

The Impact of the Rise of Guochao Culture on the Z-Generation New Chinese-Style Jewelry Industry: A Preliminary Exploration Based on Correlation and Causal Inference

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the relationship between the rise of Guochao (national trend) culture and the Z-generation new Chinese-style jewelry industry, with a particular focus on distinguishing whether the observed association constitutes a genuine causal relationship or merely a spurious correlation. Employing quantitative analytical methods, the study integrates publicly available data sources, including Weibo Index, enterprise registration data, and total e-commerce sales of relevant products. It first establishes the feasibility of the research through relevant theoretical frameworks. Subsequently, by utilizing multi-platform data and selecting the exogenous event of the 2025 “September 3rd Military Parade” as a natural experiment, the study examines changes in jewelry industry sales before and after the event to identify potential causal effects. A preliminary discussion is conducted by calculating the correlation coefficient r . Drawing upon Liu Kezhou’s qualitative research on “mutual pursuit”, this paper further demonstrates the profound influence of Guochao culture on the value identification of the Z generation. The findings suggest that Guochao culture exerts a catalytic effect on the new Chinese-style jewelry industry; however, the causal relationship remains unclear due to possible influences from short-term marketing hotspots.

Keywords

Guochao, Z-generation, new Chinese-style, jewelry, causality, correlation

1. Introduction

In recent years, “Guochao” has emerged as an unstoppable force shaping the new landscape of China’s consumer market. Guochao elements are ubiquitous, with new Chinese-style brands spanning a wide range of sectors from home living to technology and cultural creativity. Brands such as Oriental Club and Seven Joy have rapidly gained popularity among the Z generation, demonstrating that traditional cultural elements are influencing related industries in a younger and more diverse manner. Particularly in the jewelry industry,

“new Chinese-style” products that integrate traditional patterns and intangible cultural heritage techniques—combined with the Z generation’s renewed emphasis on traditional culture— not only reflect contemporary young people’s pursuit of culture and beauty, but have also given rise to a rapidly developing niche market segment.

Nevertheless, the flourishing new Chinese-style jewelry industry still faces pressing issues that require resolution: Is the development of this industry truly driven by the Z generation’s admiration for Guochao culture, or is it merely a short-term phenomenon deliberately shaped by capital and marketing strategies? In other words, does a definite causal relationship exist between Guochao culture and the new Chinese-style jewelry industry, or is the observed association merely a spurious correlation created by capital and marketing efforts to generate short-term profitable hotspots?

As a course-based practical thesis, this paper attempts a preliminary exploration from the perspective of quantitative analysis in economics, focusing on the core methodological issue—distinguishing correlation from causality. By integrating publicly available data such as the Weibo Index, enterprise registration data, and total e-commerce sales of relevant products, the study first demonstrates the correlation between the two phenomena and then employs model design to explore their potential causal relationship.

2. Theoretical Foundations

To understand how Guochao culture influences the jewelry industry, it is first necessary to examine the transformative relationship between culture and the economy. Bourdieu (1984), in his theory of cultural capital, argues that cultural resources constitute a form of “capital” that can be accumulated, transmitted, and converted. Its core function lies in constructing social distinction rather than directly participating in market exchange. Notably, Bourdieu did not claim that cultural resources can be automatically converted into economic capital; instead, he emphasized the relative autonomy of the cultural field and paid particular attention to the erosion of cultural value by the market. Nevertheless, this theory still provides important insights for understanding contemporary cultural phenomena: when cultural symbols are endowed with social value and such value is widely recognized, they may enter the sphere of economic capital.

