A SEMIOTIC STUDY OF TRADITIONAL PATTERNS IN THE FIVE DIALECTS OF THE LI ETHNIC GROUP—CULTURAL SYMBOLISM AND MODERN COMMUNICATION *

Zhehao Wu[1] and Supachai Areerungruang[2]
[1-2]Faculty of Decorative Arts, Silpakorn University, Thailand
Corresponding Author's Email: supachai3833@gmail.com.

Abstract

With the advancement of modern media technology and the increasing demand for the dissemination of traditional culture, the communication and development of traditional ethnic patterns are facing both new challenges and opportunities. The traditional patterns of the five dialects of the Li nationality in Hainan, deeply rooted in historical accumulation and rich symbolic meanings, serve as important cultural symbols. This paper adopts a semiotic perspective to analyze the cultural connotations and symbolic values of these traditional patterns and explores their possible applications in modern media communication. By examining their semantic characteristics and narrative forms, and combining them with modern communication techniques and visual expression, this study aims to provide theoretical support and practical

references for their transformation and innovation in contemporary cultural communication.

Keywords: Li Five Dialects, Semiotics, Cultural Symbolism, Traditional Patterns, Modern Communication

Introduction

The Li ethnic group, as the earliest indigenous population of Hainan Island, has cultivated a distinctive material and intangible cultural heritage through millennia of productive practice and daily life. Traditional patterns, widely applied in textiles, pottery, architecture, and everyday artifacts, serve as critical symbolic carriers reflecting the Li people's perceptions of nature, society, and cosmology, while embodying ethnic identity, historical continuity, and spiritual beliefs (Liu, 2024).
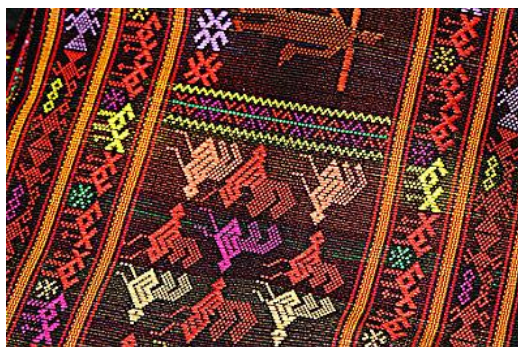

Figure 1 Traditional Li Patterns (Photographed by researcher, 2025)

Primarily inhabiting the central and southern regions of Hainan, the Li people's language divides into five major dialects—Ha, Qi, Meifu, Sai, and Run—each cultivating distinctive pattern traditions shaped by differing environments and histories. For instance, the Meifu dialect area features animal motifs linked to hunting culture, whereas the Ha dialect area

emphasizes geometric patterns reflecting agrarian civilization. These motifs function not only as decoration but also as markers of social identity, ritual symbolism, and auspicious emblems, originating from practices such as ancestral worship, nature worship, and totemic beliefs, thereby illustrating the Li philosophy of harmony with nature (W. He, 2024).
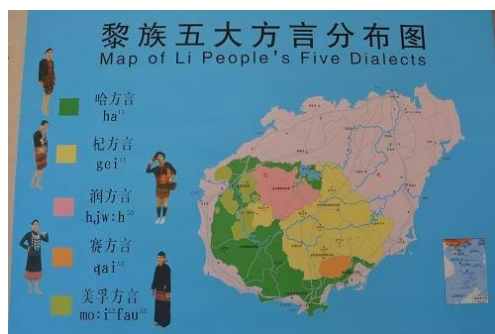

Figure 2 The map of the distribution of the five dialects of the Li people.

(Photographed by researcher, 2025)

However, modernization poses severe challenges to the transmission of traditional craftsmanship. Declining cultural identity among youth, marginalization under globalization, and the need for alignment with contemporary aesthetics have all contributed to the endangered status of Li traditional patterns (Zhu, 2024).

