

Preserving China's Heritage: Suzhou Double-Sided Embroidery on Casualwear

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the subject of Suzhou double-sided embroidery and how this folk art can be passed on and promoted in the twenty-first century by applying it to informal clothing. Otherwise, this craft technique may be on the verge of disappearance as the result of modernization and changing consumer inclinations, but trend-focused clothing designs are an effective way to breathe new life into this type of craft. In this study, TAM and TII are employed to facilitate a discussion of the traditional embroidery in modern clothing. They envisage the continued economic feasibility of Suzhou embroidery, changed perception and a sustainable fashion system. Incorporating tradition with the contemporary world accordingly, the research presents new approaches to how to sustain this old art in the competitive environment of contemporary society.

Keywords: Suzhou Embroidery, Cultural Heritage, Casualwear, Technology Acceptance Model, Sustainable Fashion, Modern Fashion Integration

Introduction

The long history and tradition of deco embroidery in China can be seen in the Suzhou double side embroidery which comes from Suzhou Jiangsu province. This complex process entails making designs on both the front and reverse of the silk fabric with beautiful patterns and this takes talent and more so skill (Khan, 2023). The Suzhou embroidery peaked in the Ming and the Qing period where it became a symbol of power as well as everyday dress. However, as with many other crafts, the Chinese economic boom and the changing fashion trends of the twentieth century led to the decline of Suzhou embroidery. The exquisite and labour-intensive quality of the embroidery also made it difficult to reuse in large-scale production. Moreover, younger generations stopped wearing traditional Chinese dresses garnished with Suzhou embroidery and switched to wearing Western outfits. Currently, there are less than one hundred embroidery workshops left in Suzhou, most of which offer mere souvenir purposes.

The Suzhou double-sided embroidery is therefore seen as a strong cultural representation of ancient China, which is about the city of Suzhou thousands of years ago. This craft has significantly influenced the value system, dynasties, imperial courts, and people's daily lives (Ma & Li, 2023). This vehicle has historical significance due to immense attention to detail, visual appeal, and a combination of artistic ambition and accuracy. Suzhou double-sided embroidery has evolved through the centuries to become abstract art not just cloth and thread but continuing to inspire the better-off and the populace with empowered motifs for royal palanquins and quotidian commodities. The complexity of the patterns and the creation of elaborate designs on both sides of the sheer silk fabric also demonstrate the passed-down skill and hard work of craft workers from prehistoric times.

Therefore, despite the Suzhou double-sided embroidery originating from historical and cultural aspects, its future is threatened with extinction, especially due to modernization and changing market trends. Technological advances and a focus on the industrial model in terms of company development have put traditional crafts aside. Sadly those practices are now a thing of the past in the current world of fashion and marketing where such cultural items are almost forgotten and their significance lost. This study seeks to fill this research gap by focusing on a context that may be traced at the intersection of the 'classic' and 'new'. The second technique of double-sided embroidery which originated in Suzhou seems to be used in modern fashion, especially casual wear as a way of adapting to modernization (Fülemile, 2020). This is through the integration of this traditional art in ordinary wear and as an insight of the study aims at ensuring that this particular art form does not die off in the face of globalization and mass production. The ultimate end goal of this approach is not only to promote and continue the practice of Suzhou double-sided embroidery but also to promote and spread awareness of China arts.

The practice of traditional embroidery is a severe threat to the country's cultural heritage since it is getting sidelined. Inheriting history, Suzhou embroidery has become one of the most representative artisanries of Chinese classical aesthetics. The erasure of these traditional folk crafts erases a connection to China's history and a part of its heritage (Zarrow, 2020). The Chinese government recognizes the importance of the conservation of culture and heritage, in which Suzhou embroidery has not been left out since attempts have been made towards the revival of arts as well as supporting embroidery workshops. However, it is also necessary to look for other methods to bring such crafts into the modern world where such products can be as profitable as possible. One such strategy is integrating traditional concepts like Suzhou embroidery with present-day concepts of fashion and clothing. Casualwear, which can be bought at any clothing shop, is a chance to combine the things from the old days with fashionable pieces of today. Contemporary interpretations of conventional folk arts may be appreciated more by the younger generation of consumers who appreciate their country's heritage than the actual antiques. Therefore, introducing Suzhou embroidery into casual wear, could guarantee a better future for artisans and propagate the art of this craft from Suzhou to other regions across China and other countries. Despite the beauty and uniqueness of embroidery as an artwork, it should be put to use in the advertising of China and style (Moniruzzaman et al., 2021). However, to encourage people to patronize Suzhou's traditional crafts regularly to appreciate and support traditional arts in their daily lives, items such as t-shirts, jackets, and shoes could be embroidered with Suzhou designs and made affordable for people.

