

Revitalising Brands through Cultural Branding: A Mini Review

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ABSTRACT

Cultural branding has emerged as a strategic approach for promoting brands by integrating cultural identity, authentic storytelling, and consumer-centred branding practices to create meaningful and differentiated brand experiences. This mini review aims to synthesise current knowledge on the role of cultural branding in promoting brands, with particular emphasis on its theoretical foundations, cultural narratives, digital branding strategies, ethical considerations, and practical applications. A comprehensive literature search was conducted using the Scopus database. Peer reviewed publications, including original research articles, systematic reviews, meta analyses, and case studies published in English, were reviewed. Studies that did not explicitly address cultural branding, as well as grey literature, were excluded to ensure the quality and relevance of the evidence. The findings indicate that successful brand promotion through cultural branding relies on the integration of authentic cultural narratives, visual identity, storytelling, digital media, and consumer engagement strategies to strengthen brand authenticity, emotional attachment, and long term brand loyalty. The review also highlights the growing role of digital platforms, including social media, digital storytelling, and interactive brand experiences, in enhancing the visibility and relevance of culturally inspired brands. However, existing research remains fragmented, with limited integration of theoretical perspectives, practical branding frameworks, and ethical considerations. Ongoing debates surrounding cultural authenticity, cultural appropriation, and the commercialisation of cultural heritage further underscore the need for more comprehensive branding approaches. Future research should develop interdisciplinary and integrated cultural branding frameworks while evaluating branding effectiveness across multiple communication channels and diverse cultural contexts. Such efforts will contribute to more authentic, ethical, and sustainable brand promotion strategies.

Keywords: Cultural branding, Brand promotion, Brand authenticity, Digital branding, Storytelling

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, cultural branding has gained increasing attention as an effective strategy for differentiating brands and strengthening consumer engagement in highly competitive markets. As consumer expectations continue to shift towards authenticity and meaningful brand experiences, branding has evolved beyond functional and emotional appeals to incorporate cultural narratives, heritage, local identity, and shared values. By embedding cultural significance into brand identity and communication, organisations are better able to establish emotional connections with consumers, enhance brand authenticity, and foster long-term loyalty. Consequently, cultural branding has emerged as a promising approach for promoting brands across diverse industries, enabling organisations to preserve cultural heritage while enhancing brand relevance, market differentiation, and competitive advantage.

Cultural branding is a strategic approach that integrates cultural narratives, symbols, values, and storytelling into brand identity to create meaningful connections with consumers. Unlike conventional branding, which primarily emphasizes functional or emotional benefits, cultural branding builds authenticity by reflecting local traditions and community values, thereby strengthening emotional attachment, trust, and brand loyalty (Yang et al., 2025). As consumer demand for authentic and culturally meaningful experiences continues to grow in an increasingly globalized marketplace, cultural branding has become an important strategy for brand differentiation and long-term competitiveness. However, its success depends on genuine cultural engagement and adaptation rather than

the superficial use of cultural symbols, as inauthentic representations may undermine consumer trust and damage brand reputation (Anute, 2024).

Despite the growing body of research on branding and consumer behaviour, studies examining how cultural branding contributes to effective brand promotion remain fragmented across multiple disciplines, including marketing, visual communication, cultural studies, consumer behaviour, and brand management. Existing research has predominantly explored individual dimensions of cultural branding, such as brand authenticity, cultural storytelling, visual identity, packaging design, digital branding strategies, and consumer engagement, with limited efforts to integrate these elements into a comprehensive branding framework (Kumar et al., 2025). Although digital media has created significant opportunities for brands to communicate cultural values and engage diverse audiences across multiple platforms, the literature indicates that organisations continue to face challenges in consistently translating cultural narratives across branding touchpoints, including packaging, advertising, social media, websites, and experiential marketing. These challenges are often compounded by organisational constraints, such as limited resources and insufficient cross-departmental coordination, which hinder the effective implementation of integrated cultural branding strategies (Barker, 2026). The literature also reveals ongoing debates regarding the balance between preserving cultural authenticity and adapting brands to contemporary consumer expectations, particularly in relation to ethical representation, cultural appropriation, and the commercialisation of cultural heritage (Albakry et al., 2026). Consequently, there is a need for a more integrated understanding of cultural branding that combines authentic storytelling, strategic brand positioning, digital communication, visual identity, and consumer engagement to promote brands while preserving cultural identity and ensuring long term market relevance.

