

Historical Evolution and Contemporary Practice of Rural Brand Design: The Integration of Traditional Culture and Modern Innovation

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Abstract

The article provides a critical assessment of the evolution and contemporary practice of rural brand design, emphasising the complex fusion of traditional heritage and modern innovation. By systematically analysing literature spanning different disciplines, we identify key trends and challenges faced in different historical periods, paying particular attention to the preservation of local product characteristics and folk craft heritage. Modernisation pressures, including increased market competition and cultural preservation dilemmas, are discussed alongside innovative solutions adopted by rural communities. Our analysis highlights successful strategies for incorporating traditional aesthetics into product design that cater for contemporary markets without losing the original flavour. In addition, the emergence of digital platforms such as social media has revolutionised rural branding strategies, offering unprecedented reach and engagement potential. The main contributions of this review include providing a structured approach to literature selection, an exhaustive exploration of rural brand dynamics, and insights into sustainable growth paths for rural economies.

Keywords: Rural Brand Design, Traditional Culture, Modern Innovation, Historical Evolution, Contemporary Practice, Market Competition, Cultural Heritage, Digital Marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Rural brand design is a visual communication mode based on rural characteristics, culture, and value, aiming to enhance the countryside's popularity, reputation, and attraction and promote the countryside's economic, social, and cultural development. The historical evolution and contemporary practice of rural brand design reflect the integration process of traditional culture and modern innovation and also show the results of implementing the rural revitalization strategy.

The historical evolution of rural brand design can be divided into three stages: the first stage is from the 1970s to the 1990s; the preliminary exploration stage of rural brand design is led by European and American countries, Mainly with geographical indications, local specialties, and tourism resources as the main content, Emphasizing the natural environment and historical culture of the countryside; The second phase, starting from the 1990s to the early 2000s, In the rapid development stage of rural brand design represented by Asian countries, Folk culture, ecological agriculture, and community participation, Emphasizing the humanistic emotion and lifestyle of the countryside; The third stage, from the early 21st century to the present, The transformation stage of rural brand design innovation led by China, Mainly based on cultural heritage, creative industries, and digital technology, Emphasize the innovation ability and future potential of rural areas.¹⁻³

The contemporary practice of rural brand design shows the integration of characteristics of traditional culture and modern innovation. On the one hand, traditional culture is a necessary foundation and resource for rural brand design; through the protection, inheritance, and promotion of traditional culture, the uniqueness and identity of rural brands can be enhanced. On the other hand, modern innovation is a significant power and means for rural brand design. The competitiveness and influence of rural brands can be enhanced through the introduction, integration, and application of modern innovation.^{4,5} For example, the cultural creation of the Forbidden Museum and the City that never sleeps in the Tang Dynasty all reflect the organic combination of traditional culture and modern innovation.

We link rural brand design to visual arts such as painting, sculpture and photography, redefining them as dynamic mediums for artistic expression and cultural dialogue. In emphasising how traditional motifs can be combined with innovative techniques, rural brand design becomes a living art form, akin to a masterpiece that condenses cultural identity. This holistic perspective enriches our understanding of country branding as a multifaceted narrative of cultural continuity and innovation.

Targeting the pivotal role of rural brand design in fostering ecological appreciation, preserving cultural heritage, and evoking nostalgic sentiments, this paper sets out with a precise mission: to critically assess its historical trajectory and current practices, particularly focusing on the harmonious blend of tradition and innovation. We delve into defining rural brand design, explicating its essence and operational significance. Next, we trace its developmental history, pinpointing key phases and distinctive attributes. Lastly, we scrutinize exemplary contemporary cases, distilling valuable insights for future endeavors. Aligned with burgeoning cultural-tourism demands, our analysis underscores the imperative of harnessing creativity, aesthetics, and artistry to catalyze cultural-tourism synergy, thereby accelerating rural rejuvenation.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF RURAL BRAND DESIGN

Historical Evolution of Rural Tourism

Rural tourism is a form of tourism with rural areas as the main landscape and resources, which not only satisfies people's exploration and enjoyment of nature and culture but also promotes the economic and social development of rural areas.⁶⁻¹⁰

Figure 1 analyzes the development process of rural tourism.¹¹ The historical evolution of rural tourism can be divided into the following stages:

In the 1860s, foreign rural tourism sprouted in the European region. During this period, European countries experienced the Industrial Revolution and urbanization, and people developed an interest and nostalgia for the ecological environment and traditional culture of rural areas. Some countries have started developing rural tourism projects, such as rural landscapes in the UK, lavender fields in France, and wineries in Italy.

