ASI Asia Social Issues ASIA SOCIAL ISSUES 2027; 20(2): 52
https://doi.org/10.48048/asi.2027.52 RESEARCH ARTICLE

From Traditional Craft to Contemporary Cultural Products: Integrating Cultural Identity and Consumer Preferences in Polychrome Lacquer Carving

Xu Yu, Puvasa Ruangchewin* and Poradee Pantupakorn

Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Burapha University, Chon Buri 20131, Thailand

(*Corresponding author's e-mail: puvasa@gmail.com)

Received: 7 July 2026, Revised: 10 September 2026, Accepted: 21 September 2026, Published: 27 November 2026

Abstract

Polychrome lacquer carving is a traditional craft of Jiangxi Province, China, characterized by layered colours, carved surfaces, and distinctive visual forms. Although the craft possesses cultural and artistic value, public understanding of its materials, production techniques, and cultural meanings remains limited. This study examined how the technical and visual characteristics of polychrome lacquer carving could be integrated with selected cultural characteristics of Xiannü Lake Scenic Area to develop contemporary cultural products.

A mixed-methods approach was employed. Qualitative data were collected through documentary research, field investigation, and in-depth interviews with five purposively selected participants comprising inheritors of polychrome lacquer-carving techniques, lacquer-carving artists, and a specialist in contemporary cultural-product design. Quantitative data were obtained through a questionnaire survey conducted with tourists and local residents at Xiannü Lake Scenic Area. Of the 150 questionnaires distributed, 141 valid responses were included in the analysis, yielding a valid-response rate of 94.00%.

The findings showed that many respondents had encountered polychrome lacquer carving but possessed limited understanding of its production process and cultural meanings. Respondents placed particular importance on cultural value, aesthetic quality, contemporary character, and practicality in cultural-product design. The qualitative findings identified the materials, layered colours, carving techniques, surface qualities, and visual language of polychrome lacquer carving as craft-based design resources. The investigation of Xiannü Lake Scenic Area separately identified natural forms, local narratives, legends, and symbolic associations as place-based cultural resources.

The integration of these findings resulted in four design concepts—feather, happiness, immortal, and fish—which were applied to a hat ornament, pendant, tissue-box ornament, and notebook ornament. The study demonstrates a context-specific design approach in which a traditional craft provides the technical and visual medium for interpreting the cultural identity of a separate place within the same provincial context. The findings are limited to the participants and geographical setting included in the study and should not be generalized to all consumers or traditional crafts.

Keywords: Cultural identity, Consumer preferences, Contemporary cultural products, Polychrome lacquer carving, Product design

Introduction

Traditional crafts preserve knowledge of materials, production techniques, visual practices, and cultural meanings developed across generations. Their continuation, however, cannot depend solely on the reproduction of conventional objects. Changes in contemporary lifestyles and patterns of product use require designers and craft practitioners to consider how traditional knowledge may be adapted without obscuring its cultural origins or reducing it to surface decoration.

Polychrome lacquer carving is a traditional craft of Jiangxi Province, China. It is distinguished by the

repeated application of differently coloured lacquer layers, followed by carving through the accumulated surface to reveal variations in colour, depth, and texture. Its visual identity is formed through the relationship among lacquer materials, layered colours, carving techniques, surface relief, decorative structures, and symbolic motifs. These characteristics embody both artisanal knowledge and regional aesthetic traditions. Nevertheless, public encounters with the craft do not necessarily lead to an understanding of its production process or cultural meanings.

Previous studies have addressed lacquer carving in relation to craft transmission, cultural communication, and contemporary product development. Zhu (2008) argued that the continuation of lacquer carving depends on communicating its cultural significance as well as preserving its production techniques. Cheng and Chartniyom (2023) examined the adaptation of lacquer techniques to creative products and emphasized the importance of cultural meaning, aesthetic response, and contemporary application. These studies indicate that the development of craft-based products requires more than the direct reproduction of traditional forms.

Studies of culture-oriented product design similarly emphasize the translation rather than the copying of cultural characteristics. Leong and Clark (2003) treated culture-based knowledge as a resource for design thinking, while Lin (2007) demonstrated how cultural features may be identified and transformed into contemporary product attributes. Moalosi et al. (2010) further argued that cultural knowledge should be incorporated throughout the design process rather than applied as decoration after a product form has been determined. These approaches provide a basis for examining how the material and visual characteristics of a traditional craft may be used in a separate cultural context.

Xiannü Lake Scenic Area, located in Xinyu, Jiangxi Province, represents a place-based cultural resource distinct from the tradition of polychrome lacquer carving. Its identity is associated with natural forms, the water landscape, local narratives, legends, and symbolic imagery. Polychrome lacquer carving and Xiannü Lake Scenic Area do not constitute a single local tradition. Their relationship in this study is established through design: the craft provides the materials, techniques, surface qualities, and visual language, while Xiannü Lake Scenic Area provides the natural, narrative, and symbolic content to be interpreted.