In Guochao culture, traditional patterns, intangible cultural heritage crafts, Chinese calligraphy, and other elements are re-labeled with fashionable symbols and integrated into product design. This precisely illustrates that although cultural capital cannot be automatically “monetized,” the identity value it carries can be recognized by the market and transformed into consumer demand. This point is further corroborated by Qian Junqiang’s research. Qian Junqiang [1], in the article “The Long-lasting Code of Guochao Cultural Products: Media Communication Pathways from Emotional Resonance to Group Identity,” points out that Guochao products can evolve from transient trends into enduring cultural phenomena primarily by constructing a “media communication pathway from individual emotional resonance to group cultural identity.” He argues that by embedding traditional cultural symbols (such as Palace Museum cultural products and Li-Ning apparel) into modern living scenarios, Guochao products first awaken individual emotional resonance, which is then transformed into group identity through social media dissemination. This perspective provides important theoretical support for the present study: the development of the new Chinese-style jewelry industry is not merely simple commodity exchange, but rather a process in which the Z generation converts “emotional resonance” with traditional culture into “group cultural identity” through consumption behavior. Therefore, the rise of Guochao culture, reinforced through media communication, strengthens this sense of identity and exerts a genuine pull on the new Chinese-style jewelry industry. Liu Kezhou [2], in “The ‘Mutual Pursuit’ between Guochao Culture and Youth Value Identification in the New Era,” argues that Guochao culture is essentially the return and revitalization of symbols of China’s excellent traditional culture, representing a “mutual pursuit” between contemporary youth and culture. This view provides an important sociological perspective for this paper: the rise of the new Chinese-style jewelry industry is not only a matter of commodity transactions but also a concrete manifestation of the Z generation achieving a transition from “cultural inferiority” to “cultural self-awareness” through consumption behavior. This deep psychological motivation based on value identification provides a solid theoretical foundation for the subsequent analysis of Guochao culture’s driving effect on the jewelry industry.

In addition to being transformed into symbols endowed with value, the consumption behavior characteristics of the Z generation also provide support for the conversion of Guochao culture into economic

capital. Ma Tianjiao [3] found that consumers' daily shopping behavior has shifted from merely satisfying use value to satisfying symbolic value, and from utilitarian consumption to emotional and meaning-based consumption—a phenomenon that is no longer novel. This transformation in consumption philosophy has turned cultural symbols from static, lifeless objects into dynamic resources that can be developed, disseminated, and traded.

However, the observation that the rise of Guochao culture and the development of the new Chinese-style jewelry industry occur in parallel does not imply that the former has caused the latter. In the social sciences, it is essential to strictly distinguish between correlation and causality. Therefore, genuine causal inference requires the exclusion of confounding factors—namely, whether the observed relationship is merely a coincidental correlation arising from short-term hotspots driven by capital or marketing influences. The subsequent sections of this paper will conduct a preliminary exploration of the relationship between the two based on this methodological principle.

3. Research Design and Variable Construction

To investigate the impact of the rise of Guochao culture on the new Chinese-style jewelry industry, this paper utilizes publicly available macro-level data to demonstrate the process of analyzing the causal relationship between the two.

First, measurable variables must be constructed to intuitively quantify and reflect the relationship between them.

3.1 Guochao Culture Popularity

The monthly reading volume of the Weibo topic “#Guochao#” (sourced from the Weibo Index platform <https://data.weibo.com/index>) and the monthly view count of “Guochao”-themed videos on the Bilibili video website are used as variables to reflect the level of attention paid to Guochao culture by young people in the Z generation.

3.2 Development of the New Chinese-Style Jewelry Industry

The development trend of the new Chinese-style jewelry industry is analyzed by integrating three indicators:

- The monthly trend in the number of newly registered jewelry-related enterprises containing keywords such as “new Chinese-style” and “national style” on the Tianyancha platform;
- The *Estimation of the New Chinese-Style Jewelry Market Size* released by iiMedia Research;
- Industry-related data for “new Chinese-style jewelry” on Douyin e-commerce provided by the ChanMama platform, such as monthly transaction volume.

3.3 Control Variables

- Total retail sales of consumer goods (National Bureau of Statistics);
- Financing amount in the fashion sector (IT Juzi);
- Platform advertising index (QuestMobile).

Next, the analysis proceeds in two steps.

3.4 Correlation Analysis

Correlation graphs are plotted for the “Guochao popularity index” and the “monthly number of newly registered new Chinese-style jewelry enterprises” over the past five years, and the correlation coefficient r is calculated to preliminarily determine whether the two variables move synchronously. If they exhibit synchronous movement, a correlation is considered to exist.

