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(AIJBES)www.aijbess.comCONSUMERS' SATISFACTION TOWARDS THE USAGE OF
CHINESE TRADITIONAL CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN
FURNITURE PRODUCTS : A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
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This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

This study tries to find out consumers' satisfaction towards the usage of Chinese traditional cultural elements in furniture elements. A qualitative method is adopted in this study to investigate 10 consumers' perspectives. 10 consumers are all from Nanjing city in China. The results shows that all the interviewed consumers know the existence of the furniture products integrating with Chinese traditional cultural elements. What's more, they are not satisfied with the current situation of the usage Chinese traditional cultural elements in furniture products. Most consumers point out that the cedar and the plum are the favorite elements that they prefer to use in the furniture products. The usage of consumers' favorite elements will increase consumers intension of purchase, but the price and functional attributes should also be taken into full consideration. This study has a strong practical significance for furniture designer and workers of cultural and creative products.

Keywords:

Customer Satisfaction, Chinese Traditional Cultural, Furniture Product, Qualitative

Introduction

In recent years, Chinese traditional cultural elements have made increasingly significant achievements in enhancing the connotation of product design and enhancing the competitiveness of products in the international market (Zhang, 2021). In the clothing industry, Chinese local sports brand Li Ning “Wudao” series of shoes, the “tiger and crane double shape” Chinese traditional culture of martial arts action elements into the design of sports shoes, the New York fashion Week debut detonated social media, contributing to a one-day stock price increase of more than 7% (Haocheng, 2022). In the makeup industry, Chinese local makeup brand Huaxizi adopts the characteristic positioning of “Oriental makeup”, and the product carving process draws on the unique technique of Hui style wood carving summarized by traditional Chinese culture. In 2021, the sales of the finished product in the Japanese market exceeded five million yen on the first day, breaking the monopoly pattern of European and American brands in the cosmetics market (Tang, 2023).

Moreover, in the console game field, the game of “Black Myth: Wukong” achieved great success because of the deep exploration and innovative integration of Chinese traditional cultural elements. It restores oriental aesthetics with top technology and reconstructs the expression dimension of traditional narrative through interactive media, becoming a benchmark case for the modernization of traditional culture (Hu & Zhao, 2025; Zitong et al., 2025).

However, few research focus on using the Chinese traditional cultural elements into the usage of furniture products. As early as 2015, China has surpassed the United States furniture consumption, becoming the world's first furniture consumer (Chen Xuehui et al, 2013). However, according to the global furniture industry development report released by the China Furniture Association, in 2022, the consumption value of the furniture industry in the United States is growing, China's consumption is declining, and Germany is flat (Lu Jun, 2023). Wang Li (2021) also pointed out in her research that the actual consumption gap in China's furniture market has increased significantly.

After the British Industrial Revolution, large-scale mass production of machines replaced traditional handicraft production, and the production cycle of products was greatly shortened. In the early days, due to the limitations of production technology and process, standardized furniture production only focused on the basic functions and practicability of products to meet the material needs of people at that time (Friedwald & Song Kun, 2011). However, with the rapid development of social economy, the production efficiency of furniture products continues to improve, and under the background of great material wealth, the furniture market has gradually changed from a seller's market to a buyer's market. Global economic integration has promoted the prosperity of the world, expanded the choice of consumer furniture, coupled with the gradual awakening of human aesthetic awareness. Where, customers no longer only use the value of furniture as an absolute element of purchase, but also put forward higher demands for the beauty of products. That is to say, most consumers are no longer only concerned about the basic functions of furniture, but more taking into account their own aesthetic needs (Hu Yinghui, 2021). Wang Muzi and Li Jun (2021) found through investigation and research that when furniture consumers choose furniture, they pay more attention to the function of home furnishing, but also pay more attention to the color, style, style and other appearance design of furniture products. Zhang Xiulan (2017) also pointed out that today's consumers not only

demand the practicality and comfort of furniture, but also value the unique and exquisite appearance of furniture.

