

Corporate heritage tourism brand attractiveness and national identity

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Examines the attractiveness of the Tong Ren Tang (TRT) as a Chinese corporate heritage tourism brand and considers the significance of TRT for Chinese national identity. The study considers the saliency of Balmer's augmented role identity notion *vis-à-vis* corporate heritage institutions/corporate brands. Insights are made from and for corporate heritage, heritage tourism and national identity literatures.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A conceptual model comprising five hypotheses was developed and this informed a survey-based questionnaire administered to domestic tourists/customers visiting Tong Ren Tang's flagship shop in Beijing.

Findings: The attractiveness to domestic Chinese tourists/customers of the Tong Ren Tang corporate heritage tourism brand was found to be attributable to its multiple role identities: national, corporate, temporal, familial, and imperial. As such, this study lends credence to Balmer's augmented role identity notion. Chinese domestic tourists/customers-as members of an ethnic Chinese community-in visiting TRT not only consume an extant corporate heritage by tangible and intangible means but can also be seen to express, and reaffirm, their sense of Chinese national identity.

Practical implications: For Tong Ren Tang's (TRT) managers there should be an appreciation that the attractiveness of TRT as a corporate heritage tourism brand rests not only on what it sells but also in what it symbolises in national and cultural terms. This finding is applicable to the managers many other corporate heritage/corporate heritage tourism brands.

Social implications: Adopting a primordial perspective, the TRT pharmacy was found to be of singular significance to China's national identity. Traditional Chinese Medicine, Confucian and Daoist religious/philosophical and China's erstwhile Imperial polity are significant and enduring precepts of Chinese national identity. As such the TRT flagship shop/brand is of singular importance since China has eviscerated much of its cultural heritage –particularly in relation to its corporate heritage brands.

Originality/value: The first empirical study to focus on corporate heritage tourism brands, and one of the first studies to examine a Chinese corporate heritage/corporate heritage tourism brand. Also significant in focussing on the Tong Ren Tang corporate heritage brand. Established in 1669, TRT's history spans five centuries: a corporate provenance which is exceptional within the People's Republic of China. The study links the corporate brand notion with the nascent corporate heritage brand domain and the established area of heritage tourism.

Keywords: China, corporate brand, corporate heritage, tourism.

Paper type: Research paper.

Keywords: Corporate Heritage, Corporate Heritage Tourism, National Identity, Beijing, China.

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Introduction

Focussing on Tong Ren Tang (TRT), Beijing's celebrated traditional Chinese medicine shop, this study examines the pharmacy's attractiveness as a domestic tourism attraction as a corporate heritage tourism brand. The research also considers its role in encapsulating and expressing Chinese National Identity from a primordial perspective. The study takes account of the multiple role identity perspective of corporate heritage institutions (Balmer 2011b, 2013) and is also informed by the literature on nationality and ethnicity. This is because our scrutiny of this corporate branding phenomenon points to the prima facie importance of the Tong Ren Tang corporate brand to Chinese identity, culture, and to Chinese Civilisation. Insights are made from and for corporate heritage, heritage tourism and national identity literatures.

Our research picks up the notion that corporate heritage tourism/corporate heritage tourism brands links the nascent corporate heritage domain with the established field of heritage tourism and identified that phenomenon that corporate heritage brands can be tourism attractions in their own right (Balmer 2013 p.321).

Dating back to 1669, TRT – whose flagship and “mother” shop is situated in Da Shi Lan

(大栅栏) district of China's capital city – is a noteworthy Chinese domestic tourism retail attraction. Although significant, the shop cannot, of course, be in a different league from other Chinese tourism attractions such as The Forbidden City and the Great Wall of China.

By means of context however, within Beijing, authentic (as opposed to faux) prominent corporate heritage tourism attractions are singularly uncommon. Without question, TRT is China's most celebrated traditional Chinese medicine corporate brand. The pharmaceutical brand is known both within China and Chinese diaspora for the quality of its medicinal products and services which are – in more ways than one – “Fit for a King”.

The royal epithet is fitting since Tong Ren Tang brand, until the establishment of a Republic in 1911, was the sole purveyor to the Imperial (“Celestial”) Court and to successive Chinese Emperors. As such, the shop is of singular importance within China, and to reiterate, among the Chinese diaspora, in that the corporate brand it is a living, and peerless, link with China's extraordinarily long and rich Imperial past.

Moreover, TRT is also of significance to the national identity of China. This is because traditional Chinese medicine is viewed as a delineating trait of China and of Chinese Civilisation (Eisenberg, 1995). Traditional Chinese medicine is informed by Confucian philosophy and, more particularly, by the religious dictums of Daoism. Significantly, Confucianism and Daoism are two important, and distinguishing, attributes of Chinese culture. The importance of the aforementioned can be seen in Tong Ren Tang's publications which emphasise and accord considerable import to the above:

“Tong Ren Tang is the inheritor of Chinese traditional medicine culture. The theory of Chinese medicine is the essence of Chinese traditional medicine culture, which absorbs the essential ideas from Chinese classical philosophy (of) Confucianism and Daoism.” (Aiying and Zhiying, 2011 p.1)

“(TRT) embodies the cores of the Confucian as ‘benevolence, virtue and goodness’. Hence, ‘considering patients and customers as the most important’, is the highest realm sought by Tong Ren Tang.” (Aiying and Zhiying, 2011. p.1)

Corporate heritage tourism and corporate heritage tourism brands

This study is conscious of the work of Misiura (2006), *vis-à-vis* the broad heritage marketing domain. It is also especially mindful of, and builds on, the work of Park (2010 p.133) who urged scholars to explore heritage tourism experiences in different countries and contexts.

We do this in several ways.

1. First, in responding to Park's challenge, this research focusses on China which, in heritage tourism contexts remains relatively unexplored (Gu and Ryan, 2008).
2. Second, it takes account of the emerging corporate heritage canon; corporate heritage institutions being characterised as being long-established organisations whose key corporate

identity traits and as corporate heritage brands their corporate have endured (Balmer, 2011b; 2013).

3. Third, and, more specifically, the research engages with the embryonic corporate heritage tourism notion: the latter recognises that active heritage institutions can be tourism attractions in their own right (Balmer, 2013).
4. Fourth, the investigation focusses on a prominent heritage retail outlet, which of itself, in corporate heritage/corporate heritage tourism terms represents a departure.
5. Fifth, our inquiry marks new ground in that it examines the roles of an indigenous Chinese philosophy (Confucianism) and religion (Daoism) in the context of Tong Ren Tang as a corporate heritage/corporate heritage tourism entity.
6. Sixth, this article focusses not only on domestic tourists but on domestic tourists who are also consumers (customers) of TRT's products and services.
7. Seven, and importantly, this empirical study explores the role of TRT as a corporate heritage tourism attraction as an informal mechanism through which national identity could be encapsulated and communicated. Park (2010), for instance, noted the importance of informal mechanisms as expressions of national identity and this study on TRT as a corporate heritage tourism attraction speaks to Park's reasoning.

Following on from Park (2010), *all seven perspectives represent new heritage tourism perspectives.*

Tong Ren Tang: an inimitable Chinese corporate heritage brand/corporate heritage tourism brand. A corporate heritage brand of consequence

Synthesising the above, in our estimation, Tong Ren Tang represents an important case within the corporate heritage brand/corporate heritage tourism brand/corporate tourism genres.

The reasons for this are manifold.

This includes the age, rarity and prominence of this particular Chinese corporate heritage tourism attraction and because domestic tourism visits to the mother shop of this inimitable Chinese corporate heritage brands are multi-faceted. This is because the shop's visitors are not only tourists but are consumers of TRT's products and services too. Moreover- and significantly-they are members of an ethnic and cultural community- taking a primordial perspective of nationality).

