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INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES IN MODERN FASHION DESIGN BASED ON SILK ROAD CULTURE

This article delves into the application strategies and significance of Silk Road cultural elements in modern fashion design. As a crucial corridor for ancient East-West civilization exchanges and trade, the Silk Road's rich cultural repertoire injects fresh creativity and expressive forms into contemporary fashion. Initially, the article outlines the distinctive features and profound symbolism of Silk Road cultural motifs, emphasizing their enduring influence and allure. It then analyzes current trends in fashion design alongside consumer preferences, highlighting key themes such as multicultural fusion, sustainability, technological integration, and personalization/customization.

The text further elucidates the value of Silk Road-inspired designs in the modern fashion landscape. Then the current trends in fashion design are analysed along with the needs of consumers. The following areas are highlighted in the development trends of modern clothing design: sustainability (designers focus on choosing environmentally friendly materials, reducing waste during production), technological application (the emergence of smart clothing, functional fabrics and other innovations has transformed clothing from basic wear to items with additional practical functions), personalisation and customisation (designers put consumers' personalised needs first by offering customised services that allow for individual selection and requirements).

Finally, the article proposes concrete strategies for integrating Silk Road elements into modern fashion. These include blending contemporary design aesthetics with traditional philosophical concepts, innovatively merging traditional materials and techniques, and evoking cultural emotional resonances. These approaches not only enhance a brand's value and market competitiveness but also contribute to global cultural diversity and the preservation of heritage practices.

Key words: Modern Fashion Design, Silk Road, Globalization, Less is More.

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ІННОВАЦІЙНІ СТРАТЕГІЇ В СУЧАСНОМУ ДИЗАЙНІ ОДЯГУ НА ОСНОВІ КУЛЬТУРИ ШОВКОВОГО ШЛЯХУ

У статті проаналізовано стратегії застосування та значення культурних елементів Шовкового шляху в сучасному дизайні одягу. Як важливий коридор для древніх східно-західних цивілізаційних обмінів та торгівлі, багатий культурний репертуар Шовкового шляху вносить свіжу творчість та виразні форми в сучасну моду.

Перш за все у статті визначено відмінні риси та глибоке символізм культурних мотивів Шовкового шляху, наголошено на їх тривалому впливі та привабливості. Потім аналізується поточні тенденції в дизайні одягу разом з потребами споживачів. У тенденціях розвитку сучасного дизайну одягу виділено наступні напрямки: сталий розвиток (дизайнери зосереджуються на виборі екологічно чистих матеріалів, зменшенні відходів під час виробництва), технологічне застосування (поява «розумного» одягу, функціональних тканин та інших інновацій перетворила одяг з базового носіння на предмети з додатковими практичними функціями), персоналізація та кастомізація (дизайнери ставлять на перше місце персоналізовані потреби споживачів, пропонуючи кастомізовані послуги, що дозволяють індивідуально підбирати одяг відповідно до їхніх вподобань та вимог).

Далі пояснено цінність дизайн-розробок, натхненних Шовковим шляхом в сучасному модному просторі. Ці дизайнерські рішення надають одягу унікального шарму, наголошують на регіональній та культурній ідентичності, сприяють культурному діалогу та міжкультурному розумінню, а також полегшують передачу та відродження традиційних культур. Нарешті, у статті запропоновано конкретні стратегії інтеграції елементів Шовкового шляху в сучасну моду. Вони включають поєднання сучасної дизайнерської естетики з традиційними філософськими концепціями, інноваційне злиття традиційних матеріалів та методів, викликання культурної емоційної резонансу. Ці підходи не тільки підвищують вартість бренду та конкурентоспроможність на ринку, але й сприяють глобальній культурній різноманітності та збереженню спадщинних практик.

Ключові слова: сучасний дизайн костюма, шовковий шлях, глобалізація, принцип «менше – більше».

Problem Statement. Driven by the wave of globalization, the importance of exploring and applying traditional cultural elements in the field of modern fashion design has gradually emerged. As a critical artery for cultural exchanges and trade between the East and West in ancient times, the Silk Road carries profound historical accumulations and rich cultural connotations. However, when applying Silk Road cultural elements, designers face deep-seated issues such as how to integrate modern aesthetic concepts while respecting traditional culture and how to achieve a balance between cultural inheritance and innovation. Therefore, effectively combining Silk Road cultural elements with modern fashion design to create outstanding garments that embody both traditional essence and modern trends has become a significant challenge in the current fashion design field.