Huang Yanli (2018) pointed out that China's furniture industry is in the middle and lower reaches of the global furniture manufacturing industry chain, and the competitiveness of the entire country's furniture manufacturing industry is low, and innovative furniture design is the driving force for the continuous development of our country's furniture manufacturing industry. In addition, the consumption pattern of the whole society is fond of the aesthetic psychology, and if the product design does not consider aesthetic factors, the product is difficult to be accepted by customers in the fierce market competition (Li Ming, 2022). In other words, to change the phenomenon of Chinese consumption decline in the furniture market, innovative furniture design is a path worth trying. Zhu Yuejia (2023) believes that the reason why traditional furniture products are difficult to innovate in design is that furniture design fails to meet the psychological emotional needs and aesthetic pursuit of consumers.

In recent years, the academic and design circles have attached great importance to the application of traditional Chinese cultural elements in modern design. The first is to add Chinese traditional cultural elements into the product design, and the traditional cultural concepts are carried out in a new way, so that the excellent Chinese culture goes out of the country and goes to the world. This is not only in line with the background of increasingly frequent and close global material and cultural exchanges, to keep the traditional cultural treasures that have been deposited for thousands of years from being submerged, to maintain the continuation of traditional Chinese cultural genes, but also in line with China's policy orientation.

Second, Chinese excellent culture contains national spiritual connotation and cultural heritage, which is in line with the spiritual and aesthetic needs of Chinese consumers. Shao Ke and Zhao Lina (2023) pointed out in their research that the design integrated with the excellent traditional Chinese culture can more arouse the emotional resonance of consumers, so that the product can be sold better. Zheng Yanling and Yang Fuzheng (2023) also pointed out that excellent design products need to carry the spiritual sustenance of the nation, and the characteristic traditional cultural elements provide the direction of material selection for design.

It can be seen that the integration of Chinese traditional cultural elements into furniture design is conducive to meeting the psychological needs of consumers, improving the competitiveness of Chinese furniture products, and conducive to the innovation and development of modern furniture design, as well as demonstrating the charm of Chinese traditional culture and enhancing the construction of national cultural soft power. However, the elements of Chinese traditional culture are rich in connotation, all-inclusive, and diverse in forms of expression. Although the cultures of different regions integrate and penetrate each other, their spiritual core is different.

In addition, the 5000 years of history of China, the cultural elements deposited in different periods are not the same. The use of Chinese traditional cultural elements in furniture design does not mean all the traditional elements are copied and piled on the furniture, nor does it mean the integration of Chinese traditional cultural elements and furniture design based on the designer's own likes and dislikes. In addition, furniture design is different from pure artistic expression, but also need to consider the unity of practical function and aesthetic function, that

is, design products can meet both practical function and psychological needs (Chen Taohong, 2023). Therefore, grasping the actual needs of consumers is the key to furniture design.

Therefore, this study objective is to investigate consumers' favorite Chinese traditional cultural element used in the furniture products, which is become the pipeline research in this study. The results of consumers' preferences can help the furniture designers know more about consumer's real needs, so that to design more furniture products that are more satisfactory to consumers. What's more, for workers of cultural and creative products, the understanding of the consumers' favorite elements can help them know to make more targeted cultural and creative products.

Literature Review

In order to find out consumers' favorite Chinese traditional cultural elements. this study tries to summarize what Chinese traditional cultural elements that could be used in the furniture products. These studies summarized the framework of the classification of Chinese traditional cultural elements based on previous studies (Luo, 2022; Li & Gao, 2020; Wang, 2019; Li, 2016; Chen & Ruo, 2009; Yi & Eki, 2005; Zhang & Fang, 2004; Zhang & Jin, 2001).

Generally speaking, the Chinese traditional cultural elements include several classifications, like the traditional philosophy, the traditional religion, the traditional literature, institutional culture, art culture, science and technology culture, folk culture, vessel culture, regional culture, traditional architecture culture, biological culture, respectively.

However, not all the classifications of culture elements could be used in the furniture products. Yu (2022) proposed six requirements of choosing the Chinese traditional cultural elements using in furniture products. The first requirement is the purity of the elements, and the second is authenticity of the element. The third requirement is the compatibility of the elements. The fourth is the degree of abstraction of the elements. The fifth is the recognition of the elements. The sixth is the uniqueness of the elements. This study thinks that the premise of the purity of elements is the authenticity of the elements. So based on the requirements of Yu (2022), this study deletes the requirement of the authenticity of the element and confirms the five requirements of choosing the elements using in the furniture products. The requirements are the purity of the elements, the compatibility of the elements, the degree of abstraction of the elements, the recognition of the elements, the uniqueness of the elements.

