

The Feasibility and Appeal of Design Inspiration Based on Lingnan Cultural Heritage in the Modern Elderly Fashion Market

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the feasibility and appeal of infusing Lingnan cultural heritage into modern elderly fashion in China's "silver economy," targeting the unique preferences of an ageing population. The study used a quantitative research approach to collect 402 valid questionnaires from urban Chinese women aged 50-75, analyzing their fashion preferences and purchasing behaviours. The results demonstrate a significant correlation between cultural preferences, buying motivations, and buying behaviour, underscoring the role of cultural identity in elderly fashion choices. The study concludes that integrating Lingnan cultural heritage into fashion design can effectively meet the aesthetic and cultural needs of elderly consumers, fostering innovation and sustainable development in the fashion industry.

Keywords: Lingnan Cultural Heritage, Modern Elderly Fashion, Market Attractiveness

INTRODUCTION

The global demographic landscape is witnessing a significant shift, with the ageing population experiencing substantial growth (D.E. Bloom & D.L. Luca, 2016). As societies transition into the era of the "silver economy," there is an increasing focus on understanding and catering to the unique needs and preferences of elderly consumers (Benjamin L & Alexander P, 2022). In China, this trend is particularly pronounced, with a rising number of elderly individuals contributing to the emergence of a substantial market segment (Hong Y & Osmud R, 2018).

Concurrently, cultural heritage and design have garnered growing attention in China (Bai, 2021). The nation's rich history and diverse cultural tapestry have sparked a rekindled interest in preserving and promoting traditional practices and aesthetics. Consequently, the market for cultural products is experiencing continuous growth as consumers seek products that embody and celebrate their cultural identity (Atthaphon P & Patcha U, 2022).

Amidst these developments, the fashion industry plays a crucial role in shaping cultural expression and responding to consumer demands (Paola B & Jose T, 2018). However, while the market often caters to youthful trends, an underserved demographic of older women exists in urban China (Xu, 2018). These women possess distinct clothing needs and preferences, which still need to be addressed by mainstream fashion.

The Lingnan region, comprising Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hainan provinces, stands out as a cultural hub with a rich heritage that interweaves traditional Chinese customs with influences from indigenous communities and maritime trade routes (Zhao, 2021). With its unique blend of cultural elements, Lingnan's cultural heritage represents an opportunity to bridge the gap between traditional and contemporary fashion for older women in urban China.

Therefore, the study delves into the feasibility and appeal of using Lingnan cultural heritage as design inspiration in the contemporary elderly fashion market, aiming to provide a theoretical basis for further research into how Lingnan cultural heritage can be subtly integrated into the design of fashion collections explicitly tailored for elderly women. This endeavour aims to meet the practical needs and aesthetic interests of this underserved market segment while celebrating and preserving the cultural essence of the Lingnan region.

AN OVERVIEW OF RELEVANT CONCEPTS

Aging Population and Consumption in China

As China's demographic structure changes, population ageing and its impact on consumption have become a prominent topic of concern (Yang, 2023). Over the past few decades, China's demographic structure has undergone significant changes, with the proportion of older people increasing rapidly (Yang, 2023). This phenomenon results from extended life expectancy, declining birth rates and improved healthcare (Jessica Y H & Arun S H, 2018). Older people have more stable financial incomes and more significant economic control than most younger people (Liudmila R et al., 2021).

The rise of an ageing population has given rise to the "silver economy", which refers to the older population's economic activities and consumption behaviour (Liudmila et al., 2021). As the number of older consumers grows, so does the demand for goods and services that meet their needs and preferences. Older consumers seek products and services that improve their overall well-being and lifestyle, including investing in wellness products, leisure activities, cultural experiences and other services that contribute to their physical and mental health (Grazyna, 2020). As older consumers gain control over their purchasing decisions, there is a demand for products and services that offer customization and personalization. Brands that offer tailored experiences and cater to individual preferences are gaining a competitive advantage in this segment.

In response to these changes, businesses and policymakers in China are increasingly recognizing the importance of an ageing population and its impact on consumption patterns and economic development (Cheng, 2023). Strategies that focus on promoting healthy ageing, supporting older people in their post-retirement years, and tailoring products and services to meet their needs are essential for businesses and policymakers to cater to this market segment effectively (Cheng, 2023). By recognizing the economic impact of older persons and tailoring products, services and experiences to their unique requirements, China can create a more inclusive and dynamic consumer environment that benefits older persons and the broader economy.