This distinction is necessary because combining cultural resources from different local contexts may otherwise result in arbitrary or superficial designs. Applying a recognizable motif to a product does not necessarily preserve its meaning, and using a traditional technique does not automatically create a meaningful relationship with a destination. The characteristics of the craft and the place must therefore be examined separately before their potential relationships are established through design translation.

Consumer responses provide an additional source of information for this process. Cultural products may be evaluated through cultural meaning, aesthetic quality, contemporary relevance, and practical use. Understanding these expectations can help designers determine how cultural content should be communicated and how products may be adapted to contemporary contexts. Consumer preferences, however, should not independently determine cultural meaning; they should be considered alongside craft knowledge and place-based cultural evidence.

Accordingly, this study integrates three sources of information: the technical and visual characteristics of polychrome lacquer carving, the cultural identity of Xiannü Lake Scenic Area, and consumer responses collected within the study area. The findings are used to establish design criteria and develop contemporary cultural-product concepts and prototypes.

The study addresses the following objectives:

1. To identify the material, technical, visual, and cultural characteristics of polychrome lacquer carving relevant to contemporary product design.

2. To identify selected natural, narrative, and symbolic characteristics of Xiannü Lake Scenic Area that may serve as place-based content for cultural-product development.

3. To examine consumer awareness and preferences relevant to the design of contemporary cultural products.

4. To integrate the findings into design concepts and cultural-product prototypes.

The study does not seek to establish a universal model for all traditional crafts or tourism destinations. Instead, it provides a context-specific examination of how a traditional craft from Jiangxi Province may

function as a technical and visual medium for interpreting a separate cultural setting within the same province.

Literature review

Polychrome lacquer carving as a craft and design resource

Traditional crafts embody knowledge developed through repeated engagement with materials, tools, production processes, and cultural practices. Their cultural significance is expressed not only through completed objects but also through the skills, decisions, and meanings involved in making them. The adaptation of a traditional craft to contemporary products therefore requires attention to both its visible characteristics and the knowledge embedded in its production.

Polychrome lacquer carving is distinguished by the application of lacquer in multiple coloured layers and the subsequent carving of the surface to expose selected colours and depths. Its visual expression depends on the relationship among lacquer materials, the sequence and thickness of the layers, carving techniques, surface relief, decorative composition, and symbolic motifs. These characteristics collectively form the recognizable craft language of polychrome lacquer carving.

Zhu (2008) viewed the continuity of lacquer-carving traditions as dependent on both technical transmission and cultural communication. Preserving production techniques without communicating their meanings may restrict the craft to a specialist context, whereas reproducing its visual appearance without understanding the underlying process may weaken its cultural and material integrity. This distinction is relevant to contemporary product design because the transfer of motifs alone cannot represent the full identity of the craft.

Cheng and Chartniyom (2023) examined the integration of lacquer techniques into creative products and showed that contemporary applications must negotiate craft preservation, design adaptation, and consumer response. Their study indicates that traditional techniques can acquire new functions when designers recognize which elements are essential to the identity of the craft and which may be modified for contemporary use.

For the present study, polychrome lacquer carving is treated as a design resource comprising four related dimensions: materials, production techniques, visual characteristics, and cultural meanings. These dimensions provide the technical and visual means through which another cultural context— Xiannü Lake—may be interpreted in product design. The craft is not treated as originating from Xiannü Lake; rather, its techniques and visual language are applied as a medium of contemporary cultural expression within the broader context of Jiangxi Province.

Cultural identity, place- based resources, and design translation

Cultural identity in product design concerns how the characteristics of a community, tradition, or place are selected, interpreted, and communicated through designed objects. Such identity may be expressed through materials, forms, colours, motifs, production techniques, narratives, and patterns of use. These elements do not carry fixed meanings independently; their significance depends on the cultural contexts from which they are drawn and the manner in which they are transformed through design.

Hall (1990) described cultural identity as a process of positioning and representation rather than a fixed collection of inherited characteristics. This perspective is relevant to cultural product design because designers do not simply transfer culture into products. They select and reorganize cultural elements, thereby influencing how a place or tradition is represented and understood. Consequently, the design process must explain why particular elements are selected and how their meanings are retained or modified.

Culture- oriented design studies have proposed structured approaches for translating cultural characteristics into product attributes. Leong and Clark (2003) described culture-based knowledge as a resource for design thinking, while Lin (2007) demonstrated how cultural features may be identified and translated into contemporary product forms. Moalosi et al. (2010) similarly emphasized that culture- oriented product design requires cultural knowledge to be integrated into the design process rather than applied as decoration after a product form has already been determined. Qin and Ng (2020) further proposed that metaphor can connect

traditional cultural properties with contemporary design expressions.

These approaches distinguish design translation from direct reproduction. Direct reproduction copies an existing form or motif, whereas design translation identifies its visual structure, function, association, or symbolic meaning and interprets it in a new context. This distinction helps prevent cultural products from relying on recognizable imagery without explaining its relationship to the product or its intended users.

