

Article

A study on the relationship among DIIBC, brand value, and the organizational performance of a China's domestic down coat leadership brand

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Abstract: In the current digital era, digital communication has a profound impact on the construction of product brands and affects the organizational performance of enterprises; thus, digital communication has become a power that cannot be ignored to improve the organizational performance of enterprises. This study demonstrated three hypotheses based on previous research and used a questionnaire survey to collect first-hand data from distributors of a China's leading domestic down coat brand (named BRAND A in this study), and then studied and analyzed the relationships among digital integrated and interactive brand communication (DIIBC), brand value, and organizational performance through SEM analysis methods. The results showed that DIIBC had an indirect negative significant positive effect on organizational performance through brand value, while it had a highly significant direct positive effect on the organizational performance of this brand in China's domestic down coat industry, and DIIBC's final function on organizational performance was highly significant positive.

Keywords: digital integrated and interactive brand communication (DIIBC); brand value; organizational performance; a China's leading domestic down coat brand

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In this digital era, all organizations are influenced by digital technology; an enterprise's brand value, marketing, and organizational performance are no exception. The application of digital technology has profoundly changed the down coat industry in China, it has two main influences on product trade. First, it significantly changed consumption habits, and more consumers have shifted from offline trade to online trade. "Different forms of market analysis strongly point toward a scenario wherein spending on mobile commerce will overtake e-commerce in the next 3 years. The Chinese fast fashion apparel market is a testament to that. On an average, most brands get about 15–20% of their website traffic via mobile devices and this is growing rapidly." (Roll, 2021). The sales channels of down coat in China are shown in **Figure 1** (Guo et al., 2020):

An online retailer is a specific application of e-commerce. Benefiting from the rise of social e-commerce and livestream e-commerce, all down coat brands have been laid out. E-commerce platforms have become the main channel for down coat sales in China, with online retailers accounting for 42% of such sales in 2018, as

shown in **Figure 1**, and expected to be further improved in the future.

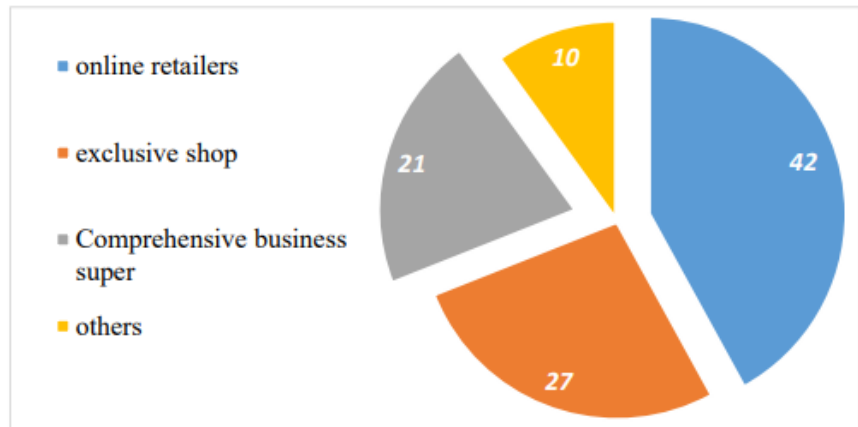


Figure 1. Distribution of China's down coat sales channel share in 2018 (%).

The second influence is that it shortens the trade chain and reduces the product trade cost in China, including down coat trade. Commodity information can reach consumers quickly through the Internet, and the goods themselves can reach consumers directly from manufacturers through developed logistics networks. A common phenomenon, that is, the number of physical stores operated by manufacturers is gradually decreasing. Ultimately, the management cost is reduced more than before. Some down coat brands simply give up their own production and processing products, outsourcing production orders to other manufacturers, evolving from a manufacturer brand to a “trademark licensing” brand, which is more conducive to the reduction of management costs. With the increasing opening of China's national door and the increasing prosperity of the domestic market economy, many foreign down coat brands have also landed in the Chinese market, increasing the competition in China's down coat market. Compared with international brands, Chinese down coat brands do not have advantages in terms of sales channels or communication channels, which leads to a serious squeeze in space for them to enter the high-end market. With the continuous promotion of high-end brands, industry market concentration has continued to grow.

1.2. Research problem

According to the background indicated above, the main problem is that the overall competitiveness of China's domestic down coat brands is relatively weak, and it is difficult to compete with international brands such as Moncler and Canada Goose in the high-end market which have higher profits.

