

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

DIGITAL-ERA LUXURY BRANDING AND CULTURAL HERITAGE INTEGRATION: AN ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF MIDDLE-AGED CONSUMERS' PREFERENCES IN HIGH-END CHEONGSAM MARKETS

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—Abstract—

This study explores how digital-era branding strategies and cultural heritage integration influence middle-aged female consumers' preferences in the high-end cheongsam market. Positioned within the domains of e-business and contemporary brand governance, the research adopts a systematic literature review approach guided by the PRISMA framework to synthesise evidence from leading academic sources. The analysis focuses on how cognitive evaluation, cultural alignment, and digitally mediated brand narratives shape consumer decision-making and engagement. Findings indicate that consumer preference is strongly determined by the alignment between traditional cultural symbolism and modern design innovation, particularly when communicated through strategic branding and digital platforms. Cognitive self-identity, perceived

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authenticity, and emotional value emerge as critical drivers of brand attachment and loyalty. Additionally, the integration of innovation in product design is found to enhance brand competitiveness and facilitate stronger consumer-brand interaction within digitally influenced luxury markets. The study contributes to the eBusiness literature by reframing traditional luxury fashion consumption within the context of digital branding and governance strategies. It highlights the growing importance of culturally responsive innovation and targeted market segmentation, particularly for underexplored consumer groups such as middle-aged women. Practical implications are offered for luxury fashion enterprises seeking to optimise digital engagement, strengthen brand positioning, and develop culturally grounded yet innovation-driven strategies in globalised markets.

Keywords: Digital Branding, Luxury E-Business, Cultural Heritage Integration, Consumer Cognition, Design Innovation.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The luxury fashion industry is progressively redefining its strategic positioning by embedding cultural narratives within contemporary design frameworks, aiming to expand its appeal to emerging consumer profiles. Among traditional garments reimaged for modern luxury markets, the cheongsam has re-emerged as a culturally symbolic and stylistically versatile artefact, particularly resonating with the increasing influence of middle-aged women as discerning and economically empowered consumers (Ng, 2018). This demographic expects more than aesthetic appeal; they seek products that articulate cultural authenticity, emotional depth, and alignment with their evolving lifestyle preferences and physical embodiment (Hou & Sirinkraporn, 2024).

To address these nuanced expectations, luxury brands have substantially reengineered the cheongsam by fusing classical Chinese design motifs with advanced Western tailoring practices, refined silhouettes, and premium materials, thus repositioning it as a global luxury item (Feng, 2019). As noted by Mengchao et al. (2021), such innovation-centric approaches enable brands to preserve cultural symbolism while establishing differentiation in an oversaturated fashion landscape. Innovation, in this context, extends beyond aesthetics—it constitutes a deliberate brand strategy for renewing relevance, sustaining competitive advantage, and aligning with the identity narratives of modern consumers. Through the introduction of design elements that accommodate personalisation and convey exclusivity, traditional garments like the cheongsam are recontextualised to serve contemporary consumer needs without compromising their historical essence. This dual function of innovation—as a signifier of both continuity and modernity—enables the construction of hybrid brand identities that reinforce market distinction (Mengchao et al., 2021).

Further insight from consumer behaviour studies reveals that psychological dimensions such as a desire for uniqueness, fashion leadership, and the construction of self-concept are instrumental in shaping luxury consumption patterns (Navia et al., 2021). For middle-aged female consumers, traditional garments become expressive tools for navigating personal identity through a cultural lens. Their purchasing behaviour reflects a strategic alignment with values of exclusivity, superior craftsmanship, and symbolic authenticity—characteristics that resonate with their aspirational self-image (Kozar & Huang, 2019). Consequently, luxury brands must craft offerings that not only harmonise innovation with tradition but also secure enduring consumer allegiance and market resilience.

Problem Statement

Contemporary shifts in luxury fashion branding have increasingly prioritised younger demographics, frequently overlooking the nuanced and evolving sartorial preferences of middle-aged consumers. This demographic remains largely underserved, despite its growing economic influence and heightened sensitivity to cultural representation in fashion (Ye & Kim, 2024). The absence of strategic engagement with this segment reflects a critical oversight, particularly as luxury brands risk forfeiting substantial market potential by failing to understand how the interplay between tradition and modernity informs purchasing behaviour. In response to this gap, the present study investigates the cognitive frameworks through which middle-aged women interpret and respond to innovative cheongsam designs. It probes how this consumer group perceives design novelty in relation to their sense of identity, cultural affiliation, and aesthetic standards. By unpacking these evaluative processes, the research elucidates how traditional symbolism and contemporary fashion elements are integrated within the consumer psyche, offering a refined understanding of the cognitive negotiation between heritage and innovation in the context of luxury apparel.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate how middle-aged women cognitively interpret innovative elements in luxury cheongsam design.
2. To examine the key determinants shaping middle-aged female consumers' preferences for high-end cheongsam designs that integrate traditional cultural values with contemporary fashion features.
3. To analyse the role of cheongsam design innovation in influencing brand positioning and fostering consumer interaction within the middle-aged female market segment.

