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Design and Inheritance of the She Ethnic Wedding Costumes based on the Grounded Theory

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Abstract
This study employs open-ended interviews and textual analysis to collect data on the primary elements influencing the design and dissemination of She ethnic wedding costume. Employing grounded theory, four principal categories were discerned: the significance of clothing attributes, awareness of cultural identity, incorporation of contemporary technology, and proactive engagement in cultural dissemination. A "cognition–emotion–behavior" model was established to elucidate how these aspects collectively influence modern design methods and cultural transmission routes. The results establish a theoretical basis for comprehending the mechanisms of impact and present practical insights for advancing the sustainable development of She ethnic wedding costume culture.

Keywords: Ethnic wedding costumes, design and inheritance, grounded theory, influencing factors

1.0 Introduction
The She ethnic group, one of the officially recognized minority groups in China, has developed a rich cultural heritage in Zhejiang Province. Among its artistic traditions, the She wedding costumes are especially significant, embodying distinctive aesthetic elements, symbolic motifs, and traditional craftsmanship. As an important form of intangible cultural heritage, these costumes reflect the community's historical memory, social customs, and cultural identity. However, existing studies have primarily concentrated on general cultural descriptions or protection strategies, while insufficient attention has been given to the mechanisms that influence the design, transmission, and contemporary adaptation of She wedding costumes. The lack of systematic research on how traditional values, modern technologies, and cultural dissemination interact presents a clear research gap.

To address this gap, this study investigates the key factors affecting the design and inheritance of She ethnic wedding costumes and develops a theoretical model that explains their interrelationships. This study aims to investigate the key factors influencing the design and inheritance of She ethnic wedding costumes and to explore how these factors interact to shape cultural transmission in contemporary contexts. Specifically, the objectives are (1) to identify the core factors affecting the design innovation and intergenerational inheritance of She ethnic wedding costumes; (2) to determine the interactive mechanisms of these factors under the background of modernization and marketization; and (3) to construct a cognitive-affective-behavioral theoretical model that explains the

dynamic evolution of costume culture. By clarifying these mechanisms, the study provides both theoretical insights for ethnic costume research and practical strategies for revitalizing intangible cultural heritage and supporting regional cultural tourism development.

2.0 Literature Review

Research on ethnic costumes in China has mainly focused on theoretical discussions of cultural symbolism, social change, and the relationship between costume traditions and wedding customs (Fang, 2018). While these studies highlight the cultural and historical significance of ethnic attire, they often remain descriptive and lack analytical depth regarding contemporary design practices (Chu, 2019). Existing research on wedding costume consumption and cultural industries is also relatively limited, particularly concerning how traditional aesthetics interact with modern consumer preferences (Huang & Chen, 2020; Yan & Fan, 2017). Recent scholarship has increasingly recognized the intangible cultural heritage value of She ethnic costumes and explored strategies for preservation, digital documentation, and sustainable development (Cai & Cai, 2023). For instance, Wang's study on the cultural meaning of She colored ribbons emphasizes the role of digital technology in safeguarding traditional crafts. However, these works primarily address protection measures and pay insufficient attention to the internal mechanisms that shape the evolution, reinterpretation, and revitalization of She wedding costumes (Zhou & Wang, 2020). Similarly, studies that employ comparative methods to analyze regional costume characteristics often face challenges related to vague research boundaries and a lack of systematic analytical frameworks (Xue & Long, 2020).

More broadly, scholars have emphasized that research on ethnic costumes should move beyond the examination of craft techniques to consider their cultural logic, identity functions, and social meanings (Hu, Zhang & Du, 2024). Although these studies provide valuable perspectives, few have examined how traditional values, user perceptions, and modern technologies jointly influence the design and transmission of She wedding costumes. This gap is especially evident in the lack of grounded empirical analysis that integrates both practitioner and consumer perspectives. To address these limitations, this study adopts grounded theory to systematically analyze interview and textual data, identify core influencing factors, and construct a theoretical model that explains the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mechanisms underlying the design and inheritance of She ethnic wedding costumes. By linking empirical evidence with theoretical reflection, the study responds directly to the gaps identified in previous literature and contributes a more comprehensive understanding of how traditional costume culture adapts within contemporary social and market contexts.