Faced with these problems, it is necessary to improve the overall brand competitiveness of domestic down coats in China and make more domestic down brands into the high-end market in phases to change the current situation where there is almost only one domestic brand, Bosideng, in the high-end market. It is recommended that phase I enter and occupy the middle- to high-end market, while phase II moves toward the high-end market. In this way, brand stakeholder enterprises can achieve superior competitive organizational performance in the industry.

To improve the situation of China's domestic down coat brands, which have been in the middle and even lower market for a long time, earning low profits and lacking the strength to develop to the high-end market, we need to think about and deeply study the association of digitally integrated and interactive brand communication (DIIBC), brand value, and organizational performance from the perspective of digital implementation of brand strategy. The highest level of marketing is not marketing, but communication (Schultz, 1993), and in this digital age, it is very necessary and critical to take advantages of more digital channels for communicating its brand position and building brand awareness. Aaker (2014) argument that, digital is not only critical brand building tool, but also the digital program in digital should become strategic. In the increasingly competitive market, every enterprise needs to think about how to create a brand image that is trusted by customers and has a distinct personality, let the brand extend more value (Hui, 2022).

1.3. Research object

Based on the description analysis of background, the problems extraction and discovery above to China's domestic down coat brands, this research focused on the China's down coat marketing industry, from the point of DIIBC perspective, studied on the relationship among DIIBC, brand value, and organizational performance of a China's domestic down coat leadership brand. The primary objectives of this research were as follows:

- 1) To study the influence of DIIBC on brand value, and organizational performance of a China's domestic down coat brand.
- 2) To study the mediating roles of brand value in the relationship between DIIBC and organizational performance of a China's domestic down coat brand.

1.4. Research questions and hypotheses

1.4.1. Research questions

This study focusses on RQ 1: How do DIIBC, and brand value affect the organizational performance in companies of a Chinese down coat brand?

RQ 2: During the process of DIIBC influencing the organizational performance of the Chinese down coat brand, what special intermediate role does brand value play?

1.4.2. Hypotheses

- 1) The effect of DIIBC on brand value

DIIBC is a comprehensive digital brand marketing program, and the digital program can add the product function benefits and make user experience richer through a chip embedded-in product or mobile app, such as facilitating users' consumption and tracking product logistics information, etc. Therefore, the digital project has become a part of the product or service, increasing the value, and thus enhancing the brand value (Aaker, 2014). Wei (2020) arrived at the conclusion that a channel marketing mode combining online and offline has become an important means for luxury brands to carry out marketing, serve customers, and reflect brand value. Based on these studies, we can propose:

Hypothesis 1: DIIBC has a direct positive effect on brand value.

2) The effect of brand value on organizational performance

Eng and Keh (2007) found that spending on advertising and brand value all result in better brand sales and brand profitability. Brand value is the internal basis and driving force of brand performance, and good brand performance is based on high brand value. Zhong (2013) drew the conclusion that the essence of economic activities is the process of continuously realizing value creation, and the so-called value creation refers to the realization of value appreciation. Value increment is the foundation of enterprise survival and development. Brand value, which is based on product quality, is also an important prerequisite for an enterprise to achieve lasting organizational performance.

Hypothesis 2: Brand value has a direct positive effect on organizational performance.

3) The effect of DIIBC on organizational performance

Digital marketing strategies are marked by the adoption of ICTs and digital tools. Enterprise website is an important channel for enterprise brand promotion, Ren et al. (2012) stated that excellent website performance increases consumers' purchasing motivation by reducing consumers' purchasing costs and improving consumers' satisfaction and loyalty, thus improving enterprise performance. And one study's results demonstrated that brand information display can affect brand performance through mediator of quality-of-service experience (Zheng and Lian, 2017). So, we can make this assumption as follows.

Hypothesis 3: DIIBC has a direct positive effect on organizational performance.

