



The Design and Development of Dabujiang Patchwork Embroidery for Modern Bags

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Received 06/06/2024

Revised 12/06/2024

Accepted 23/08/2024

Abstract

Background and Aim: Dabujiang patchwork embroidery, an intangible cultural handicraft with the longest heritage in southern Hunan, has garnered increasing attention in recent years due to its unique characteristics. However, these products are facing a situation of decline because they cannot meet the needs of modern people. The objective of this research article is to design and develop modern bags featuring Dabujiang patchwork embroidery patterns for women in contemporary society.

Materials and Methods: This research is a combination of qualitative research and quantitative research. The qualitative research method was used to study the color, pattern, and meaning of characteristics from 54 pieces of 6 theme categories of Dabujiang product pictures. Interview intangible cultural inheritors, designers, bag shop owners, and women consumers to understand modern women's design needs for women's bags. Combining the characteristics of the Dabujiang pattern characteristics with the needs of modern women, the design and development of six new Dabujiang women's bags based on 6 theme categories. Through 424 questionnaires for women to assess the women's favorite new bags and analyze the reasons women like and find out the future trend of women's bag development.

Results: The results of the research revealed: 1) The patterns based on the six categories have different symbolic meanings respectively and they are mainly bionic and geometric patterns. The lines are curves, and the layout is generally symmetrical and balanced. 2) There are 11 kinds of common colors and mainly based on the five orthodox colors of Chinese tradition. The main colors are red, blue, yellow, black, and white, representing the five traditional Chinese elements, which extend different meanings. 3) Through interviews find out young women prefer large bags of bag 1 style, the Morandi color scheme, and meanings of happiness, love, career success, luck, wealth, and beauty. Consequently, the researcher designed six bag styles based on bag 1 style and six theme categories to meet the needs of modern women associated with these six meanings. Questionnaire responses from 424 young women showed that 23.58% favored the Phoenix pattern bag style, making it the most preferred among the six new bag designs. This style showcases a phoenix motif in blue, white, and black colors, symbolizing career success.

Conclusion: The findings indicate that modern women highly value career success and self-worth, prioritizing independence over traditional roles. This conclusion mainly stems from the transformation of modern women's roles and the awakening of self-awareness. In addition to assuming the role of mother in the family, modern women also play the role of professional women in society, and more and more women regard career success as their pursuit goal. In the context of the changing identity and goals of modern women, the products should be designed that meet the needs of modern women based on their needs, combined with the symbolic meaning of cultural patterns. For future product development, incorporating symbolic patterns that align with the career aspirations of modern young women is recommended.

Keywords: Dabujiang Patchwork; Dabujiang characteristic; Modern bag; Pattern design.

Introduction

"Dabujiang patchwork embroidery" stands as a quintessential representation of folk art in Yongxing County, Chenzhou City, Hunan Province, embodying the distinctive local traditional characteristics within Hunan's intangible cultural heritage. While once popular during times of fabric scarcity, the ancient art of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery has waned in modern times (Wu, 2020). It has gradually faded from people's lives and is at risk of being lost (Yang, 2024). Can it overcome challenges and regain vitality in the next decade amidst rapid digital advancements? This depends on both the craft itself and the empowerment it receives.





To revitalize traditional crafts, the Chinese government created the “Chinese Traditional Craft Revitalization Plan,” encouraging respect for traditional culture, craftsmanship, innovation, product quality improvement, and environmental sustainability. The plan also supports integrating traditional crafts with modern needs and rural tourism to protect the cultural ecology and promote green industry transformation.

Modernization has made bags essential for women, used to carry money, phones, cosmetics, keys, and more, while also serving as fashion statements. The evolving relationship between modern bags and women extends beyond fashion and function, encompassing broader social, economic, and psychological realms. Different styles and materials can match various outfits and occasions, expressing women's tastes and personalities. Notably, although women's bags hold a significant position within Dabujiang patchwork embroidery, most of these bags feature traditional patterns but lack modern stylistic elements which is a lack of innovative designs that undermine the charm of these bags, resulting in a disconnect with modern tastes.

Yoo et al. (2017) found that the fashion industry plays a prominent role in women's consumerism, with culture significantly impacting women's consumer habits as well. Research has proven that traditional embroidery can be successfully applied to modern fabric design. Sun & Tong (2021) demonstrated that Quanzhou Jincang embroidery can be adapted to meet modern consumer needs. They reduced the saturation of the dominant red and gold colors and used the Morandi color system, matching these with black and white perfectly. This new approach to Quanzhou Jincang embroidery has become very popular, highlighting effective color matching. The combination of traditional cultural elements with modern women's needs has successfully redefined traditional culture for contemporary life. Therefore, redesigning and advancing women's bags within the realm of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery emerges as a promising avenue to revitalize this cultural heritage. Such efforts can preserve traditional techniques, increase awareness of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery, and illustrate its distinct cultural allure. Literature shows that "Dabujiang Patchwork Embroidery" products mainly include children's fabric items like bibs, hats, bellybands, and patchwork quilts (Chen & He, 2021). Some explore its use in clothing, but research on its application in women's bag design is lacking. The researcher found that young people prefer simple, economical, and eco-friendly bags.

