



# THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF CULTURAL HERITAGE: INVESTIGATING THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE HERITAGE AND INNOVATION OF YI COSTUMES - A CASE STUDY OF THE LIPU YI PEOPLE

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**Abstract:** *The folk costumes of Lipu Yi People, a branch of Yi ethnic minority in China, have not received much attention from China and the rest of the world. The reason could be that Lipu Yi People live in mountainous areas far away from cities and their incomes are low. This study explored the characteristics of the folk costumes a Lipu Yi People as well as the factors influencing their folk costumes over modern design, as reference for the folk costumes for other ethnic minorities. The research model in this research was based on a questionnaire survey of 442 participants, including intangible cultural heritage experts and scholars, governmental officials, local people, people in charge of creative handcrafts, intangible cultural heritage inheritors and tourists. Five hypotheses were made for the exploration and descriptive analysis; confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling were applied. The results support all five hypotheses. In conclusion, inheriting cultural fractions, cultural changes, the regional environment, cultural connotations and artistic characteristics each have a significant and positive influence over the design and application of folk costumes Yi ethnic minority.*

**Keywords:** *Lipu Yi People's folk costumes; Characteristics; Design application; Influencing factors.*

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
3. Research Methodology
4. Results
5. Conclusion

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. Research Background

The unique ethnic heritage of Chinese folk costumes, gradually getting popular, is now an essential part of the Chinese costume culture. In recent years, the development of Chinese ethnic culture has received widespread attention of people from all walks of life. The Chinese government has issued many policies for the conservation of Chinese ethnic culture. Under the guidance of these policies, several measures for the preservation and inheritance of various Chinese cultural components have been carried out throughout China. One of these components is the traditional culture of Yi ethnic minority, such as the folk costumes, songs and dances of Yi ethnic minority. Yi People's folk costume is an important part of the Chinese folk costume design art, and it is most prominent among Yi ethnic minority in Panxi region of China.



Lipu Yi People boasts a wide variety of costume patterns, each of a different cultural connotation. Most of their costume patterns are mainly derived from the imitation of nature and the totem worship. The characteristics of Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns combine the folk characters and the cultural confidence of Lipu Yi People. Rapid socioeconomic development and multicultural integration have negatively influenced the originality of Lipu Yi People's folk costume culture. Under the influence of foreign cultures, most of the original folk costume patterns have gradually disappeared. Studying the characteristics of Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns is essential for the preservation and application of the original Yi culture.

## 1.2. Research Objective

This research examined the characteristics of Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns and explored the factors influencing the application of Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns in modern design, as to provide reference for the design and application of other folk costume patterns.

## 1.3. Research Scope

1.3.1. Studying Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns and the colors with corresponding cultural connotations. Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns and colors are mainly derived from the imitation of nature, the totem worship as well as social life. While the patterns are mainly derived from animals, plants, geometry, social life, and natural phenomena, the colors are mainly of black, red, yellow, blue and white.

1.3.2. Integrating Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns and innovating the application of costume patterns in modern design, enhancing cultural confidence and increasing the attention to Lipu Yi People's folk costume culture. In terms of influencing factors, this research could provide reference for the innovative development of Lipu Yi People's folk costumes.

## 1.4. Research Hypotheses

H1: Inheriting cultural fractions is positively correlated with the design and application of Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns.

H2: Cultural changes are positively correlated with the design and application of Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns.

H3: The regional environment is positively correlated with the design and application of Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns.

H4: Cultural connotations are positively correlated with the design and application of Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns.

H5: Artistic features are positively correlated to the design and application of Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns.

## 1.5. Research Model

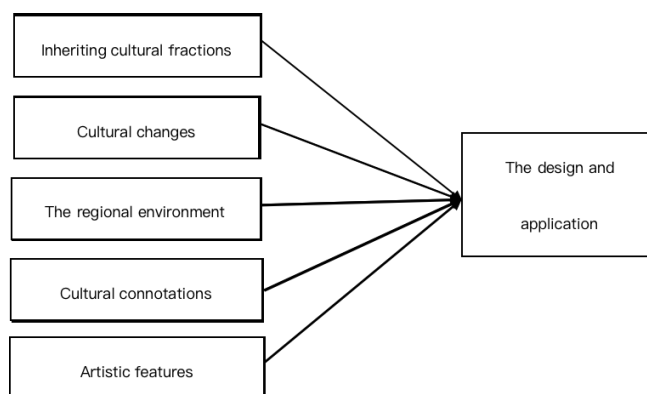


Figure 1. Factors influencing the application of Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns in model design













## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Overview of Lipu Yi People’s Folk Costume Culture









Lipu Yi People is a subgroup of Yi ethnic minority who live mainly in Yisala, Renhe District, Panzhihua City of Sichuan Province, China. The population of Lipu Yi People in this area is about 40,000, representing 96% of overall population of Yi ethnic minority (Yang, 2014). The main colors used in Lipu Yi People’s folk costumes are red (connoting passion and generosity), black (connoting heaven and earth), blue (connoting freedom and nobility), and white (connoting beauty and good luck). Lipu Yi women’s costumes are generally decorated with silver ornaments, embroidery, piping, and other folk wear processes (Zhang,2015). Because of the differences in history and geographical environment, the colors and patterns used in Lipu Yi People’s folk costumes differ considerably from those of Yi People living in other areas (Figures 2 and 3) (Wang, 2017).

**Table 1.** Lipu Yi women’s costume patterns and corresponding connotations

	Category	Contains the pattern kind	Implication	Patterns, Samples
Patterns	Animals	Animal totems such as tiger, ram's horn, cockle, bull's horn, bull's eye, crab's foot, chicken intestine, etc.	Gratitude for the animals that depend on us for survival	 
	Plants	Common flowers and plants such as fern, sunflower, camellia, petunia, lotus, crocus, pomegranate, azalea, peony, etc.	Originated from nature, symbolizing the tenacity of plants and the love of life	 
	Geometry	Present stripes, triangles, diamonds, octagons, squares, etc.	Self-decoration, as well as the separation and connection of different patterns	 
	Social Life	Flame pattern, window lattice pattern, fire sickle pattern, stone step pattern, copper coin pattern, etc.	Awe and worship of fire and a love of social life	 
	Natural Phenomena	Natural phenomenon patterns such as sun and moon patterns, star patterns, mountain patterns, swirl patterns, wave patterns, rainbow patterns, Auspicious Knot, cloud patterns, etc.	The worship of the sun and the moon	 



**Table 2.** Lipu Yi women’s costume colors and corresponding connotations

	Category	Applications	Implication	Extraction of colors
Color	Black	Men's and seniors' clothing, large area use	Noble, dignified and dignified	 
	Blue	Mostly for women's clothing base color, children's clothing decoration color	Free, noble, high	 
	Red	A greater proportion of women's clothing	Brave, passionate, warm	 
	White	Male coats, female skirts, etc.	Beautiful, clean and auspicious	 

**2.2. The Current Situation of Folk Costume Inheritance and Design Application of Yi Ethnic Minority**

There are only a few domestic papers on Lipu Yi People’s folk costumes available in China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CKNI) database (domestic) and in World of Science database (international). Moreover, most of international studies only focused on the folk costumes of Yi ethnic minority. The systematic color scheme based on Yi women’s folk costumes in Liangshan, China was established and a color record of the folk costumes of Yi ethnic minority was made as reference for other cultural groups (Ji et al. 2020). The patterns and special techniques used in the folk costumes of Yi ethnic minority can be directly applied to the design or reorganization of modern costumes, creating new artistic appeals (Wang 2017). The constituent elements of Yi women's headdresses and accessories, such as headscarves and hats, were sampled and analyzed (Wang and Soh 2017). Folk clothing-making culture of Yi ethnic minority, a highlight to the tourism in Panzhuhua city, was discussed from the perspective of textile souvenirs (Wang and Zhao 2017). With the technologies of virtual reality and somatosensory interaction, the limitations of traditional techniques—including high conservativeness and poor interactivity—can be overcome by improving the virtual digital conservation of folk costumes (Lei et al. 2017). The aesthetic characteristics of folk costumes of Yi ethnic minority can be observed through three aspects: patterns, styles and colors. Li (2021) studied the preservation of the traditional folk costume characteristics (structures, patterns and colors) of Yi ethnic minority and the cultural inheritance in terms of ethnic psychological culture and production skills and the innovative means to promote tourism product development. The geometry patterns of the folk costumes of Yi ethnic minority can be created so as to be integrated with modern clothing design while preserving the traditional cultural connotations. This can enhance cultural confidence through the inheritance and development of the cultural connotations of the folk costumes of Yi ethnic minority. It can also improve the competitiveness of China’s clothing industry (Zhao, 2021). The application of the folk costume patterns of Yi ethnic minority in modern clothing as well as the manufacturing, pattern design and home textiles may promote the inheritance and study of the folk costume culture of Yi ethnic minority (Simin et al. 2017) as well as improve the current understanding of the connotations and patterns of the folk costumes of Yi ethnic minority (Tao, 2018). Li (2004) analyzed the artistic characteristics and values of the folk costume patterns of Yi ethnic minority. Wan (2016) studied the preservation and the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage in the