According to the hypotheses above, given previous knowledge and the present research viewpoints and conclusions, we can enrich the concept framework like the following illustration (Figure 2):

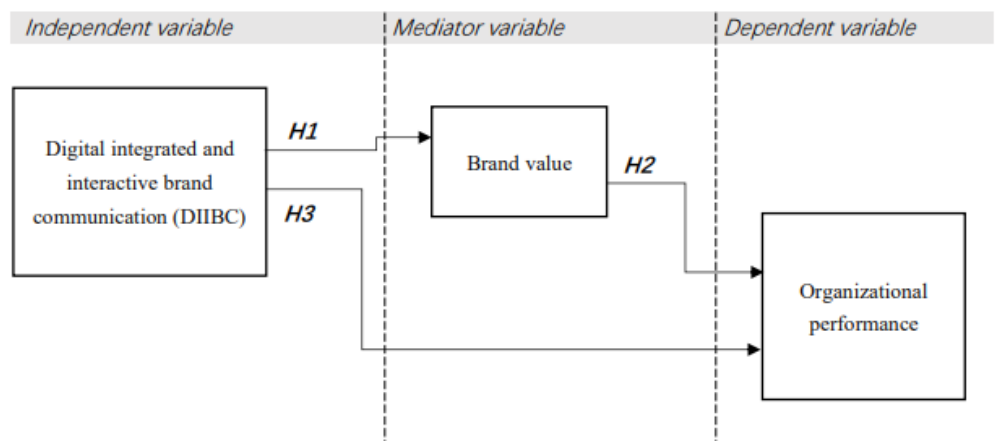


Figure 2. Conceptual framework.

2. Review of the literature

2.1. Definition of terms

2.1.1. Brand value

Brand value reflects the usefulness of a brand to its stakeholders, including the value and use value of the brand. There are three dimensions of brand value

according to the scope of action: emotional brand value, rational brand value, and operational brand value. These three-dimensional values, when offered together, are assessed as brand differentiation that generates demand in the business-to-business and consumer markets (Gummesson, 2004; Webster, 2000), and plus social value. Among these four dimensions of brand value, the first three are the basis. Only when the first three dimensions are well provided can the high-quality social value of a brand be provided. For the objectives of this study, the four dimensions of brand value were reorganized into two value aspects: core value and potential value. A brand's core value refers to the value of a brand to all its stakeholders, including the ethics of the brand, the emotion of the brand, the morality of the brand, the average annual profit, etc. Potential value refers to the driving factors that will bring about the future development of a brand, such as the years of brand operation, the quantity of technical monopoly, the average annual advertising investment, etc. The brand's core values and potential values will be detailed in their measurement concerns later.

2.1.2. DIIBC

Digitally integrated interactive brand communication (DIIBC) refers to the use of digital technology as the glue to achieve seamless connections among various channels in form, interaction as the characteristic of the operation mechanism, and brand as the core content for products and their ancillary and value-added services communication. DIIBC is not only an important tactic but also the implementation and embodiment of brand digital communication strategies, and it has become the core of effective marketing.

Based on the brand value theory (Kotler, 2012), channel support in the customer multiplier factor could be replaced with the Internet and new media in a digital marketing channel combination. Lin (2017) claimed that in the digital era, we should rely on digital media, then, accomplish the brand strategy through digital integrated and interactive brand communication (DIIBC), highlight and strengthen brand value, and finally improve organizational performance. Hou (2018) argued that traditional brands are transforming into digital brands, and compared with traditional brands, in addition to the traditional marketing market window of brand owners, there is also a brand observation window opened in the digital marketing platform to digital brands, and this window is just where the digital marketing in this study comes in.

Zhu (2021) believed that digital marketing has two major means: community marketing and social media marketing, among which the goal of community marketing is not only to form an interactive relationship between consumers and brands, but also to promote continuous interaction between brand users, while the goal of social media marketing is to promote the interaction between consumers and brands in a wider range of ways. Liu (2023) demonstrated that a brand digital communication evaluation model based on interactive emotion can guide the digital construction of landmark products.

2.1.3. Organization performance

Organizational performance refers to the operational effectiveness of an organization. It can be divided into external performance and internal performance which includes employee performance and department performance (Ma and Bao, 2010). The organizational performance evaluation of enterprises mainly includes the

evaluation of financial indicators, nonfinancial indicators, and core competitiveness indicators; thus, the performance evaluation can be comprehensive and can reflect reasonable characteristics (Peng, 2015). The evaluation index of enterprise core competitiveness can be set from the following aspects: patented and nonpatented innovation skills, professional equipment related to technology, and customer satisfaction. Financial indicators are still the main aspect of evaluating enterprise organizational performance and mainly include the following points: the enterprise's ability to obtain benefits, the ability to repay debts, the enterprise's ability to develop well, the enterprise's ability to run normally and the enterprise's ability to expand. For the sustainable development of enterprises, nonfinancial indicators play a special role. An enterprise can design performance assessment indicators for the economic environment from different aspects, such as recycling and reuse of raw materials and improving the utilization rate of materials. At the same time, enterprises are also using the corresponding public resources; thus, they should have a certain sense of social responsibility and undertake a series of social responsibilities, such as employee satisfaction and contributions to the social employment rate.