This study summarizes and screens out 30 elements of Chinese traditional cultural elements used in furniture products, which includes plant elements, animal elements, the pictographic Chinese character elements, traditional skills elements, appliance culture elements, literary elements, religious elements, architectural elements.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research method to investigate consumers' preference towards the Chinese traditional cultural elements chosen. Considering the limited time and resources in this study, this research only focuses the consumers in the Nanjing city, China. The target consumers should have the furniture purchase needs in recent two years in this study. The consumers for investigation chosen in front of the furniture shopping mall. The researcher of this study introduces the purpose this study deeply and detailly to the consumers, and consumers' rights in the interview process will be informed. After obtaining the permission of interview from the consumers, this study conducts the formal interviews.

Thus, there are 10 consumers have been selected in Nanjing City of Jiangsu province, in China with furniture purchase needs in recent two years are selected as the participants in this study. The semi-structure interviews are used to investigate the consumers' preference. For each consumer, a face-to-face interview is used in this study. In this study, the interview time is scheduled with interviewees first. After obtaining the consent of the consumer, the interview is recorded. The information of the 10 consumers is listed below in Table 1.

Table 1: Consumers Information

Consumers	Gender	Age	Purchase needs in next two years
Zhang	Female	32	Yes
Zhu	Female	27	Yes
Sun	Male	38	Yes
Yang	Female	29	Yes
Zhou	Female	42	Yes
Li	Male	52	Yes
Meng	Male	40	Yes
Mao	Female	38	Yes
Wang	Male	33	Yes

The interview questions are made based on the research purpose of this study. Before conducting the formal interviews, the research questions are conducted an expert validation. There are two experts in the field of using cultural elements in modern design are invited to do the expert validation. This study revised several rounds of modification of the interviews questions to meet the expert's requirements. Once all the interview questions are obtained fully approvement by the two experts. Those interview questions are used to conduct a preliminary test.

Two consumers are chosen to conduct a preliminary test of the interview questions. The preliminary test shows that all the statements in the interview questions are clear and not ambiguous, and the words using in the questions are easy to understand, so that they understand the meaning of the interview questions deeply. What' more, the two consumers are quite sure about the purpose of the interview questions, and they can understand what kind of key information the interview questions trying to get.

The interview questions in this research are as follows:

1. Do you know that the furniture market is selling the furniture products with Chinese traditional cultural elements?
2. Are you satisfied with the Chinese traditional cultural elements used in the furniture products?
3. What Chinese traditional cultural elements do u want to use in the furniture products, and why?
4. Will you have the intention to purchase to buy the furniture products integrating with your preferred Chinese traditional cultural elements?

The result gain from the interviewed will be analysis by using a thematic analysis approach. This analysis approach was consider appropriate for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Hence, the analysis process involved six critical steps, start with transcription, familiarisation, coding, theme development, review, and interpretation. This structured approach ensured a comprehensive and trustworthy interpretation of participants' perspectives (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

Results and Discussion

Consumers are invited to do the research in this study are all Chinese citizens from Nanjing city. In order to make the interview go smoothly, the interview is conducted in Mandarin. The researcher will translate the interview results into English after all the interviews are done. The edited transcription method will be used to present the interview results (Helin, 2024).

For the first interview questions, all the consumers point out that they know the existence of the furniture products that integrating the Chinese traditional cultural elements.

Many consumers state that furniture products that integrating the Chinese traditional cultural elements are not new things only in recent years. Just like consumer Li says, "When I decorated my apartment more than 10 years ago, I brought the furniture products integrated with Chinese traditional cultural elements." Consumer Li also declares that furniture products decorating with Chinese traditional cultural elements is like a commend sense to us, and we know the essence of that kind of furniture products for a very long time.

According to the consumers', answer to this interview questions. It is easy to find that all the consumers are knowing well about the existence of furniture products integrating with Chinese traditional cultural elements. Besides, some consumers can speak out specifically where this kind of furniture products are on sale in Nanjing city. What' more, consumer Wang and consumer Mao figure out that those furniture products with Chinese traditional cultural elements are normally more expensive than then those products without Chinese traditional cultural elements.

To sum up, all consumers interviewed are very familiar with the furniture products that integrating the Chinese traditional cultural elements.

