



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***FAMILIARITY AND LIKINGS THROUGH
IMPLEMENTATION OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL CULTURE
IN DIGITAL PRODUCT DESIGNS***

YANG ZONGRUI

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**FAMILIARITY AND LIKINGS THROUGH
IMPLEMENTATION OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL CULTURE
IN DIGITAL PRODUCT DESIGNS**

By

YANG ZONGRUI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of
Science**

November 2020

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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November 2020

Chair : Mohd Faiz Bin Yahaya, PhD
Faculty : Design and Architecture

Cultural innovation design is very reliable in making traditional culture up to date. With a population more than 1.4 billion people, China is blessed with many traditional cultural properties. However, in case of cultural properties, preserving is no longer hard but making it significant to the current and future generation is harder. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the role of familiarity and liking in helping to improve the awareness of Chinese traditional culture among the Chinese people. Two surveys were conducted for this research, the first survey was to identify the most familiar and the most preferred cultural elements among the Chinese people. While the second survey validated the intention of the research. Using 5-points Likert scale, each participant were asked to rate the 10 product images based on their familiarity and liking level of preferences. Data were then analyzed using correlation analysis, ANOVA analysis, and descriptive analysis in SPSS. Results of the study indicated that, in survey 1, respondents preferred traditional color and nature patterns in palace culture. Through the data analysis for survey 2, respondents were indicated to prefer single color cultural elements, simple style with complete cultural elements. In addition, through the data analysis, this study confirmed that the design of new products with people's prefer cultural features will help them better understand their own culture and improve their cultural awareness.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**ASPEK KEBIASAAN DAN KESUKAAN MELALUI
IMPLEMENTASI BUDAYA TRADISI MASYARAKAT CHINA KEPADA
REKA BENTUK PRODUK DIGITAL**

Oleh

YANG ZONGRUI

November 2020

Pengerusi : Mohd Faiz Bin Yahaya, PhD
Fakulti : Rekabentuk dan Senibina

Inovasi reka bentuk dalam budaya amat berpotensi menjadikan budaya kekal mengikut peredaran zaman. China mempunyai populasi seramai 1.4 bilion penduduk, ini membuatkan mereka kaya dengan pelbagai jenis budaya. Banyak usaha telah dijalankan bagi memastikan budaya-budaya tersebut dipelihara dengan baik. Namun ketika ini pemeliharaan budaya bukanlah lagi masalah utama, cabaran ketika ini adalah untuk mengekalkannya supaya ia seiring dengan peredaran zaman dan sentiasa relevan untuk generasi akan datang. Justeru, tujuan penyelidikan ini adalah untuk memahami peranan aspek kebiasaan (familiarity) dan kesukaan (liking) dalam membantu meningkatkan kesedaran terhadap budaya tradisi China dikalangan masyarakat China. Penyelidikan ini menjalankan dua kajian survey. Survey yang pertama bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti elemen budaya yang paling dikenali dan disukai dikalangan masyarakat China. Manakala, survey yang kedua dijalankan untuk melihat sejauhmana tahap kesedaran masyarakat China tentang budaya mereka setelah elemen budaya yang dikenalpasti daripada survey satu direka bentuk dengan produk terkini. Menggunakan Skala Likert 5-points, responden diminta untuk menilai 10 imej produk dan menetapkan level kebiasaan dan kesukaan berdasarkan pengalaman mereka. Data kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teknik 'correlation analysis', 'ANOVA' dan 'descriptive analysis' daripada perisian statistik SPSS. Analisis data daripada survey 1 menunjukkan responden lebih menyukai warna tradisi dan corak semulajadi daripada budaya istana. Manakala, analisis data daripada survey 2 mengenalpasti bahawa responden lebih menyukai produk yang mempunyai elemen budaya penuh, satu skim warna dengan gaya pengayaan yang ringkas. Disamping itu, penyelidikan ini juga membuktikan bahawa reka bentuk produk yang disesuaikan dengan ciri-ciri budaya yang dikenali dan disukai, berpotensi

membantu masyarakat memahami dan sekali gus meningkatkan kesedaran tentang kebudayaan mereka sendiri.