In this study, Xiannü Lake constitutes a place-based cultural resource separate from the tradition of polychrome lacquer carving. Its design content is drawn from its natural landscape, water environment, local narratives, legends, and symbolic associations. These characteristics must first be identified and analyzed independently. Selected elements may then be translated through the materials, layered colours, relief surfaces, and carving techniques of polychrome lacquer carving.

The relationship between the two cultural resources is therefore complementary rather than genealogical. Xiannü Lake provides place- based content, while polychrome lacquer carving provides a craft process and visual medium. Establishing this distinction is necessary to avoid implying that the craft originated in Xiannü Lake or that the two represent a single local tradition. It also provides a clearer basis for evaluating whether the resulting products communicate both the identity of the destination and the integrity of the craft.

Consumer preferences and cultural- product evaluation

Consumers evaluate cultural products through a combination of visual, emotional, cultural, and functional responses. A product may attract attention through its appearance, but continued interest or purchase intention may also depend on whether consumers recognize its cultural meaning, perceive it as authentic, establish an emotional connection with it, and consider it suitable for practical use.

Norman (2004) explained that responses to designed objects involve visceral, behavioral, and reflective dimensions. Applied to cultural products, these dimensions include immediate responses to form and colour, experiences of use, and reflection on cultural or personal meaning. This framework suggests that visual attractiveness alone may be insufficient if a product does not also provide functional value or meaningful cultural associations.

Aesthetic preference refers to consumers' responses to the visual properties of a product, including its form, colour, composition, surface, and overall appearance. In products derived from polychrome lacquer carving, aesthetic preference may be associated with the visibility of layered colours, relief, carved details, and the relationship between traditional craft qualities and contemporary form.

Emotional attachment refers to the connection consumers develop with a product through memory, cultural association, personal experience, or symbolic meaning. Cultural products may encourage such attachment when their narratives or visual elements allow consumers to associate the product with a place, experience, or valued cultural idea. Emotional attachment should nevertheless be distinguished from purchase intention: the former describes an emotional relationship, whereas the latter concerns a stated likelihood of purchasing.

Perceived authenticity concerns whether consumers regard a product as credible in its representation of cultural sources and craft traditions. Authenticity does not necessarily require the complete reproduction of a historical object. It may instead arise from the consistent use of meaningful materials, techniques, motifs, and narratives. However, excessive modification or the unsupported combination of unrelated cultural elements may weaken perceived authenticity.

Practicality refers to the suitability of a product for use, handling, storage, maintenance, or integration into everyday life. Practicality is particularly important when a traditional craft is adapted from a decorative or ceremonial context to contemporary cultural products. Size, weight, durability, price, and ease of use may affect consumers' acceptance even when they respond positively to a product's cultural meaning.

Purchase intention represents consumers' stated willingness or likelihood to purchase a product. Although previous studies have examined its relationships with aesthetic preference, emotional attachment, perceived authenticity, and practicality, the present study uses consumer responses descriptively to inform the cultural-product design process. It does not

test causal or predictive relationships among these variables.

Previous research has linked cultural representation and consumer response in several contexts. Huang et al. (2021) examined the relationship between media exposure and willingness to purchase intangible cultural heritage products. Wang and Zhang (2022) discussed the relationship between cultural identity and consumer behavior in traditional craft products. Chen and Li (2025) considered aesthetic, emotional, and cultural dimensions in consumer evaluations of museum products, while Kumari et al. (2025) examined how cultural elements in product design relate to purchase intention. Together, these studies support the inclusion of aesthetic, emotional, cultural, and functional dimensions, although their relevance must be tested within the specific context of polychrome lacquer carving and Xiannü Lake.

Integrated analytical framework

The literature indicates that contemporary cultural product development involves three analytically distinct but related components. The first is craft identity, represented in this study by the materials, layered colours, carving techniques, surface qualities, motifs, and artisanal knowledge of polychrome lacquer carving. The second is place identity, represented by the natural forms, water landscape, local narratives, legends, and symbolic associations of Xiannü Lake. The third is consumer response, examined through awareness of polychrome lacquer carving and preferences concerning cultural value, aesthetic quality, contemporary character, and practicality.

These components should not be merged at the beginning of the design process. The cultural and visual characteristics of polychrome lacquer carving and Xiannü Lake must first be documented and interpreted separately. Their potential relationships can then be examined through design translation. Consumer data subsequently provide evidence concerning how the resulting cultural and design characteristics may be recognized, evaluated, and accepted.

Accordingly, the analytical process used in this study consists of four stages. First, field and documentary data are used to identify the material, technical, visual, and cultural characteristics of polychrome lacquer carving. Second, the natural, narrative, and symbolic characteristics of Xiannü Lake are analyzed as place-based design resources. Third, questionnaire data are used to examine consumer awareness and responses relevant to product development. Fourth, findings from the preceding stages are integrated to establish design criteria and develop product prototypes.