Cultural Heritage and Fashion

Cultural heritage and fashion are intertwined in a dynamic relationship that spans centuries and geographical boundaries. As a form of self-expression, fashion has always been influenced by culture, tradition and social values (Gianluigi, 2019).

Cultural heritage is a source of inspiration for designers, providing a wealth of patterns, motifs, fabrics and styles contributing to fashion development (García, 2018). Fashion designers often draw inspiration from historical costumes, traditional textiles and indigenous crafts to create modern interpretations of cultural heritage. By incorporating elements from the past, fashion plays a vital role in preserving and revitalising traditional crafts and cultural practices. Fashion incorporating cultural heritage can serve as a statement of cultural resilience and promote intercultural dialogue and understanding.

In addition, cultural heritage subverts traditional fashion trends and brings a long-lived and enduring essence to clothing (Csanák, 2018). Fashion's cultural heritage enables individuals to express their identity and ideas through clothing. Traditional clothing and iconic styles carry a sense of belonging and are symbols of cultural pride and representation.

The interplay between cultural heritage and fashion is a source of innovation, creativity and identity (Hassan & Azin, 2018). As designers continue to explore and reinterpret cultural heritage, fashion is increasingly becoming a dynamic reflection of societal values, historical heritage and global perspectives. Through the combination of fashion and cultural heritage, it is possible to reflect the richness of human history, promote diversity and create a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity.

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Modern elderly fashion

Modern elderly fashion refers to contemporary clothing styles and designs for the ageing population (Au & Lam, 2019). It is a fashion segment that caters to older people's needs, preferences and lifestyles, recognising that fashion is not limited to the younger generation (Katherine T et al., 2019). Today's seniors are active, enthusiastic, appearance and fashion-conscious, focusing on dressing appropriately to maintain their self-image as part of their social context (Atthaphon & Patcha, 2022). Older women still aspire to have fashionable clothing as a sense of self-consciousness and are increasingly concerned with appearance management (Jackie G, 2018). Older people demand better clothes regarding aesthetics, psychological needs and fit. Clothing is becoming increasingly important to older people as they want to make new social connections, project an image and hide the imperfections that come with old age (Au & Lam, 2019). With an ageing population predicted to grow significantly over the next 20 years, modern senior fashion aims to empower and celebrate the style of older people, reflecting their different identities and preferences while catering for their unique clothing requirements (Atthaphon & Patcha, 2022). Despite this, no specific design guidelines and codes for modern geriatric fashion exist.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Guangzhou, China, to explore the feasibility and appeal of design inspiration from Lingnan cultural heritage in the modern senior fashion market. Researchers formulated survey questions to analyze the demand for culturally infused fashion products and consumption patterns among elderly women in urban China. The target group was older women with different fashion styles, the focus is on the target age group of 50 to 75, as they represent the largest segment of urban Chinese older women. And a quantitative research methodology was used, including a questionnaire survey of women aged 50-75 years old in urban China.

Aging Population and Consumption in China

Data collection took place online from October to December 2023. Using a quantitative research approach through questionnaire surveys, researchers assess the market feasibility and appeal of Lingnan cultural heritage-inspired elderly fashion products, with 402 valid questionnaires collected. Two key variables, age and gender (female, aged 50-75), were pivotal in examining consumer behaviour in urban China. Answers were analysed using frequency counts, multiple responses, and linear regression to obtain information on product demand, cultural interests, purchasing factors and consumer behaviour.

Reliability and validity of instruments

The questionnaire was distributed online, and data was collected from October to December 2023. The internal consistency of various sections developed in this study was assessed using Cronbach's α coefficient. According to the overall reliability coefficient, the standardized reliability coefficient is 0.865, indicating excellent overall questionnaire reliability. Construct validity was evaluated using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test, and factor analysis was employed to explore the fundamental structure of the questionnaire items. Validity was assessed using the KMO and Bartlett's tests. The KMO test yielded a coefficient of 0.873, and Bartlett's chi-square value was 2295.623 (Sig. = 0.000 < 0.01), indicating excellent overall validity of the questionnaire.

Four factors with eigenvalues greater than one were extracted, collectively explaining 65.705% of the variance. Varimax rotation was applied to enhance interpretability, revealing strong factor loadings for most items exceeding 0.4. The analysis indicates that the questionnaire exhibits high reliability (Cronbach's α > 0.7) and structural validity (KMO = 0.873, Bartlett Sig. = 0.000). The four extracted factors provide in-depth insights into how the questionnaire items are conceptually grouped. These findings validate the applicability of the questionnaire survey in exploring cultural fashion preferences and purchasing behaviour.