2.2. Related research

The components of brand value mentioned above actually belong to the peripheral value of the brand. The core value is the brand personality, that is, all the things unrelated to the tangible benefits of the corresponding products of the brand. According to Kapferer (2012), brand personality can play a psychological role and arouse the psychological resonance of consumers. The brand personality is formed and highlighted during brand communication, and in the process of internal brand communication, the brand culture is further generated, which deepens the strength of brand identification because brand culture is the most important aspect of brand identification, and it can even be used to reclassify consumer groups under its cultural dimension, which includes the brand's career, ideas, ideals and values. To estimate brand value, Kapferer (2012) considered there to be at least four metrics: brand awareness with prompts, brand awareness with product leads but no prompts, evoking sets or considering sets (Is the brand one of two or three brands that consumers will buy? and how the brand is consumed?).

In brand communication (Lin, 2017), the enterprise takes the core value of the brand as the highest principle; chooses advertising, public relations, marketing, and other communication methods under the overall framework of the brand recognition element system; promotes a specific brand; and accumulates brand equity continuously, thus establishing a brand-personified image and guaranteeing the purpose of market sales, that is, good brand performance.

Since integrated marketing communication (IMC) (Schultz, 1993) was proposed, Carter (2021) putted forward the concept of digital marketing. Using digital integrated marketing to communicate its brand will produce more obvious effects, therefore, its significance is also greater. For example, a web tool designed in a digital marketing campaign or correlation short-form video was screened on in-store monitors such as Uniqlo, a garment brand in Japan, to achieve the sustainable development of brand competitiveness.

All these that could meet desires and needs come from manufacturers or enterprises, customers, consumers, etc., such as stakeholders to a brand, which are embodiments of brand value, for example, brand quality, good brand image, or brand recognition from customers.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Questionnaire design and measurement

The first data, also primary data, comes from the online survey with questionnaires in this study. Aside from demographic questions and screening questions, most key question responses were measured using a Five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). So, the level of measurement is interval, all variables are interval scale. The dominant variables were coded according to the Five-point Likert scale to facilitate data processing and interpretation. Online survey was conducted in this study, five items covering DIIBC were adapted from Yu et al. (2012), and as for brand value, 12 items covering it with Chinese characteristics, for organizational performance, six items covering it were adapted from Rabbani (2006). The observed variables and their abbreviations are shown in the following table (Table 1).

Table 1. Abbreviation of constructs and observed variables.

Variable	Definition	Measurement
Brand value	Brand's core value	Interval variable Five-point Likert scale
	Brand's potential value	
DIIBC	Support of marketing channel	Interval variable Five-point Likert scale
	Goal customers of marketing channel	
	Digital application of marketing channel	
Organizational performance	Finical performance	Interval variable Five-point Likert scale
	Non-finical performance	

3.2. Data collection and sample

There are three factors (latent variables), and 23 items (observed variables) as stated above, for covariance-based SEM requires a sample size usually in the order of 10 to 20 times the model parameters (Ikediashi et al., 2013), hence, the number of sample firms should between 230 and 460 samples.

Because 20% of the questionnaires were returned by posts (Anderson and Berdie, 1975), and this study required a sample size between 230 and 460 samples of the brand (named BRAND A in this study), it is a native Chinese down coat brand with a history of approximately several decades years and familiar in Chinese people, which is one brand of China’s leading domestic down coat brands in market competition, the researcher sent questionnaires to at least 1150 firms associated with BRAND A, and convenience sampling was used to collect data through an online questionnaire survey conducted from June to July in 2023. The data included the opinions of the respondents, namely, managers of sample firms, 381 firms responded to the brand at last. After removing abnormal data and incomplete data, 352 firms’ data were obtained.

4. Structural model analysis and result

4.1. Proposed structural model analysis

After an overview of the demographic information of the participants in the research, reliability, and validity were analyzed to test the measurement model by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and the goodness-of-fit index was calculated to test the structural model. The results of testing shown that Chi-Square = 46.344, df = 68, Chi-Square/df = 0.682, *p*-value = 0.457, RMSEA = 0.031, CFI = 0.967, LTI = 0.972, SRMR = 0.058. Therefore, it can be concluded that the measurement model satisfactorily fits the data, as shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Model fit analysis for all latent variables after modification indices.

