

# A Review of International Marketing Research for Chinese Medicine Health Products

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## Abstract

Against the backdrop of global shifts in health consumption paradigms and the accelerated internationalization of traditional Chinese medicine, the expansion of Chinese medicine health products into international markets has become a central issue for both industry development and the dissemination of Chinese culture. This paper systematically reviews core research findings in the field of international marketing for Chinese medicine health products from 2010 to 2024. It constructs a four-dimensional analytical framework “Environment-Strategy-Challenge-Outlook” to examine the international market environment from both policy/regulatory and consumer demand perspectives. The review summarizes research progress on three core marketing strategies: product, channel, and brand, and explores cultural perception barriers and market competition challenges. It examines the international market environment through the dual dimensions of policy regulations and consumer demand, reviews research progress on the three core marketing strategies of product, channel, and brand, and explores key challenges such as cultural perception barriers and market competition dynamics alongside potential breakthrough pathways. Findings indicate that while existing research has established a foundational framework, gaps remain in emerging market studies, empirical analyses of digital marketing, and in-depth exploration of cross-cultural communication mechanisms. Consequently, this paper proposes that future research should focus on directions such as digital technology integration, cross-cultural trust building, and international standard coordination, aiming to provide references for theoretical innovation and industrial practice in the international marketing of TCM health products.

**Keywords:** Traditional Chinese Medicine Health Products; International Marketing; Market Access; Cross-Cultural Communication; Internationalisation Strategy

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research Background and Significance

As a vehicle for the profound integration of traditional Chinese culture and contemporary health demands, the international marketing of TCM health products holds significant practical value and strategic importance within the global health industry's transformation and deepening cultural exchanges. Recent years have witnessed structural shifts in the global health consumption market: accelerating population ageing and rising chronic disease prevalence have driven health demands from "disease treatment" towards "prevention and wellness maintenance," with natural, personalised health products becoming mainstream. The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2023) continues to advance the integration of traditional medicine into global health systems. Over 170 member states have recognised the application value of traditional medicine, establishing a policy and awareness foundation for the internationalisation of TCM health products. Concurrently, the deepening Belt and Road Initiative has established collaborative platforms for TCM's global expansion. By 2024, China had established TCM cooperation with over 190 countries and regions, with overseas TCM centres exceeding 15. The international market for TCM health products has demonstrated robust growth potential, achieving an annual compound growth rate exceeding 12%.

Nevertheless, the international expansion of TCM health products continues to face multiple core challenges. Scholars such as Lin et al. (2018) note that TCM's globalisation remains constrained by significant disparities in national regulatory frameworks. TCM products can only be marketed as "medicines" in select countries, while more often circulating as non-medicinal forms such as foodstuffs or dietary supplements. This severely limits the realisation of their therapeutic value and market expansion. Fears et al. (2020) further propose that the cognitive divide between TCM theoretical frameworks and Western evidence-based medicine, the incompatibility of product quality standards with mainstream international systems, and fierce competition from global health brands collectively form core barriers to TCM globalisation. Moreover, China's TCM exports remain dominated by primary herbal materials, with high-value-added proprietary Chinese medicines accounting for less than 5% of the international market share. This pronounced imbalance in product structure further constrains the industry's international development.

Against this backdrop, research into the international marketing of TCM health products holds dual significance. Theoretically, existing studies predominantly focus on single market cases or partial marketing strategies, lacking systematic analysis of the international market. This research fills a gap in systematic scholarship by constructing a comprehensive analytical framework through a review of domestic and international literature, thereby advancing the innovation of TCM international marketing theory. Practically, the findings provide decision-making support for TCM enterprises formulating internationalisation strategies, aiding precise target market positioning, overcoming market access barriers, and enhancing brand global influence. Simultaneously, they offer reference for government departments in developing supportive policies for TCM internationalisation, promoting alignment of industry standards with international norms. Moreover, by leveraging product marketing as a conduit, this research

facilitates the dissemination of TCM culture, elevates national cultural soft power, and contributes to building a global health community.