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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Mohd Faiz Bin Yahaya, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Design and Architecture
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Siti Mastura Binti Md Ishak, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Design and Architecture
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

ZALILAH MOHD SHARIFF, PhD

Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 20 January 2022

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

In the process of globalization, it is important to preserve traditional cultures to maintain the diversity of world culture since culture is the soul of a country and a nation. If any nation in the world abandons its national cultural traditions and has no distinctive features, it will lose its national identity and be assimilated by the world. According to Zhang and Cheng (2015), they enjoy celebrating western festivals and imitate the cultural behaviors of other countries, but at the same time, they are not very interested in their local culture. This has contributed to the annihilation of the traditional local culture. Because of that, there is a critical need to make an effort to increase the awareness among the people about their local culture. However, in order to make sure people are more sensitive and aware about their traditional culture, the affection or contact with the people involved includes considering aspects such as behaviors, trends and environments (Paula et al., 2019). Consumer product is one of the best contacts that can reach the people because products are capable to inspire people's behaviors, social status and providing effective support in their daily activities. These days, digital products are the most commonly used product by the consumer. Research by Wu and Ying (2016), included their report on the prospect of the Chinese smart watch market in 2018 which indicated that the closest digital product to the consumer is a digital watch. Therefore, consumers are strongly suggested to take advantage of the digital watch as it would help in improving the people's perception on traditional local culture.

In recent years, more and more designers are aware of the importance of local culture, but most of them lack the knowledge on how to combine traditional culture with modern product designs. Recently, a large number of digital products entered the market and this provide some opportunities for innovative and participatory (Reisman, Payne, & Frow, 2019). Therefore, in the area where digital products and culture are combined, there is a lot of space for development. Because of that, there is a good opportunity to study on how to implement Chinese traditional culture elements to the digital product design and at the same time, increasing the awareness among the Chinese people about their own traditional culture.

1.2 Problem Statement

At present, there are many issues in China regarding cultural identity. The situation is becoming worse until it has become difficult for their own people to differentiate between their own cultural characteristics with their neighboring countries such as Japan and Korea. At the same time, the Chinese people prefer

to wear modern clothing and hardly wear their traditional outfits in their daily lives. This is unfortunate since Chinese traditional culture has a long history and has been handed down to the present from one generation to the other. Therefore, it is necessary for the Chinese people to preserve their cultural identity and try to make sure it is relevant for the new generation to appreciate it. By doing this, it will not only increase the cultural awareness among the Chinese people, but it can also educate foreigners about the Chinese traditional culture.

1.3 Research Question

1. What are the components of Chinese traditional culture that could be used into digital product design?
2. How to establish a balance between traditional components and modern features through Chinese traditional culture in digital products design?
3. How to increase the awareness on Chinese traditional culture among Chinese people?

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To analyze the components of Chinese traditional culture that could be used into digital product design.
2. To establish a balance between traditional components and modern features through Chinese traditional culture in digital products design.
3. To increase the awareness on Chinese traditional culture among Chinese people.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

Firstly, this study has explained the concept, classification and characteristics of digital product design and factors that influence consumers' purchase of digital products. This is because digital products have a great influence on our life (Zhang, 2014; Zeng, 2016; Jiang & Wang, 2015). However, other types of industrial products should also be considered, since they have a huge influence on our lives. However, due to the wide range of industrial products, it is difficult to comprehensively introduce them. Thus, this study only used digital products to show the process of research.

In Chinese traditional culture, porcelain culture, regional culture, clothing culture, etc. the above mentioned are all valuable reference materials (Xu, 2018; Yang,

2017; Li, Liu, & Li, 2016). These types of culture are also applicable to product design. However, the regional culture has regional limitations, and the range of these cultures is large. Thus, only porcelain culture has been used in this study. In the porcelain culture, different periods have different characteristics, especially the prosperity and maturity of porcelain in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Therefore, this study focused on the Qing dynasty since the porcelain of this period was developed and matured by (Zhang, 2018).