In conclusion, the research aims to modernize "Dabujiang Patchwork Embroidery" for women's bags, catering to various demographics. This effort aligns with the "Chinese Traditional Craft Revitalization Plan" and Hunan's policies on intangible cultural heritage. The result will help us understand the cultural characteristics and connotations of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery and can continue the culture of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery through innovative design and protect and inherit this patchwork skill with cultural characteristics. Redesigning and advancing women's bags within the framework of the Dabujiang patchwork not only preserves traditional techniques but also fosters broader recognition of this art form. It showcases its cultural distinctiveness, safeguarding this intangible fabric art from fading into obscurity.

Objectives

1. To study and collect Dabujiang patchwork embroidery patterns and analyze their cultural meanings.
2. To design and develop modern bags featuring Dabujiang patchwork embroidery patterns for women in contemporary society.

Literature review

1. The Dabujiang patchwork embroidery background.

Dabujiang patchwork art originated in the Han Dynasty (202 BC-220 AD) and prevailed in the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1912 AD). It is a kind of primitive plastic art popular among the people. It reflects the characteristics of the integration of Chu history and culture, highlighting the regional traits of southern Hunan. The state of Chu has believed in the phoenix since ancient times because it represents the immortal spirit and auspicious meanings. (Chen & He, 2021). Based on adhering to the traditional



expression techniques, modern Dabujiang patchwork embroidery draws on the expression methods of other art types, adapts modern art design concepts, and adds modern life elements, which have extremely high artistic value. In 2003, China launched the "Chinese Ethnic and Folk Culture Protection Project", and launched the survey, declaration, and protection of China's intangible cultural heritage (Liao & Peng, 2017). In 2009, Hunan Yongxing Dabujiang patchwork embroidery was selected as the intangible cultural heritage of Chenzhou City. In 2012, it was rated as a Hunan intangible cultural Heritage (Yanke & Zongming, 2018).

2. Dabujiang patchwork embroidery classification and their symbolic meaning

Dabujiang patchwork embroidery is rich in cultural meaning and includes various motifs in its classification. From the perspective of the diverse decorative themes of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery, it embodies the generation of cultural concepts and is deeply influenced by the traditional philosophy of Chinese culture. Depending on the theme category, Chen & He (2021) found that the pattern of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery can be divided into six categories as follows plants, animals, mythical creatures, texts, borders, and folk story patterns that have blessing meanings in Chinese culture. The detailed analysis is as follows (Chen & He, 2021).

Plant Patterns: These include depictions of real plants like peach, pomegranate, Buddha's hand, peony, lotus, plum, pumpkin, and curled vines. Primarily featuring flowers and fruits, each plant pattern carries specific traditional cultural meanings. For example, the plum blossom pattern symbolizes the spirit of perseverance and happiness in life. The lotus pattern signifies the purity and blessings of many sons. The chayote pattern represents longevity and being blessed with happiness. (Chen & He, 2021).

Animal Patterns: Common animal motifs include butterflies, bats, tigers, fish, magpies, and lions. These patterns often symbolize protection and the expulsion of evil spirits and are depicted with plants, representing blessings through traditional legends or auspicious expressions. For example, the magpie standing on the branches of plum blossoms signifies that good things are on the way. The tiger pattern represents warding off evil and safeguarding the healthy growth of children (Chen & He, 2021).

Mythical Creatures Patterns: Featuring legendary animals such as the dragon, phoenix, and Kirin, these patterns symbolize auspiciousness and boundless power. The dragon and phoenix patterns stand out as the most prevalent designs among mythical creatures depicted in Dabujiang patchwork embroidery. Traditional Chinese symbolism attributes the dragon pattern to supreme rulership, representing the emperor's ultimate power and status. Dragons are revered as sacred beings associated with good fortune, nobility, and auspicious qualities according to age-old beliefs. In contrast, the phoenix symbolizes the ultimate femininity akin to a queen in Chinese tradition. It is considered the queen among avian species and embodies noble virtues and auspiciousness, serving as China's most traditional symbol of good fortune since ancient times. (Chen & He, 2021).

Text Patterns: Text patterns derived from Chinese characters convey meanings of good wishes and aspirations for a better life. Common examples include symbols that "Fu" means happiness, "Shou" means longevity, and "Wan" is ten-thousands means prosperity.