China has experienced tremendous economic transition in recent years depicting a period of urbanization and industrialization. This advancement has put the country among the world's

most competitive economies but it has also exposed the rich cultural practices and major cultural practices to the risk of being eroded. Thus, shifts are occurring in the cultural industries of China due to urbanization, global influence, and customer preference. The fast transformation and development of Chinese urbanization due to economic development can cause the new integrated urban society to replace the traditional cultural areas. This change in spatial relations not only changes the physical context of the location but also erases the context that sustains many classic trades (Harvey, 2020). Artisans are being driven out of cities and heritage areas where they acquired their competence and skills through their work. Globalization also increases the pressure faced by traditional cultural industries even more. The markets are internationalized and, due to the availability of multiple similar products, the overall environment is unfavourable to small hobby crafts. The process of globalization and individualism in consumption has the potential to overshadow the richness of the Chinese tradition with shallow and more lucrative products. The saving of cultural industries is not just a matter of the preservation of antiques; it is also vital in making people of Chinese descent feel proud to be so. Thus using traditional crafts in today's markets is a good formula for preserving cultural values while trying to find ways to market them (Alfian et al., 2020). This delicate balance is crucial to preserve the rich network of cultural values and traditions of China in the face of changes ushered by modernity.

However, commercialization is as important as authenticity, and that is why the potential and development of this embroidery technique, the aesthetics and tradition need to be researched in detail (Cseh, 2023). This approach entails designer artisans, historians, and governmental organizations to work together in developing future products that mirror modern needs while embracing Suzhou embroidery aspects intact. Learning from other success stories from other parts of the world where cultural designs have been integrated into modern wear can also prove to be insightful. Introducing Suzhou's double-sided embroidery element into casualwear, I believe is a pioneering attempt to promote this artistic heritage. As casualwear and tribal wear have mass appeal, this fashion line is perfect for demonstrating the versatility of Suzhou embroidery and the intricate techniques used. This research aims at developing a symbiosis between the cultures of the past self-representation through art, and the modern concept of fashion. The application of casualwear for embroidery offers a new level of appeal for viewers and an effective means of educating those who are normally uninterested in handicrafts about Suzhou double-sided embroidery (Zheng, 2021).

The integration of Suzhou double-sided embroidery and casual outfits satisfies the current consumer shift towards culturally appealing and environmentally friendly garments. People pay attention to the consequences they cause to the environment, and the desire to respect and support traditional craft, which reveals the cultural depth and sophistication of timeless designs, is becoming more and more requested. All in all, due to its history and high quality, the adoption of Suzhou embroidery brings novelty to casualwear while enhancing sustainability values by embracing timeless and meaningful garments in the space of fast fashion (Tran, 2024). Such a strategic plan also plays the role of maintaining the Suzhou double-sided embroidery traditional handicraft and at the same time contributes to the changing of consumer attitudes and behaviours towards a more culturally sensitive and environmentally friendly fashion industry. It embodies the social modernization of tradition and guarantees that China's traditional culture is up-to-date, accepted and flourishing in today's global fashion sphere.

Many craftworks are fading from the world, especially Suzhou Shitang double-sided embroidery, and this question is one of the most urgent problems of modernization and globalization. Mass production substitutes for the unique and time-tested techniques that have been developed by generations of skilled artisans and thus, cultural identity is at risk. An art form that has existed for a thousand years and encompasses double-sided embroidery of Suzhou is threatened by new materials that can be copied fairly easily. This not only impacts the culture and tradition valued in this craft but also threatens the future of artists who constantly strive to enhance their abilities.