Among the reviewed literature, 73% is published within five years (2020-2024), ensuring the timeliness of the research basis. To address the identified gaps: first, aiming at the lack of "integrated analysis of practitioners' and consumers' dual perspectives" in existing studies, this research fills the gap through mixed-sample interviews covering three types of participants; second, for the insufficient discussion on "the interaction between traditional values and modern technology," this study takes technological integration as a core category to clarify its regulatory role in cultural inheritance; third, targeting the lack of empirical models in ethnic costume research, this study constructs a cognitive-affective-behavioral framework based on grounded theory.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopts grounded theory as the primary qualitative research method to explore the factors influencing the design and inheritance of She ethnic wedding costumes. Grounded theory is widely recognized as a rigorous bottom-up approach that derives theoretical insights from empirical data. It is especially suitable for topics where existing theoretical frameworks are insufficient or fragmented. Following the procedures of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, this study integrates interview materials and textual data to construct a theoretical model that reflects both practitioner and consumer perspectives.

3.1 Data Sources and Sample Selection
To ensure data comprehensiveness and representativeness, this study combines questionnaire screening with theoretical sampling. Preliminary questionnaires distributed online and offline in Jingning She Autonomous County (the main settlement of the She ethnic group with a well-preserved wedding costume culture, making it a representative research site) identified the primary consumer group as individuals aged 22 – 27. A total of 12 interviewees were selected, including marriageable-age members of the She community, practitioners (designers and inheritors), and cultural enthusiasts. The sample size is appropriate for grounded theory research, as theoretical saturation was reached—no new conceptual insights emerged after repeated coding.

Table 1. Basic information of the interview

Group	Occupation	Age	Education	Characters
Marriageable age	University lecturer	27	PhD	He visited many folk museums in Zhejiang and is interested in the She costume culture
	Civil servant	25	Master	She has participated in many cultural and craft protection projects
	Accountant	23	Master	She is fascinated by many embroidery and handicrafts
Practitioners	Craftsman	41	Bachelor	He is an enthusiast of the use of new technology in handicraft production and is experienced in digital exhibition and interaction
	Clothing Designer	33	Master	He runs an art company that aims to disseminate She culture
	Inheritors	39	Bachelor	She is an inheritor of dress culture and has mastered rich handicraft skills
Enthusiasts	Media Operators	23	Bachelor	She worked for online costume platforms and has made videos and documentaries
	Unemployed	25	Bachelor	He enjoys making handicraft videos to share with friends, and he is a strong enthusiast of AI technology

Student	21	Bachelor	She has experienced many traditional skills and she wishes to combine online

3.2 Interview Design Outline

An unstructured interview outline was developed to guide data collection while allowing participants to express personal experiences freely. The outline was refined through three pilot interviews—one from each interviewee group. After confirming its effectiveness, the outline was used consistently across all interviews. Questions were adjusted when necessary to capture emerging themes, following the iterative nature of grounded theory.

3.3 Open coding

Open coding was conducted on the full set of interview transcripts and textual materials. Meaningful statements were extracted, conceptualized, and compared to identify recurring themes. A total of 38 initial categories were generated through iterative analysis. Figure 1 presents the word cloud of these initial categories.