modernization process in terms of the origins, patterns, geometry and the production processes of the heritage, the context of inheritance and the influence of the political, economic and geographical environment, and aesthetic awareness. This research also examined the ways of intangible cultural heritage preservation and the inheritance in the modernization process.

Through the literature review and expert interviews, this research identified that up to date, several studies on the folk costume culture of Yi ethnic minority have been published in China and in the world. However, only a few studies have focused on Lipu Yi People's folk costume culture, and all of them have only been published in China. Because of the remote geographic locations, inconvenient transportation, backward economy and other regional environmental factors, Lipu Yi People have not received much attention from experts, scholars or the general public so far. This has limited the inheritance and development of the folk costume culture of Lipu Yi People. The main reasons for this are as follows. Firstly, the inheritors are aging, and the way of inheritance is monotonous and lost, leading to fractions in inheritance. Secondly, the integration of foreign cultures has negatively influenced the originality of the traditional folk culture. Thirdly, the rural folk costume industry is not of a high level. Without sufficient innovation, the industry also lacks the ability to develop further. Fourthly, the support of the local government remains insufficient, and neither is there a proper professional pooling of and proper researches on the folk costume culture of Yi ethnic minority.

### 3. Research Methodology

Empirical research methods were applied in this research. Firstly, 35 folk costumes representing Yi men's and women's clothing were randomly sampled. Then, this research analyzed the patterns and colors of the clothing with corresponding cultural connotation for Lipu Yi People. Secondly, this research interviewed 442 people, including intangible cultural heritage experts and scholars, people in charge of creative handcrafts, intangible culture inheritors, and tourists, to explore the factors influencing Lipu Yi People's folk costume pattern design and application as well as Lipu Yi People's folk costume pattern application in modern design. Their responses were analyzed with the descriptive analysis, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. The Characteristics of Lipu Yi People's Folk Costume Decorative Patterns

To identify the characteristics of the decorative patterns used in Lipu Yi People's folk costumes, 35 pieces of costumes representing Lipu Yi men's and women's clothing were randomly sampled for the statistical analysis of the decorative patterns (animal, plant, geometry, social life and natural phenomena) and colors (Table 3).

**Table 3.** The statistics of Lipu Yi People's folk costume pattern categories

	Frequency	Percentage	Effective percentage	Cumulative percentage
	Animals	7	20.0	20.0
	Plants	9	25.7	45.7
	Geometry	6	17.1	62.9
Effective	Social Life	5	14.3	77.1
	Natural Phenomena	8	22.9	100.0
	Total	35	100.0	100.0

As shown in Table 3, of the 35 pieces of costumes sampled, 25.7% had plant-based decorative patterns, followed by those based on natural phenomena (22.9%). Moreover, most of the patterns were mainly based on plants, natural phenomena, and animals. This is consistent with the traditional customs of Lipu Yi People of nature and totem worship.

In the descriptive statistics of the 35 pieces of costume categories (Table 4), the minimal value of 1 represents animal-based patterns and the maximum value of 5 represents natural



phenomenon-based patterns, whereas the minimal value of 1.10 represents ram's horn pattern and the maximum value of 5.80 represents the Chinese knot pattern (Auspicious Knot) .

**Table 4.** The descriptive statistics of Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns

	N	Minimal value	Maximum value	Average value	Standard deviation
Category	35	1.00	5.00	2.9429	1.47415
Patterns	35	1.10	5.80	3.3571	1.48012
Valid N (list status)	35				

Categories: 1 = animals; 2 = plants; 3 = geometric shapes; 4 = social life; 5 = natural phenomena

Patterns: 1.10 = ram's horn pattern; 5.80 = Chinese knot pattern

As shown in Table 4, the most frequently used patterns are from the category of natural phenomena (e.g., Chinese knot pattern). This is in line with the characteristics of Lipu Yi People's folk costumes that feature Auspicious Knot as main decorations.