Against this backdrop, this study investigates how to preserve the authenticity of Li culture by analyzing traditional patterns through a semiotic lens, while integrating modern design, digital media, and cultural IP strategies. By focusing on the symbolic systems across the five dialect regions, the research seeks to promote the sustainable development and innovative dissemination of Li intangible cultural heritage (Zhu, 2024).

Objectives

Classify and analyze the traditional patterns of the five dialect regions of the Li ethnic group, exploring their morphological characteristics, application contexts, and evolutionary patterns.

Apply Peirce's triadic model of signs and Saussure's linguistic semiotics to construct a semiotic framework for analyzing Li traditional patterns, revealing their symbolic meanings and socio-cultural functions.

Analyze case studies on the application of Chinese cultural symbols in modern communication, and propose strategies for the protection and innovative dissemination of Li traditional patterns in the context of globalization.

Literature Review

1. Fundamentals of Semiotics

Ferdinand de Saussure, in his linguistic studies, proposed the binary structure of signs, wherein a sign consists of the signifier and the signified. The signifier refers to the physical manifestation of the sign, while the signified represents the cultural meaning it conveys. This theory underscores the arbitrariness of signs, suggesting that the relationship between form and meaning is not inherently natural but rather established through cultural conventions and social consensus(Krampen, 1987).
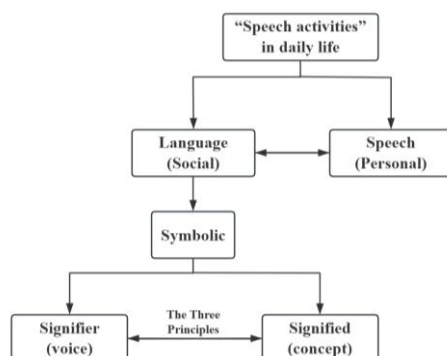
Figure 3 Illustration of Saussure's symbolic view of language (Constructed by the researchers)

In the study of traditional Li patterns, Saussure's semiotic theory provides a framework for analyzing the relationship between their visual characteristics (signifier) and their cultural symbolic meanings (signified). This approach helps to uncover the symbolic functions of these patterns within Li society(Krampen, 1987).

1.1 Signifier and Signified

Signifier: The Graphic Characteristics of Li Traditional Patterns

Li traditional patterns are commonly applied in handicrafts such as brocade, pottery, and bamboo weaving. Their design elements include geometric motifs, animal patterns, and plant motifs. These visual symbols not only reflect the aesthetic values of the Li people but also carry profound cultural meanings.

Signified: The Socio-Cultural Meanings of Li Traditional Patterns

According to Saussure, the meaning of signs is determined by cultural systems(Krampen, 1987).Therefore, the symbolic significance of Li traditional patterns must be interpreted within their historical context, social structure, and belief systems. The cultural meanings of Li patterns are primarily manifested in the following aspects.

Table 1 Moral of a pattern

Type	Pattern	Moral
Plants	Leaf pattern, banyan leaf pattern, banana leaf pattern, peanuts pattern, cottonwood pattern, valley pattern	Reproducing and reproducing offspring and tenacity, nurturing the family, and living a happy life.
Animals (Birds)	Birdie, dove, woodpecker, eagle, dove, turtle dove, gannet	Symbol of rich life, good luck and good harvest, springtime
Animal (Amphibious)	Frogs, turtles, snakes, crabs	The pattern symbolizes the protection of the paddy fields and the promotion of crop growth, and it is highly revered by the people. It represents the hope for rain, a bountiful harvest, peace throughout the seasons, good weather, and prosperity. Additionally, it reflects a strong desire for fertility, a prosperous family, and a good life.
Animals (Mammals)	Deer, horse, cat, dog, mouse, bat, baboon	The desire and blessing of beautiful love, symbolizing good luck, happiness, peace, health and longevity.
Animal (Poultry)	Calf pattern, cow head pattern, pig pattern, chicken pattern, goose pattern, man and oxen plowing pattern, man riding oxen pattern, oxen plowing pattern	A symbol of wealth, power and status.
Animals (Aquatic)	Fish pattern, pisces pattern, shrimp pattern, seahorse pattern, squid pattern	Symbolizes the pursuit of love and life, and implies the auspicious meaning of two fishes.