Model Fit Criteria	Value	Acceptable Level
Chi-Square/df	0.682	<2
<i>p</i> -value	0.457	<i>p</i> > 0.05
RMSEA	0.031	<0.06
CFI	0.967	>0.95
TLI	0.972	>0.95
SRMR	0.058	<0.06

DIIBC construct had factor loading(R) values range between 0.624 to 0.878, which were all higher than 0.6, and the R^2 values ranged from 0.389 to 0.771, which were within the acceptable range. The composite reliability (CR) was 0.855 which met the standard that CR should be greater than 0.7, and the acceptable AVE value must be higher than 0.5 (Fornell and Laker, 1981), the AVE from this model was 0.723. These two conditions indicated that acceptability of the construct reliability to DIIBC.

Brand value (BV) construct had factor loading values range between 0.674 to 0.839, which were all higher than 0.6, and the R^2 values ranged from 0.454 to 0.704, which were within the acceptable range. Composite reliability (CR) at 0.836 which met the standard that CR should be greater than 0.7, and acceptable AVE value must be higher than 0.5 (Fornell and Laker, 1981), the AVE from this model was 0.682,

these two conditions indicated that acceptability of the construct reliability to brand value.

Organizational performance (OP) construct had factor loading values range between 0.718 to 0.876, which were all higher than 0.6, and the R^2 values ranged from 0.516 to 0.767, which were within the acceptable range. Composite reliability (CR) at 0.813 which met the standard that CR should be greater than 0.7, and acceptable AVE value must be higher than 0.5 (Fornell and Laker, 1981), the AVE from this model was 0.695, all these two conditions indicated that acceptability of the construct reliability to organizational performance.

This section presented the analysis of the proposed structural model through SEM analysis in order to test the hypotheses and identify the answers to research questions.

1) Structural Model One

The results of the analysis of Structural Model One showed that the DIIBC of BRAND A had a significant direct impact on organizational performance (OP) ($\beta = 0.273, p = 0.000$). The results are shown in the following table (Table 3).

Table 3. Hypothesis testing for structural model one (Direct Effects).

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p-value
H3: DIIBC → OP	0.273	0.096	0.760	0.000

*** p -value<0.001 (p -value less than 0.001 was at the significance level of 0.001).

** p -value<0.01 (p -value less than 0.01 was at the significance level of 0.01).

* p -value<0.05 (p -value less than 0.05 was at the significance level of 0.05).

2) Structural Model Two

This model investigated the indirect effects of DIIBC on organizational performance (OP) through brand value, and brand value acted as the mediating variables.

The analysis of structural model two after modification indices indicated that brand value (BV) had a significant positive direct effect on organizational performance (OP) at the level of 0.05 ($\beta = 0.565, p = 0.035$), DIIBC had a significant positive direct effect on brand value (BV) at the level of 0.001($\beta = 0.683, p = 0.000$), and DIIBC had a significant positive indirect effect on organizational performance through the brand value (BV) at the level of 0.05 ($\beta = 0.375, p = 0.028$).The results of significance for model two are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4. Hypothesis testing for structural model two after modification indices.

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p-value
H1: DIIBC → BV	0.683	0.064	10.672	***(0.000)
H2: BV → OP	0.565	0.326	1.733	*(0.035)

*** p -value < 0.001 (p -value less than 0.001 was at the significance level of 0.001).

** p -value < 0.01 (p -value less than 0.01 was at the significance level of 0.01).

* p -value < 0.05 (p -value less than 0.05 was at the significance level of 0.05).

Table 5. Standardized direct, indirect, and total effects among variables.

Independent Variable	Effect	Dependent Variable	
		BV	OP
BV	DE	-	0.565*
	IE	-	-
	TE	-	0.565*
DIIBC	DE	0.683***	0.273
	IE	-	0.375*
	TE	0.683***	0.648***

DE = Direct Effect, IE = Indirect Effect, TE = Total Effect.

4.2. Summary of model analysis

According to Structural Model One and Model Two of BRAND A, DIIBC has a significant direct positive effect on brand value (H1) at the 0.001 level, brand value has a significant direct positive effect on organizational performance (H2) at the 0.05 level, and DIIBC has a significant direct positive effect on organizational performance ($\beta = 0.273$, $p = 0.000$). In addition, DIIBC has a lower significant positive effect on organizational performance through brand value ($\beta = 0.375$, $p = 0.028$), and its final effect on organizational performance is highly significant and positive at the 0.001 level ($\beta = 0.648$).

