

Application of Modern Design Cultural in Chinese Traditional Handicraft Products for New Apperance and Commercial Value

Yanyan Wang, Assoc. Prof. Ts. Dr. Hassan Alli, Dr. Siti Mastura Md Ishak

Faculty of Design and Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM, Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

Email: halli@upm.edu.my, ct_mastura@upm.edu.my

Corresponding Author Email: wang909020@163.com

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i2/20664>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i2/20664

Published Date: 11 February 2024

Abstract

Chinese traditional handicraft product is unique cultural connotations and exquisite craftsmanship and high global reputation. However, how to combine this unique art form with the modern appearance and enhance its commercial value is an urgent problem. The study aims to explore how the commercial value of traditional Chinese handicraft products can be optimised under the application of modern design culture. Comprehensive literature review is used as main data source to overview and support the issue under investigation. While two (2) case study of Chines traditional handicraft products selected to verify the significance of handicraft products. The results found several factors that needs to be considered during the development of Chinese traditional handicrafts products for better appearance. In addition, incorporating the craftsmanship into cultural and modern creative product elements is recommended that can promotes the seamless integration of handicraft and cultural resources with creative design toward sustainability of inheritance of the Chinese civilisation.

Keyword: Traditional Handicrafts, Cultural And Creative Products, Cultural Heritage, Sustainability

Introduction

Traditional handicraft products play an important role in passing on national culture, promoting employment and regional economic development (Yang et al., 2018). Modern design culture plays a pivotal role in reshaping and revitalising the Chinese traditional handicrafts products and building a bridge between tradition and modern aesthetics. Modern design culture allows the Chinese traditional handicraft products to evolve while retaining the cultural essence. It also provides the artisans with the creative freedom to reinterpret the

traditional motifs, materials, and techniques attempt to ensuring the continued relevance of these handicraft in a rapidly changing of the world. The application of modern design elements in the Chinese traditional handicraft product can enhances the product appeal. Moreover, the cultural and creative products that created by aligning with current design trends can be appealed a wider international audience, meeting the aesthetic needs of modern consumers, and open new markets as well as opportunities for the craftspeople. Adapt the form and function of the traditional handicraft products to the modern habits and preferences as well as can be accessible to a diverse and dynamic consumer base, especially the youth. In addition, the quality and added value of traditional handicrafts can be improved by introducing modern design concepts and methods (Cheng & De Bont, 2022).

Innovation and creativity are fostered by the intersection of modern design and traditional craftsmanship, which encourages artisans to experiment with the new materials, techniques, and forms, and pushing the boundaries of Chinese traditional craftsmanship. The successful the Chinese traditional handicraft products can ensure the sustainable of the livelihoods for traditional craftspeople. By increasing the commercial value, the artisans can receive fair remuneration for their skills and craftsmanship, thus can facilitating the transmission and dissemination of the traditional handicraft products. In addition, through cross-border cooperation, the Chinese traditional handicraft products also can be combined with modern culture, technology, and other elements to create a more attractive brand image. Currently, the design and commercial value optimisation of Chinese traditional handicraft products show that following trends, a) the wide application of digital technology provides more possibilities for the inheritance and innovation of traditional handicrafts, b) the popularity of the concept of environmental protection has made green design a new trend in the development of traditional handicrafts, and c) the increase in international exchanges has provided more opportunities for the international development of traditional handicrafts.

However, there are also some challenges of the Chinese traditional handicraft products such as the fierce market competition of the traditional handicrafts followed by the lack of innovative talents, and the protection of intellectual property rights. According to Sun et al., (2022), the integration of Chinese traditional handicraft products with modern design culture is both the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture and the enrichment the development of modern design. In terms of optimising commercial value, the traditional handicrafts can be achieved by introducing modern design concepts, improving quality, and added value, expanding marketing channels and cross-border cooperation. Hence, the objective of this study is to face up to the challenges such as market competition, lack of talents and intellectual property protection of Chinese traditional handicraft products. The prosperity of the traditional handicraft market contributes to the protection of cultural heritage through innovating and enhancing the commodity value of Chinese traditional handicraft products and revitalise in the process of modernisation.