Insects	Bug, turtle, firefly, butterfly, dragonfly, robin, robin hood, centipede, spider, ant, cockroach (egg)	A vision of love and good fortune.
Human Pattern	Hercules pattern, frog pattern	Praying for the blessing of the gods, meaning peace and good luck.
Nature and the Universe	Thunder and lightning, wind, clouds, water, fire, mountains, sky, earth and rivers.	To honor nature, seek protection, and pray for peace and blessings.

Additionally, Li women incorporate specific patterns into brocade designs based on ancestral oral traditions. These patterns encode cultural information, symbolizing family history, social status, or mythological narratives. Beyond mere decoration, these motifs serve as carriers of historical memory for the Li people.

1.2 The Value of Saussure's Semiotic Theory in Analyzing Li Traditional Patterns

To better understand the deeper meanings embedded in Li traditional patterns, Saussure's semiotic theory provides a structuralist perspective that focuses on the relationship between the visual form of patterns (signifier) and their symbolic meanings (signified) within a specific cultural context. This theoretical approach offers significant insights into the study of Li traditional patterns, allowing us to uncover the layers of cultural and historical significance encoded within these designs(Yakin & Totu, 2014):

Systematic Analysis: By applying the signifier-signified framework, researchers can systematically categorize the visual characteristics of Li traditional patterns and their corresponding cultural meanings, forming an organized semiotic system.

Revealing Cultural Logic: Saussure's emphasis on the arbitrariness of signs suggests that the meanings of Li patterns are products of social consensus. Their formation and evolution reflect changes in the Li people's social structure, belief systems, and historical development.

Facilitating Modern Applications: Understanding the symbolic meanings of these patterns can inspire cultural innovation in contemporary design, allowing Li traditional motifs to gain renewed vitality in modern contexts.

1.3 Peirce's Triadic Semiotics: Iconic, Indexical, and Symbolic Signs

Building on the foundation of semiotic analysis, Peirce's triadic model offered another lens for examining Li traditional patterns. By categorizing signs into Iconic, Indexical, and Symbolic types, Peirce provided a more nuanced approach to understanding how signs functioned in relation to their objects. This classification proved highly applicable for analyzing the diverse forms and cultural functions of the traditional patterns of the Li ethnic group, enabling a deeper exploration of their semiotic complexity(Kralemann & Lattmann, 2013).

Iconic signs refer to those signs that directly mimic or represent the objects they denote. In Li traditional patterns, animal motifs such as deer, fish, and birds are examples of iconic signs. These representations are more figurative and directly evoke real-world animals. In Li culture, these animals not only reflect daily life but also carry profound cultural meanings related to ancestor worship and totemic beliefs. For example, the deer symbolizes vitality and auspiciousness, the fish represents fertility and the abundance of water, and the bird is often considered the incarnation of ancestral spirits(Zhu, 2024).

Indexical signs, on the other hand, are signs that exhibit a causal or physical connection to their objects. Examples of indexical signs in Li traditional patterns include geometric designs such as diamonds and wavy lines, which do not directly depict specific objects but suggest certain cultural,

natural phenomena, or social structures. For instance, the diamond pattern in the Haan dialect region represents rice cultivation, symbolizing the order of agricultural society, while the wavy lines in the Qiqi dialect region reflect the Li people's oceanic beliefs, symbolizing maritime culture. Furthermore, the radial pattern of the sun symbol can represent light and divine authority, commonly used in rituals and religious ceremonies.