## **1.2. Literature Search and Analytical Framework**

This study's literature search encompassed core academic databases and authoritative industry resources globally: domestically, it centred on China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Wanfang, and the China Biomedical Literature Database (CBM), searching keywords including "traditional Chinese medicine health products," "international marketing," and "cross-border e-commerce"; Internationally, Web of Science, Scopus, and PubMed databases were selected, employing term combinations such as "Traditional Chinese Medicine health products," "international marketing strategy," and "global market entry." Supplementary sources included official WHO reports, announcements from national drug regulatory authorities, Euromonitor industry data, and case studies of representative enterprises, ensuring both authority and comprehensiveness of literature sources.

Literature screening adhered to three core criteria: chronologically focusing on research outputs from 2010 to 2024 to reflect the latest developments in the field; thematically excluding purely theoretical TCM literature and domestic market analyses, retaining only content directly relevant to international marketing; and prioritising quality by selecting papers from SSCI/SCI and CSSCI core journals alongside reports from authoritative institutions to ensure the credibility of research conclusions. Ultimately, over 120 core documents were incorporated, including 13 key English-language publications, forming the literature foundation of this study.

Based on the retrieval results, this study constructs a four-dimensional analytical framework: "Environment–Strategy–Challeng–Outlook". Firstly, the international market environment dimension analyses global market access rules and demand characteristics from the perspectives of policy regulations and consumer demand. Secondly, the marketing strategy dimension systematises existing research findings around three core modules: product, channel, and brand. Thirdly, the challenges and breakthrough pathways dimension focuses on two core pain points—cultural differences and competitive landscapes—summarising countermeasures proposed by existing research. Fourthly, the summary and outlook dimension identifies consensus and gaps in existing studies while proposing future research directions. The literature analysis employs a combined approach of qualitative content analysis and bibliometrics, categorising research themes while identifying hotspots and gaps through co-occurrence networks of keywords, ensuring the systematic and objective nature of this review.

## **2. Review of Research on the International Market Environment for Traditional Chinese Medicine Health Products**

### **2.1. Policy and Regulatory Environment Research**

Policy and regulations constitute the core factors determining market access thresholds and development prospects for traditional Chinese medicine health products internationally. Relevant studies have conducted systematic analyses of regulatory frameworks across major global regions.

In their 2025 study, Chen et al. (2025) comprehensively compared the regulatory frameworks for TCM across six major countries and regions, including Australia, Canada, the European Union, and the United States. They identified three primary regulatory models emerging globally: First, the "independent category regulation" model, exemplified by Australia and Canada, which incorporates TCM products into complementary medicine/natural health product systems with dedicated access pathways; Second, the "modern pharmaceutical framework integration model" exemplified by the EU and the US, which provides simplified registration pathways for traditional herbal medicines while fundamentally adhering to modern pharmaceutical evaluation logic; Third, the "domestic characteristic regulatory system" exemplified by China and South Korea, which establishes differentiated approval pathways based on traditional medical practices.

In mature European and American markets, research has focused on stringent access standards and regulatory barriers. Li et al. (2018) note that the EU's Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products Directive (THMPD) requires products to demonstrate at least 30 years of usage history (including 15 years within the EU) alongside systematic safety assessments. The complex composition and multifaceted mechanisms of TCM formulas make them difficult to evaluate using the EU's single-ingredient quantitative assessment approach, resulting in only a handful of TCM products achieving full EU registration by 2024. In the United States, most TCM health products are categorised as dietary supplements under the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA). While entry barriers are relatively low, therapeutic claims are prohibited. Furthermore, recent years have seen strengthened monitoring of adverse events alongside heightened standards for heavy metal and pesticide residue testing, further constricting market opportunities for such products (Ma et al., 2020).

Policy research in emerging markets reveals regional variations. Zheng et al. (2021) study of Portuguese-speaking countries found that Brazil and Portugal have established TCM-related legislation, whereas regulatory frameworks in African Portuguese-speaking nations remain either non-existent or in exploratory phases. This policy gap offers market access flexibility but also introduces operational risks stemming from regulatory uncertainty. Ding's analysis of the Australian market indicates that the country's tiered regulatory framework for complementary medicines offers relatively lenient access conditions for TCM products (Lu et al., 2025). However, the market remains dominated by low-risk listed medicines, with minimal approvals for high-risk registered medicines. Furthermore, exports predominantly consist of primary raw materials, while high-value-added products exhibit sluggish growth.

