

The Factors Influencing on Brand Value of Intangible Cultural Heritage Tourism from The Visitors' Perspective of Liubao Tea in Wuzhou City, Guangxi Province, China

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ABSTRACT

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) tourism has emerged as a crucial driver for regional identity, economic vitality, and cultural sustainability. Among such examples in China, Liubao tea in Wuzhou City, Guangxi Province, serves as a unique ICH asset combining traditional tea-making, cultural rituals, and community-based tourism. However, little is known about the brand value of ICH tourism from the perspective of visitors. This study aims to explore the factors that influence the brand value of Liubao tea ICH tourism, using a mixed-method approach to integrate both quantitative visitor evaluations and qualitative stakeholder insights. This study adopts a mixed-methods research design. In the quantitative phase, structured questionnaires were administered to 400 tourists visiting Liubao tea cultural sites. The survey focused on five core components of brand value: brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, brand association, and brand loyalty. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were used to identify key drivers of brand value. In the qualitative phase, 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders—including tea farmers, tourism service providers, cultural officials, and local government representatives. Thematic content analysis was used to examine how these stakeholders perceive and contribute to branding strategies and cultural experience delivery. The findings reveal that overall brand value is perceived at a high level among tourists, with brand loyalty emerging as the strongest component. Among the determinants, destination-based factors—such as the authenticity of tea-making demonstrations, the aesthetics of cultural landscape, and the quality of interpretive services—had a more significant impact than individual tourist behavior. Furthermore, government policies such as infrastructure development, cultural preservation initiatives, and fiscal incentives were found to enhance brand perception. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of storytelling, traditional rituals, and environmental aesthetics in reinforcing the emotional and symbolic value of the Liubao tea brand. This study provides empirical evidence and strategic insights for policymakers, tourism developers, and cultural heritage custodians. The findings suggest that enhancing destination authenticity, integrating narrative-driven cultural elements, and investing in infrastructure and local capacity-building can strengthen brand value. The study also underscores the importance of aligning branding with the values of sustainability and cultural respect. These insights may be adapted to other ICH tourism contexts in China and across Asia. Liubao tea tourism demonstrates that strong brand value in ICH tourism can be cultivated through a combination of quality visitor experience, meaningful cultural integration, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. The success of Liubao tea as an ICH brand lies not only in product quality but also in the visitor's emotional attachment, sense of identity, and immersive cultural encounters. Future research should investigate longitudinal visitor experiences and compare multiple ICH tourism sites to identify patterns of successful branding. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable cultural tourism and heritage-based regional development, destination branding

theory with cultural tourism management. It provides practical guidance for policymakers, tourism operators, and community stakeholders, emphasizing the need to align cultural authenticity with strategic marketing efforts. Sustainable development of ICH tourism requires collaborative planning that honors heritage while adapting to market dynamics.

Keywords: Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), Brand Value, Tea Tourism, Visitor Perception, Sustainable Cultural Tourism

INTRODUCTION

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) tourism has emerged as a dynamic intersection of cultural preservation and sustainable economic development. Defined by UNESCO (2003) as practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities recognize as part of their cultural heritage, ICH is increasingly leveraged as a unique tourism asset that fosters identity, pride, and continuity. As cultural experiences gain prominence among global travelers, ICH tourism offers immersive, authentic engagements that go beyond material culture, allowing tourists to connect with the living traditions of a place (Timothy & Boyd, 2006). In Asia, particularly in China, ICH tourism plays a vital role in revitalizing local economies while protecting valuable cultural expressions from erosion due to modernization.

Tea culture is one of the most celebrated components of China's intangible heritage, with deep historical roots and social symbolism (Zhao & Zhang, 2020). Among China's many regional teas, Liubao tea stands out for its unique fermentation technique, medicinal benefits, and strong association with ethnic and regional identity. Originating in Wuzhou City, Guangxi Province, Liubao tea has been consumed for centuries and is valued for its earthy flavor, long aging process, and purported health benefits such as aiding digestion and reducing cholesterol (Li & Cao, 2022). Its role extends beyond consumption—it is embedded in rituals, social gatherings, and local economic structures, making it an ideal subject for ICH tourism research.

