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Design Expression of "Chinese-style" Costumes in the Context of Globalization

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Abstract
The purpose of this study is to discuss how "Chinese-style" clothing is integrated into the international fashion market by applying traditional Chinese clothing design elements in the context of globalization. This research defined four design elements of traditional Chinese clothing through literature analysis, which mainly consisted of colors, silhouettes, fabrics and crafts. Then professional researchers selected four representative enterprises oriented to the international market from a large quantity of "Chinese-style" enterprises and compared the design works officially released by the four "Chinese-style" enterprises with the four design elements by Nvivo12. Through analyzing 1,176 pieces of Chinese-style design works of the four representative enterprises, the study found that "Chinese-style" enterprises oriented to the international market comprehensively apply traditional Chinese clothing design elements to conduct innovative design to show their own cultural identities to a large extent.

Keywords
ethnic dress, fashion design, China clothing, cultural interchange.

1. Introduction

The term "Chinese-style" originated from the west, which is closely linked to the cultural and art exchanges between the east and west. In the early period, it was interpreted as "a western decorative style with Chinese taste and sentiment which shows westerners' understanding and expression of traditional Chinese patterns and decorative art" [1]. Nowadays, "Chinese-style" has a richer connotation. Established on the basis of traditional Chinese culture, it refers to the artistic forms or lifestyles that contain large quantities of Chinese elements and adapt to the global fashion trend [2]. "Chinese-style" clothing refers to a kind of fashion design style with Chinese characteristics which closely combines Chinese elements with modern design art. It is a kind of clothing that pursues Chinese sentiments, and whose design and creation are inspired by all Chinese things and combine contemporary art aesthetics and fashion trends [3].

Since the 1990's, "Chinese-style" has become the focus of attention in the international fashion industry. The popularity of "Chinese-style" is related to the following factors: (1) traditional Chinese clothing heritages have been recognized as one of the most influential sources for Western designers to obtain oriental inspirations and create Asian chic. A large quantity of global luxury brands (including Dior, Giorgio Armani, and Fendi) have launched new products with traditional Chinese characteristics. With China being the largest luxury fashion goods consuming country, its growing market scale will consolidate the West's burgeoning desire to learn about Chinese culture and values, and this trend will support the integration of Chinese fashion into the global fashion system [4]. (2) Numerous film stars with international influence perform on the international stage wearing costumes with eastern taste. (3) In the USA, the increasing success of a group of second-generation Chinese designers is shaping a new perception of China, gradually depriving westerners of the Orientalist vision that Chinese manufacturing lacks taste and initiative [5]. Meanwhile, designers of Chinese origin and background, such as Vera Wang, David Chu, Anna Sui, Derek Lam, Alexander Wang, and Vivienne Tam, have gradually been recognized and accepted by the western fashion world after nearly 30 years of hard work. Designers of Chinese origin have also shaped Chinese-style clothing using international lifestyles, values and global design languages on the premise of preserving Chinese cultural traditions.

With the current increasingly evident trend of globalization, culture appears to be the significant factor for the competitiveness of a country, as a unique cultural heritage can function as a differentiation tool that can never be emulated by others [6]. In China, awakening from the obsession of pursuing western clothing culture by "wholesale westernization", local designers are returning to the position of local culture. Departing from national identity, they are striving to perfectly combine Chinese elements with fashion, and promote the inner spirit of Chinese clothing to the world [7]. However, in the process of self-development and integration into the international market, "Chinese-style" clothing is confronted with numerous design issues. First, certain elements of traditional Chinese culture and lifestyles have become highly inappropriate for the development of modern society, and even a number of core value issues are essentially opposite to the cultural requirements of today's world. Besides, a number of design works lack fashion awareness, as well as international vision in expressing

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traditional fashion. The lack of creativity and the difficulty of secondary creation under the fixed framework of traditional style and elements, result in virtually the same effect of most traditional style clothing [8]. Furthermore, currently there are so many similarities among "Chinese-style" clothing in terms of style, silhouette, color application, and decorative technique that homogeneity is severe, leading to plagiarism and imitation, which are commonly seen. To address these problems, "Chinese-style" enterprises oriented to the international market are required to re-examine their own traditional cultures and apply traditional design elements to present their own cultural attributes from an international perspective.

Despite the importance of traditional clothing to the fashion industry, marketing and fashion research has not thoroughly examined the design of traditional clothing in contemporary times [9]. This study aims to explore how excellent "Chinese-style" enterprises oriented to the international market are integrated into the international fashion market by using traditional Chinese clothing design elements. Since currently there are few relevant studies discussing the integration of "Chinese-style" clothing into the international market from the perspective of design elements, this study is conducive to providing design guidance to "Chinese-style" enterprises, promoting the status of Chinese designers in the international fashion field, obtaining recognition on the part of international designers and further enhancing the cultural soft power for China to go global.