The proposed relationship may be summarized as follows:

Polychrome lacquer carving: Materials, layered colours, carving techniques, surface relief, and craft

knowledge

Xiannü Lake: Natural forms, water landscape, local narratives, legends, and symbolic content

Consumer responses: Awareness of polychrome lacquer carving and preferences concerning cultural value,

aesthetic quality, contemporary character, and practicality

Design outcome: Selection, interpretation, and translation of cultural elements into contemporary cultural product prototypes

This framework does not propose that polychrome lacquer carving and Xiannü Lake share the same local origin. Instead, it provides a transparent process for bringing together two cultural resources from Jiangxi Province while preserving the distinction between the source of the craft technique and the source of the place-based content.

The framework also does not assume that consumer preferences determine cultural meaning. Cultural evidence from craft knowledge and place-based analysis establishes the content of the design, while consumer responses help inform decisions concerning comprehension, appearance, emotional communication, functionality, and product use. This distinction enables the design process to respond to consumers without reducing cultural identity to market preference.

Methodology

Research design

This study employed a mixed-methods design to investigate the development of contemporary cultural products by integrating the techniques and visual characteristics of polychrome lacquer carving with the cultural identity of Xiannü Lake Scenic Area in Jiangxi Province, China. The qualitative phase examined the

cultural characteristics of the craft and the place-based identity of Xiannü Lake Scenic Area, while the quantitative phase examined consumer awareness and preferences relevant to contemporary cultural-product design. Findings from both phases were integrated to inform the development of contemporary cultural products.

Qualitative data collection and analysis

Qualitative data were collected through documentary research, field investigation, and in-depth interviews. Documentary research focused on the historical development, materials, production techniques, visual characteristics, and cultural meanings of polychrome lacquer carving. Field investigation at Xiannü Lake Scenic Area examined its natural landscape, local narratives, legends, cultural symbols, and tourism context.

Five participants were purposively selected for in-depth interviews. They represented three groups: inheritors of polychrome lacquer-carving techniques, lacquer-carving artists, and a specialist in contemporary cultural-product design. The interviews addressed the craft's materials, production techniques, visual characteristics, cultural meanings, and potential application in contemporary products.

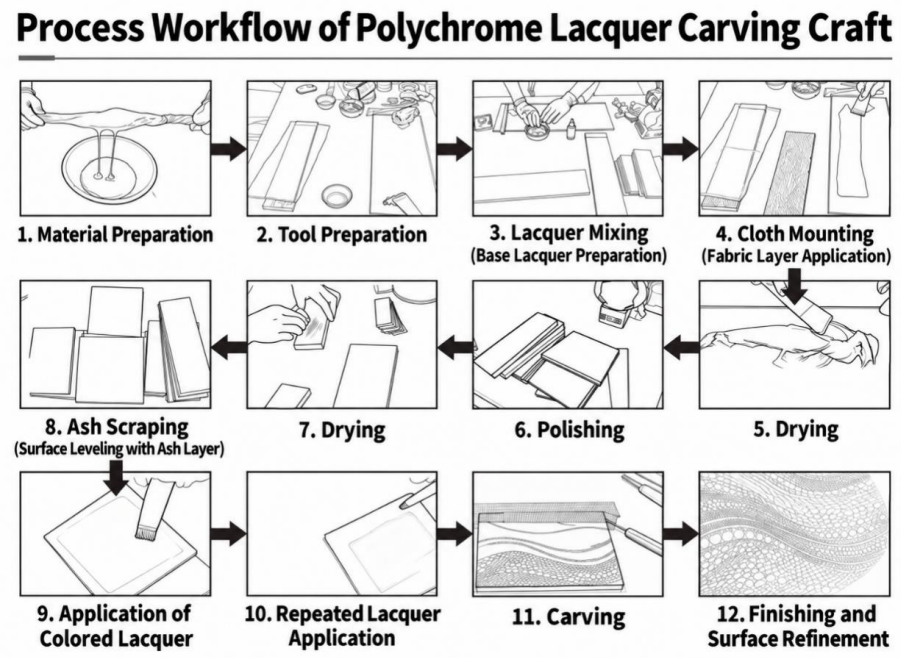


Figure 1. Production process of polychrome lacquer carving
Source: Yu (2025)

The production process of polychrome lacquer carving was documented during the field investigation. As illustrated in Figure 1, the process involves the preparation and application of multiple lacquer layers, followed by carving to reveal variations in colour, depth, and surface pattern.

The interview and field data were analyzed thematically. Relevant information was coded and grouped according to materials, techniques, visual characteristics, cultural meanings, and design applications. The characteristics of polychrome lacquer carving and Xiannü Lake Scenic Area were initially analyzed separately and were subsequently integrated during the product-design process.

Quantitative data collection

A structured questionnaire was used to examine consumer responses to contemporary cultural products based on polychrome lacquer carving and the cultural identity of Xiannü Lake Scenic Area. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section collected demographic information, including gender, age, and participant category. The second section examined respondents' awareness of polychrome lacquer carving and their preferences concerning the cultural value,

aesthetic quality, contemporary character, and practicality of contemporary cultural products.

Before data collection, the questionnaire was evaluated for content validity by three experts in visual arts and design and cultural management. The Item–Objective Congruence (IOC) Index was used to assess the consistency of the questionnaire items with the research objectives. The questionnaire items were subsequently revised according to the experts' recommendations.