Arguably, therefore, this is a corporate heritage brand/corporate heritage tourism brand of considerable consequence. As such, it is a brand meriting scrutiny from a variety of salient perspectives in terms of corporate heritage marketing but also in terms of the extant literature on nationality and ethnicity.

Chinese Heritage Tourism in context

Today, the Middle Kingdom is a significant tourism attraction. By means of context, it should not be forgotten that tourism in China largely comprises domestic tourist rather than overseas tourists. In recent years, China's domestic heritage tourism industry has received a fillip as a consequence of the introduction of a five day working week; an increase in disposable incomes terms and significantly, government, support for China's cultural heritage (Caseby 2011).

Certainly, China is celebrated for having a significant number of world heritage sites which are of considerable importance and attractiveness to tourists. This is, of course, hardly surprisingly since China, in heritage tourism terms, is exceptional because of its five thousand year as a unified polity. Moreover, China is not merely a nation state but for some is a civilisation without compare (Lenman 1993; Jaques, 2009; Wenzhong, Grove, and Enping, 2010).

Of course, China is an amalgam of many ethnicities, religions, and traditions and some philosophers provide a counter-narrative to the above by questioning the very notion of their being a Chinese civilisation (Grayling, 2015 p.41).

Mindful of the aforementioned, and with the attendant caveats, from 2000 B.C. onwards a broadly distinctive Chinese national identity was created *via* the country's adherence to Confucian philosophical and Daoist religious precepts (Isaacs and Martin 1998, p.299, p. 303).

The aforementioned traditions enjoyed a hegemonic status within China until 1949 when the People's Republic of China (PRC) came into being. In the intervening years since 1949, the PRC largely eschewed China's venerable cultural heritage. More recently, however, the PRC has revisited, promoted, and celebrated its erstwhile traditional national heritage (consider, for instance, state support for Confucian Institutes on the global stage *vis-à-vis* support for "Confucian Institutes").

Tong Ren Tang

The focus of this empirical study is Tong Ren Tang- indubitably one of China's most-celebrated corporate heritage brands and, as we argue here, notable Chinese corporate heritage tourism brand too. Tong Ren Tang's provenance is both enviable and exceptional.

Established in 1669, by Yue Xiangyang, during the reign of Emperor Kangxi, the Tong Ren Tang (TRT) traditional Chinese medicine pharmacy shop quickly developed a reputation throughout China for the quality of its medical products and the integrity of its treatments. The shop's motto (established by its founder Yue Fengming) has continually informed the pharmacy's values:

"No manpower was to be spared, no matter how complicated the procedures of pharmaceutical production were, and not material was to be reduced, no matter how much the cost." (Aiyong and Zhiying 2011, p.70).

In 1723, Emperor Yong Zheng of the Qing Dynasty made the following proclamation which, *de facto*, bestowed an illustrious imperial *imprimatur* on the brand and one that was to burnish Tong Ren Tang's reputation and which persist even today:

"Tong Ren Tang provides all the medicinal materials demanded by the Imperial Drug Hall and produces various kinds of patent medicines for the Royal Courts." Aiyong and Zhiying 2011, p.37).

From this time onwards, and for the greater part of its history, TRT had impeccable imperial credentials. From 1723 until 1911 - with the proclamation of a Chinese Republic-TRT was the sole purveyor of Chinese Medicine to successive Emperors. Moreover, TRT held the Chinese equivalent of an English Royal Warrant ("*By appointment to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second*").

Tong Ren Tang's age and impeccable imperial provenance means that it is not only Beijing's, but also China's, most celebrated corporate heritage shop.

Tong Ren Tang: as a tourist attraction

Without question, TRT is a significant corporate heritage tourist brand in its own right for both foreign and – more significantly as we shall explain – for domestic tourists. Our research found the pharmacy was often included in the itineraries of walking tours of Beijing and the shop's exterior affords one explanation why this is the case. This is not because the visually striking shop façade - festooned with visually striking imperial imagery – is not only inimitable but evokes an earlier, imperial, age (Bedford et al., 2008). Also, TRT is engrained into national consciousness owing to its antiquity and celebrity status as a corporate heritage brand.

Strikingly, too, TRT reverences its regal legacy through its centuries-old brand marque of two imperial dragons and *via* the use of the imperial colours of red and gold. Among extant Chinese organisations with the People's Republic of China, the survival of and the ostentatious display of Imperial iconography is truly exceptional.

By means of context, it should be noted the pharmacy enjoys a prominent position in the Beijing's historic Dashilan (大柵欄) street/district, much-frequented by tourists. A web site devoted to the street not explains the importance of the area but also the significance of TRT:

"Over the centuries, the traditional commercial street Dashilan holds quite a few time-honoured shops and stores which are well-known both at home and abroad. They all enjoy a history of over a hundred years, such as Tong Ren Tang Chinese herbal medicine store..."

Dashilan is-situated next to the Imperial Palace (*The Forbidden City*), and – to repeat - is known for its numerous heritage shops. Significantly, the Chinese Government recognises the TRT shop to be of major cultural and heritage significance and is included in their list of Cultural Heritage Institutions. In addition, the State has also conferred TRT the status of a *Laozihao* (a time-honoured Chinese company). Moreover, in 2005, Chinese Television accorded the pharmacy the status of China's Favourite Chinese Brand.

Testimony of the shop's profile and importance in Chinese national consciousness is the popular historically-rooted television drama series entitled *Da Zhai Men* (大宅门) which is based on TRT and the pharmacy's long associations with the Emperor and Celestial Court. The above accounts for its iconic status: it also explains why, today, it is a popular domestic corporate heritage tourism attraction.

Heritage, Corporate Heritage and Corporate Heritage Tourism Brands

The heritage of heritage

Recently, the corporate heritage notion has attracted the attention of corporate marketing scholars (Balmer et al 2006; Urde et al 2007). However, the heritage notion has a rich and enviable inheritance of its own.

Arguably, the word Heritage comes from the French term for 'inherit' (Heathcote, 2011). In Francophone nations, heritage (*Patrimoine*) typically relates to the heritage of peoples and societies whereas, in the Anglophone world, it habitually focuses on heritage landscapes and buildings (Balmer 2013; Cohen, 2002).

Heritage is a portmanteau notion which is equally applicable to the tangible, intangible, and metaphysical (Balmer, 2013). The heritage designation is broad in scope, and may pertain to an object, monument, inherited skill or symbolic representation. Heritage is often characterised as a key identity component of a social group (Bessiere, 1998).

As a notion, heritage represents our consciousness of a role outside – or beyond- history. In disciplinary terms, the heritage oeuvre is broad in scope and is informed by different disciplines including tourism (Park 2010), sociology (Macdonald, 2002, 2006; Rapport, 2002), and marketing (Balmer, Greyser and Urde 2006; Misiura, 2006).

For some, heritage represents a stand-alone discipline as the *Journal of Heritage Studies* attests. Hayden (1987) asserts that heritage is of immeasurable value: heritage symbols are like cosmetics in that when applied make the world more attractive and desirable. An individual association with heritage can be highly meaningful: it links an individual with that which has endured rather than with that which has expired or with that which is transient.

Corporate heritage and corporate heritage tourism: foundations

The corporate heritage notion was formally introduced by Balmer, Greyser, and Urde (2006) at the end of their study of monarchies as corporate brands (*Reflections* section). A year later the same authors provided a more detailed consideration of the notion (Urde, Greyser, and Balmer 2007): see editorial box 1

Since that time there has been an exponential growth in interest as well as conceptual and theoretical insights not only on corporate heritage brands but in relation to the broad corporate heritage notion. See Balmer 2013.