2. "Chinese style" clothing design elements

Design elements are critical because they are immediately perceived by viewers. Since design elements create a strong visual impact on the entire image of clothing, this study explores how "Chinese-style" enterprises oriented to the international market develop it by applying traditional Chinese clothing design elements in the context of globalization. China has a long and well-documented history of court dress through its many dynasties, characterized by traditional motifs, specialized textile techniques, and distinctive clothing styles [10]. The beauty of clothing in material, silhouette, style, and craft enables it to present a unique artistic image and aesthetics conception in both appearance and connotation. Researchers often use four design elements - line, form, texture, and color - to analyze clothing designs [11]. Thus, in order to discuss how Chinese enterprises oriented to the international market utilize traditional clothing design elements from traditional Chinese clothing culture, this article reviews and arranges theoretical literature related to traditional Chinese clothing design elements, and compares the traditional Chinese clothing design elements extracted from the literature with selected image works of the four Chinese-style enterprises oriented to the international market. For the purpose of a more intuitive data analysis process, a coding scheme for traditional Chinese clothing design elements was developed using Nvivo12. (see Table 1).

Texture	● The fabrics used for Chinese clothing are usually luxurious and gorgeous so as to present their nobility . ● The fabrics are mainly natural fibers (such as linen, cotton, and silk).
Form	● Influenced by Confucianism, traditional Chinese clothing culture humanizes external and natural costumes. ● It borrows ideas from the silhouettes of the Shenyi dress, Ru skirt, Qipao and Shan jacket. ● Straight cuts and flat costume structure are adopted to conform to human body features. ● Some common features of these robes include flamboyant silks, a loose A-line cut, decorative sashes, and varying the front or side closure and side slits.
Color	● Influenced by the theories of *Yin* and *Yang* and the Five Elements, five colors are used in traditional clothing, namely, blue, red, black, white and yellow. ● The use of contrasting colors is a major characteristic of traditional Chinese coloring. ● Dark colors are mostly honored and light colors are secondly honored. Different colors represent different seasons. ● Dyes are mainly natural minerals and plant dyes.
Craft	● Decorative means consist of several traditional crafts including edge piping, inlaying, piping, winding and embroidering. ● The main forms of expression are brocade, printing and dyeing, embroidering and Kesi (Chinese silk tapestry with cut designs). ● Stylized characters are used as motifs for gilding or embroidery . ● Symbolic meanings of other floral, fruit, plant, and insect motifs were developed over time and used in textiles, porcelain, sculpture, and furniture.

Table 1. Traditional Chinese Design Elements

The form refers to representative external elements formally expressing Chinese concepts, mainly including the silhouette and pattern of costumes. Clothing silhouette is closely associated with dress styles which are inherited from history and preserve Chinese traditions [12]. It mainly consists of two major forms: "a top shirt and bottom skirt" (represented by "a Ru skirt composed of a short jacket and long skirt" (Figure 1)) and " a sewn-up shirt and skirt" (represented by "Shenyi dress" (Figure 2) and "qipao" (Figure 3)). The first type of garment (Ru skirt composed of a short jacket and long skirt) consists of an upper part and a skirt connected high on the waistline. The upper part of the coat symbolizes heaven and the skirt - earth. Heaven and earth symbolize jointly the harmony of the universe [13]. The second type of representative clothing, the qipao, which was derived from the Manchu long robe of the late Qing era, signified modernity.

It is particularly associated with the vibrant culture of Shanghai in the 1930's, and with Hong Kong under British rule in the 1950's and 1960's. Traditional Chinese clothing was presented in a flat, two-dimensional and non-constructive way, where wide-body silhouettes were formed to hide the body and maintain a relatively large space between the clothing and the human body. Once worn, such clothing presented a dynamic fluid and elegant beauty, showing a free and easy, natural, harmonious, euphemistic and implicit conception.

Fig. 1. Ru skirt composed of short jacket and long dress (Picture from Jiangnan University Folk Costume Museum, author's collection)

The costume patterns in traditional Chinese clothing are closely linked to Chinese hierarchy culture and auspiciousness culture. Auspicious patterns represented by animals, plants, figures, utensils, and the like express the aspiration for a better life by the forms of "homonym", "symbolism", "metaphor", etc. The majority of the decorative patterns that appear on Chinese textiles, paintings, ceramics, furniture, and other artifacts have their implied meanings, which are not expressed directly, but implicitly by puns, metaphors, rebuses, references, folklores, and stories of the images on the objects.