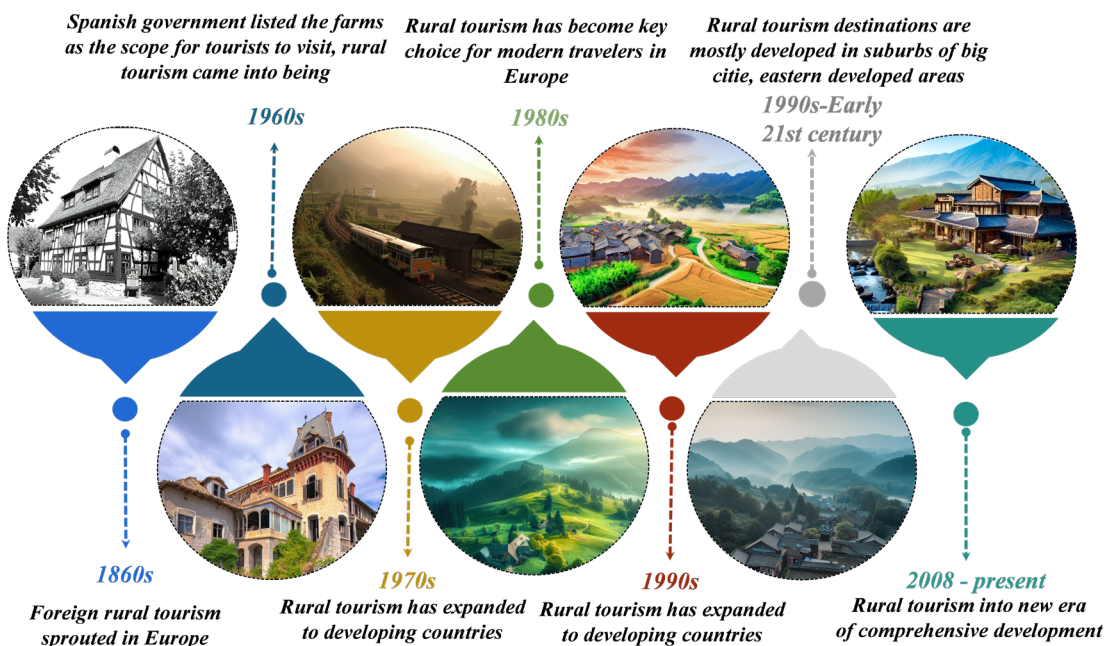


Figure 1: Analysis of Rural Tourism History.

In the 1960s, in the context of industry and urbanization, the Spanish government converted abandoned aristocratic castles into farmhouses and included them as a range for tourists to visit, resulting in the emergence of rural tourism. During this period, Spain faced an economic crisis and social unrest. The government created employment opportunities and sources of income through the development of rural tourism while protecting and utilizing rural historical heritage and cultural resources. This approach has attracted the attention and imitation of other countries.

In the 1970s, the development of transportation facilities such as railways strengthened rural accessibility and rural tourism was widely carried out in multiple countries. During this period, with the increase in people's income level and leisure time, rural tourism became an emerging form of leisure. People can not only appreciate the natural scenery and cultural customs of rural areas but also participate in rural production activities and community life, experiencing different cultures and lifestyles.

In the 1980s, the global "green movement" emerged, and rural tourism became an important choice for modern tourists in developed countries in Europe and America. During this period, people are increasingly paying attention to and reflecting on the environmental pollution and social issues brought about by industrialization and urbanization, and have put forward higher requirements for ecological protection and sustainable development in rural areas. Rural tourism is seen as a low-carbon, green, and environmentally friendly tourism model, in line with people's pursuit of health, nature, and simplicity.

In the 1990s, under the promotion of the World Tourism Organization, rural tourism expanded to developing countries, and rural tourism emerged in China. During this period, with the deepening development of reform and opening up and economic globalization, China joined the world tourism family. China has rich and diverse rural resources and cultural heritage, with huge potential for rural tourism. At the same time, China is also facing major issues such as agricultural transformation, increasing farmers' income, and rural revitalization. It is necessary to promote agricultural industrialization, farmer citizenship, and rural modernization through the development of rural tourism.

From the 1990s to the early 21st century, rural tourism in China was in its early stages, and rural tourism destinations were mostly developed and distributed in the suburbs of large cities and developed areas in the east. During this period, rural tourism in China mainly focused on sightseeing, lacking characteristics and innovation, with low service quality and management level. It was not coordinated with the ecological environment and social culture of rural areas, and there were some problems and challenges.

Since 2008, the National Tourism Administration has launched the National Leisure Plan, and rural tourism has entered a new era of comprehensive development. During this period, rural tourism in China shifted from single sightseeing to diverse experiences, participation, and interaction, from extensive development to meticulous management, protection, and utilization, and from simple economic benefits to comprehensive social benefits. China’s rural tourism has formed various types and models characterized by leisure agriculture, folk culture, ecological protection, and community participation, injecting new vitality and momentum into the development and revitalization of rural areas.

Navigating the intricate landscape of rural brand design, our analysis spotlights the dual challenge of achieving commercial viability while honoring cultural integrity. Amidst globalization’s homogenizing force, we uncover strategies that preserve distinctive local narratives against the backdrop of market demands. Emphasizing community involvement ensures that branding efforts resonate authentically, reflecting true cultural nuances rather than superficial stereotypes. Adaptive mechanisms, including co-creation workshops and feedback loops, empower locals, fostering a sense of ownership and pride. Such an approach not only secures immediate economic gains but also sustains long-term cultural vibrancy in diverse settings.