As noted by Balmer (2011), in a good deal of the heritage canon – much of which is not written from a marketing or management perspective – focuses on the built environment and on heritage visitor attractions (see: Chronis and Hampton 2008; Goulding, 2000, 2001; Hendersen, 2002; Herbert, 1995; Misiura, 2006; O'Guinn and Beck, 1989; Prentice, 1993). A good deal of this literature equates heritage with defunct institutions and redundant heritage buildings and sites.

In contrast, corporate heritage corporate heritage has as its focus extant ("living") heritage organisations and corporate brands. This focus on "living" heritage institutions represents a departure

from much of the extant marketing literature on heritage which, for the main, focuses on the built heritage environment and on heritage visitor attractions *per se*

As an aside, of particular note is the marketing heritage notion of Misirura (2006) which represents the application of marketing precepts to heritage in its broadest sense and, as such, encompasses heritage products, services, brands, tourism and visitor attractions and the built environment.

Building on earlier reflections on corporate heritage brands (Balmer et al 2006; Urde et al 2007; Balmer 2011, 2013)– and corporate heritage identities (Balmer 2011)- the corporate heritage canon notes that heritage institutions and brands are invested with traits which subsist in temporal strata (what he calls multiple time stratum). Traits which are not only invariant (unchanging) but, importantly, have remained relevant too (Balmer 2011a).

The assessment that heritage notion can be highly meaningful to organisations represents an important extension of the heritage construct (Balmer, 2011a). More specifically, heritage is meaningful to organisations not only at the level of corporate heritage brands (Balmer et al., 2006) but also to corporate heritage identities in addition (Balmer, 2011a). Arguably, too, it represents, at the disciplinary-level, a branch dimension of corporate marketing *viz*: corporate heritage marketing (Balmer, 2013).

Why are corporate heritage brands/identities valuable? From the outset, this was made clear. In arguably what is the foundational article on corporate heritage, it was argued that heritage institutions can harness positive public emotions and, because of this, heritage institutions can be valuable to stakeholders and organisations alike (Balmer et al., 2006).

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Defining characteristics of corporate heritage

More recently, the defining characteristics of corporate heritage were enumerated by Balmer (2013 pp.305-315) in terms of: *omni-temporality* (subsisting in temporal strata-of the past, present and perspective future); *institutional trait consistency* (the continuity of meaningful organisational traits); *tri-generational hereditary* (the organisation has to have been in existence, and meaningful, for a minimum of three generations); *augmented role identities* (corporate heritage institutions are infused with multiple role identities including territorial, cultural, social and ancestral identity); *ceaseless multigenerational stakeholder utility* (demonstrably salient for consecutive generations of stakeholders), and *unremitting management tenacity* (assiduous management of corporate heritage institutions is a *sine qua non*). See fig 1 below:

Fig 1: Defining Characteristics of Corporate Heritage (Balmer 2103)



Corporate heritage tourism

Recently, and to recapitulate, the corporate heritage has been linked to tourism and has resulted in the formal introduction of the corporate heritage tourism notion (Balmer, 2013 p.321). Corporate heritage tourism links the nascent corporate heritage domain and heritage tourism.

The potential significance of corporate heritage tourism (and by inference corporate heritage brands) was discussed by Balmer (2013 p.321) in the following manner:

“..a distinct domain of corporate heritage tourism (focussing on institutions who have dual identities derived from corporate, economic, and social identities and which are of interest to domestic and overseas tourist) is one area which is pregnant with possibilities.”

He continued:

“Corporate heritage tourism usefully links the nascent corporate heritage domain and that of heritage tourism. As such, there is a sub category of corporate heritage institution/brands which, because of their provenance and multiple meanings attracts not only customers but also tourists: some may be classified as (corporate heritage) customers/tourists. London Transport, Selfridges, The Vienna Boys’ Choir, Maxims (Paris) and Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (India) are prima facie cases in point.”

Institutional/augmented role identity notion

Within the corporate heritage canon of note is the institutional/augmented multiple role identity notion (Balmer, 2011a, 2013). This perspective meaningfully informs this research study. Balmer (2011) argued that with the passage of time corporate heritage organisations are:

“imbued with multiple role identities and, as such, have a number of referents.” (Balmer, 2013. p.312).

In explaining the significance of the above he asserted:

“Since corporate heritage institutions are invested with multiple identities they can, in omni-temporal terms, be emblematic of groups, societies and places. Moreover, and importantly, they confer these identities to groups, societies and places in multi-generational terms.” (Balmer, 2013, p.312)

Corporate heritage and augmented role identity

The above represents a significant dimension of this study. This aspect was explained as follows:

“Corporate heritage identities are infused with multiple role identities namely the temporal, territorial, cultural, social, and ancestral identity: these burnish an entity’s institutional identity. Since corporate heritage institutions are invested with multiple identities they can, in omni-temporal terms, be emblematic of groups and societies and places etc. (Balmer 2011a). Moreover, and importantly, they confer these identities to groups, societies, and places in multi-generational terms”. (Balmer 2013 p. 312)

National identity, religion and heritage tourism

The prospective importance of corporate heritage tourism vis-à-vis national identity is a key concern of this study of the TRT corporate heritage tourism brand. As such, this study is, in part, informed by the above literatures.

National Identity

National identity is informed by the *Staatsnation* and the *Kulturnation* perspectives of Meinecke (1908). The aforementioned standpoints being broadly analogous to the “*Primordial*” and “*Modernistic*” categorisations advanced by Park (2010, p.118).

Both the *Kulturnation* and *Primordial* schools of thought relate to nations as collective cultural communities (the cultural and ethnic nation based on common descent and is non-negotiable). The *Staatsnation* and *Modernistic* perspectives relate to self-determining nation states: the aforementioned are underpinned by juridical precepts which views nationality as one of choice (Kumar, 2003).

National identity is a key source of both an individual’s identity: national roots and associations may engender a strong sense of identification (Gellner, 1998). It is also highly meaningful at the level of the group (Park, 2010). National identity provides a keen sense of collective faith via the establishment and maintenance of a national community: a community which is informed by both a nation’s history and destiny. This explains why nations are often referred to by its citizens as fatherland or homeland: the aforementioned draws on the Teutonic notion of a *Vaterland* (fatherland), and the broadly analogous Gallic idea of a *Patrie* (homeland) as noted by Howard (2008).

To repeat, the *Kulturnation* and *Primordial* perspectives informs this empirical study as have extant cornerstone studies on the heritage tourism domain (Park, 2010).

National Identity and Religion in China: Confucianism, Daoism and Chinese National Identity

One relatively unexplored facet within the heritage tourism literature and national identity is the significance of religion and ideology: both meaningfully underpin civilisations (Adler, 2000).