Fig. 2. Shenyi dress (Pictures from Hunan Museum, author's collection)

Fig. 3. Qipao (Pictures from Jiangnan University Folk Costume Museum, author's collection)

The texture mainly refers to the materials and fabrics of traditional Chinese clothing. China is the home of silk, where in the Shang and Zhou period (1600-256 B.C.), silk costumes were widely used among high aristocracy, and cotton and linen fabrics among ordinary people. As weaving technology progressed, clothing fabrics such as ghatpot, gauze, silk, and satin (different kinds of silk products) with different textures were widely used in traditional Chinese clothing, breaking class restrictions (Figure 4). Clothing fabrics with different textures could be woven using different weaving methods, such as Kesi and brocade.

Color refers to representative colors of traditional Chinese clothing. As an important visual element, color gradually developed into a symbolic language with artistic appeal, bringing a strong visual impact and humanistic connotation to artworks. Traditional Chinese colors were extracted from natural animals, plants and mineral dyes and dyed into clothing by hand. In China traditional clothing colors were significantly affected by the Five Element theory [14]. Therefore, in ancient times, colors were divided into primary and secondary colors according to the principle of mutual promotion and restraint between the Five Elements. Primary colors are blue, red, yellow, white, and black, called the "five colors". "Secondary colors" could be obtained by mixing the primary colors. It was recorded in the *Huan Nan Zi-Yuan Dao Xun* that "there are no more than five colors, while the varieties produced by mixing them cannot be counted" [15]. The five colors defined as primary colors symbolized nobility and authority. They were the purest and most basic colors, and abundant secondary colors could be obtained by mixing them. The definition and differentiation of primary and secondary colors served the social rituals of that time. Besides, different colors were used following changes of seasons in traditional Chinese colors. The Chinese use different colors to represent different seasons, for example, blue for

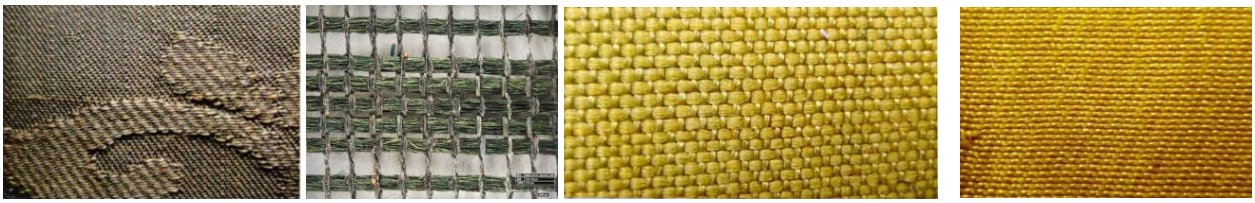

Fig. 4. From left to right: ghatpot, gauze, silk, and satin (Photographed by the author, Ran Xu, Yulai Li, author's collection)

Craft	Embroidery	Patchwork	Dyeing	Weaving	Edge piping
Textile sample					
Source	Ethnic Costume Museum, Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology	Jiangnan University Folk Costume Museum	Ethnic Costume Museum, Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology	Ethnic Costume Museum, Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology	Jiangnan University Folk Costume Museum

Fig. 5. Traditional Chinese clothing craft (author's collection)

spring, red for summer, white for autumn, and black for winter.

Craft refers to the craftsmanship for traditional Chinese clothing, represented by embroidery, patchwork, dyeing and weaving, and edge piping (Figure 5). Embroidery is a general term for various decorative patterns embroidered on fabrics using needles and threads. Types of embroidery are plain embroidery, gold thread embroidery, grain embroidery, braid embroidery, etc. Patchwork is piecing two or more kinds of clothing fabrics or colors. For example, the Paddy-field Costume, which first appeared in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and became popular in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1636-1912) Dynasties, was pieced together with various fabric scraps of different color, resembling the paddy field for the interlocking colors and fabrics of the entire clothes, hence the name. The dyeing and weaving craft is making costume fabrics into different patterns and colors using blue calico, tie-dyeing, wax printing, and other methods. The edge piping craft means adding a hem to the edge of the clothes. Adding a wide hem to women's clothes is called "Xiang" (edge piping) and a narrow hem - "Gun" (piping). Edge piping is a widely used decorative craft, which, by inserting color-contrasting hems, can highlight the beauty of lines, present a sense of three-dimensional layers, and make works more colorful.