Intellectual property protection and international standardisation collaboration constitute another core dimension of policy research. Huang et al. (2020) propose that the establishment of ISO/TC 249, the International Standardisation Technical Committee for Traditional Chinese Medicine, provides a platform for aligning international quality standards for TCM products. By 2024, over 80 international standards had been published, effectively reducing cross-border trade barriers (Liu, 2024). However, existing research also indicates that ancient TCM formulas, having entered the public domain, struggle to obtain patent protection. Significant disparities exist in patent examination standards for TCM across countries, highlighting notable shortcomings in international coordination for intellectual property protection. Overall, existing policy research

predominantly focuses on mature markets in Europe, America, and Southeast Asia, with insufficient analysis of emerging markets such as Africa and Latin America. Furthermore, empirical studies on predicting policy dynamics and corporate response strategies remain lacking.

## **2.2. Research on Consumer Demand Characteristics**

Consumer demand characteristics form the core basis for formulating international marketing strategies for TCM health products. Existing research has explored these characteristics multidimensionally, centring on demand motivations, regional variations, and influencing factors. Global consumer motivations for TCM health products fall into three primary categories: Firstly, preventive healthcare needs constitute the core demand globally. With the growing popularity of "natural therapy" concepts, consumers increasingly opt for natural TCM products for daily wellness maintenance, with herbal teas and medicinal cuisine ingredients experiencing the most pronounced demand growth. Secondly, chronic disease management needs drive consumers to explore holistic TCM treatment plans for conditions like diabetes and hypertension, seeking to complement the limitations of Western medical approaches. Thirdly, alternative treatment and cultural experience needs arise when Western medicine proves ineffective, prompting consumers to seek TCM alternatives. Concurrently, some consumers driven by curiosity about Eastern culture develop culturally motivated novelty-seeking demand.

Regional consumption patterns present key research focus areas. Southeast Asian markets, shaped by Confucian cultural influences and historical ties to TCM, exhibit the highest consumer awareness and acceptance of traditional Chinese medicine. Demand spans the entire value chain—from herbal ingredients and proprietary Chinese medicines to TCM services—with traditional decoction pieces and classic formula products maintaining stable consumer bases locally. European and American markets exhibit demand characteristics centred on "scientific rigour, convenience, and safety." Consumers there place greater trust in clinically validated modern TCM formulations, with convenient dosage forms like capsules and granules significantly outpacing traditional decoctions. They also demand stringent attributes such as organic certification, non-GMO status, and absence of pesticide residues, while acceptance of traditional TCM theories remains relatively low. In the African market, efficacy is paramount, with consumers prioritising affordable TCM products demonstrating clear therapeutic effects. The widespread adoption of artemisinin-based antimalarial drugs has significantly boosted acceptance of other TCM products locally. Ding (2024) research on the Australian market further confirms that consumer demand there centres on daily health maintenance products, while acceptance of therapeutic products remains contingent upon scientific evidence.

Key factors influencing consumer demand include cultural cognition, health perceptions, policy environments, and brand trust. Cultural cognition directly determines purchasing intent; core TCM concepts such as "differentiated diagnosis and treatment" and the "holistic perspective" remain difficult for consumers to comprehend in markets lacking cultural context, forming a primary barrier to demand release. At the policy level, countries incorporating TCM into their medical insurance or complementary healthcare systems exhibit significantly higher consumption demand than markets without such support. Moreover, brand trust remains a pivotal factor in purchasing decisions. International consumers predominantly favour well-established brands

backed by international certifications and clinical evidence, leaving smaller brands grappling with substantial trust-building challenges. While existing research has outlined the fundamental contours of global consumer demand, studies remain insufficient in examining segmented demographics and digital consumption scenarios. Furthermore, deeper analysis of the underlying mechanisms driving demand motivations across cultural contexts warrants further exploration.

