

THE ROLE OF YI EMBROIDERY IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY.

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Developing tourism has become an effective means of boosting the economy, increasing employment, and expanding the consumer market in ethnic minority regions. It is also a key pillar industry for improving the living standards of people in these regions. During tourism consumption, tourist products serve as a crucial medium and connection for tourists to obtain meaningful souvenirs. With the continuous advancement of China's tourism industry, demand for tourism products with regional characteristics is increasing. Due to the relatively late development of tourism in ethnic minority regions, there is still significant room for development in the tourism economy. Tourism products, in particular, have been relatively underdeveloped. The market for personalized, locally distinctive tourism products is particularly promising, especially in southwestern China's ethnic minority regions, where local tourism products offer significant market potential and development value. Yi embroidery is an ancient and magnificent craft, a representative item of China's national intangible cultural heritage. Its rich colors and harmonious patterns embody the Yi people's yearning for a better life. In the development of tourism projects with Chinese characteristics, fully showcasing the unique Yi embroidery culture can better reflect the diversity of Chinese culture, promote global recognition of Yi culture, and promote the prosperity and development of tourism culture in Yi regions.

Key words: Specialized tourism, Yi embroidery, Yi culture, development

Under the scorching sun, on the thousand-year-old costume stage in Zhiju Village, Yongren, Yunnan, Yi women dressed in colorful hand-embroidered clothes danced to the rhythm of suona and reed pipes, and the flowers, birds, insects and fish on their skirts seemed to come alive. This event, known as the "world's largest mountain T-stage", attracts tens of thousands of tourists every year. The characteristic tourism products of the southwestern ethnic minority areas have broad market space and development value [1]. In Ganluo County, Liangshan Prefecture, Sichuan, Axi Wuzhimo started learning Yi embroidery at the age of 10 and has now become a representative inheritor of Yi embroidery, a national intangible cultural heritage. The Yi needle and thread embroidery cooperative she founded has trained more than 6,000 embroiderers for free and helped 1,700 rural women achieve flexible employment at home. "Now I can earn more than 20,000 yuan a year by embroidery, and my daughter-in-law and daughter are also doing this craft." Embroiderer Aji Wuzhimo said with a smile that they have no intention of going out to work now. They can do Yi embroidery at home and take care of the farmland, the elderly and children at the same time. "It's much better than working outside."

Stitch by stitch, the cultural heritage and artistic characteristics of Yi embroidery

Yi embroidery has a long history and profound cultural heritage. According to research, Yi embroidery can be traced back to before the Three Kingdoms period, and is closely related to primitive paintings, record symbols, and clothing [2]. In 223 AD, Zhuge Liang entered Yunnan during his southern expedition and gave Chengdu Ruijin to the ethnic leader of Yunnan. The wives of the Sou Shuai learned the Han embroidery technique in Shu and returned home to teach it to the women of Kunsou. Yi embroidery uses red, yellow, and black as the three primary colors. The technique is rough and the colors are strong, reflecting the totem worship and folk customs of the Yi people. Compared with China's "Four Famous Embroideries" - Su embroidery, Yue embroidery, Xiang embroidery, and Shu embroidery, Yi embroidery has a more primitive and simple style. The patterns of Yi embroidery are mostly derived from nature and daily life. The patterns mainly include objects, people, plants, animals, etc., including the sun, moon, stars, cockscombs, clouds, waves, ox horns, sheep horns, horse teeth, rainbows, etc. These patterns are not only beautiful, but also symbolic carriers of Yi culture, preserving the cultural characteristics of the Yi people in a relatively complete manner [3].

Yi embroidery plays multiple roles in the tourism industry. First, it is a special tourism product. In the ancient Yi town of Chuxiong, Yunnan, the dazzling array of Yi embroidery products attracts a large number of tourists, and embroidery shops are often crowded. According to the survey, about 80% of tourists said they "very like" or "like" Yi embroidery-related tourism products, and about 50% said they "will definitely" buy Yi embroidery tourism products. The ethnic characteristics of Yi embroidery are the most important factor in attracting tourists. 90% of tourists believe that Yi embroidery "has distinct ethnic characteristics." Yi embroidery products are rich in variety, including clothing, backpacks, children's hats, murals, straps, shoulder bags, wallets, sachets, etc. Tourists are most fond of Yi embroidery products of daily necessities, and 70% of tourists prefer to buy such practical products. The prices of Yi embroidery products range from less than 100 yuan to more than 1,000 yuan, meeting the needs of tourists at different consumption levels. The survey shows that 40% of tourists are willing to spend less than 100 yuan, 20% are willing to spend 100 to 500 yuan, and nearly 10% are willing to spend 500 to 1,000 yuan.