Border Patterns: This type of pattern usually appears as a continuous repeating geometric pattern. These patterns encompass a diverse array of meaningful symbols such as the long-life lock, ancient copper money, vase, jade Ruyi, and eight diagrams, all carrying blessings for peace and wealth.

Folk Stories Patterns: Inspired by folk tales and legends, these patterns, such as the eight diagrams picture or the eight immortals crossing the sea, reflect people's prayers for a better life and express rich emotional sentiments.

3. Elements of modern bag design According to the principles of bag design, the researcher will analyze the elements of modern bag design from three design perspectives as follows:

1) Design of bag style

The shape of bag styles varies. From various research studies, it has been found that there are classifications of bag shapes according to their usage, such as shoulder bags, crossbody bags, handbags, clutch bags, messenger bags, large bags, backpacks, bucket bags, etc. Each bag style also encompasses various shapes.

2) Design of patterns

Each pattern possesses a distinct shape, layout, and meaning, so selecting the appropriate pattern for bag design is crucial. The pattern can be designed in various layout forms such as repetition, symmetry, rhythm, and balance. Traditional Chinese patterns typically follow a regular graphic layout, with symmetry and balance being the most common forms.

3) Design of colors

The selection and combination of colors can showcase different style characteristics; hence, color design is a focal point in bag design. Different colors evoke varied feelings based on color psychology theory, so choosing the right color according to the bag's style characteristics and consumer preferences is essential. Colors can be categorized into primary colors and intermediate colors. The primary colors are red, blue, yellow, white, and black, symbolizing the five elements in ancient China. Apart from the primary colors, gold, and silver, the remaining colors are classified as intermediate colors.

4. Distribution channels for bag sales in modern society Sales platforms can typically be categorized into E-commerce platforms and physical bag stores. Traditional distribution channels involve physical bag stores, which have a long history in the business. However, many young individuals nowadays prefer using E-commerce platforms for shopping. One of the most common E-commerce platforms is Taobao in China. E-commerce platforms offer a variety of bag styles at competitive prices. Consequently, many young people opt to shop online rather than in physical stores in modern society.

Conceptual Framework

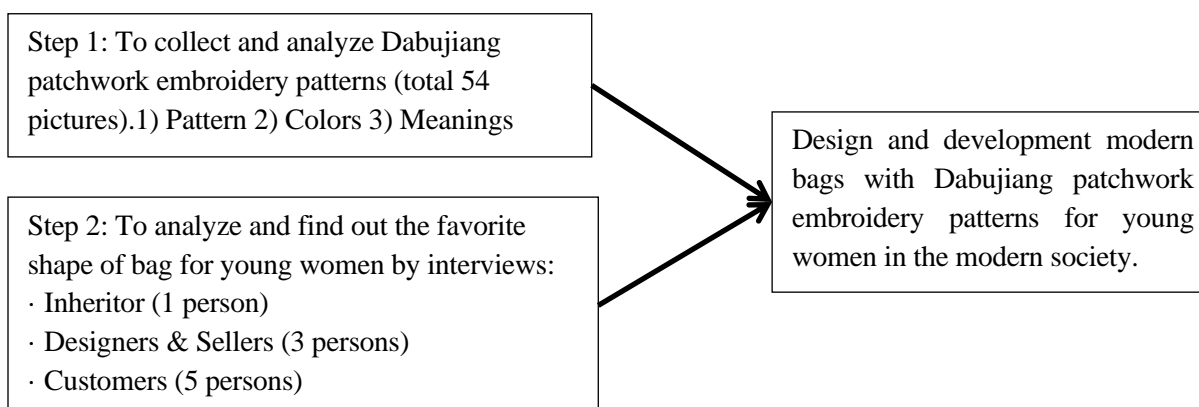


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Methodology

This research is a combination of qualitative research by field research and quantitative research by interview and questionnaire survey.

Qualitative research in this study focuses on two main aspects. First, it involves collecting image sources from the book “Patchwork Art: Craft and Work” by Chen & He (2021) and taking photographs in the Intangible Cultural Heritage Studio in Chenzhou through field research. Second, it includes conducting in-depth interviews with young women, involving three groups: 1) one intangible culture inheritor, 2) three designers and sellers, and 3) five customers, all residing in Chenzhou, Hunan, China. The instruments used in this qualitative research consisted of interview forms tailored for the intangible culture inheritor, designers and sellers, and customers in Chenzhou, Hunan, China.

Quantitative research was conducted using questionnaires to survey 424 women under the age of 40 in Chenzhou, Hunan, China, to choose their favorite bag style (Roscoe, 1969). The researcher collected data through the following process:

Step 1: To collect and analyze the characteristics and meanings of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery patterns by color, pattern, and meaning, a total of 54 pictures were included. These comprised 45 pictures from the book “Patchwork Art: Craft and Work” by Chen & He (2021), and 9 pictures taken during field

research at the Intangible Cultural Heritage Studio in Chenzhou. The researcher selected a total of 6 representative products for analysis, consisting of 5 pictures from the book “Patchwork Art: Craft and Work” and 1 picture taken during field research in Dabujiang village.