This mini review aims to synthesise the current body of knowledge on cultural branding as a strategy for promoting brands by examining the theoretical, strategic, ethical, and practical dimensions of cultural branding. By consolidating findings from existing studies, this review identifies emerging research trends, highlights gaps in the integration of these thematic areas, and examines how cultural branding can be strategically implemented across multiple branding touchpoints to strengthen brand identity, consumer engagement, and competitive advantage. The review concludes that effective cultural branding extends beyond visual aesthetics or heritage representation, requiring the integration of authentic cultural narratives, strategic brand positioning, digital communication, and consumer-centred branding practices. Such an integrated approach provides valuable insights for organisations seeking to develop culturally meaningful brands while preserving cultural identity and enhancing long term brand relevance, differentiation, and competitiveness in contemporary markets.

METHODS

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using Scopus to identify relevant studies on cultural branding and the revitalisation of brands. Keywords such as

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("cultural branding" AND (brand* OR branding OR "brand promotion") AND (marketing OR advertising OR "visual communication"))

were utilized to collect relevant articles. Various types of publications, including original research articles, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and case studies, were considered for inclusion in this mini review.

Inclusion Criteria

• Studies discussing key aspects of cultural branding and brand promotion:

- Examined cultural branding strategies for promoting and revitalising brands through authentic cultural identity, heritage, and storytelling.
- Reviewed branding elements including brand authenticity, cultural narratives, visual identity, packaging design, and brand positioning.
- Investigated consumer perceptions, emotional engagement, brand loyalty, purchase intention, and the influence of cultural values on branding effectiveness.

• Studies focusing on digital branding and contemporary marketing strategies:

- Examined the use of digital media, including social media platforms, digital storytelling, influencer marketing, and online advertising, in promoting culturally inspired brands.
- Explored integrated branding strategies across multiple touchpoints, such as packaging, advertising campaigns, food pairing promotions, websites, and retail experiences.
- Investigated the role of digital communication in enhancing brand visibility, consumer engagement, and long-term brand sustainability while preserving cultural authenticity.

• Studies addressing cultural authenticity and ethical branding practices:

- Discussed the balance between preserving cultural authenticity and adapting brands to contemporary consumer expectations.
- Examined ethical issues related to cultural representation, cultural appropriation, community engagement, and heritage preservation.
- Proposed branding frameworks, strategic recommendations, or practical applications for implementing culturally authentic and sustainable branding practices.

To ensure the quality and relevance of the evidence, several exclusion criteria were applied. Publications written in languages other than English were excluded to maintain consistency throughout the analysis. Studies that discussed branding, marketing, or cultural heritage without explicitly addressing cultural branding were also excluded because they did not align with the scope of this review. In addition, grey literature, including conference abstracts, editorials, dissertations, theses, unpublished reports, and other materials that had not undergone peer review, was excluded to ensure that the review findings were based on high quality academic research. These selection criteria enhanced the reliability, validity, and consistency of the evidence synthesised in this mini review.

DISCUSSION AND RESULT

The reviewed studies consistently demonstrate that cultural branding is an effective strategy for revitalising traditional beverage brands by strengthening brand identity, enhancing perceived authenticity, and fostering stronger emotional connections with consumers. The findings indicate that integrating cultural elements through visual identity, packaging design, storytelling, and heritage narratives enables traditional beverages to differentiate themselves in competitive markets while preserving their cultural significance. Many studies also report that consumers, particularly younger generations, respond positively to branding approaches that reinterpret cultural heritage in a contemporary and visually appealing manner. These findings suggest that cultural branding has considerable potential for increasing the market relevance and long-term sustainability of traditional beverage products.

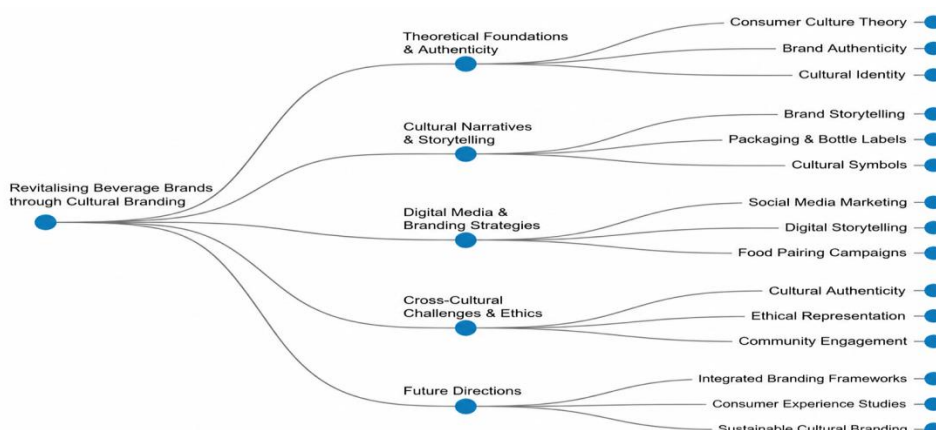


Figure 1: Prompt promoting brands through cultural branding map generated by Scopus AI

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual structure of research on revitalising beverage brands through cultural branding. The literature is predominantly centred on five key themes, namely theoretical foundations and authenticity, cultural narratives and storytelling, digital media and branding strategies, cross cultural challenges and ethics, and future research directions. Together, these themes demonstrate that effective cultural branding requires the integration of authentic cultural identity, strategic communication, ethical considerations, and innovative branding practices.

