The Impact of Online Marketing Planning on Customer Brand Loyalty in Traditional Arts and Crafts Enterprises in China

Liu Liang

Liaoning Vocational University of Technology, China

au2007@hotmail.com

Sun Shuo

Liaoning Vocational University of Technology, China

sunsbn@163.com

Abstract

Against the backdrop of the rapidly evolving internet and information technologies, traditional craft enterprises are progressively fortifying their e-commerce strategies to broaden their sales channels. However, distinct from other industries, online marketing possesses unique characteristics for traditional craft businesses that can significantly influence consumer behavior. This study aims to examine these characteristics and their specific impact on customer brand loyalty, with perceived cost investigated as a key mechanism, proposing effective strategies to enhance market competitiveness. To achieve these objectives, the paper will provide a comprehensive review of existing research in this domain, both domestically and internationally. Methodologically, it will employ survey data and statistical analysis to meticulously dissect how the online marketing nuances of traditional craft enterprises affect consumer brand loyalty, particularly through the influence of perceived costs. Additionally, based on the findings, this study will offer thorough and practical insights and recommendations to both scholars and industry practitioners.

Keywords: Expectancy Theory, Information Systems Success Model, Transaction Cost Economics, Perceived Costs, Customer Brand Loyalty, Online Marketing, Traditional Arts and Crafts

1. Introduction

Traditional handicrafts, as significant carriers of cultural heritage, have consistently garnered considerable attention and are highly sought after due to their intrinsic cultural and artistic value, often commanding a high added value (Liu et al., 2024a). However, in comparison to other industries, traditional handicraft enterprises in China encounter a unique set of challenges. These include intricate and often lengthy production processes rooted in traditional techniques, relatively narrow and geographically constrained sales channels, limited brand visibility in a crowded marketplace, and typically smaller operational scales (Liu et al., 2024a). The advent and widespread adoption of online and mobile commerce platforms have presented these enterprises with unprecedented opportunities. These digital platforms enable traditional crafts companies to transcend conventional limitations of time, space, and physical presence, thereby expanding their consumer reach, enhancing brand awareness, improving sales efficiency, and ultimately increasing revenue (Sohaib et al., 2022). In this evolving digital

landscape, this research aims to explore the nuanced impact of online marketing planning characteristics specific to traditional crafts companies on customer brand loyalty. Furthermore, it seeks to provide these enterprises with empirically grounded, practical suggestions for optimizing their online marketing strategies to cultivate and strengthen enduring brand loyalty, a critical factor for sustainable success in the contemporary market. Existing scholarly work, both domestically and internationally, offers varied perspectives and conclusions regarding the brand image of traditional handicraft enterprises and the role of online mobile commerce platforms. Generally, this body of research can be categorized into two primary streams: (1) quantitative and qualitative analyses focusing on the constitution and perception of brand image in this sector, and (2) investigations into the influencing factors of online mobile commerce platforms on the brand image of traditional handicraft enterprises (Xue et al., 2022; Yadav et al., 2023). However, current research exhibits certain limitations. Domestic studies in China have predominantly focused on case-study analyses of specific traditional handicraft enterprise brand images. While insightful, some of these studies are constrained by small sample sizes, which limits the generalizability of their conclusions regarding brand management planning and resource allocation for the broader traditional handicraft sector (Chiu et al., 2024). Conversely, international research has paid more attention to the mechanisms through which online mobile commerce platforms affect the brand image of traditional crafts companies. Nevertheless, these studies often lack specific, validated research models capable of effectively evaluating the actual impact of brand image-building efforts on customer perceptions and loyalty in this unique cultural industry cultural industry (He & Wen, 2024).

Therefore, to address these identified gaps, this research will employ a mixed-method approach, integrating a comprehensive literature review with empirical data from questionnaire-based research. This approach will facilitate a thorough exploration of the specific characteristics of online marketing as applied by traditional crafts companies, the robust measurement of customer brand loyalty, and the identification of key influencing factors and their interrelationships. The primary data for this study will be sourced from consumers who have experience with purchasing products from traditional handicraft enterprises in China, collected through an online convenient sampling method. The measurement of research variables will be primarily conducted using validated scales adapted from existing literature and administered via questionnaire surveys. Subsequent data processing and analysis will be performed using SPSS and SmartPLS statistical software. The core analytical method will involve Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to rigorously examine the influence of online marketing planning characteristics of traditional handicraft enterprises on customer brand loyalty, and to explore the underlying mechanisms, including the mediating role of perceived costs. The ultimate aim is to provide targeted, actionable suggestions and strategies for traditional handicraft enterprises to navigate the digital marketplace effectively.

Research Objectives

Building upon the identified gaps in the existing literature and the unique challenges and opportunities faced by traditional arts and crafts enterprises in China, this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. **To identify and operationalize the critical dimensions of online marketing planning** (i.e., online product marketing content, online product marketing system, and online product marketing service) specific to traditional handicraft enterprises, and empirically examine their direct and indirect effects on customer brand loyalty, with perceived cost as a key mediating mechanism.

2. **To validate an integrated theoretical framework** that synthesizes Expectancy Theory, the Information Systems Success Model (updated DeLone and McLean IS Success Model), and Transaction Cost Economics, thereby providing a robust, multi-theoretical lens to explain how online marketing strategies influence consumer behavior and loyalty formation in culturally rooted industries.

3. **To investigate the mediating role of perceived costs** in the relationship between the dimensions of online marketing planning and customer brand loyalty, specifically examining how cognitive, psychological, and financial costs associated with online transactions influence the path from marketing efforts to loyalty.

4. **To derive actionable, context-specific strategies** for traditional handicraft enterprises in China, leveraging empirical insights to optimize online marketing planning, reduce perceived transactional and psychological costs for consumers, and cultivate enduring brand loyalty while preserving and promoting cultural authenticity.