#### 4.2. The Color Decoration Characteristics of Lipu Yi People's Folk Costumes

The main colors used in Lipu Yi People's folk costumes are red, black, blue and white. Different colors are used by Lipu Yi People of different genders and ages because different colors have different connotations. As shown in Table 3, black is of the minimal value of 1 because with the connotation of nobility and dignity. It is mostly used in elderly people's clothing. In contrast, white is of the maximum value of 1 because, deemed good, clean, and auspicious. It is mostly used by young men and women.

**Table 5.** The descriptive statistical analysis of the colors used in Lipu Yi People's folk costumes

	N	Minimum value	Maximum value	Average value	Standard deviation
Color	5	1.00	5.00	3.0000	1.58114
Applications	5	1.00	5.00	3.0000	1.58114
Connotations	5	1.00	5.00	3.0000	1.58114
Valid N (list status)	5				

Colors: 1 = black; 2 = red; 3 = yellow; 4 = blue; 5 = white

Applications: 1 = black (base color for elderly clothing); 2 = red (women's clothing); 3 = yellow (decorative color); 4 = blue (women's clothing); 5 = white (men's coats and women's skirts)

Connotations: 1 = black (noble, solemn, dignity); 2 = red (brave, warm, warm); 3 = yellow (beautiful, noble, rich); 4 = blue (free, noble); 5 = white (beautiful, clean, auspicious)

In terms of colors, the overall application of colors used in Lipu Yi People's folk costumes is relatively uniform (Table 5). Among Lipu Yi People, white is used more often than black. This is in line with the results of current researches.

#### 4.3. Analysis of Factors Influencing the Design Application of Lipu Yi People's Folk Costume Patterns

The descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were conducted based on the 442 survey results to verify the analysis of factors influencing the design application of Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns (Table 6).



**Table 6.** The descriptive statistics analysis of factors influencing the design application of Lipu Yi People’s folk costume patterns

	N	Minimum value	Maximum value	Mean	Std. deviation
Inheriting cultural fractions	442	1	5	3.7854	0.76283
Cultural changes	442	1	5	3.9429	0.73713
The regional environment	442	1	5	3.6219	0.78924
Cultural connotations	442	1	5	3.8353	0.80069
Artistic features	442	1	5	3.867	0.78503
Design applications	442	1	5	3.8561	0.72576

Mean, standard deviation, maximum and minimal values of each variable are known throughout the descriptive statistics analysis.

Correlations						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Inheriting cultural fractions	1					
Cultural changes	.612**	1				
The regional environment	.475**	.535**	1			
Cultural connotations	.556**	.478**	.507**	1		
Artistic features	.518**	.480**	.517**	.653**	1	
Design applications	.627**	.602**	.621**	.737**	.731**	1

\*\* The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

The correlation analysis results demonstrate that inheriting cultural fractions, cultural changes, the regional environment, cultural connotations, artistic features, and design applications each demonstrate a significant positive correlation (correlation coefficient = 0.627, 0.602, 0.621, 0.737, and 0.731, respectively; all  $p < 0.01$ ).

**4.4. Reliability Analysis of the Questionnaire**

**Table 7.** The reliability analysis of the questionnaire

	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Inheriting cultural fractions	0.931	6
Cultural changes	0.928	4
The regional environment	0.961	8
Cultural connotations	0.969	5
Artistic features	0.973	5
Design applications	0.974	5
Total	0.971	33

The reliability analysis results, as shown in Table 7, demonstrate that the Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire is 0.971. Moreover, the Cronbach's alpha of each dimension is > 0.8. Taken together, these results indicate that the overall reliability of the questionnaire is sound.