Significance of the Study

The outcomes of this research will provide critical insights into the attitudes and preferences of middle-aged female consumers towards luxury cheongsam designs that synthesise traditional heritage with modern innovation. By examining cognitive

perceptions and brand engagement dynamics, the study offers valuable implications for luxury fashion brands seeking to more effectively engage this high-potential market segment. A nuanced understanding of the emotional, cultural, and behavioural factors influencing consumer preferences will inform strategic decisions in brand positioning and product innovation. Moreover, the research addresses a notable void within existing business and marketing literature concerning tradition-informed luxury consumption, contributing to the formulation of culturally responsive and globally relevant marketing strategies for luxury fashion enterprises.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Middle-Aged Female Consumers in Luxury Fashion

Within the luxury fashion sector, middle-aged female consumers represent an increasingly influential and valuable market segment, particularly in light of shifting trends within the broader industry. While luxury branding has historically targeted younger audiences, there is growing recognition of the purchasing power and discernment exhibited by older women. This demographic not only possesses substantial financial capacity but also demonstrates a deep appreciation for quality craftsmanship, cultural heritage, and symbolic value embedded within luxury goods (Hou & Sirinkraporn, 2024). Empirical studies suggest that these consumers actively seek both tangible and intangible returns from their purchases, including personal affirmation, social recognition, and expressions of self-identity through luxury fashion (Navia et al., 2021). Findings further indicate that middle-aged women are motivated by aspirations for status, cultural affirmation, and modern sophistication in their consumption choices (Yoon, 2017). These psychological drivers reflect a broader set of emotional and symbolic needs, wherein purchasing decisions serve as mechanisms for reinforcing self-concept, establishing emotional security, articulating creativity, and maintaining connections to cultural heritage (Kaufmann et al., 2016).

Perceptions Shaping Traditional and Innovative Fashion Design

Among middle-aged female consumers, the post-purchase evaluation of luxury cheongsam designs is primarily situated within the cognitive domain. Prior studies indicate that luxury consumption is positively associated with an individual's self-concept and the degree of alignment between the consumer's ideal self and the symbolic attributes communicated by the brand (Yoon, 2017). In the context of luxury fashion, maintaining relevance necessitates the reinterpretation of traditional garments, such as the cheongsam, through design innovation that accommodates contemporary style expectations (Hou & Sirinkraporn, 2024). The evolution of the cheongsam, particularly in terms of fabric selection, tailoring techniques, and stylistic refinement, is perceived as a necessary progression to appeal to modern, fashion-aware consumers. Nonetheless, the preservation of perceived authenticity remains essential. Excessive deviation from traditional aesthetics may result in a decline in consumer attachment and brand loyalty

(Farrag, 2017). Drawing upon self-bracketed identity theory, which asserts that middle-aged consumers often exhibit a deeper identification with cultural norms compared to younger cohorts, there is heightened sensitivity within this demographic regarding how traditional values are adapted or transformed within luxury design contexts (Chen, 2023).

Understanding Consumer Preferences in High-End Cheongsam Market

A variety of interrelated factors shape the decision-making process of middle-aged female consumers when selecting luxury cheongsam garments. Foremost among these is the aesthetic appeal, which remains a foundational expectation. These garments are required to reflect sophistication, elegance, and a refined sense of innovation in design to satisfy luxury standards (Ng, 2018). Cultural authenticity also plays a decisive role in purchase behaviour, as consumers within this demographic often seek garments that merge the intricacies of traditional Chinese craftsmanship with the practical demands of contemporary lifestyles (Hou & Sirinkraporn, 2024). Grounded in social identity theory, this preference is further interpreted as an attempt to reinforce personal identity through a synthesis of modern values and longstanding cultural traditions (Navia et al., 2021). Compared to younger cohorts, middle-aged women demonstrate a stronger inclination towards evaluating both functional elements—such as fit and comfort—and the assurance of product quality in their fashion selections (Yoon, 2017).

Brand Strategy: Integrating Tradition and Innovation

The tension between traditional aesthetics and modern design principles presents both strategic opportunities and image-related challenges for luxury fashion brands. Effective market differentiation is often achieved through the integration of culturally embedded design elements with contemporary luxury expressions, enabling brands to occupy distinctive positioning within competitive landscapes (Ajitha & Sivakumar, 2019). When applied to garments such as the cheongsam, luxury brand identity is articulated through a blend of exclusivity and cultural refinement that draws upon the garment's symbolic heritage. Cultural branding strategies increasingly involve the appropriation of iconic cultural references, repositioned within the framework of modern luxury (Peng, 2023). A prominent example lies in the development of high-end cheongsam collections that incorporate historical Chinese motifs while employing Western tailoring methods and premium materials to meet international luxury standards (Chen, 2023). Furthermore, the use of personalisation and limited-edition offerings has emerged as a key strategy to engage middle-aged consumers, who often possess stable financial resources and seek products that convey exclusivity and class relevance (Kaufmann et al., 2016). Customisable features, including embroidery patterns, fabric selection, and size alterations, have proven effective in enhancing consumer appeal and fostering brand commitment within this demographic (Liu, 2023).

Challenges in Innovating Cheongsam for Luxury Consumers

The process of innovating traditional garments such as the cheongsam necessitates a strategic balance between preserving cultural authenticity and fulfilling the sophisticated expectations of luxury consumers. As highlighted by [Hou and Sirinkraporn \(2024\)](#), although modern aesthetics are increasingly embraced, traditional motifs and symbolic cultural elements continue to hold significant value for consumers. Excessive Westernisation of the cheongsam may compromise its cultural integrity, thereby diminishing its appeal to consumers who associate luxury with heritage and authenticity ([Singh, 2024](#)). Consequently, luxury brands aiming to engage middle-aged female consumers must retain essential stylistic features of the cheongsam while selectively modifying aspects such as tailoring, fabric quality, and embellishment to align with contemporary preferences. Moreover, research by [Hung et al. \(2021\)](#) indicates that Chinese consumers residing abroad often exhibit a preference for luxury goods that convey cultural pride and emotional depth. This further underscores the imperative for design innovation to be grounded in cultural sensitivity, ensuring that product development honours both aesthetic refinement and heritage value.