Step 2: The researcher uses the purposive sample (Experts / In-depth interview) to analyze and find out the favorite shape of bag for young women through 3 groups of interviews, consisting of 1) Intangible culture inheritor 1 person; 2) Designers & Sellers 3 persons; 3) Customers 5 persons who living in Chenzhou of Hunan, China.

Step 3: To design and develop a new bag by redesigning the Dabujiang patchwork embroidery pattern on the best favorite shape of bag for young women. Choose the Dabujiang patchwork embroidery characteristic pattern style with blessing meanings suitable for women and bag design. Extract the main pattern elements from the Dabujiang patchwork embroidery characteristic pattern for creative new pattern design in modern society. Used the new pattern to the best favorite shape of bag for young women.

Step 4: To evaluate the design of the Dabujiang patchwork embroidery bag’s design.

Population: The population used in this study consisted of young women under 40 ages who live in Chenzhou of Hunan, China.





Samples: The samples in this study consist of more than 384 young women residing in Chenzhou City, Hunan Province, China. These women consumers are interested in fashion and the adaptability of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery. (Roscoe, 1969).









Results

The presentation of the data analysis and research results is divided into four sections.

Step 1: Research results on the collection and analysis of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery characteristics by the patterns, colors, and meanings. The researcher collected and sorted out 54 pictures of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery products based on 6 theme categories, with each theme category having 9 pictures featuring different patterns. There are 45 pictures from the book "Patchwork Art: Craft and Work" co-authored by Chen & He (2021), which are traditional products, and 9 pictures from the Intangible Cultural Heritage Studio in Chenzhou, which are different from the book’s pictures and were collected by taking photos. From the 54 pictures, the researcher selected 6 pictures with representative patterns corresponding to the 6 themes. Refer to Table 1 for more details.

Table 1: Summarized the Dabujiang patchwork embroidery pattern characteristics and their samples.

| Theme Category | Pattern | Colors | Meaning | Representative Product | Representative pattern and meaning |
|--------------------|--|--|---|--|--|
| The plant pattern | peach, pomegranate, Buddha's hand, peony, lotus, plum, pumpkin | Red, Green, Grey, Pink, Black, White, Yellow | Happiness, wealth and rank, blessing meaning |  “Plum Blossom” bib |  The Plum Blossom pattern means to be happy. |
| The animal pattern | butterflies, bats, tigers, fish, magpies and lions | Red, White, Black, Yellow, Green, Purple, Orange, Blue | Benediction for health, good life, and avoiding evil. |  “Magpie” bib |  Magpie pattern means love sweet. |

| Theme Category | Pattern | Colors | Meaning | Representative Product | Representative pattern and meaning |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|
| The mythical creature's pattern | dragon, phoenix, and Kirin | Red, Pink, Green, Yellow, Purple, Black | Auspicious, high-status, and successful |  "Phoenix" bib |  Phoenix means Auspicious and successful. |
| The text pattern | "Fu", "Lu", "Shou", "Xi" and "Wan" | White, Green, Yellow, Red, Blue | Blessing words, longevity, and good luck |  Text blessing as "Fu" female bellyband |  "Fu" pattern means blessing and good luck. |
| The border pattern | long-life lock, ancient copper money, a vase, jade ruyi, eight diagrams | Black, Blue, Red, Pink, Yellow, Green | Auspicious, be rich and wealth |  "Ancient money" border bib |  Ancient money patterns mean Being rich and wealthy. |
| The folk stories pattern | SuXian legend, the eight immoralities across the sea | Green, Pink, Blue, Black, Yellow, Grey | Auspicious, blessing meaning and high spiritual quality |  "SuXian" mother wash by the river" wall painting |  "Suxian" legend pattern means lucky and beautiful. |

Through Table 1 can be found that Dabujiang patchwork embroidery as a traditional Chinese handicraft, embodies regional characteristics and cultural folklore related to blessings meanings. The colors, patterns, and meaning of Dabujiang reflect local customs and traditional Chinese culture.

Patterns: Through observation of 54 Dabujiang patchwork embroidery pictures, these patterns show that curve line, mainly in the form of symmetry and balance in layout designs. The patterns in these six theme categories reflect the inherent characteristics of each thing in terms of appearance and it shows the outline is mainly geometric and bionic patterns. Geometric patterns involve symmetry, balance, and repetition, creating a neat and stable visual sense. Bionic patterns transform and vary while maintaining inherent characteristics, forming rich and diverse designs.