The survey was conducted at Xiannü Lake Scenic Area among tourists and local residents aged 22 years and above. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed, of which 141 complete and valid questionnaires were included in the analysis, representing a valid-response rate of 94.00%.



Figure 2 Research process
Source: Yu (2026)

Data analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify the principal cultural and design characteristics of polychrome lacquer carving and Xiannü Lake Scenic Area. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages. Respondents' demographic characteristics, awareness of polychrome lacquer carving, and preferences relevant to cultural- product design were reported using frequencies and percentages.

The qualitative and quantitative findings were subsequently integrated to establish design guidelines and support the development of contemporary cultural-product prototypes.

craft were applied to the interpretation of selected natural and cultural characteristics of Xiannü Lake Scenic Area.

Research scope, ethical considerations, and limitations

The study examined polychrome lacquer carving and Xiannü Lake Scenic Area as two distinct cultural resources within Jiangxi Province. It does not claim that polychrome lacquer carving originated or was traditionally transmitted within Xiannü Lake Scenic Area. Rather, the techniques and visual language of the

The study was approved by the Burapha University Institutional Review Board for Human Research (approval no. IRB 4- 068/ 2569) . All interviewees and questionnaire respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and participated voluntarily. Informed consent was obtained before data

collection, and no personally identifying information is reported in the manuscript. The qualitative phase was limited to five purposively selected participants, while the quantitative phase involved 141 valid responses collected at Xiannü Lake Scenic Area. The findings therefore reflect the specific participants and geographical context included in the study and should not be generalized to all craft practitioners or consumers in Jiangxi Province or China.

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 141)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	87	61.7
	Male	54	38.3
Age	22-30 years	34	24.11
	31-40 years	49	34.75
	41-50 years	42	29.79
	51 years and above	16	11.35
Participant category	Tourist	89	63.12
	Local resident	52	36.88

Source: Yu (2026)

Results

Respondent characteristics

A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed at Xiannü Lake Scenic Area. Of these, 141 complete and valid questionnaires were included in the analysis, yielding a valid-response rate of 94.00%. The respondents consisted of tourists and local residents. Their demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Female respondents accounted for 61.70% of the sample, while male respondents accounted for 38.30%. Respondents aged 31-40 years formed the largest age group (34.75%), followed by those aged 41-50 years (29.79%), 22-30 years (24.11%), and 51 years and above (11.35%). Most respondents were tourists (63.12%), while local residents accounted for 36.88% of the sample.

Awareness of polychrome lacquer carving

The results indicate that respondents had varying levels of awareness of polychrome lacquer carving. As shown in Table 2, 59 responses (41.84%) indicated that respondents had seen the craft but did not understand its characteristics, while 51 responses (36.17%) indicated prior knowledge of the craft. Twenty-eight responses (19.86%) indicated that respondents had heard of it, and 18 responses (12.77%) indicated no prior knowledge or understanding.

Although many respondents had previously encountered polychrome lacquer carving, their awareness was primarily based on seeing or hearing about the craft rather than understanding its materials, layered-lacquer process, carving techniques, and cultural meanings. The findings therefore reveal a gap between visual recognition and cultural understanding.

Regarding channels of awareness, online media was the most frequently reported source (57.45%), followed by exhibitions (43.97%) and interpersonal communication (41.84%). Cultural and creative product activities accounted for 33.33%, while advertising media accounted for 29.08%. These findings show that public awareness was largely formed through visual and mediated communication rather than direct engagement with the production process.

The survey also showed continued interest in learning about the craft. This interest, combined with the limited depth of existing knowledge, indicated an opportunity for cultural products to function not only as usable objects but also as media for communicating the materials, techniques, visual characteristics, and cultural meanings of polychrome lacquer carving.

Consumer preferences relevant to cultural-product design

Respondents evaluated cultural products through a combination of cultural, aesthetic, contemporary, and practical considerations. As presented in Table 3, cultural value received the highest response (79.43%), followed by aesthetic quality (77.30%), contemporary character (73.05%), and practicality (70.92%).

The findings demonstrate that respondents did not evaluate cultural products solely through visual attractiveness. They expected products to communicate cultural meaning while also adopting contemporary forms and providing practical use. These priorities were therefore used as supporting criteria in the subsequent product-development process.

Table 2 Awareness of polychrome lacquer carving

Awareness response	n	%
Knew the craft	51	36.17
Had heard of the craft	28	19.86
Had seen it but did not understand it	59	41.84
Had no prior knowledge or understanding	18	12.77

Note: Multiple responses were permitted; therefore, the frequencies and percentages do not total 141 and 100%, respectively.

Source: Yu (2026)

Table 3 Consumer priorities for cultural-product design

Design priority	n	%
Cultural value	112	79.43
Aesthetic quality	109	77.3
Contemporary character	103	73.05
Practicality	100	70.92

Note: Multiple responses were permitted.