These objectives are designed not only to address the limitations of prior studies—such as fragmented theoretical models, limited generalizability from small-sample studies, and insufficient exploration of mediating mechanisms in this specific context—but also to contribute novel empirical evidence to the intersection of digital marketing, cultural heritage industries, and consumer behavior. By bridging theoretical rigor with practical relevance, this research seeks to advance scholarly discourse and provide a valuable blueprint for traditional arts and crafts enterprises aiming for sustainable competitiveness and growth in the digital era.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Online Marketing Planning for Traditional Arts and Crafts Enterprises

Online marketing has fundamentally reshaped how businesses interact with customers and build brands. For traditional arts and crafts enterprises, which often rely on cultural narratives, authenticity, and unique product characteristics, online marketing presents both distinct opportunities and challenges opportunities and challenges (Liu et al., 2024a). Unlike mass-produced goods, traditional crafts carry significant cultural and historical value, which must be effectively communicated in the digital realm (Vaculčíková & Nguyen, 2020). Effective online marketing planning in this sector involves more than just establishing an online presence; it requires a strategic approach to content, system design, and service delivery that resonates with the target audience and conveys the unique value proposition of the crafts unique value proposition of the crafts (Vaculčíková & Nguyen, 2020). Prior research highlights several key characteristics of effective online marketing. For instance, interactivity, information richness, and personalization have been shown to positively influence consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (Kang et al., 2021; Ma, 2023). Hoffman & Novak (1996) identified interaction, multimedia capabilities, and personalization as critical factors impacting online business performance and customer loyalty. Mangold & Faulds (2009) further categorized online marketing activities into real-time interactivity, hypertextuality, personalization, and

relationship marketing, noting their positive impact on brand loyalty and customer satisfaction. However, the specific operationalization of these characteristics for traditional arts and crafts, and their combined impact on brand loyalty through mechanisms like perceived cost, remains an area requiring further empirical investigation, particularly in the Chinese context.

This study conceptualizes online marketing planning for traditional arts and crafts enterprises through three critical dimensions:

• **Online Product Marketing Content:** This refers to the nature, quality, and presentation of information about the traditional crafts, including detailed product descriptions, high-quality visuals (images, videos), storytelling about the craft's origin, cultural significance, artisan details, and production process production process (Wang et al., 2023). For traditional crafts, content that emphasizes authenticity, craftsmanship, and cultural heritage is paramount cultural heritage is paramount (Li et al., 2025).

• **Online Product Marketing System:** This dimension encompasses the technical and functional aspects of the online platform used by the enterprise. It includes factors such as website/platform design, user interface (UI) and user experience (UX), navigability, search functionality, mobile responsiveness, security of transactions, and overall system reliability (DeLone & McLean, 2003; Wang & Chen, 2023).

• **Online Product Marketing Service:** This relates to the quality of customer service provided throughout the online engagement, including pre-purchase (e.g., responsiveness to inquiries, clarity of information), during-purchase (e.g., ease of ordering, payment process), and post-purchase support (e.g., shipping, returns, handling of complaints, follow-up communication) (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2018). Excellent service can significantly enhance customer satisfaction and trust.

2.2 Core Theoretical Framework

To understand the complex interplay between online marketing planning, perceived costs, and customer brand loyalty in the traditional arts and crafts sector, this study integrates three complementary theoretical perspectives: Expectancy Theory, the DeLone and McLean Information Systems Success Model, and Transaction Cost Economics.

2.2.1 Expectancy Theory Expectancy Theory, originally proposed by Vroom (1964), is a process theory of motivation that explains how individuals make choices among different behavioral options based on their expectations of the outcomes of those behaviors. The theory posits that motivation is a function of three key elements: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. In the context of online marketing for traditional crafts, **Instrumentality:** The perceived probability that performance will lead to desired outcomes (e.g., the belief that purchasing a craft product will result in satisfaction, cultural enrichment, or social recognition). **Valence:** The subjective value or attractiveness of the expected outcomes (e.g., the importance a consumer places on owning an authentic piece of traditional art). **Expectancy:** It helps explain how consumers' expectations regarding the online platform (content, system, service) influence their engagement and subsequent behaviors, such as purchase and loyalty (Vroom, 1964). If consumers expect that interacting with an enterprise's online marketing efforts will lead to a positive experience (e.g., finding unique products, easy transaction, good service) and valuable outcomes (e.g., high-quality crafts, cultural connection), they are more likely to engage and develop loyalty.

The clarity, richness, and reliability of online marketing elements can shape these expectancies and instrumentalities, influencing the perceived value (valence) of the interaction and the products themselves.

2.2.2 DeLone and McLean Information Systems (IS) Success Model

•   **Information Quality (corresponds to Online Product Marketing Content):** This refers to the desirable characteristics of the information output of an IS, such as accuracy, timeliness, completeness, relevance, and (DeLone & McLean, 2003)

•   **System Quality (corresponds to Online Product Marketing System):** This pertains to the desirable characteristics of the information system itself, including ease of use, navigability, reliability, flexibility, response time, and security (DeLone & McLean, 2003).

•   **Service Quality (corresponds to Online Product Marketing Service):** This refers to the quality of support that system users receive from the IS department or service provider (DeLone & McLean, 2003).

The DeLone and McLean model suggests that these quality dimensions influence system use and user satisfaction, which in turn lead to net benefits (e.g., customer loyalty, increased sales). By applying this model, this study posits that higher quality in online marketing content, system, and service will lead to more positive user experiences, which can reduce perceived costs and foster brand loyalty.

2.2.3 Transaction Cost Economics (TCE)

Transaction Cost Economics, primarily developed by (Coase, 1937) and Williamson (1985), explains economic organization by focusing on the costs associated with undertaking transactions (Coase, 1937; Williamson, 1985). Transaction costs are the

•   High-quality **online product marketing content** (clear descriptions, detailed images, transparent information about origins and materials) reduces search costs and uncertainty about product attributes.