3. Representative Chinese style enterprise selection method

In order to explore the expression forms of "Chinese-style" enterprises using traditional Chinese clothing design elements in the context of globalization, the article selected "Chinese-style" enterprises oriented to the international market to conduct visual analysis of design works according to the following three principles: (1) the enterprises have overseas shops oriented to the global market; (2) the design orientation has remarkable characteristics of traditional Chinese clothing; (3) the enterprises have exhibition and show experiences in the four major international fashion weeks, namely, New York, Paris, Milan, and London. Based on the above-mentioned principles, three researchers with professional knowledge in the fields of fashion design and culture, apparel marketing and management were chosen these three researchers have been devoted to the protection and inheritance of traditional Chinese clothing culture since 2006. They have collected more than 5,000 physical objects of traditional Chinese costumes from all over the country, and established the Traditional Chinese Costume Culture Protection Base, supported by China's Ministry of Education and have received key grants from the China National Arts Fund and China National Social Science Foundation Art Project. They selected four Chinese-style enterprises including Shanghai Tang, Shiatzy Chen, Shangxia, and TANGY, and conducted an analysis on their brand concepts, design orientation and overseas shops (see Table 2). Tiziana Ferrero-Regis & Tim Lindgren confirmed that the four enterprises were expanding actively on the international market for traditional Chinese clothing [16]. Therefore, it is of reference value to select these four enterprises to conduct a design analysis of "Chinese-style" elements.

Enterprises	Brand Concepts	Design Styles	Overseas Shops
Shanghai Tang	Luxury brand "created by China"	Chinese silhouettes, Chinese decoration	Milan, Yangon, Singapore
Shiatzy Chen	Highlighting Chinese craft aesthetics. Integrating eastern and western cultures.	Western silhouettes, Chinese decoration	Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur, Paris
Shangxia	Paying attention to elements such as traditional and modern, eastern and western, and human and nature. Interpreting the beauty of balance in opposition.	Almost no decoration. Mainly pure colors. Presenting Chinese styles by silhouette and conception.	Singapore, Paris
TANGY	Paying attention to original design. Integrating brand concept of "peace, health, and beauty" and the harmonious realm of "unity of heaven and human beings" into all aspects of fashion design and development.	Basic styles. Patterns frequently used. Highlighting natural and comfortable fabrics.	Paris

Table 2. A profile analysis of four Chinese-style enterprises

A total of 1,176 design samples were established in this study, which are publicity pictures released on the official websites of the four "Chinese-style" enterprises from 2019 to 2021. There are relevant descriptions about the four design elements in the picture information. The works on the official websites are the most selected ones that can represent the images and design styles of the enterprises. Among them, 609 pieces are from Shanghai Tang (SHT), 370 from Shiatzy Chen (SZC), 131 from Shangxia (SX) and 66 from TANGY (TY). The study analyzed the four design elements and details of "Chinese-style" clothing and applied Nvivo12 to encode and classify the design works of the four enterprises.

The degree of using traditional Chinese clothing design elements by the four enterprises is measured by numerical values 1-2 (symbolic reflection=1 and modification=2). Symbolic reflection refers to the partial use of traditional Chinese clothing design elements, but the clothing retains the characteristics of modern clothing on the whole. Modification refers to the partial modification of traditional Chinese clothing elements, but largely retains the traditional Chinese clothing design elements. Since different numbers of pictures of the four enterprises are used, the use of the standardized data processing method allows us to obtain objective values for the use of traditional Chinese clothing elements by the four enterprises. By the standardized processing method, the frequency of each enterprise using traditional Chinese clothing elements is multiplied by measurement values 1-2 and the total score obtained is divided by the total number of pictures of each enterprise to obtain the mean values of the four "Chinese-style" enterprises using different traditional Chinese clothing elements (decimal points omitted).

4. Analysis of design elements of representative Chinese style enterprises

The symbolic reflection and modification are summarized in Figure 6. Figure 6 (1) can be understood as the application of the symbolic reflection of the 1,176 pictures among the four enterprises, and Figure 6 (2) - the application of the modification.

It can be seen from the results of data analysis that among the 1,176 pictures, traditional clothing colors and fabrics are more frequently used in "Chinese-style" design. Among them, 894 (76%) pieces use traditional Chinese clothing colors and 724 (62%) traditional Chinese clothing fabrics, while only 181 (15%) use the silhouettes. With regard to the four major traditional Chinese clothing crafts, brocade is used in 129 pieces, printing and dyeing in 208 pieces, and embroidery in 346 pieces, respectively.

The bar charts show the average values of the different design elements used by the four enterprises, illustrated in Figure 7, Figure 9, Figure 11, Figure 13, and Figure 15.

