

The Application of Visual Elements of The Shidong Miao Ethnic Group's Single Log Dragon Boat in Cultural and Creative Design

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Abstract:

This study aims to investigate how the visual elements of the Shidong Miao ethnic group's single log dragon boat can be applied in the field of cultural and creative design to further address issues related to the lack of regional distinctiveness and the preservation and innovation of culture in cultural and creative products. Various methods, including literature research, case studies, and design experiments, were employed to conduct a detailed analysis of the visual elements of the Shidong Miao ethnic group's single log dragon boat, such as its form and colors. These elements were integrated into cultural and creative design, and various application methods in multiple domains were explored. Through practical exploration, a product exemplified by the "Single Log Dragon Boat IP Image Design" was designed as a case study, expanding new perspectives for the cultural and creative design of the single log dragon boat. The visual elements of the Shidong Miao ethnic group's single log dragon boat possess extensive potential for application in cultural and creative design, offering new pathways for cultural preservation and innovation.

Keywords:

Miao Ethnic Group, Single Log Dragon Boat, Visual Elements, Cultural and Creative Design

1. Introduction

The Shidong area has been a significant settlement for the Miao ethnic group since ancient times, and its cultural traditions have always been rich and uniquely charming. Every year, in the late fifth month of the lunar calendar, the Miao people gather in the Qingshui River basin, with the town of Shidong in Taijiang County at its center, to hold a grand and influential cultural event of single log dragon boat racing [1]. The single log dragon boat incorporates various distinctive visual elements such as unique designs and colors and is an integral part of the cultural tradition of the Shidong Miao ethnic group.

However, with the development of modern life, traditional cultures of various ethnic minorities are facing a significant decline and, in some places, even the risk of disappearing and fading [2]. In this context, combining tradition with contemporary trends through cultural and creative products has proven to be an effective way to promote the development of traditional cultures [3]. As a result, cultural and creative design, as a novel approach to cultural preservation and innovation, holds substantial significance for enhancing cultural inheritance and socioeconomic development in the Shidong area, especially in the context of modern economic models. Elevating the value and market presence of cultural and creative products related to the Shidong Miao ethnic group's single log dragon boat and showcasing innovative designs that reflect the ethnic and regional characteristics have become increasingly crucial.

This article aims to conduct an in-depth exploration of the application of the visual elements of the Shidong Miao ethnic group's single log dragon boat in cultural and creative design, analyzing its importance and feasibility in terms of cultural preservation and commercial innovation. Through a systematic analysis and extraction of the visual elements of the Shidong Miao ethnic group's single log dragon boat, combined with modern design concepts and their application in cultural and creative design, this research plays a significant role in promoting the development of cultural and creative design related to the Shidong Miao ethnic group's single log dragon boat. Emotional Design

2. Visual Element Characteristics of the Single Tree Dragon Boat of the Shidong Miao Ethnic Group

Visual elements are the constituent components for conveying visual information. They are combined in specific forms, rules, and logical sequences to create a visual language that serves the needs of information transmission [4]. The Shidong Miao ethnic group's single log dragon boat is renowned for its unique design and colors, representing the historical and cultural evolution of the Shidong Miao ethnic group. It is an art form with profound cultural significance.

2.1. Unique in form, ancient and mysterious.

The Miao people's religious beliefs originate from totem worship, with Miao dragon culture sharing a common historical origin with Chinese dragon culture, yet forming unique characteristics within the Miao society's history. The Miao people have a diverse range of dragon types, with the Taijiang "Jiesong Ge" alone describing up to 24 varieties. Additionally, the Miao people's reverence or resistance towards dragons is based on the perceived nature of the dragons. The Shidong Miao ethnic group's single log dragon boat is a composite totem of dragon, ox, and bird, representing the core elements of the spiritual world of the Miao single log dragon boat festival [5].

Dragon Head: In terms of dragon head design, the Shidong Miao ethnic group's single log dragon boat shares similarities with the Han Chinese dragon's "Nine Resemblances", including features such as antlers like a deer, head like a camel, neck like a snake, scales like a carp, and ears like a cow. Unique Miao ethnic identity features include a robust donkey nose, tiger's jaw canine teeth, shrimp-like human eyebrows, large ox horns, a dragon neck resembling a snake, and spines on the back, among others [6]. The dragon head is carved from Z-shaped willow wood and decorated with ten dragon fins, two dragon ears, two strands of hair, two nose

whiskers, six dragon mustaches, eight dragon eyebrows, and pairs of ox, deer, and sheep horns. It also features a dragon pearl, dragon tongue, and a cicada. There are 160 dragon scales in four layers on the dragon neck. The dragon head prominently features a carved wooden bird and “dragon horns”, a pair of U-shaped large ox horns that are 80 centimeters long, curving upwards with pointed tips symbolizing good omens of favorable winds and abundant harvests.