Early Rural Brand Design

The early rural brand design emphasized the protection and inheritance of traditional culture. During this period, the brand design emphasized the importance of traditional cultural elements, such as history, customs, and folk tales. These traditional elements are actively incorporated into the brand design, aiming to highlight rural communities’ uniqueness and historical heritage. The brand is not only the product’s logo but also becomes a medium to convey cultural stories, attracting the emotional resonance of consumers. The early rural brand design emphasized the local characteristics of rural products. The brand’s design highlights its unique quality and production technology, whether agricultural products, handicrafts, or local cuisine. This helps to build a regional understanding of the product and allows consumers to link the product to a specific geographical area. This emphasis on local characteristics helps to build brand identity and enhance consumers’ trust in rural products. Another striking feature is the widespread use of regional signs in early rural brand designs. Regional signs may include maps, landscape photos, and local names of specific areas to help consumers quickly identify the product’s origin. This use of geographical identification further strengthens the product’s connection with specific geographical areas, helping consumers make decisions at purchase.

Grounded in semiotics and authenticity theory, early rural brand design underscored craftsmanship and individuality as crucial signifiers of heritage and uniqueness. Referencing Table 1, we delineate facets and evaluative metrics, exemplifying through case studies. Handcrafted elements—labels, fonts, bespoke packaging—invoke a sense of artisanal care, piquing consumer curiosity and conveying intrinsic value. Community involvement, a cornerstone, embodies collaborative consumption theory; locals’ active participation in creation and advocacy fortifies product integrity, spurring socio-economic growth and heritage preservation. Thus, rural brands emerge not just as market entities, but carriers of collective memory and cultural legacy.

Table 1: Effect and Value Analysis of Early Rural Brand Design.

Aspect of Rural Brand Design	Effect and Value of Rural Brand Design
Rural planning and design	Improve the visibility and reputation of the countryside, enhance the attraction and competitiveness of the countryside, and expand the influence and radiation of the countryside
Rural product design	Promote the sales and appreciation of rural products, drive the rural economy’s development and prosperity, and increase farmers’ income and welfare
Rural service design	Enhance the sense of pride and belonging of farmers, stimulate their sense of innovation and enthusiasm for participation, and cultivate the countryside’s spiritual civilization and social atmosphere
Rural cultural design	Promote the harmonious coexistence between man and nature, create a natural environment for sustainable development, and protect biodiversity and ecological security

Historical Evolution and Contemporary Practice of Rural Brand Design

Rural brand design is taking the countryside as the main object, using artistic design thinking and brand innovation strategy, deeply excavating the rural natural ecology, historical culture, characteristic industry, and other resources, extracting the visual language and symbols with a distinct style, and shaping a brand visual system in line with the natural endowment of rural areas.¹² Rural brand design is an essential means of rural management and an important goal of rural revitalization.

The historical evolution of rural brand design can be divided into the following stages:

The first stage is rural image design. This stage is mainly to beautify the rural environment and improve the rural image for the purpose, through planning, construction, decoration, and other ways, to create a rural landscape with regional characteristics and local customs. For example, in 2003, Zhejiang Province proposed “renovating thousands of villages,” which is to improve rural infrastructure, improve the quality of life of farmers, and show the new rural features with the principle of “production, living, and ecology.”

The second stage is rural brand identification design. This stage is mainly to enhance the visibility and reputation of rural areas through the design and registration of the rural trademark and identifying trademarks, signs, slogans, and other elements to build a rural brand identification system. For example, in 2008, Anji, Zhejiang province, registered the trademark of “China’s Beautiful Village,” becoming the first county in China to own its trademark.

The third stage is rural brand communication design. This stage is mainly to expand the influence and attraction of rural areas through various media and means, such as planes, videos, networks, activities, etc., to promote the connotation and value of rural brands inside and outside, shaping the rural brand image. For example 2018, Wuyuan in Jiangxi province launched a series of videos titled “The Most Beautiful Chinese Farmer Painting,” which received over 100 million views on social platforms such as TikTok.

The fourth stage is rural brand experience design. This stage mainly meets consumer needs and improves consumer satisfaction through innovation and optimization of rural products, services, space, and other elements to create an interactive and participatory rural brand experience scene. For example, in 2020, Lijiang in Yunnan province launched the “Lijiang Time” brand experience plan and set up the “Lijiang Time Station” nationwide so consumers could feel Lijiang’s local customs at home.

The contemporary practice of rural brand design presents the following characteristics:

First, pay attention to the integration of traditional culture and modern innovation. Based on respecting and protecting the traditional rural culture, modern design concepts and technical means are introduced to give new connotations and extensions to the rural brand. For example, Pengzhou, Sichuan province, combines the local Longmen paper-cutting art with digital technology to create a Longmen paper-cutting digital museum integrating display, experience, education, and creation.