Source: Yu (2026)

Respondents also expressed a preference for products suitable for everyday use and for designs that combined recognizable traditional characteristics with contemporary forms. Practical or everyday applications received a high level of interest, indicating that the adaptation of polychrome lacquer carving should extend beyond conventional display objects. Product size, portability, convenience, and suitability for daily use were consequently considered alongside cultural and aesthetic qualities.

The findings resulted in four consumer- related design criteria:

1. Cultural recognizability: The products should retain identifiable materials, surface characteristics, layered colours, or visual features associated with polychrome lacquer carving.

2. Aesthetic quality: The cultural elements should be organized into visually coherent forms rather than applied as isolated decorative motifs.

3. Contemporary adaptation: Traditional characteristics should be interpreted through forms appropriate to contemporary products and lifestyles.

4. Practicality: The products should provide functions, dimensions, and forms suitable for use, handling, or display in everyday contexts.

Integration of the qualitative and quantitative findings

The qualitative investigation identified materials, layered colours, carving techniques, surface relief, decorative structures, and symbolic motifs as the principal characteristics of polychrome lacquer carving. The investigation of Xiannü Lake Scenic Area separately identified natural forms, water-related imagery, local narratives, legends, and symbolic associations as place-based cultural resources.

These two sources were not treated as originating from the same local tradition. Polychrome lacquer carving provided the craft techniques and visual language, whereas Xiannü Lake Scenic Area provided the place-based cultural content. The survey findings concerning awareness and design preferences were used to support decisions about how these resources could be communicated through contemporary cultural products.

The limited depth of respondents' understanding indicated that the products should make the craft's recognizable characteristics visible while providing supporting narratives that explain their cultural and technical origins. At the same time, respondents' emphasis on cultural value, aesthetic quality, contemporary character, and practicality guided decisions concerning product form, function, visual composition, and intended use.

Accordingly, the integrated findings established the following design direction: selected natural and cultural elements from Xiannü Lake Scenic Area would be interpreted through the materials, layered colours, carving methods, and surface qualities of polychrome lacquer carving. Consumer responses would inform the accessibility, visual presentation, and practical application of the products, but would not independently determine their cultural meanings.

Summary of findings

The findings show that respondents had encountered polychrome lacquer carving but possessed limited understanding of its production techniques and cultural meanings. Awareness was developed primarily through online media, exhibitions, and interpersonal communication. Respondents placed particular importance on cultural value, aesthetic quality, contemporary character, and practicality when evaluating cultural products.

The integration of the qualitative and quantitative findings produced a design direction in which polychrome lacquer carving served as the technical and visual medium, while Xiannü Lake Scenic Area provided the natural, narrative, and symbolic content. Consumer responses were used to refine the communication, appearance, contemporary relevance, and practicality of the product concepts.

Because the survey was conducted with 141 respondents at Xiannü Lake Scenic Area, the findings reflect the characteristics of the sample and the specific geographical context of the study. They should not be interpreted as representative of all consumers in Jiangxi Province or China.

Discussion

Interpreting cultural awareness and cultural identity

The findings reveal a distinction between respondents' exposure to polychrome lacquer carving and their understanding of the craft. Although 36.17% of the responses indicated prior knowledge of the craft and 41.84% indicated that respondents had previously seen it, the latter group did not necessarily understand its materials, layered-lacquer process, carving techniques, or cultural meanings. This pattern suggests that visual recognition alone does not provide a comprehensive understanding of craft identity.

The finding is consistent with Zhu (2008), who argued that the continuity of lacquer carving depends not only on the transmission of production techniques but also on the communication of cultural meaning. If the public encounters the craft primarily through completed objects or visual images, its layered production process, material knowledge, and cultural context may remain inaccessible. The survey results support this concern because online media, exhibitions, and interpersonal communication were the principal channels through which respondents became aware of the craft.

Visible characteristics nevertheless played an important role in initial recognition. Layered colours, carved surfaces, decorative structures, and handcrafted qualities enabled respondents to distinguish polychrome lacquer carving from other forms of cultural products. This observation corresponds with Cheng and Chartniyom (2023), who noted that material and visual characteristics contribute to consumers' recognition of lacquer-based products. However, recognizing these

characteristics should not be equated with understanding their cultural significance.

The findings therefore indicate that contemporary cultural products should not rely solely on the reproduction of decorative motifs. Product forms, surface treatments, and supporting narratives should work together to communicate how the craft is made and why its visual characteristics are culturally significant. In this way, the product can function both as an object of contemporary use and as a medium connecting visual recognition with cultural understanding.

Consumer preferences and product acceptance

The survey findings show that respondents evaluated cultural products through a combination of cultural, aesthetic, contemporary, and practical considerations. Cultural value received the highest response, followed by aesthetic quality, contemporary character, and practicality. These results indicate that respondents did not separate cultural meaning from the appearance and use of a product. Instead, they expected cultural products to preserve recognizable cultural characteristics while remaining visually coherent, relevant to contemporary lifestyles, and suitable for practical application.

This pattern is consistent with Norman's (2004) view that responses to designed objects involve appearance, use, and reflective meaning. In the context of cultural products, visual qualities may attract attention, while cultural meaning and practical usability contribute to the broader evaluation of a product. The findings therefore support an approach in which cultural expression, aesthetic quality, and function are considered together rather than treated as independent design concerns.