Analysis of the factor extraction and the information content of the extracted factors reveals that four elements were removed in the factor analysis, with eigenvalues all exceeding 1. The variance explained by these four rotated factors is 19.243%,

18.847%, 13.920%, and 13.695%, respectively. The cumulative variance explained after rotation is 65.705%.

This study utilized the Varimax rotation method for maximum variance to identify the relationship between factors and research items. The rotation was conducted to reveal the information extraction patterns of the elements concerning the research items. The correspondence between factors and research items is presented: all communality values corresponding to the research items exceed 0.4, indicating a strong association between the research items and elements. This implies that the factors can effectively extract information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study thoroughly analyses the quantitative findings from a survey on the demand and consumption patterns of culturally integrated fashion products among older women in urban China. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: demographics and consumer behaviour. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to collect demographic information, including income, age and marital status, to understand consumer behaviour related to fashion, culture and preferred fashion styles among the respondents. Factors Influencing Purchasing Behaviour The second part of the questionnaire was designed to explore the influencing factors affecting the purchasing behaviour of fashion products. These factors are analysed in detail below:

Frequency Analysis

Frequency Analysis is employed to examine the distribution of categorical data, determining the count and percentage of each category. Expressed from frequency statistics (n=402):

from 1, your age frequency analysis shows that: B. The frequency of 50-59 years old is 289 with a percentage of 71.891 per cent; C. The frequency of 60-69 years old is 95 with a rate of 23.632 per cent; D. The frequency of 70 years old and above is 18 with a percentage of 4.478 per cent; and A. The frequency of those under 50 is 0, with a rate of 0 per cent. B. 50-59 years (71.891 per cent) is the highest, and A. under 50 years (0 per cent) is the lowest. **The results of the age distribution survey showed that the age distribution of the respondents was varied. This indicates that the study was conducted mainly with the views of older women.**

The results of the frequency analysis of the marital status by 2 You show that B. Married frequency is 327 with a percentage of 81.343 per cent; C. Divorced frequency is 37 with a percentage of 9.204 per cent; A. Unmarried frequency is 30 with a percentage of 7.463 per cent; and D. Widowed frequency is 8 with a percentage of 1.99 per cent. B. Married (81.343 per cent) was the highest, and D. Widowed (1.99 per cent) was the lowest. **These findings suggest that many of the target population are married, which may influence their fashion consumption patterns.**

The results of the frequency analysis by three your education level show that D. College frequency is 177, representing 44.03%; C. Bachelor's degree frequency is 112, representing 27.861%; E. High school and below frequency is 80, representing 19.901%; B. Master's degree frequency is 27, representing 6.716%; and A. Doctoral degree frequency is 6, representing 1.493 per cent. D. college (44.03 per cent) is the highest, and A. PhD (1.493 per cent) is the lowest. **This distribution highlights the diversity of educational backgrounds of older urban women.**

Frequency analysis of 4 Do you usually like to buy products with fashion elements, such as clothes, etc.? shows that: C. Occasionally buys 271 times, accounting for 67.413%; B. Often believes 98 times, accounting for 24.378%; A. Never buys 33 times, accounting for 8.209%. C. Occasional purchase (67.413 per cent) is the highest, and A. Never purchase (8.209 per cent) is the lowest. **These figures show a significant interest in fashion items that incorporate cultural elements in this population.**

By 5 What channels do you prefer to buy related fashion products? Frequency analysis shows that: B. Online platform frequency is 181, accounting for 45.025%; A. Brick-and-mortar shop frequency is 139, accounting for 34.577%; C. TV shopping frequency is 61, accounting for 15.174%; and D. Other frequency is 21, accounting for 5.224%. B. Online platform (45.025%) is the highest, and D. Other (5.224%) is the lowest. **The dominance of online platforms shows the importance of e-commerce among this population.**

The results of the frequency analysis by 6 Which fashion style do you prefer show that C. Casual & Comfortable frequency is 149, with a percentage of 37.065%; B. Fashionable & Trendy frequency is 114, with a percentage of 28.358%; A. Classic & Timeless frequency is 71, with a percentage of 17.662%; D. Ethnic & Culturally Inspired frequency is 51, with a percentage of 12.687%; and E. Other has a frequency of 17, with a percentage of 4.229 per cent. C. Casual & Comfort (37.065%) was the highest, and E. Additional (4.229%) was the lowest. **These diverse style choices highlight the diversity of fashion preferences among the target population.**