Table 2．"Open coding" process of design and inheritance costume research based on interviews

Original sentence
A1 If I have the chance, I think I will wear the Phoenix dress to hold the wedding ceremony, which is the most distinctive dress of the She nationality. It is an exceptional experience, which can not only make my wedding more unforgettable but also inherit and promote the She culture.
A2 I prefer its color collocation, which is usually very bright, such as the combination of red and gold, which are both festive and vibrant. The She embroidery is also particularly exquisite, with delicate stitching and symbolic patterns, showing the diligence and wisdom of the She people.
A3 I hope that more in line with the aesthetic taste of young people, the style should be more fashionable, it is best to integrate some modern elements will adjust the color match, etc., at the same time, I also hope to have some matching accessories, so that the whole shape is perfect.
A4 I am a She ethnic minority myself. Since childhood, I have had a strong interest in our ethnic costumes. Seeing that many ethnic minority cultures are gradually being forgotten in modern society, I want to show the uniqueness of the She ethnic wedding costumes through my designs.
A5 Now is the 5G and digital era. We can use 3D printing technology to realize the diversified remodeling of fabrics.
A6 In the design process, I may retain traditional patterns and adjust color combinations. I will also consider the functionality and comfort of modern clothing.
A7 When many young people travel to Zhejiang, they go to local ethnic experience halls to wear characteristic costumes and participate in local activities for interaction and communication.
A8 Culture is to let more people know, experience and spread it. No matter in what way, whether it is to participate in local cultural activities offline or spread intangible cultural heritage through short videos, we must highlight the cultural confidence that our country emphasizes now.
A9 Actively seek inheritors of traditional crafts to learn and master handicraft techniques and apply them to designs. Explore some modern technological means to improve the production efficiency and quality of clothing.
A10 The acceptance of She ethnic phoenix costumes in the modern market is gradually increasing. However, due to its complex production process and high cost, it limits its market popularity to a certain extent.
A11 I like buying clothes online very much, especially ethnic costumes that I am interested in. I follow several niche brand ethnic clothing stores. Whenever there are new products, I want to repurchase them and try different styles.
A12 We have set up handicraft training classes in the local community and teach young people production skills for free. At the same time, we also give certain material rewards to encourage them to participate in learning.
A13 To show that the She ethnic group is different from other ethnic groups, it is best to reflect the historical and cultural aspects of the She ethnic group so that others can recognize at a glance that it is She ethnic clothing.
A14 Highlight the regional style. It cannot be simply imitated like clothing on the market. The clothing itself should be beautiful, and the decorations should also be attractive. It is best to reflect some ethnic characteristics.
A15 Because I am a student with limited economic ability but I like it very much. Many ethnic costumes are relatively expensive for me. So I am more inclined to She ethnic costumes that can be both good in quality and inexpensive while also spreading ethnic culture.
A16 In terms of pattern design, some adjustments and innovations can be made based on retaining traditional patterns and combining modern aesthetics. In terms of production technology, some modern tools and materials can be tried to improve production efficiency and quality without losing the characteristics of traditional crafts.
A17 At the social level, activities such as cultural exhibitions, fashion shows, and ethnic costume festivals can be held to let more ordinary people understand and appreciate She ethnic phoenix costumes. At the same time, cooperation with fashion brands and media can be strengthened. Publicity and promotion can be carried out through various channels to increase the social attention of She ethnic phoenix costumes.
A18 Any culture must keep pace with the times. Staying in the original position will have limitations. Especially for local governments, they are now doing their best to publicize. Doing intangible cultural heritage at this time is a particularly trendy thing. Then, combined with live streaming with goods, it not only does what you like but also has a source of income.
A19 Suitable for wearing in different seasons. In summer, light fabrics can be used, such as silk or linen. In winter, it should be warm and a thermal insulation layer can be added.
A20 The distinction between the styles of wedding costumes for the bride and groom should not conform to the characteristics of gender costumes in She ethnic traditions but also reflect the role differences in modern weddings.
A21 Whether the cutting of wedding costumes conforms to ergonomics can show the figure advantages of the wearer without affecting the convenience of movement.