Symbolic signs rely on cultural conventions or societal agreements to attribute meaning, without a direct or causal connection to the objects they represent. Examples of symbolic signs in Li patterns include motifs such as the thunder god pattern, sun patterns, and dance figures. These signs acquire their meanings through long-standing cultural associations. For instance, the thunder god pattern in the Sai dialect area represents the authority of the thunder god and the order of the heavens and earth, while the dance figure in the Run dialect area symbolizes sacrificial rituals and clan beliefs. These patterns are not only visual representations but also carry the spiritual and social order of the Li people(Zhu, 2024).

From the perspective of Peirce's semiotics, the traditional patterns of the Li ethnic group are composed of both figurative animal motifs and metaphorical geometric forms, as well as symbolic cultural signs. This reflects the multi-layered nature of Li society and its rich system of symbols. Analyzing these patterns through Peirce's semiotic framework not only deepens our understanding of the internal logic of Li culture but also provides theoretical support for the contemporary design and cultural innovation of traditional patterns(Kralemann & Lattmann, 2013).

Research Methodology

This study employs a combination of literature analysis and case study methods. First, by systematically collecting and analyzing relevant research on

the Li ethnic group's traditional patterns and integrating semiotic theory with practical cases in modern communication, the study explores the symbolic meanings and expressive forms of Li ethnic patterns in cultural dissemination. Using the semiotic frameworks of Saussure and Peirce, the study examines the visual sign system created by Li ethnic patterns, revealing their symbolic functions and significance in cultural transmission and study investigates how these symbols facilitate cross-cultural communication and creative transformation in contemporary contexts.

Results

In order to further explore the application of semiotic theories in understanding Li traditional patterns, a field study was conducted to examine the five major dialect groups. This investigation revealed how the regional variations in patterns align with the socio-cultural and environmental contexts of the Li people.

1. Five dialects of Li ethnic group

The five major dialect groups of the Li people—Ha, Qi, Meifu, Sai, and Run—have developed distinct traditional pattern systems over their long historical evolution. Due to differences in geographical environment, social structure, modes of production, and belief systems, the patterns in each dialect region exhibit unique stylistic characteristics, symbolic meanings, and semiotic features. By integrating Peirce's triadic model of signs (icon, index, and symbol) with Saussure's theory of the signifier and signified, these patterns can be classified semiotically and interpreted within their cultural context.

Table 2 Classification of the five Li dialects

Dialect Area	Pattern Type	Symbolic Meaning	Semiotic Classification	Description
Ha Dialect	Geometric Patterns (e.g., triangles, diamonds)	Represents rice farming culture and social hierarchy	Indexical Sign	Geometric patterns are commonly found in weaving and pottery. Triangular and diamond shapes symbolize agricultural practices and social structures. The triangle also represents communication with the heavens, linked to ancestor worship.
Meifu Dialect	Animal Motifs (e.g., deer, fish, birds)	Reflects totem worship	Iconic Sign	Animal motifs, such as deer, fish, and birds, reflect totemic beliefs and ancestor worship. These patterns are realistic representations of life, vitality, and spiritual connections.
Sai Dialect	Mythological Elements (e.g., sun, thunder god)	Reflects mythological beliefs	Symbolic Sign	Patterns inspired by mythological beliefs, such as the sun symbolizing divine power and the thunder god representing authority, carry symbolic meanings rooted in cultural and religious contexts.
Run Dialect	Human Figures (e.g., dance figures)	Represents sacrificial culture	Iconic Sign	Human figures, particularly those depicting dance scenes, symbolize ritual practices, ancestor worship, and the unique cultural traditions of the Li people. These motifs are realistic depictions of human forms.

Qi Dialect	Abstract Symbols (e.g., whirlpools, wavy lines)	Represents ocean culture	Indexical Sign	Abstract patterns, such as whirlpools and wavy lines, evoke natural phenomena like ocean currents and water, reflecting the Li people's strong connection to maritime culture and the natural world.

Following the classification of the dialects and their respective symbolic meanings, it is important to delve deeper into one of the most iconic and widely used motifs in Li culture—the human figure motif. This motif plays a significant role across all five dialects, especially in the context of Li brocade weaving, which serves as a rich representation of Li cultural heritage.

