

Development of Time-honored Brands in China: Analyzing Enterprises' Value System in Three Senses

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This paper explores the construction mechanism of time-honored brand companies' value system. Honorary title, tradition, technology, geographic space, and culture are fundamental concepts that time-honored brands employ to establish their values. These five concepts simultaneously construct values in different dimensions and constitute the value system of the time-honored brands. Anthropologist David Graeber (2001, 2005) points out that scholars usually use the term value in three senses: sociological or philosophical, economic, and linguistic. Among the three usages, the economic often contradicts the other two. In contrast, this paper shows that the employment of the three senses is feasible and necessary for understanding the value system of the time-honored brand.

Keywords: time-honored brands, value system, three dimensions of value

INTRODUCTION

Time-honored brands have a long history in China. They grew out of commercial brands, which appeared in the Tang Dynasty and boomed in the Ming and Qing dynasties. With many of them shrinking in size or going out of business during the anti-Japanese war and their development slowed down during civil war. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, time-honored brands have experienced three external shocks during their development. First, the movement to join public and private sectors in 1956 caused some time-honored brands to stop or even disappear. Second, the movement to eliminate Four Stereotypes during Cultural Revolution destroyed entities of time-honored brands, their excellent managerial experiences, and their unique techniques. Third, the impact of new marketing concepts, methods, operating modes, and joint-ventures from the western world since the reform and opening-up of China was most deadly for time-honored brands (He and Peng 2005). The history of the development of time-honored brands shows that they are still passing by the stage of renaissance and transformation. Seeking reconstruction and realization of their social and economic value has become an urgent task for time-honored brands. To explore these values of time-honored brands, we

put forward the following questions: What constitutes the value system of time-honored brands? Which styles can this system be transformed into? What materials can serve as the carriers of such transformation?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Chinese Time-honored Brands

Scholars in the fields of management and anthropology have conducted research on the revival and development of the time-honored brands in recent years. For instance, management scholars have explored the sustainable development of time-honored brands from the perspective of brand evolution (Yang 2013; Yang 2014), the impact of cultural properties of time-honored brands on their corporate value (i.e., Ji and Wang 2014), the revival of time-honored brands from the perspective of reminiscence (i.e., Fan and Sun, 2016), and management theories. They have done this by taking time-honored brands as typical mature enterprises of traditional industries (i.e., Guo, Yang and Leung 2016). In the field of anthropology, national scale research into time-honored brands has been launched led by Zhang Jijiao, a researcher of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Zhang's research team has carried out surveys of time-honored brands in 16 provinces and cities in China. They have made comparisons between provincial and regional brands. They also have explored theories from such perspectives like collective memory, cultural heritage and relation between government and enterprises. This research team published the first green book of time-honored brands in 2011 and continued doing it every year since 2013. In addition to the books, this team has publications in domestic and foreign periodicals (i.e., Zhang 2013a, 2013b, 2015; Yin 2015; Chen 2014) which have constituted a series of research papers, greatly enriching case studies and research contents of time-honored enterprises and business anthropology.

Research by management scholars and anthropologists has shown that time-honored brands are facing various problems such as being conservative, lacking innovation, suffering serious brain drain, enduring weak brand consciousness, and modern marketing awareness deficiencies. Scholars have conducted research on the values of time-honored brands by adopting a quantitative method. For example, Wang Chengrong et al. (2012; 2014) have contended that brand values contain market value, social value and cultural value and proposed the THBV (time-honored brand value) quantitative evaluation method. Brand history, cultural heritage, business philosophy and strategies, traditional technologies, and skills as well as architectural heritage and cultural artifacts are five factors for assessing social value and cultural value of brands. Wang Zhuo (2015) has followed the THBV evaluation method and conducted quantitative study on time-honored brands in Shenyang city. With value as the main point, this paper uses a qualitative method to explore the interaction mechanism between constituent parts of value and the feasible manners that time-honored brands pursue for sustainable development.