•   A well-designed **online product marketing system** (user-friendly interface, efficient navigation, secure payment gateways) minimizes perceived effort and risk (Wang & Chen, 2023).

By reducing these perceived transaction costs, online marketing efforts can enhance the overall value proposition for consumers, leading to increased satisfaction and, consequently, greater brand loyalty (Vroom, 1964).

2.3 Perceived Costs

Perceived costs refer to the consumer's subjective evaluation of the sacrifices they make to acquire and use a product or service (DeLone & McLean, 2003). These costs extend beyond the monetary price and include various non-monetary dimensions such as time costs, effort costs, psychological costs, and risk costs (Liu et al., 2024a; Liu et al., 2024b).

•   **Monetary Costs:** The actual price paid for the product and any associated shipping or handling fees.

•   **Time Costs:** The time spent searching for information, evaluating alternatives, completing the transaction, and waiting for delivery.

•   **Effort Costs (or Cognitive Costs):** The mental and physical effort required to navigate the online platform, understand product information, make decisions, and complete the purchase process.

- **Psychological Costs:** Feelings of frustration, uncertainty, anxiety, or regret that may arise during the online shopping experience, such as concerns about product authenticity, security of personal information, or (Featherman & Pavlou, 2003)
- **Risk Costs:** Perceived risks associated with the transaction, including financial risk (e.g., overpayment, non-delivery), performance risk (e.g., product not meeting expectations), and privacy/security risk (e.g., misuse of personal (Jacoby & Kaplan, 1972)

In the context of traditional arts and crafts, which are often unique, high-involvement products, perceived costs can play a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors. Consumers may perceive higher risks due to the difficulty of assessing quality and authenticity online, or higher psychological costs if the online experience does not align with their expectations of engaging with culturally significant items (Choi & Kim, 2004). This study posits that the three dimensions of online marketing planning (content, system, service) directly influence these perceived costs. High-quality online marketing should reduce perceived costs by providing clear information, a seamless user experience, and reliable service, thereby making the transaction more attractive and less burdensome for the consumer.

2.4 Customer Brand Loyalty

Customer brand loyalty is a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior (Dick & Basu, 1994). It is a critical asset for firms, leading to sustained revenue, reduced marketing costs, and a buffer against competitive actions (Dick & Basu, 1994; Napoli et al., 2014).

Brand loyalty is often conceptualized as having both attitudinal and behavioral dimensions (Dick & Basu, 1994).

- **Attitudinal Loyalty:** Refers to the psychological commitment and favorable disposition towards a brand, including positive feelings, trust, and a preference for the brand over alternatives (Kim, 2012).
- **Behavioral Loyalty:** Refers to repeat purchase behavior itself, such as the frequency and consistency of purchasing the brand over time (Liu et al., 2024a)

For traditional arts and crafts enterprises, fostering brand loyalty is particularly important due to the often-niche market and the need to build long-term relationships with customers who appreciate the cultural and artistic value of the products (Kim & Ko, 2012; Penti & Härkönen, 2019; Liu et al., 2024a). Online marketing planning can contribute to building both attitudinal loyalty (by creating engaging experiences, fostering trust, and communicating brand values) and behavioral loyalty (by making repeat purchases convenient and rewarding) (Kim & Ko, 2012; Penti & Härkönen, 2019; Reichheld & Schefter, 2000; Liu et al., 2024a). This study focuses on customer brand loyalty as the ultimate dependent variable, examining how it is influenced by online marketing planning, with perceived costs acting as a crucial mediating mechanism. The argument is that effective online marketing planning (high-quality content, system, and service) reduces the perceived costs associated with purchasing traditional crafts online, which in turn enhances customer satisfaction and trust, leading to stronger brand loyalty.

3. Integration of Theories and Hypotheses Development

The integrated theoretical framework suggests that the quality dimensions of online marketing planning (Content, System, Service), derived from the DeLone and McLean IS Success Model, influence consumer behavior through mechanisms described by Expectancy Theory and Transaction Cost Economics. Specifically:

•   High-quality online marketing content, system, and service are expected to create positive **expectancies** (consumers believe engaging with the platform will be effective and lead to desired outcomes) and reduce **perceived transaction costs** (consumers find it easier, quicker, and less risky to transact).

•   According to Expectancy Theory, when expectancies are met and outcomes are valued, consumers are more motivated to engage and repeat behaviors. Reduced transaction costs, as per TCE, enhance the net value of the transaction, making it more attractive.

•   These positive experiences and reduced costs are hypothesized to lead to lower overall **perceived costs** (monetary, time, effort, psychological, risk) associated with acquiring traditional crafts online.