China has engendered two, long-standing and indigenous, ideologies-Confucianism, and Daoism (Alder, 2002). Both will, in part, be the focus of this study. An understanding of them is necessary in order to an understanding as to why TRT is attractive to domestic tourists. Adler (2002 p.13) made the prescient comment regarding the aforementioned:

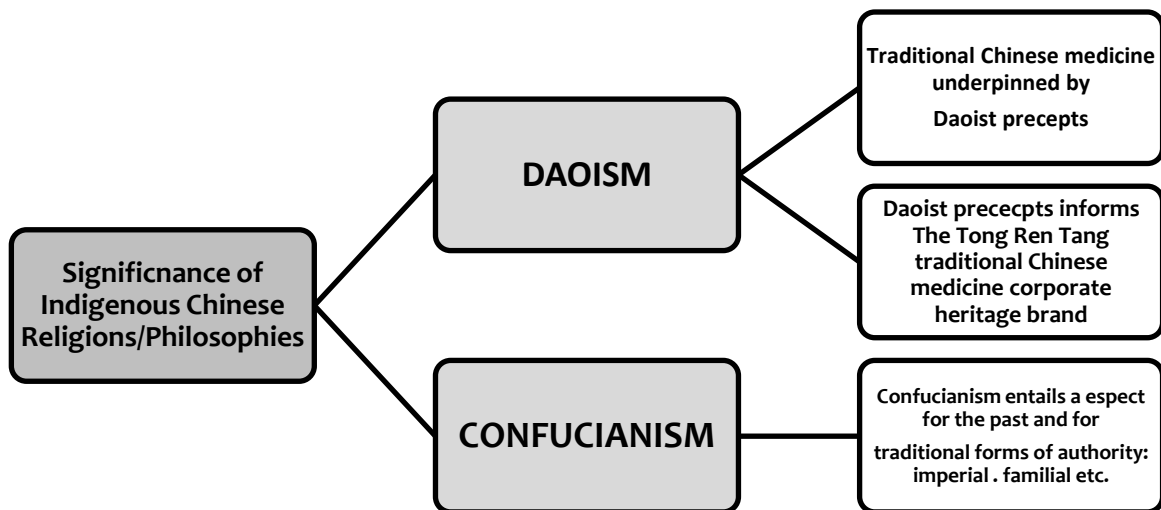
“To the extent that religion is one of the factors that people use to construct their identities-it signifies “membership” in Chinese culture”.

Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism (a non-indigenous Chinese religion) and other religions have co-existed, somewhat uneasily since 1949, with Chinese State Marxism. China’s major belief systems encompasses religions (Buddhism, Daoism, and Popular Religion); a state ideology (Marxism); a distinctive cultural philosophy (Confucianism) which are, in their various modes, highly significant dimensions of China’s ethico-religious, and moreover, national identity.

Adopting a historical/heritage perspective, Confucianism and Daoism are significant since they are indigenous to China and therefore are highly meaningful to China’s collective identity and are also meaningful to a consideration of heritage in Chinese contexts and moreover to our scrutiny of Tong Ren Tang as a corporate heritage tourism brand: See Fig 1 below.

Editorial Box 2 provides background information vis-à-vis the above. Curiously, it is a foreign ideology Marxism which represents the most influential of China’s contemporary ideologies. However, an understanding of two of China’s philosophies/religions is germane for this study. As such, Confucianism precepts, arguably, reinforce a distinct Chinese approach to heritage and the past whilst Daoist precept are highly meaningful to traditional Chinese medicine and therefore, by default, to our examination of the Tong Ren Tang as a corporate heritage brand.

Fig. 2. Significance of indigenous Chinese philosophies/religions to Tong Ren Tang and to Chinese approaches to the past/heritage



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Daoism

Daoism stresses the important of health and, as such, the religion emphasizes the importance of traditional Chinese medicine (Xiaoming, 2005).

The prominent Chinese writer Lu Xun noted that an understanding of Daoism is key to understanding Chinese culture (Xiaoming, 2005 p.11). For his part, the celebrated Cambridge University sinologist, Joseph Needham CH. observed:

“Many of the most attractive elements of the Chinese character derive from Daoism. China without Daoism would be a tree of which some of its deepest roots had perished.” (Xiaoming, 2005. p.11).

One prominent aspect of Daoism is its considerable impact on traditional Chinese medicine and by inference its significance *vis-à-vis* traditional Chinese medicine shop Tong Ren Tang. In short, traditional Chinese medicine is informed by Daoist principles. This is attributable to their pursuit of longevity and health. A famous Chinese adage says:

“Nine out of 10 Daoists are doctors.” (Xiaoming, 2005. p.10).

Civil Religion and Cultural Symbolic Constitutions

In the context of the above, the sociological notion of *Civil Religion* (Hammond 1976. p.171) and Inden’s (1976), *Cultural Symbolic Constitution* perspective offer meaningful insights. The aforementioned refers to, among others, those transcendental believer that relate to the past, present and future of a people and nation, whilst the latter takes account of a nation’s doctrines, ideologies, rituals and myths which informally constitute a meaningful, albeit symbolic, constitution. Both of the above perspectives speak to the above and, more broadly, to this study on TRT.

National Identity and Heritage Tourism

Within the national identity literature, there is a synergetic relationship between heritage and national identity. The links between the two constitute a significant *leitmotif* within the broad canon (Anderson, 1983; Geertz, 1973; Gellner, 1983, 1998; Nairn, 1997; Smith 1991, 1994).

National heritage is meaningful to countries and their cultures in that heritage communicates, and embodies, national identities (Edensor 2002; Gellner 1983; Smith 1991; Kumar 2003); imbues a feeling of national kindred ship; burnishes national sovereignty (Wright, 1985): and binds societies together during periods of dramatic change and disruption (Howard, 1998). As Smith (1993, p.161) cogently explained:

“The primary function of national identity is to provide a strong community of history and destiny to save people from personal oblivion and restore collective faith.”

Within the heritage tourism canon the issue of national identity and heritage also represents a prominent strand of scholarship (Edensor, 2002: Palmer, 1998; 2005; Park, 2010; Smith, 1991). Heritage tourism is meaningful as signifiers and enhancers of nation states (Lowenthal, 1998).

The literature is replete with insights relating to the inextricable links between heritage tourism and national identity. For example, heritage tourism can encapsulate and communicate national identity (Bandyopadhyay, Morais, and Chick, 2008; Palmer 1998, Pretes 2013); strengthen national allegiance (Palmer 2005); bolster national distinctiveness (Park 2010); engage citizens with a nation’s collective past (Franklin 2003); can be of sacred/spiritual significance (Smith, 1991); promote officially-sanctioned national and cultural narratives (Edensor, 2002); and maintain a collective cultural, ethnic and national memory (Park, 2010).

The nascent domain of heritage marketing is also worthy of note (Misuirra, (2006). Broadly speaking, the aforementioned takes an explicit marketing approach to heritage tourism. However, unlike heritage marketing, the corporate heritage domain (which, in part informs this study) is concerned with extant entities having an enduring meaningful heritage rather than with erstwhile and sometimes long-defunct institutions

As noted by Rowbottom (2002), visits to heritage sites are singularly special in that they evince an uncommon transcendent experiential quality among visitors: this is especially true of domestic tourists (Park, 2010a; 2010b). Heritage tourism sites links the individual to something far greater than the self. Whilst many heritage tourism sites relate to historical phenomena of the distant past (Park, 2010; Weaver, 2010) their provenance can be more recent (Henderson, 2002).

Heritage tourism, and the embryonic corporate heritage tourism/corporate heritage tourism brand domain, can be regarded as sub streams, albeit significant sub-streams, of the broader heritage

territory. Of course, a broader categorisation of heritage may entail conjoining both of the above perspectives.

Heritage tourism represents a significant line of scholarship within the tourism management canon (Waite, 2000; Halewood and Hannman 2001; Chhabra, Healy, and Sills 2003; Palmer, 2005; Gu and Ryan, 2008; Poria and Ashworth, 2009; Prentice 1993; Poria et al., 2003, 2006; Park, 2010a, 2010b; Hudson, 2011) and mirrors the wider academic interest in heritage *per se* (Lowenthal, 1998; Macdonald, 2002; Urry, 1995).

Hypotheses Development and Conceptual Framework

The Chinese state has deemed Tong Ren Tang corporate heritage brand to be of major, national, cultural, and heritage importance to China.