THREE DIMENSIONS OF VALUE AND TIME-HONORED BRANDS

Value is an important topic of business and economic anthropology. As Graeber (2001, 1-2) has pointed out, although anthropologists have frequently discussed value, there are no clear elaborations of value theories in the field of economic anthropology. Scholars often comprehend value from three dimensions, namely, sociological (or philosophical), economic, and linguistic dimensions. Sociologically (or philosophically) speaking, value refers to such ideas as personal values and family values; viewed from the perspective of classical economics, value refers to market value, such as the value of a house, etc.; linguistically speaking, value means the contrastive value defined in the structural linguistics of Saussure which states that the meaning of a word is produced by comparing it with other words. Graeber (2005) has further indicated that the value system is action-based and can be transformed into practices. Taking the "labor value theory" of Marx as an example, it contends that labor equals to human creativity with which the physical environment, social relations and material goods are put into practice. Capitalism converts labor into marketable abstract objects, namely the working ability of laborers, and the key phase of this conversion is the use of currency, so currency becomes a value representation in this regard.

According to Graeber, not only tangible objects, such as family heirlooms and currency, but also intangible substances, such as a certain emotion, can serve as representations.¹

Anthropologists have found that their analysis from the perspectives of sociology (or philosophy) and linguistics are often incompatible with that of economics. For example, economists argue that the value of commodities resides in the fact that they can satisfy the desires of the consumers and create or increase their happiness, but since the scarcity of goods is ubiquitous, people will rationally allocate and consume resources to realize maximum benefits. However, this rational logic is opposed by Marxist scholars and substantivist anthropologists. The former proposes the theory of surplus-value, arguing that workers' wages cover up the nature of their exploitative labor status, while the latter triggered the famous debates between substantivism and formalism in economic anthropology.

Can the three analytical dimensions proposed by Graeber be used to verify the values of time-honored brands simultaneously or not? The prominent feature of time-honored brands is "time-honored," which reflects their profound history and culture earning a history of integrity dating back to their creation. They once enjoyed or now still enjoy good reputations and have great social influence in local communities and even the country. As business enterprises, time-honored brands also attach much importance to make profits from their goods, so they are certainly concerned over how to expand the market and attract more consumers. Besides, governments award grades to time-honored brands according to various levels (national, provincial or municipal levels), and thus have formed a hierarchical structure which provides basis for comparison among the brands. Therefore, we propose that honorary titles, traditions, science and technology, geographic space and culture are important ways for time-honored brands to create their value system which covers the three orientations outlined by Graeber, namely, sociology (philosophy), economics and linguistics.

CASE STUDY: VALUE CONSTRUCTION OF XIFENG LTD.

Xifeng Liquor Co., Ltd. is in Liulin Town, Fengxiang County, Shaanxi Province. Its predecessor, Shaanxi Xifeng Liquor Factory, was founded in 1956. In 1999, it was restructured into Shaanxi Xifeng Liquor Co., Ltd. In 2009 and 2010, the equity diversification of the enterprise was realized through two capital increases and share expansions. The company carried out further expansion in 2016. The total assets of the joint stock company are 3.45 billion *yuan* (USD \$487.5 million) at present, covering an area of 900,000 square meters which includes 400,000 square meters floor area. It has an annual production capacity of 100,000 tons with more than 3,000 employees and 4,000 sets of production equipment. Xifeng Ltd., the largest liquor manufacturer in Northwest China and the biggest profit earner and taxpayer in Shaanxi province, is classified into the national first-tier enterprises. Xifeng liquor, the leading and core product of the enterprise, is one of the most famous old-brand liquors in China. Xifeng, as a trademark, has been successfully registered in the United States, the European Union, Russia, Thailand and New Zealand. It sells well not only in China but also in other 26 countries and regions on four continents. In 2019, Xifeng's brand value reached 120.622 billion *yuan* (USD \$17.047 billion) ranking at the top of Chinese white spirits brand value list.

Based on the field data mainly collected from January to February 2019 in Xifeng Ltd. and Liulin Town, we found that the company has made great efforts to construct enterprise value in ways like honor acquisition, tradition inheritance, science and technology adoption, geographical space protection and the spread of Xifeng culture. We will illustrate as follows.