In the research, the data collection was done online and obviously it is impossible to get more real feedback from the respondents directly. The main reason for this is because the research was conducted in another country and thus, it was also limited by time and funds.

1.6 Research Significance

First of all, the integration between traditional culture and modern products will enhance the influence of traditional culture in the present Chinese society. The application of traditional cultural elements with digital modern products will make it up to date and “evergreen”.

At the same time, it will provide designers with philosophical knowledge on how to adapt the traditional conception to the product design, especially on the selection and percentage of elements that should be considered and added in. Furthermore, designers are also trend setters. Hence, the new product design not only solves problems, but also makes an existing good product better and the aim was to get attention, especially from the consumer. Therefore, if Chinese or non-Chinese designers consider to have traditional culture elements when they design a product and it sells very well in the market, it will definitely influence the society. This will help to increase the Chinese people’s knowledge on their own traditional culture elements and makes it appear relevant all the time. Chinese traditional culture is ancient and wealthy, and Chinese products have gone to the world, hence, the Chinese must promote their traditional culture to the world to enrich the world’s culture. On the other hand, China’s huge market also attracts many foreign companies to design products for sale in China. According to Li et al. (2016), the problem that needs to be solved would be how to use traditional culture to design products for foreign designers.

Besides that, modern products with cultural elements will help the new Chinese generation to appreciate their cultural identity. According to some cases, modern styles of product design were inspired by a simple style of traditional cultural elements and some modern features that originated from traditional components (Kang et al., 2017). For example, the simple modern style designs were referred from the same design concept as Zen and freehand brushwork in traditional Chinese culture.

Finally, the combination of traditional elements and modernity has more benefits to the aspect of innovation in design. In this research, the researcher believes that by adapting traditional cultural elements in product designs, it will create a new style of design concept which is original and will be very familiar to the Chinese people. Furthermore, the application of traditional culture to the current product design will preserve the local culture over the changes of the time.

In the Chinese local culture, there are many concepts and elements with local characteristics that are classic and valuable, and those elements are more attractive than some pop culture. Some of the modern culture were developed by the benefits of traditional culture (Taddeo et al., 2017). According to Taddeo et al. (2017), designers need to learn how to enhance the effect of cultural elements to improve the user experience and increase the sense of identity of consumers. Therefore, if designers can blend the traditional and contemporary elements together in their designs, they might not only promote cultural awareness, but also increase the sales for the product. Besides that, both traditional culture and modern features will get their continuation and innovation out of it.

In conclusion, it is a good prospect to consider traditional cultural elements when designing a modern product. The three main benefits about includes enhancing the influence of traditional culture in the present society; capability to increase the sense of belongings among the new generation of Chinese people, while having the potential to promote innovation in design.

