Dilemma and Breakthrough of Zhuang Brocade Culture Development in Guangxi in the Era of New Media

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Abstract. Zhuang Nationality Brocade Weaving Skills are considered one of the artistic treasures of China's ethnic minorities. They hold research value in the fields of artistic design, examination of national customs and culture, and enhancement of national spiritual and cultural heritage. However, since the reform and opening up, the protection and inheritance of these skills have faced difficulties due to the rapid changes in social ecology. In the new media era, the sales model of 'channel is king' has also impacted the survival environment to some extent. This paper focuses on subversive innovative thinking, specifically on the model, product content expression, and sales channels. The aim is to overcome the challenges faced by Guangxi Zhuang brocade culture development in the new media era.

Keywords: Zhuang nationality brocade weaving skills; disruptive innovation; Intangible Cultural Heritage

1 Introduction

Zhuang nationality brocade weaving skills is one of the important representative folk arts of China's ethnic minorities, and has been called one of the four famous brocades of China, along with Yun brocade, Shu brocade and Song brocade. As an important material symbol for studying the folk culture of ethnic minorities, the Zhuang brocade occupies an important position in the development process of the Zhuang people. In recent years, the significance of Zhuang brocade as a material symbol of Zhuang people's daily necessities has been regarded as an “out-of-date style”. Although many people in the autonomous region still rely on Zhuang brocade in their daily lives, outside the region and around the world, it is valued more for its spiritual significance as an intangible cultural heritage and cultural carrier. It is considered a 'future style' in the competition for soft power.

In China's current media landscape, the development of Zhuang brocade has faced unprecedented challenges due to both its inherent limitations and external influences.
Furthermore, there has been a lack of attention from domestic and foreign researchers regarding the media perspective of Zhuang brocade, resulting in a scarcity of specific guidance programs and studies on how to utilize new media to revolutionize this traditional craft. This paper addresses the current challenges faced by the development of Zhuang brocade and provides practical suggestions to overcome the issue of its difficult inheritance.

2 Development history and practical significance of Zhuang nationality brocade weaving skills

Zhuang nationality brocade weaving skills date back to the Han Dynasty. Over time, it has evolved from a material symbol in the daily life of the Zhuang people to a cultural carrier of China's traditional culture. It has practical significance in guiding other artistic designs, examining the customs and cultures of ethnic minorities, and embodying China's spiritual and cultural heritage.

2.1 Development History

Daily necessities as material symbols.

There is a record of the ancestors of the Zhuang people in the Han Book of Geography, [1] which states that "Men work as farmers, planting rice and ramie, while women raise silkworms and produce textiles". Archaeological discoveries in Guangxi Guixian (now Guigang City) revealed a significant number of black ground orange-red back brocade fragments in the seven martyrdom coffins unearthed. These fragments represent the earliest form of Zhuang brocade. In traditional society, Zhuang brocade, as a material symbol of daily necessities, is an indispensable necessity in the daily life of the Zhuang people, and the more obvious social behavior is: in the 1930s, no matter how poor or rich a Zhuang woman was, there were always a few pieces of exquisite Zhuang brocade in the dowry box before she got married, generally woven by the hand of the woman. On the one hand, Zhuang brocade represents the identity and status of the married woman, and the greater the number of brocades, the higher the social status of the married woman; on the other hand, it is also a symbol of the married woman's dexterity, gentleness and goodness, and reflects the married woman's desire for the beauty of love, for example, the most classic pattern of love in Zhuang brocades is the "Double Happiness Pattern".

However, since the reform and opening up, more and more Zhuang people have gone out of the mountains to seek employment opportunities in the metropolis, and the desire for wealth has made the Zhuang people gradually forget the protection and inheritance of their native culture and folklore, coupled with the impact and fusion of Han nationality culture on the culture of ethnic minorities, which, to a certain extent, has affected the roots of Zhuang brocade in the Zhuang people between different generations. Nowadays, Zhuang nationality brocade weaving skills will rarely be understood by the young people of the Zhuang nationality, and the memory of Zhuang brocade only stays in the generation of ancestors.
High-quality artwork as a carrier of culture.