2.2 Typical Patterns of Lai Figures

Traditional Li motifs are primarily manifested in Li brocade weaving. Among the diverse patterns found in the five dialectal branches of Li brocade weaving, the "human figure motif" is a predominant and essential element across all dialects. Especially common in the tube skirt patterns, this motif is composed of stylized depictions of the head, torso, arms, and legs. It is often accompanied by auxiliary motifs such as frog patterns, ghost patterns, and "great force" deities. The design approach emphasizes "expressive symbolism" over "realistic representation." For instance, the "Great Force God" and the "General" are stylized human-like figures that embody strength and heroism—depicted as mighty beings who can move mountains and shape the world. These figures, woven by the skillful hands of Li women, serve as a tribute to primordial strength and spiritual vitality in the cultural history of Li brocade(Chen, 2010).

In the Ha dialect, the human figure motif employs exaggerated design techniques to add a sense of humor and liveliness. Female figures are

particularly distinctive: they feature diamond-shaped heads, tall hair, slender bodies with arms akimbo and limbs extending outward. Fingers and toes are prominently displayed, and the figures are adorned with minimal accessories. These characters appear vivid, dynamic, and highly expressive, with bold and exaggerated compositions that highlight their heroic vitality.

In the Qi dialect, female figures are primarily composed of geometric shapes, such as diamonds and triangles, which form the main body. The head may be borrowed from or shared with other forms, and the body elements often overlap. The neck area is filled with colorful frog patterns. The limbs extend outward symmetrically, and the compositions are tightly structured and visually dense, without additional decorative motifs. Male figures, on the other hand, are rendered with solid lines and rectangular forms. To enhance ornamental appeal, embroidered floral outlines are incorporated to enrich the chromatic expression of the patterns.

The Run dialect features human figure motifs with a more imposing and powerful presence, producing strong visual impact. From a distance, the figures resemble pyramid-shaped rooftops. The head, chest, and limbs are rendered small and refined. These figures are often derived from a decomposition of the archetypal Great Force God motif, and include various configurations of large and small deities symbolizing ancestors, descendants, and continuity. Visually, they evoke images of houses, patriarchs, or nurturing mothers—conveying themes of fertility, lineage, and ancestral protection. This reflects the Li people's spiritual beliefs and aspirations for prosperity, family continuity, and collective well-being. Decorative elements in the Run dialect are highly varied, drawing inspiration from everyday life, and include motifs such as the swastika, waves, rice grains, and meanders. The human figures are bold, exaggerated, and powerful in form, with a highly expressive artistic impact.

In the Sai dialect, human figure motifs are relatively small in size and abstract in form, making anthropomorphic features less discernible. The patterns are executed with refined embroidery techniques and minimal decorative detail. Geometric forms and lines are employed to create monochromatic folded motifs, which are arranged horizontally in an orderly manner.

In the Meifu dialect area, human figure motifs are created using tie-dye techniques, characterized by sharp angular forms and a monochromatic color palette. Fine, broken lines are employed to delineate limbs and torsos in a zigzag manner, while short horizontal lines are exaggeratedly used to depict shoulders and joint areas. The combination of fragmented lines conveys the human form in a stylized way, evoking imagery of figures holding hands or standing shoulder to shoulder. The resulting compositions appear continuous and undulating, imparting a sense of rhythmic fluidity and an aura of mystery and ambiguity.

Across the five major dialectal regions of the Li people—Ha, Qi, Run, Sai, and Meifu—the human figure motifs each exhibit distinctive stylistic characteristics. In addition to standalone human motifs, Li brocade patterns also include composite and special human motifs. Composite motifs often feature combinations of human and animal forms, reflecting the close relationship between humans and animals during the early developmental stages of Li civilization. Examples include the "frog-man" motif, stemming from the "frog pattern theory," as well as plowing ox motifs and riding ox motifs. There also exist unique human motifs designated for specific ceremonial contexts, such as the pregnant mother motif, longevity elder motif, and wedding motif(Si, 2017).