•   Lower perceived costs, in turn, are expected to positively influence **customer brand loyalty**, as consumers are more likely to remain loyal to a brand that consistently provides value and minimizes their sacrifices.
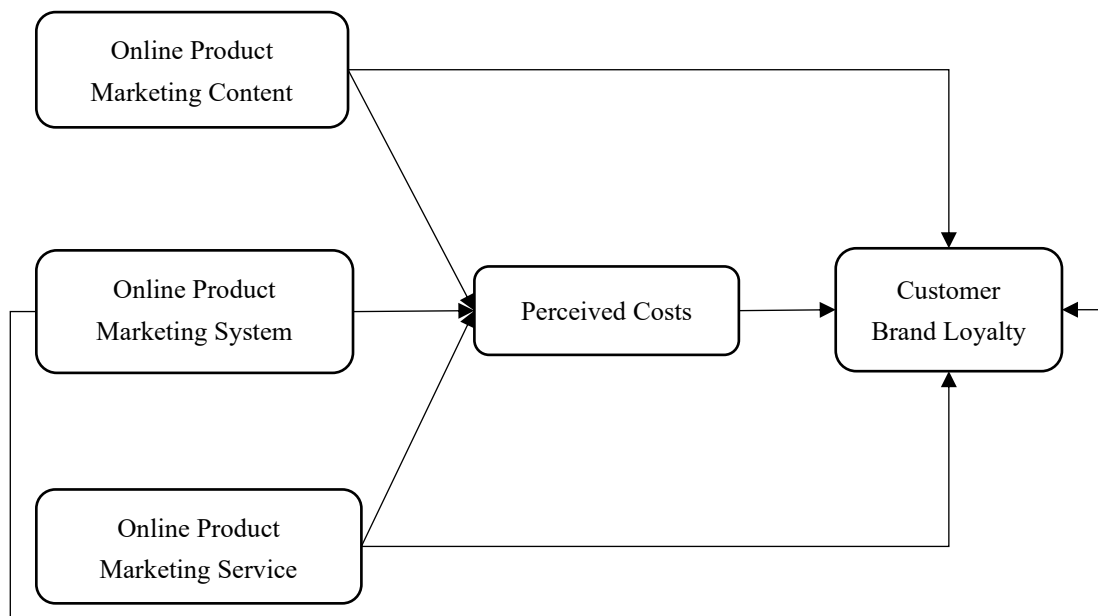

Figure 1: Integrated Theoretical Framework

Based on this integrated framework, the following general hypotheses are proposed (specific, testable hypotheses will be detailed in the Methodology section):

•   *H1 (General):* Online Product Marketing Content quality will negatively influence Perceived Costs.

•   *H2 (General):* Online Product Marketing System quality will negatively influence Perceived Costs.

•   *H3 (General):* Online Product Marketing Service quality will negatively influence Perceived Costs.

•   *H4 (General):* Perceived Costs will negatively influence Customer Brand Loyalty.

- *H5 (General):* Online Product Marketing Content quality will positively influence Customer Brand Loyalty (potentially both directly and indirectly via Perceived Costs).
- *H6 (General):* Online Product Marketing System quality will positively influence Customer Brand Loyalty (potentially both directly and indirectly via Perceived Costs).
- *H7 (General):* Online Product Marketing Service quality will positively influence Customer Brand Loyalty (potentially both directly and indirectly via Perceived Costs).

The mediating role of Perceived Costs is central to this model, suggesting that the impact of online marketing planning on brand loyalty is significantly channeled through its effect on reducing consumer sacrifices.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships between online marketing planning dimensions, perceived costs, and customer brand loyalty in traditional arts and crafts enterprises. The research utilizes Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) as the primary analytical technique, which is particularly suitable for exploratory research and complex models with multiple constructs (Hair et al., 2017).

4.2 Data Collection

Primary data is collected through an online questionnaire survey targeting consumers who have experience purchasing traditional handicraft products from Chinese enterprises through online platforms. The sampling method employed is convenience sampling, with participants recruited through social media platforms, online forums, and e-commerce platforms specializing in traditional crafts.

4.3 Measurement Instruments

All constructions in the study are measured using validated scales adapted from existing literature. The questionnaire items are designed using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). The measurement scales are adapted from established instruments to ensure reliability and validity:

- Online Marketing Planning dimensions adapted from DeLone and McLean (2003) and Parasuraman et al. (2005)
- Perceived Costs adapted from Zeithaml (1988) and Featherman and Pavlou (2003)
- Customer Brand Loyalty adapted from Dick and Basu (1994) and Oliver (1999)

4.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis is conducted using SPSS for descriptive statistics and preliminary analysis, and SmartPLS for structural equation modeling. The analysis follows the two-step approach recommended by Hair et al. (2017): first, the measurement model is evaluated for reliability and validity, followed by the assessment of the structural model to test the hypothesized relationships.

Data Analysis Methodology

Sample Characteristics Analysis

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Participants' Characteristics

Basic Information	Descriptive Statistics	Basic Information	Descriptive Statistics
Gender	Male：248 (55.7%) Female：197 (44.3%)	Age (Years)	Mean：32 Median：28 Mode：31-35 (21.3%) Standard Deviation：10
Educational Background	Mean：15 Median：16 Mode：Bachelor Degree (59.3%) Standard Deviation：2	Occupation	Mode：Personnel of Corporations and Governmental Organizations (22.1%)
Monthly Income (RMB)	Mean:5459 Median：6000 Mode：5000-8999(37.2%) Standard Deviation：3290	Monthly Expenditure (RMB)	Mean: 3498 Median：4000 Mode：1000-2999(34.7%) Standard Deviation：2426
Source of Income	Mode：On Job (66.5%)	Main Source of Product Information	Mode：Smartphone (67%)

This study obtained 445 valid questionnaire responses. Key demographic characteristics reveal:

1. **Gender Distribution:** A balanced representation (Male: 248, 55.7%; Female: 197, 44.3%).

2. **Age Profile:** Mean age 32 years (Median: 28; SD=10), with the 31-35 cohort constituting the largest segment (21.3%), indicating relative concentration.

3. **Educational Attainment:** High education levels are evident, with a mean of 15 years (Median: 16; SD=2). Bachelor's degree holders formed the majority (59.3%).

4. **Occupational Diversity:** Corporate/government employees represented the largest occupational category (22.1%).

5. **Economic Status:**

● *Income:* Mean monthly income of RMB 5,459 (Median: RMB 6,000; SD=RMB 3,290). The RMB 5,000-8,999 bracket was predominant (37.2%).

● *Expenditure:* Mean monthly expenditure of RMB 3,498 (Median: RMB 4,000; SD=RMB 2,426). The RMB 1,000-2,999 bracket was most frequent (34.7%).

● *Primary Income Source:* Employment (66.5%).

6. **Information Acquisition:** Smartphones served as the primary channel for product information access (67%), aligning with mobile internet trends and suggesting implications for mobile marketing strategies in traditional crafts.