Nowadays, the Zhuang nationality brocade weaving skills have been cut off from the "out-of-date style" as a material symbol, and more in the form of high-grade artwork in the public's field of vision. If the daily necessities of Zhuang brocade as a material symbol is called "Popular tastes", then, nowadays it is called "Highbrow", as a cultural carrier of high-grade works of art, it cuts off the significance of the symbol as a material symbol, that is, it does not have the practicality. Although in some areas of Guangxi, people still use Zhuang brocade as their daily necessities, but since the reform and opening-up, the external environment has changed considerably, and its own limitations have gradually appeared, and an endless number of new products have taken the place of Zhuang brocade, which is now no longer a necessity in the life of the Zhuang people.

At the present stage, Zhuang brocade has more far-reaching influence on the society, no matter from the point of view of artistic methods, or from the point of view of Zhuang national history and national soft power, it is the crystallization of wisdom condensed by the working people of our country through continuous practice and accumulation in thousands of years, besides, it is a true portrayal of Mr. Lu Xun's saying that "only the national is the world".

2.2 Practical Significance

Important reference in the art field.

Zhou Qufei of the Song Dynasty in the "LING WAI DAI DA" recorded that [2] velvet is "white in color, with a square pattern, wide and large, like the threaded ropes of the Central Plains, but more beautiful and thicker than threaded ropes, and is really the best clothing material in the South." The "white square pattern" is a description of the early image of Zhuang brocade. Early Zhuang brocade looks very decorous, its pattern is mainly geometric, and its color is mainly monochrome. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Zhuang brocade became a popular daily necessity and decoration among the Zhuang people due to its brilliant colors and intricate patterns. It was also commonly used as part of women's dowries. [3] The evolution of Zhuang brocade patterns has been influenced by technological advancements. The original patterns, such as the simple "swastika" pattern, "chrysanthemum" pattern, and "Double happiness" pattern, have been expanded to include the harvest picture, which is used to represent the harvest, and the auspicious picture, which is used to symbolize peace for the nation. These Zhuang brocades are woven with cotton or silk threads and feature flexible, vivid patterns, complex structures, and brilliant colors. They reflect the enthusiasm and vitality of the Zhuang people, as well as their pursuit and yearning for a better life.

Meanwhile, the Zhuang brocade has developed into a complete system after a long period of evolution. In the early days, the Zhuang people demonstrated their ingenuity by using hand looms equipped with support systems, transmission devices, heddle-splitting devices, and jacquard devices. Using cotton yarn as the warp and various colored velvet as the weft, the method of passing through the warp and breaking the weft was employed to create clever crossings and substitutions, completing the pattern of Zhuang brocade on the machine. The descendants summarize the skills of their prede-
cessors and conclude that there are seven processes involved: [4] spinning (turning cotton into threads), dyeing (coloring the weft threads according to the pattern), and five other steps for producing colors such as red, yellow, blue, black, and green. Thirdly, sizing involves moistening the yarn with rice broth or powdered syrup. Fourthly, rolling the warp yarn into a simple shape. Fifthly, pulling refers to pulling the weft yarn. Finally, carding, which involves preparing the fibers for spinning. Seventh, thread the browns and buttons by combining the warp and weft yarns. The conclusion of the warp yarns is divided on the browns and buttons. Finally, knot the flower board according to the specifications, using various colors and patterns to weave the colorful Zhuang brocade.

Physical evidence for the study of ethnic humanities.