Analysis of research. Analysis of previous research. In recent years, the cultural art and resource development of the Silk Road have emerged as increasingly significant research topics. Han Xiang (Han, X., 2019, p. 20–30) exemplified the Persian brocade and chainmail, noting that these items originated from the Persian region of West Asia and were disseminated and influenced the clothing culture of the inland areas through the Silk Road, which facilitated cultural exchange between China and the West. Chen Xigang (Chen, X., 2019, p. 79–103) focused on the clothing adornment of the “grape-decorated sash” worn by Hu Teng dancers in the Tang Dynasty, exploring its Silk Road origins and religious connections. Jia Jingting (Jia, J., Chen, H., & Hu, X., 2022, p. 51–52) integrated the clothing elements of the Western Regions of the Silk Road into the design of women’s handbags. She extracted, combined, and restructured the shapes and patterns of Silk Road clothing, preserving their traditional cultural essence

while creating fashionable handbags that cater to contemporary aesthetics. Guan Ziwei (Guan, Z., Lyu, Z., & Li, M., 2023, p. 71–76) employed a methodological approach from the study of pattern composition to analyze and categorize the definitions, compositional styles, and color applications of the Tang Dynasty’s bead-and-circle motifs.

Subsequently, using contemporary clothing as a product carrier, she conducted research on the inheritance and innovation of these motifs, providing a multidisciplinary approach and exploratory experience for the digital application and dissemination of traditional regional motifs in clothing design. Li Peng (Li, P., & Li, X., 2019, p. 22–28) emphasized that environmentally-friendly and natural products have become a significant trend in international consumption. Silk, due to its natural and environmentally-friendly fiber characteristics, has become a prominent element in elegant clothing design. He advocated for the perfect integration of ancient silk culture with modern fashionable elements, avoiding both elitist pure art design ideologies and conservative design approaches. This integration would facilitate the blending and mutual promotion of traditional culture and modern civilization. Wang Wanchun (Wang, W., 2014, p. 115) highlighted the artistic accomplishments and aesthetic values embodied in the historical Silk Road. With the increasing integration of ethnic elements into contemporary fashion, designers in China must deeply understand and summarize traditional ethnic cultures to capture the essence of Chinese culture and balance ethnic and international influences. This would enable them to create clothing designs that align with international trends while embodying ethnic culture. These case studies primarily constitute experimental explorations, and some research on Silk Road clothing design remains at the level of formal

expression, lacking refinement into design philosophy and ideology. However, they provide various research approaches and argumentative paradigms, opening new horizons for further investigating the integration of Silk Road cultural elements into modern design.

The purpose of the article is to identify the application strategies of Silk Road cultural elements in modern fashion design, providing valuable insights and inspiration. It strives to promote the widespread application and in-depth development of Silk Road cultural elements in the field of modern fashion design. This research not only holds significant guidance for modern fashion design but also contributes to the inheritance and development of traditional culture, promoting cultural diversity and sharing.

Presentation of the main material

1. Elements of Silk Road Culture

1.1. Characteristics and Implications of Silk Road Cultural Elements.

As a product of ancient civilizational exchanges and commercial trade between the East and the West, Silk Road cultural elements encompass a range of cultural symbols, artistic representations, and traditional customs influenced by the Silk Road. Spanning vast regions from China to Central Asia, India, West Asia, and the Mediterranean, they exhibit enchanting cultural charm through their diverse forms and profound historical backgrounds. Cultural diversity and integration are distinctive features of Silk Road cultural elements. On the Silk Road, different civilizations such as Central Asian, Indian, and West Asian collided and merged, giving rise to the unique Silk Road culture. Through long-term interactions, these elements have continuously innovated and integrated, forming the colorful Silk Road cultural landscape we see today (Liu, H. X., Deng, Y. S., & Pan, Y, 2023, p. 1.

Silk Road cultural elements also carry profound historical significance. From the emergence of the Silk Road in the 2nd century BCE to the changes of various dynasties and empires, they have witnessed the vicissitudes of human history and are repositories of rich historical stories and traditional customs. These elements serve as vital windows into ancient wisdom and ways of life. Furthermore, Silk Road cultural elements emanate an air of mystery, poetry, and artistry. The arduousness and remoteness of the Silk Road lend these cultural elements a mysterious quality, igniting people's imagination and desire for exploration. Simultaneously, Silk Road cultural elements are presented through diverse artistic expressions such as silk, embroidery, jewelry, tea, porcelain, wreaths, and artistic forms like poetry, music, and dance, exhibiting their unique artistic charm (Li, X. Y., 2021, p. 86–88).