Personalization and Exclusivity as Luxury Drivers

Contemporary luxury consumers increasingly seek personalised experiences that reflect individual identity and emotional meaning. According to [Carey et al. \(2016\)](#), mature female consumers place significant value on products that affirm their self-concept and foster emotional connection. Within the context of cheongsam design innovation, the provision of bespoke elements—such as tailored embroidery or selective fabric options—enhances consumer loyalty by offering a sense of exclusivity coupled with personal significance ([Rahman, 2023](#)). Additionally, [Bishnoi and Singh \(2022\)](#) found that emotional engagement often outweighs rational evaluation in consumer decision-making related to luxury fashion products. Personalisation plays a central role in stimulating these emotional responses, thereby enabling luxury brands to satisfy both practical needs and deeper psychological aspirations ([Taylor, 2016](#)).

Emotional Branding and Storytelling with Cheongsam Products

Storytelling remains a pivotal component of luxury brand management, particularly in relation to gendered consumer engagement. As emphasised by [Carey et al. \(2016\)](#), when emotional branding strategies are integrated with narratives that highlight heritage, artisanal craftsmanship, and cultural significance, they significantly enhance consumers' emotional connection and perceptions of brand authenticity. In parallel, [Singh \(2024\)](#) asserts that emotion-driven social media strategies exert a positive influence on consumer loyalty and brand perception. In the context of luxury cheongsam design, it is especially important to resonate with the cultural sensibilities of middle-aged female consumers. This necessitates the deliberate incorporation of historical narratives and traditional production techniques that foreground the garment's

cultural origins. Emphasising the legacy and symbolic craftsmanship of the cheongsam allows brands to strengthen emotional resonance and align more closely with the values of this demographic (Bishnoi & Singh, 2022).

Global Expansion Strategies: Globalization of Cheongsam

To successfully penetrate international markets, luxury fashion brands must pursue a strategic approach to globalisation that supports the expansion of cheongsam innovation. As highlighted by Hung et al. (2021), global luxury consumers exhibit a preference for products that fuse culturally distinctive characteristics with universally recognised luxury markers such as exceptional craftsmanship, exclusivity, and superior quality. For the cheongsam to achieve global resonance, it is essential to retain its cultural integrity while adapting design elements to accommodate diverse body shapes, climatic conditions, and regional aesthetic preferences. Building upon this perspective, Bilsel (2017) advocates for the concept of sustainable branding, wherein local cultural traditions are harmonised with contemporary values of environmental and social responsibility. This synthesis enhances brand appeal among ethically driven consumers and strengthens global positioning by aligning cultural heritage with sustainability-oriented expectations.

Middle-Aged Female Consumers: An Underserved Luxury Segment

Middle-aged women are emerging as a highly influential demographic within the luxury fashion sector. As noted by Carey et al. (2016), this consumer group demonstrates lower price sensitivity, heightened brand loyalty, and seeks both emotional and social value through their purchasing decisions. Similarly, Rahman (2023) identified that immigrant women in London exhibit strong allegiance to online luxury fashion brands, largely due to perceived product quality and personal resonance. Luxury fashion brands can capitalise on this market by tailoring their cheongsam offerings to align with the preferences of middle-aged women, particularly their emphasis on authenticity, comfort, and exclusivity. These consumers prioritise garments that reinforce self-image and express cultural pride, viewing such attire as a medium through which personal identity and heritage are simultaneously affirmed (Hou & Sirinkraporn, 2024).

Consumer Loyalty and Brand Advocacy in Luxury Traditional Fashion

Sustaining long-term success in the luxury traditional fashion sector necessitates the cultivation of strong consumer loyalty. Middle-aged women, in particular, exhibit a heightened emotional resonance with luxury brands that emphasise heritage and cultural authenticity, which significantly increases their likelihood to engage in brand advocacy behaviours compared to other consumer segments (Rachbini et al., 2023). The integration of cultural roots into cheongsam innovation not only deepens emotional bonds but also enhances brand loyalty and consumer lifetime value. Evidence from Ladhari et al. (2019) suggests that emotional value exerts a more substantial influence on brand loyalty in the luxury segment than purely functional aspects such as product

quality. Consequently, positioning the cheongsam as a culturally rich and symbolically significant garment offers luxury brands a strategic advantage in fostering committed consumer communities.

Additionally, perceptions of authenticity play a pivotal role in shaping brand trust. Halwani (2021) emphasised that cues such as narratives around traditional craftsmanship, artisanal expertise, and cultural symbolism meaningfully affect loyalty and trust among luxury consumers. For middle-aged women, authenticity aligns with their evolving priorities related to legacy preservation, cultural identity, and self-affirmation (Mehra & Jain, 2021). By nurturing emotional attachment, luxury brands can achieve not only increased revenue per consumer but also benefit from spontaneous brand advocacy. Such organic promotion is particularly influential among middle-aged women, who frequently function as cultural tastemakers and opinion leaders within their social and familial networks, particularly in matters related to fashion and heritage (Ladhari et al., 2019).