Zhuang brocade was traditionally a crucial dowry for Zhuang women and remains a significant material for studying the humanities and social sciences of the Zhuang people. By examining the connotation, layout, and matching scheme of its patterns, it can provide valuable evidence for investigating the ecology of Zhuang ethnic folk culture. The Zhuang brocade is an important aspect for examining the folk culture and ecology of ethnic minorities. It reflects humanistic colors in its development process and is an external manifestation of ethnic minority culture. The weavers carefully design the connotation, layout, and collocation of each group or pattern in Zhuang brocade. They inject the concepts of life and nature into the specific patterns, giving a new interpretation to each warp and weft. [5] Zhuang brocade incorporates natural scenery, including animals and plants, and uses natural colors such as red, green, yellow, and blue. The ancestors of the Zhuang people added their unlimited imagination to create the bright and brilliant Zhuang brocade. It is obvious that Zhuang weavers incorporated abstract concepts such as sun, clouds, and thunder into their woven patterns, along with specific figurative designs. These abstract concepts were woven into circle, cloud, thunder, and other geometric patterns, reflecting the Zhuang people's deep respect and exploration of nature in traditional society.

National soft power key evidence.

Zhuang brocade is a traditional skill included in the list of representative items of national intangible cultural heritage. It is considered one of the most important examples of China's soft power. The intangible cultural heritage represents the intrinsic spiritual values of a nation, carrying its civilization and cultural diversity. It is also considered the root and soul of a nation. Therefore, it must be actively promoted to prevent its extinction in the face of rapid modernization. The proper safeguarding and transmission of intangible cultural heritage is essential for preserving a people's heritage, developing its spiritual culture, and promoting global cultural diversity. In conclusion, it is recommended that the government should continue to prioritize the protection and transmission of intangible cultural heritage and that more policies should be implemented for the protection of this heritage.

China established a center for protecting intangible cultural heritage to enhance the country's soft power globally. The influence of culture is vast, yet its impact is often
understated and gradual. Therefore, it is important to be vigilant against the threat of cultural imperialism and to preserve and promote local culture. This will not only enhance China’s soft power but also safeguard its position in the global cultural arena.

3 The development dilemma of Zhuang brocade in the new media environment

The development of Zhuang nationality brocade weaving skills has faced unprecedented challenges under the new media environment, both due to its own limitations and the impact of external factors. This section focuses on the limitations of Zhuang brocade weaving skills and the impact of the new social and ecological environment on Zhuang brocade. It illustrates the dilemma of developing Zhuang brocade weaving skills at present.

3.1 Limitations of the craft itself

Limitations of Zhuang brocade technique.

The limitations of Zhuang brocade weaving skills are due to the tediousness of the steps, the difficulty of the operation, and the subjective nature of the design patterns. Even for simple patterns, it takes a Zhuang brocade worker three to four days to handcraft a one-meter length of brocade. To create more complex patterns in Zhuang brocade, workers must utilize their comprehensive abilities, including art appreciation, aesthetic sense, and computerized design skills. This requires professionalism in all aspects of the process, from designing the patterns to printing the drawings.

Secondly, Zhuang brocade is a handmade product that requires workers to spend long hours sitting in front of a brocade weaving machine, ranging from one to six hours. During this process, workers seldom move around except when they need to roll, pull, and draw yarns. However, the long hours of manual work can have a negative impact on their necks, and even spines. In addition, if the warp and weft threads are broken due to a mistake in the technique, Zhuang brocade workers must search for the corresponding threads, which can be challenging and requires good eyesight. The Guangxi Silk and Hemp Textile Research Institute has identified a hemp textile (specimen M1: 550) with a thread count of over 200. The density of its warp and weft threads is 41 and 31 per square centimeter, respectively. This demonstrates the intricate and time-consuming production process of Zhuang brocade.

Limitations of geographical dissemination.

Currently, Zhuang brocade weaving skills are only researched within the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, specifically in the areas of Jingxi, Binyang, and Xincheng. [6] This is due to the natural factors of the birthplace of Zhuang brocade itself. Specifically, the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region is characterized by a karst landscape with numerous mountains and hills, resulting in limited transportation and dis-
parate economic levels. Geographical constraints have prevented Zhuang brocade in-
heritors from exchanging expertise with those from different regions. These factors
have contributed to the loss of Zhuang brocade today.