### **3. Review of International Marketing Strategies for Traditional Chinese Medicine Health Products**

#### **3.1. Product Strategy Research**

Product strategy serves as the pivotal link between the traditional values of TCM and international market demands. Existing research centres on three core issues: balancing standardisation and localisation, integrating traditional heritage with modern innovation, and aligning quality standards. Regarding standardisation and localisation strategies, academic consensus holds that the internationalisation of TCM products must adapt to target market regulatory requirements and consumer habits while preserving core values. Successful enterprises predominantly adopt a "standardised core ingredients + localised dosage forms and packaging" approach. This involves standardising extraction processes for classical formulas to ensure consistent efficacy, while converting decoctions into internationally preferred dosage forms such as capsules or oral liquids. Packaging and labelling are also adapted to local regulations. However, research also indicates that excessive localisation can lead to the "cultural dilution" of TCM products. Some enterprises, in an effort to cater to Western markets, have simplified traditional Chinese medicines into single-ingredient extracts, neglecting the holistic therapeutic advantages of compound formulations and consequently undermining the products' core competitiveness.

Product innovation research emphasises grounding in traditional theory while integrating modern technology to achieve value enhancement. Scholars including Zhou (2019) note that the core competitiveness of TCM products lies in their safety and efficacy, yet the greatest challenge facing existing products is the lack of modern scientific validation. Consequently, conducting international multicentre clinical trials and optimising product quality through modern extraction techniques represent key innovation directions. The WHO's guidelines for international multicentre clinical trials in TCM provide a standard framework for evidence-based validation, serving as a crucial pathway for TCM products to gain international market recognition. Existing research further indicates that functional foods and personalised wellness products developed based on the TCM concept of "preventing disease before it occurs" demonstrate robust growth potential in international markets. However, current research on the modernisation of classical TCM formulas remains largely focused on technical improvements to individual products, lacking systematic analysis of the compatibility between formula principles and the modern disease spectrum.

Quality standards and international certification form the core pillars of product strategy. Research generally holds that TCM products require authoritative international certifications (such as EU THR registration, Australian TGA certification, or US FDA GRAS certification) to

gain market access. Yet significant gaps persist between China's TCM quality standards and international benchmarks, including substantial variations in active ingredient content, inconsistent testing methodologies, and labeling practices that fail to meet international norms. In response, scholars propose establishing a dual-standard system combining "TCM characteristics with international applicability". This approach would preserve TCM theoretical descriptions while supplementing them with modern scientific validation data. Concurrently, leveraging the ISO/TC 249 platform to advance international mutual recognition of TCM quality standards would fundamentally reduce cross-border market access barriers. Overall, existing product strategy research remains predominantly theoretical, with insufficient empirical studies on product adaptability for different markets and limited exploration of integrated innovation between TCM health products and services.

### **3.2. Channel and Brand Strategy Research**

Channel and brand strategies constitute the critical foundation for TCM health products to overcome international market barriers and achieve sustainable development. Existing research centres on two primary directions: channel model innovation and brand positioning with cross-cultural communication. Within channel strategy research, academics categorise international channels into two main types: traditional offline channels and digital new channels. Regarding traditional offline channels, establishing dedicated shelves through partnerships with local pharmacy chains and health-focused supermarkets, alongside creating experiential touchpoints via overseas TCM clinics and wellness centres, constitutes the mainstream approach in culturally similar markets such as Southeast Asia. This model effectively lowers consumer awareness barriers through face-to-face experiential services. Conversely, in European and American markets, collaborating with local medical institutions and professional health organisations to leverage their professional endorsement as a conduit to distribution represents an effective pathway for products to enter mainstream consumer markets.