Strategic Design Innovation in Traditional Luxury Branding

In the realm of luxury fashion, effective design innovation necessitates a strategic alignment with both cultural identity and consumer expectations to reinforce brand equity. Wei (2017) illustrated that the evolution of cheongsam styles reflects broader historical developments as well as contemporary consumer demands, indicating that culturally informed design remains essential to brand strategy. Zhang (2020) argued that authenticity constitutes a critical competitive asset, as the retention of traditional cultural elements facilitates brand distinction in saturated luxury markets. According to Cherny-Scanlon (2016), the incorporation of sustainability within heritage craftsmanship enables brands to deliver dual value—satisfying the ethical concerns and aesthetic standards of discerning consumers. Kim (2021) critiqued the applicability of Western-dominant luxury evaluation frameworks such as the Brand Luxury Index (BLI), contending that such models inadequately capture culturally nuanced consumer perceptions, thereby necessitating context-specific positioning approaches. Collectively, these findings suggest that culturally sensitive design innovation, when rooted in local heritage and tailored to evolving consumer values, significantly enhances brand identity and fosters loyalty within the traditional luxury fashion sector.

Theoretical Framework

This research is anchored in the interrelated domains of luxury fashion innovation, cultural heritage, and consumer cognitive behaviour, with a focus on its commercial implications. Drawing on Self-Concept Theory Sirgy (1982), it is posited that consumers are inclined to select products that correspond with their perceived or aspirational self-identity. In the luxury fashion context, middle-aged women tend to assess garments such as the cheongsam not solely for their aesthetic or traditional attributes, but for the extent to which these designs resonate with their evolving sense

of self. This theoretical perspective accounts for the preference within this demographic for garments that integrate classical cultural elements with modern stylistic expressions, reflecting both continuity and transformation in lifestyle aspirations. Consequently, cheongsam designs that foster an emotional resonance while aligning with self-perception are more likely to elicit heightened brand loyalty and purchase intent.

Similarly, Cultural Branding Theory [Holt \(2004\)](#) provides a framework for understanding how brands can cultivate symbolic meaning and identity by embedding culturally resonant narratives within their products. Within the luxury cheongsam sector, authenticity rooted in Chinese cultural values significantly shapes consumer choices. Middle-aged female consumers demonstrate a strong preference for garments that maintain traditional symbolic significance while being reinterpreted through a premium, contemporary lens. From this perspective, cultural branding serves not only as a differentiation strategy in a competitive luxury market but also as a mechanism for cultivating sustained emotional engagement with consumers who value cultural continuity and prestige.

Fundamentally, Self-Concept Theory [Sirgy \(1982\)](#) offers a conceptual basis for examining how middle-aged female consumers associate luxury cheongsam designs with their self-identity, favouring garments that encapsulate their personal values and shifting self-perceptions. Complementing this, Cultural Branding Theory [Holt \(2004\)](#) elucidates the manner in which brands construct meaning by embedding culturally significant narratives into their offerings, a particularly pertinent approach in the realm of traditional fashion such as the cheongsam.

These theoretical perspectives collectively provide insight into how premium cheongsam garments, situated at the convergence of cultural heritage and contemporary design, are interpreted and appraised by this consumer segment. The integration of Self-Concept Theory and Cultural Branding Theory within the study's framework underscores the importance of cultural authenticity, emotional resonance, and design innovation in shaping consumer attitudes and influencing purchasing intentions. By exploring how consumers cognitively respond to modern reinterpretations of heritage garments, the research seeks to identify the critical elements that luxury fashion brands must consider in order to harmonise their contemporary offerings with the evolving expectations of culturally attuned consumers in the high-end fashion sector.

Literature Gap

While existing literature has examined consumer behaviour within the luxury fashion domain and highlighted the cultural relevance of traditional garments, there remains a discernible gap concerning how middle-aged female consumers cognitively interpret and emotionally engage with innovative, high-end cheongsam designs. Much of the current scholarship tends to prioritise younger demographics, broader perceptions of

luxury branding, or the conservation of traditional attire, thereby overlooking the intersection of heritage and innovation within the luxury cheongsam segment. Additionally, insufficient emphasis has been placed on how design modernisation affects the purchasing behaviour of middle-aged women, particularly those who prioritise both cultural integrity and contemporary style. This study seeks to bridge these research gaps by investigating the cognitive evaluations, emotional motivations, and brand positioning strategies that shape consumer responses to design innovation in the luxury cheongsam market.

METHODOLOGY

Research Method

This study utilised a qualitative research design by applying the SLR method. This approach was appropriate as it facilitated an in-depth exploration of existing literature, enabling a nuanced understanding of the interplay between luxury and tradition from the perspective of middle-aged female consumers. Rather than collecting primary empirical data, the study systematically examined and synthesised prior research to uncover critical insights relevant to the research focus.

Research Design

The study employed an SLR approach, which facilitates a structured, transparent, and replicable process for collecting and analysing data. This design was selected due to its capacity to support a rigorous and impartial evaluation of existing academic literature. To ensure clarity and objectivity in the selection of sources, the PRISMA framework was applied, enabling a systematic process for identifying, screening, and including studies pertinent to the research focus.

Data Collection

Search Strategies

To obtain pertinent peer-reviewed literature, an extensive search was carried out across four principal academic databases.

- Scopus
- Web of Science
- ResearchGate
- Google Scholar

1. **Keyword Research:** The identification of pertinent studies aligned with the research objectives was primarily guided by keyword-based search strategies. To ensure comprehensive coverage of the relevant literature, the study employed key terms such as ‘Luxury Fashion’, ‘Cultural Heritage’, ‘Cheongsam Design Innovation’,

and ‘Middle-Aged Female Consumers’. This targeted approach facilitated the retrieval of literature addressing the intersection of luxury fashion and traditional values among middle-aged female consumers. Additionally, iterative refinement of keywords played a crucial role in excluding irrelevant studies, thereby enhancing the relevance and precision of the systematic review.