1.2. Influence and Appeal of Silk Road Cultural Elements

As a unique cultural heritage, Silk Road cultural elements possess extensive and profound influence and appeal. They are scattered across numerous historical sites and cultural relics, including the wall paintings of the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, the architecture of the ancient city of Samarkand, and the sculptures of the Buddhist relics in Bamiyan. These places are not only testimonies to history but also treasures of art and culture, attracting countless individuals in search of inspiration and enlightenment (Chen, L. L., Suo, Y. T., Jiang, R. X., et al, 2021, p. 96–101).

The appeal of Silk Road cultural elements stems from their deep historical and geographical backgrounds, as well as the diverse ethnic exchanges and integrations. They are presented with unique local characteristics and cultural symbols, serving as sources of inspiration for fashion designers and artists. By incorporating Silk Road cultural elements into clothing, accessories, and artworks, designers transmit them to a broader audience through fashionable and artistic forms. This fusion and innovative design approach not only injects new vitality and fashionable charm into Silk Road cultural elements but also brings new opportunities and dynamism to the development of contemporary cultural industries.

2. Development Trends in Modern Fashion Design Concepts and Analysis of Consumer Needs

2.1. Development Trends in Modern Fashion Design

Cultural Diversification and Fusion: With the advancement of globalization, exchanges and fusions between different cultures have become more frequent, and fashion design reflects the influence of multiculturalism. Designers are drawing inspiration from various cultures, blending diverse cultural elements to create more inclusive and international fashion.

Sustainability: As global environmental awareness increases, sustainability has emerged as a significant trend in modern fashion design. Designers are focusing on selecting environmentally friendly materials, reducing waste during production, and considering recycling and reuse options after a garment's use.

Technological Applications: Technological advancements have profoundly impacted fashion design. The emergence of smart clothing, functional fabrics, and other innovations has transformed garments from basic wearables into items with additional practical features. Personalization and Customization: People are increasingly seeking

uniqueness and individuality, leading to a growing demand for customized clothing. Designers are now prioritizing consumers' personalized needs, offering customized services that allow individuals to tailor their clothing according to their preferences and requirements.

2.2. Consumer Needs

Appreciation of Cultural Heritage and Innovation: In the context of globalization, consumers express a strong sense of identity and belonging towards the preservation and innovation of their local cultures. They desire clothing that embodies the essence and historical memory of their traditional culture while aligning with modern aesthetics and lifestyles. Therefore, designers must innovate while respecting traditional culture to meet this demand. **Emotional Resonance and Psychological Satisfaction:** In the fast-paced and stressful modern lifestyle, people yearn for emotional resonance and psychological comfort through clothing. Designers must delve into consumers' emotional needs, skillfully utilizing design elements to evoke emotional responses and achieve a spiritual connection between the garment and the wearer. **Naturalism and Minimalist Aesthetics:** Influenced by growing environmental awareness and the minimalist lifestyle, modern fashion design tends towards a natural and minimalistic aesthetic. Designers utilize natural elements and simple lines to create a clothing style that is close to nature, austere, and refreshing, aligning with modern individuals' aspirations for harmony with nature.

3. The Application Value of Silk Road Cultural Elements in Modern Fashion Design

In modern fashion design, the application of Silk Road cultural elements holds significant importance that cannot be overlooked. Firstly, the integration of these elements endows clothing with unique personality and charm. Amidst the competition in the fashion industry, designers seek distinctive design elements to capture consumers' attention. The Silk Road culture, rich in historical depth and ethnic characteristics, provides a vast inspiration pool for modern fashion design. By skillfully combining Silk Road elements with fashion design, designers can create works brimming with individuality and charm, evoking emotional resonance among consumers and enhancing the brand value and market competitiveness of the clothing.

Secondly, the application of Silk Road cultural elements helps highlight regional characteristics and cultural identity. The Silk Road spans multiple countries and regions, each nurturing unique cultural elements and styles. Incorporating these elements into fashion design not only showcases the allure of

local cultures but also reinforces regional identity and cultural confidence. This design practice not only promotes the inheritance and development of local cultures but also contributes to the prosperity of local cultural tourism and commodity markets.