The specific objectives for the study are given below

- To identify the historical development and artistic influences shaping Suzhou double-sided embroidery on its integration into Chinese casualwear for heritage preservation.
- To evaluate the aesthetic effect of the Suzhou double-sided embroidery technique on casualwear.
- To design innovative strategies and transmission modes for disseminating the Suzhou double-sided embroidery technique among the Chinese youth within casualwear.

Literature Review

Suzhou's double-sided embroidery technique is one of the most exquisite kinds of embroidery works, which dates back more than a thousand years ago and was born in the land of China, Suzhou in Jiangsu province (Panfeng, 2020). This art form was designed during the early development of Chinese culture when Suzhou embroidery masters attempted to work on some experimentation to achieve a distinctive and intriguing end product. At the beginning of the transition, the practitioners worked on one-sided graphics mainly involving natural objects such as landscapes, animals and plants in detail. Some of the problems that the artisans encountered as this art form became popular are some of the following; how to make Suzhou embroidery different from other regional embroidery styles. This challenge spurred a revolutionary innovation: pareu embroidery, a specific technique that includes carefully sewing designs on finer sides of silk fabric at both sides (Atallah, 2024). The creation of this technique established how talented and skilled the craftsmen were but also how they applied art in their work. The craft provided a dual-sided value to it hence making it an art of its kind that was quite different from any other. The great groundbreaking laid the foundation for the future golden eras of Suzhou embroidery during the periods of the Ming and Qing dynasties and therefore it helped to preserve the culture and to turn it into an international icon of eternity.

Suzhou embroidery reached its apex in the Ming and Qing dynasties when the art form became far more than a regional custom. Amidst this transformation, Suzhou earned its reputation as one of the great cultural and artistic cities of China. Apart from the imperial courts and other royalty, the affluent class offered unrivalled support and demand for Suzhou's Reverse side embroidery art on all forms of clothing, accessorize, and trinkets. Embroidery art in Suzhou was certainly well developed during the first centuries of these dynasties as the masters pursued the subtle art of putting delicate stuff with complex patterns etched on the sheer silk cloth (Silberstein, 2020). During this period, art began to intrude the society's displays and became part of people's garments and wear; from expensive clothing to ordinary wear by commoners. Suzhou embroidery gained a reputation associated with elegance, refinement, and characteristically Chinese disposition. Suzhou double-sided embroidery art soon became preferred by imperial court art because of its luxuriousness.

They transformed from simple pieces of clothing to items that reflected the wearer's societal class through carefully embroidered designs and rich materials. The versatility of this technique was well illustrated when moving from the ceremonial wear that was once used to the everyday wear much deserved by the fortunate few who got to wear art masterpieces. Suzhou craftsmen provide fine skills in the interweaving of threads and silk with motifs of nature and symbols that are cultural. Consequently, Suzhou embroidery was not only employed by the higher class to beautify their clothing, but it embodied the essence of China's aesthetic and timeless culture as a symbol of the nation's ideas towards art.

Bridging computer embroidery with leisure wear is a rather provoking intersection between innovation and tradition in the latest apparel. This trend proves that artistic elements have played significant roles in transitioning embroidery, especially Suzhou double-sided embroidery, to casual garments in China. Reviewing the development of the concept and evaluating its aesthetics allowed understand how this combination of conventional and innovative philosophies has benefited fashion greatly (Ozdamar Ertekin et al., 2020). The embroidery itself is a reminder of the history of culture and people's work, an art of designs stemming from centuries of talented roots. The art of fine embroidery and the control possessed by this technique has been practiced for the generation ensuring the iconography of Chinese art. It can be seen that Suzhou's double-sided embroidery has developed into a magnificent picture, which immersed different Chinese dynasties into it. The Tang Dynasty was characterised by several auspicious cultural symbols which were followed by elegant nature-oriented designs of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The change of Suzhou double-sided embroidery is at the same time an exciting history influenced by different dynasties in Chinese history as well as the mirror of cultural and artistic transformation.