1. **Honorary acquisition.** The company has actively participated in various expositions and industry appraisals and won a series of honorary titles. For example, Xifeng liquor won the gold quality award of 1915 Panama World Expo in San Francisco of the United States. In 1952, Xifeng liquor, together with Fenjiu, Maotai liquor and Wuliangye liquor, was rated as the four famous old Chinese brands by the state in the First National Liquor Show. It was awarded eight international prizes including the gold medal in the 15th Paris International Food Expo in 1992. Xifeng liquor achieved the honor of China time-honored brand in 2000. It was selected and recognized as China's well-known trademark by the State Administration for Industry and Commerce in 2005. Xifeng liquor's distillery was included in the first

batch of the intangible cultural heritage list of Shaanxi Province in 2007. The enterprise was appraised as a national industrial tourism demonstration site in 2008. Xifeng liquor was named as Top Ten Chinese Cultural and Historical Liquor and China Top Ten World Famous Liquor in the Seventh China Liquor Brand Value Appraisal held in Beijing in 2015. Xifeng Ltd. obtained the title of China's Corporate Culture Benchmarking Unit in 2018 and was selected in the National Brand Project by Xinhua News Agency in January 2019.

2. **Tradition inheritance.** Xifeng Ltd. has maintained its tradition mainly from two aspects. One is that it attaches great importance to mining the historical record related to Xifeng liquor. For example, the enterprise invites scholars to research archaeological information and historical archives as well as to collect local folk stories of Xifeng liquor, demonstrating the uninterrupted history of the liquor for 3,000 years in the Central Shaanxi Plain. The long and continuous history of Xifeng liquor has become the focal point in the company's advertising and has been compiled into a cultural brochure titled the "Xifeng Liquor Legend." In 2019, Xifeng Liquor Chronicles, including the historical document and folk stories, obtained the official recognition of the Local Records Office of Shaanxi Province. The other aspect of traditional inheritance is that Xifeng's enterprise continues employing the traditional liquor container, *jiuhai*, as the unique craft of Xifeng liquor. *Jiuhai* is the key appliance of the liquor storage technique dating to the Ming Dynasty. Its production process is complex: first of all, wet twigs of the chase tree from Qinling Mountain are woven into *lou* (basket), and then the inner wall of *lou* is starched with white cotton cloth dipped in a pulp mix of honey, egg white and flour. When the wall becomes completely dry, it is pasted with hemp paper, dried in the air, and these two actions are repeated hundreds of times. Finally, *lou* is sealed with vegetable oil and beeswax and turns into *jiuhai*. When liquor is placed in such a *jiuhai*, it will continue to react in an esterification process, producing strong aroma that appeals to enthusiasts of fine alcoholic beverages.

3. **Science and technology adoption.** Xifeng liquor belongs to the category of Chinese spirits produced by solid-state fermentation which is a high quality-assured crafted technique. Besides employing *jiuhai* as mentioned earlier, the company retains many other handcrafted manufacturing processes such as making *jiuqu* (distiller's yeast) to brew liquor. Meanwhile, the company is mechanizing parts of its operations to make distillation more efficient without compromising traditional production skills. For example, machines supply steam provided by the power plant instead of artificial fire for heating product. Water cooling has been replaced by an air-cooled instrument to cool down the liquor after the distillation. Besides, the fermentation process is digitalized by computer-operated temperature and humidity controls of the liquor manufacture workshops. Moreover, the company established a special laboratory to conduct taste and quality inspection of its liquor products. Previously, experienced masters examined the liquor before leaving the workshop. But now, the lab measures the content of various ingredients in the liquor with a machine. In addition, the company set up a liquor design center which has developed the technique of producing new drinks with different flavor blends. Through this way, the company has diversified its liquor products to meet discerning needs of the market.