Background of Study

Traditional Chinese handicrafts are an integral part of China's cultural heritage and innovation is still needed to realise their commercial value and sustainable potential. Modern handicrafts, as cultural and creative expressions imbued with humanism, draw unique value from their artistic components. This value not only enhances the uniqueness of the product, but also its market and commercial appeal. Most traditional crafts have the status of

international, national, provincial, and municipal intangible cultural heritage. They include not only production techniques and skills, but also represent valuable resources that can be transformed into capital. However, recently the traditional handicrafts are principally facing many challenges and opportunities.

The Role of Handicrafts

Traditional handicraft not only represent the skills and experiences of the past, but also convey our cultural memories and emotions. People began to make tools and decorations using natural materials and tools. These handicrafts are humble, but they are the beginning of traditional handicrafts. Handicrafts are all part of life, ranging from the jewellery of the nobility to the daily necessities of the common man. Traditional handicrafts still hold an important place today. Many places still retain unique traditional handicrafts such as weaving, pottery, carpentry, and carving. These skills are not only a source of local pride but also an important part of cultural heritage (Zhan & Walker, 2019). However, the production of traditional handicrafts faces many challenges due to various economic, cultural, and social reasons. In the process of modern industrialisation, traditional handicrafts are gradually replaced by machine-made products. However, some visionary people began to recognise the value of traditional handicrafts and tried to integrate them into modern life. The combination of modern and traditional handicrafts has become a characteristic of this era.

The revival of traditional handicrafts has become a trend with the rise of environmental awareness and people's recognition of local culture (Deb et al., 2022). Recently, there are many places have begun to pay attention to the inheritance and development of the traditional handicraft products and encouraging the young people to learn and participate in the work. At the same time, some commercial organisations have begun to pay attention to and invest in the production and sale of the traditional handicrafts, providing new opportunities for the development of these skills. Furthermore, the use of modern technology such as 3D printing and digital design also can provide unlimited possibilities for the innovation of the traditional handicraft products. In addition, it also can help the traditional handicraft products to be better protected and passed on and giving them a new lease of life in our today's society.

Modern Design Culture

Modern design culture, as a dynamic and evolving field, reflects the evolving aesthetic preferences, technological advances, and social values of contemporary society. It not only influences mere aesthetic concepts, but also shapes lifestyles and consumption patterns. Scholars have extensively researched the modern design culture of traditional handicrafts from the perspectives of design concept, style, industry dynamics and market forces. From the perspective of design concept and style, many scholars believe that modern design culture places great emphasis on personalisation, diversity, user experience, emotional expression, and environmental protection. In addition, these elements were constitutes a design spirit that is not only visually appealing but also consistent with contemporary social values and the requirements of sustainable development (Brown & Vacca, 2022).

Studying the impact of modern design culture on traditional handicraft products from the perspective of design industry and market dynamics can assert that cultural and creative handicraft products to grown into a huge industry and market segment. However, this growth

has intensified competition among designers and brands as well as highlighting the needs for innovation and differentiation in the market (Banerjee & Mazzarella, 2022). In addition, the popularity of design education has prompted scholars to examine the impact of design education on modern design culture, particularly in the inheritance and innovation of the traditional handicraft products. Mostly, there are believe that the design education should prioritise the development of innovation, critical thinking skills, interdisciplinary knowledge, and practical skills among the students, which are equally important to those working in the handicraft industry.

An important supporting factor for the development of modern design culture is globalisation. This has facilitated the integration of different cultural elements in design practice. Designers always draws their inspiration from different cultural backgrounds attempt to create the vibrant globalised designs that can reflect the richness of our interconnected world. In essence, the exploration of the many facets of modern design culture, including design philosophy, industry dynamics, market forces, education, and the impact of globalisation on aesthetics, highlights the profound impact of modern design culture on contemporary society and traditional handicraft products. An interconnectedness forms as the backbone of a design culture that not only reflects the zeitgeist but also actively it shapes.