It is classified by the Chinese state as *Laozihao* (“a time-honoured brand”), and the brand is designated as being in the first selection of China’s cultural heritage. The mother shop of TRT is a well-recognised retail tourism attraction and corporate heritage brands can be tourism attractions in their own right (Balmer, 2013). As such, the heritage credentials of TRT are unambiguous. Writers on nations and nationality have stressed the synergetic relationship between national identity and in heritage its various forms (Anderson, 1983; Geertz, 1973; Gellner, 1983, 1998; Nairn, 1997; Smith 1991, 1994). Heritage can engender a sense of national community, and the notion that a person’s country is a fatherland (Howards 2008 p. 8). As such, National identity can be an important component of an individual’s identity (Gellner, 1978), and group identity too (Park 2010). Moreover, heritage tourism attractions can be repositories of, and also communicate, national identity (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2008; Palmer, 1998; Pretes, 2003). Heritage tourism attractions are a means through which individuals can engage with a nation’s collective past (Franklin, 2003). It is therefore hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 1. The TRT shop’s national (Chinese) heritage character is significant for its corporate heritage role identity.

As one of China’s few remaining high profile corporate heritage brands -with a corporate brand provenance dating back to the 17th century-the shop has engendered multi-generational familial loyalty among the Chinese. Chinese society accords great prominence to the family and this is a key tenant of Confucianism (Adler, 2002; Jordan, 1972; Shahar and Weller 1996, Story, 2010; Wilkinson, 2008). The family is crucial in the creation an individual’s Chinese identity (Adler 2002). More generally, collectivism and Confucianism are inextricably linked, and this accounts why the family is viewed as the bedrock of China and Confucianism. Confucianism places great store on filial piety and the family is considered to be one of five cardinal relationships (Story 2010 pp.103-104). Moreover, in erstwhile Imperial China, (and following the dictates of Confucianism), individuals were regarded as part of larger family of which the Emperor was its head: as the “*Father*” of the Chinese State (Hofstede, 1980; Wenzhong et al., 2010; Wilkinson, 2008). An especial characteristic of Chinese notions of the family is the sense that the family encompasses both the dead and the living. The cult of ancestor worship (which infuses Confucianism, Daoism and Chinese Popular Religion) is a potent expression of this (Adler, 2002). As such, family relationships are both *vertical* (multi-generational) and *horizontal* (the extended family) and both are highly meaningful (Wenzhong et al., 2010; Wilkinson, 2008). There are clear links with the above within the corporate heritage canon where tri-generational hereditary and ancestral identities are accorded prominence (Balmer, 2013). It is therefore hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 2. The TRT shop’s familial heritage character (multi-generational customers) is significant for its corporate heritage role identity.

Dating back to 1669, Tong Rang Tang is one of China’s longest established corporate brands. Most pre 1949 Chinese corporate brands did not survive the turbulent changes within China during the latter part of

the 20th Century. As such, the TRT mother shop/the corporate heritage brand is special in that it has been in existence for over five centuries. In China, although there is a fascination with the contemporary and with the future, there is also a respect for the past and for tradition: tradition being a fundamental Chinese value and this is in accordance the Confucianism (Bond, 1980). Time is a fundamental component of identity (Mead, 1929; 1932); and time is one of the most attractive corporate heritage dimensions (Hudson and Balmer 2013). Unlike history, heritage links an individual with that which has endured rather than what has expired (Balmer, 2013). Heritage clarifies the past and makes the past relevant for contemporary contexts and purposes (Lowenthal, 1998); provides existential anchors which are of value in times of uncertainty and counters the deficit, loss, or, indeed, trauma caused by the past (Rapport 2002 p.87); offers stability during period of change (Hewison, 1985, 1987), and gives comfort to older generations who hanker heritage institutions associated with their youth (Holbrook and Schindler 2003). Heritage represents a time continuum and can equate to perennial acts of bequeathing and receiving heritage: heritage is never truly owned but is loaned (Balmer, 2011). Corporate heritage institutions subsist in temporal time strata (Balmer, 2013), and corporate heritage identities are invested with time: times past, present and of the prospective future (Balmer et al., 2006). It is therefore hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 3. The TRT shop's multi-temporal heritage character is significant for its corporate heritage role identity.

Tong Ren Tang, until the establishment of a Chinese Republic in 1911, was the official purveyor to successive Chinese Qing Emperors. Even today, the company's logo uses the imperial dragon and the imperial colours of red and yellow. For many centuries, Tong Reng Tang was the official supplier of traditional Chinese medicine to Chinese Emperors and the Imperial links endure. For instance, the shop's visually striking imperial imagery is reminiscent of another age. Tourists' guide books note the pharmacy's Imperial links and note how the corporate heritage brand has provided traditional Chinese medicinal products for eight Emperors (Bedford et al., 2008 p.112.) A nation's imperial/royal provenance can be highly salient in heritage tourism terms (Smith, 1993; Balmer et al 2006; Balmer 2009; 2011b), and China has a five thousand year imperial polity which ended in 1911 (Lenman 1993; Wenzhong et al., 2010). Within Confucianism, loyalty to the Emperor is one of five cardinal relationships (Story, 2010). Max Weber (1968) held that China's ancient imperial polity helped to foster a sense of common Chinese ethnicity. The Chinese Emperor promoted common symbols, traditions and values which reinforced a common Chinese heritage and culture (Smith, 1993). It is therefore hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 4. The TRT shop's imperial character is significant for its corporate heritage role identity.

Within China, Tong Ren Tang is known for the quality of its traditional medicinal products and services. Arguably, the corporate brand is the most famous all traditional Chinese medicine brands in China and among the Chinese diaspora. Tong Ren Tang uses medicinal formulas which have been unchanged for many centuries and are known for their quality among the Chinese. As such, TRT's exceptionally strong association with traditional Chinese medicine is a core corporate and product heritage identity trait. A primary manifestation of identity is an organisation's products or services (Olins, 1995). Chinese medicine is a defining characteristic of Chinese culture and civilisation (Eisenberg, 1995). There exists a category of institution which are different from others in they are distinguished by having a distinct corporate heritage (Balmer, 2011; 2013) and corporate heritage institutions are stable points in a changing world (Balmer et al., 2006). Corporate heritage institutions have meaningful trait consistency over time, and such traits are expressed *via* a variety of conduits such as corporate purposes, activities, competencies, cultures, philosophies, strategies and, significantly, can be expressed in terms of product and service focus and quality levels (Balmer, 2013). It is therefore hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 5. The TRT shop's corporate and product heritage identity is significant for its attractiveness as a Chinese heritage tourist brand attraction.

The direct-effects arguments for the impacts of Chinese culture measures such as National role identity, familial role identity, multi-temporal role identity and imperial role identity of TRT on its attractiveness as a domestic Chinese Heritage Tourist attraction are persuasive. However, it is argued that the aforementioned factors (hypotheses) affect TRT as a Chinese heritage tourist attraction indirectly through TRT's corporate heritage role identity. It is therefore hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 6. The TRT shop's corporate identity mediates the effects of (a) National role identity, (b) familial role identity, (c) multi-temporal role identity, and (d) Imperial role identity on the attractiveness of TRT as a Chinese corporate heritage tourist brand attraction.