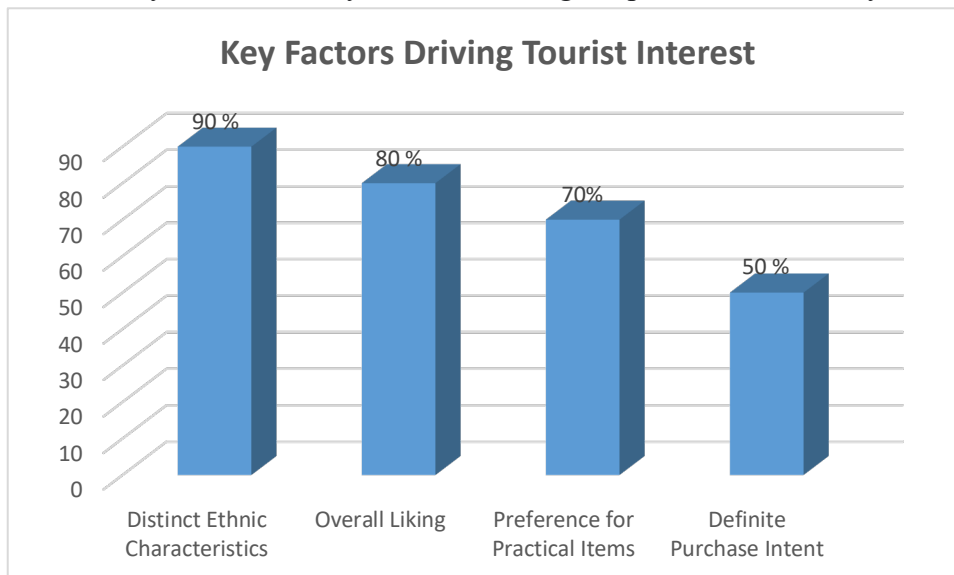
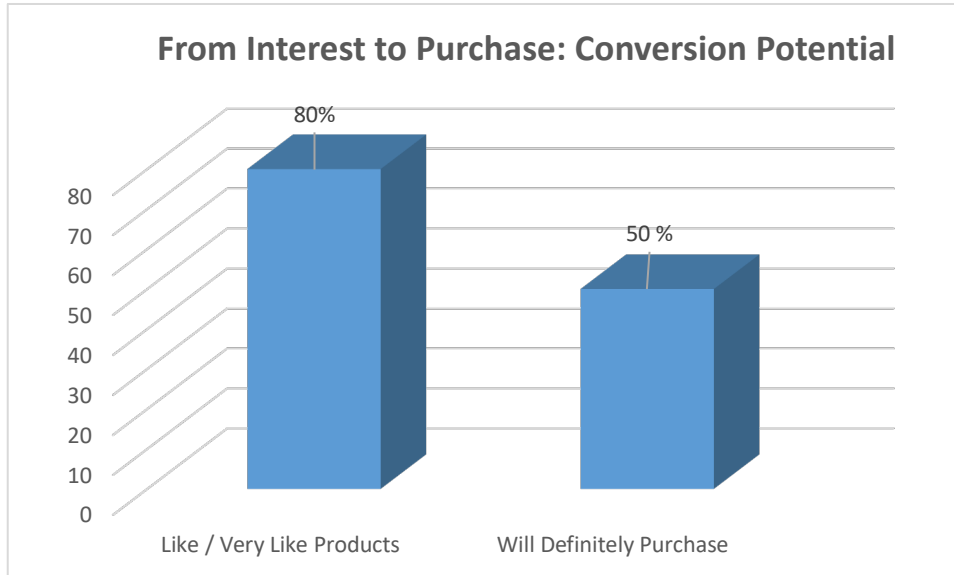


Figure 1

However, comparing the high appreciation rate (80% like the products) with the lower purchase intention (50% will definitely buy) reveals a significant conversion gap. This gap between interest and action represents both a challenge and an opportunity for tourism marketing.

**Figure 2**

Cultural Experience, Interactive Experience of Yi Embroidery

in Tourism Activities Yi embroidery is not only a tourist commodity, but also an important cultural experience resource. In the ancient Yi town of Chuxiong, Yunnan, the Yi embroidery production process itself has become a beautiful tourist attraction. Tourists can observe the Yi embroidery production process and even experience the embroidery skills themselves. This participatory tourism experience enhances tourists' sense of immersion and achievement [4]. The Costume Competition Festival is the ultimate expression of the Yi embroidery cultural experience. The Costume Competition Festival in Zhiju Village, Yongren County, Yunnan Province has a history of over 1,300 years and is known as the "source of costume competition" and the "world's largest mountain costume competition runway." Every year on the 15th day of the first lunar month, Yi people from all over the country dress up in their handmade costumes and spontaneously flock to the costume competition stage in Zhiju Village. From nearly 100-year-old mothers to children who have just learned to walk, everyone will show off their style on this day. This original cultural experience activity allows tourists to not only appreciate the exquisite Yi embroidery works, but also gain a deep understanding of the cultural connotations and national spirit behind Yi embroidery[5]. The Costume Competition Festival covers almost all categories of Yi art, including songs, dances, music, and embroidery. A large number of primitive agricultural and sacrificial rituals, national beliefs, and cultural creations are preserved in the event.