Colors: According to the findings by Jian and Juan (2021), the primary colors commonly utilized in Dabujiang patchwork embroidery products include red, black, blue, yellow, and white which are the five orthodox colors. Through an analysis of 54 images, the researcher identified a total of 11 different colors present in Dabujiang patterns. Key colors such as red, blue, black, yellow, and white dominate the palette, with black emerging as the most prevalent color, accounting for over 87% of all patterns. Following closely, red encompasses 79.6% of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery products, while blue is featured in 77.8% of the items. Both yellow and white are present in 61.1% of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery products, as indicated in the researcher's data analysis, aligning with the outcomes of the study conducted by Chen &

He and He Juan. In addition, the background color is commonly used blue, black, and white. The color contrast is strong which shows the traditional culture characteristics.

Meanings: Each color in the Dabujiang patchwork has distinct meanings tied to local customs and ancient Chinese beliefs. Red symbolizes joyous occasions, blue denotes high status, black and white signify solemnity, and yellow represents nobility. Local old artists summed up three groups of common color matching principles: red with green means lively and lovely, red with yellow means to be loved, and red with black means strict and restrained color matching meaning. Generally, these colors are also the unique color-matching rules of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery. The patterns focus on themes of good luck and protection, often combining elements to create unified and meaningful designs. These patterns reflect the local culture's unique traditional folk customs and cultural characteristics. The theme of the Dabujiang pattern is centered on praying for good luck and warding off evil spirits and expresses the simplest folk beliefs and cultural connotations through homonyms and image comparison.

Step 2: Research results on determining the favorite shape of bag for young women

To find out the women's preferences for bag shape style and the pattern meaning for bag design. This step mainly searches data and interviews 3 groups of 9 people to determine the appearance of the bag.

At first, the researcher found four bag styles which are the top 4 sales on Taobao E-commerce sales platform in 2023. It can be seen in Figure 1. These bag styles are samples to choose from by interview.



Figure 1: The shape styles of bags that top 4 sales in bags on Taobao in 2023

Source from: collect and draw by Wang Siyi

Subsequently, the research conducted research data collection through 3 interview groups, including 9 interviewees: one of the inheritor's intangible cultural heritages, three bag sellers and designers, and five consumers from the Chenzhou location. The results are as follows:

1) Group 1 one person named He Juan, an inheritor of the intangible cultural heritage of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery in Hunan Province. She highlighted the high artistic value of this craft and emphasized the need for designs to align with local cultural characteristics with traditional meanings. He Juan underscored the importance of understanding the essence of Dabujiang in pattern and color design to resonate with consumers. The auspicious blessing implied by Dabujiang patchwork embroidery is suggested to use a circular form and symmetrical or balanced layout for design. She suggested using a large bag to design such as bag 1 because the pattern can be designed with many varieties of patterns by a large background.

2) Group 2 has 3 people who are customized service bag shop owners and designers in Chenzhou. They noted a preference among women for large bags due to their functionality and similar pricing to smaller bags. The sellers recommended updating the color palette to appeal to modern young women, suggesting using trendy color schemes like the Morandi colors for their successful sales. However, they also suggested the color design and matching should basic the five orthodox colors.

3) Group 3 that 5 young women including two college students and three young workers from Chenzhou. They expressed their preferences for the bag 1 style, citing convenience for various daily needs. Their inclinations towards bag styles and color choices align with themes of happiness, love, successful career, luck, wealth, and beauty, emphasizing the importance of emotional considerations in design.

As a result, incorporating traditional values and contemporary aesthetics can elevate the appeal and sales of Dabujiang patchwork embroidered bags. Most women favor the shape style of bag 1 and may prefer to the Morandi color scheme. The importance of integrating the Dabujiang patchwork pattern can be designed as a circular pattern and symmetrical or balanced layout. The pattern should combine similar meanings into the products to enhance traditional cultural characteristics. Understanding the profound

cultural significance of the Dabujiang patchwork is essential for creating designs. The redesigned pattern should appeal to women consumers who need to embody the meaning of happiness, love, a successful career, luck, wealth, and beauty.

Step 3: Research results on designing and developing new Dabujiang patchwork embroidery bags according to the needs of young women and the Dabujiang patchwork culture characteristics.







The study aims to redesign Dabujiang patchwork embroidery bags based on women's preference elements and cultural characteristics with traditional meaning. The bag design process is as follows:

1) Collected patterns from 54 pictures in Step 1 which symbolize blessing meaning of happiness, love, successful career, luck, wealth, and beauty by six theme categories.




2) Redesign the pattern to a circle form and symmetrical or balanced layout by the inheritor's intangible cultural heritage suggestion. The creative new pattern can be combined with a similar meaning. Redesign the color basic on the extracted product with five orthodox colors and matching with the Morandi color scheme.