4.5. CFA for Factors Influencing the Design Application of Lipu Yi People’s Folk Costume Patterns

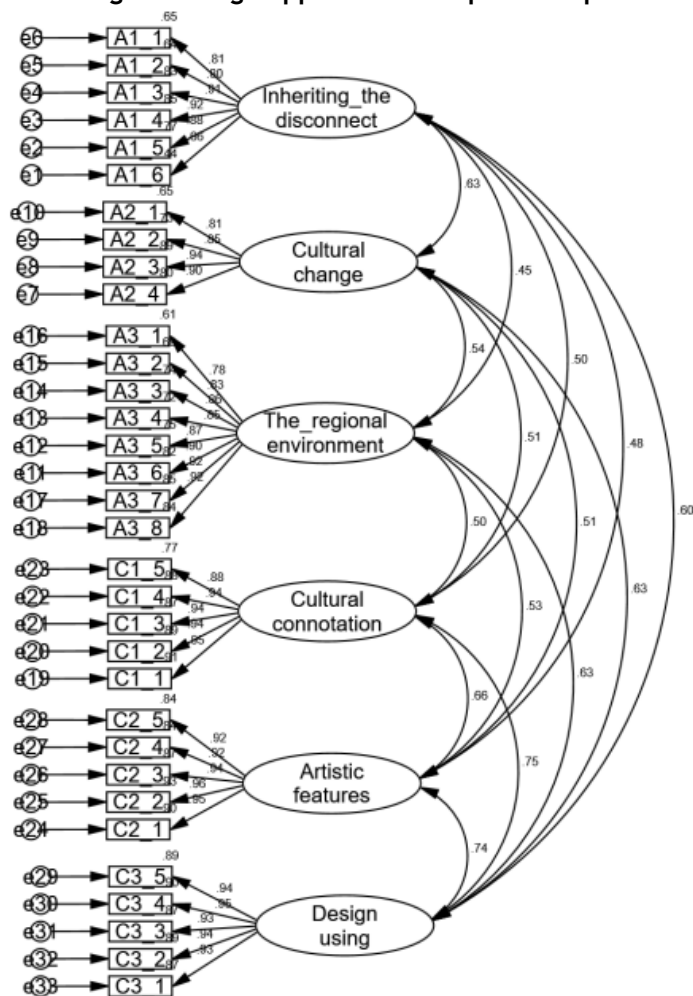


Figure 2. The CFA of factors influencing the design application of Lipu Yi People’s folk costume patterns

Table 8. Factor loadings for CFA

		Standard estimate	SE	CR	p	AVE	CR
Inheriting cultural fractions	A1_6	0.66	0.051	15.113	***	0.6971	0.9317
	A1_5	0.88	0.049	22.376	***		
	A1_4	0.921	0.048	24.029	***		
	A1_3	0.91	0.048	23.578	***		
	A1_2	0.802	0.054	19.549	***		
	A1_1	0.808					
Cultural changes	A2_4	0.896	0.046	22.921	***	0.7690	0.9299
	A2_3	0.943	0.045	24.636	***		
	A2_2	0.855	0.049	21.362	***		
	A2_1	0.808					
The regional environment	A3_6	0.904	0.052	22.028	***	0.7518	0.9603
	A3_5	0.868	0.051	20.828	***		
	A3_4	0.847	0.054	20.151	***		
	A3_3	0.858	0.055	20.52	***		
	A3_2	0.831	0.055	19.657	***		
	A3_1	0.779					
Cultural connotations	A3_7	0.921	0.055	22.588	***	0.8637	0.9694
	A3_8	0.919	0.055	22.521	***		
	C1_1	0.952	0.031	32.514	***		



	C1_2	0.942	0.032	31.656	***		
	C1_3	0.935	0.032	31.045	***		
	C1_4	0.938	0.032	31.268	***		
	C1_5	0.878					
Artistic features	C2_1	0.951	0.029	37.951	***		
	C2_2	0.962	0.027	39.699	***		
	C2_3	0.935	0.029	35.821	***	0.8772	0.9727
	C2_4	0.917	0.03	33.565	***		
	C2_5	0.917					
Design applications	C3_3	0.931	0.027	37.625	***		
	C3_4	0.949	0.024	40.531	***		
	C3_5	0.942	0.025	39.416	***	0.8829	0.9742
	C3_2	0.942	0.025	39.376	***		
	C3_1	0.934					

Chi-square = 1422.289, df = 480, p = 0.000, RMSEA = 0.067 < 0.1.

As shown in Table 8, all the factor loadings are > 0.5, indicating that the questionnaire is of a sound structural validity. Moreover, all the average variance extracted (AVE) values are > 0.5, indicating that the questionnaire is of a sound convergent validity. The combined reliability (CR) values are > 0.7, indicating that the questionnaire is of somewhat credibility.