It can be seen from the comparison data of the use of each traditional Chinese clothing design element by the four "Chinese-style" enterprises that among the four enterprises Shiatzy Chen and TANGY use traditional Chinese clothing colors with more frequency and are listed before Shanghai Tang and Shangxia (Figure 7). Chinese-style enterprises express their cultural background by using traditional Chinese clothing colors, especially the traditional five colors, but it will moderately reduce the lightness and purity of colors while using traditional Chinese colors, so that the colors are visually less bright and jumpy, giving people a more stable feeling (Figure 8). Especially, Shanghai Tang extensively uses the traditional Chinese colors of red series and black series. Lise Skov thought that Shanghai Tang is mainly based on the lifestyle of people who wear that kind of clothing exclusively, presenting a dialectical relation of planting and re-implanting. Its attractiveness basically lies in a cultural style resembling imitation to appreciate China's past [17]. The study of Green-Armytage showed that designers frequently used colors to express their cultural identities, which is consistent with the use of traditional Chinese colors by the four Chinese-style enterprises oriented to the international market to highlight their own cultural attributes.

Among the 1,176 design works, there are 724 pieces related to traditional Chinese clothing fabrics. TANGY (1.03) and Shangxia (0.77) to a large extent use natural fabrics frequently used in

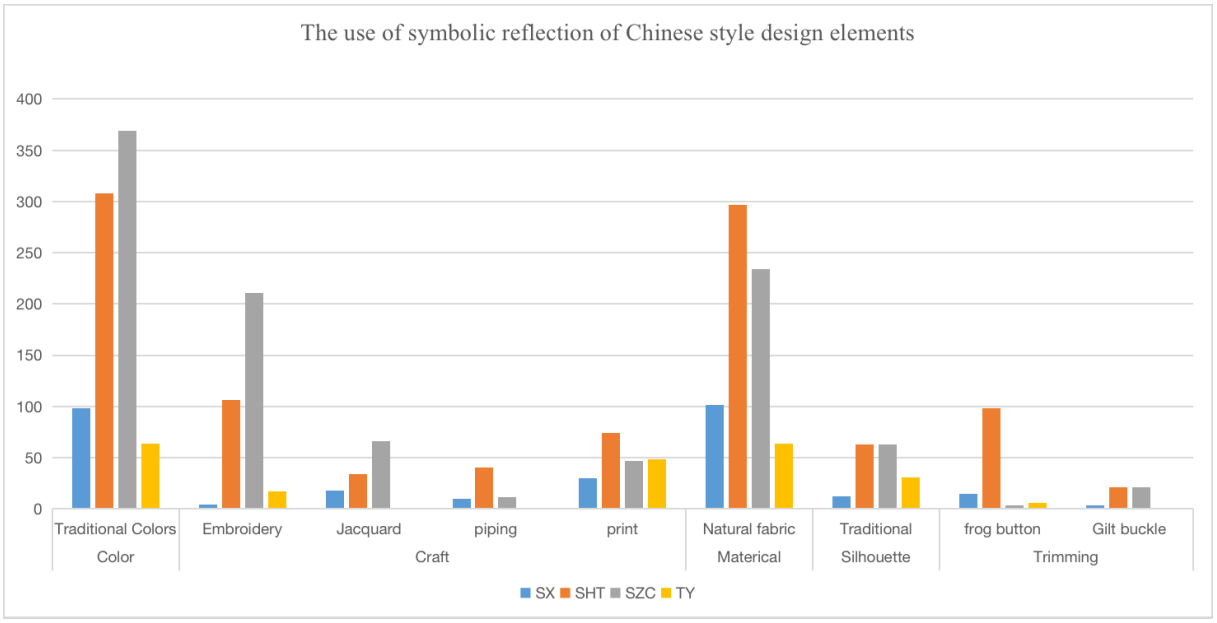

Figure 6 (1)