Respondents also expressed interest in products that could be integrated into everyday life. This preference suggests that the contemporary adaptation of polychrome lacquer carving should not be limited to conventional decorative objects. Appropriate product size, portability, convenience, and practical function can extend the contexts in which consumers encounter and use the craft.

From a design perspective, consumer preferences should not independently determine the cultural content of a product. Cultural content must first be established through the analysis of craft knowledge and place-based resources. Consumer responses can then inform how that content is communicated, organized, and adapted to contemporary forms and uses.

Design implications for contemporary cultural-product development

The findings demonstrate that the development of contemporary cultural products in this study involves two distinct cultural resources. Polychrome lacquer carving provides materials, layered colours, carving techniques, surface relief, decorative structures, and visual language. Xiannü Lake Scenic Area provides natural forms, water-related imagery, local narratives, legends, and symbolic content. The study does not treat the craft as originating from Xiannü Lake Scenic Area or present the two as a single inherited tradition.

The design process first examined the characteristics of the two resources separately. Selected elements from Xiannü Lake Scenic Area were then interpreted through the technical and visual characteristics of polychrome lacquer carving. Consumer findings concerning cultural value, aesthetic quality, contemporary character, and practicality were used to refine product form, visual presentation, scale, function, and intended use.

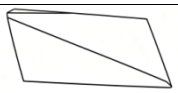
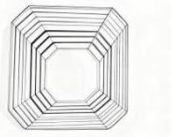
This process differs from the direct placement of traditional motifs on contemporary objects. Direct reproduction may preserve a recognizable image but does not necessarily communicate its meaning or its relationship to the craft process. In the present study, cultural elements were selected, simplified, reorganized, and translated into forms compatible with layered lacquer and carving techniques. The resulting designs therefore maintained a visible relationship with both the craft medium and the cultural content of Xiannü Lake Scenic Area. The relationship among the principal components of the design process is presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Proposed design-translation framework

Framework component	Key elements
Polychrome lacquer carving	Materials, layered colours, carving techniques, surface relief, and visual language
Xiannü Lake Scenic Area	Natural forms, water-related imagery, narratives, legends, and symbolic content
Consumer findings	Cultural value, aesthetic quality, contemporary character, and practicality
Design translation	Selection, simplification, reorganization, and application

Source: Yu (2026)

Figure 3 Emotional design experiment chart

No.	Name	Form design	Cultural elements	Innovative design
1	feather			
2	Happiness			
3	Immortal			
4	Fish			

Source: Yu (2026)

The framework positions cultural analysis before consumer- oriented adaptation. Craft knowledge and place- based analysis establish the cultural and visual content of the products, while consumer findings guide decisions concerning accessibility, appearance, contemporary relevance, and practical use. This sequence reduces the risk of treating cultural identity as decoration determined solely by market preference.

The design process resulted in four concepts: feather, happiness, immortal, and fish. Each concept was developed by identifying its cultural association, simplifying its visual structure, and adapting it to the material and technical characteristics of polychrome lacquer carving. The development of the four design concepts is presented in Figure 3.

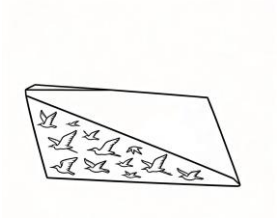
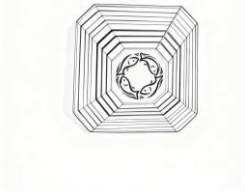
The concepts were subsequently applied to four product prototypes: a hat ornament, pendant, tissue-box ornament, and notebook ornament. These applications responded to the survey findings concerning contemporary form and practical use. They also provided different scales and contexts through which the layered colour, carved surface, and symbolic content could be experienced. The completed product applications are presented in Figure 4.

The four prototypes demonstrate how the technical and visual characteristics of polychrome lacquer carving can be adapted to products associated with Xiannü Lake

Scenic Area. Their contribution lies not in presenting the craft and the destination as a single local tradition, but in establishing a transparent design relationship between a traditional craft medium and a separate source of place-based cultural content within Jiangxi Province.

The proposed approach provides a context-specific basis for cultural- product development. Its application to other crafts or destinations would require renewed analysis of the relevant craft knowledge, local cultural resources, intended users, and production conditions rather than the direct repetition of the present designs

Figure 4 Cultural and creative product prototype design

Serial No.	Content	Product Diagram	Innovative Design	Application Scenario
1				Hat ornament
2				Pendant
3				Tissue box ornament
4				Notebook ornament

Source: Yu (2026)

Conclusion

This study examined the development of contemporary cultural products by integrating the technical and visual characteristics of polychrome lacquer carving with selected cultural characteristics of Xiannü Lake Scenic Area in Jiangxi Province, China. The study treated these as two distinct cultural resources. Polychrome lacquer carving provided the materials, layered colours, carving techniques, surface qualities, and visual language, while Xiannü Lake Scenic Area provided natural forms, local narratives, legends, and symbolic content.