4.6. SEM for Factors Influencing the Design Application of Lipu Yi People’s Folk Costume Patterns

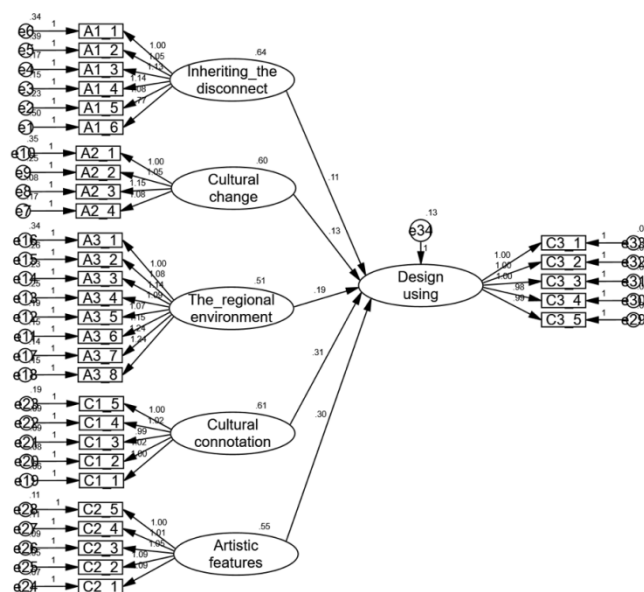


Figure 3. The SEM of factors influencing the design application of Lipu Yi People’s folk costume patterns

Table 9. The SEM coefficients

Independent Variable	Relationship	Dependent Variable	Estimate	Standard Estimate	SE	CR	p
Inheriting cultural fractions	-->		0.114	0.174	0.024	4.715	***
Cultural changes	-->		0.126	0.184	0.025	4.975	***
The regional environment	-->	Design application	0.188	0.255	0.028	6.785	***
Cultural connotations	-->		0.312	0.464	0.026	11.844	***
Artistic features	-->		0.296	0.416	0.027	10.973	***

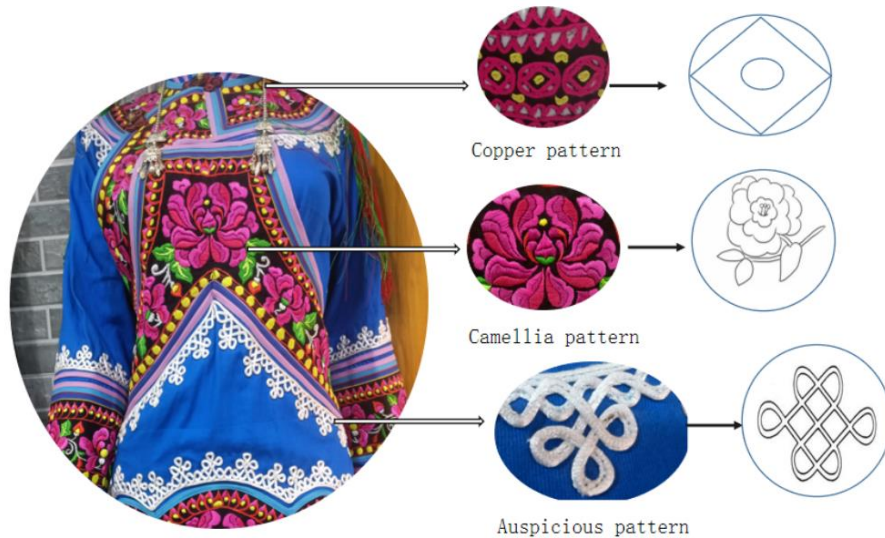
\*\*\* p < 0.001; chi-square = 2246.912, df = 490, p = 0.000, RMSEA = 0.090 < 0.1.



Inheriting cultural fractions, cultural changes, the regional environment, cultural connotations, and artistic features each demonstrate a significant and positive influence over design application (estimate = 0.114, 0.126, 0.188, 0, and 0.296, respectively; all  $p < 0.001$ ).

**5. Conclusion**

The findings of this research demonstrate that the decorative pattern features of Lipu Yi People’s folk costumes primarily focus on the decorative patterns derived from plants, natural phenomena and animals. The patterns derived from natural phenomena represent the main costume patterns, of which auspicious festival patterns are most commonly used (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** The patterns of Lipu Yi women’s clothing

In terms of colors, elderly Lipu Yi People favor black, which connotes nobility and solemnity, whereas younger Lipu Yi People favor white and blue, which connote beauty and auspiciousness, respectively, followed by red and yellow. The statistical analysis results of this research are in line with the current situation of decorative patterns and color applications in Lipu Yi People’s folk costumes (Figure 5.)