In recent years, Liubao tea has become a focal point of cultural tourism development, with efforts from local authorities and stakeholders to transform the tea-making tradition into a sustainable tourism offering. These efforts include tea-themed homestays, interactive tea-making workshops, tea museums, and festivals that attract domestic and international tourists alike (Chen, 2019). However, the success and sustainability of such tourism initiatives largely depend on the perceived brand value of the destination in the eyes of visitors. Brand value, in this context, refers to the aggregate perception of a tourism destination as shaped by experience, emotion, and association (Keller, 1993).

Drawing upon Aaker's (1996) brand equity model, this study examines five key dimensions that contribute to brand value in ICH tourism: brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, brand association, and brand loyalty. Each dimension plays a strategic role in influencing tourists' perceptions and behaviors. For instance, brand awareness determines how easily tourists recognize and recall a destination; brand image reflects the beliefs and attitudes attached to the destination; perceived quality signals the expected excellence of services and products; brand association encompasses emotional and cultural connections; and brand loyalty indicates the likelihood of repeat visitation and word-of-mouth advocacy (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007).

The aim of this study is to evaluate how visitors to Liubao tea tourism in Wuzhou perceive its brand value across these five dimensions. By analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, the research seeks to uncover how tourist experiences shape destination branding and to propose strategic recommendations for strengthening the brand identity of Liubao tea tourism. The findings will provide insights for cultural tourism development not only in Guangxi but also in other regions seeking to leverage their ICH for sustainable tourism growth.

Research Objectives

To explore the factors influencing on brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea in Wuzhou city, Guangxi Province, China.

Brand Value: Concepts and Theory

Brand value refers to the perceived worth of a brand in the minds of consumers and plays a crucial role in shaping visitor behaviour and destination image. It encompasses various components including brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and overall brand equity (Keller, 2003; Aaker, 1991). In the context of cultural heritage tourism, brand value allows destinations to differentiate themselves in a competitive market by conveying authenticity, heritage significance, and emotional appeal (Adegbuyi, 2022; Dong, 2022). Empirical research suggests that developing a strong brand identity helps increase tourist satisfaction, repeat visitation, and willingness to pay a premium (Papadas, 2021). For ICH tourism, brand value often stems from historical narratives, cultural significance, and meaningful visitor experiences (Huang et al., 2022).

Intangible Cultural Heritage: Concepts and Characteristics

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2004) defines ICH as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills transmitted through generations.” These include oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, traditional craftsmanship, and knowledge of nature. ICH is seen as a living heritage essential to community identity and cultural continuity (UNESCO, 2004; Lin, 2018). ICH must be actively practiced and transmitted within communities, offering experiential and educational value to tourists. Its preservation supports not only cultural integrity but also sustainable tourism development (Zhang & Jiang, 2023).

Tourism Management

Tourism management involves the planning, development, and marketing of tourism destinations to achieve sustainable economic, cultural, and social outcomes (Cooper et al., 2018). In heritage tourism, management must balance conservation with visitor engagement. Sustainable tourism principles encourage the integration of local participation, environmental sensitivity, and cultural authenticity (Lane, 2022). Successful ICH tourism management includes product diversification, community-based operations, and marketing strategies that emphasize unique cultural elements (Holloway, 2019).

Tourist Behaviour in Tourism

Tourist behaviour encompasses the psychological, social, and economic factors that influence travel decisions. It includes motivation, perception, attitudes, and post-travel evaluation (Cook, 2022). In ICH tourism, behavioural drivers such as authenticity-seeking, cultural curiosity, and emotional connection are strong predictors of tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Chumongkol, 2020). Research also shows that sustainable and eco-conscious tourists are more likely to support cultural heritage initiatives, particularly if the brand communicates values of conservation and community support (Awogbemi et al., 2022).