Consumption Preferences and Market Trends of Handicraft Products

People's demand for material products and the way they consume them are undergoing profound changes. Especially in the field of handicraft products, consumers are paying more and more attention to the quality, artistry and cultural connotations of the products, as well as to the environmental protection and sustainability of the products (Boccella & Salerno, 2016). Traditional handicraft products, with their unique artistry and cultural connotations have become an important choice for consumers in their pursuit of quality life. They are not only having aesthetic value but also carry history, culture, and tradition, bringing people spiritual satisfaction and pleasure. At the same time, the traditional handicraft products are also can protect our environmental and contribute for sustainable development, reduce resource consumption and environmental pollution during it production process that in line with the modern society's pursuit of green, healthy, and sustainable development.

Consumers are paying more and more attention to the quality and personalisation of products and showing keen interest in uniquely designed and well-made handicraft products. More and more consumers are willing to buy environmentally friendly and sustainable handicraft products to satisfy their environmental awareness and social responsibility. With the popularity of the Internet, online sales platforms have also become an important channel for the sale of handicraft products. Meanwhile, offline brick-and-mortar shops have also attracted consumers' attention to handicraft products by organising exhibitions, lectures, and other activities to enhance brand awareness and reputation. Driven by digitalisation and technological innovation, the traditional handicraft industry as the source of inspiration for tourism souvenirs and cultural and creative products has shown the development trend of diversification, digitalisation and internationalisation of gifts (Liu & Xie, 2022).

Cultural and creative products and tourism souvenirs are no longer confined to the traditional cultural symbols and a single production process, but the product designers have combined

the traditional culture with the current popular elements and adopted technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to bring more intuitive product interaction and experience for consumers as well as bringing more innovative increments to the handicraft industry. AI and other technologies to bring consumers with more intuitive product interaction and experience for the handicraft industry that can bring more innovation increment. Users' attitudes and concepts towards the consumption of traditional handicraft products have gradually changed, placing more emphasis on the communication of emotional substance through handicraft products in daily life. Consumption of new handicraft products has changed from traditional festivals such as Chinese New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, etc., and nowadays the consumption of products has shown a trend from centralised to decentralised and internationalised.

Materials and Methods

The methods adopted in this study includes an extensive literature review, which plays a key role in understanding the existing body of knowledge and keeping abreast of the latest research findings. In addition, several representatives of the Chinese traditional handicraft products were selected as case studies to assess the impact of such applications on commercial value by analysing their use of modern design elements, as well as market feedback.

Results and Discussion

This study found that the commercial value of Chinese traditional handicraft products has been significantly enhanced with the application of modern design culture. This not only helps to protect and pass on this unique cultural heritage, but also favours the expansion of its commercial market. However, it also needs to realise that how to maintain the uniqueness of traditional handicraft products while meeting the demands of the modern market is still an issue we need to explore in depth. The results of the study as also found the there are three (3) main significant factors need to consider in the development of Chinese traditional handicraft products are;

- a) Application of Minimalism: By simplifying the appearance design of traditional handicraft products, the design concept of modern minimalism brings a more modern and fashionable visual effect to these products, making them more attractive in the market.
- b) Functionality enhancement: modern design focuses on the functionality of products, which makes traditional handicraft products more competitive in the market by improving their practicality while maintaining their unique aesthetics.
- c) Environmental protection: Modern design pays more and more attention to the concept of environmental protection, which is also reflected in traditional handicraft products. By using environmentally friendly materials and production processes, these products not only have higher ecological value, but also make them more attractive in the market.

Case Study: Modern Design Forms for Traditional Handicrafts

In modern society, the design forms of Chinese traditional handicraft products are constantly evolving and innovating. Modern design forms for traditional Chinese handicraft products often involve the fusion of traditional techniques, materials and aesthetics with

contemporary design principles (He, 2018). The following are some specific cases to demonstrate the modern design forms of the Chinese traditional handicraft products:

a) Combination of traditional elements and modern technology: Many modern designers combine elements from the Chinese traditional handicrafts with modern technology to create products with unique styles. For example, traditional patterns and colours have been incorporated into the design of modern ceramics, glass, and metal products, retaining traditional aesthetics but with a modern look. Modern design forms of traditional Chinese handicrafts often involve a fusion of traditional techniques, materials, and aesthetics with contemporary design principles.

b) Humanised design: An important trend in modern design is to focus on user experience. By studying people's needs and behavioural habits, designers humanise traditional handicraft products to make them more compatible with modern life.



