Stories

According to Guo Xuejun, Tian Ao, and Cui Xing, key elements of brand stories include conveying brand characteristics through narrative storytelling, linking to social trends to elicit positive consumer responses, influencing brand loyalty, capturing consumer attention, fostering brand attachment, and building brand communities. Based on this, he proposes that crafting compelling brand stories for brands requires cross-fields adaptability, accurately targeting consumer preferences.

Simultaneously, brand stories must precisely connect with different dimensions of consumer emotional resonance, refining and categorizing narratives to stimulate targeted emotional responses in consumers' minds [7].

2.4 Time-honored brands

According to regulations by the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, a China Time-honored Brand refers to a brand (name, trademark, etc.) with profound historical heritage, strong cultural characteristics, unique craftsmanship, excellent design and manufacturing, high-quality products and services, efficient marketing channels, and broad social recognition[8]. Its core characteristics include: long history, distinct national and regional characteristics, relevance to residents' lives, and has influence within the industry.

2.5 Traditional Theoretical Framework for Time-Honored Brand Marketing

First, the brand narratives of time-honored brands often overemphasize historical value, such as brand origins and traditional craftsmanship, making it difficult for consumers to resonate with modern values. Their outdated storytelling has gradually marginalized them. Second, the communication strategies of time-honored brands tend to be traditional, largely confined to distributors and offline stores. Online investment accounts for less than 20%, and 40% of time-honored enterprises lack independent digital departments, resulting in a lack of systematic digital communication strategies[9]. They rarely utilize emerging marketing channels like new media, gradually disconnecting from younger consumers. .

3. Reinventing and Preserving Heritage Brand Narratives in the New Media Era

Quanjude, a time-honored Chinese culinary brand established in 1864, features oven-roasted duck as its signature dish within its distinctive cuisine. Its profound cultural heritage distinguishes it from other heritage brands. However, during the pandemic, Quanjude faced the dual challenges of consumer attrition and consecutive years of losses. In response, the brand shifted its focus toward younger consumers and implemented a series of initiatives.

3.1 Brand Story Reinvention Mechanism: "Our Ancestors' Selection" and "Cute Duckling" IPs Short Videos Narrative System Innovation:

From Historical Retrospect to Emotional Carrier

3.1.1 Narrative System Innovation: From Historical Retrospect to Emotional Vehicle

The "Our Ancestors' Selection" series short videos follow the narrative thread of "an ancestor journeying to a city just for a single dish," .

In these short videos, the portrayal of the "ancestor" is contrary to our general perception - stern and traditional. Instead, it impacts a vivid " foodie "characteristic on the "ancestors". This effectively bridges the generational gap in historical narratives. This vivid imagery sparks imagination: envisioning the ancestor a century ago, traversing streets and streets just for that perfect bite of crispy-skinned, tender-meat roast duck.

Simultaneously, the "journey to a city" narrative shifts the time-honored brands'core value of "centuries of history" from simply a temporal dimension to an emotional one. Traditional heritage brands often fall into the trap of "emphasizing founding dates," reducing their historical value to hollow temporal symbols; whereas "Our Ancestors' Selection" anchors its historical narrative in "the pursuit of culinary perfection." This transforms the rigid expression of "long-standing history" into an emotional anchor of "the pursuit of culinary perfection." When tradition is interpreted as "taking time for delicious food, just like our ancestors did," the brand's persistence shifts from "distant history" to "resonance in everyday life." Based on this, the "Our Ancestors' Selection" narrative breaks down barriers between people and tradition, enabling consumers to intuitively grasp the brand's core value of "centuries of consistency." This approach resolves the disconnect between traditional narratives and modern sensibilities.

The "Cute Duck Chef" series of short videos launched by the Quanjude brand reimagines its narrative through the cartoon IP character "Cute Duckling"[10]. This chubby little duck cartoon character infuses the brand with youthfulness, trendiness, and vitality. Within the series, an animated short introducing Quanjude's historical origins subverts the solemnity typically associated with heritage brand narratives. It reconstructs the brand story through dual layers of visual symbolism and expressive logic. Visually, the cartoon style high-saturation colors and fluid lines create a lighthearted atmosphere, delivering powerful visual impact that instantly captures short-form video viewers' attention. Simultaneously, the cartoon style, along with internet-savvy, colloquial dialogue among animated characters, subtly dissolves the solemnity and obscurity often associated with "historical tales." Furthermore, in the short animation, Quanjude's founder Yang Quanren is portrayed as a plump cartoon duckling. His exaggerated body language and facial expressions bridge the gap between historical narrative and modern perception. By transforming Yang Quanren's story, from being too poor to afford roast duck when 15 years old, to opening his first duck shop at 45, followed by years of entrepreneurial hardship—into a coming-of-age story. In this way, the century-old legacy evolves from an abstract concept into a tangible and related cartoon persona, ultimately creating an emotional connection between modern consumers and the history heritage of this time-honored brand.