4. **Geographical space protection.** Xifeng Ltd. is located in Liulin Town of northeastern Baoji City of the Central Shaanxi Plain. The plain, also known as Weihe Plain, is formed by the alluvial deposition of Weihe River and its two tributaries, Jinghe and Luohe rivers, which abound in water resources and thus supports a rich regional agriculture. People in Liulin region have had a collective memory of the geographical space. For example, Liulin residents are familiar with "the story of Pei Xingjian reciting poems"² and regard the pavilion in Tingzitou village where the story happened as a site with local characteristics and a must-go place for visitors. In 2003, the General Administration of Quality Supervision and Inspection of the People's Republic of China approved the company's application for the protection of Xifeng liquor's geographical heritage. Xifeng liquor thus became the first liquor product to obtain this honor in Shaanxi Province. In the same year, Liulin Town was designated as a national geographic protection area. To guard the quality water source of the town, chemical plant construction is prohibited around Liulin, and a complete sewage treatment system has been built to manage effluents.

5. **Cultural diffusion.** Xifeng Ltd. has marketed its culture mainly in two ways. Firstly, it materialized the historical and local influential figure Pei Xingjian. When people enter the gate of Xifeng

Ltd., a white marble statue of Pei Xingjian comes into view. The enterprise also rebuilt a road from the town to the county and called it Peigong (Mr. Pei) Avenue. Secondly, the company has set up Xifeng Liquor Culture museums in Liulin, Baoji, Beijing, Xi'an, Guangzhou, and Wuhu. Taking the museum in Liulin as an example, it chronologically exhibits the history related to Xifeng liquor, the building story of Xifeng factory, various honorary medals awarded to Xifeng liquor and the enterprise, and notable quotes of praise given by national leaders such as Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai to Xifeng liquor. It displays cultural relics such as the drinking vessels unearthed in Baoji City, the grain for liquor manufacture, a scale model of an ancient liquor distillery, and liquor bottles of historical design dating to the establishment of the company.

In the investigation, we found that the value created by Xifeng Company through honor acquisition, tradition inheritance, science and technology adoption, geographical space protection and cultural diffusion has gained a high degree of recognition among people within the sphere of the company, the Liulin Town and even the whole Shaanxi Province. Most of the workers of Xifeng Ltd. grew up in Liulin Town. We were told that three generations of some staff have been working in the distillery and they are deeply proud of being a member of *Xifeng ren* (Xifenger). The legend of Pei Xingjian's poems is an oral tradition passed down from generation to generation, imbuing in the people with the honor and belonging to the company and the community. In the company's dormitory area, each living space can be equipped with a tap for a low fee that directly discharges Chinese spirits to the household. Some interviewees even told us that drinking liquor is the first thing they do in the morning. So, in these regards liquor and stories such as Pei Xingjian reciting poems are naturally integrated into Liulin people's daily lives. From the perspectives of Xifeng workers, the time-honored enterprise has its own internal life force, and it is feasible to build the core value from its own history, traditions, and advantages.

However, we also found that consumers outside Shaanxi province know little about the core value of Xifeng in terms of its honor, tradition, technology and culture, which results in the low sales among these people. From our viewpoint, the reason is closely related to the lack of external marketing. For instance, some people we interviewed outside Shaanxi have heard about Xifeng liquor, but are unaware of its abundant history and exquisite craftsmanship promoted by the company. In the interviews, the staff of Xifeng Museum told us that the main visitors to the museums include inspection officials, dealers and key customers. The museum, as an important cultural carrier of the time-honored brand, did not play its role well. Marketing network of the company is not enough as well. For instance, Xifeng enterprise has sold products to the network distributors and not really stepped into the field of short video marketing to propagandize its history, tradition and culture.³ Therefore, Xifeng Company should strengthen its publicity through the media, advertisement, museum education and other ways from the aforementioned five aspects, containing honorary, tradition, science and technology, geographical space and culture, to cultivate consumers' feelings of having empathy and resonance with Xifeng, and expand the liquor's sales market outside the province.