Documents by year

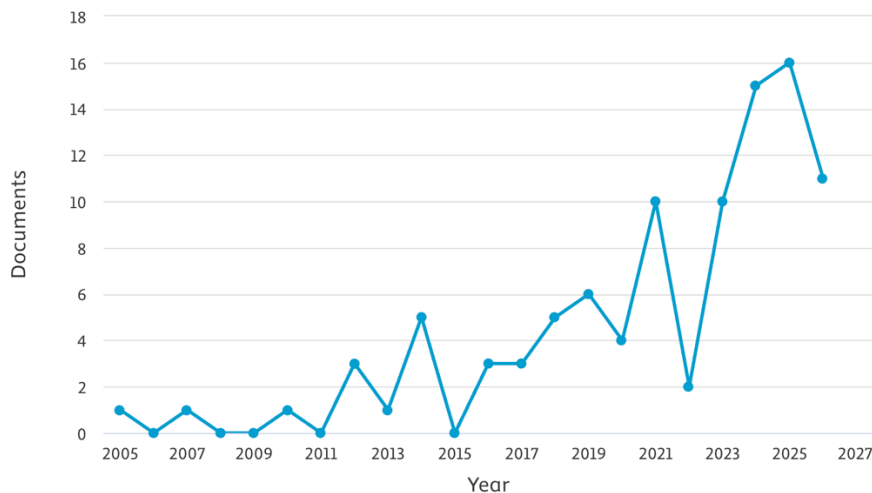


Figure 2: Graph on publications and citations per year in the topic of revitalising brands through cultural branding

The publication trend indicates a gradual increase in research on the topic from 2005 to 2019, followed by a more substantial growth beginning in 2021. The number of publications reached its highest level in 2025 with 16 documents, reflecting growing scholarly interest in the field. Although the number of publications declined to 11 documents in 2026, this reduction is likely attributable to incomplete indexing of publications for the current year.

Theoretical Foundations and Brand Authenticity

The literature consistently identifies authenticity as the cornerstone of cultural branding. Unlike conventional branding, cultural branding embeds products within local traditions, cultural narratives, and shared values, allowing brands to establish stronger emotional connections with consumers (Tran, 2014). Consumer Culture Theory, Brand Authenticity Theory, and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions are among the dominant theoretical frameworks explaining how brands create culturally meaningful identities. These theories suggest that successful cultural branding requires genuine cultural engagement rather than merely incorporating traditional symbols or motifs (Rexhepi et al., 2014). Consumers increasingly expect brands to demonstrate authenticity through meaningful storytelling, ethical representation, and respect for cultural heritage (Yang et al., 2025). However, current studies remain largely conceptual, with limited empirical evidence examining how authenticity influences consumer perceptions of traditional beverage brands. Future research should investigate how authenticity can be effectively translated into branding strategies for local beverages while maintaining both commercial appeal and cultural integrity.

Cultural Narratives, Storytelling and Visual Identity

The reviewed literature highlights cultural storytelling as one of the most influential components of cultural branding. Traditional beverages become more meaningful when supported by compelling narratives that communicate their history, cultural significance, production methods, and regional identity (Anute et al., 2025). Visual storytelling through bottle labels, packaging, colour palettes, typography, illustrations, and cultural symbols further reinforces these narratives and strengthens consumer attachment. Studies consistently report that culturally relevant storytelling improves brand recall, perceived authenticity, emotional engagement, and long-term loyalty (Liu et al., 2025; Doshi et al., 2026). Packaging also functions as a cultural communication

medium by integrating semiotic elements that reflect local heritage and identity (Kusumawati et al., 2026). Despite these findings, most existing research investigates storytelling and packaging independently rather than examining how they function collectively within an integrated branding strategy. Future studies should explore the combined influence of storytelling, visual identity, and packaging on consumer perceptions of traditional beverage brands across different cultural contexts.