The implementation of Suzhou double-sided embroidery on casualwear is based on a complex process that successfully reconciles the dualism of tradition and the contemporary. The subtlety is found in ornamental accents that stand for something and embody meaning in every detail of the seam. These elements imbue Suzhou double-sided embroidery with the function of storytelling and turn daily wear into garment art. In using a mixture of annular meanings and today's shapes, the people of Suzhou have created a clear visual language that is both appealing to the traditionalist as well as the modernist. Wearers of these casual wear are not only incorporating traces of history into the current trends but doing so in a manner that is the result of painstaking effort (Du et al., 2021). This fusion revives old apparel to be worn, which in turn, incorporates elements of Chinese culture that the wearer can bring with him or her anywhere. Instead of staying as an ornament that adds a pinch of flavour to an outfit, the embroidery acquires a new layer of meaning: it is a link between eras that would be appealing to those who appreciate the classics and those who enjoy the thrill of the new. Suzhou double-sided embroidery is a living example showing how the golden age of artistic skills is alive and well even today. It not only makes clothing look beautiful with good stitching but it makes sure that the sentiments of respective centuries exist in today's cloth textures. Historic and artistic elements integrated into Suzhou double-sided embroidery give the fabric a new form of visual art that incorporates history and art into the fashion sphere as a way of encouraging wearers to engage in cultural beauty through fashion (Chen & Xue, 2021).

Known as one of the ancient forms of artwork that originated in various cultures of different centuries, embroidery has turned into a field that is full of historical references combined with modern tendencies. stitch from its historical perspective and its incorporation with the present tendencies gives a unique blend that retains the cultural heritage while in a position to capture the future trends today. Due to the history of development, embroidery being one

of the oldest art forms inherited from ancient Egypt, China, Mesopotamia and other ancient countries has regional characteristics reflecting socio-religious and technological changes of different periods (Babadjanov, 2020). An example of single-sided embroidery that was mastered or developed in history is the Chinese single-sided embroidery from Jiangsu Province where people mastered the use of embroidery on both sides of the cloth to develop impressive visual masterpieces. The Suzhou double-sided embroidery experienced the transformation of style throughout the ages while incorporating the influence of distinct Chinese dynasties that contributed to their imprint in terms of culture and art.

In Europe's Renaissance period, embroidery was reintroduced whereby garments became very embellished with gold and silver threads. With time, embroidery was viewed as a status symbol, reflecting the prowess of artists. Embroidery was gradually included as decorations on textiles due to the mechanized embroidery machines that emerged during the Industrial Revolution. The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed a revival of hand embroidery borrowed from folk arts and ethnic groups with the use of embroidery improving the expression of individuality. Salinger has revealed that craftsmanship is experiencing a resurgence in the 21st century through differentiation (Rojas, 2021). The use of handcrafts and artisanal products has brought back the old-fashioned embroidery with more style and flair. Today, embroidering is used in fashion by designers to interconnect the tradition of hand-made designs with the novelty of young trends. Present-day production and exportation of embroidered products and fabrics across the globe have allowed the fusion of cultures resulting in embroidery designs with a blend of different cultures from various parts of the world. Contemporary practices have also focused on the use of non-conventional materials and varieties of surfaces along with this art form. As people evaluate fashion trends and historical development the two are not mutually exclusive but rather cyclic. Moreover, embroidery introduces elements of stories that augment the importance of garments and makes designers incorporate cultural elements into their work to fulfil the needs of consumers (Gonçalves, 2023). Today people are paying more attention to eco- and slow-fashion which also correlates with embroidery because it lengthens the usage of a garment and creates a connection between the person wearing a piece and the maker. Consumers seek customized, artisanal items, and embroidery offers a way to fulfil this need.

And in the Chinese casualwear designs traditional embroidery techniques have penetrated due to the richness of the eastern cultures. From this conventional and contemporaneous examination, it is discernible how this historical craft has influenced Chinese casual wear in terms of culture, aesthetics and style. Traditional embroidery in the casualwear of the Chinese originated from ancient cultures and the stitch works give an implication of regional products and cultural significance. Emerging out of this are different changes in styles of embroideries across the different dynasties but shows the impact that traditional craft can still have on the common fashion of people today (Ruiting, 2023). When dynasties were over, the features of embroidering tape and other casual wear also evolved and each one had imprints on Chinese casual wear. Embroidered textiles reflect the status of the person using the clothing, his or her station in life, and his or her connection to a particular culture. Instead of merely decorating, it goes further to demonstrate the rhythm and the longevity of the relationship that has defined Chinese casualwear for centuries.