Figure 1: Various Cultural Creative Products

Source: photo by author

As one of China's historical and cultural heritages, the Forbidden City Museum has always been widely noticed and loved. In recent years, the Forbidden City Museum has also launched a series of traditional handicraft cultural and creative products, whose "Forbidden City IP" is unique in design, rich in cultural connotations, and of high practicality and collection value. These products, which focus on the application of traditional cultural elements in their design and combine them with modern aesthetic concepts, have been well received by consumers, and their sales have shown steady growth over the past few years. In Figure 1, the cultural and creative products from the Forbidden City, the design source of the pattern comes from the famous painting "Thousands of Miles of Rivers and Mountains" of the Northern Song Dynasty, combining the traditional pattern with the modern lead-free glass, and with the dazzle process, which is both environmentally friendly and safe, but also presents a delicate texture. As in Picture 1, the cultural and creative products from the Forbidden City, the design source of the pattern comes from the famous painting "Thousands of Miles of Rivers and Mountains" of the Northern Song Dynasty, combining the traditional pattern with the modern lead-free glass, and with the dazzle process, which is both environmentally friendly and safe, but also presents a delicate texture.

The product on the right side is creatively designed in the shape of a dragon, using hand-painted gold craft to depict the dragon's horns, hand-painted glaze craft to dot the eyes, using

high-quality clay, the cup body is rounded and full, and the cup handle is created in the shape of a dragon's tail, which adds a sense of ceremony and interaction for the user.

a) Eco-sustainable design: With increased environmental awareness, many designers are focusing on the sustainability of traditional handicraft products. They are reducing their environmental impact by using eco-friendly materials such as bamboo, wood, and paper, and designing reusable packaging and structures.

b) Cross-border collaboration: Cross-border collaboration is a trend in modern design, where designers are beginning to work with traditional craftspeople to combine traditional craft techniques with modern design concepts. For example, some designers have combined traditional Chinese embroidery techniques with fashion design to create unique garments and accessories.

c) Digital design: With the spread of digital technology, the design of traditional craft products is increasingly relying on computer-aided design software. Designers can use this software for accurate modelling and simulation to create products with unique visual effects.



Figure 2: Traditional embroidery elements and their application in clothing design

Source: photo by author

Embroidery originated in China and then spread all over the world. As a decorative art of traditional craftsmanship, it is not only practical, but also carries rich cultural connotations. With the passage of time, the embroidery craft has evolved, from simple patterns to complex abstract art, and its expressions and techniques are constantly being innovated. Embroidery comes in a wide variety of patterns and colour choices, from traditional flowers and animals to modern abstract patterns, all of which provide endless design inspiration for clothing designers. With the increasing awareness of environmental protection, some designers have started to use recycled materials for embroidery, such as old clothes and waste fabrics, which is both environmentally friendly and innovative. Embroidery is used in clothing theme design, such as retro style, ethnic style, futuristic and so on. With embroidery, designers can create a specific atmosphere and emotion.

d) Fusion of traditional and modern aesthetics: Some designers have tried to combine traditional aesthetics with modern aesthetics to create modern handcrafted products with both traditional aesthetics and contemporary style. For example, some traditional motifs have been reinterpreted and paired with modern geometric patterns and colours to create designs that are both traditional and stylish.

These two (2) cases above had demonstrated the modern design forms of Chinese traditional handicraft products, which can retain the traditional elements while incorporating modern design concepts and technologies, so that modern design culture offers new possibilities for the development of traditional handicrafts in modern society.