The qualitative findings identified the principal craft- based and place- based resources relevant to product development. The questionnaire findings showed that respondents had encountered polychrome lacquer carving but possessed limited understanding of its production techniques and cultural meanings. Respondents also placed importance on cultural value, aesthetic quality, contemporary character, and practicality when evaluating cultural products. These findings informed the communication, visual presentation, form, and intended use of the product concepts.

The study developed four design concepts—feather, happiness, immortal, and fish— which were applied to a hat ornament, pendant, tissue-box ornament, and notebook ornament. The resulting designs demonstrate one possible approach to using the techniques and visual language of a traditional craft to interpret the cultural identity of a separate place within the same provincial context. The approach does not present polychrome lacquer carving as originating from Xiannü Lake Scenic Area or treat the two as a single inherited tradition.

The findings provide a context-specific reference for designers and cultural practitioners seeking to connect traditional craft techniques with contemporary cultural-product development. The study also indicates that cultural communication should accompany visual and functional adaptation so that products convey not only recognizable forms but also the materials, techniques, and meanings of the craft.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The qualitative phase involved five purposively selected participants, while the quantitative findings were based on 141 valid questionnaires collected at Xiannü Lake Scenic Area. The sample was geographically concentrated and does not represent all craft practitioners or consumers in Jiangxi Province or China. The questionnaire results were also based on self-reported responses rather than observed purchasing behaviour. Future research may include a larger and more diverse sample, examine consumer responses in other geographical contexts, and evaluate the developed prototypes through actual use or market testing.

Declaration of generative AI in scientific writing

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) solely for language editing, including improvements to grammar and readability. The authors subsequently reviewed and verified the revised text against the original research data and sources. ChatGPT was not used to generate research data, conduct statistical analyses, interpret the findings, or make research decisions. All final revisions and editorial decisions were made by the authors, who take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

CRediT author statement

Xu Yu: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal Analysis, Data Curation, Writing – Original Draft. **Puvasa Ruangchewin:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing. **Poradee Pantupakorn:** Writing – Review & Editing.

References

Chen, G. M. (2017). *Identity, cultural*. In Kim, Y. Y. (Ed.). The international encyclopedia of intercultural communication. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Chen, Y., & Li, X. (2025). What makes a museum product creative? Unpacking aesthetic, emotional, and cultural dimensions from the consumer perspective. *Journal of Cultural Heritage, 68*, 112-124.

Cheng, L., & Chartniyom, P. (2023). Blending and translation: Research on and practice of lacquer were creative products. *Journal of Asian Art and Design, 4*(2), 13-34.

Hall, S. (1990). *Cultural identity and diaspora* (pp. 222-237).). In Rutherford, J. (Ed.). Identity: Community, culture, difference. London, England: Lawrence & Wishart.

Holt, M. (2017). Semiotics and design: Towards an aesthetics of the artificial. *The Design Journal, 20*(Suppl. 1), S332-S341.

Huang, Y., Lv, Q., & Lin, J. (2021). Media influence and the willingness to buy intangible cultural heritage products: A moderated mediator model. *Journal of Mathematics, 2021*, 4664998.

Jaisuda, T., Madlee, D., & Santajit, W. (2022). Jewelry of East Lanna cultural identity: Contemporary jewelry design strategies and methods from

cultural identity. *Journal of Asia Design & Research, 5*(2), 1-14.

Kumari, J., Yang, Y., & Kumar, J. (2025). Tradition in transition: How cultural elements in product design influence consumer purchase intention. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics, 37*(11), 3517-3534.

Leong, D., & Clark, H. (2003). Culture-based knowledge towards new design thinking and practice: A dialogue. *Design Issues, 19*(3), 48-58.

Lin, R. T. (2007). Transforming Taiwan aboriginal cultural features into modern product design: A case study of a cross-cultural product design model. *International Journal of Design, 1*(2), 45-53.

Liu, R., & Sprott, D. E. (2021). Multiple mental categorizations of culture-laden website design. *Journal of Business Research, 139*, 1002-1013.

Moalosi, R., Popovic, V., & Hickling-Hudson, A. (2010). Culture-orientated product design. *International Journal of Technology and Design Education, 20*(2), 175-190.

Norman, D. A. (2004). *Emotional design: Why we love (or hate) everyday things*. New York: Basic Books.

Press, M., & Cooper, R. (2003). *The design experience: The role of design and designers in the twenty-first century*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate.

Qin, Z., & Ng, S. (2020). Culture as inspiration: A metaphorical framework for designing products with traditional cultural properties. *Sustainability, 12*(17), 7171.

Wang, L., & Zhang, Q. (2022). Cultural identity and consumer behavior in the context of traditional craft products. *Journal of Consumer Culture, 22*(4), 891-910.

Zhang, J. (2021). Exploring the application of traditional elements in cultural and creative product design. *Art and Design Review, 9*, 332-340.

Zhu, C. (2008). Inheritance, communication and integration: On the expressiveness and influence of lacquer carving art. *Journal of Nanjing Arts Institute, 4*, 78-83.