3.4 Initial Category

To minimize researcher bias, the initial categories were refined through multiple rounds of comparison and categorization. Statements that appeared fewer than three times were excluded to ensure analytical reliability. The 38 remaining categories are the most representative of participants' perceptions and experiences.

style pattern color quality practical comfortable
convenient, personalized decoration
fashion popular geographical region historical value,
national tradition, interact with residents
cultural exhibition transmits craftsmanship price
online sales source of income intelligent digital
recognizability influence phoenix totem cultural
customs motherland national unity material ergonomics
seasonal publicity popular media cooperation

Figure 1. Opening coding: 38 Initial categories

3.5 Axial coding
Axial coding connected the initial categories to identify higher-level conceptual relationships. Through systematic comparison, 12 main categories were developed: clothing characteristics, use value, aesthetic taste, cultural identity, emotional experience, inheritance and expression, consumer market, modern technology, national brand, cultural confidence, quality, and communication and promotion. These categories represent mid-level influences on She wedding costume design.
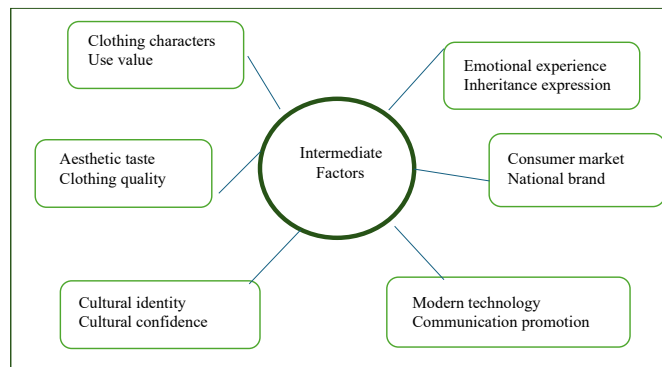

Figure 2. Axial coding: 12 main concepts

The core part of all coding processes in grounded theory is selective coding. The purpose of this part is to extract the core category. First, based on the interview data, deeply analyze the logical connections and correlations between the main categories, and extract the core category that can play a leading role. After refining and sublimating the main categories, this step yields the core category, which influences the design requirements. Secondly, through multi-level coding and in-depth analysis, connect the factors influencing the inheritance path of the core coding to form a theoretical model. The core categories are the value of clothing characteristics, cultural identity consciousness, modern technology integration, and communication initiative.

Table 3. Relational structure based on concepts from axial coding

Concepts	Implication	Relationship
Value of clothing characteristics	Internal factor and antecedent factor	Cognition-effect-behavior
Cultural identity consciousness	Internal situational factor	Cognition-effect-
Modern technology integration	External situational factor	Effect-behavior
Communication initiative	External situational factor	Effect-behavior

3.6 Model Construction
Selective coding was used to integrate the 12 main categories into four core categories: value of clothing characteristics, cultural identity consciousness, integration of modern technology, and initiative in cultural dissemination. These categories form the basis of the

proposed cognition–emotion–behavior model, which explains how practitioners and consumers understand, evaluate, and act upon She ethnic wedding costume culture.
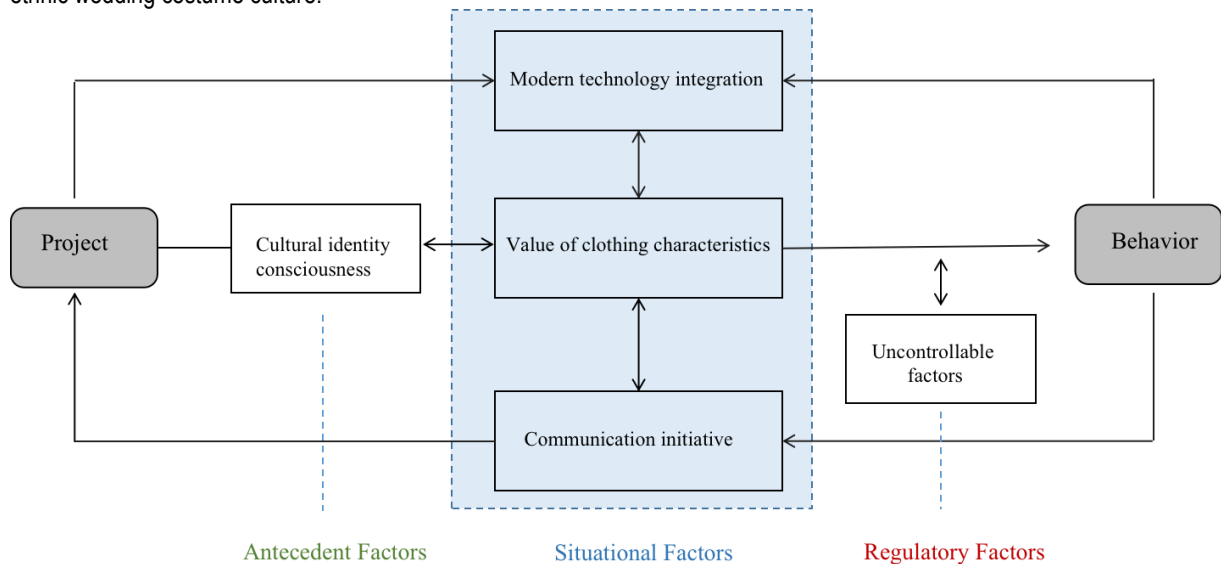