3) Design the bag with the bag 1 style and use the redesigned pattern, color with culture meaning basic on the symmetrical layout which shows the traditional characteristic of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery. The design process can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Design the Dabujiang patchwork embroidery bag as a process

| Extract pattern | Redesigned Pattern | Redesigned Bag |
|--|--|--|
|  <p>Extract the plum blossom pattern from the plant theme category by the happiness meaning.</p> |  <p>Redesign the plum blossom pattern into a circle form that symbolizes happiness.</p> |  <p>The joy and happiness bag</p> <p>Designed the bag based on the symmetrical layout with traditional color matching and according to the original graphic shape with the bionic pattern in nature.</p> |
|  <p>Extract the magpie pattern from the animal theme category by the beloved meaning.</p> |  <p>Redesign the magpie pattern with another magpie pattern with a balanced layout that symbolizes love as a circular pattern form.</p> |  <p>The beloved bag</p> <p>Designed the bag based on the product color matching adding a magpie pattern with the plum blossom pattern by the bionic pattern.</p> |

| Extract pattern | Redesigned Pattern | Redesigned Bag |
|---|--|--|
|  <p>Extract the phoenix pattern from the mythical creature's theme category by successful career meaning.</p> |  <p>Redesign the phoenix pattern that completes the missing part to depict a full phoenix figure. The phoenix standing on one foot signifies in the center of the cloud geometric pattern exceptional achievement or elevated status in one's career.</p> |  <p>The Phoenix dance for nine days bag</p> <p>The redesigned phoenix is showcased in a circular moiré pattern, portraying the phoenix dancing in the clouds and symbolizing remarkable career successes. Incorporating a peony motif in the background, with blue as the dominant color, signifies a symbol of high status.</p> |
|  <p>The patterns of "Fu" and "Shou" are extracted from good luck which symbolizes good luck and longevity in Chinese.</p> |  <p>The variations in sizes of the "Fu" characters were rearranged through repeated compositions to achieve a balanced aesthetic with different forms.</p> |  <p>The great lucky bag</p> <p>The redesigned "Fu" pattern serves as the background image, while the "Shou" pattern takes the central position, portraying good luck and blessing longevity symmetrically on the bag. The Morandi color scheme, featuring light pink and blue, adds an innovative touch to the color palette while preserving the essence of the pattern.</p> |
|  <p>Extract the intricate and aspirational lines for an innovative design, the Ruyi pattern is encircled by the sewing pattern characteristic.</p> |  <p>Vertically arranged double money lines refine the surrounding plant motifs in a symmetrical structure, creating a visual representation of a continuous string of money through repetition.</p> |  <p>The plutocrats' bag</p> <p>The innovative double money pattern has symmetrical lines on both sides, with a central focus on the Ruyi pattern. Traditional double money with a yellow border at the bag's base conveys wishes of prosperity.</p> |

| Extract pattern | Redesigned Pattern | Redesigned Bag |
|--|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Extract the legend story pattern of SuXian's mother washed by the river which has "be beauty" meaning. | The lotus pattern from the legendary story is extracted and crafted in a bionic pattern with a symmetrical design. Reconstructed into a curved circular shape, the pattern symbolizes the softness and allure of women. | The charm enhancement bag The revamped design is split in half and symmetrically displayed on both sides of the bag. Featuring pink and purple hues from the Morandi color scheme, the design preserves Dabujiang's essence, with the story-inspired pattern positioned at the center. |

Step 4: Research results on surveying and analyzing the most preferred bag style among young women. According to the questionnaire from 424 young women, it was found that 23.58% of women prefer the "Phoenix Dance for Nine Days" bag style, which is the most favored among the six new bag styles. It can be seen in Table 3. This style features a phoenix pattern in blue, white, and black colors, symbolizing success in one's career.

Table 3 The questionnaire about the reason for choosing the new bag style

| Bag Style | Several people choose | The rate of choose | Ranking |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------|
| The Phoenix dance for nine days bag | 100 | 23.58% | 1 |
| The joy and happiness bag | 84 | 19.81% | 2 |
| The plutocrats' bag | 75 | 17.69% | 3 |
| The charm enhancement bag | 61 | 14.39% | 4 |
| The beloved bag | 54 | 12.74% | 5 |
| The great lucky bag | 50 | 11.8% | 6 |

Discussion

1. Many traditional Chinese patterns have similar cultural characteristics which appear in the common feature of pattern, color, and meaning. Wu (2020) notes that the craftsmanship seen in Dabujiang patchwork embroidery serves as a medium of cultural continuity, linking present-day practices with ancestral traditions. This link is significant because it showcases how traditional arts can preserve cultural heritage while remaining relevant in contemporary times. The layout composition of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery primarily exhibits symmetry and balance, like the traditional layout seen in Han embroidery. The symmetrical composition conveys a stable sense of order, while the balanced design reflects dynamic changes, showcasing the ancient craftsmen's design wisdom and their pursuit of beauty. The symmetry and balance in traditional Han embroidery not only fulfill aesthetic standards but also embody philosophical principles inherent in Chinese culture. This design approach symbolizes harmony and equilibrium in life, which are central tenets of Confucian thought. Dabujiang patchwork embroidery, drawing from these traditions, continues this legacy by maintaining these structural principles in its compositions.