**Figure 5.** The colors used in Lipu Yi women’s dresses



Based on the cultural connotations and color analysis of Lipu Yi People’s folk costume patterns, this research concludes that the elderly Lipu Yi People’s folk costumes tend to be darker in color, mostly black, and tend to have fewer decorations. Young Lipu Yi People tend to wear dresses that are mainly blue and white in color and are decorated with animal, plant, flower and geometry patterns. This research indicates that the cultural characteristics of Lipu Yi People’s folk costumes are influenced by such factors as inheriting cultural fractions, cultural changes, the regional environment, religious beliefs, and aesthetic awareness. As a result, Lipu Yi People’s folk costumes have received little attention from the outside world, and the development of Lipu Yi People’s folk costume culture is still at a preliminary stage. Therefore, how to apply Lipu Yi People’s folk costume culture to modern products design as a tourism highlight and how to better integrate it with the development of non-heritage tourism is an issue that deserves attention.

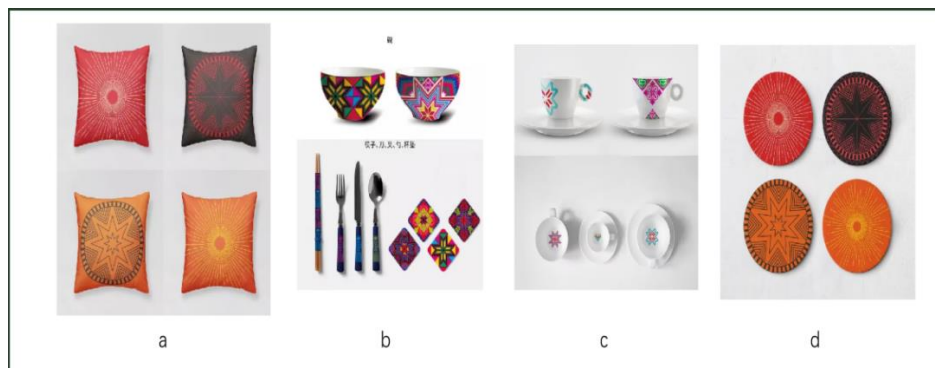
The descriptive statistical analysis concludes that Lipu Yi People’s folk costume patterns are mainly of plant, natural phenomenon and animal patterns, among which the Chinese knot pattern (auspicious knot) is used most often in modern designs. The CFA shows that five factors, namely inheriting cultural fractions, cultural changes, the regional environment, cultural connotations, and artistic characteristics each have a positive influence over the modern design of Lipu Yi People’s folk costume patterns. Therefore, this research combined the regional environment, cultural connotations, artistic characteristics and other influencing factors to sample and reorganize Lipu Yi People’s folk costume patterns based on the influencing factors concluded from previous studies, and thoroughly explored the cultural connotations behind those patterns, so as to apply them to modern architecture, packaging, decoration and other designs in a more practical way. The legend is as follows.



**Figure 6.** The design and application of floral motifs in window decoration



**Figure 7.** The application of animal prints in modern packaging design



**Figure 8.** The design and application of geometry patterns in modern home decoration

According to the results of this research on Lipu Yi People's folk costume patterns in design application in Part 4, inheriting cultural fractions, cultural changes, the regional environment, cultural connotations, artistic features and design applications are all significantly and positively correlated. The reliability analysis (Table 7), validity analysis (Table 8), and SEM (Table 9) all demonstrate that the questionnaire is of a sound reliability and validity. SEM coefficient analysis demonstrates that inheriting cultural fractions, cultural changes, the regional environment, cultural connotations and artistic features each have a significant and positive influence over design application. These results are in line with the empirical evidence as well as the findings of Zhao (2021), Wan (2016), and Wang (2017). Previous studies on folk costumes have primarily analyzed the artistic features, design applications and religious beliefs unilaterally, while only a few studies have examined these influencing factors with empirical researches. Therefore, this research applied the empirical and quantitative research methods to explore the factors influencing Lipu Yi People's folk costume pattern designs and applications. This research discussed the factors that influence the application of Lipu Yi People's folk motifs in modern design. The research results could offer experience to promote Lipu Yi People's folk costume pattern applications in modern design and provide references for the design and application of other folk costume patterns.

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