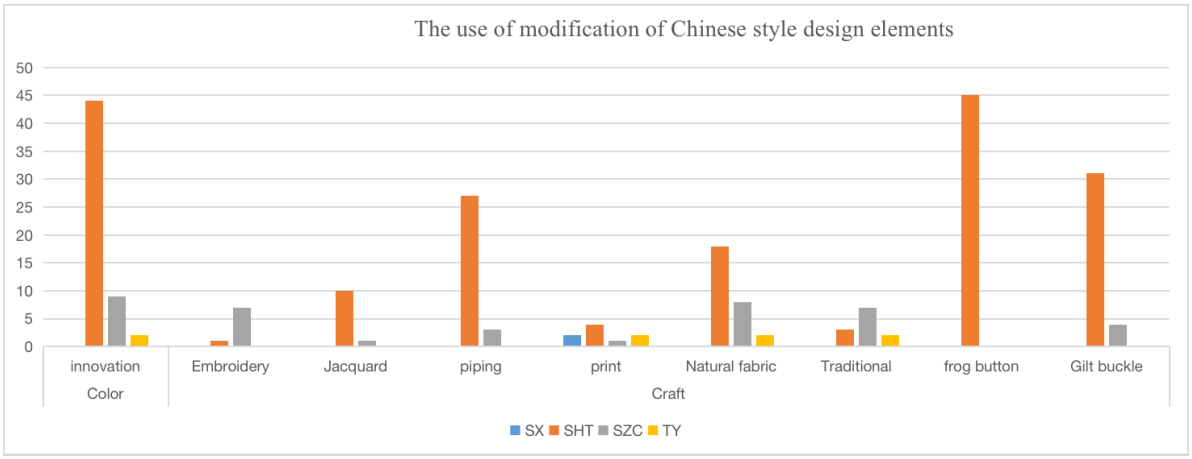

Figure 6 (2)

Fig. 6. The use of traditional Chinese clothing design elements by the four "Chinese-style" enterprises (Drawn by author)

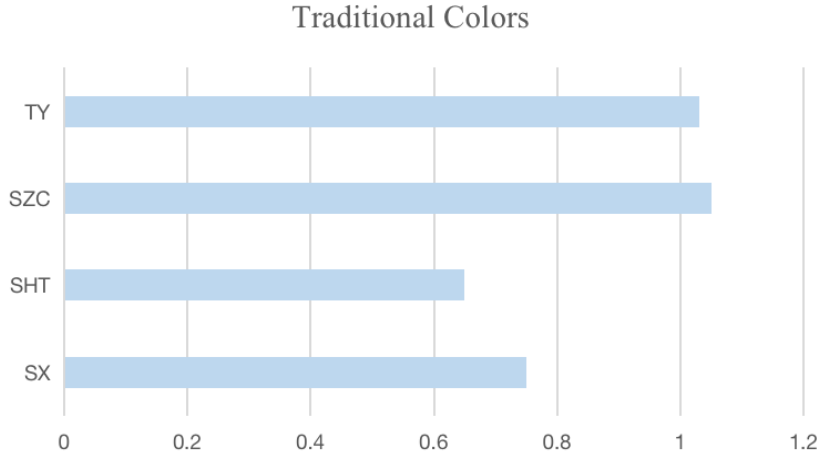

Fig. 7. Mean values of traditional Chinese clothing colors (Drawn by author)

traditional Chinese clothing such as silk, cotton and linen, which boast good water absorptivity and air permeability. It can be seen that TANGY is most distinctive in fabric design (Figure 9). All the 66 works displayed on the official website adopt the traditional Chinese clothing fabric of Gambiered Guangdong Silk, which is a kind of silk fabric dyed with natural plant dyes and also a purely handmade eco-friendly fabric. Ready-to-wear clothes made of Gambiered Guangdong Silk rustle while people wearing them move, hence they are called "Xiang Yun Sha" (rattling cloud yarn). With good washing fastness and strong waterproof performance, Gambiered Guangdong Silk is easy to

Fig. 8. Shiatzy Chen examples of traditional Chinese color (Pictures from Shiatzy Chen, author's collection)

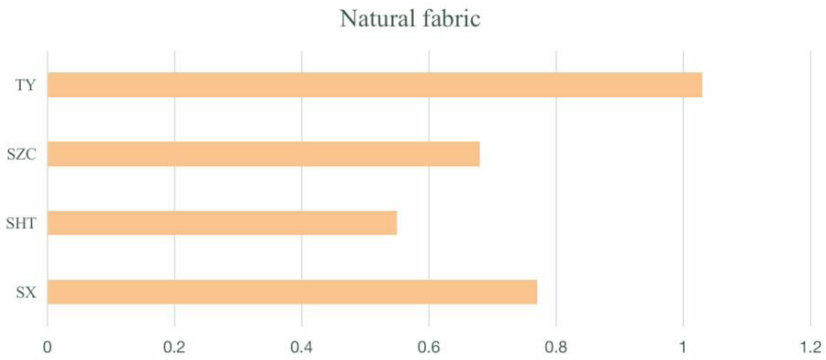

Fig. 9. Mean values of traditional Chinese clothing fabrics (Drawn by author)

Fig. 10. Pictures from TANGY (Pictures from TANGY, author's collection)

wash and dry, and is durable (Figure 10). TANGY has specially established the Gambiered Guangdong Silk Ecological Park in Guangzhou to provide fabrics for producing clothing.