Social media platforms and digital marketing are catalytic in reinventing rural brands. Beyond mere visibility boost, they enable immersive storytelling, connecting global audiences with rural narratives. E-commerce platforms democratize market access, empowering local artisans and farmers to scale-up, bypassing traditional retail barriers. Livestream shopping personalizes the online experience, merging entertainment with commerce. Mini-programs offer interactive experiences, enhancing customer engagement. The ‘Jinan Time’ campaign exemplifies viral success, blending history with modern flair, illustrating digital tools’ potency in revitalizing rural identities and economies.

Third, pay attention to the deep binding between opinion leaders and brands. By working with influential and professional opinion leaders and with their personal charisma and fan base. For example, Wuxi, Jiangsu province, invited the famous traveler Lynch to build its “Wuxi Time” brand plan. Through Lynch’s perspective and story, Wuxi showed consumers the delicious food, beauty, and beauty.

INTEGRATION OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE AND MODERN INNOVATION OF RURAL BRANDS

Integration of Traditional Culture and Modern Innovation

Rural brand design refers to the process and activities of forming the brand image with rural characteristics and market value through the integration, creation, and dissemination of rural resources and culture to enhance rural areas’ attraction and development power.¹³⁻¹⁸ Rural brand design has a long and rich history in China; from the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China. Some pioneers have tried to improve and build the countryside, Such as the Zhai Cheng experiment and Dingjiazhuang experiment. During the Anti-Japanese War, The Communist

Party of China launched a large-scale rural construction movement in the anti-Japanese base areas To “serve the people wholeheartedly” Through land reform, mutual assistance in production, culture, and education, Improved the living conditions of the farmers, Cultivate the organizational ability of the farmers, To create several new countryside with revolutionary spirit and democratic atmosphere; After the founding of the new China, With the advance of socialist construction and reform and opening up, China has carried out a series of rural transformation, reform and revitalization, Some rural brands with local characteristics and the times style have emerged. Table 2 shows the concrete expression mode of integrating traditional culture and modern innovation.

Table 2: Integration of Traditional Culture and Modern Innovation.

Integration of traditional culture and modern innovation	Embody
In terms of ideas	Emphasize people-oriented, people-oriented, love as the soul, respect and meet the needs and wishes of rural residents, stimulate their awareness of participation and subject initiative, and cultivate rural residents’ cultural confidence and pride.
In terms of methods	Focusing on case-oriented, problem-oriented, and project-oriented, investigating and analyzing the reality and characteristics of rural areas, formulating brand design schemes in line with rural characteristics, and adopting a diversified, open, cooperative, and participatory design mode.
On the content	Focusing on ecology, production, and life as the main lines and centering on the five general goals of the rural revitalization strategy, we will build rural products, services, and cultural brands with local characteristics and market competitiveness.
In form	Focus on using modern scientific and technological means and artistic techniques to create a brand image with visual impact and appeal through various channels and platforms for effective brand communication and promotion.

In the historical evolution of rural brand design, a prominent and common feature is integrating traditional culture and modern innovation. Traditional culture refers to the cultural connotation and spiritual value related to the natural environment, historical evolution, folk customs, and cultural heritage contained and inherited in the countryside. It is an essential basis and source of rural brand design. Modern innovation refers to drawing on and absorbing modern technology and cultural elements and realizing the organic combination of traditional culture and modern innovation, an essential means and goal of rural brand design. The integration of traditional culture and modern innovation can not only maintain the historical sense and uniqueness of rural brands but also enhance the ecological beauty and sense of responsibility of rural brands and enhance the social cohesion and influence of rural brands, as well as the innovative vitality and forward-looking. Navigating the complex terrain where modern innovation meets traditional culture in rural brand design unveils intricate challenges and tensions. While innovation seeks to propel rural identities forward, embracing new technologies and global trends, it risks diluting the very essence sought to be preserved—the authentic, timeless cultural heritage. These dynamics give rise to dilemmas concerning the extent to which modernity should permeate traditional frameworks without eroding their core. Critical examination of case studies illustrates instances where innovation and tradition coexist harmoniously, as well as scenarios marred by discord. This scrutiny highlights the importance of balanced strategies that respect and honor the past while charting progressive paths for rural communities. Figure 2 shows the four aspects and concrete manifestations of integrating traditional culture and modern innovation.

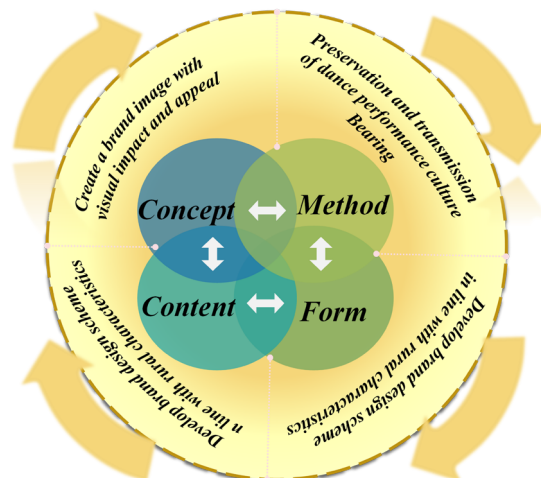


Figure 2: Integration of Traditional Culture and Modern Innovation.