2. Database Research: To uphold academic rigour, the selected studies were sourced from Scopus, Web of Science, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar, given their reputability and inclusion of high-impact, peer-reviewed research related to cheongsam and luxury fashion. Accessing a diverse range of databases mitigates potential selection bias and ensures a comprehensive representation of scholarly perspectives.
3. BOOLEAN Operators: Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) were employed to enhance search precision and refine the scope of the literature. For instance, the query “Emotional branding” AND “Consumer identity” AND “Brand loyalty in luxury market” was used to identify studies focusing on the adaptation of traditional fashion. Similarly, combinations such as “Cheongsam modernization” OR “Cultural authenticity” helped capture research relevant to practical applications. Additional filters, including “Heritage fashion branding” and NOT “Luxury consumption behaviour,” were applied to exclude technically oriented studies while retaining those aligned with the thematic focus.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The criteria for inclusion and exclusion of articles utilised in this study are presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Type	Peer-reviewed articles and empirical studies, given their credibility and presence in high-impact indexed journals.	Non-peer-reviewed sources, opinion pieces, and non-empirical studies to minimise bias and misinformation.
Focus	Studies examining university students’ adoption and perceptions of cognitive skills.	Studies that are unrelated to the core research focus.
Language	Articles published in English, as the majority of leading journals in the field publish in this language.	Articles published in languages other than English.
Date Published	Publications from 2016 to 2025, to reflect the latest developments and trends in luxury fashion and innovation.	Studies published before 2016, as they may contain outdated data.

PRISMA Framework

To ensure both transparency and replicability, the study employed the four-stage PRISMA process, as depicted in [Figure 1](#). This process consists of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion of studies that meet the defined criteria.

Identification

- A total of 45 studies concerning the Cheongsam within academic and professional discourse were initially retrieved through database searches.

Screening

- The relevance of the remaining 28 studies was evaluated based on their publication date (prior to 2016), as well as their titles and abstracts in relation to the research objectives.
- Studies that focused solely on the intersection of luxury and tradition, without addressing middle-aged female consumers' cognition and preferences for high-end cheongsam design, were excluded.
- Following this screening process, 12 studies were shortlisted for inclusion.

Final Selection

The 12 most relevant studies were subjected to thematic analysis and categorised according to the key themes and core findings.

- AI adoption trends
- Impact on academic writing and communication
- Ethical concerns and pedagogical challenges

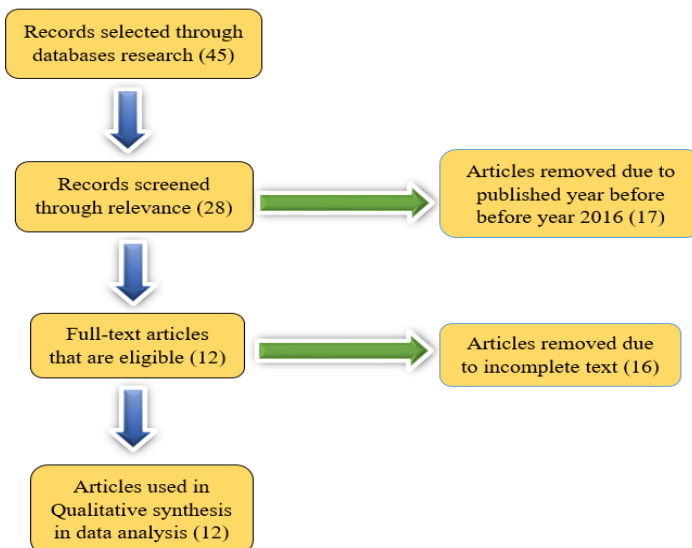


Figure 1: PRISMA Framework.

The PRISMA framework ensures a systematic, transparent, and unbiased selection of studies by following a structured process that incorporates rigorous screening procedures aimed at minimising bias while maintaining the quality and relevance of the research. Additionally, PRISMA strengthens the transparency and replicability of the review process, allowing future researchers to validate the findings, as illustrated in [Figure 1](#).

Data Analysis Method

The study employs thematic analysis as a qualitative method to examine and interpret the selected literature. This approach facilitates the identification of recurring patterns, themes, and concepts that align with the research objectives. [Table 2](#) outlines the systematic steps undertaken during the thematic analysis process.

Table 2: Thematic Analysis Steps.

Steps	Description
Familiarisation	Involves reading and re-reading all the collected data to gain a thorough understanding.
Initial Codes	Generating initial codes by identifying and highlighting key points, concepts, and ideas relevant to the research objectives.
Initial Themes	Organising the generated codes into broader thematic categories.
Reviewing Themes	Evaluating the themes to ensure they remain aligned with the original research focus and objectives.
Defining and Naming Themes	Based on the focus of the collected data, themes are defined and named in accordance with the contextual content of the selected articles.
Producing the Report	Employing the identified themes to guide data analysis and inform the discussion section.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were rigorously upheld throughout the SLR. The study relied exclusively on publicly accessible, peer-reviewed literature, ensuring all sources were properly cited to maintain academic integrity and prevent plagiarism. To minimise researcher bias, a uniform set of inclusion and exclusion criteria was consistently applied across all stages of the review. The PRISMA framework was employed to ensure a transparent and replicable methodology. Additionally, any studies addressing culturally or socially sensitive themes were interpreted and presented with respect, preserving the original authors' intent and adhering to the highest ethical norms throughout the research process.

Data Analysis

Three themes derived from the Systematic Literature Review are presented in [Table 3](#). These themes highlight the influence of cognitive perceptions and design innovation on consumer behaviour and brand strategy in the context of luxury cheongsam.

Table 3: Thematic Analysis.