In traditional Chinese culture, the orthodox colors representing the five elements frequently appear in various forms of embroidery. For instance, Han embroidery and Taoyuan embroidery predominantly use five colors: red, yellow, blue, black, and white, which are also the main colors in Dabujiang patchwork



embroidery (Kong, 2023; Chen & Zhang, 2018). Each of these colors carries specific meanings derived from the five elements. For example, red, which represents the element of fire, signifies auspicious happiness (Sun & Tong, 2021). Kong (2023) elaborates on the cultural and philosophical significance of these colors, explaining how they are not randomly chosen but are deeply embedded in the Chinese cosmological outlook based on the Five Elements (Wu Xing) theory. This theory attributes different elements (wood, fire, earth, metal, and water) to specific colors, each representing various natural phenomena and human emotions. Thus, the use of these colors in Dabujiang patchwork embroidery reflects this comprehensive worldview. The interpretation of these colors reflects the deep-rooted beliefs and values in traditional Chinese culture.

In conclusion, the patterns, colors, and meanings embedded in Dabujiang patchwork embroidery embody the rich cultural heritage of traditional Chinese embroidery. The use of symmetrical and balanced designs, alongside the symbolic colors of the five elements, reflects the ancient craftsmen's sophisticated aesthetics and cultural beliefs. This continuity and adaptability affirm the timeless appeal and cultural significance of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery in both historical and modern contexts. The studies by Kong (2023), Sun & Tong (2021), Wu (2020), and Sun & Tong (2021) collectively highlight how traditional craftsmanship can maintain cultural integrity while evolving to meet contemporary tastes, ensuring the preservation and ongoing relevance of this vital cultural heritage.

2. The motifs within the six major themes of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery each bear distinct meanings that reflect traditional Chinese culture and beliefs. An analysis of these patterns revealed that the phoenix totem is the most favored motif among traditional Chinese women. This preference is deeply rooted in the implications of Chinese traditional culture. The phoenix is a totem of the Chu ancestors, with a long history in the Chu state, serving as a symbol of local cultural beliefs. Han embroidery, which also originates from Chu culture, features phoenix patterns that symbolize peace (Chen & Zhang, 2018). Within Dabujiang culture, the phoenix pattern signifies success and high status. While the meanings of phoenix patterns vary slightly under the same cultural background, they universally represent blessings, prayers, and the totemic beliefs of traditional culture. This is evident across different regions and arts. For example, in Han embroidery, the phoenix pattern is often used to convey peace and harmony, emphasizing cultural continuity by using symbolic motifs to express communal values (Chen & Zhang, 2018). Additionally, the traditional Chinese motifs, including the phoenix, have the potential to bridge past and present cultural expressions. Despite modern-day changes in aesthetic preferences, these motifs continue to symbolize deep-seated cultural values such as success, high status, and auspicious blessings, which have been cherished across generations.

In summary, the phoenix pattern, as seen in both Dabujiang and other traditional Chinese embroideries, consistently symbolizes success, high status, peace, and cultural blessings. This illustrates a shared cultural heritage and the enduring power of traditional motifs in expressing the core values and beliefs of Chinese culture. The research by Chen and Zhang and the studies by Sun & Tong exemplify the persistent and adaptable nature of these cultural symbols, emphasizing their significant role in maintaining the continuity and relevance of traditional Chinese artistic expressions.

Conclusion

The results of a questionnaire survey conducted among 424 young women show that the most preferred bag style is the "Dance for Nine Days" bag. Interviews revealed that those favoring this style appreciate its high-status symbolism and their preference for traditional regional cultural patterns. The cultural significance of Dabujiang originates from Chinese Chu culture, where the phoenix is a prominent totem. In traditional Dabujiang patchwork embroidery, the phoenix and peony are often depicted together in a pattern known as "Phoenix Passes Through Peony," symbolizing a happy life and good fortune for women (Chen & Yuan, 2020). Therefore, the presence of the phoenix in Dabujiang embroidery on women's bags holds special cultural significance for many women in Chenzhou, symbolizing high virtue, grace, and the union of yin and yang. Traditionally associated with the empress, the phoenix embodies beauty, prosperity, peace, and transformation. This mythological creature's symbolism of renewal and resilience



resonates strongly with modern women's aspirations for personal growth and empowerment. By blending tradition with contemporary values, phoenix patterns appeal to consumers who appreciate meaningful cultural narratives in fashion and design. Many modern women prioritize independence and career success over traditional desires for marriage and children. Hence, the choice of the "Dance for Nine Days" bag reflects contemporary women's values of independence.