Cultural Value of Rural Brands

Rural areas are the most vibrant hot land and the main body of the history of Chinese civilization. Villages are the carrier of this civilization and the soft power to cultivate and study civilization. The cultural value of rural brands refers to the cultural connotation and spiritual value related to rural areas contained and transmitted by rural brands. It is the core feature and competitive advantage distinguishing rural brands from other brands.¹⁹ Figure 3 shows the packaging process of rural characteristic agricultural products in Qinbi Village. Qinbi Village first, with the help of agricultural products and cultural creation, spread rural culture. Then, make a set of packaging for honeysuckle tea through the combination of local culture, which introduces the local scenic spots and history of the picture book Qin Wall century map style picture album with unique features. Finally, the most simple and original materials are used to present the texture and connotation of the product so that consumers can pay attention to the product and are deeply attracted by the packaging.



Figure 3: Packaging Process of Rural Characteristic Agricultural Products in Qinbi Village.

Table 3 summarizes various aspects and specific cases of the cultural value of rural brands. The cultural value of rural brands mainly includes four aspects: history, ecology, society, and innovation value:

Table 3: Cultural Value of Rural Brands.

Cultural Value of Rural Brands	Concrete Content	Specific Case
Historical value	The historical evolution, folk customs, and cultural heritage of the countryside reflect the development track and cultural inheritance of the countryside and have a sense of historical weight and uniqueness.	Anji white tea
Ecological value	It is closely related to the natural environment, biodiversity, and ecological security of rural areas, reflecting the ecological advantages and sustainable development of villages, and has ecological beauty and responsibility.	Anji bamboo weaving
Social value	It is closely related to the social customs, folk beliefs, and public services of the countryside, reflecting its social characteristics and civilization level, and has social cohesion and influence.	Anji farmhouse
Innovation value	Drawing lessons from and absorbing modern technology and cultural elements to realize the organic integration of traditional culture and modern innovation with innovative vitality and forward-looking	Anji Bamboo Sea Scenic Spot

The historical value of rural brands. Anji white tea is the earliest in China, with a planting history of thousands of years, and is known as the “King of Tea.” It is a geographical indication of the agricultural product of Anji County and an essential part of the Anji rural brand.

The ecological value of rural brands. Anji bamboo weaving is one of the traditional Chinese handicrafts. It uses the rich local bamboo resources to produce a variety of exquisite and practical bamboo products, showing the artistic charm of bamboo and protecting the bamboo’s ecological function.

The social value of rural brands. Anji Nongjiale is a pioneer and model of agricultural tourism in China. Rural accommodation, catering, entertainment, and other services allow tourists to experience rural life and culture while increasing farmers’ income and welfare.

The innovative value of rural brands. Anji Bamboo Sea Scenic Spot is one of China’s first national 5A scenic spots. Using modern scientific and technological means, it has created various tourism projects such as bamboo sea waterfall, bamboo sea rafting, and bamboo sea cable car so visitors can enjoy the natural scenery and feel the surprises of science and technology.

Sustainable Development and Modern Innovation in Rural Brand Design

In the heart of rural brand design lies the intricate dance between sustaining cultural heritage and upholding environmental integrity. Efforts to bolster rural economies through branding must tread lightly, avoiding the erosion of ecological health and cultural authenticity. Balancing acts include eco-friendly tourism promotion that celebrates local traditions without degrading natural landscapes, and community-centric initiatives that ensure benefits reach all stakeholders while preserving ancestral customs. Key considerations involve participatory governance, equitable resource management, and fostering awareness among residents and visitors alike about the symbiotic relationship between nature conservation and cultural continuity—essential for achieving holistic sustainability in rural branding endeavors. Here are some things about sustainability and community engagement:

Protection and utilization of rural cultural heritage. Rural cultural heritage is an essential resource for brand design and a significant content of rural cultural revitalization. Good protection and development of rural cultural heritage can inherit excellent culture, enhance rural image, increase rural income, and promote rural development. At the same time, we should pay attention to the central role of the community, let the community residents participate in the protection, inheritance, innovation, and utilization of cultural heritage, and enhance the community’s cohesion and sense of belonging.

Improvement and management of the rural ecological environment. Rural ecological environment is an essential basis for rural brand design and also an important guarantee for rural sustainable development. Improving and improving the rural ecological environment can improve the ecological quality of rural areas, beautify the rural landscape, increase rural attractiveness, and promote rural tourism. At the same time, we should give full play to the participation of the community, let the community residents participate in the construction, management, supervision, and maintenance of the ecological environment, and enhance the sense of responsibility and civic awareness of the community.