Liubao Tea Intangible Cultural Heritage Tourism

Liubao tea, with a history of over 1,500 years, is recognised for its cultural and medicinal value. As a form of ICH, it is promoted through agritainment models combining tea cultivation, homestays, and tea-drinking experiences (China Daily, 2017). Despite increased efforts in plantation expansion and tourism infrastructure, studies reveal that Liubao tea tourism lacks strategic brand value development and demand-side insights (Shaowen, 2012; Wu, 2016). Given the saturation of tea tourism offerings across China, Liubao must differentiate its ICH through visitor-focused branding, authentic experiences, and meaningful cultural interpretation (Dong, 2022; Yin, 2016). This literature review supports the study’s aim to identify brand value-building strategies based on visitors’ perspectives.

This study addresses the research gap by exploring factors influencing brand value of ICH tourism from the visitor’s perspective, using Liubao tea tourism as a case study. The aim is to develop strategic recommendations for enhancing brand identity, creating emotional connection, and ensuring long-term sustainability of heritage tourism in Guangxi Province.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach. The quantitative component involved surveying 400 tourists who visited Liubao and engaged in tea-related tourism. A structured questionnaire was used to measure five brand value dimensions: awareness, image, perceived quality, association, and loyalty. Convenience sampling was applied, targeting tourists who spent at least one night in the area and used a paid tourism service. The questionnaire’s validity was confirmed via the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) index, and reliability was verified using Cronbach’s Alpha (≥ 0.70). Data were analyzed using SPSS for descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlation, t-tests, ANOVA, and multiple regression. For the qualitative phase, 20 stakeholders were interviewed using Delphi techniques. These included tea garden owners, accommodation providers, transport operators, and government officers. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo software and triangulated to enhance credibility.

RESULTS

Liubao tea tourism in Wuzhou City, Guangxi Province, China, holds substantial brand value from the perspective of visitors due to its deep cultural roots, authenticity, and contributions to local heritage. As an

intangible cultural heritage (ICH), Liubao tea embodies centuries-old traditions, including unique fermentation techniques, tea ceremonies, and community-based tea farming. Tourists are drawn to immersive experiences such as visiting plantations, engaging in the tea-making process, and learning the historical and health-related benefits of the tea. Educational opportunities through guided tours, museums, and cultural centers further enhance the tourism appeal. Visitors also appreciate their role in supporting the local economy by engaging with tea farmers and artisans, which reinforces community preservation. The tea's reputation for quality, distinct flavor, and health benefits contributes to its brand strength. Additionally, sustainable practices in tea cultivation and heritage conservation resonate with eco-conscious tourists. Effective marketing campaigns—including online platforms, festivals, and collaboration with tourism agencies—have amplified the visibility of Liubao tea, positioning it as a unique cultural product. Overall, the brand value of Liubao tea tourism lies in its ability to blend cultural richness, authentic local engagement, educational depth, environmental sustainability, and strategic promotion into a holistic and meaningful visitor experience.

Tourist Behavior

Table 1 Tourist Behavior

Factors	Mean	S.D	Meaning
Geographical Factor			
1. Unique topography of Liubao: elevated land and mountain, river, and tea garden.	4.3750	.62478	Maximum
2. The weather in Liubao, cool and fresh air, almost all year round.	4.3475	.55454	Maximum
3. The tea plantation is the main reason for visiting Liubao town.	4.2725	.70675	Maximum
Overview of Geographical Factor	4.3175	.53259	Maximum
Tourism Activities			
1. Experiencing in tea leave-picking in Liubao is fascinating.	4.2375	.69808	Maximum
2. Participating in black tea drinking ceremony is very authenticated.	4.1625	.66498	High
3. Learning to fry and roll the tea leaves in the traditional way.	4.2750	.68961	Maximum
4. Staying in a homestay in a tea estate provides pristine nature, cool breeze, lush green garden, lofty hills, blue mountain covered with mist.	4.3075	.65499	Maximum
5. Liubao black tea is the unique souvenir that provides the taste of thick liquor with a cooling medicinal edge and menthol and root spices with a long sweet after taste.	4.3025	.64189	Maximum
Overview of Tourism Activities	4.2570	.50931	Maximum
Social factors			
1. Liubao zhen has a tea market where it is a traditional place to learn authentic black tea culture.	4.2825	.66241	Maximum
2. Liubao tourist center is the place for the history and culture of Liubao black tea.	4.3900	.61142	Maximum
3. Liubao people are friendly and have high service mind for tourists.	4.3550	.64421	Maximum
4. Language is not a problem in traveling to Liubao because tourism providers can speak English well.	4.3675	.63911	Maximum
Overview of Social Factors	4.3488	.39530	Maximum
Overview of Tourist Behavior	4.3078	.41866	Maximum