5. Conclusion and discussion

5.1. Conclusion

According to the structural models of the brand, all the hypotheses were supported by this study. The research results for BRAND A are shown in **Table 6**.

Table 6. Summary of tested hypotheses and significant level about the brand.

Hypothesis	Significant	Result
H1: DIIBC has a direct positive effect on brand value.	0.683***	Supported
H2: Brand value has a direct positive effect on organizational performance.	0.565*	Supported
H3: DIIBC has a direct positive effect on organizational performance.	0.273***	Supported

5.2. Discussion

Tables 5 and **6** show that DIIBC has a lower significant indirect effect on organizational performance through brand value, which acts as a mediating variable, but DIIBC has a highly significant effect on the organizational performance of BRAND A.

Three hypotheses were developed and tested to determine the answer to the research questions above, and the answers are shown below (**Table 7**):

Table 7. Summary of results in all hypotheses testing.

Research Questions	Hypothesis	Conclusion	Results
RQ1: How do DIIBC, and brand value affect organizational performance in companies of a Chinese down coat brand?	H1: DIIBC has a direct positive effect on brand value.	Supported	In comparison, DIIBC has a direct significant positive effect on brand value, and brand value also has a direct significant positive effect on organizational performance, while DIIBC has a lower significant indirect positive effect on organizational performance through brand value, but DIIBC has a high significant positive effect on organizational performance in total. Ultimately, a highly significant positive effect of DIIBC on organizational performance was produced, that is, brand value served as a mediator variable in the process.
	H2: brand value has a direct positive effect on organizational performance.	Supported	
RQ2: During the process of DIIBC influencing the organizational performance of the Chinese down coat brand, what special intermediate role does brand value play?	H3: DIIBC has a direct positive effect on organizational performance.	Supported	

5.2.1. Theoretical contributions

The theoretical contributions can be summarized as follows.

First, this study examines the relationships among integrated brand marketing, brand value, and organizational performance from the perspective of digital implementation of brand strategy, which is suitable for and enriches the needs of brand research in today’s digital era.

Second, a China’s leading down coat brand was selected to study the relationships among digital integrated and inactive brand communication (DIIBC), brand value, and organizational performance, which expanded the relevant research and made the research results on the relationships among these three factors more convincing. Zhu (2021) argued that digital marketing can increase digital brand equity through the direct positive effect of DIIBC on brand value.

Last, the results of this study can provide a reference for subsequent related research.

5.2.2. Managerial implications

In addition to the above theoretical research contributions, this study also has certain practical implications. First, this study investigated the relationships among digital integrated and interactive brand communication (DIIBC), brand value, and organizational performance from the perspective of digital implementation of brand strategy, which is conducive to meeting the development and practice guidance needs of China’s domestic down coat brands in the current digital era.

Second, DIIBC was focused on for carrying out research on a China’s leading domestic down coat brand, it is in line with the current reality of China’s domestic down coat brands but also makes DIIBC research more specialized.

Third, the findings of this study can provide practical guidance for the brand management of China’s domestic down coat brands in the digital age to improve the organization’s performance.

5.2.3. Limitations and directions of future research

There are some limitations in this study. Firstly, the 230 sample firms mostly come from Jiang Xi province, in fact, it may be not reflecting the overall situation of the down coat brand. Expanding the survey to other provinces would be considered in future research.

Secondly, only quantitative research methods were utilized in the current study, if incorporating qualitative research methods, could offer more detailed data and insights into the relationship among DIIBC, brand value, and organizational performance of the brand.

Last, in addition to DIIBC and brand value, other factors, such as brand management capabilities, organizational learning, and corporate capabilities, affect each other and affect organizational performance. Future research could explore other relevant factors to obtain more comprehensive knowledge, and more importantly, such research will be beneficial for obtaining a complete understanding of how different factors contribute to the overall success of China's down coat brands.

Author contributions: Conceptualization, SM and KC; methodology, KC; software, SM; validation, SM and KC; formal analysis, SM; investigation, SM; resources, KC; data curation, SM; writing—original draft preparation, SM; writing—review and editing, KC; visualization, KC; supervision, KC; project administration, KC; funding acquisition, SM. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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