Hull: The Shidong Miao ethnic group’s single log dragon boat has distinctive features in terms of its aesthetic design. The history of the Shidong Miao ethnic group’s single log dragon boat is long, and the size of its hull varies depending on the era. According to the “Zhenyuan Prefecture Annals”, it is documented that “Chong’an River, from Sheng Bing to Qingshui River, Miao people also engage in dragon boat games on May 25th, with peculiar shapes. They use large trees to create a boat, merging two trees together, creating an extremely long boat, approximately four or five zhang in length, capable of carrying thirty to forty people.” The Miao dragon boat maintains a unique style with the symbolic representation of mother and son boats, signifying family reunions and happiness. The dragon boat does not have a tail, but during the sacrificial rituals of the racing event, the shaman hands a bundle of thatch to the helmsman to insert into the rear cavity of the boat, known as the “Phoenix Tail,” symbolizing the auspicious meaning of harmony between the dragon and phoenix.

2.2. Rich in colors, splendid and joyful.

The colors of the dragon boat are rooted in the Miao people’s keen insight and inherent cognition of the colors of nature. In the extensive cultural understanding of the Miao people, red and silver ornaments carry symbols of joy and magnificence. Vibrant red is widely used, from the red ribbons tied to the dragon’s head, neck, and bullhorns, to the red pennants under the dragon’s jaw, and the red flags on the boat’s body, to the red sashes at the oarsmen’s waists and the red woolen balls adorning their hats. Miao people use red decorations to create a festive atmosphere, stirring the emotions of participants, making them feel excited and thrilled. During the Dragon Boat Festival gatherings, Miao women wear gorgeous and distinctive clothing. They don sparkling silver phoenix crowns, silver bracelets on their wrists, layered silver necklaces, complemented by silver earrings and silver patterns on the edges of their clothing, as well as silver tassels on the corners of their clothing, making them a splendid sight. Meanwhile, men participating in the races wear eye-catching silver-buckled belts with floral patterns, and their clothing is adorned with intricate geometric silver pieces on the edges and collars, enhancing their charm and athletic appeal.

In contrast to grand festivals, the Miao people are more inclined to the rich colors of nature in their daily lives. The gathering areas of the Miao people in southeastern Guizhou belong to the transition zone from the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau to the southeastern hills. They have various plants like indigo, lacquer trees, and tung oil trees that can produce dyes. Miao people pick oilseeds and extract tung oil, which is applied to the newly made dragon boat, forming natural wood patterns and colors. They collect black lacquer from lacquer trees and use it for preservation on the aged dragon boat hulls. The depth of the color can indicate the boat’s age. In their daily clothing color choices, the Miao people favor blue, cyan, and black. Over the millennia, the Miao people have developed a unique dyeing process using indigo. The use of natural fuel ensures that the colors in Miao clothing remain vivid and enduring without fading. The Miao people have seamlessly integrated the perfect use of colors

into their culture, conveying different symbols and meanings through clever color combinations.

3. Analysis of the Application of Cultural and Creative Design of Miao Wooden Dragon Boat in Shidong

3.1. Current Status of Cultural and Creative Design Application of Miao Wooden Dragon Boat in Shidong

Currently, research on Shidong Miao wooden dragon boats primarily focuses on descriptive studies and research into cultural, economic, and social functions. There is significant untapped potential for exploring the cultural and creative applications of Shidong Miao wooden dragon boats. In the context of cultural and industrial integration and cultural tourism, Shidong Miao wooden dragon boat festivals are considered intangible cultural heritage. However, due to their regulated and short-term nature, they lack the prerequisites for long-term circulation and daily operations [7]. While Shidong benefits from policies that empower cultural industries to drive rural revitalization, relying on local cultural resources such as the wooden dragon boat festival for economic development and income generation in the form of folk culture and tourism, the current cultural industry model of Shidong Miao wooden dragon boats mainly revolves around the open and inclusive nature of the dragon boat festival. This model stimulates folk tourism and contributes to the development of related cultural aspects like embroidery and silver jewelry. Yet, there's a lack of exploration regarding the utilization and development of the visual elements of the wooden dragon boat itself and its combination with cultural and creative carriers to facilitate the transformation of Shidong Miao's outstanding traditional culture into the modern economic market.