3.2 Impact of the new social ecosystem

The endless substitutes.
During the early days, the production and manufacturing of daily necessities, such
as Zhuang brocade, were largely limited by the production materials and technology of
the farming society. However, in the current social and ecological environment, these
constraints have been broken, and substitutes for Zhuang brocade have emerged,
greatly affecting the inheritance and development of Zhuang brocade techniques. In the
new social environment, machine production has replaced manual labor in the produc-
tion of daily necessities. This has improved production efficiency and level. As a result,
the material attributes of Zhuang nationality brocade weaving skills have been replaced
by machine-produced fabrics that are more efficient and affordable in terms of time and
price. While the technique for creating Zhuang brocade has been retained, the brocade
itself is gradually disappearing from the historical stage of the Zhuang people.

Diversion of audience attention.
In the era of new media, the media ecosystem has undergone significant changes. As
a result, audience attention has, to some extent, replaced product quality as the core
that the emergence of a new medium or technology must have its own metaphor, either
positive or negative, and rejects the theory of the neutrality of technology. The Internet's
emergence has rapidly transformed traditional societies' mode of operation, structurally
impacting them. In this process, the audience devotes significant attention to 'frag-
mented time.' For instance, an inane short video can receive millions of likes. This con-
text-less and fragmented access to information increasingly distracts the audience. Ul-
timately, mass audiences lose interest in intangible cultural heritage such as Zhuang
brocade due to the time required for research and the strong historical context.

4 Innovative means of Zhuang brocade in the new media
environment

The research reveals that there is limited attention paid to Zhuang brocade from a media
perspective, both domestically and internationally. Furthermore, there is a lack of spe-
cific guidance programs and studies on how to use media to innovate Zhuang brocade.
Therefore, this chapter proposes renovation methods and suggestions at both macro and
micro levels to address this issue.
### 4.1 Macro-level innovation approaches

**Attract investment from a wide range of companies by combining production and sales.**

Based on the field research conducted on the Jingxi Culture Center and Zhuang Brocade Factory, it was found that the factory only employs 16 Zhuang brocade workers, which is insufficient to meet the current demand for offline purchases. Furthermore, the factory faces issues with an imperfect operational system and a shortage of skilled workers. To promote the export of Zhuang brocade beyond the autonomous region and national borders, the factory managers must first address the issue of low productivity. Improving productivity can attract both domestic and foreign investments, increase the popularity of Zhuang brocade domestically and internationally, and ultimately boost market demand for Zhuang brocade.

The productivity of Zhuang brocade production is limited by the number of machines and the small number of workers at the Zhuang brocade factory. The Zhuang Brocade Protection Unit should actively seek sponsors and reach a mutually beneficial agreement to renew their machines and expand production. With sufficient funding, the unit can ensure the training of Zhuang brocade workers and ultimately solve the labor shortage problem in Zhuang brocade production.

**Leverage social media's secondary distribution model for rapid distribution.**

The advancement of mobile communication technology has significantly reduced the distance between people, breaking the barriers of time and space for information transmission. As a result, the whole society has become a "global village". In light of this, it is important for the inheritors of Zhuang brocade to stay up-to-date with the latest developments and utilize new media to promote their craft, thereby increasing awareness of Zhuang brocade among a wider audience.

The protection units of Zhuang brocade culture should collaborate with new media organizations to promote Zhuang brocade on social media platforms and bring it to the attention of users. For instance, Zhuang brocade inheritors could partner with established content creators on social media platforms. This would enable quality content creators to act as 'opinion leaders', providing audiences with more cultural knowledge about Zhuang brocade and advice on purchasing products. In addition, the Zhuang Brocade Cultural Center could establish an official new media account to promote and sell Zhuang brocade. This would enhance the visibility, reputation, and credibility of Zhuang brocade, ultimately building a new media matrix for Zhuang brocade culture.

**Government policy on conservation of Zhuang brocade.**

Zhuang brocade is not widely known outside of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, primarily due to insufficient support from the local government. In the past century, the skills of Zhuang brocade weaving have suffered from a cultural break in the inheritance process, which has undermined the integrity of the skills. Currently, Zhuang brocade inheritors should focus on preserving the existing Zhuang brocade production process and protecting all types of Zhuang brocade collections. Based on this,
future Zhuang brocade researchers should aim to reconstruct the entire process of the Zhuang brocade technique to fill any gaps in its integrity.