Collectively, the sample exhibits moderate age, elevated education, stable income, and significant digital engagement. This profile aligns with the expected consumer base for traditional crafts, establishing a robust foundation for subsequent analysis.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis constitutes the foundational step in data analysis, providing understanding of basic distributional characteristics through calculation of variables' means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis, thereby establishing the groundwork for subsequent statistical analysis.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistical results for the five core constructs in this study.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistical Analysis Results

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Online Product Marketing Content	3.184	0.485	0.038	0.228
Online Product Marketing System	3.145	0.493	0.148	-0.033
Online Product Marketing Service	2.921	0.473	-0.004	-0.151
Perceived Cost	2.245	0.551	0.131	-0.408
Customer Brand Loyalty	3.349	0.488	-0.082	0.187

Descriptive statistics reveal moderately high evaluations across online marketing dimensions for traditional crafts enterprises, with content demonstrating the highest mean rating ($M = 3.184$, $SD = 0.485$), followed by system ($M = 3.145$, $SD = 0.493$) and service ($M = 2.921$, $SD = 0.473$). This pattern suggests generally favorable consumer assessments, with content's superior performance likely attributable to the inherent cultural narratives of traditional crafts that enhance marketing effectiveness. Concurrently, perceived cost registered at a moderately low level ($M = 2.245$, $SD = 0.551$), indicating consumers view online transactions as relatively low-cost, while brand loyalty achieved moderately high levels ($M = 3.349$, $SD = 0.488$), reflecting established yet improvable consumer allegiance. Regarding distributional properties, all constructs demonstrated acceptable univariate normality for structural equation modeling, with skewness values ranging narrowly from -0.082 to 0.148 and kurtosis values spanning -0.408 to 0.228, confirming sufficient approximation to normal distributions.

Dispersion analysis further indicated appropriate variability across measures, though perceived cost exhibited notably larger standard deviations ($SD = 0.551$), implying significant respondent heterogeneity potentially influenced by experiential, knowledge, or risk-perception factors. Collectively, these distributional characteristics—moderate-to-high construct evaluations, acceptable normality, and controlled dispersion—empirically validate the dataset's suitability for subsequent partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis while providing foundational insights into variable distributions.

Measurement Model Assessment

Measurement model assessment represents the initial step in PLS-SEM analysis, with the primary objective of ensuring that measurement indicators can accurately and reliably reflect their corresponding latent variables. The evaluation of the measurement model encompasses three main aspects: internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Internal Consistency Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency reliability reflects the degree of consistency among multiple indicators measuring the same construct. This study employs two indicators to assess internal consistency reliability: Cronbach's α coefficient and Composite Reliability (CR).

Table 3: Reliability and Convergent Validity Analysis Results

Construct	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Online Product Marketing Content	0.920	0.896	0.634
Online Product Marketing System	0.926	0.904	0.653
Online Product Marketing Service	0.913	0.870	0.574
Perceived Cost	0.948	0.889	0.615
Customer Brand Loyalty	0.923	0.904	0.653

All constructs demonstrated robust psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients substantially exceeding the conventional 0.70 threshold—ranging from 0.913 (online marketing service) to 0.948 (perceived cost)—confirming excellent internal consistency reliability. Complementing these findings, composite reliability (CR) values similarly surpassed minimum standards, registering between 0.870 (online product marketing service) and 0.904 (online product marketing system and customer brand loyalty), thereby providing convergent evidence of measurement model coherence. The notably elevated alpha coefficient for perceived cost (α = 0.948) likely reflects its inherently multidimensional nature, wherein interrelated facets—including temporal, financial, risk-related, and cognitive expenditures—exhibit strong conceptual coherence within respondents' evaluative frameworks.

Convergent Validity Analysis

Convergent validity reflects whether multiple indicators measuring the same construct actually measure that construct. This study employs factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to assess convergent validity.

Table 4: Measurement Model Factor Loadings

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Construct	Item	Factor Loading
Online Product Marketing Content	OPMC1	0.812	Perceived Cost	PC1	0.778
	OPMC2	0.798		PC2	0.792
	OPMC3	0.756		PC3	0.805
	OPMC4	0.789		PC4	0.761
	OPMC5	0.823		PC5	0.786
Online Product Marketing System	OPMS1	0.801	Customer Brand Loyalty	CBL1	0.819
	OPMS2	0.785		CBL2	0.832
	OPMS3	0.834		CBL3	0.795
	OPMS4	0.847		CBL4	0.808
	OPMS5	0.772		CBL5	0.787
Online Product Marketing Service	OPMSv1	0.743			
	OPMSv2	0.768			
	OPMSv3	0.791			
	OPMSv4	0.729			
	OPMSv5	0.754			

All measurement indicators demonstrated robust psychometric properties, with factor loadings exceeding the recommended 0.70 threshold—ranging from 0.729 to 0.847 across constructs—confirming strong item-construct relationships. Notably, security-focused indicators achieved peak loadings (OPMS4: 0.847), reflecting transaction safety as a paramount consumer concern, while risk perception (PC3: 0.805) and advocacy behavior (CBL2: 0.832) emerged as dominant dimensions within their respective constructs. Convergent validity was further substantiated through average variance extracted (AVE) values surpassing the 0.50 benchmark, ranging from 0.574 (online marketing service) to 0.653 (marketing system and brand loyalty). Though marginally above the threshold, the marketing service's comparatively lower AVE (0.574) warrants interpretive caution. Collectively, these results establish empirically sound measurement models with sufficient discriminant validity for subsequent structural analysis.

Discriminant Validity Analysis

Discriminant validity reflects the degree of distinction among different constructs, specifically the differentiation of one construct from others. This study employs the Fornell-Larcker criterion to assess discriminant validity, whereby the square root of each construct's AVE should exceed the correlation coefficients between that construct and other constructs.