Table 1 presents an analysis of tourist behavior related to Liubao tea tourism. The results indicate that all three factors—geographical, tourism activities, and social factors—are rated at a “maximum” level of satisfaction, with an overall mean of 4.31. Tourists highly value Liubao’s unique topography, cool climate, and tea plantations. Engaging tourism activities such as tea leaf-picking, tea ceremonies, and homestays in natural settings enhance their experiences. Social factors, including friendly locals, language accessibility, and cultural learning centers, significantly contribute to visitor satisfaction. These findings suggest that Liubao offers a well-rounded, culturally rich tourism experience that aligns with visitor expectations.

Liubao Destination Factors

Table 2: Liubao Destination Factors

Factors	Mean	S.D	Meaning
Physical Factors			
1. The weather in Liubao is cool fresh air and it is good for walking tour and tea garden tour.	4.3000	.64501	Maximum
2. The black tea tourism in Liubao is a turn-key tourism from plantation to finished product.	4.2425	.63221	Maximum
3. Black tea garden can be toured on an everyday basis	4.3050	.61882	Maximum
Overall Physical Factors	4.283	.499	Maximum

Cultural and Heritage Factors			
1.The art of black tea plantation is valuable, tourists can try the seed selection, tea planting, and tea leave picking.	4.3325	.59399	Maximum
2.The tea preparation in Liubao is tradition like in an old time.	4.2775	.63758	Maximum
3.The tea drinking ceremony is very unique for both tea selection, pottery and process.	4.2750	.65609	Maximum
Overall Cultural and Heritage Factors	4.30	.419	Maximum
Infrastructure and Facilities Factors			
1.Traveling to Liubao is very convenient.	4.2650	.61296	Maximum
2.Traveling in Liubao town has various modes such as taxi, bus, car rental.	4.2500	.63522	Maximum
3.Accommodation in Liubao is very cozy.	4.0925	.70280	High
4.Accommodation in Liubao is adequate for tourists	4.3719	.75468	Maximum
5.Internet and wifi are easily accessible in Liubao	3.9400	.85042	High
6.Food is safe with standard price in Liubao	4.0975	.79975	High
7.Travel service and tourist guides are excellent and effective in Liubao	4.2350	.86987	High
Overall Infrastructure and Facilities Factors	4.1780	.43866	High
Overall Liubao Destination Factors	4.2521	.30056	Maximum

Table 2 presents the analysis of Liubao destination factors influencing tourist satisfaction. Three main categories were assessed: physical, cultural and heritage, and infrastructure and facilities. Both physical (mean = 4.283) and cultural/heritage (mean = 4.30) factors were rated at the “maximum” level, reflecting tourists’ high appreciation for the pleasant weather, accessible tea gardens, traditional tea practices, and unique tea ceremonies. Infrastructure and facilities were rated “high” (mean = 4.178), with strong scores for transportation and accommodation, but slightly lower ratings for internet access and food services. Overall, Liubao’s destination factors received a “maximum” satisfaction rating (mean = 4.2521), indicating strong tourist appeal.

Governmental Factors

Table 3: Governmental Factors

Factors	Mean	S.D	Meaning
Central Government Policy			
1.Chinese government supports Tea heritage tour in Liubao by various advertisements.	4.1775	.70159	High
2.Chinese government supports tea heritage tour in Liubao by giving tax refund	4.2100	.72610	High
3.Chinese government supports tea heritage tour in Liubao by providing various transportation routes	4.3425	.66430	Maximum
Overall Central Government Policy	4.24	.466	High
Local Government Laws and Regulations			
1.Local government tourist center provides good tourist information.	4.1625	.71229	High
2.Local government provides licenses for standard tea tourism providers to give trust to tourists.	4.2925	.74386	Maximum
3.Tourists can complain with tourist center for all misbehave of tourism providers	4.2300	.78972	High
Overall Local Government Laws and Regulations	4.23	.569	High
Overall Governmental Factors	4.2358	.45388	High