For the second interview question, all the consumers interviewed are showing an unsatisfied attitude towards the usage of Chinese traditional cultural elements. This study provokes more questions based on the interview outlines to explore the deep reasons for consumers' dissatisfaction towards the usage of Chinese traditional culture elements. Manual coding is used to analyze the collected qualitative data, so as to find out the reasons why consumers are not satisfied with the Chinese traditional cultural elements used in the furniture products. The themes and sub-themes are summarized below in Table 2.

Table 2: The Summary of The Reasons of Consumers' Unsatisfaction

Themes	Sub-themes
Wrong usage of the Chinese traditional culture elements	Unfamiliar with the elements used Choosing the unpopular elements

The ignorance of the elements' symbolic meaning.	The elements are not Chinese traditional culture elements
	The wrong collocation
	The symbolic meaning suitable for specific crowd
	The symbolic meaning is out of date

Based on the summarized themes and sub-themes, this study can find out that there are two main reasons that consumers are not satisfied with the Chinese traditional elements that used in the furniture products. One reason is that consumers are not satisfied with the Chinese traditional cultural elements choosing. As consumer Zhang and Zhou points out that some elements used in the furniture product are not the elements that are deeply related to our daily life. What's more, Consumer Li declares that the elements used in the furniture products are not the popular ones that can represent the local characters. Consumer Meng thinks that some elements used in furniture products are not real Chinese traditional culture elements.

The other reason is the ignorance of symbolic meaning of the elements. As Consumer Sun points out: "In some furniture products, there are more than just one element exists. However, the collocation of the elements symbolic meaning does not match with each other." Consumer Zhu adds that some symbolic meaning of the elements used in the furniture products could only be proper for particular crowd, for example the newly married couples, the seniors.

What's more, Consumer Mao and Yang believes that some symbolic meaning of the elements used in the furniture products aren't very suitable. Besides, Consumers Wang states that some elements have the symbolic meaning which is out of date.

Considering the consumers' unsatisfaction towards the usage of Chinese traditional cultural elements in furniture products. This study also tries to explore what the specific Chinese traditional cultural elements that consumers prefer to use in the furniture products.

According to the consumers' answers, it can be found that all the consumers choose the plant elements. Three consumers choose the animal elements. Two consumers choose the pictographic Chinese character elements. Three consumers choose the religious elements. 6 out of 10 consumers choose cedar as consumers' favorite elements that they want to use in the furniture products. 5 out 10 consumers also choose the element of plum blossom as the favorite one to be used in the furniture products.

Manual coding is also used to make the reasons why consumers like those two elements clearer and more logical, see in Table 3.

Table 3: The Summary of The Reasons Why Consumers Like the Two Elements

Themes	Sub-themes
Homesickness	They can be seen almost everywhere in the city
	They are the city tree and flower
	Consumers are familiar with them since young

The symbolic meaning	The history of the city
	The hope for future
	The attitude we should hold for life
Beautiful in appearance	The Lines of the two figures are nice
	The colors are cheerful and attractive

They are three main reasons for consumers to choose the two elements. Firstly, the two elements of cedar and plum represent homesickness. As consumer Zhou points out that, those two elements could be seen everywhere in their neighborhood and in Nanjing city, and when they see those elements, they feel the warmth of home. It can be found that consumers prefer those elements that have connection with their hometown. Many scholars pointed out that things related to their hometown resonate most emotionally (Samavaki, 2023; Wei et al., 2023).

Besides, Consumer Li, Consumer Yang, Consumer Zhu, and Consumer Sun all mentions that cedar, plum blossom are the tree of the city and the flower of the city respectively, and the two elements represent the image of the Nanjing city. Research shows that the main reason for a city to select a kind of tree and flower to represent the city is because of the culture (Cheng et al., 2025). The tree and flower of city can reflect the culture the city reveres, as well as the mental attitude of the citizens.

Consumer Meng says those two elements are deeply related to their childhood memory, and the memory of these two elements is as familiar as if they are embedded in the genes. Subramaniam and Rathnapriya (2024) points out that childhood memories can affect consumers' preferences. Those two elements can remind consumers of the childhood memories then the willingness of purchase will be increased.

Secondly, for Nanjing citizens, those two elements are more than just the elements themselves and they have a very representative symbolic meaning. Just as Consumer Zhu explains, "I love the element of cedar", because of its Chinese symbolic meaning. Cedar represents perseverance, which is highly consistent with the cultural heritage of the City of Nanjing. If you look back the history of the city, you would be surprised about its historical stories and all the ups and downs the city has been through. The elements of cedar can remind everyone in the city to rethink about the history and the past, which can help us understand more about who we are, why we are here and how we get here.