DISCUSSION: ANALYZING VALUE SYSTEM OF TIME-HONORED BRANDS IN THREE SENSES

The Xifeng case study shows that time-honored brands can build and enhance their values in five ways. The first way is to create values with honorary titles. Honorary titles endow time-honored brands with industrial and social prestige among the peers. The national award of "China Time-Honored Brand" is highlighted in company promotional campaigns. The China Time-Honored Brand, as defined in the norms issued by the Ministry of Commerce in 2006, refers to "the brand with long history, products, skills or services passed on from generation to generation, distinct traditional Chinese cultural background and profound cultural deposits, wide social recognition and good reputation".⁴ More specifically, the conditions for certification include: established before 1956; inheriting unique products, skills or services; having a corporate culture with the great Chinese national tradition; having Chinese national characteristics and distinct regional cultural characteristics; having historical and cultural values, good reputation, wide social recognition, etc. The questionnaire survey conducted by the time-honored brand

research group in 12 Chinese provinces and cities shows that: 44.7 percent of enterprise managers of time-honored brands believed the certification is of significant help and 44.4 percent thought that it helped to enhance the enterprises' reputations and economic values (Time-honored brand research group 2011). In this regard, the certification reflects the relationship between government and time-honored brands. Zhang Jijiao (2015) has proposed a "sheltering" and "sheltered" umbrella theory to describe the relationship and argued that such relationship, as an important resource allocation method, may be more frequently employed and more efficient than an enterprises' market development capability. Meanwhile, the award of the time-honored brand is the start of the "umbrella relationship" between the government and enterprises.

The second way is to create values based on traditions. Traditions include historical stories, unique skills and business ideas of time-honored brands passed on from generation to generation. Each time-honored brand has its own legends and stories, reflecting its rich history. Time-honored brands all have their unique skills and some crafts are certified as intangible cultural heritage, such as liquor-making technology of Xifeng wine, production skills of Chinese rice paper, the skill of roast duck of Quanjude, forging craft of Wangmazi scissors and Chinese medical culture of Tongrentang. To promote these traditional skills, time-honored brands have built production lines to show off their craftsmanship, and some even provided consumers with chances to practice on their traditional production lines. For example, Shenyang Laolongkou, when making investments to renovate the well "Wanlong Spring" at its original site, built a traditional manual liquor-making workshop, a two-tier antique corridor and exit-ways for visitors to perceptually see the traditional hundred-years-plus liquor-making crafts (Feng 2011, 300). Besides, most time-honored brands advocate the traditional business idea of "honest operation, cheating neither the old nor the young customers." For instance, the business creed of Shantou Fried Oyster Restaurant is to "welcome customers with honesty and embrace wealth with fairness." Daiyuexuan, the famous writing brush maker in Beijing for about one hundred years, takes the four virtues of writing brushes ("sharp, neat, round and tough") as the standards of good writing brushes and good people.

The third way is to create value with science and technology. Applying new science and technology here means to replace handcrafting with advanced machines and equipment, both strengthening modernization of time-honored brands and improving their productivity and economic benefits. Take Quanjude and Pangaoshou for instances. Quanjude adopts modern computer technology to simulate manual duck roasting. With the time, temperature, humidity, and other indicators accurately set, ducks roasted with such "smart" equipment are more tender and delicious than those manually roasted (Wang and Zhang 2012, 9). In addition, with the standard production line, Quanjude can produce over 20,000 semi-finished ducks each day, fully meeting the market demand. Pangaoshou is a time-honored brand of traditional Chinese medicine. It introduced a German high-speed automatic liquid filling line in 2004 "in the hope to distinguish itself from traditional Chinese medicine production sites in people's mind and to enhance the brand with science and technology" (Zhang 2015, 45). As the cases of Quanjude and Pangaoshou show, the introduction of new equipment can strengthen technological innovations and break the conservative stereotypes for time-honored brands, but for other enterprises such as Xifeng Ltd., the application of unique manual skills becomes an important indicator of time-honored brands and distinguishes them from peer groups. Moreover, manual skills are carriers and the basis of the history and core competitiveness of time-honored brands. Therefore, traditional manual skills may not be completely discarded while new science and technology are applied to create the value of time-honored brands.