Conclusion

In this study found that the commercial value of Chinese traditional handicraft products has been substantially enhanced through rational integration with modern design culture. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature also found that the principles of modern design culture, namely minimalism, a focus on practicality and material affinity, while maintaining a delicate balance between practicality and aesthetics, play a pivotal role. This cultural fusion not only preserves and perpetuates the unique cultural heritage embedded in traditional handicrafts, but also greatly enhances their impact in the commercial market. Furthermore, through in-depth case studies and reliable sales data analysis, the transformative impact of modern design culture infused into Chinese traditional handicrafts is evident. This injection has acted like a driving force, injecting new vigour into these handicrafts. Moreover, sales data emphasise that the incorporation of modern design principles has successfully restored the relevance and appeal of these handicrafts. They resonate with a wider consumer base that seeks sophistication, wellness, natural beauty, and lifestyles linked to the fundamental aspects of life. However, amidst these favourable developments, there are also challenges that need to be examined in a holistic manner. The central issue is how to strike a delicate balance between preserving the inherent uniqueness of traditional craft products and adapting to the dynamic demands of the modern market.

In this study is also suggested the development of systematic theoretical through the combination of modern design culture and traditional handicraft products for further research. This combination is not only limited to form, but also an important enhancement in commercial and aesthetic value. The empirical results reveal the key role of modern design principles such as minimalism, practicality, and material affinity in this context, while demonstrating how this cultural fusion enhances the attractiveness of traditional handicrafts and improves their impact in the commercial market. Besides that, the finding provides new perspectives on the study of traditional handicrafts and offers important theoretical guidance for the design field. Through the application of modern design culture, it can provide an innovation ideas and systematic process for the development of traditional handicrafts that can meet the needs of modern society as well as preserving and perpetuating the uniqueness of traditional culture.

As a conclusion this study highlighted the key role of modern design principles to enhancing the commercial value of traditional handicrafts and identifies the challenges faced in the process of preserving and perpetuating traditional handicrafts. It is important as a reference for the policy makers, designers, handicraft producers and consumers. In addition, it helps us to better understand and assess the commercial value of traditional handicrafts and provide designers and producers with new design concepts and methods that offer new opportunities for the promotion and market expansion of traditional handicrafts.

References

- Banerjee, A., & Mazarella, F. (2022). Designing Innovative Craft Enterprises in India: A Framework for Change Makers. *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation*, 8(2), 192–216.
- Boccella, N., & Salerno, I. (2016). Creative Economy, Cultural Industries and Local Development. *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 223, 291–296.
- Brown, S., & Vacca, F. (2022). Cultural sustainability in fashion: Reflections on craft and sustainable development models. *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy*, 18(1), 590-600.
- Cheng, P., & De Bont, C. (2022). *Understanding Design Utilizations in China: Investigating Design Award-Winning Products Based on Innovation Pyramid Framework*.
- Deb, S. K., Mohanty, P. P., & Valeri, M. (2022). Promoting family business in handicrafts through local tradition and culture: An innovative approach. *Journal of Family Business Management*.
- He, S. (2018). Chinese Traditional Handicrafts in Promoting the Design Expression of Modern Creativity Based on Computer Multimedia Technology. *2018 11th International Conference on Intelligent Computation Technology and Automation (ICICTA)*, 141–145.
- Liu, Z., & Xie, A. (2022). Poverty reduction effects of integrating high-quality development and cultural tourism in China. *Chinese Journal of Population, Resources and Environment*, 20(4), 383-391.
- Shafi, M., Yin, L., Yuan, Y., & Zoya. (2021). Revival of the traditional handicraft enterprising community in Pakistan. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, 15(4), 477–507.
- Sun, Y., Lin, H.-Y., & Lin, R. (2022). A Pilot Study on Reproduction and Sustainable Development under the Promotion of Crafts: Taking Weaving in Taiwan as an Example. *Sustainability*, 14(20), 13116.
- Yang, Y., Shafi, M., Song, X., & Yang, R. (2018). Preservation of Cultural Heritage Embodied in Traditional Crafts in the Developing Countries. A Case Study of Pakistani Handicraft Industry. *Sustainability*, 10(5), 1336.
- Zhan, X., & Walker, S. (2019). Craft as Leverage for Sustainable Design Transformation: A Theoretical Foundation. *The Design Journal*, 22(4), 483-503.