Among the four elements of traditional Chinese clothing crafts, printing and dyeing and embroidery are used with more frequency (Figure 11). What TANGY uses the most is the printing and dyeing craft (0.79), which is related to the application of purely handmade plant dyeing by TANGY in the use of Gambiered Guangdong Silk (Figure 12). Shiatzy Chen (0.61) and Shanghai Tang (0.35), to a large extent, use the embroidery craft. Shanghai Tang mainly uses embroidery and edge piping and combines the silhouette element of traditional Chinese clothing to establish a "Chinese-style" image of design works. Shiatzy Chen primarily focuses on Suzhou Embroidery and Hunan Embroidery. It comprehensively uses embroidery methods such as tufting, grain stitch, patchwork stitch, and the like, so that each season's products present exquisite embroidery work with different themes. The clothing style of Shangxia rarely uses embroidery decoration or other crafts.

The traditional silhouette is used in a total of 181 pieces of design works by the "Chinese-style" enterprises, being the least used design element among the four. Among these enterprises, the ranking of TANGY and Shiatzy Chen is relatively high (Figure 13). For TANGY's costumes, single pure colors are used as primary color tone, and silhouettes are used principally to present the Chinese style. Shiatzy Chen mainly absorbs, simplifies and modifies the silhouette element of traditional Chinese clothing. For example, some local elements such as the stand-up collar, lateral forepart, split hem, and others, are innovated and adopted to make them meet a modern aesthetic style (Figure 14). The innovated clothing looks more modern and fashionable. While Shanghai Tang mainly borrows from the clothing silhouette of the Qipao and Tang Jacket and the overall style is more traditional.

Among the 1,176 pieces of design work, 91 use piping. The detailed elements were analyzed from five aspects, namely, the Chinese knot button, brass button, split, stand-up collar and buttons on the right (Figure 15). Among them, the design element of the stand-up collar is widely used. Besides, the Chinese knot button and split are also frequently used. Then the next are buttons on the right and brass buttons. Among the four "Chinese-style" enterprises, Shanghai Tang uses relatively much of the three detailed elements of the stand-up collar, the Chinese knot button and side split in the use of traditional design elements, while Shiatzy Chen, Shangxia and TANGY are most distinctive in using the stand-up collar among detailed design elements (Figure 16).

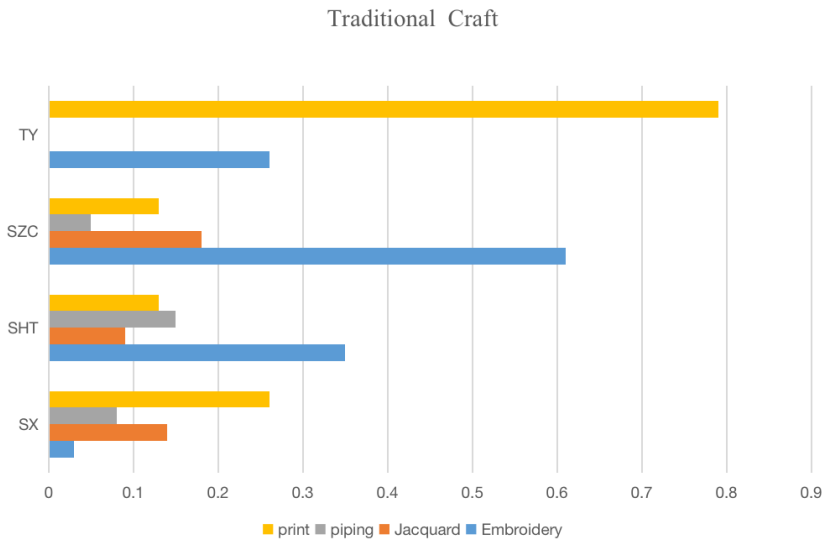

Fig. 11. Mean values of traditional Chinese clothing crafts (Drawn by author)

Fig. 12. Photo from TANGY (Picture from TANGY, author's collection)

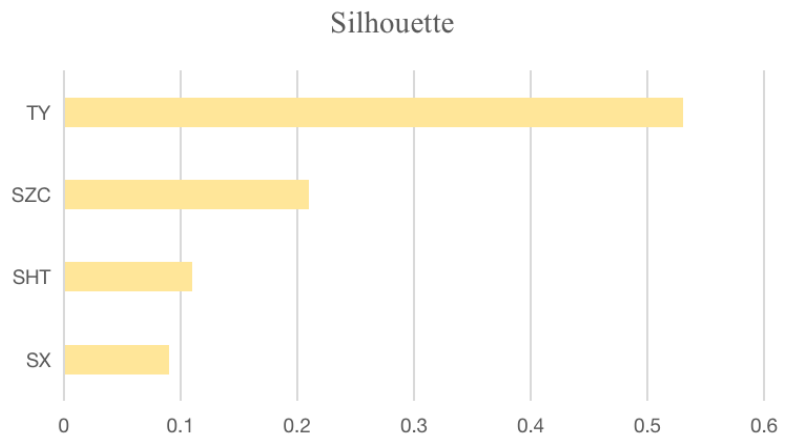

Fig. 13. Mean values of traditional Chinese clothing silhouettes (Drawn by author)