Furthermore, the application of Silk Road cultural elements in modern fashion design fosters cultural exchange and cross-cultural understanding. As a vital conduit for East-West trade and cultural exchange, the Silk Road witnessed the interaction and fusion of multiple civilizations and ethnic groups. Integrating Silk Road elements into modern fashion design provides a platform for dialogue and exchange between different cultures, facilitating cross-cultural understanding and mutual learning. This design practice helps break down cultural barriers and boundaries, promoting global cultural diversity and sharing.

Lastly, the application of Silk Road cultural elements holds significant importance for the inheritance and revitalization of traditional cultures. These elements carry historical memories of ancient East-West cultural exchanges and fusions, embodying abundant cultural resources and wisdom. By incorporating Silk Road elements into modern fashion design, designers inject new vitality and fashion sense into traditional cultures, propelling their inheritance and development. This design practice not only attracts the younger generation's attention and interest in traditional cultures but also stimulates their enthusiasm and awareness for researching and protecting traditional cultures (Li, J. S, 2018, p. 388).

4. Application Strategies of Silk Road Cultural Elements in Modern Fashion Design

4.1. Incorporating Contemporary Design Language Externally

In modern fashion design, the design philosophy of "Less is More" is widely employed, emphasizing the simplification of design elements to highlight key aspects and essence (Han, Y., 2023, p. 7–9). Meanwhile, "following nature's way" is a significant concept in traditional Chinese philosophy, stressing alignment with natural laws and the pursuit of harmonious unity between nature and humans (Chen, M. Q., & Wu, W. H, 2023, p. 90–92). Combining these two approaches can inject new vitality into modern fashion design. When applying Silk Road cultural elements, the "Less is More" philosophy requires designers to selectively choose representative patterns, colors, or styles and integrate them into garments through concise design techniques. This minimalistic design style not only highlights the unique charm of Silk Road culture but also aligns with the aesthetic preferences of modern

audiences. Simultaneously, the “following nature’s way” concept urges designers to adhere to the natural forms and patterns of Silk Road elements without excessive exaggeration or alteration of their original characteristics. Such designs result in more natural, harmonious, and attuned garments that resonate with the wearer’s body and spirit.

For instance, as illustrated in Figures 1 (a, b), the “Instant·Fleeting” collection draws inspiration from the flying apsaras of the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang (Wang, K., 2024, p. 150). It incorporates the rich visual language of Ikat dyeing and weaving techniques, presenting a staggered, overlapping, and intersecting aesthetic in fashion design. The visual effects depicted by the Ikat language particularly evoke a sense of transience, resembling the gradual fading and distant recollection of many paintings in the Mogao Caves over thousands of years. In the innovative design process, relatively concrete images such as flying apsaras and thousand Buddhas are reinterpreted using the Ikat language, conveying an intertwined, ethereal “artistic conception.” This aims to emotionally transport the viewer to the fleeting beauty of the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang while capturing the fleeting moment of the flying apsaras circling the walls. Such a design not only embodies the essence of “Less is More” but also aligns with the philosophical ideology of “following nature’s way.”

4.2. Innovative Integration of Traditional Materials and Techniques

As public awareness of environmental protection and health continues to grow, the concept of sustainability has increasingly gained importance in modern fashion design. The Silk Road, as a historic route of civilizational exchange, offers a wealth of

innovative resources in traditional materials and techniques for modern fashion designers. In terms of materials, designers can draw inspiration from traditional textile materials in Silk Road culture, such as silk and linen, and combine them with modern technological advancements for improvement and innovation. The adoption of new biodegradable materials as alternatives to traditional synthetic fibers enhances the environmental friendliness and comfort of garments. Simultaneously, emphasis should be placed on recycling and upcycling traditional fabrics to reduce resource wastage and environmental pollution.

For instance, as shown in Figures 2 (a, b), the “Paper Reimagined” collection upcycles large quantities of discarded express delivery boxes and packaging waste from everyday life. Through a series of practical experiments, it explores new nodes and concepts in the current recycling chain of packaging resources, resulting in sustainable and innovative wearable paper fashion art (Wu, J., Mu, S., & Chen, Y., 2022, p. 182).