3.2 Redefining Value Dimensions: From Craftsmanship to Cultural Resonance

In the "Cute Little Star Chef" series, the animated short "31 Steps to Roast Duck" uses the "Cute Little Duckling" character to comprehensively showcase traditional techniques in Peking duck preparation, along with its evolution and preservation over time. Using cartoon characters, supplemented by vivid animation, traditional techniques like "glazing with caramelized sugar," "placing in the oven," "removing from the oven," and "cutting the duck into slices" are no longer confined to monotonous process demonstrations. Instead, they become engaging, showing the techniques in a tangible and direct way.. Simultaneously, the cartoon characters' dialogue within the animation highlights that these techniques were passed down through generations of artisans over time, rather than achieved overnight. This new narrative approach emphasizes the brand's historical value. This storytelling strategy skillfully bridges the gap with historical craftsmanship while transforming the brand's characteristics—"traditional craftsmanship rooted in the people" and "enduring craftsmanship"—into emotional symbols suitable for short video dissemination.

3.3 Evolving Communication Channels: From One-Way Messaging to Community Collaboration

The "Mengbao Duck" IP significantly enhances the communication effectiveness of Quanjude's brand story, establishing a multi-channel collaborative communication matrix. Online dissemination leverages new media platforms. Consumers share their experiences with Mengbao Duck IP merchandise on social media, allowing the brand values embodied by "Mengbao Duck" to spread through entertaining content. Simultaneously, popular check-in videos on Douyin (TikTok) encourage consumers to travel across geographical boundaries specifically to visit locations, using platform-specific new media content to amplify the brand story. Thus, the brand narrative transcends limitations through new media channels, employing a many-to-many communication approach to reach a broader audience.

ISSN 2959-6130

4. Brand Story Reimagination and Heritage Strategies for Heritage Brands in the New Media Era

4.1 Content Reimagining Strategy: Integrating Traditional Heritage into Modern Life Scenarios to Bridge Perception Gaps

Content serves as the core vehicle for brand narratives. It must break free from the singular "century-old history" framework of heritage brands, transforming abstract cultural heritage into "perceptible and relatable" modern content. This addresses the disconnect between traditional narratives and contemporary perceptions highlighted by Lin Chunhua.

The core assets of time-honored brands—abstract symbols like "historical culture" and "traditional craftsmanship"-can be transformed through "IP-driven visualization" into emotional carriers more easily understood and embraced by contemporary consumers.

Consider Quanjude's "Cute Duckling" animation case: transforming the intangible cultural heritage of "hang-oven roasted duck techniques" into relatable, visual symbols like the "Cute Duckling." This approach allows brand narratives to intuitively convey brand characteristics, capture consumer attention, and establish emotional connections.

4.2 Narrative Restructuring Strategy

In the new media landscape, heritage brands must not overemphasize the linear and solemn narratives. Instead, personified, relatable, and multi-channel storytelling should be favored, making historical tales vivid and engaging, shifting from one-way communication to community-driven co-creation. Break the solemnity and rigidity of history. Instead, companies should endow historical figures or brands with vibrant and dynamic personalities, bridging the psychological gap with consumers.

For example, Quanjude's "Our Ancestors' Selection" video connects historical figures with modern life experiences, using relatable and vibrant characters to resonate with contemporary consumers. Avoid hollow time anchors like "overemphasizing founding dates." Instead, focus on "specific scenarios and minute details," transforming the solemnity of "century-old heritage" into relatable life moments.

For instance, in Quanjude's "Cute Little Star Chef" animated series, Yang Quanren's entrepreneurial tale uses details like "15-year-old Yang Quanren standing outside the roast duck shop, drooling like a river" and "vowing to make the best roast duck." Similarly, the "Our Ancestors' Selection" video's narrative of "an ancestor journeying to a city for a single dish" bridges history and everyday life. Consumers may not recall "the exact year Quanjude was founded," but they will be moved by details like "a man fulfilling his childhood dream over 30 years." This resonates with the brand's "century-old heritage" value, fostering greater consumer attention and attachment.

4.3 Communication Channel Transformation Strategy

In the new media landscape, heritage brands can leverage core IPs to build multi-channel communication strategies, shifting brand storytelling from one-way dissemination to community co-creation.