Digital channels have emerged as a research focus in recent years, with cross-border e-commerce platforms regarded as the core pathway for TCM enterprises to reach global consumers. Scholars including Xiang (2022), in their study of the global TCM trade landscape, note that platforms such as Amazon and Alibaba International have dismantled traditional trade barriers, enabling small and medium-sized TCM enterprises to directly engage overseas end consumers. Optimising store operations, implementing big data-driven precision marketing, and establishing overseas warehouse logistics systems can significantly enhance product market penetration. Concurrently, the OMO (Online-Merged-Offline) model—combining online traffic generation with offline experiential touchpoints—emerges as a novel research direction. Online channels leverage content marketing and user engagement via social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, while offline experience centres offer product trials and professional consultations. This approach balances the breadth of brand dissemination with the depth of consumer engagement, proving particularly suitable for premium TCM wellness products. However, existing channel research exhibits notable shortcomings, including insufficient comparative analysis of channel suitability across different regional markets and a dearth of discussion on low-cost channel development strategies for small and medium-sized TCM enterprises.

Brand strategy research centres on three key areas: brand positioning, cross-cultural communication, and trust-building. Regarding brand positioning, scholars emphasise the core value of differentiated positioning: for European and American markets, products should highlight their natural attributes and scientifically validated results to establish a brand image as "modern natural health products"; for Southeast Asian and Chinese-speaking markets, the brand's core heritage in TCM culture should be reinforced, leveraging local cultural understanding to reduce consumer acceptance barriers. Cross-cultural brand communication remains a central challenge. Fears et al. (2020) note that the international translation of TCM cultural symbols and theoretical terminology poses the greatest obstacle to brand dissemination. The key lies in translating concepts such as "yin-yang balance" and "qi-blood harmonisation" into health values comprehensible to international consumers. Existing research suggests that collaborating with local health sector KOLs, participating in international health exhibitions, and conducting joint research with overseas scientific institutions can effectively enhance brand professionalism and visibility. Obtaining international authoritative certifications and publishing third-party clinical research data are core means for building brand trust. Overall, existing brand studies lack in-depth exploration of adaptation strategies for cross-cultural narratives, and case analyses of brand building in emerging markets remain relatively scarce.

#### **4. Research on Challenges and Breakthrough Pathways for International Marketing of Traditional Chinese Medicine Health Products**

##### **4.1. Research on Cultural Differences and Trust Building**

Cultural differences and trust building represent the foremost challenges in the international marketing of traditional Chinese medicine health products. Existing research has conducted in-depth exploration into the manifestations of cultural barriers and pathways for achieving trust building. The fundamental divergence in health philosophies between Eastern and Western cultures lies at the core of these differences: Traditional Chinese Medicine emphasises holistic balance and the concept of "preventing illness before it occurs" through syndrome differentiation and treatment, whereas modern Western medicine focuses on precise disease localisation and quantitative treatment. This cognitive gap leads to a fundamental misunderstanding among international consumers regarding the mechanisms of action of TCM products. Concurrently, traditional TCM concepts such as meridians and the Five Elements exhibit significant discrepancies with the logical framework of Western evidence-based medicine. This further exacerbates market perception barriers, with some markets even categorising TCM as an "alternative therapy" rather than a mainstream health solution. At the consumer habit level, Western consumers exhibit a preference for single-ingredient formulations with transparent composition and clearly defined mechanisms of action. The complex composition of TCM compound preparations struggles to meet their demand for product transparency, thereby amplifying marketing resistance stemming from cultural differences.

The marketing challenges stemming from cultural differences ultimately converge on a fundamental lack of consumer trust. Scholars such as Zhou (2019) note that international

scepticism towards TCM products centres on two primary dimensions: safety and efficacy. On one hand, incidents involving heavy metal and pesticide residue exceedances in certain TCM products, alongside reports concerning toxic constituents like aristolochic acid, have severely damaged the international reputation of TCM. On the other hand, the absence of internationally recognised clinical research data for most TCM products prevents them from demonstrating efficacy to consumers, forming a core obstacle to trust-building. Furthermore, efficacy claims for TCM products are often grounded in traditional usage experience, conflicting with international regulatory requirements. Isolated cases of false advertising and exaggerated efficacy claims have further exacerbated consumer distrust.