Shi (2019) found that the consumption preferences of post-80s women lean towards fashion, modernity, and hedonism, paying close attention to the additional connotations and cultural significance of goods in her research on the concept and practice of symbol consumption among post-80s female white-collar workers. The design of this new Dabujiang patchwork embroidered bag not only caters to modern women's needs but also imbues it with unique traditional cultural meaning. The phoenix symbolizes resilience and an eternal spirit, representing the idea of rising from adversity—a quality appreciated by modern women who value autonomy and determination. The phoenix's enduring significance in Chinese art and its modern reinterpretations highlight its continued relevance to contemporary society, reflecting themes of strength, independence, and identity.

The study found that modern women favor patterns symbolizing an independent spirit and career advancement, particularly those with traditional cultural designs and characteristics. The findings on the symbolism of the phoenix in Chinese culture and its resonance with modern women's aspirations could significantly inform the design of future Dabujiang patchwork embroidery products. By incorporating the themes of transformation, renewal, and empowerment associated with the phoenix, designers can create pieces that honor traditional motifs while speaking to contemporary values of strength and independence. This approach could lead to a revival of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery by making it more relatable and appealing to modern consumers, especially those seeking meaningful and culturally rich fashion choices.

Furthermore, this research highlights the potential for integrating cultural heritage into modern fashion trends in a way that preserves its original meaning and significance. By understanding and respecting the deep cultural narratives behind symbols like the phoenix, designers can innovate while maintaining authenticity. This blend of tradition and modernity can enhance the perceived value of traditional crafts, fostering appreciation and support for cultural heritage. By refining and innovating the design, the Dabujiang bag pattern now better aligns with modern women's preferences, expanding its appeal and ensuring the preservation of Dabujiang culture for future generations. Ultimately, these insights could contribute to a broader movement within the fashion industry, where cultural symbols are thoughtfully incorporated into contemporary designs, ensuring that the legacy and stories behind these symbols endure and evolve with current and future generations.

Recommendation

1. Theoretical Recommendation

Given the evolving times and advancements in traditional technology, it is theoretically advisable for traditional pattern design, such as that of Dabujiang, to adapt to contemporary aesthetic preferences. Specifically, Dabujiang pattern design might benefit from transitioning from two-dimensional to three-dimensional forms. For instance, it is suggested that designers could develop three-dimensional simulation effects for phoenix feathers by utilizing dense lines to enhance the texture.

Moreover, it would be theoretically advantageous for Dabujiang patchwork embroidery designers to leverage research findings to create products that embody the cultural significance and symbolism of the patterns. For example, a continuous series of patterns could convey specific meanings within the product designs. The four plants—plum blossom, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum—represent noble gentlemen and could be integrated into throw pillows or curtain designs. Such a comprehensive series of pattern designs would theoretically contribute to product diversity and potentially boost sales.

Additionally, product pattern design could be tailored to cater to varying demographic preferences. For instance, men's clothing could incorporate dragon totems with black and white backgrounds as a symbolic power and auspicious, paired with traditional Dabujiang patchwork techniques, preserving the essence of traditional culture meaning.



2. Practical Recommendations

To address the challenge of low production efficiency in Dabujiang patchwork embroidery while harnessing its rich cultural significance, practical recommendations can be implemented. The complexity of the production process often hampers mass production due to the refinement difficulties in the patterns lacking classification.

A practical solution proposed by the research is the creation of thematic pattern atlases that categorize the patterns into six distinct categories. Designers can utilize this classification system to innovate new designs for Dabujiang patchwork embroidery products. Additionally, adopting AI or software tools for pattern redesign and printing can streamline the production process by ensuring patterns are replicated accurately on cloth with suitable shapes and colors based on the classification. Craftsmen can then utilize templates derived from the Dabujiang patchwork embroidery atlas to fabricate cloth pieces, facilitating batch production and quicker turnaround times. By implementing this strategy, Dabujiang patchwork embroidery products can be manufactured more efficiently, thereby enhancing productivity.

Furthermore, conducting research that delves into traditional cultural patterns, colors, and meanings will play a pivotal role in shaping the future development of the Dabujiang patchwork handicraft industry. This focus on preserving cultural heritage while streamlining production processes is essential for the continued success and growth of the Dabujiang patchwork artistry. By implementing these practical recommendations that align with traditional cultural patterns, colors, and meanings, the Dabujiang patchwork handicraft industry can enhance its future development prospects and enable the efficient production of Dabujiang patchwork embroidery products.

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