For instance, Quanjude centered its communication around the "Cute Duckling" IP, leveraging social media and short-video platforms to guide consumers in naturally spreading brand values and actively participating in co-creating brand value. This approach breaks communication barriers, expands the reach of brand narratives to more consumers, and fosters the collective construction of a brand community.

5. Conclusion

This paper explores the "Reinvention and Inheritance of Time-Honored Brand Stories in the New Media Era," using Quanjude as a case study. Chinese heritage brand It reviews core theories on brands new media communication, brand storytelling, and time-honored. Through case analysis, it examines Quanjude's ins approach to reinventing its brand narrative in the new media landscape. Ultimately it distills strategies for brand stories reinvigorating and preserving time-honored in the digital age: Key conclusions are as follows:

First, the landscape of new media offers brands-honored an interactive approach to communication, "many-to-many" while also exposing the limitations of traditional narrative dissemination in this environment—most heritage brands overemphasize hollow expressions and overly formalized traditional storytelling. Quanjude's journey demonstrates that contemporary expressions of tradition are key to. reimagining narratives brand By visualizing brand symbols and emotionalizing brand values, it effectively bridges the gap between perceptions of traditional narratives and modern.

Secondly, the restructuring strategy three-dimension highly practical of "content-narrative-channel" proposed in this paper. From the content dimension, and relatable life, the "symbol" strategy abstract visual brand transforms into historical concepts and traditional craftsmanship tangible IP characters and scenarios. For instance, through videos depicting Quanjude presented the entrepreneurial journey of its founder Yang Quanren, an animated short his growth story, turning into the concept of "a century of consistency" a character symbol relatable, empathetic. At

the narrative level, "lifestyle-oriented" brand storytelling breaks down barriers between perceptions obscure historical values and modern, connecting to life historical figures and tales contemporary to resonate with consumers. This aligns with Guo Xuejun et al.'s requirement that brand stories should capture consumer attention and foster brand "attachment". From a channel perspective, multi-channel media dissemination has transformed brand storytelling from one-way transmission to an output model "many-to-many" maximizing the reach of brand narratives.

At the same time, this study has limitations: the case selection focuses on Quanjude's time-honored brand, in the catering industry, without covering other types of brands such as time-honored department stores, traditional Chinese medicine, and apparel. Furthermore, this paper primarily employs through empirical case studies of the proposed strategies to quantify the communication effectiveness data. Future research could incorporate case studies of other types of time-honored or conduct empirical analyses to test the effects and specific communication of the strategies proposed their impact on consumer purchase intent and loyalty.

In summary, in rebranding time-honored brands, the new media environment requires upholding their core craftsmanship historical heritage and traditional while actively embracing innovative storytelling and communication methods. Only by resonating with modern perceptions through their "centuries-old history and traditional culture" brand narratives can they transcend temporal and spatial boundaries, ensuring the sustained vitality of. these heritage brands

References

[1] Zheng Wanyao. Deconstruction of News Essence and Redefinition in the New Media Context [D]. Bohai University, 2017.

[2] Hua Shengying. Research on Brand Story Construction and Consumer Emotional Connection in Digital Marketing [J]. Market Outlook, 2025, (14): 49-51.

[3] Lin Chunhua. Research on Youthful Branding Strategies for Time-Honored Brands in the Modern Consumer Context [J]. Time-Honored Brand Marketing, 2025, (18): 1-3.

[4] Hu Yue. A Decade of Truth-Seeking in the Digital Jungle: A Panoramic View of New Media Research—Scientific Knowledge Map Analysis of China's New Media Studies from 2006 to 2016 [J]. Journalism

[5] Jing Dong, Su Baohua. New Perspectives on Defining New Media [J]. Journalism World, 2008, (03): 57-59.

[6] Hu Yuhui. The Bubble Economy of New Media. Advertiser, 2007. (12)

[7] Guo Xuejun, Tian Ao, Cui Xing. Evolutionary Pathways and Development Trends in Brand Story Research: A Visual Analysis Based on CiteSpace [J]. Journal of Dalian University, 2025, 46(03): 82-94.

[8] Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China et al. (5 Departments). Administrative Measures for the Demonstration Creation of Time-Honored Chinese Brands [Z]. 2023-01-06. Commerce Regulation [2023] No. 6. Central Government Portal, http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2023-02/01/content_5739600.htm

[9] Wu Qihua. Digital Marketing Innovation for Time-Honored Brands from a Consumer Behavior Perspective [J]. Traditional Brand Marketing, 2025, (15): 1-3.

[10] Xu Weipeng. Quanjude, Xunbaojì, Taotaoju... These Restaurant Brands' Strategies Reveal the "Secret Code" Behind Traditional Brands' Revival [J]. China Business World, 2025, (14): 16-19.