The cultivation and development of rural creative industry. The rural creative industry is an essential driving force for rural brand design and a meaningful way for rural modernization development. Cultivating and developing the rural creative industries can stimulate the innovation vitality of rural areas, enhance the core competitiveness, increase the economic benefits of rural areas, and promote rural employment.²⁰⁻²⁵ At the same time, we should give full play to the community’s creativity, let the community residents participate in the design, production, sales, and promotion of the creative industry, and enhance the entrepreneurial spirit and confidence of the community. Table 4 presents the case analysis of sustainability related to community participation.

Table 4: Sustainable Development Case Studies in Rural Brand Design.

Year	Project	Address	Tourism Income
2018	Conservation and Utilization of Rural Cultural Heritage	Zhentou Village	5 million yuan
2018	Improvement and Management of Rural Ecological Environment	Longgang Village	25,000 yuan
2018	Cultivation and Development of Rural Creative Industries	Longjing Village	120 million yuan

APPLICATION OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE AND MODERN INNOVATION IN RURAL BRANDING

Integration of Traditional Culture and Modern Innovation of Chinese Rural Brands

Rural brand is an essential means of revitalization and an effective way to display rural characteristics, enhance rural value, and attract rural consumption.²⁶⁻²⁸ In China, there are some successful cases of rural brands, which, through the integration of traditional culture and modern innovation, create rural brands with regional characteristics and market competitiveness. Table 5 presents the four typical cases.

Table 5: Case Analysis of Chinese Rural Brands.

Year	Region	Rural Brand	Reception Number	Income
2020	Zhejiang Anji	“Green Mountains and Clear Waters” is Golden and Silver	10.56 million	21.48 billion yuan
2019	Hunan Yongzhou Lingling District Daqing Village	Daqing Tea Culture Park	300,000	3 million yuan
2019	Shandong Jinan Zhangqiu District Hanzhuang Village	Hanzhuang Maltose Culture Museum	500,000	5 million yuan
2020	Shandong Pingyi Miaquan Village	Xinfa Yongye E-commerce Company	100,000	300 million yuan

Figure 4 shows the most beautiful rural brand case in China. Wuyuan County was named the most beautiful town in China by China National Geographic Magazine, every March and April, the rape flowers bloom in the Wuyuan. Zhouzhuang is a famous ancient town in the south of the Yangtze River, and “Xiangcun” is a rural tourism experience project developed by Zhouzhuang relying on the tourism culture brand of the ancient water town. It is located in Zhouzhuang Qibin Village, only 7 kilometers away from Zhouzhuang ancient town. There are few tourists here. It can be said to be quiet south of the Yangtze River; living here, looking for the Jiangnan water town at that time, you can feel the 60s to the 00s taste the charm of the village. We all know the saying that “Guilin landscape is the best in the world,” and Yangshuo in Guilin has won the reputation of “Yangshuo landscape is Guilin” with its unique and beautiful scenery. Yangshuo is a karst landform that gathers the essence of tourist attractions in the Guilin landscape. During the rainy season after May, you can enjoy the misty rain of the Lijiang River. The river is clear and beautiful when the rainy season ends in July and August. Beiyu Village is a beautiful village built by Qionghai City, Hainan Province. It is adjacent to Guantang Hot Spring, Wanquan River, and Baishiling scenic spots and enjoys unique location and resource advantages. Beiju Village has a specific historical and cultural accumulation, rich in life atmosphere, especially in Qionghai Guantang Hot Spring tourism resort, often attracting the surrounding tourists to stop and stay.



Figure 4: The Most Beautiful Rural Brand Case in China.

International Rural Brand Traditional Culture and Modern Innovation Integration

Illuminating the multifaceted tapestry of rural brand design worldwide, our study contrasts methodologies across continents. From Europe’s agritourism-focused branding, seamlessly blending rustic traditions with modern comforts, to Asia’s tech-driven approach, leveraging digital platforms to preserve and promote ancient crafts globally. North America showcases community-led initiatives that celebrate indigenous cultures, whereas Africa emphasizes sustainability and fair trade in branding efforts. Each region’s unique blend of tradition and innovation offers invaluable insights, underscoring the universal yet distinct ways communities harness branding to safeguard heritage and stimulate economic vitality. In the world, there are some successful cases of rural brands. Through the integration of traditional culture and modern innovation, they have created rural brands with regional characteristics and market competitiveness. Table 6 presents four typical cases:

Table 6: Case Analysis of International Rural Brands.