Themes	Description
Cognitive Perceptions of Luxury Cheongsam Design Innovations	This theme explores the cognitive processes through which middle-aged female consumers interpret and evaluate innovative elements incorporated into luxury cheongsam designs.
Factors Influencing Preferences for High-End Cheongsam Designs	This theme investigates the interplay of cultural symbolism, aesthetic appeal, and emotional resonance in shaping consumer preferences for cheongsam designs that integrate traditional heritage with contemporary fashion sensibilities.
Impact of Design Innovation on Brand Positioning and Consumer Engagement	This theme analyses the influence of design innovation in cheongsam on brand positioning strategies, focusing on its role in fostering consumer engagement and loyalty among middle-aged female consumers.

Theme 1: Cognitive Perceptions of Luxury Cheongsam Design Innovations

The reviewed literature underscores that the motivational cognition of middle-aged female consumers is shaped by factors such as age, brand novelty, and responsiveness to fashion trends. These elements significantly contribute to their inclination towards luxury fashion. Within this context, rational evaluation and cultural resonance emerge as influential drivers in the acceptance of stylistic change and the appreciation of distinctive high-end garments like the cheongsam. The studies presented in Table 4 collectively demonstrate that cognitive self-perception, awareness of fashion trends, and rational assessment play critical roles in shaping consumer engagement with luxury fashion. The findings reveal that cognitive age and self-identity are central to purchase motivations, particularly for culturally embedded garments such as the cheongsam. When consumer perceptions are congruent with both innovation and cultural authenticity, stronger brand attachment and loyalty are fostered. Design innovation proves most effective when it resonates with consumers' cognitive frameworks and simultaneously preserves the cultural significance inherent in traditional fashion.

Table 4: SLR for the Cognitive Perceptions of Luxury Cheongsam Design Innovations.

Study	Objectives	Methodology	Data Analysis and Results	Conclusion
Amatulli et al. (2015)	To examine how cognitive age affects motivations for purchasing luxury goods.	Quantitative survey using consumer questionnaires.	Regression analysis indicated that cognitive age is a significant predictor of luxury purchasing motivations.	Cognitive age serves as a stronger determinant than chronological age in explaining motivations for luxury consumption.
Chen et al. (2011)	To investigate consumer perceptions and	Quantitative study based on consumer	Statistical results confirmed that consumer perceptions	Positive perceptions of luxury brands play a critical role in

	behavioural responses to luxury fashion products.	surveys targeting luxury fashion brands.	significantly influence purchasing decisions and brand loyalty.	enhancing consumer loyalty and influencing purchasing behaviour.
Pedro et al. (2024)	To explore both designers' and consumers' perspectives on innovation within the high-end fashion industry.	Mixed-methods approach, combining interviews and surveys with fashion stakeholders.	Thematic analysis showed that innovation shapes both designer creativity and consumer expectations; surveys confirmed preference for innovation.	Innovation is instrumental in defining high-end fashion perceptions among both consumers and designers.
Chen and Zhuang (2024)	To analyse cognitive factors contributing to consumer conformity towards luxury fashion trends.	Empirical research using structured questionnaires among Chinese consumers.	Structural equation modelling demonstrated that rational cognitive responses, rather than emotional ones, guide conformity.	Cognitive assessment and trend perception are major drivers of consumer conformity in the luxury fashion innovation context.

Theme 2: Factors Influencing Preferences for High-End Cheongsam Designs

Preferences for high-end cheongsam are primarily shaped by cultural attachment, emotional resonance, and the reinforcement of social identity, as illustrated in [Table 5](#). Among middle-aged consumers, motivations for engaging with luxury fashion are influenced by a combination of innovative design, personal expression, and adherence to established societal norms. These interrelated factors collectively inform their purchasing decisions and brand affiliations within the traditional luxury segment. The studies presented in [Table 5](#) demonstrate that middle-aged female consumers place high importance on cultural symbolism, emotional self-expression, and individuality when selecting luxury cheongsam. Their fashion preferences are strongly influenced by personal identity, societal image, and deeply rooted cultural values across diverse market contexts. Design innovation is favourably received when it preserves cultural heritage and resonates with personal significance. These insights highlight the necessity for luxury brands to develop cheongsam that harmoniously blend aesthetic appeal with psychological depth and cultural authenticity.

Table 5: SLR for Factors Influencing Preferences for High-End Cheongsam Designs.

Study	Objectives	Methodology	Data Analysis and Results	Conclusion
Hou and Sirinkraporn (2024)	To investigate the motivations and determinants behind Chinese consumers' cheongsam	Quantitative survey conducted through electronic questionnaires.	The analysis identified beauty, cultural symbolism, celebrity influence, individuality, and	Cultural symbolism and aesthetic appeal are the dominant influences on consumer preferences

	purchasing behaviour.		workplace relevance as key factors.	regarding cheongsam innovation.
Yoon (2017)	To analyse the influence of female consumers' self-image on their preferred fashion styles.	Quantitative survey analysed using SPSS and AMOS.	Findings indicate that both ideal and actual self-image significantly influence preferences for fashion styles.	Self-perception plays a pivotal role in shaping preferences for culturally embedded luxury apparel such as the cheongsam.
Ma and Hahn (2023)	To explore cross-cultural differences in consumer decision-making styles related to fashion purchases.	Online surveys administered to consumers in the U.S. and South Korea.	Results show that cultural values and product expectations significantly impact decision-making styles.	Psychological and cultural values are central to shaping consumer preferences for traditional luxury fashion.
Lee (2023)	To examine the determinants of genderless fashion preferences among consumers.	Quantitative survey with factor analysis, t-tests, and ANOVA.	Findings revealed that individual expression, social openness, and adaptability in style influence preferences.	Innovation and alignment with personal identity are essential drivers of contemporary fashion preferences, offering direction for cheongsam reinterpretation.