3.2. English Translation: Insights from the Cultural and Creative Application of Shidong Miao Wooden Dragon Boat Design

By exploring and extracting the visual elements of dragon boat racing culture and engaging in artistic creativity, creative products become carriers of the rich content and spirit hidden in excellent traditional culture. This, in turn, helps better achieve the integration of cultural heritage and cultural industry development. For example, taking the dragon boat-themed tableware gift set offered by the Palace Museum as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Dragon Boat Tableware Gift Box (Image from the internet).

Inspired by the dragon boat, the set uses the dragon boat's hull as a plate, decorating the plate's edge with sea wave patterns, making it shine like a dragon boat on the river, aligning with the theme. The dragon head and tail retain the vivid details of the dragon boat, and the design of the handles is both aesthetic and heat-resistant. The

dragon head and tail are in gold, and the porcelain chopsticks feature golden dragon patterns, creating a coordinated color scheme. This cultural and creative product extracts, combines, and applies the dragon boat's design, patterns, and color characteristics, presenting them through an appropriate medium, combining creativity with usability.

This insight derived from the dragon boat racing cultural and creative product can be extended to the cultural and creative design process of the Shidong Miao wooden dragon boat. It emphasizes that cultural and creative design starts with a deep understanding of the cultural heritage's spiritual essence. It involves extracting and flexibly applying its features. The choice of medium and the creative process should take into consideration the compatibility with the culture and practicality of the product. Additionally, it should explore the potential for industrial integration. Creativity should uphold ethnic uniqueness while being compatible with contemporary development. Through cultural and creative design, the cultural core can be enriched and refined, making it inclusive and open to both the ethnic and global contexts, allowing ethnic culture to endure and shine through cultural and creative design and application.

3.3 English Translation: Basic Principles of Shidong Miao Wooden Dragon Boat Visual Elements in Cultural and Creative Design

Respect for Traditional Culture: Cultural and creative design based on intangible cultural heritage should adhere to the principles of authenticity, integrity, and inheritance. Respecting traditional culture is the foremost prerequisite for preserving and developing ethnic culture. Only by respecting one's own cultural traditions can recognition from others be obtained. No matter what form is used to promote ethnic culture and its development, it cannot be detached from the cultural roots [8]. From a temporal perspective, cultural and creative design should authentically, accurately, and objectively reflect the traditional culture of the wooden dragon boat. From a spatial perspective, it should protect the integrity of the traditional culture of the wooden dragon boat, respecting its original cultural elements. From an inheritance perspective, the essence of inheritance is the continuation of culture, and cultural and creative design should consider the possibility of design in the context of cultural tradition. Therefore, the "Hualong" activity of the Shidong Miao people is essentially a cultural means of regulating all social members within a region. While focusing on innovative design methods and approaches, it should also respect tradition, accurately capture the intrinsic meaning and cultural value of visual elements, and convey its cultural significance accurately to society, making it easy to inherit and propagate while preserving its integrity.

Alignment with Modern Aesthetics: Intangible cultural heritage, as the cultural heritage of a nation or region preserved and developed in its way of life and production, is an intuitive expression of the character and aesthetic habits of that nation or region [9]. Modern graphic design within the scope of modern aesthetics is characterized by simplicity, fluidity, abstraction, and structuration [10]. In the case of cultural and creative design for ethnic cultures, it is necessary to extract and organize typical visual elements, integrating them into a modern design context. Specifically, cultural and creative design of wooden dragon boats should repeatedly consider the harmony between intrinsic content and appearance to convey cultural value. Through cultural and creative design, it aims to resonate with the audience on a spiritual level, deeply combining cultural and spiritual elements with the product's attributes, aiming

for a harmonious relationship between spirit and matter. It emphasizes elevating the design level, making full use of various elements to display cultural creativity, aiming to foster and promote the awareness of intangible cultural heritage through cultural and creative design.

Precise Positioning in the Consumer Market: In the context of the festival economy, adapting to the consumer market, attracting funding for development and promotion, is one of the trends in cultural and creative design. Under this trend, visual elements of the dragon boat should be fully explored, redeveloped, and designed, utilizing their open and inclusive nature to penetrate the market, establishing a solid market positioning based on cultural and creative products, and capturing the needs of various audience groups. Guizhou, as a province known for its cultural tourism, has a wide range of consumer demographics in terms of age and nationality. Consumer groups include scholars from both domestic and international regions, tourists of various age groups, students, and event participants. This covers a broad spectrum of age groups, from the elderly to the young, and even children. To cater to scholars visiting from domestic and international regions, considerations can be made for collectible miniature wooden dragon boat models, shirts, etc. For the middle-aged and young consumer groups, consider offering exquisite dragon boat blind box collectibles, phone cases, bookmarks, silver jewelry, and more. For children, design and create dragon boat-themed LEGO sets, coloring books, and more. Analyzing the consumer groups for cultural and creative products related to the wooden dragon boat and developing targeted series of products is of significant importance for market positioning, stability, and expansion. While engaging with commercial culture, it is essential to walk the path of ethnic distinctiveness and prevent the loss of the cultural essence caused by excessive commercialization.