The fourth way is to create value from the perspective of geographic space. Geographic space here includes two aspects: products' geographic original producing area and the heritage that resonates. Since time-honored brands have existed for a long time, places of origins have left profound impressions on people of those areas (sometimes several generations of a family) like Liulin Town's residents. Moreover, the products with distinct regional features highlight not only the unique ecological landscape of their place of origin, but also the technology and creativity of their producers. Time-honored brands' nostalgic association with place also draws upon consumers' desires for sentimental feelings. Take Taipingguan Restaurant in Guangdong province as an example. It is themed as the earliest restaurant to serve western cuisine.¹ It has been renovated several times since China's reform and opening-up in an effort to

reconstruct consumers' memories by combining their visual, tactile, olfactory, gustatory and auditory sensations. For many middle-aged people in Guangzhou, Taipingguan Restaurant is a place filled with memories of youth, while for young people, Taipingguan Restaurant carries childhood memories. In this regard, the operation and development of Taipingguan Restaurant is closely and emotionally related to the daily lives of generations of people in Guangzhou (Yang and Li 2014). In general, the geographic space links time-honored brands, special local culture and daily lives of local people together.

The fifth way is to create value from the perspective of culture. Culture here mainly covers two aspects: the history and origins of time-honored brands presented in the form of statues, names and plaques, and the brand's cultural connotation shown to the public through the ways of theme museums, galleries and culture-oriented tour routes sponsored by time-honored brands. A typical case of materialized culture in the form of names is Shixian Taibai in Chongqing City. Shixian Taibai is the name of a time-honored brand producing liquor. Shixian literally means "poetry genius". The famous poet Li Bai of the Tang Dynasty was known for his poetic writing and of his love of liquor. His elegant and graceful poems are romantic and unconstrained. Therefore, the brand name Shixian Taibai, combining Chinese history, liquor features and literati culture together, is easy to remember for Chinese consumers. As for museums and galleries, time-honored brand Laomeihua built the first shoe culture museum in China, Guifaxiang built a food culture museum, Huqingyutang Pharmacy built a Traditional Chinese Medicine museum, and so on. These theme museums and galleries usually exhibit the manufacturing crafts and folk culture in connection with the products and the development history of the enterprises. In addition, time-honored brands have designed tour routes based on the characteristics of their products, which are welcomed by consumers. In a word, time-honored brands create new ways to enhance their popularity among ordinary people and to attract people to consume their products in terms of cultural education.

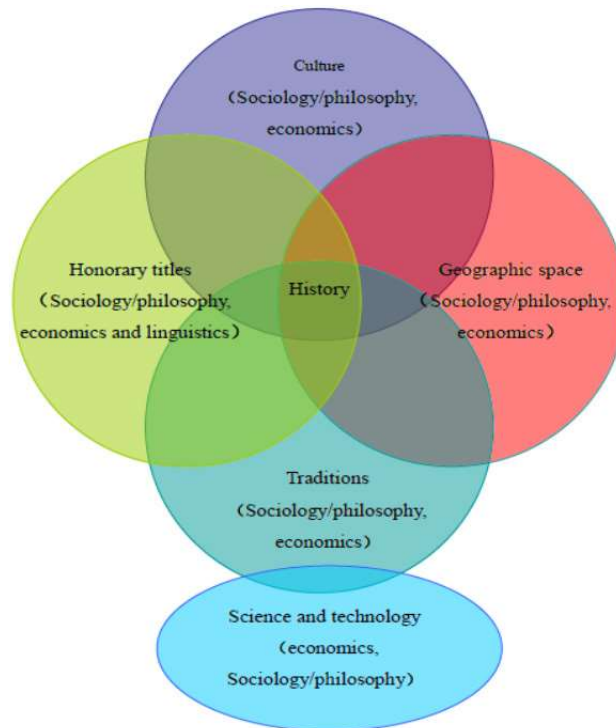
Honorary titles, traditions, science and technology, geographic space and culture are important ways for time-honored brands to create value which covers the three value orientations outlined by Graeber, namely, sociology (philosophy), economics and linguistics. Substantivist anthropologists argue against the idea that people always seek to maximize the profits in economic activities in all social forms, because they may pursue certain economic behaviors to realize religious and spiritual goals in both Western and non-Western societies. For instance, Polanyi (1968, 153) pointed out that European and American families exchange labor to take mutual care of their children in respect for the principle of reciprocity instead of an economic principle that maximizes "profit." However, we argue that it is necessary to take social, economic and linguistic orientations into account when analyzing the value system of time-honored brands. There is no doubt that honorary titles, traditions, geographic space, and culture primarily demonstrate sociological values of time-honored brands and serve as important resources for the realization of market values of the enterprises. Besides, in China, honorary titles are classified into national and local (provincial and municipal) rankings according to the levels of the government that award the titles. An enterprise may be simultaneously designated as a time-honored brand by different levels of government, but it will only publicize the prestigious national one in advertising campaigns. This can be easily understood if we put this phenomenon into the hierarchical administrative system of China. The hierarchy embedded in the specific social background of China gives rise to the need of the comparative method of structural linguistics in the analysis of time-honored brands. Science and technology indicate economic values first and then sociological values because the introduction of modern equipment by enterprises is intended on one hand to improve productivity and create more profits, and on the other hand, to change the stereotypes of the companies in people's mind and to build new images as modern enterprises. Honorary titles, tradition, science and technology, geographic space and culture become representations of values and these representations can be either intangible, i.e., national, provincial or municipal "time-honored brand" certifications, traditional craftsmanship, and business acumen, or tangible, i.e., geographical heritage equipment modernization and themed museums. Honorary titles, traditions, science and technology, geographic space and culture constitute a system of time-honored brands' values, as shown in the following table 1.