Theme 3: Impact of Design Innovation on Brand Positioning and Consumer Engagement

Table 6 illustrates how design innovation contributes to enhanced brand positioning, reinforces competitive advantage, and substantially elevates consumer engagement and loyalty within the luxury fashion sector. The evidence presented in Table 6 collectively highlights that the incorporation of design innovation plays a pivotal role in reinforcing brand distinction, establishing market leadership, and fostering emotional resonance with consumers in the luxury fashion domain. Such innovation facilitates not only the strategic repositioning of brands but also cultivates consumer loyalty through mechanisms of value co-creation, symbolic status, and alignment with self-identity. These insights reinforce the notion that innovation functions as a critical strategic resource for sustaining consumer engagement and securing a long-term competitive edge.

Table 6: SLR for the Impact of Design Innovation on Brand Positioning and Consumer Engagement.

Study	Objectives	Methodology	Data Analysis and Results	Conclusion
Zuma (2024)	To examine the impact of fashion design innovation	Desk-based research.	Findings indicate that design innovation	Fashion design innovation plays a vital role in

	on market share and brand leadership in South Africa's luxury sector.		significantly enhances both market share and brand differentiation in the luxury industry.	achieving strong brand positioning and attracting consumers in luxury markets.
Puiu et al. (2021)	To explore the influence of status quo bias and fashion innovativeness on brand loyalty and consumer engagement in luxury fashion.	Quantitative study utilising structural equation modelling.	Results show that a preference for the status quo and fashion involvement drive interest in innovation, mediated by status consumption.	Design innovation promotes brand loyalty by enhancing emotional and social status engagement among luxury consumers.
Serdari (2020)	To propose the ASCEND framework that links innovation to competitive advantage in luxury fashion branding.	Conceptual model development with case analysis of fashion brands.	Brands that incorporate innovation within their design strategy achieve greater competitive advantage and successful brand repositioning.	Strategic integration of design innovation reinforces brand leadership and addresses anticipated shifts in consumer behaviour.
Nyadzayo et al. (2020)	To identify key drivers of brand engagement, including value co-creation, social media marketing, and brand self-connection, within luxury brands.	Descriptive survey analysed through structural equation modelling.	Analysis reveals that value co-creation and brand self-connection significantly boost consumer engagement and brand loyalty.	Innovative brand engagement strategies enhance consumer loyalty and support effective brand repositioning in the luxury segment.

DISCUSSION

Cognitive Perceptions of Luxury Cheongsam Design Innovations

Amatulli et al. (2015) posited that cognitive age exerts a stronger influence than chronological age in shaping motivations for luxury consumption. This perspective is complemented by the findings of Hou and Sirinkraporn (2024), who asserted that the purchasing behaviours of middle-aged consumers are closely tied to emotional gratification and perceptions of cultural authenticity. While Amatulli et al. (2015) offer a generalised view of luxury purchasing motivations, the present study provides a more focused examination of these dynamics in relation to cheongsam, specifically addressing the cultural and emotional sensitivities exhibited by older consumers towards traditional attire.

Chen et al. (2011) observed that women's brand loyalty is significantly shaped by their consumption experiences, suggesting that their purchasing behaviours warrant close

attention. These findings align with those of [Navia et al. \(2021\)](#), who identified emotional branding and self-image alignment as pivotal in influencing middle-aged women to purchase luxury products. Similarly, [Yoon \(2017\)](#) argued that self-concept strongly determines fashion preferences. However, [Chen et al. \(2011\)](#) did not directly address the interplay between tradition and innovation, particularly in the context of heritage fashion like cheongsam. In contrast, the current study examines how middle-aged consumers navigate their appreciation for traditional design while being simultaneously drawn to modernised reinterpretations.

[Pedro et al. \(2024\)](#) explored the impact of innovation on both designer creativity and consumer expectations within the high-end fashion sector. Their findings correspond with those of [Farrag \(2017\)](#) and [Chen \(2023\)](#), who emphasised that innovation remains sustainable when it respects cultural authenticity, rather than disregarding the sensibilities of culturally conscious consumers. This study extends that discourse by concentrating specifically on the cheongsam, integrating Pedro's broader insights into fashion innovation with a detailed exploration of how sustained innovation can support brand authenticity and consumer trust. It highlights the potential risk of consumer alienation if design modifications diverge excessively from traditional aesthetics. [Chen and Zhuang \(2024\)](#) demonstrated that rational cognitive processes are more influential than emotional impulses in driving conformity to luxury fashion trends. This contrasts with earlier theoretical models that prioritised emotional branding, such as those proposed by [Bishnoi and Singh \(2022\)](#). Within the context of cheongsam, this suggests that middle-aged consumers are more inclined to engage in reflective evaluation of innovation's compatibility with cultural heritage, rather than responding based solely on emotional appeal.

Factors Influencing Preferences for High-End Cheongsam Designs

[Hou and Sirinkraporn \(2024\)](#) identified beauty, cultural heritage, celebrity endorsement, and individual expression as key motivational drivers for cheongsam purchases. These findings are consistent with those of [Ng \(2018\)](#) and [Farrag \(2017\)](#), who also recognised aesthetic value and cultural preservation as core motivators in traditional luxury fashion. However, [Hou and Sirinkraporn \(2024\)](#) extended this understanding by incorporating socially shaped influences, such as public figures and professional settings, into the preference formation framework. A notable limitation of their study is its geographic concentration on mainland China, which may restrict the applicability of its conclusions across diverse cultural contexts. [Yoon \(2017\)](#) introduced an alternative approach to understanding fashion preferences through the lens of female consumers' self-image. Their conclusions align with [Navia et al. \(2021\)](#), who contended that middle-aged women engage with luxury fashion as a means of reinforcing personal identity. When applied to cheongsam, this perspective suggests that consumers seek garments that reflect both traditional cultural values and evolving self-perceptions. However, the self-image model employed does not address material product attributes—such as fabric

quality and tailoring—that are integral to the evaluation of cheongsam designs.