Tab. 3: The meaning of human figure pattern (Analyzed by the authors, 2025)

	Ha Dialect	Qi Dialect	Run Dialect	Sai Dialect	Meifu Dialect
Patterns					
Pattern Extraction					
Specificities	Figurative, Symmetrical forms, with Exaggerated and rough shapes	Focus on linearization and emphasis on local details	Exaggeration, deformation of the way to hold the pair, highlighting the characteristics of the eye, concise writing	Single shape, distinctive corners, small size	Multiline Twill, Positive View Angle, Figurative, Simplified Lines

Following the analysis of the human figure pattern and its distinctive features, the next step involves exploring how these traditional patterns can be adapted into modern communication strategies. The application of semiotic theory is essential for this transformation, as it enables the encoding of traditional cultural elements into visual symbols that resonate within contemporary design contexts.

2.3 Semiotic Design Methods in Modern Communication

In the design of visual representations based on the five dialects of the Li ethnic group, semiotic theory plays a crucial role in transforming traditional

cultural elements into visual symbols with contemporary communicative power. The core of the design strategy lies in the recognizability and cultural representation of symbols. Rather than merely focusing on visual aesthetics, the visual representations are constructed as encoded messages that carry deep cultural meanings(Xiong, 2024).

Firstly, the visual language is developed through symbolic extraction from tangible elements in Li culture, such as totems, traditional clothing, color schemes, and decorative patterns. These elements function as "signifiers" that point to specific "signified" cultural concepts, following Ferdinand de Saussure's model of the sign. The encoding process ensures that each visual representation not only embodies the visual characteristics of a particular dialect group (Sai, Ha, Qi, Run, Meifu) but also transmits its unique historical and cultural identity.

Secondly, Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model of the sign—icon, index, and symbol—is implicitly applied in the construction of these visual representations. The visual appearance of the characters resembles traditional Li attire and facial patterns (iconic signs); specific gestures or accessories suggest cultural practices or social roles (indexical signs); and abstract motifs such as deer, waves, feathers, and boats are used symbolically to convey spiritual beliefs, myths, and values (symbolic signs).

For instance:

The Sai dialect image includes feathered headdresses and red-black weaving patterns to symbolize ritual and identity.

The Ha dialect incorporates pottery and animal totems representing fertility and domestic life.

The Qi dialect features boat-shaped tattoo totems, evoking the maritime traditions of the group.

The Run dialect uses fluid, wave-like line motifs to express harmony and nature worship.

The Meifu dialect emphasizes facial tattoos and the symbolic image of deer, representing strength and transformation.

These symbols are then reconstructed and modernized in the design process to achieve two objectives: cultural identification and communicative adaptability. Through techniques such as abstraction, simplification, color adjustment, and proportion modification, the designs maintain their ethnic essence while becoming more accessible and appealing to broader audiences(Sun & Ab Aziz, 2023).

As visual translations of minority cultural symbols extend beyond design into broader communication contexts, the shift from traditional to digital media reshapes their adaptability and reception. The digital landscape offers both opportunities and challenges, necessitating the development of semiotic strategies to preserve and enhance the cultural meanings embedded in these symbols. Effective dissemination now relies on how well modernized symbols retain their significance across diverse digital audiences.

3. Dissemination of Minority Cultural Symbols

The history of communication has evolved through four major stages: oral, written, printed, and digital. In the contemporary "digital era," digital media has become the dominant mode of daily interaction. Against this backdrop, the digital dissemination of minority cultural symbols has emerged as a significant area of academic inquiry. Based on Harold Lasswell's 5W model, existing research demonstrates a growing body of scholarship on this subject.

From the communicator's perspective, Li and Liu argue that communicators should explore the cultural connotations of minority groups, enhance their modern adaptability, and promote their contemporary value(Li & Liu, 2011).He emphasizes the need for communicators to adapt to changing

communication dynamics and actively engage audiences in the digital era(M. He, 2021).