Regarding techniques, designers can borrow from traditional dyeing, embroidery, and other craftsmanship methods in Silk Road culture and integrate them with modern technology for innovation and enhancement. Additionally, designers should stay attuned to fashion trends and consumer demands during the innovation process of materials and techniques. By deeply understanding market dynamics and consumer psychology, they can grasp the direction of fashion trends and consumers’ key concerns regarding environmental protection and health. This ensures that the designed garments align with market demands and consumer expectations.



a

b

Fig. 1. Wang Ke. Models from the collection “Instant·Fleeting”. Peking, China, 2024



a

b

Fig. 2. Wu Jichi, Mu Si, Cheng Yibing. Models from the collection “Paper Reimagined”. Peking, China, 2022

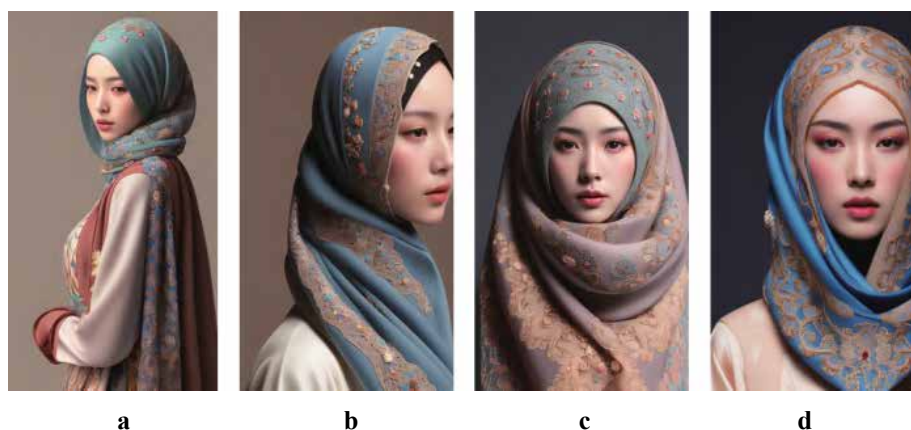


Fig. 3. Zhang Jun. Models from the collection “Silk Road Floral Rain”. Peking, China, 2024

4.3. Inherent Cultural and Emotional Resonance

Clothing, as one of the carriers of culture, conveys not only external beauty but also bears inherent cultural emotions. Silk Road culture serves as a significant link in the exchange between Eastern and Western civilizations, with “Dunhuang art” being one of its most representative artistic forms. Integrating elements of “Dunhuang art” into modern fashion design not only enhances the artistic value and cultural connotation of clothing but also triggers an inherent cultural and emotional resonance among consumers. “Dunhuang art” is renowned for its unique mural style, rich color application, and profound historical and cultural significance. Utilizing “Dunhuang art” elements in modern fashion design involves innovative transformation and elevation through extracting classic patterns, color schemes, and styling features (Liang, Z. X., 2023, p. 70–71).

For instance, as shown in Figures 3 (a, b, c, d), the “Silk Road Floral Rain” series incorporates extracted and redesigned Dunhuang patterns and color elements (Zhang, J., 2024, p. 151). The color palette primarily comprises five hues – white, green, black, red, and yellow – corresponding to the five elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth in traditional Chinese philosophy. The designs predominantly feature mid-tones, such as gray-green, ocher, and taupe, employing complementary color combinations to achieve an elegant and exquisite aesthetic. In terms of craftsmanship, the pieces incorporate the traditional handicraft technique of “filigree inlay”, adding depth and dimension to the scarf patterns. The reinterpreted and reconstructed designs exhibit a new Chinese-inspired style, reflecting the designer’s attitude toward integrating ancient and modern aesthetics

with inclusivity and innovation. This innovative transformation not only demonstrates respect for and continuation of traditional culture but also elicits a sense of identification and belongingness among consumers toward historical, cultural, and artistic values. Furthermore, this cultural and emotional resonance aligns with the globally advocated concept of a community with a shared future for mankind. By wearing clothing with a shared cultural background, individuals can profoundly feel the cultural connections and emotional resonance between them, fostering mutual understanding and respect and promoting world peace and development.

Conclusion. The Silk Road, as a crucial artery for ancient East-West cultural exchange and trade, provides modern fashion design with unique creative inspiration and expression through its rich cultural elements. Based on the analysed innovative approaches of Chinese designers in harnessing the potential of the Silk Road, such strategies are identified:

- 1) the integration of modern design principles like “Less is More” with traditional Chinese philosophical concepts like “following nature’s law”;
- 2) innovative fusion of traditional materials and techniques;
- 3) strategies that evoke inherent cultural and emotional resonance endow clothing with distinctive personality and charm.

This approach enhances brand value, market competitiveness, regional identity, and cultural recognition, facilitating cultural exchange and cross-cultural understanding. It holds significant importance for modern fashion design and the preservation and revitalization of traditional cultures.

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