Ma and Hahn (2023) also addressed how cheongsam appeals to women aiming to express a dual identity rooted in heritage and modernity. Nevertheless, similar to Yoon (2017), their analysis overlooks physical design elements like cut, material, and craftsmanship, which are critical in shaping consumer judgements of authenticity and luxury in traditional garments. Lee (2023) explored preferences in gender-neutral fashion, highlighting the importance of individuality, versatility, and societal openness. Although these findings are not directly focused on traditional wear such as the cheongsam, they provide valuable insight into how innovation and distinctiveness influence consumer preferences. These observations are in line with Kaufmann et al. (2016), who asserted that middle-aged consumers in the luxury segment place a high value on personalisation and uniqueness, factors that can be translated into cheongsam design adaptations.

Impact of Design Innovation on Brand Positioning and Consumer Engagement

Zuma (2024) demonstrated that innovation in fashion design plays a pivotal role in enhancing market share and establishing brand differentiation within the luxury fashion sector. This aligns with earlier findings by Chen (2023), who strongly emphasised that integrating innovation with elements of cultural heritage not only increases brand appeal but also cultivates long-term consumer loyalty. Zuma further advocated for the use of innovation as a strategic branding instrument, a notion that supports the rising demand for modernised yet culturally authentic cheongsam designs. Puiu et al. (2021) explored the influence of status quo bias and fashion innovativeness on brand loyalty. Their study resonates with Farrag (2017), who acknowledged that consumers of traditional garments increasingly expect a blend of contemporary features and preserved authenticity. Puiu et al. advanced this understanding by illustrating how design innovation enhances emotional resonance and fosters social engagement among middle-aged consumers within the luxury fashion market.

Despite this, it is important to note that Serdari's conceptual framework, while addressing luxury branding, primarily centres on Western high-end fashion, which may not adequately reflect the nuanced cultural considerations essential to cheongsam innovation Farrag (2017). The cultural specificity required in adapting traditional attire such as the cheongsam necessitates a more localised and heritage-sensitive approach. The role of brand engagement in fostering consumer loyalty within luxury markets was further examined by Nyadzayo et al. (2020). Their findings correspond with Kaufmann et al. (2016), who highlighted emotional relevance and self-identification as crucial loyalty drivers. Nyadzayo et al. observed that innovation which facilitates personalisation and emotional resonance significantly boosts consumer involvement. These insights reinforce the strategic value of tailored cheongsam offerings that cater to individual expression while maintaining cultural integrity.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This research contributes to the theoretical discourse on luxury consumer behaviour by illustrating that cognitive self-perception, cultural authenticity, and design innovation jointly influence the preferences of middle-aged women towards high-end cheongsam. It supports existing frameworks of emotional and cultural branding by revealing how consumers negotiate between tradition and modernity through the lenses of individual identity and societal expectations (Hou & Sirinkraporn, 2024; Navia et al., 2021). Furthermore, the study extends luxury branding theory by evidencing how design innovation strengthens brand positioning and fosters consumer loyalty within culturally anchored fashion segments, where a deliberate equilibrium between heritage and contemporary aesthetics is essential.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated how middle-aged female consumers cognitively perceive and respond to design innovations in high-end cheongsam, revealing that cultural authenticity, cognitive self-perception, and rational evaluation play critical roles in shaping preferences and fostering brand engagement. Innovation was positively received when it maintained respect for traditional values, thereby sustaining consumer loyalty and aligning with established personal identities. Elements such as aesthetic value, emotional resonance with cultural heritage, and self-concept were found to be integral in influencing preference formation. Strategic innovation in design was shown to enhance brand positioning and deepen emotional consumer attachment. Theoretically, the findings extend the Self-Concept and Cultural Branding Theory by applying constructs of consumer cognition, emotional branding, and cultural branding to the domain of luxury traditional fashion, an area that has been relatively underexplored. From a practical standpoint, the study suggests that luxury brands aiming to appeal to the increasingly influential demographic of middle-aged women should integrate innovation with culturally grounded narratives. Overall, the research underscores the importance of balancing tradition with modernity, indicating that culturally sensitive innovation strategies can strengthen market positioning within the luxury fashion sector.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTION

Although this study provides meaningful insights into the cognitive and cultural dimensions influencing middle-aged female consumers within the luxury cheongsam sector, several limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the exclusive use of secondary data derived from a systematic literature review may restrict the contextual depth and fail to capture consumer-specific subtleties that primary empirical research could reveal. Secondly, the study's focus on Chinese cultural heritage narrows its applicability, potentially limiting the generalisability of findings to other luxury markets characterised by different cultural frameworks. Moreover, much of the existing literature emphasises consumer perspectives, with comparatively limited attention given to brand-side innovation strategies and the creative intentions of designers. Future research should consider employing qualitative or mixed-method methodologies to generate more

comprehensive, real-time insights from both consumer and designer standpoints. Comparative cross-cultural investigations may further enrich the findings by examining how perceptions of luxury-traditional garments vary across different global contexts. Additionally, longitudinal studies could be valuable in tracking the evolution of consumer preferences over time, particularly in response to dynamic changes in lifestyle, fashion trends, and cultural contexts.

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