Country	Rural Name	Area (square km)	Population (ten thousand people)	Annual Earnings (100 million)	Number of Visitors (ten thousand people)	Product Sales Volume (RMB 100 million yuan)	Brand Features
Japan	Futian Farm	0.8	0.2	1.5	10.0	0.8	Organic agriculture
France	Provence	31,400.0	490.0	200.0	120.0	50.0	Hometown of lavender
Germany	Rhine Valley	1,232.7	58.3	40.0	80.0	20.0	Wine & Castle
America	South lowland	1,500,000.0	1,500.0	500.0	100.0	100.0	Southern culture
New Zealand	Hobby village	5.0	0.1	2.0	50.0	1.5	Movie Fantasy Village

Figure 5 shows the case of the most beautiful international rural brand. Provence, the “land of lavender: Provence is a region of southeast France famous for its lavender flower fields, ancient villages, and romantic customs. With lavender as the core, Provence has created a series of rural tourism products and services, such as a lavender museum, lavender refined oil workshop, lavender theme hotel, etc. Provence also uses the network platform to promote the culture and lifestyle of Provence and enhance the brand awareness and influence of Provence. Provence’s “hometown of lavender” brand attracts many tourists and consumers and promotes local economic development and social harmony.

Parma Cheese: Parma is a city in northern Italy known for producing Parma cheese. Parma cheese is a hard cheese made from milk unique to local cows, with strict quality control and unique flavor and nutritional value after prolonged aging. Parma cheese enjoys the status of protection of origin (PDO) in the European Union, and only the cheese produced in the Parma region can use the name and logo of Parma cheese. Combining traditional craftsmanship and modern technology, Parma Cheese has created a rural brand with local characteristics and an international reputation.

Tomita Farm: Tomita Farm is an integrated agricultural enterprise in central Hokkaido, Japan, known for producing quality agricultural products and providing diversified services. Based on the natural environment and guided by innovative ideas, Tomita Farm has created a series of agricultural brands, such as Tomita Milk, Tomita Corn, Tomita Flowers and Tomita, etc. Tomita Farm also uses its advantages to develop agricultural ecological and cultural tourism projects, such as the Tomita Zoo, Tomita Garden, Tomita Art Museum, etc. Tomita Farm also introduces well-known international enterprises LVMH, Dior, Chanel, and so on to endorse its international image, combining the regional and product brands to form a strong image of origin.

The Hobbit Village in New Zealand: The Hobbit Village is a film location in the central North Island of New Zealand, known for the Lord of the Rings and the Hobbit films. The Hobbit Village is a typical English village-style village, consisting of 56 Hobbit caves, a tavern, a post office, and a lake, completely restoring the scenes from the film. With film culture as the core, Hobbit Village has created a series of rural tourism products and services, such as a Hobbit Village guide, Hobbit cave accommodation, Hobbit tavern dining, etc. The Hobbit Village also uses social media to spread the stories and charm of the Hobbit Village and to enhance the brand awareness and influence of the Hobbit Village. The “Hobbit Village” brand of Hobbit Village attracts many film fans and tourists and promotes local economic development and social harmony.



Figure 5: Most Beautiful International Rural Brand Case.

Integration and Innovation Practice of Traditional Culture and Modern Innovation

For designers, understanding the interplay between tradition and innovation can foster creativity grounded in local identity, leading to the development of culturally resonant brands that appeal to contemporary markets. Policymakers

can use these findings to develop supportive measures that encourage sustainable rural development and ensure that innovative branding efforts do not overshadow the preservation of heritage values. In addition, by recognising the importance of community engagement and technology integration, stakeholders can work together to develop policies and designs that empower rural economies while preserving cultural heritage. Rural brand design integrates the natural resources, cultural heritage, social features, economic activities, and other elements of the countryside to form a rural image and value with regional characteristics and market competitiveness.^{29,30} There are some successful rural brand design cases at home and abroad, which, through the integration of traditional culture and modern innovation, create unique charm and influential rural brands. These cases have several standard features:

First, we will continue to put people and give full play to the central role of rural residents. Rural brand design should not only consider the market demand and consumer preferences but also respect and meet the needs and wishes of rural residents so that they can participate in rural brand design, reflect their interests and demands, and enhance their sense of belonging and pride. For example, the brand of “China’s Beautiful Village” in Anji, Zhejiang province, is to organize farmers to manage, serve, and self-supervise through the guidance of Party building, forming an excellent social governance and civilized fashion.

Second, adhere to the quality-oriented and constantly improve the quality and level of rural brands. Rural brand design should pay attention to quality assurance and standardization construction, establish and improve the quality and safety inspection and testing system of agricultural products, promote the traceability mechanism of agricultural products, implement the grading system of agricultural products, and improve the quality and added value of agricultural products. At the same time, we should strengthen scientific and technological innovation and support, improve the efficiency and efficiency of agricultural production, and enhance the ability of agriculture to resist risks. For example, the “Parma Cheese” brand in Parma, Italy, ensures the quality and flavor of the cheese by strictly implementing the EU Protection of Origin (PDO) system.