Table 3 summarises tourists’ perceptions of governmental support for Liubao tea tourism. Central government policy received an overall “high” rating (mean = 4.24), with the strongest support noted for transportation development (mean = 4.3425). Local government laws and regulations were also rated “high” (mean = 4.23), particularly in providing licenses for standard tourism providers (mean = 4.2925), which builds tourist trust. While tourist information and complaint mechanisms were appreciated, their scores were slightly lower. Overall, governmental factors were rated “high” (mean = 4.2358), indicating that government initiatives are effective, though with room for improvement in policy execution and tourist services.

Building Brand Value of ICH tourism for Liubao Tea Town

Table 4: Brand Value of ICH tourism for Liubao Tea Town

Factors	Mean	S.D	Meaning
Brand Awareness			
1.Tourists can recall that Liubao is the top tea for black tea.	4.0975	.79975	High

2.Tourists recognize and distinguish Liubao black tea from other black tea because of the package and taste.	4.2350	.86987	High
3.Tourists select Liubao black tea for the first priority when asking about black tea brand.	4.1775	.70159	High
Overall Brand Awareness	4.17	.566	High
Brand Image			
1.Tourists can remember tag line of Liubao black tea.	4.2100	.72610	High
2.Tourists position Liubao black tea as medical tea for good health.	4.3425	.66430	Maximum
3.Liubao black tea is reliable taste, flexible drinking process and environmentally friendly.	4.1300	.74800	High
4.Liubao black tea package consists of liubao black tea story.	4.3825	.65748	Maximum
5.Liubao black tea relates all parts of the product and service, personality through story.	4.0500	.70266	High
Overall Brand Image	4.22	.389	High
Perceived Quality			
1.Tourists experience impress on Liubao black tea brand e derived from smelling, touching and drinking.	4.2750	.77516	Maximum
2.Every Liubao black tea has brand which is extrinsic quality for Liubao black tea.	4.2100	.83825	High
3.Perceived quality includes marketing actions as well, all marketing campaigns and activities must be targeted at the right audience , through the right channel and with the right message.	4.2728	.7751	Maximum
Overall Perceived Quality	4.24	.672	High
Brand Association			
1.Liubao black tea brand provides attitude to convey the satisfaction of consumers through drinking tea and sweets made from black tea.	4.0975	.79975	High
2.Tourists buy Liubao black tea and Liubao black tea cake and sweet as souvenirs in visiting Liubao tea town.	4.2350	.86987	High
3.Tourists are confident and health concerns with drinking and using Liubao black tea products.	4.1775	.70159	High
Overall Brand Association	4.17	.566	High
Brand Loyalty			
1.Tourists satisfy Liubao tea tourism.	4.2100	.72610	High
2.Tourists will revisit Liubao tea tour for tea tourism.	4.3425	.66430	Maximum
3.Tourists will share or tell friends about Liubao tea tourism and invite them to visit.	4.3900	.65496	Maximum
Overall Brand Loyalty	4.31	.422	Maximum
Overall Brand Value of ICH tourism	4.2239	.36600	High

Table 4 presents tourists' perceptions of brand value dimensions for Liubao tea as an intangible cultural heritage (ICH) tourism product. Overall, brand value is rated "high" (mean = 4.2239). Brand loyalty received the highest score (mean = 4.31), indicating strong visitor satisfaction, likelihood of revisits, and positive word-of-mouth. Perceived quality was also rated high (mean = 4.24), especially sensory experience and effective marketing. Brand image (mean = 4.22) was enhanced by storytelling and health associations. Brand awareness and brand association scored slightly lower (mean = 4.17), suggesting room for improvement in recognition and emotional connection. These findings affirm Liubao tea's strong ICH brand foundation.

Hypotheses Analysis

Hypothesis 1: Tourist Behavior Factors influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea in Wuzhou city, Guangxi Province, China.