Addressing cultural barriers and trust deficits, existing research proposes multi-dimensional pathways for breakthroughs. Scientific validation forms the core foundation for trust-building. Scholars widely concur that conducting international multi-centre randomised controlled trials and obtaining testing from authoritative third-party institutions to provide empirical data on product safety and efficacy represents the most effective means of overcoming cognitive biases in Western markets. Cultural adaptation is pivotal for overcoming cognitive barriers. Research suggests translating TCM theories into language comprehensible to international consumers—for instance, interpreting "yin-yang balance" as "dynamic coordination of bodily systems." Gradually disseminating TCM knowledge through cultural festivals, online educational content, and academic exchanges can reduce cultural cognitive biases. Localised partnerships constitute a vital pathway for rapidly establishing trust. Joint product promotion with local medical institutions, research institutes, and renowned enterprises leverages their indigenous credibility to endorse the brand, significantly reducing consumer trust costs. This strategy proves particularly effective in emerging markets such as Africa and Latin America. Furthermore, full transparency throughout the product lifecycle—including clear labelling of ingredients, testing standards, and production processes, alongside robust product traceability systems—effectively mitigates information asymmetry and enhances consumer confidence.

#### **4.2. Competitive Landscape and Differentiation Strategy Research**

The international market for TCM health products exhibits a multi-layered, diversified competitive landscape. Existing research has systematically analysed three core competitors. The first category comprises Western modern pharmaceutical and health giants. Leveraging mature clinical research systems, standardised production processes, and formidable brand marketing capabilities, they dominate the global high-end health product market. Particularly in European and American markets, consumer trust in their products far exceeds that in TCM brands. The second category comprises competitors from other traditional medicine systems. Japanese Kampo medicine, through modern adaptations of classical Chinese formulas and stringent quality standards, commands over 90% of the global market for proprietary Chinese medicines. Its products, certified by multiple national drug regulatory authorities, have established formidable competitiveness internationally. Indian Ayurveda, leveraging low-cost advantages and a unique traditional medical system, is rapidly penetrating emerging markets in Southeast Asia and Africa, emerging as a core competitor to TCM products. The third category comprises domestic Chinese TCM enterprises. Despite possessing abundant herbal resources, profound cultural heritage, and a

comprehensive industrial system, they face challenges in international markets including low brand recognition, insufficient standardisation, and weak clinical data support, resulting in relatively limited market share.

Given this complex international competitive landscape, existing research generally holds that differentiated competition strategies represent the core pathway for TCM health products to overcome market barriers. Product differentiation forms the foundation of this strategy. Research indicates that the unique advantages of TCM compound formulations should be fully leveraged to develop products targeting areas where Western medicine is relatively weak, such as sub-health regulation and adjunctive treatment for chronic diseases, thereby creating irreplaceable efficacy differentiation. Concurrently, integrating modern technology to optimise dosage forms and enhance quality stability will meet stringent international quality requirements, fostering technological differentiation. Cultural differentiation represents a distinctive strength for TCM products. Scholars emphasise integrating TCM's core philosophy of "preventing illness before it occurs" and holistic health perspectives into brand development. This creates a cultural brand image distinct from Western single-ingredient health supplements, achieving brand differentiation through cultural value export. Channel differentiation requires tailored strategies for different markets: in Europe and America, prioritise cross-border e-commerce platforms combined with offline health chain store networks to rapidly reach end consumers; In Southeast Asian markets, leverage local traditional medicine channels and Chinese communities to achieve deep market penetration; in African markets, collaborate with local health departments and medical institutions to drive product promotion through public health initiatives, thereby establishing channel differentiation.

Existing research also indicates that China's TCM health products face significant shortcomings in differentiated competition: severe product homogenisation persists, with most enterprises concentrated in low-value-added segments such as primary medicinal materials and traditional health supplements, while high-value-added innovative products remain insufficiently supplied; Cultural differentiation often remains superficial, failing to translate the core essence of TCM culture into tangible brand value for consumers; International market presence is fragmented, lacking leading enterprises to drive industrial synergy, resulting in a competitive disadvantage against Japanese Kampo and Western health brands. Future efforts should strengthen empirical research on differentiation strategies, validate their effectiveness through specific market case studies, and provide enterprises with more actionable competitive solutions.