1.7 Research Framework

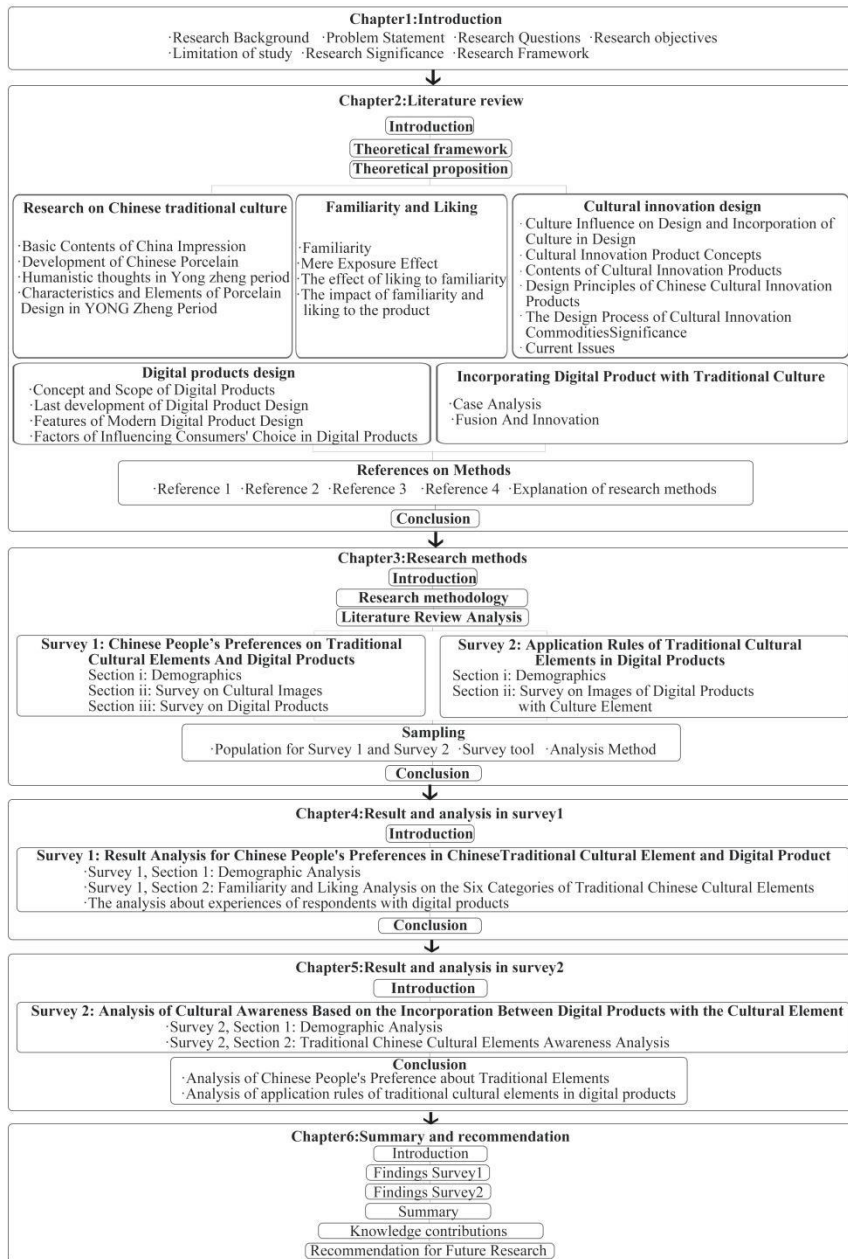


Figure 1.1: Research Framework

Figure 1.1 shows the research framework for this study. Chapter 1 points out the main issues and highlighted the question for this study. In addition, three objectives were suggested in order to answer the research questions for this

study. Besides that, this chapter discusses the importance and the limitations that the researcher faced while conducting this study.

Following that, Chapter 2 describes the theoretical framework for this study, and discusses any related literature review to the present study. It starts with a discussion about numerous literature reviews related to Chinese traditional culture, familiarity and liking, theoretical references on Cultural Innovation Design, digital product design and the existing application of traditional elements with modern product designs. Besides that, relevant inputs from this chapter will be used to support the method selection for this study, that also facilitates the formation of theoretical proposition.

Moving on, Chapter 3 describes the research method for this study, including questionnaire surveys, data analysis, and comparative research plus literature research method references. Moreover, two surveys are used in this research, the first survey shows why cultural elements are appropriate for digital products designs, and the second survey verifies application rules of traditional cultural elements in digital products.

Subsequently, Chapter 4 shows the analysis of survey 1, results identified the categories of cultural elements most popular with Chinese people and analyzed respondents' preferences and habits for digital products. Meanwhile, Chapter 5 shows the analysis of survey 2, which analyzed respondents' preference for the application of Chinese cultural elements in digital products and showed how to improve Chinese cultural identity among the Chinese people.

Finally, Chapter 6 focuses on the summary, knowledge contribution and suggestions for future research. This study provides a reference for the combination of digital products and Chinese culture elements, including a study on the appropriate proportion of elements in the using area of digital products. For future research, people can study more about the standards of cultural innovation design and how to apply culture into industrial products.

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