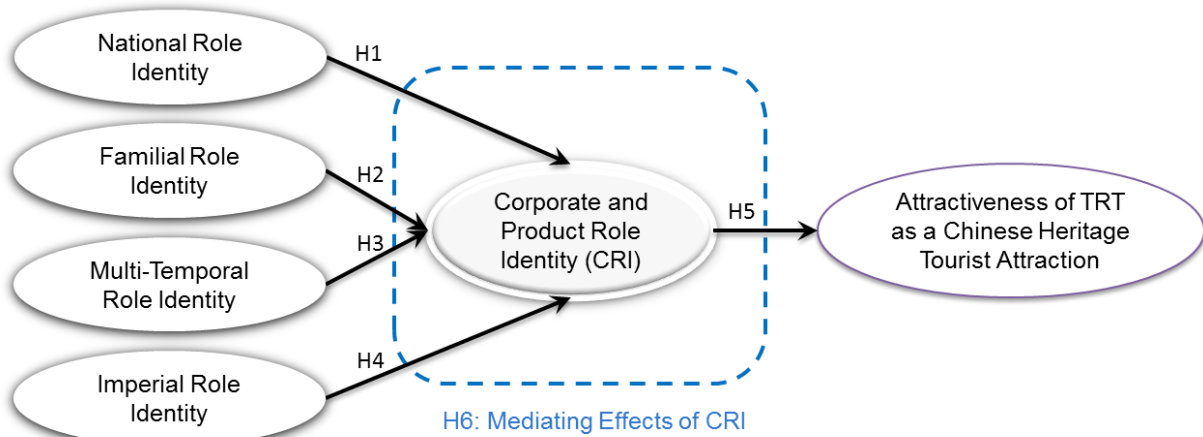


Fig. 3. Conceptual Framework of Corp orate Heritage as Heritage Tourism Brand Attraction in China

Figure 3, above, presents the conceptual framework *vis-à-vis* the attractiveness of Tong Ren Tang as a corporate heritage tourism brand attraction.

Research Method

To test the focal constructs and hypotheses, a survey questionnaire developed from the literature was used. The survey was informed by documentary data on the company. It was also informed by qualitative and secondary data collected during the first stage of the study. By such means, the reliability and validity of the research is heightened (Edmondson and Mcmanus, 2007).

Data collection: preliminary stage

Documentary and web-site information on the company were scrutinised prior to the collection of qualitative data and recourse was made to company-specific documents including annual reports, newsletters, strategic reports, press articles and an official company history. Furthermore, the researchers consulted guide books on Beijing and China; scrutinised details of guided tours of Beijing and web-based information on TRT. The aforementioned confirmed the shop's/corporate brand's status as a prominent tourist attraction.

Qualitative data was drawn from interviews with six senior managers of TRT along with a group discussion with senior managers also took place. Notes were taken of the above discussions.

In addition, a visual audit of the shop also took place which revealed the strength of the shop's imperial iconography. Observation also formed part of the data collection which took place on successive visits to

the shop and which focussed on the behaviour of tourists outside the shop. For instance, it was noticed that tourists regularly took photographs of the shop and visits to the shop were a component of tourist walking tours to Dashilan (大栅栏). Observational notes were kept *vis-à-vis* the above.

Data collection: a survey questionnaire with domestic tourists

Data for the survey questionnaire was undertaken over a three day period. The researchers along with six postgraduate Chinese students from Beijing administered the questionnaire. To assess all the focal model constructs this research adopted a variety of multi-item scales. All the scales were informed from the literature review and developed to fit the research purpose and context. The measures of both the constructs relied on five-point Likert scales ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Over 600 domestic (Chinese) tourists were approached and this resulted in 115 usable questionnaires having an approximate response rate of 20%. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics, correlations and average variances.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Average Variances Extracted (AVE)

CONSTRUCT	ATR	CRI	FRI	IRI	NRI	MRI
<i>Attractiveness of TRT as a Chinese Heritage Tourist Attraction (ATR)</i>	0.854					
<i>Corporate Role Identity (CRI)</i>	0.233	0.745				
<i>Familial Role Identity (FRI)</i>	0.098	0.198	0.843			
<i>Imperial Role Identity (IRI)</i>	0.205	0.498	0.005	0.762		
<i>National Role Identity (NRI)</i>	0.185	0.136	-0.096	0.007	0.851	
<i>Multi- Temporal Role Identity (MRI)</i>	-0.013	0.174	-0.114	0.124	-0.056	0.854
Mean	2.07	2.12	2.46	2.08	2.78	1.84
SD	.987	1.009	.768	1.028	.870	.970
CR	0.890	0.784	0.879	0.800	0.887	0.889

Notes: Values on the diagonal are the square-root of AVE

Data Analysis: Results

Partial Least Squares (PLS) were used to test the measurement properties, the structural model and hypotheses. As previously indicated, 115 usable questionnaires comprise the sample size for the study and as noted by Goodhue et al., (2012,) and Chin (1998). PLS is appropriate for highly complex predictive models in small to medium sized samples.

Measurement Validation and Reliability

Following Gerbing and Anderson (1988), the measures’ reliability and constructs validity of the focal constructs were assessed. Item-total correlations were tested for the measurement items of all the scales. As shown in Table 2 below, the composite reliability (CR) values for each construct range from .784 and .890 indicating good degree of internal consistency of the proposed constructs.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to test constructs validity. The results of CFA model testing demonstrated a good fit with Chi-square (CMIN) = 125.010; Degrees of freedom (DF) = 124; CMIN/DF = 1.008; CFI = .998; RMSEA = .008.

After the constructs were confirmed, a PLS method was used to estimate the convergent and discriminant validity (AVE) of the measures. The factor loadings shown in Table 1 are all above 0.5 and, therefore, are statistically significant at the .01 level suggesting satisfactory convergent validity of the constructs. The square root of the AVE (values on the diagonal of Table 1) was greater than the correlations between the construct and the other constructs in the model and this represents a good result for the discriminant validity of the constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). All factor loadings were all above .5 and were found to be statistically significant at the .01 level (See Table 2) and indicate a satisfactory convergent validity of the constructs (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

Table 2

Construct Measures

Constructs	Measures	Loadings
ATR	TRT shop's attractiveness as a Chinese heritage tourist attraction	
AVE = .729	ATR1: <i>I am very pleased that I visited this TRT shop with long history today</i>	0.874
CR = .890	ATR2: <i>Visiting this TRT shop is a good experience for me as a tourist</i>	0.809
$\alpha = .816$	ATR3: <i>I will come back again to visit this TRT shop in the future</i>	0.876
CRI	TRT shop's corporate heritage role identity	
AVE = .556	CRI1: <i>TRT brand with its emphasis on quality is important to you</i>	0.715
CR = .784	CRI2: <i>It is important that the centuries old trust and quality of TRT is important to you</i>	0.894
$\alpha = .615$	CRI3: <i>The centuries old Chinese respect for the TRT corporate brand is important to you?</i>	0.595
FRI	TRT shop's familial heritage character (multi-generational customers)	
AVE = .710	FRI1: <i>I have used TRT products</i>	0.692
CR = .879	FRI2: <i>My parents used TRT products</i>	0.888
$\alpha = .824$	FRI3: <i>My grandparents have used TRT products</i>	0.929
IRI	TRT shop's imperial character	
AVE = .580	IRI1: <i>I am attracted by the TRT's imperial past in providing medicine for successive Chinese Emperors</i>	0.823
CR = .800	IRI2: <i>TRT is successful in communicating its heritage (i.e. shop layout, packaging, logo, colour,)</i>	0.872
$\alpha = .630$	IRI3: <i>TRT is successful in communicating its imperial heritage (over 300 years)</i>	0.550
NRI	TRT shop's national (Chinese) heritage character	
AVE = .725	NRI1: <i>TRT brand is a Chinese National Treasure</i>	0.791
CR = .887	NRI2: <i>TRT brand is important to your sense of Chinese identity</i>	0.905
$\alpha = .820$	NRI3: <i>Chinese medicine is important to your sense of Chinese identity</i>	0.855
MRI	TRT shop's multi-temporal heritage character	
AVE = .729	MRI1: <i>The TRT corporate brand is relevant to modern day</i>	0.851
CR = .889	MRI2: <i>The future existence of the TRT corporate brand is important to you</i>	0.920