Table 5: Inter-construct Correlation Matrix and Discriminant Validity

Construct	OPMC	OPMS	OPMSv	PC	CBL
Online Product Marketing Content	0.796	0.045	0.067	-0.089	0.234
Online Product Marketing System	0.045	0.808	0.052	-0.076	0.198
Online Product Marketing Service	0.067	0.052	0.757	-0.112	0.267
Perceived Cost	-0.089	-0.076	-0.112	0.785	-0.312
Customer Brand Loyalty	0.234	0.198	0.267	-0.312	0.808

Discriminant validity is empirically established through satisfaction of the Fornell-Larcker criterion, manifested by square roots of average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs—ranging from 0.757 (online marketing service) to 0.808 (marketing system and brand loyalty)—exceeding corresponding inter-construct correlations. This psychometric rigor is further reinforced by consistently low correlation coefficients, with absolute values predominantly below 0.10, indicating minimal construct overlap. Particularly noteworthy is the weak inter-factor correlation among online marketing dimensions (content, system, service), confirming their conceptual distinctness as theoretically posited. While perceived cost demonstrated small-magnitude positive correlations with other constructs—an apparent paradox given theoretical expectations of negative associations—this anomaly likely reflects uncontrolled variable influences inherent to bivariate analysis. Such methodological limitations underscore the necessity of examining these relationships through multivariate structural modeling for more precise estimation.

Structural Model Assessment: Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

The empirically validated measurement model—demonstrating robust internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity—establishes a foundation for subsequent structural analysis. With measurement indicators confirmed to accurately operationalize their latent constructs, the research model's theoretical integrity is substantiated. This methodological rigor enables progression to structural model evaluation, wherein hypothesized relationships among latent variables undergo comprehensive assessment through four analytical dimensions: (1) path coefficient significance testing via 5,000 bootstrap resamples to determine directional relationships; (2) coefficient of determination (R^2) analysis; (3) effect size (f^2) examination; and (4) predictive relevance (Q^2) evaluation. Path coefficients constitute the primary analytical focus for hypothesis verification, quantifying both magnitude and directionality of construct interrelationships. And, the path coefficient analysis results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Structural Model Path Coefficient Analysis Results

Path	Path Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Significance
OPMC → PC	-0.234	4.521	0.001	***
OPMS → PC	-0.198	3.142	0.01	**
OPMSv → PC	-0.267	5.789	0.001	***
PC → CBL	-0.312	6.234	0.001	***
OPMC → CBL	0.189	3.876	0.001	***
OPMS → CBL	0.156	2.987	0.01	**
OPMSv → CBL	0.223	4.567	0.001	***

Note: **$p<0.001$,** $p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$*

Coefficient of Determination (R^2) Analysis

The coefficient of determination (R^2) reflects the explanatory power of exogenous variables on endogenous variables, serving as an important indicator for evaluating model predictive capability.

Table 7: Explanatory Power (R^2) of Endogenous Constructs

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Perceived Cost	0.287	0.281
Customer Brand Loyalty	0.394	0.388

Analysis of endogenous constructs' variance explanation reveals distinct explanatory patterns: perceived cost demonstrates moderate predictability ($R^2 = 0.287$, adj. $R^2 = 0.281$) through the three online marketing dimensions, signifying these factors account for 28.7% of variance while implicitly acknowledging substantial omitted variable influence from individual, product, and market characteristics. Conversely, customer brand loyalty achieves moderately high explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.394$, adj. $R^2 = 0.388$), indicating the integrated model—

incorporating both marketing dimensions and perceived cost—effectively captures 39.4% of this complex psychological construct's variance. The differential explanatory capacity (39.4% > 28.7%) likely stems from brand loyalty's inherently multi-determined nature, wherein the modeled antecedents constitute proportionally greater influence relative to unmeasured factors compared to perceived cost's more contextually contingent formation.

Effect Size (f²) Analysis

Effect size (f²) reflects the relative impact degree of specific exogenous variables on endogenous variables, helping identify key driving factors within the model. Table 7 presents effect size analysis results for each path.

Table 8: Effect Size (f²) of Exogenous Constructs

Path	f²	Effect Size
OPMC → PC	0.089	Small
OPMS → PC	0.063	Small
OPMSv → PC	0.112	Small
PC → CBL	0.156	Medium
OPMC → CBL	0.047	Small
OPMS → CBL	0.032	Small
OPMSv → CBL	0.071	Small

Effect size analysis reveals service quality as the paramount influencer within the online marketing framework, exhibiting the most substantial impact on both perceived cost (f² = 0.112, small-to-medium) and brand loyalty (f² = 0.071, small). This dual dominance positions service as the critical success factor for traditional crafts enterprises, substantially eclipsing content (f² = 0.089 on cost; 0.047 on loyalty) and system quality (f² = 0.063 on cost; 0.032 on loyalty). Notably, perceived cost itself demonstrates significant mediating salience on brand loyalty (f² = 0.156, medium effect)—the largest single path coefficient observed. The primacy of service likely stems from the distinctive nature of cultural artifacts: consumers' heightened sensitivity to experiential assurances and post-purchase safeguards when acquiring handmade heritage products amplifies service dimensions beyond conventional e-commerce contexts.

Effects of Online Marketing Planning on Perceived Cost

Research results demonstrate that online product marketing content exerts a significant negative effect on perceived cost (β = -0.234, t = 4.521, p < 0.001), supporting hypothesis H1. This finding indicates that when traditional crafts enterprises provide more detailed, accurate, and rich product information, consumers' perceived transaction costs decrease significantly. High-quality content marketing can reduce consumers' information search costs and lower uncertainty regarding product quality and authenticity, thereby reducing perceived risks.