Figure 3. Relationships in the "cognitive-affective-behavioral" model

4.0 Findings

Based on the selective coding process, four core categories were identified as the key factors influencing the design and inheritance of She ethnic wedding costumes: the value of clothing characteristics, cultural identity consciousness, integration of modern technology, and initiative in cultural dissemination. Together, these categories illustrate how cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions collectively shape both the creative design process and the transmission of cultural meaning.

The value of clothing characteristics emerged as the cognitive foundation of both consumer preference and design decision-making. Participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of visual features such as color combinations, embroidery craftsmanship, and symbolic motifs. As noted by one respondent, the vibrant pairing of red and gold, along with the delicacy of traditional She embroidery, forms a major source of aesthetic appeal. These attributes not only guide designers in maintaining recognizable cultural markers but also help consumers articulate their understanding of the costume's cultural significance. Cultural identity consciousness further deepens this cognitive perception by adding an emotional dimension to the use and transmission of the She wedding costumes. For many participants, wearing such costumes represents more than an aesthetic choice—it reflects a sense of belonging and cultural pride. This emotional attachment motivates designers to preserve traditional elements and inspires younger consumers to purchase, wear, and promote these garments as expressions of identity, thereby strengthening intergenerational cultural continuity.

At the behavioral level, the integration of modern technology plays a significant role in expanding the visibility and creative potential of She wedding costumes. Participants from different groups highlighted how digital fabrication tools, online retail platforms, virtual exhibitions, and new media applications facilitate innovation, improve production efficiency, and provide more diverse channels for cultural presentation. These technologies transform not only design practices but also the methods of disseminating cultural heritage. The initiative in cultural dissemination further reinforces these processes by encouraging both practitioners and consumers to participate actively in the spread of the She costume culture. Activities such as community workshops, fashion shows, cultural festivals, social media content creation, and collaborative branding not only increase public exposure but also stimulate market interest and cross-cultural engagement. This proactive involvement operates across emotional and behavioral dimensions, forming a dynamic mechanism that continuously revitalizes cultural meaning.

Overall, the four interrelated core categories collectively form the empirical basis for the proposed cognition–emotion–behavior model, demonstrating how She wedding costume culture evolves in response to contemporary social contexts, technological transformation, and changing consumer values.

5.0 Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the design and inheritance of the She ethnic wedding costumes are shaped by four interrelated core factors: value of clothing characteristics, cultural identity consciousness, integration of modern technology, and initiative in cultural dissemination. These factors function within a cognition–emotion–behavior framework, creating a comprehensive explanatory model for the adaptation of traditional costume culture to modern social and technological environments. The cognitive dimension reflects how practitioners and consumers perceive the cultural and functional attributes of the She wedding costumes. Distinctive colors, embroidery patterns, and craftsmanship form the basis for design decisions and consumer recognition, echoing existing research that views ethnic

costumes as carriers of cultural memory and identity. Clear cognitive understanding appears to be a prerequisite for aesthetic appreciation and the development of deeper emotional engagement.