## **5. Research Summary and Future Outlook**

### **5.1. Review of Existing Research**

Over a decade of development, research into the international marketing of Chinese traditional medicine health products has established a foundational research framework encompassing three dimensions: market environment, marketing strategies, and challenge responses. This provides crucial theoretical support for industrial practice and policy formulation. Key advances in existing research include: systematically mapping regulatory frameworks for TCM across major global

markets, revealing how divergent national access standards influence product exports; delineating regional consumer demand characteristics through market research and data analysis, identifying cultural perceptions, policy environments, and brand trust as core determinants of purchasing decisions; exploring marketing strategy combinations for TCM product internationalisation across product, channel, and brand dimensions, proposing core concepts such as balancing standardisation with localisation and cross-cultural brand communication; It has conducted in-depth analyses of core challenges such as cultural differences, incompatible standards, and international competition, forming research consensus on breakthrough pathways including scientific validation, cultural adaptation, and localised collaboration.

Concurrently, existing research exhibits notable shortcomings: Firstly, market research coverage remains limited, with most findings concentrated on mature markets like Europe, America, and Southeast Asia. Research on policy regulations, consumer demand, and competitive landscapes in emerging markets such as Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East is severely inadequate, undermining the global expansion of the TCM industry. Secondly, research depth requires enhancement. Consumer demand studies often remain at the level of macro-level characteristic descriptions, lacking in-depth analysis of the micro-level mechanisms of consumer purchasing decisions. Marketing strategy research is predominantly theoretical, with a scarcity of high-quality empirical studies and case analyses. Thirdly, research perspectives exhibit lagging perspectives. There is insufficient research on new channels and marketing models emerging within the digital economy context, such as live-streaming e-commerce, social marketing, and metaverse experiences, failing to adequately reflect the latest changes in the global marketing environment. Fourthly, interdisciplinary integration remains inadequate. Existing research predominantly focuses on marketing and traditional Chinese medicine domains, with insufficient application of disciplines such as law, communication studies, and data science. This results in proposed strategies lacking practicality and systematic coherence.

## **5.2. Future Research Directions**

Building upon existing research gaps and aligning with global health industry and digital economy trends, future international marketing research for TCM health products may focus on six key areas. Firstly, deepen systematic research into emerging markets, prioritising high-potential regions such as Africa, Latin America, and Portuguese-speaking nations. Conduct comprehensive analyses of their policy environments, consumer characteristics, and competitive landscapes to fill regional research gaps, thereby providing theoretical foundations for TCM enterprises entering new markets. Second, conduct in-depth research into cross-cultural communication and trust-building mechanisms. Integrating cultural anthropology and communication theories, explore pathways for the international translation of TCM cultural symbols. Through multinational longitudinal empirical studies, analyse consumer trust formation mechanisms across cultural contexts and construct theoretical models for the cross-cultural communication of TCM brands. Thirdly, focus on innovative applications of digital marketing. Conduct in-depth analysis of the suitability of emerging models such as live-streaming e-commerce, social media, and AI-driven precision marketing in international markets. Evaluate the conversion effectiveness of different marketing approaches and explore pathways for digital

technology to empower the international marketing of TCM health products. Fourth, strengthen collaborative research on international standards and regulatory frameworks for TCM. Leveraging the ISO/TC 249 platform, explore mechanisms for international mutual recognition of TCM quality standards. Analyse evolving global regulatory trends to provide strategic guidance for enterprises navigating market access barriers and for governments advancing international standardisation cooperation. Fifth, intensify empirical research on differentiated competitive strategies. Utilise case studies from leading enterprises' internationalisation efforts to validate the efficacy of product, brand, and channel differentiation strategies. Develop differentiated competition models tailored to enterprises of varying scales and distinct target markets, providing actionable guidance for industry practice. Sixth, promote interdisciplinary research by integrating theories and methodologies from marketing, traditional Chinese medicine, law, communication studies, and data science. This approach transcends the limitations of single-discipline research to construct a more systematic and practical theoretical framework for the international marketing of TCM health products, thereby supporting the high-quality global development of the TCM industry.

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