As per Article 6 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Intangible Cultural Heritage, [8] the protection and preservation of intangible cultural heritage must be included in the national economic and social development planning of the people's governments at or above the county level. Additionally, funds for such protection must be included in the budgets of their respective levels. Local government departments should respond to the country's call to establish special funds for the renewal of Zhuang brocade machines and the payment of Zhuang brocade workers' wages. This practice can effectively safeguard jobs, attract talent, and ultimately improve the productivity of Zhuang brocade factories, thereby attracting investment from other industries.

4.2 Micro-level innovation approaches

Innovations in Zhuang brocade patterns and motifs.

Zhuang brocade is utilized in various forms, all of which reflect the Zhuang people's enthusiasm and their desire for a better life. To innovate the design program for Zhuang brocade products, we must first consider the historical background of its development. The origin of the development of Zhuang brocade is not as illustrious as Shu brocade and Song brocade, and its popularity is not as widespread as Yun brocade and Shu brocade. Blind imitation is not a solution for protecting and preserving Zhuang brocade. To fully realize its value, it is necessary to consider the actual situation and seek truth from facts.

The Zhuang brocade design program should keep up with the times and incorporate elements of the new era while retaining the original pattern. In terms of pattern design, it should cater to public taste and create new patterns that meet the demands of the new era. Additionally, the new design for Zhuang brocade should preserve its national characteristics while creating products that appeal to the public. To achieve this, new patterns should be created that incorporate Chinese elements, such as the 'plum, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum' series and the 'ink, paper, and ink stone' series, with a focus on thematic series. Overall, the quality of the product is of utmost importance and should adhere to the basic principle that 'content is king'. This will solve the problem of the lack of diverse patterns in Zhuang brocade and ensure innovative product expression, ultimately broadening the sales channels of Zhuang brocade.

Innovations in Zhuang brocade expressions.

From sustaining to disruptive innovation.

The current stage of innovation for Zhuang brocade products only remains in the innovation of product categories, but such innovation is actually just a simple "transfer" rather than the real meaning of innovation. [9] Professor Clayton M. Christensen of Harvard Business School divides innovation into two types: sustaining innovation and disruptive innovation. Sustaining innovation is commonly referred to as incremental
innovation that does not disrupt the original ecosystem and value system, while disruptive innovation, as the name suggests, fundamentally changes the ecosystem. The so-called "old wine in a new bottle", from the traditional quilt, embroidered balls to the new lampshade, purse and other category innovation are sustaining innovation, but for the current stage of development of Zhuang brocade in the predicament, this innovation is obviously not feasible. Therefore, if we want to transform Zhuang brocade, we need to implement the second mode of innovation, which is disruptive innovation.

Zhuang brocade was born with both symbolic and spiritual attributes: on the one hand, its practicality as a material symbol; on the other hand, Zhuang brocade also carries parents' wishes for their children's growth and people's prayers to the gods for favorable weather conditions. With the passage of time, the influence of Zhuang brocade as a symbolic attribute has diminished, and people place more emphasis on the value generated by its spiritual attribute. In the new media environment, the first thing to do in the subversive innovation of Zhuang brocade is not to get stuck in a rut. The heirs of Zhuang brocade should actively try to cooperate with other industries, for example, linking Zhuang brocade with games and food and drink, and as small as a piece of eye cloth or tissue paper with Zhuang brocade pattern or pattern, or as large as the shape and structure of skyscrapers, these are all innovative ways worth trying. Second, it is the innovation of product content, which can be done through the digital presentation of Zhuang brocade products with patterned drawings, thus bringing Zhuang brocade back into the public eye. Of course, there are related Zhuang brocade protectors in this direction to put theory into practice and achieve certain results, [10] for example, in December 2016, Nanning, Guangxi, the whole line opened metro line 1, "Zhuang brocade classic" design program in the entrances and station interior decoration of Zhuang brocade elements for the most comprehensive all-round display.

Emulate disruptive innovation models from peer industries.