Consumer Zhang explains more in details, she stresses that this city has been through some suffering and hardship, but this city is not defeated, and still stand up proudly like a cedar in snow, and no matter how big the snow is, it never bends down.

What's more, consumer Sun explains the reason why he appreciates the plum. "Nanjing city experienced the war in the past, but it embraces the beautiful future with a positive attitude, just like the plum blossoms in the snow. We don't forget the history, but we keep running hard forward instead of living in the past." The element of plum reminds us of the history of our city and the way of treating our history, and what attitude we should hold for our future.

Consumer Yang and Zhu believes that the symbolic meaning of the Chinese traditional cultural elements means a lot to the current generation, who live in an era of abundant material life, and the symbolic meaning of the elements can inspire them to think what kind of life attitude they want to have for their future.

Besides, Consumers also mention the beautiful appearance of those two elements. Consumer Mao says, the leaf of the cedar is very beautiful, and the lines are simple smooth and clear. What's more, the never-fading green color can fresh and pleasant people. Consumer Zhou express her preference towards the outlook of the plum. The edges of the plum blossom petals have a slightly wavy natural arc, which is both as exquisite as a meticulous painting and as free and easy as a freehand brushwork. Besides the color of cedar makes us cheerful. That are very pleasing to our eyes and can make us feel very happy.

According to the description of consumer Mao and consumer Zhou, it can be found that appearance of the Chinese traditional cultural elements should also be taken into consideration when using them in the furniture products.

For the fourth research question, all the consumers express firm willingness to purchase those furniture products with their favorite Chinese traditional cultural elements, like consumer Wang and Zhou says, using our favorite can increase our desire to purchase those furniture products. Consumer Yang believes that the furniture products with my favorite elements will arouse my attention quickly.

However, some consumers also point out their concerns. Consumer Zhang indicates that if the price of those furniture products is too much more expensive than similar products, maybe they will give up purchasing. Consumer Zhu expresses the same view, the price of those furniture products should not exceed the consumption capacity, or they cannot afford it.

Except for the consideration of the price, some consumers also figure out using the Chinese culture elements in the furniture products should not reduce the functions of the furniture products. Consumers Li insists that the functional attributes of furniture products should not be influenced by using adding the Chinese traditional culture elements in them. Consumers Mao also states the function is the most important part of the furniture products, and the usage of Chinese traditional cultural elements cannot influence the basic functions of the furniture products. Many researchers also pointed out that the function of the furniture products are the key factors (Başbuğ & Biçer, 2023; Wang, 2022).

To sum up, using the consumers' favorite Chinese traditional cultural elements can attract consumers attention and improve their purchase intention. However, consumers also point out that the price and the function should be also taken into fully consideration.

Conclusion

In summary, this study objective is to investigate consumers' favorite Chinese traditional cultural element used in the furniture products. Therefore, the objective of the study has been achieved according to the interviews, it can be found that consumers from Nanjing are no strangers to furniture products integrating with Chinese traditional cultural elements. The existence of those kind of furniture products has been deeply rooted in consumers' hearts. However, consumers are not satisfied with the Chinese traditional cultural elements used in

furniture products in nowadays, because the wrong usage of the Chinese traditional cultural elements and the ignorance of the elements' symbolic meaning.

The elements that consumers want to use in the furniture products are the cedar and the plum. One reason in the two elements represent the feeling of homesickness. The second reason is the symbolic meaning of the two elements, which remind consumers the history, the hope for future and the attitude for life. The beautiful in appearance of those two elements are also the reasons that consumers want to use in the furniture products.

The limitation of study is the small sample size, only ten consumers are invited to conduct the interview, and the results are getting from the ten consumers' answers. What' more, only qualitative method are used for collecting data.

For the future studies, more research should be focused on investigating on consumers preferred Chinese traditional cultural elements based on a large number of consumers. Qualitative data of consumers' satisfaction towards the Chinese traditional cultural elements used in furniture products should be collected and summarized to better understand consumers preference. Besides, how to integrate the Chinese traditional cultural elements with full consideration of their functional attributes in an economical way are also the direction of future research.

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