The application of Yi embroidery in the tourism industry has brought significant economic benefits, becoming a key tool for poverty alleviation and prosperity in ethnic minority areas. By the end of 2020, Liangshan had established a cultural industry park and 10 industrial bases, with the annual output value of the Yi embroidery industry reaching 139 million yuan, helping

approximately 200,000 embroiderers in Liangshan find flexible, home-based employment. Yi embroidery provides a platform for employment and broadens income sources for rural women. Zhou Caifeng from Shizhong Township, Yao'an County, established a Yi embroidery company, engaging over 1,000 women in the township in embroidery processing and development, creating a seamless marketing network encompassing production, supply, and sales. The 40 embroiderers who join the company earn over 600,000 yuan annually, an average increase of 15,000 yuan per person. The Yi embroidery industry in Yongren County, Chuxiong Prefecture, has also injected new vitality into poverty alleviation and prosperity in remote mountainous areas. Yi embroidery not only increases farmers' income but also optimizes the industrial structure of ethnic minority areas. As the tertiary industry continues to rise in future economic development, the commercialization of Yi embroidery tourism will help increase its share in the overall industrial structure and promote coordinated economic development.

Inheritance Challenges: Problems and Dilemmas in the Development of Yi Embroidery Tourism

Yi embroidery faces many challenges in tourism development. The aging of inheritors is a prominent problem. In the Liangshan Yi area, the average age of inheritors of intangible cultural heritage such as Torch Festival, silverware, lacquerware, Bimo painting, Yi calligraphy, and Yi embroidery is over 60 years old, and the aging of inheritors is accelerating. Young people are not very willing to learn Yi embroidery due to life pressure and changes in cultural level. Mastering intangible cultural heritage skills requires a lot of time and long-term concentration, and there are very few young people who can persist in learning. Some intangible cultural heritage skills are passed down from generation to generation and are the means of livelihood for inheritors. They are often not taught to others at will, resulting in a limited scope of inheritance. The lack of product value evaluation is a real dilemma in the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. If we insist on the unity of internal and external values of intangible cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage is in danger of becoming a cultural "fossil"; if we compromise with the market and only focus on exploring economic value, the meaning of protecting intangible cultural heritage will be lost. At present, the cultural creation of intangible cultural heritage has become a mainstream trend. The external value of products such as practicality and aesthetics has become an important evaluation criterion, while the internal value of intangible cultural heritage products such as history and education has been downplayed [6].

In the face of challenges, Yi embroidery needs to innovate its development path to better integrate into the tourism industry. Cultivating market-oriented inheritance entities is a key measure. We should increase investment in the construction of intangible cultural heritage transmission bases, improve related supporting facilities, and provide a place for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. We should increase policy support, such as preferential taxation, and provide financial support for the production and operation of intangible cultural heritage workshops. We should encourage small and medium-sized intangible cultural heritage product production workshops to develop in groups, and change the current situation of small, numerous and scattered market-oriented inheritance entities in Liangshan Yi area. It is also crucial to improve the evaluation standards for intangible cultural heritage achievements. The production of intangible cultural

heritage products should take into account both internal and external values and grasp the scale of innovation. We should create an inheritance atmosphere that gives equal importance to the intrinsic and external values of intangible cultural heritage through media publicity and events. The establishment of awards and honor assessments should also consider its internal and external values[7]. We should support intangible cultural heritage inheritors to open training courses, encourage intangible cultural heritage product manufacturers to participate in training, help manufacturers clarify the core of intangible cultural heritage culture, and better grasp the scale of intangible cultural heritage innovation. Integration with modern fashion is an important direction for the development of Yi embroidery. In 2020, the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology and the Liangshan Women's Federation reached a strategic cooperation agreement to promote the market transformation of Yi embroidery products through industry guidance, design support, and access to platform resources. In September of the same year, over 80 styles of clothing, accessories, bags, jewelry, and other products featuring Yi embroidery were showcased at Beijing Fashion Week, showcasing a new trend. Every year on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, tens of thousands of people flock to the ancient village of Zhizhu, Yongren, Chuxiong, for the Costume Competition. The hillside slopes stretch upward and to the sides of the catwalk, forming a natural grandstand. Dozens of towering, centuries-old trees interspersed the area, providing shade from the sun for the spectators. Team after team of Yi women took the stage, showcasing their beautiful costumes and graceful dances to the accompaniment of suona and reed pipes. In the distance, several blond-haired, blue-eyed foreign tourists captured these captivating moments with their cameras. They paused to admire not only the scenery but also the cultural atmosphere. The ancient craft of Yi embroidery is telling the story of Yi culture to the world in a brand-new manner, and is also embroidering a road to wealth for the Yi people in the world.

Conclusion

Rural tourism is booming these days, and a rural cultural tourism industry chain based on distinctive ethnic cultures is gradually taking shape. Yi embroidery, a representative example of this cultural brand, is leading villagers on the path to revitalization and development. Yi embroidery plays a groundbreaking role in modern Chinese tourism.

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