Notes: CR (Composite Reliability); All the measures have adopted five-point scale (1 = "Strongly disagree" and 5= "Strongly agree")

Table 3

Research Hypotheses Test Results

Hypotheses	Path coefficients / t-Value		Results
H1: NRI → CRI	.163* / 1.752		Supported
H2: FRI → CRI	.228* / 2.256		Supported
H3: MRI → CRI	.150* / 1.667		Supported
H4: IRI → CRI	.477* / 5.610		Supported
H5: CRI → ATR	.233* / 2.668		Supported
H6: Mediating effects of CRI	Direct Effect	Total Effect	
H6a: NRI → CRI → ATR	.195/2.010	.037**/1.324	Supported
H6b: FRI → CRI → ATR	.094/.814	.053*/1.264	Supported
H6c: MRI → CRI → ATR	-.024/.060	.035**/1.258	Supported
H6d: IRI → CRI → ATR	.156/2.721	.111**/2.556	Supported
Model Fit Statistics	Chi-square (CMIN) = 125.010; Degrees of freedom (DF) = 124; CMIN/DF = 1.008; CFI = .998; RMSEA = .008		

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$

The survey confirmed all six hypotheses.

As to our findings, the effects of national role identity (H1: $\beta = .163$, $p < .1$), familial role identity (H2: $\beta = .228$, $p < .1$), multi-temporal role identity (H3: $\beta = .150$, $p < .1$), and imperial role identity (H4: $\beta = .477$, $p < .1$) on TRT's corporate heritage brand role identity, are all positive and significant (See Table 2 above).

The corporate heritage role identity of TRT was found to have a significant and positive impact on its attractiveness as a Chinese heritage brand tourist attraction as the data analysis results indicated (H5: $\beta = .233$, $p < .1$).

Following Baron and Kenny's (1986) procedure, this study also confirms the positive significant mediating effects of corporate heritage role identity of TRT between its heritage characters (notational, familial, multi-temporal and imperial) and its attractiveness as a Chinese heritage tourist brand attraction (H6, See Table 3).

Discussion and Implications

The study revealed TRT to be a significant Chinese corporate heritage tourism brand attraction: an attraction which encapsulates and expresses Chinese national identity. The latter, seemingly, accounts, in part, for its popularity and significance as a corporate heritage tourism brand.

Whilst it is undeniably the case that TRT is a popular and prominent domestic (Chinese) retail tourist destination because of its corporate and product heritage (in terms of providing many invariable traditional Chinese medicines and services) there are other highly meaningful role identities which account for the pharmacy's popularity as a domestic corporate heritage attraction.

This study, focussing on a prominent Chinese corporate heritage entity as – in addition - a corporate heritage tourism brand attraction, appears to be the first of its kind.

Tong Ren Tang and Chinese National Identity

Notably, the shop, with its venerable heritage, is invested with powerful and meaningful multiple role identities which are strongly aligned to Chinese National Identity.

In short, TRT, as a repository of manifold multiple role identities (*some of which are associated with two buttraces of Chinese culture, namely, Confucianism and Daoism*), result in an inimitable domestic corporate heritage tourism experience: an experience which (*taking a primordial perspective vis-à-vis nationality*), seemingly, both celebrates and communicates Chinese national identity.

Tong Reng Tang: conferring Chinese national identity

The research insights support the premise that heritage institutions can encapsulate and confer national identity (Balmer, 2013). It also validates the saliency of the multiple role identity notion (Balmer, 2011b, 2013). From this study the former, seemingly, is both evident that apparent.

As such, domestic tourism visits to the pharmacy can possibly be seen to *reveal, remind, and reawaken* a sense of traditional Chinese culture and bolster of sense of belonging to a Chinese cultural community. As the research suggests, tourism visits to the shop, along with the consumption of heritage (via TRT's products and services), links the individual domestic tourist to enduring dimensions of Chinese civilisation and, as such, they engage not only to China's past and present but, significantly, to the country's prospective future.

Moreover, domestic tourism visits to the shop represents a unique tourism experience – in corporate, national and cultural terms, amongst others - since TRT is an entity imbued with a living aggregate heritage.

Mindful of the *Civil Religion* perspective (Hammond 1976. p.171), domestic tourism visits to the shop are perhaps akin- to a national pilgrimage. In social identity terms these visits may well represent a powerful expression of the Chinese group sense of self.

Tong Ren Tang: importance to Chinese identity and Civilisation

Arguably, as China's most celebrated corporate heritage entity, TRT is a potent emblem of China's ancient Civilisation. Domestic tourism visits to the shop represent "a rite of renewal" in terms of an affiliation to China and to Chinese culture. Since nations have and, moreover need, multiple identities (Thapar, 2014) there should be no surprise that TRT is viewed as a Chinese cultural icon in corporate heritage tourism terms.

As this study has revealed, this is because TRT is invested with powerful and meaningful role multiple role identities: the existence of multiple role identities among heritage institutions is a characteristic of heritage institutions (Balmer, 2011b, 2013).

It was shown the shop's allure as a heritage tourism attraction to the Chinese– unlike standard retail outlets and other time-honoured retailed brands-is attributable to its multiple and meaningful role identities –corporate, temporal, familial, national, cultural and imperial. Some organisations are imbued with normative and utilitarian identities (Albert and Whetten, 1985): significantly, TRT is suffused with both normative and, moreover with, multiple utilitarian/societal identities (Balmer 2013).

Moreover, as China's modernisation develops apace, and as tangible manifestations of traditional Chinese culture are progressively debilitated, the shop's national importance as a living heritage entity and as an icon of China's national identity is incomparable.

Corporate heritage tourism: significance of Royal and Imperial associations

The research has a degree of similitude with extant scholarship on heritage tourism including the work of Park (2010 pp.117-118) in that both studies recognise the importance of royal associations in heritage tourism contexts. Park's research (2010) explained how tourism visits to a Korean Palace can reinforce a sense of Korean national identity. Both studies shed light on the inextricable links between tourism, nationality, heritage and royal provenance in Korea and in the case of this study, China.

In the context of heritage tourism research/nascent corporate heritage tourism brand scholarship, it would seem that heritage tourism activities associated with a country's imperial or royal past, as with the

work of Park (2010), can be highly meaningful in experiencing national identity but in asserting and affirming national values and identity.

Tong Ren Tang: significance of Confucianism and Daoist associations

The shop's heritage identity anchors reveal the significance of Chinese cultural primordialism (Park 2010): TRT is a repository of Chinese cultural values which define the Chinese as a people. This is evinced *vis-à-vis* the shop's status as the premier exponent of traditional Chinese medicine and, therefore, its tangential link with the tenets of Daoism. Arguably, too, it mirrors the precepts of Confucianism in terms of the traditional Chinese respect for its rulers-imperial or otherwise (Chinese rule spanned three millennia), for familial ties (multigenerational aspect of the shop's customers along with its ownership/management) and for an ethical remit reflected in the shop's guiding principles:

“No manpower was to be spared, no matter how complicated the procedures of pharmaceutical production were, and not material was to be reduced, no matter how much the cost.” (Aiyong and Zhiying 2011, p.70).

In particular, Tong Ren Tang's indissoluble link with traditional medicine, which itself is inextricably linked with Daoism, means the shop, taking a Durkheimian (1915) perspective, upholds and reinforces by also embodies, and reflects, certain, traditional values. Arguably, therefore, TRT represents a distinct world-view, or cosmology, which especially pertains to the Chinese.

Management Implications

From both a corporate brand management and tourism management perspective, TRT's managers should appreciate that the attractiveness of their flagship shop rests not only on what it sells but also in what it symbolises in national and cultural terms.