4. Application of Shidong Miao Wooden Dragon Boat Visual Elements in Cultural and Creative Design

By integrating the analysis of the single wooden dragon boat's design and color visual elements, each element is refined and reshaped. While highlighting the unique features of these elements, new patterns that encapsulate the cultural essence of the single wooden dragon boat are created. These patterns are then applied in the practical design of the Single Wooden Dragon Boat IP, facilitating the transformation of the dragon boat's design, color, and other visual elements into cultural and creative products. Emotional Design Application of Miao Silver Jewelry

4.1. Refinement and Reshaping of Single Wooden Dragon Boat Visual Elements

Direct Extraction of Visual Elements: Directly extracting overall or partial elements of design is the simplest and most common way of creative product design. In the creative design of visual elements from the single wooden dragon boat, extracting these elements directly and combining them with the clever ideas of the designer can give new meanings to creative products. For example, in the visual elements of the single wooden dragon boat's distinctive bull horns, the shape of these bull horns is directly extracted and applied to creative design following the principles of aesthetic form [11]. Using clever creativity in the most ordinary design methods can create unexpected experiences.

Integrated Use of Visual Elements: The single wooden dragon boat's design features intricacy and complexity. Simplifying visual elements is a more efficient way to

understand things. When extracting visual elements from the single wooden dragon boat, it is important to preserve the traditional semantics and cultural significance of the patterns. Extract visual elements that hold symbolic meanings and blend, mix, and combine them to create patterns with a contemporary touch.

4.2. Practice of Single Wooden Dragon Boat IP Image Design

The Miao people believe in the idea that “everything has a spirit.” They consider that all things, just like humans, have life, thoughts, feelings, and emotions. They anthropomorphize everything. Therefore, the IP image of the single wooden dragon boat here is depicted in the form of a human. The intention is to showcase not just a simple figure, but an independent entity that embodies the spirit of the single wooden dragon boat. (Figure 2)

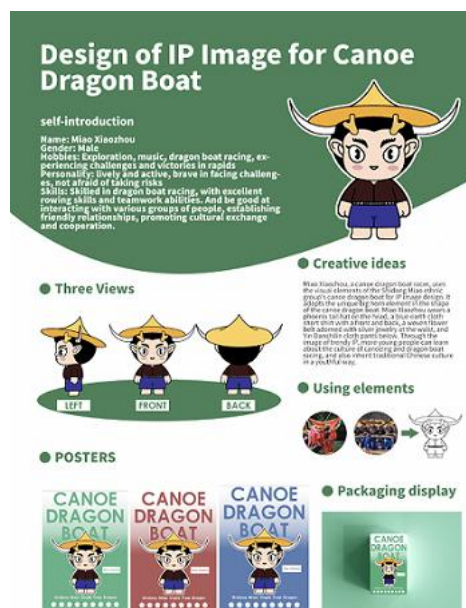


Figure 2. The effect of the single wooden dragon boat IP image design.

The original source of this IP image design is the paddler in the single wooden dragon boat race. The design extracts the paddler's image, including: a phoenix-tail hat, a turquoise short shirt with a silver-decorated woven flower belt, and indigo-dyed linen pants. These elements are integrated with the refined facial features inspired by the single wooden dragon boat. Through the process of refinement and visualization, this design is condensed into the image of “Miao Xiao Zhou” using a symbolic graphic language. The goal is to convey the essence of the competitive, rustic, and mystical culture of the single wooden dragon boat and to create an IP visual image with distinctive regional recognition. IP image design, as a personified and emotionally charged character, not only enhances the brand’s identity but also has an irreplaceable impact on emotional engagement in cultural and tourism promotion.

5. Conclusions

In addition to directly applying the visual elements of the Shidong Miao single wooden dragon boat’s original design to other products to preserve people’s initial impressions of the dragon boat, it is essential to pay attention to modern design concepts and aesthetic demands. These elements should be used to either uphold or innovate the cultural values it embodies. This integration allows the single wooden dragon boat to blend with contemporary fashion, resulting in the creation of culturally

distinctive cultural and creative products with elements of Guizhou folklore. This, in turn, can drive the development of Guizhou's cultural and creative industry and provide creative support for Guizhou's pursuit of green economic growth.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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