In terms of innovating Zhuang brocade products, it is possible to draw inspiration from the innovation models of the other three famous brocades and products of the same type.

First of all, the inheritors of Zhuang brocade can learn from the innovation methods of the other three famous brocades and incorporate their specific design plans. One example is that the protection and inheritance of Yun brocade fully reveals the humanistic characteristics of Yunnan, which not only applies the brocade to traditional national costumes, but also combines the brocade with local architectural decorations of houses, stores on the street, and tourist attractions. Another example is that based on the large number of netroots cities in Sichuan and Chongqing, Shu brocade inheritors make full use of the passenger flow brought by these netroots cities to apply Shu brocade to netroots attractions, so that tourists can subconsciously feel the charm of Shu brocade during their visit. Additionally, Shu brocade inheritors have opened numerous specialty stores, expanding the coverage of the Shu brocade market. Therefore, to develop themselves, Zhuang brocade inheritors can use innovative methods such as setting up authoritative offline Zhuang brocade stores to expand their sales range through
chain stores. They can also establish online Zhuang brocade stores to increase the popularity and sales volume of Zhuang brocade, thus achieving the inheritance and protection of this traditional craft.

Secondly, Zhuang brocade inheritors can also learn from the innovative techniques used in similar products. For instance, when referring to Su embroidery, people immediately associate it with the beautiful and unique scenery of Jiangnan, such as West Lake and Suzhou Garden. This impression leads people to believe that the use of Suzhou embroidery is fashionable and popular. Contrary to people's imagination, Zhuang brocade is not outdated in life scenes. However, many people's memories of Zhuang brocade are limited to its portrayal in the movie 'Liu Sanjie', which can create a traditional and outdated impression for those outside the region. To dispel these misconceptions, it is important to showcase the modern and innovative ways in which Zhuang brocade can be utilized. Cultural stereotypes surrounding Zhuang brocade have hindered its dissemination and development. Therefore, it is important for the inheritors of Zhuang brocade to break down barriers and promote the cultural significance of Zhuang brocade. This will ensure the successful transmission of Zhuang brocade to future generations.

Channels Innovation.

In the current media landscape, it is not sufficient to simply produce a quality product. The fast-paced evolution of the media ecosystem necessitates a more diverse approach to product sales models and channels. The Lasswell Communication Model emphasizes the significance of the channel, stating that all information transfer must occur through an intermediary or with the aid of material carriers. In the era of mass communication, the interactive relationship between people and the environment has led to the introduction of the concept of the 'Information Environment (IE). In other words, the interaction between people and the environment is facilitated through the media. Both of these factors emphasize the importance of the channel for product sales. Solving the problem of sales channels is crucial for Zhuang brocade enterprises and workers to obtain practical benefits. This will give them the confidence and ability to continue inheriting the Zhuang nationality brocade weaving skills, and attract more people to participate in the preservation and protection of Zhuang brocade.

The development of sales channels should primarily depend on new media and technology, such as e-commerce platforms like JD.com and AliExpress, and social media platforms like bilibili.com and TikTok for live streaming. Secondly, aim to market and advertise in diverse markets using soft-sell advertising as the primary method and hard-sell advertising as the secondary method. For instance, consider incorporating Zhuang brocade patterns into game scenes to provide the audience with a visual feast while also subconsciously introducing them to the art of Zhuang brocade.
5 Conclusion

The preservation and promotion of Zhuang brocade skills require more than just maintenance and innovation. What is needed is ‘disruptive innovation’ that will reintroduce it to the public in a new form, thereby gaining their genuine appreciation and admiration. Secondly, by overcoming the constraints of time and space on Zhuang brocade weaving skills, we can solve the dilemma of Zhuang brocade cultural development in Guangxi in the era of new media. This will enable Zhuang brocade weaving skills to leap from an 'out-of-date style' to a 'future style'. Furthermore, with regards to the issue of insufficient attention given to the research of Zhuang brocade by scholars both domestically and internationally, it is necessary for the government to implement policies that incentivize enterprises and academic institutions to increase their investment in scientific research in this field.

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