Theoretical Framework

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

TAM, defined by Davis (1989) and further elaborated on by Davis et al (1989), was based on the Theories of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior. Hence, TAM is widely used in research since it established its validity in predicting the usage and acceptance of new technology. As posited by Liu et al (2022), TAM is a central model that helps elucidate the drivers of technology acceptance. Central to TAM are two primary constructs: beliefs that encompass two constructs which are perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU). PU stands to highlight the extent to which an individual thinks that the application of a certain system would improve his/her working performance and PEOU refers to the extent to which an individual perceives that the use of a certain system would not require him/her effort. Specifically, in the context of education TAM appears relevant because new digital technology is incorporated into learning settings more and more. Education today involves incorporating complex devices and applications which makes the TAM an ideal model for judging various technological impacts in the learning environment (Sadeck, 2022). For instance, through internet connection mobile devices allow for instant access to large volumes of information/learner data and the integration of these mobile devices in learning can be understood using TAM. In other words, if the learner's perception of how useful the mobile learning application is to them and how easy it is to use it, he or she will make it a habit or practice to use to application in learning, which in effect helps in enhancing his/her learning ability.

The strength of TAM essentially transcends into correctly estimating the acceptance and usage of new technologies. It facilitates the freedom to assess the entire technology adoption process by deducing its emphasis on the perceived usefulness and ease of use of educational technologies. Moreover, TAM can encourage the adoption of new technologies for better learning experiences and increased effectiveness of educational practices. TAM offers insights more specific into how technology can be used in the educational context and its impact by focusing on the perceived attitudes of users.

Theory of Individual Innovativeness

The subsequently presented Theory of Individual Innovativeness (TII) is proposed to help researchers explain the diffusion of innovations in terms of individual characteristics. According to Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory, some characteristics negate or affirm the utilization of a new practice. As pointed out by Ali (2019), personality and tastes, demographics, previous experience, and contacts are such factors (Singh et al., 2021). According to TII, people with a higher level of innovativeness are more likely to adopt new technologies or practices.

The theory identifies five key attributes that influence the adoption of an innovation: significant other, adaptability, permeability, ease of test, ease of adoption, and visible measurability. Perceived complexity is one of the attributes of innovations and consists of the extent to which an innovation is considered to be difficult to understand and learn. Relative advantage refers to the capacity of the type of innovation under consideration to present a higher value relative to the current practices of potential adopters (Montes de Oca Munguia et al., 2021). Trialability refers to the possibility of using the innovation in a trial manner or in a limited way before going full-scale in its implementation. Relative advantage can be defined as how much an innovation is considered to be superior to the idea that it displaces. Observability on the other hand means the amount of protrusion that an innovation outcome displays.

Conclusion

The application of Suzhou double-sided embroidery in the design of modern casual wear, therefore, can be an important approach to the strategic rationalities to maintaining the Chinese culture, as the society becomes more and more globally influenced. Thus, this research highlights the importance of traditional arts like Suzhou embroidery and presents how this craft can be useful for presenting clothes in today's society. Using theoretical models such as the Technology Acceptance Model or the Theory of Individual Innovativeness, the study shows how these antiquated methods can be introduced into modern costumes. It not only supports the continuing viability of the craft on a financial level but also enhances culture and responsible consumption. Finally, blending tradition and technology by incorporating historical motifs with contemporary fashion styles makes Suzhou double-sided embroidery to be innovative and relevant to modern fashion whilst strengthening the cultural heritage.

Contribution

The findings of this research would assist in the documentation and evolution of Suzhou double-sided embroidery by incorporating it into modern-day casual clothing. This ensures that the fashion fits with modern society and economics to ensure that this ancient method remains economical. Traditional embroidery in modern dressing can be made possible through the use of TAM and the Theory of Individual innovativeness. Apart from fulfilling its objective of safeguarding cultural assets, this strategy also resurrects relevant old crafts and preserves sustainable fashion that will benefit artisans at the same time help audiences appreciate distinctive Chinese artistic creations more.

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