TABLE 1
THE VALUE SYSTEM OF TIME-HONORED BRANDS

Value system	Value representations	Value dimensions
Honorary titles	National, provincial or municipal “time-honored brand”	Sociology/philosophy, economics and linguistics
Traditions	History and stories, traditional skills and business ideas	Sociology/philosophy and economics
Science and technology	Standard modern equipment	Economics and sociology/philosophy
Geographic space	Geographical indications and reminiscence-themed geographic space manifestations	Sociology/philosophy and economics
Culture	Materialized history, theme museums, galleries, cultural tour routes	Sociology/philosophy and economics

Honorary titles, tradition, science and technology, geographic space and culture are not mutually exclusive; they have an overlapping part – history (as shown in Figure 1). “Time-honored” indicates that such enterprises have a longer history than peers of the same industry. The companies’ traditions are reproduced through inheritance from generation to generation. The geographic space can only create values based on local environment and nostalgic feelings stemming from the past. The culture is rooted in materialized history, such as excavated cultural relics, and history described with material objects. In contrast, science and technology are much more modern partly due to the fact that industrial machinery production is closely related to the industrial revolution in the West.

FIGURE 1
RELATIONSHIPS AMONG HONORARY TITLES, TRADITIONS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, GEOGRAPHIC SPACE AND CULTURE



However, modern science and technology and traditional antiquity are not exclusive to each other. In such industries as manufacturing and brewing, equipment imitates only partial manual craftsmanship or replaces labor-intensive manual procedures of lesser technical content. As pointed out by some scholars (Tian 2011), mechanization does not “save” manual production if we think that the operation of the equipment is still controlled by technical personnel who are familiar with all procedures based on traditional craftsmanship. Some scholars have argued that the combination of traditional skills with modern technology will not diminish time-honored brands’ cultural values, because the combination is “to utilize strengths of modern technology to complement traditional skills where it cannot suit modern market and make time-honored brands embark on the road of efficient and rational industrialization and marketization” (Guo 2011, 215). On the contrary, some scholars have contended that machine production can easily eliminate the emotional appeal of traditional skills of time-honored brands and “the intervention of equipment will split history, culture and traditions” (Li 2015, 114). George Ritzer (2008) has criticized standard machine production in his book *The McDonaldization of Society* and argued that the global fast-food company, McDonald’s, uses the same equipment and controls standard procedures all over the world. Its employees could produce same food anywhere after simple training which results in the global expansion of capitalism. In contrast, James Watson et al. (1997), with the development of McDonald’s in East Asia as examples, argue that standard capitalism expansion may not bring about homogeneity since McDonald’s has adopted different localization strategies for development, and local people even endow the company with new cultural connotations. The research of Ritzer reminds us to critically look at standardized production while Watson tells us not to ignore local heterogeneity, which throws light on the understanding of the relationship between tradition and modernity for time-honored brands. Technology-based mechanized production can both create economic benefits and easily eliminate local features (including local culture, dietary habits, etc.) and locality (i.e., nostalgic feelings to specific geographic space, products made by specific groups in particular natural environment) which are exactly important resources for time-honored brands to enhance their values. Traditional skills and modern equipment are double-edge swords. Therefore, we suggest that it is significant for time-honored brands to properly handle the relationship between “history” and “modern.” Enterprises should find feasible ways to properly handle the relationship between them according to actual conditions, and thus realizing their sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