By 8 Do you think traditional culture influences your fashion consumption? Frequency analysis results show that A. Yes, the frequency is 272, accounting for 67.662%; B. No frequency is 89, accounting for 22.139%; C. The frequency is 41, accounting for 10.199%. A. Yes (67.662 per cent) is the highest and C. I'm not sure (10.199 per cent) is the lowest. **This finding indicates that many respondents recognise the role of traditional culture in their fashion choices.**

Frequency analysis results from 9. Are you familiar with Lingnan's cultural heritage and traditional patterns and crafts, such as Cantonese embroidery, Xiang Yun Sa, Guang Cai, etc.? Show that: B. General frequency is 189, accounting for 47.015%; A. Familiar frequency is 151, accounting for 37.562%; and C. Haven't heard of its frequency is 62, accounting for 15.423%. Among them, B. General (47.015%) is the highest, and C. Never heard of (15.423%) is the lowest. **It shows that many of the target population knows Lingnan cultural heritage, which may influence their fashion preferences.**

By 10, if the above related traditional patterns are printed on the clothing, whether it will make you desire to buy frequency analysis results show that: A. would frequency is 296, accounting for 73.632%; B. will not frequency is 73, accounting for 18.159%; C. not sure frequency is 33, accounting for 8.209%. **A. would (73.632%) was the highest and C. not sure (8.209%) was the lowest. This finding highlights the potential appeal of fashion products featuring traditional motifs.**

Multiple responses

Multiple responses are used for various choice analyses, analysing the proportion of choices in multiple choice questions; two terms are involved, namely, response rate and prevalence, with response rate being used to compare the relative proportions of choices and prevalence being used for the majority of choices in a particular item. Response rate is used to compare the relative proportion of choices for each option, and popularity rate is used to compare the popularity of choices for a particular item. Specifically, the response rate and popularity rate of C. quality and craftsmanship of clothing, D. design details of dress, and E. price, of the three items in 7 What factors affect your purchasing behaviour when choosing clothing [Multiple Choice Questions] are significantly higher. **The survey results show that the quality and craftsmanship of garments are the most important factors influencing purchasing behaviour**, with 87.313% of respondents considering this factor necessary. **This emphasises the critical role of product quality and craftsmanship in attracting older female consumers to fashion products.** 70.149% of respondents believe that the design details of the garment are also important. **This highlights the aesthetic preferences of older female consumers who tend to favour products with unique designs.** Price also plays a vital role in purchasing behaviour, with 57.463% of respondents considering it. **This suggests that older female consumers are price-conscious and may be more inclined to choose reasonably priced products.** Related to the theme of this study, 42.537% of the respondents identified cultural factors as influencing purchasing behaviour. This suggests that when cultural elements are incorporated, older female consumers have some level of interest in fashion products. In 11 If Lingnan cultural heritage-related craftsmanship is incorporated into clothing, your most acceptable price range is [Multiple Choice] in C. 301-500 RMB, B. 101-300 RMB, A. below 100 RMB, a total of 3 items with significantly higher response rates and prevalence rates.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis is used to examine the significance and direction of the linear correlation between the two variables; when using Pearson correlation analysis, we generally use the correlation coefficient r to describe the degree of linear correlation between the variables; if the correlation coefficient $r < 0$, it indicates that the correlation between the two variables is negative, and if the correlation coefficient $r > 0$, it suggests that the correlation between the two variables is positive. If the correlation coefficient $r=0$, the correlation between the two variables is negative, while if the correlation coefficient $r>0$, the correlation between the two variables is positive. Correlation analysis was used to study the

correlation between purchasing behaviour, cultural preference, buying motivation, and behavioural attitudes. Pearson's correlation coefficients were used to express the strength of the correlation, refer to Table 1. The specific analyses can be seen as follows:

Table 1. Correlation Analysis Table

	Mean	SD		Purchase Behavior	Cultural Preferences	Purchase Motivation	Behavioral Attitude
Purchase Behavior	3.751	0.849	Pearson Correlation	1			
			Sig. (Two-tailed)				
Cultural Preferences	3.946	0.801	Pearson Correlation	0.393**	1		
			Sig. (Two-tailed)	0.000			
Purchase Motivation	4.069	0.724	Pearson Correlation	0.425**	0.254**	1	
			Sig. (Two-tailed)	0.000	0.000		
Behavioral Attitude	3.621	1.000	Pearson Correlation	0.446**	0.256**	0.403**	1
			Sig. (Two-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
*At the 0.01 level (two-tailed), the correlation is significant.							
At the 0.05 level (two-tailed), the correlation is significant.							