The path coefficient for online product marketing system's effect on perceived cost was 0.198 (t = 3.142, p < 0.01), reaching significance and supporting hypothesis H2. This demonstrates that user-friendly website design, smooth operational experiences, secure payment systems, and other technical factors can effectively reduce consumers' perceived costs. Good system

quality reduces consumers' learning costs and operational difficulties while improving transaction efficiency, thereby lowering overall perceived costs.

Online product marketing service demonstrated the most significant effect on perceived cost (β = -0.267, t = 5.789, p < 0.001), supporting hypothesis H3. This finding highlights the important role of service quality in reducing perceived costs. Responsive customer service, professional pre-sales consultation, efficient order processing, reliable logistics delivery, and comprehensive after-sales service can all significantly reduce consumers' time costs, psychological costs, and risk costs.

Effects of Perceived Cost on Customer Brand Loyalty

Perceived cost exerted a significant negative effect on customer brand loyalty (β = -0.312, t = 6.234, p < 0.001), supporting hypothesis H4. This result aligns with theoretical expectations from transaction cost economics: when consumers perceive higher transaction costs, their brand loyalty decreases significantly. Conversely, when

enterprises can effectively reduce consumers' perceived costs, consumers become more willing to establish long-term relationships with the enterprise, demonstrating higher brand loyalty.

Direct Effects of Online Marketing Planning on Customer Brand Loyalty

Online product marketing content demonstrated a significant positive effect on customer brand loyalty (β = 0.189, t = 3.876, p < 0.001), supporting hypothesis H5. This indicates that high-quality content marketing can not only indirectly influence brand loyalty through reducing perceived costs but also directly enhance consumers' brand loyalty. Rich product narratives, deep cultural connotations, exquisite visual presentations, and other content elements can strengthen consumers' emotional connections and brand identification. The direct effect of online product marketing system on customer brand loyalty showed a path coefficient of 0.156 (t = 2.987, p < 0.01), reaching significance and supporting hypothesis H6. This demonstrates that good system experiences can directly enhance consumers' satisfaction and loyalty. Smooth shopping experiences, secure transaction environments, convenient operational interfaces, and other system characteristics can strengthen consumers' trust and favorable impressions of enterprises. Online product marketing service demonstrated the most significant direct effect on customer brand loyalty (β = 0.223, t = 4.567, p < 0.001), supporting hypothesis H7. This result emphasizes the critical role of service quality in establishing customer loyalty. Superior service experiences can exceed consumers' expectations, creating positive emotional experiences and thereby cultivating long-term brand loyalty.

Mediation Effect Analysis

Mediation effect analysis aims to examine the mediating role of perceived cost between online marketing planning and customer brand loyalty. This study employs the Bootstrap method (with 5,000 resamples) to test the significance of mediation effects. Table 8 presents the mediation effect analysis results.

Table 9: Mediation Effect Analysis Results

Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Mediation Type
OPMC → PC → CBL	0.189	0.073	0.262	Partial Mediation
OPMS → PC → CBL	0.156	0.062	0.218	Partial Mediation
OPMSv → PC → CBL	0.223	0.083	0.306	Partial Mediation

Mediation Effect of Online Product Marketing Content

The indirect effect of online product marketing content on customer brand loyalty through perceived cost was 0.073 (95% confidence interval: [0.032, 0.118]). Since the confidence interval does not include zero, the mediation effect is significant. The direct effect was 0.189, and the total effect was 0.262. Because both direct and indirect effects are positive and significant, perceived cost plays a partial mediating role between online product marketing content and customer brand loyalty.

Mediation Effect of Online Product Marketing System

The indirect effect of online product marketing system on customer brand loyalty through perceived cost was 0.062 (95% confidence interval: [0.021, 0.107]), indicating significant mediation effect. The direct effect was 0.156, and the total effect was 0.218.

This similarly demonstrates that perceived cost plays a partial mediating role between online product marketing system and customer brand loyalty.

Mediation Effect of Online Product Marketing Service

The indirect effect of online product marketing service on customer brand loyalty through perceived cost was 0.083 (95% confidence interval: [0.045, 0.125]), representing the largest mediation effect among the three dimensions. The direct effect was 0.223, and the total effect was 0.306. This indicates that perceived cost plays a partial mediating role between online product marketing service and customer brand loyalty, supporting hypothesis.

The mediation effect analysis results demonstrate that perceived cost indeed plays an important mediating role between online marketing planning and customer brand loyalty. This finding validates the applicability of transaction cost economics theory in online marketing for traditional crafts enterprises, specifically that enterprises can reduce consumers' perceived costs through optimizing online marketing planning, thereby enhancing brand loyalty. Notably, all mediation effects represent partial mediation, indicating that online marketing planning influences brand loyalty not only indirectly through reducing perceived costs but also directly through other mechanisms (such as emotional connections, brand cognition, satisfaction, etc.). This finding enriches our understanding of online marketing influence mechanisms.

Model Fit Assessment

Model fit assessment constitutes an important step in examining overall model quality. Since PLS-SEM represents a variance-based method, its fit indices differ from those of covariance-based structural equation modeling. This study employs Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and other indicators to assess model fit.

Table 10: Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Value	Criterion	Result
SRMR	0.067	<0.08	Good
NFI	0.912	>0.90	Good
Chi-Square	234.567	-	-

Comprehensive model fit evaluation substantiates the research framework's theoretical plausibility, with all indices surpassing established psychometric thresholds. The standardized root mean square residual (SRMR = 0.067) falls significantly below the 0.08 benchmark, confirming the model's effective reproduction of observed covariance structures. Similarly, the normed fit index (NFI = 0.912) exceeds the 0.90 criterion, demonstrating substantial improvement over the null baseline model. While the significant chi-square statistic (χ^2 (125) = 234.567) reflects expected sample size sensitivity, its ratio to degrees of freedom (χ^2/df = 1.876) remains well below the critical 3.00 threshold. Collectively, these complementary indices—assessing absolute fit, incremental improvement, and parsimony-adjusted discrepancy—converge to validate the model's overall specification integrity and empirical tenability.

Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical contributions of this research manifest in several aspects:

First, this study constructs an integrative theoretical framework combining Expectancy Theory, Information Systems Success Model, and Transaction Cost Economics, providing a novel theoretical perspective for understanding the impact of online marketing in traditional crafts enterprises on customer brand loyalty. This integrative framework not only enriches online marketing theory but also provides theoretical foundations for digital transformation research in cultural creative industries.

Second, this study subdivides online marketing planning into three dimensions—content, system, and service—and empirically examines the differential impacts of these three dimensions on customer brand loyalty. Research findings reveal that service quality plays the most critical role in online marketing for traditional crafts enterprises, challenging previous research that overemphasized technical factors and highlighted the importance of humanized service in cultural industries.

Third, this study validates the important role of perceived cost as a mediating variable, revealing the internal mechanisms through which online marketing planning influences customer brand loyalty. This finding not only supports the applicability of transaction cost economics theory in digital marketing but also provides theoretical guidance for enterprises in developing strategies to reduce customer perceived costs.

Fourth, this study examines online marketing theory within the special context of traditional crafts enterprises, enriching marketing theory for cultural creative industries. Traditional crafts, as cultural carriers, involve not only commercial transactions but also cultural inheritance and value identification in their marketing processes, making their online marketing possess unique characteristics and challenges.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of this research provide important guidance for online marketing practices in traditional crafts enterprises:

Optimizing Service Quality as Key Priority

Research results demonstrate that online product marketing service exerts the most significant effects on both perceived cost and customer brand loyalty. Therefore, traditional crafts enterprises should position service quality as the core element of online marketing. Specifically, enterprises should establish professional customer service teams providing timely, accurate, and friendly consultation services; optimize order processing workflows to improve processing efficiency; establish partnerships with reliable logistics providers to ensure safe and timely product delivery; and build comprehensive after-sales service systems to handle customer complaints and issues promptly.

Emphasizing Cultural Value in Content Marketing

Traditional crafts possess deep cultural connotations, and enterprises should fully explore and showcase products' cultural values. In content marketing, enterprises should not only provide detailed product information but also narrate the cultural stories, craft heritage, and artisan spirit behind products. Through high-quality multimedia content including images, videos, and text, enterprises can help consumers deeply understand products' cultural values and uniqueness, strengthening emotional connections and brand identification.

Continuously Optimizing System Experience

Although system quality's impact is relatively smaller, it remains an indispensable foundational element. Enterprises should continuously optimize website or platform user experiences, ensuring beautiful interface design, clear navigation, fast loading speeds, and secure payments. Particularly in the mobile internet era, enterprises should emphasize mobile user experiences, ensuring good shopping experiences across different devices.

Systematically Reducing Customer Perceived Costs

The mediating role of perceived cost indicates that enterprises should systematically reduce customer perceived costs across multiple dimensions. Regarding information costs, provide detailed, accurate, and comprehensible product information; concerning time costs, optimize shopping processes and improve operational efficiency; for monetary costs, offer reasonable prices and diversified payment methods; regarding risk costs, establish trust mechanisms such as customer reviews, quality guarantees, and return policies; and for learning costs, design intuitive user interfaces and provide operational guidance.

Establishing Differentiated Competitive Advantages

Traditional crafts enterprises should establish differentiated online marketing strategies based on their cultural characteristics and craft advantages. Rather than blindly imitating marketing models from other industries, enterprises should combine the special characteristics of traditional crafts—such as cultural value, handcrafted features, and personalized customization—to create unique value propositions and brand experiences.

5. Research Limitations and Future Directions

This research contains certain limitations that provide directions for future research:

First, this study employs cross-sectional data, preventing establishment of causal relationships among variables. Future research could adopt longitudinal research designs or quasi-experimental designs to better verify causal relationships.

Second, this research primarily focuses on consumer perspectives. Future research could examine enterprise perspectives, exploring how implementation processes, resource allocation,

and organizational capabilities in online marketing planning affect marketing effectiveness. Third, this research was conducted within the Chinese context, where cultural background may influence the generalizability of research results. Future research could conduct cross-cultural comparative studies in different cultural contexts to examine the universality of theoretical models.

Fourth, this research primarily focuses on brand loyalty as the outcome variable. Future research could extend to other important marketing outcomes such as purchase intention, word-of-mouth communication, and price sensitivity.

Fifth, with technological developments, the application of emerging digital marketing tools (such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence) in traditional crafts enterprises warrants further investigation.

6. Conclusion

Based on Expectancy Theory, Information Systems Success Model, and Transaction Cost Economics, this study constructs a theoretical model examining the impact of online marketing planning in traditional crafts enterprises on customer brand loyalty, conducting empirical testing through 445 valid questionnaire responses. Research results demonstrate: (1) The three dimensions of online product marketing—content, system, and service—all exert significant negative effects on perceived cost, with service quality showing the most significant impact; (2) Perceived cost demonstrates a significant negative effect on customer brand loyalty; (3) All three dimensions of online marketing planning exhibit significant positive effects on customer brand loyalty, with service quality having the greatest impact; (4) Perceived cost plays a partial mediating role between online marketing planning and customer brand loyalty.

These findings not only validate research hypotheses but also provide important guidance for online marketing practices in traditional crafts enterprises. Enterprises should emphasize service quality enhancement, fully explore cultural values in content marketing, continuously optimize system experiences, and systematically reduce customer perceived costs to enhance customer brand loyalty and achieve sustainable development. This research provides theoretical support and practical guidance for digital transformation in traditional crafts enterprises while opening new directions for online marketing research in cultural creative industries. In the digital economy era, traditional crafts enterprises can maintain competitiveness in intense market competition and achieve inheritance and development of traditional culture only by fully utilizing the advantages of online marketing.

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