Table 5: Regression Analysis on Tourist Behavior

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.543	.210		21.687	.000*
	Geographical Factor	-.062	.108	-.087	-.581	.562
	Tourism Activities	-.070	.083	-.075	-.838	.402
	Social Factors	.058	.165	.066	.351	.726

R ² =	.084	Adjusted R ² =	.007	F=	.946	Sig=	.419
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*Accepted Sig. Level is equal to or less than .05

Table 5, it shows that Tourist Behavioral Factors do not influence Brand Value of Intangible Cultural Heritage Tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea in Wuzhou city, Guangxi Province, China because the data is not significantly relevant (Sig=.419) which is more than .05.

Hypothesis 2: Tourist Destination Factors influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea in Wuzhou city, Guangxi Province, China.

Table 6: Regression Analysis on Tourist Destination Factors						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.160	.205		10.548	.000
	Physical Factor	.133	.058	.153	-2.304	.022*
	Cultural and Heritage	.493	.043	.591	11.566	.000*
	Infrastructure and Facilities	.136	.094	.111	1.448	.014*
	R ² =	.403	Adjusted R ² =	.399	F= .89.135	Sig=.000*

*Sig.≤.05

From Table 6, it shows that Tourist Destination Factors consisting of Physical Factors, Cultural & Heritage Factors, and Infrastructure & Facilities Factors can explain the influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea at 40.3% (R²=.403, Sig.=.000). Physical factors influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea at significant level .05 (Sig=.022) ; and Cultural and Heritage factors influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea at significant level .01 (Sig. =.000); Infrastructure and Facilities influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea at significant level of .05 (Sig. =.014).

Hypothesis 3: Governmental Factors influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea in Wuzhou city, Guangxi Province, China.

Table 7: Regression Analysis on Governmental Factors						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.416	.138		17.462	.000*
	Central Government	.688	.058	.877	11.864	.000*
	Local Government	-.263	.060	-.326	-4.407	.000*
	R ² =	.625	Adjusted R ² =	.388	F= 127.221	Sig=.000*

*Sig.≤.05

From Table 7, it shows that Governmental Factors consisting of Central Government Policy and Local Government Policy can explain the influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea at 62.5% (R²=.625, Sig.=.000). Central Government Policy influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea at significant level .01 (Sig=.000) ; and Local Government Policy influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea at significant level .01 (Sig. =.000).

CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that the brand value of Liubao tea as an intangible cultural heritage (ICH) tourism attraction in Wuzhou City, Guangxi Province, is perceived at a high level by visitors. Brand loyalty ranks the highest, with tourists expressing satisfaction, intention to revisit, and willingness to recommend Liubao tea tourism. This is consistent with qualitative findings, where visitors noted strong recognition and emotional attachment to the tea. Perceived quality is also high, attributed to traditional fermentation techniques, consistent flavor, health benefits,

and the use of natural ingredients—all contributing to the tea's artisanal reputation. Brand image is shaped by cultural symbolism, health-oriented perception, and community involvement, reinforcing Liubao tea as a symbol of heritage, sustainability, and wellness. Brand awareness is strong domestically and growing internationally, aided by cultural tourism integration and experiential activities such as tea-making tours. Visitors can easily identify Liubao tea through its distinct packaging, taste, and storytelling. Lastly, brand association is marked by tourists' emotional connection with tea-related souvenirs and confidence in product quality. These results underscore the multidimensional brand value of Liubao tea ICH tourism, combining cultural depth, product excellence, and meaningful experiences—highlighting the importance of aligning heritage with strategic branding for sustainable tourism growth.

Hypotheses Analysis

Hypothesis 1: Tourist Behavior Factors influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea in Wuzhou city, Guangxi Province, China.

The hypothesis analysis shows that Tourist Behavioral Factors do not influence Brand Value of Intangible Cultural Heritage Tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea in Wuzhou city, Guangxi Province, China because the data is not significantly relevant ($\text{Sig}=.419$) which is more than .05.

Hypothesis 2: Tourist Destination Factors influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea in Wuzhou city, Guangxi Province, China.