5. Conclusion

In the context of global economic integration, the fashion system is going global as well. Traditional Chinese clothing is an important business card in cross-cultural communication. Similar to the traditional clothing of Japan, South Korea and other countries, China should highlight the cultural connotation and characteristics of its traditional clothing to meet the requirements of target consumers during the process of cross-cultural communication. Clothing forms an overall symbol, with its silhouettes, colors, fabrics and crafts, to convey its functions, culture and emotion.

This study explores how "Chinese-style" enterprises use traditional Chinese clothing design elements to exhibit their own cultural attributes in the context of globalization. In order to achieve this study objective, three professional researchers selected the design works of four "Chinese-style" enterprises oriented to the international market. Then they visually analyzed and summarized the 1,176 works of the four identified brands by Nvivo12. The study concludes that the four "Chinese-style" enterprises oriented to the international market have used traditional Chinese clothing design elements to a large extent, but there are individual differences in the specific use of traditional Chinese clothing design elements. On the whole, the order of the use of traditional Chinese clothing design elements is color, fabric, craft and silhouette.

China has developed a rich and colorful traditional clothing culture during its historic development, but it is still relatively weak in the modern international fashion market system. The results of the study explain how the four representative "Chinese-style" enterprises oriented to the international market use traditional Chinese clothing design elements to expand the international market and how to present these clothing cultures with Chinese characteristics to the world. Relevant studies on this aspect are of utmost significance for Chinese designers, foreign trade enterprises, clothing brands and research scholars to be integrated into

Fig. 14. Sample profile of the four enterprises' Chinese Design Elements (Pictures from TANGY, Shiatzy Chen, Shanghai Tang, Shangxia, author's collection)

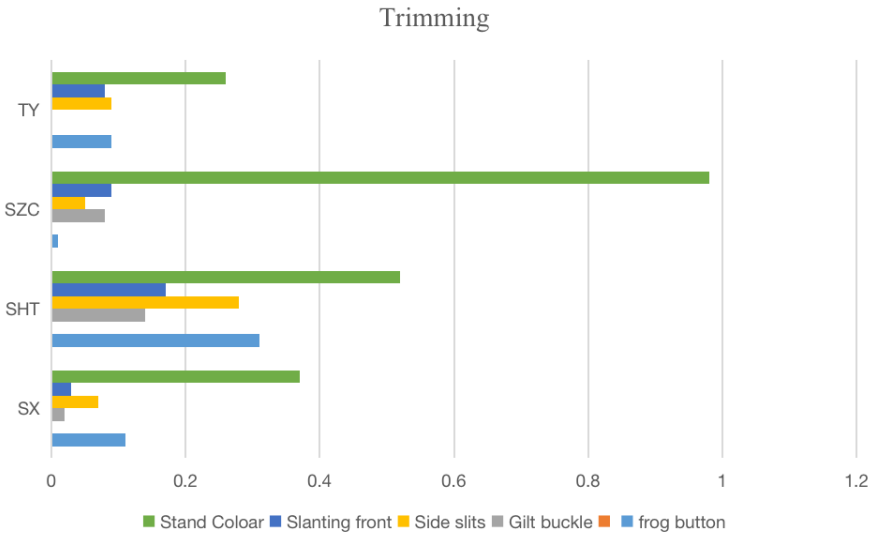

Fig. 15. Mean values of traditional Chinese silhouettes (Drawn by author)

Fig. 16. Examples of Chinese style element design details (Pictures from Shanghai Tang, Shiatzy Chen, Shangxia, TANGY, author's collection)

the international fashion system by using traditional Chinese clothing elements.

Limitations and suggestions for future studies are as follows: First, since there are differences between the design samples of the four Chinese-style enterprises, the ranking of the four Chinese-style enterprises using traditional Chinese clothing design elements by the mean value is a relative value. Nevertheless, this study can provide references for related subsequent studies. Second, the analysis of the four design elements based on the products released on the official websites of the four Chinese-style enterprises lacks an overall analysis of the clothing. This study reveals the important role that design elements in traditional Chinese clothing play in the process of "Chinese-style" enterprises entering the international market, as well as individual differences of different Chinese-style enterprises in the use of traditional Chinese clothing design elements. These findings provide meaningful references for "Chinese-style" enterprises when entering the international market.

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