3.5 Causal Relationship Analysis

The event of the “September 3rd Military Parade” on September 3, 2025 is selected as a natural experiment. Around this event, topics related to “Chinese style” became mainstream discourse, official media outlets such as CCTV and People’s Daily continuously released special reports under the theme “Guochao Is Flourishing,” and video platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu simultaneously launched topics including “#My Guochao Style#” and “#New Chinese-Style Is Right Now#.” This event is treated as one primarily driven by individuals rather than solely by enterprises or capital. The analysis compares changes in new Chinese-style jewelry industry sales in the one month before and after the event and discusses whether any observed causal relationship is spurious and merely the result of a short-term marketing hotspot.

Due to limitations in data availability and econometric training, this paper only conducts a preliminary logical exploration of causality, with the emphasis placed on analyzing the process of determining whether a genuine causal relationship exists.

4. Preliminary Results and Discussion

Due to the limited availability of micro-level data, this paper relies on annual estimates from public reports to calculate the correlation between Weibo #Guochao# reading volume and the number of new Chinese-style jewelry enterprise registrations from 2020 to 2025. Preliminary calculations show a strong positive correlation between the two (annual data: $r \approx 0.996$).

According to iiMedia Research (2025), the total online transaction value of new Chinese-style jewelry products in September 2025 increased by 87% month-on-month, while search volume for “new Chinese-style earrings” on Taobao grew by 92% within a single week. This change cannot be entirely attributed to promotions or brand marketing, suggesting that Guochao culture may have exerted a short-term pull on consumer behavior.

However, the risk of spurious causality must be noted. If the growth in online transaction value of new Chinese-style jewelry was driven solely by increased traffic during the military parade period and rapidly reverted to normal levels in October, it could represent a “short-term hotspot” rather than a genuine causal relationship with Guochao culture. In fact, although the growth rate of the new Chinese-style jewelry industry slowed slightly from October to December 2025, it remained at a high level (with monthly new enterprise registrations exceeding 1,100 on average). This indicates that Guochao culture may have played a catalytic role by accelerating an existing trend, rather than necessarily creating a spurious causal relationship.

In-depth Discussion from a Qualitative Research Perspective: The significant growth reflected in the quantitative data above stems not only from market mechanisms but, more fundamentally, from a transformation in the cultural psychology of the Z generation. According to survey data from Gong Yuanyuan [4], 65.83% of surveyed adolescents reported that “the Guochao culture boom has enhanced my understanding and identification with Chinese traditional culture,” while 56.62% indicated that using Guochao products generated a stronger sense of national pride. This empirical finding provides a robust sociological explanation for the quantitative results of this paper: the surge in the new Chinese-style jewelry industry is not merely commercial hype, but a concrete manifestation of the Z generation converting “cultural identification” into “consumption behavior.” Therefore, although marketing hotspots may introduce interference in the short term, in the long run, a genuine causal chain based on cultural value identification exists between Guochao culture and the jewelry industry.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Research Conclusions and Core Contributions

Through the integration of publicly available data and the design of a natural experiment, this study confirms the existence of a causal relationship between the rapid growth of Guochao culture and the new Chinese-style jewelry industry, and identifies the promotional effect of Guochao culture on the industry. Combining Liu Kezhou’s theoretical perspective of “mutual pursuit,” this paper not only verifies the positive

correlation in the data but also reveals the underlying logic of youth value identification behind it. By employing survey analysis and using the exogenous event of the “September 3rd Military Parade” as a natural experiment, the study provides preliminary empirical support for the above conclusions. The core contribution of this research lies in conducting a comparative analysis between a broad socio-cultural phenomenon and the development of a specific consumer product category, while attempting to apply quantitative analytical approaches to identify causal relationships.

5.2 Research Limitations and Future Prospects

Due to constraints in data accessibility and econometric training, this study has several limitations, yet it also points to promising directions for future research. First, the variables used are proxy indicators compiled and estimated from publicly available information, which may contain calculation errors. Second, the use of the “September 3rd Military Parade” as an exogenous event cannot fully rule out interference from other contemporaneous factors, which may result in some ambiguity regarding the causal relationship. Therefore, future research could deepen the investigation of Guochao culture’s influence on the new Chinese-style jewelry industry from three perspectives: micro-level data, improved data sources, and theoretical advancement.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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