In short, TRT is not only a historic retail outlet but, moreover, is a highly significant corporate heritage entity and a unique corporate brand icon of national importance. Thus, TRT is not only a retail corporate brand but also a corporate heritage brand, a corporate heritage tourism brand of national import. Arguably, too, it is of global importance *vis-à-vis* the Chinese diaspora as well.

Research Limitations

In accordance with the precepts of case-study research and mindful of issues of epistemology the findings it is not possible to conclude that the findings are generalisable in a statistical sense. This study on corporate heritage tourism brands should be seen as a significant study in terms of its focus but a provisional study in terms of the relatively small sample size.

Further Research

Avenues for future research might include examining corporate heritage tourism brand entities and their significance for national identity in other countries. Austria, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom – where corporate heritage institutions have prevailed – lend themselves to this mode of inquiry.

This study has focussed on a retail outlet and other prominent retail outlets might also be profitable in terms of insight (*Harrods-London, Macy's-New York, Hudson Bay Company-Toronto, Les Galeries Lafayette Haussmann-Paris*).

However, the embryonic corporate heritage tourism brand domain is, seemingly, broad in scope and encompasses many sectorial fields.

For instance, within China, there is further scope in examining the significance and characteristics of corporate heritage tourism brands within China. Moreover, the significance of corporate heritage tourism brands to the Chinese diaspora would provide other lines of enquiry (as would the saliency of corporate heritage tourism to other Diasporas such as the English, Indian, Irish, Italian, Korean, Scottish ethnicities).

From a theoretical perspective, there is scope to advance the insights from this study by drawing on the corporate identity literature (in explaining an institution's corporate heritage identity anchors in heritage tourism contexts) and social identity theory *vis-à-vis* corporate brands and identity (the ways in which individuals define themselves in terms of an organisations having an corporate heritage and heritage tourism identities).

The significance of an entities religious/philosophical base-Daoism in the case of TRT-would suggest that the religious dimension might provide another fruitful line of research *vis-à-vis* certain corporate heritage tourism brands too.

Final Reflection

This research has highlighted the significance of the Tong Ren Tang corporate heritage brand as a corporate heritage tourism brand attraction. TRT was also shown to be significance in terms of representing-and arguably conferring-Chinese national identity. The study was informed by the literature on corporate heritage/corporate heritage brands, heritage tourism and national identity.

As such, within the broad heritage canon the importance of corporate heritage tourism brands should be recognised.

Moreover, this study sheds more light on the importance of corporate heritage tourism in China: a nation which is not always associated in having prominent corporate heritage brands let alone corporate heritage brands of centuries-old antiquity.

The study has revealed the factors which account for its popularity as a domestic corporate heritage tourism attraction within China. Moreover, it has uncovered its importance as a distinctive, enduring and meaningful symbol of China's primordial national identity.

In a city (Beijing) where the past is experienced largely through a historical lens, Tong Ren Tang represents a living, meaningful and tangible link with a former imperial polity and with a Confucius philosophy with Daoist belief which, in many ways, still provides the bedrock of China's ancient and incomparable Civilisation.

As China reappraises and revisits its pre-revolutionary history and its cultural inheritance in terms of its "soft power" (Nye 2004) on the global stage the unique importance of TRT as a fulcrum of Chinese culture, spirituality, ancestry and memory is incalculable not only in terms of national heritage but, moreover, in corporate heritage tourism terms too.

For the above reasons, our case study of the Tong Ren Tang corporate heritage tourism brand is feasibly of consequence to corporate marketing, corporate brand management but also to corporate heritage, tourism research, heritage scholarship and studies in nationality too.

Furthermore, the cultural and national significance of this corporate heritage brand is not only of import to the managers of Tong Ren Tang and to policy makers within China but to mankind too.

In one sense too, China's corporate brand inheritance is a legacy which all mankind should cherish.

We hope our modest article will in a small way speak to the aforesaid sentiment.

EDITORIAL BOX 1. Corporate Heritage: the foundational literature

Formal introduction of the corporate heritage brand notion: Balmer, Greyser, and Urde (2006)

Formally introduced by Balmer, Greyser, and Urde (2006) at the end of their study of monarchies as corporate brands (Reflections section) these authors:

1. identified the existence of corporate heritage brands as a distinctive category of institutional brand
 2. argued that corporate heritage institutions subsisted in omni-temporal times frames and were, therefore, of the past, present and prospective future
 3. maintained that corporate heritage institutions were often cherished since they are stable points in a changing world
 4. asserted that corporate heritage institutions should be *managed* taking account of the past present and future.
 5. held that managers should take care not to wear out corporate brand symbols; ensuring corporate heritage brands
 6. remain relevant for contemporary customers and other stakeholders and senior
 7. emphasised that managers should ensure corporate heritage brands should be relevant and should accommodate not only continuity but also change
-

Further development of the corporate heritage brand notion and introduction of the heritage quotient: Urde, Greyser, and Balmer (2007)

A year later-mindful of the above insights-a more considered treatment was afforded to the corporate heritage brand notion. In this cornerstone article the authors:

- a) Emphasised the distinction between *a corporate heritage brand* and a *corporate brand with a heritage*. Corporate brand heritage concerns institutions that *emphasise their heritage as part of its corporate brand identity*. In contrast a corporate brand with a heritage relates to heritage organisations that do not overtly manage or marshal their organisation's corporate heritage
- b) Remarkd that corporate heritage brands are not necessarily valuable only that they may be valuable or accord value
- c) Introduced the "heritage quotient": a five-part framework where the key facets of corporate heritage brands were deemed to be dependent on track record, longevity, core values, use of symbols and an institutions' belief that its' history is important.

This framework represents a more considered development of the initial insights articulated in Balmer et al (2006)

Exponential growth of the corporate heritage canon

The above articles resulted in an exponential growth of interest in corporate heritage among corporate marketing and management scholars including Balmer 2009, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2013; Burghausen and Balmer 2014a; 2014b; 2015; Blombäck and Brunninge, 2009, 2013;; Hakala et al 2011, 2015; Hudson 2011; Hudson and Balmer 2013; Schroeder et al 2015; Urde and Greyser 2015; Wiedmann et al, 2011a, 2011b).

EDITORIAL BOX 1: SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGION IN CHINA
Confucianism

Confucianism is based on the teachings of the scholar Confucius—who lived around 600-700 B.C (Adler, 2002; Yao, 2000). During the Han dynasty (202-206 B.C) Confucianism was formally adopted by the Chinese state. Thus, it provided the intellectual basis for Imperial China and the foundation of the Middle Kingdom's education system. Until the 20th Century it was the dominant strand of Chinese philosophical thought (Adler, 2002). As a philosophy, Confucianism stresses that humans are *social beings* with obligations. Fulfilment for the individual is achieved via the perfection of moral nature (Adler 2002). In Confucius-thought harmony is achieved via *Li* and *Ren* (Wilkinson, 2008). Accordingly, importance is accorded to manners, ritual and ceremony (*Li*), and the attainment of the virtues of love, humanity, goodness and generosity (*Ren*).

Daoism

Daoism has the greatest number of followers of China's five main religions (Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism). Today, there are more than 25,000 priests and 1600 temples of the *Quanzhen* and *Zhengyi* branches of the Daoist faith (Xiaoming 2005 p.11). The “Three Ancestors” of Daoism are Celestial Master Zhang, Lao Zi and the Yellow Emperor. Daoist belief is grounded in the complicated and somewhat impenetrable notion of the *Dao* (the way) and the culmination of virtue. Daoism stresses the importance of health and, as such, the religion emphasizes the importance of traditional Chinese medicine (Xiaoming, 2005).

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