In terms of content, Huang highlights the reconstruction of cultural symbols, such as Zuiweng Pavilion, through interactive design and content infusion(Huang, 2017). Ling and Lan advocate for the use of micro-videos to disseminate Xibaipo culture(Ling & Lan, 2023). while Mi points out that mobile short videos present both opportunities and challenges for the digital communication of Liangshan Yi culture(Mi, 2022).

Regarding media strategies, Han stresses the need to build digital dissemination platforms for indigenous cultures(Han, 2020), and Du proposes cross-media strategies for ethnic minority quyi(Du, 2019). Zhou (2021) suggests integrating modern online media to protect and promote Xiangyunsha culture through digital platforms(Zhou, 2021).

Focusing on audience and effectiveness, Zhu and Wang construct an influence model based on the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, finding that performance expectations and ease of use positively affect youth adoption of digital intangible cultural heritage (ICH)(Y. Zhu & Wang, 2021). Similarly, Guo and Zhuang propose a three-dimensional user experience model, emphasizing its role in enhancing the effectiveness of ICH digital dissemination(Guo & Zhuang, 2017).

Overall, literature shows that changes in communicators, content innovation, media strategies, audience engagement, and effectiveness evaluation are critical to the digital dissemination of minority cultural symbols. The digital era brings both challenges and opportunities, making continued exploration essential for cultural inheritance and innovation.

In light of these evolving dynamics, a semiotic approach not only enhances our understanding of traditional cultural symbols but also provides a practical theoretical tool for evaluating their transformation and dissemination

in modern settings. With this framework in place, the following section offers a summary of key insights from the current literature and proposes directions for future exploration.

Conclusion

This study, grounded in semiotic theory, examines the transformation and expression of Li ethnic traditional patterns in modern communication, revealing the mechanisms and potential of ethnic cultural symbols in contemporary design and media. The findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of these patterns as cultural visual symbols depends on the integrated operation of semiotic elements. Using Peirce's triadic model, the study illustrates how iconicity, conventionality, and symbolism collectively enable effective cultural reproduction in new media contexts.

The digital environment fosters the innovation of Li patterns through form, color, and semantic extension, facilitating cross-cultural symbolic transformation in creative products, brand visuals, and media communication. This process not only diversifies dissemination channels but also reinforces cultural identity through "cultural re-encoding."

Moreover, modern communication methods introduce hierarchical dissemination patterns, from basic visual representations to deeper cultural narratives. Systematic and narrative strategies are vital for sustaining cultural memory and enhancing symbolic value.

In sum, this research builds a semiotic analytical framework for the modern communication of Li traditional patterns, offering theoretical insights for cultural transformation and practical guidance for the digital dissemination of intangible heritage

Discussion

The advancement of digital technologies and social media has significantly reshaped the dissemination of traditional cultural symbols, breaking spatiotemporal constraints and enabling broader global reach. In this context, innovative design has expanded from visual expression to multidimensional creative practices such as brand identity and packaging, enhancing the recognizability, commercial value, and cultural influence of traditional symbols.

Additionally, the precision and personalization enabled by digital platforms facilitate emotional resonance with targeted audiences, strengthening cultural identity on a global scale. Sustainable communication practices, emphasizing green design and ecological responsibility, have become increasingly critical. Furthermore, cross-cultural communication offers new opportunities for cultural innovation, while the development of cultural IP design provides a strategic pathway for transforming traditional symbols into globally recognizable brands.

Recommendation

Future research should further explore the application of digital technologies to innovate dissemination models for traditional cultural symbols. Emphasis should be placed on integrating innovative design strategies, enhancing audience engagement, and promoting sustainable communication through environmentally responsible practices.

Moreover, cross-cultural comparative studies should be expanded to foster cultural exchange and mutual inspiration. Strengthening cultural IP development through systematic brand building and global market promotion is also essential to ensure the sustainable vitality and international dissemination of traditional cultural symbols.

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