Digital Media and Contemporary Brand Communication

Digital media has transformed the way traditional brands communicate with consumers and establish contemporary brand identities. Social media platforms including Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube enable brands to present traditional beverages through visual storytelling, food pairing content, influencer collaborations, and user generated content that resonates with younger audiences (Zhang, 2026). Beyond social media, brands increasingly utilise websites, e commerce platforms, mobile applications, digital advertising, email marketing, and interactive technologies such as QR codes and augmented reality to enrich consumer experiences and strengthen brand engagement (Kiu, 2018; Ghonim & Awad, 2025). These digital branding strategies enable traditional or new brand to be repositioned within modern lifestyle contexts while preserving their cultural narratives. However, the literature also highlights concerns regarding excessive commercialisation, algorithm dependence, and the potential loss of cultural authenticity when heritage is simplified for digital consumption. Future research should investigate how integrated digital branding strategies influence consumer trust, long term loyalty, and cultural appreciation while balancing innovation with authentic cultural representation.

Cross Cultural Adaptation and Ethical Considerations

As cultural branding expands into broader markets, brands increasingly face challenges related to cultural adaptation and ethical representation. The literature identifies tensions between maintaining authentic cultural identity and adapting branding strategies to meet the expectations of contemporary and global consumers (Batra, 2017). Issues such as cultural appropriation, the misuse of traditional symbols, limited community engagement, and intellectual property rights have become significant concerns (Mallick, 2026). Effective cultural branding therefore requires transparency, collaboration with local communities, respect for cultural ownership, and culturally sensitive communication strategies to ensure that branding initiatives celebrate and preserve cultural heritage rather than exploit it for commercial gain (Hecht & Lee, 2009). Nevertheless, practical guidelines for implementing ethical cultural branding remain limited, highlighting the need for further research on community participation, cultural governance, responsible branding practices, and the development of ethical frameworks that can be applied across diverse industries and cultural contexts.

Practical Applications and Future Research Directions

The literature demonstrates that effective cultural branding requires an integrated and multi layered branding system rather than isolated design elements. Successful implementation involves the strategic integration of brand identity development including packaging and bottle labels (Kumar & Kumar, 2026), advertising campaigns, digital communication, experiential marketing, retail displays, cultural events, and stakeholder collaboration to ensure consistency across all branding touchpoints. Such a holistic approach enables brands to communicate authentic cultural narratives while strengthening brand recognition, consumer engagement, and long term brand equity (Ahmed, 2026). The integration of digital communication strategies, such as social media, with cultural events and food pairing promotions enhances cultural branding by increasing brand visibility, fostering authentic cultural experiences, and strengthening consumer engagement across both local and global markets (Jahns, 2023; Noti et al., 2024). However, existing studies primarily focus on individual branding components, such as storytelling or packaging, with relatively few evaluating comprehensive branding interventions after implementation. Effective cultural branding requires strong collaboration among policymakers, local communities, creative professionals, and industry stakeholders to ensure that branding initiatives remain culturally authentic, strategically aligned, and sustainable over the long term (Putra, 2025). Scopus AI also highlights several important research gaps, including the lack of longitudinal studies, limited research in emerging markets, insufficient practical branding frameworks, and the need for interdisciplinary approaches that combine branding, cultural studies, visual communication, and consumer behaviour. Future

research should therefore develop integrated cultural branding models and validate them through consumer testing, expert evaluation, market trials, and community participation to ensure that branding solutions are culturally authentic, commercially sustainable, and effective in revitalising traditional brands.

CONCLUSION

This mini review highlights that cultural branding is an effective approach for revitalising brands by integrating authentic cultural identity, compelling storytelling, strategic digital communication, and consumer-centred branding practices. The literature consistently demonstrates that successful cultural branding extends beyond visual aesthetics, requiring genuine cultural engagement, cohesive brand narratives, and integrated branding strategies across multiple touchpoints to strengthen consumer trust, emotional attachment, and brand loyalty. However, the review also identifies several limitations, including fragmented research across disciplines, limited empirical studies evaluating comprehensive branding interventions, and ongoing debates surrounding cultural authenticity, ethical representation, and the commercialisation of cultural heritage. In addition, there remains a lack of integrated branding frameworks that combine theoretical foundations, digital branding strategies, and practical implementation within diverse cultural contexts. Future research should therefore adopt interdisciplinary and longitudinal approaches to develop holistic cultural branding models, evaluate consumer responses across both physical and digital platforms, and establish practical guidelines for ethical and culturally authentic brand promotion. Addressing these challenges will not only advance branding research but also provide valuable insights for organisations seeking to promote culturally meaningful brands while preserving heritage and ensuring long term market relevance.

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