Third, adhere to the special-oriented highlight of the characteristics and differentiation of rural brands. Rural brand design should fully explore and utilize the natural resources, historical culture, folk customs, and other characteristic elements of the countryside to create a rural brand with local and national characteristics. At the same time, we should combine the needs and preferences of modern consumers, innovate product development and service modes, and provide a diversified and personalized consumption experience. For example, the “Futian Farm” brand of Futian Farm in Japan is to meet the needs of different consumers by developing a variety of agricultural products and services, such as Futian Milk, Futian Corn, Futian Flowers, Futian Zoo, Futian Garden, Futian Garden, Futian Art Museum, etc.

Fourth, adhere to the city-oriented approach and effectively promote the marketization of rural brands. Rural brand design should keep up with market changes and consumption trends, adopt various channels and ways for brand promotion and marketing, and improve the visibility and reputation of rural brands. At the same time, we should strengthen cooperation and exchanges with other regions, industries, and enterprises, expand the domestic and foreign market space, and enhance the international influence of rural brands. For example, the “Hobbit Village” brand of The Hobbit Village in New Zealand has attracted the attention and presence of many film fans and tourists worldwide through the significant influence of the Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit series.

Figure 6 shows the schematic diagram of the steps of the rural brand of “Juxiang Xiaoguo Jia.” Around the chrysanthemum industry, tell a good chrysanthemum story. First, shout out the value. With “chrysanthemum fragrance of Guo’s home, leisurely return to the countryside” as the tourism slogan, the name of ancient poetry, the meaning of Guo’s family. Borrowing Tao Yuan Ming’s “pick chrysanthemum east, leisurely see nanshan” sentence, with the spirit of the chrysanthemum seclusion leisurely and comfortable, shows guo carefree artistic conception of rural life, at the same time with the public familiar verse, helps to brand memory, stimulate the public yearning for quiet free rural life, trigger the contemporary people out of the urban life to return to the natural life ideal. And then go to the symbol creation. Then, develop the product. After building the rural brand, the chrysanthemum products of the whole village use the brand of “Chrysanthemum Xiang Xiao Guo Jia,” unified packaging, making it a standard brand product. Finally, innovate the business format, from the layout of chrysanthemum eating, chrysanthemum living, chrysanthemum swimming, chrysanthemum playing, and chrysanthemum purchase. At the same time, the theme activities. Activity is one of the most effective communication carriers, and the use of activity marketing can bring immediate results for the brand. “Chrysanthemum” will be a season activity, spring, “chrysanthemum festival”; summer, “chrysanthemum

festival,” “autumn,” wine with chrysanthemum fragrance “chrysanthemum wine festival; winter,” chrysanthemum festival, “chrysanthemum related products as the drive, gather local characteristic agricultural products for display and sales.

Our overview uniquely synthesises the historical trajectory and contemporary practice of rural brand design, highlighting the crucial role of combining traditional culture with modern innovation. By elucidating successful models, identifying gaps, and critiquing challenges, particularly the tension between traditional preservation and technological advancement, we present new perspectives that are critical for practitioners and scholars alike. Not only does it integrate existing knowledge, but it also maps out a roadmap for future research and practical applications, advocating culturally sensitive, sustainable and technologically inclusive strategies. Our analyses highlight the need for a balanced approach that honours the past while advancing rural economies towards a prosperous future.



Figure 6: Implementation Steps of “Juxiang Xiaoxiang Jia” Rural Brand.

CONCLUSION

With the title “The Historical Evolution and Contemporary Practice of Rural Brand Design: The Integration of Traditional Culture and Modern Innovation,” this paper discusses the role and relationship of traditional culture and modern innovation in rural brand design from two aspects of theory and examples. This paper holds that traditional culture is the starting point and source of rural brand design, the core feature and competitive advantage distinguishing rural brands from other brands; modern innovation is the power and means of rural brand design and is the necessary condition for rural brands to adapt to market changes and demand. Traditional culture and modern innovation are not binary opposites but can learn from, integrate, and promote each other. Only by realizing the organic integration of traditional culture and modern innovation can we make the rural brand design more dynamic and forward-looking, better reflect the characteristics and advantages of the countryside, and better meet the needs and expectations of consumers.

Through the case analysis of different regions and countries in Anji County, Provence, Parma, and Futian Farm, this paper shows the specific application and effect of traditional culture and modern innovation in rural brand design. These cases have created a series of rural brands with local characteristics and influence through the planning and design, product development, service promotion, cultural display, and other aspects of local natural resources, history and culture, and folk customs. These cases maintain respect for and inheritance of traditional culture in the rural brand design and introduce modern technology and cultural elements, realizing the organic integration of traditional culture and modern innovation. Through the rural brand design, these cases have successfully realized the development and prosperity of the rural economy and society and become a national and even world-famous ecological tourism destination or agricultural products origin. This paper hopes to provide some reference and inspiration for the ongoing rural brand design by discussing the role and relationship between traditional culture and modern innovation in rural brand design.

Virtual tours and smart countryside brands will be pioneered in the future. The exploration of immersive technologies and data-driven strategies is expected to shape the next generation of rural identities, blending tradition with high-tech innovation.

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