The hypothesis analysis shows that Tourist Destination Factors consisting of Physical Factors, Cultural & Heritage Factors, and Infrastructure & Facilities Factors can explain the influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea at 40.3% ($R^2=.403$, $\text{Sig}=.000$). Physical factors influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea at significant level .05 ($\text{Sig}=.022$); and Cultural and Heritage factors influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea at significant level .01 ($\text{Sig}=.000$); Infrastructure and Facilities influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea at significant level of .05 ($\text{Sig}=.014$).

Hypothesis 3: Governmental Factors influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea in Wuzhou city, Guangxi Province, China.

The hypothesis analysis shows that Governmental Factors consisting of Central Government Policy and Local Government Policy can explain the influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea at 62.5% ($R^2=.625$, $\text{Sig}=.000$). Central Government Policy influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea at significant level .01 ($\text{Sig}=.000$); and Local Government Policy influence brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea at significant level .01 ($\text{Sig}=.000$).

DISCUSSION

The factors influencing the brand value of intangible cultural heritage tourism from the visitors' perspective of Liubao tea in Wuzhou city, Guangxi Province, China

This study identifies multiple factors influencing the brand value of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) tourism from visitors' perspectives in Liubao, Guangxi. Social factors emerged as most influential, particularly the friendliness of locals, accessible language use, and authentic cultural experiences, aligning with Social Exchange Theory, which links positive host–tourist interactions with stronger emotional brand connections (Kim et al., 2017; Sharma & Nayak, 2019). Geographical features—such as cool climate, mountainous terrain, and scenic tea gardens—enhance visitor experiences and brand distinctiveness (Vuong & Premkumar, 2019). Tourism activities, such as tea leaf-picking and ceremonies, offer immersive and educational engagement, reinforcing brand perception (Fu et al., 2023). Additionally, destination factors like infrastructure, traditional tea preparation, and heritage-rich environments contribute to sustainable brand identity (Nhan & Thong, 2018). Physical elements like accommodation, accessibility, and facilities further improve brand loyalty (Dong et al., 2020). Governmental support through policy, tax incentives, and promotion also strengthens the destination's brand value (Fu et al., 2023).

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this study yield several important implications for researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in the development and promotion of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) tourism, particularly in the context of Liubao tea in Wuzhou City, Guangxi Province.

1. Theoretical Implications

This research expands the application of brand equity theory in the domain of ICH tourism by demonstrating that brand value is a multidimensional construct shaped by both tangible and intangible factors. While traditional models focus on consumer goods, this study confirms the relevance of dimensions such as brand loyalty, awareness, perceived quality, and emotional association in the tourism context. Importantly, the results challenge assumptions by showing that tourist behavioral factors alone do not significantly influence brand value, suggesting that contextual and structural factors—such as destination and governmental support—play a more pivotal role. Future research could refine existing theoretical models to incorporate cultural identity and policy support as integral components of brand value in heritage tourism.

2. Practical Implications for Tourism Development

The high level of brand loyalty and perceived quality indicates that visitors place strong value on immersive, culturally authentic experiences. Tourism planners and local entrepreneurs can leverage this by curating more hands-on experiences—such as traditional tea-making workshops and homestays in tea plantations—to deepen emotional connections. Investment in infrastructure and digital promotion should prioritize highlighting the unique characteristics of Liubao tea, including its heritage, health benefits, and artisanal production.

3. Policy and Governance Implications

The significant influence of governmental factors, particularly central and local policy support, suggests that proactive governance is essential to the success of ICH tourism. Policies that provide tax incentives, transportation access, and heritage conservation funding can directly enhance brand value. Local governments should establish clear standards for quality assurance and facilitate training for service providers to align with cultural authenticity.

4. Implications for Cultural Preservation

Integrating Liubao tea tourism into the broader narrative of Chinese cultural heritage can help preserve traditional knowledge and practices, ensuring intergenerational transmission. Programs that document, certify, and narrate Liubao tea's heritage—while involving local communities—can both preserve and promote cultural identity in a globalized tourism landscape.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies should adopt longitudinal or comparative methods to explore how brand value evolves over time or differs across other ICH tourism sites. Moreover, international visitor perspectives and the digital branding of ICH products present promising areas for exploration, especially as Chinese tea culture expands into global markets.

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