The correlation coefficient value between purchasing behaviour and cultural preference is 0.393. It shows a significant level of 0.01, thus indicating that **there is an essential positive relationship between purchasing behaviour and cultural importance**. The correlation coefficient value between purchasing behaviour and purchasing motivation is 0.425. It shows a significant level of 0.01, thus indicating that **there is an essential positive relationship between purchasing behaviour and purchasing motivation**. The value of the correlation coefficient between purchasing behaviour and attitude towards behaviour is 0.446, and it shows a 0.01 level of significance, thus indicating that **there is a significant positive relationship between purchasing behaviour and attitude towards behaviour**.

Linear Regression Analysis

Behavioural Attitude, Cultural Preference, and Purchase Motivation are taken as independent variables, while Purchase Behaviour is taken as the dependent variable for linear regression analysis, refer to Table 2; the model formula is (insignificant coefficients have not been included): Purchase Behaviour = $0.631 + 0.238 \times \text{Behavioural Attitude} + 0.274 \times \text{Cultural Preference} + 0.289 \times \text{Purchase Motivation}$, the model is adjusted to have R-squared of 0.326, which means that Behavioural Attitude, Cultural Preference, Purchase Motivation can explain 32.6% of the variation of purchase behaviour. The test for the multicollinearity of the model found that all VIF values in the model are less than 5, which means that there is no problem with covariance. The D-W value is around the number 2, meaning the model has no autocorrelation. The F-test of the model found that the model passes the F-test ($F=65.799$, $p=0.000 < 0.01$), which means that at least one of the factors of behavioural attitudes, cultural preferences and purchase motivation can explain 32.6% of the changes in purchasing behaviour. **At least one will influence the purchasing behaviour, and the model is better.**

Table 2. Results of Linear Regression Analysis (n=402)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p	VIF	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	F
	B	Standard Error	Beta						
Constant	0.631	0.237		2.66	0.008				
Behavioral Attitude	0.238	0.039	0.281	6.17	0.000	1.231	0.332	0.326	F(3,402) = 65.799, p=0.000
Cultural Preference	0.274	0.046	0.281	5.99	0.000	1.102			
Purchase Motivation	0.289	0.053	0.247	5.43	0.000	1.230			

*a Dependent Variable: Purchase Behavior
D-W: 2.011

The final analysis shows that the regression coefficient of behavioural attitudes is 0.238 ($t=6.174$, $p=0.000 < 0.01$), which means that **behavioural perspectives significantly positively influence purchasing behaviour**. The regression coefficient value of cultural preference is 0.274 ($t=5.996$, $p=0.000 < 0.01$), which means that **artistic choice greatly influences purchasing behaviour**. The regression coefficient value of purchase motivation is 0.289 ($t=5.430$, $p=0.000 < 0.01$), meaning that **purchase motivation significantly affects purchase behaviour**.

In summary, this quantitative analysis provides valuable insights into urban Chinese older women's demographics, preferences and purchasing behaviours towards fashion products infused with cultural elements. These findings provide a basis for assessing such products' market viability and attractiveness among this population.

CONCLUSION

Through quantitative survey methods, this study provides an in-depth exploration of the feasibility and attractiveness of Lingnan cultural heritage as a design inspiration in the modern senior fashion market. Our study found that integrating Lingnan cultural heritage into fashion design not only meets the needs of elderly consumers for personalisation and cultural identity but also helps to promote innovation and sustainable development of the fashion industry.

The findings suggest that older consumers show higher interest and willingness to purchase fashion products incorporating Lingnan cultural heritage, especially regarding quality, design details and price. This provides practical insights for designers, marketers, and policymakers that show that incorporating cultural elements in design and marketing strategies can effectively attract and satisfy the needs of older consumer groups.

In addition, the study highlighted the importance of cultural factors in the purchasing decisions of older consumers, which suggests that the embodiment of cultural identity and traditional values plays a significant role in attracting and retaining older consumers in the fashion market. Therefore, integrating Lingnan cultural heritage into modern elderly fashion can provide this specific market segment with products that align with their aesthetic and cultural background and inject new vigour into the fashion market.

In summary, this study provides an innovative direction for the fashion industry to develop by incorporating Lingnan cultural heritage and designing geriatric fashion products that are both modern and culturally distinctive. This will not only meet the aesthetic and cultural needs of elderly consumers but also inject new vigour into the fashion market. Future research can further explore how cultural elements can be more effectively integrated into design and how this integration can affect the senior fashion market's long-term development and cultural heritage.

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