Emotional responses are shaped primarily by cultural identity consciousness. Participants frequently expressed that wearing She wedding costumes is not merely an aesthetic preference but an expression of cultural belonging. This emotional attachment generates cultural pride, strengthens intergenerational transmission, and also motivates designers to retain symbolic motifs and embed cultural narratives within contemporary design practices. Building on these emotional foundations, behavioral responses emerge through technology adoption and varied dissemination strategies. Participants highlighted the importance of digital technologies—including virtual exhibitions, online retail, and modern fabrication tools—which enhance visibility, accessibility, and innovation potential. Similarly, cultural festivals, workshops, social media engagement, and cross-industry collaborations further expand the reach and visibility of She costume culture.

The interaction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions reveals a dynamic mechanism through which cultural understanding stimulates emotional identification, which in turn motivates concrete actions related to design, consumption, and dissemination. Cultural identity enhances both consumer participation and practitioner creativity, while technological integration accelerates cultural promotion and innovation. These findings suggest that the vitality of the She ethnic wedding costume culture depends not only on the preservation of craftsmanship but also on the cultural values, emotional connections, and social behaviors that surround it. The study therefore contributes theoretically by proposing a mechanism that integrates cognitive, emotional, and behavioral perspectives within intangible cultural heritage research, offering an empirically supported framework grounded in practitioner and consumer experiences. Practically, the findings demonstrate the need for collaboration among designers, cultural institutions, local communities, and digital media platforms, highlighting strategies such as digital documentation, community education, and cross-sector innovation as pathways to enhance both cultural sustainability and market vitality.

6.0 Conclusions

This study identifies four core factors that influence the design and inheritance of She ethnic wedding costumes: value of clothing characteristics, cultural identity consciousness, integration of modern technology, and initiative in cultural dissemination. Grounded theory analysis integrates these factors into a cognition–emotion–behavior model that explains how practitioners and consumers understand, engage with, and promote traditional costume culture in contemporary contexts, offering a systematic perspective on the mechanisms shaping the revitalization of ethnic costume traditions. Nevertheless, several limitations must be acknowledged. The study draws primarily on participants from Jingning She Autonomous County and adjacent areas, which may limit the diversity of viewpoints and restrict the applicability of findings to other She communities. Its reliance on qualitative data also introduces potential subjectivity, and the absence of quantitative validation prevents the measurement of the strength of relationships among the core factors. These limitations affect the generalizability of the results and indicate the need for complementary approaches in future studies.

Despite these constraints, the findings offer practical insights for enhancing cultural sustainability. Digital tools such as 3D modeling, virtual exhibitions, and social media platforms can significantly expand the visibility and accessibility of the She ethnic wedding costumes. Community-centered initiatives—including workshops, mentorship programs, and school-based cultural education—may strengthen youth engagement and support long-term cultural transmission. Cross-industry collaborations among designers, tourism sectors, and creative industries can further diversify design approaches and broaden market channels. Future research may validate the proposed model using large-scale quantitative methods, conduct comparative studies across ethnic or international contexts, and pursue longitudinal investigations into how perceptions of She wedding costumes evolve over time and how technological change shapes cultural heritage transmission. These directions can refine the theoretical model and guide the sustainable development of ethnic costume culture in contemporary society.

Acknowledgment

Paper Contribution to the Related Field of Study

This study contributes to the field in three ways. It develops a cognition–emotion–behavior model that clarifies the mechanisms shaping the design and inheritance of the She wedding costumes. Methodologically, it applies grounded theory to integrate designer and consumer perspectives, offering an empirically supported framework for ethnic costume studies. Practically, it highlights how cultural identity, technological innovation, and active dissemination can support the contemporary revitalization of intangible cultural heritage.

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