Time-honored brands embody both rich traditional Chinese culture and local industrial and commercial cultures. From the time-honored brands which have a history of tens and even hundreds of years, we not only find such cultural heritages as products, skills or services, which have been passed on for generations, but also epitomize Chinese business traditions which emphasize honesty and reputation. This paper theoretically integrates factors of history, products, skills, services and business traditions into the value system of time-honored brands, to promote the sustainable development of this treasured business cultural heritage in China. Historical and cultural traditions of time-honored brands are important resources which can be converted into social values and market values. The above-mentioned honorary titles, traditions, science and technology, geographic space and culture constitute value representations of these resources. With similarities and their unique features, these five concepts form the value system of time-honored brands in sociological, economic and linguistic senses. The enterprises should make good use of these resources to achieve all-around development.

In conclusion, we suggest that time-honored brand enterprises conduct consumer research to evaluate marketable appeal of brand value to the mass public. From a broad view, a physical object, product or enterprise can have its brand and a brand can sometimes directly equates to the main source of commodity value. Each brand has its unique style, image and identity and sometimes can relate to national identity. For instance, a group of consumers who have never met each other before can form an imagined community (Anderson 1983) based on their loyalty to a brand. Coca-Cola and Levi’s are associated with American identity but have global appeal. In contemporary societies, brands are no longer

limited to objects but are extended to people. For example, people can register trademarks with their names and celebrities can even add value to products related to them. British footballer David Beckham is a typical case (Parmentier and Fischer 2012). European business scholar Nicholas Ind (2004) even argues that employees can become live brands of service industries. Favorable exchanges between consumers and employees can leave good impressions on consumers and promote consumers' recognition of the brand.

The pathway to brand loyalty is through the creation of strong emotions and affection toward the product in the mind of consumers (Arvidsson 2005, 239). As anthropology is the "study of humanity" it is relevant for business anthropologists to study humanity's behaviors as consumers, which has become an important area of anthropological research (Jordan 2010, 17). Furthermore, anthropological research into time-honored brands has been thriving in recent years. A batch of research papers on time-honored brands has been successively published by anthropologists and sociologists (i.e., Gao 2016a; 2016b; Wang 2015; Zhang 2013a; 2013b; 2015). Unfortunately, these studies have fallen short of linking the role of consumers toward loyalty of time-honored brands. This needs further studies.

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ENDNOTES

1. For example, in the case of family care responsibilities, although women are not monetarily compensated, they win respect and love of their family members. Here, respect and love are representations of family values.
2. In the third year of Yifeng's reign of the Tang dynasty (687), Pei Xingjian, the assistant minister of the Ministry of Personnel, took a rest near Tingzitou village, Liulin town on the way of escorting the prince of Persia back home. It was March in the spring, and Pei suddenly saw the bees and butterflies falling to the ground. Pei sent his servants to find out the reason. It turned out that a jar of old liquor had just opened in the town, and its fragrance had drifted to the pavilion five miles away, making all the bees and butterflies nearby drunk. After Pei tasted the liquor, he wrote a poem to praise it. Moreover, Pei presented the liquor to Emperor Gaozong when returning. The emperor was very happy with Liulin liquor and listed it as a royal spirits thereafter.
3. There is an account called Xifeng Liquor Huashan Sword on the Tik Tok, a popular short video app for mobile phones in China. The products displayed on Huashan Sword are sold to the sole distributors at a fixed price, and only the distributors have the right to determine the market price and the advertising of the products.
4. Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China. Norms of China Time-honored Brand. <http://tftz.mofcom.gov.cn/article/aw/201209/20120908348719.shtml>.

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